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THE RUSSIAN ANNEXATION OF THE CRIMEA 1772-1783

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Note on Turkish transliteration and spelling

Where possible I have followed the guide to Turkish spelling: *Imlâ Kılavuzu*, 5th edition (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1957).

The following diacritical marks have been used:

'ğ' to indicate the Turkish soft 'g', as in 'yoğurt'
'ş' is voiced 'sh' as in shoe
'ç' is voiced 'ch' as in church
'c' in Turkish words is voiced as 'j' in 'jelly'

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Abbreviations

AGS	*Arkhiv gosudarstvennago soveta*
Cahiers	*Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique*
Chteniia	*Chteniia v imperatorskom obshchestve istorii i drevnostei rossiiskikh pri moskovskom universitete*
EI	*Encyclopedia of Islam* (new edition, Leiden, 1960–)
ITUAK	*Izvestiia tavricheskago uchennago arkhivnago kommissii*
PSZ	*Polnoe sobranie zakonov rossiiskoi imperii* (first series)
SIRIO	*Sbornik imperatorskago russkago istoricheskago obshchestva*
ZhMNP	*Zhurnal ministerstva narodnago prosveshcheniia*
ZOOID	*Zapiski imperatorskago odesskago obshchestva istorii i drevnostei*

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Introduction

The Black Sea and its coastal areas have played an important role in the history of Eastern Europe and Western Asia. As an economic zone it served as a rich object of ancient Greek colonization; it was the granary which nourished Constantinople; Scandinavian merchant-warriors, the founders of Kiev Rus, tried to control it for purposes of trade; Asian nomads utilized the steppes to the north of the Black Sea as grazing lands and as their entrance into Eastern Europe; the Ottoman Turks, by gaining control of the entire coastline, made of the Black Sea an Ottoman lake and depended upon its peoples and their produce for economic sustenance; and finally the Russians have made the steppeland their 'bread basket' and have considered control of the sea and much of the area surrounding it a major goal of their foreign policy.[1] As a political zone the Black Sea area was of prime importance to the power of those states which controlled it and its loss to a rival state was always a significant one. Byzantium, Kiev Rus, the Golden Horde, Lithuania, Poland, the Ottoman Empire, Muscovy, all tried to control parts of the area in various periods of its history.

In 1475–8 the Crimean Tatar Khan Mengli Giray acknowledged the suzerainty of the Ottoman Sultan Mehmet II and thus began a three-hundred-year period in which the Ottoman Turks controlled the Black Sea and the lands surrounding it. The importance of the Crimea to the Ottomans during those centuries was at least threefold. First, the Tatar Khanate provided a strong northern defense against the Muscovite state, rapidly growing in power and ambition. Second, the Khans sent their armies on many Ottoman campaigns in the East against Persia and in the

[1] While no exhaustive historical study has been made of the Black Sea area as a unit, Fernand Braudel in *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II* (Paris, 1949), pp. 79–81, raises some interesting questions concerning its economic role throughout history, questions given a provocative answer for the sixteenth century by C. M. Kortepeter, 'Ottoman Imperial Policy and the Economy of the Black Sea Region in the Sixteenth Century', *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, LXXXVI (April–June 1966), pp. 86–113.

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West against the Hapsburgs and Poles. Third, the cities in the Crimea were important economic and trading centers for the Ottomans and were noted especially for the quantity and quality of Slavic slaves always available.

From the Russian point of view, Ottoman control of the Crimea was at least a nuisance and often a danger for Muscovite security. The mouths of two of the three most important Russian rivers—the Don and the Dnepr—were located within the Crimean Khanate. More important, Tatar raiders made frequent incursions into lands claimed by Muscovy and carried off thousands of prisoners to be sold as slaves. It was embarrassing and frustrating for a state calling itself the Third Rome to be continuously humiliated by a Muslim neighbor, especially by a state which was in theory an heir to the Mongol tradition. In the second half of the eighteenth century the Russian Empress Catherine II pursued a policy of colonization of the southern Russian steppeland. So long as the Crimea was under Ottoman control, she feared that such settlements would not be secure. In 1783, nine years after the conclusion of a major Russian military victory over the Ottomans, Catherine annexed the Crimean peninsula with its Muslim Tatar population to the Russian Empire.

