

# Editorial

*My song is even more up-to-date now, unfortunately. I sing for the whole  
Ukrain, for the Crimea. I want my suffering to be a drop in the ocean and help  
to solve the problems of Ukraine and Crimean Tatars.*

Jamala<sup>1</sup>

When the singer Jamala won the Eurovision Song contest in 2016, this was remarkable in many ways, and numerous contributions in this volume will refer to Jamala and her song “1944” in several contexts. So I would like to mention just one aspect here. This concerns the social and cultural links between Ukraine and Crimea which are clearly articulated in the quote above. There are numerous points of contact and exchange in Ukrainian and Crimean history solely due to the geographical neighbourhood. Less numerous, of course, were the interpretations of these contacts as a common history. Interest in such a common history only has grown around the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This was due “significantly to the long-standing primacy of national historiography, which neglected nationalities and regions that had not reached statehood in the course of the so-called long 19<sup>th</sup> century”.<sup>2</sup> Crimea, with its complex history, is coming into focus nowadays thanks to a shift in perspective from the national grand narratives to transnational imperial and colonial histories. This interest has also been further fuelled by the recent geopolitical instability in the Black Sea region, even though the close intercultural relations between Crimean-Tatars and Ukrainians are still a blind spot in research.

*Despite its significance, however, the solidary relationship has been either overlooked as a discrete object of inquiry or dismissed as a mere political “marriage of convenience” in research literature.<sup>3</sup>*

For political reasons it is a “marriage of convenience” - but it is for sure much more. Among Ukrainians, the awareness of and interest in Crimean Tatars and the Ottoman Empire grew relatively long ago, in any case much earlier than the formal subordination of Crimea to Ukraine within the Soviet Union. They date back to the Tatar raids and the human trafficking of Ukrainian captives into Crimea since the 15<sup>th</sup> century. This encounter was a main source of a rich folkloristic respectively literary production in the time to follow. Therefore, Ukrainian romantics, nation builders and historians of the Ukrainian nation in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and beginning 20<sup>th</sup> century could not pass by the motives of close relationship, and even kinship with the Crimean Tatars, that have been expressed in folklore, especially in Dumy and other literary texts. For instance, since the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, scholars, among them Mychaylo Drahomanov, Mykhaylo Hrushevs'kyy and Ahatanhel Kryms'kyy, investigated parallels between Turkish-Tatar folk art and

Ukrainian folklore, and linguists became interested in the problem of the transfer of linguistic elements from Turkic languages into Ukrainian. It became clear that the Ukrainian and Turkic-Tatar social and cultural contacts were intense in the previous centuries and played its role in constructing identity in Ukraine.

Ukrainian writers, historians and politicians have repeatedly reflected on parallel socio-cultural phenomena and developments between Crimean Tatar Ottoman and Ukrainian history, imagining a common “entangled” history as a kind of counter-narrative to ethnocentrism resp. nationalism. As a result, in the 1920s, an increasingly open concept of a socialist society developed in Soviet Ukraine on the background of the politics of Ukrainization in Ukraine: It made it possible for Ukraine to deal openly with its own history and to question traditional Ukrainian ethnocentrism or nationalism of a Prosvita-type. This development was actively picked up by Ukrainian scholars, writers, intellectuals in the 1920s in the early 1930s. During these years, when it was possible to experiment with historical narratives and at the same time develop oriental studies at the newly established Ukrainian Academy of Science, knowledge of Ukraine’s political, economic and cultural relations with the Middle East increased rapidly. Against that background the idea of Ukrainian-Tatar-Turkish relations became enriched with new arguments and began to rely on scientific facts.

The works of Ahatanhel Kryms’kyy are a telling example. In particular his *History of Turkey*<sup>4</sup> is a unique original history of the Ottoman Empire, and also his *Studies from Crimea* is a pioneering work in the field. In both books he analyses as well Slavic (and Ukrainian) sources, and links them to – what I call here – the Ukrainian-Crimean contact zone. Kryms’kyy’s attractive essayistic style<sup>5</sup>, which is particularly visible when it comes to Roksolana and Ukrainian aspects of the Ottoman Empire, has fascinated both scholars and artists and resulted in the well-deserved popularity of his work.

