



bitig Edebiyat Fakültesi Dergisi

bitig Journal of Faculty of Letters

(Cilt/Volume: 4, Sayı/Issue: 7, Haziran/June 2024)


Elite Culture of Early Modern Crimean Khanate: Western Travellers' Perceptions

Erken Modern Kırım Hanlığı'nın Elit Kültürü: Batılı Gezginlerin Algıları

Elmaz ASAN

Visiting Researcher, Cambridge University

elmaz.atr@gmail.com

 ORCID 0009-0008-9749-9093

Araştırma makalesi/Research article

Geliş Tarihi/Received: 02.01.2024

Kabul Tarihi/Accepted: 29.04.2024

Atıf/Citation

Asan, Elmaz (2024), "Erken Modern Kırım Hanlığı'nın Elit Kültürü: Batılı Gezginlerin Algıları", *bitig Edebiyat Fakültesi Dergisi*, 4 (7), 31-42.

Asan, Elmaz (2024), "Elite Culture of Early Modern Crimean Khanate: Western Travellers' Perceptions", *bitig Journal of Faculty of Letters*, 4 (7), 31-42.



Bu makale iThenticate, turnitin, intihal.net programlarından biriyle taranmıştır.

This article was checked by iThenticate, turnitin or intihal.net.

Abstract The statehood of the Crimean Tatars indigenous people of Crimea is little known worldwide. In the era of the Crimean Khanate, the Crimean Tatars cultivated elite culture characterized by a synthesis of European customs and Islamic religious traditions. The term “elite culture” refers specifically to the cultural society of the established aristocracy, the educated upper class, political influencers, and individuals active in fields such as education, art, literature, architecture, philosophy and the military. Elite culture in the Crimean Khanate can be described as the confluence of various influences leading to a distinctive fusion of artistic, intellectual and social elements. This study looks at elite culture from the perspective of Western travellers from France, Poland and England visiting Crimea in 16th-19th centuries, in particular, Martin Bronowski, Baron de Tott, Claude-Charles de Peyssonnel and others. The Crimean Peninsula has always been of interest to travellers, attracting visitors from various parts of the world at different times. This study examines the perspectives of Western travellers from France, Poland, and England who visited Crimea between the 16th and 19th centuries. Specifically, it analyzes their observations on the unique aspects of elite culture among the Crimean Tatars. Key figures studied include Martin Bronowski, Baron de Tott, Claude-Charles de Peyssonnel, and others. The research contends that the travelogues portrayed a harmonious blend of culture and politics, showcasing how certain Crimean khans, who were also skilled writers and musicians, contributed to this vision. The leaders of the Crimean Tatar Geray dynasty aspired to establish an advanced state, characterized by a military and a thriving intellectual heritage, deeply intertwined with the Ottoman Empire.

Keywords: Crimea, Crimean Tatars, Russian annexation, Western traveler, elite culture

Öz Kırım'ın yerli halkının Kırım Tatarlarının devletliği dünya çapında çok az bilinmektedir. Kırım Hanlığı döneminde Kırım Tatarları, Avrupa gelenekleri ile İslami dini geleneklerin senteziyle karakterize edilen elit bir kültür geliştirdiler. “Elit kültür” terimi, özellikle yerleşik aristokrasinin, eğitilmiş üst sınıfın, politik etki sahibi kişilerin ve eğitim, sanat, edebiyat, mimarlık, felsefe ve askeriye gibi alanlarda aktif olan bireylerin oluşturduğu kültürel toplumu ifade eder. Kırım Hanlığı'ndaki seçkin kültür, sanatsal, entelektüel ve sosyal unsurların kendine özgü bir birleşimine yol açan çeşitli etkilerin birleşimi olarak tanımlanabilir. Bu çalışma elit kültürü, 16. ve 19. yüzyıllarda Kırım'ı ziyaret eden Fransa, Polonya ve İngiltere'den gelen Batılı gezginlerin, özellikle de Martin Bronowski, Baron de Tott, Claude-Charles de Peyssonnel ve diğerlerinin bakış açısından ele alıyor. Kırım Yarımadası her zaman gezginlerin ilgisini çekmiş, farklı zamanlarda dünyanın çeşitli yerlerinden ziyaretçi çekmiştir. Bu çalışma, 16. ve 19. yüzyıllar arasında Kırım'ı ziyaret eden Fransa, Polonya ve İngiltere'den Batılı seyyahların bakış açılarını incelemektedir. Özellikle Kırım Tatarları arasındaki elit kültürün benzersiz yönlerine ilişkin gözlemlerini analiz etmektedir. İncelenen önemli isimler arasında Martin Bronowski, Baron de Tott, Claude-Charles de Peyssonnel ve diğerleri yer alıyor. Araştırma, seyahat günlüklerinin kültür ve siyasetin uyumlu bir karışımını yansıttığını ve aynı zamanda yetenekli yazar ve müzisyen olan bazı Kırım hanlarının nasıl katkıda bulunduğunu ortaya koyduğunu ileri sürüyor. bu vizyona. Kırım Tatar Geray hanedanının liderleri, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ile derinden iç içe geçmiş, askeri ve gelişen bir entelektüel mirasla karakterize edilen ileri bir devlet kurmayı arzuluyordular.

