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978-0-521-07760-6 - The Russian Annexation of the Crimea 1772-1783

Alan W. Fisher

Excerpt

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## I

*The Crimean Khanate in the  
Ottoman Empire*

The palace of the Khan in Bahçesaray bore an inscription which described Khan Kırım Giray (1758–64) as follows: ‘Kırım Giray Khan, son of his excellency Devlet Giray, the source of peace and security, wise sovereign, his imperial star rose above the glorious horizon. His beautiful Crimean throne gave brilliant illumination to the whole world.’<sup>1</sup> The court poet who composed this eulogy was attributing to an eighteenth-century Khan characteristics belonging to his predecessors of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. By 1750, and in many ways by 1650, the previously powerful authority of the Khan and of the whole Khanate had declined to only a shadow of its former glory. Even as late as 1670, the Khan called himself, ‘Of the Great Horde, and Great Iurt, of the Kıpçak Steppe, Crimean State, of the innumerable Tatars and Nogays, Great Sovereign, His Excellency Giray Khan’.<sup>2</sup> The causes of this decline, not recognized by the Ottomans or the Tatars themselves, can be traced to the internal structure of the Khanate and to its political relationship with the Ottoman Empire.

## ORIGINS OF THE CRIMEAN KHANATE

While Turkic nomads had for centuries intermittently passed through the northern Black Sea area, breaking up at least temporarily what political and economic unity might have existed before their appearance, they gained firm political control of the area only in the mid-thirteenth century with the Mongol–Tatar

<sup>1</sup> A. Borzenko and A. Negri, ‘Bakhchisaraiskaia arabskaia i turetskaia nadpisi’, *ZOOID*, II (1848), p. 495.

<sup>2</sup> A. Skal’kovskii, ‘Zaniatie Kryma v 1783 g.’, *Zhurnal ministerstva narodnago prosveshcheniia* (hereafter cited as *ZhMNP*), xxx (1841), part II, p. 3.

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conquests. The Crimean peninsula and the steppeland around it became an important province of the Golden Horde, or western part of the Mongol-Tatar Empire. For almost two centuries the unity of the Golden Horde weathered severe storms, both external and internal, and the Crimea remained one of its integral parts. In the mid-fifteenth century, however, rivalries between aspirants to leadership served to break up the Golden Horde into first two parts and then four, each ruled by its own Tatar Khan. The Khanate of Kazan on the Volga broke away from the Horde in 1438; the third, appearing in 1441, was the Khanate of the Crimea, first led by Hacı Giray; the fourth, in the same year, was that of Astrakhan.<sup>1</sup>

According to Tatar historical tradition, Hacı Giray was a descendant of Çingiz Khan, via Coçi, Tokay Timur, and Taş Timur.<sup>2</sup> The date of his assuming independent power in the Crimea, however, is a matter of dispute. Sometime between 1420 and 1441, Hacı Giray founded a dynasty which would rule the Crimea without interruption until 1783, the date of the Russian annexation. One of the major reasons for Hacı Giray's strength and for his success in establishing an independent Khanate was the migration to the Crimea from the Golden Horde of four of its most important clans: the Şirins, Argıns, Barıns and Kipçaks. These clans enjoyed much influence over the Khan because of their numbers, military strength, and a tradition of power in the Golden Horde.<sup>3</sup>

Under Hacı Giray's rule and that of his successors, Nurdevlet and Mengli Giray until the 1470s, the Crimean Tatars played an important role in Lithuanian-Muscovite-Golden Horde relations. Hacı Giray was usually aligned with Lithuania and attempted to prevent Muscovy from taking complete control of Kazan.

<sup>1</sup> B. Spuler, *The Mongol Period* (Leiden, 1960), pp. 47-56; 80-2.

<sup>2</sup> Halim Giray Sultan, *Gülben-i hanan*, p. 6.

