Perception of Homeland among Crimean Tatars: Cases from Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Crimea

Ayşegül Aydıngün[*]
Erdoğan Yıldırım[**]

Abstract: Crimean Tatars have been experiencing the loss of homeland since the Russian invasion of Crimea in 1783, which caused massive waves of migration especially to the Ottoman Empire. The loss of homeland culminated in Stalin's strategic deportations. Crimean Tatars were deported from Crimea to Central Asia in 1944 and obtained the right to return to their homeland in 1989. Since then, the return process has continued. Considering that the construction of the myth of homeland is an effective instrument to mobilize national sentiment, this article studies the perception of homeland among Crimean Tatars with its different layers - as an essential marker of identity, as an idealized mythical final destination, as a land where the community lives, and finally as a rationally desired place in search for a better life. The article also argues that these layers may coexist in individual cases although their relative significance may vary.

Key Words: Crimean Tatars, Crimea, Homeland, Identity, Deportation, Myth.

Introduction

Homeland, a definite territory, a piece of land where a people emerge, live, or imagine it as their proper place on earth, even if they no longer occupy it, is undoubtedly one of the essential elements of ethnic identification (Hutchinson and Smith 1996: 7). Yet, homeland is not any land, but a construction of a 'home' on a certain territory where a group as well as its members develop their primary identification in reference to their ethnicity which requires a spatial dimension as well as a temporal one creating the group's history. A land turned into a home is supposed to be a place where the members can feel secure in a familiar and beloved environment. As such, it is the homeland that enables a people to emerge as a distinct group.

[*] Middle East Technical University, Department of Sociology / ANKARA
aydingun@metu.edu.tr
[**] Middle East Technical University, Department of Sociology / ANKARA
erdo@metu.edu.tr

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Emphasizing the importance of homeland in the study of national consciousness and nationalism, it is argued in this article, that the construction of the myth of homeland is an effective instrument in mobilizing the national sentiment and keeping national identity alive while in exile.[1] The article focuses on the perception of homeland and its different layers for Crimean Tatars and offers a vivid example that helps to understand the construction of the myth of homeland and the importance of homeland in forming and maintaining national identity.[2] Crimean Tatars, who experienced a cultural loss under Tsarist and Soviet rules and especially during their exile in Central Asia following the 1944 deportation, maintained their national identity by morally idealizing life in their homeland, and later, when the massive return started in 1989, actually experiencing life on homeland as a minority. Therefore, by making use of the Crimean Tatar example, this article analyzes to what extent homeland is perceived as an essential marker of identity, an idealized mythical final destination for the Crimean Tatar political community, a land/place where the community lives enabling the development of societal ties necessary for group solidarity, and a rationally desired place in search for a better life. This article also argues that those layers of homeland perception may coexist in every single case although in each case the significance of each layer may differ.

For this purpose, we analyzed the perception of homeland among Crimean Tatars in two different host societies, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, and the peculiarities of their experience of homeland in Crimea.[3] To better grasp the issue of homeland, questions related to the stories told by the elderly about the homeland, the way they explain and define the homeland, the reasons for their return to homeland, their relations with local populations of countries in which they live were asked during the fieldwork. In other words, we analyzed how and to what extent Crimean Tatars have constructed the myth of homeland or the feeling of belongingness to Crimea and what mechanisms were used to accomplish this and to transmit it to younger generations.

A brief history of the Crimean Tatar community

The earliest known people who lived in the Crimean peninsula are the Scythians, followed by the Sarmatians, Ostrogoths, Huns, Khazars, Pechenegs, Kipchaks and Mongols who settled in the mountainous and central parts of Crimea. Turkic speaking Kipchaks came to the region with the hordes of the Turkic dominated Hun confederation and gave their name to the whole steppe area known as *Desht-i Kipchak*. When the Mongols of Chingis Khan arrived in the area in the middle of the thirteenth century,

there was already a certain degree of amalgamation, at least, between Kipchaks who settled in the region and Goths, who gradually Turkified. With the arrival of the Mongols, Kipchak tribes moved to the south of the Crimean peninsula and amalgamated with populations such as the Genoese, Greeks and Venetians living in the coastal region of the peninsula. Considering that the Mongol hordes that established the Golden Horde Khanate already included Turkic elements, it was not surprising that they developed a culture dominated by Turkic elements, thus forming Europe's oldest Turkic community (Williams 1998, 2001a and 2001b, Kırımlı 1996, Uehling 2004). Therefore, the formation of Tatar community in Crimea can be traced back to the end of the fourteenth century and early fifteenth century and they formed an ethnically heterogeneous community, differentiating itself from the larger group of Tatars associated with the Golden Horde (Williams 2001a, Vozgrin 1992: 134). Following the collapse of the Golden Horde at the end of the fourteenth century, Tatars of Crimea were organized as a political community under the leadership of *Gerays*, claiming descent from Chingis Khan and struggled against other contenders of the Golden Horde throne. Furthermore, under the pressure of the rising power of Moscow in the fifteenth century, to protect their Khanate, Crimean Tatars had to seek help from the powerful Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II, who sent a huge army to support Mengli Geray. With the invasion of southern coastal cities by the Ottomans in 1475, the population in the peninsula acquired a further Turkish element (Williams 2001b: 46-49). The Crimean Khanate was under the suzerainty of the Ottoman Empire between 1475 and 1774. The Russians defeated the Ottoman army in 1774 and signed the *Küçük Kaynarca* Treaty ending up the suzerainty of the Ottomans. The protection of the Ottoman Empire continued until the Russian invasion in 1783 (Azade-Rorlich 2000: 60, Fisher 1978: 1-8). From that date until the 1917 October Revolution, Crimea was directly integrated into the Russian administrative system, which was the end of the khanate. On that date Crimean Tatars constituted around eighty per cent of the population of the peninsula; however, this immediately started to decrease due to the deteriorating economic and living conditions of Crimean Tatars caused by the Russian annexation.