Anahtar sözcükler: Kırım, Kırım Tatarları, Rusya'nın ilhakı, Batılı seyyah, elit kültür

Introduction

Elite culture is generally defined as “elevated cultural expressions and institutions that are exclusive to and distinctive of social elites”. This term specifically highlights the cultural preferences of various elite groups, including the established aristocracy, the commercial bourgeoisie, educated bureaucrats, political power brokers, and military authorities. It encompasses the refined tastes and distinctive cultural markers that set these social elites apart, shaping the cultural landscape of their respective eras, including the ones related to the entertainment. “Elite members learn from early childhood about manners, correct language, etiquette, and refined taste. Later in life, the shaping and nurturing of their

habitus continues, for example through attending, and participating in, events such as the opera, theater, polo, and sailing regattas." (Salverda 2021: 25). The Crimean Khanate existing from 15th to 18th century has not been standing alone special cultural developments deeply penetrating into political life, including the patronage of arts, sciences, crafts and other field of intellectual activities in the Muslim World.

The study presented here examines the influence of the elite class, as exercised by the leadership of the Crimean khans, on the complex dynamics of social, educational and cultural processes. The aim of this study is to shed light on the central role of these elites, particularly the recognised leaders within the Crimean Khanate, in exerting a significant influence on the nuanced interplay of social structures, educational paradigms, cultural trajectories and military capacities during the era of the Crimean Khanate. Approaching a number of travelogues written by Western travelers in 17th, 18th and 19th centuries (Martin Bronowski, Baron de Tott, Claude -Charles de Peysonelle) the study answer to the question of how the local elite culture interacted with a larger political and military milieu of the Crimean Khanate, providing an insightful picture of the everyday ruling class life. Furthermore, the listed travelers served as ambassadors to the Crimean Khanate at various times, granting them firsthand exposure to the Khanate's life. As a result, their notes hold significant value. These travel records function as crucial historical documents, contributing to our understanding of Crimea's history and its lasting significance in shaping real historical narratives.

These travellers offer valuable perspectives on the confluence of Eastern and Western cultures, illuminating the dynamic interactions between different ethnic groups and the broader geopolitical landscape of the time.

Education in the Crimean Khanate

During the time of the Crimean Khanate, the inhabitants of the peninsula cultivated different religious traditions. Remarkable examples are the coexistence of mosques and kenassas (the religious buildings of the Karaites), which illustrate the cultural diversity on the peninsula. The religious differences, characterised by different practises, have not hindered the cordial coexistence of these different communities. During his visit to Crimea in 1843, the renowned German economist and writer August von Haxthausen noted the impressive religious tolerance of the Crimean Tatars, the majority Muslim indigenous population of the peninsula (Haxthausen 1973: 45).

Furthermore, linguistic unity among the inhabitants of the peninsula was characterized above all by the widespread use of the Crimean Tatar language throughout the Crimean peninsula.

The people of this state have never experienced servitude. Crimean Tatars - soldiers, peasants, shepherds, wine growers, builders, artists, craftsmen – have always been free people (Czerwonnaja 2015: 199).

The success of the Crimean Khanate was based on the principles of freedom and mutual respect. "Its educational system was as complex and thriving as that of the Ottomans and more advanced than that in Muscovy." (Fisher 1978: 17).

The Polish ambassador Martin Broniewski was commissioned by King Stefan Batory to visit Crimea in 1578. He was one of the first Western explorers to venture into this region. His visit was closely linked to a diplomatic mission to the court of Crimean Khan Mehmed II Geray. The ambassador's meticulously recorded notes reveal nuanced aspects of the prevailing social and cultural environment.

