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**Autor:** Csató, Éva Á.; Abish, Aynur

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## Kontakt/Contact

Digizeitschriften e.V.  
SUB Göttingen  
Platz der Göttinger Sieben 1  
37073 Göttingen

✉ [info@digizeitschriften.de](mailto:info@digizeitschriften.de)

# Relators of comparison in Karaim and in Kazakh as spoken in China

Éva Á. Csató & Aynur Abish

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The paper deals with comparative constructions in Karaim as compared to Kazakh as spoken in China. It is demonstrated that through contact-induced changes highly endangered languages may become more complex than their more vigorous large cognates.

Éva Á. Csató, *Department of Linguistics and Philology, Uppsala University, Box 635, SE-75126 Uppsala, Sweden. E-mail: eva.csato@lingfil.uu.se.*

Aynur Abish, *Department of Kazakh Language and Literature, Minzu University of China, Beijing, PRC. Post number: 100081. E-mail: 2014089@muc.edu.cn.*

## The aim of this article

The aim of this article is to study how comparative constructions are coded in the moribund West Kipchak Turkic language Karaim.<sup>1</sup> Another much more vigorous Kipchak language, Kazakh, will serve as a standard of comparison. Endangered languages are often claimed to be structurally less elaborate and morphologically less complex than large vigorous languages. In several articles, we have argued that the Karaim morphological system is still complex and exhibits, for instance, the typical Turkic categories in the field of modality (Csató 2012). Here, a review of the basic types of comparative constructions in Karaim will illustrate that this exceedingly small language employs an extended set of construction types in order to express comparison. Compared to Kazakh, Karaim constructions show great variation owing to the fact that the language has partly preserved the typical Turkic types and partly introduced new ones as a result of contact with non-Turkic languages.

The constructions of comparison will be described with respect to what relators they employ for marking the predicate and the nominal phrases representing Comparee and Standard NPs. Bound and free relators will be distinguished. Furthermore, we will distinguish between preposed and postposed free relators, i.e. those preceding and those following their complement.

1 We thank Irina Nevskaya for her valuable comments on a previous version of this paper.

### Degree of grammaticalization

Johanson (in print) deals with the grammaticalization of nominal relators in Kazakh, suggesting a new kind of systematic classification that distinguishes between various degrees of grammaticalization. The highest level of grammaticalization is represented by case relators. The old opaque postpositional relators represent the second degree of grammaticalization followed by less grammaticalized and complex relators. In the following presentation of the Karaim comparative relators, we will refer to these degrees of grammaticalization.

### Comparative constructions. Some basic typological distinctions

Comparative constructions typically consist of two noun phrases (NP) and a predicate. One of the noun phrases serves as the standard of comparison, NP<sup>stand</sup>, and the other as the object of comparison, the comparee, NP<sup>comp</sup>. Semantically, comparisons of inequality, equality and similarity can be distinguished (Stassen 2001: 993). Though role phrases are not comparatives, we also include them in this description because their coding can be similar to that of the comparative constructions. Comparative constructions of inequality and equality are illustrated here with English examples.

- (1) English comparison of inequality

|                               |                              |   |                          |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------|---|--------------------------|
| <i>Mary</i>                   | <i>is old-er</i>             | / | <i>more beautiful</i>    |
| NP <sup>comp</sup>            | BOUND COMPARATIVE RELATOR.ER | / | FREE COMPARATIVE RELATOR |
| <i>than</i>                   |                              |   | <i>Judy.</i>             |
| FREE COMPARATIVE RELATOR.THAN |                              |   | NP <sup>stand</sup>      |

- (2) English comparison of equality

|                             |                             |                     |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------|
| <i>Mary</i>                 | <i>is as</i>                | <i>beautiful</i>    |
| NP <sup>comp</sup>          | FREE COMPARATIVE RELATOR.AS |                     |
| <i>as</i>                   |                             | <i>Judy.</i>        |
| FREE COMPARATIVE RELATOR.AS |                             | NP <sup>stand</sup> |

In (1) and (2), the NPs<sup>stand</sup> are introduced by the free comparative relators *than* and *as*, respectively. The predicates are construed differently. In comparisons of inequality, the predicative adjective is in the comparative form, whereas in comparisons of equality, the predicate is introduced by the relator *as*. In the equality construction the predicate is also marked by the free relator *as*. Thus, in both constructions, both the predicate and the NPs<sup>stand</sup> are marked by a relator.

