CHAPTER TWO
THE CRIMEAN INSTRUMENTS OF PEACE
AND THEIR TYPOLOGY

The “donation yarlıq”

In his discussion of the ancient Turkic term *yarlıq*, Mirkasym Usmanov critically summarizes the extant literature and proposes to apply this term only to the following two categories of documents:

a) genuine *yarlıqs*, i.e., the privileges, grants, orders, appointments, etc., addressed by the khans to their subjects (including the subjects of their vassals);

b) *yarlıq*-messages (Rus. *jarlyki-poslanija*), addressed by the khans to other rulers whom the khans regarded as their vassals.

According to Usmanov, a characteristic trait of these documents was the formula “my word” (Rus. *slovo moe* < Tur. *sözüm*), present in their initial protocol, and the term *yarlıq*, present either in their final corroboration or within their text. The form and contents of a *yarlıq* expressed the binding character of the khan’s will and his suzerainty over the addressee(s). On the other hand, letters addressed by the khans to the rulers whom they regarded as their peers or superiors, as well as the instruments of peace known as *şartnames*, are classified by Usmanov as two separate categories which should not be confused with *yarlıqs*.119

Although neat and useful, Usmanov’s categorization does not fully reflect the complex reality. In his own article, the author invokes *yarlıqs* issued not by the khans, but by their wives and qalgas, who apparently had a share in their husband’s, father’s, or brother’s sovereignty.120 In the 17th century, also the Crimean nureddins referred

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to their instruments sent to the Polish kings as yarlıqs. Moreover, it sometimes happened that the very same Crimean document was referred to within its text as both a yarlıq and an ‘ahdname! Finally, if the powerful wife of Mengli Giray, Nur Sultan, could issue a yarlıq even though she was a woman and not of Genghisid descent, would it really be unrealistic for a powerful ambitious leader, such as Mamay, to refer to his document as a yarlıq even though it would be contrary to the custom, which restricted the right to issue yarlıqs to the ruling members of the Genghisid dynasty?

In the Lithuanian chancery language, the term yarlıq could refer to any letter circulating between the Lithuanian and Tatar courts. For instance, letters sent by grand dukes Casimir, Alexander, and Sigismund to Mengli Giray were sometimes referred to as yarlıqs. Usmanov might be right that such linguistic abuse reflected the ignorance of the proper Genghisid chancery manners, but nevertheless it remained a fact. His argument that while the Lithuanian chancery confused yarlıqs with simple letters, the Muscovian one impeccably differentiated between the terms jarlyk and gramota (“letter”), is also unconvincing. For instance, in 1474 Ivan III instructed his envoy to

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121 For instance, see Document 56.
122 For instance, see Document 34, issued by Ghazi II Giray in 1592, which contains the curious phrase “we have stamped this ‘ahdname, our noble imperial yarlıq, with the golden nısan-like seal” (bu ‘ahdname yarlıg-i şerif-i haqanimüzge altun nısanıq mührini basub), and is further referred to as “the ‘ahdname, the noble imperial yarlıq” (‘ahdname yarlıg-i şerif-i haqani). Usmanov, who is familiar with the above document, describes it as a şertnyj jarlyk (“oath-jarlıq”) or dogovornyj jarlyk (“agreement yarlıq”) and concludes that it belongs to the category of agreements and not yarlıqs proper; cf. idem, Žalovannye akty Džučieva ulusa XIV–XVI vv., pp. 279 and 281.
123 Such a hypothesis was recently raised by Feliks Šabul’do, although the author did not support it by any material evidence; see idem, “Čy buv jarlyk Mamaja na ukrajinsk’i zemli? (Do postanovky problemy),” pp. 301–317. To be sure, the formula “my word” (or rather its variant “our word”) was adopted by such non-Genghisid rulers as Timur, Uzun Hasan, and Shah Ismail, the founder of the Safavid dynasty; for the facsimiles of their relevant documents, see Lajos Fekete, “Arbeiten der grusinischen Orientalistik auf dem Gebiete der türkischen und persischen Paläographie und die Frage der Formel sözümüz,” AO ASH 7 (1957): 1–20, esp. pp. 17–18. In the same article, Fekete published the facsimile of a letter of the Crimean khan’s mother, containing the same formula, but he misread hazret-i ana biyim sözümüz (whereas ana biyım is the title of the khan’s mother) as hazret-i ana benim sözümüz that led him to unnecessary digressions on the redundant double possessive form; see ibidem, pp. 15 and 20.