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LITHUANIAN KARAIMS' HACHAN
MARK LAVRINOVIČIUS'S CONTRIBUTION
TO THE STUDIES AND SURVIVAL
OF THE KARAIM LANGUAGE TRAKAI DIALECT



INTRODUCTION¹

The paper aims at introducing the Lithuanian Karaims' community eminent personality Mark Lavrinovičius (1938 12 26 – 2011 12 24), an engineer in micro-electronics, Doctor of Sciences, the Lithuanian Karaims Highest Priest – Hachan, the Chairman of the Lithuanian Karaims Religious Community. Mark Lavrinovičius made an important contribution to the Karaim culture, language research and its revival, he spread the knowledge on the Karaim language and history.

The main purpose of the article is to mark Lithuanian Karaims' Hachan Mark Lavrinovičius's input into the Karaim cultural heritage revitalization, his contribution to the studies and survival of the Karaim language Trakai dialect. Moreover, the objective of the article is to mark the importance of the Karaim language in the light of Turkic peoples' cultures. The Lithuanian Karaims' language, being isolated from the other relative Turk languages for centuries, has maintained its purity and survived in its ancient condition, being unspoiled for over 600 years and still spoken by the Lithuanian Karaims.

Firstly, the article provides the information about Lithuanian Karaims' origin, religion, and identity.

The ultimate task of the article is to present Mark Lavrinovičius's works and publications on the Karaim language studies, which are:

1. *Lavrinovičius M.* Karaj Tili Otuz Siegiž Sahat Ašyra. Trakai, 1991, 294 p.
2. Bir Bar Êdi. Compiled by M. Lavrinovičius. Trakai, 2002, 379 p.
3. *Lavrinovičius M.* Karyndašlarymzyn Chaznasy. Trakai, 2002, 268 p.
4. *Lavrinovičius M.* Aziž Jazyšnyn Jomachlary. Trakai, 2002, 117 p.
5. *Lavrinovičius M.* Avaldan Kieliasigia // Из далёкого прошлого в будущее. Trakai, 2011, 80 p.
6. Русско-караимский словарь = Urus-Karaj siožliugiu. Electronic and paper versions. Compiled by M. Lavrinovičius. Trakai, 2012, 460 p.

¹ Sutrupinta straipsnio versija pavadinimu „Lietuvos karaimų Hachano Marko Lavrinovičiaus įnašas į karaimų kalbos Trakų dialekto tyrimą ir išsaugojimą. 75-mečiui paminėti“ buvo paskelbta Trakų rajono laikraštyje „Trakų žemė“ 2014 m. sausio 3 d. Nr. 1.

7. *Lavrinovičius M.* The Karaim Language Grammar – Algorithmisation (word-building / affixation). Trakai, 2011.
8. *Lavrinovičius M.* 100 Karaim Language Lessons. Electronic and paper versions. Trakai, 2011.

LITHUANIAN KARAIMS' ORIGIN

Karaims (self-designation: sg. karaj, pl. karajlar) are ethnic Turks speaking one of the Turk languages – Karaim and practising the Karaim religion. The name “karaim” here means both the name of the nationality of the Turk origin and the religion. The Karaim religion is a pure faith of the Old Testament. The essential principle of the faith is to study the Holy Scriptures independently. None of the explanatory commentaries on the Old Testament are recognised. Kenesa is the Karaim place of worship. Liturgical ceremonies are held and the texts are read in the Karaim language. Karaim spelling at present is the Lithuanian alphabetic letters and some additional letters adapted to the Karaim language sounds.

The Karaim language belongs to the Kipchak-Polovcian sub-group, Kipchak group, Western-Hun branch, Turkic languages of the Altaic family². Karaims' historical settlements have caused the development of three Karaim language dialects such as the Crimean, Halich-Lutsk and Trakai dialects³. Karaims living in Lithuania speak the Karaim language Trakai dialect.

The Lithuanian Karaims come from the Crimea and have been living in Lithuania and Poland for over 600 years. In 1397–1398, after his successful military campaign to the south, the Grand Duke of Lithuania Vytautas brought from the Crimea several hundreds of Karaim families. Karaims' duty as skilled, loyal and obedient to the law warriors was to guard the Great Duchy of Lithuania against the Teutonic Knights. The Grand Duke Vytautas inhabited the Karaims on the Lithuanian Northern borders and in Trakai in the area from the Trakai Peninsula Castle to the Insular Castle in Lake Galve. It is important to mention that since Karaims served Vytautas and guarded the castles, they carried out major attacks on the fortress, and the Teutonic Knights then never succeeded in capturing it. Later on, the Karaim community was granted Magdebourg Rights and the land for perpetuity. As a consequence, territorial remoteness from other Turk-speaking nations, community's dense residence, the goodwill of the Grand Duke Vytautas and the subsequent rulers', the privileges granted for Karaims – all these conditions have contributed to the fact that the Lithuanian Karaims have managed to preserve their culture, traditions, religion, and language for centuries. Hence, the

² Баскаков Н. Тюркские языки. Москва, 1960, с. 145.

