

THE KHAZAR LANGUAGE

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1. *Introduction*

All scholars who have voiced an opinion on the language of the Khazars in terms of assigning it to a language family take them to have been a Turkic nation¹ speaking a Turkic language.² Already in their own age, several Muslim geographers made statements to this effect.³ Trying to make sense of what remains of their language is therefore the task of Turkic linguistics.

Work carried out during the last decades on this topic started with Golden 1971, an insightful though generally neglected paper. There followed a burst of activity in the early 1980s, when Golden 1980, Ludwig 1982 and Golb & Pritsak 1982 brought together practically all of the relevant material; the article Ligeti 1981⁴ is an important review of this latter book. Beside its other assets, Ludwig's dissertation features

¹ I deliberately use this term and not 'tribe' because the Khazars do not, even in the earliest stages of their documented history, present themselves as a tribe in the typical early Turkic sense, as were the Chigil, Tuxsī, Yağma etc.

² Golden 2005: 206 points out that Abbasid sources often interchange the nisbas *at-Turkī* and *al-Xazarī*. Still, there must have been very many different ethnic groups within the Khazar realm, as there are to this day on the territory which that realm covered. These groups spoke different languages, some of them no doubt belonging to the Indo-European or different Caucasian language families. A word documented as having been in use in Khazaria need not, therefore, have belonged to the leading nation, the Khazars.

³ The most recent summary on contemporary Arab statements on this question is Golden 2005: 206 (lower half of the page). If Al-İṣṭaxrī (quoted there) reports conflicting notices, one stating that "the language of the Khazars is different from the language of the Turks and the Persians, nor does a tongue of any group of humanity have anything in common with it", the other that "the language of the Bulgār is like the language of the Khazars", both cannot be correct if they apply the same criteria of similarity and if they refer to the same language. In principle it might very well be possible that an original Khazar tribe spoke a non-Turkic language and was secondarily Turkified due to its association with the Türk empire in the 6th century; however, I think that Al-İṣṭaxrī (writing in the first half of the 10th century) or his sources are unlikely to have possessed information on such an early process.

⁴ The journal's volume was presumably antedated.

an appendix containing a supplement to the list of Khazar words in Golden 1980; Bazin 1981–82 is also relevant for the language question. The years following this intensive activity saw the appearance of numerous reviews, some of them quite detailed, and of papers taking up, or arguing against, views expressed in the research mentioned. Golden (2002–3, 2005) has recently revived investigations on the Khazar language. However, with the scanty material there is, it seems difficult to get much further than what was achieved in the early 1980s. Thus, concerning some of the ‘Abbāsid slaves whose names are dealt with in Golden 2002–3, their being Khazars by birth is merely an assumption; the names of others cannot help us in the present endeavor because they can be connected with anything Turkic or in any other known language only if they undergo heavy ‘emendations’.

It should not be too likely that new Arabic, Greek, Syriac, Persian, Hebrew or Caucasian sources mentioning unknown Khazar language elements turn up at this stage. It now seems that significant progress can be achieved only if some lengthy bilingual inscription in the Khazar language can be discovered, or perhaps a new Khazar inscription which has enough Eastern Turkic runiform characters to be intelligible.⁵ The dozens of known inscriptions are strings of at present unintelligible signs, concerning which we do not even know whether they fall into synharmonic sets (as most of the Eastern Turkic runiform script does); none of the attempts at deciphering them seem compelling.⁶ Under these circumstances, we can only sum up and comment what has till now been achieved concerning sources in foreign scripts. A summary taking into account Golden’s work together with the critical reviews dealing with it and, further, the ideas of others such as the proposals of Pritsak, has never been attempted. Determining what the Khazars spoke might tell us a lot also about their identity and about the history and structure of

⁵ Vasil’ev 2005 is a good summary of current views and opinions concerning this matter. The present author is, together with Irina Nevskaya and Larisa Tybykova, engaged in a survey of the runiform graffiti of the Altay Republic, of which we now have more than 80 (more than half of them discovered during the last 3–4 years). Some of these clearly show hitherto non-deciphered characters also found in Eastern Europe. Progress in the study of this material as well as the whole corpus of Eurasian runiform inscriptions will no doubt serve Khazar studies too.

⁶ One such instance is discussed in Kljashtornyj, 1991, who also quotes some additional attempts. Much material is brought together in Bajčorov 1989. Kyzlasov 1994 is especially important for placing the Eastern European inscriptions into their general Eurasian context; another important study is Vasary 1998. Tryjarski 2002–4 is an excellent survey of this whole area.

Turkic settlement in Eastern Europe. A sound basis for our hypotheses is important primarily for the description of the Turkic languages and the historical relationships between them, but also in order to ensure that accounts of the Khazars' early history will not rest on pseudo-linguistic arguments.

Among the present-day Turkic languages Chuvash, spoken mostly in the Chuvash republic (situated roughly between Tatarstan and Moscow), constitutes a branch in itself. Its closest relative is Volga Bulgarian, a language directly documented only in 13th and 14th century inscriptions, found mostly on the territory of Tatarstan.⁷ This branch appears to have included other, now extinct, dialects, as suggested by words integrated into Hungarian.⁸ Scholars agree that the Chuvash-Bolgar branch got separated from the rest of Turkic at a quite early stage; certainly earlier than the oldest Turkic texts we have, which are the Orkhon inscriptions of the early 8th century.⁹ The most discussed question concerning the language of the Khazars has been whether it belongs to this aberrant Chuvash-Bolgar branch of Turkic or not. Most Turcologists have thought it did, but Golden 1980, for instance, tended towards the opposite view. Our judgement of ideas concerning Khazar would now be more solid than in the early 1980s, as we now know a lot more about that branch: Several scholars, notably Andras Róna-Tas, have brought their insight into the grammatical and the lexical domain concerning the history of Chuvash, the contacts of the branch with languages surrounding it and other matters,¹⁰ and new Volga Bulgarian inscriptions appeared in the recent decades. Volga Bulgarian turns out to have been well distinct from Common Turkic but still a rather 'normal' Turkic language. The short Nagyszentmiklós bowl inscription in Greek letters is also in line with what one would expect from a 10th century source of the Chuvash-Bolgar branch of the Turkic languages.¹¹ Nothing in any

⁷ See Erdal 1993 for the documentation and description of this language and its place among the Turkic languages.

⁸ Fruitful work in this domain is being carried out by Profs. Róna-Tas and Berta. A dictionary encompassing all Turkic loans in Hungarian is in preparation; one of its preliminary versions was Róna-Tas et al. 1995. A recent important publication in this domain is Berta & Róna-Tas 2002. Prof. Róna-Tas also commented an earlier version of the present paper, enhancing it greatly, as did Claus Schönig and Andreas Waibel.

⁹ Some scholars assign the earliest of these already to the late 7th century.

¹⁰ Róna-Tas 1982 can serve as an initiation to this topic.

¹¹ Erdal 1988 has tried to substantiate the view that it represents Danube Bulgarian, the Turkic language spoken by that part of the Bulgars who moved West to the Danube, but widely different views have also been expressed; see below for one of these.

way supports the view, held by Poppe, Pritsak and some others, that the Bolgar-Chuvash branch was somehow intermediate between the Turkic and the Mongolic languages, taken by these scholars to have been genetically related. While the possibility of such genetic relationship can by no means be excluded, I would consider the full appurtenance of the whole of the Chuvash-Bolgar branch to the Turkic languages to be a firm fact. There are some features which Chuvash shares with Mongolian, one of these being the loss of stem-final *k*. One likely explanation for such similarities is that Early Mongolian borrowed its Turkic words from a language of the Bolgar type, when that was still spoken in an area in contiguity with the Mongol homeland.¹² The linguistic elements brought by the Mongolian invasion in the 13th century are easy to identify, and there is no reason to believe that any Mongolic language was spoken west of the Urals prior to Chingis Khan.

One bit of evidence which has been brought forward in support of the early presence in Eastern Europe of ethnic groups speaking Mongolic is the name of the Avar ruler who conquered Pannonia and fought against Byzantium in the 6th century: His name was *Bayan*, which means ‘wealthy’ in Mongolic and corresponds to Turkic *bay*, same meaning.¹³ I do not think that this evidence is conclusively *for* Mongolic: *bayan* may have been the shape of this adjective in Proto-Turkic as well, and could have been retained by the Avars into the 6th century (i.e. preceding the earliest direct evidence from Turkic by more than a century); subsequently it appears to have stayed in use as a title and a proper name. The word could have been borrowed from Turkic into Proto-Mongolic (and further on into Tungus; cf. Doerfer 1965: 259–260) before the stem final /a/ was dropped (the +*n* being, in fact, a suffix).¹⁴ Helimski has in three

¹² This is succinctly formulated in the section ‘Mongolic and Bulghar Turkic’, pp. 407–410 in Schönig 2003.

¹³ In his entry for this word, Moravcsik 1983: 83–84 mentions the names of, among others, this person and also three 8th to 10th century sons or brothers of Onogur or Danubian Bolgar rulers. A further instance has turned up in a Proto-Bolgarian inscription in Greek characters (mentioned in the present, as yet unpublished version of the Hungarian-Turkic etymological dictionary in preparation: in the entry *bán*, a word said to have been borrowed from *bayan* over South Slavic *bān*).

¹⁴ Schönig 2003: 406 mentions this name and two titles, adding that “none of [this] is diagnostic enough to allow firm conclusions”. According to Róna-Tas 1990: 15 (footn.), Early Western Turkic *bayan* lives on in Chuvash *puyan* ‘rich (person)’, which he derives from the “Grundwort” *puy-* ‘to become rich’. Chuv. *puy-* is, I think, likelier to be from *bay+u-* (same meaning, well attested in Old Turkic and elsewhere and clearly derived from the adjective *bay*) over **puyā-*: A verb ‘*bay-*’ is not attested anywhere else, and

papers published in 2000 (one with very useful bibliography) and 2003 put forward the idea that the Avars spoke a Tungus language and that the Nagyszentmiklós inscription mentioned above is also in this language. The European term *bayan* could, *in case* this hypothesis should prove to be correct, even be Tungus; the hypothesis is, however, arrived at by some arbitrary stretching of Tungus data, is far-fetched by itself and is therefore rather unlikely.

Any proposal to explain a Khazar element through a stem or a suffix known only from a language other than Turkic should, we think, be rejected unless at least one such element can be *unequivocally* identified on the basis of what we *know* on the history of the Altaic languages.