In comparative constructions expressing inequality, either the standard of comparison may be assigned a fixed case, or the case corresponds to that assigned to the NP<sub>comp</sub> (Stassen 2001: 994). Turkic languages typically represent the first type and apply an adverbial case, the ablative, to NPs<sup>stand</sup>. The predicate is optionally marked by the free relator *daha* ‘more’ in Turkish. See below for more about the type in which the standard NP gets its case from the comparee.

- (3) Turkish comparison of inequality

*Ali Meryem’-den (daha)*  
 NP<sup>comp</sup> NP<sup>stand</sup>-BOUND RELATOR.ABL FREE COMPARATIVE RELATOR.MORE  
*büyük.*  
 old  
 ‘Ali is older than Meryem.’

In Kazakh, the predicate in comparisons of inequality may optionally be marked by a bound relator, i.e. the comparative suffix  $\{-L^3A^2w\}$  or  $\{-(I^2)rA^2K^2\}$ , as in the following example; see Zhang (2004: 111–113). The NP<sup>stand</sup> is marked with a bound relator, the ablative case suffix.

- (4) Kazakh comparison of inequality

*Adıl Märyäm-nän aқıldi /*  
 NP<sup>comp</sup> NP<sup>stand</sup>-BOUND RELATOR.ABL intelligent  
*aқıldi-law / kışi-rek.*  
 intelligent-BOUND COMPARATIVE RELATOR.LAW / small-BOUND COMPARATIVE RELATOR.RAK  
 ‘Adıl is more intelligent / more intelligent / smaller than Meryem.’

Another type of comparative construction expresses similarity; see (5). Example (6) illustrates the similar coding of role phrases.

- (5) English comparison of similarity

*Robert sings like a nightingale.*  
 NP<sup>comp</sup> FREE SIMILARITY RELATOR.AS NP<sup>stand</sup>

- (6) English role phrase

*He works as an engineer.*  
 X FREE ROLE RELATOR.AS NP<sup>role</sup>

The most frequently used Kazakh comparative constructions are illustrated by examples (7–9). In equative type of constructions, the relator *birdey* ‘equally’, based on the numeral *bir* ‘one’ and the simulative suffix {-D<sup>2</sup>A<sup>2</sup>y}, is frequently used following the NP<sup>stand</sup>, which is marked by {-M<sup>3</sup>A<sup>2</sup>n}, the suffixed form of the postposition ‘with’.

- (7) Kazakh comparison of equality

*Men      Märyäm-men                      birdey              aқıldi-mın.*  
 NP<sup>comp</sup>    NP<sup>stand</sup>-BOUND RELATOR.WITH FREE RELATOR    intelligent-COP1SG  
 ‘I am as intelligent as Meryem.’

In constructions of similarity, the simulative suffix {-D<sup>2</sup>A<sup>2</sup>y} marks the NP<sup>stand</sup> itself.

- (8) Kazakh comparison of similarity

*Adıl      bulbul-day                                      sayra-y-dı.*  
 NP<sup>comp</sup>    NP<sup>stand</sup>-BOUND SIMILATIVE RELATOR.DAY    sing-PRES-COP3SG  
 ‘Adil sings like a nightingale.’

- (9) *Gül-dey    jäyná!*

flower- BOUND SIMILATIVE RELATOR.DAY    bloom.IMP2SG  
 ‘May you bloom like a flower!’

Similarity constructions can also be built with postposed free relators. The postpositions serving as relators in such constructions are *siyaқtı* ‘like, similar’ ← *siyaқ* ‘appearance, image’, *siқildı* ‘like, similar’ ← *siқil* ‘color’, *seқildı* ‘like, similar’ ← *seқil* ‘form’, *älpetti* ‘like, similar’ ← *älpet* ‘appearance’.

