

A historical morphology of Western Karaim: The *-a jez-* ~ *-a ez-* approximative

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ABSTRACT

Karaim is often treated as an exceptional Kipchak Turkic tongue in which certain, otherwise widespread Turkic verbal constructions are not present. Philological discoveries of recent years show, however, that some of these categories did exist in Karaim. As a response to this issue, the present article documents the Western Karaim equivalent of the Tkc. *-a jaz-* approximative construction. It is based on 18th- and 19th-century Biblical texts which are then juxtaposed with both phonetically and morphologically atypical 20th-century data. This contribution is part of a series of works describing Karaim grammatical categories hitherto undocumented in the scholarly literature.

KEYWORDS

historical morphology, Western Karaim, the Turkic *-a + jaz-* approximative, historical morphology of Kipchak

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1. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

A historical grammar of Karaim – a Kipchak Turkic vernacular listed as a critically endangered tongue in the UNESCO Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger – has been a desideratum up until the present day. The reason for this lies in the fact that even just a decade ago the oldest known and properly edited Western Karaim texts dated from no earlier than 1900, whereas for decades, as far as Eastern (Crimean) Karaim is concerned, the only descriptions based on sources older than 1900 were Józef Sulimowicz's (1972, 1973) study of the lexicon and phonology of a printed prayer book and Henryk Jankowski's (1997) grammatical description of a Biblical manuscript in which extensive linguistic material is presented. Therefore, the existing grammatical descriptions – be it academic grammars, scholarly journal articles devoted to specific grammatical phenomena, or works in which linguistic remarks are presented marginally – lacked a properly documented historical perspective.¹ In fact, our philologically documented knowledge of the pre-19th-century history of Karaim dialects was based only upon reconstructions.² Fortunately, the last decade has seen the discovery of numerous Karaim sources from the 17th and 18th centuries, see Jankowski (2014), Jankowski et al. (2019), and Németh (2014, 2015c, 2016, 2018a, 2020, 2021), which opens up new avenues of research and gives us the opportunity, on the one hand, to verify the existing reconstructions and, on the other, to augment our knowledge of the pre-19th-century history of Western Karaim.³

Several years ago, we began work on a series of articles that presented hitherto undocumented Western Karaim grammatical categories. Their apparent lack helped create an incomplete picture of this language in the scholarly literature: Karaim is often treated as an exceptional Kipchak Turkic tongue in which certain, otherwise widespread verbal constructions are not present. Bearing this in mind, in Németh (2015a, and 2019) we documented and performed a contrastive analysis of the *-p edi* pluperfect and the *-a dyr* continuative present, which were often described as non-existent in Karaim, see, for instance, Berta's (1998: 311) description in which we read that 'all languages except Karaim also use a more focal present to express events currently taking place [...] mostly formed with the *-A* converb + auxiliary verb *tur-* 'stand' + pronominal personal markers [...]'. Other works worth noting in this respect are Johanson's (1999: 173) article in which the author remarked that 'all Kipchak languages except Karaim possess numerous actional specifiers signalling modes of action, postverbal constructions consisting of a converb marker plus a following auxiliary, often a postural verb', or Schönig's (1984: 303) seminal work, in which it is stated that Karaim and Gagauz are the only Turkic languages in which there are no auxiliary verbs like the ones mentioned above. The above opinions were, we should emphasize once again, a result of the absence of a representative number of Western Karaim written sources available to scholars.

The present paper is a continuation of the above-mentioned series of articles and it is the Western Karaim *-a jez- ~ -a ez-* construction that is under scrutiny here.

¹ See Kowalski 1929, Zajączkowski 1931, Pritsak 1959, Musaev 1964, 1977, Prik 1976, Firkovičius 1996, Berta 1998, Aqtay 2009: I: 33–47, Németh 2011a: 21–76, 2011b, Olach 2013, and Gülsevin 2016: 49–131. Karaim word-formation was presented by Zajączkowski (1931: 20–23; 1932) and Çulha (2006: 18–32).

² To provide the full details of this picture, we ought to mention that some descriptions of Karaim have been complemented with historical remarks, but these were usually marginal commentaries. A good example is Musaev's (1964) grammar: it contains many observations of this kind, but without specifying the sources they are based on.

³ We refer to this period as Middle Western Karaim; for the first periodization of Western Karaim, prepared on the basis of phonological, morphological, and historical criteria, see Németh 2015c, 2018b.



2. TURKIC COMPARATIVE MATERIAL

The analysed verbal form is known from a number of Turkic languages and consists of the Tkc. *-a* converbial form of the main verb used in conjunction with the common Turkic (main and auxiliary) verb *jaz-* ‘to miss (Germ. *verfehlen*), to fail, to err’ < PTkc. **jāz-* (ĚSTJa 1989: 72–73) possibly related to PTkc. **āz-* ‘to get lost, to lose one’s way’ (ĚSTJa 1974: 94–95).⁴ In all the respective Turkic languages the construction is (or was) used to express an action that has almost taken place. It is well-documented in the Kipchak branch of the Turkic languages, see, for instance, Bshk. *-a jaz-* (Juldašev 1981: 222), Tat. *-a jaz-* (Poppe 1961: 102), CTat. *-a jaz-* (Jankowski 1992: 175, Jankowski 2010: 137), Nog. *-a jaz-* (Csató & Karakoç 1998: 338), Kirg. *-a žazda-* (KirgRussS 1965: 212), KzK. *-a žazda-* (Muhamedowa 2016: 146–149), or Kklp. *-a žaz-* (Baskakov 1952: 376).⁵ It is also known from Middle Kipchak sources, see Zajączkowski (1954: 56) or Clauson (1972: 984). In *Codex Comanicus* (a 14th-century Kipchak Turkic manuscript written by several hands in Latin script) the verb *jaz-* ‘to miss’ is attested once (Drimba 2000: folio 57 r^o), but not in the role of an auxiliary verb (von Gabain [1959] does not document the auxiliary *jaz-*, either), see <urdim da iazdim> *urdym da jazdym* ‘I struck and missed’ (Kuun 1880: 134, 254; Radloff 1887: 40).

