

"Turkism", Polish *Sarmatism* and 'Jewish *szlachta*' Some Reflections on a Cultural Context of the Polish-Lithuanian Karaites**

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to clarify one factual context in which the widespread - but erroneous - notion of the Turkic origins of the Eastern European Karaites might have arisen. I am not targeting here the senseless theories of such a politically-motivated falsifier as Seraya Szapszal, for I have done this elsewhere,¹ but I will rather try to demonstrate that the initial stages of toying of the Eastern European Karaites with "Turkicness" should not be seen as some kind of conscious de-Judaization dirty tricks, but rather as a legitimate part of a specific Jewish-Polish discourse of the 18th century.

Keywords: Karaites, origin disputes, Turkic, Eastern European Jewry.

Till the end of the 18th century, two distinctive groups of Karaites inhabited Eastern Europe, one of them in Poland-Lithuania, or *Rzeczpospolita Obojga Narodów*, the other in the Ottoman territories in the Crimea and in the Crimean Tatar Khanate. The first group spoke two dialects of a Turkic Qıpçaq language called Karaim and was deeply acculturated into its Rabbanite-Ashkenazic surroundings, with whom these Karaites were entangled in a continuing dialog, sometimes painful. The other group, back in the Crimea, was Turkish and Tatar-speaking, and represented Ottoman Jewry, whatever that means.²

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** My sincere thanks go to Geoffrey Herman, Dr. Michael Glatzer, Mikhail Kizilov, Dr. Sergei Kravtsov, Professor Shaul Stampfer. This paper is based on a lecture read at the Karaite Colloquium, Jerusalem, Ben-Zvi Institute and the Center for Study of Polish Jewry (HUJI). 07.12.03-08.12.03 / 12-13 of Kislev 5764.

¹ D. Shapira, "A Jewish Pan-Turkist: Serayah Szapszal's Work *Qırım Qaray Türkleri*", *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* (58:4) 2005, pp. 349-380; another version: "A Jewish Pan-Turkist: Serayah Szapszal (Şapşaloğlu) and his work *Qırım Qaray Türkleri* (1928) (Judaeo-Türkica XIII)", XIV. *Türk Tarihi Kongresi Ankara: 9-13 Eylül 2002, Kongreye Sunulan Bildiriler*, I. Cilt, Ankara 2005, pp. 187-212; compare also M. Kizilov, "New Materials on the biography of S.M.Szapszal (1928-1939)", *Materialy Devjatoj Meždunarodnoj Konferencii po Iudaïke*, Sefer, Moscow 2002, pp. 255-273. See also N. Ter-Ohanov, "Neizvestnyj arxivnyj material o karaimie Sergee Markoviče Šapšale (Adib-Soltan)" [Russian; forthcoming].

² See D. Shapira, *Abraham Firkowicz in Istanbul, (1830-1832): Paving the Way for Turkic Nationalism*, KaraM, Ankara 2003 (120 pp.); *idem.*, "Avraham Firkowicz in Istanbul, 1830-32", *Jewish Texts and Studies* 1.1

By the end of the century, the Ottoman Empire lost to Russia the control of the Crimea and the surrounding region, and quite a few Karaites preferred to migrate to the Ottoman Empire. Poland-Lithuania was split, at the same time, between Russia, Austria and Prussia, and about a million of Rabbanite Jews, together with all the European Karaites (except the small Galician community of Halicz) found themselves subjects of the Russian Empire. The annexation of areas heavily populated with Jews presented Russian law with a new problem as the presence of Jews had not formerly been permitted on Russian lands. After a few years of dallying with liberal ideas the Jews were confined to the Pale of Settlement and various restrictions were imposed upon them. These restrictions initially affected all Jews. However, in 1795, the Crimean Karaites, but not those of Wolhynia and ethnic Lithuania, success-

(2003), pp. 1-18 [Hebrew]; G. Akhiezer & D. Shapira, "Karaites in Poland-Lithuania Up to the 18th Century", *Pe'amim* 89 (2001), pp. 19-60 [Hebrew]; see also D. Shapira, "A Karaite from Wolhynia Meets a Zoroastrian from Baku", *Iran & Caucasus* V, 2001, pp. 105-6; *idem.*, "A New Collection of Documents on Karaites in Eastern Europe at the Ben-Zvi Institute", *Pe'amim* 90 (2002), pp. 155-172 [Hebrew]; *idem.*, "Miscellanea Judaeo-Turkica: Four Judeo-Turkic Notes (Judaeo-Turkica IV)", *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*, 27 (2002), pp. 475-496; *idem.*, "A New Version of the Karaim Poem in Crimean-Tatar from Mangup", *Vestnik Jevrejskogo Universiteta v Moskve*, 7 (2002), pp. 123-134 [Russian]; *idem.*, "From 'Our Exile' to Sichev: Abraham Firkowicz visits the Samaritans", *Cathedra* 104 (June 2002), pp. 85-94 [Hebrew]; *idem.*, "A Letter from Beta-Israel to Jerusalem", *Cathedra* 110 (December 2003), pp. 123-128 [Hebrew]; *idem.*, "Yitshaq Sangari, Sangarit, Bezalel Stern and Avraham Firkowicz: Notes on Two Forged Inscriptions", *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 12 (2002-3), pp. 223-260; *idem.*, "On Two Forged Inscriptions: Yitshaq Sangari, Sangarit, Bezalel Stern and Avraham Firkowicz", *Materialy po arxeologii, istorii i etnografii Tavrii*, 10, Simperopol 2003, pp. 535-555; "Yitshaq Sangari, Sangarit, Bezalel Stern and Avraham Firkowicz: The History of Two Forged Inscriptions", *Paralleli דקבלות*, 2-3 (Moscow 2003); pp.363-388; *idem.*, "A Karaim Poem in Crimean-Tatar from Mangup: a Source for Jewish-Turkish History (Judaeo-Turkica III)", *Jewish-Turkish Encounters. Studies in Jewish-Turkish Relations Throughout the Ages*, ed. Mehmet Tütüncü, SOTA, Haarlem 2001, pp. 79-100; *idem.*, "Beginnings of the Karaites of the Crimea Prior to the Early 16th century" (with contributions by M. Ezer, A. Fedortchouk, M. Kizilov), *A Guide to Karaite Studies: An Introduction to the Literary Sources of Medieval and Modern Karaite Judaism*, ed. M. Polliack, Leiden Brill 2003, pp. 709-728; *idem.*, "The Turkic Languages and Literatures of the Eastern European Karaites", in M. Polliack (ed.), *A Guide to Karaite Studies: An Introduction to the Literary Sources of Medieval and Modern Karaite Judaism*, ed. M. Polliack, Leiden Brill 2003, pp. 657-707; *idem.*, "Some New Data on the Karaites in Wolhynia and Galicia in the 18th Century", *Karaimy Galicha: Istoriia ta Kul'tura / The Halych Karaims: History and Culture*, L'viv & Halyč 2002, pp. 11-23; *idem.*, "Indeed Ancestral Tombs? - Historical Data and their Modification in the Tombstone Inscriptions of Abraham Firkowicz", *Pe'amim* 98-99 (2004), pp. 261-318; *idem.*, "Turkic Languages and Literatures of Karaites Up to the Early 20th Century", *Proceedings of the Misgav Yerushalayim Conference*, ed. by D. Bunis, Jerusalem 2003 [Hebrew; 45 pp.]; *idem.*, "The Present State of Some Colophons and Marginalia on the Bible Manuscripts in the First Firkowicz Collection", *SEFER International Conference*, Vol. 1, Moscow 2004, pp. 102-130 [Russian]; *idem.*, "Kak nabljudatel' transformiruet nabljudaemyj objekt: A. Firkovič na Kavkaze v 1840 g. i v 1849-1850 gg. i ego vliianie na gorskix jevreev" ["How an Observer Changes the Observed: Avraham Firkowicz in the Caucasus, 1840-41 and 1849-50, and His Impact on the Mountain Jews"], *Judaica Rossica*, IV (Moscow 2006), pp. 8-30 [Russian]; *idem.*, "Judaization of Central Asian Traditions as Reflected in the so-called Jewish-Khazar Correspondence, with Two Excurses: A. Judah Halevy's Quotes; B. Eldad Hadani; and With An Addendum", *Khazars*, ed. by V. Petrukhin, W. Moskovich, A. Fedorchuk, A. Kulik, D. Shapira (*Jews and Slavs*, Vol. 16), Gesharim, Jerusalem & Moscow 2005, pp. 503-521; *idem.*, "Linguistic Adaptation in the Bible Translations into the Turkic Languages of the Karaites", *Massoroth* 13-14 (2006), ed. S.E. Fassberg & A. Maman, Jerusalem 2006, pp. 253-278 (Hebrew); *idem.*, "Persian, and especially Judeo-Persian, in the Medieval Crimea", *Irano-Judaica* VI, ed. Sh. Shaked, Jerusalem 2008, pp. 253-289; *The Tombstones of the Cemetery of the Karaite Jews in Çufut-Qal ʿEh (the Crimea). Report of the Ben-Zvi Institute Expedition. A Collection of Studies*, edited by Dan D.Y. Shapira, Ben-Zvi Institute, Jerusalem 2008.

