

Abstract

The bachelor thesis examines the life and activity of Avraham Firkovich, East European Karaite scholar, manuscript collector and alleged forger. The aim of the thesis is to present the significance of Firkovich's collections, that constitute a great part of Hebrew and Judeo-Arabic manuscripts in The National Library of Russia, his relations to Haskalah and *maskilim*, who perceived Firkovich ambivalently, and his lifelong effort to protect Crimean Karaites from anti-Jewish laws implemented by Russian Empire. The thesis endeavours to depict Firkovich's motives for forging manuscripts, to explain his theory about the origin of Crimean Karaites and to present his scholarly work. Firkovich's forged manuscripts (the Mejelis and Derbent Document), which Firkovich passed off as old colophons to Torah scrolls, served him as a foundation for his ahistorical theories about the origin of Crimean Karaites. Based on these manuscripts and other forgeries he claimed that Karaites inhabited the Crimean Peninsula before the crucifixion of Jesus Christ and therefore are not guilty for Christ's crucifixion like the rabbanites. Thus he strived to protect his community from tsarist offices and to ensure a more significant status in his community for himself.