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NOTES ON THE GOLDEN HORDE DIPLOMATIC CEREMONIAL: THE ORIGIN OF THE WORD *KOREŠ* IN RUSSIAN SLANG

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The article deals with the word *koreš* 'close friend' used in Russian cant. It comes from the Russian verb *koreševat'sja* 'to greet each other friendly, to establish friendship and close relations' that, in turn, has its origin in the Turkic verb *körüš-* 'to see each other, to have an audience'. The diplomatic ceremony of *koreševan'e* 'a kind of very close embrace' was common in the Golden Horde and its successor states – the Khanates of the Crimea, Kazan and Astrakhan, the Noghay Horde and Muscovy, at least up to the end of the 16th century. Soon the word *koreš* (literally: 'a man participating in the ceremony of *koreševan'e*') with the meaning 'true and close friend' was ejected to the sphere of Russian slang and acquired a secondary, alleged link with the Russian word *koren'* 'root' as if it were its pseudo-diminutive form.

Key words: Golden Horde, Crimean Khanate, Noghay Horde, Chingisid diplomatic ceremonial, Turkish loan-words, Russian etymologies, linguistic contacts.

The Russian word *koreš* (diminutive *korešok*) is attested in the "Dictionary of Modern Russian Literary Language" in its figurative meaning as 'a true and close friend is called that way' (*Slovar'* 1956, col. 1423). The "Dictionary of Moscow Slang" defines the word as 'a friend, bosom-friend, boon-companion', and its derivative verb «*korešitsja*» means 'to make friends, to associate with sy, to have common business with sy' (Elistratov 1994, p. 208). It is generally noted in dictionary entries that the word *korešok* in the meaning 'friend' is a diminutive of the word *koren'* 'root'. Probably owing to the same reason, as if it were extremely self-evident and apparent, the word *koreš* is absent in special etymological dictionaries (see e.g. Šipova 1976).[1]

However, in this case appearance and self-evidence may lead us astray. In fact, the word *koren'* never means «bosom-friend» in cant, and the word *koreš*, in its original meaning, has a Turkic etymology and rather long historical background.

In the Russian documentation on the relations of Muscovy with Islamic countries (the Ottoman Empire, the Crimean Khanate, and the Noghay Horde) the word

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[1] The word is also missing from the famous etymological dictionary of M. Vasmer (Fasmer 1986–1987).

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korunuš is frequently met with, in the meaning ‘arrival to a ruler with greetings, having an audience’ (Ahmedov–Mukminova 1986, p. 14). For instance, in the 1530s, the Russian diplomat D. Gubin, in his report from the Noghay Horde, wrote to Muscovy that Mirza Sultan-Ahmed b. Shijdjak (Seyyid-Ahmed) “began to call me for *kornišˌ* but I did not go to him for *korniš* in accordance with your, my sovereign’s order”.[2] In his correspondence D. Gubin often made also other mentions on *kornyš* (sometimes in the form *kornyh*) (*Posol’skie knigi* 1995, pp. 126, 127).

The Russian Turcologist Vasilij Smirnov seems to be the first to have drawn attention to the word (Smirnov 1887, p. 363, note 2). Forms like كورنيش, كورنش, كورنوش, كرنش (from Turkic كور ‘to see’ (Kadri 1943)) are mentioned in Lazar Budagov’s *Dictionary* with the translation «rendezvous, meeting, audience, appearance before the tsar or khan». The expression كورنوش خانه used in Khiva means ‘meeting place or conversation place’, ‘hall’, ‘audience’; and كورنش قيلمق – ‘to visit, to introduce oneself to sy, to perform an introduction ceremony’. The word كورنش is also used in the Crimean Khans’ *yarlyk*s, in the *Bābur-nāme* and Abū-l-Gāzī’s works (Budagov 1869, pp. 122, 150–151)

We can find these expressions repeatedly in the Russian ambassadorial documentation of the Crimean Khanate. The Crimean Khan Sāhib-Gerāy wrote to Moscow in 1525: “If you want to harrass me as you do with Kazan, and want to make other mischiefs, (I warn you that) we (my people) are not of the sort who cannot respect ourselves (*koreševatisja*)”.[3] The Noghay mirza Ismail wrote to Moscow in 1550: “If you want to have good relations with me, you should give audience (*kornjuš*) to my ambassador every week”.[4] The Muscovite tsar Ivan IV “called (the Noghay) ambassadors to make salutations (*karaševat’sja*). And during the salutation (*karaševan’e*) the ambassadors submitted their requests (to Ivan)”.[5] Thus, Muscovite sovereigns sometimes had “karaševan’e” with the Muslim ambassadors, i.e. they «karaševalis’». But the real meaning of this word and the process itself remains in obscurity. The word was interpreted in different ways: V. G. Tiesenhausen interpreted it as “to see each other, to welcome, to salute” (Savva 1901, p. 223), while in S. A. Belokurov’s explanation it means “to shake hands or even lay a hand on a head” (Belokurov 1906, pp. 93–94). However, most likely the word referred to a certain form of salutation: when meeting two persons clasped hands and touched shoulders as if it were a kind of embrace. Usually only persons of equal rank could have *koreševan’e* (*koreševalis’*), for example, Muslim ambassadors with Muscovite *boyar*s and *d’jak*s, or Ivan IV with Kazan khan Šāh-‘Alī. If such form of salutation was used by a sovereign to greet an ambassador, it was extraordinary honour for the latter.

