

RETURN OF THE KHAZARS

A Film Script by
Edward HIRSCH
(USA)

Picture:

High slopes of the Caucasus mountains, shepherds seek summer pasture for huge herds of sheep.

Dissolve to:

Slow pan across Georgia's Eastern steppes.

Dissolve to:

Slow tilt up tall forest trees.

Sound:

(Music: folk music -reminiscent of Adzhari culture; integrated under the following sequence)

Georgia endured scores of invaders through a tumultuous history that also included moments of glory and greatness. Persians, Pechenegs, Huns, Mongols, Alans and Avars. Most formidable were the Khazars - a nomadic tribe that arose out of the mist in the year 200 and vanished into the clouds in the twelfth century.

Unlike the other tribes - barbarians who harnessed their slaves to chariots - the Khazars brought an advanced civilization -unsurpassed before or since. In the words of Saban K'uzgu, the leading Muslim religious scholar, the Russian society that dislodged the Khazars from their empire owes a heavy debt to the Khazars. Russian art, culture and enterprise was all a legacy of the Khazars

Longshot: Hilltop vantage point of fabled Trabzon which has watched as great empires come and go.

Why haven't we heard of the Khazars, then? Why has their story been suppressed? If the Khazars, whose historical authenticity is not challenged were the most enlightened empire of their time - mightier than Byzantium - why do they still go unrecognized?

Pan: Sumel Monastery set amongst lush forested mountains.

The Khazars believed that all peoples, all faiths and all nations were complementary -not contradictory. This failed - and still does today - to cut any ice with nations that were at each other's throats.

Full shot. Ataturk Kosku behind the town of Trabzon. Paintings of "Father Turk."

Cut to:

Close shot. Tea garden in Rize.

The Khazars were the first visionaries. Their Pax Khazarica extended from the Caspian Sea - known as the Khazar Sea - to the Black Sea - from the Volga to the Dnieper and the Don -and at its height in the ninth century - included most of the Caucasus and the southern steppes.

Full shot. Panorama of majestic view of sea, flowers and trees.

Cut to:

Full shot. Kazar in Hungary. Maiden in folk costume with bonnet adorned with silver lace.

But in 965 A. D. Sviataslov defeated the Khazars in battle and the mightiest trading empire the world had ever known was dissolved. The Khazars vanished with hardly a trace. Not a single sentence of their language survives. Their cities were destroyed. The Mongols crushed their monuments. The

Soviets later flooded the Khazars' remaining archaeological sites, constructing great dams and hydroelectric projects. The Khazars fled to Turkey, Hungary, the Crimea and Caucasus.

Cut To:

Close Shot. Small Village in Nograd County in Hungary,

Full Shot. Tall Tree in Georgia Topples...

Cut To:

Full Shot. Another tree starts to fall. When it is halfway down...

The Khazars were a beacon to the ravaged peoples of the world. In a time of the utmost cruelty and cynicism they offered a refuge to the most humble and despised. Deposed emperors fled to the Khazar citadels at Atil and to the Crimea - thousands of Jews persecuted by Byzantium fled Constantinople for Khazaria - where they were warmly welcomed. No one was too great or too small to find a home among the Khazars.

Cut to:

Picture:

Full shot. Church in Batumi. Mosque in Trabzon. Synagogue in Hungary.

In the eighth century, the Khazars - who previously prayed only to the thunder god decided to choose a religion. They held a great debate, inviting the leading religious thinkers of the three great faiths.

RETURN OF THE KHAZARS

Full shot. Border area of Kemal Pasa; empty gravel beach, tea factory, mysterious Byzantine Church.

The Christian spoke of redemption and a promise of heaven. He pointed to the great wonders of Byzantium, the richest and most magnificent tribute to God ever erected. The Muslim told of the glories of their armies which had vanquished everything that stood before them. He promised paradise. The Jew told of the wandering and sufferings of his people. Scorned by all the nations of the world, they offered an eternity of hardship and struggle.

Full shot. Faithful of Batumi lighting their candles the town's 11th century Georgian Orthodox cathedral, an parishioner with decision for centuries. In the end it was a tie. an offering of chickens for the harvest festival also kindles a commemoration for Georgia's martyrs in the struggle for freedom from the Soviet Union.

