Between destruction, protection, and transformative re-creation

Muslim (Crimean Tatar and Ottoman) architectural heritage in Crimea

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Abstract: *This article discusses the politics of patrimonialization in the historical and cultural context of Crimea's Muslim material heritage. It asks how the peninsula's rich Islamic past – from the Seljuk, Golden Horde, Ottoman, Crimean Khanate, and later imperial Russian and Soviet eras – is integrated into national heritage politics, and explores the rationales and mechanisms behind cases where it is ignored or even erased. Starting with an historical overview, the article continues with an account of the changing stances toward Crimea's Islamic material remains after the peninsula's incorporation into the Russian Empire and subsequently the Soviet Union. The main focus, however, is on the more recent past, specifically developments in Crimea before and after the Russian invasion and subsequent occupation in 2014. Through the examples of sites such as the famous Khan's Palace, the article looks at how heritage strategies have unfolded over recent decades, and at the ideological and political climate that shaped them. The last part of the article investigates the creation of new narratives, the re-creation and reinvention of a specific Islamic past, through the decision to embrace an Ottoman visual idiom at the expense of other locally rooted forms.*

> [Crimea] is the location of ancient Khersones, where Prince Vladimir was baptised. His spiritual feat of adopting Orthodoxy predetermined the overall basis of the culture, civilisation and human values that unite the peoples of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus. The graves of Russian soldiers whose bravery brought Crimea into the Russian empire are also in Crimea. This is also Sevastopol – a legendary city with an outstanding history, a fortress that serves as the birthplace of Russia's Black Sea Fleet. Crimea is Balaklava and

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> Kerch, Malakhov Kurgan and Sapun Ridge. Each one of these places is dear to our hearts, symbolising Russian military glory and outstanding valour.[1]

These lines, delivered by Vladimir Putin in 2014 in a speech marking Crimea's 'reunification' with Russia, symbolically appropriate the peninsula through a religious founding myth and narratives of military victory and sacrifice. Through the baptism of an iconic prince,[2] Crimea is tied to the Christian Orthodox faith and Slavic ethnicity, with the Turco-Islamic and other dimensions of its past deliberately excluded. The Crimean Tatars, an indigenous Muslim people of Crimea who were persecuted and ultimately deported en masse in 1944,[3] are mentioned by Putin only as having been "treated unfairly, just as a number of other peoples in the USSR."

This downplaying and disregard of Crimea's Turco-Islamic past is the present article's starting point. Focusing on architectural edifices and their cultural context, this study investigates how the rich layers of the peninsula's Islamic past – from the Seljuk, Golden Horde, Ottoman, Crimean Khanate, and Russian and Soviet periods – are integrated into national heritage politics today, and explores the rationales and mechanisms behind instances where this heritage has been ignored or even erased.[4] This study draws heavily on fieldwork carried out in the region by a team of scholars led by Hakan Kırımlı and this author prior to the Russian occupation in 2014, and many of the photographs and details included here are products of that fieldwork.[5] Although

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1 "Address by President of the Russian Federation," *Official Internet Resources of the President of Russia*, March 18, 2014, http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20603.

2 Vladimir the Great (Volodymyr I Sviatoslavych, r. 980–1015), prince of Novgorod and Grand Prince of Kiev, was ruler of Kievan Rus, a federation of East Slavic and Finnic peoples that existed from the late 9th to the mid-13th century. According to tradition, he was baptized in 988 in Chersones. For Chersones, see Jobst (2013).

3 See Izmirli (2020), pp. 327–38.

4 The many layers of the region's past are reflected in its toponyms. Most places have been renamed multiple times and are today known by different names in different languages. Where possible, I have opted to give the place name in Crimean Tatar the first time I use it, followed by its Turkish (Ottoman) name, and finally the toponym given after the Russian annexation in 1783 (for main centers) or after the 1944 deportations (for villages). If there is a difference between the current Russian and Ukrainian toponyms, I have given both. In later instances, I use only the Crimean Tatar name, except for Aqmescit/Simferopol, for which I provide both names.

5 This fieldwork was supported financially by the Turkish government. For the results, published as an inventory of Crimea's Turco-Islamic material heritage, see Kırımlı &

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this article began as part of a workshop on the Ottoman legacy's fate in a "post-Ottoman territory," the Turco-Islamic remains in Crimea extend well beyond the Ottoman past. Nevertheless, the peninsula's cultural and political connection to the Ottoman world and later to Turkey continues to shape Ukrainian, Crimean Tatar, and Russian attitudes in different but substantial ways.

The article begins with an historical overview of the Muslim presence in Crimea under the Golden Horde (13th–15th century) and the Crimean Khanate and Ottoman Empire (15th–late 18th century). This is followed by a section on the transformations of, and changing stances toward, the peninsula's Turco-Islamic material remains under imperial Russian and Soviet rule. Afterwards, developments since Ukrainian independence in 1991 and Russia's occupation of Crimea in 2014 are discussed.

In the second half of the article, particular examples of the protection, destruction, and appropriation of Crimea's Turco-Islamic material heritage from the early Soviet era onward will be addressed alongside the heritage approaches they entail and the ideological and political climate in which they have unfolded. Throughout most of this period, diverse levels of disruption and destruction of the region's Islamic material heritage and culture are apparent.[6] More recently, a new dynamic has also arisen: the transformative re-creation and re-invention of a specific Islamic past through the implementation of an idealized Ottoman visual idiom at the expense of other locally rooted forms, a troubling trend with significant implications for the few surviving examples of the region's Turco-Islamic past.

Islamic culture in Crimea to 1783

The first Muslim presence in Crimea arrived with Seljuk conquests in the early 13th century. A century later, under the Golden Horde, most of the local Turkic population converted to Islam.[7] This new religion was nourished by ties with Anatolia and the Mongol-dominated realms in northwestern Asia, including the lands around the Volga Basin and the Caspian Sea. Crimea's

Kançal-Ferrari (2021). The other team members and co-authors were Gökçe Günel, İbraim Abdulla, Nariman Abdülvaap, Safiye Eminova, and Gülşen Dişli.

6 Muslim heritage in other neighboring regions, such as the Meskheti region in Georgia, experienced a similar fate: Kançal-Ferrari (2022a).

7 Peacock (2006).

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oldest Islamic architectural remains date to this period, including religious structures like the mosques and madrasa in historical Qırım (also known as Solkhat, today Eski Qırım in Crimean Tatar and Staryi Krym in Russian/Ukrainian), the mosques in Sudaq (Sudak in Russian/Ukrainian) and Şeyhköy (today Davidovo), the mausolea in Qırq Yer (later Çufut Qale, "the fortress of the Jews") and Eskiyurt (literally "old settlement," renamed Podgorodnee in 1948), and the nearby Azizler ("saints") burial ground. These remains are among the most important legacies of the Golden Horde, and their cultural and archaeological significance is not limited to the peninsula.[8] In the 15th century, Islam became more firmly established in the region with the formation of the Crimean Khanate, a successor state to the Golden Horde and later vassal of the Ottomans. In 1475, the Ottomans conquered Crimea's southern shore and the important Genoese trading outpost of Caffa (Ottoman Kefe, renamed Feodosiya in 1802), thereafter transforming its cultural landscape and marking their presence visually through extensive construction activities.[9]

Caffa was a *şehzade sancağı*, a district where young Ottoman princes gained their first ruling experience. It was home to many mosques and even mausolea (*türbe*s) of Ottoman princes, among them the mosque and adjacent bathhouse of Sultan Süleyman (1494–1566), erected when he was still a prince, and at least two other mosques with lead-covered domes. The cosmopolitan town was called 'little Istanbul' because of its rich urban structure. Its fountains, marketplaces, and white stone streets were praised by the famed Ottoman traveler Evliya Çelebi, who states that Caffa was home to about 50 mosques and neighborhood masjids, several madrasas, dervish lodges, palaces, and more than 50 churches.[10]

In parallel with the Ottoman presence in southern Crimea, art and architectural production in the Crimean Khanate developed in a continued dialogue with Ottoman artistic and literary culture from the late 15th century on, especially under the patronage of the ruling Geray (Ottoman: Giray) dynasty. This close dialogue, which lasted for some three centuries, can be traced in the architecture of the region's mosques, madrasas, and mausolea, and particularly

8 Kançal-Ferrari (2018); Kırımlı & Kançal-Ferrari (2021), pp. 88–93; 426–31; 488–95; 606–43; 765–77.

9 Kançal-Ferrari (2022).

10 Evliya Çelebi (2011, II/7, p. 259); Öztürk (2006); Bocharov (2016).

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in and around the khanate's capital of Bağçasaray (named for the khan's "Garden Palace" there).[11]

The political and artistic center of the khanate was the Khan's Palace, constructed in Bağçasaray in the early 16th century at a time of particularly close relations with the Ottoman Empire. Partly burned down along with much of the city during the Russian invasion in 1736, the palace was restored in the mid-18th century with material and craftsmanship furnished by the Ottomans. This palace constitutes the northernmost representative and one of the period's rare extant examples of Ottoman secular architecture. Its adjacent mosque, mausolea, and cemetery with rich epigraphic material exemplify Ottoman material and literary culture (Fig. 1).[12] The palace, as discussed in greater detail below, is unfortunately currently the subject of controversy because of its ongoing 'restoration'.

