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In Defense of Land and Faith: Muslim Tatars between Confrontation and Accommodation in Late Imperial Russia

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This article offers a discussion of state-society encounters and confrontations in the 1870s and 1880s, including both violent clashes and protracted negotiations, between Muslim Tatars and representatives of the Russian imperial state. It explores conflicts over land and faith in Muslim communities of Crimea and the Volga region, combining an analysis of the socio-economic and cultural-political roots of protest. In so doing, it goes beyond the technical details of specific disputes, offering rich information on everyday life in the countryside. It looks at forms of protest, boycott, and resistance, demonstrating that these could be highly individualistic, localized incidents or broader, collective phenomena. They could be directed against new rules and directives issued by the central state and communicated by its local representatives, or they could be aimed at village elders and neighbors. The religious affiliation of those involved could, but did not have to become a factor. In addition, the article explores protest in comparative terms. Why were open conflict and resistance against the state more common in the Volga provinces than in Crimea?

That many observers have framed the late 1870s as a period of crisis and rebellion is understandable given the frequency and intensity of protests, riots, and petitions against different policies at the time. Soviet historians saw local disturbances as part of a wider “popular and revolutionary movement,” primarily driven by former state peasants across large swaths of European Russia and directed against “those vestiges of feudalism left by the reform,” while those specialized in the Volga region explained the riots not only in terms of economic exploitation but also as the result of a supposed rise in pan-Turkism among educated Tatars.¹ Post-Soviet analyses by local historians have paid less attention to economic factors, usually offering a cultural analysis that, influenced by post-colonial theory (and often post-Soviet nationalism), largely

1 Peter A. Zaionchkovsky, *The Russian Autocracy in Crisis, 1878–1882* (Gulf Breeze: Academic International Press, 1979), p. 1. The book was originally published in Russian as *Krizis samoderzhavii na rubezhe 1870–1880-kh godov* (Moscow, 1964). Zaionchkovsky is referring to the liberation of the peasantry from serfdom in 1861. Among many other examples, see Nikolai N. Firsov, *Proshloe Tatarii* (Kazan, 1926), pp. 39–42; Ernis I. Chernyshev, “Volnenie Kazanskikh tatar v 1878g,” *Vestnik nauchnogo obshchestva tatarovedeniia* 7 (1927), pp. 173–202; A. N. Grigor’ev, “Khrisianizatsiia nerusskikh narodnostei kak odin iz metodov natsional’no-kolonial’noi politiki tsarizma v Tatarii,” in *Materialy po istorii Tatarii*, vyp. 1 (Kazan, 1948), pp. 226–285; and Kh. Kh. Khasanov, *Formirovanie tatarskoi burzhuaznoi natsii* (Kazan, 1977), pp. 21–24.

discusses imperial policy toward the Tatar population in terms of an antagonistic relationship between an imperialist Russian state and an oppressed minority.²

Recent Western analyses have tended to focus on sectors that were indeed shaped by conflict, such as schooling and missionary work, and thus they have confirmed this antagonistic picture, albeit in more nuanced terms.³ Some went further than others. Looking at the post-reform era as the precursor to the politicization of identity in the early twentieth century, James Meyer presents state-society interaction in the Volga region as part of a long-term cycle of Muslim protest; for him, this protest was kindled by the “new state model” introduced in the 1860s, that is, the efforts to achieve greater unity by bringing Muslims and others under more direct state administration.⁴ On occasion his analysis gives the impression that Tatars tried to avoid civil authorities wherever possible; that they sought to live in accordance with Islamic norms and otherwise be left in peace.⁵ While Mustafa Tuna and Kelly O’Neill are less blunt in their discussions, they also point to the emergence of an ever-more intrusive state from the 1860s that ultimately failed to reach its Muslim population.⁶ This article confirms the former point while putting some question marks over the latter: indeed, the post-reform imperial state penetrated deep into rural communities; however, while the analysis shows (some) villages in revolt against the state, it also puts these incidents into perspective, suggesting that state institutions and Tatar villages were interacting on numerous levels and should neither be seen as worlds apart nor as predominantly hostile toward each other. Research on different periods and adjacent regions has begun to highlight the importance

2 Among others: Il’dus K. Zagidullin, *Tatarskie krest’iane Kazanskoi gubernii vo vtoroi polovine XIX v. (60–90e gg.)*, PhD dissertation (1992), Kazan Scientific Center, RAS Institute of Language, Literature and History; Il’dus K. Zagidullin, *Perepis’ 1897 goda i tatary Kazanskoi gubernii* (Kazan, 2000), esp. pp. 81–110; Dilyara Usmanova, “The Legal and Ethno-Religious World of Empire: Russian Muslims in the Mirror of Legislation (Early Twentieth Century),” *Ab imperio* 2 (2000), pp. 147–167; Rafik Mukhametshin, “Islamic Discourse in the Volga-Urals Region,” in Galina M. Yemelianova, ed., *Radical Islam in the Former Soviet Union* (London: Routledge, 2010), pp. 31–61.

3 Robert Geraci, *Window on the East. National and Imperial Identities in Late Tsarist Russia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001); Wayne Dowler, *Classroom and Empire: The Politics of Schooling Russia’s Eastern Nationalities, 1860–1917* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2000); Paul Werth, *At the Margins of Orthodoxy: Mission, Governance, and Confessional Politics in Russia’s Volga-Kama Region, 1827–1905* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002); Mara Kozelsky, *Christianizing Crimea: Shaping Sacred Space in the Russian Empire and Beyond* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2009).

4 James Meyer, *Turks across Empires: Marketing Muslim Identity in the Russian-Ottoman Borderlands, 1856–1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 48–80, esp. pp. 49, 67.

5 *Ibid.*, esp. pp. 63–64.

6 Mustafa Tuna, *Imperial Russia’s Muslims. Islam, Empire, and European Modernity, 1788–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); and Kelly O’Neill, *Claiming Crimea: A History of Catherine the Great’s Southern Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017).

of more pragmatic forms of encounter at the rural level.⁷ This builds on studies of what Willard Sunderland aptly called “the imperial ground floor,” everyday interaction in small towns and villages, which has helped to show that inter-ethnic relations were often not antagonistic.⁸

This article’s focus on the Tatar peasantry is also a corrective to analyses that foreground religious institutions, thought, and practice in studies of the Russian Empire’s Muslim regions (often combined with a focus on intellectuals).⁹ While Crimea and Kazan surely lend themselves to discussions of Islam under late imperial rule, their large rural populations also raise the question of whether a focus on Muslims as religious personas can really do justice to their everyday lives and concerns. Tellingly, while the vast literature on the Russian peasantry touches upon Christianity, it tends not to move religion center-stage. The lives of most of the protagonists in this article were probably also shaped less by Islamic institutions and injunctions than by the fact that they were farmers, laborers, landowners, lower-level bureaucrats, rich or poor, delinquent or law-abiding, religiously observant or indifferent, and that they belonged to different genders and age groups.

Ultimately, the discussion of protest and conflict in this article helps to show that while antagonism between Tatar communities and state institutions existed for various reasons (in some places more than in others), it was often complemented by negotiation, persuasion, and accommodation. The article relies on court records from both Crimea and Kazan, on the detailed coverage

7 Galina Yemelianova, “Volga Tatars, Russians and the Russian State at the Turn of the Nineteenth Century: Relationships and Perceptions,” *The Slavonic and East European Review* 77:3 (1999), pp. 448–484; Robert Crews, *For Prophet and Tsar. Islam and Empire in Russia and Central Asia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006); Matthew Romaniello, *The Elusive Empire: Kazan and the Creation of Russia, 1552–1671* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2012); Charles Steinwedel, *Threads of Empire. Loyalty and Tsarist Authority in Bashkiria, 1552–1917* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016). Kelly O’Neill’s *Claiming Crimea* also makes this point rather convincingly for the pre-reform period.

8 For example: Willard Sunderland, “An Empire of Peasants. Empire-Building, Inter-ethnic Interaction, and Ethnic Stereotyping in the Rural World of the Russian Empire, 1800–1850s,” in Jane Burbank and David L. Ransel, eds., *Imperial Russia. New Histories for the Empire* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), pp. 174–198; Lutz Häfner, *Gesellschaft als lokale Veranstaltung: Die Wolgastädte Kazan’ und Saratov (1870–1914)* (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 2004); Corinne Gaudin, *Ruling Peasants: Village and State in Late Imperial Russia* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2007); and Victor Herdt and Dietmar Neutatz, eds., *Gemeinsam getrennt. Bäuerliche Lebenswelten des späten Zarenreiches in multi-ethnischen Regionen am Schwarzen Meer und an der Wolga* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2010).