<sup>3</sup> H. Inalcık, 'Yeni vesikalara göre Kırım Hanlığının Osmanlı tabiliğine girmesi ve ahidname meselesi', *Bellekten*, VIII/31 (1944), p. 199; Halim Giray Sultan, pp. 13-14, gives only the date of his death, 1466. Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, II (Ankara, 1964), p. 425, says he became Khan in 1420. Inalcık, 'Hadjdji Giray', *Encyclopedia of Islam* (new edition), III (Leiden, 1965), p. 44, says all that is known is that by 1433 Hacı Giray was ruling as Khan. Spuler, p. 95, on the basis of Mongol, Russian, Polish as well as Tatar sources, sets the date at 1441.

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Mengli Giray reversed the alliances after 1468 and tried to establish better relations with Ivan III, Grand Prince of Moscow, against Poland and the remnants of the Golden Horde. Russian historians, such as V. D. Smirnov and I. B. Grekov, consider Mengli Giray, along with the last Khan, Şahin Giray, as the two greatest of the Crimean Khans, i.e., Khans friendly to Russia.

## CRIMEAN KHAN BECOMES OTTOMAN VASSAL

Genoese traders had been in the Crimea all during the domination of the Golden Horde. Their settlements grew during the period of internal Tatar struggle until the end of the fourteenth century when they controlled the whole southern coast of the Crimea. After the establishment of the Crimean Khanate, the Genoese, centered mainly in Kaffa and Azak, tried their best to influence internal Tatar politics and to insure that Tatar leadership was amenable to Genoese presence on the peninsula. The Tatars, however, were more interested in controlling the Genoese and the latter were forced, after 1449, to accept a form of protection from the Poles, their chief economic competitors.<sup>1</sup> In 1454, Hacı Giray made an attack on Kaffa with the help, for the first time, of the Ottoman Turks. Although the attack was unsuccessful, the cooperation of the Ottomans was to change over the next twenty years into at least partial control of the Crimeans. It was to be one of the important Crimean clans, the Şirins, who aided the Ottomans in this effort.

In 1475, the Ottomans again attacked the Genoese in Kaffa, under the command of Grand Vezir Gedik Ahmet Paşa, and with the help of the new Khan, Mengli Giray. This time the Turks prevailed and the Genoese were finally expelled. In the next year Crimean forces under the leader of the Şirin clan, Eminek Mirza, joined the Ottomans in their campaign in Moldavia in an apparent first expression of vassalage. During their absence the Khan of the Great Horde made one last attempt to end Crimean

<sup>1</sup> Marian Malowist, *Kaffa—kolonia genueńska na Krymie i problem wschodni w latach 1453–1475* (Warsaw, 1947); Kortepeter, 'Ottoman Imperial Policy', p. 92, sets the date of this 'protection' as 1462.

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independence and succeeded in deposing Mengli Giray and installing in his place Nurdevlet, Mengli's brother. Mengli fled to Istanbul where he spoke of the Sultan as his 'sovereign'. Upon Eminek Mirza's return to the Crimea he petitioned the Sultan, 'on behalf of all Crimean mirzas, beys, and the whole population', to return Mengli Giray as Khan of the Crimea. With the Sultan's acceptance of the Tatar request, the formal Crimean-Ottoman relationship was established. A Crimean Khan would from now on be confirmed (*tasdik*) by the Sultan upon the request of the Tatar aristocracy. Implied in this event was the right of the Sultan to dismiss ruling Khans as well.<sup>1</sup>

Earlier historians have treated the events of the years 1475-8 as those of the Ottoman conquest of the Crimea. Some have assumed the existence of a Tatar-Ottoman 'treaty' which stipulated all of the legal conditions of Crimean-Ottoman relations. This supposed 'treaty' stated that (1) the Khan had complete internal power and could appoint his civil and military officials; (2) the 'Crimean population' was to 'choose' the Khan from the Giray family of royal princes; (3) as supreme sovereign of the Crimea, the Ottoman Sultan could summon the Khan to participate in military campaigns and the Khan was to have no authority to declare war or to conclude peace on his own initiative; (4) as Caliph, the Sultan was to appoint religious officials for the Crimea; (5) the Khan was permitted the privilege of having his name read in the Friday noon prayers (*hütbe*) and engraved on Crimean coinage. Both of these latter rights were traditional Islamic signs of sovereignty.<sup>2</sup>

