EASTERN EUROPEAN KARAITES
IN THE LAST GENERATIONS

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Two Prayers for the Day of Atonement in Translation into the Luck-Halicz Dialect of Karaim

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The aim of this paper is to present and discuss two fragments of prayers for the Day of Atonement translated or copied in 1940 by an unknown author into the Luck-Halicz dialect of Karaim. These prayers are known from Karaite prayer-books which contain the texts in the original Hebrew version. The prayers are compiled from various biblical quotations. The article presents a transcription with a photocopy, an English translation, annotations and comments.

1. Introductory notes

The Luck-Halicz dialect of Karaim, similar to the communities themselves, is in irreversible retreat. The Luck community, which in 1930 numbered 80 members (Mardkowicz 1930: 18) does not exist any longer (Kobeckaitė, Pilecki 2003: 25), and there remain of the community only a few elderly persons mostly scattered throughout Poland.¹ As for Halicz, out of 122 Karaims in 1939, there remained fifteen in 2002, only six of whom resided permanently in the town (Ešvovyč 2002: 208; Kizilov 2002: 33). Today, Mrs. Janina Eszwowicz, head of the Karaim Association in Halicz and the oldest member of this community, and Mrs. Sabina Zajączkowska are dead, and only two aged women remain in Halicz.

¹ No doubt Karaims of Luck who live in Poland do not speak their native language. According to the last census of 2002, there were 45 individuals who declared Karaim nationality in Poland. However, in an ethno-sociological survey carried out in 1997, their number was equal to 55, out of 126 persons questioned (Adamczuk 2003: 33). In fact, the number of Karaims in Poland is higher, probably at least 126 individuals, but not all of them declare the Karaim nationality. This is evident since as many as 65 surveyed people declare that they profess the Karaim religion (ibid., 60). However, no more than 17 Karaims in Poland have the command of Karaim and only 2 of them speak it (ibid., 65, 70).
The Luck-Halicz dialect of Karaim has been known to modern research since Foy (1898), Munkácsy (1909), Mardkowicz’s dictionary (Mardkowicz 1935) and Zajaczkowski’s grammar (Zajaczkowski 1931).

The published literary output in both Hebrew and Turkic Karaim of Karaim writers, translators and copyists employing the Hebrew alphabet has been the subject of a few surveys and is known from Poznanski’s bibliographies (Poznański 1913, Poznański 1916, 1918). A spectacular revival of Turkic Karaim literature based on Latin script started with Mardkowicz’s activities in Luck in 1930. Mardkowicz composed stories, poems, and tales; wrote articles; collected Karaim popular literature himself and encouraged others to write in the Karaim language. Many literary works and samples of both secular and religious literature written in Luck-Halicz dialect were published by Mardkowicz in his Karaj Awaźy (1931-1938) and in other publications, although some scholars have argued that the number of contributors from Halicz to this journal was not high (Kizilov 2002: 33). Some literary works composed by the writers from Halicz, such as Zecharija (Zecharia) Abrahamowicz (d. 1903), Abraham Leonowicz, Jacob Joseph Leonowicz and Zarach Zarachowicz were previously published by Grzegorzewski (1903:63-67, 70) and in Myśl Karaimsko (Zajaczkowski 1931:34).

It is evident that much of religious literature of Karaims is related to the Bible which is the basic source of the Karaite doctrine. Unfortunately, there is no critical modern edition of the Bible in either of the two Karaim dialects. Samples of the Bible, including whole books, were edited by Kowalski (1929), Zajaczkowski (1932, 1934), Firkovičius (1994, 2000) and Jankowski (1997). There are also some more detailed studies on this subject (Danon 1921, Gordëvsjkij 1928, Jankowski 1997).

From 1930 onwards, Aleksander Mardkowicz regularly employed the Latin alphabet, adapting the Polish version of Latin script to the Luck-Halicz dialect. His first two publications Elijahum ucetu and Zemerler using this alphabet came out in Luck. Some educated Karaims in Halicz, however, were still employing the Hebrew alphabet in 1940, at least for religious literature.

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2 For the critique of Foy see Zajaczkowski (1931:33) and Dubiński (1950; 1994).
3 The term “Hebrew language” is not used by Karaims. They referred to Hebrew as lešon kodesh (see e.g. Kowalski 1929: 1 and Maleckij 1890: vii), in Turkic mostly ažiz til, in Polish święty język (Zarachowicz 1926: 6); sometimes other terms were also used, e.g. eski Tenach til (Kokenai 1939: 30).
4 For the bibliography of Mardkowicz see KRPS (22-24).
2. Description of the text

The two fragments of prayers which are the subject of this article were found among the archival materials in Halicz. One is titled רָפָאֵל הָעִבְרִי חֲלִיאָה and is dated 7th November 1940 (written 7.XI.1940), while the other holds the title רָפָאֵל הָעִבְרִי חֲלִיאָה, and is dated 10th November 1940 (written 10. XI. 1940). One might incorrectly assume that these titles suggest translations of Psalm 32 and another part of the Bible, most likely Leviticus 16, starting with verse 30. In fact both are translations of compilations composed of various biblical quotations which are used by Karaims as prayers for the Day of Atonement.