³ Баскаков Н., Зайончковский А., Шапшал С. Караимско-русско-польский словарь. Москва, 1974, с. 5.

Karaim language Trakai dialect, with the exception of some obvious Slavic borrowings and syntax structures, is the unspoilt, preserved 14th-century Karaim language.

MARK LAVRINOVIČIUS'S LIFE AND CAREER

Mark Lavrinovičius was born on 26th December 1938 in Trakai (Lithuania) into a Karaim family of Michail and Aliza (maiden name Firkovič) Lavrinovič. In 1956, he finished secondary school in Trakai and in the same year entered the Kaunas Polytechnic Institute (now Kaunas University of Technology) the Faculty of Electrical Technologies, which he graduated from in 1961. After graduation, he worked in the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences.

Since 1966 to 1995, he worked at the Science Research Institute "Venta" in the positions from the senior engineer to the head of a science laboratory. The area of his research and development was microelectronics. On 28th June 1968, he was awarded the Candidate of Sciences degree for the research on the topic "Methods of accelerated tests on reliability of computing elements" (in 1993 nostrified Doctor of Science). Through decades of work in the field of science he inspired and provided a great deal of scientific proposals and generated their realisation via many generations of his subordinates. Since 1995 to 1999, Mark Lavrinovičius worked in the field of car electronics. He retired in 1999.

In 1962, in Trakai, he married Alina Dubinskaya. Trakai is surrounded by picturesque vast lakes and, certainly, being its local inhabitant, in summer in his free time Mark Lavrinovičius liked fishing in Lake Galvė, usually standing on the bridge to the Trakai Insular Castle.

Throughout his life, Mark Lavrinovičius actively participated in the Karaim community life. He was a skilful organiser and determined for the wellbeing of the nation. In 1989, he was the Chairman of the Karaim Organising Committee for the International Karaim Congress in Trakai. What is more, in 1997 he was the Chairman of the Karaim Organising Committee to mark the 600th anniversary of the Settlement of Tatars and Karaims in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. The celebration was fascinating and left long-lasting impressions. The street performance of Karaims' arrival in Trakai was a spectacular view: wearing national costumes, horses ridden or in horse drawn carts, Karaims entered the town. Furthermore, the scientific conference, the performance by local karaims, and other events were arranged to mark the celebration which lasted several days. Many Karaims living in Russia, Ukraine, France, Italy, Australia, etc. came to their homeland for the event. In the same year, Mark Lavrinovičius was awarded the 2nd Class Order of the Lithuanian Grand Duke Gediminas for his outstanding performance in civil and public offices.

Mark Lavrinovičius was a highly educated and intelligent man. Since his childhood, he fluently spoke his native Karaim language. Moreover, years of working on the Russian–Karaim dictionary enriched his vocabulary up to the volume of the dictionary (over 13000 items). He was always willing to share the knowledge, he used to arrange the Karaim classes and teach the language. Apart from his native language, he also spoke fluent Lithuanian, Polish, Russian; he had a good command of English as well. He was determined to reach his goals and realize his ideas. He was a widely respected personality among community members and far beyond it. In 2009, the Lithuanian Karaims Community elected Mark Lavrinovičius to the Lithuanian Karaims Highest Priest position – Hachan and the Chairman of the Lithuanian Karaims Religious Community.

MARK LAVRINOVIČIUS'S WORKS ON THE KARAIM STUDIES

“BIR BAR ÈDI” (ONCE UPON A TIME)

“Bir Bar Èdi” is a set of the Karaim literary heritage. The book contains Karaim folk legends, stories, and fairy-tales. Mark Lavrinovičius compiled them from a variety of printed Karaim sources and manuscripts from the Karaims’ home archives. He translated a number of texts into the Karaim language Trakai dialect by himself and prepared them for publishing. The book contains well-known Karaim writers’ and poets’ (A. Mardkovič, A. Šišman, S. Firkovič, etc.) literary works and also unknown Karaim writers’ creations. What is more, the book includes Russian and Polish writers’ literary works translated into the Karaim language. Mark Lavrinovičius also translated the texts originally written in the Crimean or Halich-Lutsk dialects into Trakai dialect. Stories are presented in the ordinary everyday language, which allows the reader plunge into the Karaim life in bygone days. Mark Lavrinovičius published the book himself in 2002.