fully lobbied for the annulment of these discriminatory regulations and obtained advantages denied their Rabbanite brethren.³ The Russian annexation had a very positive impact for the Crimean Karaites. At the end of the 18th century, yet prior to the Russian annexation, the Crimean Karaites had engaged in profiteering from the lands of Greeks and Armenians who had migrated to Russia during the Crimean civil war during the reign of Shâhîn-Girây.⁴ After the Russian annexation, they profited from the lands of the Tatars who were migrating to the Ottoman Empire. At the beginning of the 19th century the cities of Gözleve and Odessa became flourishing ports and many Crimean Karaites succeeded as traders there and became wealthy. The improved economic situation of the Crimean Karaites attracted members of the northern Karaite communities to the peninsula, especially those of Łuck (Luck, Lutsk), who were known for both their thorough religious education and for their dire poverty. Among these emigrants were YaShaR Lucki, David Kokizow, Mordekhay Sultanski and Avraham Firkowicz, all of them rather close relatives from Luck. This emigration of the Luck savants from their native town to the Crimea has become in the course of the 18th century almost traditional.⁵ In the 18th century Luck, with the nearby Kokizow,⁶ had developed into the intellectual center of the Karaites. Many reasons operated here: the dwindling of the Troki community as a result of wars and epidemics in the early 18th century, immigration of the most illustrious and advantageous Karaites of Troki (as a result of the aforesaid hardships) to Luck and Kokizow,⁷ and the physical affinity of Luck to the thriving cities of Brody and Tarnopol, where the first sprouts of the Haskalah, the Jewish Enlightenment, were budding.

³ See Ph. Miller, *Karaite Separatism in XIXth Century Russia. Joseph Solomon Lutzki's "Epistle of Israel's Deliverance"*, Cincinnati 1993 (Introduction); for the Russian texts of the petitions submitted to Count Platon Zubov, the successor of Prince Potemkin in the office of the general Commissioner of Novorossija, which included the Crimea, see I. Kaja (Qaya, Kaya), "Balovni Sud'by" (the text of this important posthumous work will be published soon).

⁴ See D. Shapira, "A Karaim Poem in Crimean-Tatar from Mangup: a Source for Jewish-Turkish History (Judaeo-Turcica III)", *Jewish-Turkish Encounters. Studies in Jewish-Turkish Relations Throughout the Ages*, ed. Mehmet Tütüncü, SOTA, Haarlem 2001, pp. 79-100; *idem.*, "A New Version of the Karaim Poem in Crimean-Tatar from Mangup", *Vestník Jevrejského Universiteta v Moskve*, 7 (2002), pp. 123-134 [Russian]. On the civil war in the Crimea, see G. Akhiezer, "The Hebrew Chronicle of R. Azaria the Karaite", *Qobetz 'Al Yad* 2008-2009 (Hebrew; forthcoming).

⁵ See D. Shapira, "Some New Data on the Karaites in Wolhynia and Galicia in the 18th Century", *Karaimy Galicja: Istorija ta Kul'tura / The Halych Karaims: History and Culture*, L'viv Galyč 2002), pp. 11-23. It has been stressed also by M. Zaveryaev-Hammal, in his presentation at the First International Karaite Colloquium ("The Immigration of the Luck Karaites to the Crimea in the First Half of the 19th Century and their Role in the Life of the Karaite Community of the Crimea").

⁶ The history of Kokizow, Karaite included, founded by the open-minded King Jan Sobieski, deserves a special study, in the context of the cultural tendencies prevalent in Poland in the late 17th / early 18th centuries. This town was envisaged as a model of the ideal Sarmatian *cosmos*. I am grateful to Dr. Sergei Kravtsov for an enlightening conversation on this subject.

⁷ Compare now D. Shapira, "Some New Data on the Karaites in Wolhynia and Galicia in the 18th Century", *Karaimy Galicja: Istorija ta Kul'tura / The Halych Karaims: History and Culture* (L'viv-Galyč: Spolom, 2002), pp. 11-23.

The Karaites of Luck had a history of attempts to differentiate themselves from the obsolete *qahal* system and the sway of the Rabbanite majority over it as early as the last years of the existence of an independent Polish-Lithuanian Republic. They presented a petition to the last independent Sejm (the so-called "Four-Years Diet") in which they wrote, *circa* 1790, threatening, demagogically enough, to emigrate to Turkey, if their demands are not met: "zawsze do tego momentu nie byliśmy pod żadną inną Juryzdykcyą, iak tylko Szlachecką, aby śmy przeto do Juryzdykcyi Mieskiej, ani Kahalney Żydowskiej nie należeli, lecz do Ziemiańskiej, iak dawniey do Starościnskiej, byli oddani, dopraszamy się"⁸ (until this moment we have never been under any other sort of jurisdiction, save for that of nobility (*szlachta*); thus, we are asking not to be included neither into town jurisdiction, nor into that of the Jewish *qahal*, but, as before, to *Ziemiańska* or *Starościnska*).⁹

In the first decades of the 19th century they enjoyed sympathetic interest on the part of the *Maskilim*, the emerging Reform movement¹⁰ and scholars associated with Jewish Studies, *Wissenschaft der Judenthums*. This is the part of the background to be fully comprehended for what was called "Firkowicz Project" carried out in the Crimea and elsewhere between the twenties and the seventies of the 19th century. Time does not allow us to go into details of the life of A. Firkowicz and his carrier. However, some remarks seem to be in place.

