

Imagining Crimean Tatar History:

Indigenous Status, Russian Marginalisation, Ukrainian Cooptation

When Russia annexed Crimea in 2014, there were many promises that the Crimean Tatars would be better off under Russia than they had been under Ukraine. This article looks at one reason why this has not occurred – namely mutually antagonistic historiography in ‘publistika’ and popular history. The Crimean Tatars’ claim to indigenous status clashes too fundamentally with the imperialist and ethno-nationalist logic of ‘Krym Nash’. Annexation and the exile of the main Crimean Tatar leaders has forced them to restate this indigenous ideology ever louder. The Ukrainian side, on the other hand, has belatedly found solidarity with the Crimean Tatars’ cause, with a new historiography that emphasises cooperation and parallel state-building, rather than confrontation.

After Annexation

In his victory speech in March 2014, Putin said ‘I believe we should make all the necessary political and legislative decisions to finalise the rehabilitation of Crimean Tatars, restore them in their rights and clear their good name’ (Address by President 2014). There was talk of legalising land seizures in return for political loyalty (most Crimean Tatars had been forced to build homes from scratch, known as *samo-zakhvat*, since their return from exile). Putin tried to negotiate with or coopt the leaders of the elected Crimean Tatar assembly, the Qurultay, amidst talk of giving them substantive local power, such as by a 20% quota in local administration. But his interlocutor, the veteran Crimean Tatar leader Mustafa Dzhemilev, insisted he had no right to discuss changes to political arrangements in sovereign Ukrainian territory (‘O chem Dzhemilev i Putin govorili’ 2017).

But ultimately there was no consociational deal for the Crimean Tatars. Putin’s eventual decree of April 2014 only promised ‘to promote the creation and development of national and cultural autonomies, other public associations and organizations of the Armenian, Bulgarian, Greek, Crimean-Tatar and German peoples’. Instead of equality for the Crimean Tatar language, there was only the promise of ‘basic general education in the languages of the said peoples’ and in the language of Soviet-style national-in-form ethnographic concessions, ‘the development of traditional crafts and forms of management’ (Rossiiskaia gazeta, 2014b). The new ‘constitution’ of the annexed Republic backtracked even further. It dissolved any idea of special status in the formula of the ‘multinational people of the Republic of Crimea’, who were, furthermore, ‘part of the multinational people of the Russian Federation’ (Rossiiskaia gazeta, 2014a). The Crimean Tatar language was listed

as one of three state languages, alongside Russian and Ukrainian. But there was no mention of detailed obligations to promote it. All mention of 'national and cultural autonomies' was dropped. In not particularly coded language, the authorities were charged instead with 'the prevention [using the KGB term *profilaktike*] of international (interethnic) conflicts and ensuring interethnic and interconfessional harmony' – the main threat to which was apparently Crimean Tatar self-assertion. A proposal in 2016 to grant Crimean Tatars 'a federal national-cultural autonomy' seemed to be a ploy to force Crimean Tatars in Crimea to link up with other groups Russia-wide and dissolve the Crimean Tatars in a wider 'Tatar' identity. Such an autonomy would not be territorial (Goble 2016).

Russia has arrested hundreds of Crimean Tatar activists. It claims not to be targeting Crimean Tatars per se, but only religious 'extremists' and 'terrorists'. However, the repression campaign has been accompanied by a dismissive attitude towards the Crimean Tatars' history and historical rights. The human rights group Crimea SOS recorded 422 cases of persecutions by July 2018; including nine 'intentional killings', sixteen missing persons, eleven deportations and one hundred and twenty four 'illegal detentions and arrests' (Human Rights in Crimea 2018). The Mezhlis was banned; the Muftiate was coopted, renamed the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of the Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol (DUMKiS), and made one of Russia's regional Muftiates. In February 2018 the Mufti helped convene a loyalist 'Council of the Crimean Tatar People' (*Sovet krymsko-tatarskogo naroda*) as a possible long-term replacement for the Mejlis (Chopa 2018), which had last been elected for a five-year term in autumn 2013.

Kyiv, on the other hand, has belatedly made amends for its comparative neglect of Crimean Tatar issues before 2014. In March 2014 the Ukrainian parliament recognised the Crimean Tatars as a 'rooted' (i.e. indigenous) people and the Mejlis as 'the highest representative organ of the Crimean Tatar people' ('Pro Zaiavu' 2014). In November 2015 the Ukrainian parliament recognised the 1944 Deportation as 'genocide' ('Pro vyznannia' 2015). Similar language recurred in a resolution passed in October 2016 condemning the banning of the Mejlis ('Postanova', 2016). But there was slower progress on a specific law to define Crimean Tatar rights, or on corresponding changes to the Ukrainian constitution (Urcosta 2017). A draft bill 'On the status of the Crimean Tatar people in Ukraine' was registered in parliament in April 2017.

The belated focus on minority rights and indigenous status was adopted as one possible route back to the eventual recovery of Crimea. Especially as it was coupled with a new emphasis on the 'parallel' history of Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars – essentially a joint and hopefully stronger claim on the peninsula, but in the language of indigenous rights (Wilson 2017). (The Ukrainian minority in Crimea is largely Russian-speaking and only made up 24% of the population, as of 2001). The second

element in this parallelism was the new emphasis on a multi-national civic nation. According to one historian, 'in our political nation, there are different subjects making it up. One of the important authors of the creation of the modern Ukrainian political nation is the Crimean Tatar ethnation' ('Monografiiu' 2018). Though this new civic nationalism also co-existed with a rise in more radical, ethnicist sentiments (Minich 2018); and critics argued that Kyiv was only acting instrumentally, to bolster its claim on the peninsula.

This essay compares how these differing approaches to Crimea and Crimea history have manifested themselves in popular historiography in both Russia and Ukraine since the annexation of Crimea. It does so by examining popular texts from Crimean Tatar, Russian and Ukrainian sources, nearly all written since 2014. This paper does not make any claims as to how representative any of the three is of general discourse. It does not claim that every historical work follows the same schema. But it does claim that there are interesting new mythologies in both Russia and Ukraine that tell us much about the politics of both states.

The Crimean Tatar Discourse - Indigenous Rights

For the modern Crimean Tatar national movement, the 'Declaration of National Sovereignty of the Crimean Tatar People' serves as a founding statement of principles. It was passed by a popularly elected national assembly, the afore-mentioned Qurultay, in June 1991 (numbered the second, claiming legitimacy from the first in 1917); and asserts that 'Crimea is the national territory of the Crimean Tatar people, on which they alone have the right to self-determination' ('Deklaratsiya' 1991). As veteran dissident Mustafa Dzhemilev, who served as leader of the Qurultay and its plenipotentiary body the Mejlis from 1991 until 2013, therefore claimed after the 2014 'referendum' on Crimea joining Russia: 'The right to self-determination only belongs to indigenous people - Crimean Tatars' (Dzhemilev, 2014).

In Russian the word for 'indigenous' is *korennoi*, in Ukrainian *korinnyi*. Both mean 'rooted' (Belitser 2016). This organic metaphor is built into an ideology based on six historical precepts. Firstly, precedence and original majority status. The Crimean Tatars may only currently account for 12% of the Crimean population, but they see this as the result of colonial rule and enforced emigration. Before the first Russian annexation of Crimea in 1783, the Crimean Tatar made up over 80% of the population, and had lived in Crimea for more than a millennium. Second is a kind of meta-indigenous-ness: the Crimean Tatar nation is depicted as a melting pot of many peoples who have inhabited the peninsula at one time or another. 'The Crimean Tatars are the indigenous people of the Crimean peninsula, who formed here in the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries as a consequence of

extended assimilation processes of the old inhabitants of the peninsula (Tavrians, Cimmerians) with later peoples (Sarmatians, Huns, Alans, Mongols, Kipchaks and others' (Bekirova 2017, p. 15).

Although the catalyst for that 'formation' as a people was the Mongol incursion from Eurasia, the Mongols only made up one part of this unique local mix of peoples. The Golden Horde included Crimea in its vast territories in the thirteenth century, but an independent Crimean Tatar Khanate emerged in the fifteenth century. The idea of a common identity as just 'Tatars' is rejected by the Crimean Tatars; especially as it was imposed on them after 1944, when only 'Tatar' figured in Soviet censuses and identity documents. If the Crimean Tatars only arrived in the thirteenth century, that allows Russia to claim precedence and pre-eminence from what was in reality a patchy pattern of Slavic settlement before then ('Krymskie tatory' 2014; Gromenko 2016b). Many Crimean Tatars therefore prefer to be known simply as 'Crimeans' – *qırımlar*.

