Latinization Projects in Karaite and Jewish Linguistic Environment in 20th Century Poland and Lithuania

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Abstract

The rise of nationalism and modernization encouraged the emergence of a range of language reforms within different ethnic groups. One of the most widespread was the idea of Latinization, which emerged in Ottoman Empire, Caucasus, and Jewish groups in Europe in the beginning of the 20th century. The reform swept through those regions and effected many linguistic communities in different countries. The article aims to discuss the Latinization projects in Karaite and Jewish Rabbanite communities and the impact of other Latinization reforms for these communities. The implemented research has shown that Latinization projects in Jewish communities were a part of a bigger movement. And, despite of different motivations, that drove these reforms in Karaite and Jewish Rabbanite communities, we can trace the impact of the Turkish language reforms in both projects.

Introduction

As Miroslaw Hroch has stated (Hroch, 2015), the nationalism of, as he called it, small nations was based on the emergence of the nation before the establishment of the national states; the key factor for those communities to emerge was related to the imagined geographical boundaries of their ethnic groups—the mental maps—that were often based on the language or dialect, which a particular group recognize as their native language. However, in Jewish communities (both Rabbanite and Karaite), which used to be multi-lingual, the process of emergence of linguistic nationalism was complicated. Different strategies were used to define the national language; the decision made by particular Jewish groups on this issue was closely related to other questions of emerging nationalism—perception of historical past and the question of homeland. But, likewise in other ethnic communities of the late 19th century Eastern Europe, all these issues were in one way or another combined into one strategy, based on one language as the only

mother tongue—the essence of the group's collective identity. One of the most widespread practices was the Latinization of local languages, which emerged in Ottoman Empire, Caucasus, and among Jewish groups in Europe in the beginning of the 20th century. The reform swept through those regions and effected many linguistic communities, especially in the former USSR where the Latinization of local vernaculars and ethnic languages was seen as a long-term reform, which would serve as a common writing system in the future non-class communist world. It is also very symptomatic that the transition from any alphabetic system to Latin script is marked with the growing secularization of communities. As A.V. Sudyin states in his article, before the WWI, the adherents of Islam who spoke

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Turkic vernaculars in Russian Empire and tend to describe themselves as religious, in most cases tend to oppose the Latinization of the script of their vernaculars (Sudyin, 2023, p. 105–106). Commonly, the idea of shifting to Latin script by non-Catholic populations was related to modernization ideas and a degree of secularization within these communities.

The article aims to define the relation between Latinization projects of Turkic languages in Polish and Lithuanian Karaite communities and Kemal Atatürk's Turkish language reform, presuming that the mutual influence of these geographically remote processes was decided by both the personal initiatives of chief Polish Karaite leader Seraya Shapshal and the Kemal Atatürk on the one side, and similar challenges of nation-building on the other. In the East European Karaite community Latinization of the Turkic vernacular went alongside with the dejudaization of the community's linguistic environment. This process was noticed by R. Freund, who stated that "while affinity between Turkic elements in Karaite and the old Armeno-Kiptchak and Kuman-Polovets languages is strongly emphasized (…) the obvious influence of the biblical Hebrew is played down and ignored" (R. Freund, 1991, p.15). I will argue that the Latinization in both cases was driven by the aim to secularize Turkish and Karaite societies to minimize the influence of religion within Karaite and Turkish societies. In both cases, the religious tradition was perceived as a form of alien cultural and especially linguistic influence and as an obstacle for the nation-building in both communities. I will use the concept of devisualization, coined by Geoffrey Haig to show how the devisualization of Hebrew is used in Karaite communities to benefit the emergence of the Turkic vernacular as the national Karaite language; and how devisualization of the *leshon hakodesh* is related to the Latinization of Turkic. In other words, I will try to show the link between the Latinization of Turkic vernacular and dejudaization that emerged in the Polish and Lithuanian Karaite communities; I will try to prove that the Latinization of Karaite Turkic vernacular was not an isolated phenomenon, but rather fitted into the general context of Latinization of Turkic languages. I will argue that the changes in linguistic environment in the societies is strongly reflects the changes in these societies, especially in the Jewish communities, who uses a range of languages in conjunction with Hebrew (and Aramaic), spoken vernacular and local non-Jewish languages. "In this triglossic relationship, Hebrew–Aramaic was the high-status language used for literary and religious purposes, the non-Jewish language was used for communication outside the community, and the Jewish variety was used for all vernacular functions (home, school, and business) within the Jewish community" (B. Spolsky, 2019, p. 584). This is particularly important when we discuss the issues of secularization in religious communities, acculturation into dominating societies. In other words,

all the mentioned changes in the Jewish communities were reflected in the linguistic environment of these communities.

Before examining the Latinization projects in the Karaite communities in Poland and Lithuania, it is useful to discuss the terms, which are used in historiography to name the spoken vernacular, which, after Latinization and standardization, appeared in the 1930s, became known as Karaite language. In the 19th century, the vernacular used by Imperial Karaites was usually described as Tatar in the historiography, press, and by the Karaites themselves (see below). However, the vernacular used by the Crimean Karaites (Tatar vernacular and a variety of Turkish) differed from those of Poland (Halicz—Lutsk dialect) and Lithuania (Troki dialect). In contemporary historiography, the language used by the European Karaites is usually described as Karaite language, the title given by Seraya Shapshal after the standardization process emerged in the Polish Karaite community. The term Turkic language is also applied. We may agree with Musaev who claims that there is no pan-national uniform Karaite language" (K. M. Musaev, 1964, p. 37). As the Latinization process took place in Poland, and at a smaller scale in Lithuania, I will use the term Turkic vernacular, to make a difference between standardized and Latinized language, that emerged as a national language among the Polish and Lithuanian Karaites in the 1920s–1930s and its previous non-standardized form.