The Crimean Khanate lost her full sovereignty twice in her history. The first one was to the Ottoman Empire. It was conceived by both sides as a recently established relationship between two historically non-hostile and culturally similar bodies. The Ottoman suzerainty was interpreted as the reunion of two brotherly groups, descending from the same roots but following different routes. Throughout that period the relations between the Ottoman Empire and the Crimean Khanate is considered by many historians as one of cooperation and mutual benefit (İnalcık 1944, Fisher 1977, Williams 2001b). The

second loss of sovereignty was to the Russian Empire. In contrast to the Ottoman suzerainty, however, this was perceived quite negatively by Crimean Tatars due to historical enmities, differences in ways of life and the patterns of sovereignty practiced by the modernizing Russian state apparatus as well as the deteriorating conditions in Crimea following the implementation of the Russian land regime. As a result, while the Ottoman suzerainty encouraged the feelings of integration, the Russian sovereignty entailed both the impoverishment of Crimean Tatars and their cultural and political alienation from Russians. This fact, combined with the strategic significance of the peninsula, resulted in the politics of slavicisation, which led to massive waves of migration of Crimean Tatars primarily towards the Ottoman lands. It is in this period that the feeling of the loss of homeland started to develop.

In the early 1920s, the community experienced a cultural revival under the *korenizatsia* (nativisation) policy and the establishment of the Crimean Autonomous Republic in 1921.[4] However, the growing political pressures of the Soviet regime under Stalin starting with the end of the 1920s culminated in the deportation of the Crimean Tatar population in 1944. The 1944 deportation of the Crimean Tatars was the result of strategic deportations of Stalin resulting in special settlement (*spetsposeleniye*) until 1956 (Nekrich 1978: 87-136). The multiethnic nature of the Soviet Union was a great weakness during the German invasion. Several autonomous republics such as the Volga German and Crimean Autonomous Republics were dissolved and many groups were accused of collaborating with the enemy and were deported. The 1944 Crimean Tatar deportation from Crimea entailed the dispersion of the whole community to the Central Asian republics of Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, and to Udmurt and Mari Autonomous Regions. Approximately half of deportees died either during or soon after the deportation (Marie 1995: 93-105, Williams 1998: 295). Russians were encouraged to settle in the peninsula, which was emptied off the Crimean Tatars.[5] The loss of political sovereignty to the Russians and the continuing oppression resulting in waves of migration and the 1944 deportation were the main reasons for their loss of homeland paving way to the construction of a myth of homeland. This provided the basis for the formation and strengthening of Crimean Tatar national identity and their yearning for their homeland (Allworth 1998: 180-204, Conquest 1970, Sheehy and Nahaylo 1980: 6-16, Kreindler 1986: 389-390, Özcan 2002, Nekrich 1978: 87-136, Uehling 2004).

Although most of the deported nationalities obtained the right to return to their homelands, when the special settlement ended in 1956, Crimean Tatars were among the ones whose rights were not rehabilitated like Meskhetian

Turks and Volga Germans. It is in 1989 that Crimean Tatars obtained the right to return to their homeland.[6] Since that date, the Crimean Tatar population in Crimea has been increasing continuously. They now constitute approximately the 12 per cent (250,000 people) of the Crimea's population according to the latest estimations of the Crimean Tatar Associations in Simferopol (Akmescit) and Turkey.[7]

Homeland as an essential maker of identity

The fieldwork has revealed that throughout the exile years, Crimean Tatars preserved their national identity and struggled to return to their homeland. They transmitted to the next generations their experience of deportation, their perception and feelings about Crimea, their memories of life in Crimea together with their knowledge of the imagined golden past when Crimean Tatars constituted the majority of the population in Crimea. Thus, Crimean Tatars developed a strong attachment to Crimea, which began to be perceived as the cradle of their identity. This shows that the homeland as a territory transcended the simple economic and political dimensions because it turned out to be strictly associated with group identity (Yiftachel 2001: 359-360). Knowing that the full realization of a nation can only be possible through the possession of and identification with a specific territory enables us to understand why Crimean Tatars nationalized their territory, an essential element of nationalism, which became an important source in constructing and mobilizing the Crimean Tatar national identity (Allworth 1998: 252, Smith 1986: 163, Smith 1981). Due to their specific history, some cultural characteristics of Crimean Tatars have been subject to erosion while the idea of homeland acquired a specific importance within the Crimean Tatar identity. As observed during the fieldwork, as a result of the interaction with other communities both in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, the impact of the Soviet regime and the modernization process they have gone through time, Crimean Tatars developed a hybrid cultural identity. However, starting with the migrations caused by the Russian Empire's policies and especially the 1944 deportation, they strengthened their national identification, which was mobilized by the loss of homeland causing an intensified attachment to the ancestral land and a desire for return. The attachment to homeland developed during the exile years nationalized the space and territorialized the nation (Kaiser 2002: 229-232). This added to the importance of the homeland myth, which was utilized as an important marker of national identification. Khrushchev's 1956 speech at the Twentieth Congress further reinforced the myth. In his speech, he made no mention of Crimean Tatars among the nationalities officially granted the right to return to their homelands.

It is also important to stress the close relation between territory, history and population, which are indispensably important elements of nationhood (Nalçaoğlu 2002: 295). It is the existence of the community members, conscious of their history united with their homeland, which will permit the full realization of a nation's destiny. It is the idealized unity of a nation, a group of people identifying themselves as such with a territory described as homeland, which enables that people to locate themselves in the spatio-temporal matrix through which they define their place within the society of contemporary nations and within the continuity of their history uniting the past, present and future. This explains why, in 1989 immediately after the acquisition of the right of return to their homeland, Crimean Tatars started to migrate *en masse* from the Central Asian republics to Crimea.

The historicisation of the land makes it possible to define the land as the historic homeland, the essential element of the history of the community, which may also become a sacred territory through the myth-making process (Smith 1999a: 269-270). The loss of homeland, experienced by people as the loss of present security and future guarantee of its existence, may further contribute to its sacredness in the myth which now emerges as the sole available bond connecting the land and the people. Smith supports this by saying that the historical territory which is perceived as the most secure place for the community nurtures the feeling of national identity, yearning for the unification of both the exiled people and exiled land for the fulfilment of the mission necessary for the survival of the community (Smith 1999b: 349-350). In other words, the control over the nationalized territory is essential for the control of their own lives in order to fulfil their national destiny (Allworth 1998: 253).