The way Firkowicz chose to separate his community from the encroachments of the Rabbanite majority was to present it to the Russian authorities as an ancient exotic Hebrew group that split from the rest of Israel twenty-five hundred years earlier. He could consequently claim that his community was not responsible for those things that Christians accuse the Jews of, including the crucifixion of Jesus, the creation of the Talmud, various superstitions, and a parasitical way of life. Contrary to the widely held impression, Firkowicz never claimed that the Karaites of the Crimea and Eastern Europe are a separate people of Turkic origin, though he constantly stressed, obtusely, their specific Turkic traces. Many scholars did not realize this discrepancy and were not aware of what it implies. Furthermore, the only connection

⁸ The orthography is as given in the original text.

⁹ M. Bałaban, "Karaici w Polsce", in his *Studia Historyczne*, Warszawa 1927, pp. 51-53; A. Zajczkowski, *Karaims in Poland*, Warszawa 1961, p. 65. See also M. Kizilov, "The Arrival of the Karaites (Karaims) to Poland and Lithuania: A Survey of Sources and Critical Analysis of Existing Theories", *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 12 (2002-2003), pp. 29-45, p. 34 n. 23. M. Kizilov informs me in a private communication that having been taxed through the *Ziemiańska* (Russ. "zemskaja" or *Starościnska* (Pol. "starosta" = German: *Kreishauptmann*; Engl. head of the circuit) administration was both safer and more prestigious. The main reason for the Karaites' objection was the following: to be taxed through the corrupt local town or *Qahal* administration was less safe than to be taxed directly by such high officials as the *Kreishauptmann* or *Ziemiańie*. Moreover, to be taxed through *Qahal* would mean that the Karaites would be subjected to the authority of their rivals-Rabbanites.

¹⁰ The first Reformed prayer book in London was printed as if a Karaite one. Cf. also J. Kaplan, "The 'Karaites' of Amsterdam "in the early eighteenth century, an unknown chapter in the history of the fermentation of ideas in the Sephardi community", *Zion* 52 (1987), pp. 279-314 (Hebrew).

that Firkowicz made between the Karaites and the Khazars was the (inaccurate) claim that the Khazars received the Karaite rather than the Rabbanite version of Judaism. The significance of this claim was both polemical and apologetic. It reproached the Rabbanite Jews by implying that a large Turkic people received Karaite and not Rabbanite Judaism and it removed the sense of offence felt by many Russians at the idea that in their early history they had been enslaved to vagrant Jews. Firkowicz explained to the Russian *obščestvennost'* that their forefathers were not subservient to the familiar *jargon*- (this is, Yiddish) speaking and Talmud-following Jews, but to other Jews, exotic and proud *Orientalics*. He never presented this idea as an organized theory but he sowed allusions and created an atmosphere. The theory was based on tombstone inscriptions from the Crimea, and on colophons and marginalia to manuscripts, both of which underwent careful "treatment" at the hands of Firkowicz.¹¹ In reality, and without intending to do so, Firkowicz, who was a true loyalist to his Turkic mother tongue, laid the foundations for the rise of the first European-like nationalism among the Turkic - or Turkic-speaking - peoples. Firkowicz's public activities created a supportive attitude towards Karaites by the rulers. Firkowicz even tried to create a sense of common heritage between the "Israelites" (*i.e.*, the Karaites) and the population of Southern Russia / Malorossia / Ukraine, when he argued for common racial origins of these groups. Obviously, this was a reflection of both Polish Sarmatism, with its anti-Slavic racism of the Szlachta (with one of the non-direct consequences being the Polish rejection of Pan-Slavism), and of Anglo-Israelism.¹² In a text in Russian (kept at the Kiev's Ukrainian National Library Named after Vernadsky, Jewish MSS OPI 1210), Firkowicz presented his views on the remnants of Slavic words in Hebrew texts, said to have been found "in the Khazar city of Mangup", as evidence to common ancestry of Jews and the inhabitants of Southern Russia (Malorossia / Ukraine). He quoted "Dr Abraham Geiger, *Parschandatha. Die Nordfranzösische Exegetenschule*, Leipzig 1855, p. 33", as expressing the view, that the Jews of Eastern Europe called the Slavs *Kanaan*, having thinking that they are the descendants of the Kanaanites who fled from Joshua.¹³ However, Firkowicz rejected this opinion and stated that

¹¹ See, for details, *The Tombstones of the Cemetery of the Karaite Jews in Çufut-Qal Qeh (the Crimea). Report of the Ben-Zvi Institute Expedition. A Collection of Studies*, edited by Dan D.Y. Shapira, Ben-Zvi Institute, Jerusalem 2008; Dan D.Y. Shapira, "Indeed Ancestral Tombs? - Historical Data and their Modification in the Tombstone Inscriptions of Abraham Firkowicz", *Pe'amim* 98-99 (2004), pp. 261-318; *idem.*, "Yitshaq Sangari, Sangarit, Bezalel Stern and Avraham Firkowicz: Notes on Two Forged Inscriptions", *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 12 (2002-3), pp. 223-260; *idem.*, "On Two Forged Inscriptions: Yitshaq Sangari, Sangarit, Bezalel Stern and Avraham Firkowicz", *Materialy po arxeologii, istorii i etnografii Tavrii*, 10, Simperopol 2003, pp. 535-555; "Yitshaq Sangari, Sangarit, Bezalel Stern and Avraham Firkowicz: The History of Two Forged Inscriptions", *Paralleli תהגבלות*, 2-3 (Moscow 2003); pp.363-388).

¹² See Dan. D.Y. Shapira, "The Mejelis 'Document' and Tapani Harvianen: On Scholarship, Firkowicz and Forgeries", *Omeljan Pritsak Armağanı / A Tribute to Omeljan Pritsak*, ed. by Mehmet Alpargu & Yücel Öztürk, Sakarya 2007, pp. 303-393; *idem.*, "Remarks on Avraham Firkowicz and the Hebrew *Mejelis* 'Document'" *AOASH* 59:2 (2006), pp. 131-180.

