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The “Orient” in Europe? Crimea in Western Travelogues from the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries

According to the classical tradition accepted by modern geographers, the Crimean Peninsula is located at the south-eastern corner of the European continent, on the northern shore of the Black Sea. From the mid-fifteenth century, the Crimean Khanate, a remnant of the Golden Horde, occupied most part of it. In the late fifteenth century, the khanate became a protectorate of the Ottoman Empire, and a narrow strip on the south, which never was a part of the khanate, became an Ottoman province. In the early modern period, Western Europeans knew almost nothing of Crimea.¹ This remote country was considered as a part of a vast, enigmatic, and fearful Tartary stretching from the Black Sea to the Pacific Ocean. For instance, Charles-Louis de Secondat de Montesquieu (1689–1755) compared Crimea to a blank spot on the map when he wrote: “During the reign of Louis XIV [...] Muscovy was as little known in Europe as Crim Tartary.”²

This changed in 1783. As the famous British traveler Edward Daniel Clarke (1769–1822) put it: “The capture of the Crimea excited the attention of all Europe.”³ After the Russian appropriation, Crimea became an important attraction and a stage of European travel, particularly of the educative Grand Tour. The southern voyage of Russian Empress Catherine II (1729–1796) in 1787, in the company of the French ambassador Louis-Philippe de Ségur (1753–1830) and the famous wit Charles-Joseph de Ligne (1735–1814), made the best promotion for Cri-

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1 Traditionally, travelers and other writers used a definite article before the name of (the) Crimea. Several examples are supplied in citations below. However, more recently, especially in Anglo-American research, the article is omitted.

2 Baron de Montesquieu, *The Spirit of Laws*, translated by Thomas Nugent (2 vols., New York 1899), vol. 1, p. 132. First published in French in 1748.

3 Edward Daniel Clarke, *Travels in Various Countries of Europe, Asia, and Africa*, pt. 1, 4th ed. (2 vols., London 1816), vol. 2, p. 173.

mea.⁴ The French Revolution set the next stimulating impulse, especially for British travelers, when the traditional route of the Grand Tour through France to Italy was blocked, but, a little later, the peace of Tilsit (1807) stopped British travels to Russia.⁵ Later aggravations in relations with Russia ceased French journeys as well. However, foreigners continued publishing reports of former voyages.

Western travelers to Crimea could rely on the patronage of Russian officials who tried to impress the foreigners by showing them the achievements of Russia's foreign policy and the results of efforts in "civilizing a barbarian country." An example could be Empress Catherine II's tour of southern Russia: she invited Western diplomats and other outstanding personalities to join her and see the developments in lands taken from the Ottomans. This trip became a popular topic of literary works, travelogues in particular. Among the unexpected results was the topos of the "Potemkin villages," i. e., a skillful deceit imagined by the empress' favorite and the governor of South Russia, Prince Grigorii Potemkin (1739–1791): "theatrical sceneries" (villages, herds of cattle, crowds of happy locals, and so on) covering the country to make Her Majesty believe that the country was flourishing, though in fact it was barren. However, modern research has uncovered that the "myth of Potemkin villages" appeared even *before* the imperial tour; moreover, it was created by those who had never been to the South, because the prince's works met with opposition both in Russia and abroad. Potemkin loved theatrical effects and his phantasies sometimes went very far, but he never made secret that some of the pictures offered to visitors were decorations: they were a kind of models showing Russia's global plans for the future.⁶ Be that as it may, Potemkin patronized Western travelers, such as the French Baron Charles de Baert du Hollant (1750/1751–1825) in 1784⁷ or the "scandalous" British Lady Elizabeth Craven (1750–1828) in 1786.⁸

4 Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford 1994), pp. 126–141.

5 Anthony Cross, *From the assassination of Paul I to Tilsit: The British in Russia and their travel writings (1801–1807)*, in *Journal of European Studies* 42/1 (2012), pp. 5–21, here pp. 5–6, 18.

6 Aleksandr Panchenko, *Russkaia istoriia i kul'tura: Raboty raznykh let* (Russian History and Culture: Researches from Various Years) (Saint Petersburg 1999), pp. 462–475; see also Simon Sebag Montefiore, *Prince of Princes: The Life of Potemkin* (London 2001), pp. 376–383.

7 *Mémoire extrait du journal d'un voyage fait, au printemps de 1784, dans la partie méridionale de la Russie*, in *Voyages historiques et géographiques dans les pays situés entre la Mer Noire et la Mer Caspienne* (Paris 1798), pt. 3, pp. 1–98, here p. 2.

8 'Pis'ma pravitel'ia Tavricheskoi oblasti V. V. Kokhovskogo pravitel'iu kantseliarii V. S. Popovu dlia doklada E. S. kniazia G. A. Potemkinu-Tavricheskomu' (Letters from the Governor of Taurida Region V. V. Kokhovskii to the Head of the Office V. S. Popov to be Reported to His Serene Highness Prince G. A. Potemkin-Tavricheskii), in *Zapiski Odesskogo obshchestva istorii i drevnostei*

Crimea presented a number of attractive aspects for study and reflection. The people there were ethnically diverse, practiced different religions, and were thus considered "exotic." Travelers with scientific interests could scrutinize the rich and varied inanimate and animate nature. Antiquarians could study the abundant heritage of classical Greek, medieval Genoese colonies, and Islamic civilization. Romantics could search for a natural paradise in the subtropics of the southern coast and fall into Rousseauistic melancholy. Practical persons could commit to projects for future developments on the peninsula. Travelers understood Crimea as a historically and culturally specific country, as can be deduced from the usage of its toponym that was included into the titles of travelogues together with other place names such as Russia, Turkey, Egypt, Greece, and so on.

Research in modern humanities created a set of tools lending themselves to the analysis of travel writings of various kinds,⁹ and there are publications addressing the image of Crimea. The most important works are worth mentioning, especially because of Crimea's specific role in Russian, Ukrainian, and Tatar national narratives.¹⁰ Sara Dickinson, Andreas Schönle, and Andrei Zorin have shown how Russian imperial ideology endowed Crimea with particular value.¹¹ Kerstin Jobst traced the evolution of the Russian image of Crimea in 1783–1917, when its role on the mental map gradually changed from the "other" to "own."¹² Vladimir Koshelev addressed Crimea's image in the works of the Russian national poet Alexander Pushkin (1799–1837).¹³ Kelly O'Neill showed the evolution of the Crimean landscape and its image in the Russian imperial period

10 (1877), pp. 235–361, here pp. 252–253; Nataliia Bolotina (ed.), *Prisoedinenie Kryma k Rossii, 1783–1796: Sbornik dokumentov* (Crimea's Unification with Russia, 1783–1796: A Collection of Documents) (Moscow 2019), p. 222, no. 135.

9 For a brief synthesis see Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing* (Cambridge 2002), pp. 261–273.

10 Gwendolyn Sasse, *The Crimea Question: Identity, Transition, and Conflict* (Cambridge, Mass. 2007), pp. 35–81.

11 Sara Dickinson, Russia's First "Orient": Characterizing the Crimea in 1787, in *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 3/1 (2002), pp. 3–25; Andreas Schönle, Garden of the Empire: Catherine's Appropriation of the Crimea, in *Slavic Review* 60/1 (2001), pp. 1–23; Andrei Zorin, *By Fables Alone: Literature and State Ideology in Late-Eighteenth–Early-Nineteenth-Century Russia*, translated by Marcus C. Levitt, Nicole Monnier, and Daniel Schlaffy (Boston, Mass. 2014), pp. 92–120.

12 Kerstin S. Jobst, *Die Perle des Imperiums: Der russische Krim-Diskurs im Zarenreich* (Konstanz 2007).

13 Vladimir Koshelev, *Tavrisheskaia mifologiiia Pushkina* (Pushkin's Taurida Mythology) (Nizhni Novgorod 2017).

from “Muslim” to “Orthodox.”¹⁴ I traced the origins and development of representations of Chersonese (the ancient, later Byzantine, city located on the site of present-day Sevastopol) as a holy center of Russia.¹⁵ The “discovery” of Crimea by Western travelers and the creation of its image in the West have been analyzed in a couple of studies.¹⁶ Vladimir Orekhov discussed the evolution of some Crimean stereotypes in the Western mind, particularly the idea of the Russians as “destroyers of archaeological monuments and sites,” which was used as a pretext for removing the finds from the peninsula to Western museums and collections.¹⁷

In this paper, I will analyze “Oriental” features of the Crimean image created by late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century travelers belonging to Western culture. References to other travelogues, sometimes from a later period, highlight the parallels and the development of the discourse. The first Russian decades laid the foundation for today’s image of Crimea in the public mind. The Western gaze shaped the background; while Russian-speaking travelers and writers mostly followed the ways of interpretation preset by the Enlightenment philosophy and literature. Travelers created different images of Crimea, but, nevertheless, it is possible to uncover a series of common traits across these images.