But aside from hearsay evidence taken from Westerners, particularly the Genoese, there is no Tatar or Turkish evidence for the existence of such a treaty or conquest. An eighteenth-century Crimean historian wrote that the Khan (Crimean throne) 'entered under Ottoman protection'.<sup>3</sup> This description seems to

<sup>1</sup> Inalcık, 'Yeni vesikalara', pp. 218-19; Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, II, pp. 127-32.

<sup>2</sup> The 'treaty' is described in Peyssonnel, *Traité sur le Commerce de la Mer Noire* (1787), II, pp. 228-30; and in F. Khartakhai, 'Istoricheskaia sud'ba krymskikh tatar', *Vestnik evropy* (1866), II, p. 201.

<sup>3</sup> Halim Giray Sultan, p. 17: 'Kırım tahtını... devlet-i aliyenin himayesi altına girmeği düşündü.'

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be much closer to the truth. The Ottomans acceded to requests from the Tatar aristocracy themselves to send to them the former Khan, who was residing in Istanbul. The Turks did not impose an unpopular Khan by force. If such a document existed it could not have included some of the 'treaty's' provisions, such as the fourth, since they did not take effect until the late sixteenth century.<sup>1</sup>

One aspect of this 'treaty', though suspect, has been widely accepted. Historical tradition has it that this 'treaty' recognized the unique position within the Empire of the Giray family, which claimed to have descended directly from Çingiz Khan. Hence all Girays bore the epithet *Cingiziye*. The convention supposedly provided for the Giray family's mounting the Ottoman throne should the House of Osman be extinguished. Peyssonnel, a French consul in the Crimea in the mid-eighteenth century, however, states that 'neither Crimean historians, nor any ministers of the Khan, nor any Princes know of any convention by which Crimean Khans would mount the Ottoman throne if there were no heirs'. Halim Giray Sultan also makes no reference to any such convention.<sup>2</sup> One Ottoman chronicler mentions that in the years of Hacı Selim Giray (1683–99) discussions along this line took place in Istanbul. But since there is no further evidence, one must suppose that no such convention was ever established.<sup>3</sup>

What is certain about any new Crimean–Ottoman arrangement is that many of the towns and harbors along the southern shore of the Crimea did pass under direct Ottoman control. Kefe, as Kaffa was now called, became the center of a new Ottoman *sancak* (province) which included the Crimean shore and the town of Azak. The Khanate itself comprised the rest of the peninsula and vast stretches of steppeland from Transylvania to the Caucasus. Within the Khanate the Tatars remained virtually independent.

<sup>1</sup> Smirnov, *Krymskoe Khanstvo* (1887), p. 300.

<sup>2</sup> H. A. R. Gibb and H. Bowen, *Islamic Society and the West*, I, part 1 (London, 1950), p. 25. See also A. D. Alderson, *The Structure of the Ottoman Dynasty*, p. 15, quoting from P. Rycaut, *Present State of the Ottoman Empire* (London, 1690), p. 58; Peyssonnel, vol. II, pp. 230–1.

<sup>3</sup> Mehmed Ağa Silâhtar, *Fındıklılı, Silâhtar Tarihi* (Istanbul, 1928), II, p. 340; see Inalcık, 'Giray', *İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, IV (Istanbul, 1948), p. 787.

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The only manifestations of their having entered ‘Ottoman protection’ were, first, the expectation that the Khans and their military forces would participate in Ottoman campaigns when summoned and, second, that the Sultan had the right to confirm the new Khans after they had been chosen by Tatar leaders. That this initial voluntary arrangement was to change over the next three hundred years to the benefit of the Sultans is, however, supported by all the available evidence.