In line with Broniewski's accounts, the educational landscape in Crimea during this period is an important phenomenon, as the Crimean Tatars established educational institutions near mosques. Of particular significance is the ambassador's astute observation that education in Crimea was accessible to both male and female populations. During the Crimean Khanate, Arabic was one of the most important languages of instruction, as education at that time was mainly focused on religious knowledge, particularly the study of the Quran, reflecting Islam's significant influence in the region. Islam was the main religion in Crimea, shaping many aspects of life, including education. Students often learned Arabic to access religious texts, including the Quran, which played a central role in their educational curriculum.

In his book on the Crimean Tatar community in the 16th century, he writes that "*the Tatars send their children to school to teach them Arabic*". (Seidamet 1921: 30). The Polish Catholic bishop Stanislav Bogush-Sestrenevich visited Crimea after the illegal Russian annexation in 1783. His work, which bears the title "History of Taurida", was published in 1800. The book delves into various facets of the Crimean peninsula across different historical epochs, ranging from ancient times to the present day. It places particular emphasis on the Crimean Tatars and their educational system. In his statements about the Crimea, the bishop takes the same position as the Polish ambassador M. Broniewski on the education system at the time of the Crimean Khanate:

"In the 18th century, the Crimean Tatars had many popular schools and institutes: village schools at the peak of Muslim knowledge, schools of the theology spread everywhere, from the outskirts of BaktchiSerai, where Mengheli-Gherai himself insisted on founding the mother-school of the "medresses" of Crimea (Zindjirli), to the most remote villages. Seminars quickly famous and renowned even in Constantinople where one always knew what thinking "divinely" meant, and which contributed, to no small extent, to spreading throughout Islam the great reputation as well as the high prestige which the Crimean co-religionists enjoyed everywhere." (Broniewski 1630: 287-288).

The rulers of the Crimean Khanate recognised the importance of education for the maintenance of social order and the promotion of cultural identity. They often supported the establishment of madrassahs as part of their efforts to consolidate power and create a sense of unity among the various ethnic and religious communities within the khanate. The madrassahs were not only educational institutions but also centres for cultural preservation and the dissemination of Islamic values.

"Madrasah education, was a kind of elites' education for channeling essential knowledge, value and norms for those who shoulder duties as ilmiye [teaching] class's religious official, judicial organ and madrasah educator (professor)" (Sağlam 2018: 58).

Furthermore, the Turkish researcher Suleiman Gur emphasizes in a study that the children of the Geray dynasty in Istanbul were educated according to the Ottoman study system. *"This education system included languages and dialects such as Arabic, Persian, Latin and Chagatai Turkish, as well as Turkish. Positive sciences such as history, geography, martial arts, astrology, mathematics, logic, and chemistry were also taught. In addition to calligraphy and music lessons, sports activities such as hunting, shooting and wrestling were also thought perfectly."* (Gür 2022: 71).

The khans' desire for high education was evident not only in their political activities, but also in the fact that many Crimean khans made a significant contribution to the development of Crimean Tatar musical culture, literature and philosophy with their literary and musical creations. These leaders also contributed to the development of national libraries.

The Hungarian-born Baron de Tott, the French ambassador, was appointed ambassador to Crimea under Khan Kirim Geray. He remained in this position until the death of Khan Kirim Geray (1769). In 1784 he wrote an important four-volume work that was published in Amsterdam under the title "Notes on the Turks and Tatars". His memoirs provide an insight into life in both Turkey and the Crimea. The second part of his notes focuses on the Crimean Khanate and its administration in the region. In his memoirs, Baron de Tott emphasizes the special attention that the Crimean khans paid to the development of art in the Crimean Khanate. *"The highly esteemed reverence for the arts did not lead to a neglect of literature and the sciences. In fact, many khans who served as role models were themselves remarkable poets. It is worth noting that the Crimean khans harboured a deep passion for poetry and thus contributed to a vibrant cultural milieu in the peninsula."* (Tott 1884: 113-114).

