



THE JEWS OF  
KHAZARIA

SECOND EDITION

KEVIN ALAN BROOK

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Kevin Alan Brook

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The researchers [of Khazar history] have beautiful days in front of them [while they explore] . . . [t]he spellbinding history of a Jewish Atlantis that slumbered in neglect for centuries.

—Alexandra Lemasson, *L'Express*, June 7, 2001

Every schoolchild in the West has been told that if not for Charles Martel and the battle of Poitiers there might be a mosque where Notre Dame now stands. What few schoolchildren are aware of is that if not for the Khazars . . . Eastern Europe might well have become a province of Islam.

—Peter Golden, *Khazar Studies*

To the oppressed Jews of the world, the Khazars were a source of pride and hope, for their existence seemed to prove that God had not completely abandoned His people.

—Raymond Scheindlin, *The Chronicles of the Jewish People*

The peoples of the Khazar Khanate had a more advanced way of life than those of the Central Asian Turkic tribes, whose chief occupation was nomadic animal husbandry. The level of its agriculture and handicrafts industry matched contemporary European standards. In terms of commercial development it even exceeded them.

—György Balázs, *The Magyars*



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# Introduction

This book explores the history and culture of the Khazars, a Turkic people who established a large empire in southern Russia during the early medieval period. The Khazars were politically and militarily powerful, representing a “third force” in Europe and Asia on par with the Byzantine Empire and the Islamic Caliphate. They were known to be excellent traders, farmers, fishermen, warriors, and craftsmen.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the Khazars’ history was their adoption of the Jewish religion. For centuries, the Khazar territory was a major region of settlement for Jewish refugees escaping persecution, and these refugees soon introduced Judaism to the Khazars. The king of Khazaria, Bulan, became convinced that Judaism was the true religion, and under his leadership and that of his successors, some of the Khazar people also adopted Judaism. Synagogues and yeshivas were established in Khazaria, and the study of the Torah and Talmud became commonplace. The Khazars underscored their allegiance to the Jewish faith by adopting the Hebrew script and Hebrew personal names, even to the extent of naming some of their children after Jewish holidays such as Pesach and Hanukkah. Jews lived in many of the major Khazar towns.

Khazaria exerted a tremendous impact on world history. The Khazars’ persistence against Arab invaders eventually halted their conquests north of the Caucasus, similar to the role of the Franks in blocking Arabs from conquering more lands in western Europe. The Khazars also had an impact on the migration of many Bulgars, leading eventually to the establishment of Bulgaria in the Balkans. The Khazars helped to influence the early culture and governmental systems of the Magyars and the Rus’. Khazaria also served as a major center for world trade and contributed to economic prosperity in the region.

Since the publication of the first edition of this book in April 1999, many important developments have taken place in the field of Khazar studies.

These developments have substantially altered the content of the text. The first international Khazar studies colloquium was held in May 1999, and it, along with subsequent conferences, has led to increased correspondence and cooperation between researchers in many different countries. Archaeological research has continued in Russia and Ukraine at burial and fortress sites, and archaeological reports and books from eastern Europe have become more easily available in the West. Numismatic confirmation in 2002 that the Khazars minted Jewish-themed coins in the late 830s helps us to reassess the date of the conversion of the Khazar king to Judaism. Genetic data collected from Jewish populations around the world have been published in scientific papers during the 2000s, helping to finally resolve long-standing debates about the ancestry of East European Jews.

In the second edition, we will also explore new evidence for Christian religious expression in the Khazarian Crimea, the types of weaponry used by the Khazar military, a story about Jewish Khazars living in the Byzantine Empire, documents concerning Jews with East Slavic names who lived in the cities of Grodno and Brest, and new revelations about the connections between the Crimean Karaites and the Karaites of Istanbul, among other topics.

We will reevaluate fundamental issues in the light of these and other recent discoveries. For instance, it has become clear that the Khazar ancestral component in Ashkenazic Jewry is not as large as we might have once imagined. Nevertheless, the basic theory that I proposed in the first edition—that East European Jews descend from a mixture of Khazars, Slavs, Middle Eastern Jews, German Jews, and Czech Jews—remains in accord with the known evidence, and we may still see the East Slavic-speaking Jews who inhabited Kievan Rus' and the Lithuanian Grand Duchy as the missing link between the Turkic-speaking Khazars of the early medieval era and the Yiddish-speaking Jews of later times. We will also encounter confirmation that Ashkenazic Jews are closely related to Sephardic Jews, Italian Jews, Mountain Jews, and several other Jewish populations.

I believe it is important that the entire story of the civilization of Khazaria should be easily accessible to both scholars and laymen. When I first began researching the Khazars in 1993, I was puzzled by the fact that so few extensive studies on the Khazars had been published in Western languages. I therefore undertook the task of writing the kind of book that I thought needed to be available. I hope this completely updated second edition will be as well received as the first edition, and that it will further advance the study of this subject. This is my tribute to a fascinating culture which does not deserve to languish in obscurity or controversy any longer.

—Kevin Alan Brook

## Chapter One

# The Origins of the Khazars

*For millennia, wandering bands of nomads lived in the steppes of central Asia and southern Russia. Yet, contrary to popular belief, these nomads possessed culture and other traits of civilized life. Some of the most spectacular archaeological finds anywhere in the world have been discovered in the grasslands of Ukraine and Russia. The Scythians, warriors of Iranian origin, were one of the earliest societies in the steppe (seventh to third century BCE), and many of their rich treasures have come to light. They were great patrons of the arts who commissioned Greek artists. In the summer of 1996, the tomb of a Scythian military commander was found near Ryzhanivka village in Ukraine, containing a gold-handled sword, a headdress decorated with gold, wine jars, and silver decorations. Another exciting discovery was the Scythian gold pectoral from Tolstaya Mogila along the Dnieper River, which contained detailed engravings of animals and people.<sup>1</sup> At other gravesites, Scythians were buried along with large quantities of gold bracelets, rings, and tiaras.*

*Centuries after the Scythian society disappeared, other societies made their mark in the steppes, including the Sarmatians, Huns, and Khazars. As the historian Peter Golden has noted,<sup>2</sup> many of the early central Asian nomads took a deep interest in trade and succeeded in building rich civilizations with literacy and high levels of political, social, and military organization. According to Golden, “The picture of the nomad as simply a mounted marauder, while justified from the point of view of those who felt the fury of their attacks, does not tell the full story.”*

*The Turkic civilizations of central Asia were often just as culturally rich as that of the Scythians. In August 2001, Turkish archaeologists excavating a shrine in central Mongolia discovered the ancient tomb of the Kök Turk kagan Bilge, who ruled from 716 to 734. The tomb contained thousands of*

works of art made from silver and gold, such as silver sculptures of deer and a gold crown decorated with a mythological bird figurine.

The Khazars emerged on the world scene as Turkic horsemen who believed in shamanism and lived a nomadic lifestyle. Over the course of many centuries, the Khazars adopted a more settled way of life and replaced their former Tengri beliefs with Judaism, Islam, and Christianity. This chapter explores the evolution of the Khazars into a tribe and the earliest development of their kingdom.

## THE TURKIC HERITAGE

The Khazars were predominantly Turkic and probably originated in the steppes of central Asia, or perhaps in the Ural or Caucasus mountains. The details of their origins are still somewhat obscure. The early ninth-century Greek historian Theophanes wrote that the Khazars were “eastern Turks.”<sup>3</sup> The Arab chronicler al-Masudi recorded in *Kitab at-Tanbih wa al-Ishraf* (957) that “the Khazars . . . are a tribe of the Turks.”<sup>4</sup> The Chinese chronicle *T’ang-shu* likewise declared that the Khazars “belong to the stock of the Turks.”<sup>5</sup> Writers in the centuries following the demise of Khazaria reinforced this knowledge. The twelfth-century religious scholar Rabbi Yehudah ben Barzillai of Barcelona referred to “the Khazars, who are Turks.”<sup>6</sup> The thirteenth-century Polish writer Martinus Oppaviensis<sup>7</sup> called the Khazars Turks when referring to them as Justinian II’s one-time allies in the Crimea (see chapter 7).

Turkic and Jewish genealogical myths recorded by King Joseph and *Sefer Yosippon* identified Khazar as the “brother” of other Turkic tribes like the Bulgars and Sabirs (see below). Syriac legends said that the ancestor of the Khazars was named “Khazarig,” the brother of “Bulgarios.”<sup>8</sup> Most scholars believe that these legends have a historical basis and that the Khazars were indeed closely related to Turkic tribes such as the Bulgars and Bashkirs.

According to Turkic legend, as preserved in Chinese chronicles,<sup>9</sup> the original Turks lived beside a large swamp. Enemies killed them off, with the exception of one boy, whose feet they cut off and whom they threw into a marsh. A female wolf rescued the boy. Years later, the boy impregnated the wolf. When the leader of his enemies hired someone to kill the boy, the boy and the wolf fled to a cave in a mountain north of the Turfan Depression (in eastern Turkistan, which today is in northwestern China). The wolf gave birth to ten sons in the cave. One of the ten sons was named A-shih-na, and his tribe became powerful and expanded greatly in size. All ten sons settled along the southern slope of the Altai Mountains, came under the control of the Juan-

Juan, and became blacksmiths. The A-shih-na adopted the name “Turk.” The legend indicates that the wolf is the totem ancestor of the Turks.<sup>10</sup>

As was the case with most nomadic Turks, the Khazars were racially and ethnically mixed. Among the Turks were black-haired peoples with dark brown eyes, red-haired peoples with green or hazel eyes, and fair-haired peoples with blue eyes. Some had high cheekbones, wide faces, and narrow eyes, resembling the peoples of east Asia. Many others resembled Europeans or Middle Easterners. The diversity of the Turks is also made apparent by the fact that the term “Turk” is not a racial term, but rather was applied to a variety of different nomadic tribes who shared a common vocabulary and culture. The heterogeneity of the Turks is still apparent today, since the disparate modern Turkic peoples often look strikingly dissimilar. For example, the Gagauz people of Europe differ from the Kazakhs of central Asia, just as Azeris of the south Caucasus differ from Uyghurs of northwestern China. In certain instances, this diversity can be explained by the frequent process by which diverse peoples originally of non-Turkic origin were “Turkicized” and adopted Turkic as their language.<sup>11</sup>

The Khazars were described by ibn-Said al-Maghribi as having blue eyes, light skin, and reddish hair.<sup>12</sup> Many other early Turkic tribes also had red hair. Chinese and Muslim sources indicated that the ancient Qirghiz (Kyrgyz) people living north of the Sayan Mountains along the upper Yenisei River had red hair, blue eyes, and white skin. For example, Gardizi reported a legend of the origin of the Kyrgyz people wherein a Khazar nobleman named Bashqird befriended the “Saqlabs” (Slavs) and called another group of people whom he led the “Khirkhiz.” He added that it was said that the Saqlabs mixed with the Khirkhiz and that this explains the incidence of red hair and white skin among the Khirkhiz.<sup>13</sup> The *T'ang-shu* chronicle said that the Kyrgyz people were “tall, with red-hair, ruddy-faced and blue-eyed. Black hair is considered a bad omen.”<sup>14</sup> The red hair of the Kyrgyz might mean that they were partly of some non-Turkic origin. A Hsiung-nu ruler in the early fourth century had a red beard, and the *Shih-ku* said that the Hu people, descended from the Wusun (neighbors of the Hsiung-nu), had red beards and blue eyes.<sup>15</sup>

On the other hand, al-Istakhri said that Khazars had black hair.<sup>16</sup> Al-Istakhri added that there were “Black Khazars” and “White Khazars,” alleging that the latter were light skinned and handsome while the former were dark skinned. However, scholars agree that this was not a racial distinction but rather a social one. The Black (*Kara*) Khazars were the lower classes, while the White (*Ak*) Khazars were the nobility and royalty.

When Soviet archaeologists excavated Khazarian kurgans (burial mounds) near the fortress of Sarkel, dating from the tenth to the twelfth centuries, they discovered physical remains that apparently were of members of the Khazar



tribe. Some of these Khazars belonged to a Slavic type, while others were short-skulled Europeans. Only a few Mongolian types were found.<sup>17</sup>

Alternative theories have been proposed about the origins of the Khazar people throughout the years. In the nineteenth century, some scholars considered the Khazars to be Turks or Tatars, while others said that they were Finno-Ugrians related to the Magyars; still others argued that the Khazars were Slavs or related to the Circassians.<sup>18</sup> A large number of possibilities were raised in the following century as well. In his PhD thesis *Struktur und Gesellschaft des Chazaren-Reiches im Licht der Schriftlichen Quellen* (1982), Dieter Ludwig suggested that the Khazars were Hephthalites (allegedly Turkic) originating from Khorasan (eastern Persia) who formed a union with the Sabirs around the sixth century. Warren B. Walsh claimed that the Khazars were related to the Georgians and Armenians.<sup>19</sup>

The scholars who have had the easiest access to Khazar documents and artifacts are, naturally, those in Russia and Ukraine. Unfortunately, the Communist conceptualization of history skewed analysis of the ethnogenesis of tribes in the Russian lands during much of the twentieth century, as Bruce Trigger explained:

The Soviet Union was the first country where archaeological data were interpreted within the framework of Marxist historical materialism. Since the late 1920s, this paradigm has guided all archaeological research done there.<sup>20</sup>

This ideology had drastic consequences for Khazar studies. Under the oppressive regime of Stalin (1929–1953), Soviet historians and archaeologists were forced to adopt the view that the Khazars were not Turkic migrants from the East but rather were natives of the north Caucasus.<sup>21</sup> Mikhail Artamonov therefore alleged, during the 1930s and 1940s, that the Khazars were local natives of the Don valley and the north Caucasus. Lev Gumilev and several other archaeologists expressed the belief that the Khazars were a “Turkified” Daghestani, Sarmatian, or Alanic people. Vladimir Minorsky, too, wrote that the Khazars were a grouping of local nomadic tribes of southern Russia who were brought together under a new Khazar-Turkic leader.<sup>22</sup> The view that the Khazars were mainly or entirely a “Turkified” people does not appear to be valid, since it is known for certain that the Khazars were Turks. However, there remains the possibility that some non-Turkic people under the jurisdiction of the Khazar Empire also assumed the name “Khazar”—especially Jewish immigrants from the Middle East who intermarried with the Khazars.

The meaning of the ethnonym “Khazar” has been much debated. According to some scholars, “Khazar” may be derived from the root words *kaz* (meaning “wanderer”) and *er* (meaning “man”). On the other hand, Douglas

Dunlop believed it was possible to associate the Khazars with the Chinese name of one of the nine ancient Uyghur tribes, “Ko-sa.”<sup>23</sup> Some early Chinese writers knew the Khazars under the names *K’osa t’u-chüeh* (K’osa Turks) and *T’u-chüeh ho-sa pu*, and Dunlop’s argument is largely based on the close resemblance between the “Ko-sa” and “K’osa.” In *Khazar Studies*, Peter Golden disagreed with Dunlop’s suggestion, writing that a connection between the Khazars and Uyghurs cannot be established, and that the real connection existed with the Oghurs.<sup>24</sup> Early Rus’ian sources called the Khazars the “White Ugrý” and the Magyars the “Black Ugrý.”<sup>25</sup> It should be assumed that “Ugrý” is equivalent to “Oghur.” The Oghurs were a special branch of Turks who spoke a form of Turkic distinct from Common Turkic.

More recently, however, scholars have reevaluated the question of whether Khazars can be associated with Uyghurs, since some new evidence has been discovered that may connect the Khazars with people of the ancient Uyghur Empire. The reevaluation involves the name “Qasar.” “Qasar” was found in the form “QSR” on the mid-eighth-century Shine-usu, Terkhin, and Tes runic inscriptions from northern Mongolia, all of which were composed in the Old Uyghur language.<sup>26</sup> In one of the runic inscriptions, the Uyghur kagan Bayanchur (El-Etmish Bilgä) (reigned 747–759) wrote that the Qasars were involved in events of the sixth century. T. Senga believed that the Uyghur tribe or surname “Qasar” may be equivalent to the Ko-sa of the Chinese sources.<sup>27</sup> There has been speculation that part of the Qasar group moved west from Mongolia or northern Kazakhstan into Khazaria, but this is far from certain. Károly Czeplédy and Louis Bazin proposed that the Qasars were the ancestors of the Khazars.<sup>28</sup> Bazin argued that this Uyghur group migrated westward before the year 555, and he suggested that *qas-* means “to tyrannize, oppress, terrorize.” Czeplédy argued that the westward migration of the Qasars occurred around 463.<sup>29</sup>

It is interesting that the multitribal Chiu-hsing (“Nine Surnames”) confederacy, conquered by the Uyghur kagan, included a tribal leader named Ko-sa, according to the Chinese work *Hsin T’ang-shu*.<sup>30</sup> Additionally, it should be noted that the kagan of the Uyghur Empire between 823 and 832 was named Hosa t’e-le (Hazar Tekin). Were these leaders related to the Khazars? Senga postulated that Ko-sa was the surname of the leader of the Ssu-chieh (Sikari) tribe, possibly associated with the T’ieh-le group rather than with Uyghurs, and that it was the T’ieh-le who were the ancestors of the Khazar people.

More recently, András Róna-Tas connected *Qasar* (Khasar) with the ancient Roman title “Caesar.”<sup>31</sup> This title, in turn, derived from the Latin name “Julius Caesar.” The word *Caesar* was transmitted to the Turks via the Persians. In Middle Persian, the name took the form “Kesar.” Dan Shapira concurred with Róna-Tas’s analysis.<sup>32</sup>

A complete answer about the origins of the Khazars is not yet available. However, it should be emphasized that the evidence indicates the importance of westward migrations in the creation of the Khazar people.

### LEGENDS ABOUT THE BEGINNINGS OF THE JEWISH KHAZARS

Some of the Turkic peoples believed that they could trace their descent back to Noah, the legendary ark builder, through the biblical character Togarmah. One of the most important Khazar kings, Joseph, wrote in his celebrated *Reply to Hasdai ibn Shaprut* that the Khazars were descended from “Kozar,” the seventh of Togarmah’s ten sons (the others being Uygur, Tiros, Avar, Oguz or Ogur, Bisal or Barsil, Tarna, Sanar, Bulgar, and Savir). Other medieval Hebrew essays substantiated this claim. For example, the anonymous tenth-century Hebrew historical work *Sefer Yosippon* stated that Togarmah’s son Kozar had nine brothers, who represented the ancestry of the Bulgars, Pechenegs, and other Turkic groups. Genesis 10:2 and 10:3, in turn, traced Togarmah’s ancestry back several generations, naming Japheth as his grandfather and Noah as Japheth’s father. It is also worth mentioning that Shem Tov ibn Shem Tov called Khazaria “the country of Togarmah” in his *Sefer ha-Emunot* (early fifteenth century).

Jewish authors often speculated that the Jews in Khazaria were descended from some of the twelve tribes of ancient Israel. For example, the Khazar author of the *Schechter Letter* mentioned a tradition among his people that the Khazarian Jews were descended from the tribe of Simeon.<sup>33</sup> Similarly, Eldad ben Mahali ha-Dani (Eldad “the Danite”), a Jew who may have hailed from eastern Africa or Khazaria,<sup>34</sup> wrote (in the late ninth century) that the tribe of Simeon and the half tribe of Menasheh lived in “the land of the Khazars” and took tribute from twenty-five kingdoms, including some Muslim nations. Eldad brought this to the attention of the Jews of Spain in 883 and aroused considerable interest in the topic among them.

Several other versions of the Eldad ha-Dani legend exist in Hebrew literature. A large assortment of these tales, concerning the whereabouts of the remnants of the twelve tribes of Israel, were collected in the *Chronicles of Jerahmeel* by Jerahmeel ben Solomon, a twelfth-century Italian Jew. One of the documents in Jerahmeel’s collection is the *Chronicle of Elchanan the Merchant*, which was said to be written by Elchanan ben Joseph, a seafaring merchant from the land where the tribe of Dan dwelled. This chronicle, as preserved by Jerahmeel, is more detailed than Eldad’s tale and provides valuable additional information. Elchanan’s chronicle indicated that the tribe

of Judah and half of the tribe of Simeon lived in tents in “the land of the Khasdim.” They collected tribute from twenty-five kingdoms, including Muslims and descendants of Keturah, Abraham’s second wife.<sup>35</sup> They were described as proficient archers and sword fighters who warred against non-Jewish nations and at times went on excursions to Iraq. Elchanan said that Judah and Simeon spoke Hebrew, Greek, and the language of Togarmah (Turkic), and that they were knowledgeable about the Torah, Mishnah, Talmud, and Agadah.<sup>36</sup> It is obvious that these statements, like those in the tale narrated by Eldad, refer to the Jews living in Khazaria. Dan Shapira showed how the term *Khasdim*, spelled “Kazrim” in some versions of the tale, equaled “Khazars” in its meaning.<sup>37</sup>

The other document from the *Chronicles of Jerahmeel* that provides details about the lost tribes in the Caucasus region is titled *The Ten Banishments of the Sanhedrin*. The details in this document sometimes contradict those in Elchanan’s account. For example, the tribe of Ephraim and the half tribe of Menasheh, rather than Simeon and Judah, were said to be collecting tribute from twenty-five kingdoms.<sup>38</sup> Ephraim and Menasheh formed a large confederation of hardworking horse riders who lived “opposite the city of Meyuqa.”

There was also believed to be a connection between the Khazars and Magog, a son of Japheth. The *Life of Saint Abo of Tiflis* (Tbilisi) said that the Khazars were savage “sons of Magog” who were “without religion, except that they recognize a god the creator.”<sup>39</sup> According to *Expositio in Matthaeum Evangelistam*, a commentary on Matthew 24:14 written in 864 by the monk Christian of Stavelot, the Jewish Gazari or Gazares (Khazars) lived “in the lands of Gog and Magog” (see chapter 6). The Arab traveler ibn Fadlan wrote (in 921 or 922), “Some hold the opinion that Gog and Magog are the Khazars.”<sup>40</sup> The Talmud, however, identified Magog with the White Huns and Gog with the Goths.<sup>41</sup> Josephus, writing in the first century, associated Magog with the Scythians.

Christian of Stavelot added that Alexander the Great “enclosed” or “shut in” the Gazari, but that they escaped. This statement is derived from an ancient legend in which Alexander was seen as a hero for walling up dangerous, unclean peoples. Prester John described the enclosed peoples as cannibals.<sup>42</sup>

The *Cosmography* by Pseudo-Aethicus Istricus, written circa 770, stated, “Other writings omit the Turks [= Khazars living near the Black and Azov seas]. . . . He says that they are closed in by the Byrrrichean mountains and the isles of the Taracontas and right to the bay of the Pontus by its lands and littorals. . . . They are people . . . from the stock of Gog and Magog. . . . Along with their offspring, the very worst, they are a race pent in behind the Caspian Gates. They have a [tall] stature, are sooty, foul, with acutely pointed(?) teeth.”<sup>43</sup>

The medieval German legend of the “Red Jews” derived from a combination of three of these stories: (1) about Alexander the Great’s enclosure of monstrous nations behind a large mountain northeast of the Mediterranean; (2) about Gog and Magog, said to be the destroyers of the world at the end of time; and (3) about the ten lost tribes of Israel.<sup>44</sup> German writers used the “Red Jews” legend to express anti-Jewish sentiments and fears about the anticipated apocalypse.

The term “Red Jews” was chosen because medieval Germans saw red hair and red beards as signs of a dishonest, deceitful individual. Thus, Red Jews were Jews who had red hair and red beards, according to Andrew Gow.<sup>45</sup> This is visually demonstrated in a fifteenth-century German *Historiated Bible*, which depicted the ten lost tribes of Israel (enclosed by Alexander) with red hair and red beards.<sup>46</sup> By contrast, Alexander and his army had blond hair.

The Red Jews made their first appearance in German literature in Albrecht von Scharfenberg’s late thirteenth-century text titled *Der Jüngere Tituel*. According to Albrecht, the Red Jews are enclosed between two tall mountains called Gog and Magog; these Jews are “warlike” and present a military threat to Christians.<sup>47</sup> Another late thirteenth-century document, *Der Göttweiger Trojanerkrieg*, stated that the Red Jews lived in the land of “Plotzen,” a country that “stretched far and wide.” It also said that the Red Jews taxed travelers very heavily, and that they looked ugly and frightening.<sup>48</sup> It further said that after twenty thousand Red Jews were killed in battle against Greek soldiers, the remnants of Red Jewry fled into the mountains, where they were conquered by King Alexander “many years later.”

*Gottes Zukunft*, penned by Heinrich von Neustadt circa 1300, called the enclosed country “Caspia.”<sup>49</sup> Heinrich also wrote that the terrifying people of Gog and Magog, descended from Japheth, are the ten tribes of Israel, locked up by Alexander in the “Caspian Mountains” (the Caucasus Mountains are meant). The Caspian Jews are numerous and have large armies.

*Buch der Maccabäer* by Ludger von Braunschweig (early fourteenth century) expanded upon the meaning of the legend. It said that Alexander’s army came to the “Caspian Mountains” and met the ten Israelite tribes, who are also called Red Jews. The Red Jews were already partially enclosed, and thus imprisoned, by the mountains, because God had punished them for worshipping two golden calves made by their king Jeroboam. Alexander further trapped the Red Jews in these mountains by piling boulders to form a great wall. But Alexander and his men were unable to complete the task of walling up the Jews, so he asked God to enclose the mountains entirely. Von Braunschweig wrote that God answered Alexander’s prayer. Nevertheless, medieval Christians were concerned that Gog and Magog would break out of the Caucasus Mountains at the end of time and destroy the Christian world.

In *Judenbüchlein* (early sixteenth century), Victor von Carben imagined a dialogue between a Christian and a Jew. The Jew described the king of the Red Jews as a descendant of the tribe of Judah—reminiscent of Elchanan the Merchant’s comment that Judahites ruled over the land of the Khasdim—and said that the “Caspian Mountains” were located on “the other side of Babylonia,” bordering the sea that the Germans called the “Wild Sea” and that Jews called Sambation.<sup>50</sup> The waves of the “Wild Sea” were so fierce that it was impossible to navigate across it during the week. However, the sea rested from Friday at six o’clock pm until Saturday at six o’clock pm. The Red Jews could not cross during this time because they were observing the Sabbath. The fictional Jew in this dialogue lamented the perpetual imprisonment of the Red Jews between the sea and the mountains because only Red Jewry could liberate the German Jews.

At least one English writer picked up on the Red Jews story. In the fourteenth century, Hugh de Campden created a rhymed translation into Middle English of *Sidrac*, an Old French manuscript from the thirteenth century concerning a conflict between the eastern kings Boctus and Garaab and the conversations Boctus had with the sage Sidrac, which led to Boctus’s conversion to Christianity. The first portion of the text reads as follows:

There was a kyng that Boctus hyght  
 And was a man of moche myght  
 His londe lay be grete Inde  
 Bectorye hight hit as we fynde  
 After the time of Noee even  
 Vijte hundred yeere fourty and seven  
 The kyng Boctus hym bethought  
 That he wolde haue a citee wrought  
 The rede Iewes fro hym spere  
 And for to mayntene his were  
 Ayenst a kyng that was his foo  
 And hathe moste of Inde longyng hym too  
 His name was Garaab the kyng.<sup>51</sup>

The line “The rede Iewes fro hym spere” means “The red Jews from him shut out.” Thus, the text refers to King Boctus’s enclosure of the Red Jews and to his building of a city.

Jewish folklorists also spun tales about Red Jews. There were several key similarities between the Jewish and German legends: the Red Jews were warriors who ruled a large kingdom and lived beyond a large sea or river called Sambation. The historian Salo W. Baron suggested that the Red Jews of the Jewish tales were the Khazars.<sup>52</sup> It does seem very likely that the stories about

the fiercely independent Red Jews were vague memories of, or rumors about, the powerful Khazar kingdom, transmitted in distorted form to German Christians. Håkon Stang, however, expressed hesitation about the claim that the Red Jews were definitely the Khazars, asking, “Yet is this [the existence of Khazar Jews] enough to establish word of ‘the Red Jews’?”<sup>53</sup>

## THE KHAZARS AND THE HUNS

The original Hunnic empire was established in inner Asia in the third century BCE by the military commander T’ou-man. It was greatly strengthened and enlarged during the reign of Mo-tun, son of T’ou-man. Yet the empire of the Huns separated into northern and southern divisions in the middle of the first century CE. The northern Huns began moving west after a major defeat inflicted upon them in 93 CE by the Hsien-pi (Mongols).<sup>54</sup>

The Huns moved westward into southern Russia and Crimea by the 380s, taking possession of the lower Don River valley and the territory surrounding the Sea of Azov. Priscus recorded (circa 448) that the Akatzirs (*Akatziroi*) or Akatirs (*Akatiroi*) living near the Black Sea were subjects of the Huns.<sup>55</sup> He wrote that Attila, king of the Huns, installed Karidach (Kuridach) as king of the Akatzirs around the middle of the fifth century. The Akatzirs also were in alliance with the Alans around this time. Some historians have thought that the Akatzirs might be ancestors of the Khazars. However, no solid evidence exists that would connect the Akatzirs with the Khazars, even though the anonymous author of the early medieval *Ravenna Cosmography* had asserted just such a connection.<sup>56</sup> In any case, “Akatiir” is the original form of *Akatzir*, and Róna-Tas effectively debunked the alleged connection between the Akatzirs and the Khazars.<sup>57</sup>

Oghur Turkic tribes—including the Onogurs, Saragurs, and Uturghurs (Utigurs)—crossed the Volga River and entered Europe around the year 463. Previously, the Oghurs lived in western Siberia and central Asia, but they suffered a defeat at the hands of the Sabirs and were forced to migrate. The Oghuric Onogurs settled along the Don and Kuban river basins of the north Caucasus, as well as in the steppe lands north of the Kuban River up to the Don River. According to Peter Golden, the Oghurs were members of the T’ieh-le tribal union mentioned in Chinese sources.<sup>58</sup> These Oghuric newcomers apparently intermingled with the Akatzirs and the Huns. Indeed, scholars have often considered the Onogurs, Utigurs, and Kutrigurs of the Crimea and Phanagoria to have been Huns.

The Huns still controlled portions of the European steppe lands during the sixth century, including the Crimea. One of the Hunnic kings of the Crimea, named Grod, sought an alliance with the Byzantine emperor Justinian I.<sup>59</sup>

Grod adopted Christianity in 528 and melted many pagan idols, converting them into silver and electrum coins. The Crimean Huns were dissatisfied with Grod, so they killed him and installed Mougel, his pagan brother, as their new king.<sup>60</sup> An important consequence of this change in command was that Mougel reversed Grod's pro-Byzantine policies.

Remnants of the Huns remained in the eastern Pontic steppes and the northern Caucasus for many years, and some ventured into Romania. It is interesting that Christian of Stavelot considered the Jewish Gazari living in "Gog and Magog" to be Huns (see chapter 6). This, however, is probably a generic use of the word *Hun*.

One of the earliest factual references to the Khazars dates from the year 555, when an anonymous author wrote a supplement attached to the Syriac translation of *Greek Church History of "Zacharias Rhetor."* In this supplement, the Khazars were listed among the nomadic tribes living in tents north of the Caucasus Mountains.<sup>61</sup>

## THE WESTERN TURKISH EMPIRE

For over sixty years, the Western Turks ruled the Khazars.

The Western Kök ("Blue") Türk Kaganate was founded in 552 by Ishtemi, the yabghu kagan, who was the brother of the supreme Türk kagan Bumín.<sup>62</sup> Ishtemi and Bumín were members of the Turkic Asena (Ashina) dynastic clan. The headquarters of this vast empire was located near Lake Balkash. In the year 567, hordes of Western Turks arrived in the Volga River region. They soon assumed control over the Sabirs,<sup>63</sup> Onogurs, and Alans of the north Caucasus. By circa 570, the Khazars were under the jurisdiction of the Western Turkish Empire.<sup>64</sup> The Western Turks took possession of the city of Bosphorus (the future Kerch) from the Byzantine Empire in 576. The North Caucasian Huns also became subjects of the Western Turks. Additionally, Ishtemi's forces took control over the Iranian city-states of Bukhara, Samarkand, and Khwarizm in central Asia.

Ishtemi died in 575 or 576 and was succeeded as Western Turkish yabghu kagan by his son Tardu, who lived until 603. Tardu eventually gained control over the Eastern Turks as well. In 601, Tardu's army unsuccessfully attempted to conquer the Chinese capital city of Chang'an. After Tardu's death, Chulo (reigned 603–611) became yabghu kagan. Chulo's unsatisfactory performance led to revolts. His successor, Shih Kuei (reigned 611–618), expanded the Western Turkish realm as far east as the Altai Mountains. Shih Kuei also expanded the western frontier of his empire. His younger brother, Tong Yabghu (reigned 618–630), known as Ziebil by the Byzantines and T'ong She-hu by the Chinese, continued the empire's expansion during his time as yabghu kagan. Tong



Yabghu's capital, called "One Thousand Springs," was located east of the Talas River.<sup>65</sup> Among his most important officials were the el-tebers, who governed conquered peoples, and the tuduns, who collected taxes. Tong Yabghu, a follower of Buddhism, was dedicated to the spread of the Buddhist faith among his people.<sup>66</sup> The famous Chinese Buddhist monk Xuanzang (600–664) visited Tong Yabghu in 630 while on a pilgrimage. He observed that this great ruler wore a green satin robe and had very long hair, while his ministers wore embroidered robes and his military attendants were dressed in furs, serge, and wool.<sup>67</sup>

The Karluks and other tribes revolted against Tong Yabghu, and he was killed by his uncle (known by the Chinese as Mo-ho-tu hou Ch'iu-li Ssu-p'i) in 630. His uncle ruled as the Western Turkish kagan during that year. These events led to a civil war, and the Western Turkish Empire broke apart during the 630s.

The tribes of the north Caucasus found themselves in the midst of a major transition. After the disintegration of the Western Turkish Empire, the Khazars were able to reassert their independence.

### **THE FORMATION OF AN INDEPENDENT KHAZAR KINGDOM**

Tong Yabghu's son established the independent state of Khazaria in the 630s and 640s. The whole region between the Volga and the fortress city of Derbent came into the possession of the Khazars.

The Khazar Empire was multiethnic and multireligious throughout its entire existence. Even as early as the seventh century, the Khazars assimilated with other tribes and confederations of the Caucasus, such as the Sabirs (also known as Savirs or Suvars), Saragurs, Utigurs, Zabenders (Samandars), and Balanjars (Great Endzhers). These various peoples formed the mosaic of Khazarian life. It appears that the Sabirs living in Khazaria intermarried with a large portion of both the Khazar and Magyar tribes. Indeed, al-Masudi reported that the Khazars were called "Sabir" in Turkic but "Khazaran" in Persian.<sup>68</sup>

### **THE EFFECTS OF KHAZAR EXPANSION ON THE BULGARS**

The Khazars soon became the dominant power in southern Russia. The expansion of Khazaria into new territories displaced other ethnic groups, most notably the Bulgars.

The ethnonym “Bulgar” means “mixed ones” in Turkic and derives from the Turkic word *bulgha* (to mix). Thus, the Bulgars were actually a tribal confederation of multiple Hunnic, Turkic, and Iranian groups mixed together.

During the winter, Bulgar men wore cone-shaped caps lined with fur, long fur coats with a belt at the waist, and boots.<sup>69</sup> They had a custom of shaving off much of their hair, except for a portion that was worn in a pigtail. Bulgar women wore wide breeches and girdles with ornaments made from iron, glass, copper, and bone.

The early Bulgars were divided into two groups: the Utigurs and the Kutrigurs. The Utigurs allied with the Byzantines and turned against their Kutrigur brethren. The two groups were engaged in bitter conflict during much of the 550s. While the Kutrigurs were defeated and absorbed by Avar invaders around 560, the Utigurs survived the Avar conquest. In the late sixth and early seventh centuries, the Western Turkish kaganate took control over the Bulgar lands. The Bulgars fought this takeover unsuccessfully, and many died in battle. However, they established their independence from the Western Turks around the same time as the Khazars.

The Bulgars established an independent state (Great Bulgaria) along the Don, Kuban, and Dnieper rivers by 630. The capital of Great Bulgaria was Phanagoria, on the Taman peninsula. Their top leader was Kubrat, a member of the Dulo clan of Western Turks,<sup>70</sup> who belonged to the Bulgar Onoghundur tribe. Khan Kubrat united all of the Bulgar and Hun tribes of the north Caucasus and the Sea of Azov region. Thus, in the seventh century, the major tribes constituting the Bulgars included the Onoghundurs, the Duchi, the Kufi, and the Kidarite Huns.<sup>71</sup> During Kubrat’s reign, Great Bulgaria maintained commercial and diplomatic ties with Khwarizm and Sogdiana in central Asia, and also had relations with Persia.

Khan Kubrat died in 642. The Bulgars were no longer united, as several factions of the Bulgars had already migrated westward prior to 635.<sup>72</sup> Three factions remained, each led by a son of Kubrat.

A number of Bulgars remained in the territory of Great Bulgaria for centuries. They were ruled by Batbayan (Bayan), the first son of Kubrat. The Khazars conquered Great Bulgaria in 650. Theophanes wrote that these Bulgars paid tribute to the Khazars ever since their land became part of the Khazar Empire.<sup>73</sup>

Some of the other Bulgars were forced by the Khazars to flee to the Danube region in the Balkans. This migration was responsible for the formation of the kingdom of Bulgaria. These Bulgars were led by Kubrat’s third son, Asparukh, until his death in 701. An anonymous seventh-century Armenian source recorded that after fleeing the Khazars, Asparukh’s Bulgars initially settled on the island of Pevka, located at an estuary of the Danube.<sup>74</sup> The Turkic Bulgars

in Bulgaria decorated their yurts with embroidered panels such as hunting scenes. In 679–681, Asparukh and his group of Bulgars crossed the Danube and migrated south of Pevka, founding their new capital at Pliska. When Asparukh died in 701, Tervel became the new khan of Bulgaria. The Bulgars of Bulgaria mixed with Slavs and adopted Orthodox Christianity in 864.<sup>75</sup> Only a few Turkic words remain in the modern Bulgarian language, which is most closely affiliated with Serbo-Croatian and Russian.

Another group of Bulgars, led initially by Kubrat's second son, Kotrag, crossed the Don River and resettled east of it. Later, in the eighth and ninth centuries, they settled along the middle Volga River region.<sup>76</sup> Culturally and linguistically, the Volga Bulgars may have been closely related to the Khazars (on possible linguistic connections, see chapter 4). The three Volga Bulgar groups were named Barsula, Eskel, and Bulkar (Bolgar).<sup>77</sup>

The Volga Bulgars established a town along the upper Volga called Bulghar and made it the capital of their land. Their territory soon became a major trading hub. By the end of the tenth century, all of the residents of Bulghar were Muslims, and there was a major mosque there. The Bulgars also had a town called Suwar (Suvar), situated near Bulghar on the Utka River, and another important mosque was located there. Other major Bulgar towns were Kashan on the Kama River and Oshel on the Tetiush River.

The rulers of Volga Bulgharia had to pay tribute to the Khazar government up until the time of Khazaria's demise. The Khazar domination over the Volga Bulgars was also indicated by al-Muqaddasi's inclusion of Bulghar and Suwar in his list of Khazar towns.<sup>78</sup>

Volga Bulgharia was a distinguished cultural and scholastic center. Many noted scholars and writers resided there, including the historian Yakub ibn Noman al-Bulgari (author of a history of the Bulgars, composed in 1112) and the poet Kul Gali (author of *Kyssa-i Yusuf* ["A Tale About Yusuf"], composed circa 1212). The Volga Bulgars were also important to the world of trade. The Bulgars exported furs, leather footwear, timber, and other items to a variety of countries in Europe and Asia. They were also experts at working with gold, silver, bronze, and copper. Bulgar architects were very skilled and built public buildings both in their home country and abroad (including Kievan Rus' and central Asia).<sup>79</sup> Many Bulgar buildings—including mosques and a khan's tomb—have been preserved up to the present day in Tatarstan.

## NOTES

1. Mike Edwards, "Searching for the Scythians," *National Geographic* 190, no. 3 (September 1996): 56.

2. Peter B. Golden, *Khazar Studies: An Historico-Philological Inquiry into the Origins of the Khazars* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1980), 1:13.
3. Theophanes, *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor*, trans. Cyril Mango and Roger Scott (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 446.
4. Golden, *Khazar Studies*, 1:57–58.
5. Golden, *Khazar Studies*, 1:58.
6. Douglas M. Dunlop, *The History of the Jewish Khazars* (New York: Schocken, 1967), 132.
7. Golden, *Khazar Studies*, 1:58.
8. Peter B. Golden, *An Introduction to the History of the Turkic Peoples* (Wiesbaden, Germany: Otto Harrassowitz, 1992), 235.
9. Golden, *An Introduction to the History of the Turkic Peoples*, 118; Sev'yan I. Vainshtein, "The Turkic Peoples, Sixth to Twelfth Centuries," in *Nomads of Eurasia*, ed. Vladimir N. Basilov, trans. Mary F. Zirin (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1989), 55.
10. Many other Ural-Altaic groups have similar stories relating their ethnogenesis to animals. The Magyars, for example, believed that Álmos, patriarch of the Árpád dynasty, was born of an eagle.
11. Golden, *An Introduction to the History of the Turkic Peoples*, 12–13.
12. Dunlop, *The History of the Jewish Khazars*, 11.
13. Arsenio P. Martinez, "Gardizi's Two Chapters on the Turks," *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 2 (1982): 125–26.
14. Golden, *An Introduction to the History of the Turkic Peoples*, 178.
15. J. O. Maenchen-Helfen, *The World of the Huns* (Los Angeles and Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1973), 373, 374.
16. Dunlop, *The History of the Jewish Khazars*, 96.
17. Itzhak Ben-Zvi, *The Exiled and the Redeemed*, trans. Isaac A. Abbady (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1961), 207.
18. Dmitrii I. Ilovaiskii, *Razyskaniya o nachale rusi* (Moscow: Miller, 1882), 238.
19. Warren B. Walsh, *Readings in Russian History* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1963), 1:15.
20. Bruce G. Trigger, *A History of Archaeological Thought* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 207.
21. Trigger, *A History of Archaeological Thought*, 226; Neal Ascherson, *Black Sea* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1995), 44; Bozena I. Werbart, "Khazars or 'Saltovo-Majaki Culture'? Prejudices about Archaeology and Ethnicity," *Current Swedish Archaeology* 4 (1996): 200. Similarly, other Soviet scholars assumed that the Volga Tatars were not Turks but rather were descended from local tribes, and that Crimea always had the same inhabitants, allegedly indigenous to Crimea, who transformed their identity from Scythian to Goth to Slav.
22. Vladimir F. Minorsky, "A New Book on the Khazars," *Oriens* 11 (1959): 124.
23. Dunlop, *The History of the Jewish Khazars*, 34–35.
24. Golden, *Khazar Studies*, 1:55–56.
25. Julius Brutzkus, "The Khazar Origin of Ancient Kiev," *Slavonic and East European Review* 22 (1944): 119. In Turkic, "White Oghurs" were known as "Sara-gurs."

26. T. Senga, "The Toquz Oghuz Problem and the Origin of the Khazars," *Journal of Asian History* 24, no. 2 (1990): 57.
27. Senga, "The Toquz Oghuz Problem and the Origin of the Khazars," 61–62.
28. Károly Czeplédy, "From East to West: The Age of Nomadic Migrations in Eurasia," *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 3 (1983): 104; Louis Bazin, "Pour une nouvelle hypothèse sur l'origine des Khazar," *Materialia Turcica* 7–8 (1981–1982): 51–71.
29. Károly Czeplédy, "A Terhin-i ujjur rovásírásos felirat török és magyar történeti és nyelvészeti vonatkozásai," *Magyar Nyelv* 87 (1981): 462.
30. T. Senga, "The Toquz Oghuz Problem and the Origin of the Khazars," 59. The Turkic confederations were often named according to the number of tribes they comprised; examples are the ethnic labels *Uturgur* (Thirty Oghur Tribal Groups) and *Onoghur* (Ten Oghur Tribal Groups). In this instance, the Chinese term *Chiu-hsing* (Nine Surnames) is equivalent to the Turkic term *Toquz Oghuz* (Nine Oghuz Tribal Groups). The Hui-ho or Wei-ho (Uyghurs) were among the Chiu-hsing. The Uyghurs were further divided into ten subtribes.
31. András Róna-Tas, *Hungarians and Europe in the Early Middle Ages*, trans. Nicholas Bodoczky (Budapest: Central European University Press, 1999), 228–29.
32. Dan Shapira, "Two Names of the First Khazar Jewish Beg," *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 10 (1998–1999): 237.
33. Norman Golb and Omeljan Pritsak, *Khazarian Hebrew Documents of the Tenth Century* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1982), 113. The author, however, was skeptical about this tradition, saying, "We cannot insist on the truth of this matter."
34. Dan Shapira thought it is possible that Eldad was from Khazaria and that his appellation "ha-Dani" could have been a reference to the River Don (see Shapira, "Two Names of the First Khazar Beg," 241). Decades earlier, D. M. Dunlop had written in *The History of the Jewish Khazars* that Eldad "may well have been a Khazar Jew" (142) and that this "seems at least possible" (141).
35. Moses Gaster, ed., *The Chronicles of Jerahmeel* (New York: Ktav, 1971), 199.
36. Gaster, *The Chronicles of Jerahmeel*, 200.
37. Shapira, "Two Names of the First Khazar Beg," 241. Shapira explained that "Khasdim" is the Hebrew term for "Chaldeans" and that this term alluded to the Khazars in this particular instance, rather than the Mesopotamian Chaldean people. As Shapira noted, other spelling variations in the Eldad tales included "Kasdim," "Khadrim," and "Kazrim." Or, contrary to Shapira, perhaps the similarity in appearance between the letters *dalet* and *resh* in square Hebrew writing may explain usages with a "-dim" ending—that is, that they came from a copyist's error.
38. Gaster, ed., *The Chronicles of Jerahmeel*, 192.
39. David M. Lang, *Lives and Legends of the Georgian Saints*, 2nd ed. (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1976), 118.
40. Dunlop, *The History of the Jewish Khazars*, 114.
41. Maenchen-Helfen, *The World of the Huns*, 4.
42. Andrew C. Gow, *The Red Jews* (Leiden, Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1995), 40–41.
43. Håkon Stang, *The Naming of Russia* (Oslo: Universitetet i Oslo, Slavisk-baltisk institutt, 1996), 100.
44. Gow, *The Red Jews*, 3.

45. Gow, *The Red Jews*, 67.
46. Gow, *The Red Jews*, 69. According to Gow, it was actually quite common for both Christian and Hebrew illustrations on medieval manuscripts to depict typical Jews as those with red hair and red clothing. Jews and red hair were also connected in a pamphlet printed in 1514 or 1515, in which a Jew was alleged to have killed a Christian child in order to extract its blood, but another child—with red hair—was spared. The redheaded child was apparently spared because the alleged Jewish murderer thought it was a Jewish child (see Gow, *The Red Jews*, 138–39).
47. Gow, *The Red Jews*, 191.
48. Gow, *The Red Jews*, 194–95.
49. Gow, *The Red Jews*, 202.
50. Gow, *The Red Jews*, 250–51. The Sambation legend has sometimes been applied to the Khazars of the Dnieper valley near Kiev (see chapter 2).
51. Frank Schaer of the Department of Medieval Studies at Central European University provided this excerpt from *Sidrac*.
52. Salo W. Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1957), 3:204.
53. Stang, *The Naming of Russia*, 99.
54. Evgenii I. Lubo-Lesnichenko, “The Huns, Third Century B.C. to Sixth Century A.D.,” in *Nomads of Eurasia*, ed. Vladimir N. Basilov, trans. Mary F. Zirin (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1989), 53.
55. Douglas M. Dunlop, “The Khazars,” in *The Dark Ages: Jews in Christian Europe, 711–1096*, ed. Cecil Roth and I. H. Levine (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1966), 326.
56. Golden, *Khazar Studies*, 1:54–55.
57. Róna-Tas, *Hungarians and Europe in the Early Middle Ages*, 229.
58. Peter B. Golden, “The Turkic Peoples and Caucasia,” in *Transcaucasia*, ed. Ronald G. Suny (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1983), 47.
59. Zoltan J. Kosztolnyik, *Five Eleventh Century Hungarian Kings* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), xii.
60. David M. Lang, *The Bulgarians* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1976), 35–36.
61. See Károly Czeglédy, “Pseudo-Zacharias Rhetor on the Nomads,” in *Studia Turcica*, ed. Lajos Ligeti (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1971), 133–48.
62. Peter B. Golden, “The Question of the Rus’ Qaghanate,” *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 2 (1982): 77. Bumin died at the end of 552 or the start of 553 and was succeeded as eastern kagan by his son Muqan, who reigned until 572.
63. The Sabirs were refugees who had fled to the north Caucasus by around the year 506. The Sabirs became embroiled in the Byzantine-Iranian Wars of 527–565, which were fought in the south Caucasus.
64. Dunlop, “The Khazars,” 327.
65. Golden, *An Introduction to the History of the Turkic Peoples*, 135.
66. Luc Kwanten, *Imperial Nomads* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1979), 46.
67. David G. Christian, *A History of Russia, Central Asia and Mongolia* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 1:260.

68. Golden, *An Introduction to the History of the Turkic Peoples*, 236.
69. Lang, *The Bulgarians*, 32.
70. Peter B. Golden, "Imperial Ideology and the Sources of Political Unity amongst the Pre-Činggisid Nomads of Western Eurasia," *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 2 (1982): 57.
71. Lang, *The Bulgarians*, 31.
72. Golden, *Khazar Studies*, 1:45.
73. Theophanes, *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor*, 498.
74. Lang, *The Bulgarians*, 37.
75. Vladimir F. Minorsky, *Hudud al-'Alam (The Regions of the World)* (London: Luzac & Co., 1937), 423.
76. The modern name of the Volga River may itself be derived from "Bolgar." Members of the Balanjar tribe and other tribes from the north Caucasus joined the Oghurs in settling near the middle Volga by the early tenth century (see Golden, *Khazar Studies*, 1:87–88).
77. Martinez, "Gardizi's Two Chapters on the Turks," 157.
78. Dunlop, *The History of the Jewish Khazars*, 187.
79. Azade-Ayşe Rorlich, *The Volga Tatars* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1986), 14.

## Chapter Two

# The Cities and Towns of the Khazars

*Khazaria was a vast land with many large Jewish settlements (see figure 2.1). Its towns had scenic vistas and were centers of commerce (especially Atil, Samkarsh, and Samandar). The author of the ninth-century Bavarian Geographer said that the “Caziri” (Khazars) had a hundred cities or clans. Important Khazarian settlements were located in the Don and Volga river valleys, on the Crimean peninsula (see figure 2.2), in the plains of present-day Ukraine, and north of the Caucasian mountain range.*

*The heartland of the Khazar Empire comprised what is now Astrakhan, Kalmykia, Daghestan, Volgograd, Rostov, Ingushetia, Kabardino-Balkarsk, North Ossetia, and Chechnya. The empire experienced significant expansion from the sixth to the ninth century. From the sixth to the ninth centuries, Khazaria included lands northeast of the Caspian Sea which are now part of western Kazakhstan and northwestern Uzbekistan. By 650, the eastern boundary of the empire consisted of the Aral Sea and the Amu Darya (Oxus River), near Gurganj, and the Khazars controlled the steppes between the Aral and the Manghishlaq Peninsula. During the seventh and eighth centuries, the Khazars also expanded their empire west of the Don River valley into parts of the Crimea and modern-day Ukraine, and the western boundary of the empire became the Dnieper. The northern and southwestern sections of the Crimea came under the control of the Khazars, while some of the southern coastal towns (such as Cherson) generally remained under Byzantine authority.*

*Thus, at its maximum size (in the ninth century), Khazaria encompassed not only the northern Caucasus and the Volga delta, but also extended as far east as the steppes of Khwarizm (Khorezm) and as far west as Kiev. However, beginning in the tenth century, the Khazar Empire contracted and eventually disintegrated.*



## THE CAPITAL CITIES OF KHAZARIA

In the earliest period, the central Khazar territory was south of the Kuma River, with its capital at Balanjar.<sup>1</sup> In the 720s,<sup>2</sup> the Khazars moved their capital to Samandar after the Arabs invaded the Khazar territory (see chapter 7). Sometime between 730 and 750, Atil, which initially served only as a royal encampment, became the third and final capital of the Khazar Empire.

### ATIL AND KHAZARAN

Khazaran-Atil was a “twin city” on the lower Volga near the Caspian Sea, in eastern Khazaria. Its two sections were connected by a pontoon bridge. It was the most important trading center of the Khazar Empire and also served as the center of government and religion. Khazaran-Atil had many markets and baths.<sup>3</sup> Jews, Christians, and Muslims resided in the capital city in relative harmony.

The eastern half of the city was known as Khazaran.<sup>4</sup> Khazaran was populated by many Muslim merchants and crafters, who originated from Khwarizm and eastern Iran. About thirty mosques existed in the capital in the 920s, according to the Arab historian Ibrahim ibn Muhammad al-Istakhri, who wrote sometime between 930 and 953. Pagans also lived in Khazaran.<sup>5</sup> In the 920s, the Arab traveler Ahmad ibn Fadlan indicated that Khazaran was ruled by Khaz, a Muslim who handled lawsuits and issues of concern to merchants. Around 943, the Muslims in the Khazar capital were served by a vizier named Ahmad ibn Kuya.

The western half of the city was known as Atil (also spelled “Itil”).<sup>6</sup> Atil became the Khazar capital around 740, according to Peter Golden.<sup>7</sup> Inhabitants of Atil included the kagan, the bek, members of the army, four thousand attendants, and “pure-bred Khazars,” and Atil was surrounded by a fortified brick wall.<sup>8</sup> There were four gates in the wall surrounding Atil, with three of these opening onto the steppe and one opening onto the river. Al-Istakhri stated that the royal palace, constructed from brick, was “at a distance from the river-bank.”<sup>9</sup> Al-Masudi wrote that the palace was located on an island in Atil that was adjacent to the western shore. According to al-Istakhri, the Khazar kagan had a golden throne and canopy. Golden gates decorated the kagan’s island palace. The bek also resided in the kagan’s castle.<sup>10</sup>

The account of the Persian historian Muhammad ibn Rustah, *Kitab A’laq an-Nafisa*, compiled around the year 903 based on earlier sources, provides details about Khazaran-Atil’s earlier history. According to ibn Rustah, Muslims lived in the capital with their “mosques, imams, muezzins, and

schools.”<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, ibn Rustah indicated that at this early period, only the kings, leaders, and members of the upper class were Jewish. Judaism later spread to the general Khazar populace (see chapter 6). People remained in the capital city during the winter but moved out onto the steppe in the spring and summer.

Ibn Rustah called the Khazar capital Sarighshin (Sarighsin), with an associated city allegedly named Khanbaligh, which perhaps meant “City of the Khan.” *Sarighshin* meant “White City,” and its Arabic equivalent may have been “Al-Bayda,” which also meant “White City.” An even earlier account, that of ibn Khordadbeh (ninth century), gave the name of the riverside Khazar capital as Khamlikh. Most authorities agree that *Khamlikh* is a contraction of a longer toponym. It is likely, though not certain, that Khamlikh-Sarighshin was equivalent to the twin city Khazaran-Atil, in which case Khamlikh probably represented the eastern half (Khazaran). Supporting this thesis is the fact that the Jewish Radhanite and Rus’ traders visited Khamlikh, which coincides with our knowledge of Khazaran as a trading hub.

The precise location of Atil still remains to be conclusively established. The theory that the remains of Atil are currently underwater was advanced by the Japanese researcher Ryuichi Hirokawa, as well as by the late Russian historian Lev Gumilev. By the late tenth century, the level of the Caspian Sea began to rise, flooding the Khazars’ coastal gardens, fisheries, and buildings.<sup>12</sup> Historical reports explained that the Caspian continued to rise during the fourteenth century.<sup>13</sup> Aerial photographs, gravitational measurements, and reports from divers had been thought by some observers, including Hirokawa, to indicate that the lost city of Atil and its wall are located underwater in the Caspian near the Volga delta, just south of Astrakhan, near the island of Chistibanka (which itself is now largely flooded).

On the other hand, some other researchers used to argue that Atil was equal to the large settlement found in 1992 at Samosdelka, an arid site at the Volga estuary southwest of Astrakhan. For example, the German-Russian archaeologist Yevgenia Schneidstein speculated that the royal brick palace is located at Samosdelka. Archaeologists such as Emma Zilivinskaya and Dmitry Vasiliev explored Samosdelka in depth during excavations conducted in the early 2000s. While Samosdelka does predate the Golden Horde era, further analysis of the site has been unable to confirm its possible identity as Atil. In 2003, Vasiliev and his team proposed that Samosdelka was equal to Saqsin, the post-Khazaria city of the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries where some remnants of Khazars lived along with Oghuzes, Pechenegs, and others (see also chapter 8). Vasiliev noted that the ceramics from Samosdelka resembled the ceramics of the Oghuz and Pecheneg settlements of the Syr Darya region of central Asia.<sup>14</sup>

## BALANJAR

Balanjar existed as a town prior to the Khazar era and was founded by non-Khazars. Turkic peoples were settled in Balanjar by the Persian emperor Khusrau (Chosroes) I Anushirvan during the 560s.<sup>15</sup> Julius Brutzkus thought that the toponym Balanjar may derive from *bala* (great) + *Endzher* (the name of a Khazar tribe in Daghestan).<sup>16</sup> Balanjar was originally possibly equivalent to the North Caucasian Huns' capital of Varach'an, which also became the name of the nearby mountains, hence Yehudah ha-Levi's reference to the Warsan Mountains (see chapter 6). If not identical to Varach'an, Balanjar was certainly in the same general vicinity. By the middle of the seventh century, Balanjar had become an integral part of the newly independent kingdom of Khazaria, serving as one of its major population centers and as its first official capital. Balanjar has been identified with the *gorodishche* (hill fort) Verkhneye Chiryurtovskoye, located by the Sulak River, a southern tributary of the Terek, in the Kizilyurtovskii raion of north Daghestan.<sup>17</sup> The town of Balanjar was about 16,000 square meters (i.e., approximately 172,223 square feet) in area.<sup>18</sup> Among the important architectural landmarks in Balanjar were two small roofless Christian churches, dating from around the sixth to eighth centuries, and a white mortar fortress. Christian crosses and altars were found at these churches.<sup>19</sup>

Balanjar was the center of a highly developed culture. Pottery-making facilities were located there.<sup>20</sup> Iron smelting also took place. Several cemeteries were discovered in Balanjar, although the latest burials dated only from around the seventh century. These cemeteries contained quite a few weapons, Byzantine coins, harnesses, jewels, belt mounts, and ear pendants. Many items—including belt buckles—were produced from gold. Among other archaeological discoveries in Balanjar were a bone saddle implement bearing an artistic depiction of hunting scenes,<sup>21</sup> coffins woven from reeds, and catacomb burials under kurgans (burial mounds). An interesting round, decorative rosette with colored glass was buried in a catacomb cemetery. Many of the catacombs with a rich quantity of material remains are believed to be those of Khazar aristocrats. Some of the other burials contain the skeletons of Bulgars, Sabirs, and Alans.

After the dramatic events in the Caucasus in the eighth century (see chapter 7), Balanjar became a considerably less important part of the Khazar Empire.

## CHERNIGOV

Chernigov (Chernihiv) was a major town on the right bank of the Desna River, founded in the eighth or ninth century. The Ukrainian historian Omeljan Pritsak considered Chernigov to have been a Khazarian town.<sup>22</sup> An old

legend stated that its founder was Prince Chorny, whose daughter was named Cherne. The Severians, an East Slavic tribe, lived in Chernigov by the ninth century and paid tribute to the Khazars.

Chernigov was incorporated into Kievan Rus' in the tenth century and became the capital of the Chernigov principality in 1024. The Mongols destroyed Chernigov in 1239, but it was later rebuilt and is today part of Ukraine.

## CHERSON

Cherson, an ancient Greek city,<sup>23</sup> was located on the Crimean peninsula near present-day Sevastopol, and survived into late medieval times. There was a Jewish settlement in Cherson during ancient times (see chapter 6).

By the middle of the seventh century, the Khazars conquered all parts of the Crimea with the sole exception of Cherson.<sup>24</sup> Pope Martin I, exiled to Cherson in March 655, recorded that year that there were food shortages in the city and that the cost of living was high. Anne Bortoli and Michel Kazanski believe that these conditions stemmed from the political circumstances of the period, whereby for a brief time Cherson was cut off from the rest of the Crimea due to the Khazar conquest of all of the other Crimean cities.<sup>25</sup> Byzantine culture influenced Cherson's residents tremendously during the second half of the seventh century through the eighth century.

The Khazars were finally in possession of Cherson by around 710, when a Khazar tudun served as the city's ruler.<sup>26</sup>

The Byzantine Empire took possession of Cherson in 834. Following his successful construction of Sarkel, Petronas Kamateros was installed as the *strategos* (military governor) of Cherson by Emperor Theophilus in 838. Though Cherson remained under the control of the Byzantines for the rest of the ninth and tenth centuries, they frequently encountered difficulties in governing the city.<sup>27</sup> Nevertheless, manufacturing and trade appear to have flourished during this period, and commerce between Cherson and Khazaria was prevalent. For instance, many pieces of Bulgar and Alan pottery from the Khazar Empire were imported to Cherson during the ninth and tenth centuries.<sup>28</sup>

The Jewish Khazars of the tenth century called Cherson "Shurshun."

In the late tenth century, large portions of Cherson were destroyed and burned, perhaps by the invading forces of Prince Vladimir of Kiev that briefly seized control. After Vladimir's conversion to Orthodox Christianity and his marriage to the Byzantine princess Anna, Cherson was returned to the Byzantine emperor. The city remained under Byzantine authority in the following centuries and was ultimately destroyed by the Tatars at the end of the fourteenth century.

## CHUFUT-KALE

Another settlement in the Khazar realm was the cave town of Chufut-Kale, located south of Eski-Kermen and present-day Simferopol, and northeast of Mangup. It is near the city of Bakhchisarai. Chufut-Kale was part of Khazaria during the ninth and tenth centuries and apparently also during at least part of the eighth century. The population of Chufut-Kale during this period was Khazarian, and Khazars were also responsible for its fortification.<sup>29</sup>

Many Jews lived in Chufut-Kale during medieval times. Indeed, *Chufut-Kale* means “Jewish fortress” in the Crimean Tatar language.

In 1299, Chufut-Kale was destroyed by Khan Nogai’s horde. However, the town was rebuilt years later. The Karaites represented the dominant population of Chufut-Kale until recent times. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Chufut-Kale became depopulated as the Karaites resettled in other towns.

## DOROS

Doros, a Gothic town in a mountainous section of southwestern Crimea, was at one time under Khazar jurisdiction. The Byzantines founded Doros around 540 to defend the routes leading to Cherson, but it fell into the possession of the Goths and was made the center of the Gothic principality. Doros was also known as Feodoro, Theodoro, and Mangup.

The Khazar kagan captured Doros around 786 or 787, installing Khazar troops there and subjecting the Gothic ruler to Khazar authority.<sup>30</sup> However, a conspiracy led by Bishop John of Gothia expelled the Khazar garrison from Doros. Certain pro-Khazar residents of Gothia captured the bishop and his rebel supporters, and they were sent to the kagan. The kagan reasserted his control over Doros and imprisoned several people who had participated in John’s conspiracy. Although the bishop was himself imprisoned—in Tepsen (Phullai), a city in eastern Crimea—he managed to escape. Khazar tuduns ruled Doros from 786 until around 810.

Archaeological data indicate that Doros had a Khazarian population and was fortified by the Khazars in the ninth to tenth centuries.<sup>31</sup> Standard Turkic tamgas (of types known from elsewhere in Khazaria as well as Danube Bulgaria) were found on walls at Doros.<sup>32</sup>

## FEODOSIA

At the height of its power, the Khazar Empire included the town of Feodosia, where a major Jewish community existed. Feodosia was originally the Greek

colony Theodosia, founded in the sixth century BCE by Greek settlers from Miletus (Asia Minor). The Genoese ruled over Feodosia (which they renamed Kaffa) from 1266 to 1475. The Turks seized Kaffa in 1475.

### KERCH (BOSPOR)

Kerch, also known as “Karch,” “Karch-ev,” “Bospor,” and “Bosporus,” was a large Khazar town on the eastern edge of the Crimea, the Kerch peninsula, located across the Kerch Strait from the Taman peninsula. It was listed as a Khazarian locality in *King Joseph’s Reply to Hasdai ibn Shaprut* (written circa 955). Kerch is near the site of the ancient Greek colony Pantikapeum. Many early Jewish artifacts have been found there (see chapter 6).

The Kerch Strait, also known as the Cimmerian Bosphorus, connects the Black Sea and the Azov Sea. Kerch, therefore, occupied a strategic location due to its proximity to the Azov Sea, which leads to the Don River.

Kerch was the home of the Church of the Apostles during the late eighth and early ninth centuries, according to the *Life of the Apostle Andrew* by Epiphanius.<sup>33</sup>

Kerch was the first Crimean stronghold for the Khazars. In excavations conducted during the mid-1960s, archaeologists discovered a Khazarian fortress that had been built during the eighth century.<sup>34</sup> This formidable fortress lasted for over a century and a half and contained a garrison. The walls, about 2.5 meters thick, comprised two parallel rows of stone blocks. At the beginning of the eighth century, the baliqchi of Kerch was called “Balghitzi” by Theophanes (see chapter 7), and his other official title was *archon*. Svetlana Pletnyova thought that in the latter stages of its Khazarian history, during the ninth century, Kerch’s local leaders were likely to have been Jewish, since Jews were a privileged group in the governmental system of the day.<sup>35</sup> This would be consistent with what is known about the local leadership of other major Khazar localities, such as Samandar.

The Genoese took over Kerch in the thirteenth century, during which time it was known as “Cherkio.” The Ottoman Turks captured it in 1475.

### KIEV

Kiev (Kyiv in Ukrainian), the magnificent “Mother of Russian Cities,” is over a millennium old, and in the early days was inhabited by Khazars and Magyars. It is situated on the banks of the Dnieper (Dnipro) River.

Historians of yesteryear used to claim that Kiev was founded by the Rus’ or the Slavs, but this view may not be correct. The *Russian Primary Chronicle*

attributed Kiev's founding to three brothers—Kiy, Shchek, and Khoriv—and described Kiev as a Khazar tributary taken later by the Varangians (Rus')<sup>36</sup> after the death of the brothers. While at one point the Khlebnikov copy of the Hypatian edition of the *Chronicle* made it seem as if the three brothers were Polianians,<sup>37</sup> the Laurentian, Suprasl, and Semeonovskaya editions of the *Chronicle* associated the three brothers with the Khazar Empire; Julius Brutzkus therefore drew the conclusion that they were ethnic Khazars.<sup>38</sup> As Pritsak has demonstrated, the *Chronicle* at one point explicitly stated that the three brothers were “kin” of the Khazars: “And we [Kievans] are living here and pay tribute to their [Kiy, Shchek, and Khoriv] kin, to the Khazars.”<sup>39</sup> Pritsak even suggested that Kiy, the primary founder of Kiev, can be identified as the vizier Kuya, who served the Khazars (see chapter 3).

Part of Kiev was founded by Khazars in the early ninth century under the name Sambata.<sup>40</sup> The Byzantine emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus wrote that Kiev was also known as “Sambatas” in his famous *De administrando imperio* (circa 950).<sup>41</sup> Similarly, ibn Rustah, Gardizi, and the *Hudud al-'Alam* all called Kiev “Zanbat.”<sup>42</sup> The meaning of the toponym *Sambata* has aroused considerable controversy among scholars. Omeljan Pritsak argued that *Sambata* meant “Shabbat” (the Hebrew term for the Sabbath, i.e., Saturday).<sup>43</sup> If this theory is correct, it would confirm that many Khazars in Kiev honored the Jewish day of rest. Some other scholars wondered whether *Sambata* originates from the name of the legendary Sambation River, where the lost tribes of Israel were said to reside. According to a popular Jewish tradition, the mythical Sambation actively flowed and threw up rocks on all days except the Sabbath, when it became stationary. Kiev, situated on the Dnieper River on the edge of the Khazar territory, might have been associated with this myth if the Dnieper was indeed considered to be the Sambation. Brutzkus, on the other hand, dismissed the Shabbat and Sambation hypotheses as erroneous and suggested that *Sambata* meant “high fortress,” and that *Kiev* means “riverbank settlement” or “lower settlement.”<sup>44</sup> According to Brutzkus, the Turkic prefix *sam-* meant “top, high, main,” and *bat* meant “strong” in Turkic. Thus, the combination *sam + bat* meant “high fortress.” He proposed that Kiev means “riverbank settlement,” since *kiii* meant “a low place, a bank of a river, or a wharf” and *ev* meant “settlement” in Turkic.

The Magyars ruled Kiev from 840 to 878 (see chapter 7). They probably controlled the city with direct Khazarian participation.

Kiev consisted of three districts in the tenth century: Gora (a citadel), Kopyrev konets (the inner town), and Podol (an economic hub).<sup>45</sup> Ivan Pantiukhov estimated that in the ninth century, Kiev had eight thousand residents, and Podol had one thousand residents.<sup>46</sup> In the tenth century, Kiev probably

had about fifteen thousand residents, and Podol's population increased to about two thousand.

Podol was the commercial center in the Kiev district. It was located on the floodplain below the hills of Kiev astride the Dnieper and the Pochaina Stream. Trading activity took place in Podol as early as the seventh or eighth century. Archaeological digs showed that permanent log houses were being built in Podol by 887. The people in Podol in the ninth and tenth centuries were engaged in jewelry manufacturing, bone and stone carving, and iron-working.<sup>47</sup> One of the districts in Podol was called Kozare ("the Khazars"). According to the *Russian Primary Chronicle*, in 945 a Christian church, known as the Cathedral of Saint Elias, was located by the Pochaina Stream near the Kozare district and the Pasyntcha *beseda*.<sup>48</sup> Pritsak considered the Pasyntcha *beseda* to be a Khazarian customs office.

Pritsak also argued for a Khazarian origin of Kopyrev konets. According to him, the element *Kopyr* in the toponym *Kopyrev konets* derived from *Kabar*,<sup>49</sup> the name of a dissident Khazar tribe. If he is correct, *Kopyrev konets* may have meant "Kabar community."

There are several other indications of the Khazarian contribution to Kiev's early history. The culture of early Kiev was partly based on the Khazarian-Saltovo way of life (see chapter 4). It is very likely that the Khazars maintained a garrison in Kiev. The *Kievan Letter* (described in chapter 6) demonstrates the existence of a Jewish community in Kiev during the Khazar era. According to George Vernadsky, the Khazarian Jews may have lived on the hill in Kiev known as Khorivitsa.<sup>50</sup> A casting mold found at Kiev that was used for making belt ornaments read "Türk" in Arabic letters on its side, and this might also be evidence of Khazar settlement in Kiev.<sup>51</sup> There is no direct evidence that a large number of Khazars used the Arabic script for writing, but it is known that the Khazars minted imitation coins with (rather imperfectly rendered) Arabic inscriptions (see chapter 5).

After several decades of Khazar rule, the Rus' wrested control of Kiev from the Khazars. After taking Smolensk and Lyubech, Prince Igor or Prince Oleg conquered the city of Kiev and killed Askold and Dir, the former rulers of the city. Kiev thereafter became the capital of the Poliane tribe. Based on his analysis of documentary evidence, Constantine Zuckerman argued that the Rus' took over Kiev between the 910s and the 930s, rather than in the 880s as is traditionally believed.<sup>52</sup>

In the twelfth century, two separate gates existed in Kiev: the "Podol Gate" and the "Jewish (*Zhidovskye*) Gate." Kopyrev konets was connected to Podol via the Podol Gate, while the Jewish Gate connected Kopyrev konets with "Yaroslav Town" (which became imperial Kiev after 1036). Furthermore, western and southern parts of Kopyrev konets were still referred to as "Zhidove"



(“the Jews”) during the eleventh and twelfth centuries.<sup>53</sup> Pereswetoff-Morath noted that the exact locations of the Jewish Gate and Zhidove are still uncertain, but he thought that they were probably near each other and that the Jewish Gate was likely located in the northwestern portion of the city of Yaroslav.<sup>54</sup> Unfortunately, the Jewish section of Podol—apparently dating back to Khazarian times—as well as monasteries in Podol, were burned down in 1124.<sup>55</sup>

### KORDON-OBA

Located on the Crimean peninsula, Kordon-Oba was fortified and settled by the Khazars during the eighth through tenth centuries.<sup>56</sup> A Christian Saltovo-culture church, constructed from limestone blocks and containing a clay floor and tiled roof, was built in Kordon-Oba in the second half of the ninth century.<sup>57</sup> (There had formerly been a Byzantine church there, but it had been destroyed.)

### MAYAKI

The Mayaki *gorodishche* (hill fort), located near the upper Don, was especially important during the second half of the ninth century and the beginning of the tenth century. Its fortress was made from white stones. Its accompanying settlement had pottery workshops and a cemetery. Alans were among its inhabitants.

### SAMANDAR

Svetlana Pletnyova wrote that *Samandar* meant “the farthest gate” in Persian and was built by Persians in the sixth century.<sup>58</sup> Its construction was mandated by the Persian emperor Khusrau (Chosroes) I Anushirvan.<sup>59</sup> The surrounding city became the capital of Khazaria for a brief period starting in the 720s and remained an integral part of Khazaria even after the kagan moved his headquarters to Atil.

Al-Istakhri mentioned that in his time, Samandar was governed locally by a Jew who was related to the Khazar king, was inhabited by Muslims who had built mosques, and had many gardens and vineyards, with grapes being the principal fruit.<sup>60</sup> Merchants frequented Samandar on a regular basis, and the city had many markets. Al-Istakhri described the homes of Samandar’s residents: “Their dwellings are made of wood, arranged crisscross, and their roofs are domed.”<sup>61</sup>

Ibn Hauqal, writing in the late 970s, explained that Samandar was a diverse community whose people professed multiple religions: “Its population consisted of Moslems and others; the Moslems had their mosques, the Christians their churches, and the Jews their synagogues.”<sup>62</sup> Ibn Hauqal also noted that the city had pagan residents.

Scholars have not come to a consensus on where exactly Samandar was located. Medieval Arabic chronicles specified that Samandar was located somewhere approximately midway between Derbent (Bab al-Abwab) and Atil, near the edge of the Caspian Sea. Several historians have ventured to be more specific. Omeljan Pritsak<sup>63</sup> argued that Samandar became the modern north Caucasian town of Kizliar on the Terek River, and decades earlier Ahmed Zeki Validi Togan<sup>64</sup> and Mikhail Artamonov<sup>65</sup> had held the same opinion concerning the Kizliar region as a whole. René Grousset, on the other hand, believed that Samandar was located between the Terek River and the fortress city of Derbent and that it later became Tarqu (Tarki), a Caspian coastal city south of the Sulak River.<sup>66</sup> Vladimir Minorsky, too, favored the identification of Samandar with modern-day Tarqu, since Tarqu is located adjacent to the coast, whereas Kizliar is located farther inland.<sup>67</sup> The association of Samandar with Tarqu is bolstered by *Hudud al-'Alam*, which stated that Samandar was located on the seacoast.<sup>68</sup> Indeed, in Tarqu, archaeologists found a city from the Khazar era that seems to be Samandar and that had a wall of stones going downhill toward the sea.<sup>69</sup> Moreover, Tarqu is the site of a Khazarian-styled fortification built from white mortar.<sup>70</sup>

However, it appears that at some point in time the Khazars may have transferred Samandar to another location: the Shelkovskoye *gorodishche* (hill fort), located further inland on the Terek River.<sup>71</sup> This fort was square shaped, with walls, gates, and towers, and it was surrounded on all four sides by ditches.<sup>72</sup> Khazarian warriors guarded it from the seventh through the tenth centuries. Water vessels made from gray clay were found there. The area, abundant with vineyards up to modern times, was later settled by Cossacks and was known as Shelkovskaya Stanitsa.

### SAMKARSH (TAMATARKHA)

Samkarsh, on the Taman peninsula (east of the Kerch Strait), was another significant Khazar settlement. In premedieval times, Samkarsh was known as “Hermonassa” and “Phanagoria.” Samkarsh was a trading post established on the site of Phanagoria. It became a Khazar possession by 704, as the Byzantine chronicler Theophanes related in his narrative on Emperor Justinian II’s conflicts with the Khazars (see chapter 7). “Tmutorokan” was the name given

to the town by the *Russian Primary Chronicle*, but Muslim geographers (including ibn al-Faqih) called it “Samkarsh al-Yahud” (“Samkarsh of the Jews”), and Byzantine sources called the town “Tamatarxa” and “Matraxa.”<sup>73</sup> “Samkarsh” and “Tamatarkha” are the native Khazar forms.

As the toponym “Samkarsh al-Yahud” attests, Jews were an important component of the population. Theophanes made a point of referring to its Jewish inhabitants when chronicling some events of the 670s.<sup>74</sup> Archaeological relics also confirm the presence of Jews there (see chapter 6).

King Joseph included Samkarsh in the list of Khazarian towns in his *Reply to Hasdai ibn Shaprut* of the mid-tenth century.

Around 986, there was (apparently) a Jewish Khazar prince named David who ruled Samkarsh and met Rus’ ambassadors who wanted to consult him about which religion Kievan Rus’ should adopt, but the authenticity of the Hebrew document which said this (the *Mandgelis Document*) is, according to Dunlop, problematic.<sup>75</sup> By 988, however, Mstislav established Rus’ control over Samkarsh, now renamed “Tmutorokan.” Tmutorokan remained in Rus’ hands until 1094.

## SARKEL

Around the year 833, the Khazars sent envoys to the court of Emperor Theophilus in Constantinople, requesting the help of Byzantine engineers in establishing a fortress on the lower Don.<sup>76</sup> The emperor agreed to assist with the project. The construction of a brick fortress on the left bank of the Don, near the modern-day village of Tsimlyanskaya, began, some suggest, in 833 or 834 and was completed sometime between 835 and 841. The fortress was named Sarkel, meaning “White Fortress” in the Khazarian language.<sup>77</sup> The Greeks referred to the fortress as the “White House” (*Aspron Hospitium* in *De administrando imperio* by Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus) or the “White Abode” (*Leukon Oikema* in the chronicle by Theophanes).<sup>78</sup> Archaeological excavations showed that Sarkel’s fortress was rectangular and had four towers, two gates, and a citadel, all built from sun-dried bricks connected by white limestone.<sup>79</sup>

According to *De administrando imperio*, Petronas Kamateros of Byzantium was the chief engineer for the Sarkel construction effort. It appears that both Turks and Greeks participated in Sarkel’s construction, but archaeological analysis has tended to emphasize the dominant Turkic role. Turkic clan symbols (tamgas) were carved into Sarkel’s bricks before they were baked.<sup>80</sup> The tamgas may have served multiple roles: (1) as marks of the ownership of the bricks by certain clans, (2) as indicators of the number of bricks which

had been completed thus far, and (3) as a request for magical powers from the shamanist gods to ensure the successful completion of the building project. Other bricks contain geometric patterns or depictions of living creatures. It has also been shown that the Sarkel bricks were thicker and smaller than Byzantine-style bricks.<sup>81</sup> In addition, the fortress had no underlying foundation, since foundations were not used by the local Turkic tribes.<sup>82</sup> In general, it may be said that the architecture of the fortress of Sarkel was similar to structures from the Turko-Iranian culture of the Saltovo-Mayaki region. On the other hand, the marble columns and capitals were characteristically Byzantine.<sup>83</sup>

Sarkel primarily served as a defensive fortification. Sarkel's garrison included three hundred men. István Fodor assumed that the castle guards were Oghuz and Pecheneg warriors from east of the Volga River.<sup>84</sup> Peter Golden, however, questioned the assumption that Sarkel's garrison consisted of Pechenegs and argued that it is more likely that they were Khazars.<sup>85</sup>

Some Hungarian scholars have proposed that Sarkel was built in order to keep out Magyars. Jonathan Shepard,<sup>86</sup> Roman Kovalev,<sup>87</sup> and Richard Mason<sup>88</sup> also favored the opinion that Sarkel was built to protect Khazaria against the Magyars by allowing the Khazars to observe and obstruct them. One rationale may have been that the Magyars were disrupting normal trading activity in and through Khazaria circa 836. (Kovalev is of the opinion that the allusion in the *Schechter Letter* to General Bulan's having "prevailed with his sword and put to flight the enemies come against Qazar" refers to a victory of his against the Magyars.) On the other hand, the Hungarian historian András Róna-Tas claimed that this idea was based on an incorrect interpretation of writings by ibn Rustah and noted that no Byzantine source mentions this alleged rationale for Sarkel.<sup>89</sup> Indeed, Mykhailo Hrushevsky (1866–1934) had referenced the following passage by ibn Rustah: "They say that in earlier times the Khazars, fearing the Hungarians and other neighboring peoples, dug trenches as a method of defense."<sup>90</sup> Other historians have suggested that Sarkel may have been protection against the Rus'. Hrushevsky was unsure whether Sarkel was built in response to the Magyars or the Rus', offering both as possibilities.<sup>91</sup> But the eleventh-century Byzantine writer Ioannes Skylitzes recorded that Sarkel was "a staunch bulwark against the attacks of the Pechenegs."<sup>92</sup> At first glance, this unambiguous statement does not square with the contention that the Pechenegs were among those who protected the fortress in service to the Khazar government, but it is possible that the Pechenegs of the time had both pro-Khazar and anti-Khazar tribal factions. George Huxley did not consider the words of Skylitzes to be a negation of the theory that Sarkel was built to guard against the Rus', suggesting that perhaps Sarkel blocked both the Rus' and the Pechenegs.<sup>93</sup>

In time, a small town arose near Sarkel fortress. There were about one hundred houses in Sarkel town.<sup>94</sup> Sarkel's population included Asiatic, Slavic, and Mediterranean individuals. No obvious religious structures were excavated at Sarkel, and it is not certain which religions were practiced by Sarkel's inhabitants. There are no signs of either Judaism or Christianity in any Sarkel burials.<sup>95</sup>

Svetlana Pletnyova proposed that one room of the Sarkel fortress may have housed a synagogue.<sup>96</sup> Her claim hinged on her interpretation of an obscure construction in the northeastern part of the citadel that had not preserved well over the years. What remains includes a large brick platform which appeared to once support a large building. Pletnyova argued that this was definitely a community building or a complex of several buildings, but that it could not have been a pagan, Christian, or Muslim house of prayer since it does not match any known characteristics for the architecture of those religions at that time period. In support of her hypothesis, Pletnyova argued that Sarkel belonged to a kagan who had embraced Judaism by that time and that the guards stationed at Sarkel may have also been Judaized, requiring a large structure where Jewish religious services could be held. On the other hand, Pletnyova also pointed out that this part of the fortress may have housed small peddlers' shops for a brief time. Roman Kovalev disputed Pletnyova's hypothesis that the mysterious structure once housed a synagogue, pointing out a lack of evidence to support this claim. Rather, Kovalev thought it much more likely that the structure may have been the palace of Sarkel's local governor with adjacent housing for the guards.<sup>97</sup>

Sarkel was located in an area of extensive trading and industry. Caravans would often pass through the town. The remains of two caravanserais were identified in Sarkel, each consisting of rooms for visitors, an area for holding cattle, and a courtyard where the caravans were kept overnight. Near Sarkel were large brick-production kilns and also a blacksmith's shop.<sup>98</sup> Sarkel's residents used Arabic dirhams (coins) for decorative purposes, stringing them alongside beads.

King Joseph included Sarkel in his list of localities within the Khazar Empire in his letter to Hasdai ibn Shaprut.

The Rus' captured Sarkel in the year 965 in a dramatic and decisive battle against the Khazars (see chapter 8). Sarkel existed as the Slavic-populated city *Byelaya Vyezha* (Old Russian for "White Tower") during the eleventh century and early twelfth century, and for much of the remainder of the mid-to-late twelfth century, it served as a winter camp for the Cumans.<sup>99</sup> The kinds of artifacts recovered from the Slavic *Byelaya Vyezha* layers are easily distinguishable from the ninth-century Sarkel-era objects (e.g., amulets, pots, jars).<sup>100</sup> For instance, a Christian cross bearing the images of the famous Rus'ian saints Boris and Hlib (Gleb) was found in the Slavic layers.<sup>101</sup>

Mikhail Artamonov's expedition team conducted most of its archaeological research at the Sarkel site during the years 1949 through 1951. The Soviet government flooded most of the remains of Sarkel after the completion, in 1952, of the Tsimlyansk reservoir and dam, which controls the Don River's flow. The Volga-Don Canal was also opened in 1952. The construction of the canal, dam, and reservoir has led to an increase in shipping traffic along the course of the lower Don. This progress has come at the expense of the Sarkel site, most of which is no longer available for further on-site exploration.