## INTERNAL ORGANIZATION

In theory the Crimean Khanate was a feudal monarchy with the Giray family, led by the Khan, enjoying supreme power in the Khanate. In fact the Giray family was first among equals since the major Crimean clans had an independent historical heritage of their own deriving from their positions within the parent Golden Horde. Tradition demanded that the Girays, descendants of Çingiz Khan, would always provide the Khans, but their real power and authority in the Khanate were dependent upon their relationship with the Ottomans and at the sufferance of the Tatar clans.

*Girays:* The Giray family held three official positions: the Khan, the Kalga Sultan, and Nureddin Sultan. The Kalga and Nureddin were supposed to be heirs to the Khanship, but in practice the Ottoman Sultan and *beys* (clan leaders) often chose other Girays to replace a Khan whom they had deposed. The Khan was only nominally sovereign over the whole Khanate, which included the Nogay steppe, the Crimean peninsula, and the Kuban region of the Caucasus. In practice the Khan controlled only a small amount of land in the Crimean peninsula itself and had limited authority over the nomadic Nogays. The remainder of the Khanate was in the hands of the clans, the Muslim institutions, and the Ottoman Sultan.

In the Crimea, one’s lands were measured by the towns from which one collected taxes. The Khan’s towns included Bahçesaray, Akmeçet, Gözleve, Karasu Bazaar and Orkapısı. In addition, he

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received all revenues from the various salt lakes and utilized all vacant lands.<sup>1</sup> All of the remaining lands of the Khanate provided revenues for the clans, the church, or the Sultan. However, the Khan's income was substantially supplemented by donations from the Sultan at times of accession and in return for military service. The Sultan often assigned to the Khan portions of his revenues from the Crimean towns under Ottoman administration. The Khan also received a small annual tribute from the Hospodars of Wallachia and Moldavia, and until 1699, from the Russian tsars, Poland, and the various Cossack communities. Peyssonnel gives the annual income of the Khan as 578,000 kuruş with 500,000 coming from port taxes at Gözleve, 30,000 from Orkapısı, 12,000 from Moldavian and Wallachian tribute, 2,500 from Kefe (Ottoman) and 600 from other Ottoman donations.<sup>2</sup>

The other two royal members of the administration, the Kalga and Nureddin Sultans, had their own courts separate from that of the Khan at Bahçesaray. They were situated at Akmeçet, and received their annual incomes from towns belonging to the Khan and Ottoman Sultan.<sup>3</sup> In the mid-eighteenth century, the Kalga received annually 21,500 kuruş from taxes collected in Karasu Bazaar, Kefe, and from the tribute from Moldavia and Wallachia, while the Nureddin's income amounted to 5,500 kuruş from the Orkapısı taxes. According to Khartakhai, the Kalga was commander-in-chief of the army and always led it into battle. Baron de Tott, on the other hand, speaking of the

<sup>1</sup> Gözaydin, *Kırım* (Istanbul, 1948), pp. 35–6; F. Lashkov, 'Istoricheskii ocherk krymsko-tatarskago zemlevladieniia', *Izvestiia tavrisheskago uchemnago arkhivnago kommissii* (hereafter cited as *ITUAK*), xxiii (1895), pp. 71–2; Khartakhai, 'Istoricheskaia sud'ba', part II, *Vestnik evropy* (1866), II, p. 143.

<sup>2</sup> Peyssonnel, II, pp. 239–41. The Başbakanlık archives contain a great number of receipts and administrative orders concerning salaries (*senelik salıyanesi*) and donations (*taamiyenin itası*). *Başbakanlık: Cevdet: Hariciye*, No. 6194 (1728, 700,000 kuruş salary); No. 4646 (1724, 18,750 akçes salary); No. 3250 (1743, 100,000 kuruş donation); No. 3392 (1745, 600,000 akçes salary); No. 2851 (1748, 6,000 akçes donation); No. 6812 (1759, 800,000 akçes salary); No. 984 (1760, 25,000 kuruş donation). For tribute, see *ibid.* No. 2086 (1726), 'Kırım hanları ve kalkay sultanları için Boğdan'dan...haraçverilmekte...'