In the article "The Crimean Khanate in May 1607 as seen by a French traveller" ("Le khanat de Crimée en mai 1607 vu par un voyageur français"), Paule Koehler presented rare manuscripts found in the French library in Paris by two French travellers from the 16th to 18th centuries who visited Crimea during the heyday of the Crimean Khanate. The travellers were servants of Baron de Salignac, the French ambassador in Constantinople from 1605 to 1612, and their notes provide valuable information about the creative talents of Gazi Geray Khan *"His leisure hours were spent composing or playing music. Murad III, at the beginning of his reign, sent him an orchestra of musicians. His poems have remained famous, they are compared to those of Fuzuli."* (Koehler 1971: 321). The poetic disposition of Gazi Geray, as well as his interest in the sciences, was also known to his Hungarian contemporaries. *The Hungarian historian, István Szamosközi, noted in his chronicle that this Crimean khan had a camel-load of books by his side on every campaign. He also added that Gazi Geray ii had a "Latin" education, as he had also mastered, apart from his Tatar mother tongue, Ottoman Turkish, Arabic, Persian, and the east Turkic literary language (Chagatai) that is, every major language of the sophisticated Orient of that time—at the same level from his writings in Chagatai, one epic poem and two philosophical works are still known today.* (Ivanics 2013: 295-296). Each khan possessed creative talents and endeavoured to contribute to the cultural expansion of the peninsula. For example: *"Saadet Geray Khan was a scholarly figure with a strong affinity for reading, possessing a rich library. Another Crimean Khan who stood out not only for his intellectual and literary persona but also for his wisdom was Hacı Selim Geray. Selim Geray, responsible for enriching the Hansaray in Bahçesaray with a substantial library, was affiliated with the Mevlevi Order."* (Gür 2022: 71). Kirim Geray Khan, also known as Qırım Geray Khan, was an important personality of the Geray dynasty. He ruled from 1717 to 1736 and was known for his efforts to promote cultural development, particularly in the fields of theatre and music, during his reign. His patronage had a lasting impact on the cultural landscape of the Crimean Khanate in the 18th century. The French ambassador Baron de Tott witnessed Kirim Geray Khan's leisure activities *"A large orchestra, a troupe of Comedians and Baladines theatrical dancers or stage buffoons, which he also had in his pay, filled all the evenings by varying his amusements and distracted the Khans of the political affairs and war preparations with which he was preoccupied during the day."* (Tott 1884: 175]

In the era of the Crimean Khanate, the intellectual landscape of the Crimean Tatars experienced a remarkable flowering of philosophical thought. Crimean Tatar scholars played a central role in promoting a variety of philosophical ideas and thus contributed to the influence of the Crimean Khanate's philosophical discourse extending beyond its territorial borders. *"Due to the inherent heterogeneity within the tradition and significant ideological changes over several centuries, the religious and philosophical heritage of the Crimean Khanate can be considered one of the most dynamic traditions of post-classical Islamic philosophical thought, where a thorough knowledge of the classics was combined*

with innovative intellectual approaches. The reception of the religious and philosophical works of the natives of the Crimean Khanate (primarily the works of Sharaf al-Din al-Kirimi, Abu l-Baq, al-Kafawi, Muhammad al-Kafawi, and Mahammad al-Aqirman) far beyond its borders shows the role of authors from this region in the transmission and cultivation of the “episteme” of postclassical Islam.” (Yakubovych 2016: 374).

Architectural Heritage of the Crimean Khanate

During the era of the Crimean Khanate, significant emphasis was attached to the architectural heritage, which manifested itself in various forms and was also part of the elite culture. Each khan was not only an educated person, but also endeavoured to leave a lasting legacy of his reign, which is reflected in the erection of architectural monuments.

“Crimean khans were also the patrons of fine arts. They built many religious and secular monuments.” (Gür 2022: 68).

The architecture of the peninsula was characterised by the presence of Crimean khan palaces, mosques, religious schools (madrassas), baths, mausoleums and fountains. Throughout Crimea there were a considerable number of mosques— - about 1500— - decorated with locally made tiles. An essential element of the architecture was also the fountains, which, beyond their ritual significance, introduced the national Eastern aesthetic of the Crimean Tatars to the peninsula. The English traveller Charles Henry Scott, who visited Crimea before the outbreak of the Crimean War in 1854, mentions this in his travel notes:

“The most striking feature, however, is the number of fountains sparkling in every direction; there being about a hundred, independent of those in the palace, of which fifty are in the streets, while the remainder are private.” (Scott 1854: 305).

The traveller was particularly interested in the Selsebil Fountain, which was built in 1764 during the reign of Kirim Geray (1758-1764). This period is considered the high point of the Crimean Khanate, and the Selsebil Fountain was an essential part of the palace architecture of the time.

“If there exists another fountain equal to this, let it show itself! We have seen the towns of Damascus and Baghdad, but we have no-where found a fountain comparable to this.” (Scott 1854: 296).

In addition to the main residence of the Crimean khans, there were other palaces that reflect the architectural heritage of the time.

“In Bakhchisaray itself there were three palaces with a capacity of three thousand people each. One of these palaces, Tenekeli (covered with iron), was built by Sahib Girai, the second by Bahadır Girai Khan, and the third by Islam Girai Khan” (Geray 2008: 41).

