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KARAIMS: THE IDENTITY QUESTION*

The name Karaims¹ derives from *karaim*, a Hebrew word meaning “the reading one”, “the calling one” and hence Karaims are also called “the people of Scripture”.² But *karaim* also means “the detached”, “the disconnected”. The same word in Turkish means “black”³, “north”, or “poor”, which suggests Turkic origin of Karaims, namely from Khazars. Karaim dignitaries from the early 20th century popularised that version of the origin of Karaim people, however, that origin is not sufficiently documented.⁴ Thus the question whether Karaims were the followers of Judaism in Khazaria is frequently asked. In publications on history, such a religious faction is mentioned but it is not exactly clear whether it was of Karaims.⁵ This is hardly

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¹ As many authors argue: “In Polish scientific (and popular) publications, followers of Karaism are referred to as *karaimi* [Karaims] and not as *karaici* [Karaites]”. Cf. M. Pawelec (2010), *Niepojęty świat Karaimów?*, “Awazymyz”, No. 3(28), <http://www.awazymyz.karaimi.org/zeszyty/item/357-niepojęty-swiat-karaimow> [accessed: 08.06.13]. This does not seem, however, to be a consistent terminological convention. Cf. B. Janusz (1927), *Karaici w Polsce*, Kraków.

² R. Otsason (2004), *Karaimi*, in: *Powszechna encyklopedia filozofii*, Vol. 5, Lublin, pp. 487-489.

³ “At the end of the fourth millennium BC, the Iranian plateau was inhabited by tribes speaking a Turkish-Kipchak dialect of the Oghuz group. So far, the reasons for the migration of those tribes to eastern lands and, finally, to middle Mesopotamia have not been fully explained. In Mesopotamia, the migrating tribes split. Some went to the South and gave rise to Sumer. Others, led by the Black Chieftain (*Kara imam* or *Kara im*), went to the North and, later, formed the nucleus or better the core of the Karaim nation.” Cf. <http://bakkal.kulichki.com/karap/istork.html> [accessed: 08.06.2013].

⁴ K. Kohler, A. de Harkavy (ca. 1906), *Karaites and Karaism*, in: *Jewish Encyclopedia*, pp. 438-447, <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=108&letter=K> [accessed: 08.06.2013]; P. Fijałkowski, *Karaimi*, in: Z. Borzymińska, R. Żebrowski, (eds) (2003), *Polski słownik judaistyczny. Dzieje – kultura – religia – ludzie*, Vol. 1, Warszawa, pp. 758-759.

⁵ There is also another version. “More or less at the same time (end of the 8th century), an interesting event took place in the region neighbouring with the Caliphate and the Byzantine Empire in the North. There was a strong Khazar Empire. Khazars were people of Turkic descent who dominated other Turkic and non-Turkic tribes in the area stretching roughly to the Caucasus Mountains, the Black Sea, the Don River, the Volga, and the Caspian Sea. Bulan, a king of Khazars, facing the competition for influence between Christianity and Islam, two great religions of that time, decided to convert to ... Judaism. There are records saying that Khazars did not accept the Talmud, which has been the starting point of the dispute in literature.” Cf. J. Krzyszek, *Najmniejsza mniejszość Rzeczypospolitej?*, “Spojrzenia” 29.05.1992, <http://>

the only mystery surrounding the history of Karaims and their culture. In this article, we want to trace a common denominator of all those inconsistencies, i.e. the dual identity of Karaims.⁶ The duality issue is deeply rooted in postmodern discussions on nationality (national affiliation) and ethnicity. Postmodernity will constitute a broader context for our deliberations⁷ in particular on ethno-sociological research conducted by Lucjan Adamczuk⁸. We will reconstruct the essence of that duality exploring transformations of the classical concepts of identity in the social teaching of Zygmunt Bauman.⁹

IDENTITY, MINORITY AND IDENTIFICATION

Identity, *minority* and *identification* are terms used repeatedly throughout this text. When speaking about *identity*, we mean the self-determination of a social actor who, in this case, is the Karaim community. Self-definition is construed from the actor's own beliefs, ideas and self-evaluation which are realised and confirmed in the social and cultural life of a given community (in the form of symbols, rituals, organisation of social life, social status hierarchy, etc.) and by historically attested authenticity of the bonds among community members (e.g. traditions, myths and legends, tales, history of the community).¹⁰ That is why a large part of this paper

magnet.fsu.edu/~krzystek/Spojrz/SPO.27 [accessed: 08.06.2013]. Much information about the origin of Karaims and their possible connections with Khazars, along with references to written sources and findings of scholars representing various fields, can be found in comprehensive monograph by Stefan Gąsiorowski (2008), *Karaimi w Koronie i na Litwie w XV-XVIII wieku*, Kraków-Budapest, pp. 100-120.

⁶ We refer to Karaims in the double sense, i.e. as an ethnic group and as a religious group. However, although we are interested in Karaims who are not followers of Karaism, we are not interested in followers of Karaism who are not ethnic Karaims. This reservation is particularly important if we take into consideration the fact that, starting from 2007, we may observe a growing wave of group conversions to Karaism (e.g. in Egypt, the US and Turkey). Cf. S. Cohen (2011), *The Jews who take off their shoes for shul*, <http://www.thejc.com/judaism/judaism-features/50660/the-jews-who-take-the-ir-shoes-shul> [accessed: 08.06.2013].

⁷ Other terms used to refer to our times include *post-modernity* and *post-modernism*. Cf. Z. Bauman (1994), *Dwa szkice o moralności ponowoczesnej*, Warszawa, p. 16.

⁸ It is worth noting that the research conducted by Adamczuk mainly focused on families in which at least one spouse declared to be a Karaim. In the orthodox doctrine of Karaism, a Karaim family is a family in which both husband and wife are Karaims. Adamczuk writes that in a research perspective "what seems to be the decisive factor determining the Karaim identity is the sense of a strong emotional connection with the broadly understood Karaim culture". Cf. L. Adamczuk (2004), *Socjologiczny obraz współczesnego życia Karaimów na Litwie i w Polsce*, "Awazymyz", No. 2(9), <http://www.awazymyz.karaimi.org/zeszyty/item/125-socjologiczny-obraz> [accessed: 08.06.2013].

⁹ In the opinion of Z. Bokszański, Bauman's considerations are also characterised by a specific ambivalence located between *modernity* and *postmodernity*, both as topics of his deliberations and the discourse pursued. Cf. Z. Bokszański (2007), *Indywidualizm a zmiana społeczna. Polacy wobec nowocześnieści – raport z badań*, Warszawa, pp. 39-41.

¹⁰ Cf. Z. Bokszański, *Tożsamość*, in: Z. Bokszański et al., (ed.) (2002), *Encyklopedia socjologii*, Vol. 4, Warszawa, pp. 252-255. Referring to Bauman, Bokszański notes also that identity issues become

is devoted to the history, culture, and origin of Karaims which are the foundations of that minority identity structure.¹¹ While speaking of *minority*, we refer to a few determinants: population size (the number of its members is always lower than the number of members of the dominant group in a given territory), a sense of belonging (bonds), cultural distinctness, asymmetrical participation in the life of dominant groups, limited autonomy, ascribed membership, and historical and symbolic validity.¹² Karaims are, therefore, a minority meaning that they have such distinctive features differentiating them from other groups inhabiting the same territories. Those features are also the basis for the *identification* of individual members of the Karaim community and thus for finding one's own *identity* in what makes one "different" which is decisive for a community emergence. Karaims are also a community whose *identity* and *minority* status undergo far-reaching transformations today. Those *post-modern re-transformations* are the cause of the aforementioned dualism. Who, then, are Karaims?

HISTORY AND ORIGIN OF KARAIMS: AN OUTLINE OF CONTROVERSIES

If we want to describe Karaims as briefly as possible, we may quote Feliks Koneczny according to whom "Karaims are Jews who dismiss the *Talmud* and for whom all comments are based only on the *Pentateuch*. They emancipated their women, participated in secular education (under the Arab rule), frequently adopted Arabs' monotheistic universality, and used Arabic, thanks to which they were more well-read and grew stronger while Talmudists wrote only in Aramaic."¹³ It is worth adding that the history of those people intertwined with histories of many European countries (many centuries of migrations, resettlements and vicissitudes of life). At

an interesting subject of reflections when boundaries of the identity "begin to blur in the darkness" and "when that does not become a problem". Cf. Z. Bokszański (2007), *Tożsamości zbiorowe*, Warszawa, p. 16. More arguments in favour of the abandonment of identity systematising concepts (both normative and descriptive) are provided within processual approaches to the category in question e.g. in "dramaturgical, phenomenological and actionalistic sociology". Cf. Z. Bokszański (1989), *Tożsamość, interakcja, grupa. Tożsamość jednostki w perspektywie teorii socjologicznej*, Łódź, pp. 148-152, 155-161, 213-214 and 224-229. Processual approaches provide a wider context for the consolidation of Bauman's theses on identity (e.g. multiplicity of identities, "selective moments of biographies", situational correlates of identity, the illusory nature of stable identity).

¹¹ We must not forget that, for example, relations between Poles and Karaims (which began in the 13th century) constituted an important element in the formation of the Karaim identity by shaping its "reflected self" which is the source of social actors' ideas about and evaluations of themselves. Cf. Z. Bokszański (1989), *Tożsamość...*

¹² Cf. T. Paleczny, *Mniejszości*, in: Z. Bokszański et al., (ed.) (1999), *Encyklopedia socjologii*, Vol. 2, Warszawa, pp. 259-264.