It is also used outside the Kipchak group, see e.g. Tksh. *-a jaz-* (Kononov 1956: 211–212;), Uyg. *-a jaz-* (Nadžip 1960: 85, 87), Uzb. *-a jâz-* (Wurm 1959: 520), or Alt. *-a jasta-* (Rachmatullin 1928: 24; not noted in Baskakov [1947]).⁶ Additionally, as far as the historical varieties of Turkic are concerned, it is known to perform the same role in Ottoman Turkish (see Kerslake 1998: 191), Chagatay (see Eckmann 1966: 145; not noted either by Blagova [1994] or Bodrogligeti [2001]), and Old Turkic (DTS 250, s.v. *jaz-*^{III}) – recorded in the 11th-century dictionary of *Maḥmūd al-Kāšgarī* (Dankoff & Kelly 1985: 220). We might add here that, as far as Old Turkic is concerned, Clauson (1972: 983) and Erdal (2004: 260) deliver a somewhat more elaborate and convincing interpretation of the analysed construction (than the one available in DTS), namely that it denoted actions which the subject failed to carry out.

⁴ This is, obviously, a simplified description of this verbal construction: the set of allophones of the Tkc. *-a* ~ *-e* (*-ā*) ~ *-j* converb as well as the phonetic shape or morphological structure of the equivalents of Tkc. *jaz-* vary in the respective Turkic languages. A comprehensive overview of the Turkic reflexes of the *-a* converb is presented in the table added to Džanmavov’s (1967) study.

⁵ In Kazakh and Kirghiz another construction is also employed to express the same meaning: the respective cognates of the above-mentioned Tkc. *jaz-* ‘to miss’ are used with the *-a* converbial form of a second auxiliary verb (*ket-* ‘to go’, *kal-* ‘to stay’, or *koj-* ‘to put’) that follows the *-p* converbial form of the main verb, i.e.: Kzk. *-p kete ~ kala ~ koja žazda-* (Somfai Kara 2002: 49–50), and Kirg. *-p kete ~ kala ~ kojo žazda-* (Somfai Kara 2003: 55; not noted in some other grammars, see Wurm 1949; Hebert & Poppe 1963), e.g. Kirg. *ölüp kala žazdady* ‘he almost died’ ← *öl-* ‘to die’.

⁶ Juldašev (1965: 109–111) provides only Bashkir, Tatar, and Uzbek examples of the analysed construction, Räsänen (1957: 185) documents only Tatar, Karakalpak, Uzbek, Turkish, and Oyrot (Altay) data, Räsänen (1969: 193, s.v. *jaz* ‘fast tun, anfangen zu tun’) mentions only its Chagatay, Ottoman, and Tatar cognates, after Radloff (1905: III/1: 227).



3. THE AVAILABLE WESTERN KARAIM DATA

3.1. Description of primary sources

The Western Karaim material presented in this paper is excerpted mainly from translations of the Torah. The basis of our work was the text of ms. ADub.III.73 which contains the oldest known translation, made in 1720, into Western Karaim, more precisely its north-western dialect. A comprehensive critical edition of this text was published by Németh (2021). The verses in which we found the analysed examples were checked against another 18th-century North Western Karaim manuscript, namely TKow.01 (created in 1722), as well as against ms. JSul.III.01, a mid-19th-century South-Western Karaim translation of the Torah. Finally, an additional text taken into consideration was the revised translation of the Book of Genesis published in Vilnius by Mickiewicz and Rojecki in 1889.

It is important to note that we have at our disposal the historical and philological data necessary to establish the time and place where the above-mentioned sources were created. Manuscripts ADub.III.73 and TKow.01 were copied in Kukizów (a small settlement in present-day Western Ukraine) by a person called Simcha, son of Chananel of Derażne (born in Trakai ca. 1670). He moved to Kukizów in 1688, where he was the *hazzan* (i.e., head priest) from ca. 1709 until his death on 27 March 1723. He began work on ADub.III.73 on 25 March 1720 and finished it on 31 May 1720 (as specified in the colophon on folios 342 r^o – 342 v^o). Roughly two years later, he commenced work on ms. TKow.01 which he finished copying on 7 December 1722.⁷ Ms. JSul.III.01, in turn, was copied in Halych most probably not later than the mid 19th century. It is the work of Jeshua Josef Mordkowicz, a copyist, translator, and *hazzan* in Halych (born 1802, died 23 July 1884). His South-Western Karaim idiolect was described in detail by Németh (2020: 46–47), and a short sample of this manuscript was presented by Cegiołka (2019). The North-Western Karaim translation of the Book of Genesis prepared for printing by Mickiewicz and Rojecki (1889) originates from the 19th century. Examples (1a–c), and (2a–d) were excerpted from the sources above.

