

## The Khazar Empire

Doç. Dr. Haluk Berkmen

The Khazar Empire came into being during the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD and lasted until the 13<sup>th</sup> century AD. The **Khazars** were part of the western wing of the ancient Turkish culture. The Khazar empire was destroyed by the unforgiving onslaught and expansion of the Mongols towards the west. The empire covered a large territory with the capital city Atil or Atil, comprising much of modern-day Eastern Europe, including Ukraine, parts of Russia and Georgia. The territories of the Khazar Empire shown below extended from the north-western regions of the Black Sea up to and including the northern banks of the Caspian Sea.

The name of the Caspian Sea is a transformed form of the harsh laryngeal Khazar, to the smooth labial form becoming Hazar. The meaning of **Khazar** is still debatable and some claim that it means /wandering/, but no connection can be found in the Turkish language leading to 'wandering'. A dissection of this name gives: **OKH-AS-ER** meaning "**the Okh and As people**" (see Chapter 4, **The Asiatic Scythians**). 'Er' is a root word found in the Turkish word 'erkek' meaning /male/. Today a country named Azerbaijan still exists on the western side of the Caspian Sea whose name can be dissected as AS-ER-BAY-JAN meaning "**The spiritual leadership of the As people**". Therefore, we can safely conclude that Khazaria means "the country of the Okh and As people".



The Khazar people belonged to a grouping of Turks who spoke a Turkic dialect and used the runic alphabet of the Orhun syllabary belonging to the Gökturks of central Asia. The royalty of the Khazars was descended from the Ashina (Asena) or **AS-ANA** Turks, who were most probably a matriarchal society. Since As-Ana means "As Mother" we can safely guess that they were culturally and most probably genetically related to the Scythians and Amazons who lived in the same region some centuries ago (see Chapter 33, **Western Anatolia**).

The capital city of the Khazars was Atil or Atil and both forms have important meanings in the Turkish language. 'Atil' means **/leap forward/** and 'Atil' means **/the region of horses/** as 'at' means horse and 'il' means region or city. Both meanings imply "horse mounted expansion". Kiev, which is the capital city of Ukraine was established by the Khazars. Kiev is a name concatenated from two Turkish words **Kiyi** and **Ev** meaning **"shore house"**; a name quite appropriate for the ancient settlement which is located on the shores of the Dnipro River.

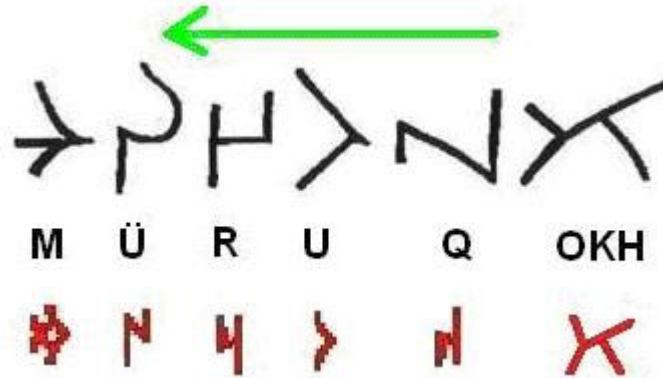
The religion of the Khazars was Tengriism, whose religious leaders were shamans. Tengriism focuses on a supreme sky deity called Tengri, Tangra or Tanrı. As the Christian Russians from the west and the Islamic Arabs from the south increased their attacks towards Khazaria, the royalty who believed in Tengri, decided to adopt the monotheistic religion of Judaism as the one most distanced and least intrusive. In this selection they hoped to remain free of the physical as well as the spiritual pressure of the surrounding powers.

Khazars were judged according to Tōra. This word means "orders of the Khagan" and is linked to the root word **Töre** meaning **customs; unwritten law of people** in the Turkish language. All other tribes were judged according to their own laws, a clear indication to the permissiveness of the Asiatic culture. The Khazars were ruled by a succession of Jewish kings until the Mongols came from the east and destroyed their cities. As the Khazar Empire came to its end the Khazars dispersed in all directions and formed local communities in Hungary, Germany, Lithuania, Ukraine and Ossetia. Since Khazar males were expert riders – a cultural trait handed over from their ancestral Turkic origin- they formed the elite light cavalry of most western armies. These riders came to be known as the **Huszar** in Hungary and the **Hussard** in France. There is a city called **Khusar-Kintsag** in northern Caucasus, which was probably founded by the ancient Khasars. Below we see a representation of a Hussard. The tall hat is a transformed form of the Asiatic **kalpak**.



**Hussard**

The word shown below has been given as an example for the Khazar script and has been interpreted as OKURUM, meaning "I read it" in modern Turkish (1).



The script has to be read from right to left, similar to all Orhun texts which have been written in that order. The black letters at the top are the Khazar letters and the red ones under them belong to the Orhun syllabary. The first letter on the right, which is not found among the Orhun letters, might be considered as being influenced from or related to the Roman K.

I have a different opinion about the above decipherment. 'Okurum' does not mean "I read it" but "I can read" or "I am reading" and is not used in the past tense. Thus the word can be split as **OKH-UR-UM**, meaning "The OKH ruler". Here the word UR stands for both region and for ruler of the region. The suffix '-UM' means /mine/ and is an indication of sovereignty.

Here are three example sentences in the Khazar language (2). They clearly demonstrate their Turkic origin, since their meaning is still understandable with the help of modern Turkish.

**Kaytmamen artkari sezimden.**

(I never come back from my word)

**Da algışladi allarni tangri.**

(and God 'supported / praised' them)

It is interesting to note that the word "algış" or "alkış" means "hand-clapping" in Turkish, an act of joy and support for praising a completed performance.

**Sendir otnu suvba, yamanlikni dostlukba.**

(Extinguish the fire with water and the adversity with friendship)

**References**

- (1) **An Introduction to the History of Khazaria**, 1999 and *The Jews of Khazaria* by Kevin Alan Brook, Rowman and Littlefield 2006.
- (2) **The Turkic Speaking Peoples**, Prestel press 2006, Germany.  
The above sentences are from the article of Talat Tekin (pages: 31-53)