¹³ F. Koneczny (1999), *Synopsis "Cywilizacji żydowskiej" Feliksa Konecznego*, Poznań. According to Linde's dictionary from the 19th century [free translation]: "Karaims, who today still live also in Poland, contributed much to old observations and they do not differ much from Jews in terms of many superstitions and they are somehow close to Mohammedanism". Cf. *Słownik języka polskiego przez M. Samuela Bogumiła Linde. Wydanie drugie*, Vol. II: G - L, Lwów 1855, p. 315.

present their number is estimated to be around 30 thousand people (25 thousand in Israel alone). The above, however, is so simplified that it obscures the essence of Karaism.

The ethnogenesis of the Karaims is not homogeneous because of their several separate lines. "In the ethnogenesis of the Crimean and Polish-Lithuanian Karaims, both the Turkic people of the Khazar Empire played their part and, after the fall of that empire in the second half of the 10th century (in result of a battle lost in 969 against prince Sviatoslav of Kiev), the Kipchak-Polovtsian tribes of Turkic descent which arrived there later."¹⁴ Those peoples, if the above is correct, came from the territory of modern Iraq where they were called Ananites after Anan Ben David of Basra¹⁵. Such an explanation, although frequently given, does not have to be entirely correct. Its grounds are lost in the mists of time and possible sources seem to be silent or disagree about its legitimacy. Szymon Szyszman, a well-known scholar studying Karaims, "considers it to be a fact that Karaism is in a straight line an extension of the beliefs of the Essenes, remains of whose monastery were discovered in Qumran near the Dead Sea in 1949"¹⁶. Another "fact" is that Karaims are descendants of the Sadducees. "The tribe which today is called the Karaim are Israelite people who long before the birth of Christ got separated from their native tribe under the rule of Israelite king Uzziah (or: Azariah [in historiography he was king of Judah – P.L. and K.R.]) in the number of ten generations."¹⁷ After the destruction of the Temple in

¹⁴ S. Pilecki (2003), *Pochodzenie etniczne*, <http://www.karaimi.org/index.php7p=1> [accessed: 08.06.2013]. According to historiography, Sviatoslav defeated Khazars in a battle in 965 while the capital of Kazaria, Atil, fell in result of the invasion of Ruthenians in 969. S. Gąsiorowski (2008), *op. cit.*, pp. 119-120.

¹⁵ His teachings determined the dual (Judeo-Islamic) nature of the Karaim religion: "Anan ben David of Basra concluded that the prophetic vocation did not end with Biblical prophets but was still possible. He considered Jesus from Nazareth to be a prophet sent to convert pagans and a great teacher of Jews. He rejected, however, the divinity of Jesus. He also considered Muhammad to be a prophet whose task was to save Arabs from committing idolatry by revealing to them the true God. The creator of Karaism incorporated some ideas of less strict schools of the Muslim law, i.e. of the Hanafi school. He also adapted a number of elements from the Muslim liturgy and religious terminology." Cf. M. A. Koproński (2008), *Fenomen Karaimów*, <http://www.kresy.pl/zycieduchowe?zobacz/fenomen-karaimow> [accessed: 08.06.2013]. Anan ben David has been often considered the "founder" of the Karaim religion and even of Karaism as such, but he was, in fact, its reformer only. Basic dogmas of Karaism and related religious writings preceded his activities. Cf. Sz. Szyszman (2005), *Karaimizm. Historia i doktryna*, Wrocław, p. 15. Not all authors, however, agree on that interpretation, cf. R. Otsason (2004), *Karaimi...*, p. 487; X.G.R., *Karaici*, in: *Encyklopedia kościelna podług teologicznej encyklopedji Wetzer'a i Weltego, z licznymi jej dopełnieniami*, vol. 10: *Karaici-Kongregacje dekanalne*, Warszawa 1877, pp. 1-5.

¹⁶ J. Krzyszek (1992), *op. cit.*

¹⁷ W. Syrokomla (1857), *Wycieczki po Litwie: w promieniach od Wilna (Troki, Stokliszki, Jezno, Fumie, Niemież, Miedniki etc.)*, Vilnius, p. 61. The theory that Karaims are descendants of Sadducees has been questioned by some authors because "the Sadducees, as it is known, rejected the belief in the immortality of souls, while on the oldest Karaim tombstones which P. Firkowicz saw in Crimea and Asia there were prayers for the dead and inscriptions that their souls would be remembered by the living". *Ibidem*, pp. 65-66. See also M. Pawelec (2010), *op. cit.*

Jerusalem, the Sadducees lost their leading role and, in line with rabbinic tradition, were declared heretics. Their place was taken by a Jewish religious and political formation of Pharisees.¹⁸ It is thought that in the 8th century, Karaims separated as a religious group in the region of modern Iraq, and became known for its orthodox interpretation of the Torah and promotion of Hellenism. That was also the starting point of Karaims' life as wanderers which later found its reflection in the doctrine of Karaism.

From the 8th to the 10th century, as a result of missionary activities, Karaism spread in Mesopotamia, Syria, Palestine, and North Africa and reached Spain, Byzantium, Persia, and the Khazar Empire (*Khaganate*) where it was adopted by its ruler (*khagan*) Bulan, his court and dignitaries as well as by a part of the population¹⁹, especially people who settled in the Crimean Peninsula and the southern steppe of Ruthenia. During those dozen or so centuries, the Karaim religion was practised in many different territories and by people of different descent but nowhere their number was very high.²⁰

Their presence in Crimea is confirmed in a sources from the 12th century. It is highly probable, however, that they settled there much earlier.²¹ The later established communes of Halych, Lutsk, and Lviv were the new home for Karaims. Starting from that time, the history of Karaims and their heritage is better documented but questions about their Turkic or Israelite descent and about them coming from Khazars or Sadducees, keep recurring. Those questions have not been fully answered yet, and thus Karaims' thinking about their past has a dual character.²²

KARAİM-POLISH CONTACTS FROM THE 13TH TO THE 20TH CENTURY: CULTURE AND SCIENCE

The history of contacts between Karaims and Poles dates back to the Middle Ages. Already at that time Karaim settlers from Crimea inhabited Ruthenian and Lithuanian lands. According to some sources, their settlements in the territory of the Kingdom of Galicia-Volhynia can be dated back to the mid 13th century when Karaims supposedly settled in such towns as: Halych, Darażno, Olyka, Kotowice,

¹⁸ R. Żebrowski, *Saduceusze*, in: Z. Borzymińska, R. Żebrowski, (eds) (2003), *Polski słownik judaistyczny. Dzieje – kultura – religia – ludzie*, Vol. 2, Warszawa, pp. 464-465.

¹⁹ Such was the Khazar tradition but it is not clear what movement within the Israelite religion it was exactly. Cf. S. Gąsiorowski (2008), *op. cit.*, pp. 107-110.

²⁰ S. Pilecki, (2003) *Religia*, <http://www.karaimi.org/index.php7p=103> [accessed: 08.06.2013].

²¹ S. Gąsiorowski (2008), *op. cit.*, p. 127.

²² The bi-polar nature of the genesis of Karaism is based on dialectics of history as well as on tales, legends and beliefs. Their mutual dependencies are perfectly reconstructed by M. Bałaban, *Karaici w Polsce, studjum historyczne*, in: idem, *Studja historyczne*, Warszawa 1927, pp. 1-92. That is clear especially of compared to its criticism by A. Zajączkowski (1928), *Na marginesie studjum Balabana "Karaici w Polsce"*, Vilnius.

Lviv, and Lutsk. Those were the towns where religious communes were established²³. Grzegorz Pełczyński mentions another interpretation according to which the arrival of Karaims in Ruthenian lands was related to the settlement campaign of duke Vytautas in the early 15th century.²⁴ According to Pełczyński, that appears to be disputable. The territories of the Principality of Galicia-Volhynia, the capital of which was Lviv in the 14th century, were divided between the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the Kingdom of Poland and to the latter belonged Halych Ruthenia with Lviv and Halych. That is why it seems strange that duke Vytautas would let Karaims settle in the Kingdom of Poland. Most probably, however, the involvement of Vytautas referred to Karaims who settled in the Lithuanian town of Trakai, divided into Christian and Karaim parts, and neighbouring villages. According to the Karaim tradition, in 1397 Vytautas brought Tatars from the territories of the Golden Horde, and 383 Karaim families from Solkhat in Crimea. A widespread view that it was connected with Karaims militarily guarding Lithuanian borders against the Teutonic Order forces lacks any solid basis in available sources.²⁵ Pełczyński believes that is very probable that Vytautas awarded privileges first to Karaims living in Trakai. The successive rulers from the Jagiellonian dynasty and later elective monarchs of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth followed in his footsteps. The privileges, however, were never granted to the entire Karaim community in the country but only to specific communes. On 27 March 1441, Grand Duke of Lithuania Casimir IV Jagiellon granted Karaims in Trakai privileges similar to Magdeburg rights. It was an extraordinary event because it allowed Karaims to form their own local government while the non-Christian population could not.²⁶ Karaites themselves were subordinate to the power of an elected vojt who reported directly to the monarch.