There are about thirty Western travelogues describing Crimea in the period in question.¹⁸ “Western” is tentative here: although some travelers were enrolled

14 Kelly O’Neill, *Constructing Russian Identity in the Imperial Borderland: Architecture, Islam, and the Transformation of the Crimean Landscape*, in *Ab Imperio* 2 (2006), pp. 163–192.

15 Nikita Khrapunov and Denis Konkin (eds.), *Problemy integratsii Kryma v sostav Rossii, 1783–1825* (Problems of Crimea’s Integration into Russia, 1783–1825) (Sevastopol 2017), pp. 305–326; Nikita Khrapunov, *Inventing the Past: Russia, the Crimea, and the Byzantine Heritage in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries*, in *Byzantium and the Heritage of Europe: Connecting the Cultures. Proceedings of the 3rd International Symposium “Days of Justinian I”*, Skopje, 30–31 October 2015 (Skopje 2016), pp. 81–88.

16 Khrapunov and Konkin, *Problemy integratsii*, pp. 75–91, 329–352, 383–401; Jürgen Osterhammel, *Unfabling the East. The Enlightenment’s Encounter with Asia*, translated by Robert Savage (Princeton 2018), pp. 314–332; Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe*, pp. 66–68, 124–126, 133–143.

17 Vladimir Orekhov, *V labirinte krymskogo mifa* (In the Labyrinth of the Crimean Myth) (Simferopol 2017).

18 For the catalogues see Antony Cross, *In the Land of the Romanovs: An Annotated Bibliography of First-hand English-language Accounts of the Russian Empire (1613–1917)* (Cambridge 2014), pp. 91–183; Arsenii Markevich, *Taurica: Opyt ukazatel’ia sochinenii, kasaiushchikhsia Kryma i Tavricheskoi gubernii vooobshche* (Taurica: An Experience in the Index of Works Concerning Crimea and the Taurida Governorate in General), in *Izvestiia Tavricheskoi uchenoi arkhivnoi komissii* 20 (1894), pp. 28, 104–160 (1898) [section 2], pp. 17–24, 32–33; (1902),

in Russian service, the crucial point is their belonging to Western European culture and having a mother tongue other than Russian. “Travelogue” is descriptor for documents of various kinds: the decisive point is the author’s feeling of being in a strange land. Therefore, these travelogues belonged to different genres, and their authors had different interests. There are encyclopedic descriptions; reports of secret agents; unedited and edited travel journals; original letters and epistolary novels; sentimental and imagined voyages. Travelers also produced a number of pictures featuring Crimean landscapes, romantic ruins, and persons in exotic dress. However, the image of Crimea in pictorial art is a separate topic for discussion.¹⁹

Travelogues made Crimea known to a wide audience both in Western Europe and in Russia: Russian elites often knew French and German languages better than Russian. Naturally, the travelers introduced many topoi and stereotypes, which survived to these days. Travelogues present ways of perception and interpretation of faraway countries and peoples and are typical products of intellectuals working at the turn from the Enlightenment to Romanticism. Researchers should bear three things in mind: first, travelers always combine empiric observations with stereotypes and prejudices taken from home, looking for their confirmation abroad; second, travelogues are subjective, and this is by no means always the case when the researcher is able to determine the degree of subjectiveness; and third, voyagers tend to notice and accentuate the “strangest” features of the other culture, taking the unusual for the typical.

1 Geography, climate, and morals

Three-fourths of Crimea’s territory is flat dry grassland, the continuation of the great Eurasian steppe. To the south, there is a highland with fertile valleys, vivid rivers, and picturesque slopes. Farther, beyond a barrier of mountains is a narrow coastline with Mediterranean climate and plants. Matthew Guthrie (1743–1807), a Scottish physician who lived in Saint Petersburg, for instance, commemorated his deceased wife with the publication of a book of her letters. These letters, however, were mostly imagined: his sources were other Crimean travelogues. According to Guthrie, this peninsula consisted of two parts, “the saline grassy stept [steppe], or plain, on the North [...] [and] the fine mountainous

pp. 58–62. Several travelogues have been added to the scholarship since then; further sources might possibly be found in future research in archival and museum collections.

¹⁹ See e.g. Nikita Khrapunov, Richard Worsley i Krym (Richard Worsley and Crimea), in *Bo-sporskie issledovaniia* 39 (2019), pp. 378–403.

country to the South, the admiration and abode of polished commercial nations for upwards of two thousand years, till the barbarous Turks shut up the Thracian Bosphorus, and turned the busy Euxine²⁰ into a watery desert [...] these two districts [...] are as different in climate, soil, and productions, as two countries widely distant from each other [...]”²¹. Thus, Crimea was split not only geographically but also in terms of civilization.

The approach to the peninsula was possible by two ways, from the north or from the east, getting through natural obstacles, which produced a feeling of “waiting for miracles.” The northern road went through the isthmus, which Russians called *Perekop* (“cross-ditch”) and Tatars *Or Kapy* (“golden gate”, according to popular and erroneous etymology), a narrow spit connecting the peninsula with the mainland, and then led through an endless and dreary flatland. As Lady Craven described it: “I crossed the plains of Perekop, on which nothing but a large coarse grass grows, which is burnt at certain periods of the year. All this country [...] is called Steps – I should call it desert [desert].”²²

The eastern road passed the Straits of Kerch, or Cimmerian Bosphorus, which, according to classical geography, separated Europe and Asia. Therefore, the travelers expected that by passing the straits they would come from the “Orient” to “civilization”. Clarke came to Crimea from Moscow, via the Don and Kuban areas. He was much disappointed with these “Asian countries” and wrote to a friend: “Our character of Asia, from the part of it we traversed, may be given in a few words – bad air, bad water, bad food, bad climate, bad people.”²³ However, when he came to Crimea, he immediately met “pure” Europeans: “We are lodged in the house of [a] Spartan. His wife, a native of Paros, decks our table with roses and honey.”²⁴ These hospitable Greeks had recently fled to Crimea from persecutions in the Ottoman Empire. However, the newcomers saw that Crimea retained many “Oriental” features. It is no accident therefore that the peninsula was considered a part of “Tartary.”

The fear of thirteenth-century Mongol (also called Tatar) invaders made Western Europeans view them as harbingers of the end of the world as foretold in Biblical prophecies. An example is the *Chronica Majora* by the English monk

20 This Hellenic name of the Black Sea appeared in use again after the Russian expansion to the south: it signified the “return” of the region from Islam back to European civilization.

21 Matthew Guthrie (ed.), *A Tour, Performed in the Years 1795–6, Through the Taurida, Or Crimea, the Antient Kingdom of Bosphorus*, [...]. (London 1802), p. 54.

22 Elizabeth Craven, *A Journey through the Crimea to Constantinople in a Series of Letters* [...] (London 1789), pp. 160–161.

23 William Otter, *The Life and Remains of Edward Daniel Clarke*, 2nd ed. (New York 1827), p. 295.

24 Otter, *Life and Remains*, p. 292.

Matthew of Paris.²⁵ A prodigious tract from Crimea to China and from the Arctic Ocean to India was called "Tartary" or "Tartarie," and its residents "Tartars." The concept of Tartary endured: a good example from the eighteenth century was the famous *Encyclopaedia* of Denis Diderot (1713–1784) and Jean d'Alembert (1717–1783).²⁶ The extra "r" added to the name of the country and its residents underlined their relation to the "*Tartarus*," the underworld of Greek mythology. However, by the late eighteenth century this analogy in Crimea's case did not seem appropriate. Lady Craven told how she had to keep her composure and use all her smartness when one Russian officer compared her new acquaintance, a noble Tatar, to the Tartarus: "A person called him cream of Tartar – which I fearing he should be told of, turned into the cream of the Tatars – which he said was no wonder, as he was so."²⁷ Russian culture developed the image of Tatars as existential enemy and embodiment of the worst qualities, an image wherein political confrontation merged with the religious rejection of Islam.²⁸ It was much similar to the image of the Ottomans in Western tradition.²⁹

However, after the Russian annexation, the image of the Crimean Tatars drastically changed. The severe warriors and invincible violators of all European customs of war suddenly became peaceful and indolent children of nature. Catherine II expressed this feeling in naïve verse written in the former khan's palace: "O miracles of God! Who of my ancestors / Could sleep well due to their hordes and khans? / But I cannot sleep amidst Bakhchisarai / Because of tobacco smoke and shouts... Is this not the place of paradise? [...]"³⁰. These verses were sent to Potemkin, who personally prepared and realized the annexation of Crimea, as a private message, not intended for publication. Therefore, they plausibly reflect the real feelings of the empress and her fascination with the Oriental romance

25 Aleksandr *Filiushkin*, *Kak Rossiia stala dlia Evropy Aziei?* (How Did Russia Become Asia for Europe?), in *Ab Imperio* 1 (2004), pp. 191–228, here p. 196.