2. The Khazar language material

The intelligible core of Khazar—not only the titles¹⁵ but also denotative nouns such as *dog* ‘funerary feast’, *it* ‘dog’¹⁶ or *bulan* ‘elk’,¹⁷ the adjective *alp* ‘valiant’,¹⁸ the words for ‘white’, ‘yellow’ and ‘black’, the agentive suffix +*čI* used in several Khazar words, the diminutive suffix +*Ak*,¹⁹ the suffix +*šIn*

Proto-Turkic cannot be shown to regularly have used stems as both nouns and verbs; Chuvash final high vowels are, on the other hand, often syncopated (as in *šar* ‘army’ < *čärig*). As correctly pointed out by Levitskaja 1976: 92, Chuvash *-An* no doubt comes from Proto-Turkic **-gAn*: The early *-gAn* derivates of *bayu-* would therefore have been **bayugan* and not *bayan*; had there been a verb **bay-*, its *-gAn* derivate would have been **baygan*. The name of the Uygur khan who reigned between 747 and 759 has also been posited as *Bayan čor* (though *buyan* < Skt. *punya* might be another possible reading of the Chinese characters). *Bayan* cannot have been formed with the formative *-Xn* described for Old Turkic in Erdal 1991: 300–308, as its second vowel couldn’t have been /a/ if it came from *bayu-* or indeed from (unattested) **bay-*; since this formative appears to have been dominant (cf. *uzun* < *uza-*, *tükün* < *tükä-*, *yarın* < *yaru-* etc.), it would even be unlikely to come from a putative **bay+a-* (for which cf. Turkish *boşa-* beside Old Turkic *bošo-*).

¹⁵ Titles often wander from one people to the other and are thus no proof of national identity; *Hilitβer*, dealt with below, is one such term. The most comprehensive account of the Khazar titles is Golden 1980.

¹⁶ See Erdal 1991a.

¹⁷ In Golb & Pritsak 1982 referred to by Golden 1984: 478, Pritsak connected this noun (also the name of a Khazar *kagan*) with the name *Bulčan* appearing in Arabic sources, taking it to be its “Hunno-Bolgaric” equivalent. This contradicts historical sound laws, as Common Turkic ‘elk’ is also *bulan* and not **bušan*. Golden 1980: 171–3 correctly discusses *Bulčan* separately.

¹⁸ This element appears as a proper name of two persons, as does *Alip* (explicitly spelled thus twice) in three Volga Bulgarian inscriptions.

¹⁹ Cf. Erdal 1991: 39–42, where the probable Iranian origin of this suffix is also mentioned.

added to colour terms²⁰—these are definitely and exclusively Turkic.²¹ A few additional terms not hitherto identified as Turkic could be added, e.g. the one spelt *ʿl-ğd ʿdh*, quoted by Golden 1980: 247. Among the elements mentioned in that book, this is one of the two²² which is neither a proper name nor a toponym nor a title: It refers to a kind of travelling tent-car. This might just possibly be an attempt to write **čadára*, since *d* and *r* look similar and can get confused in mss. in Arabic script if the word is unknown to the reader.²³ This word would then be an instance of *ča:tr* (Turkic)/*čador* (Persian), *šātor* (pronounced thus in Hungarian) etc., signifying ‘tent’; it is dealt with in detail in Doerfer 1967: 16–22.

A further hitherto unidentified term is the title *جاوشیغر*, by Golden 1980: 191–2 transcribed as **Jāwašīgar*. Since this person is, according to Ibn Faḍlān (fol. 212b, Togan 1939: 99), the third in the hierarchy under the Khazar co-ruler in charge of the army, it is fitting for him to be called *Čaviš-yīgar*; this reading perfectly fits the attested spelling. In the early Turkic administration, the *čaviš* were those who marshalled the ranks in battle and were in charge of order at court; the term is known since the Orkhon inscriptions and defined by Kāšgari. This person must have been the official in charge of the Khazar *čaviš* corps: *yīg-ar* means ‘one who assembles or convenes’.²⁴ If this idea²⁵ is correct, it must denote an

²⁰ In the name of the town *Sariğšīn* which Golden 1980: 237–9 tentatively locates on the lower Volga; see below.

²¹ I mean that the sum total of these elements—including proper names, toponyms and components of these—gives a Turkic picture. *alp* was also borrowed into various Uralic languages and *+čI* into many Asian and South East European ones; such terms could, of course, in principle also have been loans into Khazar.

²² The other one is a kind of woman’s clothing called *τζιτζάκιον* (two of the thirteen instances show the variant *τζιτζιάκιον*), mentioned by the 10th century Byzantine emperor and author Konstantinos Porphyrogennitos. Moravcsik explains it as Turkic *čiček* ‘flower’, suggesting that this must have been the original Khazar name of the Khazar lady known as Eiréne (Greek ‘peace’), who became Byzantine empress in the 8th century. Golden 1980: 175–6 agrees with Moravcsik’s view and lists the word as a personal name. Konstantinos only says that this was the name of the garment the empress wore, not her proper name; I find Moravcsik’s idea far-fetched and would think the name of the garment may e.g. have been due to its colourfulness. One is also reminded of Hebrew *cicit*, ‘a Jewish ceremonial shawl with fringes’, *ciciot* ‘fringes’.

²³ Golden quotes the single Arabic ms. extant, but mentions that there is an early Persian translation of the source; it would be worth finding out how the word is spelled there.

²⁴ A central Old Turkic meaning of *yīg-* is ‘convening a number of persons’. Kljash-tornyj 1991: 114 suggests emending *yā*, the third-last letter of this title, to *nūn*, and then proposes an interpretation involving the names of two birds (one in truncated form); this seems quite unacceptable to me. Most recently, Golden 2005: 214 proposed deriving the title from **javaš* ‘gentle’ by an obscure suffix, but this also demands an ‘emendation’.

²⁵ The interpretation *čaviš/čavuš* of the first part of this title was already proposed by Frähn and Marquart; cf. Togan 1939: 260. Köprülü’s detailed encyclopaedia entry on

office corresponding to the *çavuş-başı* in the Ottoman administration (an adjunct of the grand vizier and the head of the *çavuş* corps in the *divân*). *čavış* would here be the object of *yığ-*: We find the structure ‘object noun’ + ‘governing verb in the aorist form’ also e.g. in the name of the 19th century *Eltüzär khan* or in the title *orunbasar* < *orun* ‘place’, *bas-* ‘to tread’: This term signifies ‘deputy’ in Modern Uygur, Kirghiz, Kazakh, Uzbek, Turkmen, Tatar, Bashkir and no doubt elsewhere as well. This means that the *čavışygar* was the ‘marshal’ bringing together all the *čavış*.

Most Khazar terms which have been shown to come from specific non-Turkic languages are titles;²⁶ in general, a great number of mostly pre-Turkic titles were passed on from one ancient and medieval Central Eurasian political entity to another. One such title is the second element in the names of two Khazars referred to in Armenian sources, *Atp' ilut'uēr* and *Xat'irlit'bēr*.²⁷ Golden 1980 correctly takes this to be the title which Vilhelm Thomsen in his edition of the Bilgä Qagan inscription spells as ^äl[t]äbär (E 37) and ^äl[t]äbär (E 40).²⁸ Rásonyi (referred to in Golden 1980: 149–150 and Doerfer 1965: 202) suggested that this title consists of the Turkic noun *el* signifying, among other things, ‘realm’, followed by the aorist of *täp-* ‘to kick’. Golden 1980: 150 compares it to *Elteriš* (Kök Türk ruler), *Alp el etmiš* (ruler of the Uygur steppe empire) and the Uygur names *El Almiš Sängün*, *El Tutmiš* and *El Qatmiš*. This is highly unlikely, among other reasons because (as Doerfer 1965: 203 points out) the Orkhon Turkic aorist of *täp-* would be *täpär*. Much has already been written on this title, referred to by Golden and Doerfer; it appears in different sources, including Chinese, in quite a number of forms: The Arab traveler Ibn Faḍlān has it with a /y/ before the initial vowel, as *ياطوار*;²⁹ see Doerfer 1965 and Sims-Williams 2002: 235 for other varieties. Four Bactrian instances were recently added to this rich

çavuş (1963: 363a) states that the Khazars used the title *çavuşyar* (thus!) and also mentions the reading of ‘*çavuş*’ as a Pecheneg word by Németh 1932: 56 f.

²⁶ The originally Iranian *kel* ‘house’ is an exception. The patronym *Kundājiq* discussed as Iranian by Golden 1980 is dealt with differently in Golden 2002–3; for this name and the possibly Mongol title underlying it see also Golden 2005: 214.

²⁷ *Alp* is, of course, of Turkic origin, as is the first part in the Bactrian sequence referred to below; this might be the case also with the first part of the second name.

²⁸ Thomsen 1896: 182 (note 102) thought he might be seeing traces of an I in the beginning of the E 40 instance, pointing at a reading like *eltäbär/eltäbir*. There are, all in all, seven or eight instances of this term in runiform inscriptions, none of which have any explicit initial vowel. In view of some of the instances quoted below, the *i-* might, however, be a possibility.

²⁹ See Togan 1939: 105 for the reading, its interpretation and further evidence. Róna-Tas 1982: 166–7, dealing with this and with other Arab script evidence for this title, already says it “is not necessarily of Turkic origin”.

documentation: In texts N, N', P and Q, dealt with in Sims-Williams 2000: 74–89, a certain ruler is referred to as *Tapayly Hilitbēr* or *Tapayly Hilitβēr*. The first word in this sequence can only be analyzed as Turkic *tap-Xg+IXg*, from *tap-* ‘to revere’:³⁰ cf. also the person referred to as *Tap(a)yl(i)γ Sangun* in the *Mahrnamag* (l. 56), a Manichæan hymn book written in the 8th century.³¹ In the glossary to his edition, Sims-Williams points out that the title discussed here is attested as *lytβyr* in l. 91–92 of the *Mahrnamag*; this had not previously been noticed. This latter variant reminds us of *Xat'irlit'bēr* (assuming with Golden that *Xat'ir* is an element by itself), whereas its labial consonant is more like that of *ilut'uēr*. The Sogdian variant *dytppyr / rytppyr* quoted in Sims-Williams 2002: 235 has the labial consonant as a stop.³² The title is only once attested in Turkic in Uygur script, as *Uygur iltbär+kä bermiš* ‘he gave her to the Uygur I’;³³ all other Turkic examples are in runiform sources, in which there are no explicit vowels. The last vowel of this title is clearly long, as shown by a number of examples. Among the numerous instances, not a single one shows a vowel after the *t*; on the other hand all instances with explicit non-long vowels have a high vowel after the *l*. All this should finally put the Turkic etymologies for this title to rest: The reading ‘*el-täbär*’ (structured as *El-tüzär* mentioned above) is untenable. According to Sims-Williams 2002: 235, “the initial aspirate of the Bactrian spelling suggests that it may be a Khalach form, since the consistent preservation of [h-] is one of the most notable features distinguishing Khalach from other Turkish dialects.”³⁴ This initial /h/ may indeed explain the *y* ~ \emptyset alternation in the evidence.