The prayers are written in a notebook, of which only a few pages are available. The paper is ordinary, ca. 240x145 in size. The text is written in 26-30 lines on each page, unless there are inter-headings written with characters of larger size, separated from the rest of the text by blank space. Each unit of the text is provided with a date, put at either the top or the bottom of it. The writing of the date is a common Polish style. The works are unsigned and the name of the translator or copyist is not provided, at least not on extant pages.

The Turkic text, as well as two Hebrew words inside the main text body, נְכַשֵּׁם are vocalized, whereas the Hebrew headings are not. The handwriting is careful and very readable, with only a few mistakes and corrections. The spelling of headings imitates Hebrew block letters, whereas the main text is written in a semi-cursive, more similar to Troki Karaim than Crimean Karaim. The letters aleph, beth, gimel, non-final mem and shin are especially different from the typical Crimean Karaim semi-cursive. It is very helpful that nun and gimel, which are very similar in the Crimean Karaim script, are quite distinct in this writing.

The first text, Targum של אשה רבעי peṣa', is a translation of a Hebrew evening prayer prescribed for the Day of Atonement. It has been published, among other places, in the Karaite prayer-book Seder Tefilot ha-Qara'im (1854) under the title המְּלֹא קְרָבָא שֶל שֵׁי אהָרִים. The Karaim text is written in 28 lines, in addition to two lines of the title, and it covers a full page of the manuscript. The corresponding portion of the prayer in the printed prayer-book takes up the first page.

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5 My thanks go to Mr. Ivan Yurchenko from the National Museum Danyi Halyez for making the manuscript accessible to me.
6 The phrase יְשַׁעְיָהוּ occurs only in Ps 32:1 and יְשַׁעְיָהוּ in Gen 7:11, Exo. 19:1, Lev. 8:34, 16:30, Jos 7:25 and I Sa 11:13. I am indebted to Prof. Dr. Piotr Muchowski for helping me locate the individual verses in the Bible as well as for some general suggestions concerning this study.
7 Dr. Mikhail Kizilov has kindly informed me that in another place in the notebook there is the name of the author, Yilshaq ben Yesu'ah, in Polish Izak Szulimowicz. My thanks go to him for this information.
8 One omission is in line 8 in the second text.
The second text, *Targum šel ki ba-yom haze*, is a translation of another
evening prayer for the Day of Atonement, which covers four pages of the
manuscripts, and which is found in the same printed prayer-book on page 29 ff.
In this paper only the initial page of the manuscript is presented. The text of the
prayer on this page is written in sixteen lines, in addition to two lines with the
title and date.

Although the texts in the manuscript look like prayers, and in the first
version of this paper it was assumed that they are prescribed for the festival
called by Karaims *Bošatlych – Bosatlyk (Day of Atonement, Yom ha-Kippurim)*,
no original prayer was accessible to me to verify this supposition. I started the
study with a translation of the Turkic Karaim text, the interpretation of it and a
search for the corresponding verses in the Bible. At the same time, I checked all
modern Karaim publications available to me. Many prayers and liturgy texts
for the Day of Atonement have been published in a translation into the Troki
216) says that the basic source for the compilation of his edition was Jacob
Šišman’s publication of 1891-1892, it is well-known that these volumes,
prepared by Pinakhas/Feliks Malecki, contain only Hebrew prayers, and
Firkovičius does not disclose which Karaim translation he employed. The final
version of this paper was written after the location of these prayers in *Seder
Tefilot ha-Qara’im*.

It must be stressed that the prayer fragments published here are not included
in any existing Karaim publications, although there are a few texts similar to
them (e.g. Firkovičius 1998: 166), and individual, identical verses of the Bible
are parts of other prayers. References are noted where applicable.

3. The contents and style of the prayers

The fragment of first prayer which I shall call *Sandyr* is compiled from fourteen
quotations from the Bible. Thirteen are cited from Psalms and one from
Proverbs. All these quotations were compared with the versions translated into
the Troki dialect of Karaim and edited by Firkovičius (1994 and 2000).

