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The Crimean Tatars and their Russian-Captive Slaves

An Aspect of Muscovite-Crimean Relations in the 16th and 17th Centuries

Eizo MATSUKI

The Law Code of Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich (*Ulozhenie*), being formed of 25 chapters and divided into 976 articles, is the last and the most systematic codification of Muscovite Law in early modern Russia. It was compiled in 1649, that is more than one and a half centuries after Russia's political "Independence" from Mongol-Tatar Rule. Chapter VIII of this Law Code, comprised of 7 articles and titled "The Redemption of Military Captives", however, reveals that Muscovite Russia at the mid-17th century was yet suffering from frequent Tatar raids into its populated territory. The raids were to capture Russian people and sell them as slaves. Because of this situation, the Muscovite government was forced to create a special annual tax (*poronianichnyi zbor*) to prepare a financial fund needed for ransoming Russian captive-slaves from the Tatars.¹

Chapter VIII, article 1 imposes an annual levy on the common people of all Russia: 8 *dengi* per household for town people as well as church peasants; 4 *dengi* for other peasants; and 2 *dengi* for lower service men. On the other hand, articles 2-7 of this chapter established norms for ransom-payment to the Tatars according to the rank of the Russian captives: for gentry (*dvoriane*) and lesser gentry (*deti boiarskie*) twenty rubles per 100 *chetvert'* of their service land-estate (*pomest'e*); for lesser ranks such as Musketeers (*strel'tsy*),² Cossacks, townspeople, and peasants a fixed payment from ten to forty rubles each. The monies of this

¹ *Sobornoe Ulozhenie 1649 goda*. ed. by A. G. Man'kov, Leningrad, 1987, pp. 27-28, 172-173; *The Muscovite Law Code (ULOZHENIE)*, ed. & trans. by R. Hellie, Irvine, 1988, pp. 17-18. *Polonianiki* literally means prisoners of war and *poronianichnyi zbor* - tax for ransoming them.

² Musketeers (*strel'tsy*) - the first Muscovite permanent regular regiments of the armed forces which was organized by Ivan IV (they were armed with muskets and swords, pikes, and battle-axes, and were mainly infantrymen) and in the 16th century remained a relatively small auxiliary forces added to the mounted army of gentry (*dvoriane*) and lesser gentry (*deti boiarskie*), but in the 17th century the military importance of the *strel'tsy* grew considerably. According to Kotoshikhin, in the middle of the 17th century in Moscow alone there were more than 20 regiments of the *strel'tsy*, each of them numbering between 800 and 1.000 men. G. Kotoshikhin, *O Rossii v tsarstvovanie Alekseia Mikhailovicha*, ed. by A. E. Pennington, Oxford, 1980. pp. 102-104.

special tax were annually collected by the Foreign Affairs Chancellery (*Posol'skii Prikaz*),³ and were partly handed over to the Russian envoys to the Crimean Khanate, the Ottoman Empire and other countries. Payments were made to find Russian captive-slaves and to ransom them from the hands of Crimean, Turk or other slave-traders, and were partly paid to the Crimean and Ottoman envoys or Greek merchants who brought along a number of captive-slaves to Moscow so as to get their ransom monies.

What do these facts mean? They indicate, first of all, that in spite of political independence from the Kipchak Khanate's rule in the second half of the 15th century, Muscovite Russia for a long time after that, and even till the mid-17th century, was not yet freed from the constant attacks by the people of a successor-state of the Kipchak Khanate: the Crimean Khanate, which was created in the mid-fifteenth century in the Crimean Peninsula and on the northern shore of the Black Sea.⁴ The Russian population on the southern border with the Crimean Tatars was continuously exposed to the dangers of Crimean raider bands, which were usually formed to attack Russian permanent settlements, capture people and sell them to slave-traders, or to give them back to Russia for ransom monies.