Another prominent representative and visual marker of the shared artistic culture between the Ottomans and the Geray dynasty is the Khan's Mosque in the harbor town of Kezlev (Turkish: Gözleve, Russian: Yevpatoriya, Ukrainian: Yevpatoriia). Constructed for the Crimean khan Devlet Geray I (r. 1551–77), the mosque was designed by the famous Ottoman architect Mimar Sinan in the classical Ottoman idiom and built on the model of the great sultanic mosques, with a central dome, two large minarets, and a private prayer area for the khan (*mahfil*).[13]

Transformations under Russian/Soviet hegemony, 1783–1991

Crimea's incorporation into the Russian Empire in 1783 and the Treaty of Jassy (1792) marking the end of the Russo-Turkish War (1787–92) put an end to both the Crimean Khanate and the Ottoman presence on the northern shore of the Black Sea. Several waves of emigration to the Ottoman Empire followed, yet a large Muslim population nevertheless remained.[14] Under the policy of

11 Turkish: Bahçesaray, Russian: Bakhchisarai, Ukrainian: Bakhchysarai.

12 Kançal-Ferrari (2005, 2017).

13 Kırımlı & Kançal-Ferrari (2021), pp. 726–43; Necipoğlu (2011), pp. 265–7; Kançal-Ferrari (2022b), pp. 161–3.

14 Karpat (1985, 2002, 2010); Kırımlı (2008); Fisher (2008).

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religious tolerance introduced by Catherine the Great (1729–96),[15] Crimean Tatar communities were free to practice their faith and continue their cultural life, which sometimes even flourished. During the 19th century, many pitch-roofed mosques were constructed or reconstructed atop earlier prayer houses in urban centers like Aqmescit/Simferopol,[16] Kezlev, and Bağçasaray and in their surrounding villages.[17] Yet alongside this continuation of Muslim culture, there was much systematic destruction of the khanate's legacy, as in the case of Caffa, where virtually no trace remains of the city's 300 years as a flourishing Ottoman town. Nearly everything was destroyed in the first phase of the Russian occupation and subsequent annexation of Crimea (1771–83);[18] much of what remained, including the mosque and bathhouse of Sultan Süleyman, was taken down in the 1830s on the pretext of urban restructuring.[19] The memory of the Ottoman presence and of Muslim culture was thus annihilated almost entirely. The sole visible reminder of Ottoman architecture in Caffa is the so-called Müftü Mosque, a single-domed prayer house from the early 17th century. It was converted into an Armenian church under Russian rule and then transformed back into a mosque in the 1990s. The systematic eradication of Ottoman-period remains was, and continues to be, facilitated by Russian (and Ukrainian) affirmation and reappropriation of the Genoese past in Caffa and Southern Crimea more generally.[20]

Russia's approach to its southern territories after the 1783 annexation entailed a complex and transformative restructuring of the region's past in line

15 For the late 18th- and 19th-century transformations of conquered Muslim territories in Crimea, see Schönle (2001) and O'Neill (2006) and (2017); for the whole Russian Empire, see Tuna (2015).

16 Although the town's name was officially changed to Simferopol after the annexation, the name Aqmescit continued to be used by the Crimean Tatar population.

17 Kırımlı & Kançal-Ferrari (2021).

18 Clarke (1848), pp. 258–62, vividly describes the destruction caused by the Russian army.

19 Tunkina (2011), pp. 50–6; Katyushin (1998), pp. 121–53.

20 This Genoese past has recently been a source of conflict and competing research between Ukraine and Russia. See "Regarding the sanctions list of Russian scientific and museum institutions that participate in archaeological research on the territory of the Crimean peninsula and operate directly in the Crimea," *National Conservation Area of St. Sophia of Kyiv*, last accessed May 1, 2023, https://st-sophia.org.ua/en/news/regarding-the-sanctions-list-of-russian-scientific-and-museum-institutions-that-participate-in-archaeological-research-on-the-territory-of-the-crimean-peninsula-and-operate-directly-in-the-crimea/.

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with a new Russian imperial interpretation that left little room for its Turco-Islamic cultural remains and their Crimean Tatar inheritors. Although efforts were made to integrate the Crimean Tatar nobility into the imperial state structure, they were largely viewed as an Oriental 'other'. Catherine ordered the towns of Bağçasaray and Qarasuvbazar (Turkish: Karasubazar, Russian: Belogorsk, Ukrainian: Bilohirsk) to be preserved as examples of Crimea's Oriental face. As Crimea turned into an increasingly popular destination for the Russian imperial family, the state elite, and its local collaborators, new monumental mosques were constructed not in the region's historically rooted idiom, but instead in a new eclectic Orientalist style that reified its imagined exoticism.[21]

In contrast, Crimean Tatar consciousness and self-identification continued to hark back to the glorious Turco-Islamic past of the Golden Horde and Crimean Khanate, and to Muslim values and a Sunni Islam nourished by the cultural and political climate of the late Ottoman Empire. The early 20th century even witnessed a Muslim revival and the rise of a pan-Islamist movement under İsmail Gaspıralı/Gasprinsky (1851–1914).[22] After the abolition of the Russian monarchy, this Muslim revival spawned an attempt at independence with the declaration of the short-lived Crimean People's Republic (Crimean Tatar: Qırım Halq Cumhuriyeti) in 1917. Four years later, in 1921, Crimea was incorporated into Russia as an autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic.

In this period, 'Crimean Studies' – not confined to Turco-Islamic heritage – flourished. Already in 1918, under German occupation, Taurida University (the Ancient Greek name for Crimea, now V. I. Vernadsky Taurida National University) was founded and carried out many archaeological expeditions to historical sites. Archaeological, historical, and ethnographic research was also undertaken by the "Crimean Regional Committee for Museum Affairs and the Protection of Antiquities, Art, Nature and Folk Life (KrymOKHRIS),"[23] established in 1920. Crimean Tatar scholars strove to document their heritage through linguistic, archaeological, and art and architectural research, and together with Russian scholars, they undertook archaeological expeditions to document the

21 For the construction activities of imperial Russia in Crimea, see Kalinin & Zemlyanichenko (1991, 2016). For the region's political, administrative, and demographic transformation in the period, see O'Neill (2017) and Kırımlı (1996), pp. 1–31. For Qarasuvbazar, where most of the Turco-Islamic edifices were destroyed in the 1920s, see Abdullayev (2013). See also the contributions of Ana Guboglo and Stefaniia Demchuk in this volume.

22 Kırımlı (1996).

23 Nepomnyashchiy (2022).

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peninsula's early Muslim heritage from the 13th to the 15th century. This documentation remains the main corpus of our knowledge on this period.[24] Museums like the Khan's Palace in Bağçasaray and the short-lived Oriental Museum in Yalta (1921–29) were established to document Crimean Tatar heritage and display Muslim cultural artifacts. The Khan's Palace, transformed into a museum in November 1917 by Noman Çelebicihan,[25] is still the most important museum in the Crimean Peninsula, currently named the Bakhchisaray Historical, Cultural, and Archaeological Museum-Reserve.[26] The Oriental Museum in Yalta, however, was closed only few years after its opening, and much of its collection of valuable manuscripts was lost.[27]

This quest to document Crimea's early Turco-Islamic presence was also an attempt to legitimize the Crimean Tatars as indigenous inhabitants of the peninsula, partly in response to efforts on the part of the Orthodox Church, the imperial Russia state, and the later Soviet state to turn Crimea into a realm of Russian culture and to marginalize or even erase the peninsula's Turco-Islamic, Crimean Tatar component. Against this backdrop, the Crimean Tatars maintained a strong feeling of identity as a historically rooted Muslim community.

The favorable climate of the early Soviet regime, which allowed the Crimean Tatar (Turco-Muslim) identity to re-emerge, was reversed within the framework of harsher policies under Stalin. The nascent Crimean Tatar and Muslim revival posed a threat to the increasingly stringent Soviet ideology, and as a consequence, the Crimean Tatar revival and its elite proponents were suppressed. The scholars and intellectuals who participated in this revival, especially those involved in research on Crimea's early Turco-Islamic culture, were arrested, among them Osman Nuri Aqçoqraqlı, an intellectual, and Hüseyin Bodaninskiy, the first director of the Bağçasaray Palace Museum. Accused of anti-Soviet and Pan-Turkist activities, both were eventually executed in 1938. Many others were labelled Nazi collaborators and killed after the Soviets retook the peninsula from German troops in 1944. The same year, the Crimean

24 Kızılov & Prokhorov (2011, pp. 440–7); Bocharov & Sitdikov (2016/I); Aqçoqraqlı (2006); Nepomnyashchiy & Zaitsev (2018); Nepomnyashchiy (2019).

25 Noman Çelebicihan was a jurist, poet, and president of the independent Crimean People's Republic 1917–18; he was executed in 1918.

26 Osmanova (2007).

27 Musayeva (2014).

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Tatar population was collectively deported to Central Asia, leaving their material effects, their houses, and religious and institutional buildings behind, abandoned and unprotected.[28]

The 1944 deportations marked the beginning of a new wave of alterations to the Crimean Tatars' historical buildings and architectural structures. Some of these buildings predated the Russian conquest and had managed to survive the destructions and transformations of the late 18th and the 19th centuries. Others had been constructed during the century of Russian rule that followed the annexation. But with the mass deportation of their builders, users, and owners, all these buildings faced new threats. While the now-empty homes of the Crimean Tatars were occupied by Russian families, their houses of prayer – closed to religious use well before the deportations – were often transformed and repurposed. Some were converted into storage places and barns. Others, like the Seyithalil Çelebi Mosque (1860), were converted into apartment buildings.[29] Many were turned into museums and cultural centers, with the southeastern side (facing Mecca) transformed into a stage and film projectors installed on the northwestern side. In some village mosques, these projectors were still in place during our fieldwork in 2012.