Thus, in the case of loss of homeland as in the example of Crimean Tatars, the liberation of the historic land from invaders or oppressors is a must for the revival of the community on its own land. This situation is defined by Smith as the requirement of history that necessitates the fulfilment of a glorious destiny (Smith 1999a: 270-271). Considering that nationalism is always a struggle for control of land, an ideology and a political program designed to convert land into a national territory, one can easily understand its importance (Kaiser 1994: 231). Smith points out the significance of the concepts of 'national mission' and 'national identity' for nationalism, which we can define as the modern form of identification and attachment to a specific territory. He also explains how these concepts are essential for nations not to lose their *raison d'être*. He adds that via the preservation of a distinctive unified nation including the historic territory, the ancestral homeland be-

comes the actual place where the nation can flourish (Smith 1999b: 333-334).

Explaining the relationship between a community and its homeland has always been a controversial issue. Even the discussion about the ethnogenesis of Crimean Tatars (rivaling Russian and Crimean Tatar claims) can easily show that it is not a simple matter of knowledge and politics. Within the contemporary legal framework, it is also a discussion about the rights of a certain group of people over a certain territory. That is why, during her intervention at the United Nations working group on indigenous peoples, Gulnara Abbasova, a Crimean Tatar activist, underlined the significance of the link between land and indigenous peoples and the rights of the indigenous communities over their land. She interpreted the return to homeland not as a full repatriation, without the repossession of the land and its utilization according to traditions (Abbasova 2004). The legal struggle of Crimean Tatars to be recognized as an indigenous community at the international level and not as a minority is a proof of the significance of the link between land and people.[8]

Homeland as an idealized mythical final destination

Lévi-Strauss argues that myths are the responses of society to inexplicable but important situations, to which the society demands satisfactory resolutions. They are used to explain and create meaning in complex and seemingly unknowable situations. It is through myths that a group strives to find answers to questions such as "who are we? Where are we from?", which have ultimate importance for the existence of a group. By associating the existence of the group with the items in the environment, myths create a deeper meaning. In the case of the process of constructing a homeland, the myth establishes an existential bond between a social group and a particular land. The myth, on the one hand, penetrates into the empirical/actual group and attributes it an imaginary depth, reconstructing that group as the imaginary body of the society (Anderson 1991, Lévi-Strauss 1963: 206-231). On the other hand, the actual piece of land emerges through the myth as the cradle and space for the flourishment of that particular, now imaginatively constructed community. United with the group, the homeland emerges as something more than territory. As we can see from the terms such as 'motherland', 'fatherland', 'ancestral homeland' or 'historic homeland', it is an emotion-charged and an abstract concept (Connor 1986: 16). Linking the community in the personage of the ancestry to territory, the land ceases to be any land upon which one can establish one's living, but becomes a particular land with which the community must continuously reunite.

The fact that Crimea was a forbidden place for Crimean Tatars between 1944 and 1989 further contributed to the strengthening of the feeling of attachment to homeland through myth-making because the homeland emerged in the minds of those deported and their offspring as an unreachable and beautiful place surrounded by the mysterious atmosphere of the myth. One of the Crimean Tatars interviewed in Karasubazar/Belogorsk, Crimea, who moved from Turkey to settle down there a few years ago, explained his feelings in a very emotional tone:

> I first came in 1992. I knew that the bones of my forefathers were there. When the image of their lives passed before my eyes like a movie, my eyes were full of tears. They left their homeland only 80 years ago. My grand-mother was carrying my father in her womb when they left (Male, 55).

In addition to the enforced separation from the homeland, Crimean Tatars had also endured the deep challenge of the Marxist-Leninist myth, under which nations and homelands were expected to lose their significance in socialist societies and specifically in the Soviet Union which its dissolution made visible (Connor 1986: 36, Connor 1992). Although all references of the notion of *rodina* (homeland) were made to the greater Soviet land, nationalities preserved their own perception of homeland. In the case of Crimean Tatars, the natural beauties of Crimea were among the factors solidifying their attachment to their peninsula. Moreover, the symbolic significance of Crimea in the minds of almost all Soviet citizens as the beautiful resort place for the high rank members of the Communist Party and as a very strategic place, where the Russian Navy was located, is worth mentioning. In other words, the status of Crimea for the Soviet people was another factor increasing the value of Crimea in the eyes of the Crimean Tatars.

Since the bond between community and land can only be established through myth, the imagined and idealized representation of the collective memory, the application of the myth onto the actual situations acquires a subjective and emotional character. In fact, the Crimean Tatars' knowledge of their homeland has four major sources: the narratives of the elderly, the Crimean Tatar art, the propaganda of the National Movement, and visits made to the homeland mostly in the post-1989 period.

It is the emotional attachment to homeland which we encounter in the narratives of the elderly and which establishes and transfers the link between land and people to the next generations. As Smith argues (1999a: 253), one of the deep resources of ethnic communities was the attachment to historic territory, to ancestral homeland, which is a space associated with a given community and which became part of shared memories and mythology of

that community. Furthermore, the space, the ancestral homeland, is becoming the eternal home. All the interviewees during the fieldwork have stressed their strong attachment to Crimea as their homeland, and those who were born and raised in Uzbekistan similarly stated their powerful emotions about the homeland and the painful experience of the 1944 deportation transmitted by their parents or the elderly kin. In other words, this strong feeling of attachment to homeland was inflicted by the narratives of the elderly during their entire childhood[9] One of the activists of the National Movement in Tashkent said:

> The love of homeland is like a drug injected to our veins by our parents and grand-parents starting from our infancy. That is why, we love Crimea that much (Male, 30).

A young Crimean Tatar in Tashkent said:

> In our childhood, our parents used to narrate stories about Crimea. They would describe the natural beauties of the peninsula and we always imagined Crimea in our minds. Our parents were all the time saying that, if one day, it became possible to go to Crimea, we would have to return to our homeland.