### **SEMIKARAKORSKAYA**

The Khazar town of Semikarakorskaya, located about sixty-two miles south of Sarkel, had many traits in common with Sarkel. For example, the typical white mortar construction used at Sarkel was also employed at Semikarakorskaya's hill fort.<sup>102</sup> The Semikarakorskaya fortress, built during the Khazar era, is a large rectangular fortress, about 250 by 250 meters in size, located near the intersection of the Sal and Don rivers. It has brick walls that are 2.3 meters wide. It contains a citadel that is about 90 by 90 meters in size. The fortress is surrounded by an earth bank and a moat.

### **SUDAK**

Sudak, located on the Crimean coast between Alushta and Feodosia, was founded in the third century, perhaps by Greeks or Sarmatians. In the beginning, Sudak was known as Sugdaia and was generally under the rule of the Greeks. It was a major trading town.

Archaeological research has revealed that the Khazars fortified Sudak during the ninth and tenth centuries. The Khazar fortress at Sudak was built in the second half of the ninth century, and it contained a burial chamber in which a Maltese cross was drawn on one of its walls,<sup>103</sup> indicating the Christian loyalties of its Khazar or Saltovian guards. Khazar jewelry and ceramics were found beneath the fortress.

There was a full-fledged Khazar settlement in the surrounding town. Neal Ascherson reported that Khazar noblemen lived in Sudak, including one whose body was found in a stone tomb and who "chose to be buried by the Jewish ritual" yet was puzzlingly buried next to another man who died as the result of an ax blow to the head, evidently the victim of a human sacrifice.<sup>104</sup> The crypts in Sudak where the dead were buried had a central grave with the deceased's head pointing to the North, and this was surrounded by other burials with punched

skulls (also victims of human sacrifice), and Pletnyova and Petrukhin emphasized that these were not Jewish burials.<sup>105</sup> One grave in Sudak contained a Saltovo gold bell.<sup>106</sup> Three large pottery-producing kilns were operated within the vicinity of Sudak in the eighth and ninth centuries.

Sudak underwent numerous additional transfers of power. At the end of the eleventh century, Sudak was held by the Cumans. In 1365, Sudak became a Genoese possession, but in 1475 it was taken over by the Crimean Tatars.

### TEPSEN (PHULLAI)

Tepsen, located in a rural part of the southeastern Crimean peninsula midway between Sudak and Feodosia, was inhabited and fortified by the Khazars around the eighth through tenth centuries.<sup>107</sup> It was also known as Phullai. Tepsen had a Saltovo Christian church that was built around the second half of the eighth century from adobe bricks.<sup>108</sup> Its floor contained limestone tiles that had been recovered from a destroyed Byzantine basilica, but the overall construction differed substantially from typical Byzantine churches of the Crimea. Bulgars were apparently among the inhabitants of Tepsen. A tomb housing a warrior and his horse was discovered there, and it dates from the second half of the eighth century.<sup>109</sup> From the method of burial, stirrup, bit, and the silver plates that adorn the harness, archaeologists believe the warrior was likely a Bulgar.

The people of Tepsen were pagans until their conversion to Christianity in the late ninth century. They used to make sacrifices under a sacred oak. In 861, Saint Cyril arrived in Tepsen on his journey back from the kagan's palace. According to the *Life of Constantine*, he destroyed the sacred oak and converted the locals to Christianity.<sup>110</sup>

The modern town of Planerskoye, known as Koktebel until the 1930s, is situated where Tepsen once existed.

### UPPER SALTOV (VERKHNEYE SALTOVO)

Upper Saltov was an important settlement located along the east bank of the upper Donets in the Volchanskogo area in eastern Ukraine, approximately twenty-five miles east of modern-day Kharkiv. It was the site of a fortress constructed from white limestone.<sup>111</sup> Archaeologists also discovered a cemetery in Upper Saltov.<sup>112</sup> Archaeological discoveries indicated that Alan, Magyar, and Swedish settlements existed there from the sixth through the ninth centuries.<sup>113</sup> Its residents shared elements of culture with people living in

nearby regions. The culture flourished between circa 700 and circa 950 in numerous settlements in the Khazar Empire near and along the Don and Donets rivers, as well as in other parts of the Khazar kingdom. The general term for this culture, “Saltovo-Mayaki,” is named after both Upper Saltov and Mayaki, and it was the dominant culture of the peoples of Khazaria.

## OTHER KHAZAR SETTLEMENTS AND FORTRESSES

In addition to major Saltovo culture settlements like Mayaki, Sarkel, Semikarakorskaya, and Upper Saltov, there were many smaller villages and towns in the Tsimlyansk area and around the Don, as well as in localities far from those areas, such as on the Crimean peninsula. We do not know the original Khazarian names of most of the Saltovo culture’s settlements.

Twelve small stone castles were built near the Don in the Saltovo region in the eighth and ninth centuries. One of the important white stone fortresses in the Saltovo-Mayaki region was at Dmitrievsky, in the boundary zone between the forest and the steppe. Dmitrievsky’s fortress may have served as a winter palace for local Khazar chieftains.<sup>114</sup> In total, there were about twenty stone fortresses out of a total of at least twenty-four hill forts in the Saltovo region. They were situated near the Don, Northern Donets, and Oskol rivers, and many of them were in the land of the Severians.

The Tsimlyansk hill fort on the right bank of the Don was destroyed by an enemy early in the ninth century, years prior to Sarkel’s construction on the opposite side of the Don. Menashe Goldelman questioned the idea that “Al-Bayda” referred to Atil’s western section, Sarighshin, arguing instead that “Al-Bayda” initially represented the Tsimlyansk hill fort, and that after Sarkel was built, the term came to be associated with Sarkel.<sup>115</sup>

On the Crimean peninsula, Khazarian fortresses and Khazar-Saltovo settlements existed in Siuren (eighth to tenth centuries), Baksanskoye (eighth to tenth centuries), Kyz-Kermen (eighth to ninth centuries), and Chaika (eighth to tenth centuries).<sup>116</sup> The seaport city of Yevpatoria, in northwestern Crimea, was also once part of the Khazar Empire. Julius Brutzkus identified its original Turkic name as “Güsli-ev” (meaning “a beautiful settlement”).<sup>117</sup>

West of the Volga River and north of Sarkel, in the Russian *guberniya* (district) of Penza, there was a village called Kazarki, and the area was called Volost’ Kazarskaya (“Khazarian region”).<sup>118</sup>

According to Brutzkus, the Khazars founded towns named Sambalut, Samiran, Samakha, Samsakhy, and Samkalako in the Caucasus.<sup>119</sup> Like Sambata, these town names contained the Turkic root word *sam*, which, as previously mentioned, referred to the highlands.



Another Khazar town in the Caucasus was named Tetchik-ev.<sup>120</sup> There was another Khazar town in the Caucasus named Burgur. Except for localities described in detail by medieval chroniclers, like Samandar and Balanjar, we know little about the towns of Khazaria. The names of hundreds of Khazarian towns and villages have no doubt been lost to us.

Most of the Khazar towns in the plains of Daghestan were surrounded by circular or oval walls, which Svetlana Pletnyova said were constructed for both military defense and protection against floods.<sup>121</sup>

## THE PEOPLES OF THE KHAZAR EMPIRE

Khazaria was one of the most diverse nations of medieval Europe. It was a multiethnic society with a population of Slavic, Turkic, Iranian, Arabic, and Caucasian peoples who professed Judaism, Islam, Christianity, and other faiths.

In the ninth and tenth centuries, Judaism became the most widespread religious influence upon the Khazars (as discussed at length in chapter 6). Yet other religions also gained in popularity among various tribes in the empire. For example, some Khazars became Muslims from circa 690 to the late tenth century. They lived in Atil and Samandar, and groups of them settled in Azerbaijan (see chapter 9). According to al-Masudi, the Muslim merchants who migrated to Khazaria did so because of its “justice and security.”<sup>122</sup>

Christianity was also practiced in Khazaria. The Crimean Goths, originally from northern Europe, had been Christians since the sixth century. Some North Caucasian Huns—including their top leaders—adopted Christianity in the 680s, due to the successful missionary work of the Caucasian Albanian bishop Israel, who persuaded the Hun priests to give up their magic cube amulets.<sup>123</sup> The two churches at Balanjar have already been noted. An eighth-century Khazarian tarkhan, George, was an Orthodox Christian.<sup>124</sup> The *Life of Saint Abo* reported that Christians lived in many Khazar towns in the north Caucasus region in the 780s.<sup>125</sup>

The flight of iconodule (icon-venerating) Christians from Byzantium in the mid- to late eighth century contributed to the growth of Christianity in Khazarian Crimea.<sup>126</sup> At the time, the iconodules were being persecuted by the iconoclasts (icon breakers), represented at the highest level of power by the Byzantine emperors Leo III (reigned 717–741) and Constantine V (reigned 741–775). The iconoclasts opposed the iconodules’ use of painted religious images (icons) of Jesus, Mary, and the Christian saints on the grounds that they were idols and that idol worship was forbidden. That the Khazar leaders welcomed the presence of iconodules in their kingdom indicates a high

amount of religious tolerance, in sharp contrast, as we will see (chapter 6), to the usually intolerant attitudes of the Byzantine leaders.

The Khazars also permitted iconoclasts to engage in proselytizing efforts in Khazaria. Bishoprics were established by the Byzantine Empire in strategic parts of Khazaria in an attempt to spread Christianity among the Khazars and apparently also to counter the influence of the iconodules. There were seven bishoprics whose bishops were suffragans of the Metropolitan of Doros in the Crimea.<sup>127</sup> A bishop in southeastern Crimea served a community of Khotirs/Khotzirs (Khazars) near Phullai and Kharasiu in the eighth century.<sup>128</sup> Greek Orthodox bishops were also located in Atil and Samkarsh circa 787.<sup>129</sup>

Orthodox Christian buildings sponsored by the Byzantines sprung up in many parts of the Crimea, and not only at aforementioned locations like Kerch and Tepsen. A basilica existed in Pampuk-Kaya along the Bel'bek River since the second half of the eighth century.<sup>130</sup> A large monastery existed in Inkerman, a Saltovo settlement near Cherson, where the Chernaya River spills into the Black Sea.<sup>131</sup> A Saltovo settlement with its own church, built from locally produced stone blocks, existed in Ptashkino in the steppe lands of eastern Crimea during approximately the mid- to late eighth century.<sup>132</sup> Another church was built in Khazar-ruled Partenit (Parthenit), a locale near the Crimean coast south of Alushta, in the second half of the eighth century.<sup>133</sup> The eighth-century Saltovo church in the village of Geroyevskoye (along the western coast of the Kerch Strait, twenty-five kilometers south of Kerch) was partly constructed with marble and ceramic tiles.<sup>134</sup> A Saltovo church was built at Povorotnoye after the middle of the ninth century at the location where a stone Byzantine basilica used to stand.<sup>135</sup> The architectural evidence thus confirms the success of the Byzantines in converting many formerly shamanist or pagan members of the Khazar culture.

In 861, the Bulgarian-Byzantine missionary Saint Cyril baptized two hundred noble Khazars into Christianity (see chapter 6). Al-Masudi wrote about Christians living in Atil circa 912–913 who participated in a war against the Rus' (see chapter 8).

Over time, some of the Crimean Khazars and Bulgars became lax in their belief in Orthodox Christianity and reverted to shamanism. By the tenth century, it had reached a crisis point, from the point of view of the local Christians. In the late 910s, Christians from Khazaria journeyed to Constantinople to ask Nikolas I Mystikos, the Patriarch of Constantinople, to provide them with a bishop who could “ordain presbyters and teach the true faith.”<sup>136</sup> This plea prompted Nikolas to write to the archbishop of Cherson to arrange for presbyters. In the second half of 920, Nikolas wrote another letter to the archbishop, congratulating him for his work on reconnecting the Khazars—described as “a deluded nation, so nearly ravished from the bosom of piety by

the evil demon”—to Christianity, and urging him to continue the work and to select an archpriest to be sent to the Khazar Christians.<sup>137</sup>

Scholars are uncertain whether the North Caucasian Huns were a tribe of the Khazars that was misidentified by chroniclers as “Huns” or whether they actually were an independent ethnic group of Hunnic background that later became incorporated into the Khazar kaganate.

## NOTES

1. Károly Czeglédy, “Khazar Raids in Transcaucasia in 762–764 A.D.,” *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 11 (1960): 76.

2. Peter B. Golden, *Khazar Studies* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1980), 1:63.

3. Douglas M. Dunlop, *The History of the Jewish Khazars* (New York: Schocken, 1967), 92.

4. In Old Russian, Khazaran was known as “*Khvalisy*” (see Omeljan Pritsak, “An Arabic Text on the Trade Route of the Corporation of Ar-Rus in the Second Half of the Ninth Century,” *Folia Orientalia* 12 [1970]: 257).

5. Vladimir F. Minorsky, *Hudud al-'Alam (The Regions of the World)* (London: Luzac & Co., 1937), 162.

6. It is clear from the writings of Abraham ibn Daud in *Sefer ha-Qabbalah* and the anonymous authors of the *Schechter Letter* and *Hudud al-'Alam* that “Atil” was also the Turkic name of the Volga River itself, in addition to the name of the city. Interestingly, the Mongols also called the Volga “Idil” (see Alexander V. Riasanovsky and William E. Watson, eds., *Readings in Russian History* [Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt, 1991], 1:79). Alternative spellings for the river Atil included “Itil,” “Etil,” “Til,” “Adil,” and other variants. The Chuvashes and Volga Tatars still know the river by this name today (as “Atal” and “Idel,” respectively).

7. Peter B. Golden, “Khazaria and Judaism,” *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 3 (1983): 139.

8. Dunlop, *The History of the Jewish Khazars*, 91–92.

9. Dunlop, *The History of the Jewish Khazars*, 92.

10. Minorsky, *A History of Sharvan and Darband in the 10th–11th Centuries* (Cambridge, England: W. Heffer & Sons, 1958), 148.

11. Dunlop, *The History of the Jewish Khazars*, 105.

12. Lev N. Gumilev, “New Data on the History of the Khazars,” *Acta Archaeologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 19 (1967): 80.

13. Gumilev, “New Data on the History of the Khazars,” 96.

14. Dmitry Vasiliev presented his paper “About the Ethnic Structure of the Population of ‘Samosdelskoe’ Site” at the 10th annual meeting of the European Association of Archaeologists in September 2004.

15. Richard A. E. Mason, “The Religious Beliefs of the Khazars,” *The Ukrainian Quarterly* 51, no. 4 (Winter 1995): 383.

16. Julius Brutzkus, "The Khazar Origin of Ancient Kiev," *Slavonic and East European Review* 22 (1944): 112.
17. Csanád Bálint, "Some Archaeological Addenda to P. Golden's Khazar Studies," *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 35, nos. 2–3 (1981): 399; Antal Bartha, *Hungarian Society in the 9th and 10th Centuries*, trans. K. Balazs (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1975), 62; Bozena I. Wyszomirska, "Religion som enande politisk-social länk—exemplet: Det Kazariska riket," in *Arkeologi och Religion*, ed. Lars Larsson and Bozena I. Wyszomirska (Lund, Sweden: University of Lund, 1989), 137.
18. Svetlana A. Pletnyova, *Khazary* (Moscow: Nauka, 1986), 25.
19. Anna Frenkel, "The Jewish Empire in the Land of Future Russia," *Australian Journal of Jewish Studies* 9, nos. 1–2 (1995): 164.
20. Bálint, "Some Archaeological Addenda to P. Golden's Khazar Studies," 399.
21. Pletnyova, *Khazary*, 27.
22. Omeljan Pritsak, "The Pre-Ashkenazic Jews of Eastern Europe in Relation to the Khazars, the Rus' and the Lithuanians," in *Ukrainian-Jewish Relations in Historical Perspective*, ed. Howard Aster and Peter J. Potichnyj (Edmonton, Alberta, Canada: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 1990), 7.
23. In ancient times, Cherson was known as "Chersonesus" and was a vibrant, democratic Hellenistic city-state with a constitution and elected senators. Chersonesus was a major trading port and received imports from such cities as Athens, Delphi, and Pergamon (see Robert S. MacLennan, "In Search of the Jewish Diaspora: A First-Century Synagogue in Crimea?" *Biblical Archaeology Review* 22, nos. 2 [March–April 1996]: 47–48).
24. Golden, *Khazar Studies*, 1:60.
25. Anne Bortoli and Michel Kazanski, "Kherson and Its Region," in *The Economic History of Byzantium*, ed. Angeliki E. Laiou, et al. (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2002), 661.
26. Alexander A. Vasiliev, *The Goths in the Crimea* (Cambridge, MA: The Medieval Academy of America, 1936), 84.
27. Thomas S. Noonan, "The Khazar-Byzantine World of the Crimea in the Early Middle Ages: The Religious Dimension," *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 10 (1998–1999): 212.
28. Bortoli and Kazanski, "Kherson and Its Region," 662.
29. Noonan, "The Khazar-Byzantine World," 209.
30. Vasiliev, *The Goths in the Crimea*, 91, 105.
31. Noonan, "The Khazar-Byzantine World," 209.
32. Svetlana A. Pletnyova, *Ocherki Khazarskoy Arkheologii* (Moscow: Mosti Kul'turi and Jerusalem: Gesharim, 1999), 161.
33. Noonan, "The Khazar-Byzantine World," 218.
34. Noonan, "The Khazar-Byzantine World," 217.
35. Svetlana A. Pletnyova, *Sarkel i "Shiolkovyi" Put'* (Voronezh, Russia: Izdatel'stvo Voronezhskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta, 1996), 216.
36. Riasanovsky and Watson, *Readings in Russian History*, 1:11–12.

37. Serge A. Zenkovsky, ed., *Medieval Russia's Epics, Chronicles, and Tales* (New York: Meridian, 1974), 48.
38. Brutzkus, "The Khazar Origin of Ancient Kiev," 117.
39. Norman Golb and Omeljan Pritsak, *Khazarian Hebrew Documents of the Tenth Century* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1982), 55.
40. For the claim that a Khazar presence existed in the vicinity of Kiev and the middle Dnieper valley since the late seventh century, see Peter Sawyer, ed., *The Oxford Illustrated History of the Vikings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 147.
41. Riasanovsky and Watson, *Readings in Russian History*, 1:64.
42. Brutzkus, "The Khazar Origin of Ancient Kiev," 108.
43. Omeljan Pritsak, "The Pre-Ashkenazic Jews of Eastern Europe," 7. András Róna-Tas suggested that if this is true, it was the origin of the Magyar word *Szombat*, which also means "Saturday" (see Róna-Tas, *Hungarians and Europe in the Early Middle Ages*, trans. Nicholas Bodoczky [Budapest: Central European University Press, 1999], 152).
44. Brutzkus, "The Khazar Origin of Ancient Kiev," 110, 112–14, 118.
45. Golb and Pritsak, *Khazarian Hebrew Documents of the Tenth Century*, 56.
46. Michael F. Hamm, *Kiev: A Portrait, 1800–1917* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 10.
47. Hamm, *Kiev*, 3.
48. Golb and Pritsak, *Khazarian Hebrew Documents of the Tenth Century*, 57–58.
49. Golb and Pritsak, *Khazarian Hebrew Documents of the Tenth Century*, 57.
50. George Vernadsky, *A History of Russia* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1948), 1:333.
51. Bálint, "Some Archaeological Addenda to P. Golden's Khazar Studies," 404.
52. Constantine Zuckerman, "On the Date of the Khazars' Conversion to Judaism and the Chronology of the Kings of the Rus Oleg and Igor," *Revue des Études Byzantines* 53 (1995): 269.
53. Pritsak, "The Pre-Ashkenazic Jews of Eastern Europe," 8.
54. Alexander Pereswetoff-Morath, *A Grin without a Cat* (Lund, Sweden: Department of East and Central European Studies, Lund University, 2002), 2:108.
55. Shmuel Ettinger, "Kievan Russia," in *The Dark Ages: Jews in Christian Europe, 711–1096*, ed. Cecil Roth and I. H. Levine (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1966), 320–21.
56. Noonan, "The Khazar-Byzantine World," 209
57. Noonan, "The Khazar-Byzantine World," 215–16.
58. Pletnyova, *Khazary*, 28.
59. Gumilev, "New Data on the History of the Khazars," 83.
60. Dunlop, *The History of the Jewish Khazars*, 95.
61. Dunlop, *The History of the Jewish Khazars*, 95.
62. Vernadsky, *A History of Russia*, 1:216.
63. Omeljan Pritsak, "The Khazar Kingdom's Conversion to Judaism," *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 3, no. 2 (September 1978): 262.
64. Ahmad ibn Fadlan, *Ibn Fadlan's Reisebericht*, trans. Ahmed Z. V. Togan (Leipzig, Germany: F. A. Brockhaus, 1939), 298–99.

65. Mikhail I. Artamonov, *Istoriya Khazar*, 2nd ed. (St. Petersburg: Peterburgskii gos. universitet. Filologicheskii fakul'tet, 2002), 395.
66. René Grousset, *The Empire of the Steppes*, trans. Naomi Waldorf (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1970), 577. Pritsak associated Tarqu with Balanjar, rather than with Samandar (see Pritsak, "The Khazar Kingdom's Conversion to Judaism," 263).
67. Vladimir F. Minorsky, "A New Book on the Khazars," *Oriens* 11 (1959): 127.
68. Minorsky, *Hudud al-'Alam (The Regions of the World)*, 162.
69. Pletnyova, *Khazary*, 27.
70. Svetlana A. Pletnyova, *Ot kochevii k gorodam: Saltovo-mayatskaya kul'tura* (Moscow: Nauka, 1967), 44.
71. David G. Christian, *A History of Russia, Central Asia and Mongolia* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 1:289.
72. Gumilev, "New Data on the History of the Khazars," 83.
73. Leonid S. Chekin, "Samarcha, City of Khazaria," *Central Asiatic Journal* 33, nos. 1–2 (1989): 28. *Samkarsh* is sometimes spelled as "Samkarch."
74. Theophanes, *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor: Byzantine and Near Eastern History AD 284–813*, trans. Cyril Mango and Roger Scott (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 498. Theophanes wrote, "Now on the eastern side of the lake that lies above, in the direction of Phanagouria and of the Jews that live there, march a great many tribes."
75. Douglas M. Dunlop, "The Khazars," in *The Dark Ages: Jews in Christian Europe, 711–1096*, ed. Cecil Roth and I. H. Levine (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1966), 354, 449. Dan Shapira similarly doubts the authenticity of the *Mandgelis Document*; see Dan Shapira, *Avraham Firkowicz in Istanbul (1830–1832)* (Ankara, Turkey: KaraM, 2003), 68–69. The *Mandgelis Document* was discovered by Abraham Firkovitch (1786–1874) in the Mandgelis (Medgelis) Synagogue in the Caucasus during the 1840s. The document mysteriously vanished in 1876 but was re-discovered over a century later by V. V. Lebedev. Prince David supposedly hired a Jew named Abraham ben Simi (Avraam ben Simkha Sephardi of Kerch) to travel to Isfahan, Persia, to purchase a Torah, but the story goes that the Jews of Isfahan refused to sell one to him; see Habib Levy, *Comprehensive History of the Jews of Iran*, trans. George W. Maschke (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda, 1999), 206; Vsevolod L. Vikhnovich, "From the Jordan to the Dnieper," *Jewish Studies (Mada'e ha-Yahadut)* 31 (1991): 16–17.
76. Carlile A. Macartney, *The Magyars in the Ninth Century* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1930), 74. Roman K. Kovalev (in "What Does Historical Numismatics Suggest about the Monetary History of Khazaria in the Ninth Century?—Question Revisited," *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 13 [2004]: 124) thinks rather that the Khazars approached Theophilus in the summer of 839 and that construction took place during the years 840 and 841.
77. The word *Sarkel* consists of two elements: *sar* (a contraction of *sarigh*, meaning in this instance "white") + *kel* ("fortress," also spelled *kil*).
78. Dunlop, *The History of the Jewish Khazars*, 186.
79. Wyszomirska, "Religion som enande politisk-social länk," 139.

80. Bartha, *Hungarian Society in the 9th and 10th Centuries*, 13–14. Other fortresses in the Khazar kingdom were also constructed from bricks that contained Turkic tamga symbols.

81. Wyszomirska, “Religion som enande politisk-social länk,” 137.

82. Bálint, “Some Archaeological Addenda to P. Golden’s Khazar Studies,” 398.

83. Bozena I. Werbart, “Khazars or ‘Saltovo-Majaki Culture’? Prejudices about Archaeology and Ethnicity,” *Current Swedish Archaeology* 4 (1996): 210.

84. István Fodor, *In Search of a New Homeland*, trans. Helen Tarnoy (Gyoma, Hungary: Corvina, 1982), 239.

85. Golden, *Khazar Studies*, 1:68.

86. Jonathan Shepard, “The Khazars’ Formal Adoption of Judaism and Byzantium’s Northern Policy,” *Oxford Slavonic Papers, New Series* 31 (1998): 24.

87. Kovalev, “What Does Historical Numismatics Suggest about the Monetary History of Khazaria in the Ninth Century?—Question Revisited,” 124.

88. Mason, “The Religious Beliefs of the Khazars,” 385.

89. Róna-Tas, *Hungarians and Europe in the Early Middle Ages*, 406.

90. Mykhailo Hrushevsky, *History of Ukraine-Rus’*, trans. Marta Skorupsky (Edmonton, Alberta: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 1997), 1:176.

91. Hrushevsky, *History of Ukraine-Rus’*, 1:176.

92. Golden, *Khazar Studies*, 1:69.

93. George Huxley, “Byzantinochazarika,” *Hermathena* 148 (1990): 79.

94. Bálint, “Some Archaeological Addenda to P. Golden’s Khazar Studies,” 399.

95. Pletnyova, *Sarkel i “Shiolkovyi” Put’*, 216.

96. Pletnyova, *Ocherki Khazarskoy Arkheologii*, 97–98. Excavators of Sarkel had claimed that ornamental marble fragments found within the fortress derived from a church (see Shepard, “The Khazars’ Formal Adoption of Judaism and Byzantium’s Northern Policy,” 20).

97. Roman K. Kovalev, “Critica: S. A. Pletneva, *Sarkel i ‘shelkovyi’ put’*,” *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 10 (1998–1999): 246–47.

98. Bartha, *Hungarian Society in the 9th and 10th Centuries*, 12–13.

99. Christian, *A History of Russia, Central Asia and Mongolia*, 1:298, 360.

100. Pletnyova, *Sarkel i “Shiolkovyi” Put’*, 138.

101. Hrushevsky, *History of Ukraine-Rus’*, 1:148.

102. Werbart, “Khazars or ‘Saltovo-Majaki Culture’?,” 209.

103. Noonan, “The Khazar-Byzantine World,” 215.

104. Neal Ascherson, *Black Sea* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1995), 9.

105. Pletnyova, *Ocherki Khazarskoy Arkheologii*, 237.

106. Thomas S. Noonan, “What Can Archaeology Tell Us about the Economy of Khazaria?” in *The Archaeology of the Steppes: Methods and Strategies—Papers from the International Symposium Held in Naples 9–12 November 1992*, ed. Bruno Genito (Napoli, Italy: Istituto Universitario Orientale, 1994), 337.

107. Noonan, “The Khazar-Byzantine World,” 209.

108. Noonan, “The Khazar-Byzantine World,” 216.

109. Igor’ A. Baranov, *Tavrika v epokhu rannego srednevekov’ya (saltovo-mayatskaya kul’tura)* (Kiev: Naukova dumka, 1990), 121–23.

110. Noonan, "The Khazar-Byzantine World," 225, 226.
111. Bartha, *Hungarian Society in the 9th and 10th Centuries*, 62.
112. Bartha, *Hungarian Society in the 9th and 10th Centuries*, 201.
113. Vernadsky, *A History of Russia*, 1:157.
114. Werbart, "Khazars or 'Saltovo-Majaki Culture'?" 213.
115. Menashe Goldelman, "On the Location of the Khazarian City of Al-Bayda," *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 10 (1998–1999): 66, 69–70.
116. Noonan, "The Khazar-Byzantine World," 209.
117. Brutzkus, "The Khazar Origin of Ancient Kiev," 118. In ancient times, Yevpatoria was known under the Greek name "Kerkinitida." The Crimean Tatars call it "Gözleve."
118. Golden, *Khazar Studies*, 1:75.
119. Brutzkus, "The Khazar Origin of Ancient Kiev," 112, 118.
120. Brutzkus, "The Khazar Origin of Ancient Kiev," 112, 118.
121. Pletnyova, *Khazary*, 29.
122. Golden, *Khazar Studies*, 1:167.
123. Mason, "The Religious Beliefs of the Khazars," 401–3.
124. Dunlop, *The History of the Jewish Khazars*, 252.
125. Thomas S. Noonan, "Why Dirhams First Reached Russia: The Role of Arab-Khazar Relations in the Development of the Earliest Islamic Trade with Eastern Europe," *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 4 (1984): 241.
126. Noonan, "The Khazar-Byzantine World," 222–23.
127. Simon Szyszman, "Le roi Bulan et le problème de la conversion des Khazars," *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 33 (1957): 73.
128. Vasiliev, *The Goths in the Crimea*, 98, 103–4.
129. Noonan, "Why Dirhams First Reached Russia," 239.
130. Noonan, "The Khazar-Byzantine World," 219.
131. Noonan, "The Khazar-Byzantine World," 218.
132. Noonan, "The Khazar-Byzantine World," 216.
133. Noonan, "The Khazar-Byzantine World," 218–19.
134. Noonan, "The Khazar-Byzantine World," 217.
135. Noonan, "The Khazar-Byzantine World," 216.
136. Noonan, "The Khazar-Byzantine World," 226.
137. Noonan, "The Khazar-Byzantine World," 226; Shepard, "The Khazars' Formal Adoption of Judaism and Byzantium's Northern Policy," 21.





Figure 2.1. Map of Khazaria and Neighboring Empires in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries



Figure 2.2. Map of the Crimean Peninsula during the Khazar Era



## Chapter Three

# The Structure of the Khazar Government

*In Sefer ha-'Osher, composed in the late eleventh century or early twelfth century, Jacob ben Reuben wrote that the Khazars were mighty, with their own kingship and rule, which allowed them to avoid paying tribute to the non-Jewish nations around them. Indeed, Khazaria is the only example of an independent Jewish state in eastern Europe. The Khazars had a system of dual monarchy, which consisted of a kagan and a bek. This system was supported by additional officials at lower levels, such as tarkhans, judges, and local governors.*

### THE KAGAN

The supreme ruler (i.e., emperor) of the Khazars was known as the “kagan,” and for this reason, Khazaria has been called a “kaganate.” During the final stage of Khazarian history, the kagan was a sacred religious figure who lived in seclusion from the general public. Turks believed that the kagans were created in heaven by Tengri, the sky god, and sent to Earth to serve Tengri’s mission from the throne.<sup>1</sup> The Khazars believed that the kagan brought good fortune (*qut*) to the empire. The Khazar kagan established traditional law (*törü*) as the law of the kaganate.<sup>2</sup>

A charismatic kagan founded the Khazar kaganate by the middle of the seventh century. The kaganship was hereditary, and it is believed that the kagans of Khazaria were members of the Asena (Ashina) royal family. The kagans of the Hsiung-nu, the Eastern Turkish Empire, and the Western Turkish Empire had also belonged to the house of Asena.<sup>3</sup>

The strange ritual of kagan killing was allegedly found among both the Western Turks and the Khazars. According to the Arab historian al-Istakhri, a

limit was imposed upon the length of a Khazar kagan's life after he started ruling.<sup>4</sup> The nobles placed a silken cord around the kagan's neck and tightened it until he began to choke, and they asked him, "For how long do you intend to rule?" The nobles intended to kill him if his reign lasted even one day beyond the specified number of years. Ibn Fadlan, on the other hand, gave a precise figure for the maximum number of years allotted to a king's reign. If a kagan had ruled for at least forty years, he wrote, his courtiers and subjects felt that his ability to reason had become impaired, on account of his old age. As a consequence, they would kill the kagan.<sup>5</sup> The scenario described by al-Istakhri was virtually identical to the practice of the Western Turks. According to the Chinese document *Chou-shu*, the Western Turks inducted a new kagan by carrying him in a felt carpet and spinning him nine times. He then mounted a horse and began to ride, but the nobles choked him with a silver scarf and asked him how long he would rule. Since he was nearly being strangled, he was unable to answer coherently, so the nobles decided the duration of his reign based on their interpretation of what he had mumbled.<sup>6</sup>

Some scholars thought that the Khazars had retained the ancient Turkic tradition of kagan killing even after their conversion to Judaism. Vladimir Petrukhin, on the other hand, reasonably suggested that the ritual ceased after the Khazar royalty converted to Judaism, if not earlier, especially since Judaism prohibits human sacrifice.<sup>7</sup> The Arab chroniclers' references to Khazars killing their kagan after a predefined term has expired are thus anachronisms based on archaic materials about the Western Turks, according to Petrukhin, such that the tradition did not actually survive into the tenth century even though the chroniclers assumed it did.

The kagan's wife was known as the "khatun." However, ibn Fadlan claimed that the kagan had a harem of twenty-five wives, all of whom were daughters of kings, as well as sixty beautiful slave-girl mistresses.<sup>8</sup> By ibn Fadlan's time (the early 920s), however, the kagan was a follower of Judaism. Since polygamy was not generally a Jewish custom, it is possible that the harem was the chronicler's own invention. Historians have noticed that the number twenty-five is also prominent in the sections on the Khazars in the accounts of Eldad the Danite and Elchanan the Merchant (see chapter 1). In other words, it seems that the twenty-five "wives" symbolically represented the twenty-five peoples and kingdoms under Khazar domination.

In the years following the initial conversion to Judaism, only a Jew was eligible to become the Khazar kagan.<sup>9</sup> According to the *Schechter Letter*, the first Jewish kagan was an Israelite sage appointed by the Khazars. The Jewishness of the kaganship, along with the presence of Jews in other high administrative posts, indicates the privileged role of Jews in the Khazar government structure. Yet it is not necessarily the case that only members of the

Khazar ruling elite were Jewish, since Judaism appears also to have been the predominant religion of the Khazar tribe (see chapter 6).

The kagan was allegedly given an elaborate mausoleum after his death. Ibn Fadlan described the interesting procedure for burying a deceased kagan:

The custom of the superior king is that when he dies a great hall is built for him, containing twenty chambers. In each of these a grave is dug for him, and stones are broken till they become like powder, which is then sprinkled therein, and pitch is spread over that again. Under the building is a river. The river is large and rapid. They bring the river over the grave and say that it is in order that no devil or man, no worm or creeping beast, may come to him. When he is buried the heads of those who buried him are struck off, so that it may not be known in which of the chambers is his tomb. His grave is called Paradise, and they say, "He has entered Paradise." All the chambers are spread with silk brocade interwoven with gold.<sup>10</sup>

Archaeological remains of Khazarian mausoleums, if indeed they ever existed, have not survived to the present day. Indeed, al-Istakhri wrote that whoever passed within the vicinity of the Khazar kagan's tomb was required to walk rather than ride on horseback until he no longer could see the tomb.<sup>11</sup> This contradicts ibn Fadlan's statement that no one was supposed to know where the grave was located.

As time went on, the status of the Khazar kagan diminished. The accounts by the ninth-century historian al-Ya'qubi and the tenth-century historian al-Tabari suggest that the kagan was the supreme ruler as well as the military commander until at least the year 799, since at that time he was still providing leadership over the Khazarian army, including the division that invaded the south Caucasus in 798–799 (see chapter 7).<sup>12</sup> There may not have been a bek at that time in Khazarian history. By the 830s,<sup>13</sup> however, the kagan shared power with the other monarch, the bek, and both officials were mentioned in the letter asking for help in building Sarkel that was carried by the Khazarian envoys to the Byzantine emperor Theophilus (see chapter 2).<sup>14</sup> The Abbasid caliph al-Wathiq wrote a letter to the Khazars in 843 in which he referred to the "tarkhan malik" of the Khazars, meaning the bek, with no reference to the kagan.<sup>15</sup> Based on the available evidence, Roman Kovalev concluded that all military and political responsibilities transferred from the kagan to the bek between 838 and 843, and by 843 the kagan was merely a sacral figure.<sup>16</sup> Around 943, the Arab historian Ali al-Masudi (died 956) wrote that the kagan had limited power, since he could not give orders or decide important affairs of state.<sup>17</sup> Petrukhin thought that the offices of kagan and bek merged into one by the mid-950s, since King Joseph did not mention any other king ruling beside him.<sup>18</sup> If this is correct, the tenth-century

Arab chroniclers' references to beks and kagans sharing power are also archaic references to a discontinued practice.

### THE BEK (KING) AND HIS ARMY

During the second half of the ninth century and the century that followed, when the kagan had been reduced to the status of a spiritual figurehead, it was the bek<sup>19</sup> (i.e., *melekh*, king) who handled secular state affairs in Khazaria. Ibn Fadlan wrote that the bek had the power to bind, to punish, to release, and to govern the affairs of state. Still, the bek was considered to be the second in command, after the titular kagan. Unlike the kagan, the bek often appeared in public.

One of the most important responsibilities of the bek was leadership of the army. The bek led all military expeditions. The army consisted of a well-trained force of warriors. In *Muruj al-Dhahab wa al-Ma'adin al-Jawahir* ("Meadows of Gold and Mines of Precious Stones"), al-Masudi noted that Khazaria's army was permanent and professional, unlike neighboring countries' armies: "None of the kings in this part of the world has a regular standing army except the King of the Khazars." Al-Masudi recorded that the Khazar army included professional soldiers of the Islamic faith who originally came from Khwarizm<sup>20</sup> following a terrible drought in central Asia. These Muslim soldiers, collectively known as the Orsiyya, were ethnic Iranians, and they served as bodyguards for the Khazar king. They were also skilled horseback archers. In 943, the Orsiyya numbered about seven thousand men. Slavic Rus'ians also served in the Khazar army.<sup>21</sup> Additionally, the chronicler Marwazi wrote that ten thousand Burtasian horsemen served the Khazar king. Ibn Rustah provided a description of the Khazarian army led by the bek:

When they go out in any direction, they do so armed in full array, with banners, spears, and strong coats of mail. He [the bek] rides forth with 10,000 horsemen, of whom some are regular paid troops and others have been levied on the rich.<sup>22</sup>

Scouts ventured ahead of the army during expeditions, carrying candles and flares made from wax to provide the army with light. Each member of the army was required to take a peg with him to be used with other pegs to encircle their own army encampments, in order to prevent enemy infiltration into their camps.<sup>23</sup> A shield was hung from each peg.

At the same time when Khazarian soldiers were engaging in battle, other soldiers were left behind to safeguard their families and properties.

The Khazars continued the Turkic practice of taking hostages from enemy groups. They also seized valuable treasures from the enemy. When the army

took booty, it would all be collected in the bek's camp so that the bek could select some of the most prized items for himself, with the rest to be divided among the horsemen.<sup>24</sup>

Ibn Fadlan described what would supposedly happen in the event that the Khazar army was unsuccessful:

When he [the bek] dispatches an army group, they do not turn their backs for any reason. If they are defeated, every one of them who returns is put to death. When his leaders and viceroy are put to flight, he brings them before him with their wives and children, and gives the latter as gifts to others in their presence while they are viewing it. He does the same with their horses, goods, weapons, and houses. Sometimes he cuts each of them in two pieces and exposes him on a gibbet. Sometimes he hangs them by their necks from trees, or if he is well disposed toward them he makes them stable servants.<sup>25</sup>

Considering the many unusual things ibn Fadlan said about the Khazar kings, including but not limited to their supposed treatment of losing generals, one must keep in mind Dunlop's belief that he may have gotten biased or exaggerated information from his fellow traveler Abdullah ibn Bashtu al-Khazari as well as from various Volga Bulgars, all of whom evidently hated the rulers of Khazaria and thought of them as tyrants.<sup>26</sup>

The army was certainly the most important element in the Khazar military system. The Khazars apparently did not have a navy.<sup>27</sup>

Saadia ben Joseph (better known as Saadia Gaon) (882–942), the chief tenth-century rabbinical authority at the Talmudic academy in Sura, Babylonia, recorded an interesting custom regarding the reporting of results to the bek:

I encountered in our scriptures things that were difficult for me to understand, until it came to my mind that these same things still occur in our own times. One of these things is that I have maintained for a long time that it was Moses' habit that when he responded to a command of God he kept it in his mind until the time when the second revelation came. Moses was not allowed to break off the words of the revelation by responding to the first revelation; he had to wait until the revelation was completed, and only then could he respond.

And the reader of the Torah sees a reply that is not the response to the first statement. And if there is a reply to the second statement, then Moses gives it after the third one. For example, we have learned in: "And Moses reported the words of the people to the Lord" (Exodus 19:8) when: "And the Lord said to Moses: lo, I come to you in a thick cloud" (Ex. 19:9) at the time when: "Then Moses told the words of the people to the Lord" (Ex. 19:9) and likewise when God said: "Go down, warn the people, lest they break through to the Lord . . ." (Ex. 19:21) his answer was: "The people cannot come up to Mount Sinai . . ." (Ex. 19:23). But this answer was in response to the preceding command "And you shall set bounds for the people round about, saying . . ." (Ex. 19:12).



And as concerns my explanation of the weekly Torah portion (*parasha*) *Wa Yishma* ‘*Yethro*, it did not occur to me that this is a habit of kings until I realized that it is a habit of the kingdom of the Khazars. If a king (*melekh*) calls for a prince or a commander [to fulfill a request], then he carries it out and subsequently appears before him, but he does not say “O my Lord, I have satisfied your wish.” Instead, he waits until he is called for another request. And if he has completed that [second] request, he says: “I have fulfilled the first request.” And when it became clear to me that this is a habit of kings, then I no longer stuck to my earlier interpretation.<sup>28</sup>

The bek lived in the capital city from December to April, celebrating Hanukkah and Passover while there. However, the bek resided in the steppes during all the other months.

In certain respects, the bek was inferior in status—at least symbolically—compared to the kagan, as indicated by ibn Fadlan’s account:

He [the Kagan Bek] goes humbly in every day to the superior Kagan, displaying deference and modesty. He never enters except barefoot, with a piece of wood in his hand. When he has greeted him, he lights the wood in his presence, and when it has finished burning, he sits with the king on his throne at his right hand.<sup>29</sup>

The Khazar kagan had the power to order the bek to be put to death.<sup>30</sup> Since the status of the bek was less than that of the kagan, it may be assumed that in matters of disputed opinion, the kagan would be consulted by the bek, and that the kagan’s word on the matter was decisively final. This was certainly the situation in the early periods of Khazaria’s existence, when all officials submitted to the kagan’s authority. Yet, as time went on, the bek’s power increased, surpassing the kagan’s power by the mid-ninth century. Indeed, the major policy makers of Khazaria in the tenth century—Benjamin, Aaron, and Joseph—were beks. The *Schechter Letter*, written circa 948–949, described the kagan as the “shofet.” This Hebrew word is to be understood in the English sense of “ruler” rather than its alternate translation of “judge.” Dan Shapira explained that the term *shofet* is a biblical term indicating that the kagan held an ancient office overshadowed by the bek’s dynasty.<sup>31</sup> By way of comparison, Shapira noted that the judges in ancient Israel (who were likewise known as “shofetim”) became superceded by the kings Saul, Solomon, and David but still retained some degree of relevance.

### THE KENDER AND THE JAVSHIGHAR

The kender was the third in command in the Khazar government. The kender’s deputy, the fourth in command, was known as the “javshighar.” It is

not known what administrative tasks were performed by these two officials, as ibn Fadlan only presented their titles without further comment.<sup>32</sup> Sergey Klyashtornyi proposed that the title “javshighar” derived from the Turkic words *chav shunghar* (head of royal falcon hunting).<sup>33</sup>

## THE TARKHAN

After the kagan, bek, kender, and javshighar, the next position in the hierarchy of power was the tarkhan. The tarkhans served as commanders of regiments of the Khazar army or auxiliary troops.<sup>34</sup> A Khazarian tarkhan named Chorpan ravaged Armenia in 630 (see chapter 7). A famous tarkhan known as As Tarkhan led a large-scale military initiative against the south Caucasus in 762–764 (see chapter 7). “Tarkhan” was also the title of the local governor of Atil in the eighth century.<sup>35</sup>

## THE COURT PANEL

The Khazars also established an organized judicial system. Al-Masudi reported that the Khazars had a seven-member “supreme court” in Atil, composed of two Jews, two Muslims, two Christians, and one pagan.<sup>36</sup> Al-Masudi noted that the two judges for the Khazar tribe consulted the Torah when deciding the outcome of cases. The pagan court member represented the Slavs of Khazaria.

The court in Atil dealt primarily with trading issues.<sup>37</sup> Peter Golden has suggested that the judges were representatives for the foreign traders living in Atil.<sup>38</sup>

The representation of all Khazarian religions on the court panel indicates that the court was a model of tolerance and peaceful coexistence. The diversity in the Khazar court is remarkable when compared to the turmoil in western Europe and Byzantium over religious issues during the same period.

Apparently, some traditional Turkic methods remained embedded in the legal decisions of the Khazars even after the conversion to Judaism.<sup>39</sup>

## THE LOCAL GOVERNORS

The provincial governors in the Khazar Empire held the title “tudun” and were appointed by the Khazar kagan. The Turkic tuduns collected taxes and

customs duties.<sup>40</sup> Khazarian tuduns controlled parts of the Crimea, including Cherson and Doros (see chapter 2).

There were also appointed government officials with the title “baliqchi” who ruled the Cimmerian Bosphorus (i.e., Kerch) and Samkarsh. The title “baliqchi” means “fisherman” and reflects the Khazars’ major interest in fishing. The baliqchis were seen as the guardians of the waterfront. The Byzantine historian Theophanes wrote about a prominent Khazar baliqchi who ruled Kerch at the start of the eighth century (see chapter 7). In the late 930s, during the early years of King Joseph’s reign, there was a Jewish Khazar military general in the Bosphorus named Pesakh ha-M-Q-R “the Baliqchi.” Baliqchi Pesakh is famous for his conquest over Prince Oleg of the Rus’ (see chapter 8).

Some Khazar localities possessed elected government leaders in addition to appointed leaders like the tuduns and baliqchis. There was an elected position known as “babaghuq” (“father of the city”) in several cities. Babaghuqs led affairs in Cherson between about 705 and 840.<sup>41</sup> Another babaghuq presided over Samkarsh around the year 703.

Local Turkic kings were called “el-teber.” El-tebers ruled over communities of Khazars as well as those of Magyars, Huns, Onoghurs, Volga Bulgars and Suvars, and Burtas.<sup>42</sup>

Ibn Fadlan reported that one Muslim official in particular was responsible for handling legal issues of concern to Atil’s Muslim population (see chapter 2). The chief representative of the Muslim community was the vizier (*wazir* in Arabic). The viziers Ahmad ibn Kuya and Khaz were chosen from among the *ghulams* (slave soldiers) in the Khazar king’s army. Omeljan Pritsak suggested that the vizier Kuya, father of Ahmad, was identical to the Kiy of the old Rus’ian chronicles.<sup>43</sup>

## TAXATION

The products of blacksmiths were taxed by the Khazar government.<sup>44</sup> Foods and drinks were also taxed. For example, Muslim merchants in Khazaran-Atil paid taxes in the form of food to the Khazar kagan.<sup>45</sup> Along with customs duties on merchandise and transport (see chapter 5), these taxes were important sources of revenue for the kagan’s government. However, *Hudud al-‘Alam* reported that the maritime customs duties brought in the most wealth to the Khazar king.<sup>46</sup> Revenue supported the vast resources of Khazaria, including paying the salaries of soldiers, border guards, judges, rabbis, and governors to accomplish such daily tasks as defending the borders, operating the synagogues, running the court system, and maintaining the king’s palace.

## TRIBUTARY PEOPLES

Khazaria may be considered an empire during the periods when the Khazars controlled other ethnic groups. By the second half of the eighth century, the Khazars controlled a vast land territory between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea, including parts of the Ural Mountains and Volga River. This resulted in the recognition of Khazarian overlordship by numerous peoples, including the Caucasian Alans, the Hungarians, the Bulgars, certain Slavic tribes, and the Crimean Greeks and Goths.

Many eastern Slavs were paying tribute to the Khazars around the middle of the ninth century. Under the year “859,” the *Russian Primary Chronicle* recorded that the Khazars imposed tribute upon the Polianians, Severians, and Vyaticians, consisting of “a white squirrel-skin from each hearth.”<sup>47</sup> The Radimichians also paid tribute to the Khazars.<sup>48</sup> Meanwhile, the Krivichians, Slovenes, and Meria in the north paid tribute to the Varangians.

The *Russian Primary Chronicle* claimed that Prince Oleg of Kiev conquered the Severians in “884” and the Radimichians in “885.” But recent scholarship has proven that Oleg actually reigned from 911 until 941.<sup>49</sup> Thus, Oleg probably conquered the Severians and the Radimichians in the 920s or 930s—before his war with the Khazars in the late 930s, his war with the Byzantines in 941, and other raids in 943 and 944 (see chapter 8). In one of the surviving versions of his *Reply*, Khazar King Joseph wrote (circa 955) that his empire ruled over three Slavic groups: Sever, Slaviun, and Ventit.<sup>50</sup> Yet Constantine VII (circa 950) wrote that the Severians paid tribute to the Rus’, not to the Khazars.<sup>51</sup>

Other tribes also had to pay the Khazars tribute on a regular basis. The Bulgars paid an annual tribute in the ninth and tenth centuries. Almush, the ruler of the Volga Bulgars in the early tenth century, was under the jurisdiction of the Khazars.<sup>52</sup> The Burtas (a Finnic or Iranian people), Pechenegs (a warlike Turkic people), Magyars, and other tribes also paid tribute to the Khazars. The shamanist “North Caucasian Huns” were vassals of the Khazars during the seventh century.<sup>53</sup>

## NOTES

1. Richard A. E. Mason, “The Religious Beliefs of the Khazars,” *The Ukrainian Quarterly* 51, no. 4 (Winter 1995): 392, 399.

2. Peter B. Golden, “Khazaria and Judaism,” *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 3 (1983): 143.

3. Douglas M. Dunlop, *The History of the Jewish Khazars* (New York: Schocken, 1967), 160. The Persian geographical treatise *Hudud al-'Alam* (“The Regions of the

World”), compiled in 982 and 983 by an unknown author, noted that “Ansa” was the tarkhan kagan’s tribal group at Atil.

4. Dunlop, *The History of the Jewish Khazars*, 97.

5. Dunlop, *The History of the Jewish Khazars*, 112.

6. Peter B. Golden, “Imperial Ideology and the Sources of Political Unity amongst the Pre-Činggisid Nomads of Western Eurasia,” *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 2 (1982): 46–47.

7. Vladimir Petrukhin presented his position in his paper “On the Sacral Status of the Khazarian Khagan: Tradition and Reality,” presented at the Interdisciplinary Workshop on “Rulership and Religion,” held on February 23, 2002, at Central European University in Budapest.

8. Dunlop, *The History of the Jewish Khazars*, 109, 112.

9. Omeljan Pritsak, “The Khazar Kingdom’s Conversion to Judaism,” *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 3, no. 2 (September 1978): 278–79. Al-Istakhri claimed that there was a young man in the kagan’s family who was a Muslim, and made a point of noting his ineligibility for the throne on account of his non-Jewish religion.

10. Dunlop, *The History of the Jewish Khazars*, 111–12.

11. Carlile A. Macartney, *The Magyars in the Ninth Century* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1930), 221.

12. Pritsak, “The Khazar Kingdom’s Conversion to Judaism,” 278; Roman K. Kovalev, “Creating Khazar Identity through Coins: The Special Issue Dirhams of 837/8,” in *East Central and Eastern Europe in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Florin Curta (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), 231.

13. Pritsak, “The Khazar Kingdom’s Conversion to Judaism,” 278. By 833, according to Pritsak; some other researchers, including Zuckerman and Kovalev, contend that the envoys to Theophilus arrived in Constantinople during 838.

14. Kovalev, “Creating Khazar Identity through Coins,” 231.

15. Kovalev, “Creating Khazar Identity through Coins,” 231.

16. Kovalev, “Creating Khazar Identity through Coins,” 231–32.

17. Vladimir F. Minorsky, *A History of Sharvan and Darband in the 10th–11th Centuries* (Cambridge, England: W. Heffer & Sons, 1958), 148.

18. Petrukhin, “On the Sacral Status of the Khazarian Khagan.”

19. The bek is sometimes called the “viceroy.” Alternative Turkic titles for the bek included *yilig* and *shad* (*ishad/isha*). The title *shad* derives from *abshad*, which originally was *äbä-shad*.

20. Dunlop, *The History of the Jewish Khazars*, 206. Vladimir Minorsky suggested that the Orsiyya guards were members of the Alan (As) tribe (see Vladimir F. Minorsky, “A New Book on the Khazars,” *Oriens* 11 [1959]: 129).

21. Peter B. Golden, *Khazar Studies* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1980), 1:16, 81. A few members of other groups, including the Oghuz, also served in the Khazar army. According to some historians, the most notable Oghuz warrior in the army was Toqaq Temir-Yaligh (Toqaq “Iron-Bow”), the father of Seljuk. After Toqaq’s death, Seljuk was supposedly brought up in the Khazarian royal court in Atil. Around 985, Seljuk allegedly quarreled with the Khazar king, escaped east to Jand along the Syr Darya, and converted to Islam. For discussion, see Dunlop, *The History of the Jewish Khaz-*

ars, 259–60. Seljuk went on to found several important Turkish dynasties in Asia Minor, Syria, and Persia. Ibrahim Kafesoğlu, in *A History of the Seljuks* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1988), 23, argued against connecting Toqaq and Seljuk with Khazaria, persuasively arguing that Toqaq in fact served in the Oghuz state.

22. Dunlop, *The History of the Jewish Khazars*, 105.
23. Arsenio P. Martinez, “Gardizi’s Two Chapters on the Turks,” *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 2 (1982): 154–55.
24. Dunlop, *The History of the Jewish Khazars*, 105.
25. Richard N. Frye, *Ibn Fadlan’s Journey to Russia* (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2005), 77.
26. Dunlop, *The History of the Jewish Khazars*, 109–10.
27. Dunlop, *The History of the Jewish Khazars*, 211.
28. Translated from the original Hebrew text given in Abraham E. Harkavy, “Rab Sa’adyah Gaon al debar ha-Kuzarim,” in *Semitic Studies in Memory of Rev. Dr. Alexander Kohut*, ed. G. A. Kohut (Berlin: S. Calvary & Co., 1897), 245.
29. Dunlop, *The History of the Jewish Khazars*, 111. The fact that the Khazar bek sat next to the kagan only after lighting firewood shows that fire was used as a “purifier” in Turkic shamanism (see Golden, *Khazar Studies*, 1:98–99).
30. Golden, “Khazaria and Judaism,” 149.
31. Dan Shapira, “Two Names of the First Khazar Jewish Beg,” *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 10 (1998–1999): 236.
32. Dunlop, *The History of the Jewish Khazars*, 111.
33. Sergey G. Klyashtorny, “About One Khazar Title in Ibn Fadlan,” *Manuscripta Orientalia* 3, no. 3 (November 1997): 22–23. Alternatively, Golden (in *Khazar Studies*, 1:191–92) had offered the possible reconstruction of the title as *jawashighar* but added, “The meaning and etymology of this word remain unclear.”
34. George Vernadsky, *A History of Russia* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1948), 1:219.
35. Pritsak, “The Khazar Kingdom’s Conversion to Judaism,” 262.
36. Vladimir F. Minorsky, *A History of Sharvan and Darband in the 10th–11th Centuries*, 147.
37. Antal Bartha, *Hungarian Society in the 9th and 10th Centuries*, trans. K. Balazs (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1975), 16.
38. Golden, “Khazaria and Judaism,” 143.
39. Golden, “Khazaria and Judaism,” 143.
40. Golden, *Khazar Studies*, 1:216.
41. Pritsak, “The Khazar Kingdom’s Conversion to Judaism,” 264.
42. Pritsak, “The Khazar Kingdom’s Conversion to Judaism,” 263–64.
43. Norman Golb and Omeljan Pritsak, *Khazarian Hebrew Documents of the Tenth Century* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1982), 55.
44. Bartha, *Hungarian Society in the 9th and 10th Centuries*, 12.
45. Bartha, *Hungarian Society in the 9th and 10th Centuries*, 16.
46. Vladimir F. Minorsky, *Hudud al-‘Alam (The Regions of the World)* (London: Luzac & Co., 1937), 162.

47. Alexander V. Riasanovsky and William E. Watson, eds., *Readings in Russian History* (Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt, 1991), 1:11.

48. Frederick I. Kaplan, "The Decline of the Khazars and the Rise of the Varangians," *American Slavic and East European Review* 13 (1954): 4.

49. Constantine Zuckerman, "On the Date of the Khazars' Conversion to Judaism and the Chronology of the Kings of the Rus Oleg and Igor," *Revue des Études Byzantines* 53 (1995): 269.

50. Julius Brutzkus, "The Khazar Origin of Ancient Kiev," *Slavonic and East European Review* 22 (1944): 110–11. Brutzkus suggested that the Severians of the Chernigov area were connected with the Turkic Sever tribe (see 123).

51. Riasanovsky and Watson, *Readings in Russian History*, 1:66.

52. Golden, "Khazaria and Judaism," 130. Circa 921, ibn Fadlan wrote that the Volga Bulgars paid tribute to the Khazars in the form of one sable fur from each Bulgar household.

53. Golden, *Khazar Studies*, 1:90. These Huns lived in the Sulak River basin, north of Derbent.

## Chapter Four

# The Khazar Way of Life

*The daily life and culture of the Khazars is not described in detail in historical documents. Thus, archaeological fieldwork is our primary source of reliable information about this obscure subject. Archaeological evidence shows that the Khazars were a highly productive people, manufacturing goods of all sorts for both internal use and export to other countries. It also confirms that the Khazars were expert farmers and herders.*

*Most of the Khazars spoke a Turkic language, and some wrote in Turkic runes, but many of them also became familiar with other languages and scripts.*

### KHAZAR ARTS AND CRAFTS

The Arab historian al-Istakhri wrote that Khazaria produced no exportable goods except isinglass,<sup>1</sup> which is extracted from fish. As an example, he claimed that clothing was not produced in Khazaria, since the Khazars imported clothing from Turkmenistan, Persia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, and the Byzantine Empire. Scholars have tended to follow the assumption that the Khazars were consumers, but not producers. Ananiasz Zajaczkowski, for example, wrote,

In productive work the Khazars had no direct participation, and their entire material culture was imported and of foreign origin. This role of an intermediary and not that of a producer is very typical of the Khazars, as of many other Turkic peoples.<sup>2</sup>

Yet, the historical record is not entirely correct in its assessment of Khazar commerce. Whereas al-Istakhri and other medieval written sources make it



appear as if craft production was at a very low stage of development in the Khazar Empire, numerous archaeological surveys have demonstrated that the Khazars produced and exported many of their own goods as well. The discovery of many blacksmith and pottery shops during the course of excavation shows that much domestic manufacturing took place in Khazaria. Archaeology has revealed that, in addition to pottery and iron products (e.g., weapons, farming tools), the Khazars produced large quantities of leather clothing, silver and gold jewelry, ornaments, silverware, mirrors, horse saddles, decorated belt buckles, and other items. This evidence led Thomas Noonan to the conclusion that the Khazars were relatively self-sufficient in crafts production.<sup>3</sup>

The Saltovo-Mayaki culture of Khazaria, which especially prospered along the Don and Donets river valleys, may be described as a civilization in which creativity and skill flourished. The Khazars and other tribes in the kingdom often manufactured belt mounts and amulets decorated with images of plants, animals, and humans. A variety of interesting amulets were found at cemeteries in Upper Saltov (Verkhneye Saltovo) and Dmitrievsky, including circular “sun amulets” and representations of horses.<sup>4</sup> According to archaeologist Bozena Werbart, the ring shape of the “sun amulets” was spiritually significant, representing Tengri, the shamanistic god of the sky. (Werbart<sup>5</sup> and Shepard<sup>6</sup> both noted that these “sun amulets” disappeared from Khazarian settlements and cemeteries sometime after the 830s, upon the spread of Judaism among the Khazars.) Members of the Saltovo culture made amulets not only from various metals but also from bone, dogs’ teeth, and wolves’ teeth.<sup>7</sup> At Sarkel, archaeologists unearthed bracelets, sabers, bronze figurines, and other types of metal crafts. The Saltovo peoples also were active in creating implements such as hammers, axes, knives, arrow tips, and bows.

Pottery was produced in large quantities in Crimean towns, Samkarsh, and along the Don River (at Sarkel, Suvarovo, Podgaevka, Mayaki, and other sites). Pottery-producing kilns were found near Sarkel and Suvarovo.<sup>8</sup> Saltovo potters produced pottery of many kinds, often featuring lines, patterns, and designed rims.<sup>9</sup> Some of the pottery was marked with tamgas (tribe symbols). In most regions of Khazaria, the Khazars used red and green clay to produce pottery, but Daghestani Khazars primarily used gray clay.<sup>10</sup>

The Khazars created an abundance of beautiful jewelry, including bracelets, rings, chains, and earrings produced from gold, silver, bronze, or glass. Some of the motifs on the jewelry amaze archaeologists. For instance, specimens of Khazar jewelry depicting a woman have been found in the Caucasus.<sup>11</sup> Dubbed the “Khazar Madonna,” she may represent a shamanistic deity, perhaps Umay (see chapter 6). A stone mold used to make quadrangular pendants was excavated from a site in Kharkiv oblast.<sup>12</sup> Part of a slate mold used to make beads was unearthed at Mayaki.<sup>13</sup>

Burials at Upper Saltov contained ample evidence of Khazarian industry, including ornaments, ceramics, weapons, a harness, and other items. The objects were manufactured from iron, bronze, silver, gold, bones, glass, cornelian, amethyst, rock crystal, and other materials. Other noteworthy finds at Upper Saltov included a Turkic hat made of felt that was found in catacomb number nineteen, and two Turkic boots made of felt and leather that were found in catacomb number twenty-two.<sup>14</sup> The left boot was decorated with bronze and silver plates that depicted flowers (among which were some that were lotus-shaped), faces, and geometric designs. It had a rectangular buckle made from bronze. Three silver dirhams that had been reused as ornaments upon their retirement from coin circulation were found in catacomb number twenty-four.

Particularly extraordinary Khazarian artwork was discovered during the 1990s on horn plates in a catacomb burial near Shilovka in the middle Volga region of Russia.<sup>15</sup> The pictures feature several animals—including two dragons, horses, a rabbit, and a bear—as well as archers and numerous helmeted soldiers carrying long spears. The presence of the dragons demonstrates a Chinese influence.

Among the weapons and battle attire manufactured by the Khazars for the army's soldiers were battle-axes; knives; spears; swords; sabers; bows and arrows; *kistens* (morning stars with a heavy ball made from iron, bronze, lead, bone, or stone, and which were round, oval, or [less commonly] spiked in shape, and affixed by a chain or thong to a long handle); helmets; and chain armor.<sup>16</sup> Most Khazarian battle-axes were *chekans*—small axes containing a long, narrow blade on one end and a hammer on the other end. However, some other Khazarian battle-axes had a second blade, smaller than the main one, in place of a hammer, and a few others had a pointed spike in that position. Khazarian sword types included *palashes* (broadswords with a long, straight, single-edged blade) as well as swords with shorter blades. Saltovo sabers typically had a single-edged curved blade with only the tip of the blade being double edged. Their handles were either straight or curved. At the end of each handle was an oval-shaped pommel (a counterweight to balance the sword).

Some members of the Saltovo-Mayaki culture, particularly those near the western border of the Khazar Empire, lived in close proximity to Slavs.<sup>17</sup> For instance, some lived in the land that is at present Bogatoye in the Izmail raion of the Odessa oblast (southern Ukraine). Remains of a yurt were found there. During the ninth and tenth centuries, the Saltovo peoples operated a pottery shop and an iron workshop in Bogatoye.<sup>18</sup> Archaeologists discovered that the Saltovo craftsmen of Bogatoye often sold their goods to their Slavic neighbors. Saltovo peoples also sold their wares to Slavs living in other regions.

Slavs living in Sumy oblast used Saltovo amphoras and plaques, and those in Kharkiv oblast used Saltovo amphoras and pottery.<sup>19</sup> Saltovo pottery also reached locations in Chernovitsy oblast, an area with predominantly East Slavic inhabitants.<sup>20</sup>

The material culture of early Kiev—including weapons, belts, belt buckles, and harnesses—bears a resemblance to the characteristic Saltovo style.<sup>21</sup> Excavations at a medieval settlement near the village of Khodosovka, near the Dnieper, unearthed a clay pot that was like typical Slavic pottery from the settlement except that its ornamentation was designed by a Khazar.<sup>22</sup> The extent to which the Khazars and other Turkic tribes influenced the arts and crafts of the Kievan region is a subject worthy of continued investigation.

## KHAZAR AGRICULTURE AND FOOD GATHERING

Agriculture, fishing, livestock breeding, and hunting were very important activities in Khazaria.

Crop agriculture prevailed in many parts of the Khazar Empire, particularly in the northern forest zone, while nomadic pastoralism prevailed in some parts of the southern steppe zone. Archaeologists conducting excavations on the Crimean and Taman peninsulas and along the River Don have gathered evidence that the peoples of Khazaria used plows, hoes, sickles, scythes, shovels, spades, and other agricultural tools. The hoes and plows were used for working the soil, while the sickles and scythes were used for cutting grains at harvesting time. Farmers in the Don valley used two different types of wooden plows, one heavier than the other; the heavier plow was used for harder work and had a colter.<sup>23</sup> Whereas large scythes were used for harvesting grains for human consumption, short scythes were used for harvesting hay for animals.

Among the crops cultivated in the steppe lands in Khazaria were millet, wheat, barley, rye, hemp, and garden vegetables (e.g., peas).<sup>24</sup> The farmers of the Don valley and Daghestan manually operated millstones<sup>25</sup> for grinding grain to produce flour. They stored their excess yield in grain pits. Several grain pits were found at Dmitrievko in the Belgorod oblast and at Samkarsh. Melon and cucumber seeds and the remains of grapes and cherries were also found during excavations of Khazar settlements.<sup>26</sup> A grapevine-pruning knife was found during digs at Tsimlyan near the Don's right bank.<sup>27</sup> The town of Balanjar was also one of the grape- and cherry-growing centers in the kingdom. Grape-growing was certainly one of the most productive activities for the Khazar farmers. Wines were produced on the Crimean and Taman peninsulas in large quantities.

According to the *Reply of King Joseph to Hasdai ibn Shaprut*, the Khazars of Atil lived in their city during the winter, but in the month of Nisan (March–April), they would go to the fields and gardens for the cultivation of their crops. Each Khazar family had its own hereditary estate. King Joseph also reported that there were many orchards and vineyards in the Khazar Empire. However, he added that rainfall was not frequent around Atil. The fertility of the land of the lower Volga region depended largely on rivers, streams, and springs. The Khazars tended to engage in agriculture along the edges of rivers while pursuing nomadic pastoralism elsewhere, according to Bartha.<sup>28</sup> The Khazars created irrigation canals between the Terek and Sulak rivers and other parts of the northeastern Caucasus because of the lack of sufficient rainfall.<sup>29</sup> By contrast, in the Don valley, there was already sufficient rainfall, so irrigation was not necessary in order to produce a bountiful harvest.

Crops were transported both by river and by carts, according to al-Istakhri. The Khazars used skiffs for sailing along the Volga River.<sup>30</sup>

Al-Istakhri wrote that rice and fish were the staple foods in the diet of the residents of Khazaran-Atil.<sup>31</sup> The Khazars caught many kinds of fish, including sturgeon, carp, sterlet, perch, and beluga. Archaeologists have located a net ballast, fishing hooks, and spears which once belonged to Saltovo fishermen.<sup>32</sup>

Nomadic pastoralism and animal keeping took place in many parts of the southern steppes of Khazaria. Livestock domestication was practiced by many of the Khazars, Alans, and Bulgars. Horses were bred for riding, pulling carts, and meat. Sheep were raised for wool. The breeding and raising of cattle, goats, birds, donkeys, pigs, and oxen was also commonplace in the kingdom. The Khazars along the Don and Donets kept their animals in stables. Pigs and horses were fed barley, hay, and straw.<sup>33</sup> Aside from farm animals, the Khazars possessed many domesticated camels,<sup>34</sup> cats, and dogs. The camels helped to transport goods. Archaeological studies have concluded that beekeeping also took place in Khazaria.<sup>35</sup>

The peoples of Khazaria hunted wild boars, beavers, elks, foxes, birds,<sup>36</sup> and rabbits. For hunting, the Khazars and other tribes used arrows, bows, spears, axes, and lassos.<sup>37</sup>

## THE STRUCTURE OF KHAZAR HOMES

Most domiciles in Khazaran and Atil were felt tents (yurts), along with a smaller number of clay houses, owing to the fact that the kagan did not allow people to build houses with brick; thus, only royal and public buildings were

built from brick.<sup>38</sup> Stone and wood were also utilized for a variety of buildings constructed in the empire, including homes.

At Balanjar, dwellings were generally small, circular, single-room yurts with an open fireplace in the center. These were typical of nomads. However, some of the residents of Balanjar lived in dwellings with two or more rooms and stone foundations.

Similarly, some of the Turkic peoples of the southern Don valley lived in round, yurtlike homes with open fireplaces in the center, resembling the yurts of central Asia and southern Siberia. By contrast, a typical farmer of northern Khazaria would live in a permanent square-shaped house (e.g., a home with walls made from wood logs or from reeds, mud, and wooden stakes) and would create a stove out of stone and place it in a corner of his home, rather than in the center. As time went on, the nomadic herdsmen of southern Khazaria also transformed their living quarters into more permanent structures by sinking their tents into the ground and covering the sides of the tents with turf for warmth during the winter season.<sup>39</sup> At some Khazarian settlements along the Don, such as Tsimlyanskaya hill fort, both nomadic yurts and permanent structures existed.<sup>40</sup> Permanent Khazarian homes often featured earthworks and ditches.

## KHAZAR COSTUME AND HAIRSTYLE

Al-Istakhri wrote, “The dress of the Khazars and surrounding nations is coats and tunics.”<sup>41</sup> The Rus’ wore the “short coat,” while the Khazars, Bulgars, and Pechenegs wore the “full coat.”<sup>42</sup> These “full coats” were essentially koftans—similar to the long gowns worn by Ashkenazic Jews in the nineteenth century.

Turkic men and women wore their hair in braids. According to a seventh-century Chinese account, only the Turkic kagan could have long flowing hair (tied with a ribbon), so the nobility and warriors wore braided hair instead.<sup>43</sup> Proof that this Turkic custom was inherited by the Khazars comes from two archaeological relics: (1) a Khazar silver scoop from the eighth or ninth century, found at Kotskii Gorodok on the Ob River in western Siberia; and (2) a drinking horn from beneath the Chorna Mohyla<sup>44</sup> (“Black Barrow”) mound in Chernigov, dating from the 960s. The artwork on these relics depicts the Khazarian epic motif of the defeat of the kagan during a fight with his rival. It has even been suggested that these images represent the ancient Turkic tradition of the ritual murder of the kagan,<sup>45</sup> which was discussed in chapter 3.

The rim of the Khazar scoop from Kotskii Gorodok features two dismounted horsemen engaged in wrestling. One of the wrestlers has loose hair

tied with a ribbon, but the other has braided hair.<sup>46</sup> They are surrounded by their bows and horses.

A silver mounting on the drinking horn from Chernigov shows two running archers. The Khazar archer has long braided hair, whereas the Rus' (Viking) enemy chasing after him has loose hair and outstretched hands. Accompanying the image are two birds, two griffins, and three other animals. The creatures were portrayed according to Nordic artistic traditions.<sup>47</sup> The archer with loose hair was probably considered to be the prince (kagan) of Kievan Rus' by the artist.

## KHAZAR GRAVES

Burials in the Khazar Empire took many forms, including cenotaphs, catacomb graves with underground chambers, burials in pits with horses, and the burial of men and women together.<sup>48</sup> The various peoples under Khazar rule seem to have had different types of graves.

Pagans in Khazaria buried their dead with items they owned during their life on Earth, so that they would accompany them in the afterlife. Khazarian graves—including those at Upper Saltov, Bulganakskoye in the Crimea, Martan-Chu in modern-day Chechen-Ingushetia, and Nizhne-Arkhyzsk in modern-day Karachay-Cherkessia—often included glass beads, glass vessels, glass bracelets, mirrors, and other glassware products.<sup>49</sup> Most of these were products of the Saltovo-Mayaki culture. Shamanistic Khazars also put other items in their graves, including buttons, belt buckles, earrings, rings, bronze ornaments, stone beads, pottery, saddles, iron swords, bows, arrows, axes, and lances. Khazar graves sometimes contained foreign-made objects, attesting to cultural interactions with much of the rest of the world through trade.

Sarkel's burials included circular pits of a pagan nature. There were also ritual shamanistic burials of humans and animals under buildings at Sarkel, placed to try to protect the inhabitants of the town from evil spirits.<sup>50</sup>

Chastiye Kurgany, in the Rostov region of Russia, was the site of Khazarian kurgans whose skeletons were accompanied by such objects as arrowheads, an iron stirrup, a gold earring, a silver pendant from a belt, bronze belt pendants, bone facings from a bow, and ceramic shards.<sup>51</sup>

At one time, the Khazars practiced cremation, according to the anonymous Persian history *Mughmal at-tawârîh*, written circa 1126.<sup>52</sup>

Many of the forms of burial that the Khazars used prior to their conversion violate Jewish law. For instance, Jewish law prohibits cremation, and typical Jewish graves are simpler and do not contain possessions of value.

## LANGUAGES SPOKEN BY THE KHAZARS

Several Arabic historians of the tenth century described the original Khazar language as one bearing some resemblance to the Bulgar language while retaining distinctive qualities. Al-Istakhri wrote,

The Bulgar language resembles that of the Khazars, while the Burtas speak another language. Similarly, the Rus' language is different from both the Khazars' and Burtas' languages.<sup>53</sup>

Ibn Fadlan wrote,

The language of the Khazars does not resemble the Persian nor the Turkish languages, nor any other language in the world, even if it does resemble the language of the Bulgars.<sup>54</sup>

Ibn Hauqal, writing several decades later, confirmed al-Istakhri's notice:

The Bulgar language is like the one of the Khazars.<sup>55</sup>

In addition, ibn Hauqal wrote these sentiments echoing ibn Fadlan's remarks: "The language of the Khazars is different from that of the Persians and Turks." If these statements are accurate, it would appear that the Khazar language can be described as having affinities to the Oghuric linguistic group, a unique branch of the Turkic linguistic family (see table 4.1). The modern Chuvash language, spoken in the Chuvash Republic of western Russia, is the

**Table 4.1. The Turkic Linguistic Family**

<b>SIBERIAN (NORTHERN)</b> Southern Altai, Northern Altai, Chulym, Dolgan, Karagas (Tofa), Khakas (Abakan Turkic), Shor, Tuvinian, Yakut (Sakha)	<b>CHAGATAY (EASTERN)</b> Aynu, Chagataysh,* Ili Turki, Salar, Uyghur, Yellow Uyghur (West Yugur), Southern Uzbek, Northern Uzbek
<b>KIPCHAK (CENTRAL)</b> Bashkir, Belarusian-Lithuanian Tatar,* Crimean Tatar, Cuman (Kipchak),* Karachay-Balkar, Karaim, Karakalpak, Kazak, Krymchak,* Kumyk, Kyrgyz, Nogay, Pecheneg,* Tatar (Volga Tatar)	<b>OGHURIC (WESTERN)</b> Chuvash, Danubian Bulgar,* Volga Bulgar*
	<b>OGHUZ (SOUTHWESTERN)</b> Southern Azeri, Northern Azeri, Balkan Turkic, Gagauz Turkish, Ottoman Turkish,* Qashqai, Quchani (Khorasani Turkish), Salchuq, Turkish (Anatolian Turkish), Turkmen

\*extinct language

only living language in the Oghuric group.<sup>56</sup> Omeljan Pritsak believed that the Khazar language was equivalent to the ancient Hunnic language.<sup>57</sup>

Unfortunately, we still know very little about the grammar and vocabulary of Khazarian, because few definite traces of the language have survived. Two known Khazarian place-names have been determined to show Chuvashic affiliations: the fortress Sarkel and a river named Hara siu.<sup>58</sup> Our limited word stock does not appear to be sufficient to identify Khazarian as a Chuvashic language, though that remains a possibility. At present, the debate over whether the Khazars spoke an Oghuric Turkic or Common Turkic language is not able to be settled.

The Khazars wrote their original language in Turkic runic letters. Examples of Turkic runic writing have been found at various sites from the former Khazaria. A single Turkic word was affixed to the *Kievan Letter* (see chapter 6). Turkic runes were found in a cave in Kerch, on two flasks from Novocherkassk, and on stones at the Mayaki hill fort. Other examples of Turkic written language were found inscribed on large stones in Khumar (in present-day Karachay-Cherkessia) but were misused by local residents instead of being preserved in museums and translated.<sup>59</sup> Scientists did, however, have the opportunity to study the Turkic runes at the Khumar citadel. The main difficulty is in differentiating between Khazar-produced runes and other types of runes. Some of the runes may be in the Khazar language, while others might be in Bulgar or some other language. (The runes at Khumar, for instance, are likely to be Bulgar.) In fact, the only runes which may at this time be unquestionably classified as Khazarian are those on the *Kievan Letter*.

One of the major characteristics of Jewish life throughout history has been the use of Hebrew as a liturgical and, sometimes, a written and spoken language. When the Khazars adopted Judaism, they gradually adopted Jewish customs, including the Hebrew language. The *Schechter Letter* and *King Joseph's Reply* were composed in Hebrew, as was the *Kievan Letter*, though the Khazar affiliation of the Jews who wrote the latter is sometimes debated (see chapter 6). There is also additional evidence that seems to demonstrate that the Khazars adopted Hebrew. For instance, the Arabic writer Muhammad ibn Ishaq an-Nadim of Baghdad, in his *Kitab al-Fihrist* (Book of the List), composed circa 987–988, indicated that the Khazars used Hebrew letters when writing.<sup>60</sup> On the other hand, some Khazars probably spoke Greek in addition to Hebrew (see the summary of the *Chronicle of Elchanan the Merchant* in chapter 1).

The Khazars would have been able to learn how to read and write Hebrew from recent Jewish immigrants to Khazaria as well as from the old Jewish communities of the Crimea. Indeed, there exists evidence that the Crimean Jews of the Khazar era were fully acquainted with Hebrew and were willing



to teach the language even to Christians. For instance, the evangelist Saint Cyril gained extensive knowledge of Hebrew during his stay in the city of Cherson in 860–861 (see chapter 6). Using his newly acquired knowledge, Cyril incorporated elements of Hebrew letters into the Glagolitic character set he developed; for instance, the letter III (representing the sound *sh*) was derived from the Hebrew letter *shin* (שׁ). The Cyrillic character set, created in the 890s, borrowed this letter, as well as the structure of what later became the letter III (representing the sound *shch* in Russian), from Glagolitic. Moreover, the Cyrillic letter II (representing the sound *ts* in Russian) was derived from the Hebrew letter *tzaddi* (צ).

Evidence from the Persian work *Ta'rikh-i Fakhr ad-Din Mubarak Shah*, composed in 1206, indicates that the Khazars at some point switched from the Hebrew alphabet to a Cyrillic-like alphabet. The relevant passage reads,

The Khazars have a script which is related to the script of the Russians [Rus] [alternatively: “derived from that of the Russians”]. A group of Greeks [Rum] who are near them write in this script and are called Greek Russians [Rum-Rus]. They write from left to right, and the letters are not joined to one another. They number twenty-one. The greater part of these Khazars who use this script are Jews.<sup>61</sup>

The Catalan Jewish traveler Ibrahim ibn Yaqub wrote, in the second half of the tenth century, that the Khazars spoke the language of the “Saqalibah” (Slavs) due to frequent contacts between the two groups.<sup>62</sup> He also mentioned knowledge of Slavic among Rus', Pechenegs, and two other peoples. But knowledge of Slavic could hardly have been universal among the Khazars of this period.

## NOTES

1. Douglas M. Dunlop, *The History of the Jewish Khazars* (New York: Schocken, 1967), 96.

2. Ananiasz Zajaczkowski, “Khazarian Culture and Its Inheritors,” *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 12 (1961): 300.

3. Thomas S. Noonan, “The Khazar Economy,” *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 9 (1995–1997): 272–74, 287.

4. Bozena I. Werbart, “Khazars or ‘Saltovo-Majaki Culture’? Prejudices about Archaeology and Ethnicity,” *Current Swedish Archaeology* 4 (1996): 204, 205.

5. Werbart, “Khazars or ‘Saltovo-Majaki Culture’?” 205.

6. Jonathan Shepard, “The Khazars’ Formal Adoption of Judaism and Byzantium’s Northern Policy,” *Oxford Slavonic Papers, New Series* 31 (1998): 16.

7. Richard A. E. Mason, "The Religious Beliefs of the Khazars," *The Ukrainian Quarterly* 51, no. 4 (Winter 1995): 405.
8. Antal Bartha, *Hungarian Society in the 9th and 10th Centuries*, trans. K. Balazs (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1975), 13.
9. Werbart, "Khazars or 'Saltovo-Majaki Culture'?" 213.
10. Noonan, "The Khazar Economy," 275–77.
11. Ehud Ya'ari, "Skeletons in the Closet," *The Jerusalem Report* 6, no. 9 (September 7, 1995): 30.
12. Thomas S. Noonan, "What Can Archaeology Tell Us about the Economy of Khazaria?" in *The Archaeology of the Steppes*, ed. Bruno Genito (Napoli, Italy: Istituto Universitario Orientale, 1994), 334–35.
13. Noonan, "What Can Archaeology Tell Us about the Economy of Khazaria?" 334.
14. Vladimir V. Koloda, "Issledovaniya v Verkhnem Saltove v 1996 godu," *Vostochnoyevropeyskiy Arkheologicheskii Zhurnal* 12 (September–October 2001).
15. Svetlana A. Pletnyova, *Ocherki Khazarской Arkheologii* (Moscow: Mosti Kul'turi, and Jerusalem: Gesharim, 1999), 235 and Figure 119.
16. A. V. Komar and Oleg V. Sukhobokov, "Vooruzheniye i voennoye delo Khazarского kaganata," *Vostochnoyevropeyskiy Arkheologicheskii Zhurnal* 3 (March–April 2000).
17. Slavs and Saltovo peoples shared a cemetery at Suhaya Gomol'sha (see Noonan, "What Can Archaeology Tell Us about the Economy of Khazaria?" 338). Several Saltovo battle-axes were found at Suhaya Gomol'sha.
18. Noonan, "The Khazar Economy," 309–10. Archaeologists found slag (refuse from iron smelting) at the iron workshop.
19. Noonan, "What Can Archaeology Tell Us about the Economy of Khazaria?" 338.
20. Noonan, "What Can Archaeology Tell Us about the Economy of Khazaria?" 342.
21. Vladimir Ia. Petrukhin, "The Normans and the Khazars in the South of Rus' (The Formation of the 'Russian Land' in the Middle Dnepr Area)," *Russian History/Histoire Russe* 19 (1992): 397.
22. Valentina O. Petraschenko, "Do problemy arkheologichnoy interpretatsii litopisnikh polyan," in *Starozhitnosti Rusi-Ukraini: zbornik naukovikh prats'*, ed. Petro P. Tolochko (Kiev: Kyivs'ka akademiya yevrobiznesu, 1994), 181–87.
23. István Fodor, *In Search of a New Homeland*, trans. Helen Tarnoy (Gyoma, Hungary: Corvina, 1982), 219.
24. For instance, archaeologists excavated millet and wheat grains at the Khazar village Chopolav-tepe in Daghestan as well as at the Saltovo settlement of Rogalik.
25. The millstones were typically made from quartz, but occasionally also from sandstone, limestone, or granite (see Vladimir V. Koloda and S. A. Gorbanenko, "Zemledel'cheskii kompleks rannesrednevekovogo naseleniya Verkhnego Saltova," *Khazarский Al'manakh* 2 [2004]: 173–74).
26. Csanád Bálint, "Some Archaeological Addenda to P. Golden's Khazar Studies," *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 35, nos. 2–3 (1981): 407; Noonan, "The Khazar Economy," 267–68.
27. Bartha, *Hungarian Society in the 9th and 10th Centuries*, 52.