“KARYNDAŠLARYMYZNYN CHAZNASY”

(RELATIVE TURK-SPEAKING PEOPLES’ FAIRY-TALES)

At present, there are about 250 Karaims in Lithuania. Nonetheless, it is just a tiny group of a vast Turkic language family which counts up to 40 Turk nationalities and makes about 200 mln people all over the world. Therefore, Mark Lavrinovičius came up with the idea to translate Turk-speaking nations’ folk fairy-tales into the Karaim language Trakai dialect. As a result, he selected 90 Turk fairy-tales of 23 relative Turk nations, which are: the Altays, Azerbaijanis, Balkars, Bashkirs, Khakas, Chuvashes, Dolgans, Gagauz, Yakuts, Karachays, Karakalpaks, Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, Crimean Tatars, Kumyks,

Nogais, Tofalars, Tatars, Turkish, Turkmens, Tuvans, Uyghurs and Uzbek. Also four Ket language folk tales were added to the list. Mark Lavrinovičius translated all these 94 short stories himself into the Karaim language Trakai dialect. They are narrated in the ordinary everyday language, the same as grandmas in the old days would tell the stories to their grandchildren. He published “Karyndašlarymyznyn Chaznasy” (relative Turk-speaking peoples’ fairy-tales) in 2002 himself. In the foreword, Mark Lavrinovičius mentions that the nation’s folklore transmits its entity. Due to this fact, the way Turk people acquire the environment, their particular mentality is close to our life acquisition.

“AZIŽ JAZYŠNYN JOMACHLARY” (THE BIBLE STORIES)

In 2002, Mark Lavrinovičius wrote in the Karaim language Trakai dialect “Aziž Jazyšnyn Jomachlary” (The Bible Stories) and published it himself. The Bible stories from the Old Testament are described there.

“AVALDAN KIELIASIGIA” (FROM THE ANCIENT TO THE FUTURE)

The book “Avaldan Kieliasigia / Из далёкого прошлого в будущее” contains the description of Karaim customs and traditions, language, religious festivals, the origin of Karaim ornament, the base of Karaim religion.

A particular emphasis in the book is placed upon the Karaim language. Among all modern Turkic languages, in phonetics, grammar, and lexics Karaim is the closest relative to the Karachay-Balkar, Kumyk, Crimean Tatar languages, among the dead languages – to the Cuman (Polovcian) language⁴. Prof. N. A. Baskakov, K. M. Musaev and other turkologists mark a close relation between the Cuman (Polovcian) and Karaim languages⁵. On the grounds that the Karaim language Trakai dialect has been surrounded by non-related to Turkic languages nations for over six centuries, it has maintained its purity.

For a comparison of the Cuman and Karaim languages, Mark Lavrinovičius refers to a world-famous Cuman culture linguistic manual “Codex Cumanicus” (dated to the end of the 13th – beginning of the 14th century).

⁴ Ibid., c. 6.

⁵ Ibid., c. 6; *Мусаев К. Грамматика караимского языка, фонетика и морфология. Москва, 1964, с. 20.*

TABLE.6 The Lord's Prayer from "Codex Cumanicus" and from the Karaim Liturgical Prayer Book

Codex Cumanicus	Karaim Liturgical Prayer Book
Atamyz, kim kioktiasieñ, alhyšly bolsun Sieniñ atyn!	Atamyz ki kiokliardia, machtavlu bolhej birligi adyjnyñ
Kiel'siñ Sieniñ chanlyhyn, bolsun Sieniñ tiliamiagiñ niečik kioktia, alej jerdia!	Da kip bolhej bijligij da kligij kiokliardia johartyn da jer ũštiunia ašahartyn.
Kiuñdiagi öt'miagimižni bižgia biugiuñ biergil'!	Kiuñdiagi öt'miagimižni biergiñ bižgia
Dahy jazychlarymzny bižgia biugiuñ bošatchyl, niečik biž bošatyrybz bižgia jaman èt'kianliargia.	Da bošatchyn bar jazychlarymzny.
Dahy jekniñ ("jek" in Halich dialect – "devil") synamahyna bižni kuvurmahyl, basa barča jamandan bižni kutcharhyl!	Tiuž jollarydan azaštyrmahyn bižni, ančech kutcharhyn bižni azhyrtvčudan.
Amieñ.	Amieñ.