9 In addition to Meyer and Tuna, I would include the following literature in this category: Allen J. Frank, *Muslim Religious Institutions in Imperial Russia* (Leiden: Brill, 2001); idem., *Bukhara and the Muslims of Russia: Sufism, Education, and the Paradox of Islamic Prestige* (Leiden: Brill, 2012); Agnès Nilüfer Kefeli, *Becoming Muslim in Imperial Russia: Conversion, Apostasy, and Literacy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014); Michael Kemper, “Imperial Russia as Dar al-Islam?” *Encounters: An International Journal of the Study of Culture and Society* 6 (2015), pp. 95–124; and Paolo Sartori, *Visions of Justice: Shari’a and Cultural Change*

of local newspapers, and on a great variety of contemporary publications by central and regional authorities.

DIVERSITY IN THE BORDERLANDS: GOVERNING TATARS IN CRIMEA AND KAZAN

Muslim Tatars formed the most sizable group of non-Russians in both territories. On the Crimean peninsula, which was part of Tauride Province, they were joined by considerable numbers of Turkic-speaking Jews, both so-called Krymchaki (who were Rabbinite Jews) and Karaite Jews (an independent, non-Talmudic religious movement within Judaism).¹⁰ In addition, there were substantial groups of Armenians, Greeks, non-Orthodox Russians, and foreign “colonists.” In the Volga region, formerly animist communities of Turkic-speaking Chuvash and Finno-Ugric Cheremis, along with smaller contingents of Kriashens (or “baptized Tatars”), Mordvins, Poles, Jews, and Germans accounted for most of the empire’s internal “others.”¹¹

Crimea and Kazan showed different patterns of settlement. Russians were spread out across Kazan Province, forming majorities or significant minorities in virtually all districts. Tatars made up the majority of the population in Mamadysh and Kazan Districts (without Kazan city, which was predominantly Russian), while both Russians and Tatars showed significant contingents in five other districts, including Spassk and Chistopol. Tatar villages were concentrated along Kazan Province’s northern and eastern borders, regions that were heavily-wooded and removed from the main towns and rivers. 98 percent of the Tatar population lived in villages.¹² In Crimea, by contrast, the Russian population remained a relatively weak minority, largely confined to the cities of Simferopol, Sevastopol, and Kerch.¹³ Yet, this population grew, and after a railroad connection was opened in the mid-1870s, coastal towns such as Yalta and Alupka quickly developed into imperial spas.¹⁴ Like in Kazan, Tatars

in Russian Central Asia (Leiden: Brill, 2016).

10 Kozelsky, *Christianizing Crimea*, pp. 38–39.

11 According to the census of 1897, the ethnic composition of Kazan Province was as follows: 38.4 percent Russian, 31.3 percent Tatar, 23.1 percent Chuvash, and 5.7 percent Cheremis; none of the remaining groups reached more than one percent. In religious terms, Muslims formed the only significant minority: 68.9 percent were Russian Orthodox, 29.1 percent Muslim: *Pervaia vseobshchaia perepis' naseleniia Rossiiskoi Imperii, 1897g.* (St. Petersburg, 1904), vol. XIV: Kazanskaia guberniia, V, VII. The ethnic composition of Crimea is more difficult to ascertain as most figures were for Tauride Province as a whole, which included three districts north of Crimea. The census, however, included numbers of native speakers of different languages per district. 45.4 percent spoke Russian or Ukrainian as their native language in Crimea; 35.5 percent spoke Tatar, which included not only Muslim Tatars, but also Karaites, and some Greeks; 5.8 percent of the population spoke German, 4.4 percent “Jewish” (*evreiskii*), and 3.1 percent Greek. Even smaller groups spoke other languages. *Pervaia vseobshchaia perepis'*, vol. XLI: Tavricheskaia guberniia, pp. 2–3.

12 Zagidullin, *Perepis' 1897 goda*, p. 92.

13 Kozelsky, *Christianizing Crimea*, p. 23.

14 Andrei Mal'gin, *Russkaia Riv'era. Kurorty, turizm i otdykh v Krymu v epokhu imperii. Konets*

were driven off the more fertile soils.¹⁵ Still, statistics from the 1880s suggest a Muslim share of 42.7 percent for the peninsula as a whole.¹⁶ By 1917, Muslims had dwindled to 12 percent in urban areas and 42 percent in villages.¹⁷ While these figures illustrate the decline of the Tatar population, they also underline that, right up to the end of imperial rule, Tatars continued to be the dominant community in the countryside.

Villages were often monoreligious and monoethnic. By the 1860s, only six percent of all Kazan Tatars lived in “mixed” villages, and few of these included Russians (instead, Tatars mixed with Chuvash, Mordvins, and others).¹⁸ In Crimea, mixed villages emerged as a result of intermarriage, Tatar out-migration (and the occasional return of the émigrés), and the simultaneous colonization of these lands by Slavic, German, and other settlers.¹⁹ Either way, while most Tatars lived among their own kin, they were engaged in social and economic exchanges with their neighbors.

Since the reign of Catherine II (1762–1796), the Russian Empire had sought to institutionalize different religions.²⁰ This policy affected both Crimea and Kazan. The Muhammadan Spiritual Assembly in Crimea was adopted directly from Ottoman structures and, like its counterpart in Orenburg, it came to be headed by a *mufti*. The two assemblies were put in charge of all religious matters and the appointment of Islamic dignitaries. They were also given jurisdiction in cases of family and inheritance law among Muslims.²¹ That said, most of these disputes were decided by imams elected at the community level and then appointed by the state. The Simferopol-based assembly was admittedly not formally set up until 1831.²² Until then, the authorities simply co-opted the former Ottoman offices of *mufti*, *qadi-asker* and five district *qadis*, and gave

XVIII – nachalo XX v. (Simferopol, 2006), esp. pp. 79–81.

- 15 Viktor Utz, “Die Besitzverhältnisse der Tatarenbauern im Kreise Simferopol,” *Zeitschrift für die gesamte Staatswissenschaft* XLI (1911), pp. 134–135. On Kazan: N. I. Vorob’ev, *Kazanskije Tatary* (Kazan, 1953), pp. 56–57, and Iskander Giliyazov, “Politika tsarizma po ot-nosheniiu k tataram Srednego Povolzh’ia vo 2-i pol. XVI–XVIII vv.,” in *Materialy po istorii tatarskogo naroda* (Kazan, 1995), pp. 243–256.
- 16 K. A. Werner, *Pamiatnaia knizhka Tavricheskoj gubernii* (Simferopol, 1889), section II, pp. 32–33.
- 17 Ia. E. Bodarskii et al., *Naselenie Kryma v kontse XVIII – kontse XX vekov* (Moscow, 2003), p. 131.
- 18 Andreas Kappeler, *Rußlands erste Nationalitäten. Das Zarenreich und die Völker der Mittleren Wolga vom 16. bis 19. Jahrhundert* (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 1982), pp. 489–494.
- 19 Utz, “Die Besitzverhältnisse der Tatarenbauern im Kreise Simferopol,” p. 69; see also 4fn, 133fn. On intermarriage: Fedor Voroponov, “Sredi krymskikh Tatar,” *Vestnik Evropy* 23:3 (1888), esp. pp. 151, 157, 166.
- 20 On the empire’s institutionalization of different religions, see Paul Werth, *The Tsar’s Foreign Faiths. Toleration and the Fate of Religious Freedom in Imperial Russia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).
- 21 Alan Fisher, “Enlightened Despotism and Islam under Catherine II,” *Slavic Review* 27:4 (1968), esp. pp. 547–553; Danil’ Azamatov, *Orenburgskoe magometanskoe dukhovnoe sobranie v kontse XVIII–XIX vv.* (Ufa, 1999); and Crews, *For Prophet and Tsar*.
- 22 Vladimir Bobrovnikov, “Islam in the Russian Empire,” in Dominic Lieven, ed., *The Cambridge History of Russia. Imperial Russia, 1689–1917*. Vol. II (Cambridge: Cambridge

them salaries.²³

Initially, the state and ecclesiastical authorities pursued a more pragmatic, conciliatory approach in Crimea than in Kazan, largely thanks to the continued numeric strength of Tatars, Jews, Greeks, Armenians, and others.²⁴ They tended to refrain from direct missionary activity (despite occasional pressure from the archbishop in Odessa or the metropolitan in Moscow to step up their efforts). As a result, the religious rights of Muslims were respected to a greater extent than in the Volga region, where anti-Islamic campaigns persisted. During the Crimean War (1853–1856), however, Crimean Tatars were treated as potential traitors, encouraged to leave, or even forcibly resettled.²⁵ This experience once again moved thousands to flee, led to the desertion of entire villages, and surely helped to inscribe suffering and loss into the Crimean Tatars' collective memory. While, despite everything, Tatars still formed the largest community in four of the five Crimean districts by the turn of the century, the imperial authorities might have learnt an important lesson from the war period and favored a more conciliatory approach once again from the 1860s (which could be a first contributing factor to the lack of open unrest in reform-era Crimea, discussed below).²⁶

DIVERGING TRAJECTORIES: LAND, SERVICE OBLIGATIONS, AND MIGRATION

That Muslims were governed differently in Crimea and Kazan had much to do with their different historical trajectories. From the incorporation of the Kazan Khanate into Muscovy in the mid-sixteenth century, the tsar had used the Tatar elite as a cavalry force to defend the frontier, offering them land in return.²⁷ Crimea, by contrast, was an unpacified borderland for only a few years. Once the Ottoman Empire had renounced all claims after its defeat in the Russo-Turkish War of 1787–1792, no large army was needed to keep the peninsula under control, and there was little need for a Tatar borderland gentry.