The choice was simple for the Khazar Khagan. The entire Khazar ruling class converted to Judaism. Their army remained Muslim and the majority of the people Christian. Scholars have puzzled over this elderly parishioner with decision for centuries. In the end it was a tie. an offering of chickens for the harvest festival also kindles a commemoration for Georgia's martyrs in the struggle for freedom from the Soviet Union.

Close up. Enter Licka. I am looking for the answer. I will look in
She is dressed in Georgia, in Adzharia, in Abkhazia, in
tattered clothes. She Karachay and Balkaria and even into Astrahan
lights a candle. in Russia, the site of the Khazar capital and
fabled Trabzon home of the Laz people, also
descendants of the Khazars.

Dissolve TO: Sound:

Licka's home, a bombed Licka: "I have no money and no way out."

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out structure.

Licka's on way to **So the way out is the way through.**
school.

Shattered streets, empty
dolphinarium, desolate train
station.

**My town has seen 2 civil wars. We have little
electricity, little water, and little importance
in the world.**

Licka's school.
Laughing faces.

**But i would rather live in Adzaria than in the
most elegant city on earth. Life is good in
Georgia, and even better in Adzaria.**

Licka plays piano.

Narrator: Licka is a descendant of the Khazars,
one of the few remaining. The rest of the
Khazars are scattered like the wind across
Karachay and Balkaria in the Caucasus,
Hungary, Turkey and the United States.

Licka making feature Licka is a movie star at the age of fifteen. She
film. has already appeared in one award - winning
full - length feature, a remnant of the once -great
Georgian film - industry which is in danger of
fading like the Khazar empire.

Narrator goes for a walk
through torn streets, passing
crumbling buildings, and
street vendors with their
paltry wares.

To me, Batumi is the most beautiful city in the
world. Because one thousand years ago the
Khazars strolled this same path.

Narrator strolls along
Black Sea Coast, sits on
bench.

Batumi is a great place, because it resonates with
the great deeds of the Khazars. They brought
harmony to the world's religions. No other

people has ever attempted that, much less succeeded, for hundreds of years.

Close **up:** Hotel filled with gangster types.

They say that Georgia is dangerous. But that's a myth. It's safer than Miami. The Khazars were not a myth, they were a historical people, admired even by their enemies.

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Smiling faces of mixed They exemplified the finest qualities of the bag of Batumi residents: Muslim culture, the Christian, the Jewish, Adzaris, Georgians, even the Buddhist, for the Khazars followed the Russians etc. Silk Road.

Close shot: Faces of beautiful women of Batumi.

The Khazars were also renowned for beauty of their women, many of whom exhibited an independence of spirit unique for that age.

A Khazar princess, Tzitazakion, or Flower, married Constantine V of Byzantium and gave birth to Leo the Khazar, shaping the destiny of Byzantium.

Legend has it that the Khazars communicated by dreams. Whatever the truth of that statement, not a single sentence of their language remains. Only the shadows of their empire, which it is said lingered for centuries after the fall.

Long shot: Shadows of the walls and buildings of the Khazars.

SloW pan: Lake Hazar Only three places in the world retain the Khazar place name: Lake Hazar in Turkey, a small village in the mist with the sleeping soldier of that name on the road to mountain as a backdrop. Batumi and the village of Kazar in Hungary.

The echo of the Khazar empire sounds in the soldier who still sleeps etched in the mountain above the lake.

Long shot: Lake Hazar. The townspeople tell me the lake was named after an unknown army of one thousand that was lost while marching in the mountains.

Close up: Governor. A descendant of the Kabardian's, close

relatives of the Khazars, the governor has hopes to turn the Lake into a tourist attraction to revitalize an area that now listens warily for the drumbeats of four separate guerilla armies:

Some artists say that, Lake Hazar is the most beautiful lake in the world. But few outsiders ever venture near.

Close **up**: Saban Kuzgu in his study at Euphrates University.

Everyone who is touched by the Khazars is never the same again. Saban Kuzgu, one of the greatest living Muslim, scholars and the Dean of Religious Studies at Euphrates University near Lake Hazar, has written two books on the Khazars. He maintains that the Khazars were the only people in history who succeeded in bringing harmony among the religions. And he says that Russia owes all of its culture to the legacy of the Khazars.