Linguistic environment of Lithuanian Karaite and Jewish communities

Linguistic situation in the Karaite community before the language reform in the 20th century was quite specific. Karaites, being a part of Jewish religious environment, preserved the linguistic constellation characteristic to many Jewish communities. Hebrew language enjoyed the status of sacred language, likewise the Hebrew square script and were commonly used by Karaites for religious practices and texts. One of the best-known examples of religious exegesis that emerged in the Troki Karaite community was a polemic treatise by Issac ben Abraham from Troki, "The Strengthening of Faith" (Hebrew [1] חזוק אמונה written in the 16th century but published for the first time in Amsterdam in 1705. Hebrew was also a *lingua franca* in the correspondence among distant Karaite communities, which otherwise used local vernaculars. The most common vernacular among East European Karaites one of several Turkic dialects; they dispersed to Polish Crown and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the 14th–15th centuries during the wave of Karaite migration to the North and establishment of their communities Halicz, Lutsk, and Troki (D. Troskovaitė, 2023, p. 145–162). Though the Turkic was perceived as a vernacular, spoken by most of the Karaites, living in

Eastern Europe, there were certain initiatives to write down pieces of religious literature in this vernacular using square Hebrew alphabet. The idea to adopt this alphabet for Turkic vernacular was determined by the fact that the religious education of the local Karaites was based on the instruction of Hebrew language and alphabet. For majority of the community members, it was the most common writing system until the end of the 19th century. One of many examples of such kind is the prayer book written or compiled by some Zevulun, son of Nehemya Rojecki in 1866, who served as hazzan (clergyman) of the Panevėžys (Lithuania) Karaite community. This manuscript book was composed in Turkic vernacular using Hebrew script for the religious purposes either for hazzan himself or for his community (PKM, Ms. PKM 4071 R 4191). In bigger and well-established Karaite communities, the practice of using Hebrew script for Turkic vernacular was evident in publishing religious texts. For example, in 1835, basic Karaite catechism in Turkic written by Solomon ben Mordecai Kazzaz, the leading sage of Chufut Kale, was published for educational purposes. This work was the first basic or elementary textbook on the Karaite version of the Mosaic faith intended for younger people (Ph. Miller, 1998, p. 84). The 19th century was a period of transition from Hebrew to Turkic printing in Karaite community; we may argue that the emergence of printed literature in Turkic vernacular in the 19th century Karaite communities is related to the growing dejudaization among Karaites, which aimed to dissociate themselves from Jewishness but at the same time encouraged the birth of national Turkic identity within the community. As Phillip Miller has stated, "one can see this as taking place in a community that both wanted and needed to trumpet its self-importance, as part of a political agendum that was seeking official recognition of Karaism as something 'different' from Judaism" (Ph. Miller, 1998, p. 84). The first piece of secular literature in Turkic vernacular was the poems of an amateur Karaite poet Simon Kobecki (1857–1933), published in 1904 in Kyivv (Ukraine) using Cyrillic script. But this volume was the first and probably the only one until the interwar period, when the secular Karaite literature in Turkic vernacular began to flourish. As Mikhail Kizilov has noted, "in contrast to the 19th century, when most Karaite books were published in Hebrew, not a single book (!) had been published by the Karaites in Hebrew in the period from 1919 to 1939" (M. Kizilov, 2007, p. 400). The wave of Turkic printing in the Polish Karaite community was influenced by several interconnected initiatives, carried out by Karaite leaders. Firstly, the Latinization of the Turkic vernacular in the Karaite community went along with the standardization of this vernacular, which encouraged the emergence of secular literature and, changed the status of Turkic in the community. Secondly, the emerging national identity of the Polish Karaites in 1920s–1930s fostered the representation of this language as a unique national Karaite language, which was named after the community and is known as Karaite language today. It is true that "in this period that Karaim started to be a literary language used for secular poems, stories, historical and polemic articles, translations from foreign languages, and even for fairy-tales. Surprisingly, a tiny Karaite community of interwar Poland and Lithuania (ca. 800 individuals) was publishing five periodicals and quite a number of separate brochures and leaflets (M. Kizilov, 2007, p. 401).

But it would be misleading to analyze these changes in the Karaite linguistic environment in isolation for the processes that took place in other Turkic speaking linguistic communities. As it was already mentioned, the analysis of sources had showed an affective influence of Turkish language reform, implemented by Mustafa Kemal in Turkey, to the processes in Polish and Lithuanian Karaite linguistic environment.

