The etymology of Karaim kybyn ‘pie’

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Summary: The article presents the etymology of Karaim kybyn ‘pie’ already proposed by Ananiasz Zajączkowski from a Turkic verb that is evidenced only in Turkish. The Karaim word kybyn is unknown in other Turkic languages. The same verb is thought to be a base of another derived word, kybty ‘scissors, shears’, which is attested in more Turkic languages from Old Turkic onwards. The etymology of kybty was also postulated by Ananiasz Zajączkowski and approved by later researchers. The article gives new evidence, examines the meaning and the history of the Turkish (göz) kıp- ‘to wink’ and a possible relation of the verb kıp- to kirp- and kırk- ‘to clip, to shear’. It is worth noting that kybyn is nowadays one of the best recognizable products of Karaim culture in Lithuania.

Keywords: Kybyn ‘pie’, Karaim, etymology, related words
1. Kar. *kybyn* ‘pie’

Karaim *kybyn*¹ ‘pie’ is evidenced in none of other Turkic languages, including the languages of the North-Western group close to West Karaim, i.e. Armeno-Kipchak (Tryjarski 1969, Garkavec 2010) and Lithuanian-Polish Tatar² (Woronowicz 1935), as well as the Turkic languages of the Crimea, i.e. Krymchak (Rebi 2004, Ianbay 2016), Crimean Tatar (Useyinov 2005)³ and Urum (Garkavec’ 2000). It is not attested in the standard dictionaries of other North-Western languages, i.e. Bashkir, Tatar, Karachay-Balkar and Kumuk, either. This word is also lacking in Old Turkic (Clauson 1972), Old Uighur (Wilkens 2021), Cuman (Grønbech 1942) and Middle Kipchak (Toparlı, Vural and Karaatlı 2007). Likewise, *Kybyn* is absent from Budagov (1871) and Radloff (1899), that is the dictionaries which gloss words from many Turkic languages. Zajączkowski (1932: 78), who has examined this word, evidenced it only from West Karaim.

Karaim attestation for *kybyn* is late. Since ‘pie’ does not occur in the Bible, it cannot be evidenced in the translations of the Bible which are the oldest Karaim texts. The first North-West Karaim evidence comes from Kowalski (1929: 228) and Zajączkowski (1932: 78) and the first South-West Karaim evidence from Mardkowicz (1935: 47). This word is listed in the Karaim-Russian-Polish dictionary (*KRPs* 383) after Kowalski and Zajączkowski. This dictionary also provides the Crimean Karaim form *qîbîn* (*KRPs* 377) which is the source of Aqtay and Jankowski (2015: 301). The glossing of *kybyn* and *qîbîn* is different in the Karaim-Russian-Polish dictionary, the former being ‘пирожное; пироги (чаще полукруглые, начинённые мясом и испечённые на листе) | ciastko; pierogi; (duże, półokrągłe, nadziewane mięsem i pieczone na blasze)’ (p. 383) and ‘печёный пирожок

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¹ A few different transcription systems are used in this article: a transcription based on the modern Karaim alphabet for West Karaim (but different for historical West Karaim), standard Turkish alphabet for Turkish (and a different standard transcription for historical Turkish), and a conventional Turkological transcription elsewhere.

² Both Armeno-Kypchak and Lithuanian-Polish Tatar are extinct languages for a long time, thus they are also historical languages.

³ Also Dobruja Tatar (Karahan 2011).
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полукруглой формы с начинкой из сырого мяса | pieczony półokrągły pirożek faszerowany surowym mięsem (п. 377), respectively; identically in Aqtay and Jankowski (2015: 301) with the English translation ‘baked pie filled with raw meat’.

An etymology of kybyn was proposed by Zajączkowski (1932: 78). According to him, kybyn is derived from the verb *kyp- ‘ciąć, zrównać ciasto’, i.e. ‘to cut, to clip, to even up dough’ with the deverbal suffix -yn that forms nouns; Zajączkowski also demonstrates the causative verb kyptyr-.

This etymology has one weakness. The verb *kyp- is unknown in Karaim and its evidence is based on Turkish as a single language, see Redhouse (1890: 1504) kıpmak ‘1. to wink (the eye) for a moment. 2. to snip, to dock (a thing) very slightly’. Another evidence comes from Radloff (1899: 840) who provides the verb qüp- in two meanings ‘1. to wink (the eye). 2. to cut off slightly’, cf. Özyetgin (2001: 528). Unfortunately, Radloff does not show his sources, but provides this word in Arabic, Armenian and Greek scripts, i.e. also from Armenian and Greek Turkish. However, the modern Redhouse dictionary glosses the verb kip- only as ‘to wink, to blink (eye)’ (Red. 652) and ignores the other meaning related to cutting or snipping.