The third element is pride in the statehood associated with Crimean Tatar identity, that preceded annexation. Despite close relations with the Ottoman Empire, 'the Crimean Tatars had their own statehood' 'from 1441 to the annexation of Crimea by the Russian Empire (1783)' (Bekirova 2017, p. 15).

Fourth, the Crimean Tatar Khanate is depicted as a 'Golden Age' (Abdulavea 2012), an apogee of national power and cultural achievement, when a unique local culture was formed specifically on the peninsula. Khan Mengli Giray (ruled 1468-75 and 1478-1515) gave himself the title of 'Emperor [*Khakan*] of the two seas and the Sultan of the two continents', joining Europe and Asia like the Byzantine emperor before him, although Giray's two seas were the Black and the Caspian rather than the Mediterranean and the Black (Haivoronskii 2009).

Fifth, Russian rule is depicted as a typical binary of empire and colony, framed as annexation and 'settler colonialism' leading to depopulation (Veracini 2010). Because of the strategic importance of Crimea, the Crimean Tatars argue that they were treated even more harshly than the indigenous populations in Kazan or Astrakhan, 'to force out the indigenous population and resettle with those moving from internal provinces' and even from outside the empire (Dzhemilev 2018, p. 8; Bekirova 2017, p. 16).

Sixth, the Crimean Tatars supposedly showed their attachment to their native land by creating a strong movement of resistance and revival. 'On the eve of the February Revolution in 1917 the Crimean Tatar national movement had strong enough intellectual and revolutionary-democratic cadres, who could organise and head structures of power on their own land' (Dzhemilev 2018, p. 9). They organised the first democratic national assembly or Qurultay, which set up a Crimean People's

Republic, the first Muslim Democracy (preceding the Azerbaijan Republic by many months), albeit one sensitive to the realities of multi-ethnicity in Crimea. This Republic was only destroyed by Bolshevik force of arms. But the Bolsheviks' difficulties in taking Crimea were one reason behind the creation of the Crimean ASSR in 1921. Former Qurultay activists then used the Soviet indigenisation (*korenizatsiia*) policy and 'achieved definitive successes in the development of the economy and national culture of Crimea' (Dzhemilev 2018, p. 10).

But the colonial logic soon reasserted itself, leading to repressions after 1928 and severe famine during collectivisation in the early 1930s - after 60,000 had died in the famine of 1921-3 (Dzhemilev 2018, p. 10) - and further repressions in 1937-8 (Bikova 2018). Despite split loyalties, it is denied that large numbers of Crimean Tatars collaborated with the German occupiers in 1941-4. Some 15,000 to 20,000 Crimean Tatars served in local 'self-defence' forces set up by the German occupying forces. These were often collaborationist, but also bended to whomever was locally dominant. Some 2,100 to 2,400 served in pro-German battalions, but these were multi-ethnic (Bekirova 2017, p. 81). But a higher number of 25,000 served in the Red Army. Allegations of desertions are hard to verify, but probably no more than 3,500 (Gromenko 2016c). The 2013 film *Haytrama* tells the story of Crimean Tatar pilot Amet-khan Sultan, twice the recipient of the Hero of the Soviet Union medal. At least 600 Crimean Tatars were also active in local partisan groups (Bekirova 2017, pp. 81-102; Smolii 2015, p. 386).

Finally, the tragedy of the 1944 Deportation (*Sürgünligi*) looms large among Crimean Tatar narrative and commemoration. A totalitarian 'year zero' policy was imposed in 1944-54 to erase all evidence of Crimean Tatar pre-history: 'a total change of place names', 'the demolition of all monuments of historical culture', 'the large-scale re-writing of the history of Crimea' (Dzhemilev 2018, p. 7). But there is also pride in the resistance movement created in the late Soviet era, which overcame severe repression, but stayed peaceful, and helped organise the return to the homeland after 1989 (Bekirova 2014 and 2017). Before 2014, the Crimean Tatars were prepared to consider pragmatic power-sharing arrangements, given their minority status; but still insisted that it made no sense to talk 'of the "self-determination" of post-war settlers mainly from Russia [even if they] make up a majority in Crimea' nowadays (Dzhemilev 2018, p. 15).

Russian Mythology - Existential Assault

Russia's justification for the annexation of Crimea in 2014 has drawn on often contradictory arguments, but with a core emphasis on 'historical rights' (Teper 2016; Biersack and O'Lear 2016). But how to make sense of a historical reality in which a truly 'Russian Crimea' in truth only existed for about a century, from the 1850s to the 1950s? Vladimir, the Prince of Kyiv not Russia (Volodymyr

in Ukrainian) laid siege to the main Byzantine Crimean city of Chersonesus (in Slavic Korsun) in 988; but medieval sieges were ten a penny and hardly amounted to conquest of the entire Crimea. The Russian Empire annexed Crimea eight hundred years later in 1783, but then left the Crimean Tatars largely to their own devices until the Crimean War in the 1850s. Crimea was then administratively Russian, although power on the peninsula changed hands frequently in 1917-21, and there was a degree of Soviet-style 'indigenisation' in the 1920s. Crimea was administratively transferred to the Ukrainian SSR in 1954.

The answer is a typically neo-colonial approach, which ignores or marginalises everything that came before annexation; the latter-day myth-making of 'settler nationalism', nervous about the human and physical evidence of the predecessor population all around them ('The Crimean Exception' forthcoming). Marginalisation is achieved by depicting indigenous populations as indigent, nomadic, violent and having no settled or developed civilisation; and by reframing the settlers as the historic population. Russia is therefore inherently hostile to the Crimean Tatars' claim to indigenous status. Supposedly academic studies have been devoted to proving that they were only a 'national minority', and a fragment of the broader Tatar nation (Sokolovskii 2016). The main such study used outdated definitions to claim that 'indigenous' status can only refer to 'the original inhabitants of an area' (with 'original' meaning pre-historical). 'Indigenous' was also framed as pre-modern; those 'following their traditional lifestyle'. Statehood, ironically, makes that impossible; although normally Russian authors denigrate the Crimean Khanate's claims to statehood (see below). Only small peoples, less than 50,000 in number, count as indigenous anyway in this approach (Coynash 2018).

Russian bookstores have been full of new books on Crimea since 2014, but much of the new Russian historiography is only an action replay of two previous eras. The first was the Imperial era, though crucially not immediately after the first Russian annexation of Crimea in 1783. The Crimean Tatar majority and the new imperial population lived largely parallel and separate lives until the Crimean War in 1853-56 (O'Neill 2017). Russian historians and churchmen began reinventing the peninsula as the 'Russian Athos' in the run-up to the war; the campaign to 'Christianise' Crimea began with the reopening of the Dormition cave monastery in Bakhchisarai in 1850. But most of the work was undertaken after the Crimean War, with the creation of the Tauride eparchy of the Russian Orthodox Church in 1859 (now the diocese of Simferopol and Crimea) (Kozelsy 2010). The key text of the period was Makarii Bulgakov's *History of Christianity in Russia* (originally 1846, here 1994), which 'brought competing tropes in Crimean history together in critical ways. He emphasised that Crimea was Christian before it was Muslim and that proto-Russians were present in the land along with Greeks'. More radically, he claimed that 'the receptors of the Christianity in this region' in the first Millennium 'were not Greeks and Romans but the "proto-Russians", that is the Scythians and

the Gett-Dacians lumped together' (Kozelsky 2010, pp. 56 and 55). The elaboration of a Christian past for Crimea reached its Imperial apogee with the 900th anniversary of Vladimir's baptism in Crimea in 1888 (Bibliotheca Chersonessitana); although ironically some of the momentum behind the 'Russian Athos' project was lost after access to the original Mount Athos became much easier after Greece took control in 1913.

The second key myth-making period was the ten years between the Deportation of the Crimean Tatars in 1944 and the administrative transfer of Crimea to Ukraine in 1954. One reason for Crimea's administrative loss of republican status in 1944-54 was to erase its Crimean Tatar history before starting anew. Another was overturning the new historiography of Crimea that had been written in the 1920s (Kyriushko and Boitsova, 2006; Zinchenko 1998; Sevdia, 1997). The Deportation was justified retrospectively by supposed 'ancient Russian' claims on Crimea; but myth-making in the early 1950s was even cruder than in the nineteenth century. The official resolution required historians 'to reconsider the erroneous positions and concepts about the historical past of Crimea in the light of I. Stalin's ingenious work *Marxism and Linguistics*,' (Hromenko, 2016), albeit displacing the even cruder 'ethnogenesis' theories of Nikolai Marr, according to which any new civilisation on any given territory is simply another iteration of its predecessors. Marr was posthumously disgraced in 1950, necessitating some historiographical adjustment, but Soviet historians still wrote in the spirit of an 'ancient Russian' presence in the Crimea.