The Khan's Mosque in Kezlev was converted into a museum as early as 1929. It underwent a long restoration between 1962 and 1985, during which its minarets (demolished by the end of the 18th century) were re-erected. After that, the mosque was turned into a museum of religious history and atheism. It returned to use as a mosque only in the 1990s, on the initiative of the returning Crimean Tatars. The Khan's Mosque in Bağçasaray, meanwhile, was turned into a storage depot for the palace museum after 1944. Its minarets, which had also been torn down, were reconstructed in the 1960s. It, too, returned to use as a mosque with the return of the Crimean Tatars.

In the 1970s and 1980s, archaeological research resumed on the early phase of the peninsula's Islamic past. While this research was carefully published and is of great scholarly importance, it was also a mixed blessing, as building fragments, artifacts, and tombstones – physical testaments to Islam's early presence in Crimea – were removed to local museums (notably the Feodosiya Antiquities Museum, founded in 1811) or to museums outside the peninsula (notably the Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, which carried out much of

28 Izmirli (2020), pp. 327–30; Kırımlı & Kançal-Ferrari (2021), pp. 27–30.

29 Kırımlı & Kançal-Ferrari (2021), pp. 60–1.

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the research).[30] The relocation of objects of Tatar material culture to the Hermitage Museum undoubtedly helped to preserve them, but that action also must be seen as a continuation of the tsarist period's colonial legacy and as part of the other Soviet-era transformations that aimed at both a real and a symbolic 'cleansing' of the territory.

Heritage politics since 1991

A new era began in 1991 with the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Ukrainian independence, and Crimea's declaration as an autonomous republic. The Crimean Tatars, deported in 1944, were finally allowed to return, and many did.[31] Returnees soon set to work to protect and preserve the last vestiges of their ancestors' material culture. Their former homes had long since been occupied by non-Crimean Tatar families, and it was often not possible to reclaim them. Other physical reminders of their heritage, especially cemeteries, had been desecrated or destroyed under the Soviet regime, with tombstones smashed or used as construction material.[32] Unfortunately, not a single endowment deed of any of the many endowments in the Crimean Khanate is known to have survived, meaning that returning Crimean Tatars lacked any documentary record of their community's oldest religious and public buildings.[33] The same was often the case with private property, as property deeds from before the deportation had often been lost or destroyed as well. What remained were the still-standing religious edifices, mainly mosques, mausolea, a few madrasas, and the Khan's Palace in Bağçasaray.

During the approximately 20-year period before the Russian invasion and occupation in spring 2014, a balance of a sort existed between national (Ukrainian) heritage politics and Crimean Tatar efforts related to their Muslim heritage. The Crimean Tatars were an important counterweight to the pre-

30 Kramarovskii (2012).

31 Izmirli (2020), pp. 331–5; Tutku Aydın (2021), pp. 69–126.

32 The last large-scale destruction took place in the Khan's Palace cemetery, where "in October 1991 … the local Communist Party chairman led a group of thugs with sledgehammers to break the tombstones, in a primitive form of 'protest' against the return of Crimean Tatars." Personal note by András Riedlmayer, January 23, 2015.

33 For the fate of religious foundations after the annexation in 1783, see Kırımlı (1996), pp. 15–7.

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dominance of ethnic Russians in Crimea.[34] This mutually beneficial balance, coupled with the shared memory of Soviet-era oppression and a desire to construct a common future in the face of Russian encroachment, increased cooperation between Crimean Tatar scholars and Ukrainian academics and institutions. Following its independence, Ukraine undertook many steps to document and protect Crimean Tatar and Turco-Islamic heritage and incorporate it into an inclusive national narrative. Research on and restorations of the Crimean Khanate period's historical sites were initiated. Nominated by Ukraine, the Khan's Palace entered the Tentative List of UNESCO in 2003. The documentation, protection, and restoration of local Muslim heritage was also aided by support from Turkey through institutions like the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency and the Directorate for Turks Abroad and Related Communities.[35] In 2006 and 2007, important restorations were carried out in Salaçıq (renamed Staroselye in 1945), the site of the first palace of the Crimean Khanate in the suburbs of Bağçasaray, including the mausoleum of Hacı (Mengli) Geray (1501/2) and the Zincirli Madrasa (1500/1), perhaps the two most important symbolic examples of the region's early Islamic heritage.[36] On the same site, the New Zincirli Madrasa (1909), also known as the Gaspıralı School, was transformed into a private museum in 2011 with a collection of documents related to the history of the Crimean Khanate and the Crimean Tatars (Fig. 2).[37] In the heart of Bağçasaray, the Orta Cami (Central Mosque, also known as the Friday Mosque, rebuilt in 1861), which had been repurposed

34 For the Russian majority's opposition to the Crimean Tatars' return, see Izmirli (2020), pp. 331–5. According to the census of 1785, Crimean Tatars represented 84.1 percent of Crimea's population, compared with 2.2 percent for ethnic Russians. After the Crimean War, in the census of 1864, these numbers had changed to 50.3 and 28.5 percent, respectively (O'Neill 2017, p. 30). The only census from Ukrainian Crimea, carried out in 2001, identifies the population as 58.3 percent Russian, 12 percent Crimean Tatar, and 24.3 percent Ukrainian ("All-Ukrainian Population Census' 2001 Data," State Statistics Committee of Ukraine, archived at https://web.archive.org/web/20070918184853/http://www.ukrcensus.gov.ua/eng/results/general/nationality/, accessed April 16, 2023). The first Russian census after the occupation in 2014 gives these numbers as 67.9 percent Russian, 12.6 percent Crimean Tatar, and 15.7 percent Ukrainian; Surinov & Dianov (2015), p. 108.

35 Kırımlı & Kançal-Ferrari (2021).

36 For an excellent publication on the site and the results of the restoration, see Gavriliuk & Ibragimova (2010).

37 Originally called La Richesse, the historical museum was renamed in 2015 as the Crimean Historical Museum-Reserve (Krymskiy istoricheskiy muzey-zapovedni).

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as a cinema in the Soviet period and refaced with a façade that disguised its religious past, was restored and reopened for prayer in 2013 (Fig. 3).[38]

Fig. 1: Bağçasaray, Khan's Palace. Photograph by Osman Oktar, 2012; Fig. 2. Historical and archaeological complex in Salaçıq. Photograph by Yevgeniy Kalinin, 2013, WikiMapia. Attribution-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported (CC BY-SA 3.0).

Cultural cooperation between Ukraine and the Crimean Tatars has grown steadily since the peninsula's invasion and subsequent occupation in 2014, after which many Crimean Tatars also left for mainland Ukraine. This commu-

38 Kırımlı & Kançal-Ferrari (2021), pp. 376–83.

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nity's integration into Ukrainian cultural politics progressed against the backdrop of the escalating conflict with Russia in advance of Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine, and the Crimean Tatars' historical contribution to the formation of Ukraine has been renegotiated on several levels.[39] After long efforts, the Crimean Tatars were recognized in July 2021, together with Crimea's two Turkic-speaking Jewish communities (the Karaites and Krymchaks), as an "indigenous people of Ukraine" – a designation that grants legal protection to their language, history, and culture.[40]

This recognition is all the more important because of the stark erosion of their cultural rights in occupied Crimea. The peninsula's steadily increasing Russian population views Crimea as historically belonging to (Orthodox) Russia, and the Crimean Tatars as later invaders with no historical claim to the territory. Such sentiments, nourished by ideologically driven discourses both before and after the occupation, are partly echoed in Putin's speech in front of the Duma, quoted at the start of this chapter.[41] Yet Putin has also referred to the peninsula as the homeland of the Crimean Tatars, and Russia has made some concrete efforts to embrace and ostensibly even protect its Muslim (Crimean Tatar) heritage – though the sincerity of these efforts remains to be seen, as I will discuss below. In August 2014, only months after the occupation, the Crimean parliament added all monuments of cultural heritage in the peninsula to the Russian Federation's official list of cultural heritage sites; this was formalized in a decree signed by the prime minister, Dmitry Medvedev, in fall 2015. Following this inclusion, fieldwork and excavation activities started to be carried out in Crimea, and restoration work commenced on the Khan's Palace.[42] In many cases, however, these efforts have been criticized, not only

39 Rohdewald (2015).

40 See Law of Ukraine, No. 1616-IX, about the indigenous peoples of Ukraine: *Holos Ukrayiny*, July 1, 2021, http://www.golos.com.ua/article/348879, accessed April 16, 2023. Crimean Tatars were already accepted as an indigenous people of Crimea in the "European Parliament Resolution of February 4, 2016, on the Human Rights Situation in Crimea (2016/2556[RSP])," *European Parliament*, accessed April 16, 2023, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-8-2016-0043_EN.html?redirect.