Some of seventeenth-century dictionaries list this verb, but only in the meaning ‘to wink’, usually as collocation with the word göz ‘eye’, e.g. Molino (1641) göz kïpmaḳ [Ghos capmak] ‘to wink’ (Molino 1641: 7), Carradori (1650) güzleri kïp- [ghiuzleri qapparam] and köz ile kïp- [chiosileh capparam] ‘id’ (Rocchi 2011: 214), Meninski (1680) göz kıpmak [göz kypmak] ‘id’ (Meninski 1780: 961). The verb kïp- (kip-) in the meaning ‘to snip, to dock, to cut, to shear’ etc. as well as the verb kïrp- (kïrp-) are absent from these dictionaries, also from Argenti, Megiser, Ferraguto, etc. The verb kïp- (kip-) is also wanting in one of the most reliable compendia of the 18th century, Viguier’s “Elements”, which only contains the verb kïrmpåk ‘to cut’ [qerpmaq ‘découper’] (Viguier 1790: 373). Neither is it evidenced in other 19th-century dictionaries. Bianchi and Kieffer (1837: 438) provide only [qypmaq] (kipmak) with göz [gueus ‘cligner les yeux’] ‘to wink’. Also Zenker (1876: 691 and 690) gives only [kypmak] (kipmak) and the derived [kypyrmak]

4 Rässänen’s (1969: 265) alleged Shor kyp- is probably a mistake, for Shor like Khakas has only the verb qïpla- ‘to shear, to cut’ (Radloff 1899: 842, Kurpeško-Tannagaševa and Apon’kin 1993: 31).
(kipirmak) in the meaning ‘to wink’ [eligner | blinzeln]. Like Viguier, Zenker (1876: 697) also evidences the verb kırp- (kırp-) ‘to shear’ [kyrpmak ‘tendre | scheeren’], referring it to kırkmak. This is also the case with Sāmī’s (1317/1901: 1053 and 1062) dictionary which glosses the verb kip- as ‘to wink’ and the verb kırp- as ‘1. to cut off, to snip. 2. to clip. 3. to wink (the eye)’.

Moreover, the verb kip- in this meaning and the verb kırp- are absent from historical (Tarama) and dialect (Derleme) dictionaries. Modern standard Turkish dictionaries also gloss the verb kip- only as ‘to wink’, e.g. kıp mak ‘göz kapaklarını çabucak açıp kapamak, kırpmak’, i.e. ‘to open and close quickly the eyelids’ (TS 1156) and kıp mak ‘gözleri hızlı hızlı açıp kapamak’, i.e. ‘to open and close the eyes very quickly’ (Kardaş et al. 2000: 1657). In addition, the authors of the latter dictionary qualify this verb as provincial. On the other hand, both of these dictionaries gloss the verb kırp- as ‘to snip, to dock; to shear’ and ‘to wink’, etc. (TS 1164 and Kardaş 2000: 1668), thus also translating it as kırkmak ‘to shear’.

According to Erdal (1991: 300), the Old Turkic suffix {-Xn} forms object nominals from transitive stems and subjects nominals from intransitive ones and can be illustrated by many examples.

Therefore, although the verb *qip- is attested in one language only and its attestation is late and problematic, Zajączkowski’s etymology may be accepted as correct, but not entirely certain for the lack of the sound attestation of the base verb. However, there is another, much older word that seems to be derived from the same verb *qip-, it is qipti ‘scissors, shears’.

2. Trk. qipti ‘scissors, shears’

The etymology of this word was also proposed by Zajączkowski (1932: 86). He derives it from the same verb as kybyn and the suffix -ty which in Karaim forms one more word, jarty ‘half’. Although the etymology of jarty (yarti) is not without problems, see, e.g., ÈSTJa 1v 145, and the suffix is rare, the suffix was recognized by Räsänen (1957: 120) and it forms at least one certain derivative, the Tatar yaqtï ‘light’ ← yaq- ‘to burn’ + {-tI}.