Nevertheless, the architectural heritage as well as the entire elite culture was completely destroyed by the aggressive colonial policy of the Russian Empire. The first manifestation of this destructive influence took place during the Russo-Turkish War of 1735-1739, when the capture of the town of Bakhchisarai by Field Marshal Christoph von Münnich in 1736 resulted in most of the Khan's palace being set on fire. The greatest tragedy caused by the fire was the complete destruction of the Crimean Khans' largest library, which contained the works of outstanding Crimean scholars of the time. As a result of Russia's aggressive action, the recovery of the intellectual works of the scientists became almost impossible. In her book “Kırımın Kalan Mirası”, the Turkish researcher Nicole Kançal-Ferrari presents valuable information about the main residence of the Crimean khans, which was related by Münnich himself.

"It seems that Bachisaray had a really beautiful and advanced architecture. According to the general, the floor of the palace, which was extremely well maintained, was painted in gold with floral motifs ("feather-shaped floral motifs"), probably in the reed style. Munich mentions that in the center of the house (palace) there was a magnificent bath ("in the center of the house was a magnificent bathroom"). From Munich's account, it is clear that he was very impressed by this marvelous marble bath. This bath, and with it the entire palace, was burnt to the ground in a few hours by the Russian soldiers. The gold ornamentation of the dome of the bath was sent to Petersburg." (Kançal-Ferrari 2005: 74).

In the last quarter of the XV - early XVI century, the Palace of Kalga-sultan was erected on the bank of the Salgir River, in the suburb of Ak'mesdjita (Russian Simferopol). This palace was one of the most massive palaces of the peninsula, which housed the second after the Khan, the heir to the Khan's throne, Kalga-sultan. After Münnich's invasion of Bakhchisarai in 1736, the Russian authorities also ordered to burn down Ak'mesdzhit. The palace was destroyed, later partially restored, and destroyed again after the annexation of Crimea in 1783.

One of the Russian officials appointed immediately after Empress Catherine II's visit to the Crimea in 1787 described the palace as follows: *"The Grand Palace of Kalgi Sultan is not large in itself and is occupied by our soldiers, who have already managed to destroy some of the fountains adorning the palace and cut down trees."* (Abdulvaapov 2021: 126)

In 1832, as a result of the Russification of the peninsula, the Weisbord Brewery was built on the site of the former palace of Kalgi Sultan. The events that took place, such as the burning of the significant library of the Khan Palace, the replacement of the residence of Kalgi Sultan with a brewery, and the destruction of the architectural landscape, were a consequence of Russian policy on the peninsula.

"In the eyes of Russian officials, any site associated with Islamic practice or Tatar tradition – be it a fountain, mosque, coffeehouse, or shrine - had intrinsic political content." (O'Neill 2017: 263).

The Popularity of Tradesmen, Craftsmen and Merchants in the Crimean Khanate

The Crimean Khanate, located at the crossroads of key trade routes between East and West, demonstrated not only the outstanding cultural achievements of its elite, but also successful economic strategies that ensured its sustainability. In addition to the development of elite culture, the people of the Crimean Khanate were actively engaged in applied occupations aimed at the production of local goods. The English traveller, Ch. G. Scott, found a significant development of the local handicraft industry: *"The preparation of morocco and other coloured leathers, making boots and slippers, fashioning caps to suit the different races, the manufacturing of all kinds of ironmongery, pottery, and saddles, soap and candles, are a few of the occupations of the people."* (Scott 1854: 216).

Craftsmanship activity in the Crimean Khanate stood out not only for the production of goods needed to fulfil everyday needs, but also for the successful creation of weapons, which were in high demand both inside and outside the Khanate.

In 1753, the French consul Claude - Charles de Peyssonnel, sent to Crimea, provided a valuable analysis in his treatise on trade in the Black Sea, describing the production of arms in the Crimean Khanate. This treatise stressed not only the importance of arms production in ensuring the defence capacity of the territory, but also its role in shaping trade relations with foreign partners.

Crimean gunsmiths showed great skill in the choice of materials, construction and finishing of weapons. Technological innovations, such as the use of Damascus steel, gave Crimean blades not only high strength, but also characteristic ornamentation on the surface, which gave the products a unique style. Crimean blades and knives gained a reputation for high quality and aesthetic products, which attracted the attention of trade partners and collectors.

"In addition to this, they pass into Circassia, Russia, Poland, Moldavia, Wallakia, Natolia and Constantinople, from where they spread throughout the Ottoman Empire, and even into foreign countries, since I saw them sold in Paris." (Peyssonnel 1787: 143-144).