¹³ Но почему евреи средних вѣковъ, славянскій языкъ называли ханаанским, трудно объяснить, вѣроятно потому, что незная происхождения славян, признавали ихъ потомками техъ

Genesis 10:26 and 1 Chronicles 1:20 mentioned Saleph and Atzarmaved" (Салефъ и Ацармаведъ שלף הצרמות) as sons of Joqtan son of Eber son of Shem son of Noah, and that the Septuagint has Sarmotha and Asarmotha for the latter, which Firkowicz took as equal to Sarmatians. Saleph, according to Firkowicz, is the same as *Slav*. He also stated that the nowadays inhabitants of Southern Russia are more in common, physically, with the Semites than with the Japhetides, so the Malorossians should be Semitic.¹⁴

As a result of successful lobbying, in which Firkowicz used pseudo-historical, pseudo-archeological, and pro-Christian and pro-Enlightenment arguments, the Karaites of the Russian Empire became legally recognized as an independent denomination in 1863, and they were officially granted the name of "Russian Karaites [or, "Karaitе Russians", *russkije karaimy*] of the Old Testament". Firkowicz also requested that the Karaites be granted the rights of the Russian nobles, but this request was denied. Nevertheless, the word "Jew" was officially removed from the members of this community and they were granted the same rights as the native Russian Orthodox population. This is how the gradual process of their de-Judaization began. The emancipation of the Russian Karaites, which was seen as having been achieved at the expense of the rest of Russian Jewry and was accompanied by an anti-Rabbanite campaign, provoked a bitter split with the rest of the Russian Jews. The kernel of these newly-passed laws was positive discrimination in favor of Karaites vis-à-vis other (Rabbanite) Jews. This positive attitude, however, led to a faster pace of assimilation among the younger generation of Karaites. By the end of the nineteenth century many Karaites no longer understood the religious difference between themselves and other Jews. They therefore sought alternative, not religiously bound, ways to consolidate their separate identity. This tendency expressed itself in the activity of Serayah b. Mordek-

первобытных жителей ханаанской земли завоеванной Исусом Навиновъ (!) которые при общемъ истребленіи успели спастись.

¹⁴ въ книгѣ Бытія, гл. X, стихъ 26 и въ 1 книгѣ Паралипоменона, гл 1 стихъ 20 упоминается изъ четвернацати сыновей Юктана, сына Евера, сына Симова, сына Ноя, а именно: Салефъ и Ацармаведъ въ הצרמות שלף наименование последняго т.е. Ацармаведа въ греческомъ переводѣ семидесяти толковниковъ въ книгѣ Бытія обозначено Сармота, а въ Паралипоменонѣ Асармота. Тоже видно и въ переводѣ славянскомъ, гдѣ также переведено: Сармота и Асармота. Звукъ Сармота такъ близокъ къ названію Сарматъ, древнихъ обитателей южной Россіи, что о дальнѣйшей тождественности и говорить нечего. Сарматы же по мнѣнію историковъ были славяне. Имя Салефъ, какъ въ греческомъ такъ и въ славянскомъ переводѣ, передано теми же звуками какъ на еврейскомъ т.е. Салефъ. Корень этого наименованія есть שלף (слафъ), означающий сниманіе, вынутіе, обнаженіе мѣча и конечно близко подходитъ къ славянскому слава; такъ что безъ принужденія можно бы производить названіе Славянъ отъ слафъ и Салефа, имени потомка Ноева, тѣмъ болѣе что славяне и сарматы, по свидѣтельству древнихъ историковъ, были одноплеменны и наибшніе жители южной Россіи въ наружности имѣютъ большѣ сходства съ типомъ симетическимъ чѣмъ съ типомъ яфетовымъ, отъ котораго ученые производятъ народы прочей Европы. Поэтому кажется, что славяне принадлежать къ племени симетическому. Точно такъ и ученый Богушъ-Сестренцевичъ, основываясь на толкованіи Писанія, едва-ли правильно, проихвадитъ Сарнатъ отъ Мидійцевъ, племени Яфетова, упираясь на гречесомъ названіи Συρομυδιά одной изъ полуденныхъ провинцій Мидійскаго царства, ибо Сиromидія ничего не имѣетъ общаго съ явно греками вымышленнымъ названіемъ Савроматъ.

hay Shapshal / Seraja Markovič (Sergej Markovič) Šapšal / Seraja Szapszał or Thürey Khan Şapşal-oğlu (1873-1961), that lead to the de-Judaization of the East-European Karaites and turned the majority of them into a new Turkic people, *Karaims*.

However, Firkowicz himself regarded Karaism as the only remnant of *verus Israel*, *peletijath she'erith Yisrael*, and sought a means of ensuring the survival of the real and only Jews in the Gentile world. It was not that the Karaites, God forbid, were not Jews in his eyes, though he was asking to remove from them this name, but the name of the Jews became usurped, according to Firkowicz's view, by millions of heretics and infidels. Using this *taqiyyah*, he was a true follower of the tendency prevalent among the Karaite intellectuals of the late 18th century Luck, whose way of thinking was probably influenced by the Frankist and *Dönme* teachings. There was also a question of social status: in the 1860s, when it seemed a matter of years before all the Jews would attain equal rights - which in fact happened only after the February Revolution of 1917 - he felt terrified by the possibility that the Karaites would once again be at the same footing as the Rabbanites, for in the Rabbanite humiliation he saw the confirmation of the Karaite truth.

Now, why did Firkowicz stress so emphatically the Turkic features of the Karaites, if he himself regarded them as Jews? In order to understand this continuing and intensive emphasis on of the Turkic features of the Karaites and pretensions to be recognized as gentry, so prominent even in the interpretation by Shapshal of the *tarkhan* status of Crimean Karaites as something like petty gentry, we should go to the source rather than to look for the coin under the spotlight.

From the 16th century onwards, the Polish nobility, *szlachta*, believed that its racial, we would say in the late 19th century, origins were quite different from those of the *chłopy*, the Polish peasants. The word for *szlachta* comes from the German *Schlacht*, "pedigree" (cf. *Geschlecht*), but it is possible that some play on words involving *lach / lech* was also on work here. Like the historians of other European countries, the Polish historians of the 16th century sought to dignify the origins of their nation by placing them in antiquity. The fabled valiant Sarmatians, the Winged Horsemen, who lived north of the Black Sea in the time of the Roman Empire, were believed to have been the ancestors of the Polish nobility.¹⁵ The name Sarmatia was already applied to Poland

¹⁵ See, e.g., A. Walicki, *Romantic Nationalism: the Case of Poland*, Stanford University Press 1980; J. Maciejewski, "Sarmatyzm jako formacja kulturowa," *Teksty*, No. 4 (1974); M. Bogucka, *W kręgu Sarmatyzmu*, Warsaw 1974; T. Ulewicz, *Sarmacja. Studium z problematyki słowiańskiej w XV i XVI wieku*, Kraków 1950; J. Tazbir, *Kultura szlachecka w Polsce. Rozkwit, upadek, relikty*, Warsaw 1963; T. Mankowski, *Genealogia sarmatyzmu*, Warsaw 1946; S. Grzybowski, *Sarmatyzm*, Warsaw 1996; cf also N. Ascherson, *The Black Sea*, London 1995, *passim*; R. Butterwick (ed.), *The Polish-Lithuanian Monarchy in European Context. C. 1500-1795*, New York 2001; compare also B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, London 1983. The ultimate source for this idea of the Sarmatian origin of the Poles seems to be a Byzantine source, Cynnamos II.18, who stated: *lechoi hoi Skythikon eisi genos*. It is possible that some interaction with the Hungarian nobility, after Stephan Batory has been elected King of Poland, was also at work here. Cf. now M.