Latinization of Turkish: Mustafa Kemal's language reform as the agent for linguistic changes among Turkic—Speaking Karaites

After the establishment of the Republic of Turkey in 1923, the vast reform project was launched by Mustafa Kemal, which, among other, comprised the Latinization of Turkish language. This was one of the most important aspects of modernization and westernization of Turkey, which strongly affected the self-consciousness of Turkish people. Latinization of Turkish language was also a part of Turkish national project that emerged from the legacy of the Young Turks movement. As Geoffrey Lewis points out, Atatürk's belief was that progress could never be achieved within the multi-racial Ottoman Empire. Reforms were to aim at changing radically all aspects of Turkish society abolishing its traditional beliefs and institutions (G. Lewis, 1999, p.51). Seeing old social structures as an obstacle for the birth nation was also characteristic to some of the Karaite intellectuals already in the first decades of the 20th century. As early as in 1911, one of the Karaite leaders in Russian Empire, an advocate of Karaite enlightenment, David Kokizov being a strong adherent of modernization openly criticized the old social order and beliefs within Karaite community, relating these, though indirectly, to the language practices in the community (D. Kokizov, 1911, p. 21–34). D. Kokizov argued that the community needs to abandon their Turkic vernacular and adopt the language of the dominating society to become a part of European civilization. However, he sympathized to the Russian language, like the *maslikim* in the Russian Jewish community while the Turkic vernacular, called Tatar language by D. Kokizov, was perceived by him as uncivilized. However, already in the 1920s, Turkic vernacular gradually gained a status of the national language of the East European

Karaites and this shift of language status coincided with the Latinization project, implemented by Polish Karaite leader Seraya Shapshal in the1920s and early 1930s. I will argue that it was directly related to the Mustafa Kemal's language reform that was implemented in Turkey in 1928.

It might be assumed that the Latinization project of Mustafa Kemal was inspired by other initiatives of this type. For example, one of many initiatives of Latinization in USSR was the case of Azerbaijan. In 1923, the government of Azerbaijan came out in favor of the Latin script and declared the Latin alphabet official. By June 27, 1924, the Latin alphabet had become the official script and on May 1, 1925, the Roman alphabet became mandatory for newspapers and official documents and it began to be taught in all schools. Even before that, the Iranian–Azerbaijani intellectual and writer Mirza Fatali Akhundov (1812–1878) became the first advocate of adopting Latin script to Azerbaijani language. His first project of language reform started in the middle of the 19th century and became an example for further Latinization of Azerbaijani language. One more important Latinization project which was implemented within the borders of Ottoman Empire and attained broad knowledge and political decisions by Imperial government was the language reform in Albania. Mustafa Kemal was in Albania in 1910 soon after the adoption of the Latin script for Albanian language, which was implemented as early as in 1908 by a Monastir Congress. The Congress assembled Albanian intellectuals, including those, living in diaspora, to take measures of alphabetic reform and standardization of Albanian language. The Congress saw Latinization to unite Albanians under common national project, which was not welcomed by the Ottoman Empire at all, taking measures to suppress it. The Ottoman government tried to search for a compromise with the Albanian national leaders by offering the Ottoman identity and Arabic alphabet for Albanians and Albanian language, though, unsuccessfully. Among other initiatives of Latinization, one could mention the newspaper *Esas, which was released* in 1911 in Monastir (in modern Bitola, North Macedonia). It consisted of two pages in Arabic and two in modified Latin characters for the Turkish language (Nathalie Clayer, 2004). Though short lived, this was probably the first attempt to use Latin script publicly for the Turkish. Even though these facts cannot prove the direct impact of these initiatives to the Latinization project of Mustafa Kemal in 1927–1928, it may attest that these practices of Latinization were known to Mustafa Kemal and could serve as an example for his Turkish language reform, especially considering that part of Albanian-speakers were Muslims, who used the Ottoman Turkish version of Arabic script likewise Turks in the Modern Kemalist Turkey.

Atatürk's reforms begun in the 1920s and aimed the newly established country's modernization, based on its secularization, the deactualization of the Ottoman Empire's legacy, westernization, and the strengthening of Turkism (U. Heyd, 1954; G. Hazai, 1974; H. Brendemoen, 1990). But Atatürk was not the first to embrace the idea of language reform. Similar concepts were presented in the late 19th century by the sociologist Ziya Gökalp (1876–1924), one of the pioneers of Turkey's nationalist movement. His reform proposals were comparatively more moderate and sought to consolidate the prevailing use of the Turkish language by retaining its existing loanwords (Y. Bingol, 2009, p. 40–52). But unlike his predecessors, Atatürk succeeded in implementing Turkish language reforms and achieving his goals of using language to: (1) create a secular, national Turkish consciousness and (2) bring the Turkish culture closer to Western civilization (K. Yılmaz, 2011, p. 69). As G. Haig has correctly observed, the first phase of the Turkish language reform was aimed at changing the language script—rejecting the Arabic script and adapting Latin for the Turkish language. Atatürk realized that a script was not just a means of denoting sounds, but an entirety of certain symbols that, in the case of the Arabic script, were incompatible with the secular Turkish national consciousness being created. The significance of religion for Ottoman Turk self-awareness, and a shared alphabet strengthened ties between the Ottoman Turks and Arabic languages, intensified their interaction and the migration of individual words and peculiarities of syntax from the Arabic language to Turkish (K. Yılmaz, 2011, p. 66). The rejection of the Arabic script was meant to accelerate Turkish secularization and the development of their national consciousness. "So, a new phase of language reform emerged in the form of simplification and purification of the Turkish language that was involved the expurgation of Arabic and Persian accretions. They were to be replaced by lexical items of Turkic origin with neologisms based on Turkish roots and suffixes (…). To promote a deeper sense of national identity among Turkish people, Kemal Atatürk established the 'Turkish Linguistic Society', later turned into the Turkish Language Association in 1932, that would discuss ways of simplifying and purifying the language" (K. Yılmaz, 2011, p. 73). This language planning understood here as defined by Robert Cooper as "the effort to influence the behavior of others with respect to the learning, structure, and allocation of functions of their language codes" (R.Cooper, 1989, p. 45) was entrusted to the Turkish Language Association established in 1932 to replace the previously existing Turkish Linguistic Society (K. Yılmaz, 2011, p. 73). Standardization of the language was followed by the appearance of the first grammar books, dictionaries, and textbooks in the Turkish language. And while the language and alphabet reform divided society into supporters and opponents, it nevertheless succeeded in changing the direction of Turkish consciousness formation from East to West. Atatürk's Turkish language reform project is considered in historiography to be the most successful attempt of its kind in

history and, as noted by Geoffrey Lewis, "the most thorough-going piece of linguistic engineering" (G. Lewis, 2002).