The problem of the captive-slaves taken by the Tatar raiders and the ransoming of them by Russia was always one of the diplomatic themes acted out between the Crimea and Russia throughout the period from the beginning of the 16th century to the end of the 17th century.⁵ In any case, Muscovite Russia at mid-17th century had not yet the power to compel the Crimean Tatars to stop their repetitious invasions. Neither militarily nor diplomatically was this possible, which evidences the fact that the government was obliged to legislate a special tax for ransoming Russian captives in the most systematical Law Code of 1649. For the Muscovite government there was no choice but to get them back by paying ransoms from the Tsar's treasury, the financial fund of the Muscovite state.

But when did the ransoming by the state treasury begin in Muscovy?

³ *Posol'skii Prikaz* (in English: Ambassadorial Chancellery or Foreign Affairs Chancellery) was the central governmental institution in Muscovy from the 16th to the early 18th century that was responsible for administering the relations between the Muscovite government and foreign powers. Regarding the history of *Posol'skii prikaz* and its functions, see: S.A. Belokurov, *O posol'skom prikaze*, Moscow, 1906; S.K. Bogoiavlenskii, *Prikaznye sud'i XVII v.*, Moscow-Leningrad, 1946. The *Posl'skii prikaz* also conducted negotiations and arranged the ransom of Russian prisoners in other lands, gathering for this purpose the redemption tax (*Polonianichnyi zbor*). See Article 1 of chapter VIII.

⁴ For a brief history of the emergence and early development of the Crimean Khanate, see: A.M. Nekrasov, *Vozniknovenie i evoliutsiia Krymskogo gosudarstva v XV-XVI vekakh. Otechestvennaia istoriia*, 1999, No.2, pp. 48-58. See also: V.D. Smirnov, *Krymskoe khanstvo pod verkhovenstvom Ottomanskoi Porty do nachala XVIII stoletii*. St. Petersburg, 1887; A. Fisher, *The Crimean Tatars*. Stanford, 1978.

⁵ The most comprehensive and reliable works on diplomatic relations between the Muscovite government and the Crimean Khanate are: A.L. Khoroshkevich, *Rus' i Krym. Ot soiuza k protivostoianiiu*. Moscow, 2001; A. A. Novosel'skii, *Bor'ba moskovskogo gosudarstva s Tatarami v pervoi polovine XVII veka*. Moscow-Leningrad, 1948.

During the reign of Mengli-Giray Khan (1466-1514),⁶ who accepted in 1475 the suzerainty of the Ottomans (Mehmed II) in the Crimea and so became the real founder of the Giray dynasty (1440s-1783) of the Crimean Khanate, the human plunder taken during his campaigns began to be brought to Kaffa and sold to slave-merchants for a great profit, and this seems to set the stage for the slave-trade to become one of the most important and most profitable economic sections in this khanate. But the political alliance (1480) between Ivan III (1462-1505) and Mengli-Giray, which continued throughout the reign of Ivan III, against both Lithuania (Casmir) and the remaining Kipchak Khan (Ahmad) prevented the Crimean raiders to attack Russian territory at will.

The main value of this alliance for Mengli-Giray was Moscow's cooperation against the Kipchak Khanate. But when the Kipchak Khanate disappeared at the beginning of 16th century, Mengli-Giray was less interested in the Moscow alliance. He turned his attention northward, broke the alliance with Muscovy (in the reign of Vasili III :1505-1533) and went over to the Lithuanian side. He made an alliance with Lithuania (the Polish Jagellonian monarchy) in 1512. From this time on, the Crimean Tatars shifted the main direction of their slave raids to the border provinces of the Muscovite state, refraining from looting the Ukrainian lands controlled by the Lithuanian Principality. Since this time, the Crimean looting activity in the Muscovite territory intensified and began the protracted struggle between Russia and the Crimean Khanate.⁷ The devastating raids of Crimean Tatars into the southern borderlands of Muscovite Russia did not decrease until the end of the 17th century.

