

## Foreign lexical items in the lexicon of the Karaim language

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Karaim, the traditional language of the originally Crimean followers of Karaite Judaism, has long been spoken as a minority language in three small clusters located in Eastern Europe (of which now only the Lithuanian community in Trakai continues to speak Karaim on some level). Without much official recognition, let alone regulation, historically this Turkic language has been in constant intensive contact with the languages of other peoples, hence it is no surprise that its lexicon contains a significant number of loanwords. Besides other Turkic languages contributing to the core Kipchak component, Slavic languages have also left a significant mark. Outside of this, for cultural reasons, there was also a strong influence from within the group of speakers of Karaim that led to the adoption and integration of loanwords from the Jewish liturgical languages, i.e. Hebrew and Aramaic.

Throughout the years, there have been several rather narrowly focused articles on lexical items belonging to the specific components (see e.g. Zajączkowski 1959, 1961 & Jankowski 2013), how they came to be and how several specific items got adapted, but the question of how sizeable the components actually are and their distribution across word classes and semantic areas has, to my knowledge, mostly remained unanswered.

In the proposed poster presentation, I will present the data gathered and examined during my research in progress where I analyze entries from dictionary resources, i.e. Baskakov's *Karaimsko-russko-pol'skiy slovar'*. The main objective of my investigation is to, as precisely as possible given the nature of the data, provide proportions of foreign components in the general lexicon of modern Karaim by their origin and then to further describe the loanwords in terms of their affiliation to certain semantic fields and level of incorporation into the grammatical system. As the dictionary contains lexemes from all three dialects of the language, each dialect is analyzed separately.

The reason why I find it important to conduct such an analysis, outside the obvious general frame of contact linguistics, is that I believe that by comparing it to similar analyses of other Jewish diaspora languages (granted that Karaim has a special yet through linguistical means defensible place among them), possible regularities, and tendencies allowing predictions regarding the distribution of said elements (if only in the dichotomy of liturgical vs majority languages) can be discovered. Such regularities and tendencies would then be helpful in the documentation and possibly even revitalization or revival efforts of less documented Jewish diaspora languages. The presentation will touch only briefly upon these viable generalizations, mostly in contrast to Yiddish, as further analysis of other languages is required for their accurate postulation.

*Keywords:* Karaim, lexicon, loanwords, language contact

**Word count:** 431

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