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Karaim: a high-copying language

Éva Ágnes Csató

Abstract

The subject of this chapter is the Lithuanian dialect of the Karaim language, a Kipchak Turkic vernacular spoken in the Baltic area for the last 600 years. Being the language of a small religious community, Karaim has always been a sociolinguistically weak code dominated by the regional standard languages, Polish, Russian and Lithuanian, and their non-standard local variants. The following presentation will use Karaim data to illustrate some of the code-copying processes discussed in the previous chapter by Johanson and in Johanson 1993, 1999a and 1999b.

Karaim exhibits a high degree of convergence with the areally-dominant codes. This convergence is mostly due to adoption of non-Turkic features copied from the dominant languages spoken by the multilingual Karaim speakers (cf. Csató 2000b). Imposition has, however, also played a certain role. Lithuanian Karaims have the tradition of marrying members of Karaim communities who do not speak the Karaim language such as, for instance, the Karaims living in the Crimea. When these move to the Lithuanian Karaim community and learn Karaim, these people carry over non-Karaim features into their Karaim language. Thus, in addition to adoption, imposition has also contributed to changing the Karaim language.

The aim of this chapter is to illustrate how contact-induced dynamic processes have changed the basic word order properties of Karaim, which today manifests a unique combination of the following typological features: S(ubject) O(bject) V(erb), Postposition, N(oun) G(enitive) or G(enitive) N(oun) in free variation, A(djective) N(oun). The contact-induced syntactic changes examined will be described according to the code-copying model.

1. Global copies

Global copies, that is, segmental items that possess a material shape, such as stretches of speech, morphological, lexical, phrasal and phraseological items of various kinds, are the most easily detectable types of copies. The high number of non-Turkic lexical elements in Karaim is a clear signal of the high-copying nature of this language. See, for instance, the Karaim example in (1), which contains a global copy from a dominating non-Turkic language.

- (1) *Da c'en'al'ar yar b'ir kib'it't'a öz'g'ä.*
 and price-PL each one shop-LOC different
 'And the prices are different in each shop.'

Global copies are accommodated to the morphosyntactic frame of the Karaim language. The copy of the Slavic word *cena* 'price' has the combinational properties of Karaim nouns and bears the Karaim plural suffix *-l'ar*. The usual Turkic way of accommodating copies of foreign verbs is applied in Karaim. A nominal form of the foreign model is copied, for instance the infinitive, and the Karaim pro-verb *et'* - 'to do' is added to it. The pro-verb has the function of anchoring the copied verb into the morphological frame of the basic code. See the copy of the Slavic infinitive *pozdravit'* 'to congratulate' used as a verb in the form *pazdravit' et'* - with the same meaning.

- (2) *N'ečik m'en'im tuvyan kib'ün'üm*
 when I-GEN be born-PART day-1SGPOSS
to alar k'el'äd'l'ar m'en'i yar yil pazdravit'
 then they come-PRES-3PL I-ACK every year congratulate
et'm'ä.
 PROV-INF
 'They come every year to congratulate me on my birthday.'

All copies are adapted to the Karaim phonological and morphosyntactic frame. For instance, the Slavic word *cena* 'price' is adapted to the Turkic principle of syllabic harmony (see Johanson 1998: 32–34). Both syllables in the Karaim copy *c'en'a* are front, and all the consonants are palatalized. Palatalization is marked by the apostrophe in the Karaim examples. The copied lexical item, *c'en'a* in (1), is classified as a front stem, and thus the front variant of the Karaim plural suffix *-l'ar* is attached to it.

Adjectives are accommodated in the morphosyntactic slots housing Karaim adjectives. These are characterized in Turkic languages by the fact that they lack congruence morphology with the head noun. No gender, number or case congruence is observed in the attribute position. Thus, Slavic adjectives are copied in a standardized form which is, as a rule, a form ending in *-i*. See the form *manovi kurpa* 'semolina' in (3).

- (3) *M'en' bayındim kurpa, manovi kurpa maya k'er'äk*
 I look for-PAST-1SG porridge semolina I-DAT necessary
ed'i.
 be-PAST
 'I looked for porridge, I needed semolina.'

2. Selective copying

One type of selective copying is "material copying". This means that phonic properties of model code units – segments and patterns typical of them – serve as models and are copied onto units of the basic code. The affricate [ts] is a material copy of the corresponding Slavic one; cf. *cena* [tsena] in example (1). The distribution of this sound is limited to global copies of foreign lexical items. A more comprehensive process of material copying concerns the palatalized consonants in Karaim. As a result of this copying, each consonant has a palatalized variant in contemporary Karaim; cf. Csató (1999a and 1999b).