We owe to Ludwig 1982: 356–357 the (quite solid) evidence from Theophanes (mid 8th century) for the word which proves that the Khazar language must be an especially archaic variety of Turkic: He shows that *dog / δog* was also the Khazar variant of Orkhon Turkic *yog* ‘funerary feast’, beside being that of the 6th century first Türk dynasty as quoted in Greek sources.³⁵

³⁰ The [a] in the second syllable is normal in Old Uygur suffixes with a velar.

³¹ The ms. must be a later copy; see Müller 1912: 10.

³² In early borrowings into Sogdian, foreign /l/ is rendered as δ , in late borrowings as *r*; the *p* can be read as [b].

³³ Ms. U 1a part II v 3, edited by Le Coq 1912: 147. Wilkens 2000: 74 (text 49); clearly readable on the internet.

³⁴ Note, though, that initial /h/ may at this early date still have existed in other Turkic varieties as well.

³⁵ Since the Khazars were in contact with the Western Türk, indeed being their vas-

3. *Phonetic evidence for Khazar classification*

Balḥī's statement that *lisān bulgār miṭla lisāni 'l-ḥazar* is quoted (among others) by Benzing 1959: 691, though I would not accept his translation "daß die Sprache der Bulgaren dieselbe sei wie die der Chasaren": مثل can also denote 'similarity' (in any sense) and not necessarily 'identity'. To balance this we have, at any rate, the statement of (10th century) Iṣṭaxrī (quoted e.g. in Golden 1980: 56 with page reference to the edition) about the Khazars' language that 'no distinct tongue of mankind shares any of its characteristics' (*lā yuṣārikuhu lisān fāriq mina 'l-umam*). Golden 1980: 56–7 discusses the question of the classification of Khazar with reference to views expressed by Zajāczkowski and Baskakov, which he convincingly refutes. The language being so archaic (as indeed one would expect in view of its early documentation), evidence which might be thought to disqualify a Bolgar-Turkic or a Common Turkic profile for Khazar must be weighed carefully, to see whether some feature characteristic of one or of the other language branch may not have come into existence at a stage later than Khazar evidence. This matter has already been pointed out in reviews to Golden 1980. Golden had stated that the title *tudun* speaks against assignment of the Khazar language to Bolgar-Chuvash, as the sound shift $d > r$ is not found in it; but in fact the passage $d > r$ (or $\delta > r$) should probably be dated later than the end of the 7th century, the time for which the title is attested;³⁶ the earliest evidence for Volga-Bolgarian *turun* is in 1230.³⁷

We are lucky in being able to divide the typical features of Bolgar-Turkic into two groups: The features which elements of this branch of Turkic share with Mongolic cognates (A) existed already before its speakers left Eastern Asia; the features which it does not share with Mongolic (B) are innovations which emerged in the west. The B features—the Western innovations—could have come up during a Western community phase (B₁), in which case they would be shared by Chuvash-Bolgar and Khazar; alternatively (B₂), they could have come up after a separation of

sals for some time, it would not be surprising if they borrowed some lexemes from them. However, this term clearly denoting a traditional religious practice, it seems an unlikely word to borrow; the relationship between the two states appears to have been political rather than cultural.

³⁶ See Johanson 1983.

³⁷ See Róna-Tas 1982: 158. The d/r question is dealt with also in Erdal 1993: 137–141, and cf. below.

Khazar and Chuvash-Bolgar, possibly even after Khazar had died out: The replacement of /d/ by /r/ just mentioned is a B₂ feature of Bolgar-Chuvash, since it is not shared by Khazar. If a Western innovation (B) found in Bolgar-Chuvash is shared by Khazar (B₁), that indicates proximity and *would* entitle us to consider Khazar to belong to this group; if it does not (B₂), this does *not* prove that Khazar did not belong to this section of Turkic, as the emergence of this feature might postdate the Western community stage. If, however, any A feature—a feature shared by Bolgar-Chuvash and Mongolic—is not found in Khazar, this would be clear proof that Khazar is not part of the Bolgar-Chuvash section of Turkic. Note that both B₁ and B₂ features can in principle be found also in languages which we know to be ‘normal’ Turkic, such as the Kipchak languages, which also entered the ‘western’ Turkic contact and sharing area at some stage in history.

What, then, are the A features, the ones which can be reconstructed for Proto-Bolgar and Proto-Mongolic in the lexicon they shared and which the Ancient Bolgars brought with them when leaving South Siberia and travelling to the west?

- a) The shared lexicon of the Bolgar branch and Mongolic have /r/ where all other Turkic languages have /z/ instead.
- b) The Bolgar branch and Mongolic have /l/, /lč/ or /lj/ where all other Turkic languages have /š/ instead; in Chuvash /lč/ and /lj/ become /ś/.³⁸
- c) The Bolgar branch and Mongolic have the voiced palatal affricate [j] in word onset where Old Turkic³⁹ and some other Turkic languages have [y] instead.

³⁸ Much of the evidence for this is brought together in Tekin 1979: 130–132. This correspondence appears in *baš* ‘head’, or, e.g., in the reciprocal-cooperative suffix -Xš-, as also shown by synonymous Mongolian -(U)lčA-. In both of these cases, Volga-Bolgarian retains /lč/ and Chuvash has /ś/, not /l/. Róna-Tas 1999 shows that, in two suffixes, Chuvash /ś/ corresponds to the Common Turkic cluster /nč/.

³⁹ We know this thanks to sources in Brāhmī, Tibetan and Arabic script, with reasonable certainty also sources in Manichaean script. The runiform characters y_1 and y_2 may conceivably have had the secondary value *j* as well, *in case* this was the onset allophone of /y/ there. *If* this sound existed in Orkhon Turkic at all, it could also have been written with the letter č (e.g. in the name spelled *Maqarač*, which is written with *j* and not č in Sanskrit). The Classical Mongolian script, adapted from the Uygur script, used the letter *yōd* also for representing onset [j] and we don’t know whether the Mongols did not copy this practice from the Turks they were in contact with.

- d) Proto-Turkic /ā/ and /e/⁴⁰ can appear as /i/ and /i/ respectively (both apparently realised as [i]) in Mongolic.⁴¹ In Volga Bulgarian, /ā/ > /ia/ > /ya/ and /e/ > /iä/ > /yä/.⁴²
- e) /s/ has an allophone /š/ before /i/ in Bolgar Turkic and in Mongolic; there is no such phenomenon in any other Turkic language.
- f) A palatalization of /t/ to /č/ is attested in Mongolic and Chuvash, only to a very limited extent in Volga Bulgarian, and not attested anywhere elsewhere in the Turkic world.
- g) Mongolic and Chuvash share the loss of Common Turkic voiceless velars at the end of nominal stems. I am not aware of such a phenomenon in Bulgarian.

Which of these phenomena do we find in what has survived of Khazar?

(a) *Rhotacism*

The fortress whose name is spelled as Σαρκελ in Greek and שרכיל (*s/šrkyl*) or שרכל (*s/šrkl*) in Hebrew⁴³ was built in 838, for and by Khazars, and was not inherited from any Turkic tribe which might previously have come into the area (e.g. the Bulgars). The name is therefore highly likely to be Khazar and not one taken over from some other Turkic language. The second part of this name was probably borrowed from the lost West Middle Iranian cognate of Sanskrit *gr̥ha* ‘house’, Russian *gorod* ‘town’, Gothic *garths* ‘house’ and so forth.⁴⁴ In Turkic, this element lives

⁴⁰ /e/ is the front counterpart of /ā/, having evolved from long /ä/.

⁴¹ Although Proto-Turkic /a/ and /ā/ are sometimes raised also in Tuvan and Yakut, there is in those languages no connection to original vowel length.

⁴² In Volga Bulgarian *jāl* ‘year’ corresponding to common Turkic *yāš* ‘wet; year of age’, the onset /y/ appears to have been incorporated into the /j/. In this language, both long and short /o/ and /ö/ (and sometimes /ü/) of Proto-Turkic also become falling diphthongs (with onset /w/).

⁴³ The difference between the Greek and the Hebrew sibilants consists in the placing of a diacritical dot in Hebrew, the use of which was (and is) not obligatory in the first place. Hebrew also has another, unequivocal letter for expressing the sound /s/, but that letter was not put to use in any of the early instances in which the name appears in Hebrew writing. Golden 2005: 208 states that שרכיל “can be read as *Šarkil* (more likely given Medieval Hebrew traditions of transcribing foreign terms) or *Sarkil*”. I think medieval Hebrew traditions do not necessarily speak for š, as *šin* for [s] is also very common. Furthermore, *yōd* was regularly used also for representing [e] and not just long or short [i].

⁴⁴ Munkácsi 1905 actually lists words of the shape /k/-vowel-/l/ in several Finno-Ugrian and a number of East Caucasian languages as well as in Ossetic and Kurdish, having very similar meanings; the areal diffusion of this Iranian term does seem to be in need of some further elucidation. Connecting Chuvash *kil* (~ *kel*) ‘house’ with an

on in the Turkish and Azeri suffix *+gil*, which is used for referring to a set of persons in some way (e.g. as family members) attached to the person referred to by the noun serving as base (cf. Samojlovič 1925). Golden 2005: 208–9, who deals with this city name and its cognates in some detail, also quotes a Circassian tale which mentions *Sarqahλ* in connection with the *Qazahra*. Turkish *+gil* is an untypical suffix in not following vowel harmony and in being unstressed and thus betrays its origin as a separate word. *Sarkel* / *Šarkel* was synonymous with the etymologies of both *Casablanca* and *Belgrade*: The first part of *Σαρκελ* is translated into Greek as *άσπρον* or *λευκόν*, both ‘white’. To judge by this meaning, Khazar *sār* / *šār* ‘white, pale’ would *not* be identical with *sāriġ* ‘yellow’; this latter served as base for the name of another Khazar town, *Sāriġšīn*. As Tezcan, 1975: 104–107 has shown,⁴⁵ Common Turkic also has, beside *sāriġ*, a word *sāz* ‘pale’. *sāz*, attested with a long vowel in Turkmen,⁴⁶ is the real cognate of the Khazar term. In Karachay-Balkar north of the Caucasus—in Khazar country—and also in Kirghiz as well as in Ottoman and in Anatolian dialects, *saz* denotes ‘a pale complexion’. Yakut *ās*, which also must come from *sāz*, denotes a ‘white horse’s hide’, while Kazakh and Kirghiz have the derivate *saz+ar-u* ‘to become pale’. From this *sāz* a verbal derivate in *+I-* appears to have been formed, of the type discussed in Erdal 1991, section 5.42;⁴⁷ this was then expanded to *sāri-g* by using *-(X)g*, the common formative for forming nouns and adjectives from verbs. The sound-law counterpart of Classical Mongolian *šira* ‘yellow’ is *sāz*,⁴⁸ just as Mongolian *bora* corresponds to Turkic *boz* ‘grey, light brown’: Turkic /z/ regularly corresponds to Mongolian /r/, Mongolian [š] is regular for /s/ before /i/, and Turkic long *ā* turns up in Mongolian as /i/ in other cases as well. Chuvash *šur* also comes from *sāz* since it means ‘white, pale’; Chuvash *šurā* could, by sound

Evenki (i.e. Tungus) term (borrowed into Yakut), as advocated by Fedotov 1996: 291–292 (quoted by Golden 2005: 209), is clearly highly far fetched—beside the fact that the /u/ of the Evenki term makes the etymological connection impossible.

