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The Karaim names of Sunday and Monday

The first attempt at explaining the origin and meaning of the Turkic names of the days of the week was made by A. N. Samojlovič in his study *Nazvanija dneĭ nedeli u tureckich narodov*.¹ Unfortunately, we do not have any possibility to profit directly from this work. The newest study was published, seventy-two years later, by P. B. Golden (*AOH* 1995).

What is at issue in the present paper is to present and explore the Karaim names for Sunday and Monday, a small part of a much wider theme: "The Karaim names of the days of the week".

The Jewish system used numerals to indicate each day of the week except for the *Sabbath*. In Karaim, each day of the week has its own name (see Table). The Karaim names of the days of the week have preserved traces of Turkic, Christian, Muslim and Judaic traditions. The whole system is quite a complex and extraordinary case.

In Karaim, the language of a non-Christian people, Sunday is designated by the term *yex kün*² translated as 'the holy day' (Zajaczkowski 1961a: 20; Golden 365). Monday, *yexbaškün*, used to be translated as the 'day after the holy day' (Zajaczkowski 1961a: 20; Golden 366).³ Zajaczkowski (1961b: 303) claims that the Turkish terms were "coined by Christian missionaries for the use of the Turkic peoples they were converting, e.g. the Komans or Polovti". According to Golden (366), "that undoubtedly points to Christian missionary influences among the Kumano-Kıpçaks before the Karaim community took shape in the Crimea". Zajaczkowski attempts to prove that Karaims are one of the Khazarian inheritors. The Kumano-Kıpçak world has been equally open to a wide variety of religious

¹ *Jafetičeskij Sbornik* II (1923): 98-119.

² Other variants: *йэхкюнь*, *йихкин*, *йухкүн*.

³ Cf. R III 511: Kar. *yix kin* 'der Sonntag', *yix baš kin* 'der Montag'.

influences: Christian, Judaic and Islamic (Zajaczkowski 24-39). Each of the religions had its representatives on the Khazarian territory. The Arabian geographer Ibn Rosta observed the Lord's day on three days of the week: Friday, Saturday and Sunday (Zajaczkowski 1961b: 301). The Karaim names of Sunday and Monday correspond with Mišar *baškön* 'Monday' (Golden 374), Armeno-Kıřčak *yix kün* 'Sunday' (Tryjarski 341; Golden 372) and *yix pař kün* 'Monday' (Golden 372), Karačay-Balkar *ıyix kün* 'Sunday' and *bař kün* 'Monday' (KBRS; Golden 372). All of these seem, at first glance, to be fairly clear.

In Golden's paper, Kar. *yex kün* is derived from Turk. **ıduk*, lit. 'sent' but, here, used in the meaning of 'sent, i.e. dedicated to God', hence 'sacred' in a more general sense (Clauson 46); cf. Krč.-Blk. *ıyık* 1. 'священный', 2. 'неделя',⁴ 3. 'духи рек, гор', ... etc. (ÈSTJa I 649) + *kün* 'day'. Räsänen cites **ıduk*: Krč.-Blk. *ıyık* 'Woche', *ıyix-kün* 'Sonntag'; Kar. L. *yix-kin* 'Sonntag'; Kum. *yux-öv*,⁵ Kar. T. *yeğ uv* < **ıduk-äb* 'temple' (VEWT 164). However *yex*, *yix* or *yux* 'saint' do not occur in Karaim dictionaries. We might also try to connect Kar. *yex*, *yix*, *yux* with Pers. *yek* یک 'one'. Kowalski translated *yex kün* as 'good day' (MK XI: 30), Kar. *yex* < Turk. *yeğ* 'good'.⁶ KRPS (244), for reasons which we do not know, places *jiv bas kin* 'Monday' under *jiv* 'house'. Firstly, such a phonetic shape does not occur in the list of the names of the days of the week at the end of the dictionary, neither for Monday nor for Sunday. What sort of word is it then? Secondly, what is it supposed to mean (*jiv bas kin* 'house, first day')? We believe that this attestation, being a hapax, can be passed over in silence in our discussion.

Hence, there exist three possibilities to explain the word *yex*. Let us examine them in what follows.

1. *yex kün* 'Sunday' [= 'first day']

Conjecture 1: Persian model. Kar. *yex kün* < Pers. *yek* یک 'one' + Kar. *kün* 'day'.

Pro – The translation of Kar. *yex kün* 'Sunday' as 'the first day, the day one' approximately matches the Persian model: *yek* 'one' + *řambe* 'Sabbath' > 'the first day after Saturday = Sunday'.

Con – Forming this compound according to the Persian model seems impossible, as it would assume a considerable knowledge and a wide use of Persian among the Karaims (in Khazaria?⁷). Yet, the Karaim vocabu-

⁴ "Значение в кбал. воскресенье > неделя" (ÈSTJa I 649).

⁵ Cf. R III 508 *yikäu* 'die Kirche'; Arm.-Kıřč. *ıyov* 'temple, église' (Tryjarski 342).