The eighteenth century brought significant change to Kazan. Forced by Peter I (1682–1725) and his successors to choose between conversion to Christianity and the loss of property and privileges, many Tatars preferred to retain their faith, give up their land, and join the state peasantry. Only a few nobles continued to own land: by 1782, 34,290 male Tatar servitors were counted in Kazan Province, but only 555 Tatar landowners.²⁸ Yet, in some

University Press, 2006), p. 209.

23 A. G. Zavadovskii, *Sto let zhizni Tavriidy, 1793–1883* (Simferopol, 1885), p. 93.

24 Kozelsky, *Christianizing Crimea*, pp. 17, 32–37.

25 For example: Mara Kozelsky, "Casualties of Conflict: Crimean Tatars during the Crimean War," *Slavic Review* 67:4 (2008), pp. 866–891.

26 On the numbers of Tatars in 1897: *Pervaia vseobshchaia perepis'*, vol. XLI: Tavrisheskaia guberniia, VIII.

27 Romaniello, *The Elusive Empire*, pp. 117–120.

28 Gazis A. Gubaidullin, "Iz proshlogo tatar," in *Materialy po izucheniiu Tatarstana II* (Kazan, 1925), p. 93.

ways, rural Tatars were better-off than their Russian neighbors: as few of them were privately-owned serfs, they experienced fewer restrictions than many Russians.²⁹ Among the serfs emancipated in Kazan Province in 1861, there were 214,649 Russian Orthodox and only 71 Muslim Tatars.³⁰

While most Tatars had thus become part of the impoverished rural population, a new business elite of Tatar merchants and entrepreneurs also emerged between 1775 and 1860.³¹ The Industrial Revolution, which began at the end of the 1840s in the Volga region and led to a large number of soap-making, textile, leather and fur-processing plants, promoted this new economic class. By 1857, one third of the 263 industrial enterprises in Kazan Province was owned by Tatars.³² Individual Tatar families, such as the Iunusovs, Apanaevs, Iakupovs, and Arsaevs were particularly wealthy entrepreneurs and landowners.³³

In Crimea, the liberation of the serfs had less of an impact on the economic situation overall. Few estates ever held serfs in this region.³⁴ Population dynamics and land questions were shaped by different factors. One of them was migration. While Muslim Tatars continued to outnumber all other ethno-religious groups, their share steadily decreased. The Tatar exodus began right after the Russian annexation of Crimea. In order to replenish the deserted villages, the authorities invited state peasants from the most populous regions of central Russia and today's Ukraine, along with soldiers and spare clergymen (*zashtatnye tserkovniki*), to settle on the peninsula.³⁵ In addition, the promise of unused lands attracted significant numbers of Ottoman and Polish subjects to Crimea, especially Greeks, Romanians, Moldovans, and Polish Ukrainians.³⁶

As in Kazan, land ownership became a serious issue. After the annexation of Crimea, the redistribution of lands was carried out in a hasty and haphazard fashion.³⁷ Prince Potemkin, governor-general of "New Russia," as the vast

29 For a detailed analysis of the socio-economic situation of Volga Tatars in the nineteenth century, see Kappeler, *Rußlands erste Nationalitäten*, pp. 413–480.

30 *Obshchii svod dannykh khoziaistvenno-statisticheskogo issledovaniia Kazanskoi gubernii* (Kazan, 1896), pp. 80–81.

31 Kappeler, *Rußlands erste Nationalitäten*, pp. 455–474.

32 Khasanov, *Formirovanie tatarskoi burzhuaznoi natsii*, p. 94. On the Industrial Revolution in the Volga region in general, see *ibid.*, pp. 84–116.

33 Karl Fuks, *Kazanskie Tatary* (Kazan, 1844), p. 127; Khasanov, *Formirovanie tatarskoi burzhuaznoi natsii*, p. 96.

34 Elena I. Druzhinina, *Iuzhnaia Ukraina v period krizisa feodalizma, 1825–1860gg.* (Moscow, 1981), pp. 41–42.

35 Fedor Lashkov, *Istoricheskii ocherk krymsko-tatarskogo zemlevladiiia* (Simferopol, 1897), pp. 128–130. The types of settlers are discussed in: Druzhinina, *Severnoe Prichernomor'e v 1775–1800 gg.* (Moscow, 1959), pp. 121–132.

36 Druzhinina, *Severnoe Prichernomor'e*, pp. 129–130. On the development of this region more generally, see Willard Sunderland, *Taming the Wild Field: Colonization and Empire on the Russian Steppe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004).

37 Lashkov, *Istoricheskii ocherk krymsko-tatarskogo zemlevladiiia*, pp. 131–136.

steppe region north of the Black Sea came to be called, gave up to 15 percent of the territory as gifts to his protégés.³⁸ He also had many Tatar nobles co-opted into the new administration; and while some of them had difficulties proving their noble background for lack of documentation, others received large swaths of land. By the early nineteenth century, Tatars still made up three quarters of the elites who owned inhabited land on the peninsula.³⁹

Most ordinary Tatars, by contrast, ended up in a precarious situation, as Russian and Tatar landowners began to seize neighboring territories. These landowners knew that land seizures were not subject to legal prosecution, regardless of the fact that they were against the law.⁴⁰ What is more, while peasant enclosures had existed on virtually every estate before the Russian conquest, the new (especially Russian) landowners were unused to such arrangements and started imposing obligations on the (mostly Tatar) peasants using their lands that were not very different from serfdom.⁴¹

Many questions concerning land in Crimea remained unresolved until the mid-nineteenth century. Between 1802 and 1848, a special land commission was in charge of landed property disputes. While it dealt with a large number of disputes, it was dominated by the nobility and tended to serve its interests.⁴² Tatars could also turn to the existing courts in Simferopol for their land claims, but these estate courts had a reputation for being slow, corrupt, and staffed by members of the administration.⁴³

As in Kazan, rural Tatars were personally free; yet Crimean Tatars also enjoyed other privileges. Unlike Volga Tatars, they did not have to pay poll tax, and until 1874 they could not be drawn into the army. If they had the means, they could change landlords, sell or purchase land, or move to state-owned lands. A decree passed in 1827 confirmed these privileges.⁴⁴ That said, restrictions persisted (for example, on the amount of land that could be sold or rented out), and some of the privileges may have existed mainly on paper.

After the Crimean War, the demographic situation changed once again. Many Tatars left for the Ottoman Empire, some returned, while another wave of Slavic settlers arrived. The resulting need for land surveys, demarcations, and conflict resolution is one of the reasons why new courts were considered necessary in Tauride.⁴⁵

38 Ibid., p. 133. See also Evgenii A. Zagorovskii, "Organizatsiia upravleniia Novorossiei pri Potemkine v 1774–1791 godakh," *Zapiski Imperatorskogo odesskogo obshchestva istorii i drevnostei* 31 (1913), pp. 52–82, esp. p. 68.

39 O'Neill, *Claiming Crimea*, p. 197.

40 S. Kharizomenov, "Formy zemlevladieniia u krymskikh tatar," *Iuridicheskii vestnik* 25:5 (1887), pp. 59–76, esp. pp. 62, 75.

41 Utz, "Die Besitzverhältnisse der Tatarenbauern im Kreise Simferopol," pp. 93, 96–98.

42 Zavadovskii, *Sto let zhizni Tavridy*, p. 168; O'Neill, *Claiming Crimea*, pp. 187–188.

43 Zavadovskii, *Sto let zhizni Tavridy*, p. 168; Voroponov, "Sredi krymskikh Tatar," p. 152.

44 "Polozhenie dlia Tatar-poselian i vladel'tsev zemel' v Tavricheskoi gubernii," in PSZ II, vol. 2, no. 1417, September 28, p. 182.

45 This becomes clear in the comments made by the jurist reviewing the old court system in

**“YOU OLD DEVIL SHOULD HAVE KICKED THE BUCKET A LONG TIME AGO”:
WRATH AGAINST LANDOWNERS AND LAND SURVEYORS**

The following discussion shows different reactions to state policies, along with equally diverse judicial responses to insubordination. The religious affiliation of those involved could, but did not have to become a factor. Most importantly, the cases contain several narrative layers: cases of resistance included elements of accommodation while episodes that highlight cooperation contained elements of animosity. There is never just one story to tell.