28. Bartha, *Hungarian Society in the 9th and 10th Centuries*, 54.
29. Noonan, "The Khazar Economy," 266.
30. Vladimir F. Minorsky, *A History of Sharvan and Darband in the 10th–11th Centuries* (Cambridge, England: W. Heffer & Sons, 1958), 148.
31. Dunlop, *The History of the Jewish Khazars*, 93.
32. Bálint, "Some Archaeological Addenda to P. Golden's Khazar Studies," 407; Noonan, "The Khazar Economy," 270.
33. Koloda and Gorbanenko, "Zemledel' cheskii kompleks rannesrednevekovogo naseleniya Verkhnego Saltova," 169.
34. Dunlop, *The History of the Jewish Khazars*, 224. Camel bones were found at Sarkel, at the Tsimlyansk hill fort, and at Karnaukhovo (north of Sarkel) as well as at Slavic settlements in the upper Don region (see Roman 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]: 103–4). According to Gardizi, the Burtas also owned many camels.
35. Bozena I. Wyszomirska, "Religion som enande politisk-social länk—exemplet: Det Kazariska riket," in *Arkeologi och Religion*, ed. Lars Larsson and Bozena I. Wyszomirska (Lund, Sweden: University of Lund, 1989), 138.
36. Birds inhabiting Khazaria included geese, swans, bustards, pelicans, storks, eagles, and chickens.
37. Noonan, "The Khazar Economy," 271
38. Dunlop, *The History of the Jewish Khazars*, 92.
39. Fodor, *In Search of a New Homeland*, 215.
40. Werbart, "Khazars or 'Saltovo-Majaki Culture'?" 211.
41. Dunlop, *The History of the Jewish Khazars*, 96.
42. Dunlop, *The History of the Jewish Khazars*, 99.
43. Vladimir Ia. Petrukhin, "The Early History of Old Russian Art: The Rhyton from Chernigov and Khazarian Tradition," *Tor* 27, no. 2 (1995): 482–83.
44. Its equivalent Russian name is Chernaya Mogila.
45. Petrukhin, "The Early History of Old Russian Art," 483.
46. Petrukhin, "The Early History of Old Russian Art," 481.
47. Petrukhin, "The Early History of Old Russian Art," 477.
48. Werbart, "Khazars or 'Saltovo-Majaki Culture'?" 213.
49. Noonan, "The Khazar Economy," 282–83, 301.
50. Svetlana A. Pletnyova, *Sarkel i "Shiolkovyi" Put'* (Voronezh, Russia: Izdatel'stvo Voronezhskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta, 1996), 36–38, 91–92.
51. Personal correspondence with Vladimir Klyutchnikov, head of the Chastiye Kurgany archaeological team.
52. Mason, "The Religious Beliefs of the Khazars," 410.
53. Gyula Pauler and Sandor Szilágyi, *A magyar honfoglalás kútfoi* (Budapest: Nap, 1995), 239.
54. Pauler and Szilágyi, *A magyar honfoglalás kútfoi*, 216.
55. Pauler and Szilágyi, *A magyar honfoglalás kútfoi*, 239. In *Al-Athir al-Baqiyah* ("Ancient History and Geography"), Abu Raihan Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Biruni (973–1048) wrote that the Suvars and Bulgars of Volga Bulgharia spoke a language

that was a combination of the Khazar and Turkic languages (see Peter B. Golden, *An Introduction to the History of the Turkic Peoples* [Wiesbaden, Germany: Otto Harrassowitz, 1992], 235).

56. The precise origins of the Chuvash people are still a mystery. The Chuvash might be descended from Suwar/Sabir people who mixed with Finnic tribes (including the Mari, Mordvin, and Burtas) and Turkic tribes (including the Bulgars) (see Peter B. Golden, *An Introduction to the History of the Turkic Peoples*, 396).

57. Omeljan Pritsak, "The Pre-Ashkenazic Jews of Eastern Europe in Relation to the Khazars, the Rus' and the Lithuanians," in *Ukrainian-Jewish Relations in Historical Perspective*, ed. Howard Aster and Peter J. Potichnyj (Edmonton, Alberta, Canada: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 1990), 4. Pritsak has used the term "Hunno-Bulgaric" to describe Oghuric Turkic.

58. András Róna-Tas, *Hungarians and Europe in the Early Middle Ages*, trans. Nicholas Bodoczky (Budapest: Central European University Press, 1999), 114.

59. Ya'ari, "Skeletons in the Closet," 27.

60. Peter B. Golden, "Khazaria and Judaism," *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 3 (1983): 142.

61. Golden, "Khazaria and Judaism," 142; Dunlop, *The History of the Jewish Khazars*, 120. Both options provided in the first sentence are possible translations of the phrase (personal correspondence with Peter B. Golden, January 26, 2006).

62. Dunlop, *The History of the Jewish Khazars*, 230; Mykhailo Hrushevsky, *History of Ukraine-Rus'*, vol. 1, trans. Marta Skorupsky (Edmonton, Alberta: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 1997), 486.



## Chapter Five

# Khazarian Trade

*Commercial activity flourished in southern Russia and Ukraine during the Khazarian era. The principal traders with Khazaria were the Radhanites and the Rus'. Arabs, Chinese, Oghuz Turks, and other peoples also traded with the Khazars.*

*The Khazars occasionally struck their own coins in imitation of Arabic coins. Most of the Khazar coins were not circulated within the Khazar Empire for any considerable period of time, but rather quickly found their way to external trading partners in Scandinavia and elsewhere.*

### KHAZARIA AS A GREAT MEDIEVAL TRADING CENTER

Khazaria was a major center for trade, especially in the eighth and ninth centuries. The classic Persian geographical essay *Hudud al-'Alam* described Khazaria as a land of plenty: "This is a very pleasant and prosperous country with great riches. From it come cows, sheep, and innumerable slaves."<sup>1</sup> Thus, it naturally attracted much commercial activity. The Khazars controlled several trade routes that connected Asia and Europe. One of the most important of these was along the Volga. Other significant Khazarian trade routes were those along the River Don, the Azov Sea, the Black Sea, and the Caspian Sea.

The Khazar kagan required traders to pay customs duties and tithes on merchandise transported by both land and water routes. For example, when the Rus' brought valuables that they intended to export past the city of Atil, the Khazars taxed them according to the value of the goods. Lesser chiefs also demanded payment. Ibn al-Faqih of Hamadan, the author of *Kitab al-Buldan*

(circa 902), indicated that when the Rus' reached Sarkel on the Don, the local Khazar governor of Sarkel took one-tenth of their merchandise.<sup>2</sup>

Members of the Khazar tribe were directly involved in trading. According to Gardizi, the Khazars traded candle wax and honey.<sup>3</sup> Khazars were also merchants of wine, exporting it to the Caucasus and Mesopotamia; much of this wine originated from Samandar. Archaeological research has shown that Khazarian-made silver bowls, cups, belts, and belt ornaments were exported to the Urals (the present-day Perm province), western Siberia (the Ob River region), and Kievan Rus' (the Riazan province), among other places. Other materials that the Khazars exported did not originate from the Khazar Empire but rather from other lands. For instance, the Khazars often exported central Asian silver dishes and Persian coins to the Urals.<sup>4</sup> Until the close of the ninth century, Arabic silver was transported through Khazaria into eastern Europe.

The Khazars dealt with a wide range of trading partners throughout Eurasia. Khazars traded in Khwarizm's capital, Kath, where they found a large selection of quilts, cotton goods, felt, and cushion covers.<sup>5</sup> Several caravan trade routes linked Khazaria with other nations. Al-Istakhri mentioned that trading caravans led from Gurganj, an Oghuz trading center in Khwarizm, to Khazaria and Khorasan.<sup>6</sup> Caravans also departed from the city of Bulghar on the upper Volga. Khazar merchants often traveled to Volga Bulgharia to barter with the Bulgars.<sup>7</sup> A Volga Bulgar cemetery in Tankeev was found to contain Saltovo pottery and earrings, and Saltovo pottery was also imported into the Volga Bulgar city of Biliar.<sup>8</sup> Additionally, the Khazars in Daghestan traded extensively with the Alans. Some of the approximately one hundred Alanic tombs from Klin Yar in the north Caucasus contain Khazarian artifacts, including bronze bells and mirrors.<sup>9</sup>

Pottery from Armenia, Iraq, Iran, Khwarizm, and other lands in the Middle East and central Asia was imported into Sarkel.<sup>10</sup> Spherical cones were exported from Oren-kala in Azerbaijan to the Mayaki hill fort in Khazaria.<sup>11</sup> Jangling pendants from the upper Volga and Urals region, as well as foreign scabbards from other lands, also ended up in Khazaria.<sup>12</sup>

The Khazar Empire, as a bridge between East and West, contained overland routes that led to the famous "Silk Road." After trading in Khazaria, traders sometimes traveled to Turpan (Turfan), Kashgar, and the Pamir Mountains, where they met other Turkic tribes (ancestors of the Uyghurs and Kyrgyz). It was also possible to continue eastward on the route in order to reach China. Silk, incense, perfumes, spices, coral, gold and silver coins, and gems such as pearls and emeralds were among the many items transported on the Silk Road by Jews and other traders. Among the most interesting Asian imports to Khazaria were cowrie shells from the Indian Ocean and a comb made from elephant ivory.<sup>13</sup> Another noteworthy elephant ivory product that

arrived in Khazaria was an elephant-shaped chess piece which came to Sarkel from India, Sogdiana, or Persia. It dates to approximately the tenth century and is now housed at the Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg. Several other chess fragments were also found at Sarkel, also from the tenth or eleventh century. Some chess historians, including M. K. Goniaev and Ivan Temofeevich Savenkov, have suggested that the game of chess may have been transmitted to the peoples of eastern Europe by way of the Khazars, who in turn acquired it apparently from the Persians, and later researchers like Isaak Linder and Victor Keats thought this hypothesis was highly tenable (since the Khazars were the first tribe in Russia to own chess pieces) though not yet established for certain.<sup>14</sup> Evidence for chess was found at many archaeological sites in Kievan Rus' and Poland from the eleventh through the thirteenth centuries, indicating that the game certainly became widespread in the period immediately following the Khazar era.

Paper, another Asian invention, also reached Khazaria. Paper and henna were found in Sarkel's fortress along with a skeleton. Scholars determined that the paper had been made in Samarkand in central Asia.<sup>15</sup>

There are indications that the Khazars traded in Sweden and even settled there in small colonies. Birka, situated on a small island in Lake Mälaren in eastern Sweden south of Uppsala, was one of the chief Viking trading centers during the ninth and tenth centuries and drew traders from many nations. It was inhabited by about five hundred to six hundred people,<sup>16</sup> and items imported there included a French or Rhenish pitcher<sup>17</sup> and furs<sup>18</sup> from the Lapps, Finns, and Rus'. The archaeologist Holger Arbman (1904–1968) identified several graves in Birka that contained objects imported from Khazaria. For instance, Birka grave number 716 (a non-coffin grave) contained a "Khazar girdle" which resembled girdles from the Upper Saltov grave fields.<sup>19</sup> According to Björn Ambrosiani, former chief archaeologist of Sweden and director of the Birka excavations, a Khazar ceramic jar was found in a Birka grave. Asiatic articles of clothing found at Birka—such as kaftans, hussar jackets, fur-trimmed hats, bronze mounts for leather belts, an "eastern" button, and balloon trousers—may also be of Khazarian origin. Arbman believed that at least two of the Birka graves belonged to members of the Khazar tribe. By contrast, other scholars suggest that the traces of Khazar culture in Birka arrived through Rus' intermediaries, rather than from Khazars themselves:

There is much to suggest that the Khazars had a very strong political influence on the eastern Slavs before the consolidation of the early Russian state; and that the battles with the Khazars and later nomads, the Pecenegs and Polovtsians, set a very pronounced stamp on the Rus warrior class and, through the Russian connections, on the warriors of Sweden. The dress of the wealthier classes in Birka



and other places in Sweden was greatly influenced by the Orient, and belts, belt fittings, axes and other objects in tenth-century graves not infrequently stem from the nomads of the steppes, or copy nomadic or even Islamic prototypes.<sup>20</sup>

Several of the objects found at Birka which apparently originated from Khazaria are characterized as belonging to a post-Sassanidic style of art. Birka grave number 838 (a chamber grave), for example, contained a silver strap-end mounting composed under the influence of Persian style. The mounting contains a plant motif and two birds of prey enclosed by rhombuses. Arbman believed that it is possibly Khazarian, since it is somewhat distinctive from similar Hungarian and Persian mountings.<sup>21</sup> Silver pendant pieces portraying ornamental vine branches and palmettos were found in Birka grave number 965 (a chamber grave), and Arbman wrote that these, too, were probably manufactured by the Khazars.<sup>22</sup>

A miniature Khazarian stirrup from the lower Volga was attached to a necklace of rock crystals and carnelian beads that was found in another grave at Birka.

## THE JEWISH RADHANITES

The Jewish Radhanite merchants were among the traders who crossed Khazaria when venturing to and returning from China, India, and other parts of Asia. The Radhanites also traveled to Spain.

Radhanite trading activity especially prospered from the 750s to the 830s. The Radhanites exported many items from eastern Asia, including the spices cinnamon, musk, aloe, and camphor. "For more than 100 years," wrote Matthew Goodman, "virtually every bit of spice that entered Christian Europe did so as a result of Radanite trade."<sup>23</sup> In addition, they exported swords, silk, furs, and slaves from Europe. Ibn Khordadbeh, a Persian geographer and traveler, stated in his mid-ninth-century work *Kitab al-Masalik wa'l-Mamalik* ("Book of Routes and Kingdoms") that the Radhanites spoke the Persian, Slavic, Spanish, Frankish (*ifraniya*), Greek, and Arabic languages.<sup>24</sup> Being Jewish, they also undoubtedly knew at least some Hebrew. Their remarkable multilingual abilities were useful assets, since they encountered trading partners from many diverse cultures. They often traveled between Persia and Europe via the Caucasus Mountains and went as far east as China. One of their routes traversed the Slavic lands to Khamlikh, from which traders entered the Caspian Sea toward Balkh and Mawara'an-Nahr, which then led to the Wurut Toghuzghuz and passages into China. Evidence of Radhanite trading activity in China includes a letter from an early eighth-

century Persian Jewish merchant that was found at Khotan in western China (Xinjiang province).<sup>25</sup>

Historians have generally assumed that the Radhanites originated in Provence (southern France), but Moshe Gil argued that they actually came from the eastern shore of the Tigris River in Iraq, known in medieval times as the district of Radhan.<sup>26</sup> Multiple accounts indicated that Radhan was a region in the vicinity of Persia and Baghdad. A fertile land with many date palms and wheat fields, Radhan was inhabited by numerous Christians and Jews. There was also a village called Radhan in the vicinity of Baghdad, according to Ibn al-Athir, al-Bakri, and al-Suyuti.<sup>27</sup> On the other hand, Gil's theory does not account for the origins of all of the Radhanite traders. All four Radhanite routes described by Ibn Khordadbeh started in Provence at one end, and many of the traders on the routes were French Jews. While the traders collectively knew six gentile languages, there was not necessarily a particular gentile language that all traders individually understood. There is no evidence that they all knew Persian, which they probably would have had they all owned homes in Persia. The foregoing does not rule out the possibility that Persian Jews were the trailblazers on these routes.

The traveling Radhanites established social and cultural relations between Central Europe and Kievan Rus' and Khazaria. Beginning in the middle of the ninth century, trading became extensive between Regensburg (a major southern German city) and the Khazar capital, Atil; the cities of Vienna and Kiev served as major trading centers along the route.<sup>28</sup> Over the years, the Khazars came increasingly into contact with the western Jews, in large part because of the Regensburg-Kiev-Atil route.

After the Rus' conquered Atil in the 960s and the Khazar Empire subsequently fell apart (see chapter 8), the northwestern shore of the Caspian no longer served as a central station for Jewish traders. Although Atil was cut off from the route by the eleventh century, Kiev remained an integral part of it. In the late eleventh century, Jewish traders following this route also stopped in the Hungarian city of Esztergom.<sup>29</sup> On one particular occasion, two Jews from Regensburg who had traded in "Rus'" (Galicia) reached Esztergom on the Sabbath, and the local Jews punished them for violating the Sabbath.

In addition to the traditional Regensburg-Kiev route, a new Radhanite trading route was developed that led from Prague across Poland into Kiev. The 1031 Hebrew account of Rabbi Yehudah ben Meir ha-Kohen of Mainz, titled *Sefer ha-Dinim*, named Przemyśl (a Polish city) and Kiev as major trading sites along the Jewish route in his time. A French Jewish trader from Doreville named Yitzhak Dorbelo wrote in the twelfth century that he arrived in Poland accompanied by the Radhanites.<sup>30</sup>

According to the 1150 account of Rabbi Eliezer ben Nathan of Mainz (also known as “RaBaN”), Jewish merchants who traversed the Kiev-Regensburg route faithfully observed their religion. Most of the traders never drove their caravans on the Sabbath. Instead, all carriages were gathered in a circle, and their merchandise was placed in the middle of the circle; then the traders prayed and celebrated their day of rest.

Further insights into the Jewish traders’ lifestyle were recorded by another twelfth-century author, Yitzhak ben Asher ha-Levi of Speyer. He and Eliezer ben Nathan both indicated that these traders created trade unions and pooled their money into a common account from which money was withdrawn when purchases were made in Kievan Rus’. When merchandise was brought back from the land of the Rus’, it was shared among the traders’ families by a lottery system.<sup>31</sup>

Customs documents from 1191 (issued under the rule of Ottakar I of Bohemia) and 1192 (issued under Count Leopold of Austria) stated that Jewish merchants from Regensburg traded weapons, saddles, spices, wood products, slaves, silk, wool, and linen fabrics in Kiev.<sup>32</sup>

A thirteenth-century document by Rabbi Zedekiah ben Abraham ha-Rofe ‘Anav of Rome discussed two German Jewish merchants from Regensburg, Abraham and Yaakov, who traveled through Hungary along the Danube River when going to and from Kievan Rus’ during the mid-eleventh century.<sup>33</sup>

The Jewish Khazars of Kievan Rus’ probably kept in touch with western Jewish educational centers in the eleventh and twelfth centuries in large part by way of the Radhanite caravans. It is often suggested that the Khazars adopted religious customs from the Radhanites.

## RUS’ TRADERS IN KHAZARIA

The Rus’ were originally Viking traders from Scandinavia. According to Ibn al-Faqih’s *Kitab al-Buldan*, the Rus’ traded in the Byzantine Empire and the city of Samkarsh (Tamatarkha). Their ships traveled from the Northern Donets River to the Don and then along the Volga until they reached the Caspian Sea, where they traded with Iranian coastal ports.<sup>34</sup> The Rus’ also traveled on land by caravans from central Asia through Iran to Iraq, including Baghdad.

The Rus’ merchants transported beaver-skin furs, black fox skins, sword blades, and other items past Khazaran-Atil. They had extensive trading relations with the Khazars that included active coinage exchange. Ibn Khordadbeh wrote that the Rus’ traders often arrived at the Khazar city of Khamlikh, where the Khazar king collected tribute from them.<sup>35</sup>

## ARAB TRADERS IN KHAZARIA

Some Arab merchants traversed the country of the Khazars. No doubt many of them journeyed to the predominantly Muslim city of Khazaran.

According to *Derbend-Nameh* ("The History of Derbent"), Arab traders from Derbent were required (during the 730s) to pay Arab authorities a 10 percent tax on their goods if they decided to go north to trade in Khazaria.<sup>36</sup>

The Arabs were especially interested in Khazarian fur clothing. In Arabic countries, several types of furs were named after the Khazars, including some called "khazari."<sup>37</sup>

## CHINESE TRADERS IN KHAZARIA

Trade between Khazaria and China was widespread. Items transported from China to the Khazars included Chinese silk dresses<sup>38</sup> and Chinese mirrors.<sup>39</sup> A large Chinese mirror was found in an eighth- or ninth-century Saltovo cemetery at Yutanovka in the Volonkonovka raion of the Belgorod oblast. Another Chinese mirror, from the T'ang dynastic era, was found in a Khazar-era cemetery in Armiev in the Shemysheika raion of the Penza oblast. A tenth-century Chinese copper coin was excavated from a kurgan in a cemetery at Tsarev, in the Leninsk raion of the Volgograd oblast.<sup>40</sup>

Some evidence indicates that Chinese merchants set foot in the Khazar territory. For example, a rose-colored paper in Chinese writing, listing income and expenses, was found at Moshchevaya Balka in the north Caucasus.<sup>41</sup> Some fragments of Chinese manuscripts were also found.

## COINAGE

It is now beyond doubt that the Khazars minted their own coins.<sup>42</sup> Rus' traders would sell goods to the Khazars only in exchange for silver dirhams, which were prized for their high purity. Thus, when the demand exceeded the supply for these coins, due to a decline in the availability of coins from North African and Iraqi mints, the Khazars started to mint their own coins, beginning around the early 820s.<sup>43</sup> The Khazar dirhams imitated the designs and inscriptions on Islamic dirhams. These imitations often contained chronological errors, since the engraved ruling dates of the caliphs do not correspond to the years when those caliphs actually ruled. There were also spelling mistakes on the engravings of caliph and place-names (e.g., "Sarkand" for Samarkand).<sup>44</sup> For trading purposes in Europe, only the weight of the silver

mattered, not what the inscriptions on the coins read, so the fact that these were imperfect imitations was irrelevant, since they always weighted similarly to real Arab ones.<sup>45</sup> The existence of so many errors supports the contention that these were not official releases from Arab mints but rather were engraved by Jewish Khazars who were not entirely fluent in the Arabic language.<sup>46</sup>

In 837, or more likely 838, the Khazar government issued four new series of dirhams. Though their inscriptions and designs differed, they were all struck in the same workshop using the same dies around the same time, as analysis by the numismatist Gert Rispling showed.<sup>47</sup> All words on the dirhams were in Arabic. The only series that bore an authentic date—the Islamic date AH 223 (equivalent to the period from December 3, 837, to November 22, 838)—was that which contained the phrase *Ard al-Khazar* (“Land of the Khazars”).<sup>48</sup> A total of eighty-one *Ard al-Khazar* coins have been found. Another highly significant series was one that contained the inscription “Moses is the messenger of God,” a clear reference to the prophet Moses who was so important to Judaism, instead of the usual Islamic saying “Muhammad is the messenger of God” that forms part of the Muslim *Shahada* (Declaration of Faith). It is evident that the Moses coins were minted by a Jew. Five Moses coins have been found so far, and they all bear false dates and mint names. One specimen of the Moses series was found in the Spillings hoard, a huge collection of 14,295 silver coins plus other silver and bronze objects that was discovered at a farm on the island of Gotland in Sweden in July 1999.<sup>49</sup> The Spillings coins had been deposited at Gotland by Vikings during the Middle Ages. The Moses coin from Spillings bears a fictitious mintmark claiming it was minted at “Madinat as-Salaam” (Baghdad) in 766–767. The four other known Moses coins—found in Russia in the Kislaya hoard, in Estonia in the Kochtel hoard, and in Finland in the Svedjelandet hoard—carry the fake mintmark “Madinat as-Salaam 779–780.” Experts have also identified seventy-eight Khazar coins that contain a particular tamga (tribal sign) on the bottom. These, too, have fake dates and mint locations, including “Madinat as-Salaam 803–804.” The fourth Khazar series from circa 838 featured an Arabic name, either “Jalil” or “Khalil,” in Kufic script on the obverse margin. Eighteen of these have been located, and they also have fake dates and mint locations. “Jalil” or “Khalil” was probably the name of the engraver.

The Khazars minted additional varieties of imitation dirhams after the year 838, but these were not unique and did not bear any special slogans or symbols.

The source of the silver the Khazars used for minting may have been within Khazaria itself, specifically the mines near the Terek River of the

northern Caucasus; alternatively, the silver may have come from imported Islamic silver ingots.<sup>50</sup> It remains uncertain whether the Khazar coins were struck in Atil, Sarkel, or still another location. The numismatists Aleksei Bykov and Glen Shake were of the opinion that the tamga was a Sarkel mint-mark.<sup>51</sup> Roman Kovalev, on the other hand, wrote that the tamga was probably the Khazarian royal family's symbol, noting that it resembles the runic tridents of many other medieval Turkic states and that it was positioned where the names and titles of Abbasid rulers typically were located.<sup>52</sup>

Through the process of trade, coins from many parts of the medieval world—especially the Byzantine Empire and the Islamic Caliphate—reached Khazaria. Byzantine coins minted during the reigns of emperors Justinian II (restoration 705–711), Leo III (717–741), Constantine V (741–775), Michael III (842–867), Basil I (867–886), Leo VI (886–912), Romanus I Lecapenus (920–944), Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus (913–959), Romanus II (959–963), Nicephorus II Phocas (963–969), and John Tsimisces (969–976) were excavated at sites in the Khazar Empire.<sup>53</sup> The Khazars of Samkarsh used coins that were produced at the Byzantine mint in Cherson on the Crimea during the ninth century. Arabic silver dirhams were found in Khazar graves in the Atil region, Upper Saltov, Zhitkov, and the Rostov oblast. Additionally, fragments of dirhams issued by Caliph Harun al-Rashid (reigned 786–809) and Caliph Amin (reigned 809–819) were discovered in the lower Don valley, as were half of an Umayyad dirham from the 720s and half of a dirham from the city of Zerenj in southern Iran.<sup>54</sup> A pre-Islamic Persian coin, issued by the ruler Hormizd IV (reigned 579–590), was found in the lower Don valley.<sup>55</sup> Pre-Islamic Persian drachms minted during the reign of Khusrau (Chosroes) II Parviz (590–628) were found in Khazar-era cemeteries in the present-day Chechen-Ingushetia region.<sup>56</sup>

## NOTES

1. Vladimir F. Minorsky, *Hudud al-'Alam (The Regions of the World)* (London: Luzac & Co., 1937), 161.

2. Omeljan Pritsak, "An Arabic Text on the Trade Route of the Corporation of Ar-Rus in the Second Half of the Ninth Century," *Folia Orientalia* 12 (1970): 257. The Khazars' 10 percent customs duty calculated from the value of imported trade goods was the same percentage as the Volga Bulgar khan required.

3. Douglas M. Dunlop, *The History of the Jewish Khazars* (New York: Schocken, 1967), 107. Al-Istakhri claimed that all the honey and wax in Khazaria was brought there from the lands of the Rus' and Bulgars, but this must be an exaggeration.

4. Csánad Bálint, "Some Archaeological Addenda to P. Golden's Khazar Studies," *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 35, nos. 2–3 (1981): 410.

5. Vladimir F. Minorsky, *Hudud al-‘Alam (The Regions of the World)*, 121. Kath, also known as “Kazh” and “Shahrstan,” was a center for scholarship and outstanding architecture.
6. Carlile A. Macartney, *The Magyars in the Ninth Century* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1930), 222.
7. Arsenio P. Martinez, “Gardizi’s Two Chapters on the Turks,” *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 2 (1982): 157.
8. Thomas S. Noonan, “What Can Archaeology Tell Us about the Economy of Khazaria?” in *The Archaeology of the Steppes*, ed. Bruno Genito (Napoli, Italy: Istituto Universitario Orientale, 1994), 341.
9. Andrei B. Belinsky and Heinrich Härke, “Cemetery Excavation at Klin Yar, North Caucasus, 1993–94,” *Newsletter of the Centre for the Archaeology of Central and Eastern Europe* 3 (1995): 4–5. Klin Yar is outside the town of Kislovodsk in the Stavropol district of Russia.
10. Thomas S. Noonan, “Russia’s Eastern Trade, 1150–1350: The Archaeological Evidence,” *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 3 (1983): 254.
11. Thomas S. Noonan, “The Khazar Economy,” *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 9 (1995–1997): 275.
12. Noonan, “What Can Archaeology Tell Us about the Economy of Khazaria?” 339.
13. Noonan, “The Khazar Economy,” 282.
14. Isaak M. Linder, *Chess in Old Russia*, trans. Martin P. Rice (Zurich: Michael Kühnle, 1979), 178; Victor Keats, *Chess, Jews and History* (Oxford: Oxford Academic, 1994), 1:111.
15. Roman K. Kovalev, “Critica: S. A. Pletneva, *Sarkel i “shelkovyi” put’*,” *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 10 (1998–1999): 248. The Muslims in Samarkand had learned the paper-making process from Chinese craftsmen who were held hostage by Ziyad ibn Salih in 751 (see Wasilii V. Barthold, *Turkestan Down to the Mongol Invasion*, 3rd ed., trans. H. A. R. Gibb and T. Minorsky [London: Luzac & Co., 1968], 236–37).
16. William W. Fitzhugh and Elisabeth I. Ward, eds., *Vikings: The North Atlantic Saga* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2000), 105.
17. Fitzhugh and Ward, *Vikings*, 53.
18. Fitzhugh and Ward, *Vikings*, 48.
19. Bozena I. Wyszomirska, “Religion som enande politisk-social länk—exemplet: Det Kazariska riket,” in *Arkeologi och Religion*, ed. Lars Larsson and Bozena I. Wyszomirska (Lund, Sweden: University of Lund, 1989), 142. Several golden Khazar or Avar girdle mountings with plant ornamentations from the first half of the ninth century were also discovered in Silesia and central Poland.
20. Else Roesdahl and David M. Wilson, eds., *From Viking to Crusader* (New York: Rizzoli, 1992), 78.
21. Holger Arbman, “Einige orientalische Gegenstände in den Birka-Funden,” *Acta Archaeologica* 13 (1942): 306.
22. Arbman, “Einige orientalische Gegenstände in den Birka-Funden,” 308.
23. Matthew Goodman, “How the Radanite Traders Spiced up Life in Dark-Ages Europe,” *Forward*, May 30, 2003. Goodman suggested that the Radhanites probably

also exported many other Asian spices, “among them black pepper, cloves, nutmeg, ginger, galangal (similar to ginger) and saffron.”

24. Elkan N. Adler, ed., *Jewish Travellers* (London: George Routledge & Sons, 1930), 2. Adler interpreted the word *ifraniya* as “French,” but according to Gil, *ifraniya* could actually be a designation for the language of Frankish-controlled Italy, rather than a reference to the French spoken in France (see Moshe Gil, “The Radhanite Merchants and the Land of Radhan,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 17, no. 3 [1974]: 310). Interestingly, Arabs usually used the term “Franks” to refer to western Europeans in general, rather than only those living in France or the Frankish Kingdom.

25. Gil, “The Radhanite Merchants and the Land of Radhan,” 313. The letter was written in Judeo-Persian and addressed to a Jew in Tabaristan (western Persia), asking for help in unloading mangy sheep. The Jews of Kaifeng are of Persian/Khorasanian/Bukharan origin. This is verified not only by the Persian words that were in use by them, but also by the resemblance between the interiors of Chinese Jewish and Persian Jewish synagogues (see Ken Blady, *Jewish Communities in Exotic Places* [Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 2000], 261). Kaifeng’s Jews, like Persian Jews, counted twenty-seven letters in the Hebrew alphabet rather than twenty-two, and their Torah readings were divided into fifty-three chapters like with Persian Jews, rather than fifty-four as with other communities (see Blady, *Jewish Communities in Exotic Places*, 267).

26. Gil, “The Radhanite Merchants and the Land of Radhan,” 300.

27. Gil, “The Radhanite Merchants and the Land of Radhan,” 314.

28. Omeljan Pritsak, “The Khazar Kingdom’s Conversion to Judaism,” *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 3, no. 2 (September 1978): 265. Kalonimus ben Shabtai, a tenth-century author, made reference to Jewish trading between Regensburg and eastern Europe (see Paul Wexler, “The Reconstruction of Pre-Ashkenazic Jewish Settlements in the Slavic Lands in the Light of Linguistic Sources,” *Polin* 1 [1986]: 12).

29. Nora Berend, *At the Gate of Christendom* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 112, 226. This was recorded in a late eleventh-century responsum which made its way into a compilation by Abraham of Rome.

30. Itzhak Schipper, “Dzieje gospodarcze Żydów Korony i Litwy w czasach przedrozbiorowych,” in *Żydz i w Polsce Odrodzonej*, ed. Aleksander Haffika, Itzhak Schipper, and Aryeh Tartakower (Warsaw, 1936), 116.

31. Schipper, “Dzieje gospodarcze Żydów Korony i Litwy,” 114.

32. Schipper, “Dzieje gospodarcze Żydów Korony i Litwy,” 114.

33. Raphael Patai, *The Jews of Hungary* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1996), 31–32.

34. Pritsak, “An Arabic Text on the Trade Route of the Corporation of Ar-Rus,” 248.

35. Alexander V. Riasanovsky and William E. Watson, eds., *Readings in Russian History* (Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt, 1991), 1:64.

36. Thomas S. Noonan, “Why Dirhams First Reached Russia: The Role of Arab-Khazar Relations in the Development of the Earliest Islamic Trade with Eastern Europe,” *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 4 (1984): 265–66.



37. Peter B. Golden, *Khazar Studies* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1980), 1:109–10.
38. Bálint, “Some Archaeological Addenda to P. Golden’s *Khazar Studies*,” 410.
39. Noonan, “The Khazar Economy,” 310.
40. Noonan, “The Khazar Economy,” 316.
41. Noonan, “Why Dirhams First Reached Russia,” 257.
42. Roman 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): 106. During the twentieth century, scholars debated at length about whether or not coins were produced in Khazaria. For an early summation of these controversies, written before all types of Khazarian coins had been found and identified, see Thomas S. Noonan, “Did the Khazars Possess a Monetary Economy? An Analysis of the Numismatic Evidence,” *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 2 (1982): 220–23. The Russian numismatist Aleksei Andreevich Bykov was an early adherent of the notion that the Khazars minted coins, expressing this view during the 1970s (see, for example, his article “O khazarском чекане VIII–IX vv.,” *Trudy Gosudarstvennogo Ermitazha, Numizmatika* 4, no. 12 [1971]: 26–36). The American numismatist Glen R. Shake, in his book *Coins of the Khazar Empire*, 1st ed., plus supplements (Allen, TX: Trimillennium Press, 2000), 75, leaned toward the view that the Khazars did mint their own coins, even though he did not consider this to have been completely proven. Archaeologists found the Khazar coins in various deposits in Estonia, Sweden, Finland, central and northern Russia, and on an island in northern Germany.
43. Kovalev, “What Does Historical Numismatics Suggest?” 107–8.
44. Noonan, “Did the Khazars Possess a Monetary Economy?” 241.
45. Omeļjan Pritsak, in *The Origins of the Old Rus’ Weights and Monetary Systems: Two Studies in Western Eurasian Metrology and Numismatics in the Seventh to Eleventh Centuries* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, Harvard University Press, 1998), 22–32, written in 1990, purported to provide the exact weights of Khazar and Volga Bulgar silver coins. For instance, he claimed that each Khazar silver dirham (called “yarmaq” in Turkic) would have weighed about 2.73 grams according to the North African dirham standard, that the Khazarian *altin* measure (assumed to be equal to fifteen yarmaqs) equaled 40.95 grams, and that the Khazarian *sam* measure (*zequq* in Hebrew) equaled 204.75 grams, that is, five *altins*. Of these and other measures, only the yarmaq was an actual coin. Pritsak pointed out that the Khazarian yarmaqs from the Devitsa hoard, which contain the tamga, usually weighed between 2.51 grams and 3.01 grams, and statistically 2.75 grams on average. However, some of his suggested names, equivalents, and conversions for the weights of various coin releases of medieval Europe have been criticized by scholars like Stephen Album and Ludomir Lozny for being too exact (considering the variability of most coinage released during that time period) as well as, in some cases, unproven (see their reviews of Pritsak’s book in *The English Historical Review* 114, no. 458 (1999): 937–38; and *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 44, nos. 3–4 (2002): 297–98, respectively).
46. Wyszomirska, “Religion som enande politisk-social länk,” 140–41.
47. Kovalev, “What Does Historical Numismatics Suggest?” 113–15.
48. The *Ard al-Khazar* coin type was first identified by the Swedish numismatist Cardus Johannes Tornberg in his book *Numi cufici regii numophylacii holmiensis*,

*ques omnes in terra sueciae repertos* (Uppsala: Excudebant Leffler et Sebell, 1848). The Khazar coins from the Devitsa hoard of central Russia contained fake dates from the 750s through the 820s.

49. Jonathan Lynn, "Viking Treasure Hoard Yields Astounding Finds," *China Daily*, 24 June 2002.

50. Kovalev, "What Does Historical Numismatics Suggest?" 111–12.

51. Shake, *Coins of the Khazar Empire*, 31, 35, 54.

52. Roman K. Kovalev, "Creating Khazar Identity through Coins: The Special Issue Dirhams of 837/8," in *Central and Eastern Europe in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Florin Curta (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), 228–30.

53. Noonan, "Did the Khazars Possess a Monetary Economy?" 255–57.

54. Menashe Goldelman, "On the Location of the Khazarian City of Al-Bayda," *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 10 (1998–1999): 69.

55. Goldelman, "On the Location of the Khazarian City of Al-Bayda," 69.

56. Noonan, "The Khazar Economy," 299.



## Chapter Six

# The Khazars' Conversion to Judaism

*One of the most remarkable and unique events in Khazar history was the large-scale adoption of Judaism in the kingdom. The Khazars chose to adopt the standard rabbinical form of Judaism rather than the beliefs of the Karaite sect.*

*This chapter explores the circumstances that led to the conversion of the Khazars as well as the documents and artifacts which verify the existence of widespread Khazar Judaism. Primary sources of information concerning the conversion episode include (1) Khazar documents, such as the Reply of King Joseph, the Schechter Letter, and the Kievan Letter; (2) reports from Arab and Persian historians, travelers, and commentators, such as ibn Fadlan, al-Istakhri, ibn Rustah, and 'Abd al-Jabbar ibn Muhammad al-Hamdani; (3) the Persian treatise Denkart; (4) the Frankish commentary Expositio in Matthaeeum Evangelistam by Christian of Stavelot; (5) Jewish books, such as Sefer ha-Qabbalah by Abraham ibn Daud and Sefer ha-Kuzari by Yehudah ha-Levi; and (6) several Karaite texts.*

*The conversion episode has sparked the imagination of countless people, both Jewish and non-Jewish, throughout the ages. In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, it became a popular topic for novels, the most famous being Dictionary of the Khazars by the Serbian writer Milorad Pavic (1988) and The Wind of the Khazars by the French writer Marek Halter (2003).*

### THE FIRST JEWS OF EASTERN EUROPE

Archaeological evidence indicates that Jews have lived in the Balkans, in the Caucasus (including Georgia), along the northern shores of the Black Sea, and in other areas of eastern Europe since Roman times.

Jewish settlements and synagogues existed in Roman-governed Pannonia (modern-day Hungary) as early as the third century CE. Archaeological discoveries have included stone markers upon which Jewish names and menorah (seven-branched candelabra) images were engraved.<sup>1</sup> The markers often bore inscriptions written in the Latin language. One of the early third-century tablets from ancient Pannonia includes a reference to Cosmius, the head of the synagogue at Spondilla. In some cases, the Jewish identity of the inscribed names is known because the ethnic terms *judeus* and *Judaea* were appended. Engravings of the seven-branched menorah were also found on Pannonia-era rings and amulets as well as on a clay oil lamp.<sup>2</sup>

Jews also lived in Moesia and Thrace during Roman times. A third-century tombstone from near Gigen village, Nikopol district, in northern Bulgaria (near the Romanian border) refers to a man named Iosses by the title *archisynagogus*, which means “synagogue chief.”<sup>3</sup> Additional evidence for Jewish settlement in early Bulgaria also exists.

Perhaps the most significant of ancient Jewish settlements in eastern Europe were those on the Crimean and Taman peninsulas. In the premedieval period, thousands of Jews from Egypt, Judea, Syria, and Asia Minor migrated to the Hellenistic kingdom of Bosphorus. They settled in such Crimean towns as Pantikapeum (later called Kerch) and Theodosia (later called Feodosia), in Phanagoria (later called Tmutorokan) on the Taman peninsula, and in Gorgippia (later called Anapa) along the northeastern Black Sea coast in the present-day Krasnodar region. Some also settled in the town of Olbia, located northwest of the Crimea, at the Bug River’s estuary, along the Black Sea coast near present-day Odessa. The Jews of this region were actively engaged in jewelry making, pottery making, and trading in grain, fish, and slaves.<sup>4</sup> These Jews spoke Greek, as demonstrated by Greek marble plaques created by Jews in Pantikapeum, Olbia, Gorgippia, and other towns in the Crimean region from the first through the third centuries.<sup>5</sup> The Greek inscriptions often contain typical Jewish names such as “Yehudah” and “Enokh,” but also less common names like “Chreste,” “Sogos,” “Anos,” and “Phodakos” that some of these Jews possessed.

Some of the inscriptions reveal that synagogues in the Greek colonies welcomed slaves to become attendees of their congregations. For example, a marble inscription in Greek found in Phanagoria, dating from 51 CE, mentions the liberation of a slave that was “to be guaranteed by the guardianship of the Jewish community.”<sup>6</sup> Another inscription from the kingdom of Bosphorus, dating from 80 CE, declares that the slave Heraclas was freed by a woman named Chreste in a *proseuche* (Jewish house of prayer).<sup>7</sup> It says that Heraclas, the former slave, could travel freely on the condition that he attended the synagogue’s services devoutly. (This was a typical requirement for

slaves freed in synagogues in these Greek colonies.) However, these slaves did not become official Jews but rather gained the status of “God fearers” (see also appendix D).

Archaeological findings at Chersonesus (later called Cherson) were particularly interesting. There, in the fifth or sixth century, the Byzantines built a Christian basilica above an earlier structure that seems to have been an ancient synagogue. A stone found in the basilica contains carvings of the *lulav* (palm branch), shofar (ram’s horn), and menorah, and Hebrew writing was found on a plaster fragment from a wall in the basilica.<sup>8</sup> These artifacts date from the second, third, or fourth century. The plaster fragment, written in Hebrew and Greek, refers to a certain “Hananiah from Bosphorus,” and it also mentions Jerusalem.

Many stones found at Pantikapeum, dating back to the second to fourth centuries, are also inscribed with menorahs. The Jews flourished in Pantikapeum because it was the capital of the Bosporan Kingdom and the most prosperous of all the settlements in the Crimean region.

The Eastern Crimean Archaeological Expedition of the Institute of Archaeology of the Russian Academy of Sciences made two very important discoveries on the Azov Sea coast of the Kerch peninsula that provide evidence for ongoing Jewish settlement on far-eastern Crimea at least until the sixth century.<sup>9</sup> First, in 1990, the expedition found a menorah symbol on a fragment of an amphora dating to approximately the 570s. This amphora was found at the medieval settlement of Zolotiye Vostochnoye v Bukhte, five kilometers east of the village of Zolotiye. In 1999, the expedition uncovered a large amphora fragment depicting a menorah with nine candles. This one was found at the Zelenyy Mys site, eight kilometers west of the village of Kurortnoye, and it is from approximately the second half of the sixth century.

A variety of interesting legendary tales supplement factual records about the early history of Jews in eastern Europe (see also chapter 1). For example, an early sixth-century Jew named Yehudah Magig supposedly wrote folktales about ancient Jewish dispersions throughout Asia and Crimea, including stories about Judeans settling in Matarkha (Tamarkha).<sup>10</sup> There also exists a host of semimythical stories about Jews being forcefully deported to the Caspian region.

As we have seen, large Jewish communities existed in eastern Europe before the Khazar Empire was established. The Romans and Byzantines later took control over the ancient Greek colonies, and the Crimean Jews began to trade frequently with the Byzantine capital, Constantinople. Several centuries later, most of the Crimea was incorporated into the Khazar Empire. It is uncertain to what degree the Jewish communities of ancient Crimea survived through the centuries into the Khazar era. Many scholars believe that

descendants of the early Jewish populations of the Crimea and Caucasus influenced the decision of the Khazars to convert to Judaism. According to this point of view, the Crimean Jews came into direct contact with the Khazars.

### KHAZARIA AS A REFUGE FOR PERSECUTED JEWS

Khazaria became a safe haven for significant numbers of persecuted Jews from Europe and Asia.

The anti-Jewish policies of the Byzantine Empire forced many Jews to flee to less dangerous lands such as Khazaria. Several emperors initiated policies of forced baptism. Around 630–632, the Byzantine emperor Heraclius (reigned 610–641) decreed that all Jews in his empire must convert to Christianity.<sup>11</sup> Jews also escaped from the Byzantine Empire around the years 722–723, during the reign of Emperor Leo III (reigned 717–741), since Leo III's policy was to force Jews to adopt Christianity.<sup>12</sup>

Persecutions in Byzantium remained a threat for Jews in the following century. In the 860s, Emperor Basil I (reigned 867–886) tried to convert Byzantine Jews by decree.<sup>13</sup> However, Basil I's conversion schemes were not successful, and persecution intensified. By the end of the ninth century, Byzantine laws decreed that Jews could not hold public office, intermarry with Christians, or own Christian slaves.<sup>14</sup> Jews were told to read the biblical scriptures in Greek rather than in Hebrew. Furthermore, if any Jew tried to convert a Christian, he would be killed, and his property would be confiscated. Jews were not allowed to testify on behalf of Christians during legal proceedings and could not construct new synagogues. These laws clearly were meant to codify the "inferior" status of Byzantine Jews in comparison to Orthodox Christians.

Statements by Byzantium's religious figures make it clear that the goal of converting Jews to Christianity was not only imperial policy but church policy as well, and also applied to Jews living in the Crimea. Photius, a patriarch of Constantinople during the mid- to late ninth century, wrote the following in a letter to the bishop of Bosphorus (Kerch): "Were you also to capture the Judeans there, securing their obedience to Christ, I should welcome with my whole soul the fruits of such beautiful hopes."<sup>15</sup>

Byzantine emperor Romanus I Lecapenus (reigned 920–944) received a letter from the patriarch of Jerusalem by the year 931 that urged him to convert all Byzantine Jews to Christianity.<sup>16</sup> Hence, the emperor began to persecute Jews around 932 and, like his predecessors, attempted to convert them to his own faith. Romanus's actions led to the murder of hundreds of Jews and the destruction of numerous synagogues.<sup>17</sup> Jews continued to migrate to

Khazaria from the Muslim and Byzantine lands circa 943 because they were still being forcefully converted to Christianity by Romanus, according to al-Masudi.<sup>18</sup> With the continuing flight of Jews from Byzantium, Joseph, the king of the Khazars, welcomed them to settle in his country. Obviously, the Khazar Jews despised Romanus for his persecutions, calling him “the evil one.”<sup>19</sup> Circa 943, according to the anonymous tenth-century *Schechter Letter*, King Joseph reacted to Romanus’s persecutions by ordering revengeful attacks upon the Taman peninsula as well as bringing many Christians to ruin (which does not necessarily mean that they were killed—probably some other form of punishment is meant).

The *Schechter Letter* indicated that some Jews came to Khazaria to escape “the yoke of the idol-worshippers.”<sup>20</sup> It further stated that the Jews who came through Armenia to Khazaria intermarried with the Khazars and propagated the ritual of circumcision, but it also mentioned that Sabbath observance was not universally adopted among all Khazars prior to their official conversion. The Jewish immigrants learned the customs of the Khazars and fought side by side with them in wars against enemy nations.

Jews from Mesopotamia (modern-day Iraq) also moved to Khazaria. Around 929, Saadia Gaon wrote that a Jew named Yitzhak ben Abraham migrated from Mesopotamia to Khazaria.<sup>21</sup> The *Schechter Letter* confirmed that Jews came to Khazaria from Baghdad as well as from the Byzantine Empire and Khorasan (eastern Persia).<sup>22</sup>

The multiple waves of Jewish settlers coming to the Khazarian lands appear to have played a major role in encouraging the Khazars to convert to Judaism. This is indicated by the following brief statement by the Arab historian Dimashqi (written circa 1327):

Ibn-al-Athir [or al-Masudi?] tells how in the days of Harun the Emperor [of Byzantium] forced the Jews to emigrate. They came to the Khazar country, where they found an intelligent but untutored race and offered them their religion. The inhabitants found it better than their own and accepted it.<sup>23</sup>

Other historians suggest that the Khazars adopted Judaism as a conscious political decision designed to help preserve the political independence of Khazaria from the Christian and Muslim empires surrounding them.<sup>24</sup> Thus, Khazaria held the balance of power between the Christian Byzantine Empire and the Muslim Caliphate.

Omeljan Pritsak and Shelomo Dov Goitein, on the other hand, attributed the conversion of the Khazars solely to the influence of traveling Jewish merchants like the Radhanites.<sup>25</sup> This inference cannot be drawn from any of the surviving historical sources but should not be entirely dismissed.



## TENGRI SHAMANISM, THE INDIGENOUS RELIGION OF THE KHAZARS

Before their conversion to Judaism, most of the Khazars were shamanists and worshipped spirits and the sky. Their particular belief system is known as Tengri shamanism.

The early Khazars routinely sought the advice of a shaman or medicine man, called *qam* in Turkic. A shaman would enter a trancelike state in an attempt to contact the invisible spirit world, to exorcise evil spirits under the earth's surface, and to win the protection of benevolent spirits. Shamans were considered to be both healers and predictors of future events. Al-Tabari wrote that the early Khazars learned rainmaking rituals and prayers.<sup>26</sup> Only shamans were believed to have this power. Gardizi wrote about a rainmaking stone that the Khazars, Karluks, and Oghuz supposedly fought over for possession.<sup>27</sup> It was said that the stone could be used by a Turkic magician to create rain or snow at will.

The Khazars had an elaborate assemblage of gods, similar to that of the Bulgars and other Turkic tribes. They believed that divinity was present throughout nature, and so their belief system may be described as a form of pantheism. The leading god of the Turkic shamanists was Tengri, the sky god, an immortal being who created the world.<sup>28</sup> Umay (meaning "placenta") was the mother goddess, and the divine twins Yir and Sub were the primary earth and water deities respectively.<sup>29</sup> Tengri was said to have ruled the "upper world," while the fertility goddess Umay and the earth-water deities ruled the "middle world," and Erlik-khan, the god of death, ruled the "lower world" (hell).<sup>30</sup> The deity Ärklig was involved in military affairs.<sup>31</sup> The Turks also worshipped a thunder god, called "Ku'ar" by the North Caucasian Huns of Varach'an, who would strike down evil people and spirits by lightning. There were also deities for the sun, moon, stars, air, clouds, wind, tornadoes, rain, rainbows, and fire.<sup>32</sup> The moon deity was perceived as female, while the sun was regarded as male. The sun was the son of Tengri, and the fire god in turn was the son of the sun.

According to the late sixteenth-century Persian author Amin Ahmad Razi in *Haft Iqlim* ("The Seven Climates"), the Khazars' original religion consisted of worship of "the day and the night, the wind and the rain, the earth and the heavens. . . . But the god of the heavens is greater than the others."<sup>33</sup>

Under an entry for the year 730–731, the Syriac chronicle of Pseudo-Dionysus of Tell-Mahrê claimed that the Khazars have no single God and are Magians, and it repeated the claim that the Khazars "do not agree that there is a God in Heaven" under a separate entry dated 731–732.<sup>34</sup> While the term "Magians" usually meant "Zoroastrians," it is likely that this author actually meant "heathens."<sup>35</sup>

The shamanistic Khazars turned to the east when they prayed.<sup>36</sup> Also, the opening of a shamanist Turk's tent was directed toward the east. In the *Chou-shu*, a Chinese dynastic annal completed around 629, it is said that the kagan's tent faced "towards the East because one honors the direction from which the sun rises."<sup>37</sup>

Animals were also worshipped, and each tribe had its own totem. The old Turkic calendar, derived from the lunar calendar of the Chinese, was based on an animal cycle. The Turks generally used twelve years, and accordingly the calendar is known as the "Calendar of the Twelve Animals." The Turks along the Volga first adopted the calendar in the beginning of the seventh century. The Bulgars used a calendar containing the years of the mouse, cow, wolf/tiger, hare, snake, horse, sheep, hen, dog, and pig.<sup>38</sup> Many other variants of the calendar also existed. For example, some Turkic tribes borrowed the dragon from the Chinese for their calendar, while other Turks replaced it with the crocodile or the fish.<sup>39</sup> It is documented that the North Caucasian Huns sacrificed numerous animals as offerings to various gods.<sup>40</sup> Among Turks in general, the horse was the primary animal sacrificed to Tengri, and this appears to have been the case among the Khazars as well.

Trees were considered sacred among all Turkic peoples. The shamanist Turks of the Tepsen (Phullai) region of Khazaria made sacrifices to an oak tree.<sup>41</sup> According to Turkic mythology, a large "cosmic tree" held up the sky and served as the gateway to a higher level of the universe.<sup>42</sup> Other sacred parts of the earth were mountains, rivers, and springs.

Every year, the Turks celebrated the beginning of spring by holding events on March 22, which they called "Ulugh-kun" ("the Great Day").<sup>43</sup> The Great Day ushered in the month of Oshlaq-ay. Three months later, the kagan presided over an annual ceremony to welcome the arrival of summer, at which the Turks made offerings (including animal sacrifices) to Tengri.<sup>44</sup>

The Turks manufactured various sacred objects, including sun amulets (see chapter 4) and idols from silver and bronze.

There was also a deep reverence for one's ancestors among the Turkic tribes. The Bulgars would call out the prayer "Let my forefathers help me!" to urge their ancestors to lead them to victory on the battlefield. The Cumans (Kipchaks) erected large stone statues facing the East to memorialize their ancestors. The Persian poet Nizami (circa 1141–1203) described in one of his poems how the Cumans worshipped their ancestors and predecessors by kneeling down before stone statues and leaving sacrificial animals (such as sheep and horses) beside the statues.<sup>45</sup> The traveler William de Rubruck verified this practice when in 1253 he wrote that the Cumans built stone statues over the graves of the dead, each of which had a large engraved image of the dead person holding a drinking cup over the stomach.<sup>46</sup>

## KING BULAN'S CONVERSION TO JUDAISM

Under the reign of King Bulan,<sup>47</sup> evidently during the first half of the ninth century, the Khazars officially converted to Judaism. Bulan therefore became the first Jewish ruler of the Khazars, following almost two centuries of shamanist and Muslim rulers. The Khazars adopted the rabbinical form of Judaism rather than the Karaite variation.<sup>48</sup>

Several sources referred to Bulan as king (i.e., *bek*, *malik*, *melekh*) rather than emperor (i.e., Great Kagan).<sup>49</sup> The *Schechter Letter* said that the first Jewish bek had become the chief officer after winning victories in battles against Khazaria's enemies. Bulan and his successors to the throne all wielded considerable power as heads of the military forces of the kaganate—a role that became associated with beks and that no longer applied to the kaganship. Thus, despite the suggestions of a few scholars, including Dunlop, Bulan cannot be identified as the kagan.

According to several medieval sources, a religious disputation among representatives of competing faiths took place at Bulan's palace. However, scholars have divided opinions over whether the debate actually took place. At the debate, Bulan allegedly listened to the arguments of an Arab mullah, a Christian priest, and a Jewish rabbi. Each of the three theological leaders tried to explain the benefits of his own system of belief to King Bulan. According to *King Joseph's Reply*, there were significant disagreements between the debaters, so Bulan went a step farther by asking the Christian and Muslim representatives which of the other two religions they believed to be superior. The Christian priest preferred Judaism over Islam, and likewise the Muslim mullah preferred Judaism over Christianity. Bulan therefore saw that Judaism was the root of the other two major monotheistic religions and adopted it for himself and his people.

The short version of *King Joseph's Reply* described the events that occurred after Bulan chose Judaism:

From that time on the Almighty God helped him and strengthened him. He and his slaves circumcised themselves and he sent for and brought wise men of Israel who interpreted the Torah for him and arranged the precepts in order.

King Joseph did not reveal the identity of these “wise men of Israel.”

According to *Kitab Tathbit Dala'il Nubuwwat Sayyadina Muhammad* (“The Book of the Establishment of Proofs for the Prophethood of Our Master Muhammad”), written by 'Abd al-Jabbar ibn Muhammad al-Hamdani circa 1009–1010, one Jewish missionary in particular was primarily responsible for persuading the king and the tribes in the Khazar Empire to convert to Judaism:

One of the Jews undertook the conversion of the Khazars, [who] are [composed of] many peoples, and they were converted by him and joined his religion. [This happened] recently in the days of the Abbasids. . . . For this was a man who came single-handedly to a king of great rank and to a very spirited people, and they were converted by him without [any recourse to] violence and the sword. And they took upon themselves the difficult obligations enjoined by the law of the Torah, such as circumcision, the ritual ablutions, washing after a discharge of the semen, the prohibition of work on the Sabbath and during the feasts, the prohibition of [eating the flesh of] animals [that are forbidden] according to this religion, and so on.<sup>50</sup>

Medieval Jewish scholars, including Rabbi Moses ben Nahman (Nahmanides) in *Torat Adonai Temimah* in the thirteenth century and Rabbi Yehudah Aryeh ben Joseph Moscato in *Kol Yehudah*<sup>51</sup> in the sixteenth century, suggested that Yitzhak ha-Sangari (Isaac Sangari)<sup>52</sup> was the name of the Jewish rabbi who was involved in the religious disputation at Bulan's court and who converted the king and taught him the principles of Judaism.

The story of Bulan's conversion to Judaism was embellished by the Sephardic Jewish philosopher and poet Yehudah ben Shmuel ha-Levi (circa 1080–1141), a native of Toledo, Spain, in his famous masterwork *Kitab al-Hujjah wa'l-Dahl fi Nasr al-Din al-Dhalil* ("The Book of Argument and Proof in Defense of the Despised Faith"), which was composed in 1120–1140 and translated from Arabic to Hebrew in the mid-twelfth century. It is popularly known under the title *The Book of the Khazars* (*Sefer ha-Kuzari* in Hebrew, *Kitab al-Khozari* in Arabic). The book consists of five chapters and presents the merits of Judaism.

*Sefer ha-Kuzari* stated that an angel spoke to Bulan one night while he was dreaming, explaining that while his "intentions are desirable to the Creator," his continued observance of Khazarian shamanistic rites and sacrifices was objectionable. Ha-Levi explained that the angel's repeated warnings that Bulan's religious activities were not correct

prompted the king to explore other belief systems and religions. Ultimately, the king and all the subjects of his kingdom converted to Judaism. The arguments of the rabbi were the catalyst for this event, for, through them, the king found spiritual peace and intellectual harmony.<sup>53</sup>

Ha-Levi proceeded to explain Bulan's increasing devotion to Judaism after an expedition to the Warsan Mountains.<sup>54</sup> He continued,

The king and his chief officer went to these [Warsan] mountains, which were in the desert by the sea. The books say how, in the middle of the night, they reached a cave where Jews used to observe the Sabbath every week, and how

they revealed themselves to the Jews, and converted to Judaism—which included being circumcised in that very cave. They returned to their country with their hearts committed to Judaism, but they initially hid their faith. Using wise discretion, they slowly began to divulge their secret, little by little, to a select group of their inner circle. Their numbers grew, until finally they revealed their secret to the public and prevailed upon the rest of the masses to convert to Judaism. They brought in Jewish sages and books from different countries and learned the Torah from them. The Khazar books detail all their successes in vanquishing their enemies, conquering various lands, discovering hidden treasures [or “securing great treasures”], and amassing armies numbering in the hundreds of thousands. They also detail how the Khazars loved the Torah and yearned for the Temple—to the point where they erected a facsimile of the Tabernacle that Moses built.<sup>55</sup>

The adoption of Judaism by the Khazars was one of the most interesting events in medieval European history, and Bulan’s conversion was the beginning of an unparalleled period of greatness and splendor for the Jews of eastern Europe. It was once thought that Yehudah ha-Levi created the conversion episode as an imaginary tale, but it has become clear that the story of the conversion of the Khazars in *Kuzari* reflected actual events. Around 864–870, the Khazars were described for the first time as observers of Judaism, in the work *Expositio in Matthaëum Evangelistam* by Christian of Stavelot, which was composed in the monastery of Stavelot in Lorraine from lectures he had presented to monks there:

And of the king Alexander we read that he turned to God and begged that the peoples of Gog and Magog—those who are now called the Khazars, who were once Hunnic peoples—be shut in, since he was unable to crush them through warfare. God heard him and shut them in their mountain, so that they came to stay behind with their people; and he placed copper gates in front of this mountain. . . . We know of no nation under the heavens where Christians do not live. For [Christians are even found] in the lands of Gog and Magog, who are a Hunnic people and are called Khazars, [and are] now a people that is stronger than those whom Alexander confined, circumcized and observing all [the laws of] Judaism. The Bulgars, however, who are from the same seven tribes [as the Khazars], are now becoming baptized [into Christianity].<sup>56</sup>

### THE SCHECHTER LETTER

Around the summer of 948, Yitzhak bar Nathan, a messenger of Hasdai ibn Shaprut, met a knowledgeable Khazar Jew in Constantinople who was scholarly and a “favorite” of the kagan. At Yitzhak’s request, this Jew, whose name

is unknown, wrote an essay about Khazar history.<sup>57</sup> The original letter was written around 949, according to Constantine Zuckerman.<sup>58</sup> Zuckerman also wrote,

There is actually every reason to believe that the Letter was produced no more than five years after the events described [concerning Pesakh's war against Oleg] and was delivered to the messengers of Hasdai ibn Shaprut in Constantinople, where every detail in it could be easily verified.<sup>59</sup>

Today, the text is known as the *Schechter Letter* or the *Cambridge Document*. In 1896, Solomon Schechter discovered this and other important Genizah documents in an old synagogue in Cairo, Egypt.<sup>60</sup> The Cairo Genizah materials had been stored in a dark room where they were left untouched for hundreds of years. The documents were brought to Cambridge, England, in 1897, and the Taylor-Schechter Collection at Cambridge University now preserves these valuable medieval works.

The *Schechter Letter* described how the Khazars and the Jews who had migrated there from Armenia intermarried and "became one people."<sup>61</sup> A particular Jewish warrior was a noble fighter for Khazaria's cause and won a great victory over enemies, so the Khazars appointed him as the army's chief officer (i.e., bek). He thus is to be regarded as the founder of the dynasty of Jewish kings, according to the author.

Next, the *Schechter Letter* presented another version of the events leading to the religious disputation and the formal adoption of Judaism by the royal house and the common people. God influenced the bek to restore his faith in Judaism. His wife Serakh and her father also encouraged him to return to Judaism. The Byzantine and Arab rulers were incensed that the king chose to adopt all elements of Judaism.<sup>62</sup> They argued that it was unwise to choose the religion of such a subjugated people, and they tried to discourage him from continuing to align with Judaism. Some Khazar officers were affected by their words. After hearing complaints from his officers, the king sent for Jewish, Christian, and Muslim sages to come to his court to describe their respective religions. Each debated the merits of the three faiths, but when the Jewish sages described the Torah's account of the creation of the world in six days, God's rescue of the Israelites from slavery, and the settlement of ancient Israel, the Greek and Arab sages confirmed that what they said was right. However, some issues still were not resolved, so the Khazar officials asked for the Torah scrolls that were kept in a cave in the plain of Tizul. After the Jewish sages explained these books, the Khazars and the Israelites fully embraced Judaism. It is at this point that the immigration of Jews to Khazaria from Greece, Baghdad, and Khorasan is mentioned, and they are said to have strengthened the Khazars and helped them to keep the Covenant of Abraham.

A Jewish sage was appointed as shofet, or ruler (kagan). Meanwhile, the bek's name became Sabriel.<sup>63</sup>

The document continued with a description of the military affairs of tenth-century Khazaria, especially relating to Alan-Khazar and Rus'-Khazar interactions (see chapters 7 and 8).

The events recorded in the *Schechter Letter* have been proved historically accurate. The document itself is known to be authentic since it was mentioned by Rabbi Yehudah ben Barzillai of Barcelona in *Sefer ha-Ittim* (circa 1100), a treatise on the laws of the Sabbath and the Jewish festivals.<sup>64</sup>

The *Schechter Letter* was evidently addressed to Hasdai bar Yitzhak ibn Shaprut, a prominent Sephardic Jewish diplomat. Many scholars suggest that Hasdai read the *Schechter Letter* prior to writing to King Joseph, and that therefore the document further inspired him to try to correspond directly with the Khazar ruler.

## THE KHAZAR CORRESPONDENCE

Hasdai ibn Shaprut's famous "Khazar Correspondence" with tenth-century Khazar king Joseph came about because of Hasdai's interest in finding further confirmation that an independent Jewish kingdom still existed.

Hasdai resided in Cordoba, Spain. He was a physician as well as the vizier to the Umayyad caliphs Abd-al-Rahman III (reigned 911–961) and Hakam II (reigned 961–976). Hasdai wrote to Joseph that he initially learned about the existence of the Jewish kingdom called Khazaria from traveling merchants of Khorasan. At first, he was skeptical, but then Byzantine ambassadors to the caliph confirmed that Khazaria really existed. The ambassadors told Hasdai that the kingdom Al-Khazar was ruled by King Joseph and that traders came from Khazaria to Byzantium with fish, skins, and many other goods.<sup>65</sup>

With increased hope, Hasdai tried to make arrangements for the transport of a letter to the Khazar king. Yitzhak bar Nathan met Hasdai and offered to take his letter to the Khazars. Byzantine emperor Constantine VII blocked Yitzhak from traveling from Constantinople to Khazaria. Yitzhak returned to Spain with a letter from the emperor which claimed that the reasons Yitzhak was held for six months in Constantinople were that the route to Khazaria was supposedly riddled with intertribal warfare and that there was turbulence in the Black Sea that prevented safe navigation. Jonathan Shepard considered that the real reasons for detaining Yitzhak were probably that the emperor may have feared a military alliance between Spain and Khazaria and that he did not wish Hasdai to learn of the persecution of Byzantine Jews under Romanus, which had caused many refugees to flee to Khazaria.<sup>66</sup> However, as

mentioned previously, Yitzhak did successfully obtain the *Schechter Letter* account.

Hasdai continued to look for ways to transport his letter, which he revised to include more details, including his disappointment that Yitzhak was unable to reach Khazaria. Around the year 953, two Central European Jews, Saul and Joseph (ambassadors of the “King of the Givlim”), agreed to send the letter from the Saqlab Givlim (Slavic Croatians) to Jews in Hungary, where it would be transmitted to the Rus’ians and then Bulgars before finally reaching Khazaria. Saul and Joseph told Hasdai that around the year 947, they had met a blind Jewish scholar from Khazaria named ‘Amram, a wise man who lived in the Khazar king’s palace and ate at the king’s table.<sup>67</sup>

Circa 954,<sup>68</sup> Menahem ben Jacob ibn Saruq,<sup>69</sup> Hasdai’s literary secretary, composed the final draft of the query letter according to Hasdai’s instructions. In the letter, Hasdai asked the Khazar king many questions, such as what their land, army, government, and observance of Judaism were like, and which tribes lived under his jurisdiction. Hasdai overflowed with joy when recounting his discovery of Khazaria:

We live in the Diaspora and there is no power in our hands. They say to us every day, “Every nation has a kingdom, but you have no memory of such in all the land.” But when we heard about my master the King, the might of his monarchy, and his mighty army, we were amazed. We lifted our heads, our spirits returned, our hands were strengthened, and my master’s kingdom was our response in defense. Were it that this news would gain added strength, for through it we will be elevated further.<sup>70</sup>

The letter was transmitted eastward to the Khazar king by Yitzhak ben Eliezer, a German Jew.<sup>71</sup>

*King Joseph’s Reply* reached Hasdai around the year 955. It stated that Joseph’s ancestor, King Bulan, was circumcised, officially converted to Judaism, and drove out sorcerers and idolaters from the kingdom and trusted in God alone. The *Reply* indicated that after a Khazar-led attack on the town of Ardabil,<sup>72</sup> located south of the Caucasus Mountains, a tabernacle was established along the biblical model, with an ark, candlestick, table, sacred vessels, and altar. Bulan set up the tabernacle because the angel in his dream told him to do so. He was promised God’s assistance if he observed the commandments and had a synagogue constructed. Bulan, already leaning toward Judaism and practicing it in a basic form, continued his religious explorations, partly because of representatives of other faiths who wished to convert him, and soon he felt it necessary to call for a disputation between the faiths.

Also noteworthy in the *Reply* is Joseph’s statement that King Obadiah, a successor of Bulan, invited Jewish sages from many lands to come to



Khazaria in order to explain the meaning of the Torah, Talmud, Mishnah, and prayers:

After those days, there arose from the sons of his [Bulan's] sons a king named Obadiah. He was an upright and just man. He reorganized the kingdom and established the [Jewish] religion properly and correctly. He built synagogues and schools, brought in many Israelite sages, and honored them with silver and gold, and they explained to him the twenty-four books [the Torah], Mishnah, Talmud, and the order of prayers [established by] the Khazzans. He was a man who feared God and loved the law and the commandments.

According to many scholars, Obadiah's religious zeal led the Khazar populace to become familiar with the holy Jewish works, and thus many more Khazar shamanists converted to Judaism than otherwise would have been the case. The fact that the Khazars studied the Mishnah and Talmud—rabbinical documents rejected by the Karaite sect—indicates their affinity to rabbinical Judaism.

Obadiah was succeeded to the throne by his son Hezekiah and then by Hezekiah's son Menasheh. Then, perhaps because Menasheh left no living heirs, Obadiah's brother, Hanukkah, became king. All the Khazar kings who followed also had Hebrew names. According to Yehudah ben Barzillai, the names of the Jewish kings, in order of succession, were as follows: Bulan, Hezekiah, Menasheh I, Yitzhak (Isaac), Menasheh II, Benjamin, Aaron, and Joseph.<sup>73</sup> *King Joseph's Reply* gave a more complete enumeration: Bulan, followed by one or several other kings, then Obadiah, Hezekiah, Menasheh I, Hanukkah, Yitzhak, Zebulun, Menasheh II, Nisi, Aaron I, Menahem, Benjamin, Aaron II, and Joseph. As may readily be seen, Obadiah was not given in Yehudah ben Barzillai's enumeration, but that does not necessarily mean that he did not exist, as Zuckerman claimed. In any case, both lists confirm that the two Khazar kings who preceded Joseph were Benjamin and Aaron.

Both copies of *King Joseph's Reply* are now widely known to be based upon an authentic document, not forgeries.<sup>74</sup> Rabbis Yehudah ben Barzillai and Abraham ibn Daud both referred to the *Reply* in their twelfth-century books.

## SAINT CYRIL'S MISSION TO THE KHAZARS

Jews were continuing to actively seek converts in Khazaria in the middle of the ninth century. The *Life of Constantine* said that around the year 860, Khazar envoys came to Constantinople to request the assistance of Christian preachers. Significantly, the Khazar envoys said,

From time immemorial, we have known of only one god [Tengri], who rules over everything, and we bow to him, turning toward the East. . . . Now the Jews are urging us to accept their religion and customs, while, on the other hand, the Arabs draw us to their [Islamic] faith, promising us peace and many gifts.<sup>75</sup>

Are these the same Jewish proselytizers who were referenced by Dimashqi? Perhaps Yitzhak ha-Sangari or his disciples continued working with the Khazar people after the successful conversion of Bulan? Unfortunately, we possess no further evidence of Jewish proselytism in postconversion Khazaria beyond the *Life*.

In the year 860, Saints Cyril and Methodius were sent as missionaries to the Khazars by the Byzantine emperor Michael III (reigned 842–867), since the Khazars had requested that a Christian scholar come to Khazaria to debate with the Jews and Muslims. The main events of Cyril's mission were recorded in the *Life of Constantine*, which was written around the 870s, probably by Saint Methodius.<sup>76</sup>

According to the *Life of Constantine*, when Cyril initially arrived in the Khazar Empire, he met a Khazar man who criticized the Byzantine manner of appointing rulers and the Christian dependence on books for religious debates. As a representative of an oral culture, the man advocated the retention of knowledge internally, saying, "We . . . bring forth all wisdom from our breasts, as if we had swallowed it, not taking pride in writing, as you do."<sup>77</sup> However, the man was unable to answer a very specific biblical question that Cyril threw at him—how many generations lived before Moses, and for how many years did each generation last—due to his lack of knowledge of the Torah. Constantine Zuckerman suggested that this man was "one of the Khazar Jews who held to a rudimentary bookless form of Judaism before the 'return' to the proper Jewish observance."<sup>78</sup> On the other hand, Francis Butler proposed that the man may have been a fictional character introduced into the text to illustrate Cyril's role as a carrier of literacy and learning to pagans.<sup>79</sup>

Saint Cyril studied Hebrew in Cherson during the winter of 860–861. After learning and translating Hebrew, Cyril traveled to the residence of Kagan Zacharias.<sup>80</sup> Methodius accompanied him. Cyril was now prepared to engage in debate with the Jewish rabbis.

Cyril's disputation began in the summer of 861 at the kagan's court.<sup>81</sup> The kagan (at that time the highest authority in Khazaria) and the bek (second in command) received the Byzantine delegation, which consisted of an envoy and judges. A number of Khazars were in the audience watching the debates. During the debates, the kagan remarked to Cyril that his people believed in one God, rather than in the Christian Trinity.<sup>82</sup> Cyril urged the Khazars to choose Christianity in order to avoid a terrible fate.

During the disputation, the Khazar leaders called themselves a “bookless crowd,” but they were aware of the existence of holy books that they could consult. The reference to holy books paralleled the *Schechter Letter’s* mention of the Torah books stored in the cave of Tizul Valley. The kagan told Cyril that his words about the scriptures were proper and as sweet as honey, yet it was God’s will that the Khazars were illiterate.<sup>83</sup> The mention of the holy books reveals that the Khazars had previously been consulting with Jews about religious matters, prior to the debate, since the Khazars themselves supposedly could not read the books.

The following day, Cyril returned to debate further with the other missionaries, and the Khazars are presented in the *Life of Constantine* as being aware of several facts described in the Torah.<sup>84</sup> The *Life* claimed that the Khazars were impressed by the saint’s debating skills.

In the words of Alexander Schenker, “The deliberations covered such doctrinal matters as the dogma of the Holy Trinity, the Immaculate Conception, circumcision, Jesus as the Messiah, the worship of images, and the dietary laws.”<sup>85</sup> The rabbis and other Jews in the kagan’s court were unconvinced by the saint’s religious arguments on these and other points. Their dedication to Judaism remained as strong as ever, setting the stage for proselytism on a large-scale basis in the empire. Saint Cyril was only successful in converting two hundred Khazar noblemen to Christianity.<sup>86</sup> However, he did succeed in persuading a Khazar governor to stop warring against a Crimean city near Cherson, for he cared for the safety of the Christians who resided there.<sup>87</sup> Additionally, two hundred Greek captives were freed when the kagan granted Cyril’s wish, and they were allowed to leave Khazaria with Cyril. Cyril also converted many common folks in the Khazar town of Tepsen (Phullai) (see also chapter 2).<sup>88</sup>

The *Life of Constantine* is not the only Christian account describing debates between the Byzantine saints and the Khazars. A separate account said that Saint Methodius, during his stay in Moravia around 879–880, held a religious debate before an audience of pagans and Jews with a Khazar named “Zambrii.”<sup>89</sup> According to the prologue to the *Life of Methodius*, Zambrii was a “heretic” who attacked Christianity. The story boasted about how Methodius “out-argued” the Jews and “heretics” since he was “armed with the words of the prophets and apostles.” Allegedly, all of Methodius’s opponents were defeated, and the assembled audience fled from a raging fire.

In 1995, Constantine Zuckerman proposed that the disputation in the *Life of Constantine* and the disputation described in the *Schechter Letter* and *King Joseph’s Reply* were one and the same event, and that the conversion therefore took place in approximately 861, shortly after Cyril’s stay in the kagan’s palace.<sup>90</sup> This possibility seemed plausible at the time, because the earliest

written reference to the Khazar conversion is Christian of Stavelot's *Expositio in Matthaicum Evangelistam* (864), but it was ruled out by the discovery that more than two decades earlier, in 837–838, the Khazars had minted coins commemorating their conversion to Judaism (see chapter 5 and below). The Khazar kings and some in their entourage were already Jews by the time Cyril arrived and were cultivating a deep friendship with Israelite Jews that continued to grow in the coming decades.

### THE KIEVAN LETTER

The *Kievan Letter* was discovered in 1962 when Norman Golb examined a collection of previously unidentified documents from the Cairo Genizah. The letter does not contain a date, which makes precise dating difficult, but it is generally assumed to be from the tenth century. According to Omeljan Pritsak, it dates back to around the year 930, during the time when Kiev was under Khazarian rule.<sup>91</sup> On the other hand, Leonid Chekin argued that it might have been composed between 870 and 930, earlier than Pritsak and Golb suggested.<sup>92</sup> The *Kievan Letter* was written on parchment and is the oldest Khazarian document ever found.

The subject of the letter is the unfortunate circumstance facing Jacob ben Hanukkah. The Jews of Kiev wrote this letter of recommendation on Jacob's behalf. Jacob's brother had borrowed a sum of money (as a loan), but afterward he was attacked and killed, and his money was stolen. When the moneylenders learned about this incident, they imprisoned Jacob, who was his brother's guarantor. Jacob remained in captivity for one year, until the Jews of Kiev freed him and paid sixty gold coins to the moneylenders. The purpose of the letter was to help raise the forty coins that remained to be paid from among other Jewish communities. The authors urged their fellow Jews to contribute money to Jacob as an act of kindness:

So now, O our masters, raise up your eyes to heaven and do as is your goodly custom, for you know how great is the virtue of charity. For charity saves men from death.<sup>93</sup>

The document was written in square Hebrew letters and in the Hebrew language, but a Turkic runiform word was added with a brush pen in the lower left-hand corner of the page. The six-letter runic word reads *[h]oqurim*, which in the Khazarian language means "I have read [it]."<sup>94</sup> The fact that this word appears on a Hebrew document shows that the Khazar officials who processed the letter understood both Hebrew and the Khazarian language.

Particularly fascinating are the signatures of the eleven Jews who wrote this letter for Jacob, since their names are of mixed Hebrew and non-Jewish origins. The following are the names of members of Kiev's Jewish community in the early tenth century:

Abraham ha-Parnas ("the Benefactor")	Qufin bar Joseph
Yitzhak ha-Parnas ("the Benefactor")	Reuben bar Simson
Yehudah bar Yitzhak Levi	. . . el bar Manäs
Gostata bar Kiabar Kohen	Hanukkah bar Moses
Manär bar Samuel Kohen	Yehudah called Sawarta
Sinai bar Samuel	

Abraham and Yitzhak served as the leaders of the community. The majority of these Jews were probably descended from proselytes, although two of the signatories were Kohens, and one was a Levite. Although the titles "Kohen" ("Aaronide priest") and "Levi" (designating a member of the Israelite tribe of Levi) are usually inherited, Golb suggested that Tengri shamanist priests (*qams*) in Khazaria adopted these titles after converting to Judaism.<sup>95</sup> A number of scholars disagree with Golb's hypothesis, arguing that non-Israelites are not allowed to adopt the titles "Kohen" and "Levi" because of the rabbinical law of descent through the male line. A possible explanation, then, is that the Kohenim and Levites in Khazaria descended in part from Middle Eastern Jewish men who had intermarried with Turkic women. In the case of Kohen Khazars (if any existed), this would have meant that they had married daughters, granddaughters, or great-granddaughters of Khazar converts who had been raised as Jews from birth, since Kohenim are traditionally prohibited from marrying converts. (Levites are not subject to the same restriction.) Alternatively, these Kohenim and Levites may have had no recent convert ancestry at all.

The question of the origins and meanings of the names in the *Kievan Letter* has aroused much discussion among scholars. Gostata's father's name, Kiabar, seems to indicate that he was a Kabar, according to Pritsak.<sup>96</sup> Kiabar may very well have been connected with the Kopyrev konets district of Kiev, which was populated by Jews, according to Kievan chroniclers (see chapter 2). Pritsak claimed that Gostata was named after the Turkic Bulgar clan member Gostan.<sup>97</sup> Other Oghuric Turkic names among the signatories include Manär ("great man") and Manäs ("great great").<sup>98</sup> Pritsak associated the name "Qufin" with the Kuban River in the north Caucasus and the Kup'i Bulgar tribe which lived in that region. He also noted that Yehudah's appellation "Sawarta" may indicate his membership in the Turkic Sabir tribe.<sup>99</sup>

Moshe Gil, on the other hand, argued against Golb's idea that the *Kievan Letter* signatories were Turks or proselytes of any other kind, noting that "the

acceptance of foreign names by Jews was a common practice in all periods."<sup>100</sup> The Russian historian Avraham Torpusman later made an identical argument and suggested that many of the names held by the Jews of Kiev were adopted from their neighbors.<sup>101</sup> Torpusman suggested that "Gostata," "Qufin," and "Sawarta" are actually East Slavic names—"Gostyata," "Kupin," and "Severyata," respectively. Torpusman explained that the name "Gostyata" or "Gostata" was frequently used by Slavs residing in the land of the Rus', such as in Novgorod in the form "Gost'ata," as known from birch-bark documents from the eleventh and twelfth centuries. He proposed that "Qufin" came from "Kupin," a Slavic name meaning "merchant," and for comparison he noted the existence of the sixteenth-century Slavic name "Kupina." As for Yehudah called Sawarta, Torpusman interpreted the Hebrew letters "SWRTH" as either "Sur'ata" or "Sever'ata," the latter deriving from the name of the East Slavic tribe Severyane of the Chernigov region. Torpusman's analysis cast doubt on the contention that the letter's signatories were of Khazar origin, even if we allow for the possibility that a few of the other names ("Manär," "Manäs," and "Kyber"/"Kiabar") might be Khazarian names. Alexander Beider was next to weigh in on the controversy, writing that Pritsak's linguistic claims that the non-Hebrew names are of Turkic origins are "far from being convincing."<sup>102</sup> Beider thought that the phonetic similarities Pritsak found with other known names could be either coincidences or misreadings; if the latter, it may be because the exact pronunciation of the names could be disputable since vowels are lacking in the Hebrew text. Beider's expertise is onomastics, the study of names, and he was unable to find the presence of the names "Manär," "Manäs," or "SWRTH" among other Jewish communities. As for the name "Gostata," in addition to the medieval Rus' parallels Torpusman had found, Beider found a reference to a Gostata in a thirteenth-century document from Czechia.<sup>103</sup> Beider was unsure whether the "Gostata" of the *Kievan Letter* was merely a name a Judean had borrowed from Slavic or whether it was that of a Slav who had converted to Judaism. He also did not dispute the possibility that some of the other Kievan Jews may have been ethnic Khazars, regardless of whether their names were Khazarian.<sup>104</sup>

The linguist Vladimir Orel disagreed with Torpusman's explanation that "SWRTH" reflects a nickname like "Severyata," "Suryata," or "Soryata"; according to Orel, no such nicknames are known to have existed among the East Slavs, and they are only Torpusman's attempts at reconstructing the name.<sup>105</sup> The special format of the name "Yehudah called Sawarta" draws our attention. Most of the other names on the letter indicate the ethnic and paternal heritage of the bearers and were in the usual "name son of father" format. Orel thought "SWRTH" stands for the Slavic word *sirota* (orphan) and that

he was a convert to Judaism.<sup>106</sup> Orel explained his linguistic argument as follows: “In identifying Swrth = Slavic \*sirota one encounters a formal complexity in the transmission of the lead vowel \*-i- of the first syllable through -w-. . . . [W]e can assume that a *mater lectionis* [a consonant serving as a weak vowel] was inserted . . . upon translation of the Slavic word [into Hebrew]. In other words, we suggest the conjunction \*Srwth.”<sup>107</sup> Orel noted that the nickname “Sirota” is found on various old Russian monuments and that it references a person who lost at least one of his parents. If, however, the term “orphan” has a Jewish meaning here, as Orel believed it does, it would mean that Yehudah was a convert to Judaism—a person who adopts a new Hebrew name and discards his former identity.