During his stay in Bakhchisaray, Charles de Peyssonnel noted that there are a significant number of gunsmiths in that city, covering the whole range of rifle and shotgun barrel production.

Crimean rifles are extremely sought after throughout the Ottoman Empire; they are only worked on in Bachisarai: in this town there are fifteen to twenty gunsmiths' shops, from which five to six hundred mounted rifles and approximately two thousand rifle barrels are produced each year; the cannons are simple or carabined; the latter are more successful than the others: it is impossible to determine the price of these rifles; they are from 15 to 200 piastres (Peyssonnel 1787: 147).

Claude- Charles de Peyssonnel's treatise sheds light on the advanced level of arms production in the Crimean Khanate in the mid-18th century. It reflects the social, economic and technological aspects of this important sector of local industry, which contributed to the economic stability of the Crimean Khanate.

Elite Military Tradition

The military power of the Crimean Khanate represented an important component of its political and strategic strength, influencing regional and international relations. The khanate's military capabilities, based on traditional and innovative strategies of the time, contributed to its internal stability and were an example for European countries.

In his work "Crimea - Past Present Claims of the Crimean Tatars", published in Lausanne in 1921 in French, the prominent 19th century Crimean Tatar political figure Jafer Seidamet analysed the history of Crimea through many accounts of Western travellers who visited the peninsula in different historical periods. Of particular interest are the testimonies of the French traveller Boudrieu, who shared his unique findings regarding the military experience of the Crimean khans.

"Whenever contemporary historians have not been blinded by passion, they have painted an interesting portrait of the Tatars of Crimea. Not only do they present them to us as the best cavalry in the world, as courageous, tireless and terrible soldiers, but they also praise their public and private, social and domestic virtues, their sincerity, their good faith, their fidelity to all their commitments, to their affections and their devotion to each other. As they were before the conquest, such they still show themselves today: superior in their bad fortune and more noble in their defeat than the Russians in their victories." (Seidamet, 1921: 12]

The military-strategic power formed in the structure of the army of the Crimean Khanate demonstrated a high level of organisation and strategic structuring. A significant component of its composition was manoeuvre cavalry, which was also pointed out by Martin Broniewski in his notes on his journey to the Crimea. *"The entire Tatar army of Khan consists of cavalry, with the exception of several hundred foot soldiers armed with guns, whom the Khan receives as an auxiliary detachment from the Turks, or maintains at his*

own expense; in addition, he takes with him on the campaign a few small cannons” (Broniewski 1630, 63)

A significant feature of Crimean Tatar tactics was the preference for quick and powerful strikes against the enemy. Nevertheless, the main emphasis was not on absolute defeat, but on flexibility and adaptability to the conditions of combat operations. The Crimean Tatars, following this tactic, favoured manoeuvre actions, not always aimed at the final resolution of the conflict in a single general confrontation. This desire to avoid direct confrontation is evidence of strategic flexibility and an intelligent approach to the art of warfare.

“In the battle itself, the Crimean Tatars were firing arrows at the enemy. The Tatar dance was actively used: detachments alternately swooped on the enemy and, having released arrows, went back, and new ones came out in their place, after which the first detachment returned”. (Sheyhumeroov 2019: 142)

The Ottoman Empire, displaying a high level of strategic alliance policy, systematically integrated the Crimean Khanate Army into the framework of its military campaigns. The Ottomans' military efforts regularly relied on the outstanding strength and tactical prowess of the Crimean Tatar army. This military alliance formed an effective strategic coalition capable of successfully confronting a variety of challenges on the strategic battlefield.

In addition, the Ottoman Empire provided financial support to the Crimean Khanate, which served as an additional motivation for the khans to participate in the military campaigns of the Ottoman Empire.

“The Sublime Porte paid the khan 5,000 to 15,000 gold coins from the income of the peninsula's harbors as preparation costs (harçlık). The khans and the ruling elite were motivated to join the campaign by the money they received from the Porte for their participation” (Ivanics 2013: 291).

For example, Bora G'aza Girai II, who was known for his creative and musical abilities, was also distinguished for his outstanding military strategies and mastery of the Takitic military art.

His military achievements were admired by Western partners and travellers who visited Crimea during his reign. This is evidenced by the records of the servants of the French ambassador in Constantinople for the period from 1605 to 1612, who made observations during their stay in the Crimea during the era of Bora G'aza Girai II's rule.

