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The policy of the Russian tsarist state towards the Crimean Tatars. Travel accounts from the late eighteenth century to the first half of the nineteenth century

Introduction

Russia's contemporary policy in the field of historical research is based on attempts to find aristocratic arguments in explaining both its own past and present existence. The content of narratives varies from the imperial to the Soviet paradigm. However, for centuries, both the concept of the greatness of the Russian ethnos, the exclusivity (because of being "chosen by God") of authorities, and the methods of subjugation and management of other peoples have remained unchanged.

The present study illustrates one aspect of Russia's imperial history, namely its colonization of the Crimean Peninsula and the subjugation of the Crimean Tatars, one of the region's indigenous peoples.

Regarding the sources used, it should be noted that at the time of writing their own narratives, both foreigners and Russian travelers were usually influenced by some types of imperial thinking, for example, British or French. This explains the lack of critical views on Russia's policy in Crimea during this period. At the same time, the evidence that is the main source of research is a description of the "eyewitness testimonies" of how Russia "normalized" Tatars according to its principles and rules of life, what means it used to implement colonial policy, and how it happened in practice.

Raising the important question of the difference between nation-building and empire-building within the process of "internal colonialism", Michael Hechter emphasized

the legitimacy of central government: if there is opposition by the colonized population, we can speak of imperialism¹. Thus, Russia's policy towards the Crimean Tatars, attempts to privatize space, introduce its own norms and practices, changes in everyday life were a manifestation of Russia's colonial policy in its implementation of empire-building.

At the same time, according to Ronald Suny, in empires where the difference between nation and empire was blurred, the elites tried to build hybrid empires-nations, where different legitimacy partially existed in different regions². This also explains the differentiated empire's approach to the colonized territories. Thus, in the case of the Crimean Tatars, or of the peoples of the Caucasus, Russian policy was, on the one hand, extremely harsh in terms of expression of violence and demonstration of the power of the state and government, and, on the other, implemented without complete assimilation of the colonized people. For example, Tatars were never ennobled and the Tatar language was never recognized as self-sufficient. At the same time, the empire left the culture of the Tatars, their architecture and some everyday practices as "amusement rides".

It also seems to us that during colonization, the concept of the Other as an alien in the understanding of nation-building was actively used in the process of building the empire, in the search for its own identification core (apart from Orthodoxy and the Russian language)³.

In turn, Kelly O'Neill has focused on the circumstances surrounding the annexation of the Crimean Peninsula by the Russian Empire in 1783, which she characterizes as a "quiet conquest" of the region. The scholar analyzed the tsarist measures aimed at incorporating the newly acquired territories into the state, paying particular attention to the complex process of establishing imperial social, administrative, and cultural institutions. She seeks to situate the annexation within Russian history, reconsider the integration of Crimea into the imperial sphere, and trace the connections between these historical events and the present⁴.

Thus, at the end of the 18th century, the Russian Empire included the lands of the former Crimean Khanate. The tsarist government was faced with the urgent task of incorporating the newly annexed region into the imperial economic and mental space. In this regard, the relevant national policy was developed and implemented, which included: bribery of religious and political elites; forced deportation of part of the local population; displacing of the population outside the Crimean Peninsula by economic and administrative means; dissolution among foreign immigrants and immigrants from Muscovy;

¹ M. Hechter, *Internal colonialism: the Celtic fringe. British national development 1536–1966*, Berkeley 1975, pp. 60–64.

² R.G. Suny, *The empire strikes out*, [in:] *A state of nations. Empire and nation-making in the age of Lenin and Stalin*, eds. R.G. Suny, T. Martin, Oxford 2001.

³ I.B. Neumann, *Uses of the other: "The east" in European identity formation*, Minneapolis (MN) 1999, p. 9.

⁴ K. O'Neill, *Claiming Crimea: a history of Catherine the Great's Southern empire*, New Haven–London 2017.

introduction of measures of religious assimilation. Some of these directions could be implemented by means of popularizing the region among residents of various European countries, so the tsarist government actively encouraged foreign travelers to visit the Crimean Peninsula. That is why their evidences are an important source of illustration of the policy of colonization of the Peninsula.

At the end of the 18th century, the Spaniard Francisco de Miranda, Frenchman Gilbert Romme, German Peter Simon Pallas, and Russian Peter Sumarokov traveled across the Crimean Peninsula. It was also visited by the Englishwomen Elizabeth Craven and Mary Holderness, and others. Several trips to the region in the 1830s–1840s were made by the French archaeologist and ethnographer F. Dubois de Montperreux. The Crimean Peninsula aroused interest among Ukrainian and Russian scientists. In 1836, historian N. Murzakevich visited the Peninsula⁵. In the 1840s, the peninsula was visited by the German Baron A. Haxthausen. Their goal was not always scientific research: sometimes it was a revealing journey, and sometimes it was due to doctors' prescriptions.

All of them made travel records, wrote down impressions in diaries, wrote letters to acquaintances, relatives and friends during their travels. These sources are informative and vivid. Not all travelers who visited the Crimean Peninsula were interested in politics. Usually, the attention of travelers was attracted by nature, climate, topography, monuments of Muslim culture. However, a significant part of them covered, albeit in fragments, some measures of the imperial government to subdue the Crimean Tatar people.