- (10) *kar                      siyaқtı                      /*  
 NP<sup>stand</sup> snow    FREE SIMILATIVE RELATOR.AS  
*bala                      siқildı                      /*  
 NP<sup>stand</sup> child    FREE SIMILATIVE RELATOR.AS  
*kün                      seқildı                      /*  
 NP<sup>stand</sup> sun    FREE SIMILATIVE RELATOR.AS  
*adam                      älpetti*  
 NP<sup>stand</sup> man    FREE SIMILATIVE RELATOR.AS  
 ‘as snow / as a kid / as the sun / as a man’

In Kazakh, role phrases are based on *bolup* ‘being’, the converb form of the copula *bol-* ‘to become, be’. Zhang describes *bolup* used in this function as a structural particle (2004: 692).

- (11) Kazakh role phrase

*Adıl enjener bol-up jumus iste-y-dı.*  
 Adıl NP<sup>role</sup> engineer FREE ROLE RELATOR.BOLUP work-PRES-COP3SG  
 ‘Adıl works as an engineer.’

### Karaim relators of comparison

#### Karaim comparisons of inequality

Karaim still employs the Turkic type of construction to express comparison of inequality by marking the NP<sup>stand</sup> with a bound relator, the ablative suffix, and the predicate with the comparative suffix {-R<sup>2</sup>A<sup>2</sup>K<sup>2</sup>}.

- (12) Trakai Karaim proverb

*Bügün-hü çipčä yaxşı-raz*  
 today-ACC chicken good-BOUND COMPARATIVE RELATOR.RAK  
*tanda-yi tavux-tan.*  
 tomorrow-KI NP<sup>stand</sup> hen-BOUND RELATOR.ABL  
 ‘A chicken today is better than a hen tomorrow.’

This construction, however, occurs less frequently than corresponding ones with free relators; for more about these see below. The use of the comparative suffix seems to be obligatory.

#### The similitive suffix

The first opaque postposition dealt with by Johanson (in print) is a highly grammaticalized bound relator which goes back to the East Old Turkic postposition *tä:g* ‘like’. In Kazakh, this old postposition is employed as a suffix {-D<sup>2</sup>A<sup>2</sup>y}. Zhang considers it to be a case marker (2004: 78–81). In Karaim, the suffix is found in the form H. {-diy}, T. {-d’i(y)}, but its occurrence is restricted to the following pronominal forms: H. *buñd’iy* [bunjiy] ‘such’ and H. *anıd’iy* [anjiy] ‘such’ (Musaev 1964: 177) and also T. *neñd’iy* [n’en’d’ij] ‘what a’. Zajaczkowski (1932) does not mention this suffix. Deny et al. (1959) denote this suffix ‘équatif, comparatif’. According to Pritsak, for instance, South Siberian Altay Turkic has a ‘casus comparativus’ {-DIy} (1959: 583) and Khakas an ‘Äquativ’ {-DIy}. In the Karaim pronominal forms, the suffix is non-harmonic, always front. The change *ä > i* could take place in Karaim, in which low vowels preceding a [j] are raised in certain suf-

fixes. In Halich Karaim, this change may result in an *i*, e.g. *ket-fî-yd'i-m* < *ket-sä-yd'i-m* ‘had I left’ (Csató & Johanson 2015).

The Karaim pronouns *buñd'iy*, *and'iy*, and *neñd'iy* function as pronominal adjectives and do not play any role in building comparative constructions of any type. Thus, the suffix {-d'iy} no longer functions as a relator but serves instead as a derivational suffix. These adjectival pronouns may be inflected, e.g. in number and case, like other nominal categories, or they can serve as complements of a postposition. See the following examples (according to Olach 2013).

- (13) Halich Karaim biblical text

*Kiñi et-me-y-d'i*      *an-d'iy-lär-ñi*  
 envy-NEG-PRES-3SG    that-DER-PL-ACC  
*kaysi-lar-i*      *kayt-ma-y-d'ilar*  
 which-PL-POSS3    return-NEG-PRES-3PL  
 ‘X does not envy those who do not return.’

- (14) Halich Karaim biblical text

*Buñ-d'iy*    *išt'inä*      *män*    *bay-a-män*.  
 this-DER    POSTPOSITION.ON    I      look-PRES-1SG  
 ‘I look at such things.’