41 Saraf (2014).

42 Sharkov, "Russia adds Crimean cultural sites to its official monuments list," *Newsweek*, October 21, 2015, https://www.newsweek.com/russia-adds-crimean-cultural-sites-its-official-monuments-list-385595. For the national cultural-heritage register of Russia, see the Russian Ministry of Culture website at https://opendata.mkrf.ru/opendata/7705851331-egrkn/, last modified March 29, 2023.

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by Ukraine, the official 'owner' of these sites according to international law, but also by the wider international community, which has condemned the construction activities being carried out on the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Chersones, one of the peninsula's most significant archaeological sites, as well as the removal of cultural artifacts from Crimean museums to Russian institutions and the invasive nature of the alterations being carried out to the Khan's Palace under the guise of restoration work.[43]

Notwithstanding these developments, scholarly work on Crimea has increased substantially in recent years, even under Russian occupation. The inventory of Turco-Muslim heritage in Crimea that Hakan Kırımlı and I compiled before the occupation has been followed by other similar inventories since.[44] New journals have been established, and many new studies have been published on Crimean archival material, architecture, and artifacts, often in collaboration with or with the support of institutions in Kazan, in the Republic of Tatarstan, with which the Crimean Tatars share the heritage of the Golden Horde and early khanate periods as well as the experience of being a Turco-Muslim community under Russian rule.[45] Especially in recent times, Kazan has taken up the flag of Golden Horde and Turco-Islamic heritage studies in Russia, and renowned scholars of the field outside Russia, in the West and in Turkey, have contributed to these publications. Yet this new interest in Crimea's Turco-Muslim past since the Russian occupation has a manipulative dimension, disturbingly presenting the indigenous Crimean Tatars and their history and culture as a mere subgroup of the greater (Kazan) Tatar culture.

The incorporation of Crimea into the Russian Federation, although criticized internationally, has not engendered serious consequences for Russia or

43 For examples of criticism from Ukraine, see "'Evacuation' of Crimean museums to the territory of the Russian Federation will be a war crime," *Ministry of Culture and Information Policy of Ukraine*, October 15, 2022, https://mkip.gov.ua/news/7904.html; "How Russia is destroying the unique historical and cultural heritage of Crimea," *Press Service of the Ukrainian Security & Cooperation Center*, August 26, 2021, https://uscc.org.ua/en/how-russia-is-destroying-the-unique-historical-and-cultural-heritage-of-crimea/. For an example of criticism from UNESCO, see the relevant sections from the program of the 212th meeting of the UNESCO Executive Board on the situation in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea (Ukraine), 212 EX/5.I.E, September 10, 2021, https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000378910.

44 Kırımlı & Kançal-Ferrari (2021; first edition 2016); Khakimov & Seytumerov (2016, 2018).

45 Nepomnyashchiy & Zaitsev (2018); Nepomnyashchiy (2019).

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a boycott of scholarly collaboration on cultural issues, at least not until the invasion of Ukraine in 2022. In the first months of the peninsula's occupation in 2014, Turkey and Russia even coordinated on plans to restore several historical Crimean mosques and to build new ones. Although this collaboration was terminated in 2015 after Turkey shot down a Russian fighter jet in Syria,[46] Russia has nevertheless pressed forward with several of these projects in the years since, using local and Russian companies instead of Turkish partners, though some cooperation between the two countries seems to have recommenced since 2020. Today, eight years after Crimea was occupied by Russia, some of these projects have been realized, but they have involved an approach to heritage protection and restoration that has had some unfortunate results for the Islamic monuments in question – an approach that, as will be shown below, is becoming troublingly common in the region.

Case studies

Historical monuments in conquered territories are part of complex mechanisms of negotiation. The fate of a given monument, its demolition, protection, and/or reinterpretation, is often determined by ideological and political objectives and territorial claims. The decision of what to do with a monument is thus a translation of ideology into cultural policy, a process that has taken a number of forms in attitudes toward and transformations of Crimea's Turco-Islamic remains since the late 18th century, as the examples below will illustrate.

46 "Rus yönetimi: Kırım'da Türk yatırım projeleri dondurulduğu," *Kırım Haber Ajansı*, November 26, 2015, https://www.qha.com.tr/gundem/rus-yonetimi-kirim-da-turk-yatirim-projeleri-donduruldu-140930.

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Fig. 3: Bağçasaray, Orta Cami or Friday Mosque. Photograph from 2013, Kırımlı & Kançal-Ferrari (2021), p. 381; Fig. 4. Kurkulet Village Mosque. Photograph by Kançal-Ferrari, 2012; Fig. 5. Otarçıq Village Mosque, circa 1930, adjusted. Source: Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Otarchik_1930.jpg; Fig. 6. Otarçıq Village Mosque. Photograph by Kançal-Ferrari, 2012.

Transformation and use for practical needs: The Kurkulet and Otarçıq mosques

Sometimes, changes made to a building are a consequence of its practical use. The Kurkulet village mosque (renamed Lavrovoe in 1945), built in 1875 on the site of a mosque from the late 17th or 18th century, is one of the many buildings repurposed after Crimea's Tatar population was deported in 1944. The mosque was transformed into a grocery store. As with other mosques, the minaret was torn down to erase any religious associations, and the building was divided into two stories through the addition of a second floor (Fig. 4). The mosque in the village of Otarçıq (renamed Novoulyanovka in 1945) underwent a similar transformation, repurposed as a grocery store, its minaret torn down (late, in the 1970s), and its interior divided into the store and a storage area. After

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the Muslim population returned in the post-Soviet era, Muslim residents campaigned to restore the Otarçıq mosque and succeeded in reclaiming the smaller storage area in 1992, when a *mihrab* niche was painted on the wall. The store itself was only reclaimed in 1995, and as of 2012 had not yet been integrated into the prayer space. Today, the building is hardly recognizable as a mosque because the two rows of windows arranged on all four sides of the façade are still walled up (Fig. 5–6).

Constructed in the second half of the 19th century by a vibrant local Muslim community, the Kurkulet and the Otarçıq mosques are good examples of the visual alteration and utilitarian transformation experienced by Crimean Tatar religious buildings after they were deprived of their congregations during the Soviet era. Their minarets demolished, windows partly walled up (with some transformed into doors), and interior spaces divided into two floors, these buildings in their present state are no longer visibly recognizable as mosques. Even when the buildings are used as prayer houses, they often have not been returned to their original appearance because of a lack of the means to carry out a restoration.[47]

Deliberate destruction: Şeyhköy Mosque, Kalgay Palace, and Azizler burial ground

Where some sites were repurposed, others were deliberately destroyed by Soviet and later local authorities, especially sites of spiritual significance such as cemeteries, mosques, and mausoleums. The domed 14th–century mosque in Şeyhköy is a case in point. One of the oldest examples of Islamic heritage in Crimea, and one of the rare remnants from the Golden Horde period, the mosque was bombed twice and ultimately destroyed in the 1950s because of its symbolic status as a testament to the early Muslim presence in the peninsula.[48]

Deliberate destruction was carried out on a grand scale under Russian and Soviet rule for several reasons. Sometimes a site's strategic importance was the motivator; sometimes it was the site's status as a reminder of the defeated Ottomans or the Crimean Khanate, as in the case of the khanate-era Kalgay Palace in Aqmescit/Simferopol on the Salgır River. This palace was destroyed in the

47 Kırımlı & Kançal-Ferrari (2021), pp. 147–7; 580–3. For Otarçıq, see also Kançal-Ferrari (2013).

48 Kırımlı & Kançal-Ferrari (2021), pp. 88–93.

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19th century during the post-conquest restructuring of what is now Simferopol. However, its afterlife continued in the Crimean Tatars' collective memory as a symbolic site of the defeated khanate.[49] In 2015, there was an initiative to excavate the site before the planned construction of an ice rink, but that effort ultimately failed.[50]

Another prominent example is the Azizler ("Saints") burial ground from the Golden Horde and early khanate periods in Bağçasaray's outskirts. A longstanding conflict over the site, which was being used for a weekly market ("the market on bones") since Soviet times, came to a head in 2006, when the Crimean Tatars, who had been seeking to reclaim the site since the 1990s, demanded that the market stop using this ancient burial ground. Despite Ukraine's official recognition of the burial ground as a heritage site of great spiritual significance for the Muslim population, their demands met with massive opposition from the local Russian community.[51]

These few examples illustrate the tensions, constant since the 18th century, regarding local Muslim historical heritage and the culture of its representatives, the Crimean Tatars. In times of strong political dominance – whether imperial, Soviet, or post-Soviet Russian – or turbulence, these sites were often suppressed or destroyed, or, alternatively, revindicated, as in the aftermath of the 1783 annexation, in the early Soviet period, and after 1991, when the Crimean Tatars returned. Prior to the Russian occupation in 2014, Ukraine was well aware of the constant potential for conflict around these sites and developed diverse strategies of toleration and de-escalation in places shared by both the peninsula's Crimean Tatars and its Russian majority, seeking to maintain the fragile equilibrium between the two communities.[52]

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49 O'Neill (2006), p. 168.

50 Volkan Torun, "Kırım'da bulunan Türk sarayının yerine buz pateni pisti yapılıyor," *Arkeofili*, March 30, 2015, https://arkeofili.com/kirimda-bulunan-turk-sarayinin-yerine-buz-pateni-pisti-yapiliyor. See also Demchuk's and Guboglo's contributions to this volume.