In 1883, a district land surveyor (*uezdnyi zemlemer*) by the name of Burliand set out for a village near the small town of Mamadysh.⁴⁶ The Kazan provincial administration had instructed him to confirm the borders between the land of the Kazan-based merchant Apanaev and the townsman (*meshchanin*) Iunusov. Since the newspaper article about the ensuing court cases gives no further information about the landowners, their exact identities remain unclear; yet, it is likely that both belonged to the wealthy Iunusov and Apanaev business dynasties, who owned factories and land across the Volga region.⁴⁷ Meyer discusses these families as intermediaries between Muslim protesters and tsarist officials.⁴⁸ In this case, they became the target of protest themselves. The case is described in detail in the *Volzhskii vestnik* [Volga messenger], a regional newspaper that had access to court transcripts.⁴⁹

Once the land surveyor had arrived in the village, he first stopped at Iunusov’s farmstead (*khutor*), from where he sent for peasant witnesses from the surrounding communities. In response, an agitated crowd from the village of Ikshurma appeared, asking Burliand who he was and why he had come. The land surveyor read out his orders, after which the peasants left, visibly dissatisfied. When Burliand eventually began to take his measurements, now accompanied by the landowner Apanaev, the lawyer Iskakov (who represented the other landowner), four witnesses from the village of Kain-Imi, and two assistants, suddenly up to 200 Tatars emerged from the forest. Armed with stakes, they formed a circle around Burliand and exclaimed: “We won’t let you measure this land—it’s ours!” One of them shouted, “Come on, guys, let’s beat

Tauride Province prior to the introduction of the Judicial Reform and the report by Simferopol Circuit Court’s first chairman to the Ministry of Justice in 1871: “Sudebno-statisticheskie svedeniia i soobrozheniia o vvedenii sudebnoi reformy po Tavricheskoi gubernii,” in *Sudebno-statisticheskie svedeniia i soobrozheniia o vvedenii v deistvie sudebnykh ustavov 20-noiabria 1864g.*, part III (St. Petersburg, 1866), p. 26; and State Archive in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea (GAARK), f. 376, op. 1, d. 21 (“O sokrashchenii shtata Okruzhnogo Suda”, 1871), l. 12..

46 “Sudebnaia khronika: Vooruzhennoe soprotivlenie vlasti,” *Volzhskii vestnik* 56 (1884), May 15.

47 Fuks, *Kazanskii Tatary*, p. 124; Khasanov, *Formirovanie tatarskoi burzhuaiznoi natsii*, p. 96.

48 Meyer, *Turks across Empires*, pp. 53, 74.

49 “Sudebnaia khronika: Vooruzhennoe soprotivlenie vlasti,” *Volzhskii vestnik* 56 (1884), May 15.

Apanaev and the witnesses!" And at that he leapt at Apanaev, started beating him and screamed: "You old devil should have kicked the bucket a long time ago (*tebe, staromy chertu, davno nuzhno izdokhnyt'*)."⁵⁰ Both Apanaev and Iskakov were severely beaten. Burliand, who remained unharmed, was dragged to a farm nearby, where the peasants told him that they had owned the land for 80 years and that they would kill him if he ever returned.⁵⁰ While Burliand was lucky, other surveyors were beaten up, maimed, and even killed in the region around the same time.⁵¹

This episode, which formed the background of two criminal cases about "armed resistance against the authorities" (*vooruzhennoe soprotivlenie vlasti*), illustrates key elements of the nature of state-society relations in late imperial Russia. The empire not only continued to engage in territorial expansion, but it also became more intrusive in existing territories. In the process of what it saw as modernization, it made efforts to standardize administrative practice and reinforce its visibility and influence in rural areas. The state's increasing concern with mediation is one of the reasons why the demarcation of land became common. A growing number of state officials, including lawyers, police officers, notaries, and land surveyors now appeared in villages on a regular basis.

Many of these officials featured in the incident involving the land surveyor Burliand, who returned to the village four days after the attack.⁵² This time he was accompanied by a police captain, three guards (*strazhniki*), and 45 peasant witnesses. The previous day the police captain had already travelled around the area to persuade the locals to let the surveyor do his work. This attempted mediation had borne fruit in some villages. In Ikshurma, however, he had been told outright that the surveyor would not be allowed to measure anything. When Burliand arrived at Iunusov's farm the following day, the second attempt to demarcate boundaries ended like the first: a crowd of stick-waving peasants drove the officials out of the village. The demarcation could only proceed after the authorities returned with yet more people and had the rebellious peasants arrested.

What does this resistance tell us about the Tatars' relationship with the imperial state? Broader developments in land ownership are part of the answer. Across the empire, land was usually held in common (*obshchee*), communal (*obshchinnee*), or private ownership (*chastnoe vladenie*).⁵³ Before the

50 Ibid., section "Svidetel' Burliand."

51 NART, f. 89, op. 1, d. 1143 ("Po obvineniiu krest'ian Mamadyshkogo uezda Akhmetshina," 1878); assaults in the border region of Kazan and Ufa Provinces are also discussed in: "Perepiska K. P. Pobedonostseva s preosviashchennym Nikanorom episkopom Ufimskim," *Russkii arkhiv* 53:4 (1915), pp. 90-91.

52 Ibid., see the section beginning with "po vtoromu delu."

53 The key difference between common and communal property was the degree of an individual's control over his share of land. In communal property, an individual's share could be changed by the community, which was in full control. In common property, the collective neither had such rights nor could it stop a co-owner from alienating his rights to his

mid-nineteenth century, a person who wanted to buy private property would first tell the community about it and then have it measured by the *starosta* (head/elder) of that community.⁵⁴ State authorities would rarely get involved, and private grounds thus tended to be surveyed and demarcated in, at best, a piecemeal fashion (the unclear boundary between Iunusov's and Apanaev's lots of land offers but one example). Land held in common or communal ownership would usually remain uncharted. It was only in the second half of the nineteenth century that both landowners and the state administration pressed for a more formal approach to land ownership and increasingly wanted state officials to monitor all transactions concerning land.

There were striking regional differences, however. A formal role for the state in overseeing and enforcing land sales was not an option in more remote territories, including most provinces east of Kazan: state institutions continued to be scattered and weak here, and there was no functioning property market. In Ufa, acquisitions of land were frequently accompanied by armed conflict.⁵⁵ In Crimea and Kazan, by contrast, state institutions were strong enough to take on the task of demarcating boundaries. The preconditions, under which this task was carried out, however, differed between the two regions and help to explain why, by the late nineteenth century, riots over land issues were less of a problem on the Black Sea littoral than in the Volga region.

In Crimea, the demarcation of property was a well-established practice. Land seizures, territorial disputes, and demarcation efforts had been part of life on the peninsula ever since its annexation. Between 1805 and 1843, the newly established Tauride Survey Department conducted a protracted general land survey of Crimea.⁵⁶ Even if the results were not always accurate, the implementation of this cadastral survey, along with the disputes it created, helped to enshrine the categories and language of empire into the peninsula's landscape, valley by valley.⁵⁷ While some dispute settlements took land away from Tatar peasants, others led to the return of incorrectly charted lands to peasant communities.⁵⁸ By the end of the 1860s, there was hardly anything left to demarcate.⁵⁹ Along the Volga, the state had not yet played the same formal role in questions concerning land, which remained largely uncharted. It is hardly surprising that the state's new demands bred resistance here.

Other key differences between Crimea and the Volga region concerned the right to own land. Whereas in most parts of the empire the nobility had developed into an estate virtually defined by its right to own land, in New

share of land: Kharizomenov, "Formy zemlevladieniia u krymskikh tatar," pp. 59–60.

54 Ibid., p. 62.

55 "Perepiska K. P. Pobedonostseva s preosviashchennym Nikanorom episkopom Ufimskim," pp. 90–91.

56 O'Neill, *Claiming Crimea*, esp. pp. 164, 189–190, 213.

57 Ibid., p. 187.

58 Zavadovskii, *Sto let zhizni Tavriidy*, p. 168.

59 Ibid., p. 171.

Russia, including Crimea, it enjoyed no such monopoly. Newly arrived settlers on the Crimean peninsula were mostly low-ranking bureaucrats, craftsmen, and retired soldiers, rather than nobles; among noble landowners, in fact, Tatars predominated.⁶⁰ The decree of 1827 confirmed not only the right of non-nobles to own or sell private land, but also their right to own it collectively. This allowed the pre-Russian, Tatar practice of owning land as a *jamaat* (private collective) to persist: Viktor Utz's doctoral dissertation "Die Besitzverhältnisse der Tatarenbauern im Kreise Simferopol [The Ownership Relations of Tatar Peasants in the District of Simferopol]," submitted to the University of Tübingen in 1911, showed that across Crimean mountain valleys, *jamaats* were the most common type of Tatar landowners until the early twentieth century.⁶¹ That said, in most villages, different types of ownership coexisted; elite and communal lands were dotted with small parcels owned by village communities, pious endowments, or private individuals (who could be distant elites or community members).⁶² In comparison with Tatar peasants in the Volga region, then, Crimean peasants had not only been more exposed to state officials and their efforts at cataloguing and measuring, but had also been recognized as landowners (individually or collectively) for a long time.

