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CRIMEAN TATAR
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CRIMEAN TATAR

CRIMEAN TATAR (Krim-Tatar, Qırım-Tatar), a name for a variety of Turkic-speaking peoples who moved to the Crimean peninsula in the past and are now found in the Crimea; in the steppe north of it (Ukraine); and in the Crimean-Muslim diaspora in Turkey, Uzbekistan, Rumania, Bulgaria, and elsewhere. The name was coined to discern between the Turkic Tatar of the Crimea and other Tatar languages (e.g., Volga-Tatar/Kazan-Tatar, etc.); the Turkic Azeri was also used to be called, in Russian usage during the Qajar period, "Caucasian-Tatar/Mountain-Tatar/Azarbaijan-Tatar," or even "Persian" (*persidskii*, to distinguish it from *farsidskii*). Similar to the situation concerning many other Turkic languages, Crimean-Tatar is rather a cultural phenomenon than a linguistic one, since it conveyed different meanings in different places and times.

In antiquity and the early Middle Age period, the Crimea and the adjacent steppe were populated by Scythian, Sarmatian, and Alanic nomads, Turkification probably began in the 6th century CE or later and was almost completed by the end of the 18th century; however, some of the descendants of Alanic population were still Iranian-speaking in the mid-17th century and known as Tāt (a term designating non-Turkic sedentary population under Turkic political and military control; see Schütz). The Ottoman traveler Evliya Çelebi (Awliāʾ Čelebi; VII, p. 251a) took notice of these Tāts, apparently Alans, who used a strange language in the mountainous region of Crimea, which he called, in one place, Ās; localities containing the element Ās feature frequently in the Ottoman Crimea, similarly to a wide distribution of the localities with

the element Čarkas (see Jankowski).

In the 9th century, the western-most part of the East European steppe, including northern Crimea, was occupied by Turkic nomads, the Patzinak/Peçeneg/Bajanak, who probably belonged to the Oḡuz Turkic groupings (see ḠOZZ). In the late 11th century, they were driven westwards (to the territories of Hungary, Bulgaria, Rumania and the Byzantine Empire) by the Qepčāq Turkic nomads, to the effect that the Eastern-European steppe became known as Dašt-e Qepčāq (Tk. Deşt-i Kıpçak), a steppe region stretching from the Pontic zone to Chorasmia. Since then, the spoken language of the Crimea and the adjacent steppe became basically Qepčāq. After the Mongol invasion in the first half of the 12th century, the Qepčāq populations of Western Eurasia became gradually known as Tātār, adopting a Mongol term of high esteem. In the course of the 12th to 15th centuries, the Crimea became an international hub, due to the great demand in Egypt, Syria, and elsewhere for pagan Turkic slaves, some to become Mamluks, and also due to the renewal of the trade on the northern route of the Silk Road as a result of the Mongol conquests of the Eurasian steppe. This brought traders to the Crimea from Central Asia and Iran, especially from Transoxania, Khorasan and Azarbaijan, as well as from Italy, Byzantium, Northern Anatolia, and Egypt. Among the people coming from Iran were Muslims, Jews, and Armenians, all of whom not only had brought with them their books in various languages including Jewish, Christian and Muslim Persian texts, but also contributed significantly to the emergence of a multinational civilization, in which Persian was a language of high status, used by Muslims, Jews, and Armenians alike. Muslim travelers and geographers, such as Ebn Baṭṭuṭa (d. 770/1368-89), mentioned *madrasa*s and *tekyas*, in which people with Persian and Chorasmian relations taught and where Persian verse was recited, as well as Islamic savants coming from Khorasan and ʿErāq al-ʿAjam (Ebn Baṭṭuṭa, tr. Gibb,pp. 471, 474, 476, 477, 482). During the same centuries, Italian and German Catholic missionaries established monasteries in the region in order to convert the pagan Turks; to help themselves in their mission in the Crimea and the neighboring lands, they saw it necessary to learn not only the Qepčāq language of the nomads, but also Persian as well, as the language current in the towns. The type of Persian used is represented in a Persian dictionary compiled by these Catholic missionaries in the Crimea, which reflects a distinctive Khorasani flavor; the Crimean Qepčāq also revealed the deep imprint of Persian, with specific Khorasani features (Monshi-Zadeh, pp. 17-19, and passim). Texts in this Qepčāq appear in the same manuscript, known as *Codex Cumanicus*, as the above-mentioned

Persian missionary material, which is probably the first known attestation of Qepčāq. Another newly identified Qepčāq text with a high percentage of Persian loan words is a 15th century Pentateuch translation in Hebrew characters, a part of the First Firkowicz Collection (1 Evr Bib 143). As in closely connected Saljuq Anatolia, Persian continued to be used in the Crimea by its Tatar rulers as a language of status for inscriptions on mosques, tombs, etc., along with Arabic, long after the Islamization had become accomplished.