But the Muscovite government did not always defray ransom money from the state treasury in the first half of the 16th century. According to S. O. Shmidt, in the 1540s a close relative of the Russian captives, usually forming a group of several decades, and with the permission of the government, went to Crimea with a merchant caravan or a Russian diplomatic mission, and searched there for his family member and bought him back at his own expenses.⁸ Of course, there were also cases where the Tatar envoys, Greeks or Turk merchants brought with them Russian captive-slaves to Moscow, and their relatives ransomed them with their own money as well.

Ransoming captives from the Tatars, however, became a serious problem in mid-sixteenth-century Muscovy, because not only the Crimean Tatars but also the Kazan Khanate took many Russian captives at that time. A.A. Zimin estimates that there were more

⁶ For Mengli-Giray's career and his political role in the history of Crimean Khanate, see: V.D. Smirnov, *op.cit.*, pp. 209-390; K.V. Bazilevich, *Vneshniaia politika russkogo tsentralizovannogo gosudarstva. Vtoraia polovina XV veka*, Moscow, 1952, pp. 102-220; A. Fisher, *The Crimean Tatar*, pp. 8-16; See also: A.V. Vinogradov, *Krymskie khany v XVI veke. Otechestvennaia istoriia*, 1999, No.2, pp. 58-60.

⁷ G. Vernadsky, *Russia at the Dawn of the Modern Age*. New Haven, 1959, pp. 67-92, 152-153; A.L. Khoroshkevich, *Rus' i Krym*, pp. 124-196.

⁸ S. O. Shmidt, *Russkie polonianiki v Krymu i sistema ikh vykupa v seredine XVI v.*, *Voprosy sotsial'no-ekonomicheskoi istorii i istochnikovedeniia perioda feodalizma v Rossii*. Moscow, 1961, pp. 30-34.

than 100,000 Russian captives in the Kazan Khanate alone in 1551,⁹ although the latter was to be conquered by Ivan IV in 1553. Wealthy captives might pay their own ransom, but the poor majority could not. The government of Ivan IV, therefore, presented to the Moscow Church Council of 1551 the problem of ransom of captives by the Tatars. Ivan IV questioned the Council on, how the ransom money for Russian captives was to be raised. Obviously his “question” had the implication that the Church should help defray the expenses. It is as follows:

«On captives. Great care must be taken about this problem. Captives, including boyars, boyars’ wives, and all ranks of people, are brought here [to Moscow] from the Tatar Hordes to take their ransom. But some of them are in debt and without service land-estates, have no means by which to ransom themselves, and no one who pays ransom for them. These captives, men and women, are conveyed back to the land of the infidels, and there they are abused with all kinds of filthy sacrileges. Concerning this, the council should decree how ransom money is to be made for them, instead of letting them go back to the infidels...»¹⁰

In the form of a “question” the government of Ivan IV indicated the Church’s responsibility toward this problem and indirectly requested expenses for the Russian captives. In fact, when the Crimean Tatars brought a number of Russian captives to Moscow and demanded ransom for them in 1535, the government asked Makarii, then the archbishop of Novgorod, to contribute seven hundred rubles to the cause, and he quickly delivered the sum, having gathered most of it from the monasteries of his eparchy.¹¹

The Church council of 1551, however, clearly refused to acknowledge the Church’s responsibility in this matter. The decision of the 1551 council (the *Stoglav*) called the ransom obligation a “public”, not a church, responsibility, and requested that that all captives should be first ransomed from the state treasury, and then the expenses needed for that should be allocated as a tax to the various holdings in the Muscovite state:

«Those captives who are ransomed by the tsar’s envoys at the Hordes, in Constantinople, in the Crimea, in Kazan, in Astrakhan, or in Kaffa, or who ransom themselves, all these captives shall be ransomed from the tsar’s treasury. Whatever amount is dispersed each year from the tsar’s treasury for the ransom of captives, this amount shall be assessed against tax units of arable land equally, for such ransoming constitutes public charity (*obshchaia milostynia*).»¹²

⁹ A. A. Zimin, *Reformy Ivana Groznogo: Ocherki sotsial’no-ekonomicheskoi i politicheskoi istorii Rossii serediny XVI v.* Moscow, 1960, p. 381.

