

MysteryTwister C3

THE CRYPTO CHALLENGE CONTEST

CATHERINE OF ARAGON'S LETTER TO KING FERDINAND, HER FATHER (1509)

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Introduction (1/2)

Catherine of Aragon (1485-1536) came to England to be the bride for Arthur, Prince of Wales, but had to live withdrawn and as a virtual prisoner of her father-in-law, Henry VII, after the unexpected death of the prince in 1502.

Catherine started using ciphers in 1507 in her correspondence with King Ferdinand, her father. At that time, the use of ciphers was not common at the English court (see the author's online article [1]).

Henry VII died in April 1509 and the late prince's brother, now King Henry VIII, married Catherine in June 1509.

On November 1st, 1509, Henry wrote to King Ferdinand, reporting, among others, pregnancy of the Queen (CSP, vol.II, p.24), saying "Your daughter, her Serene Highness the Queen, our dearest consort, has conceived in her womb a living child and is right heavy therewith."

Introduction (2/2)

On November 18th, 1509, King Ferdinand wrote to Catherine of Aragon (CSP Vol.II, p.25).

On November 28th (?), 1509, King Ferdinand wrote to Catherine of Aragon (CSP Vol.II, p.29), acknowledging the receipt of Catherine's letters of October 12th and November 3rd and 4th. This may provide a crib for the challenge ciphertext.

On November 28th (?), 1509, King Ferdinand wrote to Catherine's confessor (CSP Vol.II, p.30), acknowledging the receipt of his letter of November 5th.

Challenge

Your task is to decrypt Catherine of Aragon's letter from November 3rd, 1509 to King Ferdinand, available online at the Spanish archives [2].

Additional Information

The cipherext is followed by a cleartext, which begins with:
"Suplyco a Vuestra Alteza que me perdone porque las cyfras no van de my mano, que my yndespusycon me quyta el tyempo que para escrevyllas e menester. Y por ser tanto y por no azer mas esperar al correo, yze a my confesor y chancyller que las yzyese" (the transcription is taken from [3]).

According to this apology of not writing the ciphertext by her own, this cleartext is not a decipherment of the ciphertext. Spanish ciphers used at the time are described in the author's online article [4].

References (1/2)

[1] "Earliest English Diplomatic Ciphers" at <http://cryptiana.web.fc2.com/code/henryvii.htm>

[2] Spanish archives, "Carta de la Reina de Inglaterra, Catalina de Aragon, al Rey Catolico quejandose mucho de lo que ha escrito Manuel de Esquivel de su Confesor", <http://pares.mcu.es/ParesBusquedas20/catalogo/description/2208091>

[3] Nicolas Avila Seoane, "La escritura de las reinas de Portugal Isabel y Maria hijas de los Reyes Catolicos", <http://institucional.us.es/revistas/historia/44/2%20%20C3%81vila%20Seoane.pdf>

References (2/2)

[4] "Spanish Ciphers during the Reign of Ferdinand and Isabella",
<http://cryptiana.web.fc2.com/code/spanish.htm>

[5] Bergenroth (ed.), Calendar of State Papers (CSP), Simancas,
vol.II,

<https://books.google.co.jp/books?id=ZoY9AAAAcAAJ>,
and supplement

<https://books.google.co.jp/books?hl=ja&id=79g9AAAAcAAJ>

Note: Bergenroth employs the spelling "Katharine".

[6] Letters of close dates can be found in the Spanish archives:
[http://pares.mcu.es/ParesBusquedas20/catalogo/find?
signatura=PTR%2CLEG%2C54%2CDOC](http://pares.mcu.es/ParesBusquedas20/catalogo/find?signatura=PTR%2CLEG%2C54%2CDOC)