⁶ Kowalski has translated Kar. *yeğ uv* 'kościół, świątynia' as 'the good house' (MK XI: 30). Turk. *yeğ* 'хороший; добро; красивый' (ÈSTJa III 165).

⁷ On the Khazarian origin of the Karaims cf. T. Kowalski's opinion: "Teorii o Chazar-skim pochodzeniu Karaimów krymskich nie uważam jeszcze bynajmniej za udowodnioną, chociaż z drugiej strony muszę przyznać, że nie zawiera ona w sobie nic nie-

lary is full of Persian and Arabic words. There were, however, no reasons to copy the Persian model in order to name one day of the week only. Besides, in the Karaim dictionaries no *yex* 'one' is attested.

Conjecture 2: Hebraic model.

Pro – Religious conformity.

Con – Copying a Hebraic model and, at the same time, using a Persian word to render it in Karaim seems rather impossible. And again the same question: Why does only the name of Sunday seem to be a copy of a foreign model?

2. *yex kün* 'Sunday' [= 'holy day']

Conjecture: Turkic origin. Kar. *yex kün* < Turk. **ıduk* (or *īduk*) 'sent' + Turk. *kün* 'day'.

Pro – The Turkic origin of this word would be the best solution. We do not need to explain the name as a borrowing of a foreign model. The name of a church in the Karaim language is *yeg uv*, which we could literally translate as 'the holy house (?)'. It is possible that for Karaims, living among the Christian people, Sunday was 'the holy day (for Christians)'. It is the most popular translation and etymology (cf. e.g. Räsänen, Zajączkowski, Golden).

Con – *Yex kün* as 'the holy day' is illogical and contradictory with the Karaim religion. The etymology of Kar. *yex* < Turk. *ıduk* (or *īduk*), is commonly accepted but, nevertheless, it is certainly imperfect both phonetically and semantically. There are three phonetic variants in Karaim, namely: *yex*, *yix*, *yux* but none with the initial vowel. In Karaim dictionaries the word *yex* 'sent; holy' does not appear as such at all.

3. *yex kün* 'Sunday' [= 'good day']

Conjecture: Turkic origin. Kar. *yex kün* < Turk. *yeg* 'good'⁸ + Turk. *kün* 'day'.

Pro – The Turkic origin. Again: we do not need to explain the name as a borrowing of a foreign model. "Good day" is not the same as "holy day" because of lack of the religious nuance. Kowalski translated Kar.

prawdopodobnego. (...) Uważam jednak, że byłoby bezpieczniej sprawę tę pozostawić na razie w zawieszeniu, dopóki szczegółowe badania tak źródeł historycznych, jak zwłaszcza materiałów archeologicznych, nie pozwolą nam postawić ją na całkiem pewnym gruncie." (MK II: 6-7).

⁸ Cf. ÉSTJa III 165 without a meaning for Kar.

yeg' uv 'church' as 'the good house' (MK XI: 30) (not 'the holy house'). The most important argument pro is that this etymology is phonetically flawless.

Con – It is still questionable why Karaims as Judaism believers might have promoted Sunday among the other days of the week.

There is also a serious problem with the translation of the name of Monday *yexbaškün*. The meaning of the word is not clear because of the order of the words in the compound: *yex* + *baš* 'head; main; first' + *kün*. Whichever theory we consider, there is still the question of how to translate *yexbaškün* ('first, first day', 'holy / first day' or 'good / first day'). More logical and natural would be a compound like: **bašyexkün*.

It seems that the most reasonable among these etymologies is number 3 above (*yex kün* 'Sunday' = 'good day'), first suggested by Kowalski.⁹ It is astonishing that Zajaczkowski (1961a, 1961b) did not refer to Kowalski, and translated Kar. *yex* as 'holy'. Translating *yex kün* as 'good day' is readily acceptable from both the phonetic and the semantic points of view. There is still, however, no convincing etymology for the name of Monday.

Table (KRPS 682)

The days of the week	Karaim		Crimean Karaim
	Troki	Halicz	
Sunday	йэхкюнь	йихкин	йухкүн
Monday	йэхбашкюнь	йихбаскин	йухбашкүн
Tuesday	ортакюнь	ортакин	ортакүн
Wednesday	ханкюнь	ханкин	къанкүн
Thursday	кичибараски	кицэйнэкин	кичэйнэкүн (күчэйнэкүн)
Friday	бараски (айнакюнь)	айнэкин (эйнэкин)	эйнэкүн (айнэкүн)
Saturday	шаббат кюнь	шаббаткин	шаббаткүн

⁹ Kowalski, T.: Wyrazy kipczackie w języku Ormian polskich. – MK XI (1937-38/12), Wilno 1939.

A b b r e v i a t i o n s

Arm.-Kıpč.	= Armeno-Kıpčak
Kar.	= Karaim (T. – Troki; L. – Luck)
Krč.-Blk.	= Karačay-Balkar
Kum.	= Kuman
<i>MK</i>	= <i>Myśl Karaimska</i>
Pers.	= Persian
Turk.	= Turkic

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