¹⁰ *Zakonodatel’stvo perioda obrazovaniia i ukrepleniia Russkogo tsentralizovannogo gosudarstva*. vol.2, ed. by A. D. Gorskii, M., 1985, pp. 270, 420.

¹¹ *PSRL*. vol. VI, St. Petersburg, 1853, p. 294. See also: S.M. Solov’ev, *Istoriia rossii s drevneishikh vremen*, Kniga IV (vols. 7-8), Moscow, 1960, pp. 139-141.

¹² *Zakonodatel’stvo perioda obrazovaniia i ukrepleniia Russkogo tsentralizovannogo gosudarstva*. vol.2, pp. 350, 481-484. Regarding the *Stoglav* as a whole, see: pp. 242-252; *Le Stoglav, ou les Cent Chaptiers*, ed. by E. Duchesne, Paris, 1920; J. Kollman, *The Moscow Stoglav* (“Hundred Chapters”)

The ransom tax that actually came into being after the Stoglav Council of 1551 was called "captive money" (*polonianichnye den'gi*), and was collected annually or more often from the inhabitants of secular and church land alike. It was known, for example, that the ransom tax was collected in the years 1552, 1577 and 1581, but the size of it is difficult to estimate, because of the scarcity of information.¹³ In any case, this tax (captive money) lasted for a century until the mid-17th century, when the *Ulozhenie* of 1649 created a more regulated tax system for ransoming Russian captives (*polonianichnyi zbor*).

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The Black Sea and the Crimea occupied an important place as a major slave supplier for the Mediterranean World as is described in the earliest of recorded history until early modern times. In the Middle Ages, with the establishment of Italian trading colonies in the Crimea after the Fourth Crusade of 1204 and the incorporation of the northern shores of the Black Sea into the Mongol Empire (the Kipchak Khanate) by the mid-13th century, slave trade in this area became remarkably active. In the 14th and 15th centuries Kaffa (Caffa), a Genoese colony in the Crimea, and Tana, a Venetian one on the Azov Sea, were the most flourishing slave-markets, and the most active slave-export ports from the Black Sea.¹⁴

During these centuries, a massive number of the Tatars, Circassians, and Russians were transported as slaves to the Byzantine Empire, Italy, France, Spain, and Egypt by the Genoese, Venetian and Islamic slave-traders. Slave transportation from the Black Sea by Italians had a great influence on the history of the Mediterranean world in the Middle Ages. For example, without their activity the Mameluke Dynasty doubtlessly could neither have emerged nor existed in the history of Egypt at this period.

On the slave trading by the Italians and its importance in the East and Central Mediterranean world in these centuries we can get much information from the studies of C. Verlinden, a Belgian historian, who examined all of the extant records of sale and deeds, including notarial documents of Genoa and Venetia, in European archives.¹⁵

Only in the second half of 15th century, especially after the time when the Ottomans conquered the Byzantine Empire in 1453, expelling the Italians from the Black Sea and establishing their control over the Crimean Tatars in 1475, the traditional slave trade which had been held by the Italians was transferred to the hands of Islamic merchants. Although Muslim

Church Council of 1551. vols.1-2 (unpublished Ph. D. dissertation), The University of Michigan, 1978.

¹³ This tax (captive money) collected in one locality in 1581 was 1.19 rubles per *sokha* (a measure of arable land serving as the basic unit of taxation in Muscovy), and the following year it was 0.18 ruble per *sokha*. See: *Akty iuridicheskie, ili sobranie form starinno deloproizvodstva*. St. Petersburg, 1938, no. 211, p. 224.

¹⁴ P.P. Mel'gunov, *Ital'ianskie kuptsy i Iugo-Vostochnaia trgovlia v XIV-XV vv., Ocherki po istorii russkoi trgovli IX-XVIII vv.*, Moscow, 1905, pp. 126-162; E. Ch. Skrzhinskaia, *Istoriia Tany, Barbaro i Kontarini o Rossii. K istorii ittalo-russkikh sviazi v XV v.*, Leningrad, 1971, pp. 29-64.