After the Ottoman conquest of Kaffa (a Genoese town on the southeastern coast of the Crimea) in 1475, the Crimea fell into the Ottoman political sphere; the south of the peninsula became a part of the Ottoman Empire, with Anatolian Muslims settling there, while the center and the north, together with the steppe to the north of the peninsula, turned into a vassal khanate. Since then, the Turkic-speaking population of the Crimea has been linguistically divided. The population of the Ottoman south of the peninsula spoke a local form of Ottoman Turkish, which belongs to the Oğuz Turkic languages; the Noğay nomads in the steppe of the north, including territories to the north of the peninsula proper, spoke their own Turkic dialect, which was closely related to the Caspian branch of the Qepčāq; in the central Crimea, with its semi-nomadic and settled Muslim populations (“Tatars” proper), and numerous Greek-Orthodox (Urum; see Podolsky), Armenian and Jewish (Karaite and Rabbanite) populations, people spoke dialects of Qepčāq, all of which becoming gradually Oğuziced in different degrees. The data we have for the actual speech of the central Crimean Tatar, or Crimean Tatar proper, up to the early 20th century, comes almost exclusively from non-Muslim sources (Jewish Karaite, Urum, and Armenian; cf. Kazas; Samoilovich).

The earliest Muslim Crimean Turkic texts are in the official Turkic language of the Golden Horde (generally designated as Jağatay in the texts themselves), while almost all of the texts from the Ottoman period are either in plain literary Ottoman Turkish, or in Ottoman Turkish with some local Qepčāq flavor (e.g., the usage of genitive and dative cases, some verbal forms, specific vocabulary; frequently Qepčāq and Oğuz forms coexist in the same sentence). As far as Persian elements are concerned, there is no discernable difference between the usage of the Crimean Khanate and that of the empire proper during the Ottoman period. During the 16th and the 17th centuries, writing in Persian, after the models of Ferdowsi and Saʿdi, or rather of their epigones, was encouraged by new Ottoman fashions, but this was an entirely Ottoman cultural phenomenon, which should be considered, at least partly, as

originating in a reaction to the usage of Azeri Turkish by the Safavid rivals of the Ottoman dynasty. Evliya Çelebi (VII, p. 223a) quotes a poem current in the Crimea: “On the day of Resurrection, a Jew will mount a *qezelbāš* as a donkey” (using *qezelbāš* in the Turkish translation in place of the word *rāfeżi* in the Persian verse, *rāfeżi ruz-e qiāmat ḵar bovad zir-e yahud*). In 1774, the Crimean Khanate was proclaimed independent (on the condition that Tatars recognize the Ottoman sultan as a caliph) by the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca and was given the formerly Ottoman territories on the southern coast of the peninsula. Since then, the spoken language of the Crimean Muslims, both the speakers of the Oğuz Turkish and of the Oğuziced Qepčāq, has begun to merge (with the Noğay nomads unaffected by this development). In 1783, the Khanate was annexed by the Russian Empire, and many thousands of Muslims emigrated to the Ottoman Empire, beginning the process that continued well into the 20th century. In the diaspora (mostly in Turkey) are to be found probably millions of Crimean Tatars, many of them preserving not only their language, but even local Crimean dialects (Özenbaşli; Kırımlı; McCarthy). In the Russian Empire, a speaker of the Southern Oğuz Turkish variant, Ismaʿil Gasprinsky/Gaspiralı (1851-1914), initiated the first Pan-Turkist movement, in the effort to create, by means of his newspaper *Terjümān*/*Perevodchik* (1883-1918), a written common Turkic language, understandable to all the Muslim Turks throughout the world, while basing this language on Ottoman Turkish currently used in the Crimea and Istanbul and “cleansing” it from what he noted as a too extensive Arabo-Persian vocabulary (Bennigsen; Kirimli). This “cleansing” the language of the Arabo-Persian loanwords and grammatical constructions (e.g., Pers. *eżāfa*) was continued in the Soviet Union, while the written language became based, in 1922-1944, on the Central Qepčāq “dialect” (Kaya; Ceneli and Gruber).