To make things more complicated, Soviet historians also had to reject the idea of early Gothic Crimea, which had attracted the Nazis; so they settled instead on the idea of the 'Scythian-Slavs' as the progenitors of the early Russians. (The Goths supposedly established an early state before the Huns arrived in the middle of the first millennium, and then the Principality of Gothia or Theodoro after the Fourth Crusade in 1204). A new line emerged in 1952, pushed by loyalist Soviet historians like Pavel Nadinskii, the 'main creator of the myth of "primordially Russian land"' in Crimea (Hromenko 2016), and luminaries of Soviet Slavic (not Oriental) studies like Boris Grekov and Boris Rybakov, enlisted from Moscow (Grekov 1952; Rybakov 1951). In order to trump the antiquity of the Crimean Khanate, the new Soviet line took Bulgakov's theories about ancient 'proto-Russians' in Crimea to greater extremes. Although the idea of the Scythian-Slavs promoted by Pavel Shul'ts, i.e. that the two were basically the same thing, eventually proved too 'Marrist' (Shul'ts 1952), it was simply repackaged as the Scythians being the ancestors of the Slavs. The Scythian language provided 'elements of our Russian language'. Scythian or Tavrian became synonym for Rus'. Only they were natives, who fought against all 'colonisers': 'Huns, Goths, Khazars – some of whom managed to temporarily seize separate regions of the Crimean peninsula'. 'But all these foreign usurpers came to

Crimea as temporary conquerors, invaders of a foreign land. Only Russians have the unquestionable historical right to Crimea, as their own ancient Russian territory' (Nadinskii 1951, volume one, pp. 45, 30, 47 and 57). 'In the times of Kievan Rus' Crimea was largely Russian' (Grekov 1952). The first annexation in 1783 was therefore an act of 'inclusion' of Crimea, not 'joining' it to Russia (similar arguments would be made in 2014).

The general line was now to fight against the 'idealisation' of 'Tatar' history, and assert that 'the Crimean lands even in primordial times belonged to the Slavs and the Russians and their ancestors, the Scythians' (Shul'ts 1947; quoted in Hromenko 2017, p. 21). This was at a time when the population of Crimea had dropped to 351,000 in the summer of 1944 (Magocsi 2014, p. 126), and the peninsula was being resettled by heartland Russians from regions like Orel and Penza. Russians make up a majority of the population, 58.3% in 2001, up from 42.2% in 1926, but these 1.18 million are nearly all post-war migrants. The Crimean Tatars numbered 12% or 243,000 in 2001 (an occupation census taken in October 2014 recorded 65.3% Russians, 10.2% Crimean Tatars and a big increase to 1.9% 'Tatar').

The crudity of this thesis rather faded after the death of Stalin in 1953 and the transfer of Crimea to the Ukrainian SSR in 1954; but many of its underlying tropes remained, and reappeared in Russian history and propaganda after the annexation in 2014, having also circulated in the 1990s and 2000s ('Sevastopol-Crimea-Russia'). Grekov was deemed worthy of a festschrift in 2015 (Volodikhin 2015; cf Filimonov 2007). The myth of 'ancient Russian' Crimea also circulated alongside common anti-Crimean Tatar prejudice; Anatolii Mohyliov, Prime Minister of Crimea in 2011-14, called them 'Hitler's henchmen' (Mogilev, 2008). Treason trials for collaboration resulted in death sentences as late as the 1970s (Shabad 1972).

Not everyone buys into this third wave of Russian Crimean historiography. Academic studies like the two-volume collective *History of Crimea* (Yurasov 2017) produced by the Russian Historical Society and Academy of Sciences in 2017 are still possible. The bibliographical review is critical of Nadinskii, whom it regards as 'decisively rejected [*nepriyatie*] by the majority of scholars-historians' after the death of Stalin. It places many of Nadinskii's key tropes in inverted commas: such as the theory that the 'early Slavic (Scythians – their ancestors) population always strove towards "brother Rus"', and that orientation culminated in 1783 with the historical "reunion [*vossoedinenie*] of Crimea with Russia", the "the robber-raids of the Crimean Tatars" and so on' (Yurasov 2017, pp. 7-8).

A companion volume of essays is summarised as follows: ‘Crimea is... a centre of world cultures and religions, “a centre for the intersection of civilisations”’ (Yurasov 2016, p. 4). Another new Russian history of Crimea does not depict the Crimean Khanate as a simple Ottoman vassal: it still had ‘internal-political autonomy and the right to diplomatic relations with foreign states’. The Khanate had well-developed educational and Islamic cultural institutions. And ‘through the course of all its history a tradition of toleration was preserved’ (Kodzova 2015, pp. 91 and 105).

But there is also an ideology, often appearing in ‘publistika’ (Zaets 2018), that can be called ‘Krym Nash-ism’. It expresses the structures of colonial and settler discourse (Veracini 2010). Significantly, those who express any of its individual tropes tend to express them all (Hromenko 2018b). The discourse is homogenous and reified, and there is little sign of ‘solidarity’ strategies between settlers and locals (Snelgrove, Dhamoon, and Corntassel 2014).

The Islamic Interruption – Religious Precedence

Crimean cannot be ‘ours’ without also being ‘not theirs’. Significantly, the main opponent of Russian publistika is not Ukrainian claims to the peninsula, but those of the Crimean Tatars. The Crimean Tatars’ ‘indigenous’ discourse is therefore undermined at every key turn.

As in the nineteenth century, the religious narrative often comes first. Christianity was supposedly well-established in Crimea before what was only a Crimean Tatar interlude: ‘the Christian religion was in truth dominant in Crimea from the fourth to the thirteenth century’ (Shirokorad 2015, p.13). Supposedly, ‘in the period from the fourth to the ninth centuries five [Christian] eparchies existed on the peninsula’ (‘Istoricheskaia spravka’), amongst early Christians, Goths and others, even before 988. In 2017 a new textbook was introduced in schools for the course ‘Bases of Orthodox Culture in Crimea’, according to which ‘the history of the Crimean peninsula is inseparably connected with the development of Orthodoxy. Already from the very beginning period of its emergence, Christianity permeated in Crimea’ (Yakushechkin and Titova 2017, p. 14).

More or less the same myths about Crimea’s pre-Islamic Christian past have been revived since 2014 as in the nineteenth century, though the ‘Russian Athos’ is now called the ‘Crimean Athos’. The local eparchy of the Russian Orthodox Church plays a central part in the myth-making (cimea-eparhia.ru, pilgrimage.su); but with plenty of outlying publicists (Tulaev 2017; Izmailov 2016). The local branch of the Russian Orthodox Church, technically the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate), had in any case been pushing this line since the millennium of Vladimir/Volodymyr’s baptism in 1988.

The most important Christian myth is the Korsun legend, even though it is far from certain that Volodymyr/Vladimir was indeed baptised there after capturing the city in 988. Putin, however, has put this myth centre-stage, claiming that ‘for Russia, Crimea, ancient Khorsun, Chersonesus, Sevastopol have huge civilizational and sacral meaning. Like the Holy Mount for those who profess Islam or Judaism’ (V. Putin 2014). The connection is symbolised by the huge new statue of Prince Vladimir outside the Kremlin, erected in 2016, and the blockbuster film *Viking* produced in the same year, where Vladimir’s leitmotiv ‘to Khorsun! climaxes with the city’s capture and his baptism. Korsun itself has supposedly ‘existed around 2,000 years’ (Nadinskii 1951, p. 5), so its Greek-Byzantine-Rus history long predates that of the Khanate. Korsun is even mistakenly identified with Sevastopol, as Putin’s elisions do above, although the two locations are half an hour apart by road, and Sevastopol was originally a Crimean Tatar fishing village called Aqyar.

The other ‘early Christian’ myths, in chronological order, are that Andrew, the ‘first-called’ Apostle, visited Crimea, just before reaching Kyiv in 55 AD (‘The Astonishing Missionary Journeys’, 2010). Pope Clement I (88-99 AD), the Apostolic Father of the Church, supposedly spent his last days of exile in Crimea. The Goths created twenty six martyrs amongst local Christians in the fourth century. Another Pope, Martin I (649-55), was also supposedly banished to Crimea. Cyril, the ‘Apostle to the Slavs’, after whom the Cyrillic alphabet is named, supposedly studied in Crimea in the ninth century. Nothing though competes with the claims that Christ was born in Crimea and that Mary died there (Nosovskii and Fomenko 2010).