26 *Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers* (35 vols., Paris 1751–1772), vol. 15, pp. 920–926.

27 Craven, *Journey*, p. 178, n. *.

28 Mark Batunskii, *Islam i russkaia kul'tura XVIII veka. Opyt istoriko-epistemologicheskogo issledovaniia* (Islam and Eighteenth-Century Russian Culture: An Essay of Historical-Epistemological Research), in *Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique* 27/1 (1986), pp. 45–69, here pp. 56–58.

29 Felix Konrad, *From the "Turkish Menace" to Exoticism and Orientalism: Islam as Antithesis of Europe (1453–1914)?*, in *European History Online (EGO)*, accessed 4 April 2022, <<http://www.ieg-ego.eu/konradf-2010-en>>; Stephan Theilig, *The Change of Imaging the Ottomans in the Context of the Turkish Wars from the 16th to 18th Century*, in *Cahiers de la Méditerranée* 83 (2011), pp. 61–68, accessed 4 April 2022, <<http://journals.openedition.org/cdlm/6081>>.

30 Viacheslav Lopatin (ed.), *Ekaterina II i G. A. Potemkin. Lichnaia perepiska, 1769–1791* (Catherine II and G. A. Potemkin: Personal Correspondence, 1768–1791) (Moscow 1997), p. 216.

and the achievements of her rule and were presumably meant to encourage Potemkin to continue his work in Crimea. It is worth noting that a similar mood appeared in the accounts of the fellow travelers of Catherine II, Ségur and de Ligne³¹: the Tatars were no longer barbarous enemies but exotic residents of an attractive country.

The French traveler and secret agent Jean Reuilly (1780–1810) viewed the history of Crimea as the struggle of two elements, the creative Western influence bringing civilization, technologies, and trade, and the destructive Eastern one. The first was embodied in the ancient Greeks and medieval Genoese, the second in the archetypal barbarians, the Scythians and Tatars.³² Paradoxically, the Tatars supposedly were cruel only to their enemies, but were faithful, hospitable, and generous to their compatriots, “which would do honour to the most civilized people.” According to Reuilly, the Tatar character depended on the style of government rather than on the climate:

The Tatars of the Crimea have preserved, under a pure sky, the manners which they brought from the north of Siberia. Ages have passed away without making any alteration in their customs and usages; but the conquest of the Crimea by the Russians, within these few years, has already effected a considerable alteration in their manners. By being deprived of their military arms, the Tartars have forgotten the use of them [...].³³

Sometimes the specific appearance of the Tatars reminded Westerners of the Old Testament. Reginald Heber (1783–1826), a British religious poet and, later, Anglican bishop of Calcutta, was struck by the view of a Tatar camel wagon, of which he knew from the King James Bible. As he wrote in his journal: “Although ‘a chariot of camels’ is mentioned by Isaiah, I do not remember having heard of such a practice elsewhere.”³⁴ Mary Holderness (c. 1785/90–after 1827), who spent the years 1816 to 1820 in an English colony in eastern Crimea and therefore had enough time to observe her Tatar neighbors, concluded: “In the simple life of the Tatars, much may be traced of similarity with those recorded in the earliest ages of Scripture history. Their riches consist now, as was usual then, in flocks

³¹ Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe*, pp. 133–138.

³² Jean Reuilly, *Travels in the Crimea, and along the Shores of the Black Sea, Performed during the Year 1803*. Translated from the French (London 1807), pp. 33–43.

³³ Reuilly, *Travels*, pp. 56–57.

³⁴ *The Life of Reginald Heber, D. D., Lord Bishop of Calcutta. By His Widow. With Selections from His Correspondence, Unpublished Poems, and Private Papers; Together with a Journal of His Tour in Norway, Sweden, Russia, Hungary, and Germany, and a History of the Cossaks* (2 vols., New York 1830), vol. 1, p. 261.

and herds, and in the number of their families. Many also of their domestic habits are the same [...]."³⁵

Most travelers viewed Crimea as the Garden of Eden, resembling a Rousseauistic utopia. The French secret agent and tutor of a Russian nobleman Gilbert Romme (1750–1795) described the southern coast in the following words: "All this area between the Sultan's mountain and the sea is covered with orchards, which make a charming impression. There still are few residents at Nikita, but no one resides in Magarach now. All this country looks like the earthly paradise after the expulsion of Adam."³⁶ Travelers located this "terrestrial paradise" in different areas – in the vicinity of Bakhchisarai in the sub-mountainous area, for example, or in the Baidar Valley to the south-west.³⁷ Following the *pars pro toto* model, picturesque southern landscapes gradually ousted the steppe from the image of Crimea in the public mind. This paradox was known to Dmitrii Mertvago (1760–1824), the governor of Crimea in the early nineteenth century, who wrote in his memoirs: "Persons of every rank and every nation, surveying its [Crimea's] beauties in the best season, described mountainous areas which they passed on horseback by ten versts³⁸ a day, omitting the steppes which they galloped through by two hundred versts in twenty-four hours."³⁹ Searching for paradise in remote areas was typical of the period in question, particularly among the travelers to Greece and Switzerland, the Pacific Islands and South America, although these images certainly had different features.⁴⁰

35 Mary Holderness, *Journey from Riga to the Crimea, with Some Account of the Manners and Customs of the Colonists of New Russia*, 2nd ed. (London 1827), p. 217.

36 "Toute l'enceinte entre le Sultan Gora et la mer est couverte de vergers, qui font le plus charmant effet. On voit encore quelques habitants à Nikita, mais il n'y en a plus à Mayaras. Tout cet endroit ressemble au paradis terrestre, après qu'Adam en fut chassé." Charles-Gilbert Romme, *Voyage en Crimée en 1786*, edited by Maxime Deschanet and Gulnara Bekirova (Paris 2016), p. 114. In the translation, the toponyms are written in their correct/modern forms.

37 Guthrie, *Tour*, pp. 70, 116–117.

38 A Russian unit of length measuring c. 1,067 m.

39 Dmitrii Mertvago, *Zapiski* (Memoirs), in *Russkii arkhiv* 8–9 (1867), col. 1–336, here col. 175.

40 Robert Eisner, *Travelers to an Antique Land: The History and Literature of Travel to Greece* (Ann Arbor 1993), pp. 218–238; Mircea Eliade, *Myths, Dreams and Mysteries: The Encounter Between Contemporary Faiths and Archaic Realities* (New York 1967), pp. 39–56; Hulme and Youngs, *Cambridge Companion*, pp. 128–129, 140; Valentina Smekalina, *Russkie puteshestvenniki v Shveitsarii vo vtoroi polovine XVIII – pervoi polovine XIX v.* (Russian Travelers in Switzerland in the Second Half of the Eighteenth and the First Half of the Nineteenth Centuries) (Moscow 2015), pp. 163–255.