The state's concern with land must also be seen against the background of more general demographic and socioeconomic developments. After the mid-century, rapid population growth, the expansion of an entrepreneurial class, and the emancipation of the peasantry all contributed to acute land shortages and subsequent increases in the price of land. With new capitalist notions of private property gaining currency at the same time, the share of private land on the property market grew. Landowners became more aware of the possibility of making profits. Many of them had previously respected the "enclosed lands" (*zagorozhennye zemli*) inhabited by peasant communities on their grounds, but now they wanted these peasants off their lands.⁶³ They not only imposed their own understandings of property but also turned to officials to enforce these understandings; and since all of this coincided with the state's efforts to increase its presence in rural areas, police, lawyers, and surveyors soon played a key role in the demarcation of land. Most peasants, meanwhile, had their own ideas about the soil they tilled since the previous, informal arrangement had *de facto* recognized their ownership of enclosed grounds on a landlord's property.⁶⁴ The assertion made by the peasants in the Burliand case—that they had owned the land for 80 years—is therefore not surprising.

60 O'Neill, *Claiming Crimea*, pp. 197, 201.

61 Utz, "Die Besitzverhältnisse der Tatarenbauern im Kreise Simferopol," esp. pp. 6–8 and pp. 27–39; see also O'Neill, *Claiming Crimea*, p. 183.

62 O'Neill, *Claiming Crimea*, esp. pp. 194, 215–216.

63 Lashkov, *Istoricheskii ocherk krymsko-tatarskogo zemlevladieniia*, p. 133; and Boris Mironov, with Ben Eklof, *A Social History of Imperial Russia, 1700–1917*, vol. 2 (Boulder: Westview Press, 2000), p. 314.

64 Lashkov, *Istoricheskii ocherk krymsko-tatarskogo zemlevladieniia*, p. 133.

This case was not about inter-ethnic animosities, though cultural factors such as language problems might have exacerbated the conflict. Social divisions were far more important. The two landowners in the Burliand episode were members of well-known Tatar merchant families. Common religion, however, did not stop the peasants from attacking the landowners and their representatives. Why should it?

The shortage of land played a key role in the Burliand case. Volga Tatars were hit especially hard by this shortage in the second half of the nineteenth century: in comparison with all other communities in the region, they experienced disproportionately high population growth.⁶⁵ On the whole, whereas Russian and Chuvash families were relatively well off, Tatar households tended to be the least prosperous.⁶⁶ Crucially, the redistribution of land after the Great Reforms had provided Tatars on average with the smallest and least fertile parcels.⁶⁷ Of all ethnic groups, they also came to own the lowest number of horses and cattle.⁶⁸ By the end of the century, nearly 50 percent of Tatar peasants counted among households with little or no land at all (*bezzemel'nye* or *malozemel'nye*).⁶⁹

In 1883, the publisher Konstantin Lavrskii took part in the Kazan *zemstvo's* statistical census of 138 villages in four of the province's districts, which had been launched to find out why these villages had trouble repaying food loans to the *zemstvo* (institutions of local self-administration, introduced during the Great Reforms of the 1860s). Producing a detailed statistical report and describing the fate of dozens of households, Lavrskii offered vivid illustration that over time, families had to sell more land and animals, which made them dependent on alms and loans from the *zemstvo*.⁷⁰ A state revision carried out in Kazan, Ufa, and Orenburg in 1880/81 had come to similar conclusions: whereas Russian and Chuvash families had been able to meet their tax and service obligations even during bad harvests, Tatars were in no position to do so.⁷¹ The revision explained the Tatar difficulties in terms of their reluctance

65 See the detailed economic data in Kappeler, *Rußlands erste Nationalitäten*, pp. 423–426, 444, 447–448; and Vasilii Bervi-Flerovskii, *Izbrannnye ekonomicheskie proizvedeniia*, vol. 2 (Moscow, [1869] 1959), p. 191.

66 Russian State Historical Archive (RGIA), f. 1317, op. 1, d. 2 (“Iz vlechenie iz vsepoddanneishego otcheta chlena Gosudarstennogo Soveta,” 1881), l. 2.

67 *Krest'ianskoe zemlevladienie Kazanskoi gubernii*, vol. 13: *Svod po gubernii* (Kazan, 1909), pp. 88–89.

68 I. L. Morozov, “*Ekonomika tatarskoi poreformennoi derevni i massovoe dvizhenie tatarskogo krest'ianstva v Tatarii 50–70gg. XIX v.*,” *Agrarnyi vopros i krest'ianskoe dvizhenie 50–70-kh godov XIX v. Tatarskaia ASSR*. Part I (Moscow, 1936), pp. 27–33; Kappeler, *Rußlands erste Nationalitäten*, pp. 447–448, 454–455.

69 Khasanov, *Formirovanie tatarskoi burzhuaznoi natsii*, p. 109.

70 Konstantin Lavrskii, *Tatarskaia bednota* (Kazan, 1884).

71 RGIA, f. 1317, op. 1, d. 2, l. 2.

to engage in agriculture, an alleged cultural propensity that Russian authors had claimed for decades.⁷² Lavrskii's investigation, by contrast, showed that the Tatar plight had little to do with cultural dispositions: the problem was that their lots of land and harvests were so small that families were forced to use up their crops to survive the winter; they could not retain seeds for the next season.⁷³ Moreover, Tatar poverty was not limited to a few villages; it had taken hold of large parts of the Volga region.⁷⁴

The Kazan governor's report to the Council of Ministers in 1879 makes these findings seem plausible. Kazan Province was heavily dependent on government help to supply the population with food and seeds.⁷⁵ By far the greatest share of these food loans was spent on districts with large Tatar populations: out of a total of nearly 1.5 million rubles spent on poverty alleviation in Kazan Province, 60 percent were spent on the two districts in which Tatars formed more than half of the population.⁷⁶ The Senate's revision of Kazan, Ufa, and Orenburg provinces confirmed that during bad harvests, Tatar communities were completely dependent on the local *zemstvo's* food budget (*prodovol'stvennyi biudzhët*); Lavrskii's ethnographic observations and statistical calculations, in turn, suggest that this dependence on the state was so strong because, unlike in Russian or Chuvash communities, there were far too few wealthy households in Tatar villages that could help poor community members and families survive the winter.⁷⁷

This is the economic background to the Burliand episode, which took place in one of the areas worst affected by land shortage and hunger. The imperial state and its local representatives were not necessarily perceived as enemies; after all, it was them who also offered food and seeds through the *zemstvo*. What kindled resistance in the Burliand case was not the appearance of state officials; it was the concrete threat of losing one's livelihood.

72 Ibid.; the same stereotype can be found in much nineteenth-century writing on Tatars, including works by the academics Karl Fuks and Vasilii Sboev, who both taught at Kazan University: Fuks, *Kazanskie Tatary*, p. 26; Vasilii Sboev, *O byte krest'ian v Kazanskoi gubernii* (Kazan, 1856), p. 23.

73 Lavrskii, *Tatarskaia bednota*, p. 30.

74 Ibid., pp. 6, 11, 40.

75 RGIA, f. 1263, op. 1, d. 4038 ("Prilozheniia k zhurnalom, chast' 2"). Appendices to journal of June 13, 1879, no. 340, ll. pp. 355–356.

76 Mamadysh and Kazan Districts received 31.4 percent and 28.6 percent of the poverty alleviation money, respectively. The remaining 40 percent of the funds were spread out over the remaining ten districts, while the four districts in which hardly any Tatars lived, taken together, received less than 0.1 percent of the budget: *Ibid.*, l. 390ob.

77 RGIA, f. 1317, op. 1, d. 2, l. 2; and Lavrskii, *Tatarskaia bednota*, esp. pp. 10–11, 35–36. According to Lavrskii's calculations, around 40 percent of households in Russian and Chuvash villages were wealthy, as opposed to 8 percent in Tatar villages.

LAND ACQUISITION IN CRIMEA: A CASE FOR THE COURTS

That Crimean Tatars were more used to dealing with state institutions for airing their grievances about land is not to suggest that conflicts no longer existed by the time of the Great Reforms; they were simply addressed differently. With short distances between Simferopol and most Tatar villages, state courts presented themselves as reasonable and increasingly as the only option for settling land disputes.