For the Ottoman Empire, the loss of the Crimea was significant for both physical and psychological reasons. In the midst of its period of decline and at a time when traditional means of securing recruits for the army had broken down entirely, the loss of Tatar military forces was crucial. No longer could the Empire expect a secure northern frontier, for the Russians were now on the Black Sea and their Black Sea fleet would soon be built. The Russians would now have an easier route to the Ottoman Balkan provinces, and thus to Istanbul itself, should they ever choose to use it. From the psychological standpoint also, the loss of the Crimea was important. While the Ottomans had been suffering defeats at the hands of the infidels for almost one hundred years and had seen their western frontiers moving back towards the center, the Crimean Khanate was the first Muslim province to be lost. Reactions to this event caused turmoil in the Ottoman government and intellectual circles for years to come.

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Introduction

CURRENT STATE OF HISTORICAL SCHOLARSHIP

An event of such importance to both Russian and Turkish history and to the history of international relations in Eastern Europe has as yet not received the attention that it warrants. The study of the transformation of the Muscovite state into a far-flung multinational empire has been ignored by historians to a greater extent than has the decline of the Ottoman Empire. In recent years Soviet scholars have become more interested in this subject, but have spent a great deal of their effort in trying to distinguish Tsarist imperialism from that undertaken by Western European states. Western scholars interested in the Russian Empire on the other hand have generally fallen into two camps: one which accepts the Soviet formula of 'the lesser evil' or the theory of positive benefits to the subjected nationalities; and a camp which devotes most of its energy to criticizing Russian expansion into non-Slavic areas which were not historically part of early Russian states. Little emphasis from either Soviet or Western scholars has been placed upon the actual methods of, or the contemporary causes and justifications for, Russian expansion.

Turkish scholars have understandably not been eager as yet to study in detail the period of Ottoman decline. While the general histories of the Ottoman Empire do cover the period of decline, their emphasis has been on attempts at reform. Little has been written by the Turks on the loss of provinces.[1]

On the question of the Russian annexation of the Crimea, twentieth-century historians have not gone much beyond the works of V. D. Smirnov.[2] A member of the Odessa Society of History and Antiquities, Smirnov added much from published Russian sources to the lead set by Hammer, who had used some Turkish sources. But both Smirnov and Hammer were content

[1] I. H. Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi* I–IV and E. Z. Karal, *Osmanlı Tarihi* V–VIII (Ankara, 1947–62); and *Resimli-Haritalı Mufassal Osmanlı Tarihi* (Istanbul, 1957–63), 6 vols. Yusuf Akçura, *Osmanlı Devletinin Dağılma Devri* (Istanbul, 1940), discusses general problems. The loss of the Crimea is treated in two pages. Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey* (Montreal, 1964), treats this period, also from the reform standpoint.

[2] V. D. Smirnov, *Krymskoe Khanstvo pod verkhovenstvom Ottomanskoi Porty do nachala XVIII veka* (St Petersburg, 1887); and *Krymskoe Khanstvo pod verkhoventsvom Ottomanskoi Porty v XVIII stoletii* (Odessa, 1889).

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to give often deficient narratives of events. Hammer offered short descriptions of the different Khans and their reigns from information in his own multi-volume history of the Ottoman Empire.[1] Smirnov took the narrative beyond 1774, where Hammer stopped, to 1783, the date of the Russian annexation. But Smirnov, too, did little more than relate the procession of Khans and the various revolts which deposed them. He did not satisfactorily explain the reasons behind the continuous internal unrest in the Crimea. In overemphasizing Ottoman participation in Crimean events, he did not assign the blame for the eventual Russian annexation to the correct party.

More recently Boris Nolde incorporated his discussion of the Crimean annexation into the broader framework of the building of the whole Russian Empire.[2] While he included translations of some of the more important Russian sources, he followed very closely the second work of Smirnov while omitting it from his bibliography. E. I. Druzhinina, in her two interesting works, has touched only partially on the subject of the Crimea, and has tried her best to avoid discussions of the Crimean Tatars, who were a 'non-people' in Soviet historiography from their official liquidation as a nationality during World War II until 1968.[3] She is much more informative in her discussion of the administrative organization and economic development of Russia's southern provinces, including Tavricheskaia Oblast' after 1783.

AVAILABLE SOURCE MATERIALS

The source materials for a study of the Russian annexation of the Crimea are many, rich, and varied. Russian sources are predominant because so many have been published. Foremost among these is the four-volume collection of documents edited by Dubrovin.[4] He gathered together most of the important reports

[1] J. von Hammer-Purgstall, *Geschichte der Chane der Krim unter Osmanischer Herrschaft* (Vienna, 1856).

[2] Boris Nolde, *La Formation de l'Empire Russe* (Paris, 1952–3), 2 vols.