Example (3) was found in the theatre play entitled *Dostu juvńuń* [= ‘Family friend’] authored by Szymon Firkowicz (1897–1982), the *hazzan* in Trakai, a native-speaker of North-Western Karaim. The play was published by Kowalski (1929: 117) in a phonetic transcription. Exactly the same word was adduced by Zajączkowski (1932: 65).

The present author was fortunate enough to identify three other examples (4a–c) of the analysed construction written in pencil by Józef Sulimowicz (1913–1973), a Karaim-born Turkologist and native-speaker of South Western Karaim. A short annotation of his was found in the bottom margin of page 27 of A. Zajączkowski’s concise grammar of South-Western Karaim (i.e., Zajączkowski 1931). The copy of the book in question was the property of Józef Sulimowicz and it was bound together with a copy of Zajączkowski’s study on Western Karaim word formation (i.e., Zajączkowski 1932).⁸ The latter book was signed by the author as proof of ownership, but it later entered into the possession of Józef Sulimowicz. The handwriting of the notes in question

⁷ For more information regarding Simcha ben Chananel and mss. ADub.III.73 and TKow.01, see Németh (2020, 2021).

⁸ The book cover is decorated with the Polish word *Sufiksy* imprinted in gold Art Deco style letters. The latter suggests that the two works could have been bound together in the interwar period – either by Zajączkowski or by Sulimowicz. The present author received this item years ago as a gift from Anna Sulimowicz-Keruth.



is identical to that found in Sulimowicz (1969), a notebook that the present author used, among other sources, for the preparation of Németh (2015a). It was also recognized by Anna Sulimowicz-Keruth, Józef Sulimowicz's daughter, as her father's handwriting.

No Eastern Karaim examples of this construction were identified thus far.

3.2. Technical remarks on the glosses

In the interlinear morpheme-by-morpheme glossing presented below the auxiliary verb in question (which is only one component of the analysed construction) is, at this point tentatively, labelled as a grammatical marker (APRX) rather than a separate lexeme. Derivative suffixes and petrified (non-productive) morphemes are not labelled. Eng. arch. *thou* and Eng. *you* are used to distinguish between the two modern meanings of *you*. The Biblical context was checked against Benson (1857), Peake (1920), and Friedman (2003). The transcription system applied here was presented in detail by Németh (2020: 56–59, 99–104). Its main advantage is that it reconciles the phonological, phonetic, and phonotactic peculiarities of the Middle Western Karaim and Modern Western Karaim dialects.

3.3. Western Karaim linguistic data

(1) *keltirejezdij* (Genesis 20:9)

- a. *Da ündedi Avimeleḥ Avrahamny da ajtty anar ne qyldyj bizḡa da ne jazyqly boldum saja ki keltirejezdij üstürna da bijligim üstürna ullu jazyq işlar ki qylynmajdylar qyldyj birgeḡa.* (ADub.III.73: 28 r^o)

<i>Da</i>	<i>ünde-di</i>		<i>Avimeleḥ</i>		<i>Avraham-ny</i>	<i>da</i>		<i>ajt-ty</i>
and	call-PST-[3SG]		Abimelech		Abraham-ACC	and		say-PST-[3SG]
<i>an-ar</i>	<i>ne</i>	<i>qyl-dy-j</i>	<i>biz-ḡa</i>	<i>da</i>	<i>ne</i>			<i>jazyqly</i>
he\DAT	what	do-PST-2SG	we-DAT	and	what			sinful
<i>bol-du-m</i>	<i>saj-a</i>	<i>ki</i>	<i>keltir-e=jez-di-j</i>					<i>üst-ürn-a</i>
be-PST-1SG	thou\DAT	that	bring-CONV=APRX-PST-2SG					top-1SG.POSS-POSS.DAT
<i>da</i>	<i>bijlig-im</i>		<i>üst-ürn-a</i>		<i>ullu</i>	<i>jazyq</i>		
and	kingdom\1SG.POSS		top-3SG.POSS-POSS.DAT		great	sin		
<i>iş-lar</i>	<i>ki</i>	<i>qylyn-ma-j-dylar</i>		<i>qyl-dy-j</i>				
matter-PL	which	be.done-NEG-PRS-3PL		do-PST-2SG				
<i>birge-m-a.</i>								
with-1SG.POSS-POSS.DAT								



‘And Abimelech called Abraham, and said to him, “What have you done to us? And how did I sin against you, that you have almost brought a great sin on me and on my kingdom? You have done things with me that are not done.”’

The spelling of *keltirejezdij*: כִּלְטִירֵיִּזְדִּי

- b. *Da ündedi Avimeleḥ Avrahamny da ajtty anar ne qyldyj bizḡa da ne jazyqly boldum saja ki keltirajezdij üstüma da bijligim üstüna ulla jazyq išlar ki qylynmajdylar qyldyj birgeḡa.* (TKow.01: 29 v^o – 30 r^o)