51 Izmirli (2020), p. 333; "Kırım Tatar Türklerine saldırı," *İnternet Haber*, July 12, 2006, https://www.internethaber.com/kirim-tatar-turklerine-saldiri-31695h.htm, last modified on January 19, 2021. For the Islamic material heritage on this site, see Kırımlı & Kançal (2021), pp. 426–51.

52 Afanasyeva (2015).

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Dissonant heritage and revindication: The Khan's Palace and Salaçıq

Perhaps Crimea's most important site of Crimean Tatar and Muslim cultural identity is the Khan's Palace in Bağçasaray (Fig. 1). Now a museum, the palace is a site of tremendous significance, described by its former director, Elmira Ablyalimova-Chiygoz, herself a Crimean Tatar, as a "symbol of statehood for us."[53] The palace offers a rich example of the ideological transformation of Crimean space since 1783; and, like much of the peninsula's Turco-Islamic heritage, its continued existence is very much in question, in this case because of concerns about its ongoing restoration. Restoration efforts at the palace started when the region was still under Ukrainian control. Parts of the Khan's Mosque, the Sarı Güzel bathhouse, the ground-level rooms, the council hall (*divanhane*) and adjacent chambers, the inner courtyard, and the so-called Iron Door were restored. The upper level of the two-story building holds the famous Golden (or Fruit) Room, the khan's private audience chamber. Dating to the mid-18th century, this level of the palace was constructed in the Ottoman fashion of that era with material and craftsmen sent by the Ottoman sultan Mahmud I (r. 1730–54). It was in urgent need of repair during our visit in 2012. Planned restoration efforts were not realized before the Russian occupation in 2014, when most of the Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar palace employees left or were dismissed. When restoration work finally began in late 2017, it was internationally condemned as a destructive reconstruction violating heritage-protection guidelines. Work on the building, which is on Ukraine's heritage list and has been a candidate for UNESCO recognition as a World Heritage Site since 2003, started without the consent of Ukraine. Work has started on the palace mosque and continues on the privy chambers of the upper floor. The upper floor rooms seem to have been completely dismantled; a metal roof has been constructed over the whole complex to shield it from the elements. Ukraine has protested these interventions and expressed concern that they might disqualify the monument from the UNESCO World Heritage list.[54]

53 Marichka Palamarchuk, "Russia continues erasing cultural heritage, legacy in Crimea," *Kyiv Post*, December 8, 2022, https://www.kyivpost.com/post/5535.

54 Halya Coynash, "Why are we letting Russia destroy a 16th century palace in Crimea?," *Atlantic Council*, January 11, 2018, https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/why-are-we-letting-russia-destroy-a-16th-century-palace-in-crimea/. See the program of the 212th meeting of the UNESCO Executive Board on the situation in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea (Ukraine), 212 EX/5.I.E, September 10, 2021, https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000378910.

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These interventions in the Khan's Palace continue practices begun in the late 18th century, when the palace was reinterpreted in line with Russia's new imperial claim.[55] Rooms were transformed for use by the tsarist family and renamed accordingly, such as the "dining room of Catherine the Great."[56] The palace was also incorporated into the Russian literary tradition, transformed from a symbol of past Crimean greatness into a poetic trope and topic of legends, of a mythological, distant, past. Crucial here was the Russian writer Alexander Pushkin, who, after his exile in Crimea, authored the famous poem "The Fountain of Bakhchisaray" in 1821–23.[57] Inspired by the palace's so-called Fountain of Tears, the poem transformed the palace into an imaginary land of khans and harems. Today, visitors experience the palace through this 'Russian gaze': they are rushed straight to the Fountain of Tears, and to Pushkin's bust, arranged as the heart of the edifice's new interpretation as part of a Russian cultural canon instead of a Crimean Tatar canon. Yet as problematic as this imperial Russian reading of the palace's history is, it also likely saved the site during the Soviet era. A fragile timber building dating mainly to the 18th century, the palace was a symbol of Crimean Tatar greatness and the site of the 1917 declaration of the Crimean People's Republic. A museum since that year, it was only thanks to the personal initiative of the palace director and successor of Bodaninskiy, Maria Kustova, that the edifice was not destroyed in the sweeping efforts to erase Crimea's Muslim heritage after World War II. Utilizing Pushkin's famous poem, she managed to convince the Soviet authorities that the palace was a Russian cultural memory site and therefore worthy of preserving.

Other sites were not so fortunate. A case in point is the village of Salaçıq, the original seat of the Crimean Khanate and home to the first palace, madrasa, and mausoleum of the first two khans and the Ottoman-style tombs of İsmail Gaspıralı and other important figures of the Crimean Tatar nationalist movement (Fig. 2).[58] In Soviet times, this entire complex was used as an asylum for

55 See also the contribution by Guboglo to this volume.

56 Dickinson (2002).

57 Pushkin (1977), pp. 131–50. For the English translation, see Lewis (1849).

58 The bodies of a number of these later figures were interred at the site only recently, as requested in the wills of the deceased. These include the intellectual Edige Mustafa Kırımal (d. 1980, in Germany, buried in Crimea in 2007) and the politician and writer Ahmet Özenbaşlı (d. 1958, in Leninabad, Tajik SSR, and buried in Crimea in 1993). For the latter figure, see "Kırım Tatarı Dr. Ahmet Özenbaşlı'nın vefat yıl

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the mentally ill and profaned in the worst manner, with the mausoleum's entrance *eyvan* used as a toilet. Together with the Khan's Palace in Bağçasaray, it was among the first monuments to be visited by a group of international scholars in 1991 after Ukraine's independence.[59] After many initiatives by returning Crimean Tatars, the asylum was relocated, the complex was cleaned, and the monuments protected and later restored. However, in recent years, a nearby Orthodox monastery, the Assumption (Uspenskiy/Uspenskyi) Monastery of the Caves, reopened in 1993, has been steadily expanding, prompting fears of a return to 19th-century efforts to (re-)Christianize Crimea at the expense of local Muslim sites.[60]

Reclaiming the historical past: Re-Ottomanization and the creation of a new tradition

Another dimension of the complex heritage politics affecting Crimean Tatar monuments involves efforts since the 1990s to reestablish a connection between the Ottoman Empire and Crimea's Islamic architectural culture after years of neglect during the Soviet era.

Crimea's link to the Ottoman Empire and the sultan, understood as the leader of the Muslim faith until the empire's end, continued after the Crimean Khanate's incorporation into the Russian Empire in 1783. Partly as a result of this enduring link between the Ottoman Empire and Muslim culture in Crimea, the nostalgic cliché of 'classical' Ottoman decoration was used for the partial reclamation in the 1990s of mosques repurposed during the Soviet period; sometimes this was done on the initiative of individuals or returned local communities, and sometimes with money from Turkish businessmen and craftsmen and material from Turkey.

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dönümü," *Kırım Haber Ajansı*, December 4, 2022, https://www.qha.com.tr/kirim/kirim-tatari-dr-ahmet-ozenbasli-nin-vefat-yil-donumu-463660.

59 Personal note by András Riedlmayer, January 23, 2015.

60 The monastery's age is disputed. Local monks trace it back to the eighth century, but the current structure dates to the 15th century, thus roughly to the same period as the early Crimean Khanate. See Afanasyeva (2015), Kozelsky (2008), and Jobst (2019) for the expansion of the Orthodox Church and conflicts with Muslim sites, including in the region mentioned here. For the transformation of Crimean territory into Russian space, philhellenism, and the exclusion of the Crimean Tatars, see O'Neill (2006, 2017).

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Fig, 7: Akyar/Sevastopol, Akyar Mosque, minaret. Photograph of 1910, from Kırımlı & Kançal-Ferrari (2021), p. 97; Fig. 8. Akyar/Sevastopol, Akyar Mosque, exterior. Photograph by Kançal-Ferrari, 2012; Fig. 9. Akyar/Sevastopol, Akyar Mosque, interior. Photograph by Kançal-Ferrari, 2012; Fig. 10. Aqmescit/Simferopol, Seytsettar Mosque (exterior before reconstruction). Photograph by Kançal-Ferrari, 2012; Fig. 11. Aqmescit/Simferopol, Seytsettar Mosque (interior before reconstruction). Photograph by Kançal-Ferrari, 2012.

Among those reclaimed edifices is the Friday Mosque in Akyar (today: Sevastopol). Opened in 1914 with the first prayer led by İsmail Gaspıralı, this mosque was converted into archival storage during Soviet times and the interior was divided into two floors. Its minaret was torn down upon Stalin's visit to the city in 1948, erasing the primary visual marker of its identity as a mosque.[61] In 2000, a craftsman from Istanbul was invited to reconstruct the minaret, but instead of the original's neo-Mamluk style, the new minaret is a slender, pencil-like minaret in the classical Ottoman style (Fig. 7, 8). Although not in keeping with the building's design, this new minaret does at least restore

61 Kırımlı & Kançal-Ferrari (2021), pp. 96–107.

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its Muslim identity. The edifice remains two-floored, and since 2000, the walls of the entrance floor, including the *mihrab* and the *minbar*, have been entirely revetted with industrial neo-Ottoman tiles imitating 16th–century tiles. Like the minaret, these tiles reflect a visual reclaiming and reestablishment of a common glorious past in a neo-Ottoman style (Fig. 9).