in the 16th century and its people referred to as Sarmatians. These ancient Sarmatians, who were wrongly believed, till the mid-19th century, to be Turkic-speaking - in fact, Tatar-speaking¹⁶ - having been later driven west and northwards by other peoples, were thought to have conquered Poland and reduced its original population to serfdom, themselves forming the nobility of the new nation. These noble "Tatar" Sarmatians gradually adopted the Slavic speech of the conquered country, just like the Turkic Bulgars who conquered Slavic Moesia and Thracia, or like the Germanic Franks who conquered Gaul. In fact, the Sarmatian theory considered the worst military and political enemies of Poland, the Muslim Turks and the Crimean Tatars, as sharing the same origin as the Polish *szlachta* itself, with the strong emphasis on the redeeming Catholic faith professed by the Sarmatian *szlachta*. The theory also stressed the inherent backwardness and servility of the Polish Slavic peasants. Politically, the exponents of Sarmatism promoted the idea of a republic of nobles with an elected king as first among equals, with a lone *szlachcic* having the right of veto on the Sejm (Diet) decisions, and they strongly opposed absolutism of either Western or Muscovite type. Consequently, this theory was characterized by Catholic religious zeal and a deep conviction that the Polish political and social system was the best possible and that the mission of Poland was to defend the Roman Catholic world against the Eastern Orthodox, Protestant and Islamic peoples. In other words, the Catholic faith and the Sarmatian, that is, Turco-Tatar, origin of the nobility were seen as two sides of the same coin: the Catholic Sarmatians have been already redeemed, while their Muslim brethren in the Crimean steppe were still not, with the *chłopy*, Catholic or Greek-Orthodox, considered as just irrelevant. The Polish-Sarmatian nation of the nobility developed a specific outlook and civilization that had its culmination in the late 17th century, under (the Karaites-tending King) Jan Sobieski, having become, in the 18th century, opposed to the ideology of the Enlightenment or to King Poniatowski's eager reformers. The ideal features of Sarmatism included love of liberty and chivalry, excessive disregard for trade and craft, and simplicity and austerity of morals; and, in addition, a fascination with the exotic Orient and cultivation of "Sarmatian" (in fact, sometimes rather Ottoman and Tatar) ways of life and dressing, such as the *kontusz* (a man's or woman's short coat influenced by oriental fashions), or a broad woven belt and long yellow or red knee-boots, or sabers, or moustaches. In fact, the Sarmatian culture of the nobility func-

Kizilov, "Krym i Krymskoje Xanstvo v "Traktate o Dvux Sarmatijax" Matveja Mexovskogo", AEMAe 13 (2004), pp. 79-95.

¹⁶ In fact, Sarmatians spoke an Eastern Iranian language akin to Scythian, Alanic, Ossetic, etc. Compare now D. D.Y. Shapira, "On Judeo-Persian in the Medieval Crimea", *Irano-Judaica VI*, ed. Sh. Shaked, Jerusalem 2008, pp. 253-289; *idem.*, "Irano-Slavica Notes for Iranian, Slavic, Eastern-European ("Russian"), Germanic, Turkic and Khazar Studies", AHMEa 14 (2005), pp. 197-230; *idem.*, "Notes on Alans, Khazars and Other Nomads", *Proceedings of the Sarmato-Alanian Colloquy*, Barcelona 2007 (in press).

tioned as a way to unite the multinational and multi-religious Old *Respublica*.¹⁷ It is possible that against this exotic background we should examine the wave of Polish (with Hungarian parallels) *Turkophilia* in the 19th century, with a row of conversions to Islam.

So in the Old Republic of the gentry, the imagined Turkic origin was seen amalgamated with the notion of nobility. Against such a background, it is understandable that the Turkic features of the Polish Karaites, like their Turkic speech, their supposed origin from the Crimea (in any case, from a Turkic-speaking country), and the Oriental ways of life and dressing of the Karaites immediately and instinctively put them on the side of those having something in common with the ruling class of the *Rzeczpospolita Obojga Narodów*.¹⁸

¹⁷ There has been an interesting ethnic-Lithuanian response to the Polish Sarmatism, which was working with the same paradigm: the Lithuanians have promoted a theory connecting themselves, firstly, to the Latians, *i.e.*, the Romans, and secondly, to the "Scythian" nomads of the Northern coasts of the Black Sea. The renown Polish-Lithuanian historian, Matvej Mechowita (Matvej Mechowskij in Russian or Maciej Miechowski / Miechowita in Polish or Matthias de Mechov in Latin), the author of *History of both Sarmatias* (Cracow 1519; I have used M. Micheovo, *Hestoria della dve Sarmatie*, Ramusio, Venezia 1561, p. 113), relates that the Baltians (whom he was calling "Lithuanians", while including into they number also the Latvians, Prussians and Jatwiagians) boast that they came from Rome, and that their pagan high priest was sitting in *Romów*. He noted that their language does possess some "Italic" words. On the "Roman / Latin" myth in Lithuania, cf. *Historia Polonicae* by Jan Długosz; Jan Lasicki, *De diis Samogitarum caeterorumque Sarmatarum et falsorum Christianorum*, Basel 1565; different redactions of the Lithuanian Chronicle; Augustinus Rotundus, *Rozmowa Polaka z Litwinem*, Wilna 1564; Aleksander Gvanini, *Kronika Wielkiego Xsięstwa Litewskiego*, 1578; Michal Litewski (Michalon Litanus in Latin or Mikhail Litvin in Russian), *Tractatus de moribus Tartarorum, Lituatorum et Moschorum*, Basel 1615 (written circa 1550). Note also the much later revival of these theories, cf. Symonas Daukantas, *Būdas senovės Lietuvių ir žemaičių* (1845, p. 1). On Lithuanians and Sarmatism, cf. T. Venclova, "Pradžias mitas", *Tekstai apie tekstus*, Mackaus knygų leidimo fondas, Chicago 1985, pp. 25-33. On the newer redactions of the myth of the Lithuanian origins, Alanian and Herulian afterwards, see J. Jurginis, "Lituvių kildinimas iš alanų ir herulų", *Iš lituvių etnogenezės*, Mokslas, Vilnius 1981, pp. 84-92.

The Ukrainians also were inflicted by the myth about "Turkic" nomadic forefathers from the nomads of the Northern coasts of the Black Sea. Compare the identification of the Zoporogian Cossacks with the Khazars made in "The Bendery Constitution", written in Latin between 1709-1711 by the Ukrainian *hetman* Pylyp Orlik, the successor of Ivan Mazepa (see *Towards the Intellectual History of Ukrainian Thought from 1710 to 1995*, ed. R. Linderheim and G.S.N. Luckyj (Toronto-Buffalo-London, 1996), pp. 4-5, 53-64, esp. pp. 54, 56, 58. I am grateful to Dr. Sergei Kravtsov, Jerusalem, for calling my attention to this important source): "the valiant and ancient Cossack people, formerly called Khazar, was at first exalted by immortal glory ... so much so that the Eastern Emperor ... joined his son in matrimony to the daughter of the Khagan, that is to say, the Cossack prince"; "... the Orthodox faith of the Eastern confession, with which the valiant Cossack people was enlightened under the rule of Khazar princes by the Apostolic See of Constantinople ..."; "whereas the people formerly known as the Khazars and later called Cossacks trace their genealogical origin to the powerful and invincible Goths ... and join together that Cossack people by the deepest ties of affectionate affinity to the Crimean state ...". Compare also the suggestive wording in a letter of the Cossacks, from the same years, published in D.I. Javornic'kyj, *Istorija zaporoz'kix kozakiv*, 3 vls., Kyiv 1993 (first print: D.I. Évornickij, *Istorija zaporoz'skix kozakov*, Sank-Peterburg 1897), Vol. III, p. 362. Finally, the Scythian theory, as spread among the Velikorussian intellectuals beginning from the mid-eighteenth century onwards, should be scrutinized against similar background. Everyone wants to be a nomad.