2 Living conditions, diseases, and superstitions

Sometimes these searches ignored objective realities, such as the unhealthy climate of Crimea. Clarke, who was close to death from Crimean tertian fever, noted that the local climate was good for the natives only: "Russia must consider this country as a cemetery for the troops which are sent to maintain its possession. This is not the case with regard to its native inhabitants, the Tahtars [sic]."⁴¹ What struck travelers greatly was the absence of medical care, viewed as yet another "Oriental" feature. According to Heber: "On asking what remedies they had for diseases, they [Tatars] returned a remarkable answer; 'We lay down the sick man on a bed; and, if it please God, he recovers. Allah Kerim!'"⁴² Holderness reported that her Greek neighbors refused vaccination against the smallpox, despite this disease threatening their lives.⁴³ According to her account: "The Tatars wear a great number of charms and amulets, as preservatives from sickness and other dangers. They commonly consist of some written paper, purchased from the Mulla, and carefully sewn up in a piece of cotton or silk [...] They use this remedy for the sickness of their horses as well as for their own." When a child of the British lady was ill, one of her local friends offered her a similar amulet, but "I had no occasion to try the strength of this charm, as my child recovered without its assistance," she wrote.⁴⁴

Lack of sanitation and bad smells were considered other features of an uncivilized country and people. Count Constantine de Ludolf (second half of the eighteenth to the early nineteenth century), a son of the ambassador of Naples in Constantinople, who came to Crimea in 1787 to meet Catherine II, was shocked by the Tatar houses in the steppe: "These lairs are very wet and stinking, air does not penetrate inside, and dung of cows used to heat them for firewood is absent produces an unbearable stench in the house itself and its Tatar residents, which you can smell from a long distance."⁴⁵ Lady Craven was outraged by the dirty streets and houses of the Tatars, as well as by their tradition of not changing underwear even after bathing.⁴⁶ However, Heber stated: "what is hardly a sign of indolence, their houses, clothes and persons are uniformly clean."⁴⁷ Clarke con-

⁴¹ Clarke, *Travels*, vol. 2, p. 297.

⁴² Heber, *Life*, vol. 1, p. 263. The Turkish phrase "*Allah Kerim*" means "God is gracious."

⁴³ Holderness, *Journey*, pp. 153–154, 257.

⁴⁴ Holderness, *Journey*, pp. 252–254.

⁴⁵ Graf de Ludolf, *Pis'ma o Kryme* (Letters on Crimea), in *Russkoe obozrenie* 2 (1892), pp. 155–201, here p. 166.

⁴⁶ Craven, *Journey*, pp. 162, 174, 181, 183.

⁴⁷ Heber, *Life*, vol. 1, p. 263.

trasted the Tatars with the Russians in this respect: "The houses of the Tahtars, even the cottages of the poor, are extremely clean [...]. In the houses of Russian grandees, unwholesome filth is ill concealed by external splendour [...]"⁴⁸

In Crimea, there were numerous venomous insects. Clarke supplied his book with a vignette featuring several species he found in the country. He described the tarantula and the phalangium, the scolopendra and the scorpion: "Some advantages may be derived from our entomological researches, imperfect as they are, if they only cause future travellers to avoid the dangerous consequences of an attack from such animals."⁴⁹ One insect in particular had a terrible impact on the economy. A German officer in Russian service, Pierce-Balthazar von Campenhausen (1746–1808), dedicated a section of his memoirs to it: "A part of this government is infested by a plague, which devastates the most fertile corn-fields and meadows, almost every second year; I allude to the locusts [...]"⁵⁰. The locusts provide the occasion for another biblical parallel, a comparison to the eighth plague of Egypt. To get rid of this trouble, the locals used a specific "Oriental magic". In 1827, the young Scottish traveler James Webster (1802–1828) stated:

The superstition of the Tartars induced them to procure Dervises [dervishes] from Asia Minor, because the locusts come from Asia. These Dervises prayed around the mosques, and as a charm, ordered water to be hung out on the minarets, which, with the prayers, were meant to entice a species of blackbird to come in multitudes and eat the locusts in the Crimea. The water thus hung out is still preserved in the mosques.⁵¹

On the East, there was possible to get some advantages even from locusts. According to von Campenhausen: "The Tatars roast and eat them; and I was tempted once by curiosity, to partake a dish of them, and found that they tasted like roasted chestnuts."⁵² Clarke found some Crimean food, which he described as purely "Oriental" and which could be of use to his native country. It was a Tatar cucumber of an enormous size: "It would become a valuable plant for

⁴⁸ Clarke, *Travels*, vol. 2, p. 235.

⁴⁹ Clarke, *Travels*, vol. 2, pp. 196–197.

⁵⁰ Baron Campenhausen, *Travels through Several Provinces of the Russian Empire; With an Historical Account of the Zaporog Cossacks, and of Bessarabia, Moldavia, Wallachia, and the Crimea* (London 1808), p. 45.

⁵¹ James Webster, *Travels through the Crimea, Turkey, and Egypt; Performed during the Years 1825–1828: Including Particulars of the Last Illness and Death of Emperor Alexander, and of the Russian Conspiracy in 1825*, 2 vols. (London 1830), vol. 1, pp. 93–94.

⁵² Campenhausen, *Travels*, p. 46.

the poor, if it were possible to naturalize it in other parts of Europe.”⁵³ Exotic dishes always attracted travelers’ attention. For example, according to Holderness: “The food of the Tatars consists chiefly of sour milk, or paste [...] The Russians, Greeks, and Bulgarians eat frogs, land tortoises, and snails, which last they boil, and having taken from them the shell, dish them up with flour, salt, and oil.”⁵⁴ Heber informed his readers that: “The Tatars, in Spring, when the sap is rising, pierce the walnut trees, and put in a spigot for some time; when this is withdrawn a clear sweet liquor flows out, which, when coagulated, they use as a sugar.”⁵⁵ The feasts offered by the Tatars to foreigners consisted of “eggs, melted butter, nardek and bekmiss”: *nardek* meant “a marmelade of grapes,” and *bekmiss* “a sirup made from various fruits by boiling them with honey.”⁵⁶

Like in most travelogues, Heber, too, used the topic of food to comment on the extraordinary hospitality of the Tatars: “We never approached a village at half-fall where we were not requested to lodge; or in the day-time without being invited to eat and drink; and while they were thus attractive, they uniformly seemed careless about payment, even for the horses they furnished; never counting the money, and often offering to go away without it.”⁵⁷

3 Lost “golden age,” violence, and corruption

Remains and symbols of the past were visible everywhere in Crimea: there were vestiges of the Hellenic and Roman antiquity, of the Byzantine and Genoese Middle Ages, of the Golden Horde and of the Turks and Tatars of the early modern period. Especially impressive were Cyclopean fortification walls and towers of Caffa, Sudak, Balaklava and other coastal fortresses, once constructed by mediaeval Genoese and later rebuilt by Ottomans – but now partially ruined. Muslim buildings of various kinds, such as mosques and public baths, caravanserais and fountains, khan’s palace in Bakhchisarai and residential quarters of “Oriental” towns attracted attention and stimulated fantasies of the happy and romantic past. Still, a current economic and social crisis was obvious. Once flourishing port cities lost their former trade, population, and were desolated. “Caffa was called by the Tartars, in its better days, Kutchuk Stamboul (little Constantino-

⁵³ Clarke, *Travels*, vol. 2, p. 262.

⁵⁴ Holderness, *Journey*, pp. 259, 261.

⁵⁵ Heber, *Life*, vol. 1, pp. 257–258.

⁵⁶ Heber, *Life*, vol. 1, pp. 206, 263.

⁵⁷ Heber, *Life*, vol. 1, p. 262.

ple),” stated Heber in 1806. But now this city “presented a most dismal prospect.”⁵⁸ Eden-like southern coast of the Crimea was almost unpopulated. Why did it happen?

The scholarship of the question developed throughout 150 years to produce dozens of monographs and hundreds of articles discussing various aspects of the transition from the Crimean Khanate and to the Russian Empire. In result, there appeared a complicated interweaving of various approaches, historical schools, and traditions. Soviet historiography initially was ruthless to the tsarist government’s policy on the “borderlands,” and, therefore, speaks of the violence of Russian army, inefficiency and corruption of imperial government. Contemporary historiography is variable. The Soviet critique of tsarism has been in demand in Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar narratives, while the Western scholars tend to interpret the Russian rule in terms of oppression, injustice, and lack of effectiveness. In contrast, the “Russian-patriotic” researches exaggerate the Russian Empire’s achievements in the Crimea, downplaying or glossing over the problems and mistakes made by the authorities. It is worth mentioning that the historiographical field is not “even”: Russian administrative or economic activities in different periods have been studied many times, while the evolution of taxation system imposed on the locals or individual integration strategies of the Crimeans are poorly researched.⁵⁹ More balanced approach underlines the role of the decline of the Crimean Khanate in the last decades of its existence, rebellions and uprisings, the interventions of the Russian and Ottoman armies, and large-scale emigration of Muslims and Christians. When Russia annexed the Crimea in 1783, there was no elaborate plan for the integration of the new territory into the imperial structure. Therefore, the Russian government had been simultaneously creating the administrative system in its new province, collecting the data concerning its nature, population, and economy, and correcting inevitable mistakes. The Russian government encouraged the building of new cities and towns, stimulating traditional industries and introducing new economic trends, attracting

⁵⁸ Heber, *Life*, vol. 1, p. 252–253.