The feeling of attachment is transmitted not only by the narratives of the elderly but also by the usage of the items having symbolic value. A middle-aged doctor in Karasubazar told the story of her grandmother who died in Uzbekistan:

> My family was deported from here to Uzbekistan. My grandmother used to have the Koran with her all the time. She got old and sick. She called for all her children around her death bed and she asked for her Koran. In the pages of Koran, there was a plastic bag with some Crimean soil in it. We learned that during the deportation she had hid some Crimean soil in the Koran and sprinkled to the grave of every family member. She said: 'when you bury me, bury the Koran with me and sprinkle the soil onto my grave. But be careful, there is little soil left. This means that it is now time to return to the homeland' and she passed away with the Koran and the Crimean soil in her hand (Female, 37).

Another example is the story told by Veciye Kaşka, who was deported from Üsküt/Privetnoye-Crimea with her parents and brothers and sisters. Just before she died, Veciye's mother gave her the key of their house in Crimea that she had had with her ever since the deportation as the symbol of her hope for return to homeland (Cemileva, Cemileva and Halilova 2004: 67).

The usage of the emotional language, dramatization of good memories, idealization of the beauties of the homeland and over-emphasis on the uniqueness of the homeland that we come across in the narratives of the elderly are also found in the Crimean Tatar art such as novels, periodicals, poetry and music. All these contribute to the reproduction and reinforcement of the attachment to the land and to the link between this land, blood and roots.[10] It will not be wrong to argue that the recent Crimean Tatar literature is mostly dominated by strong nationalist feelings and that those publications have played a role in shaping the national feelings of Crimean Tatars. Major themes in those publications are love for homeland and bitter experiences and consequences of the deportation.[11] Poems are also reflecting a strong nationalist ideology aiming at mobilizing people around it.[12]

One of the experts working at the Republican Museum of Art in Akmescit/Simferopol said that the dominant theme of the Crimean Tatar art has shifted from the experience of exile to the theme of homeland since the return. Besides the role played by the family and art, the Crimean Tatar political movement has also been very influential in mobilizing the community. The first political movement of Crimean Tatars in exile called 'Initiative Group' gained strength after 1956. It had the capacity to mobilize the community and initiated different types of peaceful campaigns aiming at obtaining the right to return. The development of the national movement was based on the idea of acquiring the right of return to the homeland, which was given to most of the deported nationalities in 1956 at the end of the special settlement regime. At the beginning of the 1960s Mustafa Cemilev and a few young Crimean Tatars founded an organization called 'Crimean Tatar Youth Union' with the specific objective of returning to homeland. The objective of the movement was obvious in the new name 'Crimean Tatar Youth Union for Returning to Homeland'. This movement was mostly initiated by young Crimean Tatars, who had either very few or no experiences of homeland (Özcan 2002: 122-129). One of the activists of the National Movement in Uzbekistan argued about the role that the movement has to play:

> The Crimean Tatar problem cannot only be solved by politicians. People must be mobilized. People should be nationalists and every family should teach their children national consciousness. The National Assembly should have an ideology department securing the ideological education of the young generation (Male, 30).

The founders of the Crimean Tatar movement including its leader Mustafa Cemilev, during the interview in Akmescit/Simferopol, clearly expressed their

determination to claim back their homeland from the Soviet authorities starting with 1957. They stressed that their main objective is to realize the organized return of their people to the homeland and the full rehabilitation of their legal rights (Asanin 2002: 16). The national movement has been successful in organizing the establishment of Crimean Tatar Associations wherever the community lives. Later, non-violent protests, silent demonstrations and other peaceful initiatives organized by the movement gained the support of the community in general and were successful in mobilizing young Crimean Tatars.

The Crimean Tatar national movement succeeded in founding a National Parliament (*Milli Mejlis*) in June 1991 after the Second *Kurultai* in Simferopol. Mustafa Cemilev was elected as the president of the *Milli Mejlis.* The Crimean Tatar *Mejlis* is the highest organ representing the Crimean Tatar people. Although not officially fully recognised by the Ukrainian authorities, it is acknowledged that it represents the Crimean Tatar community. The *Mejlis* functions according to the decisions of the Crimean Tatar National *Kurultai* and all the activities are carried out in accordance with the Ukrainian legislature and international law. The regulations of the Mejlis clearly indicate that Crimea is portrayed as the 'national territory' and 'historic motherland' of the Crimean Tatars, who, for this reason, have an interest in protecting the economic prosperity and ecological beauty of the land.[13]

Apart from the visits and return attempts of the exile years, we noticed during the fieldwork that most of Crimean Tatars born in Central Asia had not seen their homeland until 1989. However, Crimea was still perceived as their beloved homeland even before they saw it. Up until their first visit, Crimea was a mythical homeland in their imagination. A part of Crimean Tatars born in Central Asia went to Crimea after 1989 either to see the homeland, the very villages of their grandparents or to visit their relatives and to see the conditions aiming at organizing the future return project. These visits offered the opportunity to relive the narratives of the elderly and to compare and link the actuality of the land and the idealized memories of the elderly about their ancestral villages, houses, certain topography and especially historical sites indicating the Crimean Tatar existence in Crimea. The stories told by the elderly about the homeland were mostly confirmed by the second generation Crimean Tatars. One of the interviewees, a young woman in Yunusabad (Uzbekistan), said:

> I first went to Crimea with my mum. I was disappointed when I saw the small airport. I said 'mum, is this Crimea?' On our way to the village I looked around and my disappointment continued. I said to my mum 'where is the sea? Where are the moun-

> tains? Where is the Crimea you told me?', but when we arrived to the village, I realized that everything was there, the sea, the mountains were like they told me. I did like it very much because it was my homeland. My heart was beating fast, I was amazed. Words were not enough to explain my feelings. Later when I went to Bahçesaray (Bakhchisarai) to visit the palace, my eyes were full of tears (Female, 25).