Each biblical quotation begins with the word *Sandyr*, cf. the Kar. *san* (all the
three dialects) ‘praise; dignity; glory’, from the Ar. *ša’n* here ‘standing, prestige,
rank’ (Wehr 1980: 450), which in the other Trk. languages has the regular initial

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9 For the editions of Hebrew prayers most popular among Polish Karaims see Kowalski (1929: XIII).
10 My thanks go to Ms. Mariola Abkowicz for making this book accessible to me.
11 All prayers for the Day of Atonement were quoted by Firkovičius (1998) from the 3rd volume of
Malecki-Šišman, with reference to a relevant page or pages.
12 The fragment of *Proverbs* edited by Danon (1921: 101-110) does not contain the relevant verses.
š, e.g. Tur. šan (NRTED 1048).\textsuperscript{13} It stands for the Hebrew usually translated into ṣawāl, usually translated into English as ‘Happy are/is’ (BibleWorks 1998), which is however translated here ‘praise to’, in accordance with the Karaite meaning. There are fifteen occurrences of this word in this fragment. Sandyr forms the following structures: Sandyr bosatylhan ginechlige, Sandyr esin kojuwcuha, Sandyr andij adamha, Sandyr ol kisige, Sandyr adamha, Sandyr kisige, Sandyr tigel jollularha, Sandyr abrawcularha, Sandyr ol chanlykka and Sandyr ol uluska.

As is seen, the word sandyr precedes a noun phrase of variable structures, e.g. andij adamha ‘to such a man’, adamha ‘to [the] man’, bosatylhan ginechlige ‘to those whose sin is forgiven’ etc. Although the addressee is mostly the same ‘people of the congregation’, the grammatical and lexical tools that express it are diversified.

This recurring word re-enforces the idea of praising righteous people. The formulas with the word sandyr quoted from Psalms were employed by Karaims in other religious works, too, e.g. hymns performed for the deceased (e.g. Firkovičius 1999: 100, 101). The word ṣawāl is also employed in Jewish liturgy in supplications (e.g. Elbogen 1993: 71).

The other work which I shall call Ki uspu kinde is much longer, taking up 56 lines on four pages. In this article, only the initial fragment encompassing sixteen lines is presented and discussed. This fragment is compiled from five biblical quotations, one each from Leviticus, Job and Isaiah and two from Psalms. The text starts from Leviticus 16: 30. This part does not contain any apparent stylistic or lexical tools that are repeatedly employed, as in the previous work.

The name of God is written in both prayers with the letter .addData. here translated ‘the Lord’, but the Trk. word tenri also occurs, in both the designation ‘God’ and ‘god’. It is out of the question that the translator or copyist would “update” a Heb. name of God to this Trk. term, as sometimes Karaims are accused as if they were influenced or ordered by hakhan Seraia Shapshal. We have clear evidence that the Trk. word tenri was used in Halicz in religious hymns, e.g. the hymn Ej tenrimiz basatkyun biżge jazyklarymyzny, published by Grzegorzewski in 1903 (Gregorzewski 1903: 65), and in the hymns published by Munkácsi in 1909, e.g. ol-du tâñri, jaraaaum cum (Munkácsi 1909: 202). It seems that the normal word for ‘God’ and ‘god’ was among Karaims tenri-tendri etc., whereas the Heb. name, written ndata and pronounced ha-šem, in accord with the principles of word-to-word translation of canonical Heb. literature, was left unchanged.

\textsuperscript{13} This problem was discussed by Dan Shapira in one of his papers (Shapira 2001-2002: 482 and note 23).
The syntax and the style of both compilations imitate biblical syntax and style. Word order is typical of north-western non-Islamic Trk. languages, which is common to Karaim, Krimchak, Armeno-Kipchak, Urum and Codex Cumanicus.

There is nothing special in the vocabulary, although we can point to some derived words which are absent from both Markowicz’s dictionary and KRPS. In these dictionaries only bases of these words are evidenced, e.g. tanmakly ‘contestant; betrayer’, M 61 only tanmak ‘zaprzeczenie, zdrada, Verleugnung, Verrath’ and probably elikcili ‘scoffer’, M 23 only elikci ‘szyderca, Spötter’, though the spelling of this word is inexact.

These remarks provide only a few observations concerning the contents, style, grammar and vocabulary of the two compilations presented here. Much work has still to be done to carry out a critical edition of extant Trk. manuscripts of Luck-Halicz Karaims and to compare them with the original Hebrew texts which can be found in the printed prayer-books published in Eupatoria, Vienna, Vilnius and Odessa.