Oriental studies in Ukraine in the 1920s and early 1930s were characterized by a generally positive vision of Ukrainian-Turkic-Tatar relations, which developed on the initiative of Mykhaylo Hrushevs’kyy and Ahatanhel Kryms’kyy even at the expense of a negative reassessment of Ukrainian-Moscow relations. A shift in orientation (Away from Moscow! coined by Mykola Khvyly’ovyy) was a general trend in Soviet Ukraine amongst intellectuals in the 1920s.

The aspect of a shared history between Crimea and Ukraine runs like a red thread through the contributions of this issue of Euxeinos. It points out that parallels between Crimean Tatar and Ukrainian socio-cultural constellations - for example the Crimean texts by Lesya Ukrayinka or Mykhaylo Kotsyubyns’kyy - implicitly refer to Ukraine’s and Crimea’s position colonial in the Russian empire. What seems to be clear on the surface also has deep cultural and historical roots. The investigation of historical roots and contacts and their legacy as a Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar contact zone results in a complementary and in many other ways updated picture

of Ukrainian identity. Against this background we can suggest that there has always been more than a monologist national narrative of Ukrainian self-perception. The Ukrainian-Crimean Tatar contact zone refers to an open intercultural narrative, a diverse social formation in Ukraine over a long period of time. In addition, a closer analysis of the Crimean Tatar-Ukrainian contact zone also contributes to a broader perspective on Crimean Tatar self-perception and reflection on identity, what is in particular visible today.

The first block of contributions begins with a study by Timur Kurshutov. I am very thankful for his participation in the volume, because he continues to work in Crimea under difficult conditions as a Crimean Tatar and cultural scholar. His study provides an overview and recalls the variety of forms of interaction between Crimean Tatars and Ukrainians in recent centuries. He mainly examines the period from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the present and shows not only the interactions but also parallel historical and socio-cultural constellations for Crimean Tatars and Ukrainians which until today continue to operate as a postcolonial situation. Subsequently, the author also elaborates on prospects for the future of Ukrainian-Crimean Tatar relations.

In Alexander Kratochvil's contribution, the common ground of historical experiences and the entanglement through history of Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars is addressed in the context of literary works. He designs a contact zone "Slavia Islamica Ukraine", which places the intercultural relations between Crimean Tatars and Ukrainians in a conceptual framework. This allows a challenging view of traditional (literary/ folkloristic) narratives of Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar contacts. As a consequence, the concept "Slavia Islamica Ukraine" also allows us to question stereotypes on the traditions and identity constructions of the inhabitants of the Black Sea region and suppose a complementary narrative of Ukrainian identity.

The next studies on the fine arts, music and cinematography develop this topic using practical examples. In her contribution, Alina Zubkovych gives an overview of films from various genres in the new millennium, which deal with the history and present of Crimea and the lives of the Crimean Tatars. The annexation of Crimea in 2014 constitutes an obvious caesura. Films and documentaries made afterwards are perceived in a changed social and political context. This context is characterized by internationalization and often explicit politicization. A striking example is the documentary film about Jamala (Jamala.ua by Anna Akulevich), in which the increasing political nature of art, in this case pop culture, is reflected. The author stresses in her study that the representation of Crimean Tatars in Ukraine is a unique possibility to observe the dynamics of imaginative shifts in Ukrainian media discourses that appeared during the Euromaidan and further occupation of the Crimean peninsula.

Music, popular culture, subversive culture and media representations are also at the centre of Austin Charron's study. The newly revived role of the Crimean Ta-

tars in Ukrainian socio-cultural contexts since the Maidan and the annexation of Crimea is particularly striking in the fate of the Crimean Tatar internal refugees (IDPs). The Crimean Tatar refugees activate collective memory and engage with everyday and pop culture in interesting ways. This is part of an approach to activate multicultural knowledge in various media formats in Ukraine generally, and refers to the postcolonial situation. As a result, one finds (re)interpretations of cultural memory that support the resurgent narratives of Ukrainian civic identity and multiculturalism. Crimean Tatar cuisine, music, visual arts, and other products are now increasingly visible components of Ukrainian cultural landscapes. The author pays special attention to the communication between traditional and progressive forms of Crimean Tatar art and culture. This also creates a productive field of tension for the political and discursive project to promote multicultural Crimean Tatar and Ukrainian identity.