Christianity is also deemed to have survived under the Khanate. Not because of the Khanate’s tolerance, but because of Christianity’s persistent and vigorous institutional presence, plus the limited cultural impact of the Khanate, which was little more than a military enterprise. Another idea, that the Crimean Tatars were originally Christians who converted to Islam, was briefly useful in the nineteenth century, because it could be used to justify ‘re-conversion’; but seems to have been forgotten in the twenty first century, with some exceptions (Chernyakhovskii and Chernyakhovskaya 2015, p. 182). Perhaps because this claim can be inverted. One Crimean Tatar source has claimed that: ‘Paradoxically, almost all the Christian shrines of the Crimea that appeared on the peninsula before 1783 are a legacy of the indigenous people - the Crimean Tatars’ (Abdulaeva 2014), in the sense that they were originally looked after not by Slavs but by Greeks and Goths, before the latter were absorbed into the Crimean Tatar ethnos.

Ethnic Precedence

Russian mythology presents the Crimean Tatar Khanate era as an ethnic as well as religious interruption, a mere interlude in more than a millennium of Slavic history in Crimea (Antonov 2014; Chernyakhovskii and Chernyakhovskaya 2015, pp. 122-31). One Russian *History of Crimea* rushed out in 2015, compresses the history of the Crimean Tatar Khanate into only one of thirteen chapters, after long sections depicting Crimea as the 'northern outpost of the Byzantine empire' and before discussing the Imperial and Soviet eras (Kodzova 2015; cf. Kochegarov 2014). According to another popular history: 'there was no dominant nation in Crimea in general until the end of the eighteenth century. And from the ninth to the fourteen centuries tens of peoples lived side by side in Crimea, including Russian (Rus)' (Shirokorad 2015, p. 13). Modern Russian historians and commentators are often even less circumspect than their nineteenth century predecessors in claiming that the Russians are indigenous to Crimea (Gurov 2014).

Sub-stories are needed to boost this shaky claim. Sudak, with its famous Genoese castle, was therefore originally the Slavic settlement of 'Surozh' ('Surozhskaya Rus' 2015). Local sources have even cited the notorious forgery the Book of Veles to claim evidence for 'Slavic culture' in Crimea 'long before the Greeks-Heraclites' ('Krymskie korni' 2016). But in the face of evidence of limited contact between Rus' and Crimea, the tenth-eleventh century Tmutarakan' 'state' that allegedly controlled the straits of Kerch is most often introduced into the argument to plug the gaps (Samsonov 2015). Although according to one Ukrainian historian, it had no real power on the Crimean side of the straits (Hromenko 2017, pp. 51-2; Hromenko 2018b).

This produces a particularly dangerous double metaphor: Crimea is the Russian Grenada and the annexation of Crimea is the 'Russian Reconquista' (Chernyakhovskii and Chernyakhovskaya 2015, pp. 139 ff). 'For Crimea, they [the Crimean Tatars] were something like the Moors for Spain. And like Queen Isabella fulfilled her vows to completely free the country of its occupiers and liberate Grenada, so Russia through the ages fought, trying to free its ancient territory. The Spanish managed to free Grenada four hundred years earlier, than the Russians freed Crimea. But the Moors came to the Pyrenees in the eighth century, the Tatars to Crimea in the thirteenth. The Moors stayed 800 years – and no one suggests to declare that they are the rooted population of Spain, the Tatars, if we count from their full conquest of Crimea – four hundred. If from their first intrusion – six hundred. And people try to call them the rooted nation.' (ibid, pp. 183-4).

Substitution: The Khanate was only a Vassal of the Ottomans

Another characteristic trope is that the Crimean Tatar Khanate was never a real state. Back in the nineteenth century, Vasilii Smirnov (1887) established the tradition of denigrating the Khanate to the status of an Ottoman vassal. Nadinskii then stressed the 'serf-like dependence of the Crimean

Khans on the Turkish sultans'. 'The Turks used the Crimean Tatars as their tributes and mercenaries for struggle against Slavic and other peoples with whom Turkey [sic, he means the Ottomans] was enemies' (Nadinskii 1951, pp. 63 and 64; Chernyakhovskii and Chernyakhovskaya 2015, p. 140). 'The Crimean Khans were just bureaucrats of the Turkish sultan, who changed them like gloves (in 150 years in Crimea 53 Khans were changed)' (Nadinskii 1951, p. 76). Although 'the Crimean Khans were unreliable allies. They were always prepared to join the side that paid them the most for their treason' (ibid, p. 75). In recent years, Anna Khoroshkevich (2001) has claimed that the Crimean Khanate was only ever really independent before the Ottoman conquest in 1475 and in the nine years between the treaty of Küçük Kaynarca in 1774 and annexation by Russia in 1783.

Marginalisation: Denying any Crimean Tatar 'Majority'

At the time of annexation in 1783, 83% of the population of Crimea was Crimean Tatar (Burke 1996, p. 24). It takes imagination to overturn this demographic reality. Nevertheless, Russian writings claim that, 'according to the data of the census of the middle of the seventeenth century, conducted by the Khanate authorities themselves, out of 1.1 million inhabitants of Crimea only 180,000 were Tatars – the rest in the majority – Russians and Ukrainians' (Chernyakhovskii and Chernyakhovskaya 2015, p. 141). The Crimean Tatar 'majority' in 1783 was supposedly therefore the artificial result of 'a policy of evictions of the Orthodox' at the time of the Russo-Turkish wars (1710-11, 1735-9, 1768-74), as the Crimean Tatars feared that 'Russia would be able to rely on them during the liberation of Crimea. And the rooted Orthodox population of Crimea was forced either to leave, or to accept Islam to remain in their homeland' (ibid, p. 184).

'The "Tatars" actually, the descendants of the conquerors who came to Crimea at the time of the invasion of the Horde, made up only the military estate and the state elite. The basic mass of the population was made up of the peoples who settled Crimea in former eras, starting with antiquity: Slavs and Goths, who settled here starting in the second century of our era, Greco-Italian immigrants, and up to the fifteenth-eighteenth centuries – Russian and Ukrainian captives seized by the Tatars during military raids, a part of whom were sold into slavery in the Ottoman Empire, and a significant part remained in Crimea also as slaves'. 'Even after conquest they didn't make up the main part of the population of Crimea. Relying on what came before them, in part old Russian [*drevnerusskuyu*] culture – they created their own, and for its time – not the most primitive civilisation. But they always remained a minority in their own state. This was a state, somewhat reminiscent of British colonies or South Africa in the second half of the twentieth century: a ruling Islamic ethnic minority and an enslaved Orthodox majority' (ibid, pp. 141 and 183).

According to authors sympathetic to the Crimean Tatars, however (Vozgrin 1992, p. 134), the urban population under the Khanate was indeed multi-national, but there were very few Slavs. Slav slaves tended to be sold into the Ottoman Empire. 'The permanent Slavic population appeared on the

peninsula no earlier than the XIII century, before the annexation of the Crimea by the Russian Empire in 1783 it was vanishingly small,' 'a few merchants-Slavs really lived in separate Crimean cities, but hardly - all the time. A lot of slaves indeed passed through the peninsula, but they had no time to exert any influence on the structure of the local population. In spite of Evliya Chelebi's reliance on the allegedly 900 thousand captured "Cossacks" in the Crimea, all of them either were quickly sold in the markets of Kafa (Feodosiia) and Geslev (Yevpatoriia), or immediately assimilated among the Crimean Tatars' (Gromenko 2016a). Evliya Çelebi (1611-87) was an Ottoman explorer, whose writings about the slave trade are often quoted ('Krym i torgovlia rabami', 2018), but he is not necessarily a reliable source.

Divide-and-Rule

Another way of deconstructing indigenusness is to exaggerate ethnic sub-differences amongst the Crimean Tatars. Although, according to Kelly O'Neill (2018), before 1783 these mattered much less than loyalties of dynasty and clan (these were four, later five: Shirin, Barin, Arghin, Kipchak and Manghit). However, one Russian history from 2015 exploited the idea of ethnic sub-groups to claim boldly that 'the "Crimean Tatar" people simply don't exist'. 'At the moment when Crimea was liberated, those whom according to the principle of faith were called "Crimean Tatars" were only in that part of the inhabited steppe part of the peninsula, they could properly be called steppe Nogai'. The second part – the inhabitants of mountain Crimea – were the descendants of the Goths – though it was hard to view them as Germans: they were mountain-Tats'. The third, the inhabitants of the coast – were the descendants of Greeks and Italians: south coast Yaliboyu' (Chernyakhovskii and Chernyakhovskaya 2015, pp. 184-5). The idea of a multi-ethnic Crimean Tatar ethnos is therefore turned on its head. 'A part of them mixed with the local population and, subsequently, with the arrival of the Nogais in the north of the peninsula, that gives cause to view the Crimean Tatars as a heterogonous group... Crimea was always a territory with a complex ethnic composition' (Sokolovskii 2016, p. 50).