The methodological foundation of this study is Michael Billig's concept of banal nationalism. This framework makes it possible to explore how national ideology is reproduced in everyday life through ordinary, often imperceptible symbols, language, and rituals. Examining the Russian Empire's policies toward the Crimean Tatars, the article demonstrates that imperial identity and the subjugation of the Crimean Tatar people were legitimized not through explicit political declarations, but through the seemingly mundane observations and impressions recorded by travelers.

The analysis focuses on identifying forms of “flagging” – the constant reminders of empire embedded in travelogues. From the perspective of banal nationalism, these texts emerge as ideological instruments that conditioned readers to regard imperial policies as natural and inevitable. References to Crimea with possessive pronouns such as “our” or “ours” normalized the idea that these lands inherently belonged to the empire. This subtle linguistic “appropriation” prepared readers to accept annexation as both legitimate and self-evident.

Travelers frequently depicted the Crimean Tatars as alien or “other”, contrasting their culture, everyday life, and religion with the supposedly “civilized” Russian or European

⁵ Н.Н. Мурзакевич, *Поездка в Крым в 1836 г.*, „Журнал министерства народного просвещения” 1837, No. 3, pp. 625–691.

world. Such depictions fostered a mental framework in which imperial authority was equated with progress, while the Tatar way of life was cast as backward, requiring external “renewal” or “guidance”. Routine references to Russian fortresses, churches, or roads functioned as acts of “flagging”, reinforcing the impression of imperial presence and its purportedly “beneficial” influence. Interwoven into the fabric of everyday narrative, these symbols conveyed the sense that the empire had entered an “empty” or “neglected” land to impose order and prosperity.

By portraying the local population as “wild” or “idle”, travelers’ accounts also offered moral justification for policies of resettlement, assimilation, and eventual subjugation. This framing enabled readers to perceive imperial expansion not as aggression but as a civilizing mission.

The purpose of the study is to analyze the travelogues of travelers who visited the Crimean Peninsula in the late 18th – first half of the 19th century, and to determine the features of the Russian Empire’s national policy on subjugation of the Crimean Tatars.

The ousting of the Tatars and distribution of lands among the Russian nobility

The accession of the Crimean Peninsula to the Russian Empire did not exclude the possibility of armed conflicts with the Ottoman Empire in the future. In this regard, one of the main tasks of the Tsarist government was the transformation of the region into a kind of military base and the maintenance there of a large part of military units. In the process of locating them and building strategic facilities mainly on the southern coast of Crimea, imperial officials actively displaced the local Tatar and Nogai populations from their ancestral lands, all the while destroying the traditional economic system and devastating the region. Travelers who visited the Crimean Peninsula paid attention mainly to these trends.

In particular, the Spaniard Francisco de Miranda, while still on the mainland and talking to Russian officials, wrote: “It is also said that the Russians have devastated the country [Crimean Peninsula], cutting down even fruit trees and demolishing houses and mosques to provide themselves with firewood. Some Scottish admiral, named MacKenzie, allegedly used cut down fruit trees as fuel to burn limestone”⁶.

In the end, the wanderer, who had not yet visited the annexed region and had not seen the actions of the imperial government, questioned what he had heard and summed it up: “(...) Is it possible that such senseless things are still being done and that despotism is not aware of the harmful effects of injustice and violence?”⁷.

⁶ Ф. Миранда, *Путешествие по Российской империи*, пер. с исп. Москва 2001, <https://islam.in.ua/ua/islamoznavstvo/stanovyshche-zhinky-u-krymskomu-hanstvi> (accessed: 10 IV 2026).

⁷ Ibidem.

Francisco de Miranda's words were confirmed by other travelers who saw the cities of the Crimean Peninsula with their own eyes. In particular, D. de Montperreux identified the clear consequences of the transformation of the region's cities into military bases. The traveler noted: "one winter during the Tatar uprising in Caffa in 1779, two Russian regiments warmed up so well that they did not leave a single tree; therefore, the landscape around Feodosia looked pathetic"⁸.

At the same time, while staying in Kizlyar, another French traveler G. Romme, noted: "Here is a regiment of light cavalry, which currently has 90 patients (...) Tatars, Armenians, Greeks, who had been accustomed to the local climate, had cultivated land and powerfully traded, were expelled from here. The winners replaced them, but they cannot tolerate the local climate, the land around them is barren, trade is in decline, because their hands are busier defending the captured land than cultivating it. There are 30,000 servicemen and about 60,000 former residents in Crimea"⁹.

Similarly, the local population was expelled from their ancestral lands during the construction of roads by the Russian Empire that were supposed to connect strategically important objects. Swiss statesman and diplomat Charles Pictet de Rochemont, traveling through the steppe from Perekop to Simferopol, recorded: "There is a reason why this country seems to be wild, which in reality is not so, and this is the fear of the Tatars, who are displaced from the great roads; when a road is made through one of their villages, they are forever transported to a completely different place"¹⁰.

At the same time, traditional communication gradually declined. Dubois de Montperreux mentioned that there were simply no roads on the southern coast.