Close **up** : Asian Abashidze, president of Adzharia.

Long shot: The presidential palace.

Asian Abashidze, president of Adzharia, remembers the Khazars. Abashidze is one of the most enlightened leaders on the world stage, a supporter of opera and the dramatic arts. His dream is to build a fairy tale theme park on the Bayfront in his besieged city of Batumi.

Slow pan: A stroll along the shattered streets of Batumi. Batumi could use a theme park. In a city with out a steady supply of electricity, some light is needed.

Slow pan: Aya Sofia (Church of the Holy Wisdom) and the Blue Mosque, opposite, in Istanbul. The Khazars lit up many civilizations, including Byzantium. But they weren't a myth, they were a flesh and blood people, living proof that peoples can share an ideal. But the Khazars were realists, not idealists - the greatest trading empire of their time. Their business was helping others.

Close shot: Licka at school.

Licka: The Khazars had a secret.

Narrator: This is a secret that few are told but that practically everyone can grasp when they learn it.

Close shot: Licka at the blackboard.

Licka: It's really a formula.

Narrator: The Khazars had a sense of humor. They believed that things are, not always what you expect or what they appear.

Licka (Writing on blackboard:) The formula is A - B.

Narrator : And B - A.

Cut to:

Close shot: Saban Kuzgu in his study at Euphrates University.

Saban: Chuvash may be the lost language of the Khazars. Not a single written sentence of the Khazars has filtered down through the ages. The old Bulgar language is also similar to Knazar. The Karachay and Balkars are similar to the Khazars. The Kabardians may be Khazars. But the Karaites are exactly Khazars. The Kabars went to Bulgaria, Hungary and Middle Europe. After the

destruction of the Khazar empire some Christian Khazars went to Kayseri, Harput and Tunceli in Turkey. Many Christian Khazars came to Talas. In Southern Turkey we even have a town called Idil named after the Khazar capital of MI or Atil, which is now Astrahan. The Georgian people are also thought, to be descended from the Khazars. Even the ancient name for Lake Van was Hazar. And some towns near Trabzon were named after the Khazars in ancient times.

The Khazar civilization was the highest - the only one to achieve peace between the religions. The greatest number of Khazars were Muslims. After the dissolution of the empire, many Khazars also went to the Crimea, and from the Crimea to Poland. Those who stayed in Russia mostly converted, to Christianity. Some even became Creeks, especially in Talas. They attended the Byzantine Church. The basis of European and Russian culture comes from the

Khazar culture. The Russian people established the Russian state with the help of the Khazars. The origin of the Russian military system was Khazar.

The Khazars were pagans originally. They believed in one god - Tangri. If the Khazars had managed to unite the Turkish people the way they helped the Russians and the Bulgars, there wouldn't be a Russia now.

There was no racism in Khazaria. The Khazars were the unique state that applied

capitalism in the world. They believed that the safety of trading was paramount.

Under the shadow of the humanitarian Khazar empire they established a successful, trading empire. There is no Russian culture - only Khazar.

Narrator: Saban Kuzgu is considered one of the greatest Muslim religious thinkers in the world today.

Saban: Khazaria has many parallel with America.

Cut to:

Longshot: Grozny, scenes of devastation...

Narrator: The khazars offer a solution to the religious and ethnic strife in the **Caucasus**. The alternative to the Khazar way is another thousand years of this.

Closeup: Chechen fighter.

Narrator: One fighter told me, that someday they will get back at the Russians. I said, "look around you. You have nothing. And already you are planning the next war, "-The Khazar solution is not just a good idea. It is the only idea I've heard lately.

Slow pan: Blown out buildings, weeping woman with child.

Narrator : Of course, I may have gotten here a little late, a thousand years too late, to be precise. But better late than never.

Cut to:

Medium shot: Licka in the battered schoolyard with tattered book bag. She pauses, opens bag and removes the Khazar flag.

Medium shot: Narrator enters classroom. Spins globe.

Close shot: Licka with school friends.