Both in the Middle Ages and in the early modern era, the majority of Karaims living in towns in Poland and Lithuania were tradesmen and craftsmen. Many were lease-holders.²⁷ Most probably, they worked also in agriculture and horticulture and supposedly were especially known as cucumber growers. Their mercantile activity, however, was most important, especially since they were involved in the Black Sea trade, transporting grain and wood via rivers to ports.²⁸ Owing to their trade contacts with brothers in Crimea, they were hired as translators for the military and diplomacy. They also mediated in the exchange of prisoners between Poland and the

²³ S. Pilecki (2003), *Pochodzenie...*

²⁴ G. Pełczyński (2004), *Karaimi polscy*, Poznań, p. 14.

²⁵ S. Gąsiorowski (2008), *op. cit.*, p. 336. Information on the alleged military traditions of Karaims which dated back to the Middle Ages is provided by M. Morelowski (1946), *Zamek najeziorny w Trokach z źródła formy zachodnie i czarnomorskie: studium z dziejów architektury, urbanistyki i karaimsko-tatarsko-ormiańskich migracji*, "Myśl Karaimska" Vol. 23, No. 1, Wrocław, pp. 75-76 and 88-89, and by many other authors e.g. S. Pilecki, A. Tokarczyk, Sz. Szyszman.

²⁶ Cf. S. Pilecki (2003), *Pochodzenie...*; A. Tokarczyk (2006), *Karaimizm. Saga polskich Karaimów*, Warszawa.

²⁷ S. Gąsiorowski (2008), *op. cit.*, pp. 343-362.

²⁸ G. Pełczyński (2004), *Karaimi...*, p. 16.

Crimean Khanate. Those were Crimean Karaims whose fortress was Chufut-Kale, and whom the khans from nearby Bakhchysarai obliged to take care of most distinguished prisoners.²⁹

Another domain in which Karaims were active was science. In the 16th century, one of popular figures was exegete and philosopher Isaac ben Abraham of Trakai. Many students of Anan ben David, in turn, were interested in medicine and a Karaim, Abraham ben Josiah, was appointed the court physician of king Jan III Sobieski.³⁰

The early modern period was also the time when Karaims attracted interest of European scholars. The development of biblical studies in protestant countries stimulated interest in the Karaim version of the Old Testament, and Lithuanian and Ruthenian communes regularly exchanged letters with scholars in the West. In 1691, king Charles IX of Sweden sent a scholar, Gustaf Peringer, to Lithuania. Peringer wrote a letter titled *Epistola de Karaitis Lithuaniae* which was an important source of information on Karaims for the West until the 19th century.³¹

In the modern era, Karaims' involvement in science has continued. Important Polish scholars of the 20th century who were of Karaim descent include Ananiasz Zajączkowski (professor of the University of Warsaw and author of over 335 studies devoted *inter alia* to Turkic people from the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea steppe, oriental influences in the Polish culture, and Karaim issues; member of the Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences and the Polish Academy of Sciences³²), the last Polish *hazzan* Rafał Abkowicz of Trakai (the founder of the Wrocław *kenesa*), and geophysicist Ananiasz Rojecki (co-founder of the Polish Hydrological and Meteorological Society renamed Polish Geophysical Society in 1966; awarded the Silver Cross of Merit and the Knight's Cross and Officer's Cross of Order of Polonia Restituta). They all were buried in the Karaim cemetery founded in 1890 in Warsaw, the only Karaim cemetery still in use in Europe.³³ Other outstanding Karaims include Szymon Firkowicz (a poet who translated several works by Adam Mickiewicz into the Karaim language), Szymon Pilecki (called the "Warsaw professor", chairman of the *Karaj Diń Birligiari LR* [Karaim Religious Association in the Republic of Poland], aircraft engineer³⁴), Aleksander Dubiński (Oriental Studies), and Mariola Abkowicz (since 1997, the chairperson of the Karaim Association in Poland, editor-in-chief of

²⁹ J. Orłowska-Stanisławska (2006), *Uwięzieni w skalnym gnieździe*, "Poznaj Świat" No. 8 (595), http://www.poznaj-swiat.pl/artukul,uwiezieni_w_skalnym_gniezdzie,441 [accessed: 08.06.2013].

³⁰ G. Pełczyński (2004), *Karaimi...*, p. 16.

³¹ *Ibidem*, pp. 16-17.

³² Cf. A. Zajączkowski (2006), *Zarys religii karaimskiej*, Wrocław.

³³ Cf. M. Abkowicz (2006), *Karaimi tu i teraz*, <http://www.lewica.pl/index.php?id=11246> [accessed: 08.06.2013]; A. Dubiński (2006), *Cmentarz Karaimski w Warszawie*, "Awazymyz" No. 3 (13), pp. 3-6, <http://www.awazymyz.karaimi.org/zeszyty/item/187-cmentarz-karaimski-w-warszawie> [accessed: 08.06.2013].

³⁴ E. Bezekowicz (2007), *Szymon Pilecki*, "Awazymyz" No. 1(15), pp. 17-18, <http://www.awazymyz.karaimi.org/zeszyty/item/202-szymon-pilecki> [accessed: 08.06.2013].

the *Awazymyz* magazine, and researcher at the Department of Hebrew, Aramaic and Karaim Studies at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań.³⁵

In the modern era, Karaims have enjoyed popular esteem. In addition, there is evidence that their culture grew closer to the dominant Polish culture. Such evidence includes their surnames which were increasingly Slavonic and very frequently Polish. The Semitic surnames, in turn, a characteristic feature of which was the word *ben* which means “son”, went out of use. It allows us to conclude that partial acculturation and adoption of the dominant cultural models took place at that time. Grzegorz Pelczyński mentions the following popular surnames: “Abkowicz, Charczenko, Dubiński, Jutkiewicz, Kapłonowski, Kobecki, Leonowicz, Lokszyński, Łobanas, Malecki, Mickiewicz, Pilecki, Robaczewski, Sułkowski, Zajączkowski, Żarnowski, and others”.³⁶

In the late 18th century, Catherine the Great massively enlarged her empire. Karaims living in Crimea and in the territories of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, which were annexed by Russia during the partitions of Poland, lived in one State. In result, there were about 30 Karaim religious communes (*dżymats*) in Russia. From 1795 to 1828, individual branches of Karaims of Volhynia, Lithuania and Crimea were exempted from mandatory military service (the aim of which was to strengthen antagonisms towards Jews). In the 19th century, there were also two Karaim communes in Galicia, in Halych and Kukeziv. In Russia, Karaims still enjoyed religious freedoms and their internal organisation was intact. In 1837, the Tauride-Odessa *Hachan* (or *Hakam*) and the Karaim Spritual Board in Evpatoria were established. In 1850, Karaim *dżymats* in western regions were subjugated to the Hachan. In 1863, a Hachan for western communes was appointed and his seat was in Trakai. However, before the legal situation of Karaims improved, they were treated like the Jewish people whose freedoms were limited.

It was Abraham Firkovich (1786-1874), the *hazzan* of Lutsk and a scholar, who successfully demonstrated to Russian authorities that the blame for murdering Jesus could not be laid on Karaims. He argued that Karaims were not deicides because they were not present in Jerusalem at the time when Jews crucified Christ.³⁷ His scholarly archaeological work is still valuable today. During his travels to places where Karaims lived in the past, to the Middle East and Crimea and in particular to Chufut-Kale, he collected relics and documents connected with the history of Karaims. In addition, he contributed, though probably forging or misinterpreting some of the sources, to enrooting Karaims’ belief that they should not be associated with

³⁵ Thus it is no surprise that according to the data of the Polish 2002 National Census of Population and Housing, almost 59% members of the Karaim minority in Poland have higher education, which is the highest percentage among all minorities. Cf. *III Raport dla Sekretarza Generalnego Rady Europy z realizacji przez Rzeczpospolitą Polską postanowień “Konwencji ramowej o ochronie mniejszości narodowych”*, Warszawa 2012, p. 12, <https://mac.gov.pl/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/Tekst-III-Raportu.pdf> [accessed: 08.06.2013].

³⁶ G. Pelczyński (2004), *Karaimi...*, p. 17.

³⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 19.

Jews. In the light of the present knowledge about Karaims, his interpretation appears to be misguided but, in the 19th century, it had a positive impact on the situation of the Karaim people which improved in comparison to the situation of the Jewish people. It also contributed to the fact that Karaims were not treated as Jews in the time of the Holocaust.

Today, thanks to materials collected by Abraham Firkovich, we can continue discovering the history of Karaims. His research contributed also to the enrooting and consolidation of the sense of Karaims' identity. That was particularly important in the context of Karaims' partial departure from their own cultural models. In the 19th century, many Karaims took advantage of their rights and made their careers in the administration and serving the military in Russia. Others engaged in trade and other economic activities. In the opinion of Grzegorz Pełczyński, Karaims europeanised to a large extent at that time. They became more modern and lost their oriental aura.³⁸ They were also very eager to learn and study. At the same time, in the community intellectual circles, an informal national revival movement began, the aim of which was to reconcile traditions with new transformations of the Karaim diaspora. The movement gained on importance among the Crimean Karaites. Changes in Lithuanian and Lutsk circles were of a similar character. It must be highlighted that part of the Karaim intelligentsia assimilated to Russians or Poles. Many Karaims were dedicated to Polish issues, including, for instance, hachan Romuald Kobecki.

