

Henryk Jankowski, Gulayhan Aqtay, Dorota Cegiołka, Tülay Çulha, Michał Németh, *The Crimean Karaim Bible* Vol. 1: *Critical edition of the Pentateuch, Five Scrolls, Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Daniel, Ezra and Nehemiah*. Vol. 2: *Translation*, Turcologica 119, Harrassowitz Verlag, Wiesbaden 2019, XXXIX + 647, VI + 626 pp.

The book under review is a result of a project conducted by Henryk Jankowski, one of the most eminent specialists in Kipchak Turkic languages, and particularly in Crimean (Eastern) Karaim, a Turkic language spoken by the Karaite Jewish community in Crimea which has gone extinct as early as the 18<sup>th</sup> century, having been replaced by an ethnolect of Crimean Tatar. Other project team members were experienced researchers as well with considerable achievements in the field of Karaim studies: Gulayhan Aqtay and Dorota Cegiołka (previously Smętek) of Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań, Tülay Çulha of Sakarya University, Turkey, and Michał Németh of Jagiellon University, Cracow, Poland.<sup>1</sup> The result of their meticulous work is a two-volume critical edition of the Crimean Karaim Bible (the first volume contains the critical edition of the text, the second one a translation into English).

The edition is based on several sources. A manuscript of the Crimean Karaim Bible kept in the collection of the British and Foreign Bible Society at the Cambridge University Library constitutes the basis of the reviewed edition which comprises two of manuscript's four volumes. The translations of the Pentateuch and the Five Scrolls,

<sup>1</sup> As far as Eastern Karaim Bible translations are concerned, the project team members authored several publications on this subject both independently or linked to the project: H. Jankowski, 'A Bible Translation into the Northern Crimean Dialect of Karaim', *Studia Orientalia* 28 (1997), pp. 1–84; idem, 'Translations of the Bible into Karaim', *Religion Compass* 3/4 (2009), pp. 502–523; idem, 'Translation of the Tanakh into Crimean Karaim: History, Manuscripts, and Language', in: *Jewish Languages in Historical Perspective*, ed. L. Kahn, Leiden/Boston 2018, pp. 39–61. G. Aqtay, 'Edycja krytyczna krymskokaraimskiego przekładu Tanachu. Rękopis z Cambridge. Zawartość tomu I i IV.' *Almanach Karaimski* 5 (2016), pp. 35–46; M. Németh 'A Crimean Karaim handwritten translation of the Book of Ruth dating from before 1687. Another contribution to the history of Crimean Karaim and to the question of the *stemma codicum* of the Eupatorian printed edition of the Tanakh of 1841', *Türk Dilleri Araştırmaları* 26, 2 (2016) [= Festschrift Henryk Jankowski], pp. 161–226; D. Smętek (Cegiołka), 'Some lexical and phonological features of the language of a Crimean Karaim Bible translation', *Türk Dilleri Araştırmaları* 26, 2 (2016), [= Festschrift Henryk Jankowski], pp. 227–240. Jankowski, Aqtay, Çulha and Cegiołka are also authors of numerous publications on Eastern Karaim language and literature.



i.e. Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, and Esther (volume I), as well as Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Daniel, Ezra and Nehemiah (volume IV) have been transcribed and compared with other translations in Karaim manuscripts in the John Rylands Library at the University of Manchester, the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts in Petersburg, the Russian National Library, and the Edinburgh University Library. Among the sources, there is also a manuscript from a private collection in Poland – copied before 1687, it is the oldest datable Crimean Karaim Tanakh translation. A part of it, namely the Book of Ruth which was edited by Németh (2016), was examined for the needs of the project. For the fragments of the basic source which were unavailable or unclear in other manuscripts the project used the printed Tanakh edition of Gözleve from 1841.

In the introduction, Jankowski presents an overview of the history of the studies on the Crimean Karaim Bible translations beginning from Ebenezer Henderson who in the first quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century examined, by some twist of fate, the same manuscript which became the basis for this edition.<sup>2</sup> He discusses also the emergence of the first Karaim translations of the Tanakh and some important questions such as the relationship between Eastern and Western Karaim translations, problems in distinguishing between translators and copyists, and establishing their identity, techniques and procedures of the translation. All this provides the reader with concise but comprehensive information on the basic issues of the Karaim Bible translation tradition with references to the literature on the topic. This part of the introduction is followed by detailed descriptions of the manuscripts that have been used for the critical edition.

As far as the description of the language of the translation is concerned, Jankowski once again provides rather concise information, limiting himself only to the features which are absent or different from those described in his edition of samples of a Karaim Bible translation taken from the manuscript kept in the Rylands Library in Edinburgh.<sup>3</sup> This may leave the readers with a feeling of slight insufficiency; however, the editor's decision not to repeat information provided elsewhere and make introduction as concise as possible can be explained by the significant volume of the edition.