⁴⁵ Followed by Tekin 1979: 129. Tezcan 1975 remains unpublished.

⁴⁶ In phrases such as *daġ sāsī* ‘early morning light’; the verb *aġarmak* in *tan yeri aġarmak*, the Turkish counterpart of this phrase, is derived from *ak* ‘white’.

⁴⁷ As *sāmiz* ‘fattened, stuffed’ gave *sāmri-* ‘to grow fat’, *sekiz* ‘a jump’ gave *sekri-* ‘to jump’ and *yaviz* ‘bad’ gave *yavri-* ‘to grow weak’, thus *sāz* was expanded with this same suffix to give a verb **sāri-*, which survives only in Chuvash *šur-* ‘to become white’. The passage *s > š* before long vowels, *a > u* and the loss of the final /i/ are all regular developments for Chuvash.

⁴⁸ And not *sāriġ*, as generally assumed: Mongolic *a#* does not correspond to Turkic *iġ#*, but an extra vowel in Mongolic is normal.

laws, come either from *sāz* or from *sārīg*, but has the same meaning as *šur*.⁴⁹ Both *sāz* and *sārīg* were adopted by Hungarian (where the letter *s* is pronounced as [š]): Hungarian *sár* ‘yellow’ comes from *sāz* while Hungarian *sarog* and *sárga* (same meaning) come from *sārīg*. The oldest instance of Hungarian *sár* quoted by Róna-Tas et al. 1995: 26, which is from the year 1332, mentions a ‘horse in *sár* colour’, exactly as in Yakut *ās* (< *sāz*) on the other end of Eurasia.⁵⁰

Going just by sound processes, *sar* / *šar* can have been shortened from *sarīg* through simplification of the medial cluster /g-k/ and the common syncopation of the high vowel after the /r/ (**sārīgkel* > **sārīkel* > *sarkel*); by this, the word would not serve as evidence for rhotacism. The semantics of Turkic itself seem to speak against this possibility, but in Mongolic and Hungarian the base as well appears to have signified ‘yellow’. No certainty can therefore be gained from this for the hypothesis that Khazar belonged to the Bolgar-Chuvash branch of Turkic.

Another much discussed⁵¹ problem for the theory that the language of the Khazars belonged to the Bolgar-Chuvash section of Turkic languages is their name: It has a /z/, which a rhotacistic language is not supposed to have. Consequently, the various solutions proposed for the origin of this name all assume a form which had /s/ as second consonant; this /s/ is then supposed to have gotten voiced between vowels. As Ligeti 1981: 18 points out, the name is in Chinese and Pahlavi sources as well as in the runiform Terkh and Tes inscriptions from the Uygur Steppe Empire spelled with an *s*. The problem with this idea is that there is no evidence whatsoever that the Khazar language—or Bolgar, for that matter—voiced consonants in general, or /s/ in particular, between vowels; Chuvash does do this, but it appears to be a late phenomenon.⁵² To judge

⁴⁹ *šurā pit*, e.g., means ‘a pale complexion’; cf. also the denominal verb *šurāx-* ‘to become white or pale’ (formed with +(X)k-, the general Turkic suffix for forming intransitive verbs from nouns and adjectives).

⁵⁰ Rybatzki 1994: 200 states: “In den südsibirischen Türkssprachen trägt *sarīg* auch die Bedeutung ‚weiß: graulich, isabellfarben, *flavus*’ but his sources are papers on Samoyed (in which the Turkic term is merely a borrowing). The non-yellow hues appear to be linked with horses’ colours, also in the Mongolic languages which he quotes.

⁵¹ E.g. by Golden 1980, Ligeti 1981: 18, Bazin 1981–82, Róna-Tas *passim* and in fact already by Gombocz. The various points of view are summed up in Golden 1992: 233–4.

⁵² Volga Bulgarian evidence is weak on this matter: It consists of the form *ulemā+sem+ne* ‘the scholars (acc.)’ in an inscription from 1314 (Erdal 1993: 87–8) with the retention of /s/ between vowels; we are not sure about the juncture of the plural suffix (perhaps borrowed from Finno-Ugric), however, nor whether voicing would have been permitted to interfere with consistent spelling.

by *Ätil*, the Khazar name of the Volga and also of the Khazar capital on the shores of this river, the Khazar language did not, at any rate, voice /t/ between vowels; otherwise, the name would have had a /d/ instead of a /t/ (as in modern Tatar). Nor did any other known variety of Turkic before the 14th century show voicing between vowels: The Arabic writing system, for one, would definitely have made this visible, e.g. in Volga Bulgarian. However, rhotacism in the middle of the name *xazar* might have been prevented by the /r/ at the end of it, *if* the original name had a /z/ after all: Turkic languages are known to have often avoided two consecutive /r/s. Even if the /z/ were original and not an allophone of /s/, therefore, this would not be a real proof that the language did not belong to the Bolgar-Chuvash branch. Ligeti points out that the name of the Chuvash has both initial *č* and final *š*, which would have changed to other sounds if this had been an inherited word.

(b) *Lambdacism*

Róna-Tas (personal communication) has proposed that the name of the important Khazar city *Xamlīx* (Golden 1980 no. 47) comes from *Kamiš+lik* ‘an area covered with reeds’; this is indeed a likely name for a place on the banks of a river (as *Xamlīx* is). What Róna-Tas has in mind with this is **xamīl* > Chuvash *xāmāl* ‘stubble’, which would entail the sound change *š* > *l* typical of the Bolgar-Chuvash group: **xamīl+lix* could easily have gotten simplified to *Xamlīx*. This etymology gains in certainty by the fact that *qamīl* is the Ossetic word for ‘reed’: It was clearly borrowed into Alan (the medieval predecessor of modern Ossetic) from Bolgar-Chuvash Turkic.⁵³ No contemporaries unfortunately proposed any translation for *Xamlīx*, though, and Golden (most recently 205: 213, with variants) reads the name as *Xam-malīx* < **Xam-balīx* < **Xan-balīx* ‘the king’s city’ (also the name of Beijing in Yuan times). Nor can we follow Golden’s rejection of the interpretation of *Xam+lix* as ‘shaman (*qam* ~ *xam*) area’—what do we know about the religious practices of the Khazars before some or most of them decided to adopt Judaism?

Bolušči, the Turkic name of the 10th century Khazar general whose Hebrew name was *Pesax*, might actually be considered as evidence against the Bolgar-Chuvash identity of this language, as its sibilant

⁵³ See Róna-Tas 2005: 208 ff.

appears to contradict lambdacism. The name (which actually means ‘helper, supporter’) would be acceptable as Bolgar-Chuvash if we take the second syllable to contain the reciprocal-cooperative suffix, which became *-(Ā)š-* (not *-(Ā)l-*) in Chuvash; **bol-Xš-Xš+čĭ* would give *bol-uš+čĭ* by syncopation.⁵⁴ The fact that the verb base ends in /l/ would also have been a dissimilating factor, just as the regular Bolgar-Chuvash change of *d > r* is blocked before /r/ (as first pointed out by Clark 1978). *bol-uš-*, originally ‘to be for each other’, came to signify ‘to help, support, aid’, *bol-uš* (<**bol-Xš-Xš*) ‘succour, support’: It is attested with this meaning in the *Dīvān Luġāti ’t-Turk*⁵⁵ (fol. 322 and 184 respectively) and a number of times in Rabġūzī’s *Qiṣaṣu ’l-Anbiyā*, then in (practically all!) Middle Kipchak sources and Modern Kipchak languages.⁵⁶ Chuvash also has *pulāš-* and (much rarer) *pulāš* with the meaning ‘help’, but these must be borrowings from Kipchak, as they have /š/ and not /s/. In fact, *Boluščĭ* might already be such a borrowing, in view of the name of *Boluš*, the Khan of the Polovcy (i.e. Kumans) who invaded Ruś in 1054 (referred to by Golden 1980: 169). The rare agentive use of the suffix *-Xš* in the proper name *Boluš*⁵⁷ (which makes sense only if given with this special semantic development in mind) was clearly unknown to the parents of *Boluščĭ*, who felt the need to add the agentive suffix *+čĭl*, whether they themselves happened to be ethnically Khazar or not.

We seem to have no certain Khazar evidence for lambdacism. The /š/ in the title *Čaviš-yġgar* proposed above is, on the other hand, a real problem for the hypothesis that Khazar belongs to the Bolgar-Chuvash branch; considering this (as well) to be a borrowed element would be a too simple and ad hoc solution.

⁵⁴ The *-Xš* derivate from *bol-* ‘to become’ would have been an abstract noun merely signifying ‘becoming’; cf. Erdal 1991: 265.

⁵⁵ We refer to this according to the edition of the (11th century) Turkic material by Dankoff & Kelly 1982–4, henceforth using the abbreviation DLT.

⁵⁶ These languages are listed e.g. in Berta 1996: 96–97 and Schönig 2005: 397 (who deals with the different terms for ‘help’ in the various Turkic languages); this meaning occurs also e.g. in (South Siberian) Shor and in New Uygur. Old Uygur and other Middle Turkic sources appear to use *bol-uš-* only in the literal sense deriving from the sum of its parts, however, and languages like Turkish and Turkmen have other semantic developments not related to ‘help’. Part of the mss. of the *Qiṣaṣu ’l-Anbiyā* and a part of its sections show Kipchak influence.