As a result, various travelers note that the vast majority of the cities of the Crimean Peninsula had already lost the Tatar component at the end of the 18th century. In particular, Francisco de Miranda noted that less than 10% of the population of Tatars who previously inhabited Crimea remained in their places of residence, while others were forced to flee due to the arbitrariness of Russian officers and constant incidents of violence on their part¹¹. In turn, P. Sumarokov, who visited the Crimea in 1799, wrote: "Now there are up to a hundred small and poorly built houses in Caffa, the inhabitants of which are mainly Greeks, Armenians and Karaite Jews, but not a single Tatar lives there; because all the old-timers went into the depths of the Crimea, while others completely left it"¹².

⁸ М.Ф. Дюбуа, *Путешествие по Кавказу, к черкесам и абхазам, в Грузию, Армению и в Крым*, Paris 1843, пер. с фр., предисл. и примеч. Т.М. Фадеевой, Симферополь 2009, Vol. 5–6, p. 86.

⁹ Ж. Ромм, *Путешествие в Крым в 1786 г.*, Ленинград 1941, p. 44.

¹⁰ Ш.-Р. Рошемон, *Письма о Крыме, об Одессе и Азовском море*, Москва 1810, pp. 54–56.

¹¹ Ф. Миранда, *op. cit.*

¹² П.И. Сумароков, *Путешествие по всему Крыму и Бессарабии в 1799 г. с историческим и топографическим описанием всех тех мест*, Москва 1800, p. 59.

Being in the Crimea and comparing his own observations and examinations with the evidence in the travelogues of his predecessors, travelers who had previously visited the region, scientific works and official Russian statistics, Dubois de Montperreux noted that the population of Kerch on the eve of joining the Russian Empire was about 4,000 inhabitants. However, as of the time of his travel, it had decreased to 2,820 people¹³. At the end of the 17th century, according to his information, Caffa had 45,000 inhabitants; at the time of his trip, according to the official sources he cites, there were 4,500 people. At the end of 1829, there were 3,700 people. It is clear that this calculation was quite approximate, but it demonstrated the trends that occurred in the Crimea as a result of the imperial national policy. In particular, D. de Montperreux noted: “Feodosia did not save anything from the Tatar population”¹⁴.

Gilbert Romme, while staying in Sudak, reported: “Tatar *saklis* (small houses) huddled near the wall of the fortress, but after the capture of the Crimea by the Russians, the unfortunates were forced to move out of the wall, and now they can be seen in the gorge (nearby). They will not stay there for long – 37 families are going to Anatolia. They are not allowed to cut firewood in the forest, their orchards are devastated, they cannot peacefully use their fruits; it is natural that they go to another state to look for peace and security”¹⁵. For the physical destruction of Tatars, detachments formed from representatives of other peoples, in particular, the so-called Arnauts, were used. A French traveler noted: “These Arnauts committed atrocities during the troubles and are now a threat to the poor Muslims. It is not surprising that the latter beg the heavens to save them from the situation in which they live”¹⁶.

Finally, Dubois de Montperreux states that only Karasubazar and Bakhchysarai remained Tatar, and only because Empress Catherine II decided so¹⁷. The traveler wrote that, among all the others, only they preserved the spirit, form, partially traditional culture.

The state policy aimed at displacement of the Tatars was complemented by the arbitrariness of local officials. Mentioning one of the mayors of Feodosia, namely M. Engell, the wife of an English missionary, Mary Holderness noted: “(...) Upon his own estate, he had demanded from the Tatars fifty kopeeks per head, per annum, for every ewe sheep and two rubles per head for each working ox, or cow and calf; smaller cattle to pay from fifty kopeeks to one ruble, according to their age. I left the Crimea before the effect of this arrangement could be known; but I have since heard, that the Tatars considered it as novel as it was oppressive, and many families left the property in consequence”¹⁸.

¹³ М.Ф. Дюбюа, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 86.

¹⁵ Ж. Ромм, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 61.

¹⁷ М.Ф. Дюбюа, *op. cit.*, p. 116.

¹⁸ M. Holderness, *Journey from Riga to the Crimea, with some account of the manners and customs of the colonists of New Russia*, London 1827, pp. 134–135.

Sometimes it seemed that the officials did this on purpose, with the aim of instilling trust in this or that imperial head of the region and forming the image of a good “Tsar” and protector of the Tatars. In particular, M. Murzakevych wrote: “The (M. Vorontsov’s) meeting with the Tatars was joyful and relaxed; it is clear that they felt and understood the protection that the count gave them, against the Zemstvo and county authorities, who were sucking their flesh and blood (...)”¹⁹. In fact, the actions of the officials were motivated by the desire for profit and the desire to plunder the captured territories, traditional for the imperial elites.

Along with that, the travelers recorded rare cases of psychological abuse and physical violence by the administration and individual soldiers. For example, imperial officials, forced dervishes to pray just for entertainment. In 1799, P. Sumarokov, retelling his stay in Bakhchysarai, noted: “Among other things, at the table, it came to the dervishes, and I said that I would like to see their prayers. Tomorrow I will give you this opportunity, the owner answered me (the local chief policeman is mentioned here): »I know the Mohammedan clerics, and they, of course, will be happy to do me a favor«”²⁰. In the end, his wish was fulfilled, and it cost the traveler only 10 rubles²¹.