Latinization of Turkic language in polish and Lithuanian Karaite communities

The pioneer and the main driver of Latinization project in Karaite community was its chief *hacham* (religious and political leader) Seraya Shapshal (1873–1961). He was born in Bakhchisaray in an active and well-known Karaite family. As a young man, Shapshal followed the educational track of many well-established Karaites. In 1886, he began his studies in the gymnasium under the direction of Yakov Gurevitch, which he graduated in 1894 at the age of twenty-one (LMAB RS 143, F 9a, l. 2–2v). In the same year, S. Shapshal entered St. Petersburg University, Department of Oriental Languages, which he graduated after four years. After the 1917 Bolshevik revolution in Russia, S. Shapshal spent nine years in Turkey, during which time he distinguished himself as a translator from Turkish. After working for a while at the national bank, he soon got involved in the activities, which were closer to his career in St. Petersburg and began managing the library of Sultan Abdullah Hamid II (1872–1918) (S. Gąsiorowski, 2011, p. 18). One of his most famous works of this type was the translation into French and Russian the collection of short stories by the Turkish writer and a member of Turkish Language Association, established by Mustafa Kemal to promote the Turkish language reform, Ruşen Eşref Bey (1892–1959) entitled "Candle Complaints" (S. Gąsiorowski, 2011, p. 18).

S. Shapshal spent nearly a decade in Turkey, from 1919 to approximately 1928, and thus had the opportunity to learn about Mustafa Kemal's Turkish language reform then being implemented in the country. W. Zajączkowski (V. Guliyev, 2011, p. 19) believed that S. Shapshal first attracted Mustafa Kemal's attention through his lectures at Istanbul University[2], and for this reason, considerable attention was later devoted to the Karaite spiritual and cultural legacy at the Turkish Literary Society and Turkish Historical Society, both launched by Mustafa Kemal (V. Guliyev, 2011, p.19). It is believed that S. Shapshal also contributed to Atatürk's language reforms, and the claim has been made that S. Shapshal was responsible for the introduction into the Turkish language of Arabic and Turkic replacements for certain international terms (S. Gąsiorowski, 2011, p. 19). This idea can be indirectly supported by the statement of P. Wexler, who emphasized that the Turkic vernacular, used by the East European Karaites, preserved much of original lexicon broadly replaced by other Turkic speakers by Arabic and Persian (P. Wexler, 1980, p. 99). The fact that S. Shapshal was well acquainted with initiatives being undertaken in Turkey to build a modern Turkish nation and was familiar with the country's academic world, is

evidenced by his letter of 5th November 1929 addressed to the Vilnius Voivode, in which he briefly described the activities of the Turkish intellectual and academic society *Türk Odżagy* (Flame of Turkey) (LCVA F. 51, Ap. 4, b. 248, l. 37). The letter indicated that the society was "a patriotic cultural and educational organization whose members include the most prominent members of the Turkish parliament, writers, and university professors. The society receives material support from the state so as to awaken the people's national feeling, in opposition to the former government's [introduction of] religious fanaticism—pan-Islamism—while this government promotes pan-Turkism" (LCVA F. 51, Ap. 4, b. 248, l. 37). S. Shapshal also wrote that the society's journal, *Türk jyly* (Years of Turkey), was experiencing technical problems due to the change in alphabet, and that it was difficult transitioning from the Arabic to the Latin script. Despite this, the journal's editor, Akchura Oglu Yusuf Bey[3] asked S. Shapshal to submit for publication "a review of the history of the Karaites, as one of the Turkic peoples that has preserved one of the purest Turkic dialects" (LCVA F. 51, Ap. 4, b. 248, l. 37).

These assumptions allow us to search for links between the Turkish language reforms implemented by Atatürk and the changes that occurred in the Karaite language after S. Shapshal became the leader of Poland's Karaites. This comparison is based on a model created by Geoffrey Haig, and outlined in his article discussing the theoretical aspects of language planning (G. Haig, 2004, p. 121). G. Haig identified two levels of language planning. The first focuses on changes in the textual or linguistic forms (i.e., words, grammar, and orthography), while the second, defined as situational planning, is, according to the author, related to the functional redistribution of languages within the state (in Karaite case—the community), whereby the use of languages and dialects for different purposes and in different contexts is clearly regulated. In his discussion of language planning, Haig also uses the term *invisibilization*, which can be defined as the deliberate removal or concealment of obvious signs of the existence of a particular culture so as to make that culture invisible. Haig distinguished three aspects of invisibilization: physical, virtual, and devaluation (G. Haig, 2004, pp. 121–150). He was among the first to draw attention to the functional distribution of languages as one of the most important aspects of the Turkish language reforms. We may trace the same language planning strategies in the Polish Karaite community in the 1920s–1930s under the guidance of S. Shapshal. In 1927, he was elected as a chief Karaite leader by Polish Karaites and arrived to Poland in 1928. While living in Vilnius, S. Shapshal worked in the East European Research institute as an instructor of Turkish language (LMAB RS, 143 – 16). No doubt, that S. Shapshal was appreciated as a renown Turkologist at that time. This can be attested by the fact that he was participating in the circulation of correspondence on Latinization of various