The Nogai Project

The strongest of these sub-divisions is supposedly between other Crimean Tatars and the Nogai. It is often argued that the Nogai are a completely different people; from the thirteenth century, 'in the Northern Caucasus and Black Sea littoral', Kipchaks mixed with Mongols formed a new ethnos – the Nogais' (Chernyakhovskii and Chernyakhovskaya 2015, p. 180). The Nogais lived separately on the steppe. They only made tactical military alliances with the Khanate. They distanced themselves from the supposedly disloyal Crimean Tatars during the Crimean War.

There have been some signs of reviving this idea since 2014 (Byurchiev 2014), in part because of Russia's earlier 'lessons' from divide-and-rule tactics in the North Caucasus, where many Nogais live.

Outsiders

One of the most radical ways of attacking Crimean Tatars' indigenous status is to reverse perspective and depict them as invaders. According to one source, 'to see the Tatars as the rooted population of Crimea... is possible only within the framework of political speculation. That could fit anyone – but not them. They only came to Crimea as conquerors and destroyers' (Chernyakhovskii and Chernyakhovskaya 2015, p. 183). The founder of the Khanate's dynasty, Hacı Giray (ruled 1441-66), was supposedly one such outsider, a failed contender for another throne in the north. The Nogais sent him back to 'his "homeland" in Litva' (Shirokorad 2015, p. 17).

Tatarica

Another line of deconstruction is the claim that there is no such thing as 'Crimean' Tatars, only Tatars in general. This was the Soviet line after 1944, when official censuses did not allow the adjective 'Crimean' for 'citizens of Tatar nationality formally resident in Crimea'. The idea that all varieties of the Tatars were once and/or still are one people is still propagated from Kazan (Khakimov 2016; Krganov 2014), and is often expressed in official Russian circles ('Tatarskii vopros' 2003). It is supported by a minority of Russophile Crimean Tatars ('Kogda-to tatory' 2017). According to Kazan Tatar historian Marat Gibatdinov, 'the Crimean Tatars have always been part of the big family of the Tatar nation' ('Uchebnik istorii' 2014). The Mufti of Moscow and Chuvashia, Albirhazrat Krganov, has lectured on 'Volga Tatars and Crimean Tatars: Common Historical Destinies' ('Dukhovno-prosvetitel'skii soyuz' 2014).

According to the lavish seven volume *History of the Tatars Since Ancient Times* published in 2017: 'The large Tatar nation is comprised of various groups that fully correspond to medieval Tatar states', i.e. Kazan, Crimea and others. 'The Tatar people emerged in the Golden Horde period from various local tribes, primarily the Bulgars and Kipchaks, and other Turkic peoples, such as Tatar-Mongols and eastern Kipchaks, newly arrived from Central and Middle Asia'. The 'Crimean Tatars are a Turkic-speaking nation who emerged on the territory of Crimean Peninsula as a result of the amalgamation of local Turkic western-Kipchak tribes (the Polovtsians), remnants of other (including Turkic-speaking) nomadic groups, Indo-European population (Alans, Greeks, Goths, etc) as well as Turkic and Mongol tribes which populates Crimea after the Mongol Conquest of Eastern Europe. The formation of Crimean Tatar ethnic community appears to have started in the 13th century'. Two centuries later, 'the establishment of a khanate and islamisation were drivers of the process of

ethnic homogenisation', creating a new identity by the sixteenth century, though the mainly Christian southern shores (the *oftat*) were only Tatarised in the eighteenth century (Khakimov and Gosmanov 2017, p. 3).

A sense of unity among the various Tatar Khanates supposedly survived the formal dissolution of the empire of the Golden Horde in the fifteenth century. 'There was close correlation between regions of the Golden Horde to the west of Volga and its Central Asian regions' 'contacts were not only trade related, but also migration related. This single area, besides being common state territory, is also united by an Islamic tradition: in particular, by the circulation of common popular religious texts, as well as by migrations of religious authorities (sheikhs) within the borders of a single state (from Central Asia) and from outside (Asia Minor) to Crimea and the Middle Volga region' (ibid, p. 787).

The now numerous 'Turkic-Tatar states and their populations continued to keep numerous ethnocultural and political contacts among themselves'. There was a common 'community of dominant feudal clans', the rulers of Crimea, Kazan and Kasimov [in Riazan] were close relatives, and there was a powerful 'Crimean faction' in Kazan (ibid., pp. 736 and 740).

'The Tatar khanates, especially in the 15th century, were engaged in a protracted struggle to pool their resources for the preservation of a unified state, including Ulugh Muhammad [Kazan], Ahmad Khan, the Shibanids [Central Asia] and the Girayids [Girays]. In fact, the Tatar khanates were ruled by a single dynasty. The idea of a main state, the Takht Eli (Domain of the Throne) continued to exist'.

Moreover, 'the period of fragmentation would have been overcome and the Tatar Khanates (or part of them) might have merged into a single state, possibly under the leadership of members of the Girayids. But Muscovy soon began to conquer the Tatar Khanates, including the Crimean Khanate' (ibid., p. 805).

Tatar representatives made these kind of arguments to the Crimean Tatars in 2014-15, in part on Moscow's behalf; but without much success.

Mongols, Eurasians

Russian Eurasianists would also like to see a pan-Tatar partner for the Eastern Slavs in their Eurasian project. According to the supporters of Aleksandr Dugin and Lev Gumilev, 'the Crimean Tatars are a Turkic ethnic group that can feel comfortable in the bosom of Eurasianism.' In typically florid language, they have argued that the Crimean Tatars are part of 'the political merger of the Forest and the Steppe,' the 'duumvirate' of 'Russians and Finno-Ugric' peoples with 'Volga Tatars, Bashkirs.' 'The frames of Eurasianism are so broad that they fit the Buddhist culture of the Kalmyks and the

Islamic culture of the Crimean Tatars' (Gulevich 2012). Pavel Zarifullin, the head of the Gumilev Center and author of *The New Scythians* (newskif.su), has explicitly defined a Russian-Crimean Tatar Union as the basis for a newly invigorated Eurasianism.

Crimea has a special role... a sacred value as the laboratory of the Friendship of the Peoples... Crimea was the end of the last Scythian kingdom and the beginning of others... The Russians, Ukrainians, Tatars, and Kazakhs all trace their origins from the Scythians...The Crimean Tatar people are by default Eurasian... Crimea is the starting point of any project, and will become a miniature of Eurasia ('Russko-krymsko tatarskii soyuz' 2014).

Rival Indigenous Groups

The claim to indigenous status can degenerate into a game of leap-frog as to who came first. At the height of the early discussion about the Crimean Tatars' possible status in Crimea, in May 2014, 'Putin reminded the Crimean Tatars that the Greeks were in the Crimea before' them ('Putin napomnil' 2014). The Crimean 'Prime Minister' Sergei Aksenov (2014) has endorsed the myth that 'Greeks – and not Crimean Tatars – are the indigenous people of Crimea'. Other claims of precedence include the Ossetians who claim to be 'native' to Crimea because they are descended from the Alans ('Pochemu osetiny' 2014). The idea of a Jewish 'indigenous' claim to Crimea, possibly via the Krymchaks and Karaïm (local Turkic-speaking Jews), has been revived as a further rival to the Crimean Tatar claim, as has the myth that Western Jewish bankers were behind the idea to create a Jewish autonomy in Crimea in Stalin's time (Kirilova 2018).

But the Greeks are the most popular supposed rival minority indigenous group. The 'Greeks', however, were not a continuous presence in Crimea; they arrived in four separate 'waves' (Hromenko 2017, pp. 93-5). First were the classical Hellenes, second were the Byzantine *Rhōmaïoi*, third were the Ottoman or Aegean Greeks who arrived after 1783, but were expelled in 1944, and fourth are modern Greeks. The first two waves of Crimean Greeks were originally a multi-ethnic population, like the Crimean Tatars: 'The previous Greek population of Crimea was not so much a Hellenic diaspora but rather a conglomerate of descendants of ancient Crimean peoples consolidated by Greek Orthodoxy: Tauris, Scythians, Goths, Alans, Cumans, etc. In this sense the "Crimean Greeks" were closely related to Crimean Tatars, a considerable part of whom were the descendants of the very same ancestors' (Hayvoronskyi 2014). The Orthodox faith bound the 'Greeks' together as Christians, as Islam did for the Crimean Tatars. The deportation of around 30,000 Armenians and 'Greeks' in 1778 was actually organised by the Russian authorities (Vozgrin 2013, volume two, p. 369), partly to 'protect' the local Christians, but also ultimately to replace them with the third wave, the 'Arnauts', the Hellenic Greeks from the Aegean who were militantly anti-Ottoman. Many 'Greeks' of the second wave who remained in Crimea converted to Islam, becoming

Crimean Tatars, in order to stay put. Some now live around Mariupol'. These so-called 'Azov Greeks' traditionally spoke a dialect Rumeika or Urum, which is close to Crimean Tatar.

