

The objective of this research project is to prepare a critical edition of a unique Karaim manuscript that contains a translation of the Torah into the northern variety of Western Karaim. The manuscript originates from Kukizów (near Lviv) and dates back to 1720, which makes it to date the oldest western Karaim Bible translation to be critically analysed.

The critical edition of such manuscripts makes possible for philologists and linguists to establish such facts which are evident when compared with languages that have a vast number of written sources available: the periodization of a language, the oldest Bible translation, a description of the linguistic processes and external influence that shaped the language — these issues are all of fundamental importance in the history of a language and they still need to be properly described in Karaim studies. The edition is, to some extent, also a monument to a culture, for it is the first known translation of the Bible (a fragment thereof) into the language of the Polish-Lithuanian Karaims. At this point it is also important to remember that this translation belongs to the cultural heritage of an endangered and partially extinct minority (we find Karaim listed in the UNESCO Red Book on Endangered Languages). Manuscripts are, except the Karaim cemetery in Warsaw, the only remnants of their culture in the post-war Poland.