<i>Da</i>	<i>ünde-di</i>	<i>Avimeleḥ</i>	<i>Avraham-ny</i>	<i>da</i>	<i>ajt-ty</i>
and	call-PST-[3SG]	Abimelech-NOM	Abraham-ACC	and	say-PST-[3SG]
<i>an-ar</i>	<i>ne</i>	<i>qyl-dy-j</i>	<i>biz-ḡa</i>	<i>da</i>	<i>ne</i>
he\DAT	what	do-PST-2SG	we-DAT	and	what
					<i>jazyqly</i>
					sinful
<i>bol-du-m</i>	<i>saj-a</i>	<i>ki</i>	<i>keltir-a=jez-di-j</i>		<i>üst-ürḡa</i>
be-PST-1SG	thou\DAT	that	bring-CONV=APRX-PST-2SG		top-1SG.POSS-POSS.DAT
<i>da</i>	<i>bijlig-im</i>		<i>üst-ürḡa</i>	<i>ulla</i>	<i>jazyq</i>
and	kingdom\1SG.POSS		top-3SG.POSS-POSS.DAT	great	sin
<i>iš-lar</i>	<i>ki</i>	<i>qylyn-ma-j-dylar</i>	<i>qyl-dy-j</i>		
matter-PL	which	be.done-NEG-PRS-3PL	do-PST-2SG		

birge-ḡa.

with-1SG.POSS-POSS.DAT

‘And Abimelech called Abraham, and said to him, “What have you done to us? And how did I sin against you, that you have almost brought a great sin on me and on my kingdom? You have done things with me that are not done.”’

The spelling of *keltirajezdij*: כִּלְטִירֵיִּזְדִּי

- c. *Da indadi⁹ Avimeleḥ Avrahamny da ajtty anar ne qyldyj bizḡa da ne jazyhly boldum saja ki keltirajezdij üstüma da bijligim üstüna ulla jazyh išlar ki qylynmajdylar qyldyj birḡarḡa* (Mickiewicz & Rojecki 1889: 23).

<i>Da</i>	<i>inda-di</i>	<i>Avimeleḥ</i>	<i>Avraham-ny</i>	<i>da</i>	<i>ajt-ty</i>
and	call-PST-[3SG]	Abimelech	Abraham-ACC	and	say-PST-[3SG]

⁹ Instead of the expected *ündadi*; it is perhaps a result of a blend with SWKar. *indedi*, which, in turn, might suggest that Mickiewicz and Rojecki (1889) also used South-Western Karaim sources in their editorial work.



an-ar ne qyl-dy-j biz-ğa da ne jazyhly
 he\DAT what do-PST-2SG we-DAT and what sinful

bol-du-m saj-a ki keltir-a=jez-di-j üst-üm-a
 be-PST-1SG thou\DAT that bring-CONV=APRX-PST-2SG top-1SG.POSS-POSS.DAT

da bijlig-im üst-ün-a ullu jazyh
 and kingdom\1SG.POSS top-3SG.POSS-POSS.DAT great sin

iš-lar ki qylyn-ma-dy-lar qyl-dy-j
 matter-PL which be.done-NEG-PST-3PL do-PST-2SG

birğa-m-a.
 with-1SG.POSS-POSS.DAT

‘And Abimelech called Abraham, and said to him, “What have you done to us? And how did I sin against you, that you have almost brought a great sin on me and on my kingdom? You have done things with me that were not done.”

The spelling of *keltirajezdij*: קֶלְטִירַיֶזְדִּי

(2) *jatajezdi* and *keltirejezdij* (Genesis 26:10)

- a. *Da ajtty Avimeleḥ ne bu qyldyj bizğa azğynaq jatajezdi birisi ol ulusnun qatynyjbyla da keltirgejdij üstümüzğa fašmanlyq.* (ADub.III.73: 39 r^o)

Da ajt-ty Avimeleḥ ne bu qyl-dy-j
 and say-PST-[3SG] Abimelech what this do-PST-2SG

biz-ğa azğynaq jat-a=jez-di biri-si ol
 we-DAT almost lie-CONV=APRX-PST-[3SG] one.of-3SG.POSS-NOM ART

ulus-nun qatyn-yj=byla da keltir-gej-di-j
 people-GEN wife-2SG.POSS=with and bring-OPT-PST-2SG

üst-ümüz-ğa fašmanlyq.
 top-1PL.POSS-DAT guilt

‘And Abimelech said, “What is this you have done to us? One of the people has almost lain with your wife, and you would have brought guilt on us.”

The spelling of *jatajezdi*: יָטַיֶזְדִּי



- b. *Da ajtty Avimeleḥ ne bu qyldyj bizge azǵyṇaq jatajezdi birisi ol ulusnun qatynyjbyla da keltirejezdij üstümüzge fašmanlyq.* (TKow.01: 40 v° – 41 r°)

<i>Da</i>	<i>ajt-ty</i>	<i>Avimeleḥ</i>	<i>ne</i>	<i>bu</i>	<i>qyl-dy-j</i>
and	say-PST-[3SG]	Abimelech	what	this	do-PST-2SG

<i>biz-ge</i>	<i>azǵyṇaq</i>	<i>jat-a=jez-di</i>	<i>biri-si</i>	<i>ol</i>
we-DAT	almost	lie-CONV=APRX-PST-[3SG]	one.of-3SG.POSS	ART

<i>ulus-nun</i>	<i>qatyn-yj=byla</i>	<i>da</i>	<i>keltir-e=jez-di-j</i>
people-GEN	wife-2SG.POSS=with	and	bring-CONV=APRX-PST-2SG

<i>üst-ümüz-ge</i>	<i>fašmanlyq.</i>
top-1PL.POSS-DAT	guilt

‘And Abimelech said, “What is this you have done to us? One of the people has almost lain with your wife, and you have almost brought guilt on us.”’