Homeland as the land where the community lives

Based on the interviews, it is possible to argue that despite the bad propaganda of the Soviet regime in the early years of the 1944 deportation, the interaction of Crimean Tatars with the local people of Central Asia entailed mutual understanding and the development of friendly relations. Yet, this integration is limited to the public sphere. Communal solidarity plays an essential role in critical occasions such as arranging marriages, overcoming financial and social problems. At this point, it is necessary to stress that the relationship between people's attachment to their community and their integration and attachment to the host society are not mutually exclusive. In other words, it is possible to retain a feeling of attachment to the ethnic community and be successfully integrated to the host society (Skrbıs 1999: 40). Although integrated to the host society in the public sphere, they have lived as a relatively closed community in their private domain in which they could experience higher levels of trust, resulting in quite a high degree of social solidarity. One of the main reasons for that solidarity was the extreme discrimination and shared memories of the Soviet oppression that they had experienced during the special settlement regime, which considerably diminished the possibility of developing closer ties with the Turkic nationalities of Central Asia at that time (Allworth 1998: 255). Furthermore, the territorialisation of ethnicity in the Soviet administrative and social system can also be enumerated among the factors that contributed to the strengthening of the Crimean Tatar national consciousness and the desire to live together with the community.

Despite the cultural and religious affinity, and later high integration to the public life in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, Crimean Tatars preserved their separate national identity. The community had a strong solidarity which was most of the time limited to kin solidarity aiming at overcoming the difficulties of the social life. The rarity of mixed marriages with Uzbeks and Kazakhs or members of other communities also points to this. One of the interviewees in Yunusabad (Uzbekistan), said:

> Everyone should marry someone from his /her own nationality. Of course, I am a mother, if my child insists on marrying with someone

> from other nationalities, I can't say no. But if he/she marries a Muslim at least, so much the better (Female, 55).

This situation enforces one to emphasize the community solidarity based on kinship ties rather than the shared cultural traits. Kinship ties are considered to be the very basis of human solidarity. As Smith has pointed out in the act of identifying themselves with an ethnic group, people tend to enlarge the boundaries of the kinship ties and project them over to the whole community (1992: 438). Thus, Crimean Tatars tend to interpret their whole community as an extended family. Within that context, it may even be possible to argue that the dispersion of the community is the dispersion of a family. Thus, the reunification of the community members in the homeland may figuratively be perceived as a family reunification on its own land (Horowitz 1985: 57-59).

Following the 1989 return law, both Crimean Tatar people and their leaders and activists returned to Crimea from the Central Asian republics of Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Thus, the centre of the Crimean Tatar movement shifted from Central Asia to Crimea, and this accelerated the return process. The fieldwork data gathered both in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan showed that there was not a single Crimean Tatar family which had not sent some of its middle-aged and the young members to Crimea. Especially the elderly who have not had enough financial sources and some who have established business in the Central Asian Republics are left behind.[14] Some Crimean Tatars in Uzbekistan mentioned the deteriorating economic conditions to stress how it became difficult to visit the relatives after the crisis in 1992. Indeed, the decay of the economic conditions in the newly independent republics can partly be attributed to the problems caused by the rapid transition from the socialist to the liberal economy. Nearly every interviewee in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan complained about the difficulties they are facing during this transition towards market economy.

The economic transition and the difficulties it caused affected Crimean Tatars whose situation was further aggravated by the slight priority given to the titular nationalities in the job market. A well off Crimean Tatar in Tashkent who was involved in medium scale business complained about the informal discriminatory social practices in the country by saying:

> There is no serious problem with the Uzbeks, but when it comes to the question of with whom they would prefer to work, the answer is obvious: the Uzbeks.

However, despite the perception of this relative discrimination, some Crimean Tatars still highlight that the members of the titular nationalities do not

want their friends and neighbours to leave their countries. The story of a middle-aged Crimean Tatar businessman makes a very good example to the close relationship between the Crimean Tatars and their neighbours in Uzbekistan. The views of a middle-aged Crimean Tatar businessman during the interview in Akmescit/Simferopol reveal how Crimean Tatars developed close relations with the members of the host society:

> Our Uzbek neighbours were disappointed when they learned that we were planning to return to Crimea. They said that they were very much used to living with us for long years and they would miss us so much. Then, we came to Crimea and I started running a small hotel. I needed to employ two people, and I knew that my neighbours in Uzbekistan needed money. I proposed them to work with me. Now, the two kids work with me in the hotel, and they also opened a bakery here in Akmescit. They live well and our relations still continue in Crimea.

Findings of the interviews carried out in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan indicate that at least during the Soviet regime there were no significant differences among the members of the various nationalities in terms of economic conditions. The majority of our Crimean Tatar informants have mentioned about the welcoming attitude of the Uzbeks and Kazakhs especially during the early years of the deportation emphasizing mainly the religious affinity between the Crimean Tatars and the members of the host society. That Crimean Tatars suppress bad memories of the early years of enforced settlement especially those related to poor relations with their Uzbek or Kazakh neighbours demonstrate that they are presently concerned about maintaining good relations with the members of the host society.[15] Thus, their relations with the surrounding community can now be said to be in good terms, the prevalence of bad memories and the anticipation of the possibility of such bad memories repeating themselves in the future indicates a sense of deeply hidden mistrust.

Data obtained from the fieldwork in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan demonstrate that Crimean Tatars complained about the continuously decreasing population in the places they live. They all argued that it is no longer easy to perform community activities such as weddings, funerals and circumcisions and that it is essential to live compactly with the community members.

One interviewee in Yunusabad said:

> There are only 15-20 families left in this neighbourhood. Earlier there were many Crimean Tatars. In the two factories of Yunusabad, only Crimean Tatars were working. In those days, there used to be a wedding every week. But now no one is left for such communal events. Everyone

> should marry his own people. I have a boy at the age of marriage. We should go to the homeland because there is almost no Crimean Tatar girl left here (Female, 62).
>
> An old lady from Sarı Agach, Kazakhstan, also emphasized the need to be together with one's own community:
>
> All my kids are in Crimea. I will go there when I sell the house. Who is going to bury me if I die here?