Turkic dialects, which was circulating among intellectuals in the 1930s (LMAB RS 143 – 1370) and his readiness to prepare materials for teaching Turkish. His adherence and familiarity with Turkish and Turkey is well attested by the documents remaining in this personal archive from the period he was living in Turkey: the excerpts of Turkish magazines and journals (LMAB 143 – 1309, 1318), as well as the excerpts on Mustafa Kemal from various periodicals (LMAB RS 143 – 1328). It may be assumed also that the idea of Latinization of Turkic vernacular arose in the mind of Shapshal not only under influence of Turkish language reform but also because of the Latinization of Azerbaijan language, with which he was familiar as well. Already living in Poland, S. Shapshal maintained contacts with the Promethean movement (LMAB RS 143 – 1323),[4] aiming to restore the independence of the Caucasus region, including the Azerbaijan and was definitely following the Latinization reform in this country.

The reform of Turkic vernacular, used by the Karaites, began immediately (albeit somewhat imperceptibly) after Seraya Shapshal became the Polish Karaite leader in 1927. The first step, undertaken by him, was the invisibilization of Hebrew language in the community's linguistic environment. For example, during consideration of the law on the legal status of Poland's Karaites, Shapshal presented his own draft text which included consideration of the role and duties of the community's spiritual leader, the *hakhan* (ANN MWRiOP, syg. 1462, l. 10–15). Previously, this title had been identified by the term *hakham*.[5] The consistent use of the former version from 1927 onward suggests that the term used in the draft law was not a grammatical error, but a deliberate choice, revealing a trend toward invisibilization within the Karaite community. The term *hakhan* was a Turkified version of the previous title, with clear connotations to the Turkish word *khan*, meaning leader, that satisfied Shapshal's pan-Turkic orientation. R. Freund has asserted that the Karaites in Eastern Europe used Hebrew terms up through 1927 (R. Freund, 1993:14), but the archival documents assembled for this current study show that Turkified terminology was already being used at the time in official community documents (LCVA F. 51, Ap. 4, b. 400). It can be argued that the appearance of the term "hakhan" was directly related to Shapshal's election as Karaite spiritual leader, since prior to that, both community and official state documents were using the old term—"hakham." For example, in a document issued on 22 November 1927 by the Polish Ministry of Internal Affairs permitting Shapshal entry into Poland, he is identified as the "hakham" (ANN MWRiOP, syg. 1464, l. 92–93), and the same term is also used in a letter dated 25 May 1927 from the Vilnius Voivode to the Polish Ministry of Religious Affairs regarding the procedure and organizing of elections for a "hakham" (ANN MWRiOP, syg. 1465, l. 73–74). It is worth noting that the term "hakhan" was also included in the final

law on the legal status of the Karaite community in Poland adopted in 1933, thereby definitively establishing its use in official rhetoric (ANN MWRiOP, syg. 1462, l. 297–313). Also, Shapshal has worked for further invisibilization of sacred language by translating Hebrew moth names and holiday names (e.g., using a term Zielone Święto for Shavuot) or replacing them with Turkic versions (like Bienczy Torayn for Simchat Tora) (ANN MWRiOP sig. 1464). These changes were presented to the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Public Education and can be assessed as a part of Shapshal's dejudaization program. However, an idea of translation of Hebrew terms into Turkic marked the beginning of language reform likewise in the case of Mustafa Kemal's reform project, where the Arabic words were replaced by Turkish ones. But the most significant change in the Karaite language related to script reform was analogous to the Turkish language case, namely, the transition from a "sacred" script—Hebrew in the Karaite case—to a "secular" one, that is, Latin. This can also be seen in the examples presented above where the names of the Karaite holidays were presented in the Latin alphabet. The rejection of the Hebrew alphabet meant the complete secularization of the Karaite language, separating it off from the professed religion and any links to Jewishness. As in the Turkish language case, script changes were accompanied by a functional redistribution of the languages used by the community. An effort was made to remove Hebrew entirely from public life—S. Shapshal, while standardizing the Turkic vernacular in Karaite community not only Turkified Hebrew terms but often replaces Hebrew loanwords with the Turkish ones, which also attest the direct impact of Kemal's reforms to the standardization of Turkic vernacular. Both invisibilization of Hebrew and the Latinization and standardization of Turkic vernacular led to important changes in Karaite linguistic environment. Firstly, Turkic vernacular began to be represented as the national language of the Polish Karaite community, arguing that the community is a monolingual unity, similarly to the dominating society of Poles, whose identity is strongly related to Polish language. It seems that these efforts were successful. For example, already in 1923, the Polish government's representative in the Vilnius region reported that the Karaite language, which he called the Tatar language, "is still being used in Karaite prayer services" (ANN MWWRiOP, syg. 1461, l. 18). The idea of monolingual status of Karaites also served as part of invisibilization of Hebrew by Karaite leaders. On 20 June 1927, the Vilnius Karaite community wrote to the Vilnius Voivode (ANN MWRiOP, syg. 1465, l. 83–95) notifying him of a "shortage of Polish textbooks for the instruction of the Karaite religion and language, which is also its liturgical language." These were among the first documents containing declarations of the community's monolingual status. After the Turkic vernacular was standardized and Latinized, it gained a status of national

language in Karaite community and became one of the most important identity markers for its members. It is in this context that Turkic vernacular gained a title of Karaim language, which is generally accepted by now. Being a language of many ethnic groups in the beginning of the 20th century, the Turkic vernacular became known as a national language of East European Karaites under the same title.