Selective copying can also be restricted to non-material aspects in the sense of semantic copying, which means that the content of blocks serve as models. "Semantic copying" realigns the denotative or connotative content of units of the basic code. The basic meaning of the verb *tur-* is 'to stand' in Karaim. The same verb can, however, also be used with the meaning 'to cost'. This new meaning is a selective copy from Slavic. The Slavic verb meaning 'to stand' has, in some varieties, acquired a second meaning 'to cost'. For instance, Doroszewski (1966) mentions the archaic use the Polish verb *stać* 'to stand' with the meaning 'to cost'. The history of this copying goes back to the Latin verb *CONSTARE* having both the meaning 'to stand together', 'to stand still' and 'to cost'.

- (4) Karaim
tur- 'to stand', 'to cost'

"Combinational copying" concerns the internal constituency of a unit or its external combinability with other units. Combinational properties typical of foreign case assignment rules are copied onto blocks of the basic code. The clitic postposition *-bä* 'with' is used with the usual, comitative function in (5). In (6), it is used as a sort of "case-marking" with the noun *xazzan* 'hazzan.' This use has developed as a result of the selective copying of the combinational properties of the Baltic and Slavic instrumental case. The predicative is assigned the instrumental in sentences corresponding to (6) in Lithuanian and in Slavic languages.

- (5) *Utrulaštüy koduy aninbä?*
 meet-PAST-2SG you he-GEN-POSTP.WITH
 'Have you met him?'
- (6) *Ol ed'i xazzanbı.*
 he be-PAST hazzan-WITH
 'He was the hazzan (the leader of the Karaim community).'

“Frequential copying” means the copying of frequency patterns. The frequency peculiar to a block of the model code may be copied onto an equivalent block of the basic code so that the latter undergoes an increase or decrease in its frequency of occurrence. For example, where there are two options, one may be favoured at the expense of the other. Frequential copying has led to several word order changes in Karaim. In the following section, examples will be given to illustrate changes of word order, with a special focus on the structure of nominal phrases.

3. Copying of word order

3.1. Nominal compounds

Due to contact-induced processes, Karaim has today a relatively free word order with a tendency towards dominant SVO order – i.e. it has become accommodated to the “European SOV-Sprachbund”; see Csató (1996).

Nominal categories are construed in Turkic languages as compound nouns or genitive constructions. The following syntactic structures are typical:

(7) Nominal combinations in Turkish

- | | | | |
|-----------|----------|------------------------|--|
| a. N | + N | <i>kadın doktor</i> | ‘female doctor’ |
| b. N | + N-POSS | <i>kadın doktoru</i> | ‘gynaecologist’ |
| c. N-GEN | + N-POSS | <i>evin kapısı</i> | [of the house its door]
‘the door of the house’ |
| d. N-GEN | + N | <i>Ali'nin Fatma</i> | ‘Ali’s Fatma’ |
| e. N-POSS | + N-GEN | <i>kapısı (X) evin</i> | ‘the door (X) of the house’ |

Both (7a) and (7b) represent nominal compounds; their meaning is, however, different. Construction (7a) is a so-called identity apposition, in which both constituents describe qualities or features of the referee – i.e. the referee is a woman and at the same time a doctor. The compound (7b) *kadın doktoru* means ‘gynaecologist.’ The referent may or may not be a woman. Construction (7c) is the typical possessive construction in Turkic languages. The possessor is in the genitive and the item possessed bears a possessive suffix, i.e. agreement morphology indicating the person of the possessor. As construction (7e) shows, the genitive attribute is syntactically free and may follow the item possessed; cf. Tietze (1958). In construction (7d), the possessive suffix is missing. This construction is applied when the semantic relation between the item possessed and the possessor is a particular one; thus in (7d), Fatma is the daughter of Ali. The construction is regarded to be non-standard.

Similar constructions are also found in Karaim. However, due to the result of heavy copying, both the combinational, frequency and semantic properties of these constructions are different in Karaim.

There is a tendency in Karaim to use compounds with a possessive suffix (7b) as free variants of juxtaposition (7a). Although this phenomenon can also be observed in Turkish, it is much stronger in Karaim. While only construction (7a) is found in the dominant contact languages, the dominant use of this construction in Karaim can be explained as a frequency copy of this non-Turkic pattern. As a result of the free variation, the semantic functions of the two constructions (7a) and (7b), have also been changed. The distinction in meaning between the Turkish identity apposition (7a) and the unmarked nominal compound (7b) cannot be expressed in Karaim in the same way, since there is no opposition between the two forms.