The Bandits' Nest

The deconstructive approach also makes use of Nadinskii's attack on the Crimean Tatar 'state' as basically just a criminal enterprise, encapsulated by his use of the compound noun 'Tatar-robbers' (*tatary-razboiniki*) (Nadinskii 1951, p. 60; Razboino-paraziticheskoe' 2014). It also recycles the narrative of the damage wrought by their constant wars against Muscovy (Baklanov 2014). The Crimean Tatars burned Moscow in 1571. Raiding of the north and the payment of tribute by Moscow began in 1474 - some historians would say even earlier (Chukhlib 2017, p. 15) - and did not cease until after the twin Treaties of Karlowitz in 1699 and Constantinople in 1700.

This mythologised memory fuels Russian antagonism towards the Crimean Tatars - though also a certain Crimean Tatar pride from the opposite point of view (Khodarkovsky 2002, p. 223). But if Crimean Tatars might aggrandise the Girays' military exploits, Russian historians tend to belittle them, presenting the military side of the Crimean Tatar Khanate less as a formidable battlefield opponent and more of a volunteer cavalry for grabbing slaves. Slave raids would need 'almost a third of the entire male population' (Shirokorad 2015, p. 25). 'The treatment of captives and slaves was always cruel and brutal' (Nadinskii 1951, p. 68).

Russian historians also downplay the Girays' claim to be 'white bones', i.e. direct descendants of Genghis Khan. This was a powerful symbol within the ideology of the steppe (O'Neill 2018), at a time when the leaders of Muscovy needed to assert their own rival claims to the Chinggisid legacy. Or rather, prevent the rising influence of those who would use it in Moscow (Kraliuk 2018, p. 88).

No Normal Economy

In Russian mythology the itinerant and often absent Crimean Tatars therefore supposedly had little impact on day-to-day economic life on the peninsula. 'There was no local economy as such, just theft, mainly of people' (Hromenko 2018b). This repeats an old trope established by Nadinskii: 'The Crimean Tatars engaged in peaceful economic activity in small numbers and unwillingly. Their main occupations were endless wars and predatory raids with the aim of robbery and profit'. These raids were every year, or even twice a year. Moreover, 'The economic life of Crimea went into serious decline after the incursion of the Tatars'. The Turks were not interested in the cultural-economic development of the peoples they ruled' (Nadinskii 1951, pp 65, 66, 59 and 64).

In so far as there was foreign trade, it was supposedly conducted by the Genoese (Chernyakhovskii and Chernyakhovskaya 2015, pp. 172-5; Nadinskii 1951, p. 59), during their domination of the

southern coast from the thirteenth to the fifteenth century in a loose connection of city-states known as 'Gazara', 1266 to 1475. The Genoese worked naturally with still numerous Greeks, Germans (Goths) and Slavs. 'Each of these peoples: Germans, Greeks and Italians - had more basis to consider themselves the rooted people of Crimea than the Tatars who reached it later. Although they were not rooted to Crimea' (Chernyakhovskii and Chernyakhovskaya 2015, p. 175). After the Genoese, Slavs worked the fields, producing grain (O'Neill 2018).

The Crimean Tatar therefore supposedly earned the animosity of all their neighbours. 'So if it hadn't been the Russians, then the Poles, Germans or other strong state would have done away with the bandits' nest in Crimea' (Shirokorad 2015, p. 27). Civilisation only began in Crimea after annexation: 'the flourishing of the peninsula [only] began after the return [sic] of the Russian population' after 1783 (Kodzova 2015, p. 4).

And Crimea made more geopolitical sense in Russian hands. 'The joining (*prisoedinenie*) of Crimea to Russia was of progressive significance. With the elimination of the Crimean Khanate, the threat of ruinous raids from the south to the Russian and Ukrainian lands was permanently eliminated. Turkey lost the main base of its aggression in the Northern Black Sea Coast' (Zotkin 1987).

Crimean Tatar - Cossack Conflict

Another aspect of Russian divide-and-rule is to claim that the Crimean Tatars and Ukrainian Cossacks were mortal enemies ('Kazaki i Tatory'). In Nadinskii's view of the world, the Crimean Tatars inflicted nothing but suffering on an undifferentiated 'Russia'. 'Their endless robber raids brought great material and moral harm to the Russian people. This froze the normal development of the young Muscovite state' (Nadinskii 1951, p. 75). Modern Russian commentators have tried to be more subtle, claiming that 'Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars are irreconcilable neighbours, between whom there neither was nor is any alternative to fierce competition'. Moreover, 'Turks and Tatars strove to enslave Ukrainians and convert them to Islam. The switch to Russia's supremacy saved Ukraine from Turkic-Tatar expansion'. 'Ukrainian Cossacks as Christians led a sacred religious war against Turks and Tatars' (Brekhunenko 2017, pp. 229-52).

Slavery looms large in the modern Russian narrative ('Krym i torgovlya rabami' 2018; cf 'Slavyanskikh rabov tatory' 2017). Figures of 2-3 million captured Slavic slaves are common (Prostakov 2014), even going as high as five million (Galini 2016). There is even a related myth that the Ukrainian national dish became *salo* (pig fat), because the Crimean Tatars plundered everything but pork from their Cossack neighbours (Starikov and Belyaev 2015, p. 211).

Denigrate Crimean Tatar 'Civilisation'

The Khanate era is depicted, in Nadinskii's terms (1951, pp. 64 and 75), as the 'darkest' (*mrachnyi*) period in Crimean history. The Crimean Tatars were just one of successive waves of warrior-nomads, after the Khazars and the Polovtsians, none of whom put down real roots (unlike the Scythians). One source comments at length: 'the Tatars lived exclusively in the steppe of Crimea. Any free man could visit the peninsula and see the fortifications and places of worship, remnants of houses and so on, built in the towns founded on the peninsula by Greeks, Goths, Italians, Turks and other peoples of Crimea, and compare the [inferior] quantity and quality with those built by the Tatars...the famous Khans' palace at Bakhchisaray completely burned down in 1736 and was only restored again when Crimea was conclusively captured by Russian troops. It was fully finished for the visit of Catherine the Great on 20 May 1787' (Shirokorad 2015, p. 26). Only after 1783, did 'Novorossiia and Crimea begin to develop towns. Sevastopol was founded [*zakladyvaetsya* – sic] as the main base of our fleet' (Starikov and Belyaev 2015, p. 224).

Metastasis What Came After

Putin opened this statue to Alexander III in 2017, in the Livadia Palace Park in Yalta. Alexander was the ultra-conservative penultimate Tsar, ruling from 1881 to 1894, untainted by Nicholas II's failings, and therefore a favourite of Putin's. But the broader point was to valorise the 'silver era' of the Russian empire and Crimea; the bas relief shows all the benefits of civilisation, modernity and culture that the Russian Empire brought to Crimea. No matter that many of the symbols depicted seem to have been chosen at random: the Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow was already open and Dostoevsky was already dead before Alexander III ascended the throne ('Chto nTe tak' 2017).



Putin opens the Alexander III memorial. Source of photos: <http://crimea.ria.ru/photo/20171118/1112778230.html>

Collaboration

The most toxic myth of all, that of Crimean Tatar disloyalty and 'collaboration' in 1941-4, is also still in circulation (Roman'ko 2014) – having never really gone away before 2014 (Vergasov 1969). One

can also find the statistically unlikely assertion, which somehow found its way into Beria's justification for the 1944 Deportation, that '20,000 Crimean Tatars' deserted the Red Army in 1941 ('Krymskie tatary vo vremia Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny' no date). To be fair, many are circumspect about making such an allegation, but Crimean 'Prime Minister' Aksenov (2018) is fond of code words like 'traitors' (*predateli*). A new History of Crimea for tenth graders in 2019 talked of 'the wide involvement of the Crimean Tatars in collaborationist activity compared with other ethnic groups' and claimed 'the majority of the Tatar population was loyal to the Germans, and many actively helped'. It was withdrawn for consultations ('Novyi uchebnik', 2019). There are more nuanced studies by the likes of Andrei Mal'gin (2009).