The spelling of *jatajezdi*: יִטְיִזְדִּי

The spelling of *keltirejezdij*: כִּלְטִירִיִּזְדִּי

- c. *Da ajtty Avimeleḥ ne bu qyldyj bizǵa azǵyṇa jatajezdi birisi ol ulusnun qatynyjbyla da keltirgejdij üstümüzǵa fašmanlyq.* (Mickiewicz & Rojecki 1889: 31)

<i>Da</i>	<i>ajt-ty</i>	<i>Avimeleḥ</i>	<i>ne</i>	<i>bu</i>	<i>qyl-dy-j</i>
and	say-PST-[3SG]	Abimelech	what	this	do-PST-2SG

<i>biz-ǵa</i>	<i>azǵyṇa</i>	<i>jat-a=jez-di</i>	<i>biri-si</i>	<i>ol</i>
we-DAT	almost	lie-CONV=APRX-PST-[3SG]	one.of-3SG.POSS	ART

<i>ulus-nun</i>	<i>qatyn-yj=byla</i>	<i>da</i>	<i>keltir-gej-di-j</i>
people-GEN	wife-2SG.POSS=with	and	bring-OPT-PST-2SG

<i>üst-ümüz-ǵa</i>	<i>jazyḥ.</i>
top-1PL.POSS-DAT	sin

‘And Abimelech said, “What is this you have done to us? One of the people has almost lain with your wife, and you would have brought sin on us.”’

The spelling of *jatajezdi*: יִטְיִזְדִּי



- d. *Da ajtty Avimeleḥ ne bu qyldyn bizge azǵy naq j a t a j e z d i birisi ol ulusnun qatynyn byla da keltirgijdin biznin istine faşmanlyq jazyq.* (JSul.III.01: 27 r^o)

<i>Da</i>	<i>ajt-ty</i>	<i>Avimeleḥ</i>	<i>ne</i>	<i>bu</i>	<i>qyl-dy-n</i>
and	say-PST-[3SG]	Abimelech	what	this	do-PST-2SG

<i>biz-ge</i>	<i>azǵy naq</i>	<i>jat-a=jez-di</i>		<i>biri-si</i>	<i>ol</i>
we-DAT	almost	lie-CONV=APRX-PST-[3SG]		one.of-3SG.POSS	ART

<i>ulus-nun</i>	<i>qatyn-yn</i>	<i>byla</i>	<i>da</i>	<i>keltir-gij-di-n</i>
people-GEN	wife-2SG.POSS	with	and	bring-OPT-PST-2SG

<i>biz-nin</i>	<i>ist-in-e</i>	<i>faşmanlyq</i>	<i>jazyq.</i>
we-GEN	top-3SG.POSS-POSS.DAT	guilt	sin

‘And Abimelech said, “What is this you have done to us? One of the people has almost lain with your wife, and you would have brought guilt sin on us.”’

The spelling of *jatajezd*: ‘𐰇𐰏𐰕𐰚𐰚’

(3) *öläeǵdim*

Ėtuñ kuñ... butuñ kuñ... öla-eǵdim kajǵydan... (Kowalski 1929: 117)

<i>Ėtuñ</i>	<i>kuñ</i>	<i>butuñ</i>	<i>kuñ</i>	<i>öġ-a=eǵ-di-m</i>	<i>qajǵy-dan.</i>
all	day	all	day	die-CONV=APRX-PST-1SG	sadness-ABL

For the entire day... for the entire day... I almost died of sadness.

Spelled: <öla-eǵdim>

(4) *öläeǵdim, baraeǵdim, soǵläeǵdim*

a. *öġ-a=eǵ-di-m*

die-CONV=APRX-PST-1SG

‘I almost died’

Spelled: <öla-ez-dim>



b. *bar-a=ez-di-m*

go-CONV=APRX-PST-1SG

‘I almost went’

Spelled: <bara-ez-dim>

c. *śozła=ez-di-m* [sic!]

speak=APRX-PST-1SG

‘I almost spoke’

Spelled: <siozla-ez-dim>

4. MORPHOLOGICAL AND MORPHONOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

Let us start with examining the fact that the vowel of the auxiliary verb underwent a fronting process, i.e., an *a > e* shift took place in MWKar. **jaz-* > MWKar. *jez-*. Although the *ja-* > *je-* change is not unprecedented either in Karaim dialects or in Turkic languages in general (see e.g. Räsänen 1949: 81; von Gabain 1959: 51), it is not commonplace in Western Karaim. Seen in this light, it requires commentary and an explanation.

In Turkic languages, the fronting of *a* is often caused by adjacent *j*, *ǰ*, *š*, or *č* – regardless of whether the consonants above follow or precede *a*, see, e.g. Bshk. *jāš* ‘1. young; 2. year of age’ – the reflex of Tkc. *jāš* ‘1. moist; fresh (of vegetation); 2. young’, Bshk., EKar., Tat., etc. *ajt-* id. – the continuant of Tkc. *ajt-* ‘to say’, Bshk., Tat. *bājlā-* ‘to tie’ – the reflex of Tkc. *bağla-* (see Räsänen [1969], Sevortjan [1974], Ščerbak [1970: 38], Tenišev [1984: 144]), or Kipch. CC *alaj* ~ *alej* ‘thus; this way’ (Radloff 1887: 5, s.v. *алай*).