It is pleasant to mention that Lithuanian Karaims do not need any Latin, Persian or German translations and fluently understand the language of the ancient Codex Cumanicus.

"РУССКО-КАРАИМСКИЙ СЛОВАРЬ / URUS-KARAJ SIOŽLIUGIU"
(RUSSIAN-KARAIM DICTIONARY)

One of our most valuable wealth is our language. Having been isolated from other Turkic languages for centuries, the Lithuanian Karaims' language has preserved the Turkic archaic vocabulary which has already disappeared in other Turk languages⁷.

For instance, it is important to note that in the 1930s the Turkish Language Commission on the initiative of the president of Turkey Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, implementing his reforms, arrived in Trakai to Karaims with the aim of clearing the Turkish language of loanwords. As a result, the Turkish language dictionary was enriched with 330 Karaim words⁸.

Since the 1970s, Mark Lavrinovičius thoroughly studied and analysed the Karaim lexicographic sources, and on the basis of the Karaim Literary Monuments he created the Karaim language Trakai dialect primary card catalogue. The result of this hard work was the Russian-Karaim dictionary "Русско-караимский словарь / Urus-Karaj siožliugiu". The dictionary contains 36597 Russian lexical items and 13165 Karaim words and collocations, which are mainly of the Trakai dialect, although Crimean and

⁶ Lavrinovičius M. Avaldan Kieliasigia (Из далёкого прошлого в будущее). Тракай, 2011, с. 12.

⁷ Kowalski T. Język karaimski // Myśl Karaimska. Wilno, 1926. T. I, zesz. III, s. 3-7.

⁸ Szapszal S. Sprawozdania i bibliografja // Myśl Karaimska. Wilno, 1936. Zesz. II, s. 105-107.

Halich-Lutsk dialects' Karaim words are complemented in the case of lacking them in Trakai dialect. In the foreword, the author writes: “<...> a number of Karaim dictionaries have been published up to the present. However, no Russian–Karaim Trakai dialect one existed so far. It is hardly possible to look up a translation of a Karaim word into Russian in the Karaim–Russian–Polish dictionary (1974) edited by N. A. Baskakov, A. Zajączkowski, S. M. Shapshal”⁹. That is why Mark Lavrinovičius came up with the idea to compile the Russian–Karaim dictionary. Moreover, the dictionary contains the words which the author elicited in the Karaim Literary Monuments, which were not included in the above–mentioned dictionary. The number of these words exceeds 4500 items which comprise 1/3 of the present dictionary. By no means this work is the next stage in the language studying and its revitalization. In the foreword, the author emphasizes that “<...> the offered Russian–Karaim dictionary is a practical manual for those wishing to enrich their Karaim language Trakai dialect vocabulary and it does not claim for an academic level”¹⁰. Karaim words are written in the Lithuanian alphabetic letters and some additional letters adapted to the Karaim language sounds. Before its finally first public edition in 2012, the dictionary for decades had been widely used not only by native speakers, but also by people interested in the Karaim language outside the Karaim community.

It is important to note that computer programming was not Mark Lavrinovičius's profession. Despite this fact, he studied programming on his own and created some computer software applications and computerised his Russian–Karaim dictionary. In such a way, in the electronic version the dictionary exists as both Russian–Karaim and Karaim–Russian.

It is important to mention that the Lithuanian Karaims' Hachan Seraya Shapshal (1873–1961) contributed greatly to the Karaim–Russian–Polish dictionary edited by N. A. Baskakov, A. Zajączkowski, S. M. Shapshal¹¹. It is significant that after almost 50 years Mark Lavrinovičius, in 2009 elected the Lithuanian Karaims' Hachan, becoming Seraya Shapshal's successor, completed the long-lasting work on his Russian–Karaim dictionary. Thus, the generations symbolically call to one another.

⁹ “<...>До настоящего времени издано несколько караимских словарей, однако нет Русско-караимского словаря тракайского диалекта. Зная русское слово, найти его караимский перевод, пользуясь «Караимско-русско-польском словарём» (1974) под ред. Н. Баскакова, А. Зайончковского, С. Шапшала, затруднительно, часто и невозможно...” *Lavrinovičius M.* Русско-караимский словарь // Русско-караимский словарь = Urus-Karaj siožliugiu. Тракай, 2012, с. 11.

¹⁰ “<...> предлагаемый «Русско-караимский словарь» не претендует на академичность, а является практическим пособием для желающих пополнить свой словарный запас караимского языка тракайского диалекта.” *Lavrinovičius M.* Русско-караимский словарь // Русско-караимский словарь = Urus-Karaj siožliugiu. Тракай, 2012, с. 12.