The transcription is based on Lars Johanson's system which was also applied in Jankowski's abovementioned edition of 1997. The only exception from this are contemporary Crimean Karaim words and quotations from Karaim dictionaries<sup>4</sup> which are rendered in the Latin script adopted for Crimean Tatar. The footnotes to the transcribed text provide readers with comprehensive information on variations present in other manuscripts, origins of loanwords, translation techniques applied by the translator while rendering certain Hebrew words, words or phrases that do not fit the Hebrew original or have

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<sup>2</sup> Some details on the (re)discovery of the manuscript by Jankowski are provided by Aqtay in 'Edycja krytyczna krymskokaraimskiego przekładu Tanachu', p. 38.

<sup>3</sup> Jankowski, 'A Bible Translation into the Northern Crimean Dialect of Karaim'. The manuscript, from which the samples were taken, has been used as a source of comparative material in the present edition.

<sup>4</sup> N.A. Baskakov, A. Zajączkowski, S.M. Šapšal, *Karaimsko-russko-pol'skij slovar'*. *Słownik karaimsko-rosyjsko-polski*, Moskwa 1974; G. Aqtay, H. Jankowski, *A Crimean Karaim Dictionary. 10000 entries*, Poznań 2015 [= Prace Karaimoznawcze 21].

been used in a new or modified meaning, etc. The number of editorial symbols has been reduced to a minimum making the edition easily comprehensible and really reader-friendly.

Contrary to what one could expect, the translation into English which constitutes the content of the second volume, is not an original one provided by the authors, but has been based on the King James Bible, which is known for its faithfulness to the Hebrew original. This choice was dictated by the fact that Karaim translations were strongly influenced by the Hebrew original as far as syntax is concerned.<sup>5</sup> An observation by Henderson, quoted by Jankowski in the introduction to the present edition (p. xv–xvi), may serve as a justification for this choice: “[Karaim Bible translations] cannot be understood by anybody who is not acquainted with the Tanakh”. The translation provided by the project team adheres to the existing English translation where it is possible and renders the peculiarities of the Karaim text wherever necessary. Let us limit ourselves to just one example: יהודי, יהודים in the Book of Esther are rendered in the King James Bible in accordance with the Hebrew original as “Jew”, “Jews”; however, in the Karaim version, we find *Yisra’el*, *Yisra’ellär* “Israelite”, “Israelites”: “In Shushan the citadel there was a certain Jew whose name was Mordecai the son of Jair (...)” (Est 2.5, King James Bible<sup>6</sup>) – *Yisra’el kiši edi Šušān ol birada da atī Mordeḡay oġlu Ya’irnin (...)* (Vol. 1, p. 392) – “There was an Israelite man in Shushan the citadel and his name was Mordecai, the son of Jair (...)” (Vol. 2, p. 310).

The volume edited by Henryk Jankowski and his team offers a large amount of material that will interest not only linguists dealing with Karaim and other Kipchaq/Turkic languages, but also researchers in Biblical studies. There is only one thing the reader might regret: the edition includes no facsimilia. The editors’ decision to present only transcription and translation, motivated mostly probably by financial and legal matters, is absolutely understandable and in no way detracts from the value of the edition. However, including facsimilia as Németh did in his recently published editions of Western Karaim manuscripts<sup>7</sup>, would enable readers to have a glimpse into the world of Karaim manuscripts – and make them more aware of the enormous work done by the project team resulting in such an excellent publication.

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<sup>5</sup> A detailed description of the influence of Hebrew syntax on the Western Karaim Bible translations can be found in: Z. Olach, *A Halich Karaim translation of Hebrew Biblical texts*, Harrasowitz, Wiesbaden 2013, pp. 50–212. See also eadem, ‘Numerals in Halich Karaim Bible texts’ in: *The Szeged Conference. Proceedings of the 15<sup>th</sup> international conference on Turkish linguistics held on August 20–22, 2010 in Szeged*, (eds.) É. Kincses-Nagy, M. Biacsi, Szeged 2012, pp. 371–373.

<sup>6</sup> Viewed 30 October 2021, <<https://biblehub.com/nkjv/esther/2.htm>>.

<sup>7</sup> M. Németh, *Middle Western Karaim: A Critical Edition and Linguistic Analysis of Pre-19<sup>th</sup>-century Karaim Interpretations of Hebrew piyutim*, Leiden–Boston 2020; idem, *The Western Karaim Torah: A Critical Edition of a Manuscript from 1720*, Leiden–Boston 2021.