4. Transcription and translation

4.1. Sandyr

Transcription

ترجمة شلين اشري قشت فميش

[1] Sandyr bosatylhan ginechlige jasaryn tanmaklyha
[2] Sandyr andij adamha ki sahyslamasa
[3] ֶ anar ginechin da bolmasa dzanynda anyn
[5] jamanlyk kinde kutkaradyr any ֶ Sandyr
[6] ol kisige ki jirimedi kenesi bya jamanlarnyn:
[7] da jolunda jazyklarnyn turmady da
[8] olturusunda elikcil <i> lernin olturmady.‘
[9] Sandyr ol kisige ki kojsa ֶ ha isancyn
[10] da kajrylmasa abaklarha da aldawlu

14 Ps 32: 1, cf. F 33 [...] sandyr bošatyłhan jazychlyha, jobuch giiniachtligia.
15 Ps 32: 2, cf. F 33 Sandyr aridi adamha ki sanha sahyslamasa Tieiri anar džurumun jazychnyn, da bolmasa sahysyn da anyn jaltajlych.
16 Cf. Ps 41: 2, F 46 Sandyr baruvčuha kiormia chastany, jaman wachtta kucharyr any Tieiri ʹpraise to him who visits the sick, God saves him on the day of troubleʹ.
azastyrmaklarha.\(^{18}\) Sandyr ol kisige
[12] ki adepesen any ej n da: Torah[y]ndan iwretsen
[13] anar\(^{19}\): Sandyr adamha ki kipligi anyn
[14] sendedir izlerin jireklerinde:\(^{20}\) Sandyr
[15] kisige ki korkadyr n-dan saruwlyryn anyn
[16] siwedir astry:\(^{21}\) Sandyr tigel jollularha
[17] jiriwcière iwretiwi byla n-nyn:\(^{22}\) Sandyr
[18] abrawcularha sarajataryn anyn bar jirek
[19] byla izleseler any: Sandyr adamha ki
[20] tynlajdyr meni sakama esiklerimni har
[21] kin koruma janlaryn esiklerimnin:\(^{24}\) Sandyr
[22] ol chanlykka kajsynyndyr tenrisi n
[23] ol uluska kajsyn sajady ezine iliske:\(^{25}\)
[24] Sandyr ol uluska biliwcierge machtaw
[25] bermekni ej ã jaryklyhy byla kyblalar < y > n
[26] jirij < d > iler:\(^{26}\) Sandyr d uluska ki bulajdyr
[27] anar Sandyr ol uluska kajsynyn tenrisidir.\(^{27}\)
[28] n

Translation

[1] Praise to those whose sin is forgiven and to those whose treachery is hidden.

[2-3] Praise to him whose sin the Lord does not count against him and in whose spirit there is no deceit. Praise to him who pays attention to the miserable;


\(^{19}\) Ps 94: 12, cf. F 109 Sandyr ol kişigia ki adiepliasa any Tieńri, da torezdan akyl üvretsiej anar.

\(^{20}\) Ps 84: 6, cf. F 96 Sandyr adamha ki kiptik anar Ševeni byla, tüz jyzlar ùrïkliariïnia.

\(^{21}\) Ps 112: 1, cf. F 131 [...] sandyr korcuvsčuha Tieńridiani, saruvlaryn siwisia astry.

\(^{22}\) Ps 119: 1, cf. F 137 Sandyr tiugial jollularha, ol üüzüvüliari ürüttüviyi byla Tieńrinin.

\(^{23}\) Ps 119: 2, cf. F 137 Sandyr abrawacularha Sarajatlarynyn, biak byla ıšlæstalari Any.

\(^{24}\) Pro 8: 34, cf. F 1 Li 13 Sandyr adamha tynlavču maja saklama ešikliarim catyna har kuwa; saklama janlaryn ešikliariminiń.

\(^{25}\) Ps 33: 12, cf. F 35 Sandyr ol chanlykka ki Kiucčiu Tieńrissi anyn, ol uluscha ki sajlady ıluškía őzümia.

\(^{26}\) Ps 89: 16, cf. F 101 Sandyr ol uluscha biluvüliargia mačtanyny, è Tieńri jarychlyhynha haşgachejnyn ürültlar.