Constantine Porphyrogenitus wrote about a southeastern Magyar ethnic group called Savarti Asfali, where *Asfali* is from the Greek word *asphales* (strong, reliable), and *Savarti* means “black” in the class sense of “commoner.”<sup>108</sup> András Róna-Tas wondered whether the mysterious signatory Yehudah was a Savarti Asfali who converted to Judaism, or at least someone who had some form of connection to the Savarti Asfali people.<sup>109</sup>

At present, it is not possible to accept without reservation any of the proposed interpretations of “SWRTH.”

What else do we learn from the *Kievan Letter*? Many of the phrases in the letter—such as “nor are we as warners but rather those who remind” and “you shall eat the fruits in this world”—are rabbinical idioms typical of those used in other Jewish letters of recommendation during the medieval era.<sup>110</sup> Thus, the obvious conclusion we must draw, according to Golb, is that the Khazars living in Kiev practiced standard rabbinical Judaism. Golb also explained that the letter demonstrates that many nonroyal Khazars had in fact adopted Judaism as their faith:

The new Kievan Letter may thus be said to support, and indeed to demonstrate, the authenticity of other Hebrew texts pertaining to the Khazar Jews, and together with them shows that Khazarian Judaism was not limited to the rulers but, rather, was well rooted in the territories of Khazaria, reaching even to its border city of Kiev.<sup>111</sup>

## THE DATE AND DEPTH OF THE KHAZAR CONVERSION TO JUDAISM

A variety of medieval documents that illuminate the Khazars’ Judaism have survived to the present day. The contemporary quotes from Arabic, Karaite, and other sources indicate that Jews exerted an enormous amount of influence

over Khazarian affairs, and many of these sources state that a great many of the Khazar people became Jewish. However, there are several sources that have been interpreted by some scholars as presenting a different view of the extent of Judaism among the Khazars. Meanwhile, the precise date of the conversion of the Khazars to Judaism is also contentious.

Many of those who studied and wrote about the Khazars accepted as valid Yehudah ha-Levi's statement within the beginning of *Sefer ha-Kuzari* that the Khazar king converted about four hundred years before<sup>112</sup> the time of its writing (circa 1140), that is, in approximately the year 740. Indeed, this date of 740 is frequently encountered in books and articles about the Khazars. Douglas Dunlop's endorsement of this date<sup>113</sup> was very influential in the past. Some scholars who accepted this date as valid proposed that Bulan, the convert to Judaism, could have been the kagan who was forced to convert to Islam in 737, and that therefore the kagan's adoption of Islam was a short-term commitment (see also chapter 7). Yet, as previously mentioned, it appears that Bulan was actually a bek rather than a kagan.

Other scholars accepted the chronology of al-Masudi,<sup>114</sup> which was written circa 943 and corroborated by Dimashqi several centuries later. According to both writers, the Khazar king became a Jew during the period when Harun al-Rashid served as caliph of the Abbasid Caliphate in Baghdad, that is, between 786 and 809.

As noted earlier, Constantine Zuckerman had argued that Cyril's disputation in 861 may be identified as the famous religious debate mentioned in *King Joseph's Reply to Hasdai ibn Shaprut*. Zuckerman argued against the accuracy of both ha-Levi's date of circa 740 and al-Masudi's date of circa 786–809.<sup>115</sup> The discrepancy in these two dates has often been interpreted to mean that standard rabbinical Judaism was adopted many decades after Bulan's reign and that Bulan professed a syncretic belief (such as Judaism mixed with shamanism) or a sectarian variant of Judaism (such as Karaism). Zuckerman asserted that King Bulan ruled around 861 rather than 740 and that the conversion process in the Khazar royalty took only one stage rather than two or three.<sup>116</sup>

More recently, Roman Kovalev explained that the new coin evidence points to 838 as the most likely date of the official conversion of the Khazar king to Judaism.<sup>117</sup> Whether any nonroyal Khazars had adopted Judaism prior to 838 is an open question. The issuance of Jewish-themed coins in Khazaria signaled the first known royal endorsement of the religion. They were symbolic declarations both of Khazaria's political independence and its distinctive religious orientation.<sup>118</sup> Interestingly, most Khazars and Arabs never got the chance to see these special-issue coins. According to available evidence on the distribution of the coins, the Rus' quickly obtained most of them and



traded them soon afterward in northern Europe.<sup>119</sup> The Rus' could not read Arabic and hence would not have understood their messages.

As noted in chapter 3, the bek took over many responsibilities from the kagan during the 830s, and by 843 only the bek was mentioned in official correspondence sent by other world leaders to the Khazars. In *King Joseph's Reply*, Joseph described the bek as the officeholder with the actual power over the people, while the kagan's spiritual and advisory authority was still honored by the bek. Kovalev observed that the removal of the secular power of the kagan was in line with the transformation of the kaganship into the office of the shofet (leader with less power than a king), a position that existed among the ancient Israelites and is described by the *Schechter Letter* as having been revived by the Khazars at the time of the conversion.<sup>120</sup>

The *Schechter Letter* does not provide dates for when Bulan, the victorious chief warrior possibly of mixed Khazarian-Israelite origins, became the first Jewish bek and adopted the Hebrew name "Sabriel," or for when a Jewish sage was appointed as the first Jewish kagan. However, the sequence of these two events was established in that document: A Jewish bek was installed on the throne before a Jew became kagan. In other words, the bek was the first monarch to convert to Judaism, and this happened prior to 838. If al-Masudi's date is accurate, the bek converted between 786 and 809, and Kovalev thinks that the first decade of the ninth century is most likely.<sup>121</sup> However, this first Jewish bek did not convert anyone other than himself; it was initially a personal conversion alone. The kagan, meanwhile, remained a dedicated shamanist, and the subordinate bek still remained under the kagan's religious influence, which would explain his continued worship at the pagan shrines (as described in *Sefer ha-Kuzari*), despite his nominal Jewishness. The decisive switch of the kingdom to Judaism came about in 837 or 838, when the kagan joined the bek in the Jewish religion. If Bulan indeed had some Jewish ancestors, his own conversion to Judaism—which may have been formally recognized by a rabbi in 838—may indeed have been a form of "return" for him.

A conversion for Bulan dated between 800 and 809 is also consistent with other factors. There is no evidence that any of the Khazar kagans or beks were Jewish in the eighth century. The *Life of Saint Abo* explicitly described the Khazar kagan as a pagan in the year 782.<sup>122</sup> The kagans of that period—such as Kagan Baghatur—had Turkic names, and no trace of Judaic influence can be detected. Indeed, many Jewish communities existed in Khazaria at this time—such as the immigrants from Armenia and the colonies on the Crimean and Taman peninsulas—but they had not yet persuaded even the kagans and beks to adopt their religion, much less the population at large.

Concerning the issue of Judaism's level of popularity in Khazaria, Vladimir Minorsky expressed the viewpoint that

The propagation of Judaism among the Khazars had but a restricted scope and concerned only the top of the social pyramid, while the majority of the people must have stuck to the old nomad practices.<sup>123</sup>

Similarly, Dunlop commented,

The character of the Khazars as Judaized Turks has constantly to be kept in mind. This probably means that their Judaism—limited no doubt in any case to a comparatively small group—was always superficial.<sup>124</sup>

There are also many other historians who have claimed that Judaism was restricted to the royalty and nobility and that most of the Khazars continued to worship Tengri. Other historians believe that many of the common people converted soon after the aristocratic classes did so. As previously mentioned, Golb favored the notion that Judaism was widespread in Khazaria, based on his interpretation of the *Kievan Letter*. Jonathan Shepard likewise adopted the view that the conversion was widespread, based on sources like Christian of Stavelot and ibn al-Faqih which seem to favor this view.<sup>125</sup> Widely diverging views on this question have been expressed by participants at past Khazar studies conferences around the world. At present, it seems that Judaism started to spread widely in Khazaria during the second half of the ninth century, partly because of the enthusiastic pro-Judaism policies of King Obadiah and his successors.<sup>126</sup> There are many indications that Judaism was the predominant religion among the Khazar people themselves by the tenth century.

Ibn Khordadbeh, writing between 846 and 885, only mentioned the Jewishness of the Khazar lower king (bek), and not also that of the kagan or the Khazar people.<sup>127</sup> Ibn Khordadbeh's account, apparently derived from information from before the 840s, described the very earliest stages of Judaism in the Khazar Empire. By the end of the 830s, the kagan's throne was, for the first time, occupied by a Jew. This latter situation was discussed by the Persian historian ibn Rustah, who wrote circa 903 that the Khazar rulers (the kagan, bek, generals, and chiefs) and nobles professed Judaism, but that the rest of the Khazars still practiced shamanism.<sup>128</sup> According to Zuckerman, ibn Rustah's account most likely comes from an unnamed archaic report of the late ninth century.<sup>129</sup> If so, it does not reflect the situation in the tenth century.

The Jewish kagans and beks certainly remained committed to their new religion. As an example of the dedication of the kagans to Judaism, the Arab traveler ibn Fadlan mentioned that when the kagan of the Khazars learned that Muslims had destroyed a synagogue in Dar al-Babunaj, he retaliated by destroying a minaret at a mosque in Atil and killing the muezzins.<sup>130</sup> The commitment of the rulers to Judaism obviously impacted the populace at large.

The final stage in the Judaization of the Khazars—the propagation of Judaism among the common people—took place sometime between the reign of King Obadiah and the 930s. Ibn Fadlan wrote circa 921–922, “The Khazars and their king are all Jews.”<sup>131</sup> Ibn al-Faqih wrote circa 902 (or 930), “All of the Khazars are Jews. But they have been Judaized recently.”<sup>132</sup> Al-Masudi reported in 943 that the Jewish religion was professed by the kagan, his “entourage,” and members of the Khazar tribe.<sup>133</sup> Circa 985, al-Muqaddasi compiled a work entitled *Descriptio Imperii Moslemici* in which he said, “Sheep, honey, and Jews exist in large quantities in that land [Khazaria].”<sup>134</sup> It is of major significance that ‘Abd al-Jabbar—whom I cited earlier in this chapter—wrote that the Khazars, as a collective, agreed to meet all the obligations set forth in the Torah, including not working on the Sabbath day or on holidays, adhering to kosher eating practices, practicing circumcision, and following prescribed washing rituals. Christian of Stavelot also appears to refer to the Khazars as a collective, but his use of the word *all* applies to the degree to which Judaism was followed by faithful Khazars who had converted, not to the percentage of practitioners among the Khazars. These sources demonstrate that large numbers of nonaristocratic Khazars adopted Judaism.

There also exist some other Arabic accounts—from the tenth through the thirteenth centuries—that on the surface appear to contradict the above statements. For example, al-Istakhri’s account (written circa 932 or 951) stated that the Jews were numerically the smallest group in Khazaria compared to the Muslims and Christians, but that Judaism was practiced by the king and his officers.<sup>135</sup> Similarly, al-Bakri wrote (around 1094) that most people in the Khazar Empire were Muslims and Christians, “but there are idolaters among them, and the people of a section among them, and their king, are of the Jewish faith.”<sup>136</sup> An anonymous twelfth-century source, *Risalat fi’l Aqalim*, said that the people in Khazaria were mostly Muslims, but that their king was a Jew. In a summary of earlier Arabic accounts, Yaqut wrote (around 1229) that there were more Muslims and Christians in Khazaria compared to the number of Jews.<sup>137</sup> I believe that these four Arab accounts should be interpreted as follows: whereas the Khazar Empire encompassed many non-Jewish peoples (e.g., Muslim Bulgars, pagan Slavs, Christian Goths), the ethnically Khazar people—who were outnumbered by other groups—were Jewish to a large extent, as further evidence suggests. In other words, these accounts appear to describe the extent of Judaism among all inhabitants of the Khazar Empire rather than among the Khazar tribe alone. Alternatively, these four sources may have failed to mention a large Jewish presence in Khazaria due to reliance on outdated sources such as ibn Rustah or for some other reason.

Further evidence that Judaism was the primary religion among the Khazars comes from Karaite, Persian, and Jewish sources. Around the first half of

the tenth century, the Karaite historian and biblical commentator Jacob al-Kirkisani wrote in *Kitab al-Riyadh wa'l-Khada'iq* ("Book of Gardens and Parks") that the Khazars adopted Judaism.<sup>138</sup> Other Karaite writers scorned the Khazar Jews and called them *mamzerim* rather than "true Jews." For example, Jacob ben Reuben of Byzantium wrote,

Now, [the prophet] Zachariah has already said (Zachariah 9:6), "And a bastard shall dwell in Ashdod," alluding to the Khazars who shall enter the Jewish fold in the Diaspora.<sup>139</sup>

An additional Arabic Karaite commentary, written either by Japheth ben Ali of Bassa or Jeshuan ben Yehudah, also used Zachariah's verse to explain that the Khazars were "illegitimate" bastards:

And we explain that this was the condition of the nations before the rise of Nebuchadnezzar and he made them disappear from their land, and they intermixed and perhaps the unknown laws were similar to those of the Moabites and the Ammonites. [This continued] until the arrival of the man [Eliyahu the Prophet] who separated between non-Jews (*al-Goyim*). And they became acquainted with each other as *Mishpakhot ha-Goyim* and their condition returned to what it was [before]. And it was said "And a bastard shall dwell in Ashdod" (Zachariah 9:6) and that was an indication that the Israelites gave Ashdod and its surroundings to them as a place to live. And it has been suggested that they were the Khazars who adopted the religion of Israel in the time of Exile. As for those who adopted Judaism before the Exile, the Almighty God had made them already dwell between the Israelites, in accordance with the verse in Ezekiel 47:23: "And in what tribe the stranger sojourneth, there shall ye give him his inheritance."<sup>140</sup>

Another medieval source, the Persian *Denkart*, also criticized the Khazars' Judaism, but for a different reason:

As for religion, it is evident that when it was propagated among them, the strength, the splendor, and the regal majesty of the Zoroastrian religion eliminated the strife from their lives, and established joy and profit; but that [when] false doctrines descended upon them and wove their way among them, they were changed. Thus, it is clear that the false doctrine of Jesus in Rome, that of Moses among the Khazars, [and] that of Mani in [Uyghur-ruled] Turkistan removed the strength and bravery that they formerly possessed, and [as a result] these people returned to a state of weakness and decadence when among their rivals; and Manichaeism was ruined just like the philosophy in Rome.<sup>141</sup>

As noted in chapter 4, an-Nadim mentioned the use of the Hebrew alphabet among the Khazar people—another significant indication of their Jewishness.

Several erudite Sephardic scholars wrote about the Khazars' conversion to Judaism. Abraham ibn Daud (circa 1110–1180), a Spanish Jewish writer, included the following in his 1161 work *Sefer ha-Qabbalah* (“The Book of Tradition”):

You will find the communities of Israel spread abroad from the town of Sala at the extremity of the Maghrib, as far as Tahart at its commencement, the extremity of Africa [Ifraqiyah, Tunis], in all Africa, Egypt, the country of the Sabaeans, Arabia, Babylonia, Elam, Persia, Dedan, the country of the Girkashites which is called Jurjan, Tabaristan, as far as Daylam and the river Itil where live the Khazar peoples who became proselytes. Their king Joseph sent a letter to R. Hisdai, the Prince bar Isaac ben-Shaprut and informed him that he and all his people followed the Rabbanite faith.<sup>142</sup>

Also very significant are several descriptions of Jewish Khazars who were living abroad after Khazaria's downfall. It is true that ibn Miskawayh wrote that in 965, “all” of the Khazars adopted Islam,<sup>143</sup> except for the Khazar king, but he was only referring to those Khazars who were conquered by the Khwarizmians (see chapter 8). This particular group of Khazars was forced largely to abandon Judaism for political reasons rather than out of voluntary choice. Meanwhile, a large number of Khazars remained Jewish. This is confirmed by such sources as the *Russian Chronicle*, Rabbi Abraham ibn Daud's *Sefer ha-Qabbalah*, and Constantine Akropolites's commentary on the *Life of Saint Zotikos*.

The majority of sources quoted in this section are consistent with the evidence for Khazar Judaism in the *Schechter Letter*, *King Joseph's Reply*, *Kol Yehudah*, *Sefer ha-Kuzari*, the *Kievan Letter*, and Dimashqi's report, all of which were discussed earlier in this chapter.

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

The aforementioned Moses coins from 837–838 represent the best archaeological proof of Khazar Judaism, since their Jewish message is unmistakable. According to Kovalev, these coins must have been issued at the order of the Jewish bek Bulan after his assumption of the secular powers of the kaganate.<sup>144</sup>

Tombstones were found on the Crimean peninsula that bear Jewish symbols (such as seven-branched menorahs, shofars, the staff of Aaron,<sup>145</sup> and *lulavs*) on one side and Turkic tribe symbols (*tamgas*) on the other side.<sup>146</sup> Khazar Jewish graves were also found in Kerch's straits.<sup>147</sup> The tombstones with *tamgas* appear to reveal the Khazar ancestry of these Jews. Such stones

were also reportedly found on the nearby Taman peninsula. However, most of the other Jewish tombstones throughout the Crimean and Taman peninsulas—those without tamgas—have no demonstrable connection to the Khazars, and many of them predate the Khazar era.

Scholars at a museum in Rostov-on-Don have attempted to reconstruct what seems to be a Khazarian tabernacle from parts of a folding altar that were unearthed at the Bulgar-Khazar fortress of Khumar in Circassia.

Engravings that resemble the six-pointed Star of David were found on circular Khazar relics and bronze mirrors from Sarkel and Khazarian grave fields in Upper Saltov.<sup>148</sup> However, rather than having been made by Jews, these appear to be shamanistic sun discs. There are similar discs from Khazaria with five or seven rays rather than six rays. As noted in chapter 4, the sun discs disappeared from Khazar graves after the conversion to Judaism. Additionally, ethnic Khazar horse riders' burials (distinguishable from other burials in the empire) prior to the tenth century often took the form of barrows over graves, surrounded by trenches filled with animal sacrifices, and the graves included weapons, horse-riding equipment, horses that had been slaughtered, and many riches. Such graves could not be found with items datable from the tenth century, according to Russian archaeological studies. Jonathan Shepard saw the conversion to Judaism as the probable reason for the transition in Khazarian burial patterns:

It seems reasonable to conclude that the Khazars as a collective changed to some other form of burial-ritual. Various explanations for a change might be offered, but one obvious cause would be the mass-adoption of a religion which disapproved of horse-sacrifices and burnt offerings.<sup>149</sup>

In 1999, several mainstream newspapers and magazines reported on the alleged discovery of one or more Khazarian vessels from the Don region supposedly bearing the Hebrew inscription "Israel."<sup>150</sup> Unfortunately, the story was a hoax.

## CONCLUSIONS

The Jewish religion was voluntarily accepted by the Khazars in the middle of the ninth century, probably in 838. Available evidence indicates that the Khazars practiced standard rabbinical Judaism, consisting in part of the following elements:

1. Circumcision;
2. Observance of Hanukkah;

3. Observance of Passover (Pesakh);
4. Observance of the Sabbath (Shabbat);
5. Study of Torah, Talmud, and Mishnah;
6. Prayer according to the proper order established by the Khazzans;
7. Observance of the laws of kosher by refraining from foods banned by the Torah;
8. Washing rituals and ritual ablutions;
9. Simple burials;
10. Refraining from idol worship;
11. Adherence to all the other guidelines of Jewish law (halacha) in addition to those listed;
12. Giving newborn children Hebrew names;
13. Constructing synagogues;
14. Using the Hebrew character set for writing;
15. Using the Hebrew language (for both literary and religious purposes); and
16. Building a tabernacle in the shape of that built by Moses.

Moreover, the kings of Khazaria invited Jews from the rest of the world to settle in the Khazar country, and many did so. Among the population of Khazaria, Judaism's spread was largely confined to the Khazar tribe, though some Alans also practiced Judaism. Not all Khazar tribal members adopted Judaism, but on the other hand, the conversion was not limited to the kings and nobles but rather proliferated among the commoner Khazars as well.

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17. Shaw, "Christian Anti Semitism in the Ottoman Empire," 1080.
18. Vladimir F. Minorsky, *A History of Sharvan and Darband in the 10th–11th Centuries* (Cambridge, England: W. Heffer & Sons, 1958), 146.
19. Norman Golb and Omeljan Pritsak, *Khazarian Hebrew Documents of the Tenth Century* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1982), 115.
20. Golb and Pritsak, *Khazarian Hebrew Documents of the Tenth Century*, 107.
21. Abraham E. Harkavy, "Rab Sa'adyah Gaon al debar ha-Kuzarim," in *Semitic Studies in Memory of Rev. Dr. Alexander Kohut*, ed. G. A. Kohut (Berlin: S. Calvary & Co., 1897), 245.
22. Golb and Pritsak, *Khazarian Hebrew Documents of the Tenth Century*, 111. The theory of the archaeologist Sergei P. Tolstov that Jewish intellectuals, artists, and traders arrived in Khazaria from Khwarizm (modern-day Uzbekistan) in the early eighth century, after allegedly engaging in Judaizing activities in central Asia and participating in the Mazdak Rebellion against the Zoroastrian shah of Khwarizm and then being expelled by Qutaiba ibn Muslim after he conquered Khwarizm, is not supported by any solid evidence. However, it is true that the chronicler Al-Biruni wrote about the expulsion of scholars (in general) from Khwarizm in 712, and that Qutaiba ibn Muslim promoted Islam and suppressed other religions. Habib Levy similarly claimed that Jews from the central Asian cities of Balkh, Bukhara, and Samarkand moved to Khazaria, without providing any evidence (see Habib Levy, *Comprehensive History of the Jews of Iran*, trans. George W. Maschke [Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda, 1999], 205–6).
23. Douglas M. Dunlop, *The History of the Jewish Khazars* (New York: Schocken, 1967), 89–90.
24. Proponents of this view have included, among others, Antal Bartha, Douglas M. Dunlop, Arthur Koestler, Paul Wexler, and Ananiasz Zajaczkowski.
25. Omeljan Pritsak, "The Khazar Kingdom's Conversion to Judaism," *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 3, no. 2 (September 1978): 280–81; Omeljan Pritsak, "The Pre-Ashkenazic Jews of Eastern Europe in Relation to the Khazars, the Rus' and the Lithuanians," in *Ukrainian-Jewish Relations in Historical Perspective*, ed. Howard Aster and Peter J. Potichnyj (Edmonton, Alberta, Canada: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 1990), 5; Shelomo Dov Goitein, "The Jews under Islam—Part



One: Six-Sixteenth Centuries,” in *The Jewish World*, ed. Elie Kedourie (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1979), 182.

26. Richard A. E. Mason, “The Religious Beliefs of the Khazars,” *The Ukrainian Quarterly* 51, no. 4 (Winter 1995): 414–15.

27. By way of comparison, one may note how Rashid al-Din, in his work *The Successors of Genghis Khan*, wrote that the Cuman shamans also used magical rainmaking stones (see Nora Berend, *At the Gate of Christendom* [Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2001], 247). On other Muslim authors who mentioned the rainmaking rituals of Turkic shamans, see Peter B. Golden, “Religion among the Qipčaks of Medieval Eurasia,” *Central Asiatic Journal* 42, no. 2 (1998): 207–9.

28. Technically speaking, Tengri actually consisted of two elements or divine cosovereigns: Türk Tengri, the preserver of justice, and Öd Tengri, the force that maintained the cosmic order and determined how things are at present and will be in the future (see Mason, “The Religious Beliefs of the Khazars,” 393).

29. Peter B. Golden, “Imperial Ideology and the Sources of Political Unity amongst the Pre-Činggisid Nomads of Western Eurasia,” *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 2 (1982): 44.

30. Sev’yan I. Vainshtein, “The Turkic Peoples, Sixth to Twelfth Centuries,” in *Nomads of Eurasia*, ed. Vladimir N. Basilov, trans. Mary F. Zirin (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1989), 59.

31. Mason, “The Religious Beliefs of the Khazars,” 393–94.

32. Rafael’ N. Bezertinov, *Tengrianstvo—Religiya Tyurkov i Mongolov* (Naberezhnye Chelny, Tatarstan, Russia: Aiaz, 2000), 71.

33. Mason, “The Religious Beliefs of the Khazars,” 404.

34. Mason, “The Religious Beliefs of the Khazars,” 399–400.

35. While there is no reliable evidence that any Khazars practiced Zoroastrianism, the Persians did relocate some Zoroastrians to the north Caucasus during the sixth century.

36. Zuckerman, “On the Date of the Khazars’ Conversion,” 243. Jews, on the other hand, prayed toward the direction of Jerusalem.

37. Peter B. Golden, *An Introduction to the History of the Turkic Peoples* (Wiesbaden, Germany: Otto Harrassowitz, 1992), 149–50.

38. Golden, *An Introduction to the History of the Turkic Peoples*, 250.

39. Yves Bonnefoy, ed., *Asian Mythologies*, trans. Gerald Honigsblum et al. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 324.

40. Mason, “The Religious Beliefs of the Khazars,” 401.

41. Shepard, “The Khazars’ Formal Adoption of Judaism and Byzantium’s Northern Policy,” 18.

42. Bonnefoy, *Asian Mythologies*, 328.

43. The word *Ulugh-kun* was recorded in the monumental comparative dictionary *Divan-i Lughat-it-Turk* by Mahmud al-Kashgari in the 1070s.

44. Luc Kwanten, *Imperial Nomads: A History of Central Asia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1979), 45.

45. Svetlana A. Pletnyova, “The Polovtsy,” in *Peoples That Vanished*, ed. Pavel I. Puchkov, trans. Ye. Voronov (Moscow: Nauka, 1989), 28.

46. Pletnyova, "The Polovtsy," 28. A number of statues like this have survived to the present day, and they have been examined by archaeologists.

47. The name "Bulan" meant "an elk" in Turkic. The word *bulan* is attested in the Chuvash, Tatar, and Kipchak languages in addition to Khazarian. Bulan's Hebrew name was Sabriel.

48. Peter B. Golden, *Khazar Studies* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1980), 1:23; Peter B. Golden, "Khazaria and Judaism," *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 3 (1983): 138; Golb and Pritsak, *Khazarian Hebrew Documents of the Tenth Century*, 13–15, 30. See chapter 10 for a refutation of the claim that Karaism existed in Khazaria.

49. Pritsak, "The Khazar Kingdom's Conversion to Judaism," 278, 279.

50. Shlomo Pines, "A Moslem Text Concerning the Conversion of the Khazars to Judaism," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 13 (1962): 47. Under the dietary laws of Judaism, horse meat and pig meat are not considered kosher.

51. *Kol Yehudah* is a renowned commentary on *Sefer ha-Kuzari*. On the name "Yitzhak ha-Sangari," Rabbi Moscato cited from *Sefer ha-Emunot* ("The Book of Beliefs") by Shem Tov ibn Shem Tov (circa 1380–1441).

52. Rabbi Yitzhak ha-Sangari perhaps came from the Byzantine town of Sangarus or somewhere else along the Sangarios River (known today as the Sakarya River) in northwestern Turkey.

53. Yehuda HaLevi, *The Kuzari: In Defense of the Despised Faith*, trans. N. Daniel Korobkin (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1998), 1.

54. The Warsan Mountains, near the Caspian seashore, are identified with Varach'an, the capital of the North Caucasian Huns (see Peter B. Golden, "Khazaria and Judaism," 139). "Varach'an" is the Armenian form of the Arabic rendition "Balanjar." The Huns of Varach'an resided in the Sulak River basin, which is north of Derbent. Pritsak claimed that Varach'an is probably equivalent to modern-day Tarqu, near Makhachkala (see Omeljan Pritsak, "The Khazar Kingdom's Conversion to Judaism," 263).

55. HaLevi, *The Kuzari*, 55–56.

56. Håkon Stang, *The Naming of Russia* (Oslo: Universitetet i Oslo, Slavisk-baltisk institutt, 1996), 149; Leonid S. Chekin, "Christian of Stavelot and the Conversion of Gog and Magog: A Study of a Ninth-Century Reference to Judaism among the Khazars," *Russia Mediaevalis* 9, no. 1 (1997): 17–18. The translation I provide here is a composite of several versions of Christian of Stavelot's text, including the earliest known manuscript edition from Lorsch from around the middle of the tenth century, which mentions the seven northern tribes from which the Bulgars and Khazars originated.

57. The essay's author claimed to be part of the Khazar king's entourage (see Paul E. Kahle, *The Cairo Geniza* [London: Oxford University Press, 1947], 17). Ashtor speculated that the essay was originally written in the Greek language and then translated into Hebrew by a Jew who was familiar with Italian (see Eliyahu Ashtor, *The Jews of Moslem Spain*, trans. Aaron Klein and Jenny M. Klein [Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1992], 1:200, 207), but this view is generally not accepted. Pritsak suggested that the original essay was written in the Arabic script but in the Hebrew language (see Golb and Pritsak, *Khazarian Hebrew Documents of the Tenth Century*, 129).

58. Zuckerman, "On the Date of the Khazars' Conversion," 241. The extant copy of the *Schechter Letter* dates back to the eleventh or twelfth century.

59. Zuckerman, "On the Date of the Khazars' Conversion," 259.

60. See Kahle, *The Cairo Geniza*, 7–8, 17. Medieval Jews preserved every document and book upon which the name of God or quotations from Jewish scriptures were written. These could not be destroyed, so they were either buried or stored away in a repository (*genizah*). The Cairo Genizah not only includes sacred texts bearing references to God, including the name of God, but also general and secular texts. For further information about the Cairo Genizah, consult Stefan C. Reif, *A Jewish Archive from Old Cairo: The History of Cambridge University's Genizah Collection* (Richmond, England: Curzon, 2000). Reif summarizes the Khazar-related documents on pp. 158–59.

61. Golb and Pritsak, *Khazarian Hebrew Documents of the Tenth Century*, 107.

62. Golb and Pritsak, *Khazarian Hebrew Documents of the Tenth Century*, 109.

63. Golb and Pritsak, *Khazarian Hebrew Documents of the Tenth Century*, 113. According to the Israeli researcher Dan Shapira, the name "Sabriel" is a combination of the Hebrew-Aramaic root *SBR* (to think, hope, believe, find out, understand, etc.) and the popular Hebrew suffix *-el* (see Dan Shapira, "Two Names of the First Khazar Jewish Beg," *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 10 [1998–1999]: 233).

64. Golb and Pritsak, *Khazarian Hebrew Documents of the Tenth Century*, 75. Yehudah ben Barzillai indicated that he had personally seen a copy of the *Schechter Letter*, noting that the original was written in Constantinople and that it described the military activities of kings Aaron and Joseph as well as the story of the conversion.

65. Rabbi Chisdai ibn Shaprut, "Letter from Rabbi Chisdai to King Joseph," in *The Kuzari: In Defense of the Despised Faith*, by Yehuda HaLevi, trans. Nissan Daniel Korobkin (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1998), 345.

66. Shepard, "The Khazars' Formal Adoption of Judaism and Byzantium's Northern Policy," 32–33. Around the time Yitzhak was in Byzantium, Hasdai wrote a letter to Empress Helena, the wife of Constantine VII, concerning the safety of Byzantine Jews, something about the land of Khazaria ("eres al-Kazar"), and inquiring about the potential availability of a royal Byzantine ship (see Golb and Pritsak, *Khazarian Hebrew Documents of the Tenth Century*, 80–82). The letter confirms that Hasdai had some knowledge of the existence of the Khazar kingdom. This letter only survives on a mutilated Hebrew document fragment. We may never learn what the rest of it said.

67. Rabbi Chisdai ibn Shaprut, "Letter from Rabbi Chisdai to King Joseph," 347.

68. Some scholars believe that *The Query of Hasdai ibn Shaprut* may have been composed as late as 961.

69. Menahem ibn Saruq is famous for his Hebrew dictionary *Mahberet*, which served as a guide to the study of the Torah but was attacked by the philologist and poet Dunash ben Labrat.

70. Rabbi Chisdai ibn Shaprut, "Letter from Rabbi Chisdai to King Joseph," 349.

71. King Joseph of Khazaria, "The Response of King Joseph to Rabbi Chisdai," in *The Kuzari: In Defense of the Despised Faith*, by Yehuda HaLevi, trans. Nissan Daniel Korobkin (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1998), 350.

72. Allegedly, this was the Khazar attack on Ardabil that took place in the year 730 (see Pritsak, "The Khazar Kingdom's Conversion to Judaism," 274). There is no evidence to support this claim, however, and it is incompatible with the actual conversion date for Bulan.

73. Zuckerman, "On the Date of the Khazars' Conversion," 249–50. The king lists could have been derived from another Khazar document chronicling Khazaria's history—perhaps from the so-called "Books of the Khazars" alluded to by Yehudah HaLevi in *Kuzari*. These chronicles could have been brought to Spain by Khazar royalty and scholars (see chapter 9) and probably included details of the Khazar occupation of Bulgar land, plus descriptions of the deeds of Joseph's predecessors to the throne.

74. Zuckerman, "On the Date of the Khazars' Conversion," 248; Elkan N. Adler, ed., *Jewish Travellers* (London: George Routledge & Sons, 1930), 23. Pavel Kokovtsov, a translator of the texts into Russian (in his 1932 book *Evreysko-Khazarskaya perepiska v X veke*), believed in the genuine nature of the letters. The long version of the *Reply* may date from the thirteenth century, and the short version was included in the sixteenth-century manuscript *Kol Mebasser* by Yitzhak Aqrish (see Golb and Pritsak, *Khazarian Hebrew Documents of the Tenth Century*, 76).

75. Mason, "The Religious Beliefs of the Khazars," 411; George Vernadsky, *A History of Russia* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1948), 1:346.

76. Additionally, the Roman writer Anastasius Bibliothecarius discussed Cyril's mission to the Khazars in a letter he wrote to Gauderich of Velletri dated 875 (see Chekin, "Christian of Stavelot and the Conversion of Gog and Magog," 23). The text uses the spellings "Gazara" and "Chazarorum terra" (the land of the Khazars).

77. Francis Butler, "The Representation of Oral Culture in the *Vita Constantini*," *Slavic and East European Journal* 39, no. 3 (1995): 367.

78. Zuckerman, "On the Date of the Khazars' Conversion," 244.

79. Butler, "The Representation of Oral Culture in the *Vita Constantini*," 368, 377.

80. Most likely the kagan referred to himself as "Zachariah," a Hebrew form of the name. Even though some Christians in medieval Europe also used the name "Zacharias," from the context of the *Life of Constantine*, it is clear that Zacharias was not a Christian.

81. Zuckerman, "On the Date of the Khazars' Conversion," 245.

82. Butler, "The Representation of Oral Culture in the *Vita Constantini*," 371.

83. Butler, "The Representation of Oral Culture in the *Vita Constantini*," 372.

84. Butler, "The Representation of Oral Culture in the *Vita Constantini*," 372. Butler said (377) that the alleged knowledge of aspects of the Torah by the Khazars could be an addition by the author of the *Life* based on the author's incorrect assumption that even pagan people are aware of basic elements of the Old Testament. As evidence, Butler cites another source, the *Life of Stephen of Perm*, where Saint Stephen is said to have met pagan Finns in Perm who were familiar with facts in the Torah, although such an occurrence is questionable.

85. Alexander M. Schenker, *The Dawn of Slavic: An Introduction to Slavic Philology* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996), 30.

86. Zuckerman, "On the Date of the Khazars' Conversion," 243. This point is also highlighted in a sermon dedicated to Cyril and Methodius in the *Uspenskii sbornik*

(twelfth or thirteenth century), which relates that “among the Saracens and the Khazars [Cyril and Methodius] were invincible. . . . And thus they caught them like fish with a net of words and baptized up to two hundred among the Khazar nobles, not counting women or children.” (See Schenker, *The Dawn of Slavic*, 27–28.)

87. Alexander A. Vasiliev, *The Goths in the Crimea* (Cambridge, MA: The Mediaeval Academy of America, 1936), 113.

88. Thomas S. Noonan, “The Khazar-Byzantine World of the Crimea in the Early Middle Ages: The Religious Dimension,” *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 10 (1998–1999): 225, 226.

89. Roman Jakobson, “Minor Native Sources for the Early History of the Slavic Church,” *Harvard Slavic Studies* 2 (1954): 65.

90. Zuckerman, “On the Date of the Khazars’ Conversion,” 244–45, 250.

91. Golb and Pritsak, *Khazarian Hebrew Documents of the Tenth Century*, 71.

92. Leonid S. Chekin, “The Role of Jews in Early Russian Civilization in the Light of a New Discovery and New Controversies,” *Russian History/Histoire Russe* 17, no. 4 (Winter 1990): 384.

93. Golb and Pritsak, *Khazarian Hebrew Documents of the Tenth Century*, 15.

94. Golb and Pritsak, *Khazarian Hebrew Documents of the Tenth Century*, 41–42. These runic letters were written from right to left.

95. Golb and Pritsak, *Khazarian Hebrew Documents of the Tenth Century*, 27.

96. Golb and Pritsak, *Khazarian Hebrew Documents of the Tenth Century*, 55.

97. Pritsak, *The Origin of Rus’* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), 1:69.

98. Golb and Pritsak, *Khazarian Hebrew Documents of the Tenth Century*, 40. The word *man* or *mun* is Chuvash for “great, large.”

99. Golb and Pritsak, *Khazarian Hebrew Documents of the Tenth Century*, 38.

100. Moshe Gil, “Book Review: Khazarian Hebrew Documents of the Tenth Century,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 46, no. 2 (April 1987), 145.

101. Avraham M. Torpusman, “Slavic Names in a Kiev Manuscript from the First Half of the 10th Century,” in *These Are the Names: Studies in Jewish Onomastics*, ed. Aaron Demsky (Ramat-Gan, Israel: Bar-Ilan University, 1999), 2:172–75. See also Avraham M. Torpusman, “Antroponimiya i mezhetnicheskie kontakty narodev Vostochnoi Evropy v srednie veka,” *Imia—ethnos—istoriya*, 1989, 48–66.

102. Alexander Beider, *A Dictionary of Ashkenazic Given Names* (Bergenfield, NJ: Avotaynu, 2001), 191.

103. Beider, *A Dictionary of Ashkenazic Given Names*, 35, 322. According to Vladimir Orel, Gostyata may be connected to the Old Czech name “Host’ata” and may ultimately descend from the Slavic source-word *gosteta* (see Vladimir Orel, “O slavyanskikh imenakh v yevreysko-khazarskom pis’me iz Kiev,” *Palaeoslavica* 5 [1997]: 336).

104. Beider, *A Dictionary of Ashkenazic Given Names*, 191.

105. Orel, “O slavyanskikh imenakh v yevreysko-khazarskom pis’me iz Kiev,” 336.

106. Orel, “O slavyanskikh imenakh v yevreysko-khazarskom pis’me iz Kiev,” 336–37.

107. Orel, "O slavyanskikh imenakh v yevreysko-khazarском pis'me iz Kieva," 337.
108. András Róna-Tas, *Hungarians and Europe in the Early Middle Ages*, trans. Nicholas Bodoczky (Budapest: Central European University Press, 1999), 212, 238, 419–20.
109. Róna-Tas, *Hungarians and Europe in the Early Middle Ages*, 289.
110. Golb and Pritsak, *Khazarian Hebrew Documents of the Tenth Century*, 31.
111. Golb and Pritsak, *Khazarian Hebrew Documents of the Tenth Century*, 32.
112. HaLevi, *The Kuzari*, 1. The rabbi later remarks to the king that the Hebrew year in which their dialog takes place is 4500, which also corresponds to 740 CE (see HaLevi, *The Kuzari*, 17).
113. Dunlop, *The History of the Jewish Khazars*, 170. Dunlop claimed that Obadiah's renaissance took place around the year 800 (see 170).
114. Dunlop, *The History of the Jewish Khazars*, 89.
115. Zuckerman, "On the Date of the Khazars' Conversion," 246.
116. Zuckerman, "On the Date of the Khazars' Conversion," 250. Zuckerman's scenario would have allotted only a little more than a century (from 861 to around 965) for the dynasty of Jewish kings.
117. Roman K. Kovalev, "Creating Khazar Identity through Coins: The Special Issue Dirhams of 837/8," in *East Central and Eastern Europe in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Florin Curta (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2005), 233–35, 241.
118. Kovalev, "Creating Khazar Identity through Coins," 237.
119. Kovalev, "Creating Khazar Identity through Coins," 239–40. However, one "Ard al-Khazar" coin was found in the Crimea in 1999.
120. Kovalev, "Creating Khazar Identity through Coins," 233.
121. Kovalev, "Creating Khazar Identity through Coins," 233.
122. Vernadsky, *A History of Russia*, 1:292.
123. Vladimir F. Minorsky, "A New Book on the Khazars," *Oriens* 11 (1959): 122.
124. Dunlop, *The History of the Jewish Khazars*, 195.
125. Shepard, "The Khazars' Formal Adoption of Judaism and Byzantium's Northern Policy," 15–16.
126. One theory holds that intensive Judaization may have been associated with the revolts of the Kabars. Emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus (reigned 913–959) wrote in *De administrando imperio* that the Kabars were involved in a civil war against the Khazar government (see also chapter 9). The Kabar revolts were allegedly associated, according to Antal Bartha, with the Kabars' objection to "judicial and administrative changes that followed the spread of the Jewish faith in the Khazar empire." (see Antal Bartha, *Hungarian Society in the 9th and 10th Centuries*, trans. K. Balazs [Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1975], 63). According to Omeljan Pritsak, a major Kabar rebellion took place in the 830s because the Khazar bek supported Judaism while the Khazar kagan, named Khan-tuvan (Dyggvi), was opposed to Judaism (see Pritsak, *The Origin of Rus'*, 1:28, 171, 182). The supporters of this kagan would have been those who were hostile to the spread of Judaism in the empire. After a series of conflicts, many of the rebels were killed, and the kagan was defeated. The kagan became a fugitive, fleeing from the Jewish bek along with his supporters. Pritsak

argued that the kagan and the surviving rebels resettled in Rostov and became acquainted with the Scandinavians, who founded the first Rus' kaganate by 839. He speculated that the kagan may have married a Scandinavian girl. It is known that the Kabar rebels later migrated to Hungary and Transylvania (see chapter 9). In the absence of further documentation, these theories have to be regarded as speculative and unproved, because none of the surviving documents describe objections (by either the kagan or the populace) to King Obadiah's religious policies, nor do they link Obadiah with the Kabar revolts.

127. Pritsak, "The Khazar Kingdom's Conversion to Judaism," 279.
128. Dunlop, *The History of the Jewish Khazars*, 104.
129. Zuckerman, "On the Date of the Khazars' Conversion," 253. Another illustration of the antiquated nature of ibn Rustah's account is the fact that he called the bek the *isha*, which was the bek's former title. By the 830s, the bek was already known by his new title. Thus, some of ibn Rustah's sources may even go back to before the 830s (see Dunlop, *The History of the Jewish Khazars*, 108).
130. Golden, "Khazaria and Judaism," 153.
131. Golden, "Khazaria and Judaism," 140.
132. Golden, "Khazaria and Judaism," 140.
133. Minorsky, *A History of Sharvan and Darband in the 10th–11th Centuries*, 146.
134. Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, 3:197.
135. Dunlop, *The History of the Jewish Khazars*, 91–92.
136. Frederick I. Kaplan, "The Decline of the Khazars and the Rise of the Varangians," *American Slavic and East European Review* 13 (1954): 8.
137. Golden, "Khazaria and Judaism," 142.
138. Zvi Ankori, *Karaites in Byzantium* (New York: Ams Press, 1968), 67.
139. Ankori, *Karaites in Byzantium*, 71.
140. Translated from the original Hebrew text given in Abraham E. Harkavy, "Rab Sa'adyah Gaon al debar ha-Kuzarim," in *Semitic Studies in Memory of Rev. Dr. Alexander Kohut*, 246–47.
141. Translated from the French edition, Marijan Molé, ed., *La légende de Zoroastre selon les textes pehlevi* (Paris: C. Klincksieck, 1967), 237.
142. Dunlop, *The History of the Jewish Khazars*, 127.
143. Dunlop, *The History of the Jewish Khazars*, 244.
144. Kovalev, "Creating Khazar Identity through Coins," 234, 237.
145. The staff of Aaron was a dry stick of wood from an almond tree which, according to the Torah, miraculously blossomed anew with sap and almond buds.
146. Golb and Pritsak, *Khazarian Hebrew Documents of the Tenth Century*, 27.
147. Ehud Ya'ari, "Skeletons in the Closet," *The Jerusalem Report* 6, no. 9 (September 7, 1995): 27.
148. Bozena I. Wyszomirska, "Religion som enande politisk-social lank—exemplet: Det Kazariska riket," in *Arkeologi och Religion*, ed. Lars Larsson and Bozena I. Wyszomirska (Lund, Sweden: University of Lund, 1989), 138, 143, 144. For a detailed history of the symbolism associated with the hexagram (six-pointed star), see Gerbern S. Oegema, *The History of the Shield of David* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1996). According to Oegema, the hexagram originated in Asia among non-Jews

and used to be called the “Seal of Solomon.” A fragment of a children’s Hebrew teaching aid created in Egypt around the eleventh century, stored today in the Taylor-Schechter Cairo Genizah collection at Cambridge University, depicts the six-pointed star along with other Jewish symbols. By the thirteenth century, it began to be called the “Shield of David” and to be used for Jewish magic and heraldic seals. Flags from medieval Morocco and Turkey displayed the hexagram, and Oegema thought that this particular use of the star spread from Muslim countries to Spain and then to Central Europe (see Oegema, *The History of the Shield of David*, 74). In the 1350s, the hexagram was added to the flag of the Jews of Prague. The six-pointed star came into use among Christian Germans and West Slavs also (see Paul Wexler, *The Ashkenazic Jews: A Slavo-Turkic People in Search of a Jewish Identity* [Columbus, OH: Slavica, 1993], 123). The symbol spread thereafter from Central Europe to the Jews of Poland and Russia (see Oegema, 129–30).

149. Shepard, “The Khazars’ Formal Adoption of Judaism and Byzantium’s Northern Policy,” 16. The archaeologist Svetlana Pletnyova noted that “these [sun] amulets disappeared from use even in the farthest corners of the kaganate” and thought that the Jewish rulers had forbidden their continued manufacture (see Svetlana A. Pletnyova, *Ot kocheviy k gorodam* [Moscow: Nauka, 1967], 179). Another archaeologist, Valentina Flyorova, argued that the lack of archaeological traces for Judaism from the steppe and forest-steppe zones of Khazaria presents neither support nor opposition for the hypothesis that Judaism led to the cessation of the making of sun amulets (see Valentina Ye. Flyorova, *Obrazy i Syuzhety Mifologii Khazarii* [Moscow: Mosti Kul’turi, and Jerusalem: Gesharim, 2001], 23).

150. Ehud Ya’ari, “Archaeological Finds Add Weight to Claim that Khazars Converted to Judaism,” *The Jerusalem Report* 10, no. 4 (June 21, 1999): 8; Nicolas Weill, “L’histoire retrouvée des Khazars,” *Le Monde*, July 9, 1999, 12; Alicia D. Ortiz, “El fantasma de los jázaros,” *La Nación*, Buenos Aires, Argentina, August 14, 1999.





## *Chapter Seven*

# **Relations between the Khazars and Other Peoples**

*As a powerful kingdom on the periphery of the Byzantine and Persian empires, the Khazar Empire engaged in many of the important military and political affairs of the early medieval era. The Khazars did not always maintain consistent relations with their neighbors. As we shall see, the Khazars sometimes befriended the Byzantines, Alans, and Oghuz, while at other times they were their fiercest enemies.*

### **THE ARAB-KHAZAR WARS AND RELATIONS WITH LEADERS OF THE SOUTH CAUCASUS**

Khazaria occupied a strategic position as a link between Europe, Asia, and the Middle East. The Khazars aggressively supported the expansion of their territory. In particular, the kagans challenged the caliphs and amirs for control of the border fortress of Derbent and territories in the south Caucasus (Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Armenia) and the northern Middle East. It was therefore inevitable that the Khazars would meet organized resistance from the Arabs. The Arabs and the Khazars warred against each other in the seventh and eighth centuries. These conflicts are known collectively as the Arab-Khazar Wars.

Over a century before the beginning of the Arab-Khazar Wars, the Khazars were already ambitiously expanding their domains and were involved in affairs immediately to the north of Persia and Mesopotamia. According to the ninth-century Arab historian Ya'qubi, a representative (*khalifa*) of the Khazar-Turkic kagan ruled over Georgia (Jurzan) and ancient Albania (Ar-ran) in the south Caucasus sometime between the years 488 and 531.<sup>1</sup> The

Sassanids later took control of these lands. The famous fortress of Derbent, whose Persian name “Dar-band” meant “Knot of the Gates” and whose Arab name “Bab al-Abwab” meant “Door of Doors” or “Gate of Gates,”<sup>2</sup> was built under the direction of the Sassanid Persian emperor Khusrau (Chosroes) I Anushirvan (reigned 531–578) and served as a gateway separating the Hunno-Turkic north from the Arabo-Persian south. Derbent, highly prized for its strategic location, was to become the site of numerous struggles during the Arab-Khazar Wars. However, in this early period, the Islamic religion had not yet been developed, and therefore the relentless Muslim expansionist programs were not yet a factor for the Turkic tribes to contend with.

Early in the seventh century, Muhammad, a member of the Quraysh tribe of Arabia, began to preach that only one god (Allah) exists and that the idol worship among the Arabs of his native city of Mecca was sinful. His beliefs, or “revelations,” were codified in the Qur’an, the Islamic holy book. The Meccans initially rejected this new monotheistic faith. Muhammad arrived in the oasis city of Medina in September 622 and encountered resistance from its Jewish and Christian residents. At that time, the two tribes in Medina were engaged in intense disputes. Muhammad managed to mediate in the tribal conflicts and became the leader of Medina. Over the next few years, he gained support for Islam among an increasing number of Arabs. In 630, Muhammad coerced the Meccan populace to adopt Islam. In 633, Muslim Arab soldiers began to penetrate Persia; by 641, the old Sassanid dynasty had fallen, and the Muslims had seized full control. During the remainder of the seventh century, the Muslims conquered North Africa, Spain, and all of the Middle East and established strong ruling dynasties. It was not long before the Muslims turned their attention to the pagans of the steppes.

The First Arab-Khazar War lasted from 642 to 652. It began in 642 when the Arab general ‘Abd ar-Rahman ibn Rabiyya al-Bahili attacked Khazaria. From 651 to 652, Arab soldiers attempted to invade Khazaria, and they succeeded in passing north of Derbent but were then defeated by the Khazars at Balanjar, the original Khazarian capital city, which they had attempted to capture. As a result of the fighting in 652, four thousand Arabs lost their lives, including a prominent commander named Salman ibn Rabiyya (the brother of ‘Abd ar-Rahman ibn Rabiyya). Yet hostilities between the two sides did not cease completely even after the first series of conflicts. An army of Khazars from Samandar, supported by a number of Abkhazians and Alans, was assembled in around 655 to go against an Arab army that was led by Habib ibn Maslama.<sup>3</sup> This confrontation was further provoked by the fact that Habib had been ordered to take revenge against the Khazars for Commander Salman’s death three years earlier. In 661–662, the Khazars raided Albania in

the south Caucasus, but the prince of Caucasian Albania defeated them and prevented further Khazar looting in his territory.

Between 683 and 685, the Khazar army invaded Caucasian Albania, Armenia, and Georgia, destroying many areas and taking booty and prisoners. The Arab soldiers in Armenia suffered heavy losses. The rulers of both Armenia and Georgia fell in battle against the Khazar invaders.

In 713 or 714, Maslama ibn 'Abd-al-Malik, an experienced military general, captured Derbent and unsuccessfully tried to capture the lands of the North Caucasian Huns.<sup>4</sup> Around the same time, a Khazar army of eighty thousand men temporarily captured Caucasian Albania. The Khazar general Alp', circa 716, commanded reinforcement forces to protect against Maslama's invasion of the North Caucasian Hunnic territory.<sup>5</sup> When the Khazars followed up with another southward expedition to Azerbaijan in 717, Caliph 'Umar ibn 'Abd-al-'Aziz (reigned 717–720) sent soldiers to confront the Khazars and force them to leave the area. The caliph's commander, Hatim ibn al-Nu'man, took fifty Khazars as prisoners.

The Second Arab-Khazar War lasted from 722 to 737 and had a profound impact upon the future of the Caucasus. Thirty thousand Khazar soldiers invaded Armenia in 722 or 723 and soundly defeated the Arab army (led by Thubayt al-Nahrani) at Marj al-Hijara in Armenia.<sup>6</sup> The Arabs fled to Syria. In retaliation, a Muslim army led by Jarrah ibn Abdullah al-Hakami proceeded north, penetrating the Khazar lands around 723 or 724. The Khazars attempted to defend Balanjar with wooden wagons linked by ropes surrounding the city's fortress, but Jarrah's men cut the ropes and threw the wagons downhill to clear the way for an assault on the fortress.<sup>7</sup> Jarrah's soldiers took Balanjar from the Khazars (circa 723), killed many Khazars in battle, and enslaved numerous Khazars. Some of Balanjar's people were drowned.<sup>8</sup> The Khazar governor of Balanjar escaped to Samandar. Balanjar's remaining residents left the city and resettled farther north.<sup>9</sup> The Arab army reached as far as Samandar but then retreated south. Maslama ibn 'Abd-al-Malik was pronounced Jarrah's successor as the Umayyad Caliphate's new governor of Armenia and Azerbaijan. Apparently, Maslama's deputy attacked Khazaria in 725 or 726 and captured some villages there. The son of the Khazar kagan, named Barjik, then led an expedition southward into Azerbaijan circa 726–727, but the Khazars were defeated by the Arabs at the Araxes River.

Maslama led another invasion of Khazaria in 727 and 728. In 728, Maslama fought the kagan's army for almost a month, but then heavy rain made the kagan flee. Khazars who raided Azerbaijan in 729–730 were defeated, and the Arabs reached al-Bayda, the Khazar capital on the lower Volga. However, in a major victory at the Battle of Ardabil in Persia in 730, the Khazars led by Barjik (having again invaded Armenia and Azerbaijan) defeated almost an entire

Arab army after three days of war.<sup>10</sup> One of the major Arab casualties of this battle was General Jarrah.<sup>11</sup> Commander Barjik, however, survived. The Khazars successfully captured the town of Ardabil and killed its men. Azerbaijan, Tabriz, and Armenia were all despoiled. The Khazars raided as far south as Diyar-Bakr and a location near al-Mawsil (Mosul) in northern Iraq. However, Arab soldiers stopped their advance and killed much of the army. The remainder of the Khazars fled north back to their homeland.

Thomas Noonan commented on the significance of the first half of the Second Arab-Khazar War:

Though the Khazars had been defeated eventually, one conclusion emerged very clearly from these events. The Khazars were a most formidable foe who could undertake large expeditions into the South Caucasus, destroy Arab armies led by seasoned commanders such as Jarrah, penetrate to the very borders of Iran and Iraq, and threaten the very fabric of Arab rule in Arminiya and Adharbayjan.<sup>12</sup>

The forces led by Maslama ibn ‘Abd-al-Malik surged past Derbent and again invaded Khazaria toward the end of 730, but they retreated due to the cold wintry weather. The Khazars retook Derbent from the Arabs in 731 and installed a large garrison there. Maslama reacted by invading the interior of the Khazar kingdom (in 731) and again reaching Balanjar and Samandar. Maslama killed Barjik, the Khazar kagan’s son,<sup>13</sup> and the kagan was injured. Although the Arabs could claim victory in the latest battle, they were forced to retreat southward when some Khazars pursued them from the north. The Khazar garrison at Derbent dispersed after the Arabs poisoned the water supply. Thus, Derbent again came into solid Arab control in 732.<sup>14</sup>

The Arabs, under the leadership of General Marwan ibn Muhammad, the caliphate’s governor of Armenia, defeated the Khazar soldiers in a major battle in 737. Marwan and his soldiers passed through the Dar-i Alan (“Gate of the Alans” in Persian), located in the center of the Caucasus mountain range, and marched into Balanjar, Samandar, and al-Bayda.<sup>15</sup> The Khazars were unprepared for Marwan’s forces since they were deceived into thinking that the Arabs wanted to sign a peace treaty with them. When Marwan invaded Dagh-estan, the Khazars fled and were forced to transfer their capital from Samandar to Atil. While Marwan’s army advanced along the right bank of the Volga and attacked the Burtas, the Khazar army remained on the Volga’s left bank. When the Arabs crossed the Volga and assaulted the Khazars, the Khazar tarkhan was killed, and Marwan captured the Khazar kagan. Marwan forced the kagan to pledge support for the Muslim Caliphate and to adopt Islam, with the only alternative being death by the sword. Two Muslim faqihs—Nukh ibn al-Sa’ib al-Asadi and ‘Abd-al-Rahman al-Khawlani—were sent to the ka-

gan's palace to converse with him about the laws of Islam. When the faqihs told the kagan about Islam's prohibition of consuming wine and certain meats, he asked them whether he could be exempted from the prohibition. They instructed him that no deviation from the law of Islam would be permitted. He finally gave in to their pressure and adopted their faith.<sup>16</sup> Marwan's army then returned south of the Caucasus. It is suspected that the kagan rejected Islam soon afterward.

The Khazars' attempt to control the south Caucasus had failed. The Caucasus Mountains and the northern border of the fortress city of Derbent became the southern boundary of the Khazar Empire, and the Arabs preserved control over the lands south of Derbent's gate. Yet, despite being forced in 737 to pledge their allegiance to the caliphate, and although for a while they paid annual tribute to the caliphate in the form of grains and slave children, the Khazars maintained their kingdom's independence. Military power was essential to the preservation of Khazaria as an independent state. With a large supply of horses and a professional army, the Khazars were able to maintain control of their heartland. On the other hand, it must be mentioned that the second round of Arab-Khazar battles took a drastic toll upon the Khazar settlements in the Terek and Sulak river valleys, many of which were abandoned or destroyed.<sup>17</sup>

The most important outcome of the Arab-Khazar Wars was that the Khazars were able to prevent the Arabs from advancing into eastern Europe. As a consequence, the Arabs did not have the opportunity to spread the Islamic religion among large numbers of the peoples north of the Caucasus Mountains.<sup>18</sup> Peter Golden observed,

Every schoolchild in the West has been told that if not for Charles Martel and the battle of Poitiers there might be a mosque where Notre Dame now stands. What few schoolchildren are aware of is that if not for the Khazars, as Dunlop pointed out in his work, Eastern Europe might well have become a province of Islam. The Khazars blunted the Arab advance through the Caucasus and fought them there to a standstill.<sup>19</sup>

The second round of conflict in the 720s and 730s did not end the tensions between the Khazars and other tribes.

Circa 758–760, the Abbasid caliph Abu Ja'far al-Mansur ordered the Arab governor of Armenia, Yazid ibn Usaid al-Sulami, to attempt to marry one of the Khazar kagan's daughters.<sup>20</sup> The goal was to establish long-lasting peace with the kagan and the Khazar soldiers and thus help Armenia survive in the face of Khazaria's strength. Yet while the marriage did in fact bring about harmony between the two sides for a few years, a disastrous event caused yet another outbreak of violence between the Khazars and the Muslims.

The Khazar kagan around this time was named Baghatur, according to the account of ibn A'tham. He gladly accepted Yazid's offer to marry his daughter. The Armenian historian Levond called Baghatur the *Xak'an* (i.e., kagan) and "the king of the North," and described his daughter by the title *Xat'un* (i.e., khatun), meaning "princess." The marriage between Yazid and Baghatur's daughter took place in 759 or 760. Baghatur paid 100,000 dirhams as dowry.

There was an elaborate procession following the marriage. The bride was escorted south to the Muslim town of Bardha'a (Partaw) by ten thousand elite Khazars, who took with them thousands of horses, camels, mules, and sheep, not to mention servants.<sup>21</sup> They also brought along covered wagons with silver- and gold-plated doors, as well as a variety of utensils and vessels made from precious metals.

The khatun told her new husband of her desire to learn the Islamic faith and how to read the Qur'an, so he hired some Muslims to assist her. For a while, things went well, and peace between the Khazars and Arabs finally became a reality. Yet after only two years and four months of marriage, the khatun died in Bardha'a, and her two young children also died. Yazid was devastated by the loss of his wife and children. The Khazars interpreted her death as the result of a deliberate plot hatched by the Muslims, since the khatun's courtiers suggested to the kagan that she was poisoned.

With the assumption of foul play, the Khazars took revenge. Al-Tabari wrote that in 762, the Khazars and other Turks passed Derbent and headed south, killing Muslims in Armenia.<sup>22</sup> As (Ras) Tarkhan, a Khwarizmian mercenary, was the commander of the Khazar army.<sup>23</sup> Thousands of Georgians were captured around this time. During 763 and 764, the Khazars tried to capture Yazid, but he fled; even so, many Muslims were killed. In 764, Khazar soldiers occupied Albanian territories in Azerbaijan and then took principalities in eastern Georgia (Grusia) and the city of Tiflis (Tbilisi). The Khazars also destroyed parts of Armenia in that year. In the end, As Tarkhan's horde retired northward with numerous captives and a substantial booty.<sup>24</sup>

Another story seems to resemble the account of Baghatur's daughter's marriage to Yazid. According to Georgian chroniclers, circa 796–797 a Khazar kagan learned that one of the four daughters of Georgian king Archil, the princess Shushan, had immense beauty, and he asked to marry her, promising to free K'artli'i (eastern Georgia) from the K'aghrt' people.<sup>25</sup> Shushan's mother and brothers opposed such a marriage arrangement, but the kagan continued to insist on it. Three years later, the kagan sent the Khazar general Buljan (Bulch'an) with a large army to capture Shushan. Buljan's soldiers entered Kaxet' and encircled the fortress where Princess Shushan and her brother, Prince Juansher, lived. Soon afterward, his soldiers occupied Tiflis and all of Georgia. Meanwhile, Shushan happened to be wearing a ring that had poison beneath its gem-

stone. She removed the gem and deliberately ate the poison, preferring death to marrying the kagan. Prince Juansher buried her. The Khazar kagan was angry at Buljan for Shushan's death and for the fact that her corpse was not brought to his court, so he ordered his subordinates to tie a rope around Buljan's neck and sever his head. Juansher was allowed to return to Georgia after the kagan set him free seven years later.<sup>26</sup> Due to the similarities between this story and the aforementioned Yazid story, some scholars have suggested that the engagement of Shushan to the kagan may be a fictional epic tale.<sup>27</sup>

There is a third story based on the same theme. The governor of the south Caucasus territories, Fadhl ibn Yakhya al-Barmaki, attacked a Khazar fortress near Derbent in the 790s. Originally, he planned to marry a daughter of the Khazar kagan circa 798–799, but she died on the journey to Bardha'a.<sup>28</sup> Khazar nobles told the kagan that she died as a result of foul play. This infuriated the kagan greatly, and the kagan sent a large army into the south Caucasus with the express purpose of generating destruction. This story closely resembles the stories of Yazid and Shushan, and it is not clear whether the episodes are completely historical or are merely a recurrent motif. Thomas Noonan maintained that these related episodes were historical in nature and that they were, in fact, separate events,<sup>29</sup> despite their similarities.

Nerses, the *eristavi* (prince) of K'artl'i, and Abo of Tiflis, a Muslim Arab who later became a Christian saint, both visited Khazaria around 780. The *Life of Saint Abo* (also known as the *Passion of Saint Abo*) describes their stay in the kingdom.<sup>30</sup> Nerses fled to Khazaria after attracting enmity from Muslim rulers in the southern Caucasus, and Abo and about three hundred other men escaped along with him. The Khazar kagan warmly received Nerses and provided him and his companions with generous nourishment. Nerses told the kagan that his kingdom was engaged in combat with the Arabs, but the kagan refused to pledge the support of his army for Nerses's cause. Sometime after his visit to the Khazarian royal court, Saint Abo was baptized in Khazaria by a Christian priest. After some more time passed, Nerses asked the kagan if he could depart for Abkhazia, which was now free from the Muslim threat. The kagan gave his consent and provided Nerses with many gifts.

Abkhazia (Ap'xazet'i), a Byzantine dependency in the southwestern Caucasus bordering the Black Sea, was ruled during this time by the Christian *eristavi* Leon II, a grandson of the then-reigning Khazar kagan. Leaving Khazaria, Abo followed Nerses into Abkhazia and befriended Leon II, sharing his spiritual knowledge with him, but then Nerses and his entourage, including Abo, returned to Tiflis, where Abo was slaughtered by the Persians on January 6, 786. Leon II proclaimed the independence of Abkhazia from the Byzantine Empire, seized nearby Egrisi (western Georgia), and declared himself king, and in 786 the Khazar kagan lent his support behind the quest for



Abkhazia's freedom.<sup>31</sup> As a result of these circumstances, Abkhazia became a dependency of Khazaria toward the end of the eighth century, as Ibn Rustah recorded,<sup>32</sup> but at the same time it retained some measure of sovereignty. Leon II remained the king of Abkhazia until his death in 810 or 811. Leon II's son T'eodos became the next king,<sup>33</sup> and he served until 837.

Several further conflicts destroyed the fragile Arab-Khazar peace. Sa'id ibn Salm, the governor of Armenia around the year 796, executed Najm ibn Hashim, the Arab commander of al-Bab (Derbent). As a result, Najm's son obtained the support of a large Khazar army, which ravaged the south Caucasus. In 799, the Khazar kagan and his army traveled with the rebel Hayyun (son of Najm ibn Hashim) toward the south Caucasus, where they harmed many Muslims and inflicted much damage.<sup>34</sup> This Khazar army continued their invasion as far as the Araxes River in Azerbaijan. This was the last major Khazar raid against Arabs in Transcaucasia.

The ninth century was a relatively peaceful time for Khazaria, known as the era of the *Pax Khazarica* (Khazarian Peace). The Khazars were able to hold back warlike tribes such as the Pechenegs during this period. This peace facilitated safe and productive trade for merchants coming into and through Khazaria.<sup>35</sup> It also enabled the East Slavs to expand their settlement activity in the region.

The Khazars gained many new affiliates just north of the Caucasus range in the beginning of the tenth century. Shandan, a nation northwest of Derbent, allied with Khazaria in 912.<sup>36</sup> When, in 909 or 912, the Muslim rulers of Shirvan (a region in Azerbaijan) and al-Bab attacked Shandan, the Khazars and the Sarir sent them away.<sup>37</sup> The king of Shirvan circa 912–913, 'Ali ibn Haytham, died in battle against the Khazars.

Around 916 or 917, a Khazar army assisted the *salifan* (prince) of Qaytaq (Khaydaq) in the rescue of the amir of al-Bab, 'Abd-al-Malik ibn Hashim, after 'Abd-al-Malik solicited for help from the Khazars.<sup>38</sup> 'Abd-al-Malik had taken power on January 4, 916, but his nephew Abul-Najm vigorously opposed his rule. The combined Khazar-Qaytaq forces succeeded in capturing Abul-Najm and his associates,<sup>39</sup> and 'Abd-al-Malik retained his rightful position as amir.

These events make it clear that the Khazars were involved in the affairs of the Caucasus on an ongoing basis, at times playing a historically significant role.

## RELATIONS WITH THE BYZANTINE EMPIRE

The Byzantines and the Khazars had a long period of relations, starting in the seventh century.

During the 620s, the Byzantine Empire and the Persian Empire were at war. When the Byzantine emperor, Heraclius, lost Abkhazians and Lazians from his army, he needed new allies with whom he could continue his struggle.<sup>40</sup> The Western Turkish army, among whose ranks were Khazars, came to serve this role, a perfect match, since the Turks were apparently already warring against the Persians, who were in firm control of the south Caucasus.

In 626, the Khazars imprisoned Persians and set many settlements in the south Caucasus ablaze. With the approach of winter and a resurgence of the Persian army, the Khazars retreated to the north Caucasus late in 626.

The Khazars invaded Derbent in early 627. Khazarian archers came upon Derbent with a rainstorm of arrows and then pursued its people across streets and squares.<sup>41</sup>

The late tenth-century Armenian historian Movses Dasxuranci (also known as Moses Kalankatvats'i) reported in his *History of the Caucasian Albanians* that Heraclius had his ambassador Andreas arrange a meeting between himself and Ziebil—Tong Yabghu, the yabghu kagan of the Western Turkish Empire.<sup>42</sup> This meeting took place in Tiflis, evidently during the first half of 627. Ziebil and his nobles dismounted their horses and bowed before the emperor. Ziebil kissed the emperor's throat and swore his loyalty to him. Heraclius returned the warm sentiment by taking his diadem off his head and placing it on Ziebil's head. There followed a rich banquet. Heraclius presented the Turks with jewels and earrings and gave Ziebil gems, gold, ornaments, and silk clothing that had been in his palace in Constantinople. Heraclius later met privately with Ziebil to offer him future marriage to his then sixteen-year-old daughter, whose name was Epiphania or Eudocia.<sup>43</sup> He showed him a beautiful portrait of the princess. In response, Ziebil offered forty thousand men to serve in the Byzantine army as an auxiliary force.

Under the terms of the alliance, the Byzantines and the Turks jointly fought against the forces of Persian emperor Khusrau (Chosroes) II Parviz. In 627, the Turks and Khazars attacked and conquered the then-Persian-ruled city of Tiflis. Stephen I the Guaramid, the anti-Byzantine ruler of Georgia, died during the Khazar-Turkish conquest of Tiflis, and afterward the Turks installed as the new Georgian ruler Adarnase I Patrikos the Chosroid, who was friendly toward the Byzantines.<sup>44</sup> The Persians retook Tiflis later in 627, and the Turks withdrew. Heraclius decided to spare the Turks from fighting along with his army in Mesopotamia during the summer of 627, suggesting that the oppressive heat would be too much for the Turks to endure, but he looked forward to more moderate weather when they could again cooperate.<sup>45</sup> Afterward, Heraclius and Ziebil and their armies traveled to Persia. On December 12, 627, at the Battle of Nineveh, the Byzantine and Turkish soldiers killed the Persian army commander Rhahzadh and defeated the Persians. Near the end of the

month, when winter had arrived, the residents of Tiflis openly ridiculed both Heraclius and Ziebil. On a pumpkin, they drew a distorted picture of Ziebil, depicting him as if he were blind, since the Turks had narrow and small eyes.<sup>46</sup> They then shot arrows at the pumpkin. Ziebil noticed this and got angry but was unable to take revenge against them until warmer weather arrived, so the Turks retreated north once more. In February 628, Khusrau II's son Kavadh was freed from prison and was declared the new emperor, Kavadh II Sheroe. Four days later, Khusrau II was killed, and the Persians were happy to have rid themselves of a leader they considered despotic and lazy.

In 628, Yabghu Kagan Ziebil's forty thousand horsemen, led by their *sad* or *shad* (military commander), Ziebil's nephew, entered Tiflis armed with spears and shields.<sup>47</sup> They killed many of its inhabitants (both male and female), blinded and killed Persian commanders, and engaged in widespread looting. The Turks and Khazars took many prisoners and treasures during this conquest.

Kavadh II signed a peace treaty with the Byzantine Empire in April 628. The treaty benefited the Byzantines greatly, particularly as all former Byzantine territories were returned to the Byzantines. Afterward, the Persians were very weak, and the next several emperors ruled for only short spans of time, which partly explains the success the Muslim Arabs had at conquering the Sassanid Persian state in 641, as noted earlier in this chapter.

The Khazars also occupied the Qabala region, east of Shakki, in Albania (present-day northern Azerbaijan) in 628.<sup>48</sup> The Khazar-Turkish invasion caused a serious famine for the local residents. The Khazars gave the Caucasian Albanians an ultimatum: either surrender and become vassals to the Khazar state, or males over fifteen years of age would be slaughtered and women and children would become enslaved.<sup>49</sup> The Caucasian Albanians were able to prevent their demise by handing over a large fortune to the Khazars' army commander. All of the Caucasian Albanian prisoners were subsequently released by the Khazars.

Viro, a Christian church leader (*catholicos*) of the Albanians, encountered the Khazar-Turkish army at its victory camp along the Kura River (near Bardha'a, the capital of Albania). He observed that they were in possession of stolen silver goblets and dishes engraved with gold that had come from Tiflis. At their celebratory feast, they consumed wine, camel's milk, and mare's milk in their wooden drinking horns, as well as cold meat dipped in salty water. Viro and the other Albanian representatives surrendered to the Turks that day at the camp. However, the Armenian historian Kirakos of Gandzak noted in his *History of the Armenians* that at some later date, Viro traveled to Armenia and freed Armenian, Georgian, and Abkhazian prisoners from the Khazar *shad*.<sup>50</sup>

Thus, in the late 620s, territories in Caucasian Albania, as well as Derbent and Lp'ink', became incorporated into the Western Turkish realm. Around 629–630, the Turks conducted a census of all Albanian and Georgian metalworkers and fishermen who lived along the Kura and Araxes rivers, including the residents of Tiflis, and then imposed taxes on them.<sup>51</sup> The Turks also demanded tribute payments from the local leaders of the region.

In 630, a Khazar army led by the Khazar general Chorpan Tarkhan invaded Armenia and afterward successfully defeated the Persian counterattack commanded by Honah.<sup>52</sup> The Khazars then sacrificed the horses of their Persian enemies in a shamanistic ritual. After their win against the Persians, the Khazars ruled Georgia, Caucasian Albania, and part of Armenia, but the Byzantines held on to most of Armenia.

Ziebil was deposed and killed circa 630 in an internal dispute (see chapter 1) before he could marry his fiancée.<sup>53</sup> As a consequence of his death, the Khazars' dominance over the southern Caucasus came to an end. The Persians regained control over Armenia and Azerbaijan by 632, except perhaps for Qabala and the Qabala region, which apparently were held by the Khazars until 737. Furthermore, Emperor Heraclius lost his alliance with Khazaria. Thus, this initial Byzantine-Khazar alliance lasted only about three or four years. Two other Byzantine-Khazar royal marital engagements would follow in successive years, as noted below.

In 695, after a revolt, Byzantine emperor Justinian II was deposed and exiled to the Crimean city of Cherson. Sometime between 700 and 704, Justinian II left Cherson and fled to Doros. It was around this time that he entered into relations with a royal Khazarian woman. He asked the Khazar kagan Busir<sup>54</sup> for asylum. The kagan fulfilled this request and also allowed him to marry his sister. The marriage between Justinian II and the Khazarian woman took place in around the year 703 or 704. After her marriage to the emperor, she became a Christian and adopted the baptismal name of Theodora.<sup>55</sup> Theodora and Justinian II settled in Samkarsh and had a son named Tiberius, who was born in Khazaria in 705 while Justinian II was abroad.

Soon after the marriage, friendly ties ceased to exist between Justinian II and the Khazars. For example, the chronicler Theophanes wrote that the Khazar kagan instructed Papatzys (the Khazar representative in Samkarsh) and Balghitzi (the baliqchi of Kerch) to kill Justinian II. The kagan gave this instruction because he was tempted by the new Byzantine emperor Apsimar-Tiberius, who promised him many gifts upon the capture of Justinian, dead or alive.<sup>56</sup> After a slave of the kagan told Theodora about her husband's "death sentence," she proceeded to warn him. The kagan tried to prevent Justinian II from escaping from Samkarsh by placing him under a guard's watch, but he escaped.

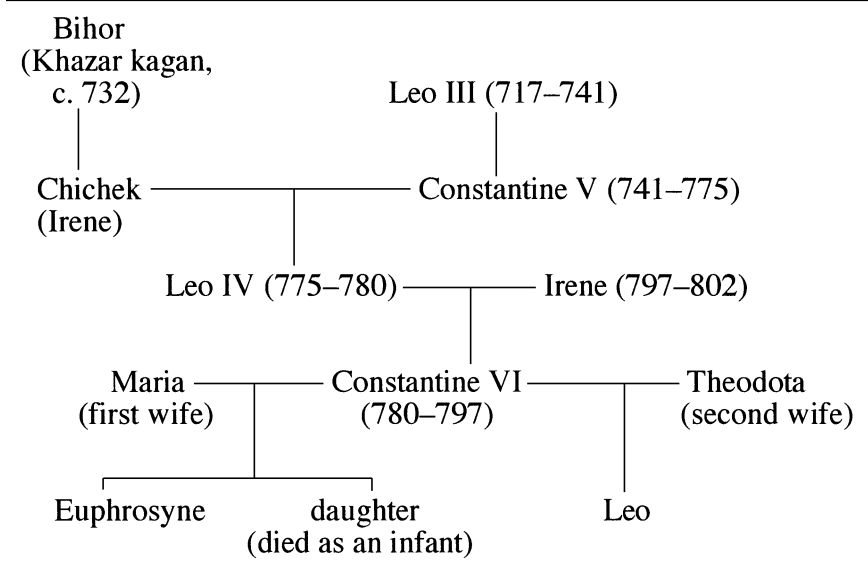
Having returned to Constantinople in 705, Justinian II was again restored to his former position as Byzantine emperor with the help of the Bulgars. He next sought war as a mechanism of revenge against the Khazars, who had recently seized control of Cherson. The Khazar tudun who presided over Cherson at this time was named Zoilos. In 711, Justinian II sent forces to Cherson to reclaim it for his empire; as a result, a great many of the people of Cherson (including Crimean nobles) were tortured and executed, and Tudun Zoilos and other officials and nobles were imprisoned and shipped to Constantinople,<sup>57</sup> with only some of them surviving the journey, since there was a storm while they were sailing that killed many. Following Zoilos's capture, the Byzantines installed Elias as the new governor of Cherson. After Justinian II indicated that he would deploy a second Byzantine army to Cherson to totally destroy it, the people of Cherson found out about the plan and joined with Elias against the crazed emperor. Elias called upon the Khazar kagan to help them, thus forcing Justinian II to agree to return Zoilos to Cherson. Three hundred Byzantine soldiers escorted Zoilos, but he died before reaching the city. According to Theophanes, the Khazars convened a funeral meal (known as "*dogh*" in the Khazarian language) in remembrance of the tudun. During the event, they killed the Byzantine army regiment's commander and all three hundred of his soldiers as human sacrifices.<sup>58</sup>

The people of Cherson rejected the authority of Justinian II and pledged their support to an Armenian general named Bardanes. Justinian II sent another expedition to Cherson to fight with Khazar soldiers. Bardanes fled the scene and sought sanctuary with the kagan. A curious thing happened next: the members of the Byzantine army, who were being directed by Justinian II, eventually supported Bardanes instead.

The Khazars allied with Cherson's rebels in 711 and thus directly helped to overthrow Justinian II. Governor Elias, with the support of soldiers loyal to Bardanes, killed Justinian II and his six-year-old son Tiberius. Following Justinian II's assassination, Bardanes became the new Byzantine emperor, acquiring the imperial name Philippikos, and the Khazars restored friendly relations with the Byzantine Empire; yet a military conspiracy in 713 dethroned Philippikos.

The third engagement between the royal houses of the Khazars and the Byzantines was between Emperor Constantine V, the son of Emperor Leo III, and the Khazar princess Chichek (Chichäk).<sup>59</sup> In 730 or 732, Leo III sent envoys to Kagan Bihor<sup>60</sup> to request that his son be married to her. The kagan agreed to this, and the marriage took place in either 732 or 733. It was, according to Peter Golden, "an extraordinary event," since Byzantine royals rarely married foreigners at that time.<sup>61</sup> Chichek was known as "Tzitzakion" by the Byzantines, and her name means "flower" in Turkic.<sup>62</sup> After her mar-

**Table 7.1. The Royal Descendants of Khazar Princess Chichek**



riage to Constantine, Chichek converted to Orthodox Christianity, adopted the Christian name “Irene,” and studied the Christian scriptures.<sup>63</sup> Constantine was installed as Emperor Constantine V in 741 after the death of his father, and he became known as “the Iconoclast.” The son of Chichek and Constantine was Leo IV (born January 25, 750), known as “the Khazar,” who reigned as Byzantine emperor from 775 to September 8, 780. Chichek died in 752.<sup>64</sup> The genealogy of Leo IV’s family is given in table 7.1.

Some Byzantines other than royalty also claimed Khazar roots. Photius (circa 820–circa 891), a Byzantine philosopher and Patriarch of Constantinople (from 858 to 867 and again from 877 to 886), was partly Khazarian in origin.<sup>65</sup>

Some Khazar warriors served the Byzantine Empire in the late ninth century. Khazars served as imperial bodyguards for the Byzantine emperor Leo VI “the Wise” (reigned 886–912). When Leo VI’s soldiers attacked the forces of Bulgarian emperor Simeon I during the Bulgar-Byzantine War of 894–897, the Bulgars struck back, soundly defeating the Byzantine army and capturing the Khazar bodyguards. Ibn Rustah wrote circa 903 about Khazar guards at the gates of the palace in Constantinople.<sup>66</sup> Khazar guards were also stationed at the gates of the palace circa 950, during the reign of Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus (913–959), and they were often in attendance at Byzantine feasts and ceremonies.<sup>67</sup> During the 950s, Constantine VII successfully recruited

some Khazars to join forces with the Byzantine army to war against the Northern Syrian ruler Saif ad-Daula.<sup>68</sup> A Khazar commander named Tuzniq apparently served the Byzantines circa 958.<sup>69</sup>

Byzantine-Khazar relations deteriorated by the middle of the tenth century (see chapter 6 on King Joseph's retaliation against Romanus I, and see chapter 8 on the Byzantine-assisted destruction of Georgius Tzul's kaganate in 1016). The last mutually cooperative venture between the two empires was the construction of Sarkel's fortress in the 830s (see chapter 2). The Byzantines joined four other groups in a coalition against Khazar king Benjamin, which is discussed below. One explanation for the hostility that Byzantium directed toward Khazaria in the tenth century is Khazaria's conversion to Judaism circa 838. The Jewish kingdom was seen as a threat to Orthodox Christianity. The persecution of Jews by Byzantine emperors (see chapter 6) was matched by an equal amount of animosity toward the Jewish king of Khazaria.

## RELATIONS WITH THE ALANS

The Alans, a people of the Caucasus who spoke an Iranian language, did not have a consistent diplomatic relationship with Khazaria. They were allied with the Khazars on certain occasions yet fought them bitterly at other times.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the Khazars cooperated militarily with the Alans around the year 655. This association did not last into the eighth century. For instance, it is known from the chronicles of al-Tabari and Ya'qubi that the Khazars attacked the Alans in 721–722. The *Schechter Letter* reported that King Sabriel—who can probably be identified as Bulan—made peace with the Alan king,<sup>70</sup> whose name is not given. The *Schechter Letter* did not describe the earlier Alan-Khazar relations, but it can be assumed that they were less than cordial. This peace treaty gave the Khazars a new valuable and mighty ally. The other nations developed a fear of the Khazars, but the possibility that another war might stir up between Khazaria and other nations always existed.

Benjamin was the king of the Khazars around the year 920, according to Zuckerman.<sup>71</sup> The Byzantines, Pechenegs, Kuban Bulgars (Black Bulgars), Oghuz, and Burtas (steppe Alans/As) assembled a coalition force that went to war against the Khazars. During this war, the Alans maintained their allegiance to Khazaria, since some of them observed Jewish religious laws.<sup>72</sup> The Alan king successfully fought back against the enemies of Khazaria. Noonan thought that this war took place in the 890s.<sup>73</sup> Pritsak convincingly suggested that the coalition was organized by the Byzantines.<sup>74</sup>

Benjamin's successor was King Aaron, who ruled in the early 930s.<sup>75</sup> According to the *Schechter Letter*, the Byzantine emperor persuaded the Alan king to fight against the Khazars, and thus the Alan king became one of Aaron's most formidable enemies. King Aaron quickly took measures to counteract this dangerous situation. After requesting help from the Oghuz king, Aaron hired Oghuz soldiers to go to battle against the Alan king, who was captured and sent to Aaron.<sup>76</sup> However, in an amazing turn of events, the Alan and Khazar kings soon became allies. This new alliance had two important consequences. First of all, Aaron's son Joseph married the Alan king's daughter. Second, the Alans rejected Christianity,<sup>77</sup> and more of them fully embraced the Judaism of the Khazars (see appendix D).