⁵⁷ It is in the onomastic tradition of *El Teriš* ‘Organizer of the Realm’, the throne name given to *Kutlug* after he founded the second Türk empire in the 7th century. The grammatically similar proper names *Atiš*, *Süñüş*, *Tokiš* and *Utuš*, mentioned in the DLT, all glorify fighter qualities. Cf. Erdal 1991: 266, and 115 for *+(X)ščĭl*.

(c) *The onset voiced palatal affricate*

A further non-Bolgar aspect of the term *Čavış-yıgar* would be that its second part starts with /y/ and not /j/; unlike, that is, Volga Bulgarian *jieti* ‘7’ compared to Old Turkic *yeti*, *jıyerמי* ‘20’ compared to *yigirmi*, *jür* ‘100’ compared to *yüz* or *jāl* ‘year’ compared to *yil* or perhaps *yaš*. Assuming that the verb ‘to assemble’ was alive in Khazar,⁵⁸ it is not very likely that its /y/ should have been retained just because it was not at the word onset. In any case we have no *positive* evidence for the voiced palatal affricate in this language. The Mongolic documentation is especially interesting: Classical Mongolian had both onset /y/ and onset /j/, but early words with Turkic cognates all had /j/ and not /y/.

(d) *The diphthongisation of low long vowels*

Proto-Turkic *sāz* ‘pale, white’ and its derivate *sāriğ* ‘yellow’ have long vowels in Proto-Turkic; this length appears to have been retained in the toponym *Sāriğšīn*, since sources in Arabic script spell it with *alif* in the first syllable. In the Bolgar branch such length appears as a diphthong in Volga Bulgarian *xyan* ‘blood’ < *kān*, and the vowel of the ‘white’ / ‘yellow’ stem becomes /i/ in Mongolic *šira*.⁵⁹ In both Mongolic and Chuvash, the palatal onset proceeds to palatalize any /s/ preceding it. No such phenomenon is visible in the two Khazar toponyms of which this stem is a part; the /a/ is spelled as a homogenous vowel, whether with length marked as in the instance just mentioned, or unmarked in Greek and Hebrew script.

Golden 2005: 210–211 would like to read the title spelled as *b’k* in mss. of al-İṣṭaxrī and Ibn Ḥawqal not as an unusual spelling for *bāğ* but as *yilig* / *yelig*, and relate it to Old Turkic and Qarakhanid *elig* ‘king’, mainly because 13th century and later sources explicitly write *ylk*. Mistaking *yā* for *bā* is very common in Arabic mss., but the emendation of *alif* to *lām* is a bit more daring. Golden sees his view supported by the name of the late 9th century Hungarian ruler Árpád’s son, which his near-contemporary Porphyrogennitos spelled as *Ιέλεχ*; but the Hungarians could, I think, have copied that from Bolgar as well (beside the possibility of this proper name having a quite different source). If Golden should be right

⁵⁸ Kipchak languages do have it, Chuvash does not!

⁵⁹ Similarly, Mongolic *nilbusun* ‘tear’ and *čilayun* ‘stone’ are (I think rightfully) considered to be cognates of Turkic *yāš* ‘tear’ and *tāš* ‘stone’ respectively.

about proposing *yelig*,⁶⁰ this would be a Bulgarian-type onset for Khazar. It could then be that Khazar turns long /ä/ into a diphthong but not long /a/; this would not be like Bolgar-Chuvash either,⁶¹ but like Yakut.

Golden 2005: 208 states that *Ītax*, “while showing the *-aq/-ak* suffix found in many Oğuro-Bulğaric forms (. . .),⁶² lacks, at least in this anthroponym, the *i-/ı- > yi-/yı-* shift that one finds in Oğuro-Bulğaric (. . .) and is apparent in the Khazar title *yilig/yélig*”. While Khazar *yelig* would accord with the Bolgar diphthongising of Proto-Turkic /e/ to give /iä/ (e.g. in *yäl* ‘community’ > Chuvash *yal* ‘village’ from Proto-Turkic *el*,⁶³ or *biäl+* < *beš* ‘five’), Volga-Bulgarian (like Yakut) did not diphthongise short or long /i/ or /i/ (cf. Erdal 1993: 149–150, 152–3).⁶⁴ Actually, then, this name fully accords with what one would expect from a language element in the Bolgar-Chuvash group.

(e) *The palatalization of /s/*

Another term not included in Golden 1980 but clearly belonging to the Khazar realm is the name of a river in an 8th or 9th century account of the Crimea, written in Greek as *Χαρασίου* and translated as *μαῦρον νερόν*, that is ‘black water’; see Róna-Tas 1976: 166–7 and 1982: 152 with references. I would suggest reading this as *xara síw* (*w* symbolising a semi-vowel; not a voiced fricative, for which Greeks would use *beta*); since [š] cannot be written in the Greek alphabet (nor is pronounced as such by normal Greeks), the reading *xara šiw* would also be possible for Khazar. That the final labial element (spelled *ou*) should be syllabic (as proposed by Róna-Tas 1982: 152) is unlikely especially if the stress on the *i* was in the original source.⁶⁵ The word for ‘water’ is *suw* in all early

⁶⁰ ‘*Yilig*’ would not be expected, as */e/ becomes *iä > yä*; see the next paragraph.

⁶¹ Cf. however Volga Bulgarian *jäl* ‘year’, mentioned above.

⁶² Chuvash *uyäx* ‘moon’ and *xëlëx* ‘horse hair’ compared to their Common Turkic cognates and synonyms *ay* and *kil* indeed show that that branch of Turkic made more use of %*k* suffixes than other Turkic languages; the Volga Bulgarian word for ‘month’ (< ‘moon’) also already ends in /x/. These suffixes may, however, have been borrowed from Iranian and may not come from Proto-Turkic.

⁶³ Found also in Mongolic as a not so early borrowing.

⁶⁴ Cf. Volga Bulgarian *hir* ‘daughter’ corresponding to Common Turkic *kiz* (both words with long vowels) and *xirx* ‘forty’ corresponding to *kirk*, both with short vowels. Chuvash does indeed place prosthetic /y/ also before onset /i/ (as in Chuvash *yitä* ‘dog’ mentioned by Golden, whose source also happens to have had a short vowel) but this appears to be a later development.

⁶⁵ Thus in Moravcsik 1958: 340.

Common Turkic but *šiv*, with an unrounded vowel, in Chuvash. In the Volga Bulgarian inscription from the year 1307 dealt with by Róna-Tas 1976 a river is called *šiw*, as in the 8th/9th century account; cf. also Erdal 1993: 128–9. Would the non-labial vowel in the word for ‘water’ speak for an assignment of Khazar into the Bolgar-Chuvash branch? Not necessarily: The Khazar form of this word is identical with the shape the word ‘water’ must have had in Proto-Turkic, as shown in Erdal 1991: 177; the labial consonant must have rounded the vowel secondarily, as happened in many Old Turkic words.⁶⁶ Had there been any positive evidence for *Xapaσιου* to be pronounced with [š], a grouping with Bolgar *would* have to be assumed, as no other early Turkic language shows this phenomenon (though Classical Mongolian does). In any case there was, in this very area, a Great Bulgarian Empire, which dissolved around the year 670. This river name could very well have been inherited from the earlier, in this case at least partially Bulgarian, population of the area; river names, and toponyms in general, often do get handed down from inhabitants to inhabitants.

(f) *The palatalization of /t/*

The Khazar name for the river Volga and for a city on its banks was *Ätil*; the /t/ was not replaced by /č/ even though it was followed by /i/. I am not aware of any Khazar word in which /t/ did get palatalized. Volga Bulgarian *alti* ‘six’ and *älti* ‘wife of imam’ as well as the 3rd person preterit suffix when appearing as *-ti* show that that language did not generally palatalise /ti/; this actually happens only in a few of the epitaphs. That the Khazars did not do that in the river’s name therefore does not disqualify their language from Bolgar status. The Chuvash phenomenon of *t > č* before /i/ etc. may either be younger, or it may have characterised only a part of the Chuvash-Bolgar group.

(g) *The loss of final voiceless velars*

At the end of his 2005 paper, Golden writes: “The shift *-q / -ğ > -x > -h > 0*, typical of Oğuro-Bulgaric . . ., seems to be a feature of Khazar as well.”

⁶⁶ Bashkir *hiv* ‘water’ (spelled and pronounced with a non-labial vowel) is, I think, likelier to come from a Volga Bulgarian substrate rather than having survived from Proto-Turkic times; other explanations are possible as well. If the Volga Bulgarian word for ‘water’ had come from **sū*, one would have expected it to have a falling diphthong, as e.g. **üč* ‘three’ becomes *weč*.

The only case where Golden seems actually to refer to such a loss in this paper is, however, in shapes which the name of the Păčănāk tribe appears to get in the sources; that, however, is not a Khazar word. I am not aware of any evidence for such a loss in Khazar. On the other hand, the attested Volga Bulgarian language material does not show this phenomenon either. So, it may be a coincidence that there is such loss both in Mongolic and in Chuvash (unless it occurs exactly in the same words); alternately, only a part of this branch of Turkic (which also had had contact with the Mongols) could have shown it. A third possibility is that our limited Volga Bulgarian corpus does not show this phenomenon although the language did have it.

B evidence

We showed above why the absence of the sound change $d > r$ is no proof that Khazar was of the Common Turkic type, even if it is in evidence in such an early Bolgar source as the 10th century Nagyszentmiklós bowl inscription in Greek characters (where the *-dOk* suffix appears with onset *r*).

Can the sound change $\#x < [\#q]$ shown at the beginning of *xara* ‘black’ help us classify Khazar (if indeed *xara sīw* is not inherited)? Another Khazar word starting with $\#xa$ is the name of the city *Xamlīx*, for which two possible etymologies were mentioned above; beside, of course, the name of the nation itself. The onset ‘stop > fricative’ sound change is typical of Chuvash and in full evidence in 13th–14th century Volga Bulgarian *hir* ‘girl’, *xyan* ‘blood’ and *xīrx* ‘forty’ (Erdal 1993: 115). However, this sound feature appears also in early Qipchaq: e.g. in pronominal *xayda* and *xačan*, and *xal-* ‘to remain’ or *xayış* ‘leather strap’ in the Codex Comanicus (just mentioning cases where the following vowel is /a/).⁶⁷ Kāšgarī (fol. 541) says that the Oguz and Qifčāq say *xayu* ‘which’ instead of the “Turks’” *qayu* and *xizīm* ‘my daughter’ instead of *qizīm*. According to Róna-Tas 1982: 163, the fivefold mention of the term *xađīŋ* ‘birch tree’ (< Old Turkic *kadīŋ*) by Ibn Faḍlān, the caliphate’s ambassador to the Volga Bulgarians, is evidence for 10th century Volga Bulgarian $\#xa-$. Ibn Faḍlān, however, uses this term first when describing the section of his itinerary between the lands of the Oguz and of the

⁶⁷ Róna-Tas (personal communication), comparing Hungarian *hal* and Finnish *kala* (both ‘fish’), points out that fricativization might be an areal phenomenon: The Hungarians lived in this area before moving further West. Cf. also Róna-Tas 1993: 295–6.