<sup>3</sup> Peyssonnel, II, pp. 254–5. In the Istanbul archives there are several budgetary orders concerning Ottoman salaries for the Kalga Sultans. It appears that the amount varied from year to year. *Başbakanlık: Cevdet: Hariciye*, No. 6326 (1760), 200,000 akçes; No. 3847 (1739), increase from 70,000 to 100,000 akçes; No. 1101 (1708), 541,000 akçes.

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Crimean campaigns in 1768–9, indicates that each of the three royal leaders had his own part of the army.<sup>1</sup> Aside from military leadership, the duties of the two lower royal leaders, and to a large degree those of the Khan himself, seem to have consisted only of spending the incomes which they received. In fact the civil administration of most of the Khanate was in the hands of the clans. It was only during the times of war that the royal family was able to exercise effective leadership.

The brothers and sons of a Khan were called sultans (royal princes) and it was from among these that he usually chose the Kalga and Nureddin Sultans.<sup>2</sup> When a Khan was killed or deposed, the Ottoman Sultan always appointed one of the sultans as the new Khan. As they had a long tradition of conspiring to overthrow their brother or father, the Khan wanted to keep the sultans as far from the center of Crimean administration as possible. He assigned them as military governors (*serasker*) over the various Nogay hordes, and if there were more sultans than hordes, the excess were kept on a private estate of the Ottoman Sultan in Rumelia. The Porte contributed a small allowance for each sultan, as it was in its best interest to keep the sultans from feeling the necessity for interfering in Crimean internal administration.<sup>3</sup> Those kept in Rumelia were called hostages (*rehin*), because, in earlier times, the Sultan had used them to keep the Khan in tighter submission to the Porte. By the mid-eighteenth century, however, the practice of holding ‘hostages’ had become a policy for the Khan’s own protection.<sup>4</sup> Later, during the period of the independent Khanate (1774–83), those sultans who were

<sup>1</sup> Khartakhai, I, p. 208; Baron de Tott, II, p. 151. De Tott wrote that there were three distinct parts of the Crimean army: the Khan’s (100,000), the Kalga’s (60,000), and the Nureddin’s (40,000). These figures were surely exaggerated, perhaps by as much as 400 per cent.

<sup>2</sup> This usage of the term *sultan* differs from common Seljuk and Ottoman practice where only the ruler had this title.

<sup>3</sup> Peyssonnel, II, p. 244. The allowances dispensed from the Ottoman treasury varied greatly from sultan to sultan. *Başbakanlık: Cevdet: Hariyiye*, No. 5494 (1715), 37,000 akçes; No. 5437 (1742), and No. 5434 (1742), both 40,000 akçes; No. 1592 (1751), 30,000 akçes; No. 928 (1762), 15,000 akçes. All of these allowances were given to sons of Khans or of former Khans. No. 630 (1759) is a much larger allowance, 401,400 akçes, but for a brother of a Khan.

<sup>4</sup> *Başbakanlık: Cevdet: Hariyiye*, No. 3849 (1739)—the term *rehin* is used for Sefa Giray Sultan, brother of the Khan, who was on the *çifilik* in Rumelia.



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governors over the Nogays were to be instrumental in causing the internal unrest which brought about the final Russian conquest.

The officials of the court included many traditional Islamic positions, and in many ways the Khan's administration resembled the Ottoman governmental apparatus. The Khan had his treasurer and chief accountant (*defterdar* and *haznedar*), steward (*kapıcı başı*) in charge of the household, and the chief swordbearer (*silâhtar*).<sup>1</sup> The Kalga and Nureddin kept their own courts with similar officials to administer those areas under their control.

Besides the Khan's administration, there were four other types of administration in the Crimea, all in large part independent of the Khan's authority. They were the Muslim institution, the clans, the Nogay hordes, and the Ottoman *sancak*, later *eyalet*, of Kefe.