- | | | | | | |
|-----|----------------|---------------|----|------------|--------------|
| (8) | N | + N-POSS | ≈ | N | + N |
| | <i>yer</i> | <i>čibani</i> | or | <i>yer</i> | <i>čiban</i> |
| | earth | tuber-POSS3 | | earth | tuber |
| | neol. ‘potato’ | | | | |

In addition to the Turkic constructions a non-Turkic one is also used. A new pattern for deriving compounded nominal lexical items has been created, namely by copying a pattern from Slavic languages; see (9). In this new syntactic pattern, the plural form of the genitive attribute follows the head noun, which does not carry any morphological marker. Compare the Karaim example in (10) and an analogue Polish example in (11).

- | | | | |
|------|---|----------------|-----------------------------|
| (9) | N | + | N-PL-GEN |
| (10) | Karaim | | |
| | <i>sawuxturuwču</i> | | <i>t' iš' l' ar' n' in'</i> |
| | doctor | | tooth-PL-GEN |
| | ‘doctor of the teeth’, i.e. ‘dentist’ | | |
| (11) | Polish | | |
| | <i>lekarz chorób</i> | | <i>dziecięcych</i> |
| | doctor | illness-PL.GEN | child-PL.GEN |
| | ‘doctor of child illnesses’, i.e. ‘paediatrician’ | | |

This is a selective copy because although the syntactic, combinational properties of the model have been selectively copied, namely the order of the two nominal elements, i.e. the modifier following the modified, and the non-Turkic use of the plural, no lexical item has been copied from one code to another. Moreover, the genitive is only used in Turkic in possessive constructions; see

(7c, d and e). The Slavic use of the genitive in derivation has been copied into the basic code. The absence of the possessive suffix will be discussed below.

As a result of this selective copying, a new frame, a new type of compounding strategy, has been created in Karaim. This new strategy has been conventionalized and is used productively by the speakers.

3.2. Preposed and postposed genitive attributes

One of the most interesting features of Lithuanian Karaim is the free variation that exists between the preposed and postposed genitive attributes in possessive constructions, see (12) and (13) respectively. This is a highly marked feature in syntactic typology; cf. Greenberg (1966, 1980). I will now demonstrate how a number of interrelated selective copying processes have created this syntactic characteristic of Karaim.

(12) N-GEN + N-(POSS)

(13) N-(POSS) + N-GEN

As a rule, the possessive suffix is used obligatorily in Turkic genitive constructions (7c). Exceptions to this, as in (7d), are semantically marked. This compulsory use of the possessive suffix in genitive constructions has been relaxed in Karaim as a result of the frequency copy of the Slavic/Baltic pattern in which there is no possessive suffix. The same change has been attested for the compounds, as (14)–(17) illustrate. The head nouns *yilisuv* 'sauna', *s'ek'ir'm'ak* 'dance' and *karaylar* 'Karaims' do not bear any possessive suffix in the following genitive constructions.

(14) *öz'üyn'ün' yilisuv üç'ün'*
own-GEN sauna about.POSTP
'About your own sauna.'

(15) *S'ek'ir'ib'iz' b'iz'n'in' s'ek'ir'm'ak'n'i kaytarma.*
dance-AOR-1PL we-GEN dance-ACC kaytarma
'We will dance our dance, the *kaytarma*.'

(16) *b'iz'n'in' karaylar*
we-GEN Karaim-PL
'Our Karaims.'

The genitive attributes may both precede and follow the item possessed without any semantic restriction. See (17) – (20) for the use of preposed genitive attributes and (21) – (24) for postposed genitive attributes.

(17) *kış aynın eg'ir'm'i altınçı k'un'un'd'a*
winter month-GEN twenty sixth day-POSS3-LOC
'On the twenty-sixth of January.'

(18) *k'ör'ün'ät' k'i bu anın iş'i*
appear-PRES3 that this he-GEN profession-POSS3
'It appears that this is his profession.'

(19) *Aliknün atası*
Alik-GEN father-POSS3
'Alik's father.'

(20) *b'iz'n'in' kizimiz*
we-GEN daughter-POSS1PL
'Our daughter.'

(21) *ittam m'en'im*
grandfather-POSS1SG I-GEN
'My grandfather.'

(22) *b'iy k'er'm'an'l'ar'n'in'*
king castle-PL-GEN
'The king of the castles.'

(23) *muzika anın*
music s/he-GEN
'His/her music.'

