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## TEXTS AND MANUSCRIPTS: DESCRIPTION AND RESEARCH

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### LETTERS BY CRIMEAN NOBLEWOMEN TO SWEDEN

This paper is a publication and translation of four letters by Crimean noblewomen to Sweden. They were written in the mid-seventeenth century in the Crimean Khanate and contain 12—14 lines each. First, I would like to provide the reader with some information concerning the circumstances surrounding the appearance of the letters and make some observations about their language. The letters are kept at the Swedish National Archives in Stockholm [1]. According to the catalogue [2], the letters' call numbers are 139, 140, 149, and 150. The letters under discussion were written by the ladies from the royal family of the Crimean Khanate (1420—1783); their authors are either mothers or chief wives of the Crimean Khans.

The texts under discussion are the first from a number of Crimean Tatar letters which I am planning to publish. As a matter of fact, not a single letter from the Tatar collection of the Swedish Archives has been published yet. Furthermore, not a single Crimean Tatar letter in a Latin transcription has been published at all. The aim of the present paper is to present the first four Crimean Tatar letters to the attention of the reader. The publication is also a good opportunity to observe the text of the letters as valuable linguistic material. No doubt, its study can broaden our knowledge about the history of the Crimean Tatar language. The letters are also of interest from the historical point of view.

The messages to Sweden authored by mothers and chief wives of the Crimean Khans contain confirmation of the devoted friendship existing between the Crimean Khanate and Sweden as well as a promise to develop their mutual relations. Each letter informs about a new Crimean envoy leaving the Crimean Khanate for Sweden. The sender certifies the high rank of the envoy. The name of the envoy is indicated only in the letters written by Khans' mothers; it is absent in the letters sent by their wives (cf. ll. 8, 20, 38, 51)<sup>1</sup>. One can assume that the letters constituted part of the credentials procedure confirming the envoy's powers. What seems a bit extraordinary is that the authors of the letters are women. (The reason of this is discussed below.) The letters required no reply in the form of a letter from the addressee; they contained a request to

show the envoy good hospitality and due respect. The letters are full of compliments and oaths to strengthen friendship between the Crimean Khanate and Sweden.

The structure of the letters betrays an old epistolary Turkic tradition well examined by Anna von Gabain [3]. It is also identical to the structure of the Golden Horde *yarliqs*, and letters [4], and of the Ottoman Sultans' messages [5]. According to this surviving tradition, the whereabouts and the names of our senders, as well as the titles of Khans, constitute an opening formula. It is followed by the whereabouts and the name of the addressee, with abundant praise to him. The letters from the Crimean Khans are no exception. But what is interesting is that the scribes did not know the name of the ruler of Sweden at the time when the letters were compiled; we find an empty space left by the scribe for the name of the Swedish sovereign.

The main text of the messages appears after the opening formula. At the end of the letters, we find the phrase "Thus, [the contents of our message] is known [to you]", a colophon typical of private letters [6]. A letter can have a date or lack it. The last word in the letters is the name of the capital of the Crimean Khanate, Bakhchisarai, written in the left corner of the leaf. The seal of the sender is placed also here.

The epistolary features of the texts are the following: the letters contain both personal pronouns as a form of address and a direct speech. In addition, there are special epistolary forms of some words, e.g. *sa'adatli* 'felicitous' instead of *sa'adatli* usual in the spoken language; *šävkätli* 'magnificent' instead of *šävkätli*; *azamätli* 'illustrious' instead of *azamätli*. As is common in the letters written by the Crimean Khans, we find here (ll. 1, 15, 29, 43) the usual formula of mentioning God — the Arabic phrase هو 'He is' or هو المعين 'He is the Helper' [7]. These are written at the top of the leaves, high above the text. The Turkic word for 'God' does not appear in the texts of the letters; loan-words are only used: الله (Arab.), خدای (Pers.) (in the form of خودی). For the word 'ruler' five terms borrowed from Turkic, Arabic, Persian and Slavonic are used: those are (in

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<sup>1</sup> For convenience, we use a single numeration for the letters' lines.