[2] «учал … меня к собе звати х корнишу. И яз… к нему на корныш не поехал по твоему государеву наказу» (*Posol’skie knigi* 1995, p. 125).

[3] «Толко ж по-казанскому захочеш меня теснити и ещо лиха захочеш искати, не таковские мя люди, что не умеем ся корешевати» (*RGADA*, fund 123, inventory 1, folder 6, fol. 91r).

[4] «Похочешь со мною в братстве быти, и ты б послу моему корнюш давал от недели до недели» (*Posol’skie knigi* 1995, p. 287).

[5] «звал послов карашеватца. И послы у карашеванья быв, да правили …челобитье» (*Posol’skie knigi* 1995, p. 286).

V. G. Morozov who was head of the Russian diplomatic mission in the Crimea in 1509, noticed especially in his report that the khan of the Crimea "had regarded him with favour and called for *koreševan'e* (*karaševat'sja*)". Grand Prince Vasilij III of Moscow in 1514 «favoured» the Crimean ambassador Appak (from beys' family of Sulešov) in the same way. The Books of Ambassadors or Book of Embassies (*posol'skie knigi*: collections of the documents on Muscovite diplomatic relations with other countries) did not mention the same cases later: the ceremony lost its prestige toward the end of the 16th century. Boris Godunov, for instance, took part in *koreševan'e* with Persian ambassadors only before his accession to the throne (Juzefovič 1988, p. 117), although in the first half of the century Muscovite Grand Princes often used *koreševan'e* even with Noghay couriers (*Posol'skie knigi* 1995, p. 183).

In 1535 the Noghay courier Kara Duvan, after his bows and regards (Russian *čelobit'e*) "in the yard" was called by the Grand Prince to *koreševan'e* and was granted a hydromel after the ceremonial (*Posol'skie knigi* 1995, p. 130). Sometimes the ceremony of *koreševan'e* was cancelled because of the participants' illness, be it real or pretended. The latter case was frequently used as a pretext for the cancellation of the audience. Thus the ceremony of *koreševan'e* of Ivan the Terrible and Dervish Khan was cancelled owing to the real desease of the latter (Dervish said: «I am ill because of my sins»). The Muscovite dignitaries I. M. Viskovatov and F. I. Sukin told the khan that the audience was impossible because of his illness. They ordered the khan only to make a bow, but not *koreševan'e* (*Posol'skie knigi* 1995, p. 256). The ambassador of the Crimean khan Menglī-Gerāy, Avel'-Ših-zade visited Moscow in November 1517. Because of an epidemic (Russian «povetrie», i.e. infection) in Kefe (the Crimea) he was not allowed to the Grand Prince's hand. Ivan did not invite him for a dinner and *koreševan'e*.[6] It can be inferred from these and similar episodes that the central moment of the process of *koreševan'e* must have been a sort of close bodily contact (probably, tight embrace).

There is no doubt that *koreševanie* was a sign of profound respect to the interlocutor. As a matter of fact diplomats and regal persons were not the only participants in the ceremony of *koreševan'e*: relatives at reconciliation could have *koreševan'e* as well. Thus, Sāhib-Gerāy wrote in one of his letter to Moscow in 1533: "By the grace of God and the favour of the Ottoman padishah, we occupied the throne of our forefathers' *yurt*. We had *koreševan'e* with our brother Islam-sultan and became reconciled with him".[7] In November 1502, Menglī-Gerāy informed the Grand Prince Ivan IV about the situation in Taht Elī ("Bol'šaja Orda" in the Russian sources): "Šeyh-Ahmed came to Astrakhan, and *tsarevich* Bahadyr and Ablekerim's brother went out

[6] «к руце великий князь его не звал и корошеватись и есть не звал» (*SIRIO* 95, p. 385).

[7] «Милосердием божиим и хандывендекеревым [distorted form of the Ottoman-Turkish word *hüdavendigâr* 'the Ottoman padishah'] жалованьем на покойников дедов и отцов наших юрте государем ся есми учинив сел. И з братом с своим с Ыслам-салтаном корешивалисся есмя. И любов межи собя взяли и много добра межи нами сталося» (*RGADA*, fund 123, inventory 1, folder 7, fol. 5).

of the city and had *koreševan'e* (*koreševalis'*) with him".[8] Thus, the word *koreš* derives from the Russian verb *koreševat'sja* ('to greet each other friendly, to establish friendship and close relations') that, in turn, has its origin in the Turkic verb *körüš-* 'to see each other, to have an audience'. The diplomatic ceremony of *koreševan'e*, a kind of very close embrace was common for the Golden Horde and its successor states – the Khanates of the Crimea, Kazan and Astrakhan, the Noghay Horde and Muscovy. It was used very actively in Muscovy of the 16th century.

Soon the word *koreš* (literally: 'a man participating in the ceremony of *koreševan'e*') with the meaning 'true and close friend' was ejected to the sphere of Russian slang and acquired a secondary, alleged link with the Russian word *koren'* 'root' as if it were its pseudo-diminutive form.

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[8] «Шиг-Ахмет в Асторокань приехал, Багатырь царевичь, да Аблекеримова брат, а вышед, с ним корешевались; а к Сеит-Махмуту царевичю человека послали. А в нагаи к салтан Ахмат мырзе человека послав, говорили с ними» (*SIRIO* 41, p. 445).