Unfortunately, Khazaria's latest alliance with Alania may have been a short-lived one. The Alan-Khazar friendship, which had been forged on both political and religious dimensions, apparently reverted to hostility sometime after Aaron's reign ended and Joseph took power, even though at first Joseph and the Alan ruler had cordial ties. The Byzantine emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus considered allying with the Alans against the Khazars, and he recorded in *De administrando imperio* (written between the years 948 and 952) that the Oghuz or Alans had the ability to wage war against their Khazar neighbors. In the section "On the Fortress Cherson and the Fortress Bosphorus," he outlined one possible strategy as follows:

Know you that if the ruler of Alania is not at peace with the Khazars but rather regards the friendship of the Emperor of the Romans [Byzantines] as more valuable, then, if the Khazars do not wish to observe friendship and peace with the Emperor, he [the ruler of the Alans] can do them great harm by ambushing them on the roads and falling upon them when they are unawares as they journey to Sarkel and the climes and Cherson. And if this ruler takes pains to keep them in check, Cherson and the climes can enjoy great and profound peace, for the Khazars fear the attacks of the Alans and not being able to attack Cherson and the climes with an army nor being able to simultaneously wage war with the two, they are forced to keep the peace.<sup>78</sup>

## RELATIONS WITH OTHER TURKIC TRIBES

The Turkic Oghuz people (also known as Torks, Uz, and Ghuzz) allied with the Khazars in wars against the Pechenegs at the end of the ninth century.<sup>79</sup> Circa 889–890, the Khazars and Oghuz forced the Pechenegs to vacate the area between the Volga and Ural rivers and move westward.<sup>80</sup>

The Khazar-Oghuz alliance lasted until the ascendancy of Benjamin to the Khazar throne. In addition to the Burtas, King Benjamin counted among his



enemies the Byzantines, the Oghuz, and the Pechenegs, as reported by the *Schechter Letter*. Gardizi wrote about the Khazar wars with the Pechenegs, Oghuz, and Burtas, and Gardizi and ibn Rustah both mentioned that the Khazars raided the Pechenegs on an annual basis.<sup>81</sup> In his famous travelogue, ibn Fadlan recorded that the Khazar king held Oghuz hostages in 922.<sup>82</sup> Yet while the Khazars warred against the Oghuz in around 921, the *Schechter Letter* reported that King Aaron allied with them in a war that took place in 932.<sup>83</sup> Several years later, during the reign of King Joseph, the Khazars entered into an alliance with the Oghuz, Circassians, Burtas, Bab al-Abwab, and the “Northmen.”

The Bulgars and the Khazars, while apparently blood relatives, started to go their separate ways by the tenth century. Politically and religiously, the Bulgars became quite distinct from Khazaria and its Judaism. In 922, the Volga Bulgars adopted Islam as their state religion and built mosques and schools.<sup>84</sup> The Bulgars also adopted the Arabic script in place of the Turkic runic script. Almush, son of Prince Shilki, was the Volga Bulgar el-teber (ruler) in 921–922. Ibn Fadlan visited Volga Bulgharia in 922 and reported that the Khazar king wanted to marry one of Khan Almush’s daughters, but was unsuccessful since one died and the other was already married to another ruler.<sup>85</sup> The Bulgars of the Ural Mountains established Volga Bulgharia as a fully independent state after the conquest of Khazaria by the Rus’. In 1236, the Mongols conquered Volga Bulgharia and destroyed its autonomous existence.

The Khazars maintained close contact with the Huns of the north Caucasus. Alp, the el-teber of the North Caucasian Huns around the late seventh century, was a Khazar vassal who often lent assistance to the Khazar kagan’s forces during battle.<sup>86</sup> After Alp invaded Caucasian Albania and took much booty, he married the kagan’s daughter. Chat-Khazr (“Chat the Khazar”) served as an ambassador and chamberlain of the Hunnic prince Awch’i T’arkhan in the Huns’ capital city, Varach’an, according to Movses Dasxuranci.<sup>87</sup>

## RELATIONS WITH THE HUNGARIANS

The Magyars (Hungarians) came into contact with the Khazars during the course of their multiple westward migrations. Most of the Magyars left their old homeland and resettled in Lebedia (Levedia) in the first half of the eighth century, continuing to live there until the middle of the following century. Lebedia was located within the borders of the Khazar Empire and included the lands between the Don River, the Donets River, and the Sea of Azov.

The early Magyars were connected with Turkic culture. This explains why early Slavic and Byzantine sources called the Magyars “Ungroi” (Onogurs),

“Ungry,” “Unnoi,” and “Turkoi.”<sup>88</sup> Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus wrote that the Magyars in Lebedia were allied with the Khazars.<sup>89</sup> The Magyars and the Khazars fought many wars against common enemies.

Most Magyar tribal names were Turkic in origin.<sup>90</sup> In addition, hundreds of words of Turkic origin exist in the modern Hungarian language. In many cases, these are words of Chuvashic character. The following are some examples of Turkic words in Hungarian:<sup>91</sup>

**Magyar**

*alma* (“apple”)  
*atyá* (“father,” “patriarch”)  
*bátor* (“brave”)  
  
*betű* (“letter”)  
*bika* (“bull”)  
*búza* (“wheat”)  
*csicsóka* (“Jerusalem artichoke,”  
 a weed plant with large,  
 yellow flowers)  
*disznó* (“hog,” “pig”)  
*etel* (“river,” in OH)  
  
*érdem* (“merit,” “worth”)  
*gyümölcs* (“fruit”)  
*ír* (“to write”)  
*jobagy* (ruler title, in OH)  
*kende, künde* (“sacral,”  
 “theocratic king”)  
*köldök* (“navel”)  
*sárga* (“yellow”)  
*sátor* (“tent”)  
*tábor* (“camp”)  
*talyiga* (“wagon,” “cart,”  
 “wheelbarrow”)  
*tükör* (“mirror”)  
*teve* (“camel”)  
*túzok* (“bustard”)  
*tyúk* (“hen”)

**Khazar/Turkic**

T: *alma* (“apple”)  
 T: *ata* (“father”)  
 K: *baghatur*, T: *bahadir* (“brave  
 warrior”)  
 T: *bitik* (“letter,” “book”)  
 K, T: *bugha* (“bull”)  
 T: *bughdai* (“wheat”)  
 K, T: *chichek* (“flower”)  
  
 OC: *tisnagh*, C: *sisna* (“pig”)  
 K: *atil* (“large river”), C: *as-til* (“great  
 waters”)  
 T: *erdäm* (“merit,” “worth”)  
 T: *jemish* (“fruit”)  
 C: *sir* (“to write”)  
 K: *yabghu*, T: *jabghu* (ruler title)  
 K, T: *kender* (“subking”)  
  
 T: *kindik*, C: *kentek* (“navel”)  
 T: *sarigh* (“yellow”)  
 K: *chater*, T: *chadir* (“canvas,” “tent”)  
 K: *tovar*, T: *tabur* (“camp”)  
 K: *talyga* (“wagon,” “chariot”)  
  
 C: *tükör* (“mirror”)  
 T: *deve* (“camel”)  
 T: *toghdaq* (“bustard”)  
 T: *taqyghu*, C: *êúxú* (“hen,” “fowl”)

Key: C = Chuvashic, K = Khazar, OC = Old Chuvashic, OH = Old Hungarian, T = Turkic)

Historians have not reached a consensus on whether the Turkic words in Hungarian were derived from the Khazar language or from the Bulgar or some other language. According to István Fodor, many of the words encompassing agriculture, horticulture, animals, and dairy products came into the Hungarian language from the Bulgar tongue.<sup>92</sup> Even if it is true that the Magyars borrowed these words from the Bulgars, the Bulgar words could have been similar to the Khazar equivalents, since the Bulgar language may have been closely related to the Khazar language (see chapter 4).

Around the year 833, the Magyars were still living between the Don and the Dnieper. Then, around 840–850, the Magyars were forced to migrate from Lebedia to the region known as Etekköz (Etekküzü).<sup>93</sup> They were driven westward from Khazaria by the Pechenegs of the Pontic steppes.<sup>94</sup> Etekköz included territories between the Dnieper and Dniester rivers (including the plain between the Pruth and the Dniester), as well as some lands to the west and east of these two rivers. The Magyars remained residents of Etekköz until 894–896.

After the Pechenegs forced the Magyars to leave Lebedia for Etekköz, the Khazar kagan advised the seven Magyar tribes to unite under one prince. According to Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, a Khazar kagan gave a noble Khazar woman in marriage to the Magyars' top chief (*voievoda*)—one of several chiefs presiding over the seven Magyar tribes—whose name was Levéd (variants: Lebedias or Elöd), in return for his military assistance and bravery.<sup>95</sup> The kagan offered Levéd kingship over all Magyars under Khazar suzerainty. He regarded Levéd as “a person of high rank, sensible and valiant.”<sup>96</sup> Levéd supposedly refused to become king of all the Magyars, since he was childless at the time, and suggested that the kingship should instead be given to Álmos or Álmos's son, Árpád. Thus, the forefather of the Árpád dynasty, Álmos (son of Úgyek), was elected as Magyar prince in Etekköz. Under Álmos, the Magyars took control of Kiev by 840.<sup>97</sup> The presence of Magyars in the Kiev region in the late ninth century is evidenced by the Ugorskoye site near Kiev.<sup>98</sup> Álmos's successor, Árpád, was installed (circa 890) as the next Magyar chief by the Khazars' customary procedure—being lifted up on a shield. (We are reminded here of the old Western Turkish practice of lifting a new kagan upon a felt carpet, as noted in chapter 3). Future Magyar kings were chosen from the descendants of Árpád, and the Árpád dynasty lasted until 1301, when King Andrew III died childless.

Ibn Rustah described Etekköz as a fertile land abounding in trees and water and capable of sustaining agriculture. During their domination of Etekköz, the Magyars imprisoned some Slavs and sold them as slaves to the Byzantines at Kerch.<sup>99</sup> Yet the East Slavs of Kiev and the Magyars generally had good relations.<sup>100</sup>

During the period of the Magyars' residency at Etelköz, the Khazars had not yet integrated themselves with the Magyars. In 881, for instance, the Kabars were fighting near Vienna separately from the warriors of the seven Magyar tribes.<sup>101</sup> However, in 894, Levente, Árpád's oldest son, led a Kabar army against Bulgaria,<sup>102</sup> indicating the emergence of closer ties.

Most Hungarian scholars agree that the Khazars influenced the governmental structure of the early Hungarians. The Magyars adopted the Khazars' dual-kingship system, for they had a *kende* (a chief "sacral king," the first in command) and a *gyula* (the second in command and the actual manager of state affairs, including the army). Árpád was the second *gyula*. The Magyars also had a third in command, called the *harka*. Eventually, the *gyula* became more important than the *kende*, just as in the Khazar Empire, where the *bek's* power came to overshadow that of the *kagan*.

In 893, a new series of westward migrations was triggered by Ismail ibn Ahmed, the amir of the Iranian Samanid dynasty, who attacked the Oghuz and drove away their herds.<sup>103</sup> The Pechenegs, who formerly dwelled between the Ural and the Volga, in turn were forced by the Oghuz to go across the Volga, and they also crossed the Don. The Pechenegs allied with the Danube Bulgars and attacked the Magyars of Etelköz. This attack forced the Magyars to flee westward into the Carpathian Basin (in 895–896). This migration is commemorated by the Hungarians to this day.

Even after 896, when the Hungarians settled in central Europe, the Khazars lived among them and mixed with them (see chapter 9).

## RELATIONS WITH THE RUS'

The relations of the Khazar Empire with the Rus' can be characterized as turbulent and aggressive. The Khazar Empire was almost constantly at war with the Rus', as King Joseph related in his *Reply to Hasdai ibn-Shaprut*. Extensive coverage of the Rus'-Khazar conflicts and their devastating consequences for the Khazars may be found in chapter 8.

## NOTES

1. Douglas M. Dunlop, "The Khazars," in *The Dark Ages: Jews in Christian Europe, 711–1096*, ed. Cecil Roth and I. H. Levine (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1966), 326.

2. Turks and Mongols called Derbent *Temir-Kani*, meaning "Iron Gates."

3. Thomas S. Noonan, "Why Dirhams First Reached Russia: The Role of Arab-Khazar Relations in the Development of the Earliest Islamic Trade with Eastern Europe," *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 4 (1984): 179.

4. Noonan, "Why Dirhams First Reached Russia," 183. One of General Maslama's most powerful enemies was a Khazar chief allegedly named Samsam (al-Simsam), who became the administrator of the village of Mukrak (Mikrakh), located on the Samur River in the Lakz area (on the left bank of the Usugh-chay), during the Khazars' domination of Shirvan (see Vladimir F. Minorsky, *A History of Sharvan and Darband in the 10th–11th Centuries* [Cambridge, England: W. Heffer & Sons, 1958], 81). I consulted Peter Golden about Samsam, and he informed me that the name came from the *Akhti Chronicle*, a relatively late source from the north Caucasus, and later became mentioned in *Gulistan-i Iram*, but it may not be a genuine Khazar name.

5. Peter B. Golden, *Khazar Studies* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1980), 1:62, 150–51.

6. Dunlop, "The Khazars," 329; Noonan, "Why Dirhams First Reached Russia," 183–84.

7. Douglas M. Dunlop, *The History of the Jewish Khazars* (New York: Schocken, 1967), 64–65.

8. Svetlana A. Pletnyova, *Khazary* (Moscow: Nauka, 1986), 26.

9. Noonan, "Why Dirhams First Reached Russia," 184. Some residents of Bal-anjar went as far north as Volga Bulgharia. Thousands of "Baranjars" who had adopted Islam were encountered there by ibn Fadlan in 922.

10. Noonan, "Why Dirhams First Reached Russia," 187. Only about a hundred Arab soldiers escaped alive.

11. Dunlop, "The Khazars," 329.

12. Noonan, "Why Dirhams First Reached Russia," 188.

13. Károly Czeglédy, "Khazar Raids in Transcaucasia in 762–764 A.D.," *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 11 (1960): 75.

14. George Vernadsky, *A History of Russia* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1948), 1:222.

15. Vladimir F. Minorsky, *Hudud al-'Alam (The Regions of the World)* (London: Luzac & Co., 1937), 452.

16. Dunlop, *The History of the Jewish Khazars*, 84.

17. Noonan, "Why Dirhams First Reached Russia," 198–99.

18. Dunlop, *The History of the Jewish Khazars*, 87.

19. Peter B. Golden, *Khazar Studies* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1980), 1:14.

20. Golden, *Khazar Studies*, 1:65.

21. Czeglédy, "Khazar Raids in Transcaucasia in 762–764 A.D.," 80.

22. Czeglédy, "Khazar Raids in Transcaucasia in 762–764 A.D.," 81.

23. Minorsky, *Hudud al-'Alam (The Regions of the World)*, 451.

24. Paul Peeters, "Les Khazars dans la Passion de S. Abo de Tiflis," *Analecta Bollandiana* 52 (1934): 33.

25. Robert G. Bedrosian, ed., *K'art'lis C'xovreba (The Georgian Chronicle)* (New York: Sources of the Armenian Tradition, 1991), 97.

26. Xosroydis, the *ostikan* (governor) of Armenia, rebuilt Tiflis to recover it from the devastation the Khazars had wreaked upon it.

27. Peeters, "Les Khazars dans la Passion de S. Abo de Tiflis," 51.

28. Noonan, "Why Dirhams First Reached Russia," 246.

29. Noonan, "Why Dirhams First Reached Russia," 247.
30. David M. Lang, *Lives and Legends of the Georgian Saints*, 2nd ed. (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1976), 117–19.
31. Golden, *Khazar Studies*, 1:66. Leon II's mother was the daughter of the Khazar kagan. Abkhazia had been a part of the Byzantine Empire since 523.
32. Vladimir F. Minorsky, "A New Book on the Khazars," *Oriens* 11 (1959): 129. The Kingdom of Abkhazia lasted until 978.
33. Bedrosian, ed., *K'art'lis C'xovreba (The Georgian Chronicle)*, 98.
34. Minorsky, *A History of Sharvan and Darband in the 10th–11th Centuries*, 69.
35. Thomas S. Noonan, "The Khazar Qaghanate and Its Impact on the Early Rus' State: The *translatio imperii* from Itil to Kiev," in *Nomads in the Sedentary World*, ed. Anatoly M. Khazanov and André Wink (Richmond, England: Curzon, 2001), 91.
36. Minorsky, *A History of Sharvan and Darband in the 10th–11th Centuries*, 102.
37. Minorsky, *A History of Sharvan and Darband in the 10th–11th Centuries*, 106.
38. Minorsky, *A History of Sharvan and Darband in the 10th–11th Centuries*, 70.
93. The region of Qaytaq was located near the Darbakh River, northwest of Derbent.
39. Minorsky, *A History of Sharvan and Darband in the 10th–11th Centuries*, 43.
40. George Huxley, "Byzantinochazarika," *Hermathena* 148 (1990): 71.
41. David G. Christian, *A History of Russia, Central Asia and Mongolia* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 1:283.
42. Walter E. Kaegi, *Heraclius, Emperor of Byzantium* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 143. Ziebil was second-in-command to the kagan.
43. Eudocia was born on July 7, 611, and baptized into Christianity on August 15, 611.
44. Huxley, "Byzantinochazarika," 72–73.
45. Kaegi, *Heraclius, Emperor of Byzantium*, 144.
46. Kirakos Ganjakets'i, *History of the Armenians*, trans. Robert G. Bedrosian (New York: Sources of the Armenian Tradition, 1986), 46–47.
47. Christian, *A History of Russia, Central Asia and Mongolia*, 1:284. Walter Kaegi suggested that the figure of forty thousand Turkish soldiers "is probably exaggerated" (see Kaegi, *Heraclius, Emperor of Byzantium*, 145).
48. Minorsky, *A History of Sharvan and Darband in the 10th–11th Centuries*, 17.
49. Noonan, "Why Dirhams First Reached Russia," 174–75.
50. Kirakos Ganjakets'i, *History of the Armenians*, 158.
51. Noonan, "Why Dirhams First Reached Russia," 175; Christian, *A History of Russia, Central Asia and Mongolia*, 1:284.
52. Golden, *Khazar Studies*, 1:176. The name "Chorpan" means "star" in Turkic.
53. Noonan, "Why Dirhams First Reached Russia," 176.
54. Busir was also known as "Ibousir-Glavan" and "Glavianos." In *Parastaseis Syntomoi Chronikai*, his name is presented as "Ibouzeros Gliabanos" (see Huxley, "Byzantinochazarika," 74).
55. George Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1969), 142.
56. Theophanes, *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor*, trans. Cyril Mango and Roger Scott (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 520.

57. Alexander A. Vasiliev, *The Goths in the Crimea* (Cambridge, MA: The Medieval Academy of America, 1936), 82; Thomas S. Noonan, "Byzantium and the Khazars: A Special Relationship?" in *Byzantine Diplomacy: Papers from the Twenty-fourth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, Cambridge, March 1990*, ed. Jonathan Shepard and Simon Franklin (Aldershot, England: Variorum, 1992), 112.
58. Richard A. E. Mason, "The Religious Beliefs of the Khazars," *The Ukrainian Quarterly* 51, no. 4 (Winter 1995): 407.
59. Golden, *Khazar Studies*, 1:65.
60. Bihor's name is presented as "Virhor" in the Armenian version of the *Life of Saint Stephen of Sugdaia* (see Stephen Gero, *Byzantine Iconoclasm during the Reign of Constantine V* [Louvain, Belgium: Secrétariat du Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, 1977], 22).
61. Peter B. Golden, "Khazars," in *Turkish-Jewish Encounters*, ed. Mehmet Tütüncü (Haarlem, Netherlands: SOTA, 2001), 37.
62. According to *De ceremoniis aulae Byzantinae* by Constantine Porphyrogenitus, the Byzantines in Constantinople named a certain type of ceremonial robe *tzitzakion* in honor of Chichek, since she was known to wear this garment (see Golden, *Khazar Studies*, 175; Huxley, "Byzantinochazarika," 75).
63. Theophanes, *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor*, 567.
64. Czeglédy, "Khazar Raids in Transcaucasia in 762–764 A.D.," 78.
65. Omeljan Pritsak, "The Khazar Kingdom's Conversion to Judaism," *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 3, no. 2 (September 1978): 267.
66. Dunlop, *The History of the Jewish Khazars*, 219.
67. Dunlop, *The History of the Jewish Khazars*, 219. Many of these events were Christian, such as Easter and the Feast of the Nativity.
68. Jonathan Shepard, "The Khazars' Formal Adoption of Judaism and Byzantium's Northern Policy," *Oxford Slavonic Papers, New Series* 31 (1998): 22, 33.
69. Peter B. Golden, "Khazar Turkic Ghulâms in Caliphal Service," *Journal Asiatique* 292, nos. 1–2 (2004): 284.
70. Norman Golb and Omeljan Pritsak, *Khazarian Hebrew Documents of the Tenth Century* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1982), 113.
71. Constantine Zuckerman, "On the Date of the Khazars' Conversion to Judaism and the Chronology of the Kings of the Rus Oleg and Igor," *Revue des Études Byzantines* 53 (1995): 254.
72. Golb and Pritsak, *Khazarian Hebrew Documents of the Tenth Century*, 113, 115.
73. Noonan, "The Khazar Qaghanate and its Impact on the Early Rus' State," 79.
74. Golb and Pritsak, *Khazarian Hebrew Documents of the Tenth Century*, 132.
75. Zuckerman, "On the Date of the Khazars' Conversion," 255.
76. Golb and Pritsak, *Khazarian Hebrew Documents of the Tenth Century*, 115.
77. Zuckerman, "On the Date of the Khazars' Conversion," 255.
78. Golden, *Khazar Studies*, 1:95–96.
79. Antal Bartha, *Hungarian Society in the 9th and 10th Centuries*, trans. K. Balazs (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1975), 60.
80. Golden, *Khazar Studies*, 1:76.

81. Zuckerman, "On the Date of the Khazars' Conversion," 254.
82. Richard N. Frye, *Ibn Fadlan's Journey to Russia* (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener, 2005), 41.
83. Zuckerman, "On the Date of the Khazars' Conversion," 254.
84. Al-Masudi claimed that the Volga Bulgar khan became a Muslim due to a dream. But the khan and his family did not convert prior to the 920s (see Dan Shapira, "Two Names of the First Khazar Jewish Beg," *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 10 [1998–1999]: 240). It was in the 920s, after ibn Fadlan's embassy to the Volga Bulgars, that the son of the khan visited Caliph al-Muqtadir while making a pilgrimage (hajj) to Mecca. András Róna-Tas argued against the theory that some Volga Bulgars had adopted Islam before the start of the tenth century (see András Róna-Tas, *Hungarians and Europe in the Early Middle Ages*, trans. Nicholas Bodoczky [Budapest: Central European University Press, 1999], 224).
85. Frye, *Ibn Fadlan's Journey to Russia*, 62.
86. Noonan, "Why Dirhams First Reached Russia," 180.
87. Minorsky, *Hudud al-'Alam (The Regions of the World)*, 411; Peter B. Golden, *An Introduction to the History of the Turkic Peoples* (Wiesbaden, Germany: Otto Harrassowitz, 1992), 234.
88. Zoltan J. Kosztolnyik, *Five Eleventh Century Hungarian Kings* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), xi. Patriarch Nikolas I Mystikos of Constantinople called the Magyars "western Turk peoples" in a letter he addressed to the Bulgarian emperor Simeon I in the 920s (see Róna-Tas, *Hungarians and Europe in the Early Middle Ages*, 53, 509).
89. István Fodor, *In Search of a New Homeland*, trans. Helen Tarnoy (Gyoma, Hungary: Corvina, 1982), 213.
90. Bartha, *Hungarian Society in the 9th and 10th Centuries*, 57.
91. Some of these examples come from the following sources: Bartha, *Hungarian Society in the 9th and 10th Centuries*, 50–52; Fodor, *In Search of a New Homeland*, 233; Lajos Ligeti, "The Khazarian Letter from Kiev and Its Attestation in Runiform Script," *Acta Linguistica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 31 (1981): 15; Róna-Tas, *Hungarians and Europe in the Early Middle Ages*, 107, 110, 111. I wish to thank the linguists Alfred Hámori, Tibor Majláth, and Paolo Agostini for their additional suggestions.
92. Fodor, *In Search of a New Homeland*, 224–25. According to Fodor (226–27), Hungarian also has some words of Alan origin, which were added to the Magyar vocabulary during the residence of the Magyars among the Iranian Alans and Turkic Bulgars of the Saltovo region. Alan words in Hungarian include *üveg* ("glass," from the Alan word *avg*), *hid* (bridge), *vért* (armor, breastplate), *zold* (green), *gazdag* (rich), and *vendeg* (guest). Fodor theorized that most of the Alans of the River Don region eventually adopted the Bulgar language in its entirety, and the stones of the Mayaki Castle, located in the Alan territory of Saltovo, had Turkic runic letters inscribed upon them (see *In Search of a New Homeland*, 226). As Fodor has it, Saltovo was a multi-ethnic region in which words of both Turkic and Iranian origin could have been transmitted to the wandering Magyars. But Róna-Tas was of the opinion that the Alan words in Magyar did not come from the Saltovo region (see Róna-Tas, *Hungarians and Europe in the Early Middle Ages*, 328).



93. Fodor, *In Search of a New Homeland*, 239–40.
94. Bartha, *Hungarian Society in the 9th and 10th Centuries*, 64; Golden, *Khazar Studies*, 1:76; René Grousset, *The Empire of the Steppes*, trans. Naomi Waldorf (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1970), 181.
95. Carlile A. Macartney, *The Magyars in the Ninth Century* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1930), 229–30.
96. Bálint Z. Takács, “Khazars, Pechenegs, and Hungarians in the Ninth Century,” in *The Turks*, ed. Hasan C. Güzel, C. C. Oguz, and Osman Karatay (Ankara, Turkey: Yeni Türkiye, 2002), 1:528.
97. Vernadsky, *A History of Russia*, 1:332.
98. Vladimir Ia. Petrukhin, “The Normans and the Khazars in the South of Rus’ (The Formation of the ‘Russian Land’ in the Middle Dnepr Area),” *Russian History/Histoire Russe* 19 (1992): 396–97.
99. Fodor, *In Search of a New Homeland*, 251–52.
100. Fodor, *In Search of a New Homeland*, 258–59.
101. György Györffy, *King Saint Stephen of Hungary*, trans. Peter Doherty (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 27. This information derives from *Annales Iuvavenses maximi*, which referred to the battle of the “Cowari” at Culmite.
102. Györffy, *King Saint Stephen of Hungary*, 42.
103. Györffy, *King Saint Stephen of Hungary*, 16.

## *Chapter Eight*

# **The Decline and Fall of the Khazar Empire**

*Ultimately, the Khazars lost their kingdom on account of the military actions of the Rus', Pechenegs, and Byzantines. This chapter explores the events which led to Khazaria's defeat.*

### **THE BEGINNING OF THE END**

The first Rus' kaganate was founded on the middle Volga during the 830s.<sup>1</sup> By 885, the East Slavic tribes were united and began to grow in strength, eclipsing Khazar power in the tenth century.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, wandering merchants and pirates from Scandinavia, called "Varang" by the Khazars and "al-Pharange" by al-Masudi, began to integrate themselves into Kievan Rus'. The Varangian chiefs were called *köl-begi* (kings of the sea)<sup>3</sup> because, unlike the Khazar chiefs, they led a large number of ships.

The Khazars became entangled in various disputes with the Rus' and the Daghestanis in the tenth century. For example, in August 901, Khazar soldiers led by their "king," Tun-Kisa ibn Buljan al-Khazari, attacked the city of Derbent.<sup>4</sup> However, they were defeated by Muhammad ibn Hashim and the *ghazis* (Muslim warriors and freebooters) of the al-Bab region.

The Arab historian al-Masudi recorded a dramatic sequence of events in which the Khazars inflicted a serious blow on the ambitious Rus'ians.<sup>5</sup> Around 913, the Khazar king allowed five hundred Rus' ships to voyage down the Volga, as long as they agreed to present the king with half of all booty they would acquire. The Rus' sailed past Atil and then traveled down the Caspian en route to Tabaristan and other coastal territories. However, the Rus' began to engage in acts of pillage and violence. They killed many men,

captured women and children, stole property, and burned villages. Afterward, the Rus' returned northward and arrived at islands near Baku, where they slaughtered thousands of Muslims.

Several months after their stay in Baku, the Rus' continued north and arrived at Atil. The Muslim Orsiyya soldiers in Atil had heard that the Rus' had killed a multitude of their coreligionists in the Caucasus, and they notified the Khazar king of their intention to retaliate against them. The Orsiyya who served the Khazar king were strong and possessed much equipment, so they felt prepared for battle. A large war broke out between the Rus' and the Orsiyya. Some of the Christians of Atil joined the fifteen thousand Orsiyya Muslims. After a three-day battle, the Khazars emerged victorious over the Rus'. Rus'ian casualties totaled approximately thirty thousand men. Most of the Rus'ians were killed in the battle; only five thousand survived, and many of those who managed to escape up the Volga were killed by the Burtas and the Bulgars.

In 1822, Alexander Pushkin (1799–1837), a master of Russian poetry and prose, wrote a famous poem entitled *The Lay of the Wise Oleg*. It declared that the Rus'ian prince Oleg declared war on the Khazars because “The Khazars have awakened his ire; / For rapine and raid, hamlet, city, and plain / He gives over to falchion and fire.”<sup>6</sup> Despite the poem's assertion that Oleg's plundering led him to destroy Khazar villages and farms, and thus to attain fame and glory, the historical record shows that victory was not Oleg's ultimate destiny. *The Russian Chronicle* also gave a romanticized view of Oleg's reign and declared that he died when a serpent bit him in the foot and poisoned him.<sup>7</sup>

A more accurate account, the *Schechter Letter*, described Oleg's activities in detail. The letter related that the Byzantine emperor Romanus I Lecapenus made overtures to the Rus' king, Oleg, encouraging him to attack the Khazar city of Samkarsh. Romanus I was reacting to King Joseph's actions against Christians in Khazaria (see chapter 6). Oleg captured Samkarsh one night while the military commander of Samkarsh, the *rab hashmonai* (head of the Hasmoneans), was away. Pesakh, a prominent Khazar baliqchi, learned of Oleg's actions and marched against several Crimean cities that belonged to the Byzantines. Pesakh conquered three cities and killed many men and women. Pesakh then came to Cherson, where he enslaved his enemies, killed all the Rus' he could find, and saved the Khazars who had been captured by the Rus'. Pesakh also found the booty that Oleg had stolen from Samkarsh. Oleg fought against the Khazar soldiers but in the end was forced to surrender to Pesakh.<sup>8</sup> The Khazars had again won a decisive victory over the Rus'. This event occurred around the late 930s, according to Zuckerman.<sup>9</sup>

Oleg confessed to Pesakh that Romanus had enticed him to attack the Khazars. Pesakh then forced Oleg to make war against Romanus so as to

avoid another confrontation between the Khazars and the Rus'. The Rus' fought against Constantinople for four months at sea, from June to September in 941,<sup>10</sup> but they were defeated by the Byzantine navy. A large number of Oleg's soldiers died. Oleg and the remnants of his servicemen fled to "FRS" and died there.<sup>11</sup>

Prince Oleg died in the Persian Empire in 944 or 945.<sup>12</sup> His Rus'ian soldiers perished after raiding the south Caucasus, including the city of Bardha'a. Ibn Miskawayh wrote that the Rus'ian leader and seven hundred Rus'ian soldiers under his command were slain by soldiers led by Marzuban ibn Muhammad, ruler of Azerbaijan. Meanwhile, in the summer of 944, Igor, the new prince of Kievan Rus', signed a treaty with the Byzantines,<sup>13</sup> which guaranteed free trade and mutual assistance in times of war between the Byzantine Empire and Kievan Rus'.

Hasdai ibn Shaprut's letter to King Joseph was sent from Spain to Hungarian Jews, to Rus', to Bulgars, and then to Khazars instead of directly from Kievan Rus' to Khazaria, owing to hostilities between the Rus' and the Khazars that continued throughout the mid-tenth century. In the mid-950s, King Joseph alluded to this ongoing strife by informing Hasdai of his blockade against Rus'ian raiding parties:

I live at the mouth of the [Volga] river, and with God's help I guard its entrance and prevent the Rus'ians who arrive in ships from entering into the Caspian Sea for the purpose of making their way to the Ishmaelites [Muslims]. Similarly, I prevent their [Muslims'] enemies who travel by land from approaching the gates of Bab al-Abwab [Derbent]. I am at war with them [the Rus'ians]. Were I to let them pass through even one time, they would destroy the whole land of the Ishmaelites as far as Baghdad.

The last sentence appears only in the long version of Joseph's reply.

In 962, the Khazars, led by horsemen and aggressive foot soldiers, destroyed many villages and cities in Crimea to try to reassert their control over the region.<sup>14</sup> The Crimean Goths turned to the Rus' for help in defending themselves against the Khazars. Svyatoslav answered their call for help and set forth against the Khazar "barbarians" in the 960s.

## THE RUS'IAN CONQUEST OF THE KHAZARS

An interesting prophetic legend which appears in the *Poviest' vremennykh lyet* ("Story of the Times"), the first section of the *Russian Primary Chronicle*, "predicted" the dominance of Kievan Rus' over the Khazars by comparing the types of swords manufactured by each side. According to the legend,

Khazar warriors approached the forested hills along the eastern shore of the Dnieper and demanded tribute payments from the Polianian Slavs who made this land their home. As a result, the Polianians gave the warriors one sword from every hut. Triumphant in their success, the warriors returned to the Khazar kagan and presented the Slavic swords to him. But the Khazar chieftains in the court warned that this tribute was a bad omen, for the Kievan swords were sharpened on both edges and were clearly superior to the Khazar swords, which were sharpened on only one edge.<sup>15</sup> The Khazar chieftains said, "Surely it will be that they will one day come to take tribute of us and of others."<sup>16</sup> Based on the inferior weaponry of the Khazars, the story foreshadowed the ascendancy of the Rus', who seized control of the south Russian and east Ukrainian lands and ended the Khazar era of political and military dominance.

A crushing blow was dealt to the Khazar Empire by Svyatoslav, Grand Duke of Kiev (ruled 962–972), the son of Prince Igor and Igor's wife Olga. His life was one of war and conquest. The *Russian Primary Chronicle* recorded that as part of his childhood upbringing, Svyatoslav was tutored by Asmund and instructed in military tactics by the *voievoda* (military commander) Svenil'd. Medieval accounts described him as a "valiant" and "strong" leader who "undertook many campaigns." In addition to double-edged swords, his warriors were equipped with battle-axes, short and long knives, spears, and iron arrows, and they were protected by shields, hauberts, and iron and copper helmets.<sup>17</sup>

According to the *Russian Primary Chronicle*, Svyatoslav conquered and seized the Khazar city of Sarkel, including its prized fortress, in 965.<sup>18</sup> A messenger warned the Khazars of the impending invasion in advance, so the Khazar warriors assembled on the battlefield and prepared to fight. The Khazar kagan joined his warriors during their losing battle against Svyatoslav. The details of what transpired on that fateful day remain sketchy. The number of casualties and hostages went unrecorded. Svyatoslav also subjugated the Alans and the Circassians in the same year.

In 966, Svyatoslav asserted control over the Vyaticians (a group of East Slavs) and began receiving tribute from them. Two years earlier, Svyatoslav had asked them to whom they paid tribute. At that time, the Vyaticians responded that they paid one silver piece per plowshare to the Khazars.<sup>19</sup>

Ibn Hauqal wrote (around 975–977) that the Rus' sailed down the Volga after defeating the Bulgars and occupied the city of Atil.<sup>20</sup> The seizure took place circa 967.<sup>21</sup> After the conquest of Atil, the Khazars escaped. According to Ibn Hauqal, around 969 some Khazars from Atil sought refuge by crossing the Caspian Sea until they reached an island called Siyah-Kuh (Siacouye),<sup>22</sup> which was inhabited by Oghuz Turks. Siyah-Kuh is equivalent to modern-day

Manghishlaq, on the northeastern coast of the Caspian. Another group of Khazars went further south to another Caspian island, off the estuary of the Terek River. A number of other Khazars fled to Baku. Some of the Khazar refugees were attacked by Ma'mun ibn Muhammad, the amir of Gurganj, who forced them to adopt Islam.<sup>23</sup> However, Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Azdi, the Muslim shah of Shirvan, assisted some of the Khazars in returning to Atil and Khazaran, although they became subject to the authority of Shirvan.

The kagan of Khazaria converted to Islam around 965–967 in exchange for the support of Khwarizm. Al-Muqaddasi wrote in 985 or 986 that he had heard of Arabs from “Gurjania” attacking the Khazars and forcing the Khazar king to accept Islam.<sup>24</sup> He also wrote that the Rus’ “conquered the Khazars and seized their land.”<sup>25</sup> Grand Prince Vladimir of Kievan Rus’ (ruled 980–1015), son of Svyatoslav, gained control over part of the former Khazar territory, including Samkarsh (renamed Tmutorokan), and the famous vineyards and gardens of Samandar were burned. While most of the Khazars under Khwarizmian control became Muslims, there were some Khazars who resisted conversion. Khwarizmian soldiers occupied the cities of those Khazars who refused to convert to Islam.<sup>26</sup>

With the stunning defeat of the primary Khazar cities, Sarkel and Atil, control of the Don trade route passed to the East Slavs, while control of the prestigious Volga-Caspian trade route effectively transferred to the Bulgars. In the period following Svyatoslav’s conquests, the Rus’ extensively colonized the Don and Donets valleys.

Land was not all that the Slavs inherited from the Khazars. Julius Brutzkus proposed that ancient Rus’ was indebted to the Khazar way of life in terms of customs, legal procedures, system of government, and military organization.<sup>27</sup> He also suggested that Khazar words for clothing, utensils, trade, and transportation made their way into the early East Slavic language of Kievan Rus’. Other words of Turkic origin, such as *bogatyř* (meaning “knight”), *telega* (meaning “wagon”), and *verv* (meaning “house community”), were also added to the Rus’ian vocabulary. Brutzkus thought these words were borrowed directly from the Khazar language, citing the Khazarian equivalents *baghatur* (brave warrior), *talyga* (wagon, chariot), and *ver-evi* (tribe town or house). Peter Golden observed that the Old Rus’ word *tovar* (military camp), a word of Turkic origin, could have come either from the Hungarian word *tábor* or directly from Turkic, but that it is not certain which was the source.<sup>28</sup> According to Golden,<sup>29</sup> the only word in the Old Rus’ language that was definitely borrowed from Khazarian is *kagan*. No other Rus’ words can with complete certainty be said to have come from Khazarian, even if it is likely that there were others. Several medieval documents recorded the fact that the supreme Rus’ ruler was called the kagan. In *The Annals of Saint Bertin (Annales Bertiniani)*,

a Frankish Latin document composed in the mid-ninth century, the sovereign of the Swedish “Rhos” (Rus) who ruled over the East Slavs in the 830s is called the *chacanus*.<sup>30</sup> Around 1050, Metropolitan Ilarion of Kiev wrote *Sermon on Law and Grace (Slovo o zakone i blagodati)* in which he applied the title *khagan* to Grand Princes Vladimir and Yaroslav of Kievan Rus’.<sup>31</sup> *The Lay of the Host of Igor (Slovo o polku Igoreve)*, an epic written in 1185 about an unsuccessful Rus’ian campaign against the Cumans, noted a certain “Kagan Oleg,” whose identity is mysterious and still debated.<sup>32</sup> Additionally, Arab and Persian chroniclers including Gardizi and ibn Rustah recorded the title of the Rus’ ruler as *khaqan* or *khagan*.<sup>33</sup> Even *Hudud al-‘Alam* called the Rus’ ruler *Rus-khaqan*.<sup>34</sup> In the north gallery of the Saint Sophia Cathedral in Kiev, an inscription calls on God to “save our khagan,” apparently a reference to Rus’ Grand Prince Svyatoslav II (1073–1076).<sup>35</sup> The Russian historian Charles J. Halperin wrote, “That a steppe title was used in Kiev suggests considerable cultural interaction, and the significance of this trace of Khazar influence has long been recognized.”<sup>36</sup>

The adoption of the word *kagan* by the Rus’ appears to reflect an intentional attempt on their part to copy the form of government of the Khazars. Like the Khazars, the early Rus’ had two leaders: a military leader (akin to the *bek*) and a semisacred dynastic leader (akin to the *kagan*).<sup>37</sup> Ibn Fadlan stated that the Rus’ deputy held the power to command soldiers, conduct wars against enemies, and rule the country, while the Rus’ *kagan*, who lived in a large fortress with hundreds of retainers, was a ceremonial ruler who “has no other duties but to make love to his slave girls, drink, and give himself up to pleasure.”<sup>38</sup> But after some time, the *kagans* of the emerging state of Kievan Rus’ gained actual responsibilities.

Kievan Rus’ subjects included East Slavs, Scandinavians, Baltic and Finnic peoples, Jews, and others. According to Thomas Noonan, the Rus’ adopted the title “*kagan*” to help legitimize their rule over this diverse population, since the title was understood by those in the population who had formerly lived under Khazar rule to mean that its bearers reigned under a divine mandate from a higher power.<sup>39</sup> Thus, the “omen” story in the *Russian Primary Chronicle*, which added that the Rus’ would someday rule over the Khazars “by God’s commandment,” was also an expression of this Khazar ideology that was adopted by the Rus’.<sup>40</sup>

The Khazarian trident, a possible *tamga* symbol of the Khazar *kagans*, was adopted by the Rus’ rulers Svyatoslav and Vladimir for use on coins and seals.<sup>41</sup> According to Robin Milner-Gulland, the trident was an “authority symbol” in medieval times.<sup>42</sup> Pritsak wrote that the trident represented the *qut* (charisma) of the Khazarian *kagan* and how it brought forth “victory and glory.”<sup>43</sup> He noted that the *tamga* on the Khazar coins, with its

three main branches, is a sort of trident. The trident is today a symbol of modern Ukraine.

Residents of Kievan Rus' adopted the steppe practice of burying their dead men next to their horses in the grave. This custom, which may have been copied directly from the Khazars, was followed in the Kiev, Chernigov, and Gnezdovo regions.

## THE PASSING OF THE KHAZAR EMPIRE

The Khazars maintained a degree of political independence until at least 1016. The last Khazar kagan was named Georgius Tzul, and he was apparently a Christian. Not much data are available on this kagan. Scholars are not certain whether Georgius Tzul ruled over the Crimea or the Taman peninsula. However, the Crimea is the more likely location. Analysis of lead seals revealed that around the late ninth and early tenth centuries, some Byzantine officials serving in the Crimea in towns like Cherson and Kerch belonged to the Tzul clan.<sup>44</sup> Several of them were named George Tzul. The Tsuls held such positions as imperial *protospatharios* (senior commander), imperial *spatharios* (officer subordinate to the *protospatharios*), and *strategos* (general who led a theme).

In January 1016, Byzantine emperor Basil II and the Rus'ian army sent a combined force against "Chazaria," as the Byzantine chronicler Skylitzes recorded.<sup>45</sup> This collaborative force was led by Sfengus (brother of Grand Prince Vladimir) and Mongus. The Khazar leader Georgius Tzul (George the Tzul) was imprisoned by the Rus', and any territories on the Crimean and Taman peninsulas that the Khazars may have held up to this point transferred ownership. It has been suggested that some members of the royal family of Khazaria—including the king—emigrated to Spain after their empire was destroyed,<sup>46</sup> but no proof has been provided. Historians who had proposed a royal exodus to Spain predicated this hypothesis on a variant translation of Abraham ibn Daud's *Sefer ha-Qabbalah*, which supposes that ibn Daud and his colleagues had seen in Toledo "his descendants" rather than "their descendants." Since this statement immediately follows a sentence about King Joseph, if the former translation were true, "his descendants" would mean King Joseph's descendants (see also chapters 6 and 9). However, it appears that the correct translation is "their descendants," referring to the Khazars as a collective.

Some historians have maintained that Khazaria actually lasted for two additional centuries. Douglas Dunlop suggested that the Khazars may have revived their old town Sarighshin as Saqsin, a market town along the lower



Volga, by the twelfth century.<sup>47</sup> Abraham N. Poliak, a professor at Tel Aviv University, claimed that the Jewish Khazar kingdom continued to exist until 1224, during the time of the Mongol invasions, although it was considerably reduced in size and strength.<sup>48</sup> Proposing an even later date for its final destruction, Menashe Goldelman claimed that Khazaria persisted after the tenth century as a “small Jewish principedom with its center at Samandar, which managed to survive until the Mongol-Tatar invasion in 1238–39.”<sup>49</sup> However, it is difficult to verify these claims, because of sparse and insufficient documentation from the eleventh through the thirteenth centuries.

Some Italian documents used *Gazaria* as the term for the Crimea until the sixteenth century. Marco Polo (circa 1254–1324), for instance, wrote that the Mongols took “Gazaria” from the Cumans. Sanudo Marino also referred to the Mongol destruction of Gothia, Sugdiana, Alania, Kievan Rus’, and “Gasaria” in the early 1240s. The administration of Genoese seaports and communities along the southern Crimean coast was directed by the “Officium Gazariae” in Genoa, Italy.<sup>50</sup> The Gothic prince Ioann (John), who emigrated to Trebizond (Trabzon) on the southern Black Sea coast with his Byzantine-Bulgarian wife Maria in the 1440s, was called “Lord of Khazaria.”

The memory of the Khazars as a major power in steppe-land affairs lingers in several languages, which call the Caspian Sea the “Khazar Sea”: “Hazar Denizi” in Turkish, “Xæzær Dænizi” in Azeri, “Bahr-ul-Khazar” in Arabic, and “Daryaye Khazar” in Persian. Today’s Azerbaijanis still speak of the “Khazri wind.” Harold La Fay, referring to a wind that reaches Baku, Azerbaijan, from the north, wrote, “In other seasons, the *Khazri*—named for the long-departed Khazars—blows from the north.”<sup>51</sup> It is appropriate, then, that the title of Marek Halter’s French historical novel about the Khazars and Azerbaijan was *Le Vent des Khazars* (“The Wind of the Khazars”).

The Russians remembered Khazaria in their *byliny* (epic oral folklore). They told stories about a hero from Kiev named Mikhailo Kozarin (“Mikhailo the Khazar”) and about Zhidovin the Giant (“the Giant Jew”).<sup>52</sup>

## REASONS FOR KHAZARIA’S DESTRUCTION

Dunlop believed that three major factors contributed to the downfall of Khazaria: the lack of natural frontiers for defense, the alleged lack of self-sufficiency for most resources, and the lack of homogeneity in the Khazarian population.<sup>53</sup> In addition, Dunlop thought the Rus’ must have been displeased when the Khazars began to prohibit the Rus’ from traveling at the lower end of the Volga. Another important contributing factor was the fact that the Khazars did not possess a navy (see chapter 4), while the Rus’ did. This dis-

advantage prevented the Khazars from remaining the masters of the seas in the same way that they were the masters of the land.

As the tenth century proceeded and Khazaria decreased in power, the Pechenegs expanded control over parts of Crimea.<sup>54</sup> Peter Golden attributed the decline of Khazaria in part to the expansion of the Pechenegs.<sup>55</sup> As mentioned in chapter 7, the Pechenegs forced the Magyars to migrate westward. By the tenth century, they had become a major force to contend with in eastern Europe. A strong Khazaria had buffered Europe from dangerous, less civilized steppe peoples like the Pechenegs.<sup>56</sup> “The Khazar state,” wrote Golden, “formed an important buffer between Byzantium and the steppe peoples, absorbing or deflecting the movements of other nomadic groupings.”<sup>57</sup> Beginning with the decline of the Khazars during the tenth century, the other Turks flowed in and came to challenge or overwhelm the Rus’ and Byzantines. The victory of Svyatoslav over the Khazars in the 960s exposed the Rus’ to the Pecheneg threat, and in 968 the Pechenegs attacked Kiev. However, Roman Kovalev pointed out that at no time did the Pechenegs threaten the very existence of Kievan Rus’, since they were not unified under a single king or government but rather were divided into eight tribal unions.<sup>58</sup>

The end of the Khazar Empire also signified the beginning of a new and unfortunate era for Jews. No longer did the Jews of eastern Europe have a nation of their own. An independent Jewish state would not rise again until the establishment of Israel in 1948.

Golden Horde Mongols controlled a large area of the former Khazar Empire around the Caspian Sea during the late Middle Ages, with their capital at Sarai in the Astrakhan area near the Volga.

As will be seen in chapter 9, the Khazars largely survived the traumatic events described above and continued to prosper in new environments and new nations.

## NOTES

1. Omeljan Pritsak, “The Pre-Ashkenazic Jews of Eastern Europe in Relation to the Khazars, the Rus’ and the Lithuanians,” in *Ukrainian-Jewish Relations in Historical Perspective*, ed. Howard Aster and Peter J. Potichnyj (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 1990), 4.

2. Peter B. Golden, *Khazar Studies* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1980), 1:79–80.

3. Julius Brutzkus, “The Khazar Origin of Ancient Kiev,” *Slavonic and East European Review* 22 (1944): 120.

4. Vladimir F. Minorsky, *A History of Sharvan and Darband in the 10th–11th Centuries* (Cambridge, England: W. Heffer & Sons, 1958), 42.

5. Minorsky, *A History of Sharvan and Darband in the 10th–11th Centuries*, 151–53.

6. Avrahm Yarmolinsky, ed., *The Poems, Prose, and Plays of Alexander Pushkin* (New York: The Modern Library, 1964), 55.

7. Serge A. Zenkovsky, ed., *Medieval Russia's Epics, Chronicles, and Tales* (New York: Meridian, 1974), 53–54. Pushkin's poem also included a reference to a snake wrapping itself around Oleg's legs and stinging him (see Yarmolinsky, *The Poems, Prose, and Plays of Alexander Pushkin*, 57–58).

8. This episode of the *Schechter Letter* is translated in Norman Golb and Omeljan Pritsak, *Khazarian Hebrew Documents of the Tenth Century* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1982), 115, 117, 119.

9. Constantine Zuckerman, "On the Date of the Khazars' Conversion to Judaism and the Chronology of the Kings of the Rus Oleg and Igor," *Revue des Études Byzantines* 53 (1995): 256.

10. Zuckerman, "On the Date of the Khazars' Conversion," 257.

11. Pritsak argued that "FRS" refers to the area along the south shore of the Caspian Sea (see Golb and Pritsak, *Khazarian Hebrew Documents of the Tenth Century*, 138).

12. Zuckerman, "On the Date of the Khazars' Conversion," 268.

13. Zuckerman, "On the Date of the Khazars' Conversion," 266.

14. Alexander A. Vasiliev, *The Goths in the Crimea* (Cambridge, MA: The Medieval Academy of America, 1936), 129.

15. Archaeological evidence has confirmed that the east Slavs produced double-edged swords; see Antal Bartha, *Hungarian Society in the 9th and 10th Centuries*, trans. K. Balazs (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1975), 12; István Fodor, *In Search of a New Homeland*, trans. Helen Tarnoy (Gyoma, Hungary: Corvina, 1982), 255. It has also been determined that the Alans in Khazaria used sabers which were sharpened on only one edge.

16. Vasilii O. Kluchevsky, *A History of Russia*, trans. C. J. Hogarth (New York: Russell & Russell, 1960), 1:51. The legend concluded with the statement "So it has also come to pass that the princes of Rus' rule over the Khazars even to this day."

17. Mykhailo Hrushevsky, *History of Ukraine-Rus'*, trans. Marta Skorupsky (Edmonton, Alberta: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 1997), 1:211.

18. Zenkovsky, *Medieval Russia's Epics, Chronicles, and Tales*, 58–59. A variation on the episode concerning the capture of Sarkel's fortress was allegedly preserved by Circassian storytellers. In the tale "Sarkel Battle" by the Circassian bard Yakhutl' Shaban, it is said that Hapach, son of Prince Weché (a ruler over the Bzhe-duk territory), assembled a large number of horsemen to attack Sarkel (see John Colarusso, "Two Circassian Tales of Huns and Khazars," *The Annual of the Society for the Study of Caucasia* 4–5 [1992–1993]: 68). The Khazarian defensive forces approached the invading horsemen, and a battle ensued. At the conclusion of the battle, the "Great Prince of Sarkel" and other Khazars were imprisoned with their legs in shackles. The remainder of the tale praises the heroic deeds of Prince Shawel, who struck fear into the Khazars with his powerful bow and curved sword. John Colarusso suggested that the tale indicates that an alliance had been formed between Circassians

and Svyatoslav's Rus'ian forces, since Circassians sometimes allied with the Rus' on other occasions. I would like to thank Brian Boeck for his caution against accepting this tale as a historical source, since he says it may only reflect nineteenth-century literary traditions.

19. Zenkovsky, *Medieval Russia's Epics, Chronicles, and Tales*, 58–59.
20. Svetlana A. Pletnyova, *Khazary* (Moscow: Nauka, 1986), 71.
21. Golden, *Khazar Studies*, 1:82.
22. Minorsky, *A History of Sharvan and Darband in the 10th–11th Centuries*, 113.
23. Douglas M. Dunlop, “The Khazars,” in *The Dark Ages: Jews in Christian Europe, 711–1096*, ed. Cecil Roth and I. H. Levine (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1966), 353.
24. The conversion of the Khazar king to Islam was also reported by Ibn al-Athir in the early thirteenth century.
25. George Vernadsky, *A History of Russia* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1948), 1:289.
26. Pletnyova, *Khazary*, 72.
27. Brutzkus, “The Khazar Origin of Ancient Kiev,” 111. Prince Svyatoslav even wore his hair in the Turkic warrior style; his head was shaven except for a lock of hair (see Vladimir Ia. Petrukhin, “The Early History of Old Russian Art: The Rhyton from Chernigov and Khazarian Tradition,” *Tor* 27, no. 2 [1995]: 484).
28. Peter B. Golden, “The Nomadic Linguistic Impact on Pre-Činggisid Rus' and Georgia,” *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 10 (1998–1999): 83–84.
29. Golden, “The Nomadic Linguistic Impact,” 81.
30. George Huxley, “Byzantinohazarika,” *Hermathena* 148 (1990): 78. In 838–839, these Rhos sent a delegation to the Byzantine emperor Theophilus (see: Jonathan Shepard, “Byzantine Relations with the Outside World in the Ninth Century: An Introduction,” in *Byzantium in the Ninth Century*, ed. Leslie Brubaker [Aldershot, England: Variorum, 1998], 174). This was prior to the establishment of the Rus' state headquartered at Kiev. The Rhos mission then arrived at the court of Louis the Pious on May 18, 839, accompanied by envoys from Theophilus.
31. Metropolitan Ilarion, “Sermon on Law and Grace,” in *Sermons and Rhetoric of Kievan Rus'*, trans. Simon Franklin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, Harvard University, 1991), 3, 17, 18, 26. Ilarion called the late Vladimir “our khagan” and “the great khagan of our land,” while saying that his contemporary, Yaroslav, was “our devout khagan.”
32. Zenkovsky, *Medieval Russia's Epics, Chronicles, and Tales*, 160. Some researchers thought either Oleg the Magus or Oleg Svyatoslavich was meant, while others thought Prince Igor of Novgorod-Seversk was really meant.
33. Arsenio P. Martinez, “Gardizi's Two Chapters on the Turks,” *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 2 (1982): 167.
34. Vladimir F. Minorsky, *Hudud al-'Alam (The Regions of the World)* (London: Luzac & Co., 1937), 159.
35. Thomas S. Noonan, “The Khazar Qaghanate and Its Impact on the Early Rus' State: The *translatio imperii* from Itil to Kiev,” in *Nomads in the Sedentary World*, ed. Anatoly M. Khazanov and André Wink (Richmond, England: Curzon, 2001), 91–92.

36. Charles J. Halperin, *Russia and the Golden Horde: The Mongol Impact on Medieval Russian History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 12–13.
37. Golden, *Khazar Studies*, 1:16.
38. David G. Christian, *A History of Russia, Central Asia and Mongolia* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 1:340–41.
39. Noonan, “The Khazar Qaghanate and Its Impact on the Early Rus’ State,” 87–89, 94.
40. Noonan, “The Khazar Qaghanate and Its Impact on the Early Rus’ State,” 89–90.
41. Simon Franklin and Jonathan Shepard, *The Emergence of Rus, 750–1200* (London: Longman, 1996), 120–21. Images from Vladimir’s trident coins are displayed in Omeljan Pritsak, *The Origins of the Old Rus’ Weights and Monetary Systems* (Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, Harvard University Press, 1998), 125.
42. Robin Milner-Gulland, *The Russians* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), 51.
43. Pritsak, *The Origins of the Old Rus’ Weights and Monetary Systems*, 78–79.
44. Thomas S. Noonan, “The Khazar-Byzantine World of the Crimea in the Early Middle Ages: The Religious Dimension,” *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 10 (1998–1999): 213–14. The Tsal clan was also known by the variant spelling “Tsal.” In Baklinskoye, northeast of Cherson, a Greek inscription in a limestone Byzantine burial vault dating to the second half of the eighth century said that a man named Tsal had erected the vault in remembrance of Fedor and Fedor’s wife (Noonan, “The Khazar-Byzantine World,” 213). According to Noonan (214), the Tsal of the inscription was a local Khazar ruler. One limestone block in the vault had a picture of a horse, and another block had a Turkic tamga. The burial was overall of a Christian nature. Three wooden caskets found at the site contained various jewelry, a vessel, a silver belt buckle, and gray clay jugs. There was additionally a flat, circular limestone disc that served as a pendant. This disc had what appear to be Turkic runes, which were partially erased. Baranov thought the Turkic marks on the disc that Fedor and Fedor’s wife had owned were of a pagan nature and had served as magical talismans (see Igor’ A. Baranov, *Tavrika v epokhu rannego srednevekov’ya (saltovo-mayatskaya kul’tura)* [Kiev: Naukova dumka, 1990], 130). If so, they had once been pagans, but after converting to Christianity they tried to erase the marks while still keeping the object in their possession.
45. Huxley, “Byzantinochazarika,” 82.
46. Herman Rosenthal, “Chazars,” in *The Jewish Encyclopedia* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1901–1906), 4:6; Heinrich H. Graetz, *History of the Jews* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1896), 3:254.
47. Dunlop, “The Khazars,” 353. According to al-Garnati, Khazars, Oghuz, Bulgars, and Suvars lived in the city of Saqsin around the twelfth century. Svetlana Pletnyova stated that the population of Saqsin consisted of Khazars, Jews, Oghuz, Khwarizmians, and Cumans at the beginning of the thirteenth century (see Svetlana Pletnyova, “The Polovtsy,” in *Peoples That Vanished*, ed. Pavel I. Puchkov, trans. Ye. Voronov [Moscow: Nauka, 1989], 31). A Rus’ian chronicle recorded that the residents of Saqsin were forced to flee from Mongol invaders in 1229 and that they arrived in Volga Bulgharia.

48. This view was also adopted by such scholars as Julius Brutzkus and Itzhak Ben-Zvi. On May 31, 1223, just one year prior to the final conquest of Khazaria, Chinggis Khan's Mongol warriors defeated the Rus' and the Cumans at the River Kalka. Brutzkus claimed that the Jewish Khazar tribe Endzher ruled over Daghestan separately from the other Khazars and that only this Endzher-ruled kingdom, rather than Khazaria as a whole, survived until the thirteenth century. Ben-Zvi claimed that after the Mongols conquered Khazaria, the Jews from Khazaria fled to Crimea, Daghestan, and the city of Derbent (see Itzhak Ben-Zvi, *The Exiled and the Redeemed*, trans. Isaac A. Abbady [Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1961], 58).

49. Menashe Goldelman, "Khazariya," in *Kratkaya Yevreyskaya Entsiklopediya* (Jerusalem, 1999), 9:537.

50. Charles King, *The Black Sea* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 85.

51. Howard La Fay, *The Vikings* (Washington, DC: National Geographic Society, 1972), 42.

52. Golden, *Khazar Studies*, 1:16.

53. Douglas M. Dunlop, *The History of the Jewish Khazars* (New York: Schocken, 1967), 234.

54. Vasiliev, *The Goths in the Crimea*, 115–16.

55. Peter B. Golden, "Khazaria and Judaism," *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 3 (1983): 146.

56. Golden, *Khazar Studies*, 1:19.

57. Peter B. Golden, "Khazars," in *Turkish-Jewish Encounters*, ed. Mehmet Tütüncü (Haarlem, Netherlands: SOTA, 2001), 41.

58. Roman K. Kovalev, "Pechenegs," in *Encyclopedia of Russian History*, ed. James R. Millar (New York: Macmillan, 2004), 3:1156.



## *Chapter Nine*

# **The Diaspora of the Khazars**

*There are many indications of a continued presence of Khazars in eastern Europe and other parts of the world. The Khazars settled in Hungary, Transylvania, Ukraine, the Byzantine Empire, Spain, southern Russia, the northern Caucasus, Azerbaijan, Egypt, and possibly also in the Middle East, Bulgaria, Lithuania, and other places. Some intermarried with other Jewish communities, while others merged with Muslim and Christian populations.*

### **KHAZARS IN HUNGARY**

Hungary was settled by Jews as early as Roman times, when it was known as Pannonia. The ancient Jews of Pannonia spoke and wrote in Greek and Latin.<sup>1</sup> It is not certain whether these Pannonian Jews have any connection with the Hungarian Jews of later times. Raphael Patai (1910–1996) argued that it was from the mixture of the early Pannonian Jews with the Kabars and Khazar Jews that the medieval Hungarian Jewish population derived its origins.<sup>2</sup>

During their westward migrations, the Hungarians came into extensive contact with Khazars, and some of the Khazars permanently settled in Hungary. Khazars were among the soldiers who protected Hungary's frontier in the tenth century. The existence of Khazar settlements in Hungary has been confirmed by topographic and documentary evidence.

In 896, the Magyars conquered the land of Hungary under the leadership of Árpád. The land that they acquired had previously been inhabited and ruled by Avars, Bulgars, Slovenians, Moravians, and Croatians. A new confederation, called On-Ogur (“Ten Arrows”), was formed from the tribes that now resided in Hungary, including seven Magyar tribes and one or three Kabar



tribes. According to Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, the seven Magyar tribes were called Jenő, Kér, Keszi, Tarján, Kürtgyarmat, Megyer, and Nyék,<sup>3</sup> although Kürtgyarmat was previously divided into two separate tribes called Kürt and Gyarmat.

The Kabars, a dissident branch of the Khazars, formed the major part of the Khazar population in Hungary. The word *Kabar* probably means either “rebel” or “ethnic mix-up.” The Kabar horde migrated westward into Hungary around the year 895 as a consequence of revolts and rebellions that had occurred around the years 862 and 881. Some scholars suggest that the Kabars’ uprising against the Khazars was motivated by the pro-Judaism policies of King Obadiah, but there is no conclusive evidence to support this claim, and the actual reason for the uprising remains a mystery.

One unanswered question in scholarship concerns whether the Kabars comprised more ethnic groups than just Khazars. Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus stated that they were “of the Khazars’ own race,” without referring to any other tribal components. The presence in early Hungary of many ethnic groups is an established fact. Hungarian tribes other than the Magyars and Khazars included the Barszil (Bercels), Eskil, Székely (possible descendants of the Eskil), Oszlár (Varsány), Kalizes (Khwarizmians), Suvars, and still others, including Slavic remnants. The Székely, in turn, apparently consisted of subtribes named Berény, Örs, and Ladány. The Suvars and Eskil were Bulgar Turkic peoples, while the Oszlár were an Alanic people, and their alternate name “Varsány” is of Alan origin. Like the Khazars, many of the Oszlár also served in the Hungarian army during the tenth century. “Kaliz” is the Hungarian name for the Khwarizmians, a people of Turkic or Iranian origin, who were called Khalisioi by the Greeks, and their presence in Hungary around 1154 was noted by the twelfth-century Byzantine writer Ioannes Kinnamos.<sup>4</sup> Many Hungarian researchers, among them István Fodor, István Herényi, and Sándor Tóth, speculated that if there were multiple Kabar groups in Hungary (as opposed to just one, the Khazars) many of the aforementioned tribes were probably part of them.<sup>5</sup> Additional steppe peoples, the Pechenegs and Cumans, were settled in Hungary during the thirteenth century, adding further to the mix.

It has been suggested that one of the Kabar clans that settled between the Danube and the Tisza rivers professed Judaism.<sup>6</sup> While plausible, since many and perhaps most Khazars were already Jewish by this time, in the absence of real evidence this remains speculation.

Many of the Kabars settled between the Tisza and Szamos rivers in eastern Hungary.<sup>7</sup> The chronicler Anonymus, the notary for Hungarian King Béla III (reigned 1172–1196), wrote in his *Gesta Hungarorum* (circa 1200) about the people called “Cozar” who lived in Hungary:

The men of chief Marót might have formerly occupied the land towards Erdély, between the river Tisza and the forest of Igfon [in Bihar County], from the river Mures up to the river Szamos. The grandson of Marót was named by the Hungarians Menmarót, and he was friendly with many people called Cozar.<sup>8</sup>

Morut (spelled “Marót” in Magyar) (born circa 874) served as the leader of the Kabars of Bihar and conquered the Tisza and Szamos valleys. Morut was apparently himself a member of the Khazar-Kabar tribe, and his grandson Menumorut (spelled “Menmarót” in Magyar) likewise served as a Khazar-Kabar ruler in eastern Hungary.<sup>9</sup> As the duke (el-teber) of Bihar, Menumorut ruled over the Khazars who inhabited the area from the Transylvanian Alps to Meszes Kapu (“Limestone Gate”) along the Szamos River. Árpád sent ambassadors to Duke Menumorut at his headquarters in western Transylvania to demand that his lands be transferred to his authority. After a period of resistance, Menumorut submitted to the authority of the Magyars and had his daughters marry Magyar princes. For example, one of Menumorut’s daughters married Árpád’s son Zoltán.<sup>10</sup>

The Kabars were active participants in the cultural, military, and economic life of Hungary. A significant fact attesting to continued Magyar-Kabar relations is the statement of Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus that the Magyars and Khazars learned each other’s languages, such that the Khazar language was spoken in Hungary until at least the middle of the tenth century.<sup>11</sup>

The importance of the Kabars to the Hungarian military system is evident from the fact that they were for some time the most recent tribe to join the On-Ogur confederation, so it was they (and not one of the seven Magyar tribes) who served on the front lines of battle, in accordance with established custom.<sup>12</sup>

The Magyars invaded Germany from the east in 954. In 955, Lél, a Magyar prince who ruled over the Kabars of Nyitra, fought in this western campaign.<sup>13</sup> Lél allied with the Magyar chiefs Bulcsú and Súr. All three chiefs were defeated by the Germans near Augsburg (in what is today southern Germany) at the Lechfeld in the Battle of Augsburg, which took place on August 10, 955. Some of the Magyar warriors drowned in the Lech River. The victors over the Magyars in this battle were the German king Otto I (reigned 936–973) and his ally Duke Conrad. The Germans relentlessly pursued the Magyars after their defeat. The Bavarian prince Henry I captured and hanged Lél and the other two chiefs at Regensburg.

Alexander Vasiliev claimed that the Khazarian population in Hungary further increased in size when the Hungarian Duke Taksony (reigned 955–970) invited Khazar Jews to settle in his realm.<sup>14</sup> I have not located a source document that would prove this claim. As the son of Zoltán and Zoltán’s Khazar

wife (Menumorut's daughter), Taksony was partly a Khazar-Kabar himself. According to Anonymus, Taksony also invited many Muslims from Volga Bulgaria to settle in Hungary.

Several other early Magyar rulers had some Khazarian ancestry. For instance, the kende Kurszán (died 904) was descended in part from Khazars, since his ancestor Levéd had married a high-ranking Khazar woman from the nobility<sup>15</sup> (see chapter 7).

There are other traces of the Khazars' residence in Hungary. Hungarian scholars have systematically analyzed a variety of place-names in Hungary that seem to derive from *Khazar*. It is believed that places named "Kazár," "Kozár," "Kozárd," "Kozárvár," and so on were named after the Khazars.<sup>16</sup> Kazár village, located about fifty-three miles northeast of Budapest in Nógrád County in northern Hungary, was honored with its own postage stamp by the Hungarian government in 1953. The stamp depicts a woman wearing the traditional village dress. There were four towns named "Kozár" in Hungary, one of which was located near a tributary of the Zagyva River. The town of Kozárd was located northeast of Szirák and west of Pásztó, in Nógrád County. There was another Kozár or Kozárd in Szatmár County, south of Nagyká (in the northeastern corner of Hungary), in the same area as Anonymus said Kabars lived. A "possessio Kozar" was given to the Kaplony tribe in 1335. A "Khazar castle" (Kozárvár) was located in Szolnok-Doboka County in east-central Hungary. Khazar settlements also existed in southern parts of Hungary (Baranya County and Tolna County), including Rác-Kozár, Nagy-Kozár, and Kis-Kozár. Rác-Kozár is a small village in southwestern Hungary also known as Egyházas-Kozár, where *egyház* is Hungarian for "church."

Among documents indicating the presence of Khazar people in Hungary is one dated 1337 that contains the Latin phrase "populi Kaza[r]." There is also a document from 1279 that makes reference to a place called "Chazarental" ("Valley of the Khazars").<sup>17</sup>

There was a Hungarian family named Kozárvári that flourished from the tenth through fourteenth centuries, and it is possible that they were Khazar in origin.<sup>18</sup> They could have been a noble Khazar family who named themselves after the toponym "Kozárvár."

A silver ring found in a cemetery in Ellend, near Pécs in southwestern Hungary and not far from the villages of Nagykozár and Kiskozár, was believed by some scholars to be of Khazar-Kabar origin.<sup>19</sup> The ring dates back to the latter half of the eleventh century and has thirteen Hebrew-like letters engraved on it as ornamentation. It was found next to a woman's skeleton. Since Kozár was the name of a village in Baranya County in the Danube valley of southwestern Hungary—as noted in a religious document of the fourteenth century—and

since Nagykozár and Kiskozár are within close proximity to Ellend's cemetery, Attila Kiss postulated that Khazar women from Khazarian villages may have moved into Ellend.<sup>20</sup> However, Nora Berend questioned this hypothesis, noting that the ring's "Hebrew" letters do not spell out any real words in the Hebrew language, they appear to have been used only for ornamentation, and they are mixed with many non-Hebrew letters and symbols.<sup>21</sup>

Beginning in 1972, a large number of untypical graves were discovered near the village of Chelarevo (formerly called Dunacséb), close to the city of Novi Sad, in the Vojvodina district of present-day northern Serbia, which was part of old Hungary. A controversy continues over whether this graveyard was the place of rest for Jewish Khazars. The site displayed a curious mix of shamanist and Jewish practices. Hundreds of graves included items typical of Avar<sup>22</sup> burials, including horse skeletons, decorated horse harnesses, armor, jewelry, and yellow ceramics.<sup>23</sup> The graves holding Avar materials contained skeletons with Mongolian features.<sup>24</sup> However, Jewish motifs were found on at least 70 of the brick fragments excavated from other graves, out of a total of at least 450 brick fragments. The Jewish symbols on the fragments include menorahs, shofars, *etrogs*, *lulavs*, candlesnuffers, and ash collectors.<sup>25</sup> One of the fragments, which was placed over the grave of Yehudah, has a Hebrew inscription that reads "Yehudah, oh!"<sup>26</sup> A small six-pointed star identical to the Star of David was inscribed on another fragment.<sup>27</sup> Some fragments contain the Hebrew inscriptions "Jerusalem" and "Israel," while still other Hebrew inscriptions are unreadable.<sup>28</sup> In accordance with Jewish tradition, the hundreds of graves marked by brick fragments lacked any burial objects. While the Chelarevo graveyard had some sections where distinct groupings of Jewish or pagan graves could be discerned, there were some areas where the Jewish and pagan graves intermingled. Near the graveyard was a large settlement which contained a goldsmith's workshop and a couple of brick fragments with carved images of menorahs. These findings led the archaeologists Radovan Bunardžić and S. Živanović to conclude that a Judaized Mongolian people lived near the graveyard.

Bunardžić considered the Chelarevo skeletons to be those of Avars, and he estimated that they date from the late eighth century to the early ninth century. The linguist Paul Wexler adopted the viewpoint that the graves held the remains of Avars.<sup>29</sup> However, carbon-14 dating of bone samples from the double burial 244–244A suggests that they date back to the year 969 ± 66 years.<sup>30</sup> István Erdélyi therefore conjectured that the burials may be those of the Khazarian Kabars who settled in the Carpathian Basin in the late 890s and who may have retained their Jewish beliefs.<sup>31</sup> By this time, the Avar Kaganate was long gone, having been conquered at the end of the eighth century and beginning of the ninth by the Franks under Emperor Charlemagne and King

Pepin,<sup>32</sup> after which the Avar kagans became Frankish clients with limited autonomy. In the decades that followed, most of the Avar people integrated with their Slavic neighbors.<sup>33</sup> Avars were quarreling with the Slavs of the Danube in the year 811, according to *Annales regni Francorum*. The Avar kagan and tudun as well as the opposing Slavic leaders arrived in the Frankish court to explain the situation, and the Franks soon sent an expedition into Pannonia to try to end the dispute. After the 810s, the Avars began to disappear from historical documentation, making remaining appearances in 822<sup>34</sup> and 870.<sup>35</sup> According to András Róna-Tas, Avar remnants, bilingual in Slavic and Turkic, survived to meet the Magyar conquerors at the end of the ninth century.<sup>36</sup> Intermarriage might explain why the skulls and burial objects reportedly are distinguishable from other Avar burials. Perhaps some of the burials at Chelarevo are those of the children and grandchildren of pagan Kabars who married Avars, while some of the others may be those of Jewish Kabars who had not intermarried. However, the proposition that many Avars ended up in Chelarevo is not in harmony with the evidence that Charlemagne resettled the Avar people on the far eastern edge of Austria near the Rába and Danube rivers in 805, taking them far from their existing homeland where life had become too dangerous for them, due to the attacks of Slavs.<sup>37</sup>

The ultimate fate of the Khazars in Hungary has been much disputed among scholars. Sándor Tóth asserted that the Kabars in Hungary eventually abandoned Judaism and adopted Christianity, and furthermore that they adopted the Magyar language in place of Khazar.<sup>38</sup> The theory that the Jewish Khazars in Hungary were absorbed by the Christian population surrounding them was shared by Péter Ujvári and Nathan Ausubel.<sup>39</sup> Thus, according to this view, the Kabars and the Magyars eventually assimilated and became one people, while modern Hungarian Jews trace their origins solely or primarily to immigrants from central Europe who came to Hungary in the Middle Ages and had Hebrew and German names. Certain family names in Hungary—Örsúr, Aba, and Bors—may be Kabar in origin.<sup>40</sup>

The alternative view is that the Khazars remained Jews for many centuries. It appears that Jews who retained their Khazar identity still lived in Hungary as late as the fourteenth century. According to Douglas Dunlop,

Even as late as 1309 a Council of the Hungarian clergy at Pressburg forbade Catholics to intermarry with those people described as Khazars, and their decision received papal confirmation in 1346.<sup>41</sup>

By extension, some researchers believe that modern Ashkenazic Jews from Hungary descend significantly, perhaps even primarily, from the Khazars. For instance, Monroe Rosenthal and Isaac Mozeson claimed that

the most strongly Khazar of the Jews are undoubtedly the Hungarian Jews, descendants of the last Khazars who fled into Hungary about 1200–1300, where they were received by their former vassals, the Magyar kings. The Hungarian Jews are definitely a fusion of Semitic German Jews and the Turkic Khazars with some Sephardic immigrants who came to Hungary by way of Italy in the 1500's escaping the Spanish Inquisition.<sup>42</sup>

However, specific proofs that modern Hungarian Jews are even partially Khazarian are lacking.

### **KHAZARS IN TRANSYLVANIA (ROMANIA)**

The history of Transylvania is intertwined with that of Hungary. Towns named Kozárvár (“Khazar Castle”) and Kozárd were located between the rivers Mures (Maros) and Szamos in western Romania, and some Hungarian historians believe that these were founded by Khazars.<sup>43</sup>

An old Romanian legend states that Jewish warriors from southern Russia invaded and settled in Wallachia and Moldova.<sup>44</sup>

The Jews of the Transylvanian town of Sfântu Gheorghe (which was part of the Kingdom of Hungary and was known as Sepsiszentgyörgy until World War I) have a tradition that they descend from white Turkic Jews from the east whose nation was conquered by the Rus'.<sup>45</sup> According to this tradition, families of Jewish Turkic merchants and soldiers settled in Sfântu Gheorghe and began to engage in agriculture. In 1360, King Lajos I of Hungary ordered the expulsion of Jews from his territories, yet the Jews in this town were listed as “Hungarians” for the census and were spared. These Turkic Jews intermarried with a few Hungarians and Romanians but remained a cohesive community for centuries.

Some scholars have advanced the claim that the Székely people descend from the Khazars and formed a portion of the Kabar nexus. Many of the Székely live in the city of Cluj and small farming villages in the upper valleys of the Mures and Olt Rivers in eastern Transylvania. They follow Unitarian Christianity and speak a Hungarian dialect.

Centuries ago, the Hungarian dialect of the Székely people was written using a Turkic runic alphabet of thirty-two characters, along with a few additional variant characters.<sup>46</sup> The Székely script was written from right to left. The runes remained in use until the eighteenth century. The alleged similarity between the Khazar and Székely runes<sup>47</sup> led Lajos Ligeti and Gyula Németh to conclude that the alphabet originated in the Khazar territory.<sup>48</sup> It further led some scholars to assume that the Székely people themselves came

from the Khazar Empire. Edward Rockstein, an expert on the Székely runes, dismissed legends about the Székelys' descent from Huns and Avars and believed that they may indeed be of Khazar origin. According to László Makkai, "Byzantine sources, as well as local tradition, identify the Székelys as the 'kabars' who had revolted against the Khazars."<sup>49</sup> The Székely functioned as border guards on the eastern Hungarian frontier in Transylvania.

The thirteenth-century chronicler Simon de Kéza had claimed that the Székely people descended from Huns who lived in mountainous lands near Pannonia prior to the conquest of the adjacent Pannonian plain by the Magyars.<sup>50</sup> But according to András Róna-Tas, there is no conclusive evidence in favor of a non-Magyar origin for the Székely, such as a Khazar or Hunnic origin, noting that the Székely language is mainly based on old Hungarian and has no Turkic origin.<sup>51</sup>

### KHAZARS IN MOLDOVA

In the 1920s, some Jews who lived in the small town of Kurilovich, near Kishinev, alleged that their families had lived in the area for at least five hundred years, and they also asserted that they were "Jewish Tartars."<sup>52</sup> Aside from this folklore, there is no evidence of a Khazarian presence in Moldova or Bessarabia, but such a presence is likely, given the aforementioned knowledge of Khazarian settlements further west in present-day Hungary and Transylvania.

### KHAZARS IN LITHUANIA AND BELARUS

Allegedly, documents contained in the Russian Judaica collections of Baron David Guenzburg (1857–1910) (7,225 volumes) and Baron Samuel Polyakov (1836–1888) (over 10,000 volumes) indicated that the Khazars founded a glass factory in Hrodna (Grodno) in the late ninth century or early tenth century.<sup>53</sup> If so, these documents would demonstrate that permanent Khazar settlements existed in the territory that is now western Belarus and that the Khazars helped to develop the glassmaking industry in the Slavic lands.<sup>54</sup> Benjamin Richler, the head of the Institute of Microfilms of Hebrew Manuscripts in Jerusalem, indicated that there is no trace of any documents of this nature, nor any such microfilms, in the Guenzburg collection as it now exists.<sup>55</sup> In August 2004, I contacted the staff of the Oriental Collections of the Russian State Library to inquire whether such documents are contained in the Polyakov collection, which they possess. Two weeks later, they relayed my

question to a specific staff member, who did not send a response. The lack of a response may indicate that there are no such texts in the collection or that they have not yet catalogued them.

It remains an open question whether the East Slavic-speaking Jews who resided in the Belarusian cities of Grodno and Brest during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries are descendants, at least in part, of Jewish Khazars, but this possibility appears likely since they had lived in those cities prior to the arrival of Jews from central Europe (see chapter 10 for details and discussion). Indeed, Peter Golden, one of the top modern experts on the Khazars, wrote, "It is very likely that Judaized Khazar elements, especially those that had acculturated to the cities, contributed to the subsequently Slavic-speaking Jewish communities of Kievan Rus'. These were ultimately absorbed by Yiddish-speaking Jews entering the Ukraine and Belorussia from Poland and Central Europe."<sup>56</sup>

## KHAZARS IN POLAND

Whether or not the Khazars settled in lands that now constitute Poland is a controversial question. No medieval documents exist that explicitly state that the Khazars settled in Poland. It may or may not be relevant that Polish chronicles from before the mid-thirteenth century disappeared during the Mongol invasion period.<sup>57</sup>

While many scholars have suggested a Khazar presence in Poland, they have never provided indisputable evidence, even in instances where the idea is presented as if it was an outright fact. The following statements, as with many others, are disappointingly not backed by any evidence provided by the authors. Françoise Godding-Ganshof declared, "Driven out of their country by the Cumans in the 12th century, part of the last Jewish Khazars settled in Poland."<sup>58</sup> Meyer Levin and Toby Kurzband wrote, "Poland received many Jews seeking to escape from the oppressions of the Crusades and the Black Death, as well as survivors of the Jewish kingdom of Khazaria."<sup>59</sup> Meyer Weinberg stated, "Poland was Christianized in 966, at a time when Jews already lived there. The first ones came from the Khazar state of Russia and Kievan Rus."<sup>60</sup> However, the following statement by Nathan Ausubel is actually consistent with what is now known about Jews of the Lithuanian Grand Duchy in the late Middle Ages in relation to East Slavic-speaking Jews mingling with German Jews, even though we still lack such evidence from Poland proper: "In time, these Khazar Jews blended with the other Jewish elements in Poland and ultimately lost their ethnic group identity."<sup>61</sup> In contrast to these other authors, Lloyd Gartner, by using the word *possible*, did not



make a declaration of certainty: "It is even possible that Jewish survivors of the Khazar kingdom near the Caspian Sea made their way to Poland after that kingdom's destruction during the thirteenth century Mongol invasions."<sup>62</sup>

In the early twentieth century, Itzhak Schipper (1884–1943), a Polish Jewish scholar, proposed that town names such as Kozari and Kozarzów in Poland were named after the Khazars, and therefore that they demarcated the settlements of the Khazars. Others of this nature in Poland, Ukraine, and Russia included Kozarzewek, Kozarze (in the Kraków region), Kozara (in the Lviv region), Kozarovich (located near Kiev), and Kozarka and Kozari (both found in Novgorod province). The town of Koganovo supposedly derived from *kagan*, the title of the supreme Khazar king. Place-names such as "Żydowska Wola," "Żydowo," and "Żydaticze" were said to derive from *Żid*, meaning "Jew." Most of these place-names were recorded in documents from the late fifteenth century and thereafter. It is difficult to confirm whether these places actually have Khazar origins, but it seems unlikely. Other researchers, notably the onomastician Moshe Altbauer and the historian Bernard Weinryb, have questioned the accuracy of Schipper's etymologies. Weinryb wondered whether toponyms with the root *Żid* may actually have referred to settlements of German Jews. Many of the other place-names actually derive from the Slavic words *kozar* (goat herder) and *koza* (goat).<sup>63</sup> Weinryb wrote, "The efforts by some historians and writers to find in certain Polish toponyms (place-names) some indication of former Khazar or Jewish-Khazar settlements were in vain. It has been proven that these names have nothing to do with Khazars or Khazar tribes."<sup>64</sup>

Another interesting, if offbeat, theory suggested that the Polish villages and graveyards called Kawyory and Kawiary are of Khazarian Kabar origin.<sup>65</sup> Kawiory was a village near Kraków, while Kawiary was a village near Sandomierz, and both villages had Jewish cemeteries. The word *Kawyory* soon acquired the second meaning of "Jewish cemetery." Some scholars noted its superficial resemblance to *Kavar*, but their attempts to prove that these villages were named after the Kabars were unsuccessful. In reality, *Kawiory* has no traceable link to the Kabars and may derive from either the Hebrew word *kevarim* (cemetery)<sup>66</sup> or the Aramaic word *qabra'* (grave).<sup>67</sup>

According to Schipper, the Khazar Jews in Poland were primarily farmers and craftsmen. Schipper's contention that these Khazars arrived in Poland was echoed by the Polish historians Kazimierz and Maria Piechotka:

In the same period there began an influx of Chazar Jews from the East. At first this was essentially a trade immigration, but towards the end of the 10th century, after the fall of the Chazar state, it assumed larger proportions. The immigrants of this period turned mainly to agriculture and handicrafts. These colonies or settlements occurred in the southern and eastern parts of the future Polish state.<sup>68</sup>

Hundreds of silver coins with Hebrew characters were minted in Poland in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries.<sup>69</sup> Some scholars claimed that these coins were released by Jews of Khazar origin. This intriguing theory is impossible to verify. Alfred Posselt claimed that a rich Jewish banker of the Lublin district named Abraham ben Joseph ha-Nasi (“prince”), who lived circa 1300 and had his name inscribed on some Polish coins, was a Khazar.<sup>70</sup> This, too, cannot be demonstrated.