KARAİMS AT THE FINAL STAGE OF MODERNITY AND THE ONSET OF POSTMODERNITY (1918-2000)

The end of World War I brought further major changes for the Karaim community. The communes in historical Lithuania and Ruthenia were once again separated by borders from those in Crimea. In addition, the community inhabiting the regions of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania was divided. Communes in Panevėžys, Pasvalys, and Tałaczkan were now part of the Lithuanian state. Trakai, Vilnius, Lutsk (before WW1 in Russia) and Halych, (previously belonged to Austria-Hungary), after WW1 were in Poland. Gradually, many members of the Karaim community settled also in Warsaw.

Karaims were loyal to their new-old Polish homeland. They were very much liked by fellow citizens and Polish authorities were sympathetic. In 1930, the Karaim commune in Trakai was visited by President of Poland Ignacy Mościcki. Visits of other Polish dignitaries were frequent.³⁹ Relations between the Polish State and Karaims were regulated by a special Act of 1936⁴⁰, and it was the Karaim Religious

³⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 21.

³⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 23.

⁴⁰ *Act of 21 April 1936 on the relations between the State and the Karaim Religious Association in the Republic of Poland* (Journal of Laws of 1936, No. 30, item 241), <http://isap.sejm.gov.pl/DetailsServlet?id=WDU19360300241> [accessed: 08.06.2013].

Association which represented Karaims in official dealings with Polish authorities. In the interwar period, the culture of the almost one-thousand community flourished. Several magazines were published including *Mysł Karaimska* [Karaim thought], which was co-financed by the Ministry of Religious Denominations and Public Enlightenment and published from 1924 to 1939, and *Karaj Awazy* [Karaim Voice]. The community organised themselves in various associations. There were associations of women and the youth (*Bir-Baw*). In Trakai, the youth from *Bir-Baw* organised meetings with young Karaims from other localities and actively participated in the establishment of various organisation, including sports organisations. Polish Karaims had lively contacts with communities now living in Lithuania. At that time, Karaims once again became of interest to scholars both in Poland and abroad, and numerous tourists visited Trakai [Polish: *Troki*].⁴¹

During World War II, the situation of Karaims was relatively good, in particular because Germans considered them “racially different” from the Jewish population.⁴² Karaims in Lutsk and Halych, however, suffered direct attacks by the Ukrainian Insurgent Army. The war was a great tragedy for that small community which suffered human and material losses. The year 1944 was particularly difficult for Crimean Tatars and Karaims as Stalin decided to displace them thereby destroying that old local culture and numerous social ties. Negative consequences of Stalin’s policy are still visible today. After the Second World War, the borders were changed again and followed by resettlements. A group of about one hundred fifty members of the Karaim community, the majority of whom were young people, arrived in Poland from territories Poland lost. “After World War II, Karaims who inhabited Lithuania migrated to Poland: to Gdańsk, Słupsk, and Wrocław. Today, over one hundred of them live in Poland. In Lithuania, their number is less than three hundred”⁴³

After 1956, when another wave of repatriates arrived, the Karaim community in Poland consisted of about three hundred people living mainly in Warsaw, Tricity

⁴¹ G. Pełczyński (2004), *Karaimi...*, pp. 24-25.

⁴² It is estimated that about 500 to 600 Karaims fought in the ranks of *Wehrmacht*, *Waffen SS*, and the Tatar Legion (the “endogenous dejudaisation” policy of Freund). Cf. J. Krzystek (1992), *op. cit.* More on the ideological justification of “racial distinctness” of Karaims from Jews (e.g. arguments “borrowed” by the 3rd Reich administration from directives issued by Pyotr Stolypin in the Tsarist Russia period) in K. Feferman (2011), *Nazi Germany and the Karaites in 1938-1944: between racial theory and Realpolitik*, “Nationalities Papers. The Journal of Nationalism and Ethnicity” No. 2(39), pp. 280-281. It should be taken into consideration, however, that there are numerous contradictory studies on that period. One author states that “the Tatar Mountain Infantry Brigade was formed not in Crimea but in Hungary during the period from June to December 1944. Its formation was never fully completed. It maintained garrisons but never fought in any battles on the side of Germany. The brigade was 3.5 thousand soldiers strong, 1/4 of whom were Germans. There are no verified sources which would confirm that members of the brigade were also Crimean Karaites, especially in the number of few hundred! There is also no evidence that any Lithuanian Karaim fought under German banners.” M. Pawelec (2010), *op. cit.*

⁴³ T. Kurs, *Karaimowie, ochroniarze księcia Witolda*, “Gazeta Wyborcza - Olsztyn” 29.06.2008, http://miasta.gazeta.pl/olsztyn/1,35186,5407607,Karaimowie_ochroniarze_ksiecia_Witolda.html [accessed: 08.06.2013].

[Gdańsk-Sopot-Gdynia], Wrocław, Opole, and Cracow.⁴⁴ The situation of Karaims was very difficult, in particular due to their little number and dispersion across the country. Assimilation seemed inevitable and some Karaim traditions vanished. An important factor which, however, saved Karaims from complete assimilation, was and is their religion. In the 1970s, there was the renaissance of Karaimism in Poland.⁴⁵ In 1975, the Karaim Religious Association organised its first convention in Warsaw which was attended by about one hundred people. The idea of conventions has been continued, which undoubtedly keeps contributing to maintaining traditions and bonds. Topics discussed during conventions included religious, cultural, and historical issues, but the conventions have also been an occasion for informal meetings. In the late 1980s, Polish Karaims established contacts with fellow Karaims living in Lithuania, which have been very lively. They also stay in touch with Karaims who inhabit regions of the former USSR. The turning point was the year 1989, when

On 19-20.08.1989, in Trakai, a convention was held which was attended by Polish citizens and also by Karaims from many localities in the USSR including Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev, Kharkov, Crimean towns, Almaty, and many others. Over 400 people gathered in Trakai and, for most of them, that enclave of Karaism was the spark of their own history in the darkness of communism. Most participants, after returning home, took advantage of the thaw and perestroika and started associate in Karaim organisations.⁴⁶

[...] the latest census of population in the Soviet Union carried in 1989 revealed that 2,800 Karaims lived there at that time. At present, the number of Karaims in those regions is lower.⁴⁷

In 1997, a group of 60 Polish Karaims joined celebrations of the 600th anniversary of Karaims' settlement in Trakai and Lithuania (facilitated by duke Vytautas), which was a perfect opportunity to integrate with communities from all over the world. In 1998, the 750th anniversary of Karaims' settlement in Halych was celebrated. One year later, another occasion for an international meeting was the re-opening of the renovated *kenesa* in Evpatoria.⁴⁸ Next meetings (in 1999 in France and in 2003 in Warsaw) were devoted to the history of Karaims and their contribution to the European heritage. The number of people attending subsequent conventions has, however, been decreasing.

In addition to numerous meetings in Poland and abroad, an important role in bringing the Karaim community together is played by the *Awazymyz* magazine which has been published in Poland since 1989 and, since 1999, by the Polish Karaim Association. The magazine is addressed to Karaim communities living in Poland and Lithuania.⁴⁹ *Awazymyz* as well as other titles devoted to Karaims are published by

⁴⁴ G. Pełczyński (2004), *Karaimi...*, p. 29.

⁴⁵ Cf. M. Abkowicz (2003), *Współczesność*, <http://www.karaimi.org/o-nas/wspolczesnosc> [accessed: 08.06.2013].

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁷ G. Górny (2007), *Sambation, Chazarowie i Karaimowie*, "W drodze" No 9(409), <http://www.miesiecznik.wdrodze.pl/?mod=archiwumtekst&id=12150> [accessed: 08.06.2013].

⁴⁸ M. Abkowicz (2003), *Współczesność...*

⁴⁹ Homepage: www.awazymyz.karaimi.org.

the Bitik publishing house under the patronage of the Polish Karaim Association (established in 1997).

In Poland, there are not many material traits related to Karaims. The most important is the Warsaw cemetery at Redutowa 34 Street.⁵⁰ Many more historic sites have survived in Lithuania. The most important is Trakai with its renovated *kenesa*, old wooden houses with a 3 window side-gable facing the street, and traditional Karaim cuisine served in local restaurants. The cuisine is particularly significant for that community as dishes have symbolic meanings and are deeply rooted in traditions and culture. That is why it still plays an important role in up-keeping the Karaim identity.⁵¹ In Crimea, numerous material traits of Karaims have survived e.g. the *kenesa* in Evpatoria with the altar brought from Halych, and the picturesque remains of Chufut-Kale town-fortress.

KARAISM AS ETHNICITY AND RELIGION: POLISH NATIONAL CENSUSES OF 2002 AND 2011

Today, Karaims are formally classified as one of the four ethnic minorities living in Poland (along with Lemkos, Roma people and Tatars).⁵² They are the smallest ethnic minority in Poland. In 1975, their estimated number was about

⁵⁰ It is still a very important place for the Polish Karaim community and taking care of graves of ancestors brings together all generations. In 2012, thanks to funds allocated by the Cultural Heritage Programme of the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage and the support of Fundacja Banku Zachodniego WBK, the necessary conservation and maintenance works at the cemetery were completed and the Karaim heritage presented at educational institutions in Warsaw and Wrocław. A. Dubiński (2012), *Usuwanie zagrożeń, czyli co robiliśmy przez ostatni rok*, "Awazymyz" No. 4(37), <http://www.awazymyz.karaimi.org/zeszyty/item/419-usuwanie-zagrozen-czyli-co-robilismy-przez-ostatni-rok> [accessed: 08.06.2013].