The word qipti can be shown in several historical and modern languages. Firstly, it is attested in Old Turkic as qiftu (qiftu in Dankoff and Kelly
1985: 139) and Middle Turkic, e.g. Codex Comanicus qyby (Grønbech 1942: 207), Middle Kipchak (e.g. Tarğumān Turkī va ʿ Ağamī va Muğāli and At-Tuhfa az-Zakiyya fī al-Luğa at-Turkiyya) qîptî ‘id’ (Atalay 1945: 198, Fazylov and Zijaeva 1978: 341–342, Toparlı, Çögenli and Yanık 2000: 118), for more examples and forms, see Räsänen (1969: 265), ÈSTJa (vi, 224) and Toparlı, Vural and Karaatlı (2007: 143, 144). Secondly, it is known in such modern Turkic languages as Khak. and Shor (Radloff 1899: 843), for the present-day forms see Khak. χïptï ‘scissors’ Subrakova (2006: 893) and Shor qïptï ‘id’ (Kurpeško-Tannagaševa and Apon’kin 1993: 31), and Turkish dialects (Derleme VIII, 2814).

3. Related verbs and some questions

As said above, *kyp- ‘to cut, to shear, to clip’ is not evidenced in Karaim, but there is historical evidence for a verb which seems to be derived from it. It is qypçy- ‘to cut out, to cut in pieces’, attested in a North-West Karaim Torah translation from 1720 (Németh 2020: 1073). Németh (2020: 1074) also evidences the SWKar. equivalent qypcy-. Although, as we will see below, the suffix {-čI} raises many problems, the meaning of this derived verb is a new support for the reconstruction of Trk. * qîp- ‘to snip, to dock, to cut, to shear’ etc.

However, at this point it should be stressed that the Kir. verb qîpçî-, indicated by Németh (2020: 1074) as a parallel from Radloff and Judaxin is either unrelated to WKar. qypçy- or has changed its meaning substantially, which is possible, see below. According to Radloff (1899: 845), the Kir. verb qîpçî- means ‘раздавить | auseinanderdrücken’; i.e. ‘to crush, to squash; to push apart’ and according to Judaxin (1965: 492), it means ‘ущемить, защемить, зажать’; i.e. ‘to pinch, to squeeze, to clutch’.

The suffix {-čI} is unproductive and most examples shown in the studies on Kirghiz are unclear or uncertain (e.g. Qudaybergenov 1980: 309, Zaxarova 1987: 218). Probably the only correct example is provided by Kasapoğlu Çengel (2017: 148). She demonstrates the verb čapçî- ‘to hit the ground with its forelimb or hoof (the horse)’, which may really be derived from an existing verb, in this case čap- ‘to strike, to hit, to kick’ (cf. Judaxin 1965: 847
and 846). The situation is similar in Kazakh in which only two sound examples can be provided, one šapši- ‘to jet, to spurt’ ← šap- ‘to run’ and könši- ‘to be satisfied, to calm down’ ← kön- ‘to agree, to consent’ (Žanpeyisov 2002: 390), though the latter is used only in an idiom. Therefore, the suffix { -čI- } in most cases occurs in verbs of unclear structure and etymology. However, it is nothing strange, for derived verbs are formed from nominals and non-valency changing or non-diathetic suffixes that form verbs from verbal bases are rare. They mostly express intensity and iterative or multiplicative action. This is what the suffix { -čI- } expresses. Since the Turkic languages followed another way of development and preferred expression of these types of action with auxiliary verbs, most of the suffixes either became obsolete or the meanings of the verbs they derived changed.

Németh (2020: 1074) demonstrates that other NWKar. manuscripts use the verb kes- ‘to cut’ in the translation of Exo 39:2 in which the 1720 manuscript has qypçy-, and one SWKar. manuscript uses kypcy- in the translation of Deu 25:12, while another has kes-. Therefore, the meanings of WKar. qypçy- ~ kypcy- and kes- must be similar.

SWKar. kypty- ‘id’ is a hapax legomenon and is only provided by Mardkowicz (1935: 48), later also in KRPS (387), but after Mardkowicz’s dictionary. Németh’s (2020: 1074) reference to Trk. kypty- ‘to cut’ in ÈSTJa (vI 224) is inexact, for ÈSTJa demonstrates this verb only in SWKar.