Since 2014, Ottoman references in architecture have also spread through institutional collaboration between Turkey and Russian-occupied Crimea. A number of new collaborations have emerged since the occupation, as in the case of the Seytsettar Mosque in Aqmescit/Simferopol. This mosque – a rectangular, 19th-century gable-roofed building – was completely intact when we visited in 2012. It was a typical representative of its period, a type of mosque that was at that time widespread in Anatolia, the Balkans, and across the northern Black Sea (Fig. 10–11). However, in 2016, it was replaced by a neo-Ottoman building with a single central dome and a three-domed portico in imitation of the classical Ottoman style.[62] In this example of neo-Ottomanism, the revindication of a glorious past comes at the expense of the locally rooted material culture, disassociating the site from its historical and cultural context in the wider Black Sea region and the Balkans.[63]

Another example that illustrates subtle appropriation and the grafting of a neo-Ottoman idiom onto the region's Muslim material culture is the Simferopol Cathedral Mosque in the suburbs of Aqmescit/Simferopol (Fig. 12).

62 The reconstruction was carried out with the support of the local religious authorities and the Turkish Foundation for Religious Affairs (TDV). See the page "Kırım Seyit Settar Camii ve Medresesi" on the TDV's website at https://tdv.org/tr-TR/proje/kirim-seyit-settar-camii-ve-medresesi/, accessed April 16, 2023. Starting with the Ankara Kocatepe Mosque in 1986, but mainly after 2010, the TDV has constructed many mosques in Turkey and abroad, mostly in a neo-Ottoman style harking back to the designs of Mimar Sinan. For other TDV projects, see https://tdv.org/tr-TR/camiler; for a downloadable booklet in English prepared by the TDV in 2016, see "Our mosques," https://tdvmedia.blob.core.windows.net/tdv/MedyaOdas%C4%B1/Camiler/TDV%20-%20Camilerimiz%20Genel%20Katalog%20(2016)%20-%20ENG.pdf, accessed April 16, 2023.

63 Though a longer discussion of the region's mosque architecture at the fin de siècle is beyond the scope of this article, examples of contemporary edifices with similar plans and building types do exist elsewhere in the region. See note 82 below, and also my submission to the 17th International Congress of Turkish Art (Warsaw, September 2023): "Mosque architecture in the broader Black Sea region at the turn of the twentieth century: Oscillation between transnational orientalism and the vernacular from the Caucasus to the Balkans."

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Originally planned to open in 2019 and nearly finished at the time of writing, this monumental mosque and its construction have a long history: in 1996, the Crimean Tatar community requested the construction of a mosque, the Aqmescit Cuma Camisi (Friday Mosque), on the current site. The request was accepted in 2004, rejected in 2008, and again accepted in 2011.[64] Construction was scheduled to begin in April 2014, with the groundbreaking planned for a summit of the presidents of Ukraine and Turkey. This summit was called off because of the Russian occupation, after which the project resumed under the new authorities. This was a highly symbolic act, as the Crimean Tatars, protesting the years of stalling by local authorities, had, since 2008, started to gather limestone blocks and other building materials on the site in a visual protest against the delay. This provided a welcome opportunity for the political authorities in occupied Crimea to score a propaganda victory by resuming the project. In fall 2014, Crimean Muslims appealed successfully to Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan for support.[65] The project was relaunched one year later, and Erbek İnşaat, a Turkish company operating in Ukraine and Crimea, was contracted for the construction. The groundbreaking ceremony was held on September 25, 2015, the second day of Eid al-Adha, with Turkey expected to finance the project. Much publicity surrounded the project's announcement and Turkey's role in it, with headlines declaring "Turkey to build Crimea's largest mosque." According to this project, and in line with the first initiative of the Crimean Tatars in 1996, the mosque would be called 'Friday Mosque' and would be large enough to hold 4,000-5,000 people.[66] It was planned in the classical Ottoman idiom as a domed edifice with a colonnaded courtyard and an ablution fountain in the center.

However, after Turkey shot down a Russian fighter plane in Syria, the Turkish company was replaced by the local architectural firm of the brothers Yunus and Emil Idrisov, who proceeded without significant alterations to the design. The new project was touted in 2019, now with the name of Cathedral Mosque (*sobornaya mechet*), as the "largest mosque in Crimea and Eastern Europe," and as being financed by Russia, but mostly through donations

64 "Crimean Tatars receive official support for building mosque," *The Unrepresented Nations and Peoples* Organization, February 22, 2011, https://unpo.org/article/12297.

65 "Biz de cami istiyoruz," *Bedir Haber*, November 20, 2014, https://bedirhaber.com/biz-de-cami-istiyoruz/.

66 "Turkey to build Crimea's largest mosque," *Hürriyet Daily News*, September 29, 2015, https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkey-to-build-crimeas-largest-mosque--89129.

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(i.e., rather than through support from Turkey, as before).[67] This Russian appropriation of the mosque was accompanied by the Crimean muftiate's incorporation into the centralized Russian religious hierarchy.[68] The mosque was stripped financially, and partly culturally, of its relationship with Turkey, the holder, heir, and representative of Ottoman heritage. The design of the nearly completed edifice (2024) is still based on the classical Ottoman type, with its four dominant minarets with three balconies each,[69] a central dome supported by four half-domes, and an arcaded portico. Through this design – not a deliberate choice by Russia after 2014, but the realization of the already-existing project – the Ottoman past, rejected and erased since 1783 in the peninsula, has become a symbolic vessel for a 'local' face of Islam.

In 2016, a tentative departure from the mosque's neo-Ottoman design was initiated when a Kazan-based design studio was contracted to strip away some

67 Kulcanay, Lilya. "Erbek İnşaat, Kırım Büyük Cuma Camii projesinden uzaklaştırıldı," *İmarpanosu*, November 26, 2015, https://imarpanosu.com/erbek-insaat-kirim-buyuk-cuma-camii-projesinden-uzaklastirildi/; "Cathedral Mosque," *Crimean Travel Portal*, https://en.travelcrimea.com/history-and-culture/20190321/73482.html, accessed April 16, 2023.

68 The centralized organization of religious institutions in Russia has placed the Crimean muftiate in a constant dilemma related to its political situation since 2014, when it found itself part of this centralized structure. See Vitaly Solonchak, "'Muftis of the Moscow Patriarchate': Support for the war against Ukraine in Russian Muslim circles," *Voice of Crimea*, March 3, 2022, https://culture.voicecrimea.com.ua/en/muftis-of-the-moscow-patriarchate-support-for-the-war-against-ukraine-in-russian-muslim-circles/. A similar process of integrating the Muslim clergy into a centralized system was carried out by Russia after Crimea's 18th–century annexation. See Kırımlı (1996), pp. 14–7.

69 This number surpasses the Süleymaniye Mosque (1550–57) with its four minarets and ten balconies, and is topped only by the Sultan Ahmet Mosque (1609–20), which has six minarets with three balconies each. This new trend of building large neo-Ottoman mosques started with the TDV's construction of the Ankara Kocatepe Mosque (1986) with four minarets, followed by the Adana Sabancı Central Mosque (1988) with six. In recent decades, the construction of mosques with a similarly high number of minarets and balconies has also increased abroad, including the Central Mosque in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, and the Hala Sultan Mosque outside of Lefkoşa/Nicosia, Northern Cyprus, both completed in 2017, and the Namazgah Mosque in Tirana, Albania, started in 2015. For mosque construction and a discussion of Ottoman architecture in the Turkish republic, see Bozdoğan (2007).

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of the Turkish (Ottoman) features and instead give it a Crimean Tatar face.[70] This shows that in Crimea, the visibility of contemporary connections to the Turkish (Ottoman) cultural sphere seems to have caused some discomfort and to have been countered by the promotion of Crimean Tatar localness.[71] However, architectural and artistic production under the Crimean Khanate and in successive periods was never strictly local – it was part of a transregional, even transcultural, high culture. It seems that in 2020, the decision to promote localness in the mosque's design was partly revised in favor of a new approach highlighting the diversity of Crimea's architectural heritage. The decoration was now to be executed by experienced Turkish craftspeople and calligraphers. The edifice's interior was to be done in marble, and a carpet for the interior of this mosque was to be produced in Turkey. The colors used for the decoration would also be imported from Turkey, perhaps similar to those in the Moscow Cathedral Mosque (Fig. 13). But this time, the decoration would not be exclusively Turkish (Ottoman), and would include motifs from the Crimean Khanate visible in the Khan's Palace, which was, as mentioned above, also part of the Ottoman cultural sphere. In addition, the architects declared that they had carried out extensive research regarding ornamentation in Russian and Turkish archives, ultimately deciding on a yellow tulip – a symbolic motif connected to the iconic Crimean Tatar figure Noman Çelebicihan – as the decoration's central element. In an additional layer of symbolism, the complex is also to include a "fountain of tears," thus incorporating an allusion to Russian cultural heritage alongside its Ottoman and Crimean Tatar elements.[72]

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70 "Kazan designers will help to defeat Ottomanism in the main mosque in Simferopol," *Realnoe Vremya*, April 7, 2016, https://realnoevremya.com/articles/330. In the words of Dmitry Musin, head of the design studio contracted to carry out the modifications to the design, "We are alarmed by the direct citation of the architecture of Turkey (Ottoman period) in this project … [T]he culture and ethnicity of the Crimean Tatars are not reflected in the architecture."