¹⁵ C. Verlinden, *L'Esclavage dans l'Europe médiévale, vol.2, Italie, Colonies italiennes du Levant, Levant latin, Empire byzantin*. Gent, 1977. See also: C. Verlinden, *Medieval Slavers, Economy, Society*

merchants replaced the Italians as the major slave traders in the Black Sea, slave trade itself in the area kept on flourishing after 1475 as well.¹⁶

Only the slave source noticeably changed after that time. While the Italians controlled the markets in the Black Sea, they were not slave hunters, but, as a rule, slave buyers from the surrounding lands, such as those of the Tatars, Circassians and the Russians and others. Since the time when the Ottomans and the Crimean Tatars had dominated the area, the latter's military campaigns and raids for captives became a major source of slaves. Although the Crimean Tatars had been acquainted with agriculture and an urban way of life by the 16th century, they retained their traditional nomadic skills and abilities to move quickly and quietly across the steppe, had an open hostility toward the Christian population, and were inherently disdainful of peasants. From the beginning of the 16th century until the end of 17th century the Crimean Tatar raider bands made almost annual forays into agricultural Slavic lands searching for captives to sell as slaves.¹⁷

As many scholars recognize the slave trade was the most important basis for the Crimean Tatar economy in the 16th and 17th centuries. During these centuries, the Crimean Khanate remained the main supplier of Slavic slaves, almost all of which were captured in southern Poland or Muscovite Russia, and brought back to the Crimea by their raiders. Most of their raids seemed neither to have had any military purpose, nor politico-territorial ambitions. The taking of captives and the selling them as slaves for the Crimean Tatars was purely an "economic" activity. R. Hellie refers to the Crimean Tatar's raiding activities as their "industry": "Slave raiding into Muscovy reached crisis proportions after 1475, when the Ottomans took over the Black Sea slave trade from the Genoese and the Crimean began slave raiding as a major industry, especially between 1514 and 1654."¹⁸

The sale of slaves brought great profit to the Crimean raiders, because they were in great demand from the Ottoman Empire. For the Ottomans, the Crimean Tatars served not only as military reinforcements in their European policies, but also as suppliers of human resources. As H. Inalcik points out in his paper mentioned above, a constant influx of human labor (slaves) as military men, craftsmen and domestic laborers, was indispensable for the society of the Ottoman Empire.¹⁹ Above all in the 16th century, demand for slave labor was remarkably large, because its growing imperial structure needed ever more officials, and each of them was an eager buyer for his entourage.

and Government in Medieval Italy, ed. by D. Herlihy Kent, 1969, pp. 1-14.

¹⁶ A. Fisher, Muscovy and the Black Sea Slave Trade, *Canadian-American Slavic Studies*, VI, 4 (1972), pp. 577-578.

¹⁷ A. Fisher, *Ibid.*; H. Inalcik, Service Labor in the Ottoman Empire, *The Mutual Effects of the Islamic and Judeo-Christian Worlds. The East European Patterns*, ed. by A. Fisher et al., Brooklin, 1979, pp. 38-39. See also: A. A. Novosel'skii, *op.cit.*, pp. 434-436.

¹⁸ H. Inalcik, *op.cit.*, p.38; A. Fisher, *The Crimean Tatar*, pp. 26-28; A. L. Khoroshkevich, *Rus' i Krym*, p. 210; R. Hellie, *Slavery in Russia. 1450-1725*. Chicago & London, 1982, p. 23.

¹⁹ See: H. Inalcik, *op.cit.*, pp. 25-52.