(24) *ek'in'ci k'un'd'a konferenc'ianın*
second day-LOC conference-GEN
'On the second day of the conference.'

The free variation between preposed and postposed genitive attributes is an important innovation from a typological point of view. A chain of copying processes leading to this new word order property of Karaim has changed the morphosyntactic frame of this Turkic language.

Genitive attributes may, under certain conditions, also follow the item possessed in Turkic languages, see (7e). The combinational properties of the reversed order in Karaim and Turkish are, however, very different. The unmarked word order in Turkic languages is for the possessor to precede the item possessed. The reverse order may also occur, but only in the postverbal position; for a detailed discussion, see Csató (2000a).

- (25) a. *Fatma'nın kızı geldi*
 Fatma-GEN daughter-POSS3 come-PAST3
 'Fatma's daughter has come.'
- b. **?Kızı Fatma'nın geldi*
 daughter-POSS3 Fatma-GEN come-PAST3
 'Fatma's daughter has come.'
- c. *Geldi Fatma'nın kızı*
 come-PAST3 Fatma-GEN daughter-POSS3
 'Fatma's daughter has come.'

Karaim does not observe any corresponding restriction. Postposed genitive attributes may be used in any position. As argued in Csató (2000a), this relaxation of the restriction is due to the fact that Karaim has changed its basic word order from the Turkic SOV order to an SVO order characteristic of the standard average European type.

The copied N + GEN constructions are, however, in many respects, different from the Slavic model. Some combinational properties of the Slavic N + GEN order have been copied into Karaim. In Slavic, the postposed genitive attribute is nominal, whereas a pronominal possessor is preposed. In Karaim, there is no difference between nominal and pronominal categories with respect to word order properties.

3.3. The order of prenominal attributes in Karaim

Turkic languages normally only have prenominal attributes. A genitive attribute is, as a rule, the first constituent of a nominal phrase. Adjective attributes modifying the head noun must consequently follow the genitive attribute. This Turkic characteristic has also changed in Karaim as a result of selective copying. Lithuanian has served as the model code in this case. The genitive attribute is often placed immediately before the head in Lithuanian; see (26).

- (26) Lithuanian
didieji tavo darbai
 great-PL your work-PL
 'Your great works.'

This ordering of the genitive attribute has been copied into Karaim. Compare constructions (27a) and (27b). The genitive attribute, *s'en'in'* 'you-GEN', is in the prenominal position in (27a), preceding the adjectival attribute *uḡlu* 'great'.

This order is motivated by the presence of the postposition *üč'in'* 'about'. The adjective attribute can, on stylistic grounds, be moved to the phrase initial position as in (27b), in which the genitive attribute is placed immediately in front of the head noun *iš'l'ar'iy* 'affair-PL-POSS2'. This strategy is copied from Lithuanian – compare example (27b) with the Lithuanian expression in (26). The selective copy of the order of the nominal attributes ADJECTIVE + GEN + N has created a new syntactic frame in Karaim. This structure is not acceptable in Turkish (**büyük senin işin*).

- (27) a. *Tuydum [s'en'in' [uḡlu iš'l'ar'iy]] üč'in'*
 hear-PAST-1SG you-GEN great affair-PL-POSS2 about.POSTP
 'I have heard about your great affairs.'
- b. *Tuydum [uḡlu [s'en'in' iš'l'ar'iy]] üč'in'*
 hear-PAST-1SG great you-GEN affair-PL-POSS2 about.POSTP
 'I have heard about your great affairs.'
- c. *Olturam yany'i Yusufnun batında*
 sit-PRES-1SG new Yusuf-GEN boat-POSS3-LOC
 'I sit in Yusuf's new boat.'

4. Chains of copying

4.1. New frames

Sequences of copying have changed the morphosyntactic frame of Karaim. As mentioned above, nominal combinations with (28a) and without possessive marking (28b) are free variants in Karaim.

- (28) Nominal combinations
 a. N + N-POSS
 b. N + N

This combinational pattern also provides a new insertion frame for the reversed genitive order. In Turkish, the reversed order is licensed only if the possessed noun carries a possessive suffix. In Karaim there is no such restriction, see (22)–(24). The relaxation of the constraint has been reinforced by another copied combinational property, i.e. the non-Turkic types of 'have' constructions. Compare the typical Turkic construction in (29a) with the copied one (29b), which is a copy of the Slavic construction illustrated in (30).

(29) a. *m'en'im ed'i ek'i karindašim*
 I-GEN be-PAST two brother-POSS1SG
 'I had two brothers.'

b. *Troxta bart b'iz'd'à uflu yiv*
 Trakai-LOC existing-3 we-LOC big house
 'We have a big house in Trakai.'