Here is the testimony of Gazi Geray's contemporaries: *“In battle, he resembled a lion whose roars make the forests resound and the deserts quiver. He had an affability and a generosity which won him all hearts, rich or poor who returned filled with honours and presents. [To the extent] that if a five-year-old child had been able to follow him to war it would have come back as rich as Croesus.”* (Koehler 1971: 321)

The army of the Crimean khans and its combat experience were of particular interest to French travellers and diplomats. Many of them, having spent several years in the khanate, sought to gain experience of Crimean Tatar military traditions and principles.

“By comparing the failures of King Charles XII and Napoleon Bonaparte, we can see that the Tatar troops had far superior logistics to Western armies. The point of view of military travellers is particularly interesting, as their relations are inspired by the logistical problems of European armies.” (Toth 2016: 91).

The French were attracted not only by the outstanding military experience of the army of the Crimean khans, but also by the impressive endurance of the army and their ability to ensure food sustainability and supply the army under difficult military conditions. These qualities were important factors in determining the effectiveness of military operations, especially in the context of long and mobile military campaigns.

The process of meat preservation known and popular nowadays as *basturma* was a provision created by Crimean Khans. The essence of this technique is drying meat in the open air in windy conditions, after which it was saturated with spices and subjected to the smoking process. *"The origin of the word means pressed and dried meat which can go back to the methods of preparing meat pressed under the saddle of horses."* (Toth 2016: 94).

The Crimean warriors also used dried cheese, horse milk and flour porridge as their military provisions. In addition, Crimean Tatar warriors used thinly sliced raw meat, known by the modern designation "Tartar", which found its way into French and generally European cuisine. The recipe for this dish came to French cuisine from the military gastronomic tradition of Crimean Tatars and Ukrainian Cossacks. *"The first information reported in Europe about the famous steak tartare comes from the 17th century engineer and cartographer, Guillaume Levasseur de Beauplan. Having served for a long time in Poland-Lithuania, he reported numerous observations of it in his work entitled Description of the 'Ukraine, published in 1651 in Rouen. In the recipe mentioned, attributed to the Crimean Tatars but also observed among the Zaporozhian Cossacks encountered in the territory of the future Ukraine, it involves cutting pieces of horse fillet one to two fingers thick, then, after having salted them abundantly on one side to draw out the blood, place them under the saddle, on the back of horse."* (Toth 2016: 92).

In light of France's diplomatic aspirations in the 18th century, a policy of maintaining relations with the Crimean Khanate was actively pursued. In order to better study the cultural and social aspects of the Crimean Tatar peninsula. Not only diplomatic representatives were this sent to Crimea, but also travellers who served as ethnographers and, at times, culinary reporters: *"French diplomacy tried to maintain relations with the Crimean Khanate, where agents and missionaries were sent to discover the territories, its products and its inhabitants. These travelers, most often experienced soldiers, were struck by the Tatars' food preservation traditions which proved very effective during their long campaigns."* (Toth 2016: 97]

French interest in Crimea was not only driven by strategic, military and ethnographic considerations, but also had a strong commercial component. In 1768, a trading company was founded in Paris, focussing on activities in the Black Sea. Crimea represented significant economic potential for French entrepreneurs and trading companies, based on the prospects for maritime trade and access to important resources in the region. The military conflicts of the time, including the Russo-Turkish War of 1768-1774, meant that the trading company's plans in the Black Sea were thwarted. The Russo-Turkish War led to the signing of the Treaty of Kuchuk-Kainarji in 1774.

The most important provisions of the treaty included territorial and border changes in Russia's favour. According to the treaty, the Crimean Khanate was recognised as independent from the Ottoman Empire. In addition, Russia acquired significant territories on the northern coast of the Black Sea, including the Kerch Peninsula and the Azov region. Eight years later, in 1783, Russia illegally annexed Crimea. The French claim to trade in the Black Sea region due to Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea was not realised, but the experience was significant and reverberated in French ethnographic, cultural and military traditions.

Conclusion

Describing the early modern Crimean Khanate, most of the Western travellers shared their deep curiosity in local culture, both popular and elite. The latter has been particularly interesting as part of a political focus on an area of intersecting borders between two great empires of those times – the Ottoman Empire in the South and the Russian Empire in the North. In pre-annexation times, i.e. before the end of the 18th century, the Crimean political elite retained strong connections to the political spheres of Eastern Europe and Western Asia: here, one may find predominantly a Turkic state starting its modernization and moving towards its own place during times of global transformation, especially the rise of Western powers in the entire Muslim world. At the level of the elite, represented by the ruling family of the Gerays, a common tradition was to patronize cultural trends, starting from education (creation of high school networks) and ending with an outstanding military tradition.