Actually, such actions were systemic in nature. Describing his stay in Karasubazar, G. Romme told about the case when the dervishes were forced to entertain foreigners, in particular, him and the Englishwoman E. Craven. He noted: “After trick riding, we went to see the sacred dance of the dervishes, who were ordered to gather for prayer to satisfy the inquisitive famous traveler. The dervishes obeyed, but how did they take this punishment, with what pleasure did they carry it out in front of a large company of dogs and infidels, one of whom orders them to pray to God and Mahomet for the sake of their amusement? As for me, I was very outraged by this abuse of power”²².

Mass physical punishments were also practiced by the imperial authorities. In particular, Mary Holderness described an incident that happened in the spring of 1818, which was told to her by an English acquaintance who witnessed the event. At that time, seven Crimean Tatars were accused of participating in riots and allegedly murders that took place in Ak-Mechet, Kerch, and Port-Patch counties. They were sentenced to ‘punishment by knockout’ in each of the cities that were considered the centers of these administrative-territorial units. The traveler noted: “In the spring of 1818 seven Tatars who had been found guilty of various robberies and murders, in the districts of Akmetchet, Theodosia, Kertch, and Port Patch, were sentenced by the Russian law to receive the punishment of the knout in each of these towns. Having first undergone this dreadful penalty at Akmetchet, they were conducted to Theodosia, heavily ironed, and lodged in the gaol

¹⁹ Н.Н. Мурзакевич, *op. cit.*, p. 106.

²⁰ П.И. Сумароков, *op. cit.*, p. 131.

²¹ *Ibidem*, p. 136.

²² Ж. Ромм, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

there till the hour appointed for the flogging. They were then taken to the market-place, where hundreds of spectators²³ were assembled to witness the scene (...). The culprits, each in his were fastened to an inclined post, having a ring at the top, to which the head was so tightly fixed, by means of a rope, as to prevent the sufferer from crying out. The hands were closely tied on either side, and at the bottom were two rings for the feet, which were in like manner secured. The back was then bared, and the plaster, or rag, which had been applied after the previous whipping, was torn off²⁴. In the end, a beating was carried out. Subsequently, the process was repeated in another city.

There were also rare cases of uncontrolled physical violence against the Crimean Tatars by the Russian army. One of them was recorded by Charles Rene Pictet de Rochemont. In the Tatar village, the traveler and his companion decided to have lunch, but there was a certain delay with the food. When the guide, who was a non-commissioned officer, found out that the local official had kept them waiting, he hit the Tatar and ordered to serve lunch urgently. The traveler wrote: "Since our guide was a non-commissioned officer, he arrogated to himself the right to act in this way with the Tatar, although he was at his home; this brutality in military people is, unfortunately, noticeable all around"²⁵.

All this created an atmosphere of fear, which was supposed to keep the local population in obedience. Gradually, the actions of the imperial authorities produced the desired results. The level of patriotism was declining, and the desire to resist the conquerors was disappearing. M. Holderness recorded this at the beginning of the 19th century: "Although during my residence there, I once or twice heard of projected insurrections, I could not, from what I saw, or what I heard upon good authority, find that any spirit of the kind existed: much too powerless are these people now, to rise up against the still increasing and giant strength of their master; and if, with the disuse of their warlike weapons, the disposition to use them be not fled, the bold spirit which distinguished them under the reigns of their Khans, seems now confined to the worst part of their community, who are ferocious and daring in evil alone"²⁶. She confirmed her statement with a specific fact: "Yie Yie Murza, a Tatar nobleman living in the neighbourhood of Port Patch, (the village to which the Tatars belonged whose execution I described), was suspected upon very strong grounds, of being a sharer in the plunder of these marauders. To answer this, he was summoned to the tribunal at Akmetchet, whither it is said, he took and distributed at his first visit, twenty thousand rubles. And eventually to raise the sums necessary to save

²³ The gathering of spectators could be voluntary, since in the absence of a significant amount of entertainment, executions and punishments were seen as a kind of show, but it is possible that the spectators were driven away by force in order to demonstrate the effect of disobedience to the imperial authority. The traveler did not know this, so she resorted only to the description.

²⁴ M. Holderness, *op. cit.*, pp. 267–268.

²⁵ Ш.-Р. Рошмон, *op. cit.*, pp. 128–130.

²⁶ M. Holderness, *op. cit.*, pp. 193–194.

himself from personal punishment, he first sold his sheep and his stud of mares, and lastly an estate²⁷.

However, in the first decades, after the annexation of the Crimean Peninsula, the Tatars resisted passively and showed silent rejection of the conquerors. While visiting Bakhchysarai, Peter Sumarokov noted that it was a big problem to find accommodation in the city to sleep, because the Tatar population did not willingly accept either Russians or foreigners for any money. Even an appeal to the local police chief and his intervention made it possible to spend the night only at the bailiff²⁸.

During the next half century, despite all the efforts of the imperial administration, the Crimean Tatars maintained an extremely positive attitude towards the Ottoman Empire. According to the reports of Baron August Haxthausen, they expressed their position covertly even in the midst of the another Russo-Turkish war, expecting further reprisals by the Russians. In particular, the traveler gave an example of the following words: “In the last war with Turkey, Herr Cornis said to an old tricky Tartar: »Friend, have you heard that the Turks have won?«, the Tatar answered, staying still: »I hope that peace will come« (...). Later Cornis asked him: »And if the Turks came, who would you join?«, he replied: »We should see where it is free«²⁹. After all, he concluded that they have a saying: »Germany has wisdom, Georgia has beauty, and Turkey has both«³⁰.