Pecheneg (fol. 202b), before reaching the Bashgird and, in May 922, the Volga Bulgarians; it therefore cannot serve as certain evidence for the language of these latter.⁶⁸ As shown in Erdal 2004: 75–78, the fricative realization of the back allophone of /k/ was possible and is attested in Old Turkic as well, though evidence is in many ways far from clear. Early Mongolic does not generally fricativize the back velar voiceless consonant, although parts of it do (see Doerfer 1965, introduction).

q > *x* at the end of a word is attested in *Ītax*, the Khazar personal name interpreted in Erdal 1991a as coming from *it* ‘dog’ plus the diminutive suffix *-Ak*. The same sound process is, indeed, attested in Volga Bulgarian *xīrx* ‘forty’, *t(i)w(i)x(+čī)* ‘chicken (seller)’ and the personal name *Amrax* (< *amra-k* ‘dear’) attested as a proper name also in Anatolia (Erdal 1993: 115). On the other hand, however, *x* appears in variants of forms with *q* in the Codex Comanicus (e.g. *yox* ‘there isn’t’, *yolux-* ‘to meet’ or *yarux* ~ *yarix* ‘bright, light’; so this is—again—no proof by itself.

So what is the result of the application of the mentioned criteria for the classification of Khazar? The criteria (a), (e), (f) and (g) and B evidence are all inconclusive; the application of the (b) criterion would speak against the inclusion of the language of the Khazars into the Bolgar-Chuvash branch, especially if *čavīš-yīgar* is the correct reading for a word for which nothing convincing has been proposed otherwise. (c) is inconclusive unless this same term is taken into consideration, and this term would tend to speak against it. With (d) there might be conflicting evidence if Golden is right with his proposal to read a title spelled as *b’k* as *yelig*; if this idea is rejected, evidence is against inclusion. Summing up all this, one would state that overall evidence would be slightly *against* the *inclusion* point of view. However, there could also have been different Khazar dialects with isogloss profiles differing in points of which we are, at present, able to detect only a few: Perhaps there was a diachronic, contact-related development towards, or away, from the Bolgar branch; or perhaps, finally, Khazar occupied intermediate positions with respect to these isoglosses.

⁶⁸ Cf. Togan 1939: 211–215. In a personal communication, Prof. Róna-Tas points out to me that Ibn Faḍlān got his data from his interpreters and not from the people he met, and “that a Bulgar was in the embassy”. In view of other evidence on the fricativization of the onset back-vowel velar, the presence of a Bulgar member in the group cannot guarantee that the name of a tree had an exclusively Bolgar shape, to the exclusion of other possible sources for Ibn Faḍlān’s rendering.

4. *The geniza mss. Cambridge T-S (Glass)*
12.122 and T-S Misc. 35.38

Let us now turn to Golb & Pritsak 1982, which contains Golb's edition of two medieval Hebrew mss., one a plea to help a certain Jew who had gotten into material troubles, the other an account of a part of Khazar history seen from a Jewish perspective. What invites our scrutiny is Pritsak's 'Altaistic' commentary to the edition of the two mss., and historical notes based on his opinions on the 'Altaic' words he purported to have discovered. The texts are presented in the work as new sources disclosing unknown Khazar language material. Most reviews about this book were written by Judaists or by specialists of Eastern European history, who took Pritsak's competence in historical Turkic linguistics for granted. Not that everybody agreed with all aspects of Golb's interpretation. S. Schwarzfuchs, e.g., pointed out two problems:

Firstly, that the Hebrew text actually does not say "we, the community of Kiev, inform you of the troublesome affair" etc., as translated by Golb, but "we inform you, the community of Kiev, of the troublesome affair . . .".⁶⁹ It would seem, therefore, that the letter was not sent *from* Kiev but *to* Kiev, putting all conclusions drawn from it concerning the Khazars and the history of Kiev on very shaky feet. It might then be appealing to the community of Kiev for help by mentioning that other Jewish communities were also being called upon to do so. Below we actually mention one linguistic reason why the letter may have been sent from a place where the language spoken was *not* Khazar.

⁶⁹ This is the meaning of מודיעים אנו לכם קהל של קייוב (*modi'im anu laxem kahal šel Kiyov*), which Golb (p. 6) calls "troublesome" and a "seemingly peculiar syntactic structure"; this is quite normal Hebrew, however, unless one tries to make it mean what it does not mean. Golb's arguments (spread over half a quarto page) against the straightforward interpretation (that the letter was *addressed to* the community of Kiev) can be summed up as follows: 1) "The letter contains pleas for aid . . . addressed to all 'holy communities scattered to all (the world's) corners . . ., and one does not find in the Genizah circular letters of this kind addressed to Jewish communities in general, which thereafter single out a particular community." 2) The bearer of the letter evidently ended up in Fustāt, (the name of old Cairo) and not Kiev. 3) Formulating the sentence so as to give the intended meaning would have been "quite inadmissible in Hebrew literary style", because "proper Hebrew sentence structure . . . calls for the verb in the initial position". The first and second arguments cannot override what the text actually says, though we do not know why the ms. ended up in Egypt; that there is nothing similar in the Cairo Geniza may just be a coincidence. The third argument is clearly not true: While classical Hebrew style prefers the verb to be in initial position, one would not do that at the price of getting the wrong meaning across.

The second problem which Schwarzfuchs had with the text was the idea that proselytes could be *kohanim* and *leviim*, appellatives which are believed to be inherited in patrilinear fashion since biblical times.⁷⁰ The “sacerdotal metamorphosis” of *kams* (Turkic shamans) to *kohanim* of which Golb (p. 32) speaks would, I believe, be unparalleled in Jewish history and seems quite unlikely to me. The conclusion would be that the document’s signatories (or their fathers mentioned within their patronyms) who have non-Jewish names would not be Khazars converted to Judaism but Jews who adopted non-Jewish names. We know that this happened everywhere and quite a lot since antiquity, e.g. with the name *Kalonymos*, which is a Greek compound. This is also the view held by Torpusman (1989: 51), a specialist in East European onomastics who dealt with the names; he quotes several examples for Eastern European Jews bearing non-Jewish names throughout history.⁷¹ In his opinion, the non-Jewish names of this document are likely to be Slavic and not Turkic; this would again, I think, make the Khazars vanish from the letter. Orjol 1997 has shown that one of the names, if not two, is indeed Slavic.⁷²

Golden 1984: 481 says he is “disturbed by the lack of any but the most skimpy data” for Pritsak’s reconstruction of Kievan history. He further points at a 110 years’ period between the person supposed to be the ‘wazir’ of Kiev in 940–950 and his father, whom Pritsak believes to have been active in 833, and tries to solve the problem by assuming a patronym to be a clan name. On the same page Golden states that “the appearance of the runiform inscription in the Kievan letter, regarded by Golb & Pritsak as an official stamp of approval by Khazar authorities, necessitates, in light of the dating of the document, a new chronology for Kievan Rus’ history. . . . This constitutes a very substantial revision of the chronology of the *Povest’ vremennyx let* . . .”.

⁷⁰ DNA research of recent years has been said to show with a very high degree of certainty that extraneous elements among Jewish *kohanim* are as low as 0.5%. Much of the controversial discussion around this topic is reflected in the internet site <http://www.khazaria.com/genetics/abstracts.html>.

⁷¹ I would like to extend my sincere thanks to Peter Golden, who made Torpusman’s paper (as well as his own review of the book) available to me.

⁷² Erdal 1993: 133 (footn. 237) already points out that nothing in the text indicates that its authors were Khazars.

4.1. *The 'runiform' recognitio*

The attention of the review article of Ligeti (1981) is mainly directed towards a short note appearing at the very end of one of these texts: a sequence of what can, by and large, be interpreted as Eastern Turkic runic characters, by Pritsak read as *hokurüm* and translated as 'I have read'. The interpretation of this *recognitio*, although placed into an admittedly plausible textual and historical context, is not without problems: The last character of the word is far from being a normal runiform *m*, which would have to consist of two pairs of parallel lines meeting on the right edge of the letter; the character could also be read as a front *k*, giving *ök* or *ük* for the third syllable of the word. Furthermore, the first character is only hypothetically taken to be the ligature of a Semitic *he* with the runic character for *o* or *u* which is in fact reminiscent of a *wāw*. For this character, Pritsak refers to a sign appearing in the fragment of a lapidary, written in runiform characters and published by Thomsen, 1910. Thomsen finds this to be an Aramaic *he* used as the numeral '5' (as still done nowadays, e.g. in Hebrew). What could have a shape similar to the numeral in Thomsen's 'Blatt' is the whole of the first character in the last word of the Geniza ms., however, and not just its rightmost half; under that comparison of letters the reading therefore ought to be *hakurüm* and not **hokurüm*.⁷³ Ligeti 1981: 12 expresses his expectation of *a* in the first syllable not on palaeographical grounds, as I do, but on comparative grounds. The word has been quoted over and again by Turcologists, who agree that it shows the passage from *d* to *r* typical for the Bolgar-Chuvash branch of Turkic. I have pointed out (Erdal 1993: 133) that *hoqu-* would, if it has been read correctly, fit in well with the prehistoric reconstruction of the verb *oqi-* 'to call out, recite, read'.⁷⁴

In case the letter should have been sent *to* Kiev, as the Hebrew text actually says, and not *from* Kiev, it could, e.g., come from the Danube Bolgar realm which flourished on the lower Danube till the 10th century. In that case the censor's note would be evidence for Bolgar and not for Khazar! We should add that the 7th century Khazar word *tudun*

⁷³ Actually, the vertical line on the right side of the first character looks much weaker and lighter than the rest of it; if it is just an accidental stain of the parchment, this first syllable would have to be read as *äl*. In sum, among the six runiform signs, only the third one is wholly beyond doubt.