As far as the Karaim data is concerned, the eastern (Crimean) dialect provides further examples of the *ja-* > *jä-* change, see the reflexes of Tkc. *jāš* ‘young’, namely, EKar. *jaš* ~ *jāš* ‘1. young; 2. green’ vs. NWKar. *jaš* ‘1. young; 2. year of age’, SWKar. *jas* id., or the Karaim cognates of Tkc. *janč-* ‘to crush’, namely, EKar. *janč-* ~ *jenč-* ‘to strike; to crush, to destroy’ vs. NWKar. *janč-* id., SWKar. *janc-* id., to mention only a few (the data is excerpted from KarRPS, and Aqtay and Jankowski [2015]). In fact, in Eastern Karaim, the *aj* > *äj*, *ač* > *äč*, and *až* > *äj* processes were quite frequent, too, *ajtalar* > *äjätälär* ‘they say’, *sač* > *säč* ‘hair’, and *ažyjym* > *äjijim* ‘I am sorry’ (KarRPS 500; Prik 1976: 41; Jankowski 2003: 122) being good examples here.

The comparative data for the *ja-* > *je-* change in Western Karaim is, however, quite modest. Zajączkowski (1932: 152–153) took this change into account and added it to the list of sound changes that occurred in Western Karaim stems and suffixes (Zajączkowski 1932: 152–163) and provided three instances of it in the following words:

- *ješil* ‘green’ < **jašyl*,
- *jerğa* ‘grade, layer’ < **jargā*, and
- *jeld’a-* ‘to delude’ < **jalda-* < *alda-* ‘to delude; to lie; to cheat’.



The etymology of the third example holds water and, in light of WKar. *alda-* ‘to delude; to lie; to cheat; serves as a good analogy for Kar. **jaz-* > *jez-* even if must assume the development of a prothetic *j-* in *jelda-*, which prothetic sound is, parenthetically saying, also attested in the Mamluk Kipchak *jalda-* ‘to mislead, to deceive’ (see Tekin 1994: 56). Given that all the Turkic cognates of this widespread verb have back vocalism and the emergence prothetic *j-* sound is rare (ĚSTJa 1974: 127), we can safely say that both the appearance of the prothetic sound and the *ja* > *je* change are not inherited phenomena, but they occurred in Karaim.

The **ja* > *je* shift in *ješil* ‘green’ raises no doubts, either; the same phenomenon took place in a number of its Turkic cognates (ĚSTJa 1974: 164–165) and, hence, there is no reason to question its occurrence in Karaim.

However, *jerġa* ‘grade, layer’ does not appear to be a perfect parallel here. Zajączkowski (1932: 153) etymologizes *jerġa* as a *-ġa* derivative of *jar-* ‘to crack, to break’, but the word’s origin is far from being clarified. What definitely undermines Zajączkowski’s view is that all Turkic cognates exhibit front vocalism (including Yakut). In other words, there is no trace of *ja-* on the onset in its Turkic equivalents, see Räsänen (1969: 198), Radlov (1905: III/1: 341).¹⁰

We can, therefore, say that there are at least (or only) two analogous examples for the *ja* > *je*-change in Western Karaim. It is important to note that the well-known NWKar. *aj* > *ej* change should not be referred to here as an analogous process, since it operated at a much later date and in a different phonotactic environment; more precisely: the latter process was documented for 19th-century Modern North-Western Karaim (Németh 2015b: 174–175; 2018b: 155) and took place only when *j* was in the syllable-closing position.

Besides the development of the analysed **jaz-*, there is no other trace of the *ja* > *je* change in ADub.III.73. Neither did we manage to find more relevant examples in any of the manuscripts we have been fortunate to deal with so far, let alone in the available scholarly works. Nevertheless, the orthography of all the examples presented above leaves no doubt that the vowel fronting in this auxiliary did indeed take place. The comparative material gives us grounds for assuming that the change could have been phonetically motivated, but in light of the scant number of parallel examples the question needs to be asked why the shift occurred with this verb? To have a better understanding of this problem, we should take note of the fact that by the time these examples were recorded the verb **jaz-* (*jez-*) had (most probably) lost its original lexical meaning and had already been grammaticalized.¹¹ The change in the stem vowel, therefore, may have been the result of (or occurred in parallel with) the reduction in the informational load of the verb, which is often the case when a lexeme is grammaticalized (see e.g., Dahl 2011: 158). The change could additionally have been catalysed by the need to avoid homonymy with the verb *jaz-* ‘to write’.

Having said this, we have grounds to believe that the **jaz-* > *jez-* change took place in Western Karaim as a result of an assimilative phonetic process possibly reinforced by semantic phenomena.

However, there are further matters to be explained in relation to the other examples. As is shown in the table below, in examples (3), and (4a–b) the auxiliary lacks the word-initial *j-*,

¹⁰ Räsänen (1969: 198) proposed a Mongolic etymology which, regardless of its value, has the advantage over Zajączkowski’s idea of not involving the reconstruction of the **ja* > *je* change. Radlov’s (1905: III/1: 341) idea to explain *jerġa* as the dative case form of *jer* ‘place’ might raise certain doubts, too.