### The opaque postposition *kibik* ‘like’

One of the postpositions used in similitive expressions—as in Turkic languages belonging to the southwestern branch—is *kibik* ‘like, as’ in both variants of Karaim.

- (15) Trakai Karaim comparison of similarity

*arslan*      *kibik*  
 NP<sup>stand</sup> lion    FREE SIMILATIVE RELATOR.AS  
 ‘as a lion’

The relator *kibik* assigns the genitive case to pronouns just as the corresponding postpositions do in other Turkic languages.

- (16) Trakai Karaim comparison of similarity

*an-în*      *kibik*  
 PRONOUN<sup>stand</sup>X-GEN    FREE SIMILATIVE RELATOR.AS  
 ‘as X’

The following example illustrates the use of a similative construction in a sentence.

- (17) Trakai Karaim comparison of similarity

|                      |                         |                                  |
|----------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <i>mān</i>           | <i>mači</i>             | <i>kibik</i>                     |
| NP <sup>comp</sup> I | NP <sup>stand</sup> cat | FREE SIMILATIVE RELATOR.AS       |
| <i>ayač</i>          | <i>üšnü</i>             | <i>miñ-äl-mim.</i>               |
| tree                 | POSTPOSITION.ON         | climb-POTENTIAL-NEGATION.PRES1SG |

‘I cannot climb on trees like a cat’.

*Kibik* is used as a postposition, as, for instance, Turkish *gibi*. In Karaim, it has developed new syntactic properties. *Kibik* ‘like, as’ in Karaim functions as a comparative particle. Thus, the NP<sup>stand</sup> derives its case from the NP<sup>comp</sup>. In the following two examples, the NPs<sup>comp</sup> *meñimki bayča-m-ni* [my garden-POSS1SG-ACC] ‘my garden’ and *ačuvun* [anger-POSS3SG-ACC] ‘X’s anger’ are both assigned the accusative case by the verbs *saban šürd’ü* ‘X ploughed’ and *töktü* ‘X poured’. The NPs<sup>stand</sup>, *baxča-si-n* [own garden-POSS3-ACC] ‘own garden’ and *ot-nu* [fire-ACC] ‘fire’ derive their case from the NPs<sup>comp</sup> (Csató 2001).

- (18) Trakai Karaim

|                              |                     |                            |
|------------------------------|---------------------|----------------------------|
| <i>Dost-um</i>               |                     |                            |
| friend-POSS1SG               |                     |                            |
| <i>meñ-im-ki</i>             | <i>bayča-m-ni</i>   |                            |
| NP <sup>comp</sup> [I-GEN-KI | garden-POSS1SG-ACC] |                            |
| <i>öz</i>                    | <i>bayča-si-n</i>   | <i>kibik</i>               |
| NP <sup>stand</sup> [own     | garden-POSS3-ACC]   | FREE SIMILATIVE RELATOR.AS |
| <i>saban šür-d’ü.</i>        |                     |                            |
| plough-PAST.3SG              |                     |                            |

‘My friend ploughed my garden just like (he ploughs) his own.’

- (19) Trakai Karaim

|                                    |                              |                            |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| <i>Ťök-t’ü</i>                     | <i>ot-nu</i>                 | <i>kibik</i>               |
| pour-past3                         | NP <sup>stand</sup> fire-ACC | FREE SIMILATIVE RELATOR.AS |
| <i>ačuv-u-n.</i>                   |                              |                            |
| NP <sup>comp</sup> anger-POSS3-ACC |                              |                            |

‘X poured his anger like fire.’

With regard to its syntactic position, i.e. the fact that it follows the noun phrase, *kibik* still behaves as a postposition. However, as the above examples illustrate, the construction NP + *kibik* is in this case different despite the fact that *kibik* itself can assign case to pronominal complements; see (16). These mixed syntactic properties of this relator make it especially interesting from a contact-linguistic point of view.



The opaque relator *moro* ‘like, as if’, a global copy of Polish *miara* ‘measure’, is used as a preposed particle in Karaim.

- Pronouns following the particle are in the nominative. Compare this to the case-assigning property of *kibik*, as in (15).