(30) Russian
 У нас (есть) большой дом в Тракае
 by we-GEN is big house in Trakai
 'We have a big house in Trakai.'

I assume that the lack of possessive marking in such constructions is the same sort of combinational property as the lack of the possessive suffix in the reversed N + GEN ordering. In Turkish, the syntactic independence of the nouns with respect to word order is dependent on the full morphological marking of both nouns, i.e. the two nouns have to carry a possessive suffix and the genitive case, respectively. Thus, either positional or morphological marking normally signals the semantic relatedness of the two nouns. This syntactic constraint is, however, not observed in either the Karaim reversed N + GEN construction or the copied 'have'-construction. This innovation has led to several consequences for the syntax of Karaim.

As Greenberg (1966) has observed, the order of the noun and the genitive attribute is GEN + N in most postpositional languages. Karaim has a free GEN + N/N + GEN order but still employs postpositions. (For the syntactic properties of Karaim postpositions, see Csató 2000c). A syntactic conflict manifests itself in relation to the N + GEN order and the adjacency principle of Karaim postpositional syntax. A postposition in Karaim must be adjacent to its nominal head. Consequently, it is semantically related to the noun which immediately precedes it; see (31).

(31) *muzika anin üč'un'*
 music s/he-GEN about
 'Music for her/him.' Cannot be read as *'About her/his music.'

Thus, the order N + GEN + POSTPOSITION cannot be used in Karaim. The normal strategy used to avoid this problem is to adopt the GEN + N order whenever a postposition is used, or to position the genitive attribute after the construction N + POSTPOSITION. When the postposition is related to the noun *muzika*, it has to occur immediately after this noun, as in (32). See also the two literary examples (33) and (34), which illustrate the same word order pattern.

(32) *muzika(si) üč'un' anin*
 music-(POSS3) about s/he-GEN
 'For his/her music.'

(33) *s'öz'ü bila erin'l'är'in'in'*
 word-3POSS with.POSTP lip-PL-POSS3-GEN
 'With the words of his lips.'

(34) *turma alninda adonaynin*
 stand front-POSS3-LOC God-GEN
 'To stand in front of God.'

4.2. New variation

The variation between different types of nominal combinations is free in Karaim. In the following authentic spoken sequence, the different constructions co-occur freely. The order is N + GEN in *šqarında Pon'av'az'n'in'* 'in the town of Panevežys', but GEN + N in *in atanin maması* 'father's mother'. The item possessed is either marked with the possessive suffix, as for instance in *m'en'im uvlumda* 'at my son', or not, as in *b'iz'n'in' s'emyada* 'in our family'. Thus, the distributional properties of the Karaim word order and construction types are very different from the distributional properties of corresponding Turkish variants which manifest clear functional differences. The free variation in Karaim is a result of high-copying. Note also the non-Turkic ordering of the adjective attribute preceding the genitive attribute in the expression *ayarayi m'en'im uvlumda* 'at my elder son'.

(35) *Men tuvdam šqarında Pon'av'az'n'in'.*
 I be born-PAST-1SG town-POSS3-LOC Panevežys-GEN
I b'iz'n'in' s'emyada ed'i s'eg'iz' džan.
 and we-GEN family-LOC be-PAST eight soul
D'ör't ulan, ata mamabə, inna,
 four child father mother-with grandmother
inna bu ed'i atanin maması,
 grandmother this be-PAST father-GEN mother-POSS3
da d'äd'ä.
 and grandfather
Ayarayi m'en'im uvlumda bart
 old-COMP-POSS3 I-GEN son-POSS1SG-LOC existing-3
t'ež ek'i ulan.
 also two son

'I was born in the town of Panavežys. There were eight persons in our family; four children, father and mother, grandmother – grandmother was father's mother – and grandfather. My elder son also has two sons.'

5. Summary

The syntactic properties of the possessive nominal compounds in Karaim have been changed by sequences of copying. The copying processes include all types of copying, both global copying and selective copying of phonological, frequential, combinational and semantic properties. High-copying languages, such as Karaim, thus, possess several historical layers of copies reflecting successive situations of contact. An established element of the inventory may be the final result of a series of changes. It becomes increasingly difficult to distinguish between copies and non-copied elements. Though conventionalized copies must go back to individual and momentary acts of copying, it is often impossible to trace them back to their origins unless their history is documented. The possibilities of reconstructing prehistorical stages on the basis of existing synchronic evidence are often very limited.

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