⁵⁹ See Nikita Khrapunov and Denis Konkin, *Mezhdu Zapadom i Vostokom: osobennosti razvitiia Kryma v sostave Rossiiskoi imperii v kontekste mezhkul’turnykh kommunikatsii, 1783–1853* (Between West and East: The Features of the Development of the Crimea within the Russian Empire in the Context of Intercultural Communications, 1783–1853), in *Journal of Education and Science “Istoriya”* (“History”) 12/7 (2021), accessed 16 May 2022, <<https://history.jes.su/s207987840015401-0-1>> with bibliography. This text is translated in English and openly available at Academia.edu, accessed 16 May 2022, <https://www.academia.edu/50190794/Between_West_and_East_The_Features_of_the_Development_of_the_Crimea_within_the_Russian_Empire_in_the_Context_of_Intercultural_Communications_1783_1853_>.

foreign colonists and resettling landowners and peasants from the Russian inland. However, this was not enough to make a significant impact and alleviate the crisis in the short term.⁶⁰ Islamic identity predominated among the Tatars, so the Sultan's empire was their "imagined homeland," and this notion contributed to the emigration. In result, the Crimea lost about two-thirds of its population. Perhaps Reuilly correctly understood the core of the problem already in 1803:

Since the Crimea has belonged to Russia, she has made many changes in its constitution; and it is said she has tried in vain to procure the love of her new subjects, by respecting their religion, and allowing them to choose judges from amongst themselves. [...] for a conquered nation, whose religion and manners are very different from those of its masters, conceives itself vexed and tormented by its governors, at the same time that those governors think they act with perfect liberality.⁶¹

The travelers viewed the contrast between contemporary crises and the vestiges of former grandeur. It is no surprise therefore that travelers invented the idea of a lost "golden age" of Crimea. Some related it to the ancient Greeks and medieval Genoese, calling the Tatars and Ottomans its destroyers. As an example, Guthrie wrote about rich gardens of various fruit trees still existing on the southern coast: "the forests of these vallies are the orchards of the antient civilized inhabitants, run wild in the hands of pastoral hordes unacquainted with their culture and too indolent to learn it."⁶² Others ran to the opposite conclusion: the golden age of the Crimean Khanate was destroyed by the Russians. As Romme noted, "Nothing could be sadder than this journey through a country devastated by war."⁶³ Clarke, a great critic of Russia, stated: "If we were to detail half the cruelties, the extortions, the rapine, and the barbarity practised by the *Russians* upon the devoted inhabitants of the *Crimea*, and their deluded *Khan*, the narrative would exceed belief."⁶⁴

The theme of the lost "golden age" was linked to the topics of bad government and violence. Melchior Adam Weikard (1742–1803), physician to Catherine II, who followed her to Crimea, told a story, the authenticity of which he himself could not verify. Allegedly, the Tatars tried to lodge a petition to the empress complaining that the Russians did not allow them their traditional daily worship

⁶⁰ For details see Khrapunov and Konkin, *Problemy integratsii*.

⁶¹ Reuilly, *Travels*, p. 62.

⁶² Guthrie, *Tour*, p. 136.

⁶³ "Rien n'est plus triste que de parcourir des lieux dévastés par la guerre." Romme, *Voyage*, p. 66.

⁶⁴ Clarke, *Travels*, vol. 2, p. 173.

and offended their women. This petition was sent with the most respected person, a Tatar priest who had visited Mecca three times. When Potemkin learnt about that, he ordered the "Tatar saint" to get fifty blows to his heels: "Everyone has his own way of winning over the love and fidelity of the subjects!",⁶⁵ Weikard commented ironically.

Westerners considered cruelty, violence, and corporal punishment a feature of the East of Europe.⁶⁶ Holderness was shocked by the severe public beatings with the *knout* (scourge), imposed for serious criminal offences. She did not see it herself, but the story told by her English acquaintance who witnessed this public punishment was quite enough.⁶⁷ In her opinion, this punishment made the character of the locals crueler rather than improving it. "In the case of the murder of a Jew and his family, which occurred in 1816, at the village of Karagoss (Pervomaiskoe), a subscription was raised at Theodosia,⁶⁸ among persons of this nation, in order to bribe the flogger to make sure of the death of the criminal."⁶⁹ To readers acquainted with Montesquieu's geographical determinism this might have come as a shock since, in this instance, the "northern" punishment was imposed upon the people of the south. For the French philosopher, inhabitants of the north were less sensible to physical pain; therefore: "You must flay a Muscovite alive to make him feel."⁷⁰ However, not all travelers agreed with Holderness. Webster described in detail the inhuman public punishment with the *knout*, which he witnessed in Simferopol. His conclusion was that this torture was in some way better than the traditional British punishments for similar crimes:

Although this punishment may be deemed barbarous, yet, upon reflection, it may be thought more adapted, than that of hanging, to the accomplishment of the object proposed by both. As regards the suffering of the criminal, the former is certainly the severer punishment; and, on his recovery, which takes place in a few days, he has a chance of reforming

65 "Jeder hat halt seine eigene Weise, sich der Liebe und Treue seiner Untergebenen zu versichern!" Taurische Reise der Kaiserin von Russland Katharina II, Aus dem Englischen übersetzt (Koblenz 1799), p. 147. The reference to the "English translation" was probably a trick used to mislead the Russian officials and keep the author's name a secret, since at that time Weikard was physician to the Russian Emperor Paul I.

66 Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe*, pp. 69–88.

67 Holderness, *Journey*, pp. 267–269.

68 Currently spelled Feodosia according to the Russian pronunciation. As many others, Holderness used the Greek-language spelling to underline the classical heritage of this town.

69 Holderness, *Journey*, pp. 269.

70 Montesquieu, *Spirit of Laws*, p. 223.

his life, of which he is the more likely to take advantage, from the recollection of his past suffering.⁷¹

Holderness supplied a number of examples of corruption and abuses committed by Russian officials: “Yet here, though depravity marks so many individuals, and they mar the endeavours which the Emperor is continually making for the benefit of his subjects.”⁷² Heber informed that the Tatars did not agree to take Russian money, as a sign of passive opposition to their new masters. They even refused the Russian officers the traditional eastern hospitality.⁷³ Thus, although Russia claimed for herself the role of bringer of progress and civilization to “barbarous savages,” it appeared as a champion of “Oriental despotism” in oppressing poor Tatars.

4 Sights, religion, and ethnic types

Probably the greatest Crimean attraction was the city of Bakhchisarai, the former khan’s capital. Its narrow, crooked streets, the blind walls of the houses, numerous fountains, mosques, orchards, Lombardy poplars, and the khan’s palace itself reminded travelers of the Arabian and Persian tales. As Prince de Ligne wrote in his epistolary memoirs:

I expected to elevate my soul on arriving in the Taurica⁷⁴ [Crimea] through all the great things, true and false, that have happened here. My mind was ready to turn itself [...] to the military with the Romans, the fine arts with the Greeks, to brigandage with the Tartars, to commerce with the Genoese. [...] but they have severally disappeared before the Arabian Nights.⁷⁵

71 Webster, *Travels*, vol. 1, pp. 95–97.

72 Holderness, *Journey*, pp. 119–122.

73 Heber, *Life*, vol. 1, pp. 262–263, 315.

74 This placename is important. In the French original, de Ligne used the form *Tauride*: *Lettres et pensées du maréchal prince de Ligne*, éd. Mad. de Staël Holstein, 2nd éd. (Paris, Genève 1809), p. 51. In French *Tauride*, in English *Taurida*, and in Russian *Таурѣда*, it was the new name of Crimea after 1783, used by both Russians and Westerners to emphasize the classical heritage of the region. It is based on the non-existent Greek **Ταυρίς*, -*ἶδος* (instead of the attested *Ταυρική*, Taurica). Its origin is probably related to an incorrect translation of Euripides’ classical tragedy *Ἰφιγένεια ἐν Ταύροις* as *Iphigenia in Tauris* (i.e., in the country, though the correct translation should have the ethnonym, *Iphigenia among the Taurians*).

75 The Prince de Ligne, *His Memoirs, Letters, and Miscellaneous Papers*, translated by Katharine Prescott Wormeley, 2 vols. (Boston 1902), vol. 2, p. 17.