Another initiative of Latinization of Turkic vernacular appeared in interwar Lithuania—Panevėžys Karaite community used Latin script with Lithuanian diacritical signs to publish their communal journal "Onarmach" (Tur. Progress) in 1934–1939 with Mykolas Tinfavičius as the chief editor of it. Three volumes were released in 1934, 1938, and 1939, publishing a wide range of texts—chronicles, poems, and translations of pieces of literature, which served not only for the entertaining of the local Karaites but also as textbooks for teaching Karaite youth to read in Turkic dialect. However, the relation between the Latinization initiative of S. Shapshal and that of Mykolas Tinfavičius is unknown. The diplomatic relations between Poland and Lithuania in the interwar period discontinued because of the Vilnius question, and due to this reason, the correspondence between Lithuanian and Polish Karaite communities was limited and we do not possess any sources that would prove the possible influence of Shapshal's initiative to the publishing of "Onarmach" in Latin script. Taking into account the fact that the first two volumes of the journal were multiplied using a shapirograph—a technology based on hectograph printing—it is rational to think that Latin script was considered to be easier to use in these machines. Moreover, it is difficult to trace the influence of nationalistic discourse in the Tinfavičius's initiative to publish this journal in Latinized form of Turkic vernacular—even though the journal took its goal to contribute to the preservation of Karaite culture and language, and it seems that the script itself was of no ideological importance for the publishers—contrary to Shapshal, Tinfavičius continued to use Hebrew words, year counting system in the pages of *Progress*, at least for the first two issues. As M. Kizilov states, "it seems that the first two issues of Onarmach were the only interwar publications which were written in a language uncensored by Shapshal (…). This unmodified variant of Karaim contained a number of Slavic and Hebrew loanwords. While in most other interwar Karaim publications, these loanwords were consciously replaced by their Turkic equivalents (…) in accordance with Shapshal's directive" (M. Kizilov, 2007, pp. 416–417). However, the journal was short lived because of both the lack of man power in the community and the beginning of the World War II, as were the other Turkic language Karaite periodicals in Poland, for example, magazine *Friend of the Karaites* (Turk. Dostu Karajnyn) edited by Zarach Firkowicz, Szymon Kobecki, and Władimierz Zajączkowski published in Trakai in 1930–1934. The first issue was

published in Polish, two more in Turkic vernacular, and the magazine ceased to exist. Only the magazine Karaite Voice (Turk. Karaj Awazy) edited by Aleksandr Mardkowicz published in Lutsk in Turkic vernacular in 1931–1938 was more successful and managed released twelve issues before closing it down. This magazine was more literary in nature - it published poetry, short stories in the Turkic vernacular, as well as folklore—riddles and sayings. However, in the long run, the issues of the ethnic origination of the Karaites and their history also found a place in it. As M. Kizilov states, "Many articles published in Karaite Voice represented quite a curious mixture of Shapshal's Khazarian doctrine with the traditional Karaite values. In spite of the fact that the main emphasis of the periodical was on Turkic Karaite traditions and the Karaim language, there were many publications of such contemporary and classical Karaite authors as Toviyah Levi-Babovich, Joseph ben Joshua, Zerah ben Natan, Moshe Derai, Zacharjasz Abrahamowicz, and others" (M. Kizilov, 2007, p. 407–408).

The Latinization project in Polish and Lithuanian Karaite communities was partly successful. In the official correspondence, the use of Latinized Turkic vernacular, later named as Karaite language, was widely accepted and the dominating society appreciated this initiative positively. Also, Latinization was a successful part of dejudaization movement within Karaite community, who managed to disassociate themselves with Jewishness at the eve of the World War II. However, it proved to be of limited success in communal press.

Latinization of Hebrew language in Jewish Rabbanite community

The wave of Latinization that emerged in the beginning of the 20th century echoed in many linguistic communities and Jews were not an exception. There were attempts to Latinize Yiddish language, but this example needs to be examined more thoroughly.[6] However, it is known that in the struggle for national language of Soviet Jews the Soviet Yiddishist intelligentsia saw modernization as a critical task, a step being undertaken for other minority languages in Leninist Soviet Russia. As B. Spolsky has stated, "they had some advantages: Yiddish already existed as a spoken and written variety, though it had been stigmatized as *zhargon* during the Czarist period by rabbis and 'Jewish cultural elites'. They argued that it was the language of the people, in contrast to Hebrew, which they associated with the bourgeoisie. One goal of modernization was to distance Yiddish from Hebrew, but the basic goal was to develop it as the national language of the Jewish people" (B. Spolsky, 2019, p. 590). On the other hand, the efforts to Latinize the Hebrew language appeared in Jewish community about the same time—in the beginning of the 20th century—but in a