Considering that in the pre-colonial period there was a kind of unity between culture and politics (some Crimean khans were also talented writers and musicians), all this can be found in the writings of Western travellers. The leaders of the Crimean Tatar Geray dynasty aimed to create a developed state with a sophisticated army and a rich intellectual tradition that was closely connected to other parts of the Muslim world. It is worth noting that some of the travellers were strongly motivated by the political aspirations of the policies of Western countries in the region, but the essence of the local cultural tradition has been more or less accurately reflected, as many Crimean Tatar sources also attest to this (especially numerous manuscripts that have been preserved as monuments of intellectual history). According to the reports of these travellers, which are recorded in this study, the Crimean Khanate was a prime example of a powerful and intellectually advanced state that even served as a model for some Western countries, especially in military terms. The culture of the Crimean Khanate's elites remains the subject of further research, which aims to refute the myths created by colonial historiography (whether Russian or Western) that portray the Khanate simply as a weak robber state.

References

- Abdulvaapov, Nariman (2021), "Kalgi Sultan's Palace in Simferopol", *Issues of Crimean Tatar Philology, History and Culture*, 12: 15-20.
- Broniewski [Broniovius], Martin (1630), *Martini Broniovii de Bezdzfedeq, ad Tartarum legati, Tartaria. Russia, seu Moscovia, itemque Tartaria*, Leiden: ex Officina Elzeviriana,
- Czerwonnaja, Svitlana (2015), "Tatarzy Krymscy – naród czy mniejszość etniczna: w poszukiwaniu nowej drogi odrodzenia narodowego", *National affairs*, (47).
- Fisher, Alan (1978), *The Crimean Tatars*, Stanford: Hoover Institution Press.
- Geray Han (2008), *Rozovyi Kust Khanov*, tr. by A. Ilmi and K. Useinov, Simferopol: Ayan, Stilos.
- Gür, Suleyman (2022), *Kırım Kitabı: Tarih, Ulema, Udeba, Şuara, Meşayih ve Müellifler*, İstanbul: Büyüyen A.
- Haxthausen, Freiherr (1973). *Studien über die inneren Zustände, das Volksleben und insbesondere die ländlichen Einrichtungen Russlands*. (Ethnographic sources. Reprints of European texts and studies, ed. Hermann Bausinger et al.) Hildesheim, New York: Olms.
- Ivanics, Maria (2013), *The Military Co-operation of The Crimean Khanate with the Ottoman Empire in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth centuries* "Ottoman Empire its Heritage, Leiden-Boston: Brill.

- Kançal -Ferrari, Nicole (2005), *Kırımdan Kalan Miras Hansaray*, Istanbul: Klasik.
- Koehler, Peter. (1971), "Le khanat de Crimée en mai 1607 vu par un voyageur français", *Cahiers du Monde russe et soviétique*, 12, No.3: 155-170.
- O'Neill, Kelly (2017), *Claiming Crimea: A History of Catherine the Great's Southern Empire*, Yale: Yale University Press.
- de Peyssonnel, Charles (1787), *Traité sur le commerce de la Mer Noire*. T. I. Paris: Cuchet.
- Sağlam, Ömer (2018), "The role of elites and education from the Ottomans to today", *Academic Bakış Dergisi*, 66.
- Salverda Tijo (2021), "Elite Culture", *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology*. Vienna: University of Vienna.
- Scott, Charles. (1854), *The Baltic the Black Sea and the Crimea*, London: Richard Bentley.
- Seidamet Djafer (1921), *La Crimée Passe-Present Revendications des Tatars de Crimée: Lausanne*, Imprimerie G. Vaney-Burnier.
- Sheyhumerov, Amet, (2019), *Armiya krymskogo hanstva: organizaciya i taktika (XV- XVIII vv.)*, Kazan'-Simferopol: Insittut Istorii im Sh. Marjani.
- Toth, Ferenc (2016), "Le bifteck tartare en poudre. Méthodes de conservation alimentaire vues par les voyageurs français en Crimée à l'époque moderne", *Actes des congrès nationaux des sociétés historiques et scientifiques* (138-8).
- Tott, Baron de (1884), *Memoires du Baron de Tott sur les turcs et les Tartares*, Amsterdam.
- Yakubovych, Mykhaylo (2016), *Filosofs'ka dumka Krims'kogo hanstva*, Kyiv,: Komora.