The peninsula's peculiar geography, which encouraged composite land ownership with large numbers of owners, made the intervention by state institutions all the more pertinent. Crimea was characterized by an unusual fragmentation of land. As one of the empire's leading agricultural journals acknowledged in 1876:

The fragmentation of landed property has reached such an extreme degree on the south coast that you will hardly find anywhere else in Russia. You will meet an owner of a few square meters of land that are worth a few rubles, or even an owner of a walnut tree.⁷⁸

Thanks to their high population growth, inheritance practices that favored parceling out, and acute lack of arable land, Tatar communities were especially prone to land fragmentation, regardless of where they lived in the empire; that this fragmentation took on unusual proportions in the Crimean mountains was largely due to the long-established rights of peasants to own land, individually or collectively, in this area and to the concentration of fertile soils in valleys and along rivers.

In the mid-1860s, the jurist reviewing Crimean court activity already noted the presence of over 2,000 private owners of small allotments, which led to frequent disputes over vineyards, orchards, tobacco plantations, and the use of rivers and mills for irrigation.⁷⁹ Private and communal land increased on the peninsula in the course of the nineteenth century, mostly at the expense of state and common land.⁸⁰ Whereas ploughed fields and pastures were usually jointly owned, orchards, vineyards, hayfields, and gardens tended to be in private hands.⁸¹ On the whole, however, with the exception of irrigated lots sheltered from heat and strong winds, most land in Crimea was arid, stony, and unfit for cropping.⁸² In many villages, no more than 10 to 30 percent of land was arable,

78 N. I. Rimskii-Korsakov, "Sel'skokhoziastvennoe obozrenie: II. Khoziaistvo iuzhnogo berega Kryma," *Russkoe sel'skoe khoziaistvo* 24, no. 1 (1876), p. 116.

79 "Sudebno-statisticheskie svedeniia i soobrozheniia o vvedenii sudebnoi reformy po Tavricheskoi gubernii," p. 26.

80 Kharizomenov, "Formy zemlevladieniia u krymskikh tatar," pp. 62, 75–76.

81 Ibid., pp. 62, 75; Utz, "Die Besitzverhältnisse der Tatarenbauern im Kreise Simferopol," pp. 41, 55–57.

82 Rimskii-Korsakov, "Sel'skokhoziastvennoe obozrenie," p. 114; and Iu. Ianson, *Krym. Ego khlebovashestvo i khlebnaia torgovlia* (St. Petersburg, 1870), pp. 2–8.

and most of it was used for stockbreeding.⁸³ This was different from Kazan where substantial parts of the province belonged to the “black soil” region.⁸⁴ Crimea’s emerging “Russian Riviera”, which offered markets for agricultural luxury products such as tobacco, grapes, and wine, did not make up for the poor quality of large parts of the peninsula’s soil: a report from the mid-1870s directly criticized widespread assumptions about Crimea’s great climate and “southern vegetation,” pointing out that most of the south coast actually had rather limited agricultural potential; that Crimean plantations and vineyards were generally in a state of disarray; and that none of them produced their goods at a profit (since the demand for Crimean products was generally low).⁸⁵ Still, vineyards and orchards were the most coveted kinds of land, and with entrepreneurial thinking on the rise, large landowners typically sought to expand their private grounds.

The consequences were both cultural and economic. On the slopes of the Crimean mountains, the decrease in the number of private landowners gradually eroded a religiously legitimated order since the inheritance of private property had long been regulated according to *shari’a* law.⁸⁶ A more pressing economic concern, however, was the rising number of landless Tatars. By the 1870s, at least 60,000 Crimean Tatars did not own any land and were at the mercy of the landowners on whose grounds they had settled.⁸⁷ The authorities did make some efforts, albeit half-hearted, to deal with the problem of landlessness. In the early 1870s, the governor of Tauride came to an agreement with the Crimean mufti to let landless Tatars settle on *waqf* (religious endowments). Yet, the state continued to whittle away at the total area of *waqf* in Crimea, with parts of it put under the authority of the central and local administration.⁸⁸ If the figures from Simferopol District are in any way representative of developments on the Crimean peninsula as a whole, the resettlement measures could not have been more than a drop in the ocean: by the early 1890s, only three percent of the *waqf* land originally registered in 1802 still existed in this district.⁸⁹

The joint purchase of land by large groups of Tatars offered a more realistic solution to the problem of landlessness; a solution, however, that depended on the availability of bank loans. These were not easy to obtain.⁹⁰ And yet, when the Russian journalist Fedor Voroponov visited the Crimea mountains

83 Voroponov, “Sredi krymskikh Tatar,” pp. 159, 172–173, 176; Utz, “Die Besitzverhältnisse der Tatarenbauern im Kreise Simferopol,” pp. 104–105.

84 Spassk and Chistopol Districts, both with sizable Tatar populations, counted among these: *Krest’ianskoe zemlevladienie Kazanskoi gubernii*, p. 84.

85 Rimskii-Korsakov, “Sel’skokhoziastvennoe obozrenie,” pp. 112–116.

86 Kharizomenov, “Formy zemlevladieniia u krymskikh tatar,” pp. 75–76.

87 Voroponov, “Sredi krymskikh Tatar,” p. 152.

88 Utz, “Die Besitzverhältnisse der Tatarenbauern im Kreise Simferopol,” esp. pp. 117, 120, 130.

89 Ibid., p. 130

90 Rimskii-Korsakov, “Sel’skokhoziastvennoe obozrenie,” pp. 112–113.

in the summer of 1887, he noted large groups of Tatars that had made land purchases in all villages he came across.⁹¹ All of these purchases had relied on bank loans, and the villagers reported no arrears.⁹² Voroponov's conclusions were very different from the ones Lavrskii had offered in Kazan: contrary to Russian stereotypes, he claimed, Tatars were neither lazy nor bad farmers, and while they were not affluent, they seemed contented and capable of looking after themselves if only they were offered loans to buy land.⁹³ This is confirmed by data from the early twentieth century, which shows that the majority of Crimean Tatar landowners lived on bought rather than inherited land.⁹⁴

Still, there were unresolved property issues galore in Crimea, and as the new Simferopol Circuit Court, opened in April 1869, informed the Ministry of Justice in 1871, one of the peculiarities of this court was the predominance of land disputes.⁹⁵ Unlike the new Kazan court, which opened in 1870, the Crimean judiciary quickly turned into a widely used avenue for conflict resolution over land.

Tatar peasants had also learned to use state institutions to their own advantage. In 1869, the Simferopol Circuit Court received a request from a Tatar peasant by the name of Ibrahim Repii oglu drawn up by an honorary justice of the peace in rather basic Russian.⁹⁶ The peasant asked the court on behalf of the village of Semen to send out a land surveyor to renew boundary marks (*ponovit' priznaki granits zemli*), which had been put up in a haphazard manner some 40 years earlier.⁹⁷ The renewed demarcation was "to put an end to all unpleasant relations constantly arising from the side of the co-owners of the land."⁹⁸ As these peasants hoped to gain something from the demarcation, they behaved rather differently from the ones in the Burliand case. The court, however, decided that the renewal of boundary marks was outside its jurisdiction.⁹⁹

And yet, it is striking that a group of Crimean peasants approached the new circuit court at the earliest opportunity to make a claim. In all likelihood, they saw this institution as an external arbiter and wanted to take advantage of its authority. In fact, their assumptions were far from naïve. In 1867 and 1868, the new *zemstvo* councils of Yalta and Feodosiia had already asked the governor of Tauride to solve the issue of missing maps and boundary marks.¹⁰⁰

91 Voroponov, "Sredi krymskikh Tatar."

92 Ibid., pp. 173, 177.

93 Ibid., pp. 153, 170, 179; see also Rimskii-Korsakov, "Sel'skokhoziastvennoe obozrenie," pp. 115-116.

94 Utz, "Die Besitzverhältnisse der Tatarenbauern im Kreise Simferopol," pp. 31-33.

95 GAARK, f. 376, op. 1, d. 21, l. 12.

96 GAARK, f. 376, op. 5, d. 1 ("Po prosheniiu poverennogo obshchestva gosudarstvennykh krest'ian Feodosiiskogo uezda", 1869), ll. 1-2ob.

97 Ibid., l. 2.

98 Ibid.

99 Ibid., ll. 8-9ob.

100 State Archive of Odessa Region (GAOO), f. 1, op. 83, d. 156 ("O spetsial'nom razmezhevanii dach Ialtinskogo uezda Tavricheskoi gubernii," 1867-1869).

Many small lots were disputed, the councils argued, and because the official district land surveyor was too busy and expensive, they wanted the work of private land surveyors to be formally recognized. The governor, however, turned down the request. He replied that a general land survey of Crimea had already been carried out; that land surveys commissioned by the *zemstvo* (which had no authority in matters of land) and carried out by private individuals could not be granted any legal power; and that boundary marks could only be renewed by state surveys, which would certainly not be triggered by legal disputes.¹⁰¹ Many local landowners, in other words—Russian, Tatar, or other—, would have liked to see more demarcation to solve the existing issues, yet the state was eager to retain its monopoly on land surveys, and moved slowly and reluctantly.