⁷⁴ Ligeti is doubtful of the *h*, expecting a *w* instead if the language was of the Bolgar-Chuvash type; I am not, in view of the early date of Khazar.

had not changed intervocalic *d* to *r*;⁷⁵ Khazar may possibly never have carried out this sound change. This would be further indication against Khazaria as source of the letter if, again, the reading *r* can be upheld.⁷⁶ In Danubian Bolgar, on the other hand, *d* should have become *r* already in the first half of the 9th century, if my interpretation of the Nagyszentmiklós inscription in Greek letters (Erdal 1988) is correct. The Danube-Bolgarian state may possibly have been the realm from which the letter was sent, as it apparently wasn't sent from Kiev. Volga Bolgarian /d/ > /r/ is documented for 1230 (the title *turun* mentioned in a Slavic chronicle) and directly attested in the late 13th century, and I take this phonetic change to be a common Bolgarian feature: That it should have taken place among different Bolgarian groups at different points in time seems to be less likely.⁷⁷ If one directly connects the change to /z/ evidenced by Hungarian *búza* < Turkic *buyday* 'wheat', this would indicate that the Hungarians either borrowed this term at a still earlier date, or that it came from a Turkic language which had not changed the voiced dental to /r/ at least after /g/.⁷⁸

Ligeti 1981: 17 points to a third circumstantial problem arising from the 'Khazar hypothesis' (in addition to the two problems brought up by Schwarzfuchs): He asks whether it could be considered a mere coincidence that on a Hebrew letter of the Khazars the *recognitio* (analogous to *legi* 'I have read' on Latin documents; similarly in Byzantine sources) is not worded in the language of the letter. "Everything", he says, "points to the existence of a Hebrew language chancellery with the Khazars; . . . on the basis of the available information it seems hardly likely that a Khaz-

⁷⁵ There are a number of examples in Greek sources and one in an Armenian source, all referred to in Golden 1980: 215.

⁷⁶ Golden's (1984: 477) doubts concerning the reading of this word are also related to the chronology of the *d* > *r* shift, but then the reading need not be doubted if the text is not Khazar anyway.

⁷⁷ The ablative suffix *+rAn* first appears in a Volga Bolgarian inscription dated to 1281, *erne küen* 'Friday' < Persian *ādīna* 'Friday' + Turkic *kün* 'day' in one from 1297; see Erdal 1993. I have stated above why Ibn Faḍlān's use of *xaḍīḡ* cannot serve as evidence for Volga Bolgarian.

⁷⁸ *toydak* is usually taken to be the source of Hungarian *túzok* 'bustard', thus giving another possible *-z-* < *-yd-* change. Concerning this word one should, however, consider that it is, in fact, not attested before the Bābur-nāme: The original Turkic word for bustard is *tōd*, first documented by Kāšgari, who says that it is pronounced as *toy* by those Turks who change [d] to [y]. *toydak* might, in view of its late attestation in Turkic, have been adopted from Mongolic, where it appears in a number of dialects. Hungarian *nyögér* < *nöker* 'comrade, e.g., shows that it was perfectly possible for Mongolic loans to reach Hungarian.

arian language chancellery would ever have functioned alongside with, or prior to it.” We might add that Jews have, up to the 20th century, used the Hebrew alphabet also when writing all the other languages they spoke throughout their history, Aramaic, Syriac and Neo-Aramaic, Ottoman Turkish, Krymchak and Karay Turkic, Persian, Arabic, Greek, Italian, French, Yiddish and their variety of Spanish (Judezmo). The chancellery of the Jewish state of the Khazars is therefore also likely to have used Hebrew writing even if the official language was a Turkic one. The letter ought to have originated in a different state, therefore, one not having adopted a monotheistic religion. If the runiform expression was “an official stamp of approval” by “authorities” of a different country, no revision of the accepted chronology or the known course of history becomes necessary.

4.2. *The proper names in the Geniza documents*

The only Turcologist who cared to comment on Pritsak’s treatment of the non-Semitic names and appellatives in Hebrew characters appearing in the two medieval Hebrew documents edited by Golb appears to have been Golden; others may not have taken Pritsak’s seemingly erudite linguistic speculations, which unfortunately very often bent and twisted information to suit the argument, quite seriously. Golden’s (1984) review article, invited by the *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*⁷⁹ is rather critical though treading quite carefully in its wording. It raises a number of important points not touched upon in the present paper; I will deal only with a few of these words which are relevant to linguistic matters.

Among the signatories of the first letter, the account of Golb & Pritsak (1982: 40) for the name *יוסף בר קופין* (*ywsf br* [= son of] *qwfyw*) must unfortunately be called unserious: Pritsak states it to be identical with the name of the Kuban river, called *ὁ Κωφῆν ποταμός* by the 6th century Byzantine author Menandros Protector and, further, to the name of a Bolgar tribal group which, in the 7th century, roamed the territory between the river Don and the Caucasus, called *Kup’i Bulgar*. Why somebody should bear the name of a tribe and/or of a river is not stated: The ‘explanation’ is exclusively based on sound similarity.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ This journal was not otherwise concerned with the Turkic world though it was close to Prof. Pritsak—who was a Ukrainian activist in the United States.

⁸⁰ By the way, Pritsak uses the name of the Kuban river also in his account of a word read as *עבם* (*βm*) in the second text, which was previously edited by Schechter. *עבם*

Another one of the signatories is שמשון יהודה המכונה סורטה (*šmšwn yhwdh hmxwnh swrth*). Pritsak derives this last word from the name of the Sabirs which, he says, were actually called *Säwär*, *Säbir* or *Sävir*.⁸¹ The last two letters (ט *t* and ה *h*) he assigns to a suffix *-tei* which he finds in the “Bolgarian” name *Bülertei* referred in Jusupov 1960: 106⁸² and in Mongolian. The suffix *+tAi* is, indeed, very common in Mongolian, where it corresponds to the Turkic suffix *+lXg*. It does not, however, exist in Turkic (though it is, of course, found in some names of Central Asian places now inhabited by Turks); even if the Turkic and the Mongol language families should, in the future, prove to be related (as some scholars think they are), it would still not be admissible to try to interpret a Turkic word as containing this suffix unless one should assume borrowing. Such borrowing would, of course, be possible from the 13th century on, when the Mongols overran Eastern Europe. This also means that the Volga-Bolgarian and the Kipchak inscriptions (which are included in Jusupov 1960 alongside each other) could have shown this suffix, as they were inscribed under Mongol rule. This flaw in Pritsak’s reasoning, the ‘solution’ of early Eastern European riddles through recourse to Mongolian, is common to many of his imaginative etymologies. In the relevant centuries Mongols are, I think, unlikely to have moved outside the zone extending from Southern Manchuria and Northern Mongolia.⁸³ The presence of any Mongolian population in Eastern Europe or in the Caucasus should not be assumed for this time, and the possibility of a genetic connection between the two language

must be the name of a political entity: It is mentioned in one series with the name *Maqedōn*, no doubt referring to the Byzantine empire which was, throughout the 10th century, reigned by the Macedonian dynasty. The word can, I think, hardly receive any interpretation, as it is preceded by a lacuna and corresponds to no known name. Pritsak, undaunted, says that the *ayin* was “erroneously used for Persian *ghayin*, which in turn was used to render foreign *q*. The name”, he adds, “was not Persian in origin but taken over by the Persians from the Kuban Bulgars.” He further states that it was a typical feature in the Huno-Bolgarian group”, as he calls the Chuvash-Bolgar branch, “that the final *n* after labials develops into *m*. Therefore,” according to him, “it becomes clear that עבם of the Schechter text goes back to an original *Qubam, (< Quban).” There are *so* many unwarranted *ad hoc* assumptions in this line of thought that it would be a great waste of space and time to discuss them.

⁸¹ See n. 2 on p. 35 of the book for references to works explaining whom Pritsak actually had in mind, and Golden 1992: 104–106 for further information about this tribe.

⁸² Jusupov actually reads the name as *Bülärtāj*, as the vowels are spelled with *wāw* and *alif* respectively.

⁸³ Janhunen 2003: 391–2 is, I think, the most recent qualified summary of what can be known about the earliest groups speaking Mongolic or ‘Para-Mongolic’ idioms.

groups does not warrant the transference of linguistic elements beyond what can be reconstructed as common heritage. As it is, three other explanations for this word are much more likely: One of these is connecting it with the people called Σάβαιοι ἄσφαλοι by the 10th century Byzantine emperor and author Konstantinos Porphyrogennitos, *Sevordik*' in Armenian and *Sawardiyah* in Arabic sources, who have been identified with the Hungarians by Berta 1992⁸⁴ and should not be confused with the Sabirs.⁸⁵ Orjol 1997 proposes an 'emendation' of the word leading him to a Slavic name. However, no emendation is necessary: The expression המכונה (*hmwnh = ha-mexune*)⁸⁶ makes us expect a כנוי (*kinuy*), a nickname, and not some national affiliation; this is the only appearance of מכונה (*mexune*) 'nicknamed' in the text. Looking at the word without Altaic preconceptions, I would suggest reading it as Germanic: *swartā* means 'the black one' i.e. 'the dark one' in Gothic and in early Scandinavian.⁸⁷ I feel this to be quite a viable proposal, considering the Gothic and Rus' presence of long standing in that part of Eastern Europe. Some Gothic was, after all, spoken on the Crimea even in the 16th century (as documented by Ghislain de Busbecq, French ambassador to Istanbul in 1555–62), when this and all other Eastern Germanic languages had long died out everywhere else.

Let us now turn to another non-Semitic patronymic, that of גוסטטא בר כיבר כהן (*gwsṭt, br kyβr khn*). Pritsak (pp. 36–37) connects this with *Kavaroi*, the name of a tribe which, according to Porphyrogennitos, joined the Proto-Hungarians somewhere on the Pontic steppe, and further with a word appearing in the Arabic translation of the *Sefer Yosippon*.⁸⁸ According to that book, one of the sons of *Togarma*, the son

⁸⁴ He analyses this as *sav*, which he takes to come from *sag* 'right', + *art* 'the back side' + 3rd person possessive suffix, and translates the whole phrase as 'Hinter-dem-rechten-Flügel', i.e. 'behind the right wing'. Such an analysis is, I think, unlikely in Turkic, as a postposition signifying 'behind' would not be *art+1* but *art+m+da*. The phrase consisting of the three elements postulated by Berta might instead signify 'the back part of the right one'. Moreover, there is no evidence that the sound change *ay > av* had already taken place at such an early date.

⁸⁵ The interpretation of this term in Bata 1996 is not less acceptable than Berta's, and probably less adventurous.

⁸⁶ The two are from the same verbal root, *mexune* being the present passive participle, *kinuy* a verbal noun.

⁸⁷ Cf. e.g. *den sorte* 'the black one' in Danish; in standard Modern German the final *t* of the stem has turned into an affricate, giving *der Schwarze*.