The imperial navy also needed a great number of slaves, since the Ottomans used slave labor on their galleys, following the old Mediterranean tradition. In fact, the largest number of the slaves shipped from the Black Sea to Istanbul, was purchased by the Ottoman government for their galleys. In 1576 the Ottomans navy staffed twenty galleys with Slavic slaves, purchased 6000 slaves in 1579, and 4000 in 1590 as well. In the 17th century the situation had not essentially changed. J. Krizhanich, the Croatian friar who traveled and observed the Ottoman Empire and went to Muscovy in the 17th century, wrote that almost only Russian slaves were used on the Ottoman galleys. In addition, since the mortality rate of slaves on galleys was high, the continuous supply of new slaves from abroad was indispensable to the Ottoman government.²⁰

It is almost impossible to estimate the total number of Russian slave-captives seized by the Crimean Tatars, since the extant sources are not only incomplete, but also inaccurate. In the paper mentioned above, A. Fisher discussed the number of Eastern Slaves captured by the Crimean Tatars and sold into the international slave trade from 1468 to 1794, but he could not arrive at a total number. In the 220 years from 1468 to 1794, he also enumerates about sixty occasions where the Tatars raided either southern Poland or Muscovite Russia and returned to the Crimea with a large number of captives. (The largest was 400,000 captives in 1676). However, as he himself suggests in the same paper, the most frequent and the most usual raider bands were small ones and captured less than 30 persons at a time.²¹

B. Baranowski, a Polish historian, states that Poland lost one million of its population in all the years combined from 1494 to 1694. On the other hand, A. A. Novosel'skii, a Soviet historian, estimates in his book that the Russian people captured by the Tatars in the 40 years in the first half of 17th century were about 200,000.²² In any case, it is very difficult to get a reliable figure for the number of Russians that had been seized by the Crimean Tatars and sold into slavery in these centuries.

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Let us now pay attention to the destiny of Russians seized by the Crimean Tatars. The captured people usually were forced to make a long march on foot and in chains to the Crimea, and many of them died on the way. Fearing military attempts to get back the captives by the Russian army or by Cossack parties, the Tatar raiding bands hurried on their way to the Crimea, and ill or wounded captives were usually killed.

S. Herberstein, an ambassador from the Emperor of Germany to Muscovy in the first half of 16th century, wrote that in 1521 "He [Mohammed Giray: Crimian Khan 1515-23] took with him from Muscovy so great a multitude of captives as would scarcely be considered credible; they say the number exceeded eight hundred thousand, part of whom he sold in Kaffa to the

²⁰ A. Fisher, *Muscovy and the Black Sea Slave Trade*, pp. 585-586.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 579-582.

²² B. Baranowski, *Chłop polski w walce z tatarami*. Warsaw, 1952, pp. 49-55; A. A. Novosel'skii, *op.cit.*, pp. 434-436.

Turks, and part he slew. The old and infirmed men, who will not fetch much at a sale, are given up to the Tatar youths, either to be stoned, or to be thrown into the sea, or to be killed by any sort of death they might please.”²³

The Crimean raiders have to hand over ten percent of their human booty to the government as a kind of custom tax at the frontier of the Crimean Khanate. Most captives were usually driven to Kaffa, the largest slave market of the Crimea under the direct administration of the Ottoman Empire, and were sold there to the slave merchants of Greek, Jewish, Armenian and Muslim origin.²⁴ These merchants bought in bulk Slavic captives from the Crimean raiders, and classified them into many categories according to their sex, age, ability or skill, and then sold them individually to local buyers, or again in large numbers to slave-traders in order to export them to the Ottoman Empire or to Iran.

