

The role of written languages in language documentation.

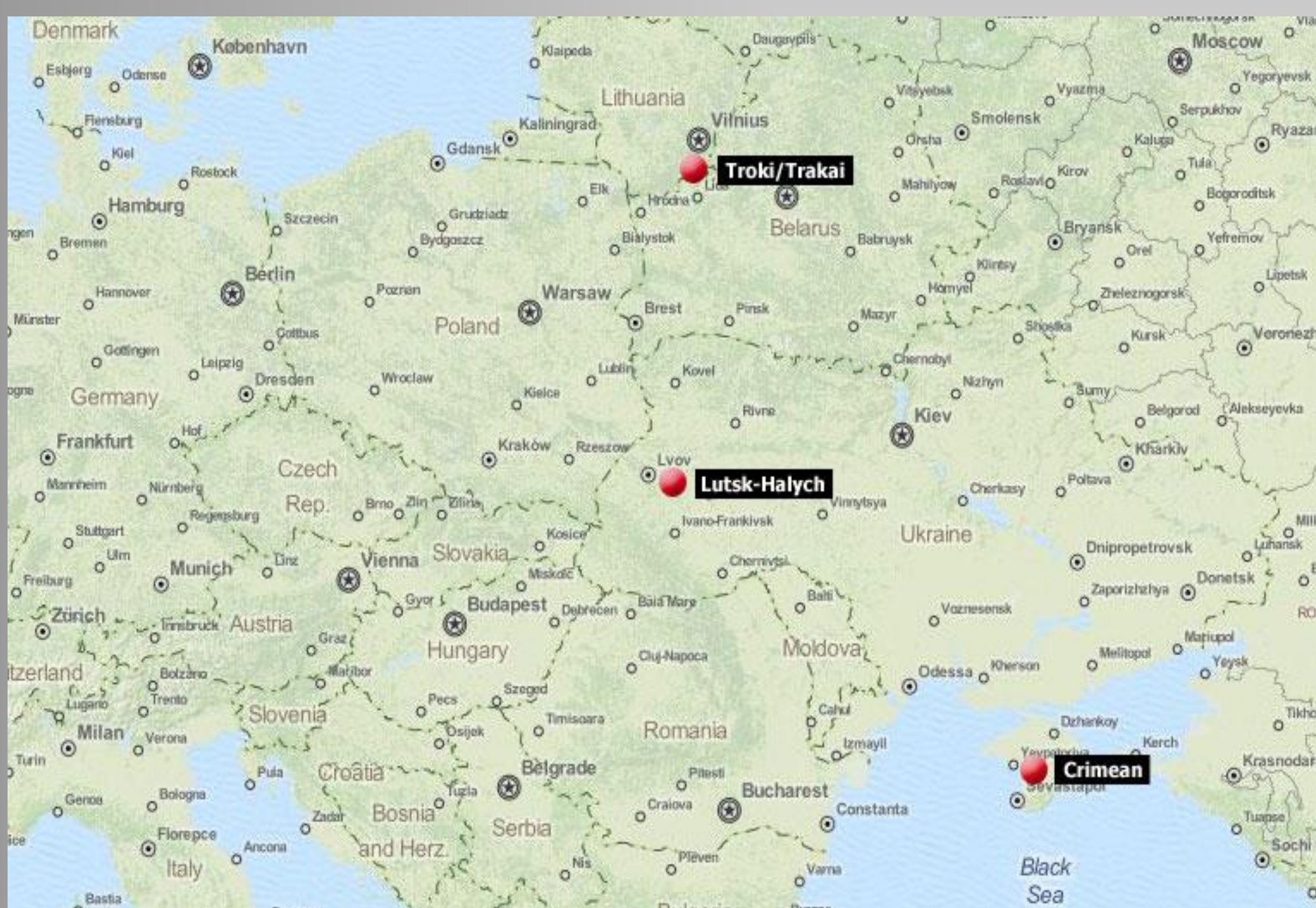
The case of Karaim.

