PART TWO

A STUDY IN THE CRIMEAN AND POLISH-LITHUANIAN DIPLOMATICS AND DIPLOMACY
CHAPTER ONE

THE LANGUAGE AND PRESERVATION OF DOCUMENTS

Turkic languages used by the Crimean chancery

Since the foundation of the Genghisid empire, Mongolian language recorded in Uighur script had prevailed in its chancery usage. Yet, in the empire’s western parts, known after Genghis Khan’s two sons as the uluses of Djochi and Chagatay, during the 14th century it gradually gave way to Turkic chancery language.¹ The chancery language used in the ulus of Djochi (i.e., the so-called Golden Horde) is today called Khwarezmian Turkic as it developed in Khwarezm, then belonging to Djochi’s ulus, and derived predominantly from western Turkic, Kipchak dialects.² After Mongolian had faded away, also Uighur script, initially used for recording both Mongolian and Turkic texts, gave way to Arabic, venerated as the script of the Koran by the Islamicized Genghisid rulers of the Golden Horde. In consequence, Khwarezmian Turkic, recorded in Arabic script, was also adopted as chancery

¹ On the gradual disappearing of Mongolian, cf. n. 2 in Part I.
² Cf. István Vásáry, “A contract of the Crimean khan Mängli Giräy and the inhabitants of Qïrq-yer from 1478/79,” Central Asiatic Journal 26 (1982): 289–300, esp. p. 297. Although this language would later influence the development of literary languages among both the Tatars and the Uzbeks, it would be an anachronism to regard it as old-Tatar or old-Uzbek. Mirkasym Usmanov persuasively argues against referring to the language used in the Golden Horde as Chagatay (Khwarezm, where it had actually developed, did not belong to the ulus of Chagatay). Usmanov also vehemently opposes crediting Ali Shir Nava’i (1441–1501), the famous Central Asian scholar today claimed as the father of Uzbek national poetry, with contributing to this language’s development. In fact, the language had been in use in Khwarezm, on the Volga, and in the Crimea long before Nava’i was born; see Usmanov, Žalovannye akty Džučieva ulusa XIV–XVI vv., pp. 101–106. A linguistic analysis of the yarlıq, addressed by Tokhtamish to Jogaila in 1393, was already undertaken by the prominent German-born Russian turcologist Vasilij Radlov [Friedrich Wilhelm Radloff]; see idem, “Jarlyki Toktamyša i Temir-Kutluga,” in: Zapiski Vostočnago Otdelenija Imperatorskago Russkago Arxeologičeskago Obščestva. Edited by V. Rozen, vol. 3, vypuski 1–2 (St. Petersburg, 1888): 1–40, esp. p. 39. Although the terminology used by the author can be regarded as anachronous today (especially his use of the term Chagatay), his conclusions convincingly point to the strong presence of northern and western Turkic dialectal elements in the literary language then used by the Golden Horde’s chancery.