Former Tatar lands which had been taken away were actively developed by the invaders. Estates, dachas, and residences of Russian government officials, bureaucrats, and the military were rapidly built on the place of auls. Mary Holderness noted that: “The size of the largest estates in the Crimea, are not to be compared with those of the colonies on the northern shores of the Black Sea, and Azov; but they greatly exceed our ideas of a large estate (...)³¹.”

One of these estates, which belonged to a Russian official, was described by Swiss traveler Ch.-R. Pictet de Rochemont: “After dinner, the governor took us to his dacha, three miles from Ak-Mosque, which was located in the depths of a magnificent valley, a mile long and a quarter of a mile wide, which actually belonged to him. His country house and surroundings are very pleasant. It is situated very well, surrounded by many establishments, including: a tannery and a brick factory, etc., I saw, he also has excellent horses (...)³².”

Staying in Simferopol, Dubois de Montperreux recorded: “Salhyr separates Steven’s possession from another, which also belongs to history – the possession of Mrs. Pallas (...).

²⁷ Ibidem, p. 194.

²⁸ П.И. Сумароков, *op. cit.*, p. 129.

²⁹ А. Haxthausen, *op. cit.*, p. 93.

³⁰ Ibidem.

³¹ М. Holderness, *op. cit.*, pp. 130–131.

³² Ш.-Р. Рошмон, *op. cit.*, p. 110.

It was sold to the late Mr. Naryshkin, who built an elegant residence in the oriental style here; (later it was bought by M. Vorontsov) (...)”³³. In particular, in remembrances of visits to the Crimean Peninsula in 1852, published in “Moskovyitianin”, it is stated: “On the fourth verst from the Sarabuzka station, there is the estate of the heirs of General Rudzevich, a wonderful house, a chapel, etc. I was driving through the village of »Kara-Kiyat« in the estate of Munikovska. Nearby, in the village of »Sarchi-Kiyak« is the estate of the Dobrovskys. There is the estate of the widow of General Al. Ershova on the banks of the Salhyr River. The Burchakov estate borders it”³⁴. In the same place, it is recorded that the house of Count Mordvinov was spread out in Baydar valley³⁵. Between the Baydar valley and Kikineiz, there are the wonderful “Laspi” dachas, namely the residence of the descendants of General Rouvier; “Tesseli” – of General Raevsky, “Foros” – of Naryshkin, Tatar aul “Misachka” – of Count Guryev³⁶. “Hurzuf” – which is the estate of Funduklay – is complemented by gardens and vineyards³⁷. As a matter of fact, there is nothing left here except the Tatar names.

The imperial government also facilitated the leasing of vineyards and tobacco plantations by Moscow merchants, the creation of industrial enterprises by local officials and Russian nobles – the new lands were supposed to bring extra profits.

The Russian Empire in the fight against Islam

The imperial national policy also included assimilation measures in the sphere of religion, which were important in the process of separating the Tatars from their roots, history, and national foundations. Religion’s purpose was characterized by historian, writer and archaeologist M. Sementovsky, who described his feelings, being in the Ak-Mosque: “Bright thoughts were born in my soul, the past faded in front of me, then a joyful future appeared in my imagination, in which the cry of a mule would be replaced with the sound Christian bells, which might soon be hung by new Christians on the towers of ancient mosques, and the cross would shine in place of the moon, which still crowns Allah’s temples”³⁸.

The empire not only started its own missionary activities in the fight against Islam, but also supported any foreign missions – British, Scottish, French missions – which would convert the local population to Christianity (actually, Orthodoxy would be desirable, however, in the beginning, belonging to one or another denomination was not impor-

³³ М.Ф. Дюбуа, *op. cit.*, p. 125.

³⁴ *Из воспоминаний о Крымском полуострове*, „Московитянин” 1855, Vol. V, p. 72.

³⁵ *Ibidem*, pp. 84–85.

³⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 86.

³⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 93.

³⁸ Н.М. Сементовский, *Путешественник. Южный берег Крыма*, Санкт-Петербург 1847, pp. 12–13.

tant) in the newly annexed territories. Implementing this direction of national policy, in 1813, the Bible Society was created in St. Petersburg, the purpose of which was to spread the Holy Scriptures among non-Christian peoples. Within two years, its branch operated in Feodosia. A year later, it spread to Simferopol³⁹. Later, A. Krym-Girey⁴⁰ built a school here, where Tatar children were taught according to Christian tradition⁴¹. The results were not immediate, but the empire gradually and relentlessly moved towards the implementation of the idea of confessional assimilation of the Tatars.

This idea was expressed by M. Holderness who noted: “the Tatars will be won to confidence by the mild and gentle demeanour of Christian ministers, I feel little doubt; and this confidence once perfected, and schools established with any success, a more abundant harvest may be hoped for from the Crimean Tatars than from any other of the Mahomedan subjects of Russia”⁴². She outlined the perspectives of this activity: “As soon as we overcome difficulties and awaken the mind of the Tatars and encourage them to ask in detail about the purpose of our activity, we will quickly begin to enjoy the fruits of our labor (...)”⁴³.