Clarke cleverly understood the ambivalence of Crimea, geographically located in Europe, but culturally in Asia. Describing Bakhchisarai as the emblematic center of the Crimean Tatars, the traveler called it "one of the most remarkable towns in Europe: first, in the novelty of its manners and customs; these are strictly Oriental, and betray nothing of a European character [...]"⁷⁶. Guthrie underlined the difference between old and new, east and west, barbarism and progress, with the image of Sevastopol, the new city constructed by the Russians as their naval base at the Black Sea: "The old Tartar houses here, as well as every where else in the peninsula, are small and ill-built; but we find along the quay some new buildings in a much better taste, the natural consequence of its being the station of the great Euxine fleet [...]"⁷⁷. Thus, the regularity and rationality of the new city plan and structures symbolized a new progressive basis for Crimea's life, replacing the former chaos.

The mosques were undoubtedly the most striking symbols of the "Orient." Many travelers could not help watching Muslims pray and were especially fascinated by the rituals performed by dervishes, which to them seemed strange and surprising. Overemphasizing their own aesthetic standards, travelers judged Muslim religious rites to be primitive and indecent aping. Typical are the words of the Holy Roman Emperor Joseph II (1741–1790), who visited Crimea in the company of Catherine II and described it in letters to his friend, Field Marshal Franz-Moritz von Lacy (1725–1801). He could not understand the rituals of those whom he called *hurleurs* (howlers): "I was also present at their prayers in the mosques, where I heard the howlers' cries and viewed the whirling of dervishes."⁷⁸ Webster saw the ritual of dervishes in the great khan's mosque of Bakhchisarai: "To call this affair ridiculous, horrid, and incredible, is nothing; to form any conception of its disgusting absurdity, one must have witnessed it."⁷⁹ While acknowledging the Muslims' deep religiosity, Webster viewed their rituals as proof of their lack of intellect and developed culture, contrasting them to the complicated and elaborated Christian rites: "The gestures of the Dervises do but prove the strength of internal religion, and may be compared to the fertile and extravagant motions made by the dumb to express their thoughts. To those who can speak, such notions seem absurd; but still they prove that the

⁷⁶ Clarke, *Travels*, vol. 2, p. 170.

⁷⁷ Guthrie, *Tour*, p. 93.

⁷⁸ "J'ai aussi assisté à leurs prières dans les mosques où j'ai entendu cirer les hurleurs et vu tourner les derviches". Alfred Ritter von Arneth (ed.), Joseph II und Katharina von Russland: Ihr Briefwechsel (Vienna 1869), p. 361.

⁷⁹ Webster, *Travels*, vol. 1, p. 87.

dumb have thoughts to express.”⁸⁰ Perhaps it was a general feature of the Western mind: many similar comments appeared in accounts of Egypt produced by the Napoleonic army.⁸¹ Only a century later Émile Durkheim (1858–1917) would recognize: “Men cannot celebrate [religious] ceremonies for which they see no reason, nor can they accept a faith which they in no way understand.”⁸²

Among the features of the “Orient” there was the diversity of ethnic types. Twenty years before her visit to Crimea, Empress Catherine II wrote from Kazan’ on the Volga to Voltaire (1694–1778): “Now I am in Asia; I wanted to see it with my own eyes. In this city there are twenty different peoples who are nothing like each other.”⁸³ Travelers to Crimea, Clarke in particular, considered this multi-ethnicity a major attraction of the country: “The variety of different nations which are found in the Crimea; each living as if in a country of its own, practising its peculiar customs, and preserving its religious rites, is one of the circumstances which renders the peninsula interesting to a stranger [...] so that in a very small district of territory, as in a menagerie, very opposite specimens of living curiosities are singularly contrasted.”⁸⁴

In Crimea, like everywhere in the East, you can meet the peoples known to classical and medieval writers such as Herodotus (c. 485 – c. 424 BCE), Strabo (c. 63 BCE – after 23 CE), or Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus (905 – 959). It was considered that, in the East, ancient peoples did not disappear; they just changed their names. Therefore, for Heber, the Tatars were the same as the Scythians: they even practiced the Scythian industries of carpet- and knife-making.⁸⁵ For Guthrie, the Crimean Karaites, the Jewish movement that rejected the Talmud, were the same as the ancient Melanchlaeni described by Herodotus, since both peoples wore black clothes.⁸⁶ The Scot believed that the name of Crimea derives from its ancient inhabitants, the Cimmerians; using the consonance of ethnic names, he also suggested a link to the Cimbri and Galli, the alleged ancestors of himself and his French wife. By mentioning that this people “antiently gave

⁸⁰ Webster, *Travels*, vol. 1, p. 88.

⁸¹ Evgeniia Prusskaia, *Frantsuzskaia ekspeditsiia v Egipet 1798 – 1801 gg.: vzaimnoe vospriiatie dvukh tsivilizatsii* (The French Expedition to Egypt in the Years 1798 – 1801: Mutual Perception of Two Civilizations) (Moscow 2016), pp. 146, 156 – 157.

⁸² Émile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, translated by Joseph Ward Swain (London 1915), p. 430.

⁸³ “Me voilà en Asie; j’ai voulu voir cela par mes yeux. Il y a dans cette ville vingt peuples divers qui ne se ressemblent point du tout.” Léon Thiessé (ed.), *Voltaire, Oeuvres complètes*, 14 vols. (Paris 1831), vol. 3, p. 21.

⁸⁴ Clarke, *Travels*, vol. 2, pp. 221 – 222.

⁸⁵ Heber, *Life*, vol. 1, p. 538.

⁸⁶ Guthrie, *Tour*, p. 84.

laws to the best part of Europe," Guthrie found the place for Crimea on the map of civilization.⁸⁷

5 Romance, "noble savages," and Western "projects"

The East was considered a place with different moral standards. The use of the term "romance of the Orient" allowed Westerners to underline the "otherness" of the East; moreover, it was the projection of their hidden desires.⁸⁸ Those who followed Catherine II on her tour to Crimea had their lodging in the former khan's palace in Bakhchisarai, a place that stimulated their fantasy. As Count de Ségur wrote: "On our return to the Khan's seraglio, it was natural enough that the sight of those voluptuous cabinets should awaken some ideas of gallantry."⁸⁹ However, Islamic regulations for women's behavior were interpreted as the sign of men's jealousy. According to Heber, on this point "the Tartars go even beyond the Turks."⁹⁰ Indeed, it symbolized their non-civilized nature, as flirtation was considered a symbol of Western progress. As Prince de Ligne wrote about Crimea, stating the contrast between its outer appearance and the behavior of the locals: "This country is assuredly a land of romance, but it is not romantic, for the women are locked up by these villa[i]nous Mahometans, who never read Ségur's ode on the happiness of being deceived by a wife."⁹¹ In 1793, the family tutor John Parkinson (1754–1840) remarked that Tatar jealousy influenced the appearance of the towns: "As they keep their women so close, the back of their houses is generally turned to the street. Indeed the houses and gardens are interspersed in such a manner that in walking along one almost forgets it is a town and is ready to fancy oneself in a straggling irregular Village."⁹²

It was only possible to overcome this restriction by acting like characters of romantic operas. Clarke told the anecdote of an English servant who imitated Tatar women by hiding his face and running away when seeing them. This sur-

⁸⁷ Guthrie, *Tour*, pp. 52, 178, 194–195.

⁸⁸ Richard Bernstein, *The East, the West, and Sex: A History of Erotic Encounters* (New York 2009); Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London 1991 [1978]); Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe*, pp. 50–62.

⁸⁹ Count Ségur, *Memoirs and Recollections*, 3 vols. (London 1825–1827), vol. 3, p. 155.

⁹⁰ Heber, *Life*, vol. 1, p. 310.

⁹¹ The Prince de Ligne, vol. 2, p. 22.

⁹² John Parkinson, *A Tour of Russia, Siberia and the Crimea, 1792–1794*, edited by William Collier (London 1971), p. 194.

prised the Tatars and made them catch the English and demand explanations for this behavior. As they did that, they took their veils off and showed him their faces, thus doing what he strived for.⁹³ Such type of “modesty” was also typical for Tatar men when meeting a Western woman. According to Lady Craven, the Tatars she met on the street avoided looking at her: “most of them kept their eyes fixed on the ground, as we passed; but some just looked up, and, as if they were afraid of seeing a woman’s face uncovered, hastily cast their eyes downward again; some diverted at the novelty, looked and laughed very much.”⁹⁴ Travelers were ready to believe every kind of nonsense if it seemed unusual. Joseph II described a strange tradition of the Crimean Karaites. A second marriage was allowed to them only if time deprived the first wife of her beauty and visual acuity: “If this law was established in Vienna, we would see women wearing spectacles to get rid of their husbands.”⁹⁵ It was most certainly a joke invented by his Russian guide; however, the emperor easily believed it and may have imagined himself in a country where everything was possible.