⁵¹ For Karaims, their traditional cuisine is the "carrier of culture". Cf. Z. Abkowicz, *Kuchnia w tradycji dnia powszedniego i świąt karaimskich*, in: M. Abkowicz, A. Sulimowicz, (ed.) (2007), *Almanach Karaimski 2007*, Wrocław, p. 15.

⁵² Report of the Ministry of the Interior and Administration, *Mniejszości narodowe i etniczne w Polsce. Charakterystyka mniejszości narodowych i etnicznych w Polsce*, <http://www.mswia.gov.pl/index.php7dzial=61&id=37> [accessed: 29.06.2009]. Excerpts are available at <http://www.stowarzyszenielemkow.pl/new/modu-les/publisher/item.php?itemid=81> [accessed: 08.06.13]. That classification of Karaims is, however, imprecise. "Karaims are not a typical minority because they combine the characteristics of religious and ethnic minorities. It should be underlined that only the so-called Crimean-Polish Karaims constitute a religious and ethnic group. Outside Poland, there are two groups of followers of the Karaim religion who are not ethnic Karaims. They include the Oriental Karaims of Semitic descent who live mainly in Palestine and Muslim countries (probably also in the US), and Slavic Karaims who live in Russia. The Crimean-Polish Karaims are Turkic people. The Karaim minority is an exotic minority of oriental origin in Poland, like Tatar and Armenian minorities." A. Rumpel (2005), *Karaimi polscy jako mniejszość etniczna i religijna*, <http://www.kosciol.pl/article.php/20050608191535408/print> [accessed: 08.06.2013]. Since 2011, data on national and ethnic minorities are collected by the Ministry of Administration and Digitisation (which replaced the Ministry of the Interior and Administration and the Ministry of Infrastructure) and not by the Ministry of the Interior which was anew established in 2011.

200⁵³ and it dramatically decreased in next 30 years. “In the 2002 National Census of Population and Housing, Karaim nationality was declared by 43 Polish citizens”.⁵⁴ According to the data of the Central Statistical Office, their number was 45.⁵⁵ However, in the next Census of Population and Housing carried in 2011, the number of Karaims increased to 346.⁵⁶ Earlier, their number was estimated to be 120. Most Karaims live in Warsaw (41 people), Wrocław (55 people), Gdańsk-Sopot-Gdynia Tricity (26 people)⁵⁷ and in Szczecin, Opole, and Cracow⁵⁸. The majority of them associate in the Karaim Religious Association in Poland and the Karaim Association in Poland. Activities of the latter include cultural events focused on maintaining traditions, organisation of scientific conferences and exhibitions to popularise the Karaim heritage⁵⁹, national and international meetings

⁵³ M. Abkowicz (2003), *Współczesność...*

⁵⁴ Report of the Ministry of the Interior and Administration, *Mniejszości narodowe...*

⁵⁵ *Ludność według narodowości, płci oraz miejsca zamieszkania w 2002 r.*, in: “Wyniki Narodowego Spisu Powszechnego Ludności i Mieszkań 2002 w zakresie deklarowanej narodowości oraz języka używanego w domu” http://www.stat.gov.pl/gus/5840_4520_PLK_HTML.htm [accessed: 08.06.2013]. The reason for the discrepancy is that the group of 45 people was divided according to their place of residence into residents of towns (43 people) and villages (2 people). More on many other discrepancies in numbers and identity profiles in: M. Abkowicz, *Karaimi we Wrocławiu*, in: M. Abkowicz, A. Sulimowicz, (ed.) (2007), *Almanach Karaimski 2007*, Wrocław, p. 107.

⁵⁶ The number of Karaims who declared complex national and ethnic identity was 113, i.e. almost 33% of Polish Karaims. Nevertheless, the percentage of people declaring homogeneous identification (233 people) increased over 500% compared to the 45 people estimate (cf. *Ludność. Stan i struktura demograficzno-społeczna. Narodowy Spis Powszechny Ludności i Mieszkań 2011*, Warszawa 2013, p. 264, http://www.stat.gov.pl/cps/rde/xbcr/gus/LUD_ludnosc_stan_str_dem_spo_NSP2011.pdf [accessed: 08.06.2013]). Therefore, the only reason for such a situation cannot be the manner in which the census questions were formulated but rather the already mentioned identity dualism as a result of which before 2011 (and due to the design of statistical research tools) more people identified themselves with Polish culture than Karaim. While the lack of option of a dual choice in 2002 was closing and limiting, the provision of an opportunity to declare double identification in the 2011 census was but an opportunity and not an obligation. So far, it remains unknown whether the Karaim identification was chosen as the first one or the second one, which is important in the context of deliberations on identity, and what percentage lives in diasporas and what percentage lives solitarily. Cf. <http://www.karaimi.org/wydarzenia/2012/item/32-gus> [accessed: 08.06.2013].

⁵⁷ <http://www.karaim.eu/index.php?id=10&lang=en> [accessed: 08.06.2013]. According to the data of the 2002 National Census, 10 members of the Karaim minority lived in Wrocław and 16 in Warsaw. Cf. *Mniejszości według województw, powiatów i gmin w 2002 r.*, 2008, http://www.stat.gov.pl/cps/rde/xbcr/gus/nsp2002_tabl3_mn.xls [accessed: 08.06.2013]. Equally detailed data based on the results on the 2011 National Census will be published in October - December 2013.

⁵⁸ B. Machul-Telus, *Wprowadzenie*, in: idem (ed.) (2012), *Karaimi*, Warszawa, p. 8.

⁵⁹ For instance, the exhibition titled “Karaj jollary – karaimskie drogi” (Karaim paths), presenting photographs from 1864 to 1960 from family archives of Polish Karaims. The exhibition was opened in October 2010 at the Ethnographic Museum in Wrocław and later it visited a number of large Polish towns as well as Trakai and Prague. Cf. M. Abkowicz, A. Sulimowicz (2010), *Karaj jollary – karaimskie drogi. Karaimi w dawnej fotografii*, Wrocław, pp. 7-9; P. Suchecka (2010), *Karaj jollary – karaimskie drogi*, in: “Awazymyz” No. 3(28), <http://awazymyz.karaimi.org/zeszyty/2010/28/item/358-ka-raj-jo%C5%82%C5%82ary-%E2%80%93karaimskie-drogi> [accessed: 08.06.2013].

for people of Karaim descent both, language courses for the youth in Trakai, as well as charity and self-help activities.⁶⁰ It is significant that only 23.26% of that minority is under 18 years of age.⁶¹ Hence, there are many voices predicting the gradual extinction of that minority. Recently, however, members of the Karaim community in Poland have been more optimistic about that difficult issue.⁶²

As far as the Karaim religion is concerned, its basis is the Old Testament and in particular the Decalogue. Karaism requires its followers to interpret it individually and adopt it in the spirit of their faith.⁶³ The so-called Karaim Bible consists of the Five Books of Moses and 19 Books of Prophets which are subordinate to the Decalogue as the leading thought.

The final organisational and legal forms crystallised in the 8th century in Mesopotamia (Iraq) under the rule of Abbasid caliph Abu Ja'far al-Mansur. The main codifier was Anan, son of David of Basra (d. 775), who argued that the Old Testament was so perfect that it could not be altered and supplemented in any way.⁶⁴

The four basic fundamentals of the Karaim faith include: 1) the written Torah and rejection of the Oral Law (Talmud and rabbinic literature)⁶⁵; 2) rejection of the vision of future award for perseverance in faith in the form of a "paradise garden" or Eden; 3) rejection of the dogma of the resurrection (different authors present that issue in various ways⁶⁶); 4) absence of angelology and demonology. Due to some

⁶⁰ Homepage of the Association: <http://www.karaimi.org/> [accessed: 08.06.2013].

⁶¹ Report of the Ministry of the Interior and Administration, *Raport dotyczący sytuacji mniejszości narodowych i etnicznych oraz języka regionalnego w Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej*, 2007, <http://prohumanum.org/wp-content/uploads/2008/03/raportmniejszosci.pdf> [accessed: 08.06.2013]. Unfortunately, reports of 2009 and 2011 do not contain such detailed data, cf. http://mniejszosci.edudemo.org.pl/pliki/cat_view/75-raporty [access: 08.06.2013].

⁶² Probably that was why Szymon Pilecki in a documentary by Włodzimierz Szpak titled *Karaimi. Ginący naród* (Karaims. Vanishing people) on Polish Karaims said that the time left to that community was one or two generations at most and later their existence would end naturally. Cf. G. Pełczyński (2004), *Karaimi...*, p. 85, and G. Górny (2007), *Sambation...* In the European context, the above has been confirmed also by other researchers both with respect to Karaims of Turkic-Khazar identity and of Jewish identity. Cf. M. Kizilov (2003), *Karaites and Karaism: Recent Developments*, http://www.cesnur.org/2003/vil2003_kizilov.htm [accessed: 08.06.2013]; T. Schegoleva (2011), *Karaites of Crimea: History and Present-Day Situation in Community*, <http://eajc.org/page34/news24063.html> [accessed: 08.06.2013]. On the other hand, publications in "Awazymyz" quarterly demonstrate that the involvement of the youngest generation of Karaims in the life of the minority is not little.