The French missionary Stephen Grellet (Etienne de Grellet du Mabilier), who visited the Crimean Peninsula in 1819, noted that when talking to a Tatar guide he found out that “they have many mosques in Bakhchysarai; some of them are small, but two are large. They used to adhere strictly to regular visits to mosques, at each time assigned to a prayer, five times a day; (...), but now, being under the power of Russia, they allow themselves liberties”⁴⁴. At the same time, large-scale construction of Orthodox churches was launched, which was recorded by almost all travelers who visited the Crimean Peninsula.

It was not only the subjugation of the peoples of the region by force that took place. There were attempts to influence by bribery, as well as by giving preferences. The Russian administration repeatedly sent money and gifts to local religious leaders and public figures, and sent their children to military educational institutions (yet another attempt to educate the younger generation in the imperial spirit). Such cases were recorded by Francisco de Miranda. In his diaries, he noted: “(...) in the morning I met several interesting people (...). They talked with the mullahs while standing near the window, and they were outside. Each of them was given an item of clothing. In the evening we returned home, and after dinner, in connection with the fact that it was necessary to send a gift to the

³⁹ Н.И. Храпунов, *Путешествие по Крыму Стивена Греллета*, „Материалы по археологии, истории и этнографии Таврии: 36. науч. пр” 2009, Vol. XV, p. 658.

⁴⁰ Aleksandr Ivanovich Sultan-Krym-Kati-Girey (1788/1789–1846) – a descendant of the Crimean khans, a religious figure, a member of the Edinburgh Missionary Society.

⁴¹ Н.И. Храпунов, *op. cit.*, p. 658.

⁴² M. Holderness, *op. cit.*, p. 128.

⁴³ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁴ Н.И Храпунов, *op. cit.*, p. 671.

mufti, the prince showed us various watches that were finely made by local craftsmen, several rings (...) and the Order of the Golden Fleece with aquamarine of unusual sizes and purity (...). The prince gave the mufti, I think, a watch and a ring, and he also gave money to other clergymen. Among the local Tatar youth, there are two young men aged 14–16 who are direct descendants of Genghis Khan, and the prince, honoring them, ordered them to be enrolled in the guard regiment as junior officers⁷⁴⁵.

At the same time, the Russian Empire tried to eliminate places and symbols of faith. In 1832, F. Dubois de Montperreux noted: “The Russian government introduced a system of converting the extraordinary mosques of the conquered cities into Greek ones, especially after the Mohammedan population left them”. Speaking about Biuk Jami, the main mosque of Feodosia, he noted that “first they started to remove the lead covering of the roof, which was sold at a profit, it is not known to whom”. Then the state allocated a lot of money for reconstruction, which quickly ran out, and for several years “either the mosque or the church resembled ruins⁷⁴⁶. The mosque did not exist, and the church, as of 1832, was never built. This also applied to many other religious buildings. Gradually they were destroyed, and in some places they were robbed. Immigrants from the interior regions of the Russian Empire dismantled them and used building materials to build or decorate their own homes⁷⁴⁷.

The Russian authorities handed over part of the mosques to the Catholics for their needs. In particular, they received one of the religious buildings in Feodosia. However, the Catholic communities had no financial support from the state. Appeals of its leaders to the government regarding the repair or reconstruction of religious buildings were either left unanswered, or they were told that they had to do it at their own expense⁷⁴⁸.

Some of the religious buildings were turned into economic buildings, deliberately offending the religious feelings of the Tatar population and humiliating its dignity. Even P. Sumarokov, who can hardly be called a politically neutral traveler, mentioned with an objective view of the actions of the Russian Empire, resorting to the description of one of the grandest mosques of Caffa, which exceeded the Dormition Cathedral in Moscow in terms of size: “Now regimental things, firewood from a palm tree are stored in this mosque; there are old sacks at the entrance and birds build their nests on these marble columns⁷⁴⁹. This case was not isolated. The traveler noted that the second mosque was turned into a Russian church, and the third into a shop⁷⁵⁰. However, the vast majority of

⁷⁴⁵ Ф. Миранда, *op. cit.*

⁷⁴⁶ М.Ф. Дюбуа, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

⁷⁴⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 85.

⁷⁴⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁷⁴⁹ П.И. Сумароков, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

⁷⁵⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 63.

mosques were simply destroyed. The words of Dubois de Montperreux attest to this: “What did I see in Old Crimea? My guide showed me five old mosques in ruins”⁵¹.

The imperial politics of memory

At the same time, the imperial authorities focused attention on measures to form the appropriate historical memory among the local population. Symbolically, its content recorded the fact that during their stay in the former residence of the khans in Bakhchysarai, Russian empresses and emperors left their autographs on the walls of the palace, as if asserting that it was “their” property, “their” property forever⁵². In this way, the empire tried to master the “content” of space. Symbolic marking of the space of the peninsula was carried out with the help of architectural structures, monuments, commemorative plaques, toponyms. According to Pierre Nora, we can talk about the consistent formation of “places of memory” that carry certain ideas, knowledge that makes it understandable for a certain community, commits an active social influence⁵³. In this way, the Russians legitimized themselves in Crimea. We can even talk about the formation of a certain “regime of truth” (Michel Foucault’s term), when monuments (...) are carriers of meanings that legitimize a certain power model, or form a “regime of truth”.