¹¹ ĚSTJa (1989: 72–73, s.v. *ūa:3-*) provides a list of Turkic languages in which the verb *jaz-* ‘to miss; etc.’ is (or, was, cf. the historic idioms of Turkic) used. The cognates of Tk. *āz-* ‘to get lost; to lost one’s way’, including Kar. *az-* ‘1. to err; to get lost; to lose one’s way; 2. to prostitute, to fall into harlotry’ (KarRPS 1974: 47) are collected in ĚSTJa (1974: 94–95, s.v. *a:3-*). Cf. also NWKar., EKar. *azġyr-* ‘1. to mislead; 2. to tempt, and Kar. *azġyrt-* ‘1. to tempt; 2. to instigate’.



whereas in example (3c) both the word-initial *j-* and the converbial *-j* are missing. To put it more concisely, we would expect the following forms:

Table 1. Examples (3), (4a), (4b), (4c) and their expected equivalents

Example	There is	Expected forms
3	<i>öläezdim</i>	* <i>öläjezdim</i>
4a	<i>öläezdim</i>	* <i>öläjezdim</i>
4b	<i>baraездim</i>	* <i>barajezdim</i>
4c	<i>śozläezdim</i>	* <i>śozläjjezdim</i>

There is no analogy in Turkic languages either for the loss of the word-initial *j-*, or for forms with front vocalism in the equivalents of the auxiliary *jaz-* (ĚSTJa 1989: 72–73). The only front vocalic form we found in the scholarly literature is Tat. *äz-* ‘to get lost’ listed by Räsänen (1969: 33, s.v. *äz*), but we could not confirm its existence in other sources (TatRussS 1966; TTDS 1969; TatRussS 2004), and, secondly, it is a reflex of the above-mentioned Tk. verb *äz-* which, although etymologically (most likely) related to Tk. *jäz-*, never played the role of an auxiliary verb. Neither can the above-mentioned NWKar. *ez-* be identified with Kar. *az-* ‘to err; etc.’, because the fronted vocalism can only be explained through the influence of the adjacent *j-*.

It is not entirely clear what the reason was for the loss of this word-initial *j-*. One explanation that could be theoretically considered here is the analogy with Kar. *az-* ‘1. to err; to get lost; to lose one’s way; 2. to prostitute oneself, to fall into harlotry’, but this can be valid only if we assume that the speakers were able to consult their own feel for the language and identify the semantic (or etymological) connection between the auxiliary *jez-* forming verbs meaning ‘to almost do something’ and a verb meaning ‘1. to err; to get lost; to lose one’s way; 2. to prostitute oneself, to fall into harlotry’ – which cannot be either confirmed or rejected. Additionally, the difference in vocalism would also remain undetermined in this case.

A much better interpretation would be to assume that the process of grammaticalization of *jez-* eventually led to irregularities in the paradigm as the borderline between morphemes became obscured and, as a result, the word-initial *j-* was reinterpreted as a non-etymological sound like the one used in the Western Karaim abilitive mood construction *-al ~ -j-al* to avoid hiatus: *-j-* is added to the abilitive mood marker *-al-* (etymologically speaking, a cognate of *al-* ‘to take’, primarily an auxiliary verb which eventually evolved into the WKar. *(j)al-* ~ *(j)el* suffix) when it follows a verbal stem ending in a vowel (Zajączkowski 1932: 126–127).

Finally, the form *śozläezdim* (example 4c), which also lacks the converbial *-j*, is most likely an erroneously adduced form, in which the stem-ending *-a* of *śozła-* ‘to speak’ was mistakenly identified as the *-a* converb. As we see in examples (4a) and (4b), in turn, the converbial *-a* is correctly used.

5. FINAL THOUGHTS. SEMANTIC AND CHRONOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

Biblical translations have one significant advantage: the context of each grammatical form can be specified very precisely. Below, we have summarized the Biblical context of verses Genesis 20:9 and 26:10:



- (1) *keltirejezdij* ‘you have almost brought’: After Abraham had arrived in Gerar, he lied that Sarah was not his wife but rather was his sister and hence she was taken to the harem of Abimelech, King of Gerar. Abimelech learned the truth in a dream through divine communication and he was warned that he would die if he does not give back Sarah to Abraham. Abimelech, therefore, sent Sarah back and said to Abraham that he has almost caused him and his nation to commit a mortal sin. (Genesis 20:1–9)
- (2) *jatajezdi* ‘has almost lain’ and *keltirejezdij* ‘you have almost brought’: Like his father Abraham, famine forced Isaac to go to Gerar, whose king was Abimelech, styled ‘King of the Philistines’. To save his life, Isaac passed off his wife, Rebekah, as his sister, until Abimelech surprised them in their connubialities and learned that she is his wife. The king rebuked Abraham for not saying the truth and said that his people have almost incurred the guilt of unconscious adultery through his lie. (Genesis 26:1–10)

As far as the other examples are concerned, the context in which *ölaeždim* is used in Firkowicz’s play leaves no doubt that it expresses an action that nearly happened: it comes from a dialogue of a couple in love, see Kowalski (1929: 117). Kowalski includes the auxiliary *ez-* in a separate entry in the glossary and explains it as: ‘entstanden aus ursprünglichen *jaz*’ (Kowalski 1929: 186, s.v. *ež*¹¹) and he translated the form *ölaeždim* as ‘beinahe wäre ich gestorben.’¹²

On the other hand, the three examples described by J. Sulimowicz were supplemented with a concise single-word explanation in the form of the Polish expression *ledwom* ‘I barely’, which is not the most accurate translation of this construction if we bear in mind the difference between ‘I almost died’ and ‘I barely survived’.

The material we collected, though modest, shows that in Western Karaim the analysed construction did not lose the role it was known to perform in other Turkic languages, namely to denote unintended actions (which eventually did not take place). Moreover, the evidence provided by the comparative Turkic data allows us to assume that the Western Karaim approximative was most likely used in the present and past tense, only, and it was not attached to negative verbs.