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The Karaim

- Karaim belongs to the Kipchak branch of Turkic
- 50-60 speakers, mainly in Lithuania
- 3 varieties: Trakai Karaim, Halich Karaim (almost extinct) and Crimean Karaim (extinct)
- Karaim are followers of Karaite Judaism



The main centers of Karaim communities

Sources of Karaim written language Karaim Bible translations

Trakai Karaim:

- Genesis, Book of Job (T. Kowalski 1929: *Karaimische Texte im Dialekt von Troki*. Kraków)
- fragments of Lamentations (A. Zajęzkowski 1932: Przekłady Trenów Jeremjasza w narzeczu trocko-karaimskim. *Rocznik Orientalistyczny* 8, 181–192; A. Zajęzkowski 1934: Przekłady Trenów Jeremjasza w narzeczu trocko-karaimskim (tekst i słowniczek). *Rocznik Orientalistyczny* 10, 158–177.)
- Psalms (M. Firkovičius 1994: *David bijniń machtav čozmachlary. Psalmės*. Vilnius)
- Psalm 91 (É. Á. Csató 2011: A typological coincidence: Word order properties in Trakai Karaim biblical translations. In: Rona, B. & Erguvanlı-Taylan, E. (eds.) *Puzzles of language. Essays in honour of Karl Zimmer*. Turcologica. Wiesbaden. 1–18)
- fragments of Exodus (M. Németh 2014: An early North-Western Karaim Bible translation from 1720. Part 1. The Torah. *Karaite Archives* 2, 109–141.)

Halich Karaim:

- fragments of the five books of Moses and some parts of the book of the Prophets (Zs. Olach 2013: *A Halich Karaim translation of Hebrew biblical texts*. Turcologica 98. Wiesbaden.)

Crimean Karaim:

- fragments of Genesis, Deuteronomy and Lamentations (H. Jankowski 1997: A Bible translation into the Northern Crimean dialect of Karaim. *Studia Orientalia* 28, 1–84.)
- Book of Nehemia (D. Shapira 2013: The Karaim translation of the Book of Nehemia copied in the 17th century's Crimea and printed in 1840/1841 at Gözleve, on the copyist of the manuscript, and some related issues. *Karaite Archives* 1, 133–198.)

The Karaim written language

The language of the translations of biblical texts and prayers differs significantly from the spoken Karaim varieties.

- numerous linguistic properties copied from Hebrew:

- word order properties, e.g. inverse order in adjectival expressions: Gen. 1: 16 *da yaratti tenri osol eki ol yariqlıqlarnı ol ullularnı* 'and God created **the two great lights**'

- morphosyntactic properties, e.g. copying the function of the Hebrew hypothetical particle onto the Karaim hypothetical marker in wishes and oaths: Deut. 1: 35 *eger kerse kişi erenlerde ol uspularda ol dor ol yaman ol uspu osol ol yerni ol yaxsı* 'not one of these men of this evil generation **shall see** the good land!'

- but also archaic features can be observed:

- phonetic features, e.g. preservation of the original vowel harmony in Trakai Karaim: Exod. 20: 7 *antetmegin šeminden Adonay tenriynin* 'you shall not swear **to the name of** the Lord, your God' (present-day form: *šeminđan* 'from the name of')

- morphological features, e.g. B-pluperfect forms which are not used anymore in spoken Karaim: Exod. 2: 2 *buyurub edi far'oh taslama Nilge ol er ulanlarin Yišra'elnin* 'the Pharaoh **had ordered** to throw the sons of Israel into the Nile'