There is a mysterious document from the Cairo Genizah, a copy of a text owned by a certain Rabbi Nissim which had been authored by Rabbi Menahem ben Elijah, that refers to a supposed messianic movement during the year 1096 originating from “al-Kazariyah” around the time of the First Crusade.<sup>71</sup> The relevant passage pertaining to the Khazars has been translated by Adolph Neubauer as follows:

And all the congregations were agitated and returned to the Lord with fastings and alms. And so from the region of Khazaria there went, as they said, 17 congregations to the “wilderness of the nations,” and we know not if they met with the tribes or not.<sup>72</sup>

The translation by Joshua Starr is slightly different:

All the congregations have been stirred, and have repented before God with fasting and almsgiving, . . . those from Khazaria. As they said, 17 communities went out to the wilderness of the Gentiles, but we do not know whether they have met with the tribes or not.<sup>73</sup>

Starr thought that “al-Kazariyah” “undoubtedly denotes the Crimea, termed *Gazaria* in Genoese documents.”<sup>74</sup> However, was its use here really a reference to ethnic Khazarian Jews, or even to Jews at all? Starr argued that the document may actually be an account about Christians—not Jews—who traveled to the Middle East to reclaim Jerusalem from the Muslims in this year, which is known to have been the start of the First Crusade, artificially altered to provide Jewish flavor.<sup>75</sup>

Rabbi Menahem’s account also refers to Ashkenazim who supposedly encountered “the mountains of darkness” where there lived “a nation with innumerable tents, and we did not recognize their language.”<sup>76</sup> While the Khazars indeed had lived in tents, there is no reason to believe they are referenced in this section of the account either. Even if Khazars were meant, these tent dwellers are portrayed as an alien people that, according to the document, asked the Ashkenazim to continue on their journey without them.

As for whether a group of Ashkenazic Jews really traveled from Germany on a long journey toward the Mediterranean in 1096 at the beginning of the Crusades, Starr, following Jacob Mann, was skeptical that they had actually

done so, writing that “it is inconceivable that a band of Jews should have come through Central Europe at this time, and have lived to tell the tale.”<sup>77</sup>

Unfortunately, Rabbi Menahem’s account, if relevant to a Khazarian migration (which, as we have seen, is doubtful), did not specify the exact location of the “wilderness of the nations.” Schipper suggested that perhaps some members of these seventeen communities of Khazar Jews settled in Poland. However, there is no evidence to sustain this belief.

The kaftans traditionally worn by Polish Jews, perhaps resembling the “full coat” worn by the Khazars (see chapter 4), have sometimes been presented as evidence of their Khazar origin. However, the Ashkenazic type of kaftan was copied from Polish Christian nobles, rather than directly from a Turkic or other steppe tribe. Similarly, it is far fetched to assume that Ashkenazic fur hats (*streimels*) were derived from a style worn by the Khazars.

Some researchers have proposed that the wooden synagogues of early medieval Poland were designed according to a Turkic model from Khazaria. Nathan Ausubel commented,

There are many theories about the origins and the architectural influences that entered into their building. . . . A third and more plausible conjecture is that the Middle Eastern refugees from the Jewish kingdom of Khazaria introduced them during the Middle Ages when they settled en masse in Poland. The Asiatic characteristics are obvious in the wooden synagogues. Byzantine elements are artfully mingled with Mongolian. The roofs, pagoda style, arranged one upon another and surmounted by vaulted ceilings and cupolas, sometimes create the illusion that one is in central Asia rather than Poland.<sup>78</sup>

However, this theory has no basis in fact, in part because of chronological considerations, but also because of the results of architectural comparisons within Poland. Most of the Polish synagogues of the sixteenth through nineteenth centuries, including the wooden ones, were actually modeled upon surrounding secular and church buildings in Poland, both in structural form and decoratively.<sup>79</sup>

### KHAZARS IN KIEVAN RUS’ (UKRAINE)

The Khazars lived in Ukraine beginning with the westward expansion of the Khazar kaganate into the Dnieper valley. By the early tenth century, a substantial community of Jews, possibly Khazarian, lived in the city of Kiev, as indicated by the *Kievan Letter* (see chapter 6). It appears that Khazars continued to live in Kiev after it was taken over by the Rus’. However, the contention or suggestion that Grand Prince Svyatopolk II of Kiev (reigned

1093–1113) invited additional Jews from Khazaria to settle in Kiev<sup>80</sup> is not based on real facts but instead is merely a conjecture based on a misinterpretation of a source text, as Alexander Pereswetoff-Morath has shown.<sup>81</sup>

During the tenth and eleventh centuries, workshops in the Kiev area were producing glass beads, bracelets, and other jewelry, and Samuel Kurinsky was of the opinion that Khazar Jews were probably the operators of these workshops.<sup>82</sup> Glass beads from the seventh or eighth century, found in the Slavic village of Khodosovka, ten miles south of Kiev, were like those produced by the Saltovo-Mayaki culture of Khazaria.<sup>83</sup>

According to the *Russian Primary Chronicle*, a Khazar Jewish delegation was invited to the court of Prince Vladimir in Kiev to discuss the tenets of Judaism, since Vladimir was deciding on a new religion to replace his former paganism. The *Chronicle* reported that in 986, after the prince had rejected the Islam of the Bulgars and the Catholicism of the Germans, he met a group of Khazar Jews (*zhidove kozarsti*).<sup>84</sup> The Jews said that they were aware of the attempts of the Bulgars and Germans to proselytize him. They explained to Vladimir that they believed in “the one God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob” and that they adhered to Judaism, which required circumcision, observance of the Sabbath, and abstinence from pork and hare meat. Then the Khazar Jews allegedly said that their native land was Jerusalem and that they were part of the dispersion of the Judeans. According to the story, Vladimir rejected Judaism because it was the faith of a stateless and exiled people, and he did not wish to bring a similarly bad fate to his own people. After further investigation, during which Judaism was no longer considered as an option, Vladimir chose to be baptized (circa 988) into Greek Orthodox Christianity, ushering in an era of Byzantine-inspired culture in Kievan Rus’.

Historians have wide-ranging opinions on the historicity of the Vladimir conversion episode as given in the *Chronicle*. Some historians, wrote Petro Tolochko, have “unreserved acceptance of the veracity of the accounts,” while others have an “absolute denial of them, explaining them as pious fiction.”<sup>85</sup> Peter Golden thought that the recorded religious discussions were probably legendary in nature.<sup>86</sup> One factor ruling against the total historicity of the section on the Jewish delegation is that Jerusalem was in Vladimir’s time under the rule of Muslims, whereas the *Chronicle* describes it as being under Christian rule at that time, when in reality the Christian Crusaders took the city only in 1099—more than a century later. But Tolochko wrote that this one inconsistency does not necessarily invalidate the rest of the story but only indicates that this particular portion as it survives was an anachronistic fourteenth-century editing of the original (now lost) twelfth-century text.<sup>87</sup> As for his own view, Tolochko explained that economic and political relationships with neighboring states were important factors for Vladimir to consider, and

that it could not have been a purely religious decision.<sup>88</sup> With Khazaria having been nearly destroyed by his predecessor Svyatoslav, and with most Jews around the world living under the rule of other peoples in his day, Judaism was probably never a real option that he would have explored. On the other hand, Tolochko did not dismiss a religious component to the decision-making process.

That Vladimir would have sought a new religion is not only believable but documented in independent sources. The eleventh-century Arabic scholar al-Marwazi and the thirteenth-century Persian writer al-'Awfi wrote that Vladimir sent envoys to the shah of Khwarizm to learn about the advantages of Islam.<sup>89</sup> As a result, the shah sent preachers to the land of Rus' to teach Islam to the Rus' people according to these sources. From the start, however, Orthodox Christianity had an advantage in that the Cathedral of Saint Elias already existed in Kiev by the middle of the tenth century (see chapter 2), and hence Orthodox Christianity was practiced by some of the city's inhabitants even then. Moreover, the Byzantine Empire, unlike the rapidly declining Khazaria, was still in a position of strength and had enjoyed trading and military ties with Kievan Rus' at various times earlier in the century. Even more interesting, Vladimir's grandmother, Princess Olga, had converted to Orthodox Christianity in the 950s.

Vladimir also had other motivations behind his choice of Orthodox Christianity. When the Byzantine emperor Basil II (reigned 976–1025) faced a military threat from the Bulgars and a revolt in Anatolia, he requested the military support of Kievan Rus', and Vladimir agreed to provide it if he could marry Basil's sister, Anna, who was an Orthodox Christian. This marriage no doubt carried with it the assumption that Vladimir would himself convert to Anna's religion.

The *Russian Chronicle* stated that around the year 1106, during the reign of Grand Prince Svyatopolk II in Kievan Rus', a Khazar army commander from the Kievan realm named Ivan ("Ivanko Zakharyich, Kozarina"), with the assistance of two other Rus' generals and other men, raided against the Cumans.<sup>90</sup> Ivan's name may suggest that some of the Khazars had become Slavicized, culturally and/or linguistically.

According to *Polnoye sobranie russkikh letopisei*, an edition of the *Hypatian Chronicle*, "byelovyezhitsi" fled the Cumans in 1117 or 1118 and sought Grand Prince Vladimir Monomakh's permission to obtain refuge in Kievan Rus'. The researcher Hugo von Kutschera made the assumption that these "byelovyezhitsi" were Khazars and that they built a new town near Chernigov (Chernihiv) which they called Byelaya Vyezha ("White Tower"),<sup>91</sup> and Julius Brutzkus magnified this assumption by adding the claim that they were from Sarkel.<sup>92</sup> These two assumptions were later adopted by Douglas Dunlop<sup>93</sup> and

Arthur Koestler.<sup>94</sup> But as Alexander Pereswetoff-Morath pointed out, the source document nowhere identifies the refugees as Khazars, and they may actually have been East Slavs from Rus'-ruled Byelaya Vyezha (which was already a Slavic town with a non-Khazar culture by the eleventh century, according to Mikhail Artamonov's archaeological research).<sup>95</sup> While theoretically possible that these "byelovyezhitsi" founded a new Byelaya Vyezha, it is mere conjecture.

Brutzkus believed that the Crimean Jews (Krymchaks) and the Crimean Tatars were descendants of the Khazars. However, the Crimean Tatars are actually largely the descendants of the Golden Horde Mongols. The Krymchaks, meanwhile, are related to other Jewish populations (see chapter 10).

It is highly likely that modern Ukrainian Jews (and other Ashkenazic Jews) have at least some ancestry from the original Jews of Kievan Rus', including Khazars (see chapter 10 for a full discussion).

Oral traditions from the nineteenth century suggest that descendants of the Khazars continued to live in Ukraine until modern times. Many "Jewish Cossacks," Jews who served in the Czarist army, insisted that they had Khazar origins,<sup>96</sup> as did some Ashkenazic Jewish families from Kiev, Ladyzhin (a village along the Bug River), and Odessa (a major southern port city).<sup>97</sup>

## KHAZARS IN THE BYZANTINE EMPIRE

In the tenth century, some Khazars visited and inhabited the Byzantine Empire. The anonymous Khazarian author of the *Schechter Letter* wrote his masterwork while staying in the city of Constantinople (see chapter 6), which is today known as Istanbul and is located in the Republic of Turkey. A number of Khazars served as palace guards in Constantinople (see chapter 7) and were subjects of the Byzantine Empire.

Some Khazars in the Byzantine Empire preserved their Jewish faith into the eleventh century. These Khazars became integrated into the rabbinical community in Pera, a suburb of Constantinople, as indicated by a miracle tale in the *Life of Saint Zotikos* about the Khazarian Jewish wife of a Jewish man that was copied by Constantine Akropolites in the early fourteenth century. The tale followed a related tale about her brother, a man "from the race of the Khazars"<sup>98</sup> who found himself struck with leprosy and sought a cure by visiting the leprosarium (leper asylum) on the Galata Hill in Pera that had been founded by Saint Zotikos in the fourth century. The tale claims that he recovered from his leprosy as soon as he anointed himself with the magic lamp oil from above the tomb of Zotikos. In the second tale, his sister is described as both a follower of Judaism and the wife of a Jew, whereas her brother is described as a Christian.

After she contracted leprosy as well, her brother repeatedly urged her to convert to Christianity, but her soul was supposedly “infected by a disease more terrible than leprosy because she held the views of the Hebrews and clung to the pattern of the law, and rejected the law of grace and truth.”<sup>99</sup> Her husband encouraged her to keep her Jewish convictions. Her brother never gave up, visiting her often to speak the words of Christian holy texts and to try to convince her of Christianity’s alleged correctness. At long last, he became so desperate that he kidnapped her and locked her in the leprosarium. Over the course of several days, he indoctrinated her with the teachings of Christianity and eventually saw to it that she was baptized in holy water. Allegedly, her health was restored immediately.

These two tales about Byzantine Khazars, previously ignored by scholars, were uncovered by Timothy Miller, who realized that they (as well as a third, unrelated tale about a eunuch named John) are contained only in Akropolites’s version of the *Life of Saint Zotikos*, which he terms the *Akropolites Vita*, unlike the other two versions, the *Synaxarion Epitome* and the *Menologion Vita*. According to Miller’s analysis, Akropolites probably copied these extra tales from an eleventh-century version of the Zotikos legend that is no longer extant.<sup>100</sup> Miller also noted that the Jewish quarter in Pera was situated near the Church of Saint Panteleemon, a building mentioned in the third extra miracle tale, as well as the leprosarium.<sup>101</sup> Meanwhile, the Jews of Pera had previously lived within Constantinople proper but were relocated to this undesirable section of Pera during the eleventh century by the Byzantine government. Hence, the tales are consistent with known details about Pera, even though some of the details are religiously inspired and fictional. They were meant to illustrate Saint Zotikos’s alleged positive impact many centuries after his death using geographic, demographic, and religious contexts that a Byzantine Christian reader would understand and appreciate. For our purposes, the *Life of Saint Zotikos* provides reliable evidence that Khazarian Jews intermarried and lived with other mainstream Jews in the Byzantine Empire—the first such evidence from any Diaspora community. Khazars probably already lived among other Jews in Constantinople proper by the late tenth century.

Benjamin ben Jonah (better known as Benjamin of Tudela), a Jewish traveler from Tudela in the Navarre region of the Basque country, journeyed to parts of North Africa, Asia, and Europe between 1160 and 1173, and recorded his experiences in *Sefer Massa’oth*. Benjamin had the following to say about Constantinople’s trading relations:

All sorts of merchants come here from the land of Babylon, from the land of Shinar, from Persia, Media, and all the sovereignty of the land of Egypt, from

the land of Canaan, and the empire of Russia, from Hungaria, Patzinakia, Khazaria, and the land of Lombardy and Sepharad.<sup>102</sup>

It is unclear whether the traders from “Khazaria” were ethnic Khazars or merely residents of the Crimea, since “Khazaria” was retained as a term for the Crimean peninsula long after the end of Khazar rule (see chapter 8). The latter is probably intended.

### KHAZARS IN SPAIN

It is said that many royal Khazars emigrated to Spain in the eleventh century (see chapter 8). It is also possible that Khazar merchants arrived in Spanish port cities, since the Moorish rulers were tolerant of Jews.

In *Sefer ha-Qabbalah*, composed in 1161, Abraham ibn Daud stated that descendants of the Khazars were studying in Toledo (part of Andalusia) during his lifetime.<sup>103</sup> Ibn Daud added that these Khazars were rabbinical Jewish students. Perhaps these scholars came to Spain from Kievan Rus’.

Dunlop wondered whether the Khazars in Spain may have contributed information about their people to the Spanish Jews through oral testimonies, and he also entertained the notion that “Books of the Khazars” containing historical details about the Khazars might actually have been brought to Toledo.<sup>104</sup> Such oral and written statements, supplementing information that could be gleaned from the exchange of letters between Hasdai ibn Shaprut and King Joseph, then theoretically could have helped Yehudah ha-Levi compose the brief account of the Khazars that appears in two sections of his famous book *Sefer ha-Kuzari*, which contains a few details not found in the Hasdai-Joseph correspondence or in other known extant texts. Whether “Books of the Khazars” existed or not will probably remain a tantalizing mystery.

### KHAZARS IN AZERBAIJAN

The Khazars were among the Turkic settlers of Azerbaijan during the early medieval period.

After the Arab general Marwan ibn Muhammad defeated the Khazars in 737 (see chapter 7), he resettled some of the Khazars between the Samur River and Shabaran (the capital of Shirvan in the lower Lakz lands of the present-day Azerbaijani Republic).<sup>105</sup> For instance, a village named Khazri was established along the middle Samur, at a location south of the fortress of



Derbent and directly north of modern Azerbaijan. These Khazar settlers practiced Islam.

In 854, three hundred Muslim Khazar families left Khazaria and received assistance in resettling in Azerbaijan from Bugha al-Kabir (“Bugha the Elder”), a Turkic ally of the Abbasid Caliphate who served as the governor of Armenia and Azerbaijan.<sup>106</sup> This resettlement was recorded by al-Baladhuri in *Kitab al-Buldan* and by the *Georgian Chronicle*. According to the *Georgian Chronicle*, Bugha was himself a member of the Khazar tribe, whereas in *Kitab al-Awraq* by as-Suli, the more generic term “Turk” is applied to him.<sup>107</sup> Bugha founded a town for these Khazars which was named Shamkur (Samkur). The town was located along the Kura River.

The majority of Azeris can trace their ancestry back to Turks of Oghuz origin, rather than to Khazars. In fact, the Azeri language is closely related to the Turkish spoken in the Republic of Turkey. Nevertheless, it is interesting to speculate on the ultimate fate of the descendants of these Azerbaijani Khazars.

### KHAZARS IN THE NORTH CAUCASUS

A considerable number of Khazars settled in Derbent, a seaport city located in Daghestan, north of Azerbaijan. In 733 or 734, Maslama ibn ‘Abd-al-Malik built a “mosque of the Khazar” in one of the seven districts of Derbent, and it served the Khazar Muslims who were living in the city.<sup>108</sup> It is likely that some Khazar Jews fled to Derbent after the Rus’ conquered Attil. The *Georgian Chronicle* discussed an invasion of “Khazars of Derbant,” and the Persian poet Khaqani (circa 1106–1190) wrote about the defeat of an army from Derbent that consisted of Khazars, Alans, and Rus’ and had attempted to invade Shirvan.

A short passage in the *Tárik al-Bab* referred to a large migration of Khazars that occurred in 1064: “The remnants of the Khazars, consisting of 3,000 households, arrived at the town of Qahtan from the Khazar territory. They rebuilt it and settled in it.”<sup>109</sup> Qahtan is believed to have been located in the region of Qaytaq in Daghestan, north of Derbent, which is now inhabited by Kумыкs (Kumyks).<sup>110</sup>

Many of these Khazars probably assimilated with other Turkic tribes and assumed new identities after the collapse of their kaganate and their subsequent immigration.

The Kумыкs of the lowlands of Daghestan, between the Terek and the Samur rivers (including the city of Makhachkala), speak a Kipchak Turkic language. Some of them claim to be descendants of the Khazars and the Cumans.<sup>111</sup> They adopted Islam in the eleventh century, but they formerly be-

lieved in Tengri shamanism. Many scholars believe that the Kumyk town of Tarqu is located on the site of the Khazar city of Samandar (see chapter 2). The Kumyk language may contain Turkic Khazarian elements. Kumyk even has some words of Hebrew origin. For example, *qaghal* (meaning “matzoh,” “Passover,” and “noise”) comes from the Hebrew word *qahal* (Jewish community or gathering).<sup>112</sup> One wonders whether the word gained much currency among the Khazars.

Other possible candidates for Khazar ancestry are the Karachays and the Balkars. Both groups are Muslims who speak closely related Kipchak languages and live north of the Caucasus Mountains. According to Peter Golden, the Karachays and Balkars descend from Khazars, Bulgars, and Cumans.<sup>113</sup>

### KHAZARS IN RUSSIA

There may be evidence that the Khazars still lived in Tmutorokan during the eleventh century, though this evidence is not indisputable. The *Russian Chronicle* reported that Prince Mstislav of Tmutorokan was able to take control of Chernihiv in 1023 with the support of a so-called “Khazar” army that supposedly had the participation of both Khazars and Kasogs. The army attacked Yaroslav, the prince of Kiev (reigned 1019–1054). Mstislav was able to maintain his possession of the Chernihiv region until his death in 1036. The *Russian Chronicle* also told of a group of “Khazars” in Tmutorokan who imprisoned a certain Prince Oleg in 1079 and shipped him to Constantinople. However, Oleg returned in 1083 to kill these “Khazars.” Minorsky suggested that these “Khazars” might have actually been Cumans (Polovtsi).<sup>114</sup>

There were a few Jewish influences upon the Cumans. The sons of the Cuman prince Kobiak were given the Jewish names Isaac and Daniel.<sup>115</sup> Furthermore, the Cuman words *shabat* and *shabat kün* (meaning “Saturday”) are related to the Hebrew word *Shabbat* (meaning “Sabbath”).<sup>116</sup> These Jewish influences may have resulted from intermarriage between Khazars and Cumans in the mid-eleventh century, as Peter Golden has suggested.<sup>117</sup>

Peter Golden mentioned a cryptic reference to a possible Khazar living in or near Russia in the company of the Pechenegs: “Hungarian Latin sources mention a ‘princeps Bissenorum [= Hung. *Besenyő* = *Pečeneg* p.g.] nomine Khazar’. This may very well be a Khazar chieftain who remained in the steppe and took service with the Pečenegs.”<sup>118</sup>

Some researchers have unconvincingly contended that many Cossacks have Khazar origins. The controversial Russian historian Lev Gumilev proposed that the Brodniks, a distinctive people who lived in communities along the River Don and Azov Sea during the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries,

were descended from both Slavs and Khazars.<sup>119</sup> (The term “Brodnik” may mean “fisherman” or “rambler.”) The Brodniks were mentioned in four entries in Russian chronicles, under the years 1147, 1216, 1223, and 1353. According to Gumilev, they spoke East Slavic, practiced Orthodox Christianity, and supposedly had once been the neighbors of the “byelovyezhitsi” people (who, as noted earlier, evidently fled Byelaya Vyezha in about 1117 to escape from the Cumans). After the departure of the “byelovyezhitsi,” the Brodniks remained the sole power in their region and successfully defended their land against the Cumans. Gumilev often entertained the possibility that some modern Cossacks, in particular the Grebensk Cossacks (also known as Terek Cossacks, since some of them lived near the Terek River), may descend from the Brodniks. The concept of an ultimately Khazar origin for the Grebensk Cossacks was later endorsed by Cossack historian George Gubaroff.<sup>120</sup> On the other hand, an alternative theory articulated by Oleh Bubenok suggests that the Brodniks descended from the Alans rather than the Khazars. There is no evidence that many Cossacks practiced Judaism at any time. However, it is interesting to note that some practicing Jews, and also some former Jews who converted to Orthodox Christianity, became Cossacks during the early to mid-seventeenth century.<sup>121</sup>

One of the most famous medieval travelers’ accounts is *History of the Mongols* by Friar Joannes de Plano Carpini, which was compiled between 1245 and 1247. Two versions of the text exist. During the course of his journeys in Kievan Rus’ and central Asia during the 1240s, Friar Joannes encountered Khazars who observed Christianity. For example, he noted that in the city of Ornas, there lived many Christians, including Gazari and Alans.<sup>122</sup> The city of Ornas was governed by Muslims (“Saracens”) and was astride “a river which flows through Iankint and the land of the Bisermins [the kingdom of Khwarizm] and runs into the sea.” It seems that Ornas was located in central Asia. Macartney suggested that Ornas was an alternative name for the city of Gurganj. The prosperous city of Ornas was flooded when the Mongols dammed its river.

In another passage, Friar Joannes wrote that the Gazari were conquered by the Mongols.<sup>123</sup> Some of the Gazari lived south of Cumania, as did the Alans, Armenians, and Circassians, and according to Joannes, all of these peoples were Christians. These Gazari were probably descendants of Jewish Khazars who were forcibly baptized. Yet, at least one tribe in southern Russia remained Jewish; the “Brutakhi who are Jews” were also mentioned by Joannes as victims of the Mongol conquests. Friar Joannes noted that the Brutakhi shaved their heads and lived south of Cumania. Paul Wexler considered the Brutakhi to be Jewish missionaries who were active in the “Cuman lands” of the Black Sea and Caspian Sea regions during the thirteenth century.<sup>124</sup> Nev-

ertheless, the Brutakhi remain a people of mysterious origin since very little is known about them.

## KHAZARS IN KAZAKHSTAN

After the fall of their kingdom, some of the Khazars went east. As mentioned in chapter 8, a portion escaped to Siyah-Kuh on the Manghishlaq Peninsula. What happened to these Khazar refugees? Some Kazakh historians believe that a number of Khazars settled along the Syr Darya and that some of the tribes in the Younger Horde (Kerderi, Berish, and Sherkesh) of western Kazakhstan were of Khazarian origin.<sup>125</sup> According to this view, the Khazars of Syr Darya were called “Kidarites” and, later, “Kerderites.” Khazar origins have also been proposed for the Shekti tribe, which also was part of the Younger Horde.

What seems to have happened is that in the thirteenth century, the Turkic Khazars in Kazakhstan assimilated with other Turkic groups as well as with the Mongols and consequently lost their ethnic identity. However, there still remain distinctive groups of Kazakhs who may be their progeny. For example, there are some modern-day Kazakhs who are called “Sary-Kazak” (“Yellow Kazakh”) or “Kok-koz” (“Blue-eyes”) because they have red hair, blue eyes, and white skin. For instance, some members of the Tobikti tribe are blue eyed, and thousands of red-haired Kazakhs inhabit the western parts of Kazakhstan near the Caspian Sea. Thus, the Sary-Kazaks are possibly descendants of the Khazars or the Cumans.

## KHAZARS IN OTHER PARTS OF THE WORLD

Numerous Khazars immigrated or were transported as slaves to the Arabic regions of the Middle East, including Iraq and Egypt. Those who arrived there involuntarily were purchased in slave markets and were trained to become slave soldiers (*ghulams*) in the Abbasid Caliphate. Khazar soldiers served in an Abbasid army which fought the Byzantines circa 768.<sup>126</sup> Some of the Khazarian recruits were eventually promoted to become officers in the caliphate.

In 815, al-Mutasim (who became the Abbasid caliph in 833) purchased a young Khazar named Itakh al-Khazari to include in his private army and, later, serve as his cook.<sup>127</sup> Other Khazar slave soldiers purchased by Caliph al-Mutasim came to be stationed at the Iraqi city of Samarra, north of Baghdad, starting in 835.<sup>128</sup> Under al-Mutasim’s rule, Itakh had an illustrious career as a soldier, commander, and administrator.<sup>129</sup> In 838, Itakh led a group

of soldiers that helped the Arab military to take the Byzantine town of Amorion. He was made the governor of Yemen in 839 or 840 and served in that capacity until 844. He led soldiers to victory against a Kurdish rebel in 841. Itakh was appointed as the security police chief in Samarra, a post he remained in for a while after Caliph al-Mutasim's death in 842. He was given new responsibilities when Mutasim's successor, Caliph al-Wathiq (reigned 842–847), appointed him to become governor of Khorasan, Sind, and the districts near the Tigris River. Itakh briefly served, from 847 to 849, as the chamberlain of Caliph al-Mutawakkil (reigned 847–861), but in 849 he was jailed by the caliph and killed by being deprived of nourishment.

Bugha al-Kabir (died August 862), the founder of the town of Shamkur in Azerbaijan, appears to have been an ethnic Khazar. He and his sons, Musa, Muhammad, and Kayqalagh, were purchased by al-Mutasim. Bugha took orders from Caliph al-Mutawakkil and allied with Muhammad ibn Khalid, ruler of Derbent. In the early 850s, Bugha broke the established order in the south Caucasus by attacking the Georgians, Abkhazians, Alans, Sanars, and Khazars; by killing Armenian patricians as well as Ishaq ibn Ismail, the amir of Tiflis; and by exiling many other rulers from Transcaucasia to Iraq.<sup>130</sup> But, after his conquest over the Khazars in 851, he became friendly with his Khazarian brethren, which included his assistance for their resettlement, as noted earlier.<sup>131</sup> This troubled the Abbasid leadership, which instructed him to leave the Caucasus region and removed him from his post as governor of Armenia and Azerbaijan. Several Khazars participated in the assassination of Caliph al-Mutawakkil and his adviser Fath ibn Khaqan in December 861; these included Bugha's son Musa ibn Bugha (died 877) and Ötemish ibn Quterkin (died June 6, 863), a son of Bugha's sister.<sup>132</sup> Ötemish served as the vizier of Caliph al-Musta'in (reigned 862–866) during 862 and 863.<sup>133</sup> From 877 onward, Kayqalagh was a powerful figure among those in service to the Abbasid caliph.<sup>134</sup>

Ishaq ibn Kundajiq al-Khazari (died 891) served as a general in the caliphate during the wars between Caliph Mu'tamid (reigned 870–892) and the Tulunid governor of Egypt, Khumarawayh (ruled 884–896).<sup>135</sup> Muhammad, a son of Ishaq ibn Kundajiq al-Khazari, ruled Egypt and Syria from 868 to 905.<sup>136</sup>

Another Khazar, Sima al-Khazari, served as a soldier in the Abbasid Caliphate during the early tenth century.<sup>137</sup>

A Muslim Khazar, Abdullah ibn Bashtu al-Khazari, served as Volga Bulgar khan Almush's envoy to the Caliph Ja'far al-Muktadir and traveled from Baghdad to Bukhara with the diplomat Ahmad ibn Fadlan in the 920s. Muhammad ibn Ra'iq, a Muslim Khazar, served as *amir al-umara* (supreme commander) in the Abbasid Caliphate circa 936–942.<sup>138</sup>

A man named Takin ibn Abdullah, allegedly called “al-Khazari,” served as governor of Egypt in the early tenth century.<sup>139</sup> His supposed Khazar ancestry was disputed by Peter Golden, who suspected that Zeki Validi Togan and Douglas Dunlop had relied upon faulty evidence.<sup>140</sup>

Benjamin of Tudela, when describing Egypt during the second half of the twelfth century, wrote, “Alexandria is a commercial market for all nations. Merchants come thither from all the Christian kingdoms.” Among the places from which these merchants arrived were Croatia, England, France, India, Italy, Russia, Yemen, and “Khazaria.”<sup>141</sup> Benjamin did not give further indications of the identity of these “Khazarian” merchants. It is possible that the traders from “Khazaria” were Crimeans, and it is not clear whether or not they were Jews.

Habib Levy claimed that “Khazar Jews migrated to northern Iran to escape domestic unrest. The settling of Khazar Jews in the northern provinces of Iran made contact possible with the Jews of Isfahan—whose numbers at that time were estimated by Nasir Khusrow at fifteen thousand—and other Iranian cities with Jewish communities. A number of Khazars took up residence among the Jews of Isfahan.”<sup>142</sup> I am unaware of a source document that would demonstrate Levy’s claim.

Jewish Khazars may have been encountered by a prominent rabbi, Petakhiah ben Jacob, toward the end of his famous journey. Petakhiah was a German Jew, born in Regensburg (Ratisbon) and living in Prague, whose experiences were detailed in the travelogue *Sibbu ha-Olam* (“Journey around the World”) by Rabbi Judah the Pious bar Samuel in the late twelfth century. He began his travels in Bohemia in 1170 and returned to central Europe in 1187. During his seventeen-year journey, he passed through Poland, the city of Kiev and the Dnieper River, Crimea, Tartary (south Russia and the Caucasus), Armenia, and the Middle East and eastern Mediterranean.

Rabbi Petakhiah visited “the land of Kedar” around 1175 or 1180. Kedar apparently was the land east of the Dnieper River. Petakhiah observed that the inhabitants of Kedar had no ships but were skilled in archery and lived in steppe territories devoid of mountains. In his account, “Bnai Kedar” is the name employed for the Cumans (Kipchak Turks).<sup>143</sup> Petakhiah found only “heretics” (apparently Karaites) in the land of Kedar, because no Jews lived there.<sup>144</sup> These “heretics” did not have knowledge of the Talmud, and their prayers consisted exclusively of psalms. In fact, they were altogether unversed in rabbinical practices. On Sabbath day, they ate bread in the dark and stood still. After visiting Kedar, Rabbi Petakhiah traveled “at the extremity of the land of Khozaria” where seventeen Dnieper River tributaries existed. He passed between the Sea of Azov and the Caspian Sea and then proceeded to enter Armenia before encountering Muslims.

Koestler claimed that the “heretics” interviewed by Petakhiah were Khazars living north of the Crimea.<sup>145</sup> Koestler’s view is improbable, because there is no evidence that they were ethnic Khazars, and the rabbinical nature of Khazar Judaism weighs against it. It seems more likely that they were Karaites whose ancestors lived in the Byzantine Empire. Furthermore, “Kedar” does not necessarily refer to Khazaria, because it was probably a general term for nomads. In fact, the land of Kedar is considered to be separate from Khazaria in *Sibbu ha-Olam*: “And a day’s journey behind the land of Kedar extends a gulf [the Black Sea], intervening between the land of Kedar and the land of Khozaria.”<sup>146</sup> This distinction is also apparent by another statement in the travelogue: “Khozaria has a language of its own; Togarma has a language of its own (they pay tribute to the King of Greece); and Kedar has a language of its own.”<sup>147</sup>

In 1185, while in Baghdad, Rabbi Petakhiah met ambassadors from people inhabiting a northern land that he called “Meshech,” which extended up to “the Mountains of Darkness” and was located about ten days’ traveling distance from the equally vague “Magog.” The original text does not equate Meshech with Khazaria, despite editor Elkan Adler’s improper insertion of the word *Khozaria* in parentheses, without a question mark, following the word *Meshech* in this section of the translation of the text.<sup>148</sup> Dunlop cautioned, “It is by no means clear that the Khazars are meant, though both Meshech and Magog have Khazar associations.”<sup>149</sup> Here is the description of this unknown people’s religious conversion that is provided in *Sibbu ha-Olam*:

To the seven kings of Meshech an angel appeared in a dream, bidding them to give up their laws and statutes, and to embrace the law of Moses, son of Amram. If not, he threatened to lay waste their country. However, they delayed until the angel commenced to lay waste their country, when the kings of Meshech and all the inhabitants of their countries became proselytes, and they sent to the head of the academy a request that he would dispatch to them some disciples of the wise. Every disciple of the wise that is poor goes there to teach them the law and the Babylonian Talmud. From the land of Egypt the disciples go there to study.<sup>150</sup>

The reference to “Meshech” becoming converts to Judaism after their rulers were visited by an angel in the middle of the night is strikingly reminiscent of the story of King Bulan’s angel in Yehudah ha-Levi’s *Sefer ha-Kuzari* (see chapter 6). Indeed, it is hard to imagine a tribe other than the Khazars, or their neighbors the Alans, that could be meant by the passage. Moreover, we have already seen how many Khazars remained Jewish into the eleventh and twelfth centuries in various parts of Europe. However, in the absence of fur-

ther substantiation, the association of “Meshech” with Khazaria will remain only a hypothesis.

## NOTES

1. Alexander Scheiber, *Jewish Inscriptions in Hungary from the 3rd Century to 1686* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1983), 15, 21.

2. Raphael Patai, *The Jews of Hungary: History, Culture, Psychology* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1996), 29.

3. István Fodor, *In Search of a New Homeland*, trans. Helen Tarnoy (Gyoma, Hungary: Corvina, 1982), 235.

4. Kinnamos’s account, *Epitome rerum ab Ioanne et Alexio Comnenis gestarum*, has been the source of much confusion, since he wrote that some of the Khalisioi (Kalizes) who fought alongside Dalmatian (Croatian) soldiers against Byzantine Emperor Manuel I Comnenus adhered to “the laws of Moses, but not in their pure form.” (see Alexander Alexandrovich Vasiliev, *The Goths in the Crimea* [Cambridge, MA: The Mediaeval Academy of America, 1936], 99). Some scholars interpreted this to mean that many Kalizes in Hungary practiced Judaism. But in another section, Kinnamos made it clear that the Kalizes “profess the same religion as the Persians,” that is, Islam (see Nora Berend, *At the Gate of Christendom* [Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2001], 61). The Kaliz people originated in the Khwarizm-Khiva region of central Asia and later migrated to the Khazar Empire, particularly the region near the Caspian coastline. Medieval Arab and Byzantine authors remarked about the Kaliz people’s close connections to the Khazars. “Khvaliskoye” was an Old Russian term for the Caspian. Close connections between the Kalizes and the Khazars are also evident from the fact that the Rus’ called the merchant town of Khazaran “Khvalisy” (see chapter 2) and from some early Slavic sources that called the Khazars “Khwalisses” (see Zvi Ankori, *Karaites in Byzantium* [New York: Ams Press, 1968], 73). However, none of this shows that the Kalizes of Kinnamos’s account were ethnic Khazars or religiously Jewish. There is no real evidence that any Kalizes ever practiced Judaism, even during their time in Khazaria. The Muslim Kalizes lent their name to the Calizutu (Kaliz Road), a trading road connecting Szeged and Bátmonostor (see Berend, *At the Gate of Christendom*, 113).

5. For the claim that the possible names of the Kabar tribes were Varsány, Oszlár or Eszlar, Tárkány, Berény, Örs, Ladány, and Sag, see Sándor L. Tóth, “A nyolcadik törzs (Hogyan lett magyar a kabar?),” in *Száz rejtely a magyar történelemből*, ed. Ferenc Halmos (Budapest: Gesta, 1994), 16–17. István Herényi speculated that their names were Varsány, Kaliz, and Székely (or Eskil).

6. István Herényi, “A magyar törzsszövetség törzsei és törzsfői,” *Századok* 116, no. 1 (1982): 68, 70. Herényi claimed that Zsid, Zsida, and Zsidó—i.e., “Jew”—were the names of documented tribal fragments amongst the Khazars, but I have been unable to find documentary evidence to substantiate this claim, and he did not list his source(s) on this point.



7. László Makkai, “The Hungarians’ Prehistory, Their Conquest of Hungary, and Their Raids to the West in 955,” in *A History of Hungary*, ed. Peter F. Sugar (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 11; Douglas M. Dunlop, “The Khazars,” in *The Dark Ages: Jews in Christian Europe, 711–1096*, ed. Cecil Roth and I. H. Levine (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1966), 348.

8. It is possible that Anonymus was referring to goat herders, since that is the meaning of the word *kozar* in the Slavic languages (see Gyula Pauler and Sandor Szilágyi, *A magyar honfoglalás kútfoi* [Budapest: Nap, 1995], 408). On the other hand, Hansgerd Göckenjan suggested that *Cozar* was actually an ethnonym for the Khazars (see Hansgerd Göckenjan, *Hilfsvölker und Grenzwächter im mittelalterlichen Ungarn* [Wiesbaden, West Germany: Franz Steiner, 1972], 39). If so, Anonymus’s account would confirm other reports about the occupation of the northern and eastern sections of Hungary, plus lands in present-day Slovakia, by the Kabars, although the Khazars also settled in other parts of Hungary. Göckenjan indicated that Anonymus was familiar with the local tradition about Khazar settlements from residents of the upper Tisza. However, other scholars regard Anonymus as an unreliable source since he recorded oral traditions that could be legendary rather than factual.

9. Dunlop, “The Khazars,” 348. It has alternatively been suggested that “Menu-morut” is a Slavic name and that he and his grandfather were not Khazars as Dunlop and others have claimed.

10. Dunlop, “The Khazars,” 348.

11. Carlile A. Macartney, *The Magyars in the Ninth Century* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1930), 231.

12. András Róna-Tas, *Hungarians and Europe in the Early Middle Ages*, trans. Nicholas Bodoczky (Budapest: Central European University Press, 1999), 348.

13. György Györffy, *King Saint Stephen of Hungary*, trans. Peter Doherty (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 27.

14. Alexander A. Vasiliev, *The Goths in the Crimea* (Cambridge, MA: The Medieval Academy of America, 1936), 100.

15. György Györffy, *King Saint Stephen of Hungary*, 19.

16. Göckenjan, *Hilfsvölker und Grenzwächter im mittelalterlichen Ungarn*, 40–41.

17. Göckenjan, *Hilfsvölker und Grenzwächter im mittelalterlichen Ungarn*, 41.

18. Samuel A. Oppenheim, “Jew,” in *An Ethnohistorical Dictionary of the Russian and Soviet Empires*, ed. James S. Olson (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994), 314; Péter Ujvári, ed., *Magyar zsidó lexikon* (Budapest: Pallas, 1929), 510.

19. Scheiber, *Jewish Inscriptions in Hungary from the 3rd Century to 1686*, 75.

20. Attila Kiss, “11th Century Khazar Rings from Hungary with Hebrew Letters and Signs,” *Acta Archaeologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 22 (1970): 347. The Ellend cemetery also contained coins minted between 1000 and 1063 and other rings from the tenth–eleventh centuries. According to Kiss, the rings found at Ellend are unlike Roman-era inscriptions from Hungary (see Kiss, “11th Century Khazar Rings,” 344). Due to the difficulties in translating the rings, it is not clear whether they belonged to Pechenegs, Cumans, Khazars, or another tribe.

21. Berend, *At the Gate of Christendom*, 61.

22. The Avars were a Turko-Mongolian people who influenced European affairs in the sixth, seventh, and eighth centuries. They ruled a large multiethnic empire in central Europe, known as the Avar Kaganate.

23. István Erdélyi, "Kabari (Kavari) v Karpatskom Basseyne," *Sovietskaya Arkheologiya* 4 (1983): 174; Ante Soric et al., eds., *Jews in Yugoslavia: Muzejski prostor, Zagreb, Jezuitski trg 4*, trans. Mira Vlatkovic and Sonia Wild-Bicanic (Zagreb, Croatia: MGC, 1989), 28. Some of the horses were buried to the left of the deceased men, while others were buried to the right of them. There was, in addition, a separate burial for horses only.

24. Soric et al., eds., *Jews in Yugoslavia*, 28. The Khazars, on the other hand, appear to have been largely non-Mongolian in type, although some Mongolian types were among them (see chapter 1).

25. Soric et al., eds., *Jews in Yugoslavia*, 28; Scheiber, *Jewish Inscriptions in Hungary from the 3rd Century to 1686*, 55; Vsevolod L. Vikhnovich, "From the Jordan to the Dnieper," *Jewish Studies (Mada'e ha-Yahadut)* 31 (1991): 19.

26. Scheiber, *Jewish Inscriptions in Hungary from the 3rd Century to 1686*, 55–56.

27. Soric et al., eds., *Jews in Yugoslavia*, 28.

28. Soric et al., eds., *Jews in Yugoslavia*, 28.

29. Paul Wexler, *The Ashkenazic Jews* (Columbus, OH: Slavica, 1993), 195. See pp. 196–98 for an interesting discussion of various Balkan and Slavic words referring to Jews, Avars, and Khazars (e.g., Romanian *Jidov*, Russian *Zhidovin*, Slovenian *óber*) that carry the secondary meaning of "giant." Wexler interpreted these words as confirming that both the mighty Avars and Khazars had become Jews. This interpretation would explain how Jews could be viewed as powerful military adversaries rather than as a weak subordinate population. Whereas the Khazar conversion to Judaism is well documented, the suggestion that Avars converted to Judaism still lacks actual evidence. There is no Jewish significance to the fact that the Avar kagan Abraham, whose reign began in 805, had a name of Hebrew origin, since he acquired this name when he was baptized into Christianity in the Fisha River. This mirrored the earlier conversions to Christianity of his predecessor Kagan Theodorus as well as a prominent Avar tudun.

30. Erdélyi, "Kabari (Kavari) v Karpatskom Basseyne," 176.

31. Erdélyi, "Kabari (Kavari) v Karpatskom Basseyne," 179. This perspective was adopted by Vsevolod Vikhnovich (see his "From the Jordan to the Dnieper," 19) and is also considered plausible by some other scholars.

32. Charles R. Bowlus, *Franks, Moravians, and Magyars: The Struggle for the Middle Danube, 788–907* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995), 49, 51, 55–56.

33. George Huxley, "Byzantinochazarika," *Hermathena* 148 (1990): 69. Mixed Avar-Slav graves existed in modern-day Slovakia, Moravia, and Austria; mixed Germanic-Avar settlements existed in Bavaria; and mixed Avar-Slav-Germanic graves existed in Slovenia (see Wexler, *The Ashkenazic Jews*, 192–93).

34. Róna-Tas, *Hungarians and Europe in the Early Middle Ages*, 263. An Avar kagan was in Frankfurt in 822 to declare his loyalty to the Franks.

35. Róna-Tas, *Hungarians and Europe in the Early Middle Ages*, 264. According to *Conversion of the Bavarians and Carantans*, written by a monk in the year 870, Avars and Slavs lived in lands under the jurisdiction of the archbishop of Salzburg.
36. Róna-Tas, *Hungarians and Europe in the Early Middle Ages*, 352.
37. Bowlus, *Franks, Moravians, and Magyars*, 57.
38. See Sándor L. Tóth, “Kabarok (kavarok) a 9. századi magyar törzsszövetségben,” *Századok* 118, no. 1 (1984): 92–113.
39. Péter Ujvári, ed., *Magyar zsidó lexikon*, 309; Nathan Ausubel, *Pictorial History of the Jewish People* (New York: Crown, 1953), 130.
40. Göckenjan, *Hilfsvölker und Grenzwächter im mittelalterlichen Ungarn*, 40. Simon Szyszman theorized that the Hungarian king Samuel Aba (ruled 1041–1044) was a chief of Kabar origin (see his “Le roi Bulan et le problème de la conversion des Khazars,” *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 33 [1957]: 74–75).
41. Dunlop, “The Khazars,” 356.
42. Monroe Rosenthal and Isaac Mozeson, *Wars of the Jews: A Military History from Biblical to Modern Times* (New York: Hippocrene Books, 1990), 224.
43. Péter Ujvári, ed., *Magyar zsidó lexikon*, 510.
44. Arthur Koestler, *The Thirteenth Tribe: The Khazar Empire and Its Heritage* (New York: Random House, 1976), 170.
45. I would like to thank Ken Ottinger, a descendant of the Turkic Jews of Sfintu Gheorghe, for sharing this folklore with me.
46. Edward D. Rockstein, “The Mystery of the Székely Runes,” *The Epigraphic Society Occasional Papers* 19 (1990): 176. Four supplemental letters (*a, e, o, f*) were derived from the Greek script, and possibly also *h* and *l*.
47. This is claimed by László Makkai in his “The Hungarians’ Prehistory, Their Conquest of Hungary, and Their Raids to the West in 955,” 10.
48. Lajos Ligeti, “The Khazarian Letter from Kiev and Its Attestation in Runiform Script,” *Acta Linguistica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 31 (1981): 10.
49. László Makkai, “The Hungarians’ Prehistory, Their Conquest of Hungary, and Their Raids to the West in 955,” 13.
50. Róna-Tas, *Hungarians and Europe in the Early Middle Ages*, 437.
51. Róna-Tas, *Hungarians and Europe in the Early Middle Ages*, 443, 444.
52. Alicia D. Ortiz, “El fantasma de los jázaros,” *La Nación*, Buenos Aires, August 14, 1999.
53. David Bezborodko, *An Insider’s View of Jewish Pioneering in the Glass Industry* (Jerusalem: Gefen, 1987), 63.
54. Samuel Kurinsky took the concept of “Khazar” ownership of glass factories and expanded it to include the medieval glass factories that operated in Opole and Wroclaw in the Silesia region of southwestern Poland. According to Kurinsky, these and other Polish “Khazar” factories manufactured glassworks that included Jewish motifs and were blown and designed according to the technique and composition commonly used by the Jews of Persia and Babylonia, but also with similarities to glass made along the Danube and in Russia and central Asia. Kurinsky thus sees the Khazars as the key instigators of the development and expansion of glassmaking in eastern Europe, a role he ascribes to Jews in general over the millennia. See Samuel

V. Kurinsky, *The Glassmakers* (New York: Hippocrene, 1991), 340–41. Even if so, these details hardly prove a Khazar relationship.

55. Personal correspondence with Benjamin Richler, May 10, 2002.

56. Peter B. Golden, *An Introduction to the History of the Turkic Peoples* (Wiesbaden, Germany: Otto Harrassowitz, 1992), 243–44.

57. Salo W. Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1957), 3:338.

58. Françoise Godding-Ganshof, “Khazars,” in *Chamber’s Encyclopedia* (Oxford, England: Pergamon Press, 1966), 8:215.

59. Meyer Levin and Toby K. Kurzband, *The Story of the Jewish Way of Life* (New York: Behrman House, 1959), 48.

60. Meyer Weinberg, *Because They Were Jews* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1986), 153.

61. Ausubel, *Pictorial History of the Jewish People*, 133.

62. Lloyd P. Gartner, *History of the Jews in Modern Times* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2000), 19.

63. See Moshe Altbauer, “Mekhkaro shel Yitzhak Shiper al hayesod ha-Kuzari-Yehudi ba-Mizrakh Eyropa,” in *Sefer Yitzhak Schiper: Ketavim nivkharim u-divre ha’arakha*, ed. Shlomo Eidelberg (New York: ‘Ogen shele-yad ha-Histadrut ha-‘Ivrit ba-Amerika, 1966), 47–58; and Matthias Mieses, “Judaizanci we Wschodniej Europie,” *Miesięcznik Żydowski* 4 (1934).

64. Bernard D. Weinryb, *The Jews of Poland: A Social and Economic History of the Jewish Community in Poland from 1100 to 1800* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1973), 22.

65. Jacob Litman, *The Economic Role of Jews in Medieval Poland* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984), 88–89; Wexler, *The Ashkenazic Jews*, 92; Paul Wexler, “The Reconstruction of Pre-Ashkenazic Jewish Settlements in the Slavic Lands in the Light of Linguistic Sources,” *Polin—A Journal of Polish Jewish Studies* 1 (1986): 11.

66. See Moshe Altbauer, “Jeszcze o rzekomych ‘chazarskich’ nazwach miejscowych na ziemiach polskich,” *Onomastica* 13, no. 12 (1968): 120–28.

67. Wexler, *The Ashkenazic Jews*, 92.

68. Kazimierz Piechotka and Maria Piechotka, *Wooden Synagogues*, trans. Rulka Langer (Warsaw: Arkady, 1959), 9.

69. Bernard D. Weinryb, “Origins of East European Jewry: Myth and Fact,” *Commentary* 24 (1957): 515.

70. Alfred H. Posselt, *Geschichte des chazarisch-jüdischen Staates* (Vienna: Vereines zur Förderung und Pflege des Reformjudentums, 1982), 45.

71. See Adolph Neubauer, “Egyptian Fragments,” *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 9 (1897): 26–29.

72. Neubauer, “Egyptian Fragments,” 27; Douglas M. Dunlop, *The History of the Jewish Khazars* (New York: Schocken, 1967), 256. The phrase “Wilderness of the Nations” derives from Ezekiel 20:35. Another messianic movement, in the middle of the twelfth century, was led by a Jew named Menahem ben Solomon, son of Solomon ben Duji. Menahem studied the Halakhah, Torah, and Talmud in Babylonia, according to

Benjamin of Tudela. He changed his name to David al-Roy and planned to capture Jerusalem and restore the Jewish exiles to sovereignty in the Holy Land. Arthur Koestler, in *The Thirteenth Tribe*, 136–37, repeated Jacob Mann’s claim that Menahem and Solomon were Khazarian Jews. However, Bernard Lewis pointed out that the word in the Cairo Genizah that Mann interpreted as “Khazaria” is actually “Hakkari” and therefore does not relate to Khazars but rather to the Kurds of the Hakkari mountains and the Hakkari region and town that today are located in south-eastern Turkey; see Bernard Lewis, “Short Notice: D. M. Dunlop: *The History of the Jewish Khazars*,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 17 (1955): 619; and Shelomo Dov Goitein, “Obadyah, a Norman Proselyte,” *The Journal of Jewish Studies* 4 (1953): 77–78.

73. Joshua Starr, *The Jews in the Byzantine Empire, 641–1204* (Athens: Verlag der “Byzantinisch-Neugriechischen Jahrbücher,” 1939), 204.

74. Starr, *The Jews in the Byzantine Empire*, 207.

75. Starr, *The Jews in the Byzantine Empire*, 207.

76. Starr, *The Jews in the Byzantine Empire*, 203.

77. Starr, *The Jews in the Byzantine Empire*, 207.

78. Ausubel, *Pictorial History of the Jewish People*, 138.

79. Piechotka and Piechotka, *Wooden Synagogues*, 46–47.

80. Dunlop, *The History of the Jewish Khazars*, 262; Benjamin Pinkus, *The Jews of the Soviet Union* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 4.

81. Alexander Pereswetoff-Morath, *A Grin without a Cat* (Lund, Sweden: Department of East and Central European Studies, Lund University, 2002), 2:110, 115.

82. Kurinsky, *The Glassmakers*, 338.

83. Thomas S. Noonan, “The Khazar Economy,” *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 9 (1995–1997): 307.

84. Alexander V. Riasanovsky and William E. Watson, eds., *Readings in Russian History* (Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt, 1991), 1:27–28. Scholars debate the identity of the Jews of the story, with some considering them to be ethnic Khazars and others interpreting them to be Jews from *Khazaria* of unspecified ethnicity (perhaps Judean). As already noted, there is an equal amount of dispute over the true ethnic backgrounds of the signatories on the *Kievan Letter*. At any rate, these Jews may have lived in the Zhidove section of Kiev.

85. Petro Tolochko, “Volodimer Svjatoslavič’s Choice of Religion: Fact or Fiction?” *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 12–13 (1988–1989): 816.

86. Peter B. Golden, *Khazar Studies* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1980), 1:84.

87. Tolochko, “Volodimer Svjatoslavič’s Choice,” 825–26.

88. Tolochko, “Volodimer Svjatoslavič’s Choice,” 827–28.

89. Tolochko, “Volodimer Svjatoslavič’s Choice,” 827.

90. Dunlop, *The History of the Jewish Khazars*, 253.

91. Hugo von Kutschera, *Die Chasaren* (Vienna: A. Holzhausen, 1910), 175.

92. See Julius Brutzkus, “Chasaren,” in *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (Berlin: Eschkol, 1930), 5:337–50.

93. Dunlop, *The History of the Jewish Khazars*, 262.

94. Koestler, *The Thirteenth Tribe*, 145.

95. Pereswetoff-Morath, *A Grin without a Cat*, 2:126. Pereswetoff-Morath was preceded in this opinion by Mykhailo Hrushevsky, who had thought that the “byelovyezhtsi” “were probably neither Khazars . . . nor Turks”; in *History of Ukraine-Rus’*, trans. Marta Skorupsky (Edmonton, Alberta: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 1997), 1:148. Since Hrushevsky was not cited by Pereswetoff-Morath in his extensive bibliography, they probably came to the same conclusion independently.

96. Joseph R. Rosenbloom, *Conversion to Judaism: From the Biblical Period to the Present* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1978), 113.

97. Personal correspondence with (1) Nicholas Andrew Bell, a descendant of Jews from Kiev who claimed Khazar ancestry; (2) Ben R. Rosenthal and Hinda Waldman, descendants of Jews from Ladyzhin who claimed Khazar ancestry; (3) David M. Razler, a descendant of Jews from Odessa who claimed Khazar ancestry; and (4) Gregory A. Kosarin, Max G. Kosarin, Edward A. Kosarin, Michael Kosarin, and Ray Kosarin, descendants of Jews from Kiev and Odessa who claimed Khazar ancestry and whose family name originally was Kazarinsky.

98. Timothy S. Miller, “The Legend of Saint Zotikos According to Constantine Akropolites,” *Analecta Bollandiana* 112 (1994): 365.

99. Miller, “The Legend of Saint Zotikos,” 365.

100. Miller, “The Legend of Saint Zotikos,” 345.

101. Miller, “The Legend of Saint Zotikos,” 376. Miller cited *Historia* by Michael Attaleiates to show that the Church of Saint Panteleemon was located near the Jewish district of Pera.

102. Benjamin of Tudela, *The Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela*, trans. Marcus N. Adler (Malibu, CA: Joseph Simon/Pangloss Press, 1987), 70.

103. Abraham ibn Daud, *The Book of Tradition*, ed. Gerson D. Cohen (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1967), 93.

104. Dunlop, *The History of the Jewish Khazars*, 119–20.

105. Vladimir F. Minorsky, *Hudud al-‘Alam (The Regions of the World)* (London: Luzac & Co., 1937), 455.

106. Thomas S. Noonan, “Did the Khazars Possess a Monetary Economy? An Analysis of the Numismatic Evidence,” *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 2 (1982): 246. The name “Bugha” meant “bull” in Turkic.

107. Peter B. Golden, “Khazar Turkic Ghulâms in Caliphal Service,” *Journal Asiatique* 292, nos. 1–2 (2004): 281. Golden is of the opinion that Bugha was in fact a Khazar.

108. Thomas S. Noonan, “Why Dirhams First Reached Russia: The Role of Arab-Khazar Relations in the Development of the Earliest Islamic Trade with Eastern Europe,” *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 4 (1984): 265.

109. Vladimir F. Minorsky, *A History of Sharvan and Darband in the 10th–11th Centuries* (Cambridge, England: W. Heffer & Sons, 1958), 51.

110. Golden, *Khazar Studies*, 1:85. Qaytaq, also spelled “Xaydaq,” is an alternative name for Jidan.

111. Lars Funch and Helen L. Krag, *The North Caucasus: Minorities at a Crossroads* (London: Minority Rights Group, 1994), 22. For instance, Salau Aliyev, a lead-

ing Kumyk activist who heads a Kumyk cultural and political organization called Tenglik, believes that his people are Khazarian.

112. Wexler, "The Reconstruction of Pre-Ashkenazic Jewish Settlements," 10.

113. Peter B. Golden, *An Introduction to the History of the Turkic Peoples: Ethnogenesis and State Formation in Medieval and Early Modern Eurasia and the Middle East* (Wiesbaden, Germany: Otto Harrassowitz, 1992), 391.

114. Vladimir F. Minorsky, "A New Book on the Khazars," *Oriens* 11 (1959): 142. The Cumans were called "Polovtsi" ("yellowish, sallow") by the Rus'ians, "Falben" ("the pale") by the Germans, "Kunok" by the Magyars, and "Comani" by the Europeans, but they were also known as "Kipchak Turks."

115. Koestler, *The Thirteenth Tribe*, 134.

116. Peter B. Golden, "Khazaria and Judaism," *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 3 (1983): 153. In Chuvash, the corresponding words for "Saturday" are *shamat* and *shamatkun*; in Karaim, *shabat-k'un*; in Karachay-Balkar, *shabat kün*. The word *kun* means both "day" and "sun" in Turkic languages. Significantly, the Karachay-Balkar and Karaim languages are both descended from Kipchak Turkic (see table 4.1). For an interesting discussion of Hebrew loan words in Chuvash (including *shamat*, *shamatkun*, and *shamat pasare*), see Yakov F. Kuz'min-Yumanadi, "O gabraizmakh v chuvashskom yazike," *Sovietskaya Tyurkologiya* 2 (1987): 68–76.

117. Golden, "Khazaria and Judaism," 154.

118. Golden, *Khazar Studies*, 1:85.

119. Lev N. Gumilev, "New Data on the History of the Khazars," *Acta Archaeologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 19 (1967): 84.

120. George V. Gubaroff, *Cossacks and Their Land, In the Light of New Data*, trans. John N. Washburn (Providence, RI: Cossack American National Alliance, 1985), 193, 205–6.

121. Bernard D. Weinryb, "The Hebrew Chronicles on Bohdan Khmel'nyts'kyi and the Cossack-Polish War," *Journal of the Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute* 1, no. 2 (June 1977): 160–61.

122. Christopher H. Dawson, ed., *The Mongol Mission: Narratives and Letters of the Franciscan Missionaries in Mongolia and China in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1955), 29.

123. Dawson, *The Mongol Mission*, 41.

124. Paul Wexler, *The Ashkenazic Jews*, 199–200.

125. Beimbet B. Irmukhanov, *Kazakstan: Istoriko-publitsisticheskiy vzglyad* (Almaty, Kazakstan: Olke, 1996), 37.

126. Thomas S. Noonan, "Why Dirhams First Reached Russia," 234.

127. Golden, "Khazar Turkic Ghulâms in Caliphal Service," 281, 296, 298. Itakh's name meant "little dog" or "puppy" in Khazarian.

128. Golden, "Khazar Turkic Ghulâms in Caliphal Service," 295–96.

129. Golden, "Khazar Turkic Ghulâms in Caliphal Service," 295, 298, 299–300.

130. Vladimir F. Minorsky, *A History of Sharvan and Darband in the 10th–11th Centuries*, 19, 25, 161.

131. Golden, *Khazar Studies*, 1:78.

132. Golden, "Khazar Turkic Ghulâms in Caliphal Service," 302. Ötemish ibn Quterkin was born in Iraq. His father's name includes the Turkic word *qut* (heavenly good fortune) and the Turkic title *erkin/irkin* (chief).
133. Golden, "Khazar Turkic Ghulâms in Caliphal Service," 303.
134. Golden, "Khazar Turkic Ghulâms in Caliphal Service," 304.
135. Dunlop, *The History of the Jewish Khazars*, 61.
136. Golden, *Khazar Studies*, 1:202.
137. Golden, "Khazar Turkic Ghulâms in Caliphal Service," 305.
138. Robert Mantran, ed., *Great Dates in Islamic History* (New York: Facts on File, 1996), 34.
139. Dunlop, *The History of the Jewish Khazars*, 190.
140. Golden, *Khazar Studies*, 1:254.
141. Benjamin of Tudela, *The Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela*, 134.
142. Habib Levy, *Comprehensive History of the Jews of Iran (The Outset of the Diaspora)*, trans. George W. Maschke (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda, 1999), 207.
143. Herbert G. Zeiden, "Davenen: A Turkic Etymology," *Yiddish* 10, nos. 2–3 (1996): 99.
144. A translation of Petakhiah's visit to Kedar is given in Elkan N. Adler, ed., *Jewish Travellers* (London: George Routledge & Sons, 1930), 66.
145. Koestler, *The Thirteenth Tribe*, 79.
146. Adler, *Jewish Travellers*, 65.
147. Adler, *Jewish Travellers*, 67.
148. Adler, *Jewish Travellers*, 83.
149. Dunlop, *The History of the Jewish Khazars*, 220.
150. Adler, *Jewish Travellers*, 83.





## Chapter Ten

# Eastern and Central European Jews after the Tenth Century

*This chapter gives an overall demographic survey of the development of Jewish communities in the lands that became part of the Russian, Polish-Lithuanian, and Austrian-Hungarian empires. Surviving historical and onomastic evidence, in conjunction with genetic and other evidence, indicates that the East European Jews are primarily the descendants of Central European Jews (the Ashkenazic Jews of Germany and the Czech Jews of Bohemia and Moravia), who in turn trace their ancestry to Rome and, before that, to Israel and other parts of the Middle East. Eastern European Jews are also the descendants of Jews from Khazaria and other locations.*

*Ashkenazic Jews arrived in Poland in large numbers starting in the mid-thirteenth century, and then migrated further east. They continued to establish new lives in eastern Europe as late as the early seventeenth century. After the Cossack uprising of 1648, however, the general direction of migrations shifted westward, with many Polish Jews moving to central and western Europe. The culmination of this westward trend was in the 1880s–1920s, when millions of East European Jews came to the United States and Canada.*

*The existence of Yiddish as the unifying language of East European Jews in recent centuries has led to the common assumption that these Jews had no ancestors who lived in eastern Europe prior to the migrations from central Europe. But many informed historians have recognized since the late nineteenth century that the culture of the Ashkenazic Jews was not the first to take root in East European Jewish communities. Benjamin Harshav, for example, wrote:*

*The label “Ashkenazi” does not necessarily mean that all Ashkenazi Jews came from Germany but that they adopted the cluster of Ashkenazic culture which included the specific Ashkenazi religious rite and the German-based Yiddish language. Thus, it is plausible that Slavic-speaking Jewish communities in Eastern*

*Europe (which existed there from early times) became dominated in the sixteenth century by Ashkenazi culture and adopted the Yiddish language.<sup>1</sup>*

*A similar view was held by Nathan Ausubel:*

*The hitherto Slavonic character of Polish-Jewish culture was rapidly transformed into a Yiddish-speaking one. Polish Jews adopted the Ashkenazic rites, liturgy, and religious customs of the German Jews as well as their method of Torah and Talmud study and the use of Yiddish as the language of oral translation and discussion. By the 16th century, except for inevitable regional variations, a homogeneous Jewish culture had crystallized.<sup>2</sup>*

### **THE EAST SLAVIC-SPEAKING JEWS OF EASTERN EUROPE: REMNANTS OF THE KHAZARS?**

The ethnic or geographic backgrounds of the Jews who lived in Kievan Rus' during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries are not specified in any medieval document. However, it is reasonable to assume that many of them were descendants of the Khazars, particularly if Norman Golb's theory that the *Kievan Letter* was written by Jewish Khazars stands, but also because there is no evidence that the Jews of medieval Kievan Rus' came from central Europe. Sadly, historians have only a few documents to study that deal with the Jews of Kievan Rus' from the tenth through thirteenth centuries, and most of these documents relate to the community in Kiev rather than those in Chernigov and Volodymyr Volynskyi (Vladimir-in-Volhynia).<sup>3</sup> Perhaps we can take at face value the assertion of the *Russian Chronicle* that Khazars remained under Rus' rule well after the fall of Khazaria (see chapter 8).

As noted in chapter 6, Torpusman argued that the earliest Jews of Kiev, represented by the signatories on the *Kievan Letter*, had at least some members who had no obvious connection to the Khazars and who may have been ethnic Judeans. It is possible that the original Jews of Kiev previously lived in the Byzantine Empire, as some of them had family ties and other associations with Jews there. During the eleventh century, some Jews from Kievan Rus', described as merchants and elders, participated in an assembly of anti-Karaite Jews that was held in either Thessalonica or Constantinople, most likely the former location.<sup>4</sup> There was also a Slavic-speaking Jew from Kievan Rus', who reportedly could not speak Greek, Hebrew, Arabic, or any other language, who traveled from his homeland to Thessalonica to meet a relative of his, a rabbi who had recently completed a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, apparently in the eleventh century.<sup>5</sup> This is the most reliable evidence that at that time the mother tongue of the Rus' Jews was East Slavic.

Documents from the fifteenth through seventeenth centuries likewise suggest that the native language of Jews in many parts of eastern Europe continued to be a form of East Slavic for a long period of time afterward. Many Jews who lived in the Lithuanian Grand Duchy (including those of Lithuania, Belarus, and the Kiev region) used East Slavic naming suffixes, patterns, and names during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, suggesting a deep familiarity with the Slavic grammatical system. There are also a few documents that explicitly indicate that particular Jews in certain communities spoke “Russian.” Eckhard Eggers argued that the East Slavic-speaking Jews of the Lithuanian Grand Duchy were of Khazarian origin.<sup>6</sup>

“Rizhko” (East Slavic for “red-haired”) and “Samodelka” (a Slavic name with a known Czech parallel) were Slavic first names held by Jewish tax collectors who lived in Kiev during the 1480s.<sup>7</sup>

The most abundant documentary evidence for Jews having East Slavic names comes from records from Brest and Grodno from the late fifteenth and early to mid-sixteenth centuries.<sup>8</sup> The Jewish men of Brest had such first names as “Bogdan,” “Golash,” “Hovash” (also spelled “Ovosh” in Brest), “Il’yash,” “Levon,” “Ogron,” “Pcholka” (also spelled “Bcholka” in Brest), “Shakhno,” and “Yatsko.” Those of Grodno had names like “Bogdan,” “Golash” (also spelled “Golosh” and “Galash” in Grodno), “Hovash,” “Il’ya,” “Kaspar” (also spelled “Kasper”), “Khatsko,” “Krivon,” “Ogron,” “Pcholka,” and “Yatsko.” Some in Pinsk were named “Vol’chko.” None of these particular names were Ashkenazic. “Bogdan” is a name of definite East Slavic origin. “Vol’chko” was a Slavic version of the Germanic name “Wolf.” “Kaspar” and “Kasper” were Belarusian Slavic forms of the Christian name “Casper” that was also popular in Poland and Germany. “Ogron” was a form of the Hebrew name “Aharon” that was in use by Slavs. Similarly, the Slavic form “Yanush” ultimately came from the Hebrew name “Yokhanan,” “Yatsko” came from “Ya’akov,” and “Il’ya” and “Il’yash” came from “Elijah.” These forms of the biblical names were invented by Christian Slavs and were then borrowed by Slavic-speaking Jews from their Belarusian neighbors. “Khatsko” came from the ancient Hebrew name “Ezekiel” but seems to incorporate the East Slavic suffix *-tsko* tacked on to the clipped Hebrew root. “Shakhno” is an abbreviated name that borrowed the suffix *-khno* from Ukrainians and Belarusians and was the secular form of the Hebrew name “Shalom.” “Pcholka,” meaning “little bee” in East Slavic, was adopted by Jews to serve as the secular equivalent for the Hebrew name “Betsalel.” “Levon” was the Belarusian Slavic form of the name meaning “lion.” “Hovash” is of unknown origin, perhaps ultimately from a Hebrew name like “Jehoash,” according to researcher Alexander Beider, but again not found among Jews in western or central Europe. “Golash” is another name of unknown origin, possibly Slavic, and again only attested in

records from eastern Europe. “Kishlovyi” was a rare non-Ashkenazic name held by a Jew in Grodno near the end of the fifteenth century. “Krivon” is an unusual name probably created by Belarusian Jews under the influence of East Slavic.<sup>9</sup> Jewish women in these cities had such East Slavic names as “Bogdana” (pronounced “Bahdana” in Belarusian; the feminine form of “Bogdan”) and “Drobna” (meaning “small”). One Jewish family in sixteenth-century Grodno had the “Russian” family name “Khoroshen’kiy.”<sup>10</sup>

However, some of the Jews of Grodno during this period possessed Hebrew first names, as well as Slavicized forms of Hebrew names like “Moshko” (for “Moshe”) and “Goshko” (for “Joshua”). These particular Slavicized Hebrew names were not simultaneously in use by Christians.

Some of the East Slavic names that were popular in Belarus were also found among the Jews of Ukraine of the same period. “Ogron,” for instance, was to be found among Jews in the Kiev area. “Pcholka” was also found in Lutsk. Some Jews in Volhynia were named “Levon.” In the first decade of the fifteenth century, Jews residing in Lviv had such East Slavic names as “Dyetko” and “Wolczko” (the Polish spelling of “Vol’chko”). Polish documents from the end of the fifteenth century recorded Jews of Lviv named “Pszczolka” and “Bczolka” (the Polish spellings of “Pcholka” and “Bcholka,” respectively).

Slavic names were already in declining use by the latter half of the sixteenth century. Nevertheless, some documents from the early seventeenth century clearly state that many Jews in northeastern Europe were still East Slavic speakers even at this late date. One noted the existence of a Jew residing in Medzhibozh, Podolia, in 1605 who spoke “Russian.”<sup>11</sup> Rabbi Meir Katz, who served in Mogilev in Belarus, observed in the early seventeenth century how many of the Jews in Mogilev spoke “Russian” and stated that he hoped they would adopt Yiddish and start referring to the city of Brest by its Yiddish form, “Brisk.”<sup>12</sup> His wishes may have been granted, for in later decades of the seventeenth century, most of the Jews of Mogilev were Ashkenazic, as name data suggest,<sup>13</sup> and presumably they were speaking Yiddish. In the late seventeenth century, the East Slavic names “Mokhno,” “Yatsko,” and “Mirukhna” were still found among Jews, but they disappeared soon thereafter.

## THE MIGRATION OF CZECH JEWS INTO EASTERN EUROPE

Jews are known to have lived in the Czech lands of Bohemia and Moravia since the early tenth century. The chronicler Cosmas of Prague described in his *Cosmae Pragensis Chronica Boemorum* how in 1098, in the midst of the

First Crusade, some Jews from Bohemia fled, while others secretly relocated their possessions into either Poland or Hungary.<sup>14</sup> This reference has often been interpreted to mean that many Jews migrated from Bohemia, especially Prague, into Poland at the end of the eleventh century, and this is a reasonable assumption. Bernard Weinryb, however, cautioned, "And the mere fact related in the Bohemian chronicle that Jews fled from Bohemia toward Poland does not constitute evidence that they actually settled there."<sup>15</sup>

Regardless of whether Cosmas actually recorded a migration of Bohemian Jews into Poland, it is certain that Jews from the Czech lands did eventually settle in eastern Europe, as has been revealed by the onomastic analysis of the records of early Jews of Poland, Lithuania, Belarus, and Ukraine. Many of the first Jewish settlers in western Poland possessed West Slavic first names that were popular among the Czechs of Bohemia and Moravia, demonstrating their roots in the Jewish communities of the Czech lands. These names included "Czirna," "Dobruchna," "Kaczka," "Radochna," and "Slawa."<sup>16</sup> Branches of the large Bohemian Jewish families Eiger, Horowitz, and Jaffe took root in eastern Europe. At the end of the fifteenth century, some Bohemian Jewish families settled in Kraków, Poland, and its suburb Kazimierz.<sup>17</sup> Abram Vaysvasar, a Jew who lived in Tykocin during the 1560s, had ancestors from Weisswasser, Bohemia.<sup>18</sup> A Jew living in Brest in 1565 and another living in Volhynia in 1575 were both identified by the sobriquet "Chekh," signifying their Czech roots.<sup>19</sup> Many Czech Jews also came to Ruthenia, including Lviv, during the late sixteenth century, and some of them were explicitly called "Czech" in documents.<sup>20</sup>

In his book *Sprachwandel und Sprachmischung im Jiddischen*, Eckhard Eggers argued that the Slavic words in early Yiddish probably came from Czech.

## THE MIGRATION OF GERMAN JEWS INTO EASTERN EUROPE

The Yiddish-speaking Ashkenazic Jews from Germany and Austria came to have the most profound effect upon the demographics, language, and culture of East European Jewry, even though they were not the first Jewish group to arrive in eastern Europe.

The presence of German Jews in Poland was already significant by the middle of the thirteenth century. In 1264, Prince Boleslaw V "the Pious" secured rights for Polish Jews in a written charter, the *Statute of Kalisz*. Among the rights enumerated in Boleslaw's charter were the right for Jews to be able to practice Judaism, the right to travel freely, the right to worship in a synagogue,

trading rights, and the right to own property. Important provisions prohibited the kidnapping of Jewish children, established the equality of the amount of customs duties charged to both Jews and Christians for transporting goods, and instituted the requirement for a fine to be paid by anyone who threw stones at a synagogue. The charter also instructed Christians to help their Jewish neighbors when they were in need.<sup>21</sup> According to Jacob Litman, the charter

was nominally granted at the initiative of Jews who apparently brought with them this German form of Jewish legislation. This document, together with the Austrian charter of 1244 after which it was patterned, echoes the oldest German lawbook, the *Sachsenspiegel*, and the Jewish charters of Speyer (1090) and Worms (1157).<sup>22</sup>

Likewise, the privilege issued by Polish king Kazimierz III “the Great” in 1334, which reaffirmed Boleslaw’s charter and added further protections for Jews, was also based on a central European model from the German lands. It is therefore reasonable to assume that most of the Jews of Poland in this period came from the German lands and had demanded the same protections they were accustomed to in the old country. Weinryb also noted that the title *episcopus iudaeorum* (meaning “Jewish bishop”) appears in Polish documents as a reference to a community leader or rabbi, and this is similar to a usage that was also employed among German Jewish communities in Cologne and other towns of the time.<sup>23</sup>

Writing during the fifteenth century, Rabbi Israel Isserlein of Austria and Rabbi Moses ben Isaac ha-Levi Mintz of Germany observed that the Polish state of Kraków had for many years been a safe haven for Jews who had been expelled from Germany.<sup>24</sup> Among the new settlers in Poland were German rabbis, who established themselves in cities like Kraków, Poznań, and Brest-Litovsk.<sup>25</sup> Many of the émigré Jews in fourteenth-century Wrocław (Breslau) were identified by their land of origin in documents, making it easy to establish that most of them came from Germany and Bohemia, while at least three of the others came from “Russia.” The Old Synagogue (Alte Shul) that was built in Kazimierz, Poland, in the early 1400s was built in the Gothic architectural style and resembled synagogues of Worms (in Germany) and Prague,<sup>26</sup> demonstrating the western origin of Kazimierz’s Jews. After Jews were expelled from German-populated towns like Mainz, Speyer, Köln (Cologne), and Vienna in the fifteenth century, additional waves of these Jews arrived in Poland and Lithuania.<sup>27</sup>

Many descendants of German Jews retained their old Ashkenazic first names and developed surnames that designated their family’s place of origin. For instance, the common surname “Shapiro” indicates ancestry in Speyer, Germany. Similar surnames include “Ettinger” (from Öttingen, Germany),

“Mintz” (from Mainz, Germany), “Bachrach” (from Bacharach, Germany), “Landau” (from Landau, Germany), “Frankfurter” (from Frankfurt, Germany), “Frank” (from Franconia), and “Wiener” (from Vienna, Austria). It has been demonstrated, for instance, that Rabbi Mendel’ Frank, who served the community of Brest circa 1524, came from a Franconian Jewish family. Some surnames had deep roots among German Jews and had existed prior to the migration into Poland. “Shapiro” (alternatively “Spiro” and “Safir”) and “Wallich” (alternatively “Wallach”) had existed since the fourteenth century. Prominent German Jewish families that arrived in eastern Europe included Fischel (originally from Nürnberg, Germany, and resettled in Kraków in the mid-fifteenth century) and Katzenellenbogen. Some German Jews were known as “the German” in records. For instance, a document from 1540 from Brest refers to “Lazar’ Nemets” (“Lazar the German”).<sup>28</sup> Jewish first names that carried over from Ashkenazic communities in central Europe to those in eastern Europe included “Golda,” “Kopelman,” “Leyzar,” “Liber,” “Lipman,” “Mendel,” “Perelo,” “Tolba,” “Yenta,” and “Zelman.”<sup>29</sup>

The inscriptions on Jewish tombstones in Polish-ruled Silesia dating from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries contain textual formulas that were also used by contemporary German Jews.<sup>30</sup>

## HOW YIDDISH BECAME THE MOTHER TONGUE OF EASTERN EUROPEAN JEWS

Yiddish, the language developed by the German Jews, is primarily based on medieval High German, and this is especially observable in its vocabulary.

Linguists traditionally thought of Yiddish as being related to the type of German that had been spoken in the Rhine Valley of northwestern Germany in medieval times. This theory has been challenged by a new school of linguistics researchers. Eckhard Eggers showed that Yiddish (particularly the northeastern dialect that was spoken by Jews in Lithuania and Belarus) shares phonetic and grammatical features with the Bavarian dialect of German.<sup>31</sup> Eggers therefore argued that Yiddish was created by Jews in Bavaria and Bohemia who subsequently resettled in Poland during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and furthermore he claimed that Jews who arrived in Poland from central Germany during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries provided several central German features that became part of the mideastern and southern dialects of Yiddish.<sup>32</sup> Similarly, the linguist Robert King argued against a Rhineland origin for Yiddish, seeing Yiddish as similar only to the east-central and Bavarian dialects of German. King identified three major structural features in common between central German and Yiddish, and



nine major features in common between Bavarian and Yiddish.<sup>33</sup> Both Dovid Katz and Robert King independently proposed that the Jews of the city of Regensburg, with their high level of culture and scholarship, may be the group that developed Yiddish.<sup>34</sup>

Alexander Beider cautioned against associating Yiddish with only one dialect of German:

Yiddish had more than one geographic source. . . . Any connection of Yiddish in its totality to one particular German dialect has to be artificial. It would be much more reasonable to consider (as did Max Weinreich and Solomon Birnbaum) that it was created after the merging of elements that originated in several regions.<sup>35</sup>

Yiddish also contains a significant number of Slavic words and traits. It is possible that some of these are a legacy from the East Slavic-speaking Jews. Maurice Samuel, an enthusiast of Yiddish, thought that it was “possible, even probable, that some of the Slavic words today found in Yiddish also occurred in *loshn knaan* [the language of Canaan],”<sup>36</sup> where his phrase “the language of Canaan” refers to the type of East Slavic spoken by Jews in what was then called in Jewish circles the eastern part of the land of Canaan.<sup>37</sup> The linguist Paul Wexler claimed that Yiddish possesses four linguistic similarities with the Belarusian and Ukrainian languages, which are the descendants of the Kiev-Polesian dialect of the Middle Ages, and that these distinctly East Slavic features came into Yiddish during the intermingling of East Slavic-speaking Jews descended from the Khazars and Yiddish-speaking Ashkenazic Jews.<sup>38</sup> Alternatively, these Slavic features may have come from Jewish-Christian interactions. Unfortunately, we do not possess any old Jewish documents or inscriptions written in East Slavic that could help to resolve the controversy.

The diffusion of Yiddish into the Lithuanian Grand Duchy can be observed indirectly through the study of onomastics. This analysis shows that the Yiddish language ascended into dominance in the duchy during the fifteenth through seventeenth centuries, and by the end of this period, it had completely replaced the Czech and East Slavic tongues formerly spoken by East European Jews. The remarkable rise of Yiddish was made possible by intermarriage between German Jews and Slavic-speaking Jews and by the sheer weight in numbers of the German Jews. Sometimes a particular Jewish family residing in the duchy would have some members with Slavic names and other members with Germanic names.<sup>39</sup> Some Lithuanian Grand Duchy Jews may have been bilingual in Slavic and Yiddish. In 1635, a Yiddish-speaking Jew from Vilnius mixed some East Slavic words into his speech while testifying in front of Jewish judges.<sup>40</sup> Eventually, Slavic women’s names like

“Bogdana,” “Drobna,” “Vikhna,” and “Yakhna” transformed into their respective Yiddish forms “Badane,” “Drobne,” “Vikhne,” and “Yakhne.”<sup>41</sup>

Clearly, the indigenous East Slavic Jews made a wholesale switch from Slavic to Yiddish when a growing number of their neighbors and marriage partners spoke Yiddish. Onomastic trends and the eventual dominance of Ashkenazic culture show that the German Jewish migrations eastward from and through Poland were massive in scale and likely dwarfed the evidently comparatively smaller East Slavic Jewish population element. The new arrivals were well educated and well versed in Judaism and may have become role models for the native Jews. The “Yiddishization” of East European Jewry occurred at different times in different cities. For instance, the Yiddishization process was completed in Brest before it was completed in Grodno. If we look at the proportions of Yiddish/Germanic names versus Slavic names among the rosters of the Jews of the Lithuanian Grand Duchy of that era, we see that the turning point of Yiddishization in most towns came during the sixteenth century and the early seventeenth century. Thereafter, during the seventeenth through twentieth centuries, all Jewish communities in Belarus, Ukraine, and Lithuania were dominated by Ashkenazic names, and the separate dialect and culture of the East Slavic Jews was lost forever.

### **ARE THERE KHAZARIAN WORDS IN YIDDISH?**

The argument is often made that the Yiddish language somehow reflects the entirety of the Jewish experience in northern Europe, as if the absence of Khazarian words in Yiddish mirrors an absence of Khazarian ancestry among East European Jews. This argument has been shown to be fundamentally false by the aforementioned evidence for the intermarriage between Yiddish-speaking Jews and other Jewish groups. Yiddish acquired some Slavic words and traits, perhaps partly from the Slavic-speaking Jews, but did not fundamentally become Slavic. Nor is there any reason to expect the East Slavic-speaking Jews to have retained much, or even anything, from the Khazarian language (or any other language they may have spoken previously) after centuries of speaking Slavic. There was never the opportunity for the transmission of pure Khazarian into pure Yiddish. However, it remains of interest whether Yiddish has any Turkic words that may have been carried over from the unrecorded language of the East Slavic-speaking Jews.

Robert King and Alice Faber argued that there are no Turkic words in Yiddish.<sup>42</sup> On the other hand, Max Vasmer, Paul Wexler, Peter Golden, and Herbert Zeiden identified a small number of Yiddish words that may in fact stem from Turkic, even if not specifically the Khazarian variety.