[3] E. I. Druzhinina, *Kiuchuk-kainardzhiiskii mir 1774 goda: ego podgotovka i zakliuchenie* (Moscow, 1955); and *Severnoe Prichernomor'e v 1775–1800 gg.* (Moscow, 1959).

[4] N. F. Dubrovin, *Prisoedinenie Kryma k Rossii: reskripty, pis'ma, reliatsii, doneseniia* (St Petersburg, 1885–9), 4 vols.

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from Russian military officers and envoys in the Crimea and Istanbul in addition to a good sampling of Catherine's orders to these individuals. In the Publications of the Imperial Russian Historical Society can be found a more complete collection of Catherine's correspondence with her officials, as well as the reports of her ambassadors Repnin and Bulgakov from Istanbul.[1]

The Odessa Historical Society published many sources including records from Şahin Giray's administration, correspondence between Potemkin and officials of Tavricheskaia Oblast', and many others.[2] The Moscow University *Chteniia* contain most of the important Russian documents concerning the creation of the Crimean independent state in 1772–4, and the correspondence to and from General P. A. Rumiantsev during his tenure on the Crimean front.[3] The records of the Russian State Council also contain much of value concerning the formulation of Russian policy during this period.[4]

The many nineteenth-century Russian journals are another goldmine of articles and sources for the study of the Crimean annexation. Most useful of these are the *Russkii arkhiv*, *Russkaia starina*, *Zhurnal ministerstva narodnogo prosveshcheniia*, and the *Vremennik imperatorskago moskovskago obshchestva istorii i drevnostei rossiiskikh*. The last one contains a very interesting account of Şahin Giray's reign by the contemporary Crimean Karaim Rabbi Azar'ia Iliia.[5]

Turkish sources are of a different nature but are no less valuable. The Turkish National Archives in Istanbul, for the Ottoman period, Başbakanlık Arşivi, contain thousands of documents concerning the Crimea, of which unfortunately only a portion have been catalogued. They include reports from Ottoman envoys and military officers in the Crimea, letters sent between Crimean

1 *Sbornik imperatorskogo russkogo istoricheskogo obshchestva* (St Petersburg, 1867–1916), hereafter cited as *SIRIO*.

2 *Zapiski imperatorskago odesskago obshchestva istorii i drevnostei* I–XXIII (Odessa, 1844–1916), hereafter cited as *ZOOID*.

3 *Chteniia v imperatorskom obshchestve istorii i drevnostei rossiiskikh pri moskovskom universitete* (Moscow, 1846–1918), hereafter cited as *Chteniia*.

4 *Arkhiv gosudarstvennago soveta*, I, parts 1 and 2 (St Petersburg, 1869), covering years 1768–96, hereafter cited as *AGS*.

5 *Vremennik imperatorskago moskovskago obshchestva istorii i drevnostei rossiiskikh* (Moscow, 1854), XXIV.

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Khans and the Ottoman government, financial registers for expenses incurred in Crimean relations, and decisions of Ottoman policy on the Crimean question. Published Turkish sources include the twelve-volume chronicle of Ahmet Cevdet, which is in reality a day-to-day description of events with inserts of documentary materials.[1] Another chronicle, that of Ahmet Vâsıf Efendi, covers the years 1763–74.[2] The official Crimean court historian, Halim Giray Sultan, has left us the Crimean version of their problems and that area's eventual annexation.[3] A manuscript copy of the history of this period written by Sa'dullah Enveri Efendi, the official Ottoman court historian of the time, is preserved in the Österreichisches Staatsbibliothek in Vienna.[4]

In addition to the Russian and Turkish sources, memoirs of two representatives of the French government who were present in the Crimea just before its independence describe rather well the internal political and economic structure of the Khanate, a structure which changed little until 1783.[5]

[1] Ahmet Cevdet, *Cevdet Tarihi* (2nd ed. Istanbul, 1854–91), 12 vols. Here used vols. I–III, 1862–3.
[2] Ahmet Vâsıf, *Mehasin-al-âsar ve hakaik-al-ahbar* (Cairo, Bulak, 1830), 2 vols.
[3] Halim Giray Sultan, *Gülben-i hanan yahut Kırım tarihi* (Istanbul, 1909).
[4] Sa'dullah Enverî, *Tarihi Enveri* (Österreichisches Staatsbibliothek, Manuscript Nos. H. O. 101, 105, 201–2).
[5] M. de Peysonnel, *Traité sur le Commerce de la Mer Noire* (Paris, 1787), 2 vols.; and Baron de Tott, *Mémoires du Baron de Tott sur les Turcs et les Tatares* (Amsterdam, 1784), 4 vols.

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