As it can be seen from the above mentioned quotations, for the Crimean Tatars still living in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, one of the driving forces behind the desire to return to homeland is to follow the community to maintain their social relationships with community members as the basis of communal solidarity. In other words, for them, returning to homeland acquires a new meaning besides being a marker of identity and an idealized mythical final destination: now it turns out to be a place where one can live with people like himself or herself.

Homeland as a rationally desired place in search for a better life

At the beginning of 1992, the Russian government started a 'shock therapy' and abolished the price control policy, which caused a rapid decrease in real wages and pensions and a complete loss of personal savings in all the former Soviet Republics. The increasing poverty had a tremendous impact on Crimean Tatars, who were planning their return. Some the Crimean Tatars interviewed, who sold everything to be able to buy a house and make a fresh start in the homeland soon after the dissolution, said that they had lost all of their savings. To this economic and psychological damage was also added a diminishing possibility of visiting the homeland and the relatives in Crimea and of communication by phone due to increasing phone and travel costs, especially for the Crimean Tatar community in Uzbekistan. One interviewee in Uzbekistan said:

> My daughter is in Crimea. I went there to see her once. It is now very expensive to go there. A return ticket is about 450 dollars. It is very difficult to save this money in a year. We talk over the phone, but we can afford it only once every two months (Female, 57).
>
> Another interviewee said:
>
> We don't know what to do. My pension is 30 dollars per month. Families are dispersed. It is not possible to go to see them on this income. Those who have no money stayed there and could not go to the homeland after the economic crisis. …Buying a small apartment in Crimea

> costs 15,000 dollars. Here we have two houses, but they give a total of 8,000 dollars (Male, 58).

During the fieldwork, we observed that the main financial source of Crimean Tatars for an eventual migration to the homeland was selling their houses. Yet, in this respect there was an important difference between the value of the houses in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. In Uzbekistan it was difficult to afford the migration expenses just by selling a house, while in Kazakhstan house prices as well as the average income are relatively higher (though, varying according to the place and quality of the house). This increased their ability to migrate.[16]

The economic difficulties constitute the main obstacle to return to the homeland although an important number of them have managed to return since 1989. Crimean Tatars interviewed in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan constitutes the minority of the community which could not return to Crimea after 1989 due to various reasons. We have also noticed that Crimean Tatars who do not have the opportunity to buy or construct a house prefer not to migrate even if they have relatives who have already returned. In other words, despite the determined attitude toward return and to reunite with the larger community in the homeland, the impossibility of finding a job and a place to live are the main obstacles for a segment of Crimean Tatars. In addition to the economic difficulties, some Crimean Tatars postponed their return because some family members had to complete their education or they needed time to transfer their current business to Crimea. One of the interviewees in Tashkent said:

> My son is about to finish his education. Once he finishes, we will go back to the homeland (Female, 44).

Another in Yunusabad, who was running a small scale import business, stressed the ambiguities of transferring her business and the need to organize her life before considering return:

> Now I make money here. I go to Istanbul, buy clothes at a reasonable price and I sell them here in a friend's shop. I do not know what I can do for living in Crimea. My husband died. I have a son. I know that we have to return because Crimea is our homeland. However, you have to think about your job (Female, 32).

Contrary to these views, some Crimean Tatars argued that the richness of Crimea will be more than enough for the Crimean Tatar community if they are not prevented by the Russians and Ukrains. They especially mentioned the potential for tourism in the southern resort places. Since Crimean Tatars form a minority both in the Crimean Parliament and local municipalities that

control the recent privatization and distribution of land, they have almost no access to valuable land especially located in the southern resort places. That the land allocated by the local authorities is far from main urban centres entails a growing discontent and gives rise to spontaneous protests by Crimean Tatars.

Conclusion

Homeland is some place where the community emerges as a separate and distinct entity. It seems that in the daily experiences of a community, its value and importance in the constitution of identity can easily be overlooked. However, its importance arises in its full vigour especially when the land and community are separated. The present study yielded that the idea of homeland was and is still very strong among the Crimean Tatar community members though it may have different meanings to different people. The fieldwork also revealed that all the four layers elaborated in this article are valid for most Crimean Tatars at varying significances. In the case of Crimean Tatars who were deported from their homeland and had to spend more than fifty years in exile, the homeland gradually wanes as a reality, but in its mythified and idealized image, it comes to be the very basis of their national identity. Under the conditions of exile lasting longer than the lifespan of at least one generation, the community under question may have lost its specific cultural traits. There may not be any specific determinant left that can help the member to separate him or herself from the members of the host societies, but even in such a situation, homeland is deeply embedded in the identification of the community members who grew up listening to the tales about their homeland. The mythified image now becomes the very marker that differentiates those people from the others. Through that image, the community members continue to associate themselves with their specific community.

Among Crimean Tatars who were dispersed in different countries, socialized in different environments and even, who partly lost their native tongue, the mythified image of Crimea as their sole homeland served as the major marker of their identity of being Crimean Tatars. The myth of homeland is constructed and the return myth is kept alive for preserving the national identity and for mobilizing people for a permanent return to the homeland when the right time comes. For this reason even economic and social difficulties in Crimea did not prevent Crimean Tatars from migrating to homeland regardless of the actual conditions. Such a determination can be interpreted as a proof of their dream of transforming the myth into a reality. Moreover, in such a situation the homeland as the marker of identity also becomes the final destination where community is expected to take root and

flourish. We can say that the very being of Crimean Tatars community is primarily based on this image. They were able to protect that image over the long years of exile, and after those years, owing to that image, they were able to re-exert themselves as Crimean Tatars into existence in the land of Crimea.

Such an exposition of the idea of homeland, however, may not be enough for fully appreciating its role on the communal identity. For a deeper assessment of its significance, one also has to look at its other layers that may come to the fore at certain periods in its impact on ethnic identity. In the fieldwork, we observed that, for the Crimean Tatar community, together with the above mentioned features (its being an essential marker of identity; and idealized final mythical destination for the community), it also operates as a place where the community members can feel secure and peaceful. Finally, in the case of Crimea, homeland becomes a destination point where members can hope for the prospect of a better life as a result of their rational decisions.