In the 1570s close to 20,000 slaves a year were being sold in Kaffa, and according to Beauplan, a French officer who served in Poland and visited Kaffa in the mid-17th century, there were nearly 30,000 slaves to be sold in 1648. He described Kaffa as follows: “In the city there are not many Tatars, there live chiefly Christians who keep in their hands many slaves which have been purchased from the Tatars, who had plundered and seized them in Poland or in Muscovy. This city has twelve Greek churches, thirty-two Armenian churches, and a Catholic church; St. Peter’s. In the city there are probably five or six thousand households, but we find here over 30,000 slaves.”²⁵

Nearly seventy percent of the slaves sold in Kaffa were driven onto ships and dispatched to Istanbul. A voyage of ten days brought them to the capital of the Ottoman Empire. When they arrived, the Ottoman officials first examined the new “cargos” and chose the best slaves: the most beautiful women for the sultan’s harem, the most handsome and the strongest men for his palace service. The remaining ones were purchased either by the government for navy, or by the slave merchants of Istanbul, all of whom were of Jewish origin and who were organized into a guild. Buyers of slaves came to here from all parts of the Empire, Egypt, Anatolia, Western Europe, Africa and Iran.²⁶

Not only the government but also individual nobles and officials purchased Slavic slaves as their suite and for use in domestic tasks. Some Slavic slaves converted to Islam and rose to a high position within the Ottoman government, but they are few and the exception. As mentioned above, the largest number of the Russian slaves were purchased by the government

²³ Sigizmund Gerbershtein, *Zapiski o Moskovii*, ed. by A. L. Khoroshkevich et al., Moscow, 1985, p. 175; Sigismund von Herberstein, *Notes Upon Russia*, London (The Hakluyt Society), vol. II, 1852, p. 65. Regarding Mohammed Giray, see: V. E. Syroechkovskii, Mukhammed-Gerai i ego vassaly, *Uch.zap. MGU*, vol. 61, 1940; A.L. Khoroshkevich, *Rus’ i Krym*, pp. 162-196.

²⁴ A.L. Khoroshkevich, *Rus’ i Krym*, pp. 211-212. For ethnic makeup of slave merchants in Kaffa, see the place quoted from Beauplan below.

²⁵ R. Hellie, *Slavery in Russia*, p. 23; Giiom Levasser de Boplan, *Opisanie Ukrainy*, ed. by A. L. Khoroshkevich et al, Moscow, 2004, pp. 208-209.

²⁶ A. Fisher, Muscovy and the Black Sea Slave Trade, p.584. Cf. A.L. Khoroshkevich, *Rus’ i Krym*, p.212.

and used as galley slaves.

There was only one advantage for the galley slaves and that was a greater possibility for escape. A Cossack captured by the Tatars served on a galley of the Kaffa Bey for seven years, but was fortunately freed by a Cossack raid. He later testified that 260 Russian slaves were serving on his galley. The famous leader of a rebellion during the Time of Troubles, Ivan Bolotnikov, before being a rebel, was also taken prisoner by the Crimean Tatars and was sold into slavery in the Ottoman Empire, where he served as a galley slave for some years. But when a German ship captured his galley, Bolotnikov was freed and went to Venice. From Venice he made his way to Russia via Poland and later became the leader of the rebellion.²⁷

Vasilii Polozov, a lesser gentry (*deti boiarskii*) who served under Governor B. A. Repnin in the second half of 17th century, was also captured by the Crimean Tatars and given as a gift to the Ottoman sultan after one and a half year's stay in the Crimea. In the Ottoman Empire he served sultan for twenty years, but against the sultan's wish he would not give up his Christian faith. Lastly, the sultan ordered his death, but he was saved and sent instead to the galleys. He served as a galley slave for more than nine years. But when his galley was wrecked except he and his friend all crew were drowned. They clung to a beam and were washed ashore. In thanksgiving, Vasilii made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem and other eastern Holy Places, and finally succeeded in getting back to Russia by way of the Circassian lands, Persia and Astrakhan. After arriving in Russia, he submitted a petition (*Chelobitnaia*) reporting his long hardship to Tsar Fedor Alekseevich and requested a post.²⁸ These cases, however, are exceptionally lucky ones. Most of the Russians who had the misfortune to be galley slaves never returned home and ended their life on the warships of the Ottoman Empire.