Narrator: It's been a long time since this banner waved over the Khazar land. Of course, like many things about the Khazars, this may have been the flag, and it may not. The Khazars were a will - o - the - wisp people and their true flag was the blue of the sky, the green of the land and the red of their blood. Or may be not. I have trouble remembering what happened last week, not to mention one thousand years ago.

Narrator: But one thing we do know as historical fact: the Khazars were an equal opportunity employer. According to ancient accounts, half the Khazars were black and half were white. The Secret Masters of the Caucasus graded their tests solely on the basis of merit, and this a thousand years before its time.

Narrator: Many years ago I traveled to Japan. When I passed through customs, the agents called the guards and the guards called the officials. Soon I was surrounded by a crowd of curious Japanese bureaucrats. I thought I had committed some great breach of Oriental etiquette. But it turned out that they had examined my passport and discovered I was born on April 29, the same birth date as the Emperor of Japan. I was bowed out of the customs shed and ushered on my way, to the accompaniment of many inscrutable exclamations.

(Pause) But never in my wildest dreams did I ever imagine that someday I would be an emperor.

Trolley shot: Rows of desks in schoolroom with students busily doing their lessons.

Emperor of all I survey.

Slow pan: Rapt faces of students. **Narrator** (Stepping to podium): Do you see that old building on the highest part of the city?

Medium shot: Children gaze out window. It was once a church and then a synagogue and then a mosque and back again in reverse order like the Khazar flag. Would you like to know what is in it? Well, nothing less than the door of a subterranean passage which extends to the distance of three leagues. You do not believe it; well listen: On the spot where the old building stands, there was once, before the Russians invaded Khazaria, an enchanted palace. No pretender or peasant had ever had the courage to enter it; those who might have dared do it, did not, however, because according to the tradition, the first one who passed the portal would have been the emperor of Khazaria.

But he would pay a high price. For the Khazar Khagans only served a brief time before they were sacrificed. Finally, a brave Khazar chieftain, before starting for battle against the Persians, hoping to find some treasures inside which would furnish a means of defending the

land against the invaders, had the doors pulled down, and preceded by his warriors, who lighted the way, he entered. After a great deal of difficulty in keeping their torches lighted, on account of the strong wind which was blowing in these subterranean passages, they reached a mysterious chamber, where they saw a coffer, upon which was written: "He who opens me will see marvels." The chieftain ordered it to be opened, which they only succeeded in doing with great difficulty; but instead of gold and diamonds they merely found a rolled canvas, upon which some armed barbarians were painted, and under them was this inscription: "Khazaria will be destroyed in a short time by these men." That same night a violent tempest broke out, the enchanted palace fell, and shortly thereafter the Rus and the Byzantines, the Pechenegs and later the Mongols entered Khazaria. You don't seem to believe this?

Well, the truth is, this is only a legend. No one knows what happened to Khazaria. It was swept away as though by a silent wind. But this is historical fact: the Khazars chose their emperor from the poorest of the poor. On the appointed day they went to the market and selected someone from the crowd. In this way they insured he would be a man of the people. And the Khazars showed great marvels to the world, marvels not of stone or literature or military glory but of inspiration.

Fade out. A mountain trail

That evening I left Khazaria, such as it is today, with the regret of not having had time

enough to see again, in the words of an ancient traveler, Edmondo de Amicis, all that is antique and noteworthy there. This regret was mitigated, however, by the desire I had to return to the real world of MTV, fast food restaurants and the LA freeway. But for a long time I had Khazaria before my eyes. For a long time I saw and dreamed of those steep spires, enormous walls, those twisting streets, and the fantastic appearance of that shadow city. Today, even, I often revive the picture with a sad pleasure and severe melancholy, and this picture leads my mind back to a thousand strange thoughts of remote times and marvelous occurrences that actually happened.

Xülasə

XƏZƏRLƏRİN QAYITMASI

Film - ssenari
Edward HIRSCH
(ABŞ)

Xəzər xaqanlığının tarixi, mədəniyyəti, qonşuluğunda yerləşən xalqlara tə'siri, bugünkü izləri barədə yazılmış film ssenarisidir.

Müəyyən təkrarlara, tarixi və coğrafi cəhətdən mübahisəli müddəalara da malikdir.