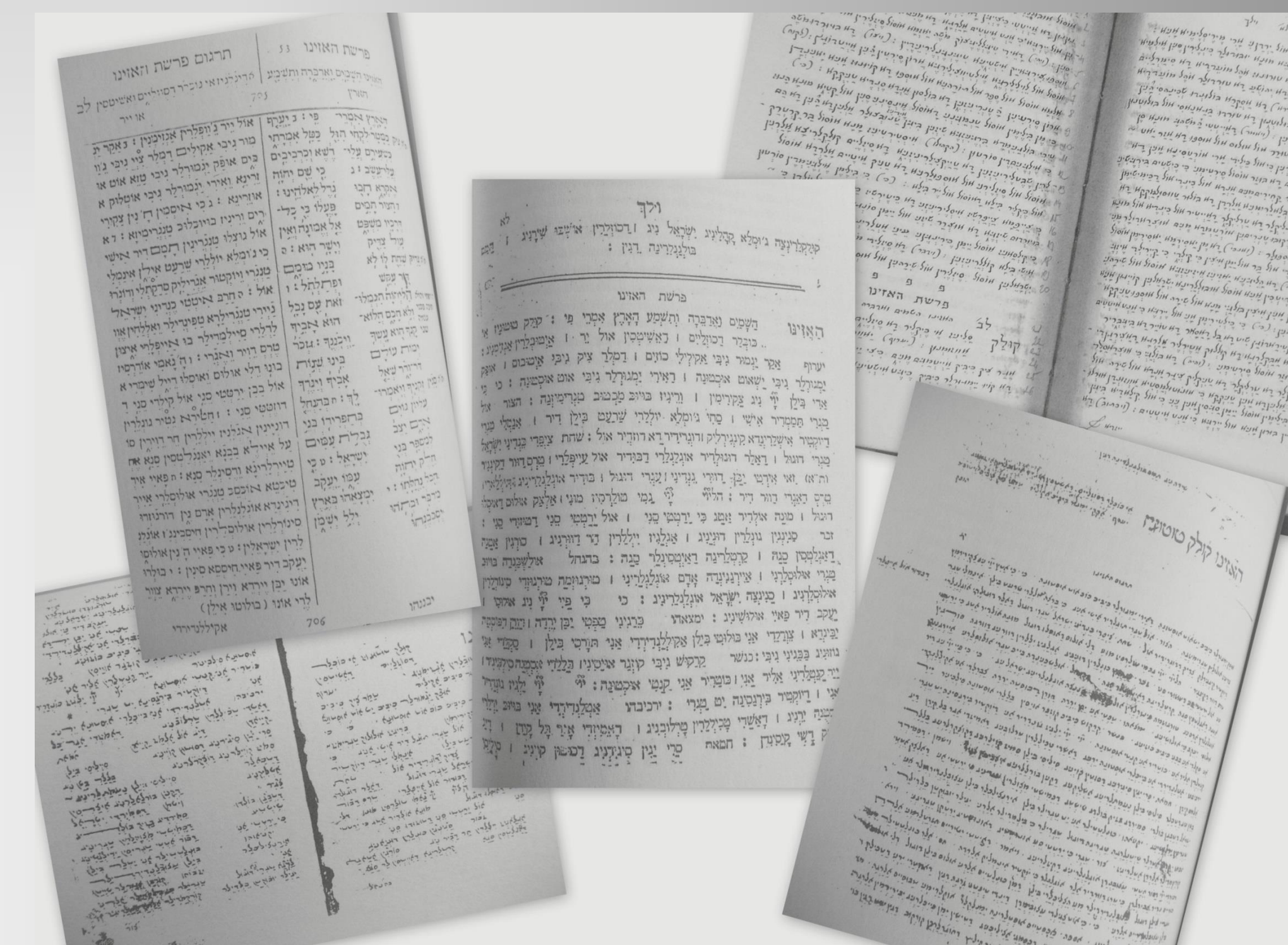
The street of Karaim in Trakai, The praying house in Trakai, Karaim leaders in Trakai (1928)



Coat of arms of the Lithuanian Karaim community

Aspects of the Karaim written language studies

- description of the language of the Crimean Karaim Bible translation focussing on the Turkic characteristics (Jankowski 1997)
- linguistic features copied from Biblical Hebrew onto Halich Karaim (Olach 2013)
- certain properties of spoken Karaim occurs because the given property is known both in Hebrew and in Slavic languages (Csató 2011)



Different versions of the Song of Moses

A new project on the Song of Moses

A new project on 'The Jewish culture and its literature among Karaim. The Song of Moses' has been carrying out by Olach at the University of Szeged between 2014–2016. The project aims to describe the linguistic properties of the different versions and compare them with each other as well as to define the place of the Karaim Song of Moses versions in the Jewish culture. The project is supported by the János Bolyai Research Scholarship of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

Further literature

- É. Á. Csató 1998: Das gesprochene Halitsch-Karaimisch. In: Laut, J. P. & Ölmez, M. (eds.) *Bahşı öğdisi. Festschrift für Klaus Röhrborn anlässlich seines 60. Geburtstags*. (Türk Dilleri Araştırmaları Dizisi 21.) 59–66.
- É. Á. Csató & D. Nathan 2007: Multiliteracy, past and present, in the Karaim communities. In: Austin, P. K. (ed.) *Language Documentation and Description* 4. London. 207–230.
- M. Firkovičius 1993: *Karaj koltchalary*. Vilnius.
- M. Firkovičius 1998–1999: *Karaj diñlilarniñ jalbar-mach jergialiari 1–2*. Vilnius.
- M. Firkovičius 2000: *Šelomonun mašallary*. (Türk Dil Kurumu Yayınları: 771) Ankara.
- T. Kowalski 1936: Najpilniejsze zadania karaim-oznawsta [The most urgent tasks of Karaim studies]. *Myśl Karaimska* 11, 12–23.
- Zs. Olach 2014: A comparative study of two evening prayers written in Karaim. In: Demir, N. & Karakoç, B. & Menz, A. (eds.) *Turcology and linguistics. Éva Ágnes Csató festschrift*. Ankara. 313–326.
- W. Zajęzkowski 1980: Karaimische Übersetzungen des Alten Testaments. *Folia Orientalia* 21, 161–162.