\(^{27}\) Ps 144: 15, cf. F 165 Sandyr ol uluscha ki buelve bolsa anar, sandyr ol uluscha ki Kiucčiu Tieńrissi anyn.
[5] the Lord saves him on the day of trouble. Praise to
[6] the man who did not follow the advices of corrupt people,
[7] and did not stay on the path of sinful people, and
[8] did not sit in the seat of scoffers.
[9] Praise to the man who trusts in the Lord,
[10] and does not turn to idols and perverse
[12-13] whom you discipline, O Lord, and to whom you
teach out of your Law. Praise to those whose strength is
[14] in You, and in whose hearts are Your paths. 28 Praise to
[15] the man who fears the Lord, whose commandments
[16-17] he admires very much. Praise to those who walk
the straight path with the teaching of the Lord. Praise to
[18-19] those who adhere to His orders and seek Him with their whole
heart. Praise to the man who
[20-21] listens to me, guards my gates, and protects
the sides of my gates every day. Praise to
[22] the kingdom whose god is the Lord,
[23] to the nation which He has chosen as His share.
[24] Praise to the nation which knows how
[25-26] to glorify [Him], O Lord, [to the people] who walk in the light
of His countenance. Praise to the nation which is like
[27] His own one. Praise to the nation whose god is He,
[28] the Lord.

4. 2. *Ki uspu kinde*

**Transcription**

תרנום של בר ובר דוד

[1] *ki uspu kinde* bosatlyk kołaredi בֵּית
[2] *siZNIN icin arytma siZni bar*

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28 The reading *izlar*, T Kar. jyzlar-jizler ‘paths’ (KRPS 193, 244, 263), as in F 96, is better than M 30
izler 'przędna, prawa strona, rechte Seite'.
[3] jazyklarynyzdan alnynda π-nyn arnyrediniz.29
[4] siwiniz π-ny bar chesidleri inamlylarny abrajdy[r]
[5] π da telejdir karys byla kyluwcularha
[6] ektemlik byla:30 isanynyz anar har wachtta
[7] ej ulus teginiz alnynda anyn gilejini zi tenri
[8] umsuntur biżge hammese:31 korkunuz eziniz
[9] icin klyctan ki kachir bya telenir ginechler
[10] kajsy tijedir klyyc anyn icin bilgejsiz ki
[12] cahyrynyz anar bolhanynda juwuk: kemiśsin
[14] ezinin da kajtsyn π-ha ki rachmetler any
[15] da tenrimi izgi ki arttyyr kyma
[16] bosatlykar:33 ki tiwildir fikirlerim [...]  

Translation

[1-2] The senior priest asked forgiveness on your behalf
on that day to cleanse you from all
[3] your sins before the Lord, and you have become clean.
[4-5] Love the Lord, all His devout men, God protects
the believers, but <extensively>34 repays those who act
[6] haughtily. Trust in Him all the time,
[7] O nation, put out your hearts before Him, God
[8] is always hope for us. For your own sake, fear
[9] the sword, for the sins are repaid with anger
[10] of the sword which reaches you so that you may know that
[11] there is a judgment. Seek the Lord while He may be found,

29 Lev 16: 30.
30 Ps 31: 24, cf. F 33 Siwviyuzh Tiewiri bar tiua elli inamly elni abrejdyr Tiewiri, da tiolejdir oščavinia kioria išini kyluvča kıkતишіглі.
31 Ps 62: 9, cf. F 33 Išanyjyz Anar har vacht ulus tiojiwuž ahnynda giliajižiži, Tiewiri syjynač bizgla hammiesa.
32 Job 19: 29.
34 M 40 only karys 'zmieszany / verlegen' i.e. 'mixed; blended', but KRPS 295 (HKar.) also 'span', which better corresponds to F 33 oščavinia kioria 'upon their (lit. his) measure'.
[12-13] call upon Him while He is near. Let the evil people forsake their way and the unrighteous their thoughts
[14] that they may return to the Lord who will have mercy on them
[15] and to our God who will generously
[16] forgive the sins. These are not my thoughts [...]

Special symbols

<> – amended or uncertain text
[] – text added by the editor
() – comments, remarks

Abbreviations

Ar. = Arabic
CKar. = Crimean dialect of Karaim
F = Firkovičius 1994
F 1 = Firkovičius 2000
Heb. = Hebrew
HKar. = Luck-Halicz dialect of Western Karaim
Kar. = Karaim
M = Mardkowicz 1935
Pol. = Polish
TKar. = Troki dialect of Western Karaim
Trk. = Turkic
Tur. = Turkish
WK = Western Karaim
Translation of ki bayom
Translation of ashrei
References


BibleWorks for Windows. 1998. BibleWorks LLC.


Maleckij, F. A. 1890. Runne Pallet. Vilna: L.L. Mac [title and the name of the editor and translator: פירות מליאבב, רעי פלט] [citation overruled by R. Pożoga, [title and the name of the editor and translator: פירות מליאבב, נרי פלט].


Seder Tefilot ha-Qara‘im (תשר התפלה והקריאת) vol. 3. 1854. Wien: Adalbert della Torre.