¹⁸ Interesting enough, the aforementioned Karaite petition submitted to the last Sejm stressed these features: "we dress ourselves in the Polish way". Compare Firkowicz's own stress, in his personal behavior and modes of dressing, during his whole life: it seems this emphasis owes more to Polish Luck than to the post-Ottoman Crimea.

Granted, they were Jews, but Jews of the better sort – looking like the *szlachta*, uncorrupted by the Talmud and preserving the (imagined) language of the ancestors of the *szlachta*.

However, in the *Rzeczpospolita* of the 18th century one could hardly speak of a monolithic Jewry: the rise of Hassidism and the bitter *Misnagdic* reaction to it; Frankism, with its *pathetic* (in the original Greek sense of the word) attempt to solve, or to repair, the tragic mystery of the Jewish existence by plunging, after the Sabbatian example, into the sacramental disguise as Christians, attacking the effeminating Talmud, and ending up by a partial cooptation into the ranks of the Polish nobility,¹⁹ not to mention the sprout of *Haskalah*, the Jewish Enlightenment - all these facilitated the emergence of new attitudes of the noble society towards the Karaites, who became no more considered as a part of one Judaism. By the mid-18th century, Gentile society in Poland was fully aware of the fact that there were many ways to be an *Israelite*, and, I believe, not only inner-Jewish feuds were playing a role in this process, but also the Frankist propaganda (which, to observe in passing, constantly stressed its Turkish origins) which targeted the Gentiles no less than the Jews. Cases of Polish aristocrats with Jewish (Frankist, mostly) blood - and proud of it - became rather numerous in the late 18th / early 19th century; with some of these people - like Adam Mickiewicz - some Karaites close to Firkowicz, like Simhah Babowicz of YašaR Lucki, were personally acquainted. This was a new reality hardly known in the previous century.

In addition, the Karaites were not the only Turkic-speaking group in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. There were Armenians, too, who, until the 18th century at least, spoke practically the same Turkic language as their Karaite neighbors in Wolhynia. These Armenians used to inhabit Lvov / Lemberg / L'wiv / Lwów in Galicia, which they called, in their Qıpçaq Turkic, Ilov, and Kameniec-Podolski in Podolia. Later on, they were coerced into an *unia* with Rome, and a wide-spread Armenian myth speaks of millions of ethnic Armenians assimilated into Poles - into the *szlachta*, in fact - by force.

On the other side, there was - and still is - another group of Turkic origin in historic Poland, or rather in the former Lithuanian Grand Principality, and there is another myth about this group, too. The myth says that Poland was successful where everyone else failed, namely, Poland and its Catholic-Sarmatian culture were persistent and wise enough to turn Muslims into Europeans, and one of the many Polish contributions to the Western civilization is the creation of "European Muslims", a possible hope for humanity. The group in question is known by different names – as *Lipki* / *Lupki* / *Lupkalar*

¹⁹ Cf., e.g., H. Lenowitz, *The Jewish Messiah*, Oxford University Press 2001; cf. also important studies in *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*. Vol. 15: *Focusing on Jewish Religious Life, 1500-1900*, ed. by A. Polonsky, Oregon: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2002 (H. Lenowitz, "The Struggle over Images in the Propaganda of the Frankist Movement;" J. Doktor, "The Non-Christian Frankists;" M. Galas, "The Influence of Frankism on Polish Culture").

/ *Lipka* Tatarlar in Turkic, after the Turkic name of Lithuania;²⁰ other names are *Lithuanian Tatars*, *Byelorussian Tatars*, *Polish Tatars*, *Byelorussian Muhammadans*, *Byelorussian Muslims*, or, simply, *Tatars*; *Tatarzy Lipki* is the term found subsequently in documents of the Old Republic. An approximate estimate of their number in Poland, Byelorussia and Lithuania nowadays is 7,000-8,000. Unlike the Karaites and Armenians, however, these people, who are at least partly of distinctively Turkic origin, never spoke Turkic since the times when they had become an ethnic group of their own, somewhere back in the 16th century. Their spoken language was West-Russian (Ruthenian, or Byelorussian), and their written languages were Byelorussian with a flavor of Polish (written in Arabic characters, of course), called *po prostu*, or Arabic. Their Byelorussian is of uppermost importance for reconstructing the linguistic history of Byelorussian, for it was disconnected from the literary tradition of the written language of the Russian Orthodox Church, and this Byelorussian of the Tatars has benefited from almost two centuries of deep research.²¹ Turkic linguistic material of the Lithuanian Tatars is scarce and reflects mostly literary production of sages who learned in the Crimea, the Ottoman Empire or in Qazan'.

According to their legends they are the descendants of the Nogays and Crimean Tatars who were brought to Lithuania as prisoners of war. Indeed, in 1397 several thousand prisoners of war were taken. Grand Duke Witold / Witowt / Vytautas of Lithuania established Tartar settlements along the Samogitian border and around the fortified cities of Lithuania as Troki, Wilno, Kowno, Lida, Krewa, Nowogrodek and Grodno to assist the defense against the Teutonic Knights and the Knights of the Sword.²² The Lithuanian Tatars considered Grand Duke as their *khan* and defender, and he was granted an important place by the Tatars in their legends. Phonetically associating his name with the Arabic word *watad*, which means *wedge*, *peg* (compare Hebrew

²⁰ The use of *Lipka* for Lithuania occurs in the diplomatic correspondence [*jarlyki* / *yarlyqlar*] of the Crimean Tatar Girây Khans with the Polish kings in the 16th century and later. Mehmed Girây I wrote in his *yarlyq*, dated 22 October 1520, to King Zygmunt I: "Our father Mengli Girây, Hadji Girây, and the ancient khans entertained friendly relations with the Polish king Wladislaw and with Dawud, the Great Bey of Lipka (*libkanung beyi*; Witold / Vytautas, Grand Duke of Lithuania, is meant), as well as with the Polish king Casimir and with the Great Bey of Lipka. We demand from the countries of Lipka and Poland 15,000 florins. The countries of Lipka and Poland are of equal value to us, and their enemies are also ours". After the Turkish wars, in 1672 and in 1678, the phrase "Tatar-Lipka" was in use in official documents. The text *Risale-yi Tatar-i Leh*, published by A. Muchliński, "Zdanie sprawy o Tatarach Litewskich", *Teka Wilenska*, 4-6 (Wilno 1858), is now seen by scholars as a 19th forgery (see I.V. Zajcev, "Antonij Muxlin'skij i "Risale-ji Tatar-i Lex" ("Traktat o pol'skih tatarax" ili "Traktat pol'skogo professora"?)).

²¹ See, e.g., E.F. Karskij, "Belorusskaja reč' arabskim pis'mom", *Učenyje zapiski Vysšej Školy g. Odessy*, 2, Odessa 1922; A.K. Antonovič, *Belorusskije teksty, pisannyje arabskim pis'mom, i ix grafiko-orfografičeskaja sistema*, Vil'nius 1968; V.P. Demidčik, "Pamjatniki belorusskoj literatury, pisannoj arabskim pis'mom, i legenda o nočnom voznesenii Muxammada", *Problemy arabskoj literatury. Pamjati akademika I.Ju. Kračkovskogo*, Moscow 1987, pp. 238-253.