From the meanings of the Tur. verbs kip- and kirp- it is clear that they are correlated. If we take the verb kirp- and the meaning ‘to snip, to dock, to cut, to shear’ of kip-, we can think of two relations, (1) kip← kirp- (qïrp-) with the drop of -r or (2) kip→ kirp- with the epenthesis of r. Preference is given to the former case for a few reasons. The first is similarity in form and meaning of the verb kirp- to kirk- ‘to clip, to shear’ (Red. 655). Both are probably derivatives of kir-, Turkic qïr- ‘to strip (hair)’ (Clauson 1972: 643, 651, ÈSTJa vI 236, Stachowski 2019: 221). The second is the fact that qïrp- is evidenced in Middle Turkic, though probably only in Kitāb al-Idrāk lī Lisān al-Atrāk, see qïrbdı ‘tüyün uclarını aldı’ i.e. ‘he sheared off the ends of hair’ (Caferoğlu 1931: 76), i.e. it seems to be older than qïp- (kip-). It has survived in modern Turkic, but only in Azerbaijani (Äzizbäyov 1984: 106)

5 In Németh (2010: 1074) 225–226.
and Turkish (see above). The third reason is purely linguistic, that is the drop of /r/ in languages is much more frequent than its addition, in this case the supposed epenthesis.

However, if we accept the change *qïrp- → *qïp-, we will have to answer the question why Middle Turkic ‘scissors, shears’ is always *qïptï and never *qïrptï, as, e.g. *kïrpïndï [qerpende ‘retaille’ and ‘rognure’] ‘clipping’ (Viguier 1790: 429, 430). Since there are no reasons to doubt the evidence of *qïptï, and *kybyn is probably later, the answer must only be one: the change *qïrp- → *qïp- must have occurred a long time ago and for some time these two forms existed as two variants.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, Zajączkowski’s etymology of *kybyn (and *kypty) ← Kar. *kyp- seems to be sound. In fact, the name of a food derived from the verb that means ‘to cut, to clip’ is nothing strange. There are at least two names of food derived from *kes- ‘to cut’, e.g. Dobruja Tatar *dörtkesken ‘pastry filled with cheese and cut into rectangular pieces’ (Karahan 2011: 541) and Kaz. *kespe ‘pasta; noodle’ (KRS 376). The verb *qïy- ‘to chop’ is also the base of a widely known Turkic derivative *qïyma ‘chopped meat’, e.g. Tur. *kïyma (Red. 661).

*Kybyn* is not the only dish in the Karaim cuisine that does not have parallels in other Turkic languages. As is known, the name of foods and dishes are typically cultural words that reflect cultural contact and there are many loanwords among them. However, in the traditional cuisine of the Karaims some types of foods and dishes were not allowed by the religion and this is the reason why the Karaims invented their own dishes and names in addition to those shared with the Jews. For instance, in North-West and South-West Karaim there is *tymbyl matzah* (KRPs 556) and in CKar. *qaburtïq ‘id’ (KRPs 356, Aqtay and Jankowski 2015: 282). A characteristic Karaim dish was once NWKar. *b’ok, SWKar. and CKar. *bek ‘bladder filled with greasy dough, sometimes also with grated potatoes and meat’ (KRPs 114, 148, Aqtay and

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6 KRPS and, following it, Aqtay and Jankowski (2015: 399) also evidence this word in Crimean Karaim, but this word is unknown in the texts available.
Jankowski 2015: 76). Although the dishes themselves are known elsewhere, the CKar. names ayaqlaq ~ ayaqlïq ‘pasty filled with raw mutton’ (KRPs 51, Aqtay and Jankowski 2015: 59) and kete ‘pie with sweet filling’ (KRPs 394, Aqtay and Jankowski 2015: 210) seem to be used only by the Karaims. However, it is kybyn that is nowadays one of the most recognizable products of the Karaim material culture in Lithuania. Although there are similar pies in the cuisine of the Turkic peoples, the Karaims coined their own name for one of them. A tourist who visits Trakai and wishes to know something about Karaims will probably visit the Karaim house of prayer kenesa and taste kybyns (Lithuanian kibinas, the plural kibinai) in a Karaim restaurant called Kybynlar or another called Kibininė.

Abbreviations

CKar. = Crimean Karaim
Derleme = NA 1963–1979
ÈSTJa iv = Levitskaja 1989
ÈSTJa vi = Blagova 2000
Kar. = Karaim
Kaz. = Kazakh
Khak. = Khakas
Kir. = Kirghiz
KRPs = Baskakow, Zajączkowski and Szapszał (eds) 1974
KRs = Syzdykova and Xusain 2001
NWKar. = North-West Karaim
Red. = Alkim, Antel, Avery et al. eds 1991
SWKar. = South-West Karaim
Tarama = NA 1963–1972
Trk. = Turkic
Ts = Akalin ed. 2005
Tur. = Turkish
WKar. = West Karaim
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