⁶³ S. Pilecki (2003), *Religia...*

⁶⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁶⁵ More on the impact on rabbinic literature, medieval Jewish philosophy, and Arabic culture on the religious doctrine of Karaism in: R. Otsason (2004), *Karaimi...* In 1903, Samuel Poznański wrote that Karaims say that "they only observe the Bible and do not recognise the tradition which followed it, i.e. Talmud, but [...] that principle is theory only and could not have been fully complied with in practice". S. Poznański (1903), *Karaici*, in: *Wielka Encyklopedia Powszechna Ilustrowana, Vol. XXXIII-XXXIV: Joerg Jan Krystyan Gotfryd – Karyszew Mikołaj*, Warszawa, p. 776.

⁶⁶ Cf. A. Tokarczyk (2006), *op. cit.*, pp. 66-78.

of analogies to Christian reformation movements, Karaims are sometimes called the “protestants of Judaism”.⁶⁷ In Karaism, the chief religious dignitary is a *hachan* who exercises authority over a district. Individual communes, in turn, are headed by *hazzans* (in the 19th century, there were two of them in each *kenesa* – the senior one called *ullu* and the junior one⁶⁸), who act as priests and registrars, and have *shamashes* as their helpers (whose duties include managing the temple property and teaching children). Both *hazzans* and *shamashes* are elected by the entire congregation. The traditional place of religious meetings of Karaims is *kenesa* (temple) and if it is not there, religious meetings are held at private houses. The latter is common among Polish Karaims as the last *kenesa* in Poland (established in 1946 by *hazzan* Rafał Abkowicz in Wrocław) was closed in 1989. The congregation membership decreased from 200 people in 1991 to about 40 in 2005 which is due to both the decreasing number of Karaims and their distancing from Karaism as a religious doctrine.⁶⁹ So what are the reasons for that situation?

After the question [about the religious life of Karaims – P.L. and K.R.] was asked, it was found that out of 401 people who responded to it, 87.2% considered themselves to be believers; in Lithuania that percentage was 84.4% and in Poland it was 93.7%. That global attitude towards faith is the result of being a follower of Karaism (63.8%) and Catholicism (23.4%). At this point it is important to note that there are significant differences in terms of religious identity between the two communities. In the Lithuanian community, 69.5% of people declared to be followers of Karaism while in the Polish community only 51.6%. That considerable difference can be explained with the fact that 42.1% people in Poland and 14.9% people in Lithuanian declared to be followers of Catholicism.⁷⁰

Thus, we can speak of two identity constructs, i.e. Karaim-Karaim and Karaim-Catholic. The identity dualism in respect to religion is not limited only to religion as it also closely connected with the language of religious life.

The Karaim belief that the truths of the faith must be acquired in their original version makes it necessary to study Hebrew as each verse of the Holy Script in the Karaim language is an interpretation of the original and the canon obliges the followers to interpret the Bible on their own, for their own use, and not using someone else’s interpretations. Thus the commitment to maintain the Karaim language is limited by its absence in the Karaim religion (not entirely though as some prayers are written and read in Karaim) which, in turn, is inextricably connected with the need to know the Hebrew tongue despite the fact that the first translation of the Hebrew Bible into Karaim dates back to the 11th century. A characteristic feature of Karaims

⁶⁷ Cf. G. Pelczyński (2006), *Protestanci judaizmu?*, “Awazymyz” No. 1(12), <http://www.awazymyz.karaimi.org/zeszyty/item/166-protestanci-judaizmu> [accessed: 08.06.2013].

⁶⁸ S. Pilecki (2003), *Religia...*

⁶⁹ Cf. footnotes 6 and 8 above.

⁷⁰ L. Adamczuk (2004), *op. cit.*; cf. S. Pilecki (2003), *Religia...*

is, therefore, their bilingualism which is part of the *sacrum-profanum* dualism.⁷¹ Interestingly, the mentioned 2007 Report of the Ministry of the Interior and Administration reads: “Karaims lost the knowledge of their native language. What distinguishes them, however, is the Karaim religion which has its roots in Judaism.”⁷² That statement clearly demonstrates a lack of knowledge about the Karaim religion and faith and it was regularly repeated in all publications of the Ministry of the Interior and Administration on ethnic and national minorities in 2005-2008. The statistical data e.g. the results of the 2002 National Census seem to confirm, however, that the Karaim language is dying as not one person who declared to be a member of the Karaim ethnic minority, would speak Karaim at home.⁷³ One may ask whether Karaims, as citizens of the post-modern world, speak the language of the country where they reside and only that language.

Differences between communities are, however, relatively huge. In Poland, the language of the country [the national language of the country of residence – P.L. and K.R.] is spoken at home by 96.8% of Karaims and in Lithuania by 59.3%. In Lithuania, the second most popular language used at home is Russian (22.9%) and the third one is Polish (8.7%). The Karaim language is used at home by 24 people in Lithuania and 2 people in Poland.⁷⁴

However, in order to remain faithful to the dictates of their religion, Karaims should use Hebrew when reading the Holy Script, and Karaim when praying. In everyday life, Karaims use the official language of the country where they live. In this way, the bilingual religious practice seems to permeate the bilingual reality of Karaims’ daily life.

POSTMODERNITY AND KARAIM IDENTITY DUALISM: AN INTERPRETATION

The post-modern identity is an identity which is treated as a “task to be fulfilled”. That task is an ongoing process which is completed not in the final phase of development. Instead, it is being completed in the course of a continuous dynamic reconstruction which is uninterrupted and not subject to evolutionary fatalism. In

⁷¹ An additional differentiation is the division of the Karaim language into Trakai-Vilnius and Lutsk-Halych dialects. Cf. S. Pilecki (2003), *Religia...*

⁷² Report of the Ministry of the Interior and Administration, *Mniejszości narodowe...*

⁷³ Report of the Ministry of the Interior and Administration, *Raport dotyczący sytuacji...* Similar conclusions can be found in sociological research. “Results of the research demonstrate that 28 people in the Lithuanian community (10.2%) and 11 people in the Polish community (8.7%) are able to both speak and write in that language [the Karaim language – P.L. and K.R.]. A lower level of fluency in that language, i.e. speaking only, has been declared by 69 people in Lithuania (25.1%) and 17 people in Poland (13.5%). It means that less than one third of the Karaim population in both countries can speak Karaim and two thirds of them do not know that language.” Cf. Adamczuk (2004), *op. cit.* So far, the lack of detailed reports on the 2011 National Census makes it impossible to update those data.

⁷⁴ L. Adamczuk (2004), *op. cit.*

that sense, identity is *practised*. We do not *have* it, so we can never *lose* it, which is frequently forgotten by risk society theorists, or make it unconditionally subordinate to our will and actions. Identity is being created in the course of a (*role-*) *play* between us and the external world. The identity game has a double purpose. It is a game played to gain identity (a game played by the world / environments and individuals and between individuals) and a game of identity (in which we try to restore our agency in creating our identity against the impact of the environment and other people). What is at stake in both variants of the identity game, which occur simultaneously, is the *reconciliation of identity* on the basis of short-term, motivated and dynamically changing social factors and influences. Essential issues are the art of maintaining an *equilibrium* between the social impact and one's own *self*, and the ability to discover the modernity dialectics which balances our own contribution against the contribution of others in creating individual identities. In that sense, we are never fully ourselves but *products of others* just like other people are never completely "alien" because in everyone we find a trait of ourselves as we also influence others. We all participate in the same game.

In the light of their history, Karaims are a perfect illustration of metaphorical postmodernist claims about modern identity issues, identity instability, fragmentation and elective identity construction. Giddens argues that today individuals are forced to construct and reconstruct their identity on their own due to the changing experience of everyday life and modern institutions' tendency to fragment individual identities.⁷⁵ The fragmentation, in turn, leads to identity being elective and facultative. Identity becomes a syncretic structure which "happens" to us rather than "lasts". In other words, the configuration of identity elements is as unstable as the stability of the continuously accelerating present. In addition, identity is based on numerous paradoxes and mutual exclusions. Karaims, despite their small number, are also subject to various contradictions. That small groups combines in its culture Turkic and Semitic languages, various interpretations of dogmas of faith (e.g. some branches of Karaims consider both Jesus and Muhammad to be prophets), and strong discrepancies in the impact of Jewish religion and culture on specific subgroups (lesser in case of Lithuanian and Polish Karaims⁷⁶ who are considered the continuators of the Khazar line⁷⁷).

⁷⁵ A. Giddens (1991) *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*, Stanford, p. 181 [Polish translation: *Nowoczesność i tożsamość. "Ja" i społeczeństwo w epoce późnej nowoczesności*, Warszawa 2002, p. 254].

⁷⁶ More at <https://forum.jewish.org.pl/> (bookmark: Judaism) [accessed: 08.06.2013].

⁷⁷ "The main evidence is their language which is the almost unchanged Turkic-Kipchak dialect. It is also known that that language was the language of Khazars and their successors Polovtsy (Kipchaks)." Cf. J. Krzystek (1992), *op. cit.* Other researchers are of a different opinion, for instance Freund argued that "the language itself is no evidence of the Khazar descent of Karaimes. He argues that they are ethnic Jews who came to Crimea directly from Byzantium and adopted the language from Khazars in the same way as Spanish Jews adopted Ladino and German Jews adopted Yiddish. As key evidence he cites the fact that Crimea was inhabited, in addition to Karaims, by the so-called Krymchaks who spoke exactly the same language but were followers of Judaism in its Rabbinic version." *Ibidem*.