On 18 May 1944, all the Crimean Tatars were sent by the Soviets in exile to Central Asia and forbidden, until early 1960s, to use their language (Conquest; Nekrich; Allworth). In the exile, especially in Uzbekistan, Crimean Tatars lost fluency in their modern tongue, adopting mainly Russian while further merging their Qepčāq and Oğuz “dialects,” besides being exposed to Uzbek influence in phonetics (the loss of the typical Turkic vowel harmony, attributed in the Uzbek language to its Iranian substratum) and vocabulary (Williams, 1998; idem, 2001, p. 422). After the Crimean Tatars were allowed to return home from their exile in 1989 (the process not finished yet), the language question arose; some opted for the Soviet-era written language based on the Central Qepčāq dialect, some for the Turkish of Turkey, arguing that

this was the most developed of all Turkic languages and that the majority of the Crimean Tatars were, in any case, Russian-speaking. Nowadays, the Crimean Tatars are fluent mostly in Russian and Ukrainian and are familiar with Turkish of Turkey and a new form of the written language (in Latin characters used in Turkey with some additional signs) based on the Central Qepčāq dialect with many features of the Turkish of Turkey. Crimean-Tatar sites on the internet frequently use two or three versions—the Turkish, the Noğay, and the Crimer-Tatar proper ones.

Among Persian elements in the speech of Muslims, Armenians, and Jews in the Crimea, the following are of interest: *afta* (week; Pers. *hafta*); *aşna* (known, familiar; Pers. *āšnā*); *āšḵāna*, kitchen; Pers. *āšpaz-ḵāna*); *ateş* (fire, pyre, bonfire, embers, shooting; Pers. *ātaš*/*āteš*); *ayna* (Friday; Pers. *ādina*); *awaz* (voice; Pers. *āvāz*); *axşām* (evening, evening meal; Pers. *šām*); *azat* (free; Pers. *āzād*); *baar* (spring; Pers. *bahār*); *başmak/bāšmaq* ("a shoe," connected to **paymōzak;* Pers. *pāy-mozag,* boot); *bazar*, (Sunday, Turk. *Pazar;* Pers. *bāzār*); *bazergān* (a trader; Pers. *bāzargān*); *bedava* (free, gratis); *bekār* (bachelor; Pers. *bikār*); *bent* (a dam; Pers. *band*); *beraber* (together, equal; Pers. *barābar*); *better* (worse, the worst; Pers. *badtar*), *biçare* = *neçar* (helpless, weak; Pers. *bičāra*); *budiye* (a large bucket; Pers. *bādia*); *but-perest* (infidel; Pers. *botparast*); *paalı* (dear, expensive, a high price **behā;* Pers. *bahā*); *papuç* (an indoor shoe, a slipper; Pers. *pāpuš*); *para* (money); *paytaxt* (a capital city; Pers. *pāytaḵt*); *pirinç* (rice; Pers. *berenj*); *can* (soul; Pers. *jān*); *canivar* (a beast, a wild animal; Pers. *jānvar*); *ciger* (kidney, love, pain; Pers. *jegar*); *çarşambe* (Wednesday; Pers. *ča[hā]ršanba*); *çerik* (a quarter; Pers. *čāryek/čāryak*); *çardıvar* (fence; Pers. *čārdivār/čahār-divār*); *çeşme* (fountain, spring; Pers. *češma*/*čašma*); *çeşni* (taste; Pers. *čāšni*); *çift/cift* (a pair; Pers. *joft*); *çuval/cuval* (a bag; Pers. *javāl*/*jovāl*); *çünkü* (because, since; Pers. *čun-ke*); *dert* (pain; Pers. *dard*); *deste* (bundle, parcel; Pers. *dasta*); *dev* (demon; Pers. *div*); *dost* (friend; Pers. *dust*); *dostane* (friendly; Pers. *dustāna*); *dostluk* (friendship); *dubara* (an intrigue; Pers. *dobāra*); *duşman* (enemy; Turk. *düşmen*/*düşman;* Pers. *došman*); *dülber* (beautiful; Pers. *delbar*); *eger* (if; Pers. *agar*); *em* (also, **ham;* Pers. *ham*); *endam* (posture; Pers. *andām*); *erkiz* (never; Pers. *hargez*); *ferman* (order, command; Pers. *farmān*); *feryad* (a cry; Pers. *faryād*); *iç* (no one; Pers. *hič*); *gerdan* (neck, throat; Pers. *gardan*); *gunakār* (sinner; Pers. *gonahkār/gonāhkār*); *guya* (similarly, like, as if; Pers. *guyā*); *gül* (rose; Pers. *gol*); *kevgir* (skimmer; Pers. *kafgir*); *keğıt* (paper; Pers. *kāğaḏ*); *melevşe* (a violet; Pers. *banafša*); *merdiven* (stairs; Pers. *nardbān*); *miyancı* (broker; Pers. *miānji*); *mıx* (nail; Pers. *miḵ*); *oraza* (a religious fast; Pers. *ruza*); *qondroq* (incense, from *kondorak*); *xasta* (ill;