The Yiddish word *kaftan* (*kaftn*), meaning “long male overgarment,” derives from a Turkic language.<sup>43</sup>

The Eastern Yiddish word *yarmulka* (*yarmulke*), meaning “skullcap,” also derives from Turkic. Wexler, following Vasmer, suggested that it derives from the Anatolian Turkish word *yağmurluk*, meaning “raincoat,” through an intermediary Slavic language such as Polish, Ukrainian, or Russian, which contain words similar to *yarmulka*.<sup>44</sup> Zeiden rejected this hypothesis as “untenable on semantic grounds,” but he still thought a Turkic origin for the word was possible.<sup>45</sup> Zeiden’s suggestion was that the first part of the word came from the Turkic adjective *yarim*, meaning “half,” which can often form the first part of a compound word or phrase, and that the second part of the word may have derived from the Turkic word *kap*, *qap*, *qapaq*, or *qapas*, meaning “cap” or “cover.” Zeiden reconstructed the combination “half cap” in medieval Turkic as *yarimqapas*.

Zeiden suggested that the Eastern Yiddish word *davenen*, meaning “to pray,” comes from Turkic.<sup>46</sup> In doing so, Zeiden rejected various popular hypotheses suggesting that *davenen* derives from a word in Arabic, Hebrew, Greek, French, or another language, especially as these words do not carry the exact meaning of “pray.” He noted that the verbal root *tabun-* means “pray” in the Kipchak form of the Turkic language. In Kipchak, the initial letter *t* often was transformed into *d*, which in this case theoretically yielded *dabundum* (I prayed).

The Yiddish word *loksh* (noodle) derives from the Turkic word *laqsha*, possibly through a Slavic intermediary.<sup>47</sup> However, in contradistinction to the original Turkic form *laqsha*, these intermediaries (Ukrainian and Belarusian) include the letter *n*, which is also contained in the Yiddish plural *lokshn* (noodles). The Ukrainian word for “egg noodles” is *lokshyna*. I believe Zeiden was right to ask, “Who borrowed the term from whom?”<sup>48</sup> In other words, was the Yiddish word really taken from the Slavs, or in fact did the East Slavs adopt the word for noodle from Yiddish?

Zeiden proposed that the Yiddish verb *khapn* (meaning “to catch, seize as prey”) derives from the Turkic verbal root *qap-* (meaning “seize”), rather than from a German or Slavic word as other linguists have proposed.<sup>49</sup>

The Eastern Yiddish word *tatele* (meaning “dear/sweet/wonderful boy”) may derive from the Turkic word *tatighli* (shortened to *tatli* in Kipchak and modern Anatolian Turkish, and also possessing the meaning “dear/sweet/wonderful/pleasant person or thing”).<sup>50</sup>

Zeiden proposed that the Eastern Yiddish word *keshe* (meaning “pocket”)—which is also found in the vocabulary of the Karaim dialect of Troki, Lithuania, and is similar to equivalent words in Lithuanian, Polish, Belarusian, and Ukrainian that also mean “pocket”—has its origin in the Turkic

word *kesh-*, which means “quiver” (i.e., an arrow-holding case), and more specifically in the Kipchak term *kesh-in-e* (to one’s quiver).<sup>51</sup>

Zeiden wondered whether the Eastern Yiddish word *tshutshik* (meaning “baby, small child”) has a Turkic origin, as parallels may be found in the Karaim and Anatolian Turkish languages.<sup>52</sup>

Due to the fact that few traces of the Khazarian language have survived, it is not possible to determine whether any of these words also existed in Khazarian.

### THE MIGRATION OF SEPHARDIC JEWS INTO EASTERN EUROPE

All Jews were expelled from Spain in 1492 and from Portugal in 1497. While many of these Sephardim established new lives in the Ottoman Empire, some of them resettled in Poland, Lithuania, Hungary, and Romania, some at the end of the fifteenth century and some in later centuries.

Two Jewish immigrants from Spain constructed a synagogue in the Polish city of Przemyśl in the sixteenth century.<sup>53</sup> During the same century, Sephardic Jews who settled in the town of Linsk (now Lesko) in southeastern Poland built a synagogue with Spanish architectural influences.

Jan Zamojski, the founder of the city of Zamość in Poland, invited Sephardic Jews to settle in his town in 1588, eight years after its creation. A number of Sephardic Jews from Spain soon arrived in Zamość and established a Jewish quarter.<sup>54</sup> The Sephardic community of Zamość was rather short lived, however, and it was replaced by an Ashkenazic community during the seventeenth century.

The Sephardic Kalahora family came to Kremenets in Volhynia by the sixteenth century.<sup>55</sup>

Some modern Ashkenazic Jews have Sephardic surnames, and some Ashkenazic families also have oral traditions of Sephardic descent.

### THE MIGRATION OF MIZRAKHI (“EASTERN”) AND ROMANIOTE (“GREEK”) JEWS INTO EASTERN EUROPE

As noted in chapter 6, Jews had migrated to the Khazar Empire from the Byzantine Empire (i.e., the Balkans and Asia Minor) over a long period of time. The degrees of their size and influence remain to be determined. Daniel Gershenson theorized that Byzantine religious rites found among the worldwide Ashkenazic community may be explained by the northward migrations

of Greek-speaking Byzantine Jews (called “Romaniotes”) into Khazaria, the alleged subsequent mixing of the Byzantine Jews and Khazarian Jews, and the alleged diffusion of these mixed Jews throughout eastern Europe following the collapse of Khazaria. He noted that Ashkenazim and Romaniotes both include the liturgical hymns of the Byzantine poet Eleazar ha-Qalir in their rituals during the Ninth of Ab, Yom Kippur, and Rosh Hashanah.<sup>56</sup> According to Gershenson, these hymns are not in general use among any other Jewish group. Moreover, as Norman Golb showed, the *Kievan Letter* used the style of rhyme that ha-Qalir had developed,<sup>57</sup> and Gershenson thought this fact demonstrates a direct link between the apparently Khazarian Jews of Kiev and the immigrants to Khazaria from Byzantium. Additionally, Gershenson noted that Ashkenazic Jews uniquely share with Greek-speaking Jews certain phrases recited during prayer, such as the verse “Living and Existent God, may He reign over us forever and ever!”<sup>58</sup>

In her book *There Once Was a World*, the author Yaffa Eliach, who declared her descent from the first five Jewish families to settle in Eishyshok, Lithuania, claimed that those earliest Jews from her town had originated in Babylonia and had moved to the town during the eleventh century.<sup>59</sup> However, she was unsure whether these pioneering Jews were karaitic or rabbinical. Eliach’s claims are considered controversial, however, including the assertion that medieval Jews in Eishyshok had partial roots in Babylonia, the notion that modern Lithuanian Jews of Eishyshok descended from the same families, and also the concept that Jews came to Eishyshok so early in the first place. At the present time, these claims cannot be proved beyond all reasonable doubt.

Some names that were common among Byzantine Jews, Arab Jews, and Egyptian Jews, such as “Sar Shalom,” “Chanina,” “Jerocham,” and “Usiel,” were also found among Jews in medieval Silesia, but only rarely among Jews in Germany, and never among Czech Jews. According to Beider, this evidence indicates that some Silesian Jews may have come from Byzantium and/or the Middle East.<sup>60</sup>

## JEW IN MEDIEVAL UKRAINE

The early Jews of Ukraine lived mainly under the rule of Orthodox Christian leaders. Orthodox Christianity was the official religion of Kievan Rus’ since 988 and carried the endorsement of the Kievan princes and, later, the Muscovite czars. While the Rus’ people were wholesale converted to Christianity in 988 by order of Prince Vladimir of Kiev, there is no evidence of Jews in Vladimir’s realm having been likewise forcibly converted. Until 1495, the

Ukrainian Jews were relatively free from discrimination and could live almost anywhere. Reports of alleged pogroms in Kievan Rus' are unfounded.

Several Jews who were residents of Kiev and nearby Chernigov (Chernihiv) maintained ties with Babylonian, German, and English Jews. Rabbi Moses of Kiev, active during the mid- to late twelfth century, sent questions concerning marital law to the Gaon of Baghdad, Rabbi Samuel ben Ali, and received two *responsa* in return.<sup>61</sup> Rabbi Moses also met Rabbi Jacob Tam of the French town of Ramerupt.<sup>62</sup> During the thirteenth century, Rabbi Yitsh' (Yitzhak?) of Chernigov met the scholar Moses ben Isaac of England somewhere in western Europe, perhaps England itself.<sup>63</sup> His discussion with Moses revealed that he knew both the Hebrew and East Slavic languages, for he proposed a Slavic etymology for a Hebrew word. The contention that Rabbi Yitsh' studied in a London academy has no basis in the source document, though it is certainly possible that he visited London at some point, especially as Moses ben Isaac's teacher, Moses ben Yomtob, was a London resident, and perhaps Moses ben Isaac lived there as well. Eliezer ben Yehudah of Worms (circa 1165–circa 1230) received some interpretations of the Torah from a certain Rabbi Yitzhak of "Russia."<sup>64</sup>

The Hypatian edition of the *Russian Primary Chronicle* was composed around 1425. Its entry for the year 1113, which concerns the aftermath of the death of Grand Prince Sviatopolk II of Kiev, has provoked much attention due to the assumed implication that Jews were attacked as a community.<sup>65</sup> Alexander Pereswetoff-Morath's research has put this contention to rest.<sup>66</sup> The *Hypatian Chronicle* describes an uprising led by a mob of residents in Kiev that included their looting the palace of the *chiliarch* Putyata and their plundering of "Zhidove." The Kievans then issued an ultimatum to Prince Vladimir Monomakh of Pereyaslav that if he failed to arrive in Kiev, they would plunder the homes of boyars, the palaces of the centurions, and the monasteries. (Vladimir did arrive and was installed as the new Kievan ruler that same year.) Pereswetoff-Morath pointed out that Zhidove was a geographical district within Kiev (see chapter 2) rather than a reference to Jews as people, and he explained that this event, with its widespread looting against many targets, does not carry the hallmarks of a pogrom directed against Jews.<sup>67</sup> Likewise, the fire of 1124 that destroyed much of Zhidove along with other parts of Kiev, including several hilltop monasteries, does not appear to be the result of anti-Jewish sentiments. Pereswetoff-Morath observed that the fire may have been the result of that year's drought.<sup>68</sup> The supposed expulsion of Kievan Jews in 1126, meanwhile, was an invention of the eighteenth-century historian Vasilii Tatishchev, who seems to have invented many facts about medieval Jews and Rus' and cannot be relied upon since his alleged sources are unavailable for study.<sup>69</sup>

There was also supposedly a pogrom against Jews that had taken place in Kiev in 1018. Upon the death of Prince Vladimir of Kiev in 1015, power struggles erupted between Prince Svyatopolk and other rivals, and the Polish king Boleslaw I “the Brave” occupied Kiev in support of Svyatopolk. These events allegedly had disastrous consequences for Jews. Scholars have often repeated the claim that the fifteenth-century Polish chronicle *Annales seu cronice inclyti Regni Poloniae* by Jan Długosz contains an entry for the year 1018 referring to Rus’ soldiers attacking and robbing Jewish homes in Kiev.<sup>70</sup> Pereswetoff-Morath noted that there is no entry dated 1018 in Długosz’s chronicle, but that Długosz does have the text of this entry elsewhere: erroneously placed by him under the year 1112 but actually recounting the events of 1113, which as we have seen were not anti-Jewish in inspiration.<sup>71</sup>

The *Kievan Chronicle* mentioned the existence of a “Jewish Gate” and a “Golden Gate” in Kiev under the years 1146 and *sub anno* 1151.<sup>72</sup> However, by this time, they may have been only geographical terms, like “Zhidove” may have also become. While Jews certainly lived near the “Jewish Gate” at one time, by the middle of the twelfth century it is not clear whether or not contemporary Jews lived there.<sup>73</sup>

A glimpse at the life of the Jews of Kievan Rus’ is provided by a letter composed around the end of the twelfth century or the beginning of the thirteenth century by Rabbi Eliezer ben Yitzhak of Bohemia. It was addressed to Rabbi Yehudah ha-Khassid of Regensburg in response to his complaint that East European Jews had a custom of giving their cantors gifts such as food during weddings and holidays, rather than paying them a salary. Rabbi Eliezer wrote, “In most localities in Poland, Russia, and Hungary, where, because of their need [evidently poverty], there are no people who can study the Torah, the communities hire any man they can find who has some knowledge, and he will serve as their cantor, teach them religion, and be a teacher for their children.”<sup>74</sup> Incidentally, Yehudah ha-Khassid had a student named Yitzhak who came from Russia.<sup>75</sup> Some scholars have used this letter to suggest that the level of Jewish learning in Kievan Rus’ at the time was not as great as in western and central Europe and that there was a shortage of religious teachers and cantors in eastern Europe until around the sixteenth century. Maurice Samuel, for instance, referred to their supposed “cultural backwardness” and claimed that early Rus’ Jewry “sent its young men to the west, to France and Germany, to obtain a Jewish education, just as pious American Jews used to send their sons to European yeshivas.”<sup>76</sup> Itzhak Schipper suggested that Rus’ students from Kiev and Chernigov studied in the yeshivas in western Germany, London, and Toledo.<sup>77</sup> Pereswetoff-Morath thought that this was plausible, but he noted that this hypothesis cannot be established for sure, since there are no documents specifically indicating that Rus’ rabbis or students attended west-

ern yeshivas.<sup>78</sup> Nora Berend, however, contended that Rabbi Eliezer's claim that there were no Jewish scholars or rabbis in most of eastern Europe was an exaggeration—an attempt to convince his reader of the need to keep the custom of donations to religious learned men.<sup>79</sup> In other words, if the East European Jews were portrayed as poor, then how could they be expected to pay a fixed salary?

The western sections of Ukraine were also settled by Jews during this time. A document from circa 1171 reported that the merchant Rabbi Benjamin ha-Nadib, a Jew from Volodymyr Volynskiyi (a town in the Volhynia province near the present-day Polish border), traded in Cologne (Köln) but was imprisoned on charges of counterfeiting.<sup>80</sup>

A certain "Isaac of Russia" visited Hampshire, England, in the 1180s.<sup>81</sup> He is not identical to the aforementioned Rabbi Yitsh' of Chernigov.

The Mongol invasion of Kievan Rus' had major consequences for both Jews and non-Jews. The Jewish communities of Kiev and Volodymyr Volynskiyi were both destroyed during the 1240s. The level of destruction in Kiev was especially considerable. When Friar Joannes de Plano Carpini visited Kiev only a few years after its destruction, he found that only about two hundred homes remained in the once grand city.<sup>82</sup> The Mongols also conquered and destroyed Chernigov in 1239, and many of its inhabitants were killed. The contention is sometimes raised that the Rus' Jews may have been entirely wiped out by the Mongols. Yet it is not necessarily the case that the Mongol invasion eliminated the Jewish populations in Kievan Rus' entirely. Henrik Birnbaum postulated that in the mid-thirteenth century, many Kievan Jews left Kiev and moved to Galicia and Volhynia, where they met and mixed with German Jews, while others moved to the Crimea.<sup>83</sup> It might be that many Jewish settlements in eastern Europe survived the Mongol conquests. Pereswetoff-Morath is of the opinion that communities of Rus' Jews were not totally extinguished during the Mongol invasion, though undoubtedly these Jews were severely impacted by these events.<sup>84</sup> According to Pereswetoff-Morath, there must have been more than just a few scattered individuals who survived.<sup>85</sup> Indeed, a continuing population of Jews in that region is the best explanation for the continued existence in later centuries of a distinctive Slavic-speaking Jewry.

The *Galician-Volhynian Chronicle* recorded in a rather ornate fashion that many peoples mourned the death of Prince Vladimir Vasil'kovich of Volhynia in 1288, and among the mourners was at least one Jew from Volodymyr Volynskiyi, who may have been a merchant.<sup>86</sup>

During the following centuries, the Ukrainian Jewish population rose considerably in numbers, partly because of a natural increase and partly because of migrations from Poland and Lithuania.<sup>87</sup> In 1349, the Galicia region transferred



to Polish overlordship.<sup>88</sup> Centuries later, upon the first partition of Poland in 1772, Galicia became a province of the Austrian Empire, after which Galitzianers (Jews from Galicia) became a distinctive Ashkenazic subgroup.

We know of many personalities from the late medieval period of Ukrainian Jewish history. Rabbi Asher bar Sinai “of Russia” studied in Spain during the first quarter of the fourteenth century with Tosafist Rabbi Asher ben Jehiel.<sup>89</sup> Jews named “Smogil,” “Abraham,” “Effraym,” and “Schabdei” lived in Lvov principality during the 1350s and 1360s.<sup>90</sup> Shanya, a Jew who had converted to Christianity, served as a tax collector in Volodymyr Volynskyy during the 1420s and 1430s.<sup>91</sup> A certain Rabbi Moses who served the Jews of Kiev during the mid- to late fifteenth century was called “Ashkenazi” and “Allemano,” so his ancestry clearly came, at least in part, from the German lands.<sup>92</sup>

From 1569 to 1654, much of Ukraine was under Polish rule. Many Jewish communities living in Galicia, including in towns like Brody, Trembowla, Budzanów, and Ternopil, built synagogue fortresses protected by cannons stationed in turrets.<sup>93</sup> Meanwhile, some Jewish men in Lviv served as guards defending the city circa 1626. Unfortunately, Jewish-Christian relations in Ukraine began to deteriorate substantially. After 1648, the rapid expansion of the size of Ukrainian Jewry was halted.

In 1648, tens of thousands of Jews living in Ukraine and Galicia were slain by the Cossacks, who were led by the *hetman* Bohdan Khmelnytsky. Some Jewish communities, such as those in Ostrog and Lublin, were entirely wiped out. After the Cossacks captured the city of Nemirov in the late spring of 1648, they slaughtered numerous Jews. Some of Nemirov’s Jews escaped and sought refuge in the walled city of Tulchin. However, the Cossacks eventually reached Tulchin and killed its Jews. Thousands of Jews were also killed in Kiev, Pereyaslav, Vinnitsa, Lubny, Piryatin, Lokhmitz, Polonnoye, and other towns. Some Jews survived by converting to Orthodox Christianity. Others were held captive by Tatars, were brought to the Crimea, and were sold into slavery. The Cossacks’ slaughter of Jews was the impetus behind a shift in the pattern of Jewish settlement in northern Europe. Prior to 1648, it was very common for Jews to migrate from western and central Europe to eastern Europe. After 1648, it was more common for Jews to migrate in the opposite direction, from the East to the West. Not surprisingly, the events of 1648 caused the name “Bogdan” to fall out of favor among Jews, who no longer named their children “Bogdan” afterward.

By this time, religious persecutions and anti-Jewish laws prevented the majority of Jews from residing within “Russia proper.” We know that Jews were not allowed to enter Muscovy by the middle of the sixteenth century.<sup>94</sup> Russian czar Ivan IV “the Terrible” (reigned 1533–1584) opposed Jewish settle-

ment in the Russian Empire and required Russian Jews to convert to Christianity or else face death.<sup>95</sup> In 1563, around three hundred Jews of Polotsk were drowned in the Dvina River for refusing to convert to Christianity.<sup>96</sup> Czar Fyodor III (reigned 1676–1682) excluded Jewish traders from Muscovite Russia. Czar Peter “the Great” (reigned 1682–1725) also hated Jews intensely. With the exception of the Galitzianers, most Polish-Lithuanian Jews became subjects of the Russian Empire in the second half of the eighteenth century. When Ukraine was acquired by the Russian Empire, Jews were able to remain there, but their ability to visit and trade in Moscow was severely limited. Empress Catherine (reigned 1762–1796) issued a decree in 1792 that prevented Jews from settling in “Russia proper.” Henceforth Russian Jews were mostly confined to the Pale of Settlement (*Cherta osedlosti*) in the western territories. Only beginning in 1917 could most Jews reside in the Russian heartland. Jews living in the Austrian Empire, meanwhile, generally received better official treatment than Jews in the Russian Empire in the years prior to World War I, and they were allowed to engage freely in political and economic affairs and had a wider choice of professions.<sup>97</sup> In large part, this was due to their acquisition of equal rights in 1867, after which they were allowed to live anywhere in Austria-Hungary.

## OTHER EARLY TRACES OF JEWS IN POLAND

Small numbers of Jews lived in Poland toward the close of the Khazar epoch. Around 965, Ibrahim ibn Yaqub, a Jewish traveler from Catalonia, indicated the existence of a Jewish community in the western Slavic lands.<sup>98</sup> Similarly, the tenth-century scholar Kalonimus ben Shabtai wrote that Jews lived in the western Slavic territories and Hungary.<sup>99</sup>

Jewish life in Poland existed on a virtually continuous basis since the eleventh century. However, some of the early documents that may relate to Jews in Poland are controversial. In particular, scholars disagree over whether the eleventh-century Hebrew account *Sefer ha-Dinim* by Rabbi Yehudah ben Meir ha-Kohen of Mainz discusses Jews in Poland or those in another country. According to this book, in an unspecified year, the town of “Prymwt” in the country “Plwny” was pillaged, at which time two young Jewish brothers were seized and taken away to the land of the “Greeks.”<sup>100</sup> Many scholars, including Salo Baron,<sup>101</sup> basing themselves on an interpretation by Julius Brutzkus, assumed that “Plwny” meant Poland and that “Prymwt” (possibly to be amended into “Primis”) was the Polish town of Przemyśl. They also copied Brutzkus to repeat his claim that the pillaging described in *Sefer ha-Dinim* took place in 1031, his assumption that the Rus’ were the ones who had

captured the Jews, and his assertion that the number of Jews involved was more substantial than just the two brothers. Pereswetoff-Morath effectively demolished the three latter claims of Brutzkus, showing that Brutzkus had in fact mixed the words of *Sefer ha-Dinim* with an apparently unrelated account, *Polnoye sobranie russkikh lyetopisey*, which had spoken of Yaroslav the Wise's plundering of the "Cherveni towns" in 1031, at which time prisoners of war were taken.<sup>102</sup> Weinryb was also critical of the view that "Prymwł" represents Przemyśl.<sup>103</sup> By contrast, Aleksander Gieysztor defended this association.<sup>104</sup> In any event, caution must be exercised when using *Sefer ha-Dinim* as a possible source for Jews in Poland.

The tolerant rulers of Poland explicitly invited Jews to settle in their land as early as 1133. A large number of Jews settled in Kraków in the twelfth century, working as merchants and tax farmers, and some of them became mint masters to Polish princes. Around 1150, Jews owned the town of Mały Tyniec, but it was later purchased by Piotr Wlast.<sup>105</sup> In 1200, the village of Sokolników (near Wrocław) was owned by two Jews, Joseph and Khaskel. The tombstone of a Jew named David ben Shalom, who died in 1203, was discovered in Wrocław.<sup>106</sup> Jewish peasants who tilled the soil on the lands of Count Henryk I around Bytom circa 1227 were required to hand over 10 percent of their harvest to the bishop of Wrocław.<sup>107</sup> It is also known that Jews lived in the Warsaw Duchy town of Płock by 1237.<sup>108</sup>

The Mongol conquest of eastern Europe affected Polish Jewry just as it affected Rus' Jewry. Many regions of Poland were ravaged, and many people were slaughtered. The city of Kraków was destroyed in 1241 but was rebuilt in 1257. Starting in 1241, Polish Jews fled to Silesia, Moravia, Bohemia, and Austria and mixed with German Jews who had typical Germanic names.<sup>109</sup>

After the Mongol conquest, renewed invitations for Jewish settlement were made in depopulated Poland, and European Jews were attracted to the provisions of the aforementioned *Statute of Kalisz* enacted by Prince Boleslaw V. But almost immediately, in response to Boleslaw's charter, three Polish Catholic Church synods adopted anti-Jewish resolutions: in Kalisz in 1264, in Wrocław in 1267, and in Łęczyca in 1285.<sup>110</sup> Among the goals of these resolutions were to restrict where Jews could live, to limit what jobs Jews could hold, and to force Jews to wear a unique hat to separate them from Christians.<sup>111</sup> Despite these first seeds of intolerance in their country, many Polish rulers remained friendly to Polish Jews. The Privilege of King Kazimierz III, referenced earlier in this chapter, encouraged more European Jews to immigrate to Poland. The Polish Jew Jordan and his son Lewko, both from Kraków, minted Hebrew coins for Kazimierz III, either directly or through their leasing of the royal mint.

New Jewish communities continued to emerge in Poland during the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries. For instance, Jews resided in the city of Warsaw by 1414.<sup>112</sup> According to Jacob Litman, many of the Jews who settled in Poland during this period came from southern Germany (including Nuremberg), Austria (including Vienna), Moravia, and Silesia.<sup>113</sup> The Jewish populations in Poznań, Kalisz, Kraków, and Wrocław were probably in the main descended from German, Moravian, and Bohemian Jews. Even though many of the immigrants did not arrive directly from the Rhineland (western Germany), some of the German Jews who arrived from eastern and southern parts of Germany appear to have had roots in the Rhineland.<sup>114</sup>

In evaluating the probable origins of most Jewish immigrants to Poland, it may also be significant that the majority of early Jewish settlements in Poland were clustered in western areas which bordered Austria, Germany, and Silesia and were distant from Kiev and Chernigov.

In 1475, Kazimierz IV (the Polish king and Lithuanian grand duke) issued a grant permitting various Jewish families from Spain, Italy (including Venice), the Crimea (Kaffa), and Constantinople to settle in Poland.<sup>115</sup>

During the early fifteenth century, anti-Jewish documents, outbreaks, and accusations prevailed among the Christians of Kraków and other parts of Poland, indicating a shift in attitudes from the earlier tolerance of Jews. The rulers of Poland soon adopted anti-Jewish attitudes as well. For instance, the Polish king Sigismund III (reigned 1587–1632), overlord of Ukraine as well as Poland, issued an edict in February 1619 that prevented Jews from owning real estate in the city of Kiev.<sup>116</sup>

In 1519, the Jews of Poland created an autonomous legislative authority known as the Council of the Four Lands. The council passed many ordinances to govern the financial affairs of Polish Jews. The council also collected taxes from Jews for handing over to the Polish government.<sup>117</sup> It was disbanded in 1764.

The Polish Jews were engaged in a wide range of professions. Some of them were blacksmiths, silversmiths, tailors, bakers, tax collectors, candlestick makers, fur traders, and scribes.

## **JEWES IN LITHUANIA AND BELARUS**

As noted earlier, Jewish settlements in the Lithuanian and Belarusian lands of medieval times evidently included vestiges of Jewish Khazars who spoke East Slavic. Incidentally, medieval Lithuania as a political entity at one point also included much of Ukraine, including the Kiev district.

Some of the Jewish settlements in Belarus were founded by the early twelfth century; those in Lithuania were founded by the thirteenth century. According to the account of the Jewish trader Ibrahim ben Jacob, Jews lived in Grodno (“Hrodna” in Belarusian, “Gardinas” in Lithuanian) by 1128 and in Kaunas (Kovno) by 1280.<sup>118</sup> Gediminas, the king of Lithuania from 1316 to 1341, encouraged Middle Eastern, Bukharan, and German Jews to settle in Lithuania.<sup>119</sup>

The Grand Duchy of Lithuania expanded in size starting in the mid-thirteenth century and was at its maximum extent by the fifteenth century, reaching from the Black Sea to the Baltic Sea. Lithuanian Grand Duke Algirdas (reigned 1345–1377) acquired much territory, including Volhynia, Kiev, Chernigov, and part of Smolensk. Thus the Jews of Ukraine came under Lithuanian control.

In 1386, Grand Duke Jagiello (reigned 1377–1392 in Lithuania, 1386–1434 in Poland), son of Algirdas, married Jadwiga, the queen of Poland, thus forming a personal union between Lithuania and Poland. Jagiello was baptized into Christianity. In his decree of 1432, Jagiello mentioned the existence of Jews in Volhynia, Kraków, and Lviv (“Lwów” in Polish).<sup>120</sup>

Grand Duke Vytautas “the Great” (reigned 1392–1430) extended Lithuania’s borders as far south as the Black Sea and incorporated the remainder of Ukraine and Belarus. In 1388 and 1389, Vytautas granted legal and religious rights to the Jews living in Hrodna, Brest, and Troki. In one of his decrees, *The Privilege of Grodno*, he allowed Lithuanian Jews to engage in commerce and enabled them “to acquire fields and grassland.”<sup>121</sup> Vytautas furthermore invited Crimean Jews and Karaites to settle in Lithuania. The new Jewish settlers contributed substantially to Lithuania’s economy, and Vytautas’s reign is remembered as a time when Lithuanian Jewry prospered greatly. Only a small number of documents attest to the immigration from the Crimea to the Lithuanian Grand Duchy. For instance, we know that a Jew named Kalef migrated from Kaffa to Lviv in 1440.<sup>122</sup> It is not possible to prove that there was any mass migration of Crimean Jews to Lithuania.

Polish-Lithuanian Grand Duke Kazimierz IV (reigned 1440–1492 in Lithuania, 1446–1492 in Poland), son of Jagiello, further helped Lithuanian Jewry to flourish, despite the objections of Catholics.

By the fifteenth century, many new Jewish communities had taken root in Lithuanian cities and towns, including Keidan, Palanga, and Slobodka.<sup>123</sup> Salo Baron estimated that about thirty thousand Jews lived in the Polish-Lithuanian realm by the late fifteenth century.<sup>124</sup>

Grand Duke Alexander (reigned 1492–1506 in Lithuania, 1501–1506 in Poland), son of Kazimierz IV, did not share his father’s tolerant attitude toward Jews. In 1495, Alexander issued an edict expelling all Jews from Lithuania.

Fortunately, he revoked this edict in 1503, since Lithuania needed Jews for their financial and trading expertise. It is documented that many Jews who had lived in Lithuania until 1495 returned there after 1503.<sup>125</sup> A number of Jews from Portugal and Spain arrived in Lithuania by the sixteenth century.

As for the Belarusian territories, Jews settled in Pinsk by 1506 and in Kletsk by 1539.

By the 1530s, the Lithuanian Jews founded the Council of the Land of Lithuania as a counterpart to the related institution in Poland, the Council of the Four Lands.<sup>126</sup>

Jews lived in Vilnius (which later became the most important Jewish center in Lithuania) under the protection of the law beginning in 1593.<sup>127</sup>

The Lithuanian Jewish communities were spared from the Khmelnytsky massacres, and many Ukrainian Jews fled northward to Lithuania to escape the Cossacks.

### **JEWIS IN HUNGARY: A SPECIAL CASE?**

Unfortunately, the early Hungarian Jewish communities did not leave behind documents of their own, so most of the available information about their existence comes from governmental documents. We recall how Hasdai ibn Shaprut had mentioned the existence of a Jewish community in Hungary during the 950s in his letter to King Joseph (see chapter 6). It is known that Jews lived in the city of Esztergom by around 1050 and in Buda by 1217.<sup>128</sup> The ethnic background of these Jews is unspecified in the records. The suggestion often arises that the early Hungarian Jews were of Khazarian origin, since the migration of Khazars into Hungary as early as 896 is well established (see chapter 9). However, Nora Berend argued that the Jewish population of medieval Hungary was not descended from the Khazars, and she noted that there is no evidence that the Khazars in Hungary were Jewish.<sup>129</sup> The Hungarian Jews from the tenth century onward were immigrants from German and western Slavic regions, according to Berend.

By the thirteenth century, Jews lived in western Hungarian cities (including Buda, Esztergom, Fehérvár, Vasvár, Nyitra, Trencsén, Körmend, and Poszony—the last being today's Bratislava in Slovakia) and the village of Üreg.<sup>130</sup> One notes the proximity of these settlements to the German lands. Jews also settled in Sopron (Ödenburg), in northwestern Hungary, around the same time, living on the same street as Christian families. The Jewish synagogue in Sopron, which still survives, was built in the beginning of the fourteenth century in the Gothic architectural style, with south German influences.<sup>131</sup> The roots of the first Jews in Sopron thus should be sought in Bavaria and Austria, and may

reflect the origins of most of the rest of the Hungarian Jews—essentially Ashkenazic, arriving from the bordering regions to the West. There is no basis for the argument that Hungarian Jews have different origins than other Central and East European Jews.

A rich Jewish merchant named Count Teka, a resident of Buda (one-half of modern Budapest), became the financial custodian and vice prince of the kingdom of Hungary in 1211. The coins that he supposedly minted, but which were probably actually only released under his lease at the mint, were marked with the Hebrew initial letter of his name. He was forced to flee to Austria in 1233 but later returned and restored himself to his office, serving until his death in 1245. Teka was identified as a Khazar in the works of Alfred Posselt and Arthur Koestler,<sup>132</sup> but in reality his ancestors came from Austria and Germany.<sup>133</sup>

Many scholars have presented the claim that some Hungarian Jews served as actual minters of coins. For instance, Kupfer and Lewicki claimed that Yehudah ben Meir ha-Kohen of Mainz had written that the early eleventh-century Hungarian Queen Gisela authorized two Jews to mint silver coins.<sup>134</sup> But according to Nora Berend, we know of Hungarian Jewish mint lessees but not of any Hungarian Jewish minters: “Texts contain explicit references only to mint lessees. . . . There is no evidence of the existence of Jewish minters. The coins were minted in the royal mints, and bear Latin legends and the name of the king. Their design includes typical patterns such as royal busts and various animals. Apart from the Hebrew letter, they do not differ from other royal coinage in style.”<sup>135</sup>

As early as the eleventh century, anti-Jewish sentiments began to take hold among the Christian leaders of Hungary. Hungarian nobles and religious leaders who took part in the Council of Szabolcs wrote anti-Jewish laws in 1092. The council said that the Jews’ working implements were to be taken away from them if they worked on a Sunday, and furthermore that Christian women and slaves were to be taken away from all Jews who owned them.<sup>136</sup> Several years later, King Kálmán (reigned 1095–1116) issued his own series of anti-Jewish laws. Kálmán’s anti-Jewish restrictions included provisions on money lending and purchases of merchandise, and also prevented Jews from buying or selling any Christian slaves.<sup>137</sup> Since Jews were no longer allowed to use these slaves for agricultural work, they were forced to abandon agriculture and involve themselves more heavily in other professions, most notably money lending. Despite continued restrictions on the types of professions Jews could be involved in, Hungarian Jews remained tax collectors and mint lessees throughout the thirteenth century.<sup>138</sup>

The situation changed for the better under King Béla IV (reigned 1235–1270). Béla IV wanted Jews from Germany and elsewhere to settle in

Hungary. Thus, he decreed in December 1251 a series of thirty-one rights for Jews, concentrating on judicial procedures. Under these protections, a Jew was to pay the same level of customs duties as any other person would pay, Christians who wounded or killed a Jew were punished and were required to pay money in compensation, anyone who disturbed a synagogue was required to pay a fine to the Jews, kidnapping of Jewish children was not permissible, and no one was allowed to force Jews to violate their religious prohibition of work during Jewish holidays.<sup>139</sup> Endre III (reigned 1290–1301), the last king of the Árpád dynasty, stated in writing that the Jews living in the city of Pressburg (Bratislava) “should enjoy the same freedoms as the other citizens.”<sup>140</sup>

In the following centuries, the Hungarian rulers once again adopted harsh anti-Jewish attitudes. King Lajos I (reigned 1343–1382) tried to convert the Jews to Catholicism, but when this did not work, all Hungarian Jews were expelled from his kingdom. The expelled Jews went to Austria and Bohemia, according to the chronicler János Túróczi. Some of the expelled Jews from northern and northeastern Hungary went to Poland.<sup>141</sup> Although Jews were readmitted to Hungary around 1364 and many returned, some of them chose to stay in Austria. Jews once again formed communities in Pressburg, Buda, Sopron, and elsewhere throughout the kingdom of Hungary. They were joined by a small number of French-speaking Jewish refugees who had been expelled from France by decree of King Charles VI in 1394, as was recorded by the traveler Bertrandon de la Broquinière.<sup>142</sup>

## JEWIS IN HISTORIC ROMANIA

The lands historically belonging to Romania are now divided into three separate political divisions: most of Bessarabia is part of the modern nation of Moldova; North Bukovina and South Bessarabia are part of Ukraine; and South Bukovina, Wallachia, and western Moldavia are part of Romania.

The early history of Jews in this region is somewhat obscure, due to sparse documentation. It seems that some of the Hungarian Jews expelled by Lajos I arrived in Wallachia during the 1360s. Jewish refugees from Spain arrived in Wallachia after 1492. The Romanian Jews are thus essentially Ashkenazic and Sephardic.

Jewish communities were established in Iasi by the fifteenth century, in Suceava by the early sixteenth century, and in Ploesti by the second half of the seventeenth century.

Some Polish and Ukrainian Jews fled to Moldova in 1648–1649 to escape the Khmelnytsky massacres. Jewish settlers continued to arrive from Poland and Ukraine in the following centuries.



## WHAT GENETIC DATA DEMONSTRATES ABOUT ASHKENAZIC ORIGINS

Genetic studies have demonstrated that a close relationship exists between eastern European Ashkenazic Jews and many of the peoples who inhabit the Middle East. To conduct many of these studies, scientists examined Y chromosome (Y-DNA) haplotypes, which are inherited from father to son and are only found in males, and mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA) haplotypes, which are inherited from mother to child and are found both in males and females. The results of the studies are consistent with the concept that the majority of the ancestors of Ashkenazic Jews were Judeans/Israelites, but they also reveal a significant degree of European ancestry among Ashkenazim, as well as some apparent central Asian and east Asian elements.

A major study published in 2000 showed that Ashkenazic Jews, Italian (Roman) Jews, North African Jews, Iraqi Jews, Iranian Jews, Kurdish Jews, and Yemenite Jews often share common Y-DNA haplotypes that are also found among many Arabs, particularly Palestinian Arabs, Lebanese, and Syrians.<sup>143</sup> They found only a small percentage of Jews who had Y-DNA types that originated from outside of the Middle East. The researchers used these data to conclude that Jews had not intermarried very often with non-Judeans, including converts to Judaism, in the Diaspora. Some of them, notably Harry Ostrer and Michael Hammer, emphasized the close relationship between Ashkenazic Jews and Italian Jews, suggesting that the primary ancestors of Ashkenazic Jews were the ancient Jews of Rome.<sup>144</sup> The study observed, “Several lines of evidence support the hypothesis that Diaspora Jews from Europe, Northwest Africa, and the Near East resemble each other more closely than they resemble their non-Jewish neighbors.” While the study came up with scientifically valid and reproducible results, it nevertheless had focused on Y-DNA and had largely left the mtDNA half of the genetics picture unexplored, except for a brief note that African mtDNA haplotypes were found in low frequencies among modern Jewish populations and mention of the fact that at the time of the study’s writing, there had not yet been an adequately comprehensive study of Jewish mtDNA origins. The 2000 study was also somewhat limited in usefulness by the lack of certain key comparative populations. For instance, the only Slavic population that was tested were the Russians, and the only Turkic population tested were Anatolian Turks. Turkic tribes from the north Caucasus and central Asia, including those likely to be descended from or related to the medieval Khazars, were not tested.

In 2001, additional pieces of the puzzle were revealed with the release of another comprehensive Y-DNA study.<sup>145</sup> This time, Kurds were included in the analysis in addition to Arabs, and comparisons were also made with data

from Slavic Poles, Belarusians, and Ukrainians. The scientists wrote, “The investigation of the genetic relationship among three Jewish communities revealed that Kurdish and Sephardic Jews were indistinguishable from one another, whereas both differed slightly, yet significantly, from Ashkenazi Jews. The differences among Ashkenazim may be a result of low-level gene flow from European populations and/or genetic drift during isolation. . . . In comparison with data available from other relevant populations in the region, Jews were found to be more closely related to groups in the north of the Fertile Crescent (Kurds, [Anatolian] Turks, and Armenians) than to their Arab neighbors.”<sup>146</sup> Two points made here were noteworthy departures from earlier studies. First, the researchers identified haplogroup R1a1 (Eu 19) as a primarily European marker, found in substantial frequencies among Hungarians, Sorbs, Poles, Belarusians, and Ukrainians, and somewhat less often among Macedonians, Udmurts (a Finno-Ugric tribe in Russia), and Turkic Chuvashes, along with a small minority of Kurds and Bedouins. The report found R1a1 in the Y-DNA of 12.7 percent of the Ashkenazic men studied and noted that its presence among Ashkenazim may be due to intermarriage with Khazars or eastern Europeans. (A follow-up 2005 study by many of the same researchers had an expanded sample size of 495 Ashkenazic Jewish men, compared to 79 in the 2001 study, and R1a1 was present in 11.5 percent of the new, larger total.)<sup>147</sup> Second, the researchers suggested that the data showed that the Kurds are among the closest paternal relatives of Jews, as both Ashkenazic and Mizrahi Jews and Muslim Kurds share several haplotypes and chromosomes, even more than Jews and Palestinian Arabs share.<sup>148</sup> Did, then, Jews have roots stemming from ancient Kurdistan or Iraq in addition to Israel? This suggestion is still controversial, and certain media reports inadvertently focused on the possibility of a Kurdish-Jewish relationship while neglecting to mention that this relationship is not necessarily closer than between Jews and Armenians or Anatolian Turks.

During 2002, a comprehensive mtDNA study<sup>149</sup> finally began to shed light on the maternal side of Jewish ancestry. It showed that most Jewish populations around the world have disparate maternal origins and may often be maternally related to their non-Jewish neighbors. This was most evident in the case of the Bene Israel of India, who were found to be very close to two mtDNA haplotypes of Indian people, and Ethiopian Jews, whose mtDNA matches Ethiopians and Somalians. In some other cases, such as with the Georgian Jews and Ashkenazic Jews, the situation is more ambiguous but still leans in the direction of the potential that a significant portion of the mtDNA of those communities comes from non-Jewish peoples among whom they resided. A coauthor of the 2002 mtDNA study, David B. Goldstein, reported to the press his opinion that since Jewish mtDNA is apparently often

of non-Judean origin, while their Y-DNA is usually Judean, most Jewish communities were founded by marriages between Judean men and local non-Judean women.<sup>150</sup> (These women would have converted to Judaism.) Shaye Cohen said that if Goldstein's speculation is true, it may explain why Jews in particular countries and regions often physically resemble their neighbors despite also sharing strands of common ancestry with other Jews.<sup>151</sup> The finding that some Ashkenazic mtDNA haplogroups originate in the Near East while others come from Europe was reaffirmed in a separate study released in 2004.<sup>152</sup> The 2004 study found that the most prevalent mtDNA haplogroups among Ashkenazim are K (found at a frequency of 32 percent), H (21 percent), N1b (10 percent), and J1 (7 percent). Haplogroup K is found in relatively small numbers in both Europe and the Middle East, and its ultimate origin is undetermined at this time. Haplotype N1b is evidently of Middle Eastern origin. The obvious question, then, is whether Khazars are among the maternal (and paternal) ancestors of Ashkenazic Jews. To date, no answer to this question is available, though it remains a strong possibility.

A study conducted by Doron Behar that was released in January 2006 added to our knowledge of Jewish mtDNA, showing that about 40 percent of Ashkenazic Jews descend in the direct maternal line from one of four women. The genetic pattern of one of the four women is also found among some non-Jews in the Middle East, but there is a debate in the genetics community about whether this and the other three patterns really originated in the Middle East or whether they came from Europe.<sup>153</sup>

Focused Y-DNA studies of Jewish hereditary subgroups—Kohens and Levites—were also undertaken by various scientific teams. Scientists identified a particular Y-DNA haplotype that is much more prevalent among Kohens, the Jewish priestly class believed to descend from the priests who served at the ancient Temple in Jerusalem, than among Jews at large. Termed the Cohen Modal Haplotype (abbreviated CMH), this haplotype is found among about 45 percent of Ashkenazic Kohens and 56 percent of Sephardic Kohens.<sup>154</sup> This contrasts with its presence in only 3 to 5 percent of non-Kohen Jewish men from the Ashkenazic and Sephardic branches. It was also found among some of the Bene Israel Jews of India.<sup>155</sup> Jewish tradition contends that all Kohens are descendants of the Israelite high priest Aaron, in which case the founding man in the Kohen lineage could conceivably have carried the Cohen Modal Haplotype in his genes.<sup>156</sup> It should be noted that the Cohen Modal Haplotype is not exclusively found among Jewish men. Some Lembas in South Africa,<sup>157</sup> Italians in central and southern Italy,<sup>158</sup> Kurds in Iraq,<sup>159</sup> Armenians,<sup>160</sup> Palestinian Arabs,<sup>161</sup> and Hungarians in the Budapest region<sup>162</sup> also possess this haplotype. Four out of five Y-DNA haplotypes found among Samaritan men (from Israel and Palestine) are very closely re-

lated to the Cohen Modal Haplotype, prompting researchers to conclude that most Samaritans probably descend paternally from the original Israelites, including a subgroup of the original Kohen priesthood.<sup>163</sup> It is clear from these results that the Cohen Modal Haplotype is indigenous to the northeastern Mediterranean region, where the Israelites are originally from, and that it was an important genetic component of the male population of ancient Israel.

All Levites are traditionally considered to be members of the Israelite tribe of Levi, and thus descendants of Jacob's son Levi, through paternal inheritance. Members of Levi had served as assistant priests in the ancient temple. Scientists were curious about whether the Levites, like the Kohens, also shared any common haplotypes among themselves, and were surprised by the results. It turned out that approximately 52 percent of Ashkenazic Levites who were tested carried haplotypes within the aforementioned haplogroup R1a1,<sup>164</sup> regarded as a sign of eastern European or central Asian origins, with 38 percent of those possessing a particular haplotype that is also found among about 11 percent of Sorbs and about 8.5 percent of Belarusians. Since this is a substantially higher prevalence of R1a1 than among non-Levite Ashkenazic men, and since it is virtually nonexistent among Sephardic Levites, it may point to distinctive origins for the Ashkenazic Levites. Perhaps the founding member(s) of the Ashkenazic Levites included one or more Khazars and/or Slavs. Scientists noted that the founder(s) who introduced R1a1 into the Jewish community probably lived around the year 1000 (no later than the year 1014, but certainly after the separation of the Sephardim and Ashkenazim had taken place) and again pointed out the possibility of Khazarian input into the Ashkenazic gene pool. Both the timing and the geographic location of the input of R1a1 are in line with Norman Golb's theory that some Jewish Khazars had artificially adopted the Levite and Kohen titles (see chapter 6). To generate such a high percentage of Khazar ancestry among Ashkenazic Levites, perhaps a large and prolific Khazarian family whose male members were formerly shamanist priests had reinvented themselves as Levites. If not priests, perhaps they were nobles or royals. But the scientists believe it is most likely that the 38 percent of Ashkenazic Levites with the same haplotype share just one common ancestor who joined the Jewish community.

A small number of Ashkenazic Jewish men possess the haplogroup R1a, which is not identical to R1a1. R1a is also distributed among various populations in eastern Europe and Asia. A small percentage of eastern European Jewish men carry the P-M45 Y-DNA haplogroup. This group is mostly found among peoples of central Siberia and central Asia, such as the Uzbeks. About 5.2 percent of Ashkenazic men possess Y chromosome lineages within the Q-P36 haplogroup,<sup>165</sup> which is found in central and northern Asia as well as among American Indians, but much more rarely among Europeans

and Middle Easterners. It is theoretically possible that Q-P36 is an inheritance from the Khazars, but other ideas could also be advanced to explain its presence.

In addition to traces of Khazarian or Slavic ancestry among Ashkenazim, there are also unexpected inputs from other parts of the world. Ashkenazic Jews from the Netherlands have more non-Judean ancestry in their Y-DNA than all other Ashkenazic communities,<sup>166</sup> and hence they may ethnically be part Dutch. A much smaller percentage of Ashkenazic Jews carry haplogroup N, also from Asia, or haplogroup E\*(xE3b), which is a sub-Saharan African lineage—about 0.2 percent and 0.6 percent, respectively, in a sample of 442 Ashkenazic men. One Ashkenazi Levite was found to carry N\*(xN3), an Asian haplogroup. A very small number of Ashkenazic men from the Baltic region of eastern Europe have haplogroup O-M175, which is found in east Asia as far north as the Lake Baikal region of southern Siberia.

On the maternal side, about 1.8 percent of Ashkenazic mtDNA comes from sub-Saharan Africans, as represented by haplogroup L2a.<sup>167</sup> (For comparison, the rate of L2a is about 4 percent among Sephardim.) About 0.7 percent of Ashkenazic Jews carry the Asian mtDNA haplogroup M\*, while about 0.2 percent carry another Asian haplogroup, A.<sup>168</sup> An additional 1.1 percent of Ashkenazim were found to carry M1, from Asia or east Africa.<sup>169</sup> A Moldovan Jewish woman from California discovered that her mtDNA matches Uzbekistani Jews who live near Bukhara, as well as Han Chinese inhabitants of eastern China and some Mongolians.<sup>170</sup> Geneticists at Trace Genetics Inc. in Davis, California, determined that her mtDNA marker is ultimately eastern Asian in origin.

As we have seen, landmark studies of Y-DNA and mtDNA that explored the relationships between Jews and other religious and ethnic groups have proved useful in determining the complete ethnic history of Ashkenazic Jews. There are additional studies that examine the diffusion of genetic diseases among various populations that have also helped to answer the question of Jewish origins. Not surprisingly, most of the studies of diseases connect Ashkenazim to the Middle East region. For instance, geneticists learned that DFNB1, a genetic mutation that causes deafness, affects some Jews as well as some Palestinian Arabs and other Mediterranean peoples.<sup>171</sup> Iranian Muslims and Ashkenazic Jews share identical haplotypes for the disease called *pemphigus vulgaris*.<sup>172</sup> Familiar Mediterranean fever, a disorder that causes fever and abdominal and joint pain, is found in three genetic forms among Ashkenazic Jews, Sephardic Jews, Iraqi Jews, and North African Jews (especially Moroccan Jews), as well as among Armenians, Anatolian Turks, and Druzes.<sup>173</sup> Since the two variants of the gene probably come from the same founder, all of the groups among which familiar Mediterranean fever is found

must share a common ancestor. The study's examination of one of the two variants seems to confirm that Iraqi Jews and Ashkenazic Jews have a particularly close ancestral relationship. A connection between Iraqi Jews and Ashkenazic Jews was also revealed by studies of the type II mutation for the bleeding disorder called blood coagulation factor XI deficiency, or hemophilia C, which is found at a high frequency among both Jewish populations and dates back either 120 or 185 generations before the start of the twenty-first century to a common ancestor who presumably lived in ancient Israel or Judea.<sup>174</sup> An allele that makes an individual more susceptible to colorectal cancer is found in 6 percent of Ashkenazim and 1–2 percent of Sephardim, as well as among some Arabs, and came from an ancestor who lived between 2,200 and 2,950 years ago.<sup>175</sup> In a study of 120 Ashkenazic Jews with Parkinson's disease, about 18 percent of participants were found to carry the G2019S mutation on the LRRK2 gene, and this mutation is much more common among Jews and North African Arabs than among European sufferers of the disease, suggesting a probable Middle Eastern origin for this mutation.<sup>176</sup>

Some other diseases show that admixtures occurred in historic times between Jews and Europeans. For example, Gaucher disease, a lipid-storage disorder, is found among some Ashkenazic Jews as well as Portuguese, Germans, and certain other European Christian groups.<sup>177</sup>

A theory contends that Tay-Sachs disease is found among Ashkenazic Jews because of the Khazars.<sup>178</sup> A 1983 study contended that Hungarian Jews are probably descended from the Khazars since Hungarian Jews (as well as Austrian Jews and Czech Jews) have a higher frequency of Tay-Sachs carriers than Russian, Polish, or German Jews.<sup>179</sup> In reality, there does not appear to be sufficient evidence to support this theory, and it cannot be shown correct while we remain in the absence of proof that some Khazars also carried Tay-Sachs. A 2004 study concluded that the mutation 1278insTATC, the most common HEXA mutation that causes Tay-Sachs disease, was present in a common ancestor who lived around the eighth to ninth centuries in central Europe, since this mutation is more common to Jews in central Europe than to those in eastern Europe.<sup>180</sup> If so, this would be inconsistent with the idea of a Khazarian founder for Tay-Sachs.

A separate theory suggests that Ashkenazic Jews received the protective CCR5-Delta32 allele through intermarriage with Khazars.<sup>181</sup> This allele protects not only against HIV infection but also rheumatoid arthritis and smallpox, and possibly other diseases as well. The 2003 study noted that about 27 percent of Ashkenazic Jews (especially among East European Jews, compared to West European Jews), about 11 percent of Sephardic Jews, and some non-Jewish Australians carry the allele. Many Europeans, including significant percentages of Icelanders, Swedes, and Mordvinians (a Finno-Ugric

tribe in Russia), are also carriers, but very few Middle Easterners are. The mutation that created CCR5-Delta32 in the CCR5 gene occurred during the medieval period between the years 800 and 1000—back about fifty generations before the beginning of the twenty-first century. The suggestion is that the Khazars contributed the allele both to the Vikings and to the East European Jews, and that it spread from there to other populations.

Due to the current lack of DNA data taken directly from medieval Khazar skeletons, theories connecting particular haplotypes or diseases to the Khazars will remain unprovable—even those that are reasonable solutions. All that can be said with certainty is that Ashkenazic Jews are descended both from the Israelites and from various other peoples of Eurasia, of whom the most likely candidates remain the Khazars, East Slavs, and West Slavs.

### DO ASHKENAZIC JEWS DESCEND FROM KHAZARS?

Historians have debated the question of a Khazar component in modern Ashkenazic Jewry for two centuries. Rabbi Isaac Baer Levinsohn, a nineteenth-century Jewish scholar from Kremenets, Ukraine, who was active in the Haskalah (“Enlightenment”) movement, was an early proponent of the hypothesis that Russian Jews came from Khazaria.<sup>182</sup> In the twentieth century, Abraham Poliak and Arthur Koestler were among the writers who proposed a huge Khazar contribution to Russian Jewry.<sup>183</sup>

Based on the foregoing analysis of the history and genetics of East European Jews, we may say that it is very probable that there is a small Turkic Khazarian element among them. We have already seen how Jewish Khazars survived well past the destruction of their kingdom (see chapter 9). There was neither a geographic nor a chronological gap of any significance separating the Khazarian Jews from the later Jewish settlements in eastern Europe. It does appear that descendants of Khazars could be found among the East Slavic-speaking Jews of Kievan Rus’ and the Lithuanian Grand Duchy. The notion that the large numbers of Khazars in Europe simply vanished, or that all of them adopted Christianity or Islam, is not in accord with the facts. Many of the Khazars remained believers in Judaism, even though they gradually lost their ethnic and linguistic identity. When Yiddish became the dominant language of East European Jews in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the assimilation of the formerly Slavic-speaking Khazars into the overall Jewish community was completed.

Individual communities of Jews in eastern Europe saw times of disruption and trauma. For instance, Jews were expelled from Grodno in 1495, though they returned in 1503 and were spared from the Khmelnytsky massacres in

1648, and the Jewish community of Kiev was disrupted by the Mongol invasion of the 1240s, though many of them escaped to other regions and, perhaps, may have eventually returned to their home city. But even with troubles like these, a large portion of the descendants of Khazarian Jews would have continued to live in eastern Europe. There is no basis for the claim that all Khazarian Jews were wiped out during the 1240s or by any other single event.

A chain of Jewish migrations leading from Khazaria to the Lithuanian Grand Duchy may explain eastern European Jews' initial use of the first name "Pesakh" (the Hebrew word for Passover) instead of the western (Ashkenazic) form "Peysakh." During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, some Jews in places like Brest, Grodno, and Pinsk had the name "Pesakh."<sup>184</sup> The same form, "Pesakh," was used by Khazarian Jews in the tenth century, as illustrated by the example of Pesakh the Khazarian baliqchi in the *Schechter Letter* (see chapter 8). The name "Pesach" or "Pesakh" was generally only used by Jews in eastern Germany (east of the Elbe River) and eastern Europe, as well as among Karaites and Iranian Jews, but not by Sephardic Jews.<sup>185</sup> The "Pesach" form, and the surname "Pesachowitz," were retained among some Polish Jews into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The Yiddish name "Peysakh," meanwhile, was used by Jews in Silesia in the mid-fourteenth century and also in medieval Germany; from the late fifteenth century onward, "Peysakh" was found among Jews in Ukraine and Belarus.<sup>186</sup> "Pesakh" led to the Ashkenazic surname "Pesachowitz."

## DO KRYMCHAKS DESCEND FROM KHAZARS?

Although the Ashkenazim formed the dominant population of Jews in eastern Europe, distinctive communities of Jews developed.

By the late thirteenth century, Jews lived in the Crimean Tatar capital of Solkhat (later called Eski-Krim, but today known as Saryi Krim). A large number of Jews continued to live in the coastal Crimean city of Kaffa (Feodosia) until the late fifteenth century.

By the sixteenth century, the Krymchak sect emerged as the major Jewish population in Crimea. The Krymchaks were rabbinical Jews who adopted the Tatar language between the late fourteenth century and the early sixteenth century. Their dialect was based primarily on Crimean Tatar, although they also used some Hebrew words. However, the Krymchaks read Hebrew in the Sephardic pronunciation rather than the Ashkenazic pronunciation.<sup>187</sup> The Krymchaks used the Hebrew alphabet until 1936 and Cyrillic thereafter.

It has been suggested that the Krymchaks might be a remnant of the Khazars, but this does not seem to be the case. The early Krymchaks called



themselves *srel balalary* (sons of Israel). According to Anatoly Khazanov, the Krymchaks may have descended in part from the early Greek-speaking Jews of the Crimea.<sup>188</sup> It is known that the Krymchaks also descended from many other Jewish emigrants from Europe (especially Spain and Italy) and the Middle East (especially Persia and Turkey).<sup>189</sup> Some Ashkenazic family names found among the Krymchaks were “Berman,” “Vejnberg,” “Fisher,” “Achkinazi,” and “Lurje,” and other Krymchaks held surnames deriving from Italy, Spain, Turkey, and the Caucasus.<sup>190</sup> In other words, the Krymchaks were a mix of Ashkenazim, Bavli (Babylonian), and Romaniote Jews.

Krymchaks lived in many Crimean towns—in particular, Bakhchisarai, Karasu Bazar (modern Belogorsk), Eski-Krim, Kaffa, Kerch, Mangup, Sevastopol, Simferopol, Yalta, and Yevpatoria. Small groups of Krymchaks later settled outside of the Crimea: in Odessa (Ukraine), Temryuk (southern Russia), and Taman (southern Russia). Most of the Krymchaks worked as craftsmen and merchants, although some were gardeners and vineyard keepers.

Krymchak culture was similar to the Crimean Tatar culture. The Krymchaks’ dances, recipes, clothing, and homes resembled those of their Tatar neighbors.

Linguistically, the Krymchak language was most closely related to Crimean Tatar, the extinct Belarusian-Lithuanian Tatar language, the nearly extinct Karaim language spoken by the Jewish Karaite sect, and the Kumyk and Karachay-Balkar languages of the north Caucasus.<sup>191</sup> All of these languages are members of the Kipchak (Cumanic/Pontic) branch of the Turkic languages (see table 4.1). The type of Turkic spoken by the Khazars is still under debate (see chapter 4); if it was an Oghuric form of Turkic, as some scholars believe, it certainly could not have resembled Krymchak, but even if it was a type of Common Turkic, there may have still been significant differences. In any event, there appears to be no evidence that Krymchak (or the related Karaim) was the language of the Jewish Khazars.

In the early twentieth century, many Krymchaks adopted the Russian language. About 70 percent of Krymchaks were murdered by the Nazis and their collaborators during the German occupation of the Crimea in 1941 and 1942. Remnants of the Krymchaks survive in the Crimea, Russia, Israel, and the United States. The Krymchak language, however, is now essentially extinct.

## DO CRIMEAN AND LITHUANIAN KARAITES DESCEND FROM KHAZARS?

The Karaites are a distinctive sect separate from mainstream Judaism. In early medieval times Karaism gained followers in Egypt, Palestine, Mesopotamia,

and Asia Minor, some of whom later migrated northward into eastern Europe. The Karaites adhered strictly to the written word of the Torah and rejected the Mishnah, Talmud, and all aspects of Oral Law. Unlike rabbinical Jews, the early Karaites did not kindle lights on the evening of the Sabbath and generally spent it in the dark and without the warmth of a fire. However, the Karaite leader Menahem ben Joseph Bashyazi permitted the kindling of Sabbath candles around 1440, and his example was followed by Karaites who lived in Lithuania, Poland, Crimea, and Turkey. Additionally, the Karaites did not use the standard Jewish calendar and did not observe the Hanukkah festival.

The first definite evidence of Karaism in eastern Europe dates from the 1180s, when Rabbi Petakhiah met “heretics” in the “land of Kedar” (see chapter 9). The earliest known Karaite settlements on the Crimean peninsula date from 1278.<sup>192</sup> Zvi Ankori, an expert on Karaite history, was of the opinion that Karaites probably did not settle in eastern Europe before the twelfth century.<sup>193</sup> It is clear that the Karaites arrived in the Crimea only after rabbinical Jews had already built up major settlements there. It is known that many Karaites came to the Crimea from Istanbul during the thirteenth through eighteenth centuries in many waves.<sup>194</sup>

The early Crimean Karaites generally worked as farmers, though in later years many of them became shopkeepers, traders, tanners, and crafters.

At the end of the fourteenth century, the Lithuanian Grand Duke Vytautas allowed three hundred Crimean Karaite families to settle in Troki. The Karaite manuscript collector Abraham Firkovitch invented the myth that these Karaites guarded the Troki castle.<sup>195</sup> Crimean Karaites also settled in Panevezys, a city north of Troki, during this time, as well as in the cities of Lutsk, Halicz, and Kiev. Some descendants of the Lithuanian Karaites moved to the Crimea in the nineteenth century.<sup>196</sup> The Karaim-speaking communities of Lithuania and nearby Poland are today not very numerous, due in part to assimilation and immigration, and there is still the risk of their extinction.

Many scholars used to suggest that the Crimean and Lithuanian Karaites were the direct descendants of the Khazars. One of the advocates of this view was Ananiasz Zajaczkowski, a Turkologist of Karaite origin, who wrote, “The Karaims fully deserve to be called the rightful successors of Khazarian culture.”<sup>197</sup> Zajaczkowski alleged that Karaite missionaries converted many Turkic tribes (such as Khazars and Cumans) in the steppes surrounding the Black and Caspian seas. To bolster his argument, he cited the *Great Soviet Encyclopedia* of 1957, which claimed that the Khazar rulers embraced Karaism.

Zajaczkowski also explained that numerous Persian and Arabic words exist in the Karaim language. He assumed that these words were acquired in multicultural Khazaria.<sup>198</sup> Actually, it is much more probable that such words

were adopted by the Karaites during their former residence in the Middle East. Zajaczkowski expanded his linguistic argument by mentioning that the Karaites speak a Kipchak dialect but use Hebrew as a liturgical language. He tried to explain this by the Khazars' adoption of the Hebrew script but retention of a Turkic language.

Other scholars have asserted that Khazarian legends and cuisine were passed on to the Crimean Karaites. Two Karaite desserts that are said to be Khazarian recipes include *khazar khalvasy* (Khazar halva), a dark-colored cake eaten on days of mourning, and a seven-layered cheesecake called *kat-lama*.<sup>199</sup> The problem here is that we do not know any medieval Khazarian recipes and thus cannot scientifically compare Karaite cuisine with Khazarian cuisine. The Karaites also have several songs and sayings that include folkloric references to the Khazars. One of these songs contains these verses: "I saddled my horse, with three arrows in my quiver. If I kill three enemies with my bow, the Khazar king will give me a gift."<sup>200</sup> A popular Karaite saying states, "When snowflakes fall, Grandfather slaughters a reindeer. The Khazar lad gallops on a horse and our rich people celebrate."<sup>201</sup> The existence of songs and sayings about the Khazars among the Karaites does not necessarily bear upon their ethnic origin, since awareness of the Khazars was also common among modern Russians, Ossetians, Circassians, and other non-Khazar groups prior to the late twentieth century. In fact, some of these songs, as well as the name of *khazar khalvasy*, were invented by Sheraya Markovich Shapshal (1873–1961), the chief rabbi (*hakham*) of the Lithuanian Karaites of Troki in the late 1920s and 1930s, who advocated the notion that his people were descendants of the Khazars. This contrasted sharply with the position of most earlier Karaites, such as the early nineteenth-century Crimean Karaite writer Mordehay Kazas, who explained in his book *Tuv Taam*, "I come from Jews; I am a descendant of Jacob, son of Isaac, who is a son of Abraham. They call my motherland Israel. My language is *leshon ha-kodesh* [the holy tongue, i.e., Hebrew]."<sup>202</sup>

To adequately address the question of whether Karaites are Khazars, it is necessary to refer back to documentary evidence. The adherence of the Khazars to the Talmud and Mishnah was indicated by *King Joseph's Reply* (see chapter 6), and Talmud study in Khazaria was also reported by the *Chronicle of Elchanan the Merchant* (see chapter 1). Abraham ibn Daud explicitly stated in *Sefer ha-Qabbalah* that the Khazars he met in Spain were rabbinical (see chapter 9), and the Khazars who lived in the Jewish district of Pera in the eleventh century clearly were mainstream Jews and not Karaites (see chapter 9). *King Joseph's Reply* also contains the name of King Hanukkah, from the holiday that Karaites did not practice (see chapter 6). We also recall that the wording of the *Kievan Letter* indicated that the Jews, possibly Khazars, who lived in Kiev were rabbinical (see chapter 6). Their descendants, who apparently tried to convince

Prince Vladimir of Kiev to adopt their faith, likewise professed mainstream rabbinical Judaism rather than the belief of a small sect (see chapter 9). These facts reveal that the Khazars' belief system was incompatible with Karaism, which from the beginning rejected the Talmud and Mishnah. There is, in fact, no documentation indicating Khazar adherence to Karaism.<sup>203</sup>

It is also significant that tenth-century Karaites condescended to and criticized the Khazars for being proselytes and thus, in their view, illegitimate *mamzerim* (bastards) (see chapter 6). This type of scorn would not have been directed by Karaites toward other Karaites.

There appear to be no aboriginal Khazar traditions among the Karaites. The Byzantine Karaites adopted Tataric surnames only by the fifteenth century when they fell under Turkish rule.<sup>204</sup> Even the Tataric language that the Karaites adopted was not Khazarian. As already mentioned, the Karaites of eastern Europe, like the Krymchaks, spoke a Kipchak dialect, while most of the Khazars may have spoken Oghuric rather than Common Turkic, or alternatively a form of Common Turkic unrelated to Kipchak, such as a language closer to Oghuz. What is more, the Greek vocabulary in the Karaim language testifies to their roots in Byzantium. The Karaites of Istanbul, from whom the Crimean Karaites truly descend, spoke Greek as their native language and were related to the Greek-speaking Romaniote Jews.<sup>205</sup> After arriving in the Crimea, these Karaites began to speak Crimean Tatar or Anatolian Turkish, and those in Lithuania and Poland spoke their Kipchak dialect called Karaim, which they had learned originally during their residence in the empire of the Golden Horde.<sup>206</sup>

From March 2005 to February 2006, I conducted a study on eastern European Karaite men's Y-DNA using the services of Family Tree DNA of Houston, Texas. The sample size was limited due to a small pool of qualifying persons who could be reached and were interested in participating. Eight valid samples were gathered: seven from paternal descendants of Crimean Karaites from Ukraine and one from a paternal descendant of Polish Karaites. None of the men was paternally related to another in the study. The Polish Karaite was found to be a member of haplogroup G2, as was one of the Crimean Karaites. G and G2 are also found in about 5 percent of Ashkenazic Jews, and Family Tree DNA's president, Bennett Greenspan, who provided assistance with the Karaite project, is confident that these Karaites got G2 from Middle Eastern ancestry. Four of the other Crimean Karaites placed within the Middle Eastern haplogroup J—two within the subgroup J1 and two within the subgroup J2. One of those in J2 matched on all twelve tested markers with a Syrian Arab. Another Crimean Karaite was found to belong to haplogroup Q, which, as already mentioned, has central Asian connections and is also found among approximately 5 percent of Ashkenazim. Our Karaite Q matched on all twelve

markers with two Ashkenazim and men from Hungary and Lithuania. One of the Crimean Karaite samples placed in none of these; his one-step mutation matches were with men whose families are from Egypt, Germany, and Spain, and his haplogroup is L.

Finally, it must be stressed that the heretical Karaites who lived in the land of Kedar toward the end of the twelfth century were probably not Khazars (see chapter 9). Scholars have sometimes erroneously presumed that these heretics, who sat in the dark on Sabbath, were Khazars, without considering the distinction between Khozaria and Kedar in Rabbi Petakhiah's travelogue.

The acclimation of the Crimean and Lithuanian Karaites into the Turkic realm does not seem to reflect a Khazar origin. "Clearly," remarked Philip Miller, "the case for the Khazar origins of the Crimean Karaites is not a strong one."<sup>207</sup> The origin of the Karaites is thus to be found in the Middle East (although the Karaites may have intermarried with Crimean Tatars), as Karaism was not professed in Crimea or eastern Europe until after Khazaria's decline and fall. The so-called Khazar cakes, songs, and sayings are actually modern inventions inspired by the propaganda of Firkovitch and his disciples, who during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries created the myth that the Khazars practiced Karaism and that Karaites are the descendants of the Turkic Khazars rather than the Judeans, partly to gain advantages from the czarist government, freeing Karaites from anti-Jewish discrimination by separating them from other Jews. Firkovitch had emphasized the Turkic connections of eastern European Karaites, but he did not himself claim that they were Khazars, except to claim that the Khazars had adopted Karaism.<sup>208</sup> In fact, he claimed that the Karaites were a separate group of Israelites who had split in biblical times from rabbinical Jews. Shapshal was the mastermind behind creating the belief that Karaites were the actual ethnic descendants of medieval Khazars and Cumans.<sup>209</sup> Modern Crimean Karaites fiercely defend their false identity, even to the extent of issuing direct physical threats against archaeologists who came during 1997 and 2003 to Chufut-Kale to study tombstones that Firkovitch had deliberately misinterpreted,<sup>210</sup> including two that he faked inscriptions for to make it seem like they marked the burial site of Rabbi Yitzhak ha-Sangari and his wife. The claim that Karaite anti-Talmudists of Middle Eastern origin have a connection with Talmudic Turkic Khazar scholars of the steppe whom they criticized is untenable.

### **DO MOUNTAIN JEWS OF THE CAUCASUS DESCEND FROM KHAZARS?**

Some writers, including Arthur Koestler,<sup>211</sup> have conjectured that the Mountain Jews of Daghestan and Azerbaijan have Khazarian ancestry. Others<sup>212</sup>

have suggested that they partially descend from Alans who converted to Judaism during the tenth century (see appendix D, “Other Instances of Conversion to Judaism in History”). The traditional language of the Mountain Jews, Juhuri, is part of the Iranian language family and contains many Hebrew elements. In Juhuri, they call themselves *Juhuri* (Derbent dialect) or *Juwuri* (Kuba dialect), and in Russian they are known as *Gorskie Yevrey*.

In reality, the Mountain Jews primarily descend from Persian Jews who came to the Caucasus during the fifth and sixth centuries.<sup>213</sup> This is clear not only by the culture and language of the Mountain Jews but also by their genetic inheritance from the Israelites. The genetic data connecting Mountain Jews’ Y-DNA (paternal) haplotypes to other Jewish communities and peoples of the Mediterranean region were announced by geneticist Dror Rosengarten in 2002.<sup>214</sup>

However, Mountain Jews probably encountered the Khazars during the era of the Khazar kingdom, and small elements of culture appear to have been exchanged between the two groups. For instance, among the Mountain Jews, some very common names are derived from Hebrew words for Jewish holidays, including the men’s names “Khanuko” and “Pisakh” and the woman’s name “Purim.” We recall that the Khazars also used the personal names “Hanukkah” and “Pesakh.” Moreover, the historian Igor Semyonov noted that the name “Nisu” (also spelled “Nusu”) is frequently found among Mountain Jews,<sup>215</sup> and it appears to derive from the Hebrew name “Nisi,” which again was used by the Khazars. The researcher Zvi Abraham found that some Mountain Jews are named “Savriil,” equal to the Hebrew form “Sabriel” or “Savriel,” the alternate name of Bulan, the first Jewish king of Khazaria (see chapter 6). The rare female Hebrew name “Serakh” (also the name of King Sabriel’s wife) was also in use among the Mountain Jews.<sup>216</sup> Some historians, including Haiko Haumann, view the Mountain Jews as a combination of Khazarian Jews and Persian Jews.<sup>217</sup>

## DO GEORGIAN JEWS DESCEND FROM KHAZARS?

Some researchers have also proposed Khazar roots for the Jews from the Republic of Georgia in the southwestern Caucasus. These Jews are known in Hebrew as the *Gruzininim*, and in Russian as *Gruzinskie Yevrey*. They call themselves *Ebraeli*. Their traditional language is Judeo-Georgian, a mixture of Georgian and Hebrew.

The historian Ken Blady explained the early history of the Georgian Jews as follows:

According to Georgian and Armenian chronicles, the Jews arrived in Transcaucasia possibly as early as 722 BCE, after the Assyrian invasion of Northern

Israel, or possibly with Nebuchadnezzar's exiles in 586 BCE. Whenever their exact arrival, most historians agree that there was a sizable Jewish settlement in the region at the beginning of the Common Era. . . . From the sixth century onward, waves of Jews fleeing persecution in the Byzantine Empire found refuge in the Transcaucasus. There were also Jewish migrations from Armenia and Persia to Georgia around this time. Very little is known about Georgian Jews in the Middle Ages, or the relationship between Georgian Jewry and the Jewish kingdom of Khazaria. What is known is that Georgian Jews were the principal middlemen in trade with the Persian, the Arab, and the Byzantine world. Georgian Jewish merchants traversed the Silk Route and maintained contact with Jewish centers of learning in Persia and Babylonia.<sup>218</sup>

According to Dror Rosengarten, Georgian Jews are more closely related to European peoples than Mediterranean peoples in terms of their Y-DNA, though they also have some Mediterranean haplotypes, and they are not closely related to the Mountain Jews.<sup>219</sup> Their mtDNA also appears to be distinct from other Jews. I am not aware of any sort of data that would suggest a connection with the Khazars. The Khazars were not yet Jews at the times they had occupied Georgia (seventh and eighth centuries). It is much more likely that the Georgian Jews descend substantially from the ethnic Georgian people, with a smaller Israelite component.

## CONCLUSIONS

Existing evidence, taken as a whole, demonstrates that while East European Jews are descended both from the Jews of the ancient Middle East and from various non-Jewish peoples (including Slavs and possibly Khazars), the Israelite element constitutes the majority of their ancestry. When Central European Jews from Germany, Bohemia, Moravia, and Austria migrated eastward, they joined with existing Jewish communities of the East, including the East Slavic-speaking Jews, whom they outnumbered. The thirteenth through fifteenth centuries were the critical period of mass migration from central Europe into Poland, and from the fifteenth through the seventeenth centuries, many of these western Jews moved further east into lands now part of Belarus and Lithuania.

After the Khazars converted to Judaism, their identity transformed from Turkic to Jewish. Jewish law requires converts to become part of the overall Jewish community and be considered children of Abraham. The convert is said by Talmudic scholars to be like a newborn child, and any relatives he/she had before conversion are no longer considered his/her relatives.<sup>220</sup> Judaism's prayers and holidays also emphasize a connection to the ancient land of Israel—and not to Khazaria. As Jacob Agus wrote:

When non-Jewish groups accepted the Jewish faith, they also embraced the myth of Hebraic descent. . . . Even the Khazars who were converted to Judaism in the light of history regarded themselves as somehow of the “seed” and the “blood” of ancient Israel. They belonged at least in part to the tribe of “Simeon” or the “half-tribe Menasseh.”<sup>221</sup>

In fact, the Jewish religion only recognizes three “official” tribal statuses: Israel, Kohen, and Levi. Hence, although Kohens and Levites are provided with the appellations “ha-Kohen” and “ha-Levi” to attach to their Hebrew names, it is unlikely that descendants of the Khazars attached a special tribal designation like “ha-Kuzari” to their names.<sup>222</sup> Thus, the apparent integration of the Khazars into Slavic-speaking Jewish communities in eastern Europe, and later into Yiddish-speaking ones, was facilitated by the Jewish religion.

## NOTES

1. Benjamin Harshav, *The Meaning of Yiddish* (Los Angeles and Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 5–6. Similar processes of large-scale linguistic change have occurred throughout Jewish history. In the twentieth century, most children and grandchildren of newly arrived American Jews switched from Yiddish to English, while Israeli Jews adopted Hebrew as their common language, both populations largely abandoning their former native languages. In late medieval Spain, Jews switched from Arabic to Ladino, which is mostly a form of Spanish.

2. Nathan Ausubel, *Pictorial History of the Jewish People* (New York: Crown, 1953), 133.

3. On the sparseness of references to Jews in Rus', see Alexander Pereswetoff-Morath, *A Grin without a Cat* (Lund, Sweden: Department of East and Central European Studies, Lund University, 2002), 2:13.

4. Pereswetoff-Morath, *A Grin without a Cat*, 2:57. Pereswetoff-Morath thought that this assembly probably gathered during the 1060s.

5. Pereswetoff-Morath, *A Grin without a Cat*, 2:59–60. This information comes from a letter from the community of Thessalonica. His native language is called “Kana'anite” in the letter. Incidentally, this Rus' Jew made plans to follow his relative's footsteps in traveling to Jerusalem.

6. Eckhard Eggers, *Sprachwandel und Sprachmischung im Jiddischen* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1998), 195–98.

7. Alexander Beider, *A Dictionary of Ashkenazic Given Names: Their Origins, Structure, Pronunciations, and Migrations* (Bergenfield, NJ: Avotaynu, 2001), 35, 406, 408.

8. Beider, *A Dictionary of Ashkenazic Given Names*, 35–36, 200–2, 289, 290, 303, 331, 332, 345, 358–60, 424, 439, 442, 477, 492.

9. Beider, *A Dictionary of Ashkenazic Given Names*, 194, 356.

10. Beider, *A Dictionary of Ashkenazic Given Names*, 201.



11. Beider, *A Dictionary of Ashkenazic Given Names*, 195.
12. Beider, *A Dictionary of Ashkenazic Given Names*, 197.
13. Beider, *A Dictionary of Ashkenazic Given Names*, 198.
14. Cosmas of Prague, *Die Chronik der Bohmen des Cosmas von Prag*, trans. Bertold Bretholz (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1955), 2:166.
15. Bernard D. Weinryb, "Origins of East European Jewry: Myth and Fact," *Commentary* 24 (1957): 515.
16. Beider, *A Dictionary of Ashkenazic Given Names*, 173, 185.
17. Bernard D. Weinryb, *The Jews of Poland: A Social and Economic History of the Jewish Community in Poland from 1100 to 1800* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1973), 30. These Jews formerly lived in places like Prague and Chomutov (see Beider, *A Dictionary of Ashkenazic Given Names*, 186).
18. Beider, *A Dictionary of Ashkenazic Given Names*, 204–5.
19. Beider, *A Dictionary of Ashkenazic Given Names*, 205.
20. Beider, *A Dictionary of Ashkenazic Given Names*, 190.
21. A translation of Prince Boleslaw's 1264 charter may be found in Alexis P. Rubin, ed., *Scattered among the Nations: Documents Affecting Jewish History 49 to 1975* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1995), 88–89.
22. Jacob Litman, *The Economic Role of Jews in Medieval Poland: The Contribution of Yitzhak Schipper* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984), 98. The 1244 charter was granted to the Austrian Jews by Duke Frederick II.
23. Weinryb, "Origins of East European Jewry: Myth and Fact," 518.
24. Weinryb, *The Jews of Poland*, 29, 30; Bernard Rosensweig, "The Thirteenth Tribe, the Khazars and the Origins of East European Jewry," *Tradition* 16, no. 5 (Fall 1977): 156.
25. Weinryb, *The Jews of Poland*, 30–31.
26. Weinryb, "Origins of East European Jewry," 518.
27. Leonard B. Glick, *Abraham's Heirs: Jews and Christians in Medieval Europe* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1999), 273.
28. Beider, *A Dictionary of Ashkenazic Given Names*, 198.
29. Beider, *A Dictionary of Ashkenazic Given Names*, 195–96.
30. Weinryb, "Origins of East European Jewry," 518.
31. Eggers, *Sprachwandel und Sprachmischung im Jiddischen*, 180.
32. Eggers, *Sprachwandel und Sprachmischung im Jiddischen*, 180–81, 191.
33. Robert D. King, "Migration and Linguistics as Illustrated by Yiddish," in *Reconstructing Languages and Cultures*, ed. Edgar C. Polem  and Werner Winter (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1992), 426–28.
34. King, "Migration and Linguistics as Illustrated by Yiddish," 434–36.
35. Beider, *A Dictionary of Ashkenazic Given Names*, 169.
36. Maurice Samuel, *In Praise of Yiddish* (New York: Cowles, 1971), 29.
37. "Canaan" alluded to the fact that it was the land of enslaved Slavic children. In 1031, Yehudah ha-Kohen referred to Kievan Rus' as the "Greek Canaan" (see Litman, *The Economic Role of Jews in Medieval Poland*, 93). In the twelfth century, Benjamin of Tudela noted that the Russian or Bohemian Jews of his time called the land of the Slavs "Canaan" (see Benjamin of Tudela, *The Itinerary of Benjamin of*

*Tudela*, trans. Marcus N. Adler [Malibu, CA: Joseph Simon/Pangloss Press, 1987], 139).

38. Paul Wexler, *Two-Tiered Relexification in Yiddish: Jews, Sorbs, Khazars, and the Kiev-Polessian Dialect* (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2002), 518.

39. Beider, *A Dictionary of Ashkenazic Given Names*, 196.

40. Beider, *A Dictionary of Ashkenazic Given Names*, 195.

41. Beider, *A Dictionary of Ashkenazic Given Names*, 206–7.

42. Robert D. King and Alice Faber, “Yiddish and the Settlement History of Ashkenazic Jews,” in *Approaches to Judaism in Medieval Times*, ed. David R. Blumenthal (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1984), 1:91.

43. Paul Wexler, *The Ashkenazic Jews* (Columbus, OH: Slavica, 1993), 113, 132. Cf., for example, the Karachay-Balkarian word for a caftan, *qaftal*, and the Ottoman Turkish form, *qaft*.

44. Wexler, *The Ashkenazic Jews*, 131.

45. Herbert G. Zeiden, “Khazar/Kipchak Turkisms in Yiddish: Words and Surnames,” *Yiddish* 11, nos. 1–2 (1998): 85–86.

46. Herbert G. Zeiden, “Davenen: A Turkic Etymology,” *Yiddish* 10, nos. 2–3 (1996): 96–97.

47. Peter B. Golden, “Chopsticks and Pasta in Medieval Turkic Cuisine,” *Rocznik Orientalistyczny* 49, no. 2 (1994): 78–79.

48. Zeiden, “Khazar/Kipchak Turkisms in Yiddish,” 87.

49. Zeiden, “Khazar/Kipchak Turkisms in Yiddish,” 83–84. Compare with the Chuvash verb for “catch” or “snatch,” *kap-* or *xăp-*, the Old Turkic form *qap-*, and the Anatolian Turkish form *kap-*.

50. Zeiden, “Khazar/Kipchak Turkisms in Yiddish,” 83.

51. Zeiden, “Khazar/Kipchak Turkisms in Yiddish,” 84–85.

52. Zeiden, “Khazar/Kipchak Turkisms in Yiddish,” 86.

53. Arthur Kurzweil, *From Generation to Generation* (New York: Morrow, 1980), 253.

54. Ruth E. Gruber, *Jewish Heritage Travel: A Guide to East-Central Europe*, 3rd ed. (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1999), 72.

55. Beider, *A Dictionary of Ashkenazic Given Names*, 204.

56. Daniel E. Gershenson, “Yiddish ‘davenen’ and the Ashkenazic Rite: Byzantine Jewry and the Ashkenazim,” *Yiddish* 10, nos. 2–3 (1996): 84.

57. See Norman Golb and Omeljan Pritsak, *Khazarian Hebrew Documents of the Tenth Century* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1982), 10–11.

58. Gershenson, “Yiddish ‘davenen’ and the Ashkenazic Rite,” 85.

59. Yaffa Eliach, *There Once Was a World* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1998), 3, 19.

60. Beider, *A Dictionary of Ashkenazic Given Names*, 162–64, 176. Mizrakhi Jews also arrived in various parts of Germany by the late twelfth century, carrying such names as Sar Shalom, Chanina, Mevorach, Tanchum, and Rabba.

61. Pereswetoff-Morath, *A Grin without a Cat*, 2:54–55.

62. Pereswetoff-Morath, *A Grin without a Cat*, 2:54.

63. Pereswetoff-Morath, *A Grin without a Cat*, 2:3, 20, 56.

64. Pereswetoff-Morath, *A Grin without a Cat*, 2:56.

65. Henrik Birnbaum, "On Jewish Life and Anti-Jewish Sentiments in Medieval Russia," in *Essays in Early Slavic Civilization*, ed. Henrik Birnbaum (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1981), 222.