71 The 2018 move by Ukraine's Ministry of Culture to include the Crimean Tatar ornamentation system of "Ornek" in its national list of elements of intangible cultural heritage can be read in this light. UNESCO added Ornek to its Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2021: "Ornek, a Crimean Tatar ornament and knowledge about it," UNESCO, https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/ornek-a-crimean-tatar-ornament-and-knowledge-about-it-01601, accessed April 16, 2023.

72 "Turkish specialists to paint the main mosque of Crimea," *Russkiy Mir*, July 31, 2020, https://russkiymir.ru/en/news/275609/; "The precise date of the Cathedral Mosque opening in the Crimea is announced," *Islamic Information Portal*, June 10,

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The distant connection to the Ottoman cultural sphere of the past is not today perceived as harmful or dangerous, and therefore the integration of its elements does not seem to be viewed as problematic; on the contrary, the inclusion of such elements is promoted as a way of embracing Crimean Tatar heritage. This attitude is also perceptible in the case of the Khan's Mosque in Kezlev. This mosque, an expression of mid-16th-century Ottoman architectural culture, was, in an act of patrimonialization, included in the coin series of "Architectural Monuments of Russia" in 2016. It is one of the edifices represented as a motif on a commemorative silver coin, labeled "Friday Mosque, Yevpatoria" ("mechet Dzhuma Dzhami Yevpatorii").[73]

Neo-Ottomanism in the broader region

Use of the classical Ottoman mosque type for 21st-century mosques is not limited to the examples offered above; it is also common in other sites in the broader region. One instance is the Sultan Süleyman Mosque in Mariupol, Ukraine (Fig. 14). Rebuilt in 2007 on the site of a mosque erected in 1906 and destroyed in 1936, this mosque illustrates a pattern typical in the region's recent mosque construction: It was erected as a revindication of a site where the Bolsheviks had destroyed a mosque. The reconstruction's patron was a Turkish steel entrepreneur from Trabzon, and high-level Turkish state functionaries attended the opening. The marble that covers the whole exterior façade of the two-story building and the ablution fountain was brought from Turkey.[74] It makes multilayered allusions to the period of Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent (r. 1520–66), the Ottoman capital of Istanbul, and the heyday of

2022, https://islam.ru/en/content/news/precise-date-cathedral-mosque-opening-crimea-announced.

73 "Commemorative coins of Russia," *Bank of Russia*, 2016, p. 12, http://www.cbr.ru/Content/Document/File/123639/coins_cbr_2016_pr.pdf.

74 "Sultan Suleiman Mosque," Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sultan_Suleiman_Mosque, accessed April 16, 2023. This edifice was recently (April 2022) in the news because of rumors that it had been hit by Russian artillery, destroying the mosque and killing the people sheltering within it. Fortunately, these rumors proved unfounded: the mosque was damaged by shelling but not hit directly, and it remains mostly intact. Interestingly, early news coverage described the edifice as a historical 16th-century mosque, perhaps because of its name and its visual reference to that period.

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Ottoman architectural culture through its name, its main dome, and its façade revetted in precious marble, once the privilege of Ottoman imperial buildings. That Sultan Süleyman's wife, the famous Roxelana (Hürrem Sultan, d. 1558), to whom the mosque is also dedicated, was from what is now western Ukraine turned this building into a monument of a common cultural past.[75]

Similar examples of this neo-Ottomanist architectural trend can be seen in other recently constructed mosques as well. The Akhmad Kadyrov Mosque in Grozny, also called "the Heart of Chechnya,"[76] is an example with similar traits of monumental visibility, references to 'official' Muslim presence in the area, and multiple overlapping layers of meaning. Initiated by the first president of the Russian Federal Republic of Chechnya, Akhmad Kadyrov, it was completed by his son and current Chechen president, Ramzan A. Kadyrov, in 2008. The edifice's neo-Ottoman design "after the model of the Sultan Ahmet Mosque" is the result of collaboration between Turkey's Konya municipality and Kadyrov's government. Supervised by Chechen civil engineers trained in Turkey, craftsmen and artists from Turkey worked on the site and executed its interior decoration in the Ottoman style. Marble from the island of Marmara was used in the interior and on the *minbar*, *mihrab*, and pulpit (*kürsü*) to create a mosque with the "aesthetic of traditional Islamic architecture of the Ottoman golden age." But the most dramatic part of the interior decoration is its 36 chandeliers, designed as small models of the three holy sites of Islam – the Kaaba in Mecca, the dome over the Tomb of the Prophet in Medina, and the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem – thus creating visual and imaginary connections to these sites. The application of these lavish details is most probably based on the reported decoration of classical Ottoman mosques in Istanbul.[77]

It is ironic that these new 21st-century mosques, especially the new "Friday/Cathedral Mosque," the reconstructed Seytsettar Mosque in Aqmescit/Simferopol, and the Kadyrov Mosque in Grozny, are modeled on the architecture of the Ottoman golden age.[78] The result is a strange situation where

75 Sertaç Bulur, "Ukrayna'da 'muhteşem' cami," *Anadolu Ajansı*, August 13, 2014, https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/dunya/ukraynada-muhtesem-cami/132025.

76 "Akhmad Kadyrov Mosque," Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Akhmad_Kadyrov_Mosque, accessed April 16, 2023.

77 Kançal-Ferrari (2021), pp. 508–14.

78 An early example of this trend is the Grand Mosque of Makhachkala (Yusuf Bey Mosque), constructed in 1998 in Makhachkala (Russian Federal Republic of Dagestan) on the model of the Sultan Ahmet Mosque in Istanbul through the support of a wealthy Turkish donor family. The mosque was enlarged in 2004–7 and has a ca-

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efforts to articulate the cultural heritage of local Muslim communities are carried out through reference to a former imperial (for Crimea) or an entirely distinct (for Chechnya) cultural and ideological context, the classical Ottoman past. While Crimea saw the visual presence of its historically rooted Muslim culture, mainly that of the Crimean Khanate and Ottoman periods, virtually erased during the imperial Russian and later Soviet periods, efforts in the 21st century to revindicate the local Muslim culture have instead resulted in the reinvention and recreation of an idealized Ottoman past. The choice to model new buildings in the region on Ottoman architecture at its peak rather than on locally rooted alternative forms has once again transformed the local architectural heritage.

Yet Turkey's promotion of neo-Ottomanism in the region's architecture in recent decades,[79] which some have dubbed "Ottoman nostalgia,"[80] has not gone unchallenged. In the Balkans especially, it has been criticized as a new visual reimplementation of Turkish dominance.[81] But it has also been defended as an effort to counter the deliberate destruction of historically rooted (Ottoman-era) Muslim architecture over the past century in Crimea and the Balkans. The Ottoman idiom, despite its problematic dimensions, can thus also be understood as a visual commemoration and reclamation of a silenced past.

The choice of neo-classical Ottoman architecture – or, more generally, embracing a Turkish-based, state-supported version of Islam through architecture – in territories outside Turkey gains a further dimension when viewed in the context of newly expanding Muslim communities and mosque construction in the broader post-communist, post-Soviet region. It can be understood

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pacity of 17,000 people. "Grand Mosque of Makhachkala," Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grand_Mosque_of_Makhachkala, accessed May 7, 2023.

79 Tokay et al. (2013); Avcıoğlu (2013) and (2021).

80 Ahmet Ersoy describes this nostalgia as a "promotion of Sunni-Ottoman symbolism in the political and aesthetic sphere" with an "emphasis on Sunni Muslim identity" and on Turkey's "postimperial leadership in the former Ottoman lands and the larger Muslim world." For an analysis of this phenomenon as a reaction against the modernism and secularism of the early Turkish Republic, see Ersoy (2015), pp. 247–48; see also Bozdoğan (2007).

81 In 2018, a planned mosque in the center of Bucharest was suspended because of local opposition and a lack of funds. Ana Maria Luca, "Romanian Muslims cancel grand mosque project," *Balkan Insight*, July 18, 2018, https://balkaninsight.com/2018/07/18/romania-muslim-cult-tables-turkish-grand-mosque-project-07-17-2018/.

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as a deliberate choice of the Sunni tradition against newly introduced forms of Islam (i.e., diverse forms of Salafism and Wahhabism), and also as in line with Russia's preferred version of a 'manageable', more institutional form of Islam.

Fig. 12: Aqmescit/Simferopol, Aqmescit Cuma Camisi (Friday/Cathedral Mosque), main façade with entrance to the courtyard. Photograph courtesy of Zafer Karatay, 2023; Fig. 13. Moscow, Moscow Cathedral Mosque, interior. Photograph by Alexander Savin – Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid =46444127; Fig. 14. Mariupol, Sultan Süleyman Mosque, 2009. Photograph by Malik Bilal, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=6586492; Fig, 15. Moscow, "Tatar" Mosque, demolished 2011. Photograph by Macs24, Wikimedia Commons, http s://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=10968711.