The New Ukrainian Approach

Ukrainian writing on Crimea has less of a pre-history than Russian (Wilson 2017; Hromenko 2018a, pp. 8-44). It can draw on Ukrainian thinking about Crimea from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Hrabovskiy and Losev 2017a), but the then national movement was divided, with many openly hostile to the 'traditional' Crimean Tatar enemy. There was no 'second wave' of historiography after 1944; because there wasn't much independent Ukrainian historiography at all in the 1950s, especially on sensitive subjects like Crimea. There was less need to address the Crimean Tatar question until 1989, as the Crimean Tatars were in exile. Finally, between independence in 1991 and the annexation of Crimea in 2014, the paradigm, with some notable exceptions, was statehood versus separatism – leaders in Kyiv were wary of siding too closely with the Crimean Tatars for fear of provoking pro-Russian agitation.

So Ukrainian writing on the subject has only come of age since 2014. Unlike the colonial logic of 'Krym Nash', Ukraine's approach is driven by state-building logic. Before 2014, Ukrainians statisticians were worried that siding with the Crimean Tatars might undermine Ukraine's own claim to the peninsula: the idea of joint patrimony over Crimea is a better fit for post-2014 realities. Ukrainian historiography can now accept much, but not all, of a Crimean Tatar historiography based on indigenous status.

Cossack-Crimean Tatar Cooperation

Negative stereotypes proliferated in the Soviet era, even in Ukraine, partly because of 'the absence during the "communist period" of our own national Turkological school' (Chukhlib 2017, p. 10). But negative feelings towards the Crimean Tatars also had their roots in both Ukrainian folk and

intellectual traditions (Kraliuk 2018), before Soviet rule promoted this conflict narrative exclusively. A 'black legend' took hold (Hrabovskyi and Losev 2017b, p. 79).

Some Ukrainians still follow a 'traditional' line stressing confrontation, particularly between Cossacks and Crimean Tatars (Kalandriuk 2017). However, there is a growing trend among modern scholars like Taras Chukhlib (2017) to emphasise cooperation and mutual influence (his book even has a picture of a Cossack on every even page facing a Crimean Tatar on every odd page). Or even to upgrade that to a narrative of the 'common fate' of Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars (Stepanchenko 2017). Historically, it is argued 'relations were characterised not only by years of military confrontations and mutual intrusion, but also, to a greater extent, diplomatic truces and unions, and therefore the peaceful coexistence of Ukrainians with Crimean Tatars' (Chukhlib 2017, p. 10).

There has been a revival of Ukrainian Orientalism, most notably in the 2018 book by Petro Kraliuk entitled *Fifteen hundred years together. The common history of the Ukrainian and Turkic peoples*. Cossacks adopted 'eastern "Tatar" political-cultural values' (Chukhlib 2017, p. 9). Or more strongly, 'the modern Ukrainian nation, even if someone didn't like this, arose from the interaction of Slavic and Turkic ethnoses' (Kraliuk 2018, p. 5).

One Ukrainian book published in 2017, *Russian Myths about Ukraine and her Past*, devoted a whole section to debunking common Russian tropes about the Crimean Tatars, and exposing them as divide-and-rule tactics. One myth was that 'Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars are irreconcilable neighbours, between whom there neither was nor is any alternative to fierce competition'. Another was that 'Turks and Tatars strove to enslave Ukrainians and convert them to Islam. The switch to Russia's supremacy saved Ukraine from Turkic-Tatar expansion'. Third was the Russian myth that 'Ukrainian Cossacks as Christians led a sacred religious war against Turks and Tatars' (Brekhunenko 2017, pp. 229-52). On the contrary, the two were natural allies against Muscovy, and 'the Crimean Khanate had neither the strength nor any plans to absorb Ukrainian lands'. 'Throughout its history', the Khanate was always open to, and tolerant of, Cossack settlers - a 'free Ukrainian population' existed in Crimea 'since the times of Kievan Rus'' (ibid., pp. 242 and 237).

As to the chronology of cooperation, 'symbolically, as a subject of international relations, the Zaporozhian Sich concluded its first (1624) and last (1711) agreements with the Crimean Khanate' (Chukhlib 2017, p. 9). It was via creative tension with one another that the Cossacks and the Crimean Khanate established their freedom of manoeuvre. Informal cooperation had an even longer history (Hromenko 2016, p. 10). 'Military cooperation between the Cossacks and Tatars started from the sixteenth century, and from the 1620s military-political unions were concluded' (Brekhunenko 2017, p. 238). It was only thanks to 'political and military cooperation between the Ukrainian Hetmanate

and the Crimean Khanate' that: the Poles were defeated in 1648-52; that the Hetmanate and Sich were able 'to "enter" on the international arena'; and that 'the Cossacks were able to gain the military advantage during the Ukrainian-Russian war of 1658-1659 and to win the close victory over the Moscow Tsardom at the Battle of Konotop in 1659' (Chukhlib 2017, p. 191). This rather skips over the fact that the Cossacks joined in wars against the Khanate in 1687 and 1689.

There was even a hybrid local mini state of Cossacks and Crimean Tatars, *Khans'ka Ukraïna* ('Khanate Ukraine'), which existed from the 1680s to the 1760s. It was a loose, basically military formation between the Dnipro and Dnistr rivers (west from what is now Crimea to Moldova, in Crimean Tatar known as *Edisan*), made up of Cossacks who accepted vassalage to the Khanate, useful as a buffer zone and pressure point on both Poland and Moldova (Chukhlib 2017, p. 151; Yakubovych 2017a).

Conversely, many Crimean Tatars settled in Ukraine, and in Polish and Lithuanian lands. In Litva (the medial name for the Grand Duchy of 'Lithuania'), the Lipka Tatars may have reached 200,000 in number. In what is now Ukraine, they were most concentrated in Volyn', where they lived as separate communities until the 1930s (Yakubovych 2017, pp. 133-46; Yakubovych 2018; Yakubovych, Kraliuk and Shchepans'kyi 2018).

Slavery

This narrative requires some intellectual gymnastics around the most contentious issue of all – slavery. On the one hand, it is still natural for Ukrainian historians to stress that the biggest impact of slave-raiding fell on the proximate, that is proto-Ukrainian, population. According to Chukhlib, 'the general loss of population from Ukrainian lands from the raids of the Horde from the end of the fifteenth to the middle of the seventeenth century was around 2.5 million'. This was 'more than Africa's losses during the transatlantic slave trade' (Chukhlib 2017, p. 21; cf Kołodziejczyk 2006). Ukrainian historians have sometimes been tempted to take over the Russian argument of a supposed Slavic majority in Crimea, made up of assimilated slaves, but stress that these were Ukrainians, mainly taken from lands immediately to the north. Kraliuk argues, however (2018, p. 83), that Slavic captives 'did not make up their own ethnic group, but were Islamised and assimilated'.

On the other hand, Ukrainian historians do not want to undermine the idea of cooperation too much. They argue that Rus' rulers also kept slaves. Furthermore, Crimea didn't have a mono-economy, i.e. just slaves. It was also a huge exporter of grain, fish and salt (Kraliuk 2018, p. 82). According to Vozgrin (1992, p. 175), it was normal to free slaves after five to six years. And 'slavery in Crimea had already almost completely disappeared in the sixteenth to seventeenth centuries'. Some

captives worked as galley slaves; others 'improved their social and economic status while living in the Ottoman world' (Magocsi 2014, p. 48).

Crimean Tatar Civilisation

In contrast to the denigration of the Crimean Tatars as simple slave traders, an important book appeared in 2016, by Mykhailo Yakubovych, *Philosophical Thought of the Crimean Khanate*, which depicted the Khanate as an oasis of culture, in constant symbiotic contact with the rest of the Islamic and Ottoman world (Yakubovych 2016). Crimean Tatar intellectuals were an organic part of the wider world of Islamic learning, like Abu Bakr Kalandar (author of the sixteenth century Persian-language Kalandar), and Abu l-Baka al-Kafauvi (author of the seventeenth century philosophical dictionary 'Book of general understandings'). And vice-versa. The famous Ottoman architect Mimar Sinan, best-known for the Suleiman mosque in Istanbul, also built the sixteenth century Juma-Jami mosque in the western Crimean city of Yevpatoriia. The Khanate's culture was built in turn on the synthesis of traditions before 1475, when 'three civilisations came together on the Crimean peninsula – the Tatars, the West European [Genoese] and the Byzantine' (Kraliuk 2018, p. 77).

Far from being warlike, 'what distinguishes Ukrainian Islam even today is tolerance and respect to alternative views, even more, interest in them' (Yakubovych 2016). Vozgrin (1992, p. 135) turns the military argument on its head. The Crimean Tatar elite were soldiers; but there was no local idea of jihad (holy war). 'The Crimean Khans acted as purely military leaders, not ideological chiefs'.