⁸⁸ The original (ed. Flusser 1978–1980) was written in the 10th century in Sicily or in Southern Italy.

of *Japheth* (i.e. in Genesis!), was called *Turki*, or, in some mss. of the *Sefer Yosippon*, *Turk*. Pritsak says that Harkavi 1874: 300 noted that one of the mss. of an Arabic translation of this book replaces this *Turk(i)* by a word written as כביר (thus, *kβyr!*). This form Pritsak wants to read as *Kiábar*, which would contradict all orthographic practice; this, in turn, he takes to be the patronymic found in the Hebrew letter, and also the source of the patronymic *Yuvāri* found in one or perhaps in two of the Volga Bulgarian grave inscriptions (Erdal 1993). Early **Kāvar*, with a long vowel in the first syllable, would indeed give **Kyavar* in Volga Bulgarian, but *Yuvāri*, which we have there, cannot go back to such a form: **Kyavar* would give *Yuvar* in Modern Chuvash but not in Volga Bulgarian. So Pritsak commits several philological and linguistic errors: He mixes up the stages in the development of a language by an error of about 500 years; he proposes an arbitrary change in the reading of a manuscript from which he did not have an edition but only saw a stray quote; the ms. which he refers to, without mentioning when it might have been written, is only the translation of a source which, itself, has the name of the eponymous ancestor of the Turks; this obscure ms. variant is, finally, taken to have been adopted as somebody's proper name, although such a practice is not known to have existed.

So much for the name of בר כיבר כהן's father. Pritsak assumes *-ta*, the last syllable of the proper name of גוסטטא 'the *kohen*' himself, to be the same Mongolian suffix which he thought he had already identified at the end of סורטה (*swrth*). This Mongolian suffix means 'having' (like English *-ed* in words like *bearded* or *spectacled*) or, as Pritsak wanted his readers to believe, "belonging to". The first part he identified as the name of a Pecheneg governor in the 9th century, called Κώστας, as quoted again by Konstantinos Porphyrogennitos. The reason the name of the ruler (whom Pritsak calls 'governor') was in the document spelled with a *g* and not with a *k* was, he says, that Greek used the letter *gamma* to express fricative *gh* and not a stop; the *s*, he adds, was dropped because of the suffix. Κώστας is, of course, a very common Greek name, as Moravcsik, Pritsak's source, states; the final *s* is the Greek nominative suffix: This is the shortened variant of Κωνσταντίνος, the name borne by the emperor and author himself. **Kostata* must in fact have been the intermediate form between these two stages of Greek historical development, subsequently shortened by haplology; Orjol 1997 shows that the variant with initial *g* is, indeed, attested as a Slavic name in the 11th–12th centuries. In this case, then, Pritsak could be right in having mentioned the name of the Pecheneg ruler; he was only unaware

of (or disregarded) its Greek and, of course, ultimate Latin origin. We already stated above why the Mongolic suffix *-tA(i)* is unlikely to have appeared here; the notion that it could have been added to a personal name to form another personal name is in any case quite unnecessary, as the two-syllable variant must have had a three-syllable predecessor. Torpusman 1989 points out these and other internal contradictions in Pritsak's position and quotes this and similar names from Slavic sources of the 9th–17th centuries. He has a different, Slavic etymology for the name, as being an **-ent-* derivative from *gost* 'guest'; this etymology is just as convincing as the Greek one.

The two other proper names of this document which Pritsak attempts to explain are מנס (mns), which appears as a patronym, and מנר (mnr), the name of one of the signatories himself. Both of these start with the sequence מנ (mn) which, according to Pritsak, represent the word *man*, meaning 'great' (a word dealt with by Prof. Róna-Tas in several papers). MNS, Pritsak (p. 40) says, "transmits Altaic (Bolgarian group) /äs/, also with the meaning 'great', as attested, for example, in the title *Attila* (< *Äs-tila*). In the Chuvash language the form *mānas* (< *mān äs*) is attested in fact." However, there is no *mānas* in Chuvash; only *mānaś*, which means 'proud' or 'haughty', and Chuvash /ś/ never comes from *s*. Chuvash does have a noun *as*, which indeed comes from Common Turkic *äs*, but it means 'mind, remembrance'. As to be expected, Pritsak's etymology for the name of *Attila*, first proposed in 1956, has not gained acceptance;⁸⁹ his suggestion for MNS is equally imaginary. MNR, finally, is supposed to be read as *Man är*, which would mean 'great man'. This is the only one among Pritsak's proposals for the first document which *might* be acceptable, although the expression 'great man' is hardly attested as a proper name. Even in the case that *Man-är* is a correct explanation of the name and is Khazar, that also does not help us much towards deciding what sort of a Turkic language the Khazars spoke: The word *man* does today survive mainly in Chuvash, but once was in use in other Turkic languages as well.

⁸⁹ It is generally agreed (as set forth by such authorities on the Huns as Otto Maenchen Helfen) that the name is a Germanic diminutive, also attested e.g. as the name of an Anglo-Saxon bishop.

4.3. *The ‘Khazar’ words in the Schechter document*

The Khazar words in the second document, before Golb & Pritsak edited also by Schechter and then Kokovcov, are discussed already in Golden 1980. Most of Pritsak’s interpretations of non-Khazar elements in this second Hebrew text, names of places, nations and states, are doubtful as they involve arbitrary emendations, but do not concern us here. What does concern us are those cases where he invoked Bolgar-Chuvash language history, Hunno-Bolgar as he called it, to support his etymologies. First, the name of the Khazar city of *Xamlīx*, which was somewhere on the lower Volga (perhaps near its estuary on the Caspian Sea), where the Khazar ruler used to take a tithe from merchants using the river: Pritsak (p. 153 ff.) disqualified previous accounts, one of which is the derivation from *xan balīx*, ‘the ruler’s city’ (over an assimilated **Xambalīx*); another possible etymology proposed by Róna-Tas is mentioned above. Pritsak instead suggested deriving the name from the early Slavic designation of the Caspian, which was *Xvalis’skoe More*. *Xvalis’* was, he believed, a compound, consisting of *As*, the name of an early Central Asian people mentioned in the sources, plus *Xvali*. Since the Turks did not have the cluster *xv* initially, he stated, they changed this name to *Xali*, added the ‘Altaic’ collective suffix *+an*, giving **xalin*; then, according to sound laws documented in Chuvash, they dropped the *l* before the *n* and then changed this final *n* to *m*, giving *Xam*. Again, there are numerous errors here; the dropping of */l/* in Chuvash must be a recent phenomenon, e.g., which was in any case more recent than the emergence of final *m* where the other Turkic languages have *n*; the collective suffix *+an* is rare in Mongol as it is in Turkic, is nowhere added to foreign words and is not productive in Bolgaro-Chuvash.⁹⁰

Another case where Pritsak was led astray by the Altaic hypothesis is the shape of the name of the city *Sarīgšīn*. He first (p. 152) arbitrarily proposed a reading *Sarīgčīn* with the argument that the Arabic script uses *šīn* to write the sound [č],⁹¹ then assigned the last syllable to a Mongol feminine suffix, added to Turkic *sarīg* ‘yellow’. In fact, while early

⁹⁰ Concerning “**hap-baliy*”, another Pritsakian creation, Ligeti 1981: 11 after elaborate argumentation says: “This hypothesis is not defensible”.

⁹¹ The sound */tʃ/* did not exist in Arabic; since Arabs did not pronounce this sound, they had no need to write it either. When it occurred in words they borrowed, they often simplified it to */ʃ/* i.e. *š*, which then also appears in the spelling of their borrowings. There is no reason to believe in the existence of such a process among speakers (and writers) of other languages.

Mongolian did distinguish gender, no early Turkic ever did; this happens to be an important typological difference between these two language groups. The Turkic suffix *+šIn* is always used with colour words: Cf. Turkish and Azeri *sarışın* ‘blonde’; Korkmaz 2003: 66 also mentions *akşın*, *gökşin*, *karaşın* and *mavişin*. *kökçin* ‘greyish, greybeard’, frequently attested in the *Qutadgu Bilig*, no doubt comes from the same formation: *kökşin* ‘bluish, greenish’ is attested twice in the DLT.⁹² Since *+šIn* is in fact attested as a Turkic suffix, there is no need to involve Mongolic for the explanation of this name.

Summing up, etymologies trying to explain Khazar lexemes and suffixes by offering wholly *ad hoc* sound processes and taking any language from any period of the Altaic world to be a possible source are unacceptable. Unfortunately, Golb & Pritsak 1982 does not make any direct contribution to knowledge of the Khazar language, although a part of the material made available in exemplary fashion definitely is an important base for further research on Early East European Jewry. Thus, our only hope for getting more information about the Khazar language and its status among the Turkic languages remains the decipherment of the rich inscriptional evidence, a task on which all scholars interested in the question should now concentrate.

The article has tried to document all views expressed on the famous “Kievan letter”. One interpretation of this Geniza document which came to the author’s attention only recently is that by the important Hungarian scholar János Harmatta in his paper ‘A magyarok nevei a görög nyelvű forrásokban’ [The names of the Hungarians in Greek sources], which appeared on pp. 119–40 of the volume *Honfoglalás es nyelvészet* edited by L. Kovács and L. Veszprémy (Budapest 1997). On pp. 136–138 of this paper, Harmatta proposes the reading QHNWB’ (a well-documented place name in Egypt) for the damaged word read as QYYWB’ and interpreted as the old name of Kiev by Golb and Pritsak, and locates

⁹² The sound change *š > č* after consonants is a typical Qarakhanid development, found e.g. in *kirčal-* < Old Turkic *kiršal-* (< *kir(i)š+a-l-*), *yapčün-* and *yapčur-* from *yap-iš-*, *kikčür-* < inscriptional *kik-šür-*, the adverb *tutči* < *tut-š-i*, *tapčur-* from *tap-iš-* etc.; cf. on the other hand Kāšgari’s *kül-sir-* ‘to smile’ where all other early sources have *külčir-* instead. Laude-Cirtautas 1961 further mentions *borčün* as a name for grey (*boz*) animals as well as *karalčün* ‘blackish’ (< *kara* ‘black’) and *kubalčün* ‘pale’ (< *kuba*) in Kirghiz, but these terms might have been borrowed from Mongolic: The suffix is there added to attributive adjectives also showing that the head is female (e.g. *xara+gcin morin* ‘black-she horse’ = ‘black mare’).

the whole event narrated in the letter in Egypt (where the manuscript was found). He interprets the witnesses' names, considered to be Khazar by Pritsak, as Iranian, Greek and Egyptian, and reads the note added at the end, which Pritsak considered to be in runiform script, as North-African rabbinical cursive. This latter point is one on which specialists of North-African rabbinical cursive should express their opinion.

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