²² In the 20th century, this part of the Tatar-Lithuanian history has been appropriated by the Karaite author A. Szyszman (A. Szyszman, *Osadnictwo karaimskie na ziemiach wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego*, Wilna 1936). Compare M. Kizilov, "The Arrival of the Karaites (Karaims) to Poland and Lithuania: A Survey of Sources and Critical Analysis of Existing Theories." *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 12 (Wiesbaden: Otto Harassowitz, 2003), pp. 29-45., p. 37 n. 34.

yated), they called him *Vatad* and considered him to be defender of Islam and of the rights of Muslims in non-Islamic countries. The Grand Duke's name was still mentioned in the Tatars' prayers as late as the 1930s.

This should ring a bell for those with knowledge of the Eastern European Karaite popular traditions of the 20th century. However, we know with certainty that the forefathers of the Lithuanian Tatars came to Lithuania not only as prisoners of war. In 1398, Tokhtamiş, the famous Khan of the Golden Horde, defeated by Tamerlane (Timur), fled to Lithuania followed by thousands of his warriors. He became the ruler of the present-day Byelorussian town, Lida, where, by the way, an important Jewish community used to exist by that time. In 1430 Prince Švitrigalis / Svidrigajlo of Lithuania summoned thousands of the Qıpçaqs and Nogays from beyond the Volga to his military service, and later, there were many immigrants and refugees from the Khanates of Qazan' and Astrakhan. The numbers of these Tatars continued to swell in various ways as prisoners of war, hostages or refugees.²³ In many cases, those defeated in the internal wars in the Golden Horde preferred to escape to Lithuania. It cannot be an exaggeration to state that the Lithuanian army was, at particular periods, built mostly on these Tatars, who were instrumental, for example, in the battle of Grünwald, 1410.

In such a military society of prisoners of war, refugees and mercenaries, there were practically no Muslim women, and for this reason, these Tatars were allowed to marry Christian women, most of whom came from the ranks of petty gentry, the *szlachta*. It was quite common for a husband to adopt the Christian surname of his wife, and so we have people with names like Ibrahim Alexandrowicz or Iskander Suszkewicz.

The elite of these refugees and mercenaries enjoyed equal rights with the Polish-Lithuanian nobility, other Tatars made up a special social entity of the Lithuanian Principality. They had certain obligations such as the 'Tatar Service', which meant that they were obligated to join the army, fully armed and on horseback, at the first call of the State. This was, for example, the case of the Tatar Guard in Troki, later forced by Avraham Firkowicz, in a twist, to mutate into a "Karaite Guard". This Tatar army certainly enjoyed different privileges. Just like the nobility they were exempt from paying tax on the land they owned and their religious freedom was - mostly - complete. Not all Islamic laws were rigorously followed and concessions were made for local peculiarities, such as (rather heavy) drinking, with men and women praying together. However, in the 16th-17th centuries, at the peak of the influence of the Sarmatian theory and religious intolerance, the Polish nobility tried to curb the Tatar rights, with the result that in the Chmelnicki War the Lithuanian Tatars fought on the side of the enemy, so in 1659 the Lithuanian Sejm re-

²³ Compare the case of the *Semionovskie liudi* who stuck in Lithuania beginning from 1443, cf. B. Spuler, *Die Goldene Horde. Die Mongolen in Rußland 1223-1502*, Leipzig 1943, p. 178. To Poland fled the last Khan of the Golden Horde, only to be executed there, in 1503, by a Muscovite demand.

stored all the Tatar rights and privileges.²⁴ The last discriminative restrictions were abolished in 1775 and the majority of Tatars became a part of the full-fledged Polish-Lithuanian nobility, *szlachta*. These Muslim Polish members of the *szlachta*, entirely Polish, except their religion, were the living testimony of the Sarmatian truth. Catholic Polish *szlachta*, with their "Turkish" garbs and moustaches, were eager to adopt these Muslim Polish *szlachcizce* rather than the Greek-Orthodox ones, whose "Sarmatian" origins were not so evident. By the end of the 18th century, the cultural integration of the Lithuanian Tatars into local Christian society was complete, and even the Russian administration, after the partitions of Poland, did not worsen their living conditions, with military service as officers in the Russian Army being the preferable occupation for generations of Lithuanian Tatars.

So this is the background for the Turkic emphasis of the Luck Karaites in their petition of 1790 presented to the last Sejm (Diet) and followed by Firkowicz in his project. Stressing Turkicness meant pretending to be of a higher, noble, status.

In the 50s of the 19th century, Avraham Firkowicz lived mostly in Wilna and in Troki / Troch / Trakai, where there existed and still exists, a small community of Karaim-speaking Karaites. Firkowicz joined their efforts for autonomy from the Karaite Spiritual Authority in the Crimea and tried to get appointed as the leader of this community, and even organized a lobby for this purpose, but he was not successful in his quest. However, he was active in archeographic work and befriended Jewish, Russian and Polish writers and thinkers. It was in this framework of lobbying for Karaites' rights and working on archives that he invented legends about the *szlachta* privileges of the Karaites, forged traditions about the "Karaite Guard" of the Lithuanian Grand Dukes and about a special separate detachment (*chorągiew*) of theirs in the

²⁴ The Lithuanian Tatars comprised four social groups, which in the territories of the Commonwealth, and particularly in Lithuania, reflected the social organization of the Golden Horde. The Tartar nobility or aristocracy was recognized as such in Lithuania, and subsequently in the Commonwealth, upon presentation of letters of patents issued by the Golden Horde. As the Rzeczpospolita did not grant any new princely titles, those who aspired to the titles of princes had their princely titles recognized only if they were related to the Chinggizides, the reigning house of the Golden Horde. This group of the Tatar aristocracy was the least numerous. Recognition required in every single case the joint decision of the king and the Sejm. These princes of blood, sometimes called also "*carewicze*", "sons of the Czar, i.e., the Khan", were followed in precedence by *begs* or *beys*. The next most illustrious group consisted of the *murza* (*mirza* or *murza*, from *emir-zade*, "son of emir" i.e., "a son of the ruler"). These were followed by the *uhłans* (*oglan* or *ohlan* meaning "brave" or "lad" - *dominus* or *miles* would be fairly correct translations into medieval feudal Latin). The use of the princely titles of *bey* or *beg* (*kniaz* and *carewicz*) was subsequently abandoned. From the 17th century, Tatar princes used the title of *murza* or *mirza* in Poland, as well as in Muscovy (where several Tatar *carewiči* were, nevertheless, known). The nobility rights of the non-royal Tatar nobility, *hospodars*, were officially acknowledged by two charters issued by King Żygmunt (Sigismund) August in 1561 and 1568, and by a number of charters issued by other kings, e.g. by Stefan Batory in 1576, Żygmunt III in 1609, Władysław IV in 1634, Michał Korybut Wiśniowiecki in 1699, and by several constitutional enactments; see Selim Mirza-Juszenski Chazbi-jewicz, "Szlachta tatarska w Rzeczypospolitej", *Verbum Nobile*, 2 (1993), Sopot, Poland. Cf. also S. Dumin, *Herbarz Rodzin Tatarskich Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego*, Związek Tatarów Polskich, Gdańsk 1999.