Pers. *ḵasta)*; *xoraz* (cock; Pers. *ḵorus*); *xoşnut* (happy; Pers. *ḵošnud*); *xışım*, (rage, wrath; Pers. *ḵašm/ḵešm*); *xıyar* (cucumber; Pers. *ḵiār*); *qoranda*/*qoranta* (family, lit. eater; Pers. *ḵoranda*); *reber, rehber* (leader; Pers. *rahbar*); *rusfay* (whore, fornicator; Pers. *rusbi/ruspi)*; *şeer* (city; Pers. *šahr*); *taxta* (plank, board, a garden row; Pers. *taḵta*); *tava* (a frying pan; Pers. *tāva*); *tilşınas* (a linguist, a Turkic-cum-Persian neologism); *tüfek* (a rifle; Pers. *tofang*); *yadikar* (a present; Pers. *yādgār*); *yar* (beloved; Pers. *yār*); *zampara* (womanizer; Pers. *zanbāra*); *zindan* (prison; Pers. *zendān*); *zižda*r (a dragon; Per. *aždar*, *aždahā*).

Armenians and Jews. The Armenian immigration to the Crimea began, according to the traditional dating, in the 11th century, after the sack of Ani (see, however, Schütz and Nagy) by the Saljuqs. New waves of Armenian immigration followed, some from Azarbaijan; some precious Armenian manuscripts were copied in the Crimea by people of Tabrizi extraction (Stone, index), and there is at least one famous example of mastery of Persian in the Crimea by an Armenian from Tabriz, besides the translation of Gospel from Syriac into Persian, which was completed in 742/1341 by Yuḥannā b. al-Ḳāṣṣ Yusof Yaʿqubi and copied in Kaffa in 828/1425 by Šamʿun b. Yusof Ebrāhim Tabrizi (Thomas, p. 203). After the Il-Khanid capital was transferred from Tabriz to Solṭāniya and the royal dynasty became Muslim, Jews, who had been prominent in the early Mongol period, began to emigrate; many of them, including Karaites, some with the *nesba* Tabrizi, opted for Cairo, while others apparently for the north (Poznanski; Fischel, p. 19). After Toqtameš conquered Tabriz in the winter of 1385-86, many artisans and craftsmen were brought to his encampment on the banks of the Volga River, whence many of them moved to the Crimea or to the Grand Duchy of Lithuania; the provenance of many Crimean families of Jews and Armenians, and similarly of the manuscripts copied prior to 1385 and owned by them, is from Tabriz. Jewish emigration from northern Iran apparently intensified after the Safavid rise to power (Akhiezer and Shapira; Shapira, 2008, sub-chapters “Sinan” and “The Yerushalmi Family”). There are important manuscripts with Iranian connections kept in the Firkowicz First Collection (Saint Petersburg), which were collected in the Crimea: They include fragments of pre-Mongol and post-Mongol texts in Judeo-Persian (Shapira); *Codex Leningradiensis*, B19a, written by Meborakh b. Yoseph b. Nethanʾel ha-Yaddu b. Wazdād/Azdād/Ozdād ha-Kohen in Cairo in 1190; B3, “Major Prophets” with Babylonian punctuation, written in 916; this manuscript had fared through Cairo, Jerusalem, Iran, Constantinople, until it stopped at Sulkhat in the 14th century; it contains two marginalia with Judeo-Persian expressions (*simān ṭoḇ kunād abruy … dar*

Nešābur-e šahrestān, 'let ST respect … in the city of Nišāpur'); "Prophets" found in Kaffa, with epigraphs made in the Crimea in 1321, 1329, 1337, 1380, 1388 (in the latter are mentioned Soleimān ha-Parsi bar David ha-Parsi); and, in addition, the Qarasub Rabbanites prevented Firkowicz, in 1839, from taking an old Pentateuch written in Sulkhat, which bears a marginalia where one Geršon b. Bahādor was mentioned.

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