Vivid accounts of Catherine II’s companions laid the background for the image of Bakhchisarai as an Eastern city where passions boiled in the khan’s harem like those in poems by George Gordon Byron (1788–1824). The travelers saw an isolated, forgotten sepulcher in the khan’s cemetery and imagined it as the tomb of some Christian woman beloved by the khan. According to Lady Craven: “I saw from the windows a kind of dome [...], and I am told it is a monument built to the memory of a Christian wife, which the Khan loved so tenderly that he was inconsolable for her loss [...] This Tartar Khan must have had a soul worthy of being loved by a Christian wife I think.”⁹⁶ Plausibly, the isolated location of the mausoleum was explained as the buried woman was Christian, so she could not be interred in the main cemetery, along with the Muslim khans. Nevertheless, it is quite interesting that most travelers paid more attention to the legend than to the description of the monument. An example is the naturalist Peter Simon Pallas (1741–1811), German by origin, who lived in Crimea for fifteen years and was commissioned by the Russian government to write its description: “On the highest spot, near the border of the uppermost garden terrace, there stays a beautiful mausoleum of the Georgian spouse of brave Khan Krym-Ghirei (1718? –

⁹³ Clarke, *Travels*, vol. 2, p. 186.

⁹⁴ Craven, *Journey*, p. 178.

⁹⁵ “Si cette loi était établie à Vienne, nous verrions bien des femmes porter des lunettes pour se débarrasser de leurs maris”. Arneth, Joseph II, p. 362.

⁹⁶ Craven, *Journey*, p. 180.

1769), with a cupola vault with the top embellished with a gilded globe."⁹⁷ It is not quite clear if he himself related the woman buried in the mausoleum to Khan Krym Girei due to the chronological coincidence, or followed some local tradition. The story of the khan's beloved prisoner soon became very popular. The classics of Polish and Russian poetry, Adam Mickiewicz (1798–1855) and Aleksandr Pushkin (1799–1837), used this legend for their poems in imitation of Byron's Oriental verses. They called this woman Maria Potocka, a member of a prominent Polish family, and wife to Khan Krym Girei. There was a boomerang effect, whereby a vague, obscure local legend developed around an archaeological monument from the past was reimagined and expanded by foreign travelers before returning back to the local Muslim community. By the mid-nineteenth century, local Tatars told the tale of Potocka to a new generation of travelers as historical fact.⁹⁸

As already stated, the travelers discovered that the Crimean Tatars lived in a natural paradise, and were reminded of the concept of "noble savage" developed by the Enlightenment. These happy and care-free men were born good and were uncorrupted by civilization. They were supposed to live close to rich nature, having no need to work hard due to their limited desires.⁹⁹ Generally, laziness was considered a feature of the South. Montesquieu contrasted the "natural idlers" of the South, who got all the necessary things from nature, to peoples of the north, who had to be industrious due to their harsh living conditions:

In Europe there is a kind of balance between the southern and northern nations. The first have every convenience of life, and few of its wants: the last have many wants, and few conveniences. To one nature has given much, and demands but little; to the other she has given but little, and demands a great deal. The equilibrium is maintained by the laziness of the southern nations, and by the industry and activity which she has given to those in the North.¹⁰⁰

Initially, this laziness was not considered a bad quality. Prince de Ligne was delighted to see the Tatars living around his Crimean estate in a picturesque spot on the seashore: "I bless the lazy. I promise to prevent their being harassed. [...]"

⁹⁷ Peter Simon Pallas, *Travels to the Southern Provinces of the Russian Empire, in the Years 1793 and 1794*, translated from the German, 2nd ed. (2 vols., London 1812), vol. 2, p. 32.

⁹⁸ A. I. Bronshein, *Transformatsiia legendy Fontana slez* (The Transformation of the Legend of the Fountain of Tears), in *Bakhchisaraiskii istoriko-arkheologicheskii sbornik* 1 (1997), pp. 475–486, here pp. 475–481; Koshelev, *Tavrisheskaia mifologiya*, pp. 13–33.

⁹⁹ Eliade, *Myths*, pp. 39–56; Ter Ellingson, *The Myth of the Noble Savage* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London 2001).

¹⁰⁰ Montesquieu, *Spirit of Laws*, p. 332.

[W]hy not settle myself here? I will convert my Tartar Mussulmans to the juice of the vine; I will give my dwelling the look of a palace, to be seen from afar by navigators.”¹⁰¹ According to Webster: “The life of the Tartar would appear to leave him nothing to desire. Truth, he is indolent and poor; but his wishes are as little as his means [...]. The Russians exclaim against the laziness of the Tartars: but wherefore should they work? They are the happiest peasantry possible without it, and are naturally unwilling to sink into common labourers.”¹⁰² The stereotype of the Eastern idler was applied to different frontier countries, such as Egypt, Greece, or Ukraine,¹⁰³ as well as to America and South-East Asia.¹⁰⁴ Westerners did not understand the specific Muslim attitude to business, which stood in contrast to Protestant ethics,¹⁰⁵ thus interpreting Tatars’ laziness negatively. Plausibly, sometimes such judgments rested on firm evidence. Holderness, who had enough time to observe Tatar workers, concluded that: “From this character of them [Tatars], it may be inferred that they are the very worst labourers in the world; and indeed an English master views with an impatient eye the slow, unwilling, uninterested manner in which the generality of them set about their work.”¹⁰⁶

As usual, Western knowledge of the East had practical consequences. Pallas suggested that the Tatars should be expelled from the fertile regions to the hinterland and replaced with industrious population: “Should the Crimea, at some future period, be so fortunate as to receive a few thousand Georgian and Armenian colonists, who might prosper and live here [...]. It is, however, to be regretted, that all these fine, warm dales of the southern coast are inhabited partly by useless, inactive, and, in certain cases, dangerous Tartars, who understand the art of destroying better than that of rearing [...].”¹⁰⁷ It was not Tatarophobia, but rather a universal method for a rational use of resources: Pallas proposed to do the same with Russian landowners incapable of developing their Crimean lands in a profitable way.¹⁰⁸

101 The Prince de Ligne, vol. 2, pp. 28–29.

102 Webster, *Travels*, vol. 1, p. 90.

103 Khrapunov and Konkin, *Problemy integratsii*, pp. 337–338.

104 Syed Hussein Alatas, *The Myth of the Lazy Native. A Study of the Image of the Malays, Filipinos and Javanese from the 16th to the 20th Century and its Function in the Ideology of Colonial Capitalism* (London 1977); Eliade, *Myths*, pp. 39–56.

105 Marat Gibadullin et al., *Predprinimatel'stvo i islam: rossiiskii istoricheskii opyt* (Entrepreneurship and Islam: Russia's Historical Experience) (Kazan' 2016), pp. 38–48.

106 Holderness, *Journey*, p. 275.

107 Pallas, *Travels*, vol. 2, p. 262, cf. p. 362.

108 Pallas, *Travels*, vol. 2, p. 364.

Charmed by its beautiful nature, travelers praised the real and imagined advantages of Crimea for commerce and colonization. A popular idea was that civilization, industry, and business were to be brought by Westerners. As Lady Craven put it:

Yes, I confess, I wish to see a colony of honest English families here; establishing manufactures, such as England produces, and returning the produce of this country to ours – establishing fair and free trade from hence, and teaching industry and honesty to the insidious but oppressed Greeks, in their islands – waking the indolent Turk from his gilded slumbers, and carrying fair Liberty in her swelling sails as she passes through the Archipelago and the Mediterranean, to our dangerous (happily for us our dangerous) coast.¹⁰⁹

According to Holderness: "Those, however, who are resident [of Crimea], may contrive, with industry and assiduity, to make their estates yield them from five to eight, and sometimes as much as ten per cent annual income, according to the circumstances of the situation and climate."¹¹⁰ Her observations were similar to what Pallas argued, a particular problem being that some Russian landowners did not invest time and labor into their Crimean estates, residing far from the peninsula and trusting corrupt stewards.¹¹¹ Holderness lived in Crimea for four years, placing her confidence in the famous agriculturalist Reverend Arthur Young Junior (1769–1827). He received an estate in eastern Crimea from Emperor Alexander I (1777–1825) to show his abilities in the transformation of land, economy, and people. Ultimately, this ambitious project failed, and the British left Crimea with nothing for their pains.¹¹² This was a traditional Western attitude towards the East: with their advanced knowledge and technologies, Westerners wanted to be teachers of "natural men" and "barbarians," thus transforming the East according to Enlightenment ideas. However, they did not take into account a problematic foreign political situation, the absence of port facilities and high roads, expensive credit, and the lack of labor force in Crimea.