By the mid-1870s, Crimean Tatars were routinely using the courts to lay claim on land—either because someone else disputed their land rights or because they had just bought landed property (in which case the court was to declare the buyer the new owner).¹⁰² In 1873, for example, the merchant Osman Umer oglu turned to the Simferopol Circuit Court to have a land purchase on the south Crimean shore confirmed, which he had recently bought at a public auction from the mullah Ibrahim Ali oglu.¹⁰³ As proof, he supplied the court with a deed of purchase from a notary in Yalta. After the jurists had examined the accuracy of this document and received confirmation from the senior notary that the land was not disputed, they declared Osman Umer oglu to be the rightful owner.

The decision of the court was central in matters concerning land purchases. Peasants were aware of this procedure. In December 1871, a group of 46 Tatar peasants jointly purchased land in Feodosiia District, for which they received a deed of purchase from a Feodosiia-based notary.¹⁰⁴ Three months later, the senior notary confirmed that there were no legal claims on the land and that the purchase was lawful. The 46 peasants then turned to the court to have their common ownership of land formally confirmed. Each one of them is identified in the court file by name.¹⁰⁵ The court soon acknowledged the purchase.

The circuit court archive in Simferopol is full of such files: by the mid-1870s, the new court had become the forum for acquiring and claiming land

101 Ibid., ll. 5–7ob., 8ob., 15–16ob.

102 I expand on this in: Stefan B. Kirmse, “Law and Empire in Late Tsarist Russia. Muslim Tatars Go to Court,” *Slavic Review* 72:4 (2013), esp. pp. 796–797.

103 GAARK, f. 376, op. 5, d. 594 (“Po prosheniiu kuptsa Osmana Umer oglu o vvode ego vo vladenie uchastkom zemli,” 1873).

104 GAARK, f. 376, op. 5, d. 599 (“Po prosheniiu 46 chelovek tatar o vvode ikh v obshchee vladenie nedvizhnym imeniem,” 1873), ll. 1–2.

105 On this distinction, see Utz, “Die Besitzverhältnisse der Tatarenbauern im Kreise Simferopol,” p. 29.

in Crimea.¹⁰⁶ Most conflicts were settled in court, rather than in the fields and woodlands, as they were in Kazan. To understand the greater difficulties of the circuit courts in asserting their authority over property claims along the Volga, one must look beyond the question of land and explore other cases in which Tatar peasants chose to resist.

RESISTING PEASANTS

In 1878, the Tatar peasant Gadii Sharipov was tried before Kazan's Judicial Chamber for "resistance against the authorities."¹⁰⁷ The authority in question was the assembly of justices of the peace in Malmyzh, on the border between Kazan and Viatka Provinces. Four months earlier, Sharipov had physically prevented the court clerk (*sudebnyi pristav*) Vershinin from recording his property.¹⁰⁸ The justices of the peace had ordered the property to be assessed because Sharipov owed money to his fellow villager Ismail Gubaidullin. When the clerk read out the warrant to the debtor, Sharipov shouted that he would not pay a thing, grabbed the official by his shoulders, turned him toward the gate, and exclaimed: "Get lost, I won't let you record a single straw here (*Ubiraisia von, ia ne dam opisat' ni odnoi solominy*)!"¹⁰⁹

The next day Sharipov and his father-in-law were summoned by the police who tried to persuade them to let the court clerk do his work, yet the father-in-law (on whose farm Sharipov lived) would not yield. The officer then gathered witnesses and went to the farm. When the auxiliary policeman (*sotskii*) Zainullin tried to climb over the fence, Sharipov pushed him off. After the debtor had reluctantly opened his gate, he tried to stop the officials from entering the farmhouse. The judicial chamber found Sharipov guilty of assaulting police officers and obstructing the execution of a judicial decision; he was sentenced to four months in prison.¹¹⁰

The case shows an expanding state whose law-enforcement agents were called upon to regulate village disputes; and it mirrors the quotidian nature of multicultural interaction in which inter-faith solidarity was by no means a given (it made no difference that the lender and auxiliary policeman, like the borrower, were Muslim Tatars). In addition, the case points to the diverse nature of resistance. The economic conditions in Tatar communities were dire, and the settlement or non-settlement of debt could be a matter of life and death (though Sharipov's case was not quite as dramatic as some of the households

106 Many of them are stored at GAARK in f. 376 (circuit court), op. 5 (civil cases). I analyse them in greater detail elsewhere: Stefan B. Kirmse, "'Law and Society' in Imperial Russia," *InterDisciplines. Journal of History and Sociology* 3:2 (2012), pp. 103-113.

107 NART, f. 51, op. 4, d. 79 ("O kr-akh Gadye Sharypove, obv. v soprotivlenii vlasti," 1878).

108 *Ibid.*, l. 2.

109 *Ibid.*

110 *Ibid.*, ll. 42-51.

described by Lavrskii). Under such conditions, cases of resistance against the authorities included cases in which the state played the role of an arbiter. That such cases grew in number in Kazan in the 1870s and 1880s (as the records of the judicial chamber suggest) had much to do with the economic difficulties and the state's increased visibility.

At the same time, the archive reveals a surge in the occurrence and scale of collective resistance against state demands across Kazan Province in the winter of 1878 and most of 1879. Many of these cases of insubordination were directed at seemingly minor demands. Even the installation of signposts could cause an uproar: in November 1878, for example, 11 Tatar peasants in the district of Chistopol were prosecuted for resistance: they had refused to follow a police order that had instructed them to put up an informational post/pillar (*stolb*) at the village entrance stating the village's name and number of inhabitants.¹¹¹ Over the following months, cases of resistance became rampant. In particular, refusals to elect auxiliary police and firemen spread quickly. This was striking insofar as the election of lay police had been common in Russia since the early modern period.¹¹²

In December 1878, the peasants of Bol'shie Tigany, a village in Spassk District, refused to elect their policemen and firemen for the next year.¹¹³ Over the following weeks, different law-enforcement agents traveled to the village, trying to uncover the reasons for this insubordination, identify its instigators, and persuade the locals to change their minds. All efforts at persuasion, however, came to nothing. The villagers insisted that no elections were necessary.¹¹⁴ They added that they had sent a petition to St. Petersburg, in which they had asked the authorities to abolish the requirement to provide information about themselves: for example, information about fire insurances, lists of elected guards etc.¹¹⁵ They would not hold another election before they had received an answer. That said, even when the police communicated the (negative) answer in May 1879, the villagers explained that they would simply submit another petition.

Further interrogations in June 1879 then extracted the following from testimonies: the village head Abdul Khalimp Burkhanov, while visiting relatives, had come across a book containing ominous news: it presumably showed that the government was planning to hang up church bells and baptize local

111 NART, f. 89, op. 1, d. 66 ("O krestiane Saifutdinove i drugikh, obv. po 273 i 286 st. ulozh.," 1878–1879).

112 *Istoricheskii ocherk obrazovaniia i razvitiia politseiskikh uchrezhdenii v Rossii* (St. Petersburg, 1913), pp. 8–9. See also Frank, *Crime, Cultural Conflict, and Justice in Rural Russia*, pp. 8, 13, 31.

113 NART, f. 41, op. 4, d. 12 ("O nevybore politseiskikh desiatskikh i pozharnykh starost na 1879 god," 1878–1879).

114 *Ibid.*, l. 10.

115 *Ibid.*, l. 16ob.

Tatars at a village assembly (*skhod*).¹¹⁶ To carry out the baptism, the authorities needed a list of people's names. This was the reason why Burkhanov had collected money for a petition to stop all correspondence containing personal information. Even after the petition's decline, he did not give up, telling people that it was better to give money for a second petition than to face baptism.

The case of Bol'shie Tigany adds another dimension to the discussion. Unlike in the attack on the land surveyor, the main reasons were not socio-economic (although economic difficulties may have contributed to the hostile atmosphere). In the late 1870s, two developments coincided that encouraged mobilization along ethnic-religious lines: renewed struggles over missionary activity and apostasy, and the wider geopolitical context (in particular, the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878). By 1865, a renewed wave of apostasy had taken hold of the region, as Tatars who had been baptized earlier now wanted to embrace Islam again.¹¹⁷ The authorities met their requests with coercion since apostasy from Orthodoxy was a criminal act. Entire villages were forcibly re-baptized or exiled to Siberia by administrative decision.¹¹⁸ The outbreak of war with the Ottoman Empire made mutual suspicions worse and gave them a new sense of urgency. Although the police never discovered more than a few quiet expressions of pro-Ottoman sympathy in the Volga region, the authorities continued to fear the emergence of a Muslim "fifth column." In this climate of mutual suspicion, the rumor of forced conversion could lead entire communities to ignore state demands that had been accepted for centuries. Any list of names, signed statements, or other information (including village signs) became suspicious: did the authorities try to make the Tatars sign something they did not understand and thus trick them into accepting Christianity?