*Muslim institutions:* The chief religious figure in the Khanate was the *müftü*. Chosen by the Crimean *ulema* (religious leaders), he sat at the head of a wealthy organization composed of all the Muslim clergy and of the extensive *vakıf* lands.<sup>2</sup> The income derived from these lands remained in the hands of the clergy and none went to the civil administration. Each mosque had its own *vakıf* and, since by 1783 there were over 1,500 mosques in the Crimean peninsula alone, the land in the hands of the clergy was substantial.<sup>3</sup>

The second major leader of the Crimean religious institution was the *kadiasker* (chief judge) who, unlike the *müftü*, was appointed by and received his authority from the Ottomans. The Crimean peninsula was divided into numerous small judicial districts, each with its own *kadı* (judge). Theoretically the *kadiasker* appointed each of the *kadis* and was their superior. In practice the *kadiasker* gave only *pro forma* approval to appointments made by the Khan,

<sup>1</sup> Peyssonnel, II, pp. 260–4. The Turkish archives have a few documents showing Ottoman payments to some of the Khan's officials. See *Başbakanlık: Cevdet: Hariciye*, No. 1018 (1755), and No. 6496 (1765).

<sup>2</sup> *Vakıf* lands are those owned by monasteries and other religious institutions, usually accumulated from pious donations. Peyssonnel, II, p. 260. The *vakıf* lands amounted to about 25 per cent of the total land in the Khanate, Gözaydin, *Kırım*, p. 38.

<sup>3</sup> I. F. Aleksandrov, 'O musul'manskom dukhovenstve i upravlenii dukhovnymi delami musul'man v krymu posle ego prisoedinenie k Rossii', *ITUAK*, II (1914), p. 212.

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the Ottoman Sultan, and the clan leaders in their respective areas.<sup>1</sup>

*Clans:* A third group which exercised authority in the Khanate and which often opposed the authority of the Khan was that of the clans. In internal affairs the Khan was limited by prerogatives and privileges of several old and powerful clans which traced their ancestry from lines as old as that of the ruling Giray family and which had preserved their semi-independent character from the time of the break-up of the Golden Horde.

From the very beginning of the Khanate the greatest of the Tatar clans was the Şirin. It controlled all of the land in the eastern part of the Crimean peninsula not under Ottoman administration: north and east of Kefe and along the Sea of Azov. The other clans changed positions in the hierarchy of relative importance from the fifteenth to the eighteenth century. In the fifteenth century, after the Şirin stood the Argın and Barın, while in the eighteenth the top clans, after the Şirin, were the Mansur, Barın and Sicivüt. The Mansur lands included Orkapısı and the whole neck of the peninsula. The Barıns and Argıns divided up the central part neighboring on Karasu Bazaar. Of the non-Ottoman Crimean Peninsula, the clans controlled about 50 per cent of the land.<sup>2</sup>

The leader of each clan, the *bey*, was chosen by the clan elders and was then confirmed by the Khan, in much the same manner that the Khan himself was confirmed by the Ottoman Sultan. At the time of confirmation the Khan would grant the new *bey* a *iarlık* or patent of authority over the lands of his clan. Although it thus appeared that legally the *beys* held office and controlled the lands of their clan at the pleasure of the Khan, in reality the *bey's* confirmation was strictly perfunctory and at no time did a Khan overrule the choice of the clan elders.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, the reverse was usually true. The *beys* of the clans, meeting with the *müftü*, constituted the nominating committee for a new Khan and at the same time the deposing committee for the old one. Seldom did

<sup>1</sup> Peyssonnel, II, p. 262.

<sup>2</sup> Inalcık, 'Yeni vesikalara', p. 199; Lashkov, 'Istoricheskii ocherk', pp. 80–2.

<sup>3</sup> Inalcık, 'Yeni vesikalara', p. 200; F. Lashkov, 'Arkhiivnyiia dannia o beilikakh v Krymskom khanstve', *Arkheologicheskii S'ezd: Trudy*, VI, part IV (Odessa, 1889), p. 100.