Another case of theoretical knowledge driving governments to practical actions was the mirage of "Oriental wealth". Many travelers, knowing that the ancient Hellenes and the medieval Genoese colonists in Crimea derived much profit from international trade, suggested the restoration of the former Silk Road, thus making Crimea an important stage on the route connecting Western Europe with

109 Craven, *Journey*, pp. 188–189.

110 Holderness, *Journey*, p. 282.

111 Holderness, *Journey*, pp. 281–282.

112 John G. Gazley, *The Reverend Arthur Young, 1769–1827: Traveller in Russia and Farmer in the Crimea*, in *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 38/2 (1956), pp. 360–405; Khrapunov and Konkin, *Problemy integratsii*, pp. 291–296.

inland Russia and, further, with Persia, Central Asia, India, and China. Such projects were developed by representatives of traditional opponents: Britain and France. As Guthrie put it: “and I by no means think it impossible that *Russia*, which brings goods by land from *China*, may one day restore the India trade by the antient channels, the Caspian and Phasis,¹¹³ more especially since its victorious banners are now waving in the very country through which the rich merchandize used to pass, and may probably render the route safe in future by a friendly treaty with the natives.”¹¹⁴ According to Reuilly, “An active coasting trade from the Black Sea to the Sea of Azov, would transport to Caffa (Feodosia)¹¹⁵ all the productions of the empire; a depot of the European manufactories, and the productions of the New World, would furnish, to advantage, Anatolia and the other Ottoman provinces in Asia, with merchandize, which they could transport by the caravans of Smyrna (Izmir), and of Constantinople; a part of those from India and of Persia would return by the way of Astrakhan to arrive to Caffa, which would once more become the centre of a considerable commerce.”¹¹⁶ Historical lessons were needed to revive the trade with the east and with the center in the once-flourishing Feodosia (Caffa), where the medieval Silk Road ended. Such measures meant the “Westernization” of the East, shifting Crimea on the mental maps.

However, alternative projects for Crimea’s future also appeared. Clarke suggested to return the peninsula to its previous state, that is to the Ottomans: “The expulsion of the Russians from the peninsula, if it had pleased Great Britain, would have been a work of ease and amusement [...] invaders would have found the Tartars greeting their arrival with tears of joy.”¹¹⁷ That is to say, Crimea should be returned to the East on the map of civilization. Similar ideas appeared in France. General Michal Sokolnicki (1760–1816), a confidant to Napoleon (1769–1821), suggested to the French emperor the creation of a Black Sea realm of Ukrainian Cossacks and Crimean Tatars under the name of Napoleonide. Tatars and Cossacks “would form a civilized nation as one of the strongest barriers against Russia’s ambitious plans for the Black Sea and Bospho-

113 Ancient Greek colony in the eastern Black Sea area, near the present-day town of Poti in Georgia, and also a river, today’s Rioni.

114 Guthrie, *Tour*, p. 156.

115 Caffa or Kafa was its name in the medieval (Genoese) period, used by Reuilly to underline the history of the city and its former importance as a commercial center on the medieval Silk Road.

116 Reuilly, *Travels*, p. 69.

117 Clarke, *Travels*, vol. 2, p. 269.

rus [...]."¹¹⁸ In this project, Crimea became the barrier between Europe and Asia, barbarism and civilization, with Russia playing the negative role.

Conclusions

Western travelers viewed Crimea as the place where beautiful and fruitful nature formed a "terrestrial paradise" and "noble savages" lived without any need and desire for labor. Their appearance, customs, and religion seemed strange, archaic, and primitive. Magnificent old structures in combination with classical authors and medieval historians made Westerners imagine the "lost golden age" of Crimea, placing it either in classical antiquity, or among medieval Genoese colonies, or in the Crimean Khanate. The understanding of Crimea as a kind of "promised land" compelled travelers to make plans, sometimes for economic development, the growth of trade, and the colonization of the country, sometimes for the restoration of the power of its former Muslim masters. Travelers ascribed a number of the so-called "Oriental" features to the peninsula, despite its geographical location in Europe. Their accounts made Crimea known to all Europe, but they also created stereotypes which later influenced politicians, merchants, and scholars. There are striking parallels with contemporary Western accounts of Egypt, Greece, and Turkey as countries with unusual natural conditions, an Islamic cultural heritage, and magnificent vestiges of old civilizations.¹¹⁹ Some parallels also occur in Western accounts of Eastern Europe and the Balkans as lands on the imagined border between "civilization" and "barbarism."¹²⁰ Nineteenth-century Russian intellectuals produced numerous accounts of the "borderland" between the East and the West – the Ottoman Empire, Geor-

118 "[Les Kosacks unis aux Tartares de la Crimée...] formerait bientôt une nation civilisée qui serait une des plus fortes barrières aux projets ambitieux de la Russie et à ses prétentions sur la mer Noire et sur le Bosphore [...]". Vadym Adadurov, "Napoleonida" na Skhodi Evropy: Uiavlennia, proekty ti dial'nist' uriadu Frantsii shchodo pivdenno-zakhidnykh okrain Rosiis'koi imperii na pochatky XIX stolittia (The "Napoleonide" in the East of Europe: Notions, Projects, and Activities of the French Government for the South-Western Frontiers of the Russian Empire in the Early Nineteenth Century), 2nd ed. (L'viv 2018), pp. 542–543, cf. pp. 303–304.

119 Helen Angelomatis-Tsougarakis, *The Eve of the Greek Revival: British Travellers' Perceptions of Early Nineteenth-Century Greece* (London, New York 1990); Eisner, *Travelers*; Prusskaia, *Frantsuzskaia ekspeditsiia*; Nevsal Olcen Tiryakioglu, *The Western Image of Turks from the Middle Ages to the 21st Century: The Myth of "Terrible Turk" and "Lustful Turk,"* (PhD thesis, Nottingham Trent University 2015), pp. 112–138.

120 Božidar Jezernik, *Wild Europe: The Balkans in the Gaze of Western Travellers* (London 2004); Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe*.

gia, and even Little Russia (central Ukraine). There one may find descriptive elements similar to the aforementioned discourses.¹²¹ Equally revealing is the parallelism of the motifs of idleness, lack of medicine, closed women, and other features of backwardness and archaism in foreign accounts of Muscovy in the early seventeenth century.¹²² There may have been general paradigms of Western and Westernized thinking leading to similar interpretations of different realities. However, differences are sometimes as suggestive as similarities. If one turns to the image of Kazan' and its environs as the Russian province with huge Islamic cultural heritage, geographically located in Europe but culturally considered a part of Asia, one will see that its image has nothing to do with that of Crimea. Kazan' lacks traits typical of Crimea such as "paradisiacal nature," "noble but idle savages," "passions in harems," and "perspectives of economical transformations with progressive ideas."¹²³ It is interesting to think of the reason. Should it be because Kazan' was conquered and absorbed by Russia long ago? Perhaps the "Oriental" representations analyzed above explain better the travelers' culture and mentality than the realities they observed. Therefore, studies of the imagined geography of Crimea allow a more contextualized and more nuanced analysis of the broad phenomenon of European Orientalism.

121 Pavel Kupriianov, "Ozhestochennye varvary" s blagorodnym kharakterom ("Fierce barbarians" with Noble Character), in *Vostochnaia kollektsiia* 2 (2005), pp. 26–42; Victor Taki, *Tsar' i sultan: Osmanskaia imperiia glazami rossiian* (Tsar and Sultan: Russian Encounters with the Ottoman Empire) (Moscow 2017); Alexei Tolochko, *Kievskaia Rus' i Malorossiia v XIX veke* (Kievan Rus and Little Russia in the Nineteenth Century) (Kyiv 2012), pp. 71–135; Amiran Urushadze, *Rossiiskaia imperiia i gruzinskoe obshchestvo v XIX v.: vzaimo(ne)ponimanie* (The Russian Empire and the Georgian Society in the Nineteenth Century: The Mutual (Mis)Understanding), in *Chertkovskii istoricheskii sbornik* 1 (2018), pp. 127–135.

122 Tat'iana Chernikova, *Rossiia i Evropa: "Vek novshestv"* (Russia and Europe: The "Age of Novelties") (Moscow 2019), pp. 249–265.

123 See A. V. Garzavina and I. A. Novitskaia (eds.), *Znamenitye liudi o Kazani i Kazanskom krae* (Famous Persons on Kazan' and its Country) (Kazan' 2005).