Parallel Fates

For two centuries until 1783, the Crimean Tatars and Cossacks leveraged one another: the Cossacks sought more autonomy from Poland, the Crimean Tatars sought more autonomy from the Ottomans. Each needed the other to survive between Poland, Russia and the Ottoman Empire. 'The situation of the Crimean Khanate in the Ottoman Empire was very similar to the situation of Ukrainian lands under Poland, and then the Hetmanate and Slobids'ka Ukraine under Muscovy and the Russian Empire' (Hrabovskyi and Losev, 2017b, p. 10).

So another parallel in modern Ukrainian historiography is that the Cossacks and Crimean Tatars both lost their statehood at the same time. When Crimea was conquered, the Russian Empire no longer needed the Cossacks. Crimea became 'independent', but a de facto Russian protectorate, in 1774; the Zaporozhian Sich was abolished in 1775. 'It was maybe paradoxical, but the freedom of the Ukrainian Cossacks was closely "interlaced" with the freedom of the Crimean Tatars' (Kraliuk 2018, p. 99).

‘National revival’ in the nineteenth century then occurred in parallel because it was supposedly dictated by similar structural conditions. ‘In the nineteenth century Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars started and passed through the cultural phase of building modern nations’ at the same time, and ‘at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century began the political phase of nation-building, and in 1917 started their national revolutions’ together (Ivanets’ 2017, p. 322). ‘The state of the two peoples on the eve of 1917 had definitive typological similarity’ (Ivanets’ 2016, p. 131).

Parallel State-Building: 1917-18

The same partnership principle can supposedly be seen when it comes to attempts to restore statehood. Beginning in 2017, Ukraine began an official program of celebrating the events of 1917-21. Russia under Putin had an ambiguous attitude to the centenary of 1917, Putin being no friend of revolution; but Ukraine’s official attitude was celebratory, to the extent of often ignoring problematic issues of the era, and drawing crude parallels with contemporary events (Lytvyn 2018). But the centenary of the first Qurultay and Crimean People’s Republic in 1917 is now presented as a similar story of ‘national self-determination’, an ‘analogue’ of the Ukrainian People’s Republic, proceeding through the same phases of local representation committees becoming self-declared parliaments, that first declared autonomy and then independence (Ivanets’ 2017a, p. 334; Ivanets’ 2018a). One source even talked of the ‘Ukrainian-Crimean Tatar union of the revolutionary era’ in 1917 (Hromenko 2016, pp. 11, 10 and 131).

There was ‘partnership... of the Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar national movements in the case of turning the territory of the former empire of the Romanovs into a democratic federal republic, in the struggle for the right of nations to self-determination and against Russian centralism’. But a deeper, ‘strategic union’ was also possible. Negotiations between the Crimean Tatars and Kyiv were held in July 1917, and Crimean Tatars attended the Congress of Peoples in Kyiv in September 1917. Sometimes the Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar parties ran joint lists, as in the Simferopol city elections in July 1917 (Ivanets’ 2017a, p. 338). Andrii Ivanets’ speculates that ‘partner relations’ could have developed into some kind of associated statehood arrangement, with the Crimean Tatars seeking some kind of “partner-protector” (ibid, p. 149); although in reality the UNR often surprised others, including at Brest-Litovsk, by its lack of interest in Crimea.

The Ukrainian and Crimean Republics recognised one another. At the time, the Ukrainians’ federal approach and innovative emphasis on national minority rights could have led to closer cooperation, but a loose arrangement seemed fine, before the emergence of the Bolshevik threat led to strategic

regrets. Ukraine without Crimea and without the Black Sea Fleet was strategically vulnerable (Ivanets' 2016, p. 151). The Crimean Tatar movement in Crimea lost power to the Bolsheviks in January 1918, the Ukrainian movement lost power in Kyiv to the Bolsheviks in February. But the restored UNR government in Kyiv organised the ambitious, if ultimately unsuccessful, military mission of Petro Bolbochan to Crimea in April 1918. Bolbochan captured Simferopol, and some of the Black Sea Fleet at Sevastopol began to defect, but he was soon ejected by the Germans (Hromenko 2018a). Moreover, relations between the Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars had broken down by the time of Bolbochan's mission, with the Crimean Tatars seeking full independence, a restored Khanate, under German and/or Turkish protection (Ivanets' 2018a, p. 153). There is no real parallel with the events of 2014.

Ivanets' (2018b, p. 87) speculates that a Crimean autonomy could have operated within the UNR, just as a Moldovan ASSR operated within Soviet Ukraine after 1921. The Bolsheviks faced a similar dilemma. The 'unrealised project' of Crimea joining the Ukrainian SSR was frustrated by politics trumping economics (Yefimenko 2014), and the Bolsheviks' tactical preference for a beacon to spread the revolution to the near and middle east.

Another retrospective tendency is the recent shift in Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar historiography away from seeing Ismail Gasprinskii (1851-1914) as a founding father. Gasprinskii was traditionally celebrated as an intellectual figure of international renown; but was ultimately a creature of his time, loyal to the empire, and his Crimean patriotism was embodied in a broader Islamism and pan-Turkism (Ivanets' 2018a, p. 19).

Noman Çelebicihan (1885-1918) is a better fit for contemporary needs. In 2017, stylised posters of him appeared in Kyiv and a biography was translated into Ukrainian, having first appeared in Crimean Tatar in 2002 (Kandym 2017). Çelebicihan united all the aspects of national revival, organisational, ideological and spiritual, symbolising the moment of 'transition of the indigenous Crimean ethnos into a qualitatively new state of ethnonation', 'a subject of political life' (Ivanets' 2018a, p. 148; Ivanets' 2017). Çelebicihan also 'well understood – unlike many Ukrainian leaders of the central Rada – that national military forces were the guarantee of success' in a hostile environment (Kandym 2017, p. 5), and attempted to set up Crimean Tatar battalions after the Bolsheviks seized power in Petrograd. He was also sanctified by his murder by the Bolsheviks in February 1918. A 'Noman Çelebicihan Battalion' of largely Crimean Tatar volunteers was named after him in 2015 (Yakubovych 2017b). The participation of Crimean Tatars in both the Maidan demonstrations and the war in the east helps undercut the Russian narrative that both were dominated by Ukrainian nationalist extremists.



This poster appeared in Kyiv in December 2017, for the centenary of the first Qurultay. Source: author's own photo.

Conclusion

This article is not about public opinion. Nor does it claim that all Crimean Tatars, Russians or Ukrainians subscribe to the points of view outlined. But it does claim that there are coherent rival opinion sets in formation that will drive discourse in the future. Each of the three has its internal logic. The Crimean Tatars' claim to indigenesness has survived a long campaign of repression since 2014. The collaborationist alternative leads either to an apolitical Islam or to a pan-Tatarism that is Kazan-centric. Pan-Turkism is unlikely so long as Turkey is aloof and Erdoğan and Putin are strategic allies. The Crimean Tatars could embrace a broader Eurasianism, but the idea has never received full Kremlin backing. As also the idea of a multi-ethnic 'people of Crimea', which the leadership of the occupied peninsula uses mainly a cover for ethnic repression. One long-term possibility might be a kind of neutralism: the idea that Crimean Tatars should take no side but their own, because they are the victim of a conflict between two Slavic peoples (Akadyrov 2019). But this would imply leaving the embryonic partnership with the Ukrainian state, which would create obvious geopolitical risks.

The Russian position tends towards settler discourse, marginalising broader ideas that could accommodate the Crimean Tatars on their own terms. The ongoing militarisation of the peninsula only makes this settler discourse stronger. As does the arrival of more Russians. According to evidence before the Ukrainian parliament: 'On official figures of Russian statistics in the four and a half years of occupation 247,500 people have moved to Crimea... almost 11% of the existing population. Given the "uninvited" visitors, as well as the natural movement (birth rate/mortality),

during the occupation, the population of Crimea has already changed by 20-25%' ('Minyayaut' naseleynya' 2018).

The Ukrainian trend towards a discourse of parallel development and state-building also seems embedded, although it coexists both with residual anti-Tatar sentiment and the claim of a directly Ukrainian Crimea (Halychanets' 2017). Before the annexation, Kyiv often seemed to view the Crimean Tatars' claims as an obstacle to maintaining the quiescence of local Russian-speakers. Since the annexation, Kyiv has seen indigenism as a useful part of its claims under international law.

The Russian settler discourse is obviously divergent from the other two. There is a rapprochement between the Crimean Tatar and Ukrainian discourses, but is only in its early stages.

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