Today, the decisive feature of identity is not a coherent unity developed and maintained by tradition but the act of creation. The unity protection is particularly difficult⁷⁸ in the case of Karaims.⁷⁹ Some time ago, Karaims were *pilgrims* in Bauman's sense.⁸⁰ Today, they are a postmodern transformation of that archetype that is a sum of an introvert *stroller*, a nomadic *vagabond*, an ex-territorial *tourist*, and a *player* entangled in identity games.⁸¹ Each of those ideal types or models of postmodern individuals contains an element that has strongly affected the shape of identity of contemporary Karaims. Those models, as Bauman writes, have always existed. When reviewing the history of Karaims, it is impossible to ignore the impression that Karaims were (in result of a number of historical and socio-political factors) one of the first to depart from the model of a *pilgrim* towards models which before the advent of postmodernity appeared marginal and disjunctive.⁸² Of course, Karaims are not exceptional. It suffices to mention Roma people, Sahara nomads and Mongolian tribes. Usually, the above was experienced by peoples and nations that for a long time lacked (or still lack) an autonomous state organisation or were subject to "cultural eradication" by mighty powers starting from ancient Egypt and the Roman Empire, through the Golden Horde, up to totalitarian regimes of the 20th century. In that sense, Karaims are a *historical prototype* of postmodern individuals and groups, i.e. deterritorialised, with eclectic identities, enslaved by the sense of unlimited freedom in "creating oneself" (What tradition to draw from? From where does my "self" draw more?).

When speaking of the identity dualism of Karaims, it is worthwhile to illustrate it recalling Włodzimierz Szpak's documentary film titled *Karaimi. Ginący naród* [*Karaims. The vanishing people*] which focuses on the fate of Karaims-Poles. One of its interesting characters is Anna Sulimowicz of a Karaim father and a Polish

⁷⁸ M. Abkowicz (2003), *Współczesność...* and idem (2006), *Karaimi...*

⁷⁹ Z. Bauman comments on that in the following way: "Efforts of an individual to stabilise the self do not compensate for consequences of the original 'disembedding'; they will not be sufficient to keep the identity tossed by the waves and drifting in one place. Some authors (including Giddens) elaborate on the now popular attempts at 're-embedding' of the disembedded self which has broken away. However, since havens are but postulates and their vision is drawn with capricious emotions, the places where the self tries to anchor are plagued with the same unsustainability and unreliability which had prompted the 'disembedded' individuals to seek havens so avidly". Z. Bauman (2000), *Ponowoczesność jako źródło cierpień*, Warszawa, p. 43.

⁸⁰ Z. Bauman (1994), *Dwa szkice...*, pp. 10-14. The decision to adhere to Bauman's thought on "postmodern" identity transformations and not to other competing concepts e.g. "postmodern society" of A. Etzioni, periodisation of modernity of S. Lash, or determinants of modernity of K. Kumara (cf. Z. Bokszański (2007), *Indywidualizm...*, pp. 36-39) results from the construction of Bauman's "postmodern" identity which is different from other frequently excessively sociological and anti-voluntarist concepts which reject the emergent nature of individual transformations of identity. Cf. *ibidem*, pp. 39-49 and 132-134. See also M. Castells' construction of identity in the "network of flows". Cf. M. Castells (1997), *Power of Identity* [Polish translation: *Siła tożsamości*, Warszawa 2008].

⁸¹ Z. Bauman (1994), *Dwa szkice...*, pp. 21-36.

⁸² *Ibidem*, p. 7.

mother. The apparently harmonious story of Anna breaks down when she speaks about passing Karaim traditions to her child. Wishing to save the heritage of her father from being forgotten, she cannot free herself from a subconscious feeling of guilt about putting her Karaim identity above the Polish one. That tension between being a Karaim and a Pole was not noticeable at all in a social campaign titled “I am Polish man/Polish woman”. Its aim was to draw attention to the multicultural character of Poland and acquaint a wide range of the public with the issue of double identity.⁸³

The dual self-identification is also evidenced in the research by Adamczuk demonstrating that Karaims are more strongly attached to their religious declaration than to the ethnic/national one. However, it might have been a result of a confusion caused by interviewers equating national affiliation with nationality-citizen-ship.⁸⁴ It needs to be remembered, however, that prior to the adoption of Judaism and reforming its foundations, Karaism was a sum of various beliefs, histories, and secular traditions. Only later, “the Bible became not only the moral and religious code of Karaims but also a history book in which they tried to trace the history of their people, identifying their own past with the changing fate of the Israeli people. Disconnected from their native land, Karaims started to wander along histories of other peoples”.⁸⁵ Does it mean that religious declarations do not go hand in hand with ethnic/national declarations orthodox Karaims? Or perhaps did the “religious” vision of the history of Karaims precede the “secular” one? And which of them may be considered the “true” history? Questions like those seem to never end.

The situation is further complicated by the fact that the Karaim community is scattered. Karaims meet at their ethnic/national conventions every few years when they cross state borders and consolidate around the historically nomadised Karaim identity. For instance:

In the Lithuanian Karaim community, there is no person who was born in post-war Poland but there are people who were born in Ukraine and Crimea (23) as well as in Russia (5). From among the Polish community, 68.3% people were born in Poland, 19% in Lithuania, and 12% to the east of Poland. Unfortunately, there are no data on Russia and Ukraine and, therefore, we cannot “balance” those migrations. Were it possible, it might turn out that Poland and Lithuania have been the countries of destination for Karaim migrants.⁸⁶

Karaims live also at the crossroads between their land of origin and their present homelands. “It is no surprise, therefore, that within the Karaim soul two elements

⁸³ A. Dubiński, M. Abkowicz (2008), *Kampania medialna “Jestem Polką/Jestem Polakiem”, “Awazymyz”*, No. 1(18), <http://www.awazymyz.karaimi.org/zeszyty/item/231-kampania-medialna-jestem-polka-jestem-polakiem> [accessed: 08.06.2013].

⁸⁴ L. Adamczuk, *op. cit.*

⁸⁵ A. Mardkowicz (1936), *Szkice Karaimskie: Cz. I. Pogrzebane źródła. Cz. II. Samotna wysepka*, “Karaj Awazy” No. 10, p. 12, http://www.jazyszlar.karaimi.Org/czasopisma/1/989_2.jpg [accessed: 08.06.2013].

⁸⁶ L. Adamczuk (2004), *op. cit.*

struggle with one another. On the one hand, it is the self-preservation instinct of the species that desperately defends its place on Earth and, on the other hand, it is fatalism which derives its strength from grim facts” [the long distance from the native land – P.L. and K.R.].⁸⁷ In this dramatic tension, there is the experience of the episodic nature of freedom, i.e. after a moment of satisfaction with finding peace, security, shelter and fulfilment of emotional needs, the imagination realises the temporary and ephemeral nature of that situation and a spectrum of possible threats and mechanisms of the stability internal erosion which do not allow the identity to get attached to new conditions and become *embedded*.

What prevails is the specific self-doubt⁸⁸ manifested in questions “who am I”, “where do I come from”, and “where am I heading”. “Doubt, a pervasive feature of modern critical reason, permeates into everyday life as well as philosophical consciousness, and forms a general existential dimension of the contemporary social world.”⁸⁹ What is particularly interesting for a sociologist is the presence of that uncertainty in mental foundations of community systems, in the history which legitimises cohabitation and continuity of particular groups, and in the social awareness of people inhabiting a given area which they consider “their own”. It is a category which undermines the stability and certainty of “familiarity”. Something what “from time to time”, “with varying luck”, or “at times” happens to be *ours*, may quickly become *foreign* if the time for which it belongs to another group or is *no man’s* property gets longer. That is exactly what has affected various elements of the Karaim identity and led to its slow deconstruction and entropy. This is how legends about Karaims’ links with the emergence of the State of Sumer, the traditional tracing of Karaims’ lineage to the Sadducees and the Karaim language disappear. Instead, new elements of identity have gained on importance e.g. Karaims’ role in the history of Poland and Lithuania and connections with such towns as Evpatoria and Trakai after Karaims eventually settled in Europe. In result of the above, the tradition is from time to time and in a fragmentary manner updated and internally transformed, creating itself anew to an extent. It happens through transformations of its components and playing with the baggage or burden of the past and the needs of the present.⁹⁰ We strive to eliminate ambivalence, ambiguity, uncertainty, historical vagueness and dualistic structure in our mental representations of the world around us because we have a need to reduce cognitive dissonance. And this is a feature of all peoples and all nations as well as of each individual identity.

⁸⁷ A. Mardkowicz (1936), *op. cit.*, p. 14, [accessed: 08.06.2013].

⁸⁸ “Radical doubt filters into most aspects of day-to-day life, at least as a background phenomenon.” (A. Giddens (2002), *op. cit.*, p. 248). Cf. Z. Bauman (2000), *Ponowoczesność...*, pp. 44-59.

⁸⁹ A. Giddens (2002), *op. cit.*, p. 5.

⁹⁰ E. Hobsbawm, T. Ranger (1983), *The Invention of Tradition* [Polish translation: *Tradycja wynaleziona*, Kraków 2008].

