Many languages have been spoken by Karaites around the world. The first Karaites—and members of similar groups—spoke Aramaic, Persian, and Arabic. In the classical period of Karaism the adherents of this movement contributed most significantly to Arabic and Hebrew literatures and linguistics, as well as to other fields of knowledge. During the Byzantine period of Karaite history, Greek was current among those within the Byzantine and post-Byzantine cultural realm. So the Karaite communities of the former Ottoman capital, Edirne, and those of the new capital, Istanbul, being mostly descendants of the Edirne community, as well as the Karaites of the pre-Ottoman Balkan Peninsula, spoke—and occasionally wrote—Greek. But towards the end of eighteenth or beginning of the nineteenth century they began to switch to Turkish. The Karaites of Egypt, those of the Land of Israel and of Hit in Iraq of course spoke Arabic. The Karaites in modern Israel—who stem mostly from Egypt and Hit—now speak Israeli Hebrew, and those in the USA, mostly of Egyptian descent, speak American English spiced with some residual Arabic.

The Karaites of Europe, including those in the Crimea, together with the Rabbanite Jews of the Crimea, known as Krimchaks,2 are the only Jews in the medieval and early modern periods to speak Turkic.3 A gradual switchover to the local Slavic languages began
after the Russian annexation of the territories populated by the Turkic-speaking Karaites (the Crimea and Poland-Lithuania) in the late eighteenth century, and intensified after the assimilation and dejudaization processes began to accelerate in the late nineteenth century. At present, Russian, Polish, Ukrainian and Lithuanian all are spoken by East European Karaites. Only remnants of Turkic speech still survive, mostly in Troki (Lithuania), in Halicz (Western Ukraine) and in Poland. Attempts have been made in recent years to revive the withering Turkic languages of the Karaites, namely the Troki Karaim dialect\textsuperscript{4} in Lithuania and Poland, and Crimean-Tatar in Ukraine and Moscow. Recently the Northern Karaites in Lithuania and Poland formally adopted the Troki Karaim dialect as their national language, and the Ukrainian and Moscow Karaites did the same for Crimean-Tatar, as part of the effort to revive these dying languages.

The present article is an attempt to survey systematically the state of the Turkic languages of the Karaites and their literatures. In the past, their Turkic speech was frequently regarded as odd and unnatural, for a Jewish group, even non-European. Combined with the too widespread view of the Turks and Turkey in general as a racially strange, unwelcome, and hostile element in Europe—an attitude still alive in too many quarters—the Turkic speech of the Karaites in a sense provoked their feelings of alienation in nineteenth century Europe. Their languages and the literatures in them created com-

\textsuperscript{4} \textit{Karaim} (or \textit{Karaim}) is the term generally used for the Turkic language of the "Northern" (formerly Polish-Lithuanian) Karaites; cf., e.g., Zajaczkowski, \textit{The Karaim Literature"}; Pritsak, \textit{"The Karaim"}. This term is assigned to distinguish this Turkic language, unique to the Karaites (called by them in Hebrew \textit{leshon qedar}), from other Turkic languages formerly in Karaita use, such as Karaite-Crimean-Tatar (called by them \textit{leshon Tatar}) or Karaite-Crimean-Turkish (called by them in Hebrew \textit{leshon yishma'el}). In East European languages, like Russian, Polish, etc. (including even spoken Yiddish!), "Karaim", which is the Hebrew plural for \textit{qara'} (Karaite), is a singular form from which adjectives like "karaismki/karaimski", etc. were formed. In the twentieth century, those members of the East European community in question who no longer wish to be regarded as Jews and have adopted a Turkic national identity, most frequently use the plural form "Karaimy/Karaimlar," etc., after the Slavic usage (and occasionally \textit{Karazy/Karaylar}). We will use "Karaim" for the language, as an adjective, and "Karaim/Karaims" as a noun for the \textit{modern} vanishing (previously Turkic-speaking) ethnic group living in Eastern Europe, whose members nowadays fiercely deny any connection with Jews. While speaking of the forefathers of the same group who identified themselves as [Karaite] Jews, the term "Karaite" is used.