different cultural and political environment. Even though it was unequivocally considered unsuccessful in historiography, it is important to discuss this initiative as a part of wide Latinization process that appeared in different ethnic groups in the 1920s–1930s. İlker Aytürk, following the article by Joseph Nedava published in 1985 (J. Nedava, 1985, pp. 137–146), thoroughly studied the Latinization project of Hebrew language. Among the supporters of this Latinization project was such figures as Arthur Koestler and Vladimir Zeev Jabotinsky; it seems that Otto Warburg, a famous Zionist leader, decided to fund the Ben-Avi's Hebrew language Latinization project (J. Nedava, 1985, p. 625, 629), but this support did not help to gain broader acceptance of this project in the Jewish audience. However, unlike in the above-mentioned cases of Karaites and Turks, this project was an exceptional idea of one person which did not gain support from any Jewish group be it religious orthodox circles, be it Jewish nationalists, or any other group in Palestine or Diaspora. This person was a productive propagator of Latinization of Hebrew language Itamar Ben-Avi, the son of the Eliezer Ben-Yehuda. He was born in Palestine Mandate in 1882 and is known for being the first modern native Hebrew speaker. His father, Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, raised him speaking exceptionally in Hebrew, which was not a common practice among the Jews of that time, who used Hebrew exceptionally for religious and literary purposes. Ben-Yehuda's idea of a broad usage of Hebrew language, which was an experiment at the end of the 19th century gradually developed to the idea of Hebrew as a national language of the state of Israel[7]. In this context, the idea of Ben-Yahuda's son—Ben-Avi—of Latinization of the Hebrew script may seem as a further modernization and development of the language. He prepared a first manuscript of poems and novelettes in Latinized Hebrew in 1913, but the book was never published; his first publication—a biography of his father Ben-Yahuda—under the title Avi (My Father) appeared only in 1927 (J. Nedava, 1985, p. 631). Considering both the authority of Ben-Yehuda in the Jewish society and the controversy of the idea of Latinization of Hebrew among broad Jewish circles, one could not expect this book to be met with enthusiasm. On the contrary, the publication was perceived with harsh resistance as betrayal of Ben—Yehuda's legacy and with a fear of assimilation. Despite negative reaction in broad Jewish circles, Ben-Avi continued to publish texts in Latinized Hebrew and was an editor of two short-lived magazines *Hashavua Hapalestini* (1928) and *Dror* (1934), which gained a small readership in Palestine Mandate and Diaspora, but the numbers did not exceed more than several hundreds of readers.

Even though this attempt to Latinize the Hebrew language was an exception in Jewish literary tradition, it gives a broader context to the already discussed language reforms and encourages to analyze mutual relations, similarities, and differences of these Latinization practices in different religious and linguistic communities. As it was already mentioned, both Turkish language reform and the Latinization and dejudaization of Turkic vernacular in Karaite community were related to nationalist projects and the emergence of national identities within these linguistic communities. However, the Itamar Ben-Avi's project of Latinization in its nature was not directly related to the Jewish nationalism or nationalist project. Even though at some point, it was designed toward the new immigrants to the Palestine Mandate and to the idea of Jewish—Muslim Federation, it never gained acceptance in the nationalism Jewish circles. After returning to Palestine in 1918, Ben-Avi at some point adopted the ideas of Canaanite movement in Palestine, agitating for unification of Jews and Muslims in one state under the canton system. He thought that the Latinization system he proposed could serve not only of the Hebrew but also for Arabic language and form a unified alphabet for both groups. The adoption of this Latin script would serve for strengthening of the common nationalism within the Palestine (J. Nedava, 1985, p. 630–632). Besides, unlike in the case of Polish Karaites, who intend to fully withdraw Hebrew language and script from communal life, I. Ben-Avi did not intend to fully replace the Hebrew script with the Latin one at least in the foreseeable future and this is the reason why the project gained a limited support. For example, V. Jabotinsky, likewise Ben-Avi himself, argued that the difficulty of Hebrew script makes it complicated for adults to learn Hebrew and to assimilate to Israeli environment; such argument arose from the personal experience of Jabotinsky, who himself used the Latinized Hebrew in his private correspondence (J. Nedava, 1985, p. 639). A. Koestler, a director of Yabotinsky's Revisionsit Party's Secretariat in Berlin for a period of time, was also a supporter of an idea of Latinization of Hebrew script. It seems that the difficulty in learning Hebrew alphabet was one of the reasons why A. Koestler felt alien to Palestine Jewish environment and thought that he would not be able to have a journalistic career in Hebrew.

But there are also certain peculiarities of both Jewish Rabbanite and Karaite projects of Latinization.

As it was already noted, there are many arguments that allow us to safely state that there is a linguistic and ideological relation between Latinization of Karaite Turkic language in interwar Poland and the language reform, implemented in Turkey few years before the Karaite initiative. Undoubtedly, Ben-Avi and his supporters were well familiar with the Mustafa Kemal's Latinization project in Modern Turkey. It seems that Ben-Avi met Mustafa Kemal in Jerusalem whom he admired and, even though Ben-Avi made his first attempts to Latinize Hebrew already in 1913—much earlier than the reform was implemented in Turkey, it is rational to think that these initiatives were somehow related. Ben-Avi could be inspired not only by Kemal himself and his reform but also by the earlier