SEARCHING FOR THE SELF: NEW DIRECTIONS OF EXPLORATION

It is worth noting that Karaims fit perfectly the contemporary discourse of post-materialist transformations⁹¹ which can be observed on the example of contrasting hierarchies of values of Polish and Lithuanian Karaims.⁹² In addition, they are an interesting example of the narrativisation of identity.⁹³ “I do not know” and “it is difficult to say” are categories which are frequently used by the Karaim youth in reconstructing their hierarchies of values⁹⁴, thereby confirming Giddens’ thesis about *doubt* discussed above. The inability to find a firm basis of one’s own identity is a characteristic feature of the liquid times of modernity in which one’s individual and social self is not owned but created in a modular manner by combining inconsistent and internally contradictory elements. In the case of Karaims that includes breaking traditional divisions between the language of the sacred and the language of the profane and concomitant explaining the structure of the Karaim culture with various presumed lines of ethnogenesis. That is how the Karaim game of and for identity is played. Karaims, however, are not exactly Bauman’s *players*. They are a group which cannot or does not want to *slightly adhere* to requirements of modernity or, which is more probable, it neither not wants to do that (as there is a large group of Karaims who want to maintain and restore their cultural heritage) nor is able to do so (which can be deduced from the mentioned research carried by Adamczuk).⁹⁵ That dual exclusion loop (unwillingness and inability) makes them modern “*sans papiers*,

⁹¹ R. Inglehart (1997), *Modernization and postmodernization: cultural, economic, and political change in 43 societies*, Princeton; R. Inglehart, *Culture and Democracy*, in: L. E. Harrison, S. P. Huntington (eds) (2000), *Culture Matters* [Polish translation: *Kultura ma znaczenie*, Poznań, 2003]; R. Inglehart, *Pojawienie się wartości postmaterialistycznych*, in: P. Sztompka, M. Kucia, (ed.) (2005), *Socjologia. Lekturey*, Kraków; J. Żakowski, *Różni nas seks. Rozmowa z Ronaldem Inglehartem*, in: J. Żakowski (ed.) (2005), *Anty-Tina. Rozmowy o lepszym świecie, myśleniu i życiu*, Warszawa.

⁹² Responses to “The adopted list of values revealed two significant differences between Lithuanian and Polish communities. Those differences consist, *inter alia*, in that “career” and “professional work” were considered “very important” and “important” much more frequently in Lithuania than in Poland. In turn, “culture” and “free time” were indicated more often in Poland than in Lithuania. What we have here is the classic model of two opposing values which is characteristic of a certain stage in the development of modern industrial societies.” L. Adamczuk (2004), *op. cit.*

⁹³ W. J. Burszta, W. Kuligowski (2005), *Sequel. Dalsze przygody kultury w globalnym świecie*, Warszawa, p. 226.

⁹⁴ W. J. Burszta and W. Kuligowski explain it as follows: “a man of today immersed primarily in the meta culture of novelty, is to an increasingly greater extent deprived of permanent conceptual frameworks which were at his disposal (and which were imposed for instance by religion) in traditional cultures and, therefore, often quite intuitively, is a *seeker of meaning*”. *Ibidem*. Cf. L. Adamczuk (2004), *op. cit.*

⁹⁵ At this point, the question about the extent of potential opportunities arises once again as “the postmodern world is considering the possibility of living with uncertainty forever, in an environment uncertain till the end of time and with the uncertainty which cannot be reduced in any way” Z. Bauman (2002), *Ponowoczesność...*, p. 44.

stateless, refugees, exiles⁹⁶, who were welcome in most places in which they arrived (in Lithuania and Russia) but never were there at home, i.e. in a place which they could call their (Karaim) land, hence Bauman's analogy to the fate of ancient exiles.⁹⁷ However, Karaims are not a "despised" people of the world, condemned and chased away from any place where they appeared, but a "welcomed guest". Being a *guest* and not a *host* is the root of the problem, i.e. being a guest who is not chased away but treated as a good *Other* but still the Other. "Perfect intruders who are always and everywhere strangers and never have their own place with the exception of places which do not have a place themselves and cannot be found on maps used by ordinary people."⁹⁸ That can well be observed on the example of Karaims who are more often described as inhabitants of a *vision* of history or a *moment* in history rather than of a specific place, town, or country.⁹⁹

The discourse on the Karaim identity in the newest scarce sources from the early 21st century differs significantly from the sources from the end of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century. Today, when speaking about Karaims, questions about their identity are asked through the prism of the "people of Israel" or "citizens of the world". And the latter interpretation seems to prevail or strongly tends to prevail. Writing about that latter category, Bauman argues that "having a deeply rooted identity which is resistant to change, 'an identity for life', will quickly prove to be not an asset but a burden in the life of a person who does not fully control the circumstances of their life journey – an albatross or a ballast which must be thrown overboard in order to regain the freedom of movement"¹⁰⁰. One cannot help noticing, however, that, paradoxically, in the face of all postmodern transformations of the world, the strength of the identity of the least numerous minority is its size. Perhaps, it is a positive effect of not exceeding the critical mass of identification or of not getting close to its limits. Thus, the generalised Other for the Karaim community, in particular for the diaspora members who know each other, is a construct representing not a much larger community than the group of individual, dispersed communities of people who know each other directly. It means that statistically a Karaim is more often a close or distant friend of another Karaim than an "unfamiliar" member of the Karaim community. Shared by few ethnic minorities in few countries, that unique

⁹⁶ Z. Bauman (2005), *Liquid Life* [Polish translation: *Płynne życie*, Kraków, 2007, p. 13].

⁹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 14.

⁹⁸ Z. Bauman (2004), *Wasted Lives* [Polish translation: *Życie na przemiał*, Kraków, 2004, p. 126].

⁹⁹ In the case of Karaims who take advantage of technological advances in communication (e.g. Karaim language e-learning courses), the virtual participation (new media, globalisation processes, and the expansion of network forms of building ethnic and national bonds) is but an action of an individual and not a manifestation of a group activity just like in the case of all other real communities whose members use the Internet. Cf. L. Graczyk, *Karaimi – społeczność realna w wirtualnej sieci*, in: B. Machul-Telus (ed.) (2012), *Karaimi*, Warszawa, p. 223. In addition, the Karaim community, which is larger in the Internet than in reality, is still strongly entangled in processes of hybridisation and fluctuation of identity which are side effects of the new media (*ibidem*).

¹⁰⁰ Z. Bauman (2000), *Ponowoczesność...*, p. 52.

characteristic of Karaims as a community which is permanently at the crossroads of history, identification and religion, and which keeps trying to firmly anchor and embed its identity raises further questions. Are Karaims now facing a new challenge of setting off on the most important journey into their self identity and across further borders? Do they need to find their place or just to find themselves? Perhaps the words of the Karaim anthem *Hanuz karajlar eksilmied*¹⁰¹ will prove to be prophetic:

Karaims have not yet perished
So long as we live,
We still believe
That we will rise.

ABSTRACT

The article aims to reconstruct the history of Karaims in the perspective of identity dualisms (polygenesis, bilingualism, etc.) in this ethnic and religious group which according to us is an illustration of "postmodern identity re-transformations". Emphasising social and religious aspects of Karaism, we portray that minor minority in the Republic of Poland as an exemplification of postmodern statements about "troubles with cultivating identity" in which the cardinal construction rule remains "doubting" in Anthony Giddens' terms. Scrutinizing first references to and records of Karaims as well as their wandering history across whole Europe up to modern times, we propose a thesis on the immanent features of deterritorialisation and identity eclecticism ascribed to Karaism from the dawn of its history. Thus the title Karaim "identity question" remains a dual one. It addresses the past ("who were we? and where do we come from?") and the future ("who are we going to be?", "where are we heading?").

¹⁰¹ The is sung to the tune of Dąbrowski's Mazurka, i.e. the national anthem of Poland. Cf. <http://www.jazysz-lar.karaimi.org/index.php?m=7&p=467> [accessed: 08.06.2013].



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Polityka zagraniczna zjednoczonych Niemiec [Foreign Policy of Reunited Germany]

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Twenty years ago, on 12 September 1990, at the consent of the Four Powers that until then bore responsibility for the two German states, Germany was reunited. The new Federal Republic of Germany was a completely sovereign state that could define its foreign policy without any limitations. In the new situation, Germany had to define its international objectives anew. At the same time, Germans had to remember about their past, responsibility for WW2, violence and calamities their neighbours and other states had suffered. In the 1990s, Germany's geographical and geopolitical location in the heart of Europe, its human and economic potential and the resulting ambitions and aspirations made Europe and the world take an interest in reunited Germany which, in turn, had to face higher expectations as well as fears and concerns expressed by international public opinion.

This book is the first volume of the series titled *The Federal Republic of Germany. Twenty Years after the Reunification*. It is a discussion on international activities of the reunited FRG and an evaluation of its major objectives and decisions in the area of foreign policy. In an analytical perspective, four main areas of Germany's external activity are assessed, i.e. its approach to the European Union, the transatlantic agreement, its policy toward Russia, and reactions to most important challenges and threats of modern times. The authors have succeeded in describing the continuation and changeability of Germany's external strategies, indicating factors that influenced the shape, direction and character of the foreign policy of the Federal Republic of Germany and their consequences for Germany and its international environment. In the complex European and global environment, Germany keeps trying to develop and implement a strategy corresponding to its new potential.