The second block brings together three heterogeneous studies. They show the diversity of viewpoints on Crimean topics which also corresponds with the diversity of research pathways and interests. The research on the Crimea and Black Sea region itself thus becomes a “contact zone”, providing surprising insights with its multi-disciplinary approach. In the contribution by Mieste Hotopp-Riecke and Dominik Napiwodzki we find a shift in perspective with a focus on Central European interdependencies of Crimean Tatar history. The historical relationships between Poland, Germany and the Crimean Tatars began in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and ended after occupation of the Crimean khanate in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. There was short period of intensive German-Crimean Tatar relations during the First World War and before the Bolsheviks takeover of control in the Black Sea region and Crimea. This constellation again refers to a certain degree to a Ukrainian parallel, which in turn also affects the current negotiation of Crimean Tatar identity. Against the background of developments since the 1990s the article presents actors and structures of the Crimean Tatar scene between Crimea and diaspora communities and addresses the question of Crimean Tatar identity in exile.

The article by Natalia Volvach presents research results based on her case study conducted in November 2017. It shows how the linguistic landscape of Sevastopol rapidly changed after Russian annexation of Crimea and how Russian power is measured differently. There is clearly a strong de-Ukrainization and de-Tatarization not only in Sevastopol (which was always a city with a special status of Russianness) but on the whole peninsula.

The contributions of this volume are complemented by the reflections of the doyen of research on Crimean Tatars (and of course other Turkic peoples in the region) by Edward E. Lazzerini. His studies on Crimea, Crimean Tatars and Muslim modernist movements have fundamentally contributed to this field of research since the 1970s and are still standard today. While the previously mentioned article focuses on the Russian appropriation of the region as a linguistic landscape,

Edward Lazzerini describes the appropriation and change of the natural resources, in particular the plants of the Crimean landscape and their economic exploitation. Crimea served as a showcase of Russian colonial and imperial measures. For example, Prince Mikhail Vorontsov's extraordinary palace complex in Alupka became a model for the construction of palaces and parks all along the southern coast of Crimea.

All articles in this issue illustrate implicit or explicit analogies of historical constellations for Crimean Tatars and Ukrainians. Today these constellations often reactivate forgotten resources of historical and collective memory. In a certain sense, the contributions in this volume tie in to this perspective of a metaphorical and, since 2014, also very real Crimean Tatar-Ukrainian contact zone. I would like to thank the authors who, with their stimulating texts, have provided important impetuses for research on Crimea and Crimean Tatar-Ukrainian cultural contexts. The interdisciplinarity of the contributions serves to map the "contact zone" and further address questions from both a detailed individual as well as overarching comparative perspective. And last but not least, I wish to stress that the studying Ukraine is not only rewarding in the sense that one learns something about Ukrainian things and topics, but one also almost always learns something new and unexpected about Ukraine's various neighbours.

**by Alexander Kratochvil**

## Endnotes

- 1 Jamala after the arrest of the vice-chief of the Medschlis (representation of the Crimean Tatars on the occupied peninsula) on the eve of the ESC final.
- 2 Jobst, Kerstin S. and Hofmeister, Ulrich, “Editorial: Krimtataren.” In *Krimtataren*, eds. Hofmeister, Ulrich and Jobst, Kerstin S., 7. Innsbruck: Studienverlag, 2017.
- 3 Finnin, Rory. ”“A Bridge Between Us”: Literature in the Ukrainian-Crimean Tatar Encounter.“ *Comparative Literature Studies* 56, no. 2 (2019): 289.
- 4 Krymskyy, Ahatanhel, *Studiji z Krymu*. Kyjiv 1930; *Istoriya Turechchyny ta yiyi pysmenstva* (4 Bd., 1924-27). About Roksolana and Suleyman: T2, vyp. 2. Pysmentstvo XIV–XV vv. Kyjiv: Ukrayinska akademiya nauk, 1927.
- 5 Krymskyy was an author of remarkable prose and poetry in Ukrainian as well, most of them with Orient-related topics.