¹¹ *Баскаков Н., Зайончковский А., Шапшал С.* Караимско-русско-польский словарь. Москва, 1974.

*THE KARAIM LANGUAGE GRAMMAR – ALGORITHMISATION
(WORD-BUILDING / AFFIXATION) AND THE KARAIM LANGUAGE
COURSEBOOK “100 KARAIM LANGUAGE LESSONS”*

Mark Lavrinovičius was an eminent scientist, he had a profound knowledge of the Karaim language. He took an active part in the Karaim community life. His attempts to teach community members the language were regular, various methods were used, classes were arranged, his burning enthusiasm never faded. Mark Lavrinovičius loved and used to recite the poem written by a Karaim poet Z. Abrahamovič (1878–1903):

KARAJ ĒDIM, KARAJ BARMYN	I WAS KARAIM, I AM KARAIM
Karaj ėdim, karaj barmyn	I was Karaim, I am Karaim
Da karajba ۆl'mia klejmiñ,	And being Karaim I want to die,
Karajlychba ujalmyryn,	I am not embarrassed about being Karaim,
Öz dinimni tašlamymyn.	I will not abandon my religion.

Kim diniñ tašlady,	The one who's abandoned his religion,
Sioziun unuttu,	Forgot his language,
Ol adam tiuviul'dir,	He is not a man,
Tuvarha ušejdyr.	He is like an animal.

(Translated from Halich-Lutsk dialect
into Trakai dialect by M. Lavrinovičius)

Mark Lavrinovičius's first Karaim coursebook by which he gave the lessons was “Karaj Tili Otuz Siegiž Sahat Ašyra” (The Karaim language in 38 hours), published in 1991.

Inspired by the Karaim turkologists Zygmund Abrahamowicz and Alexander Dubinski, Mark Lavrinovičius developed the Karaim language algorithmisation. He wrote the Karaim language grammar which mainly covers word-building / affixation. Moreover, due to the fact that Karaim is an agglutinative language, Mark Lavrinovičius gives a thorough analysis to Karaim phonetics, lexicology, semantics, etc. In 2010, on his own initiative, he launched a new project called “The Karaim language Internet lessons”; he e-mailed the lessons to community members and provided them a distant teaching. This work gradually grew into an IT work called “100 Karaim Language Lessons”. Mark Lavrinovičius worked on the lessons up to the end of 2011. Finally, the coursebook was created in both electronic and paper versions. Providing the knowledge of the language to Karaims in an acceptable and easy way was his overwhelming desire,

so that readers from the beginning to an advanced level of language competency could acquire the subject. The author's analytical way of thinking is revealed in his laconic subject exposition. The rules are provided in a brief, schematic way. As a result, not only a linguist can use this coursebook.

The coursebook contains a wide range of examples on every introduced affix. Moreover, the various engaging exercises in language proficiency are offered to be practiced. From the linguistic point of view, Mark Lavrinovičius carried out a significant innovative research by his work. In all of the 100 lessons for each grammar point, while matching every certain affix to a word, the author provides a list of the appropriate letters / sounds according to the Karaim language vowel–consonant harmony rules. Thus, he introduces the word-building and word formation rules for each variant of a studied affix.

CONCLUSION

Taking everything into account, it is obvious that the language maintenance, passing on the Karaim language and teaching the young generations was Mark Lavrinovičius's heart's desire, his ultimate goal. Lithuanian Karaims' Hachan and the ordinary Karaim community member – Mark Lavrinovičius was undoubtedly an outstanding figure of the late 20th – early 21st century.

At present, Mark Lavrinovičius's Karaim language grammar – Algorithmisation (word-building / affixation), the Karaim language coursebook and other not published works are being prepared for publication by his family.

To conclude, it is vital to refer to the Polish Tiurkologist Prof. Tadeusz Jan Kowalski (1889–1948). He told that Trakai Karaims, being isolated from other Turkic peoples for centuries, had preserved their culture, language, identity. He compared us with a fly embedded in amber¹². Indeed, the Lithuanian Karaims, God willing, have been living in Lithuania since the 14th century, passing on their ancient customs and traditions from generation to generation for over 600 years. Trakai has been the Karaim's cultural and religious heart for centuries. The Lithuanian Karaims have maintained their cultural heritage and, without doubt, the language. Truly, we are passing it on to our future generations.

¹² Kowalski T. *Język karaimski // Myśl Karaimska*. Wilno, 1926. T. I, zes. III, s. 3–7.