Thus, according to Dubois de Montperreux, a triumphal arch with the inscription “May 1787” was built near Bakhchysarai. It was built in honor of the visit of Empress Catherine II to Crimea⁵⁴. In the depths of the courtyard of the Khan’s palace, there was a wall and a magnificent fountain in the Moorish style was built in front of it in memory of Alexander I⁵⁵.

Monuments and memorial signs glorifying the invaders were erected. In particular, a monument was erected in Simferopol to Prince Dolgoruky-Crimean, who more than once passed through Crimea “with fire and sword”. Gilbert Romme expressed his attitude towards him quite clearly: “Cities, newly decorated and inhabited, receive the name of their founder, and later this name passes to the destroyer, who boasts of this new nickname, which only testifies to his great ability to carry only death and horror, lead to the destruction of industry and agriculture as a result of glorified battles, and destroy the happiness of many thousands of families who become victims of vanity. This is how in 1771 Prince Dolgoruky looted Perekop, and this bloody success gave him the title of »Crimean«”⁵⁶. “Success” brought not only the title. In the end, the imperial power also created a place

⁵¹ М.Ф. Дюбуа, *op. cit.*, p. 90.

⁵² *Из воспоминаний...*, p. 75.

⁵³ П. Нора, *Проблематика мест памяти*, [in:] *Франция память*, Санкт-Петербург 1999, pp. 17–50.

⁵⁴ М.Ф. Дюбуа, *op. cit.*, p. 272.

⁵⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 275.

⁵⁶ Ж. Ромм, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

of memory on the Tatar lands it captured. In Simferopol, an exquisite monument of local granite was erected to him near the fence of the Alexandria Cathedral⁵⁷.

The Empire also used smaller occasions to honor those who had expanded its territories and to remind the local population of those who had brought “peace” to them. In particular, a fountain was built at the place where Kutuzov-Smolensky was wounded in 1774; eight steps from the road, a pyramid was erected at the resting place of Alexander the Blessed⁵⁸.

Wide public celebration of family holidays of the imperial family became an everyday external manifestation of imperial policy. In particular, it could be observed in Sevastopol. On June 1, 1852, during the Sevastopol raid, there were 120-gun ships “12 Apostles”, “Paris”, “Uriil” and a bunch of frigates, schooners. The city was illuminated in honor of the birth of the Empress. Two naval orchestras played at the dock⁵⁹. In general, such activities were aimed at residents of various regions of the Russian Empire and foreigners. At the same time, it was important to demonstrate the greatness of Russian weapons and the steadfastness of monarchical power to the local Tatar population. In the future, it was necessary to implement the task of including it in the Russian mental space.

Conclusions

In sum, when analyzed through the lens of Billig’s theory of banal nationalism, the ostensibly apolitical travel writings of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries reveal themselves as powerful vehicles of ideology. They played a crucial role in shaping public consciousness by normalizing imperial domination, reinforcing the binary opposition between the “civilized” Russian/European world and the “backward” or “savage” Crimean Tatar world, and legitimizing colonization through subtle but persistent reminders of the empire’s presence.

Imperial national policy regarding the Tatars was aimed at the physical extermination or displacement of the most active part of the people to the Ottoman Empire, the resettlement and assimilation of those who did not want to leave their homeland. The measures of this policy were economic pressure, namely deprivation of the opportunity to own land, restrictions on rights; religious pressure, which consisted in the destruction of mosques, their transformation into Orthodox churches, conversion to Christianity. Fixation took place through the formation of the corresponding historical memory. Bakhchysarai and Ak-Mechet (Simferopol) remained the last places of Tatar culture.

⁵⁷ *Из воспоминаний...*, p. 73.

⁵⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 96.

⁵⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 80.

Travelers who visited the Crimean Peninsula were not thoroughly acquainted with the tsarist government's measures to maintain control over the annexed region, so they did not provide a comprehensive description of the national policy. Their attention was drawn only to certain measures, usually considered barbaric from the point of view of a European of that time, in particular, to mass resettlement, bribery of local elites, religious oppression, and physical violence. Sometimes there was a kind of confusion, because some foreign travelers did not distinguish between Crimean Tatars and Nogais. However, the imperial policy towards both peoples had much in common.

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The policy of the Russian tsarist state towards the Crimean Tatars. Travel accounts from the late eighteenth century to the first half of the nineteenth century

Summary: This study relies on travelers' notes, diaries, and letters to analyze the Russian imperial nationalities policy pursued by the tsarist government towards the Crimean Tatars in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Particular attention is drawn to the epistolary writings of travelers representing different nations, states and cultures, and holding diverse political and ideological views, which allows for an objective reconstruction of the processes taking place in the region. In the late eighteenth century, the Crimean Peninsula was visited by, among others, Gilbert Romme of France, Francisco de Miranda of Spain, Peter Sumarokov of Russia, and the English travelers Elizabeth Craven and Mary Holderness. Dubois de Montperreux and the German Baron A. Haxthausen made several trips to the region in the 1830s and 1840s. The analysis demonstrated that the imperial nationalities policy towards the Tatars aimed at the physical extermination or forced displacement of the most influential and active members of the population to the Ottoman Empire, as well as the resettlement and assimilation of those who remained. The instruments of this policy included economic pressure, such as the deprivation of land ownership and the restriction of rights, as well as religious pressure, manifested in the destruction of mosques, their conversion into Orthodox churches, and forced conversion to Christianity. The Tatars' cultural and ethnic distinctiveness was preserved through the cultivation of historical memory. Bakhchysarai and Ak-Mechet (Simferopol) remained the last centers of Tatar culture.