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Historical localness and (post-)imperial claims

On the other hand, the nature and stylistic origins of 'local' architectural forms in the region deserve scrutiny, too. Though beyond this article's scope, the plans, types, and styles used in new mosques in imperial Russia and the Ottoman Empire in the 19th and early 20th centuries were often less local than one might imagine. In both empires, various directives and sometimes even detailed prescriptions existed about how mosques ought to be constructed in territories under or formerly under Muslim rule. Mosques were thus symbols of both empire (and its mechanisms of control and regulation of the Muslim community) and imperial integration and tolerance of Islamic culture. The classical or eclectic rectangular, hip-roofed mosques were a product of their age and their Russian imperial context, just as the earlier single-domed edifices with their slender minarets were a product of the classical Ottoman and Crimean Khanate periods.[82]

Replacing this late-imperial architectural style with a new one (or a new traditional one, in the neo-Ottoman case) can thus be seen as a post-, neo-, or counter-imperialist stance. A new mosque in Moscow, the Moscow Cathedral Mosque (*Moskovskaya Sobornaya Mechet*), is a case in point.[83] The new mosque was built atop the site of the oldest congregational mosque in Moscow, a historical mosque also known as the 'Tatar Mosque' because its congregation consisted mainly of ethnic (Kazan) Tatars. Constructed in 1904 in the late imperial style on the design of Nikolai Alekseevich Zhukov (d. 1913), the mosque was removed from Russia's national historical heritage list in 2008 and, despite long protests, was subsequently dismantled as part of an ostensible renovation effort in 2011 on the pretext that it was not properly situated toward Mecca (Fig. 15). Once dismantled, however, authorities declared the building's reassembly unfeasible and instead replaced it with a new monumental building, the Moscow Cathedral Mosque, that was stripped of any connection to its historically rooted community and place.[84] The new mosque was officially inaugu-

82 Crews (2014); Avcıoğlu (2013). For mosque construction in the 19th-century Ottoman realms, see Katipoğlu Özmen (2014, 2018). For mosques erected during the reign of Abdülaziz in different parts of the Ottoman Empire, see Hızlı & Kılınç (2013).

83 For images of this mosque, see the gallery on its official web site: https://www.mihrab.ru/history/istoricheskaya-galereya, accessed April 16, 2023.

84 "Moscow Cathedral Mosque," *Wikipedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moscow_Cathedral_Mosque, accessed April 16, 2023. Also see the official page of the new mosque at https://www.mihrab.ru/, accessed April 16, 2023.

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rated on September 23, 2015, by the chairman of the Mufti Council of Russia at a ceremony attended by Putin and several Muslim leaders, including the presidents of Turkey and Palestine, and the leaders of the Russian Federation republics of Chechnya, Dagestan, and Tatarstan. The new Moscow mosque was built in an eclectic post-modern style with a huge dome, providing space for 10,000 people to pray, and two minarets that double as sightseeing towers. The interior decoration was designed by the Turkish Directorate of Religious Affairs and the Turkish Religious Affairs Foundation, and executed by Turkish artisans and the well-known calligrapher Hüseyin Kutlu in the "style of … classic Ottoman art" (Fig. 12).[85] The eclectic forms of the mosque's exterior, however, follow the post-modern ahistorical style also employed in the Kul Sharif Mosque in Kazan, which opened in 2005. In sharp contrast to the imperial style of 19th-century tsarist Russia that is still visible in other mosques in Kazan, the Kul Sharif Mosque was constructed in a new repertory form that combines neo-historicist and neo-Orientalist styles, neither of which has much in common with the region's architectural heritage.

This new design for monumental mosques recently constructed on Russian territory can be seen as an expression of Russia's most recent Eurasian turn and thus as in opposition to the tsarist approach and the European-oriented Enlightenment ideology on which its architectural style was based. Chechnya's most recently constructed mosque, the "Pride of Muslims" Mosque in Shali (near Grozny), built once again by Chechen president Ramzan Kadyrov and opened in 2019, is another example of this new trend. If the Akhmad Kadyrov Mosque in Grozny was a copy of an Ottoman mosque, this newly erected mosque, although still drawing heavily on the Ottoman idiom with its central dome and four half-domes, also departs from it: the dome's drum is raised and the minarets are not the slender pencil-like Ottoman-style ones, but show instead multiple diverse influences that point to the post-Timurid, Eurasian realms. With space for a total of 70,000 people to pray (30,000 inside), it surpasses even the new Çamlıca Mosque in Istanbul, opened the same year but designed in the classical Ottoman idiom, with its capacity for 63,000 people.[86]

85 "Moscow houses largest mosque in Europe," *Daily Sabah*, September 24, 2015, https://www.dailysabah.com/religion/2015/09/24/moscow-houses-largest-mosque-in-europe; "Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan Moskova Merkez Camii'nin açılışında konuştu," *Haber Türk*, September 23, 2015, https://www.haberturk.com/dunya/haber/1131928-cumhurbaskani-erdogandan-rusyada-cami-acilisi.

86 Sameer Khan, "Chechnya has Europe's biggest, most beautiful mosque," *The Siasat Daily*, July 25, 2020, https://www.siasat.com/chechnya-has-europes-biggest-most-be

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Fig. 16: Aqmescit/Simferopol, Aqmescit Cuma Camisi (Friday/Cathedral Mosque). Photograph by Oles Kolodyazhnyy, Fotobank Lori.ru, ID no. 36732920.

It is worth highlighting here the manner with which the grandeur of these new mosque projects is so often projected, through impressive numbers and superlative expressions such as "Europe's biggest, most beautiful mosque" (in the case of the "Pride of Muslims" Mosque, Chechnya), "the largest mosque in Europe" (Moscow's Cathedral Mosque), the "largest mosque in Crimea" (the Friday/Cathedral Mosque in Aqmescit/Simferopol), and so on. Such expressions suggest that these buildings are not just places of piety and prayer, but also, much like their tsarist and Ottoman precedents, symbols of political, ideological, and territorial power.

autiful-mosque-1928840/; "'Pride of Muslims': Chechnya's leader Kadyrov inaugurates 'Europe's largest mosque,'" *RT*, August 23, 2019, https://www.rt.com/russia/467152-europes-largest-mosque-chechnya/. For images, see the "Pride of Muslims" page on Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Pride_of_Muslims.

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Conclusion

The article has offered examples of different kinds of heritage politics and patrimonialization in the historical and cultural context of Muslim (mainly Crimean Tatar and Ottoman) material heritage in Crimea. The discussion of this heritage is not possible without understanding the present geopolitical situation in the region, which is much more complex than that in other regions that are similarly contested but less centrally located, such as Meskheti, Georgia.

This heritage illustrates the various approaches adopted toward the material remains, buildings, and sites in Crimea. Among these attitudes are immediate or later destruction, transformation, transformative reconstruction, and, only rarely, adequate protection. Even when buildings are restored and protected, the way they are restored is often destructive. One of the rare exceptions to this tendency is the excellent archeological investigation and restoration of the former palace complex in Bağçasaray's suburb of Salaçıq. Aside from this one example, since Crimea's annexation by Russia in the 18th century, the territory has witnessed constant, multiple re-creations of manipulative narratives that have privileged the peninsula's antique Greek and (early) Christian past while sidelining the long history of Islam, the Golden Horde, the Crimean Khanate, and the Ottoman and later Muslim communities under Russian rule.

It has to be mentioned that such narratives were never as dominant in Ukraine, and that in recent decades, Ukraine has embraced a more integrative vision of the interaction between Muslim and non-Muslim entities in Crimea and the role of the Crimean Tatars in Ukraine's formation as an independent state. These efforts have increased in light of the recent political situation, and inclusive heritage protection in Ukraine has gained prominence, as, for example, in the inclusion of Crimean Tatar architectural examples in the Pyrohiv (Pirogov) Museum of Folk Architecture and Folkways of Ukraine near Kiev.[87]

Since Russia's occupation of Crimea in 2014, an extremely calculating ideological discourse, both visual and verbal, has become common in the peninsula, supported by the construction of mosques like the Friday/Cathedral Mosque and the Seytsettar Mosque. This discourse seeks to assure the Crimean Tatars

87 "Ukrayna'nın başkenti Kıyiv'de Kırım Tatar Konağı projesi tanıtıldı," *Kırım Haber Ajansı*, December 9, 2021, https://www.qha.com.tr/haber-arsivi/ukrayna-nin-baskenti-kiyiv-de-kirim-tatar-konagi-projesi-tanitildi-359147.

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that they are welcome, well-integrated subjects of Russia. The architecture chosen for these mosques can be understood as an instrumentalization of the Ottoman legacy and its transposition onto (local) Crimean Tatar culture on different levels by Russia and, although for different reasons, by Turkey. This is possible thanks to the multilayered meanings inherent in these visual and architectural forms, and the creation of new narratives presenting a once-rejected and dissonant legacy as patrimony.

However, this narrative, which seems to favor the Crimean Tatars and appears to enjoy some support among the community, aims to replace the organically and historically rooted layers of the past with a new, fabricated vision of an ideal past. It manipulatively suggests that Russia's Muslim community both inside and outside the peninsula is integrated into the contemporary state apparatus, an integration symbolically represented in the monumental 'Cathedral Mosque.' This monumentality seeks to present itself as the official face of the Muslim community in Crimea. Yet in doing so, it imposes a 'de-culturalization' and 'de-historization' of the peninsula's Muslim heritage, and can thus be seen as a complex instance of what has been called "spatial violence."[88] By radically redefining the monumental expression of what is seen and accepted as past glory, this narrative attempts to portray a bright and shining future for Russian Muslim and Crimean Tatar culture and its heritage – a future that, seen from the outside, seems more uncertain than ever.

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