Fears of conversion were soon at the root of numerous cases of resistance: in the first half of 1879, the local authorities were faced with (non-violent but determined) refusals to elect police and firemen in the villages of Novye Uragary, Starye Uragary, Bibaevye Chelny (all in Spassk District, not far from Bol'shie Tigany) and Mamalaevo, Mamadysh District (not far from Ikshurma, where the attack on the land surveyor Burliand would take place five years later).¹¹⁹ All of these cases began with the peasants' refusal to hold elections and forward written information to the authorities. The subsequent police

116 Ibid., ll. 16-17.

117 Werth, *At the Margins of Orthodoxy*; Agnès Nilüfer Kefeli, *Becoming Muslim in Imperial Russia: Conversion, Apostasy, and Literacy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014).

118 NART, f. 1, op. 3, d. 1823 ("O nepovinoventii i buistve tatar der. Bol'shikh Shulabash," 1868); and Nedelia 26 (1883), June 26, 869-870.

119 NART, f. 89, op. 1, d. 1144 ("O krest'ianakh derevni Novykh Uragar' Spasskogo uezda," 1879), f. 41, op. 4, d. 1632 ("Po obvineniiu krest'ian der. Novykh Uragar' v soprotivlenii," 1879), and f. 51, op. 4dop., d. 61 ("Po obvineniiu kr-na Kaz. gub. Spasskogo uezda, der. Starykh Uragar', Khalitova, v soprotivlenii vlasti," 1879); NART, f. 41, op. 4, d. 13 ("O sel'skom staroste derevni Bibaevykh Chelnov," 1879); and NART, f. 89, op. 1, d. 1138 ("O krest'iane Mukhutdine Shamsutdinove i Takhvatulle Vakhitove," 1879).

investigations then uncovered the rumor that stamped documents passed on to the state would be interpreted as the acceptance of baptism. Prior to this wave of refusals, several villages in Kazan District had already engaged in open revolt at the end of 1878 (which was put down by the Kazan governor within a week).¹²⁰

That said, refusals and quiet discontent were far more common phenomena in Tatar communities than revolt at this time. Virtually all aforementioned cases included repeated negotiations and efforts by local police and other state representatives at persuading the villagers to comply. More importantly even, many villages did not rebel at all. In February 1879, the Kazan governor, who remained suspicious, instructed all police commandants to keep a close eye on the Tatar population and keep him updated. As it turned out, however, there was little to report. Hundreds of pages of police reports arrived from different districts, but all came to the same conclusion: that, at most, there was some discontent (*nedovol'stvo*) and isolated cases of pro-Ottoman sympathy in Tatar villages but no signs of open unrest or disobedience whatsoever.¹²¹ Unrest in Kazan Province, it seems, remained locally contained.

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While the Kazan governor was unnecessarily worried about most of his Tatar subjects, discontent and resistance were real. It seems reasonable to suggest that this resistance was rooted in socio-economic conditions, cultural fears, and changing forms of governance. As part of its all-out modernization and standardization effort, the center was keen to enhance its control over rural areas. Both landowners and the state administration increasingly wanted state officials to monitor and confirm all transactions concerning land. The reasons why these interactions could turn violent were usually socioeconomic, and sometimes cultural: while struggles over religious matters did much to create an atmosphere of mistrust (especially in Kazan), many incidents of resistance were caused by police and land surveyors making demands during a period of land shortage and dire economic conditions. Extreme poverty was rampant among Tatars. Admittedly, such poverty was also common among the Russian peasantry, but more affluent Russian peasants could, to a degree, step in and help. Tatar communities were increasingly dependent on aid from the center. Cases of resistance did not necessarily imply a rejection of the state and its institutions; they also included cases in which the state played the role of an

120 I analyse this revolt in detail in: Stefan B. Kirmse, "Law and Interethnic Relations in the Russian Empire: The Tatar Riots of 1878 and Their Judicial Aftermath," *Ab imperio* 4 (2013), pp. 49–78.

121 NART, f. 1, op. 3, d. 4659 ("O volnenii tatarskikh krest'ian i meropriiati protiv krest'ianskikh vystuplenii," 1879); and NART, f. 1, op. 3, d. 4661a ("O raznykh lozhnykh slukhakh i besporiadkakh," 1879).

arbiter. At the same time, because of persistent rumors of forced conversion, the Tatar peasantry also feared the institutions of the state. While rich Tatars could have mediated, they were also distrusted and attacked by the rural masses.

That said, while the late 1870s were crisis-laden in Kazan Province, the tensions must not be blown out of proportions. They were bigger in the minds of tsarist administrators than in reality. Also, tensions did not necessarily mean violence. Resistance against the powers-that-be often took the form of refusals, followed by protracted efforts at persuasion. The central authorities may have devoted little effort at communicating with protesters in the provinces, as James Meyer suggests.¹²² The judiciary, local administration, and police, however, kept the communication channels open and tried to find pragmatic solutions wherever possible.

Accommodation is a useful term to capture state-society interaction in late imperial Russia. This interaction included moments of repression and violent resistance as much as moments of negotiation and grudging acceptance. As Lauren Benton argued for the case of Spanish America, the prevalence of accommodation helps to move beyond dichotomies of collaboration and resistance.¹²³ The Russian case seems to confirm this. Central authorities and village communities (Muslim or other) may have developed no great affection for each other but they interacted on all sorts of levels: they met and negotiated in the courtroom (with unpredictable results), in notaries' offices and banks, and communicated through intermediaries including professional and lay police, justices of the peace, township and village elders, to name but a few. In so doing, they ended up accommodating each other's interests, partly out of sheer necessity, more commonly than often assumed. While riots and physical attacks on officials tended to be met harshly, refusals and quiet expressions of discontent could also lead to talks, investigations, and efforts at mediation that could take months (as in all of the aforementioned cases in which villages refused to elect officials). What about regional differences? In the 1860s, the two regions explored were at different points of development. Kazan was still an important city with a fast-growing population and a highly differentiated society. The region's minority population was also sizable, growing, and differentiated (with its rural part deeply impoverished). But with other cities surpassing its economic and geopolitical importance, Kazan was also past its prime. Things were different in Crimea. Initially dominated by non-Russians and considered an exotic backwater, the peninsula became the talk of the town in the final third of the century. The new court was introduced more

122 Meyer, *Turks across Empires*, pp. 70–71; see also Mustafa Tuna, *Imperial Russia's Muslims. Islam, Empire, and European Modernity, 1788–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 51.

123 Lauren Benton, *Law and Colonial Cultures. Legal Regimes in World History, 1400–1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 27.

swiftly than in Kazan and came to deal with land disputes in large numbers.¹²⁴ It quickly turned into an avenue for purchasing land and disputing existing boundaries.

It is striking that riots over land were less common on the Black Sea coast than in the Volga region. The reasons are manifold. First, thanks to shorter distances and personal ties to the Ottoman Empire, Crimean Tatars could more easily respond to fears of forced conversion and economic hardship by leaving Russia for good. In the Volga region, migration, if peasants saw it as an option at all, often meant moving east, rather than moving abroad. Unlike merchants and intellectuals, peasants were not cut out to be “trans-imperial” people, unless they had no alternative. Still, even in Crimea large numbers decided to stay (or return, after they had failed to start a new life in Ottoman lands). With short distances between Simferopol and most Tatar communities on the south coast, state institutions presented themselves as reasonable, and often as the only, options for solving land disputes.

Second, the relative number and importance of private Tatar landowners (usually with fertile allotments) was higher than in Kazan: unlike the majority of Volga peasants, who had no legal rights to the land they tilled or whose plots were miniscule, these landowners had much to gain from court cases. What is more, since much of Crimea’s soil was arid while parts of Kazan belonged to the “black soil” region, unused lots of land were usually available for purchase. Some landlord (Russian, Tatar, or other) was always willing to sell, which increased the importance of legal mechanisms governing the emerging markets. What is more, the lands left behind by the Tatar exodus usually fell into state hands and thus became available for purchase.¹²⁵

Third, by the late 1860s, most Crimean lands had been surveyed. While disputes persisted, these details could now be settled in court. Finally, exposure to state authorities differed between the two regions. Crimeans had not only got used to dealing with state representatives, but had also long been exposed to the secular Ottoman law, the *Kanun*, previously administered by the *qadi-asker*. This may have increased their willingness to accept and use formal legal procedures in questions concerning land. They could form interest communities to secure bank loans and buy property. Given the fragmentation of land, Tatar landowners, in fact, actively sought state support for having their boundaries and property confirmed. If anything, it was the state that, for organizational or economic reasons, could not meet local demands.

124 See the chapter “Implementing Legal Change: New Courts for Crimea and Kazan,” in Stefan B. Kirmse, *The Lawful Empire. Legal Change and Cultural Diversity in Late Tsarist Russia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

125 Utz, “Die Besitzverhältnisse der Tatarenbauern im Kreise Simferopol,” p. 70.