Polish army, and about the 17th-century Karaite knight, Naton, ambassador to the Crimea, or about the military valor of the Karaite soldiers, and so on.

The history of Troki's Tatars, with their military squad there, is well documented; as to the legends about Karaite participation in the Lithuanian military, there is only one source for them - Firkowicz's interviews with the Polish author and traveler W. Kondratowicz-Syrokomla, who turned Firkowicz, in his popular booklet *Wycieczki po Litwie w promieniach od Wilna* (Wilno 1857), into a cultural hero, and made his stories about the noble and military history of the Lithuanian Karaites into a common legacy.

Visitors to the Karaite Museum in Troki nowadays will leave convinced that the Karaites (and not the local Tatars, as it was in reality), formed the garrison of the city and guarded the person of the Grand Duke. But all these stories are the product, of course, of nothing else but Firkowicz's successful attempt to expropriate of the Lithuanian-Tatar past; Firkowicz was well acquainted with this ethno-religious group, which has indeed much in common with their neighbors, the Lithuanian Karaites, and Firkowicz's deep understanding of some ambiguity of the Tatar historical past and linguistic situation in Lithuania can be seen from his Hebrew notes found in MS OR RNL f. 946 op. 1 N 98.²⁵ However, while telling Syrokomla about the martial pride of the Lithuanian Karaites, who had - according to Firkowicz - formed the Grand Dukes' special guard, Firkowicz, at the same very time was trying to convince the *local* Russian authorities, in the same city, that the Karaites were traditionally permitted by the Grand Dukes not to take arms under any circumstances, for their religion prohibited them to do so.²⁶

Appointed by the Lithuanian Karaites to represent them vis-à-vis the Russian authorities in the late Summer and Fall of 1856, Firkowicz was pre-

²⁵ Criticized later by Jewish and Polish historians for his statements popularized by Syrokomla, Firkowicz stated in the Hebrew newspaper *ha-Meli* (HaMelitz) in 1863 that Syrokomla misunderstood him. However, these legends invented by Firkowicz *ad hoc*, in his attempt to get appointed as the religious head of the Lithuanian Karaites, and abandoned by him later, have become so deeply enrooted in the self-perception of the subsequent generations, that the only word for "soldier", used in the Karaim language today for referring to the phantomous "Karaite soldiers of the Lithuanian Grand Dukes", is *jawan / javan / yavan*. This is nothing else than the Hebrew for "Russian Orthodox, Cossack, bandit, pogromščik", from the Hebrew name of Greece, the land of the Greek-Orthodox faith. Hebrew Karaite texts from the Chmielnicki period or from the time of the Northern War made abundant use of this word while describing the cruelty of *Yavan* towards the Jews in general and to the Karaites in particular. Albeit the meaning "Russian Orthodox, Cossack" is attested in the *Karaimsko-russko-pol'skij slovar'* (ed. by N.A. Baskakov, A. Zajęzkowski, S.M. Szapszał, "Nauka", Moscow 1974), those among the modern Karaims in Eastern Europe unaware of the etymology of this word, make the most ridiculous errors, like Simha-Semjon-Szymon Juchniewicz in his recent drama in Karaim, where one of the heroes is labeled "*karaj javan*", i.e. "Karaite soldier", according to the author's intention, but in fact, from the point of view of a Karaite from the 17th-18th centuries, *"a Karaite Greek-Orthodox Cossack bandit"! See more details on Firkowicz and Syrokomla in: M. Kizilov, *Karaites through the Travelers' Eyes. Ethnic History, Traditional Culture and Everyday Life of the Crimean Karaites According to Descriptions of the Travelers*, al-Qirgisani Center, New York 2003, pp. 90-91, 130.

²⁶ On the other side, compare the example of Berek Josielewicz and his Jewish riders, an echo of whom was Adam Mickiewicz's project to establish a regiment of *husarzy israelitski* during the Crimean War, in order to fight the Czars' armies.

sent at the coronation of the new Czar, Alexander II, at Moscow, where he submitted to the monarch a Hebrew poem dedicated to the event.²⁷ Later he was granted imperial honors for this poem, and it seems that the coronation was a turning point in Firkowicz's career. A couple of years later, Firkowicz continued to lobby for Karaite rights, and submitted a memorandum *On the Origin of the Karaite Sect*, which was published by the Second Department of the Imperial Office (with the Fourth being the Secret Police). In this work he stated that the "Karaims" (Karaites) and the "Jews" (the Rabbanites) are of different origin, and for this reason the "Karaims" request to be totally differentiated from the Jews and to be called "Russian Karaims (or, "Karaim Russians"; *russkije karaimy*) of the Old Testament". As mentioned, Firkowicz also requested that the Karaites be granted the rights of the Russian nobles, but this request was, of course, rejected, but in 1863 the word "Jew" was, in any case, officially removed from the members of this community and they were granted the same rights as the native Russian Orthodox population. In fact, the emancipation of the Russian Karaites, which was seen as having been achieved at the expense of the rest of Russian Jewry and was accompanied by an anti-Rabbanite campaign, provoked a bitter split with the rest of the Russian Jews.

We should, nevertheless, observe with astonishment, that Firkowicz's request ran against the *Zeitgeist*, the spirit of the time. In the conditions of the Great Reforms in Russia in the early 60s of the 19th century, there was not much meaning in denying the Karaites the rights of the Russian nobility that Firkowicz asked for. It seemed then that it was only a matter of a few years before all Russian subjects would get equal rights. On the Polish side, however, the Polish Revolt of 1861 marked, in a sense, the end of Sarmatism as a cultural phenomenon. I believe Firkowicz's success in achieving equal rights for Karaites was a tragedy, not only because this success led to rapid de-Judaization, something nobody could then foretell, but because Firkowicz's agenda of 1863 was anachronistic by nearly a century, if not, at least, by seventy years: it went back to the Luck petition to the Sejm of 1790. Another tragedy was the absence of people in the Karaite community in Russia who were able to understand this anachronism. Firkowicz's friends-enemies-relatives from Luck able to comprehend the obsolete Old Polish context of his plight were all long dead, and in the Crimea, local Karaites lacked the sensitivity to appreciate the nuances of Firkowicz's crusade. One should understand that Firkowicz was driven not by "separatist" motifs, but rather by a religiously burdened desire to demonstrate to the Rabbanites that even "Edom", the Christian rulers of the age, recognize the truth of the Karaite version of Judaism. With the Frankist-like agenda of social adaptation on the one side, and with the *Moyufis* syndrome²⁸ on the other, who would say that Avraham Firkowicz's drive was not Jewish-Polish?

²⁷ OR RNL f. 946 op. 1 N 1 docs. 23-26; Firkowicz's *Benei Rešepi*, Vienna 1871, p. 38.

²⁸ Cf. Ch. Shmeruk, "On the Polish Yiddish song style called "Mayofes" and its variations", *The Jews in Poland*, Vol. I, ed. by A.K. Paluch, Jagiellonian University, Research Center on Jewish History and Culture in Poland, Cracow 1992, pp. 463-474; in Hebrew: *Tarbiz*, 63 (1993); in English: *Polin*, 10 (1997).