Keywords: Russian Empire, Crimean Tatars, Crimean Peninsula, nationalities policy, travelers, travel accounts

Die Politik des russischen Zarenreichs gegenüber den Krimtataren. Ansichten von Reisenden vom Ende des 18. bis zur ersten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts

Zusammenfassung: Auf der Grundlage von Reiseberichten, Tagebüchern und Briefen von Reisenden wird in der vorliegenden Studie die russische Nationalpolitik analysiert, die die zaristische Regierung Ende des 18. und Anfang des 19. Jahrhunderts gegenüber den Krimtataren verfolgte. Besondere Aufmerksamkeit wurde den Briefen von Reisenden gewidmet, die verschiedenen Nationen, Staaten und

Kultury należały do różnych grup etnicznych i miały odmienne polityczne i światopoglądowe wyznaczniki, co umożliwiało obiektywną rekonstrukcję procesów historycznych. Na przełomie XVIII i XIX w. do regionu Krimu przyjeżdżali podróżnicy z różnych państw, którzy w swoich notatkach i listach opisywali warunki życia i politykę Rosji wobec Tatarów krymskich. Do podróżników należeli: Francuz Gilbert Romme, Hiszpan Francisco de Miranda, Rosjanin Piotr Sumarokow, Angielki Elizabeth Craven i Mary Holderness, Duńczyk Dubois de Montperreux i Niemiec A. Haxthausen. W latach 1830-1840 odbyli oni liczne wyprawy do Krimu. Ich badania wykazały, że polityka Rosji wobec Tatarów miała na celu fizyczną eksterminację lub przesiedlenie do Imperium Osmańskiego najbardziej aktywnej części narodu oraz asymilację tych, którzy nie chcieli opuszczać swojej ojczyzny. Środkami tej polityki były naciski ekonomiczne, pozbawienie możliwości posiadania ziemi, ograniczenie praw, naciski religijne, polegające na niszczeniu meczetów i przekształcaniu ich w cerkwie prawosławne i nawracaniu na chrześcijaństwo. Utrzymanie odrębności kulturowej i etnicznej przez Tatarów dokonało się poprzez uformowanie się odpowiedniej pamięci historycznej. Bachczysaraj i Ak-Mechet (Simferopol) pozostały ostatnimi miejscami kultury tatarskiej.

Schlüsselwörter: Russisches Reich, Krimtataren, Krimhalbinsel, Nationalitätenpolitik, Reisende, Reisetagebücher

Polityka rosyjskiego caratu wobec Tatarów krymskich. Poglądy podróżników końca XVIII wieku i pierwszej połowy XIX wieku

Streszczenie: W oparciu o notatki z podróży, pamiętniki i listy podróżników w niniejszym opracowaniu przeanalizowano rosyjską politykę narodową realizowaną przez rząd carski wobec Tatarów krymskich w końcu XVIII i na początku XIX w. Zwrócono uwagę na teksty epistolarne podróżników, którzy należeli do różnych narodów, państw i kultur, mieli odmienne poglądy polityczne, co pozwoliło na obiektywną rekonstrukcję procesów zachodzących w regionie. Pod koniec XVIII w. Półwysep Krymski odwiedzili: Francuz Gilbert Romme, Hiszpan Francisco de Miranda, Rosjanin Piotr Sumarokow, Angielki Elizabeth Craven i Mary Holderness oraz inni. Duńczyk Dubois de Montperreux i niemiecki baron A. Haxthausen odbyli kilka podróży do tego regionu w latach 30. i 40. XIX w. W toku badań ustalono, że polityka narodowa Imperium Rosyjskiego wobec Tatarów miała na celu fizyczną eksterminację lub przesiedlenie do Imperium Osmańskiego najbardziej aktywnej części narodu oraz przesiedlenie i asymilację tych, którzy nie chcieli opuszczać swojej ojczyzny. Środkami tej polityki były naciski ekonomiczne, pozbawienie możliwości posiadania ziemi, ograniczenie praw, naciski religijne, polegające na niszczeniu meczetów i przekształcaniu ich w cerkwie prawosławne i nawracaniu na chrześcijaństwo. Utrzymanie odrębności kulturowej i etnicznej przez Tatarów dokonało się poprzez uformowanie się odpowiedniej pamięci historycznej. Bachczysaraj i Ak-Mechet (Symferopol) pozostały ostatnimi miejscami kultury tatarskiej.

Słowa kluczowe: Imperium Rosyjskie, Tatarzy krymscy, Półwysep Krymski, polityka narodowościowa, podróżnicy, dzienniki podróży