66. Pereswetoff-Morath, *A Grin without a Cat*, 2:105–9.

67. Pereswetoff-Morath, *A Grin without a Cat*, 2:107, 115.

68. Pereswetoff-Morath, *A Grin without a Cat*, 2:107.

69. Pereswetoff-Morath, *A Grin without a Cat*, 2:110–11, 113.

70. Birnbaum, "On Jewish Life and Anti-Jewish Sentiments in Medieval Russia," 244; Michael F. Hamm, *Kiev: A Portrait, 1800–1917* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 117.

71. Pereswetoff-Morath, *A Grin without a Cat*, 2:105–6. Długosz stated that the soldiers "attacked and pillaged the court of the Kievan Palatine Putyata, a wealthy man at that time, then individuals among these Jews who were staying in Kiev." (Pereswetoff-Morath, *A Grin without a Cat*, 106). This is similar to part of the account in the *Hypatian Chronicle* ("But the men of Kiev looted the palace of Putyata the *chiliarch*, and attacked and looted Zhidove"), except that Zhidove has transformed into "individuals among these Jews," and men who were apparently average subjects have become "the soldiery." While Kiev's Jews may still have been living in Zhidove during the early twelfth century, this is not provable, and Pereswetoff-Morath suggests that it had become by that point a purely geographical term. Incidentally, there is no evidence to support the claim that in 1018 Zhidove was inhabited by Jewish Radhanite traders (as claimed by Kazimierz Piechotka and Maria Piechotka, *Wooden Synagogues*, trans. Rulka Langer [Warsaw: Arkady, 1959], 48).

72. Birnbaum, "On Jewish Life and Anti-Jewish Sentiments in Medieval Russia," 223.

73. Pereswetoff-Morath, *A Grin without a Cat*, 2:108.

74. Pereswetoff-Morath, *A Grin without a Cat*, 2:63; Salo W. Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965), 10:31.

75. Weinryb, *The Jews of Poland*, 24.

76. Samuel, *In Praise of Yiddish*, 29.

77. Itzhak Schipper, "Rozwój ludności Żydowskiej na ziemiach Dawnej Rzeczypospolitej," in *Żydzi w Polsce Odrodzonej*, ed. Aleksander Hafftko, Itzhak Schipper, and Aryeh Tartakower (Warsaw, 1936), 28.

78. Pereswetoff-Morath, *A Grin without a Cat*, 2:63–64.

79. Nora Berend, *At the Gate of Christendom: Jews, Muslims and "Pagans" in Medieval Hungary, c. 1000–c. 1300* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 227–28. Hence, Berend claimed there was not a decline of religious knowledge, and Eliezer's words cannot be taken at face value (Berend, *At the Gate of Christendom*, 228), yet she added that the Hungarian Jewish communities did not attain higher levels of learning during the Middle Ages (229).

80. Pereswetoff-Morath, *A Grin without a Cat*, 2:40.

81. Pereswetoff-Morath, *A Grin without a Cat*, 2:20, 56.

82. Christopher Dawson, ed., *The Mongol Mission: Narratives and Letters of the Franciscan Missionaries in Mongolia and China in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1955), 30.

83. Birnbaum, "On Jewish Life and Anti-Jewish Sentiments in Medieval Russia," 232–33, 253.
84. Pereswettoff-Morath, *A Grin without a Cat*, 2:16–17, 121.
85. Pereswettoff-Morath, *A Grin without a Cat*, 2: 20.
86. Pereswettoff-Morath, *A Grin without a Cat*, 2: 40.
87. Shmuel Ettinger, "Jewish Participation in the Settlement of Ukraine in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century," in *Ukrainian-Jewish Relations in Historical Perspective*, ed. Howard Aster and Peter J. Potichnyj (Edmonton, Alberta, Canada: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 1990), 26.
88. Pereswettoff-Morath, *A Grin without a Cat*, 2:15.
89. Pereswettoff-Morath, *A Grin without a Cat*, 2:18–19.
90. Beider, *A Dictionary of Ashkenazic Given Names*, 189.
91. Pereswettoff-Morath, *A Grin without a Cat*, 2:65.
92. Pereswettoff-Morath, *A Grin without a Cat*, 2:64–65.
93. Bernard D. Weinryb, "The Hebrew Chronicles on Bohdan Khmel'nyts'kyi and the Cossack-Polish War," *Journal of the Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute* 1, no. 2 (June 1977): 157–58.
94. Pereswettoff-Morath, *A Grin without a Cat*, 2:114–15.
95. Philip E. Miller, ed., *Karaite Separatism in Nineteenth-Century Russia: Solomon Lutski's Epistle of Israel's Deliverance* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1993), 3.
96. Birnbaum, "On Jewish Life and Anti-Jewish Sentiments in Medieval Russia," 241.
97. See Piotr Wrobel, "The Jews of Galicia under Austrian-Polish Rule, 1869–1918," *Austrian History Yearbook* 25 (1994): 97–138.
98. Paul Wexler, "The Reconstruction of Pre-Ashkenazic Jewish Settlements in the Slavic Lands in the Light of Linguistic Sources," *Polin* 1 (1986): 4.
99. Wexler, "The Reconstruction of Pre-Ashkenazic Jewish Settlements," 4, 12.
100. Pereswettoff-Morath, *A Grin without a Cat*, 2:125.
101. Salo W. Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1957), 3:219.
102. Pereswettoff-Morath, *A Grin without a Cat*, 2:125.
103. Weinryb, *The Jews of Poland*, 21.
104. Aleksander Gieysztor, "The Beginnings of Jewish Settlement in the Polish Lands," in *The Jews in Poland*, ed. Chimen Abramsky, Maciej Jachimczyk, and Antony Polonsky (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 17–18.
105. Itzhak Schipper, "Dzieje gospodarcze Żydów Korony i Litwy w czasach przedrozbiorowych," in *Żydzi w Polsce Odrodzonej*, ed. Aleksander Hafftko, Itzhak Schipper, and Aryeh Tartakower (Warsaw, 1936), 111.
106. Gruber, *Jewish Heritage Travel*, 71.
107. Schipper, "Dzieje gospodarcze Żydów Korony i Litwy," 111–12.
108. Weinryb, "Origins of East European Jewry," 516. There was a "Jewish well" in Płock in 1237.
109. Litman, *The Economic Role of Jews in Medieval Poland*, 97–98.
110. Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, 10:33.

111. Weinryb, "Origins of East European Jewry," 516.
112. Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, 10:32.
113. Litman, *The Economic Role of Jews in Medieval Poland*, 98.
114. Alexander Beider, "The Birth of Yiddish and the Paradigm of the Rhenish Origin of Ashkenazic Jews," *Revue des études juives* 163, nos. 1–2 (2004): 193–244.
115. Weinryb, *The Jews of Poland*, 30.
116. Hamm, *Kiev*, 118.
117. Nancy Schoenburg and Stuart Schoenburg, *Lithuanian Jewish Communities* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1996), 17–18.
118. Masha Greenbaum, *The Jews of Lithuania: A History of a Remarkable Community, 1316–1945* (Jerusalem: Gefen, 1995), 353. However, most Jews were forbidden from permanently residing in Kaunas during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Some Jewish traders from Ukraine and Poland lived there temporarily during Grand Duke Vytautas' reign (1392–1430).
119. Greenbaum, *The Jews of Lithuania*, 4–5.
120. Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, 10:46.
121. Heiko Haumann, *A History of East European Jews* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2002), 5.
122. Beider, *A Dictionary of Ashkenazic Given Names*, 203.
123. Schoenburg and Schoenburg, *Lithuanian Jewish Communities*, 116, 222, 293.
124. Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, 10:36.
125. Beider, *A Dictionary of Ashkenazic Given Names*, 194.
126. Schoenburg and Schoenburg, *Lithuanian Jewish Communities*, 17.
127. Schoenburg and Schoenburg, *Lithuanian Jewish Communities*, 348–49.
128. Raphael Patai, *The Jews of Hungary: History, Culture, Psychology* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1996), 31, 34.
129. Berend, *At the Gate of Christendom*, 60–61.
130. Berend, *At the Gate of Christendom*, 62.
131. Berend, *At the Gate of Christendom*, 229, 231.
132. Alfred Posselt, *Geschichte des chazarisch-jüdischen Staates* (Vienna: Vereines zur Förderung und Pflege des Reformjudentums, 1982), 54; Arthur Koestler, *The Thirteenth Tribe: The Khazar Empire and Its Heritage* (New York: Random House, 1976), 143.
133. Berend, *At the Gate of Christendom*, 233.
134. Franciszek Kupfer and Tadeusz Lewicki, *Źródła hebrajskie do dziejów słowian i niektórych innych ludów środkowej i wschodniej Europy* (Wrocław, Poland: Ossolineum, Wydawnictwo Polskiej Akademii Nauk, 1956), 56ff.
135. Berend, *At the Gate of Christendom*, 124.
136. Patai, *The Jews of Hungary*, 41.
137. Patai, *The Jews of Hungary*, 42–43. King Kálmán's government also passed restrictions on the Muslim Bulgars living in Hungary.
138. As noted, Hungarian Jewish mint lessees, like Jewish mint masters in Poland, had Hebrew letters engraved on the coins they were associated with (see also Alexander Scheiber, *Jewish Inscriptions in Hungary from the 3rd Century to 1686* [Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1983], 77).

139. Patai, *The Jews of Hungary*, 48–49.
140. Patai, *The Jews of Hungary*, 39.
141. Patai, *The Jews of Hungary*, 56.
142. Patai, *The Jews of Hungary*, 72. Glick indicates that the French Jewish refugees moved in an eastward direction, and some were attacked by Christians (see Glick, *Abraham's Heirs*, 271).
143. Michael F. Hammer, Harry Ostrer, et al., "Jewish and Middle Eastern Non-Jewish Populations Share a Common Pool of Y-chromosome Biallelic Haplotypes," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 97, no. 12 (June 6, 2000): 6769–74.
144. Nicholas Wade, "Y Chromosome Bears Witness to Story of the Jewish Diaspora," *New York Times*, May 9, 2000, F4; Nadine Epstein, "Family Matters: Funny, We Don't Look Jewish," *Hadassah Magazine* 82, no. 5 (January 2001). Cf. Carole Oddoux, Encarnacion Guillen-Navarro, et al., "Genetic Evidence for a Common Origin among Roman Jews and Ashkenazi Jews," *American Journal of Human Genetics* 61, no. 4 (1997): A207.
145. Almut Nebel, Ariella Oppenheim, et al., "The Y Chromosome Pool of Jews as Part of the Genetic Landscape of the Middle East," *The American Journal of Human Genetics* 69, no. 5 (November 2001): 1095–1112.
146. Nebel, Oppenheim, et al., "The Y Chromosome Pool of Jews," 1095.
147. Almut Nebel, Dvora Filon, et al., "Y chromosome evidence for a founder effect in Ashkenazi Jews," *European Journal of Human Genetics* 13, no. 3 (March 2005): 389. The haplotype distribution within the haplogroup R1a1 was reported to be "very different" from that found among Muslim Kurds, even though Kurds have about the same frequency of R1a1 (11.6 percent in their report). The researchers thus wrote, "These data suggest that the increase in R-M17 [=R1a1] in Ashkenazim occurred after they had gone into the Diaspora." Moreover, the most common haplotype (H6) within R1a1 was only found in one Sephardic Jew out of 320 (0.3 percent), compared to about 45 percent of the 57 Ashkenazim with R1a1, or about 5.2 percent of all Ashkenazic Jews. This reinforced the impossibility of haplotype H6 having been important among ancient Jews.
148. See "Table 3: Proportions of Haplotypes (ht) and Chromosomes (ch) Shared by Population Pairs" in Nebel, Oppenheim, et al., "The Y Chromosome Pool of Jews," 1099.
149. Mark G. Thomas, Michael E. Weale, et al., "Founding Mothers of Jewish Communities: Geographically Separated Jewish Groups Were Independently Founded by Very Few Female Ancestors," *The American Journal of Human Genetics* 70, no. 6 (June 2002): 1411–20.
150. Nicholas Wade, "In DNA, New Clues to Jewish Roots," *New York Times*, May 14, 2002, F1.
151. Wade, "In DNA, New Clues to Jewish Roots," F1.
152. Doron M. Behar, Michael F. Hammer, et al., "MtDNA Evidence for a Genetic Bottleneck in the Early History of the Ashkenazi Jewish Population," *European Journal of Human Genetics* 12, no. 5 (May 2004): 355–64.
153. Nicholas Wade, "New Light on Origins of Ashkenazi in Europe," *New York Times*, January 14, 2006, A12.

154. Mark G. Thomas, Karl L. Skorecki, et al., “Origins of Old Testament Priests,” *Nature* 394 (July 9, 1998): 139.

155. Tudor Parfitt, “Place, Priestly Status and Purity: The Impact of Genetic Research on an Indian Jewish Community,” *Developing World Bioethics* 3, no. 2 (December 2003): 178–85.

156. For a religious perspective on the DNA studies and their pertinence to the Kohens, see Rabbi Yaakov Kleiman, *DNA and Tradition: The Genetic Link to the Ancient Hebrews* (Jerusalem: Devora, 2004). On pp. 162–63, Kleiman writes, “Based on the DNA of today’s Kohanim, the geneticists have dated the ‘Most Common Recent Ancestor’ of the Kohanim to approximately 3,300 years ago. This is in agreement with the Torah’s written and oral tradition of the lifetime of Aaron the High Priest/Aharon HaKohen, the founder of the Kohen lineage. . . . As we have discussed, genetic signatures change slightly only over many generations, through the accumulation of neutral mutations on the Y-Chromosome. Thus, it is very reasonable to assume that the CMH is therefore also the genetic signature of Abraham. This would explain why we also find the CMH in high numbers among Arabs and other Middle Easterners today. These peoples claim to be the progeny of Abraham through his son Ishmael, who would also have to be carrying Abraham’s genetic signature.” Neil Bradman and Mark Thomas, in their article “Genetics: The Pursuit of Jewish History by Other Means,” *Judaism Today* 10 (Autumn 1998): 4–6, suggested caution when it comes to interpretation of the DNA studies: “Notwithstanding the identification of the CMH, it is not possible to say that those are the markers of a ‘true’ Cohen or whether, indeed, there was a ‘first Cohen’—be it Aaron or somewhere else. In a similar way, there is no Jewish haplotype and genetics cannot ‘prove’ whether someone is a Jew; that is a matter for religious authorities.”

157. Mark G. Thomas, Tudor Parfitt, et al., “Y Chromosomes Traveling South: The Cohen Modal Haplotype and the Origins of the Lemba—the ‘Black Jews of Southern Africa,’” *American Journal of Human Genetics* 66, no. 2 (February 2000): 674–86. The CMH was particularly common among members of the Lembas’ Buba clan. The Buba clan holds a prestigious position among the twelve Lemba tribes, and the Buba claim that a distant male ancestor originated in Judea and left for Yemen with the rest of the tribe, and that their descendants later resettled in their present homeland of southern Africa.

158. A. Caglià, et al., “Increased Forensic Efficiency of a STR-Based Y-Specific Haplotype by Addition of the Highly Polymorphic DYS385 Locus,” *International Journal of Legal Medicine* 111 (1998): 142–46.

159. C. Brinkmann, et al., “Human Y-Chromosomal STR Haplotypes in a Kurdish Population Sample,” *International Journal of Legal Medicine* 112 (1999): 181–83.

160. Personal correspondence with anthropologist Dr. Levon Yepiskoposyan of the Institute of Man, Yerevan, Armenia, March 21, 2000.

161. Nebel, Oppenheim, et al., “The Y Chromosome Pool of Jews as Part of the Genetic Landscape of the Middle East,” 1099, fig. 3.

162. S. Füredi, J. Woller, et al., “Y-STR Haplotyping in Two Hungarian Populations,” *International Journal of Legal Medicine* 113, no. 1 (1999): 38–42.

163. Peidong Shen, Tal Lavi, et al., "Reconstruction of Patrilineages and Matrilineages of Samaritans and Other Israeli Populations from Y-Chromosome and Mitochondrial DNA Sequence Variation," *Human Mutation* 24 (2004): 248–60. The Samaritans themselves have always maintained that they are part of the Israelite people, and this study lends credence to their tradition. The Samaritans married Assyrian and other non-Jewish women after the Assyrians conquered Israel in 721 BCE, contributing non-Jewish mtDNA haplotypes to their lineages. Samaritans preserve their identity through the male line, so intermarriages between Samaritan men and non-Samaritan women are permitted, while non-Samaritan men are not admitted into the community.

164. Doron M. Behar, Mark G. Thomas, et al., "Multiple Origins of Ashkenazi Levites: Y Chromosome Evidence for Both Near Eastern and European Ancestries," *American Journal of Human Genetics* 73, no. 4 (October 2003): 768–79. In their study, R1a1 was found in about 1.3 percent of Ashkenazic Cohens and 4 percent of Ashkenazim who were neither Levites nor Cohens.

165. Doron M. Behar, Daniel Garrigan, et al., "Contrasting Patterns of Y Chromosome Variation in Ashkenazi Jewish and Host Non-Jewish European Populations," *Human Genetics* 114, no. 4 (March 2004): 354–65. See especially table 2 on p. 357.

166. Behar, Garrigan, et al., "Contrasting patterns," 360, 362.

167. Doron M. Behar, Michael F. Hammer, et al., "MtDNA Evidence for a Genetic Bottleneck in the Early History of the Ashkenazi Jewish Population: Supplementary Data," *European Journal of Human Genetics*, January 14, 2004, [www.nature.com/ejhg/journal/v12/n5/supinfo/5201156a.html](http://www.nature.com/ejhg/journal/v12/n5/supinfo/5201156a.html) (accessed February 6, 2006).

168. Behar, Hammer, et al., "Supplementary Data."

169. Behar, Hammer, et al., "Supplementary Data."

170. Personal correspondence with the tested woman's mother, Carel Bertram, August 3 and 7, 2003.

171. M. M. Carrasquillo, Aravinda Chakravarti, et al., "Two Different Connexin 26 Mutations in an Inbred Kindred Segregation Non-syndromic Recessive Deafness: Implications for Genetic Studies in Isolated Populations," *Human Molecular Genetics* 6, no. 12 (November 1997): 2163–72.

172. N. Mobini, E. J. Yunis, et al., "Identical MHC Markers in Non-Jewish Iranian and Ashkenazi Jewish Patients with Pemphigus Vulgaris: Possible Common Central Asian Ancestral Origin," *Human Immunology* 57, no. 1 (September 15, 1997): 62–67. One wonders whether the presence of these haplotypes in both populations meant that Persians who converted to Judaism in ancient times had joined existing Jewish communities, or whether some other kind of interaction between the two groups had occurred.

173. Shlomit Eisenberg, Ivona Aksentjevich, et al., "Diagnosis of Familial Mediterranean Fever by a Molecular Genetics Method," *Annals of Internal Medicine* 129, no. 7 (October 1, 1998): 539–42. See also Nicholas Wade, "Gene from Mideast Ancestor May Link 4 Disparate Peoples," *New York Times*, August 22, 1997, A19. Mediterranean fever is much more common among Sephardim compared to Ashkenazim. The rate of incidence is one case per 73,000 Ashkenazim versus one case per 250–1,000 Sephardim.



174. David B. Goldstein, David E. Reich, et al., “Age Estimates of Two Common Mutations Causing Factor XI Deficiency: Recent Genetic Drift Is Not Necessary for Elevated Disease Incidence among Ashkenazi Jews,” *American Journal of Human Genetics* 64, no. 4 (1999): 1071–75. Interestingly, type II of factor XI deficiency is also found among a few Italians; see Giorgia Zadra, Rosanna Asselta, et al., “Molecular Genetic Analysis of Severe Coagulation Factor XI Deficiency in Six Italian Patients,” *Haematologica* 89 (2004): 1332–40, which suggests that these Italians may have a Jewish ancestor.

175. Bethany L. Niell, Jeffrey C. Long, et al., “Genetic Anthropology of the Colorectal Cancer-Susceptibility Allele APC I1307K: Evidence of Genetic Drift within the Ashkenazim,” *American Journal of Human Genetics* 73, no. 6 (December 2003): 1250–60.

176. Laurie J. Ozelius, Geetha Senthil, et al., “LRRK2 G2019S as a Cause of Parkinson’s Disease in Ashkenazi Jews,” *The New England Journal of Medicine* 354, no. 4 (January 26, 2006): 424–25.

177. G. A. Diaz, Neil Risch, et al., “Gaucher Disease: The Origins of the Ashkenazi Jewish N370S and 84GG Acid beta-Glucosidase Mutations,” *American Journal of Human Genetics* 66, no. 6 (June 2000): 1821–32. Risch believes that these results can be explained by a central European geographic background for most eastern European Jews, rather than an origin stemming from Khazaria.

178. This was proposed, for instance, by Philip Evans, “Some of My Best Friends Are Khazars,” *World Medicine* 12 (June 15, 1977): 85–86. The theory was attacked as romantic speculation that does not make sense by Jared Diamond, “Curse and Blessing of the Ghetto,” *Discover Magazine* 12, no. 3 (March 1991): 60–61.

179. Gloria M. Petersen, Jerome I. Rotter, et al., “The Tay-Sachs Disease Gene in North American Jewish Populations: Geographic Variations and Origin,” *American Journal of Human Genetics* 35 (1983): 1258–69.

180. Amos Frisch, Roberto Colombo, et al., “Origin and Spread of the 1278insTATC Mutation Causing Tay-Sachs Disease in Ashkenazi Jews: Genetic Drift as a Robust and Parsimonious Hypothesis,” *Human Genetics* 114, no. 4 (March 2004): 366–76.

181. Marc M. Buhler, Anne Proos, et al., “Could Admixture of the CCR5-Delta32 Allele into Ashkenazi Jews and Vikings Be Explained by an Origin in the Kingdom of the Khazars?” *Papers of the XIX International Congress of Genetics* (Melbourne, Australia, July 2003).

182. Jacob S. Raisin, *The Haskalah Movement in Russia* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1913), 18.

183. Abraham N. Poliak, *Kazariyah*, 3rd ed. (Tel Aviv: Mossad Bialik, 1951); Koestler, *The Thirteenth Tribe*.

184. Beider, *A Dictionary of Ashkenazic Given Names*, 193, 197, 199, 200, 201.

185. Wexler, “The Reconstruction of Pre-Ashkenazic Jewish Settlements,” 8–9. The surname “Pesachov” is attested among the Bukharan Jews of Uzbekistan, who descend from Persian Jews and Tajiks.

186. Beider, *A Dictionary of Ashkenazic Given Names*, 401.

187. Anatoly M. Khazanov, *The Krymchaks: A Vanishing Group in the Soviet Union* (Jerusalem: The Marjorie Mayrock Center for Soviet and East European Research, 1989), 27.

188. Khazanov, *The Krymchaks*, 8. Interestingly, Krymchaks decorated their tombstones with religious symbols as well as occupational symbols, just like the ancient Jews of Kerch had done (see Ken Blady, *Jewish Communities in Exotic Places* [Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 2000], 121).

189. Khazanov, *The Krymchaks*, 13.

190. See Dan Shapira, "A Karaim Poem in Crimean-Tatar from Mangup: A Source for Jewish-Turkish History," in *Turkish-Jewish Encounters*, ed. Mehmet Tütüncü (Haarlem, Netherlands: SOTA, 2001), 89–90.

191. Peter B. Golden, "Turkic Languages," in *Encyclopedia of Asian History* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1988), 4:154.

192. Birnbaum, "On Jewish Life and Anti-Jewish Sentiments in Medieval Russia," 235.

193. Zvi Ankori, *Karaites in Byzantium: The Formative Years, 970–1100* (New York: Ams Press, 1968), 60.

194. Dan Shapira, *Avraham Firkowicz in Istanbul (1830–1832)* (Ankara, Turkey: Karam, 2003), 1–3.

195. Shapira, *Avraham Firkowicz in Istanbul*, 77.

196. Shapira, *Avraham Firkowicz in Istanbul*, 6.

197. Ananiasz Zajaczkowski, "Khazarian Culture and Its Inheritors," *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 12 (1961): 306.

198. Zajaczkowski, "Khazarian Culture and Its Inheritors," 304. Indeed, the Khazars did adopt some words originally of Persian origin, such as *baghatur*, *chater*, and *tarkhan*.

199. Włodzimierz Zajaczkowski, "The Karaites in Eastern Europe," in *Encyclopedia of Islam*, new ed. (Leiden, Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1993), 4:608–9. *Khazar khalvasy* is called *hazar helvasi* in Anatolian Turkish.

200. Sung by a Crimean Karaite on the television documentary *Mamleket ha-Kuzarim* narrated by Ehud Ya'ari (Israeli Television Channel 1, 1997).

201. Spoken by a Crimean Karaite on *Mamleket ha-Kuzarim*.

202. Abraham Kefeli, *Karaite Hadj (Pilgrimage) to Holy Land* (Slippery Rock, PA: International Institute of Crimean Karaites, 2004), 19.

203. Ankori, *Karaites in Byzantium*, 66.

204. Ankori, *Karaites in Byzantium*, 59.

205. Shapira, *Avraham Firkowicz in Istanbul*, 4.

206. Shapira, *Avraham Firkowicz in Istanbul*, 4.

207. Miller, ed., *Karaite Separatism in Nineteenth-Century Russia*, 7.

208. Shapira, *Avraham Firkowicz in Istanbul*, 90. So adamant was Firkovitch that the Khazars had adopted Karaism that he altered the text of Jacob ben Reuben's *Sefer ha-'Osher* when he published it in Gözleve, removing its offensive remark against Khazars (see chapter 6) by changing the word *Kuzarim* (Khazars) into *zrim* (strangers) (Shapira, *Avraham Firkowicz in Istanbul*, 62).

209. Shapira, *Avraham Firkowicz in Istanbul*, 92–93.

210. F. Shchennikov, “Krymskie karaimy: Pochemu popitki izucheniya ikh istorii neizmenno privodyat k skandaly,” *Yevreyskie novosti* 60, no. 36 (October 1, 2003). Among the Karaites who attempted to interfere with the archaeological team’s work were some who carried bludgeons and knives. In 1997, the police arrived, and they observed but did not intervene. During both the 1997 and 2003 expeditions, the work of the team was cut short by Karaites making threats and shouting anti-Jewish statements; nevertheless, a large quantity of data managed to be gathered.

211. Koestler, *The Thirteenth Tribe*, 146.

212. Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, 3:208.

213. Lars Funch and Helen L. Krag, *The North Caucasus: Minorities at a Crossroads* (London: Minority Rights Group, 1994), 23; Blady, *Jewish Communities in Exotic Places*, 159.

214. Dror Rosengarten presented his paper “Y Chromosome Haplotypes among Members of the Caucasus Jewish Communities” at the Sixth International Conference on Ancient DNA and Associated Biomolecules on July 24, 2002.

215. Igor Semyonov presented his paper “About Early Contacts between East-Caucasian Jews and Khazars” at the Seventh Annual International Interdisciplinary Conference on Judaica on February 1, 2000.

216. Vsevolod F. Miller, *Materialy dlya izucheniya yevreysko-tatskogo yazika* (St. Petersburg: Tip. Imp. Akademii nauk, 1892), 13.

217. Haumann, *A History of East European Jews*, 6–7.

218. Blady, *Jewish Communities in Exotic Places*, 139–40.

219. Rosengarten, “Y Chromosome Haplotypes among Members of the Caucasus Jewish Communities.”

220. Bernard J. Bamberger, *Proselytism in the Talmudic Period* (New York: Hebrew Union College Press, 1939), 63.

221. Jacob B. Agus, *The Meaning of Jewish History* (New York: Abelard Schuman, 1963), 1:42–43.

222. Although it is rare that converts to Judaism have adopted non-Israelite titles or other indications of their convert status, some proselytes in ancient times in places like Aphrodisias did retain the label “proselyte” for a long time after their conversion (see Shaye J. D. Cohen, “Crossing the Boundary and Becoming a Jew,” *Harvard Theological Review* 82, no. 1 [1989]: 29–30), and some western European converts were known as “ha-Ger” (“the proselyte”) (see appendix D).

## *Appendix A*

# Timeline of Khazar History

### **Sixth Century**

- c. 505–525—Sabirs immigrate to the north Caucasus and the Volga valley.
- c. 570–630s—Western Turkish Empire rules over the Khazars.

### **Seventh Century**

- 626–630—Byzantine Empire allies with the Western Turks, including the Khazars.
- 628/629—Khazars conquer the Georgian city of Tiflis.
- c. 630s—Western Turkish Empire falls apart.
- 630–642—Khan Kubrat rules Great Bulgaria in southern Russia.
- 642–652—First Arab-Khazar War.
- 642—Arab troops attack Khazaria for the first time.
- c. 650–1016—Khazaria exists as a distinct, independent political entity.
- 650—Khazars' territorial expansion drives some Bulgars westward.
- 651–652—Khazars defeat invading Arab troops and retain control over Bal-anjar.
- c. 678—Jews reside on the Taman Peninsula in large numbers.
- 683–685—Khazars invade Transcaucasia and inflict much damage.

### **Eighth Century**

- c. 703/704—Byzantine emperor Justinian II marries Theodora, a royal Khazar.
- 705–711—Justinian II fights the Khazars and attempts to destroy Cherson.
- 711—Khazars play a role in installing Philippicus as the new emperor of Byzantium.

- 714—Arabs seize Derbent and its fortress.
- 717—Khazars attempt to invade Azerbaijan.
- 722–737—Second Arab-Khazar War.
- 723/724—Arabs destroy the city of Balanjar.
- 723/724—Samandar becomes the new Khazar capital.
- c. 723–944—Jews move to Khazaria from the Middle East because of anti-Jewish persecutions.
- 730—Khazar commander Barjik leads Khazar troops through the Darial Pass to invade Azerbaijan.
- 730—At the Battle of Ardabil, the Khazars defeat an entire Arab army.
- 731–732—Khazars briefly recapture Derbent.
- 731—Maslama ibn ‘Abd-al-Malik kills the Khazar kagan’s son in battle.
- 732—Arabs permanently acquire Derbent.
- 732/733—Byzantine emperor Constantine V marries Khazar princess Chichek (Irene).
- 733/734—Maslama ibn ‘Abd-al-Malik builds a mosque for Khazars in Derbent.
- 737—Khazar capital transferred from Samandar to Atil.
- 737—Arabs force the Khazar kagan to convert to Islam. Muslim Khazars are resettled in Azerbaijan.
- c. 750–800—Many Saltovians on the Crimea convert to Christianity.
- 759/760—Khazar kagan Baghatur’s daughter marries the Arab governor of Armenia.
- 762–764—Khazars, led by As Tarkhan, conquer Transcaucasia.
- 775–780—Leo IV “the Khazar” rules the Byzantine Empire.
- c. 780s—Leo II, grandson of a Khazar kagan, rules Abkhazia.

## **Ninth Century**

- c. 800–809—Khazar king Bulan converts to Judaism.
- c. 820–840—Khazars found Sambata (part of Kiev) and establish a garrison there.
- c. 830s–862—Khazarian Kabars rebel against the king of Khazaria.
- c. 830s—First Rus’ Kaganate is established.
- c. 833–841—Sarkel fortress is built by Khazars and Byzantines.
- c. 838—Khazar kagan converts to Judaism, followed by the nobility and some of the common people.
- c. 838—Khazars issue silver dirhams emblazoned with declarations that the coins were minted in the land of the Khazars and that Moses is the true prophet of God.
- c. 842/843—Caliph al-Wathiq sends mathematical expert Muhammad ibn Musa al-Khwarizmi to the palace of the Khazar king.
- c. 840s–860s—Khazar king Obadiah builds synagogues and schools.

- c. 852—The renegade Khazar leader Bugha “the Elder,” directed by the caliph, attacks the Khazars and exacts poll taxes from them.
- 854—Muslim Khazars settle in Shamkur, Azerbaijan.
- 860—Khazar people report being persuaded by Muslims and Jews to abandon shamanism and accept monotheism.
- 860—Saint Cyril visits Cherson and learns Hebrew.
- 861—Saint Cyril argues in favor of Orthodox Christianity in the Khazar court.
- 861—Saint Cyril destroys the Khazars’ sacred oak in Tepsen and converts its inhabitants to Christianity.
- c. 864–870—*Expositio in Matthaewm Evangelistam* is first written record of the Khazars’ Judaism.
- 885—Most of the Eastern Slavs become united.
- 894—Magyar prince Levente leads Kabar troops against Bulgaria.
- 895–896—Some Khazarian Kabars settle in Transylvania and Hungary along with the Magyars.

## Tenth Century

- 901—Unsuccessful attack by Khazars upon Derbent.
- c. 913—In a major battle with the Khazars, thousands of Rus’ian ship voyagers perish.
- 922—Khazar kagan closes down a Muslim minaret in Atil in retaliation for the destruction of a Jewish synagogue in the Middle East.
- c. 930–988—Khazars use the square Hebrew script for writing.
- c. 930—*Kievan Letter* written by rabbinical Jews of Kiev, among whom were Khazars.
- c. early 930s—Khazar king Aaron allies with the Alans, who adopt Judaism.
- c. early 930s—King Aaron’s son, Joseph, marries the Alan king’s daughter.
- 932—King Aaron allies with the Oghuz.
- c. late 930s—Khazar baliqchi Pesakh defeats the Rus’ians.
- c. 947—Croatian Jews Saul and Joseph meet Mar ‘Amram, a scholarly Khazar Jew.
- c. 948–949—*Schechter Letter* is written by a Khazar Jew in Constantinople.
- c. 954—Hasdai ibn-Shaprut’s literary secretary writes a letter to Khazar king Joseph.
- c. 955—*King Joseph’s Reply* reaches Hasdai in Spain.
- c. 955–970—Duke Taksony allegedly invites Khazar Jews to Hungary.
- c. 964—Pechenegs seriously threaten Khazaria.
- 965—Prince Svyatoslav of Kiev conquers and seizes Sarkel.
- c. 965–967—Khazar kagan momentarily converts to Islam for political reasons.
- c. 967—Rus’ians seize Atil, the Khazar capital.

- c. 969—Khazar refugees escape to Baku and islands in the Caspian and become Muslims.
- 986—Khazar Jews allegedly discuss Judaism with Prince Vladimir in Kiev.
- 988—Prince Vladimir of Kiev accepts the Orthodox Christian religion.

### Eleventh Century

- c. 1000–1300—Some Khazars in Kievan Rus' are Slavicized and adopt the East Slavic language.
- 1016—Khazar kagan Georgius Tzul is captured by the Rus'ians.
- 1023—"Khazars" ally with Prince Mstislav of Tmutorokan.
- c. 1050–1100—Jewish Khazars live in Pera, a suburb of Constantinople, in the Byzantine Empire.
- 1064—Khazars settle in Qahtan, north Caucasus.
- 1079–1083—"Khazars" still live in Tmutorokan.

### Twelfth Century

- c. 1100–1150—Jewish Khazars settle in central Romania.
- 1106—Khazar general Ivan commands a Rus'ian army regiment.
- 1120–1140—Yehudah ha-Levi writes *Sefer ha-Kuzari*.
- 1161—Abraham ibn Daud notes that he and his colleagues have met Khazar Jewish students in Toledo, Spain.
- 1185—Rabbi Petakhiah ben Jacob meets Jews called "Meshech," who are possibly Khazars, in Baghdad.

### Thirteenth Century

- 1206—*Ta'rik-i Fakhr al-Din Mubarak Shah* says Khazar Jews use a form of the Cyrillic script for writing.
- c. 1242—A theory suggests that an Endzher-ruled Daghestani Khazar kingdom existed until this year.
- c. 1245–1247—Christian Khazars are encountered by Friar Joannes de Plano Carpini.

### Fourteenth Century

- 1309—Hungarian clergy declares that Catholics cannot marry "Khazars."

### Sixteenth Century

- c. 1500–1650—Descendants of Jewish Khazars in the Lithuanian Grand Duchy adopt the Yiddish language.

## Appendix B

# Glossary

**ak**—Khazarian for “white.” The upper classes (i.e., royalty and nobility) in the Khazar Empire were called “Ak-Khazar.” Alternative spelling: “aq.”

**alp**—Turkic for “hero.”

**amir**—Arabic title for “ruler, prince” in Muslim countries. Alternative spelling: “emir.”

**Ashkenazi**—Term for German Jews and their descendants in central and eastern Europe. Prior to living in Germany, Ashkenazic Jews had lived in France and Italy.

**at**—Khazarian for “horse.” Alternative spelling: “alas-at.”

**Atelküzü**—Turkic for “between the rivers.” Alternative spellings: “Etelküzü,” “Etelköz” (Magyar).

**Atil**—Khazarian term for the Volga River; also the name of the Khazars’ capital city along the Volga; apparently from *as* (great) + *til* (river). Alternative spellings: “Itil,” “Ityl,” “Til.”

**babaghuq**—Khazarian title for an elected “father of the city.”

**baghatur**—Khazarian for “brave warrior.” Alternative spelling: “bogatur.” Baghatur/baqat‘ur was also a title of the Alan king in the northern Caucasus, according to ibn Rustah and the *Georgian Chronicle*.

**baliqchi**—Khazarian for “fisherman”; from *baliq* (fish) + *chi* (profession). Appointed provincial governors were given this title. Alternative spellings: “bolushchi,” “balgitzl,” “balquitzi.”

**bek**—Turkic title for the king who leads the army and affairs of state. Alternative spellings: “beg,” “peg,” “peh,” “pekh,” “bey.”

**bugha**—Khazarian for “bull.” This word was used as a male personal name in Khazaria.

**bulan**—Khazarian for “elk.” This word was used as a male personal name in Khazaria. Alternative spelling: “bolan.”



**Caucasian Albanian**—Term for an ethnic group that once lived in the eastern Caucasus in the Azerbaijan region. Not related to the Albanian people of the Balkans.

**chichek**—Khazarian for “flower.” This word was used as a feminine personal name in Khazaria. Alternative spellings: “chichak,” “chichäk.”

**chorpan**—Khazarian for “star.” This word was used as a male personal name in Khazaria.

**dogh**—Khazarian for “funeral meal.”

**Duna**—Khazarian term for the Danube River.

**el-teber**—Hunnic and Turkic title for a local king. Alternative spellings: “el-tebir,” “yiltavar,” “ilut’uer.”

**er**—Khazarian and Turkic for “man.” Alternative spellings: “ar,” “är,” “ör.”

**eristavi**—Georgian title for “prince.”

**ev**—Khazarian and Turkic for “settlement, home.”

**ghulam**—Arabic term for a foreign slave soldier owned by kings in countries like the Arab Caliphate and Khazaria. The *ghulams* were purchased and then trained to become part of the king’s military. Original plural form: “ghilman.”

**gorodishche**—Russian for “hill fort.”

**gyula**—Magyar title for the king who leads the army and controls affairs of state. Alternative spellings: “jula,” “dzsula.”

**Hagar**—Khazarian Hebrew name for the Hungarians, as recorded in Hebrew documents.

**iconoclast**—Byzantine term for “icon breaker.” Iconoclasts like Byzantine Emperor Leo III banned icons from churches. The Seventh Ecumenical Council that convened in Nicaea in 787 held that veneration, but not worship, of icons was permissible.

**iconodule**—Byzantine term for “icon venerator.” Iconodules supported the use of icons (religious images) on paintings in churches.

**Israelite**—Ethnic term for descendants of the people of ancient Israel; divided into two main branches, Judeans (southern Israelites) and Samaritans (northern Israelites).

**itakh**—Khazarian for “puppy.” This word was used as a male personal name in Khazaria.

**javshihar**—Khazarian title for the kender’s deputy. Alternative spelling: “jawshyghr.”

**Judean**—Ethnic term for descendants of the southern kingdom of Judea. This includes most modern Jews and Karaites.

**kabar**—Khazarian or Magyar for “rebel” or “ethnic mixup.” The Kabars were a dissident group of Khazars who left the empire and resettled in Hungary in the ninth century.

- kagan**—Turkic title for “great (sacral) king, supreme judge.” Alternative spellings: “kaghan,” “khaghan,” “qaghan,” “khagan,” “khakan,” “khaqan.”
- kaganate**—The realm ruled by a kagan.
- kara**—Khazarian for “black.” The lower classes (i.e., commoners) in the Khazar Empire were called “Kara-Khazar.” Alternative spelling: “qara.”
- kel**—Khazarian for “fortress.” Alternative spelling: “kil.”
- kende**—Magyar title for their sacral king.
- kender**—Khazarian title for “subking,” that is, third in command. Alternative spelling: “kündür.”
- khatun**—Avar and Khazarian for “queen” or “princess.” Alternative spellings: “katoun,” “chatoun.”
- Khazarian Way**—Term for the trade route connecting the Baltic Sea region with Khazaria by way of northern Russia and the Gulf of Finland. The Rus’ often traded along this route during the ninth century.
- kilich**—Turkic for “sword, sabre.” Alternative spelling: “qilich.”
- kizil**—Turkic for “red.” Alternative spelling: “qizil.”
- kniaz’**—Russian title for “prince.”
- kök**—Turkic for “blue.” The Western Turkish Kaganate was ruled by the Kök Türks. Alternative spelling: “gök.”
- kurgan**—Turkic and Russian for “burial mound.”
- Magyar**—The Hungarian self-designation.
- Majgar**—Presumed Khazarian name for the Hungarians, as used by Turkic speakers.
- Maqedon**—Tenth-century Khazarian term for the Byzantine Empire.
- metropolitan**—A bishop in the Eastern Orthodox Church, ranked just below the patriarch.
- Mizrakhi**—Term for eastern Jews, including Jews from Iran, Iraq, Uzbekistan, and the Caucasus.
- oq**—Old Turkic for “arrow.” Two tribal confederations, one among the Bulgars and the other among the Magyars, were called the “On-Oghur,” that is, “ten arrows.”
- ostikan**—Armenian title for “governor.”
- Pax Khazarica**—Latin for “Khazarian peace,” historians’ term for the relatively stable situation in the Khazarian region during the ninth century, caused by the end of Khazar-Arab hostilities and the holding back by Khazars of Pechenegs and other wild tribes.
- qam**—Turkic for “priest, shaman.” Alternative spelling: “kam.”
- qut**—Khazarian and Turkic for “heavenly good fortune, charisma.” The Turks believed that a ruling kagan bestowed *qut* upon his kaganate.
- Romaniote**—Term for a Greek (especially Byzantine) Jew. Alternative spelling: “Romaniot.” Also called “Yavanic.”

- sam**—Khazarian for “high, top”; used in many Khazar town names.
- saq, sar**—Khazarian for “white” or “gray.” These two words were contractions of *sarigh*.
- sarigh**—Turkic for “yellow.” Occasionally also meant “white.”
- Sephardi**—Term for Spanish and Portuguese Jews.
- sub**—Turkic for “water”; the name of the shamanists’ water god. Alternative spelling: “suv.”
- talyga**—Khazarian for “wagon, chariot.”
- tamga**—Turkic term for tribe or clan symbols, which were often engraved on pottery and stones. The Khazars may have continued to use tamgas even after their conversion to Judaism. Some Turkic Saltovo peoples of Khazaria also still used tamgas even after adopting Christianity. Alternative spelling: “tamgha.”
- tarkhan**—Khazarian title for “army commander, local governor, or chief.”
- tengri**—Turkic for “sky”; the name of the shamanists’ sky god. Alternative spelling: “tängri.”
- törü**—Old Turkic for “traditional (customary) law.” Alternative spelling: “turah.”
- tudun**—Avar and Khazarian title for “provincial governor.” Alternative spellings: “titano,” “titanus,” “thodanus.”
- Var**—Khazarian and Hunnic term for the Dnieper River. Alternative spelling: “Bar.”
- Varshan**—Khazarian term for the Sulak River and the surrounding mountains. Alternative spellings: “Warsan,” “Varach’an.”
- vizier**—Persian term for a minister or adviser to a ruler. In some countries, the title was transferred hereditarily. Alternative spelling: “wazir.”
- voievoda**—Old Russian title for “military commander.”
- yaligh**—Old Turkic for “bow.”
- yir**—Turkic for “earth, soil”; the name of the shamanists’ Earth god. Alternative spelling: “yer.”
- yurt**—Russian term for a sturdy, portable, dome-shaped tent often made partly of felt and used by nomadic Eurasian peoples, including the early Khazars. Alternative spellings: “yurta” (Central Asian Turkic), “ger” (Mongolian).

## Appendix C

# Native Khazarian Personal Names

### 1. Male Names

<i>Name</i>	<i>Meaning</i>	<i>Source(s)</i>
Alp	hero	Lewond
Baghatür	brave warrior	<i>Kitab al-Futuh</i> by Ibn Atham al-Kufi
Balgitzi, Belgichi, Bälgichi, Balghichi		Theophanes
Barjik		<i>Tarikh-i Tabari</i> by Balami
Bashtu, Bashtwa		<i>Risalah</i> by Ibn Fadlan
Bihor, Biheros, Bihar, Virhor		Armenian version of the <i>Life of Saint Stephen of Sugdaia</i>
Bugha	bull	<i>Georgian Chronicle</i>
Bulan	elk	<i>King Joseph's Reply</i>
Bulchan, Buljan, Bluchan		<i>Georgian Chronicle, Tarikh al-Bab</i>
Buzer, Busir, Bazir		<i>Anonymous Byzantine Chronicle</i>
Chat		<i>History of the Caucasian Albanians</i> by Movses Dasxuranci
Chat'n		<i>History of the Caucasian Albanians</i> by Movses Dasxuranci
Chorpan	star	<i>History of the Caucasian Albanians</i> by Movses Dasxuranci
Itakh	puppy	Tabari, Ibn al-Athir, Ibn Khallikan

(continued)

## 1. Male Names (*continued*)

<i>Name</i>	<i>Meaning</i>	<i>Source(s)</i>
Kayghalagh, Kayqalagh Khatir, Khadir, Qadir Khuterkin, Quterkin	chief with heavenly good fortune	as-Suli Lewond al-Masudi
Kisa Kundajiq, Kundaj Ötemish Papatzys Tarmach Tuzniq		<i>Tarikh al-Bab</i> <i>Diwan</i> by Buhturi al-Masudi Theophanes Lewond <i>Diwan</i> by Abu Firas al-Hamdani

Certain Khazarian titles appear to have also occasionally served as male personal names. These include:

Tarkhan (“general, commander”)

Yilig, Ilig (a title for the king)

## 2. Female Names

<i>Name</i>	<i>Meaning</i>	<i>Source(s)</i>
Chichek, Chichäk	flower	<i>De ceremoniis aulae byzantinae libri</i> by Constantine Porphyrogenitus Lewond
Parsbit, Barsbek		Lewond

The Khazarian title Khatun (“lady, queen, princess”) appears to have also occasionally served as a female personal name.

## *Appendix D*

# Other Instances of Conversion to Judaism in History

### JUDAISM AMONG THE ALANS

The Alan people (also known as “As,” “Os,” and “Yasians”), ancestors of the Ossetians, were descendants of Sarmatians. They spoke an Iranian language. Alania, the homeland of the Alans, was located north of the Caucasus Mountains. Their capital city was called Maghas.

The Alans converted to Orthodox Christianity in around 915. However, they rejected Christianity around 932, according to al-Masudi, and expelled the bishops and priests who had been sent to them by the Byzantine emperor.<sup>1</sup> A number of the Alans soon adopted the Jewish faith of their Khazar neighbors, as recorded by the *Schechter Letter*:

[But in the days of Benjamin] the king, all the nations were stirred up against [Khazaria], and they besieged the[m with the aid of] the king of Maqedon . . . only the king of Alania was in support of [the people of Khazaria, for] some of them were observing the Law of the Jews.<sup>2</sup>

In the tenth century and thereafter, most of the Alans professed a mixture of shamanistic and Christian beliefs.<sup>3</sup> Their burials usually were pagan-style catacomb burials even as late as the thirteenth century.<sup>4</sup>

Duke Svyatoslav of Kievan Rus' conquered the Alans in 965. The Alans were again conquered, this time by the Mongols, between 1221 and 1223. Some of the Alans settled in Moldova<sup>5</sup> and Hungary,<sup>6</sup> while other Alans lived in the Cherson and Chufut-Kale regions of the Crimea in the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries.<sup>7</sup>

The ultimate fate of the Alans who had converted to Judaism went unrecorded.

## EUROPEAN CONVERTS TO JUDAISM

According to many scholars, Judaism was propagated widely as early as the first century. In Matthew 23:15 of the New Testament, the apostle Matthew reported that the Pharisees traveled over land and sea in pursuit of proselytes. Furthermore, the first-century Jewish historian Josephus wrote that there were many converts to Judaism in the Roman Empire. About 10 percent of the population of the Roman Empire was Jewish around the start of the common era.<sup>8</sup> This significant percentage is often attributed to the spread of Judaism among non-Jews.

Martin Goodman, however, challenged the theory that many converts were sought by Jews in the first century, suggesting that it was only in the second and third centuries that some rabbis called for an active mission to non-Jews.<sup>9</sup> Goodman proposed that Matthew 23:15 refers to the conversion of existing Jews to the beliefs of the Pharisee sect, rather than the conversion of non-Jews to Judaism.<sup>10</sup> He also wrote that it is possible that the vast majority of early conversions to Judaism were performed because a non-Jewish woman planned to marry a Jewish man.<sup>11</sup> It was common for Roman women to convert after marrying Jews.

In ancient times, many gentiles had an informal association with Judaism. These gentiles were granted the title “God fearers” by the Jews. God fearers lived in such places as Romania, Greece, and Asia Minor. An early third-century Jewish Greek inscription from a synagogue in Aphrodisias (southwest Anatolia) demonstrates that some non-Jews had accepted part of the Jewish way of life.<sup>12</sup> Although the God fearers attended synagogue services, they did not formally convert to Judaism. Besides believing in one God, they usually followed such Jewish customs as keeping the Jewish Sabbath and not eating pig meat, but they did not observe all Jewish rituals.<sup>13</sup> Many of the Greeks living in the Crimea who were drawn to elements of Judaism created a “cult of the Great God.”<sup>14</sup>

After the Roman Empire officially adopted Christianity, conversion to Judaism became prohibited. In 315, Emperor Constantine I issued the first Roman edict forbidding Jews from seeking converts. In 339, Emperor Constantine II issued a policy stating that property would be confiscated from any Jew who assisted a Christian to convert. Yet Judaizing movements continued to spring up in the following centuries in many lands.

Judaism became so popular in ninth-century Bulgaria that Bulgarian proselytes converted others to Judaism as well, according to a query letter composed in 866 by King Boris I of Bulgaria.<sup>15</sup> Pope Nicholas I “the Great” (reigned 858–867) wrote, in reply number ten of his *Responsa Nicolai ad consulta Bulgarorum* to the king, that he was also aware of how Jewish

preachers were active in Judaizing the Bulgarian populace. In particular, the pope complained that Judaizers encouraged non-Jews to abstain from work on Saturdays.<sup>16</sup> Nikolaj Kochev suggested that Balkan slaves also became Jews, encouraged by Jewish laws under which Jewish-owned slaves who adopted Judaism were freed every seven years of servitude.<sup>17</sup>

Jews were active in seeking converts on the Iberian Peninsula. Evidence suggests that African slaves owned by Jews in Spain and Morocco converted to Judaism. Jews were proselytizing in Granada (in Andalusia, southern Spain) as early as the fourth century.<sup>18</sup> Because of the existence of a fairly large conversion phenomenon in Spain, Jews were obliged to take appropriate steps. For this reason, it was necessary for Rabbi Shlomo ben Adret of Barcelona (1230–1310) to indicate the order of the blessings to be said when converts were initiated into the Jewish community.<sup>19</sup> Christian authorities initiated measures to try to stem the tide of conversion, and by the eleventh or twelfth century, they had largely succeeded in halting widespread proselytism in Spain. Yet, even as late as the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, there were still Spanish church edicts and royal proclamations that tried to prevent Jews from owning non-Jewish slaves and to stop Christians from converting to the Jewish faith.<sup>20</sup>

Many Christian clergy members converted to Judaism. Bodo, a Carolingian cleric and court deacon, converted to Judaism in 839, adopted the Hebrew name Eleazar, married a Jewish woman, and fled to Spain. The Cairo Genizah collection of documents revealed that a cleric named Wecelein, who worked for Duke Conrad of Carinthia, converted to Judaism in about 1005. A Catholic priest in Mainz, Germany, became a proselyte in 1012.<sup>21</sup> A Norman priest in southern Italy, Johannes, converted to Judaism in 1102 and adopted the name Obadiah ha-Ger (“Obadiah the Proselyte”). His inspiration came from the conversion in about 1070 of Andreas, an archbishop of Bari. In the thirteenth century, a French monk converted and adopted the name Abraham ben Abraham. He was captured and burned after fleeing to Germany.

In the twelfth century, Judaized Vlachs lived in the highlands of Wallachia, north of Greece, who gave themselves Jewish names and did not observe Christianity, according to Benjamin of Tudela’s travelogue. The Judaized Vlachs were described as a fierce and autonomous people known to be thieves. Benjamin wrote that some people considered the Vlachs to be Jews.<sup>22</sup>

Most of the recorded cases of individuals converting to Judaism come from twelfth- and thirteenth-century France and Germany. Many rabbis in those countries belonged to the Tosafist school of rabbinical theology and strongly supported conversion to Judaism, considering it a divine commandment. The Tosafists succeeded in bringing many Europeans into the Jewish community. Ben Zion Wacholder estimated that hundreds of individuals converted during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in France and Germany.<sup>23</sup> There were



proselytes during the Middle Ages, in Pontoise (northern France), Lunel (southern France), Hungary, and many other places, who became very dedicated to the study of Torah and Talmud. A Tosafist named Abraham ha-Ger was a convert to Judaism who held the belief that proselytes observe Jewish laws better than “born Jews.”<sup>24</sup> A convert lived and studied Talmud in the home of Rabbi Yitzhak ben Asher ha-Levi, a Tosafist in Speyer (a German city along the Rhine).<sup>25</sup>

The many medieval anti-Jewish laws that prohibited slave conversion and intermarriage between Jews and Christians demonstrate that, among Christians, the fear of proselytism was widespread. It was not until around the eleventh to thirteenth centuries that widespread conversion to Judaism ceased. The decrease in Jewish proselytism in Europe was directly connected to the harsh laws and persecutions created by Christians. European church and government policies against conversion to Judaism intensified starting in around 1215.<sup>26</sup> Yitzhak Males of Toulouse (France) was executed in 1278 for his participation in proselytizing efforts.

In England, the Dominican deacon Robert of Reading was so inspired by studying Hebrew that he converted to Judaism, married a Jewish woman, and adopted the Hebrew name “Haggai,” but he was condemned by an ecclesiastical council at Oxford in 1222 and handed over to a sheriff, who had him burned at the stake.<sup>27</sup>

Salomon of Üregh, a Hungarian Jew, converted his slave girl to Judaism in the early thirteenth century.<sup>28</sup> When the Hungarian city of Buda was under Turkish rule (1526–1686), it was common for Jews to own Christian slaves and subsequently to convert them to Judaism and marry them.<sup>29</sup>

Judaizing in Russia occurred even as late as the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, but it was eventually suppressed. In 1539, a Polish proselyte from Kraków named Catherine Weigel was burned to death.<sup>30</sup> Converts to Judaism in the first half of the eighteenth century in Dubno (Ukraine), Vilnius (Lithuania), and other parts of eastern Europe were also massacred. For example, in the small town of Sverovoch, a retired naval captain named Alexander Vosnitzyn converted to Judaism and was circumcised, but as a result, he was publicly burned in Saint Petersburg in July 1738 to deter others from converting.

Some Bohemian Hussites took up Judaism in the seventeenth century. They adopted the circumcision rite and began to observe the Jewish Sabbath.

## THE SABBATARIANS

The Sabbatarians were Unitarian Christians in Transylvania who adopted elements of Judaism. For instance, they adhered to kosher laws and celebrated Jewish holidays, and their day of rest was Saturday rather than Sunday.<sup>31</sup>

The Sabbatarian movement began in the late sixteenth century when the Székely nobleman named Andreas Eőssi and his Transylvanian followers began to observe the Jewish Sabbath and the other commandments of the Torah. After Simon Péchi (1575–1642) created a Sabbatarian prayer book, it became a very attractive belief system in the region, and about twenty thousand Székelys converted to Sabbatarianism in the late sixteenth century.

The leaders of the sect were executed in 1639 by Transylvanian governmental authorities. As a result, Sabbatarianism diminished, and only some people in certain villages remained committed to the ideology. The Székelys living in the village of Bözödjfalú stayed faithful to Sabbatarianism over the years and officially converted to rabbinical Judaism in 1869.<sup>32</sup> Five years later, they constructed a synagogue. Some Székely Jews were killed during the Holocaust; others survived but became persecuted by Romanians. In 1989, the Romanian dictator Nicolae Ceaușescu destroyed Bözödjfalú by damming the Küsmöd River, which flooded the houses and synagogues of its Székely Jews, and its residents were resettled and dispersed.<sup>33</sup>

## THE SUBBOTNIKI

The Subbotniki (“Sabbath keepers”) of Russia are ethnic Russians whose beliefs combine Orthodox Christianity with Judaism. The Subbotniki sect apparently originated in the late seventeenth century. They believe that Jesus was a prophet but not a divinity. Subbotniki worshippers pray in Russian, rather than Hebrew, but many of their beliefs—including observing the Sabbath on Saturdays rather than on Sundays—reflect their Judaized status. Many Subbotniki adopted Hebrew names.

After Czar Nicholas I (reigned 1825–1855) exiled the Russian Molokani sect into the Caucasus, they came into contact with Subbotniki missionaries, and many of them thus also adopted the Judaized Subbotniki teachings.

## CONVERTS IN ADIABENE

Two of the kings of Adiabene, members of the royal family, and a number of the people became Jews in the first century CE.<sup>34</sup> The kingdom of Adiabene was located east of the Tigris River, between the Great Zab and Little Zab rivers, and was part of the Assyrian section of the Parthian Empire. Today, the area encompasses part of northern Iraq. The capital of Adiabene was Arbela.

In *Antiquities of the Jews*, compiled circa 93 or 94 CE, Josephus wrote that Monobazus I,<sup>35</sup> king of Adiabene, married his sister, Helena. Monobazus I

and Queen Helena had two sons, Izates and Monobazus (later Monobazus II), but Monobazus I also had other sons by other wives. However, Izates was the king's favorite son, so he was accorded many honors. He was sent to the palace of Abennerig, king of Charax-Spasini. Izates and Abennerig became good friends, so Izates married Abennerig's daughter Samacha and was given some measure of ruling power. After his sojourn in Charax-Spasini, Izates was given control over the land of Carrae.<sup>36</sup> Izates remained in Carrae until his father's death.

During Izates's residence in Carrae, a Jewish merchant named Ananias (Hananya) interested the women of Izates's harem in the Jewish religion. Not long afterward, Ananias also converted Izates to Judaism. Meanwhile, Helena was also converted to Judaism, although by a different Jew; she thus began to observe the Jewish rituals. The members of the Adiabenian aristocracy remained Zoroastrians.<sup>37</sup>

When Monobazus I died, it became necessary to appoint the new ruler of Adiabene. Since Izates was abroad, his older brother Monobazus was chosen as the new king, receiving his father's ring and diadem, but shortly afterward, the "favorite son" Izates returned to Adiabene and took control of the government. Ananias accompanied Izates and visited the royal court of Arbela in the year 40 CE.

Since Izates, the new king of Adiabene, wanted to embrace Judaism in its entirety, he thought that it was necessary to be circumcised. His mother Helena objected to this, voicing concerns that he would come into disfavor among his subjects—who had not yet adopted Judaism—if he was circumcised and knowledge of his Jewish beliefs became public. His tutor Ananias also persuaded Izates to delay circumcision for the time being. Nevertheless, Izates still wanted to be circumcised. Eleazar, a Jew from Galilee, met the king and urged him to be circumcised so as to meet the requirements of Jewish law. With Eleazar's encouragement, a surgeon performed the circumcision on Izates.

Helena and Ananias remained concerned that Izates would lose his status as king if the people of Adiabene learned that he had adopted a foreign religion. But after an initial shock from learning of his circumcision, Helena saw how Adiabene remained at peace and how Izates remained respected by subjects and foreigners alike. She thus became content with his decision and desired to visit Jerusalem to worship at the Holy Temple. When Helena arrived in Jerusalem, she learned that the people in the city were suffering from famine, so she helped to import grains and dried figs into Judea. Izates, also being a compassionate man, sent large amounts of money to Jerusalem's leading men. Rabbinical sources, including the Tosefta, Mishnah, and Palestinian Gemara, added that Helena arranged for the establishment of a tall sukkah

(festival booth).<sup>38</sup> She contributed a golden lamp and an inscribed golden plate to the temple in Jerusalem.

Five of Izates's sons were educated in Jerusalem, where they learned the Hebrew language and Jewish scholarship. Monobazus, the brother of King Izates, and his relatives, also wanted to embrace Jewish customs. When the non-Jewish nobility of Adiabene learned this, they angrily plotted against Izates, calling upon Abia, king of Arabia, to war against the royal house. Izates's army successfully defended Adiabene against the Arab invaders, and when Abia found himself surrounded by the Adiabene army, he committed suicide. Despite Abia's defeat, the Adiabene nobility remained opposed to the Izates regime's adherence to Judaism. They urged Vologases, king of Parthia, to kill Izates. King Vologases declared war on Izates, and a large army was sent to Adiabene. After a competing army was deployed to destroy Parthia, Vologases was forced to return his soldiers home to attend to the problems there, thus saving Izates's life.

The great king Izates, friend of Judea, died around 58 CE, and Helena died soon afterward. Izates and Helena were buried in Jerusalem in three pyramids, called "Tomb of the Kings." The pyramids were commissioned by Monobazus II, Izates's older brother, who was installed as Adiabene's new king.

Following a strong precedent, Monobazus II also decided to convert to Judaism, as did many of his relatives and associates. The Tosefta recorded that members of the royal house of Monobazus II affixed mezuzahs to poles and carried these with them when they traveled, placing them in inns where they stayed overnight.<sup>39</sup> The Tosefta, Mishnah, and Palestinian Gemara noted that Monobazus II contributed money to the Jewish temple to ensure that the vessels used during Yom Kippur services had golden handles.

Some of the nonroyal Adiabeneans may have also become Jews. Records preserve the names of the Adiabenean Jews Jacob Hadyaba and Zuga (Zuwa) of Hadyab.<sup>40</sup> On the other hand, Lawrence Schiffman contended that the displeasure the Zoroastrian nobles expressed against Monobazus II's Judaism indicates that the royalty's Judaism never extended to the noble or commoner classes.<sup>41</sup>

During the war of Judea against the Roman Empire (66–70 CE), the Adiabenean royal family supported the Judean side. A fire destroyed the Palace of Queen Helena.<sup>42</sup> In *Wars of the Jews*, written circa 78 or 79 CE, Josephus wrote that the Adiabenean Jews Kenedeus and Monobazus (relatives of Monobazus II) attempted to defend Jerusalem but perished in the war against the Romans.<sup>43</sup> The sons and relatives of the Adiabenean king were captured and sent to Rome as hostages by Roman co-emperor Titus.

According to Paul Kahle, there were many Jews in the city of Arbela even after the establishment of bishops and the spread of Christianity in Adiabene.<sup>44</sup>

The last king of an independent Adiabene was Mebarsapes, who ruled around 115. In around the year 116, Adiabene became part of Assyria, a province of the Roman Empire, when Trajan of Mesopotamia invaded it. However, in 117, Hadrian ended Roman control over Adiabene. Rosenthal and Mozeson claimed that the residents of Adiabene were widely intermarried with Jews from Babylon by this time.<sup>45</sup>

The ultimate fate of the Adiabenean Jews is not entirely certain, but Itzhak Ben-Zvi claimed that they migrated to Georgia and Armenia.<sup>46</sup>

### **CONVERTS AMONG SEMITIC TRIBES OF GREATER ISRAEL**

The Adiabeneans adopted Judaism because of a sincere interest in the religion. By contrast, the Itureans and Idumeans (Edomites), Semitic tribes of the Middle East, were forcibly converted to Judaism during the second century BCE.

Josephus recorded that the army of John Hyrcanus, the high priest of Judea (reigned 134–104 BCE), took possession of Dora and Marissa, which were cities in Idumea. After conquering the Idumeans, Hyrcanus let the Idumeans stay in their land on the condition that they would be circumcised and observe the Jewish laws.<sup>47</sup> In this way, the Idumeans, descendants of Esau, became Jews by force rather than by choice.

Hyrcanus's son and successor to the priesthood, Judah Aristobulus (reigned 104–103 BCE), converted the Itureans.

The historical record appears to indicate that the Idumeans and Itureans mingled with the Judeans and celebrated the Jewish festivals along with them.

### **CONVERTS IN YEMEN**

Judeans migrated to southern Arabia in large numbers both during and following the Second Temple period. Jews lived in Yemen as early as the first century CE, according to surviving historical records. Originally polytheistic worshippers of a moon god and other gods, many of the pagan Arabs of Himyar fell under the influence of Jewish proselytizers and were impressed by the successful lives of Jews in Arabia.<sup>48</sup>

Several Himyarite kings embraced the Jewish religion.<sup>49</sup> The first of these, Yassirum Yohre'am of Himyar, the king of Dhu Raidan and Saba ("Sheba" in Hebrew), adopted Judaism in the year 270 CE. Kings 'Amr-Shlomo ben

David (reigned 325–330) and Malki Kariba Juha'min (reigned 378–385) were also Jews. Christianity was introduced to Himyar by the evangelist Theophilus in the middle of the fourth century. However, during the same century, a small number of former Christians in Yemen adopted Judaism.<sup>50</sup>

Jewish sages from Mecca and Yathreb converted King Abu Kariba As'ad (ruled circa 385–420) to Judaism toward the end of his rule. The conversion of this king was memorialized in Arab ballads.<sup>51</sup> The Himyarite army also adopted Judaism as its official religion. According to the early fifth-century writer Philostorgius, both Judaism and pagan cults were practiced among the people of Himyar. The sixth-century writer Theodorus Lector wrote that the pagan Himyarites left paganism and were Judaized by a queen of Saba.

King Martad Ilan (reigned 495–515) was also Judaized, as was his successor, King Yusuf Ash'ar Dhu Nuwas (reigned circa 515–525), who spread the religion among the Arab people in Yemen. When Dhu Nuwas learned that Jews were being persecuted in the Roman Empire, he took revenge by killing Byzantine Christian merchants.<sup>52</sup> His Christian subjects in Najran rebelled, prompting him to attack that town in October 523 to suppress the uprising. Those who were targeted by the king were members of a pro-Ethiopian, anti-Himyar faction that supported the Abyssinian *negus* (emperor) Ella Asbeha. Dhu Nuwas also destroyed the Christian churches in Zafar and Al-Makha. Other Christians—in particular, the Byzantines and the Abyssinians—were outraged by the king's actions in Najran and took military action against him. Emperor Justinian I provided the Abyssinians with ships. Ella Asbeha sent seventy thousand men to Himyar with Commander Aryat at the helm. Aryat's Abyssinian forces won a battle against the Himyarites toward the end of 523. The decisive Abyssinian victory against the Himyarites came in 525 when Commander Abraha attacked Dhu Nuwas's army at Zabid. Dhu Nuwas killed himself by plunging his horse into the sea and drowning.<sup>53</sup>

After the death of Dhu Nuwas (the last Himyarite king in Yemen), the Abyssinians conquered and settled the whole of Yemen. The religious climate changed dramatically. The Abyssinians tried to convert the Yemenites to Christianity, and Abraha built a magnificent cathedral called al-Qadis. The final shift in religious affiliation came in 628 when Islamic rulers took control of Yemen and transformed the country into a Muslim society. Jews thereafter lost their power as well as their rights.<sup>54</sup>

The Arab converts to Judaism probably intermingled with city-dwelling Israelite Jews who had come to Yemen. Genetic studies appear to confirm this, matching their Y-DNA (paternal DNA) with many other Jewish populations, while matching their mtDNA (maternal DNA) with Yemenite Muslims.<sup>55</sup>

## CONVERTS IN ETHIOPIA

The Jews of Ethiopia (Abyssinia) are known as the “Beta Israel” (“House of Israel”) and the “Falasha” (“Foreigners”). They are mostly descended from Agau proselytes, as demonstrated by genetic studies, and they closely resemble other Ethiopians. It remains possible, though increasingly unlikely, that a small portion of their ancestors were Jews from the Himyarite kingdom in Yemen.

The so-called Falashas, descended from members of the Agau tribe who (it is said) converted to Judaism even in early medieval times, conquered and destroyed the city of Aksum in the tenth century. This allegedly allowed the Falasha queen Judith to usurp the Ethiopian throne. According to legend, Queen Judith was a Jew. Judith supposedly ruled over the whole country until 977, when she was overthrown by Tekla Haimanot. The Christian Agau dynasty known as the Zagwe thus came into power and retained control until 1270. However, Harold Marcus thought that Judith’s life story was probably based upon a composite of multiple real individuals.<sup>56</sup> In Michael Belaynesh’s opinion, the historicity of Queen Judith is uncertain, as we have a limited number of written sources available for study.<sup>57</sup>

According to Marcus, it is likely that there were no Ethiopian Jews before the fourteenth century. Early in that century, the monk Abba Ewostatewos founded a Sabbatarian movement which modified the teachings of Christianity to become more like ancient, pre-Talmudic Judaism. After the persecution of his followers, the Sabbatarians fled to isolated parts of northwestern Ethiopia.

Several Christian princes in the provinces of Sallamt and Semien converted to Judaism in the fifteenth century and contributed to the military strength of the Falashas. Zar’a Ya’eqob (reigned 1438–1468), the Christian *negus* of Ethiopia, engaged in battle against these Jewish rebels.<sup>58</sup> The Falashas killed many of the Amhara people and enjoyed military successes against Zar’a Ya’eqob’s army. Zar’a Ya’eqob’s successor, Emperor Ba’eda Maryam (reigned 1468–1478), eventually was able to crush the Falashas.

The Ethiopian Jews were formally converted to normative Orthodox Judaism upon their arrival in Israel during the 1980s and 1990s.

Genetic studies have consistently shown a very close relationship between Ethiopian Jews and Ethiopian non-Jews, and little to no relationship with other Jewish populations. For instance, a study of Y-DNA conducted by Gerard Lucotte and Pierre Smets showed that Ethiopian Jews very often possess the two most widespread haplotypes in Ethiopia while they lack two very common Jewish haplotypes.<sup>59</sup> A Y-DNA study by Noah Rosenberg and his colleagues likewise concluded that Ethiopian Jews are not closely related to

other Jewish groups, even though they share some haplotypes with Yemenite Jews; they reason that gene flow between Ethiopian non-Jews and Yemenite non-Jews in early times accounts for any common haplotypes between Ethiopian Jews and Yemenite Jews, both of whom apparently have considerable convert ancestry derived from local populations.<sup>60</sup> The most common mtDNA haplotype among Ethiopian Jews is found elsewhere only among non-Jewish Ethiopians and Somalians.<sup>61</sup>

The hypothesis that the Ethiopian Jews are the descendants of the Israelite tribe of Dan appears to have no basis in fact. However, the legitimacy of their Jewishness is determined by their practice of the Jewish religion and not by their ancestry.

### CONVERTS IN NORTH AFRICA

Proselytism was partly responsible for the growth of Jewish communities in Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, and particularly Libya. However, most North African Jews share the majority of their ancestry with other Jews around the world, as genetic studies have shown.

In the seventh century, a large number of Spanish Jews fled their Visigoth oppressors. Some of these Spanish Jews settled in the Sahara Desert region of North Africa and actively proselytized Berber tribes. The close connection between Jews and Berbers was recorded by many medieval writers, such as the eleventh-century Spanish poet Abu Bakr ibn 'Ammar.<sup>62</sup> However, the first historian to mention Judaized North Africans was al-Idrisi, a twelfth-century Moroccan geographer who wrote about Berbers of the Jewish faith as well as Jewish proselytizing efforts in the western Sudan.

The fourteenth-century Tunisian historian 'Abd-ar-Rahman ibn Khaldun wrote that it was possible that some of the Berbers adopted Judaism, such as the Berber tribe Jarawa, which lived in the Aurès Mountains region of northeastern Algeria.<sup>63</sup> The Jarawa queen during the 680s and 690s was called the "Kahina" (meaning "Soothsayer"), and her full name was apparently Kahya al-Kahina. She was Jewish herself, according to many accounts. Some of the details of her life appear to be legendary rather than historical in nature. According to ibn Khaldun, Caliph 'Abd-al-Malik sent the Arab governor of Egypt, Hassan ibn Numan, to North Africa to conquer additional territory, but after having some successes, he was soundly defeated by the Kahina, whose soldiers inflicted thousands of casualties on the Arab invaders and forced the survivors to retreat far to the east. For several years afterward, the Kahina ruled over a wide expanse of land extending from Tripoli in northwestern Libya to Tangiers in northern Morocco.<sup>64</sup> However, Hassan returned with a



much larger force, and this time the Berbers were outnumbered and defeated after many battles. The written accounts differ on many of the specifics, including whether she died on the battlefield or whether she was captured and subsequently executed.

After their defeat, which completed the Arab conquest of North Africa, the Jarawa tribe lost its independence and dispersed, with some of them migrating to the Melilla region in northeastern Morocco. The majority of the Berbers were forced to convert to Islam. Among the Jewish tribes forced to adopt Islam were the Uled Jari people of the Touggourt Oasis in Algeria, the Daggatun tribe which lives between the Sudan and Timbuktu, and Tunisian and Moroccan Berbers.<sup>65</sup> The Daggatuns were tent-dwelling Berbers of the Sahara oases who shared many customs with the Tuaregs and other Berber tribes, but even after their nominal conversion to Islam, they retained some Jewish traditions.

After the expulsion of Jews from Spain in 1492, many of them arrived in North Africa. The Moroccan, Algerian, and Tunisian Jews are primarily descended from Israelite Jews, both from Israelite populations that had existed in the North African region since Roman times and from the newcomers from Spain. Y-DNA evidence showed a very close relationship between North African Jews and other Jewish populations of the world, including Iraqi Jews.<sup>66</sup>

The modern Jews of Libya, by contrast, appear to be a distinctive Jewish population, which over the centuries had less contact with other Jewish communities than other North African Jews and which may have had substantial admixture with Berbers, according to a genetic study by Noah Rosenberg and his colleagues.<sup>67</sup> Statistically, according to this study's examination of genetic distances, Libyan Jews are clearly distinguishable from Moroccan Jews (in terms of cluster analysis), though there are some commonalities (in terms of the lowest differentiation test statistic) between the two populations, which may be explainable by gene flow and/or common ancestry through either common Berber ancestors or common Israelite ancestors.

## CONVERTS IN UGANDA

In February 2002, hundreds of Ugandan Africans living in the village of Nabugoye and several other villages (near Mbale, Uganda) were officially converted by rabbis to Conservative Judaism after many decades of observing the Jewish religion.<sup>68</sup> They are known as the community of Abayudaya. *Abayudaya* is the Luganda word for "people of Judah." The Abayudaya community began to practice Judaism in 1919 under the leadership of Semei

Kakungulu. Kakungulu's religion, spread among the Abayudaya, used to mix Jewish practices with some Christian, Muslim, and African tribal beliefs, but its foundation was Judaism.<sup>69</sup> Over the decades, the Abayudaya continued to associate with Jews and had a desire to be recognized by other Jews and learn more about standard Judaism. The 2002 conversion event, though massive in scale, involved the conversion of individuals one by one.

## NOTES

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5. George Vernadsky, *A History of Russia* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1948), 1:133.
6. András Róna-Tas, *Hungarians and Europe in the Early Middle Ages*, trans. Nicholas Bodoczky (Budapest: Central European University Press, 1999), 202.
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8. Dennis Prager, "Judaism Must Seek Converts," in *Readings on Conversion to Judaism*, ed. Lawrence J. Epstein (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1995), 91.
9. Martin D. Goodman, "Jewish Proselytizing in the First Century," in *The Jews among Pagans and Christians in the Roman Empire*, ed. Judith Lieu, John North, and Tessa Rajak (London: Routledge, 1992), 75.
10. Goodman, "Jewish Proselytizing in the First Century," 60–61.
11. Goodman, "Jewish Proselytizing in the First Century," 65–66.
12. See Joyce M. Reynolds and Robert F. Tannenbaum, *Jews and God-Fearers at Aphrodisias: Greek Inscriptions with Commentary* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge Philological Society, 1987).
13. Lawrence J. Epstein, *Questions and Answers on Conversion to Judaism* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1998), 166.
14. Vsevolod N. Vikhnovich, "From the Jordan to the Dnieper," *Jewish Studies (Mada'e ha-Yahadut)* 31 (1991): 18.
15. Paul Wexler, *The Ashkenazic Jews* (Columbus, OH: Slavica, 1993), 213.
16. Nikolaj Kochev, "The Question of Jews and the So-Called Judaizers in the Balkans from the 9th to the 14th Century," *Bulgarian Historical Review* 6 (1978): 63–64. Naturally, the Judaizers also challenged the alleged divinity of Jesus (68).
17. Kochev, "The Question of Jews and the So-Called Judaizers," 66–67.
18. Paul Wexler, *The Non-Jewish Origins of the Sephardic Jews* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1996), 41.

19. Wexler, *The Non-Jewish Origins of the Sephardic Jews*, 48.
20. Wexler, *The Non-Jewish Origins of the Sephardic Jews*, 49.
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22. Benjamin of Tudela, *The Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela: Travels in the Middle Ages*, trans. Marcus N. Adler (Malibu, CA: Joseph Simon/Pangloss Press, 1987), 68.
23. Ben Zion Wacholder, "Cases of Proselytizing in the Tosafist Responsa," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 15 (1960–1961), 313.
24. Ben Zion Wacholder, "Attitudes Toward Proselytizing in the Classical Halakah," in *Readings on Conversion to Judaism*, ed. Lawrence J. Epstein (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1995), 19. Other proselytes in Christian countries also changed their names to Abraham.
25. Wacholder, "Cases of Proselytizing in the Tosafist Responsa," 297–98.
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28. Raphael Patai and Jennifer Patai, *The Myth of the Jewish Race*, rev. ed. (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1989), 85.
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30. Epstein, *Questions and Answers on Conversion to Judaism*, 175.
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32. Patai, *The Jews of Hungary*, 159–60.
33. Béla Pomogáts, "Jews by Choice," *The Hungarian Quarterly* 42, no. 163 (Autumn 2001): 113–17.
34. Flavius Josephus, *The Complete Works of Josephus*, trans. William Whiston (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1981), 415–18.
35. However, the Midrash called Monobazus I by the name "Talmi" instead (see Bernard J. Bamberger, *Proselytism in the Talmudic Period* [New York: Hebrew Union College Press, 1939], 227).
36. At first, Izates was governor of Corduene, located just north of Adiabene.
37. Paul E. Kahle, *The Cairo Geniza* (London: Oxford University Press, 1947), 185.
38. These sources claimed that she had the sukkah installed in Lydda, but according to Lawrence H. Schiffman (in "The Conversion of the Royal House of Adiabene in Josephus and Rabbinic Sources," in *Josephus, Judaism, and Christianity*, ed. Louis H. Feldman and Gohei Hata [Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1987], 309–10) the sukkah was probably actually built in Jerusalem, since the notion that it was in Lydda was a later addition to the story.
39. Bamberger, *Proselytism in the Talmudic Period*, 228.
40. Richard Gottheil, "Adiabene," in *The Jewish Encyclopedia* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1901–1906), 1:192.
41. Schiffman, "The Conversion of the Royal House of Adiabene in Josephus and Rabbinic Sources," 297.
42. Mireille Hadas-Lebel, *Flavius Josephus: Eyewitness to Rome's First-Century Conquest of Judea* (New York: Macmillan, 1993), 172.

43. Flavius Josephus, *The Complete Works of Josephus*, 495.
44. Kahle, *The Cairo Geniza*, 189.
45. Monroe Rosenthal and Isaac Mozeson, *Wars of the Jews: A Military History from Biblical to Modern Times* (New York: Hippocrene, 1990), 114.
46. Itzhak Ben-Zvi, *The Exiled and the Redeemed*, trans. Isaac A. Abbady (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1961), 50–51. On the speculation based on the writings of the Armenian chronicler Movses Khorenatsi that some of the royal house of Adiabene king Monobazus eventually settled in Armenia, see Jacob Neusner, *Judaism, Christianity, and Zoroastrianism in Talmudic Babylonia* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), 103–4, 227.
47. Flavius Josephus, *The Complete Works of Josephus*, 279.
48. Ken Blady, *Jewish Communities in Exotic Places* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 2000), 8.
49. Ben-Zvi, *The Exiled and the Redeemed*, 251–52.
50. Kochev, “The Question of Jews and the So-Called Judaizers,” 63.
51. Philip K. Hitti, *History of the Arabs: From the Earliest Times to the Present*, 8th ed. (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1963), 60.
52. Blady, *Jewish Communities in Exotic Places*, 9.
53. Hitti, *History of the Arabs*, 62.
54. Blady, *Jewish Communities in Exotic Places*, 9–10.
55. Hillel Halkin, “Wandering Jews—and Their Genes,” *Commentary* 110, no. 2 (September 2000): 54–61.
56. Harold Marcus, *A History of Ethiopia*, 1st ed. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1994), 11.
57. Michael Belaynesh, “Gudit,” in *The Dictionary of Ethiopian Biography*, vol. 1, ed. Michael Belaynesh, Stanislaw Chojnacki, and Richard Pankhurst (Addis Ababa: Institute of Ethiopian Studies, 1975).
58. Steven Kaplan, *The Beta Israel (Falasha) in Ethiopia* (New York: New York University Press, 1992), 59.
59. Gerard Lucotte and Pierre Smets, “Origins of Falasha Jews Studied by Haplotypes of the Y Chromosome,” *Human Biology* 71, no. 6 (December 1999): 989–93.
60. Noah A. Rosenberg, Eilon Woolf, et al., “Distinctive Genetic Signatures in the Libyan Jews,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 98, no. 3 (January 30, 2001): 860, 861.
61. Mark G. Thomas, Michael E. Weale, et al., “Founding Mothers of Jewish Communities: Geographically Separated Jewish Groups Were Independently Founded by Very Few Female Ancestors,” *The American Journal of Human Genetics* 70, no. 6 (June 2002): 1417.
62. Wexler, *The Non-Jewish Origins of the Sephardic Jews*, 41.
63. Haim Z. Hirschberg, “The Problem of the Judaized Berbers,” *Journal of African History* 4, no. 3 (1963): 317.
64. Hirschberg, “The Problem of the Judaized Berbers,” 318.
65. Hirschberg, “The Problem of the Judaized Berbers,” 336; Nathan Ausubel, *Pictorial History of the Jewish People* (New York: Crown, 1953), 225–27.

66. Almut Nebel, Ariella Oppenheim, et al., “The Y Chromosome Pool of Jews as Part of the Genetic Landscape of the Middle East,” *The American Journal of Human Genetics* 69, no. 5 (November 2001): 1100.

67. Rosenberg, Woolf, et al., “Distinctive Genetic Signatures in the Libyan Jews,” 858–63. The authors declared that the Libyan Jews are “separate from and show strong differentiation from the other populations of our study” (860). See in particular table 3 on page 861, where only one Libyan Jew was part of the cluster containing all nineteen Ashkenazic Jews from the study, as well as all nineteen Moroccan Jews and seventeen out of the eighteen Iraqi Jews. The cluster containing nineteen out of the twenty tested Libyan Jews contained only one Iraqi Jew and two Ethiopian Jews in addition to two Palestinian Arabs. Another cluster contained eleven Ethiopian Jews and four Yemenite Jews.

68. Haim Shapiro, “300 Ugandans in ‘Jewish’ Village since 1919 Convert to Judaism,” *The Jerusalem Post*, February 22, 2002.

69. James R. Ross, *Fragile Branches: Travels through the Jewish Diaspora* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2000), 22–23.

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## About the Author

**Kevin Alan Brook** is a historian who has researched the Khazars since 1993. He has contributed articles about the Khazars to *The Encyclopaedia of Judaism*, second edition (Brill, 2005) and *The Turks*, vol. 1 (Yeni Türkiye, 2002). Since 1995, Brook has maintained the website of the American Center of Khazar Studies (Khazaria.com).