- The relator  $\chi az / \chi as$  ‘like, the same way, similarly’ can be used in the same sense as *moro* ‘as, like, as if’ and may even modify *moro* to express ‘just like’. We assume that  $\chi as$  is a colloquial and further grammaticalized variant of the relator *kiyas / kiyasa* to be presented below. The following examples of its usage are quoted from Baskakov et al. (1974).

- (23) Trakai Karaim
- |                            |                |               |
|----------------------------|----------------|---------------|
| <i>χas</i>                 | <i>erīnčāk</i> | <i>ešāk</i>   |
| FREE SIMILATIVE RELATOR.AS | <i>lazy</i>    | <i>donkey</i> |
| 'like a lazy donkey'       |                |               |
- (24) Trakai Karaim
- |                            |                            |                  |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|------------------|
| <i>χas</i>                 | <i>moro</i>                | <i>plastīrni</i> |
| FREE SIMILATIVE RELATOR.AS | FREE SIMILATIVE RELATOR.AS | <i>plastic</i>   |
| 'just like plastic'        |                            |                  |

### Less grammaticalized relators

The Trakai Karaim relator T. *kīyas* [also occurring as *kīyas*] and its Halich Karaim form *kīyasa* [also *kīyasa*] are copies from Persian/Arabic. The form ⟨*kīyasen*⟩ is used in Turkish in the meaning ‘by comparison, by analogy [with]’. In Uyghur, the form *kīyasā* is used as a relator meaning ‘as, like’. The meaning of this relator is ‘by comparison, like’. As mentioned above, this relator is used in the contracted forms *χaz* / *χas* in the spoken language. This is also confirmed by the distribution of *kīyas* and *χaz* / *χas*. The full and the short form are in complementary distribution. Whereas *kīyas* and *kīyasa* are frequently used in the biblical texts, the short forms occur only in the spoken language. The full form of this relator is semantically more transparent than the contracted form.

(25) Trakai Karaim biblical translation

*Ķi kūn da ķečā avurlan-dī üštū-m-ā*  
 because day and night become.heavy-PAST3SG upon-POSS1SG-DAT  
*kudrat-iy,*  
 omnipotence of God-POSS2SG  
*buzul-du yašarmay-īm;*  
 decay-PAST3SG youth-POSS1SG  
*kīyasa kuṛaxlīy-īn-da yaz-nīn*  
 FREE SIMILATIVE RELATOR.AS dryness-POSS3-LOCATIVE summer-GEN  
 ‘For your omnipotence is upon me day and night, my youth has decayed, as in the dry-  
 ness of the summer.’  
 Firkovičius 1998: 46–47.

### The interrogative relator of comparison

The interrogative pronoun *nečik* ‘how’ functions in Karaim as a comparative relator. As a result of selective copying from Slavic languages, interrogative pronouns are also used as subjunctors in embedded clauses. Thus, in the following examples, *nečik* ‘how’ is employed as a functional equivalent of the Russian relator *kak* ‘how’ as a subjunctor (26) and as a comparative relator (27).

(26) Trakai Karaim literary language

*Da ayt, nečik šūv-ā-m an-ī.*  
 and say.IMP2SG how love-PRES-1SG X-ACC  
 ‘And tell (X) how I love X.’

When functioning as a comparative relator, the interrogative pronoun *nečik* ‘how’ precedes the NP<sup>stand</sup>. The predicative adjective is assigned the comparative suffix.

- Comparisons of equality, i.e. of the ‘as Y as’ type, have the same pattern in Karaim as in “Standard Average European” languages (Haspelmath 1998: 325), in which the relator consists of two elements, one modifying the predicate and the other modifying the NP<sup>standard</sup>.

- ### Role phrases

(29) Trakai Karaim spoken language  
*İşle-y-t'                      üratıvčü-bä.*  
 work-PRES-3SG            teacher-BOUND ROLE RELATOR.WITH  
 'X works as a teacher.'