The lack of a back-harmonic variant of *jez-* ~ *ez-* and, to certain extent, also the way in which example (3) was published in Kowalski (1929: 117; i.e. ‘*öla-eždim*’ with a hyphen between the converbial stem and the approximative marker) suggest that the morpheme in question was treated not as a suffix, but rather as an auxiliary verb deep into the 20th century.

It is worth to note that in the Eastern Karaim translations of the Torah to which we have been fortunate to gain access, the simple past, imperfect, and past conditional forms are used (also in adverbial constructions) where approximative forms exist in the verses quoted above, see *ketirdinj* ‘you brought’ (simple past, 2nd sg.; Genesis 20:9; BSMS 288: 23 v^o; Gaster Hebrew 170: 9 r^o), *azdan jatyrdi* ‘almost lied’ (imperfect, 3rd sg.; Genesis 26:10; BSMS 288: 29 v^o), *azdan jatsa edi* ‘almost lied’ (past conditional, 3rd sg.; Genesis 26:10; Gaster Hebrew 170: 19 r^o), *ketirir edinj* ‘you brought’

¹² The same example is adduced by Zajączkowski (1932: 65) in a paragraph describing the deverbal nominal suffix *-(y)q*: among numerous other examples, he mentions Kar. *jazyq* ‘sin’ which is ultimately a derivative of Tk. *jaz-* ‘to miss, to err’, and remarks, in Polish, ‘por. konstrukcję *öla-eždim* ≤ **öla-jazdym* ‘o mało nie umarłem’ [= cf. the construction *öla-eždim* ≤ **öla-jazdym* ‘I almost died’]. Given that in his introduction Zajączkowski (1932: 6) clearly states that his work is based on the lexical material collected by Kowalski (1929), there is no doubt that Zajączkowski’s example is also, in this case, taken from there. Finally, it is worth noting that Zajączkowski (1932: 65) adduces Kar. **jaz-* as an asterisked form, which means that, in his view, **jaz-* did not exist either in the spoken language in his lifetime, or in the written sources he was acquainted with.



(imperfect; 2nd sg.; Genesis 26:10; BSMS 288: 29 v^o), and *getirir edin* (imperfect; 2nd sg.; Genesis 26:10; Tiriškan 1841: 23 r^o). Additionally, in the Eupatorian edition of the Tanakh published by Tiriškan (1841), *futurum II* forms are also employed – in combination with the past tense form of the *e-* ‘to be’ copula verb. The use of the latter construction is clear evidence of Oghuzic influence – in Crimean Karaim, this compound tense was employed to express a past-tense action that its performer intended to do or was obliged to do (Prik 1976: 142), see *getirežek edin* ‘you intended to bring’ (Genesis 20:9; Tiriškan 1841: I: 16 v^o), and *jatažaq edi* ‘[he] intended to lie’ (Genesis 20:9; Tiriškan 1841: I: 22 v^o).

Finally, we should also pose the question when this category eventually ceased to function in Western Karaim. Quite telling is the fact that all authors of grammatical descriptions of this language left this construction undiscussed. In case of non-Karaim authors this might have been a corollary of the absence of a representative number of Karaim written sources available. But this list of authors includes also Ananjasz Zajączkowski (1903–1970) and Mykolas Firkovičius (1924–2000), who were native speakers of Karaim, see Zajączkowski (1931), Firkovičius (1996). The latter fact and the mistakenly quoted and inaccurately interpreted data of Józef Sulimowicz – after all, a Turcologist and native-speaker of South-Western Karaim, too – might suggest that the Western Karaim approximative was no longer a productive (or, at least, a commonly used) category in the idiolects of speakers born at the beginning of the 20th century. Moreover, it should also be emphasized that in the case of the 20th-century examples only highly educated native speakers of Western Karaim confirmed philologically its existence. So it is likely that this category ceased to be productive in spoken Karaim somewhat earlier than the turn of the 20th century.

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EDITORIAL SYMBOLS

$abc > cba$	borrowing, internal development
$abc \rightarrow cba$	derivation
* abc	reconstructed or not attested form
⟨ abc ⟩	orthographic notation
$abc \sim cba$	alternation



ABBREVIATIONS

ABL = ablative | **ACC** = accusative | **Alt.** = Altay | **APRX** = approximative | **arch.** = archaic. | **ART** = article | **Bshk.** = Bashkir | **CTat.** = Crimean Tatar | **CVB** = *-a* converb | **DAT** = dative | **EKar.** = Eastern (Crimean) Karaim | **Eng.** = English | **GEN** = genitive | **Germ.** = German | **INDEF** = indefinite | **Kar.** = Karaim | **Kipch. CC** = the language of *Codex Comanicus* | **Kirg.** = Kirghiz | **Kklp.** = Karakalpak | **Kzk.** = Kazakh | **ms.** = manuscript | **MWKar.** = Middle Western Karaim | **NEG** = negative suffix | **Nog.** = Nogai | **NOM** = nominative | **NWKar.** = North-Western Karaim | **OPT** = optative | **PL** = plural | **Pol.** = Polish | **POSS** = possessive | **PRS** = present | **PST** = simple (Tkc. *-dy*) past | **PTkc.** = Proto-Turkic | **SG** = singular | **SWKar.** = South-Western Karaim | **Tat.** = (Kazan) Tatar | **Tkc.** = (General) Turkic | **Tksh.** = Turkish | **Uyg.** = Uyghur | **Uzb.** = Uzbek | **WKar.** = Western Karaim

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