attempts to Latinize the Turkic language, which were already discussed. One more aspect which unites both Ben-Avi and Mustafa Kemal—the aim of modernization and westernization of their societies. As İlker Aytürk states in his article, Ben-Avi was known for his westernizing reputation in Yishuv (I. Aytürk, 2007, p. 625-645; J. Nedava, 1985, p. 632). The question of westernization was an issue both for Jews in Palestine mandate and for Turkish leaders in a newly established Republic of Turkey as both groups experiences the impact of the Ottoman legacy, cultural and linguistic influences. Moreover, it became even more important in Palestine mandate with the growing immigration of Jews from Europe, most of whom were born and raised in European environment. Palestine was a place where the European Jews met with Oriental coreligionists and the emerging cultural differences encouraged some Jewish intellectuals to advocate for westernization of the Palestine Jewish society. However, this issue was of secondary importance for East European Karaites, if at all. As early as in 1911, the question of belonging to European civilization was broadly discussed by already mentioned D. Kokizov, who agitated for Karaites in Russian Empire joining the European civilization through adoption of Russian language. Later in 1920s-1930s the question of Europeization and westernization did not gain much importance for Karaite communal elite while implementing the standartization and latinization of Turkic vernacular in Polish Karaite communities.

Conclusions

Latinization projects in Jewish communities were a part of a bigger movement. The end of the World War I and the collapse of the Ottoman Empire meant the emergence of new political and social order and questions of identity for many ethnic and religious groups, which lead to the appearance of language reforms and propositions of new linguistic constellations within these communities. Modernization and westernization encouraged those groups to adopt Latin alphabet to their vernaculars and this was the first time for non-Catholic communities to accept Latin script. Not all initiatives were met with enthusiasm, nor all of them experienced success. Despite of different motivations, that drove these reforms in Karaite and Jewish Rabbanite communities, we can trace the impact of the Turkish language reforms in both projects. We may assume that the authoritarian nature of Kemal's regime in Turkey likewise the authoritative nature of Karaite community's governance in Poland made the Latinization project successful in both cases. This was not a case in Jewish community in Palestine where the diverse Jewish society did not accept the idea of shifting from square Hebrew to Latin script seeing this initiative as neglection of the sacred status of Hebrew, which may lead to secularization and assimilation of the Jews. Unlike the Jews, who considered secularization threatening their identity, Turkish elite, and Mustafa Kemal, on the contrary saw this as a mean of creating national Turkish identity, and this argument was a strong mover of Latinization project in modern Turkey.

Declaration of conflicting interests

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Notes

1. An English translation of this treatise is available online. See: https://ia600203.us.archive.org/31/items/faithstrengthene00trok/faithstrengthene00trok.pdf
2. We do not poses firm historical evidences to prove that Shapshal was giving lectures at Istanbul University. However, it is widely accepted that because of the language reform, implemented in Turkey at that time, many academical staff left Turkish Universities, which led to the emergence of vacant positions in academia, which had to be occupied by new scholars.
3. Yusuf Akchura Oglu (1871–1931) sought to win Russian Turks over to the side of Turkism with his famous article Uch Torj-e-Siasat (The Political System of Three). The article was published in "Turk"—a popular Cairo periodical. In this text, the author stated: "the Turkish nation is the heir of Islam and Western civilization." In 1911, Y. A. Oglu also published the magazine "Turk Yurdu" (Turkish Motherland). This magazine became a herald of Pan-Turkism both in Russia and Turkey. Oglu himself was born into a Tatar family and was extremely influential in the All-Russian Muslim Political Organization (Ittefaq-Al-Muslimin) in 1905–1906, and was a member of the Russian Duma.
4. More on the movement and its relation to Poland: Paweł Libera, Polish authorities and the attempt to create the Caucasian Confederation (1917–1940), Studia z Dziejów Rosji i Europy Ś rodkowo-Wschodniej, LII-SI (3), p. 232-252, https://doi.org/10.12775/SDR.2017.EN3.11
5. For example, in the Russia's Imperial legislation.
6. I am thankful for Dr. Larisa Lempertiene for sharing this knowledge.
7. Modern Hebrew became an official language in British-ruled Palestine in 1921 along with English and Arabic; in 1948, it became an official language of the newly declared State of Israel.

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Appendix

Abbreviations

LMAB RS	Wroblewski library of Lithuanian academy of science, manuscript department (Vilnius, Lithuania)
LCVA	Lithuanian central state archive (Vilnius, Lithuania)
ANN	Archivum Akt Nowych (Warsaw, Poland)
PKM	Panevėžys Local Lore Museum Panevėžys (Panevėžys, Lithuania)

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3. Project of the Karaite legal status in Poland, 1928, LCVA F. 51, Ap. 4, b. 400
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5. The excerpts of Turkish magazines and journals in S. Shapshal collection, LMAB RS, 143 – 1309, 1318
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8. Permission for S. Shapshal to enter Poland, ANN 1927, MWRiOP, syg. 1464, l. 92–93
9. Letter of Wilna/Vilnius wojewoda concerning elections of Karaite hacham, 1927, ANN MWRiOP, syg. 1465
10. The law of the Karaite legal status in Poland, 1933, ANN MWRiOP, syg. 1462, l. 297–313.
11. The list of holidays celebrated by Karaite community in 1937 as presented by S. Shapshal, ANN, MWRiOP syg. 1464, l. 73–74.
12. The letter of the representative of Polish government in Wilna/Vilnius region, 1923, ANN MWWRiOP, syg. 1461, l. 18.
13. The appeal of the Karaites to Wilna/Vilnius wojewoda, 1927 ANN MWRiOP, syg. 1465, l. 83–95.