- ### The typology of comparison in Karaim

Compared to Kazakh, Karaim comparative constructions display features that can be explained as selective and global copies from non-Turkic contact languages. The old bound relator {-DIy} is no longer used as a comparative relator in similitive constructions. The old postposition *kibik* 'like' is in use, but its syntactic properties

have been influenced by selectively copied combinational properties of contact languages. The old global copy *kiyasa* ‘as’, which goes back to Arabic, has been further grammaticalized and become an opaque free relator in the form *χas*. Its use and combinational features have been reinforced by corresponding comparative relators of contact languages, for example, of *moro* ‘as’, which has been globally copied from Polish. The Turkic pattern of marking role phrases has been replaced by case assigning.

Table. Types of comparative constructions

| Constructions              | English   | Turkish   | Kazakh  | Karaim   |
|----------------------------|---|---|---|--|
| <i>Inequality relators</i> |   |   |   |  |
| Predicate                  | bound<br><i>or</i><br>preposed<br>free: <i>more</i> | none<br><i>or</i><br>preposed free:<br><i>daha</i>        | none<br><i>or</i><br>bound relators:<br>{-L <sup>3</sup> A <sup>2</sup> w}<br>{-(I <sup>2</sup> )rA <sup>2</sup> κ <sup>2</sup> } | none<br><i>or</i><br>bound relator:<br>{-R <sup>2</sup> A <sup>2</sup> κ <sup>2</sup> }                            |
| NP <sup>stand</sup>        | preposed<br>free: <i>than</i>                       | bound: abla-<br>tive case                                 | bound: ablative case  | bound: ablative<br>case<br><i>or</i><br>preposed free:<br><i>ñečik</i>   |
| <i>Equality relators</i>   |   |   |   |  |
| Predicate                  | preposed<br>free: <i>as</i>                         | none  | none  | none<br><i>or</i><br>preposed free:<br><i>aley</i> , etc   |
| NP <sup>stand</sup>        | preposed<br>free: <i>as</i>                         | postposed<br>free: <i>gibi</i> , <i>ka-</i><br><i>dar</i> | bound: {-M <sup>3</sup> A <sup>2</sup> n} and<br>free postposed:<br><i>bırdey</i>   | postposed free:<br><i>ķibik</i> or<br>preposed free:<br><i>ñečik</i> , <i>kiyasa</i> , <i>χas</i> ,<br><i>moro</i> |
| <i>Role phrase relator</i> |   |   |   |  |
| NP <sup>role</sup>         | preposed<br>free: <i>as</i>                         | postposed<br>free: <i>olarak</i>                          | postposed free: <i>bolup</i>  | bound: {-B <sup>2</sup> A <sup>2</sup> }   |

### Similitive relators

|                     |                   |                                     |   |   |
|---------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------------|---|---|
| Predicate           | none              | none                                | none  | none  |
| NP <sup>stand</sup> | preposed          | postposed                           | bound: {-D <sup>2</sup> A <sup>2</sup> y}   | postposed free:   |
|                     | free: <i>like</i> | free: <i>gibi</i> ,<br><i>kadar</i> | postposed free:<br><i>siyaḳti</i> , <i>siḳildi</i> ,<br><i>seḳildi</i> , <i>âlpetti</i> | <i>ḱibik</i><br><i>or</i><br>preposed free:<br><i>ḱiyasa</i> , <i>ḡas</i> , <i>moro</i> |

The frequency of the various comparative constructions in Karaim has been influenced by the frequency of corresponding constructions in contact languages. Thus, for instance, in comparisons of inequality the NP<sup>stand</sup> is less frequently marked by a bound than a free relator.

### Notations

Graphic forms are given in angle brackets of the type < >

Morphophonemic transcriptions are given in curly brackets of the type { }

Phonetic transcriptions are given in square brackets of the type [ ]

← means ‘is derived from’; < means ‘has developed from’

### Abbreviations

|                     |                        |                    |               |
|---------------------|------------------------|--------------------|---------------|
| ACC                 | accusative             | NP <sup>comp</sup> | comparee      |
| COP                 | copula                 | NEG                | negation      |
| DAT                 | dative                 | PL                 | plural        |
| DER                 | derivation             | POSS               | possessive    |
| GEN                 | genitive               | PRES               | present       |
| H.                  | Halich Karaim          | SG                 | singular      |
| NP <sup>stand</sup> | standard of comparison | T.                 | Trakai Karaim |
|                     |                        | X                  | he, she, it   |

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