The post-return experiences in the homeland foster the establishment of a crucial link between myth and reality in the minds of the community members. Since these experiences also create serious disillusionments due to harsh daily living conditions, but not regret, they have lead to a shift in the construction of the myth of homeland rather than bringing its end altogether. The mythified image of homeland now assumes a function of guide for a political action in the nationalist ideology of Crimean Tatars.

Notes

1. Although we used the term 'national identity' in this article fort he case of Crimean Tatars, a stateless community, the terms 'ethnic identity' and 'national identity' is interchangeably used referring to the relevant literature. While Crimean Tatars define themselves as a nation, they are defined by others as an ethnic group. See Connor 1978.
2. For example, Williams, in his book entitled *The Crimean Tatars: The Diaspora Experience and the Forging of a Nation* (2001b) offers an excellent narration of the history of the formation of the Crimean Tatar national identity.
3. This paper is based on the fieldworks carried out in Crimea in 2001, 2002, 2004 and 2006, and in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan in 2005 and 2006. During the fieldworks, 92 in-depth interviews were conducted in Crimea, 23 in Uzbekistan and 10 in Kazakhstan with Crimean Tatar community members, the leaders and activists of the national movement. Currently, approximately 75-85,000 Crimean Tatars still live in Uzbekistan and an estimate of 2,000 Crimean Tatars in Kazakhstan. According to the 1989 Soviet population census, half of Crimean Tatars in the Soviet Union lived in Uzbekistan (188,365) and around 1% lived in Kazakhstan (2,924). Crimean Tatars in Uzbekistan are mostly concentrated in Tashkent and some surrounding districts of Tashkent such as Yunusabad and Chircik. Those who remain in Kazakhstan are mostly concentrated in the Southern part of the country, in

Chimkent region (especially Sary Agach village). No major difference is noted between the Crimean Tatars who live in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan regarding their perception of homeland.

4. It is necessary to remind that Crimean Tatars' attempt to establish a Crimean Tatar Autonomous Republic in 1917 under the leadership of Noman Çelebi Cihan was prevented by the Bolsheviks and Cihan was killed. Bolsheviks established an autonomous republic in 1921 but without using the term 'Tatar'. For more details see Kırımlı 1996.
5. During World War II, eight Soviet nationalities were deported to Siberia and Central Asia between 1941 and 1944. These were Volga Germans, Karachai, Kalmyks, Chechen, Ingush, Balkars, Meskhetian Turks and Crimean Tatars. These people were classified as 'traitor nations' by Stalin and they were subjected to a special settlement regime until 1956. For more details please see Kreindler 1986.
6. In November 14, 1989, The Supreme Soviet issued a decree 'On Recognizing the Illegal and Criminal Repressive Acts Against Peoples Subjected to Forcible Resettlement and Ensuring their Rights'. This decree strongly condemned Stalin's deportations and declared that these forceful settlements are barbarian acts which are in contradiction with the humanist nature of socialist order and guaranteed the rehabilitation of their rights. The decree referred also to Balkars, Kalmyks, Germans, Meskhetian Turks, Koreans, Greeks, Kurds, Karachai, Chechen and Ingush which shared the same faith with Crimean Tatars at different times. While following the collapse of the Soviet Union, nationalities having homelands outside the Soviet Union returned in great numbers to their home countries such as Germans, some of those whose homelands are within the former Soviet Union still face important difficulties. For example, in the case of the Meskhetian Turks, the repatriation law was accepted by the Georgian government only in July 2007 and their return still not began yet. Applications for return was to begin in January 2008, however, a postponement of three months was accepted by the Council of Europe as a result of the demand of Georgia, a conditional member of the Council of Europe since 1999. For more details see Trier and Khanzin (eds) 2007.
7. The repatriation process of Crimean Tatars is a difficult one considering the relations of the Crimean Autonomous Republic with the central government of Ukraine and also the impact of the international forces competing in the region. Crimean Tatars want to become influential in politics both at the level of the Crimean government and also at the level of Ukraine's. Besides social, cultural and economic claims, Crimean Tatars have political claims which are critical within the current demographic climate in Crimea. The loyalty of the Crimean Tatar national movement to the Ukrainian state and their support for the integrity of Ukraine increased the hostility of Russians, who constitute the majority in the peninsula.
8. The Convention 169 of the International Labour Organization (ILO) concerning indigenous and tribal peoples in independent countries adopted on June 27, 1989 and entered into force in September 5, 1991, offered indigenous people many international instruments to prevent discrimination and assimilation through recognizing their right to develop their own way of life and identities within the states in which they live. Other agreements such as the Bishkek Agreement which recognized the rights of deported nationalities and UN declarations such as the Law on the Rights of the Indigenous Peoples adopted in September 2007 recognizing many rights including especially their right to their lands, provided Crimean Tatars a legitimate basis and legal framework for claiming their rights in their homeland.
9. The homeland is not necessarily the birth place of the individuals but the place where the community is born.

10. In a popular song, the beauties of Crimea are depicted as follows:

Aluşta'dan esgen yeller	Winds blowing from Aluşta
Yüzüme vurdu	Cast my face
Balalıktan özgen evge	Since my childhood at home
Koz yaşım duştu	I cried
Ben bu yerde yaşamadım	I did not live in that place
Yaşlığıma toyamadım	I could not have enough of my youth
Vetanıma hasret kaldım	I yearned for my homeland
Ey guzel Kırım	Oh beautiful Crimea
Bahçelerin meyveleri	The fruits of the gardens
Bal işe şerbet	Honey and sherbet
Sularını içe içe	Drinking her water
Toyamadım ben	I could not have enough
Ben bu yerde yaşamadım	I did not live in that place
Yaşlığıma toyamadım	I could not have enough of my youth
Vetanıma hasret kaldım	I yearned for my homeland

11. *Adalet Güreşi Saflarında* (in the Ranks of Struggle for Justice) by İdris Çelebioğlu Asanin; *Kırım'dan Seda* (Voices from Crimea) by Pivot Zeti; *Ana Kaygısı* (Mother's Worry) by Rüstem Muedin; *Kırımın Sadık Kızları* (Loyal Daughters of Crimea) by Safinar Cemileva, Lentara Hamitova and Lila Cemileva; *Secde* (Prostration) by İskender Fazıl; Etiket Krımski Tatar (Crimean Tatar Identity) by M.A. Hayruddinov and C.M. Useyinov; *Şiirler* (Poems) by Amdi Giraybai and the periodical *Altın Beşik* (Golden Cradle) are some of the examples that emphasize the same themes.

12. A poem from İskender Fazıl (1998: 74) entitled *İki Dünya* (Two Worlds) is a good example for this:

Öyle devir	The time
Kelecek:	Will come:
Kırım Tatar	Crimean Tatar
Milleti de	Nation too
Vatanında	Will set up
Kırım Tatar	The Crimean Tatar
Devletini	State
Tikleyecek	In its homeland

13. The second article of the *Regulations of the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar People*, which defines the Mejlis as the highest plenipotentiary representative organ of the Crimean Tatar people describes the aims of the Crimean Tatar Mejlis as follows:

§ The elimination of traces of the genocide carried out by the Soviet state with regards to the Crimean Tatars, the revival of the national and political rights of the Crimean Tatar people and the realization of their rights for free, national-state self-definition on their national territory;

§ The implementation of a system of measures for the return and revitalization of Crimean Tatars to their historic motherland—to Crimea;

§ Revival of the language, culture and religion of the Crimean Tatars;

§ The improvement of the economic infrastructure of Crimea, with the aims of carrying out socio-economic programs and guaranteeing the social defence of the Crimean Tatar people;

§ The improvement of the worsening ecological situation of Crimea (www. Qurultay.org)

14. An old Crimean Tatar in Uzbekistan said:

Most of those who had money returned much earlier. Young had to go back. It is much more difficult when you are getting old. Most of my family members are in Crimea now. I am saying to myself that I should go back and die there. I don't know, maybe I can realize it one day. Now I cannot afford to go (Female, 65).

Another said in Chirchik:

We have to go back. But I do not have money for travel costs. I can sell the house for 3000 dollars. I should spend the half of it for the travel and container cost. With the remaining money I can't do anything in Crimea and we won't have a house to live in. Now we miss the Crimean Tatars who left Chirchik (Male, 67).

15. For the initial bad treatment of Crimean Tatars by their Uzbek neighbours in their special settlement areas see Williams 2001: 391-2.

16. This is also supported by the World Bank data. According to this source, in the year 2004 the NGI per capita in Uzbekistan was 460 USD while in Kazakhstan it was 2260 USD. (http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/DATASTATISTICS/0,,contentMDK:20535285~menuPK:1192694~pagePK:64133150~piPK:64133175~theSitePK:239419,00.html , last accessed 25.02.2006, 3:10.)

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Kırım, Özbekistan ve Kazakistan'daki Kırım Tatarları'nda Anavatan Algısı

Ayşegül Aydıngün[*]
Erdoğan Yıldırım[**]

Özet: Kırım Tatarları, başta Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'na doğru olmak üzere çok büyük göçlere neden olan 1783 Rus işgalinden beri anavatan kaybını yaşamaktadırlar. Anavatan kaybı Stalin'in stratejik sürgünleri ile doruk noktasına ulaşmıştır. 1944 yılında, Kırım Tatarları Kırım'dan Orta Asya'ya sürülmüşler ve anavatanlarına dönüş hakkını 1989 yılında elde edebilmişlerdir. O tarihten beri, vatana geri dönüş devam etmektedir. Anavatan mitinin milli duyguyu harekete geçiren etkin bir araç olduğu göz önünde bulundurarak, bu makalede, Kırım Tatarları'nda anavatan algısı çeşitli katmanları ile incelenmektedir. Bu katmanlar, kimliğin temel bir unsuru olarak anavatan; idealize edilmiş nihai bir hedef olarak anavatan, Kırım Tatar toplumunun yaşadığı yer olarak anavatan ve daha iyi bir yaşam için akılcı olarak seçilen bir mekan olarak anavatan şeklinde sıralanabilir. Ayrıca bu makale, bu farklı katmanların her bir Kırım Tatarı'nda farklı derecelerde olmakla birlikte, aynı anda var olabildiğini iddia etmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kırım Tatarları, Kırım, Anavatan, Kimlik, Sürgün, Mit.

[*] Orta Doğu Teknik Üniversitesi, Sosyoloji Bölümü / ANKARA
aydingun@metu.edu.tr
[**] Orta Doğu Teknik Üniversitesi, Sosyoloji Bölümü / ANKARA
erdo@metu.edu.tr

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Восприятие Родины крымскими татарами Крыма, Узбекистана и Казахстана

Айшегуль Айдынгун[*]
Эрдоган Йилдырым[**]

Резюме: Крымские татары лишились своей исторической родины после вторжения России в Крым в 1783 году, что вызвало массовые волны миграции в Османскую империю. Посредством стратегических депортаций Сталина изгнание и утрата родины достигли своего расцвета. В 1944 году крымские татары были переселены из Крыма в Среднюю Азию, и только в 1989 году они получили право возвращения на родину. С тех пор продолжается процесс возвращения на историческую родину. Учитывая, что миф об исторической родине является эффективным инструментом для мобилизации национальных чувств, в данной статье исследуются различные уровни восприятия родины крымскими татарами. Эти уровни можно определить как: родина как основной фактор идентичности, родина как идеализированная конечная цель, родина как ареал проживания крымско-татарского населения, родина как рационально выбранная местность для лучшей жизни. Вместе с этим в этой статье утверждается, что эти уровни в разной степени могут сочетаться у каждого крымского татарина, в то же время они все вместе могут сосуществовать.

Ключевые слова: крымские татары, Крым, родина, идентичность, депортация, КГБ.

[*] Ближневосточный технический университет, кафедра социологии / Анкара
aydingun@metu.edu.tr
[**] Ближневосточный технический университет, кафедра социологии / Анкара
erdo@metu.edu.tr

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