A number of the Russian captives of the Tatars were kept as slaves in the Crimea, without being sold abroad as merchandise or brought back home for ransom. The Crimean Khanate supplied not only the slaves for military forces but also important materials such as grains, meat and salt to the Ottoman Empire.²⁹ The khan and many clan leaders received a certain percent of captives from raiders as a "gift" or "custom" and used the women in their harems, and the men in agriculture in their landed estates. Of course slaves also performed domestic work in the towns. Sometimes they were hired out from the Muslim owners to Christian employers.

Mikhalon Litvin (Michael the Lithuanian), who left a vivid picture of the Crimean Tatar based on first-hand observation in the mid-16th century, demonstrates that Kaffa was a big slave-market port city, from where a large number of Slavic slaves were exported to the major

²⁷ *Vossoedinenie ukraïny s rossiei. Dokumenty i materialy*. 3 vols., ed. by Institut Istorii (AN SSSR), vol. I, pp. 7—72; *Vosstanie Bolotnikova. Dokumenty i materialy*. Moscow, 1959.

²⁸ V. A. Belobrova, *Cherty zhanra khozhenii v nekotorykh drevnerusskikh pis'mennykh pamiatnikakh XVII veka. TODRL*, 27 (1972), pp. 266-269; *Russian Travelers to the Christian East from the Twelfth to the Twentieth Century*. ed. by T.G. Stavrou et al., Columbus (Ohio), 1985, pp. 52-53.

²⁹ S. M. Kortepeter, Ottoman Imperial Policy and the Economy of the Black Sea Region in the Sixteenth Century, *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 86 (1966), pp. 139-166.

slave-mart of Asia Minor, and that the slaves were used to carry out the most burdensome tasks also for the Crimean Tatars themselves. Mikhalon Litvin wrote: "The Crimean Tatars have much more slaves than livestock. Therefore they supply them also to other lands. Many ships loaded with arms, clothes and horses came to them one after another from beyond the Pontus and from Asia, and left always from them with slaves. So these plunderers always are in possession not only of slaves for trade with other people but also have slaves for their own estates and to satisfy at home their cruelty and waywardness. In fact we often find among these unfortunate people very strong men, who, if not castrated, are branded on the forehead or on the cheek, and are tormented by day at work and by night in dungeons."³⁰

The fate of Slavic captive-slaves was not bright either in Turkey or in the Crimea.

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From the second half of 15th century to the end of 17th century, the Muscovite government continued to make all efforts both diplomatically and militarily to stop or prevent the Crimean slave raids into Russia. In spite of their almost constant plundering of Russian lands for material and human booty, the Muscovite state would not break off diplomatic relations with the Crimean Khanate. The Muscovite government sent at least thirty-five of their own embassies to the Crimean Khanate and received twenty-seven Crimean ones to Moscow during the years from 1474 to 1692.³¹ Envoys of both countries were continuously and regularly exchanged at the same time when thousands of one government's subjects were being enslaved by the other nation's raiders.

Moreover, the Muscovite government provided the Crimean envoys and their merchants with a special building (*Krymskii dvor*) to house in Moscow, when most representatives of European countries had not yet their own permanent residence there.³² The Crimean envoys and merchants often came to Moscow bringing with them a number of Russian captives and stayed at *Krymskii dvor*, because the Muscovite government actively encouraged the visit of Tatar merchants whose purpose was to offer Russian captives for ransom.

The Muscovite state not only tried to purchase with ransom as many of the Russian captives as it could afford, but also offered annually substantial "gifts" (*pominki*) to the Crimean Khans in the hope of avoiding raids. Although the term *pominok* (sing. of *pominki*) is often interpreted as "gift", the meaning of this word, however, was almost "tribute" in the actual diplomatic relations between the two countries.³³ The Muscovite government was

³⁰ Mikhalon Litvin, *O npravakh tatar, litovtsev i moskovitian*, ed. by A.L. Khoroshkevich, Moscow, 1994, pp. 71-72. See also: A.L. Khoroshkevich, *Rus' i Krym*, pp. 208-224.

³¹ A. Fisher, *The Crimean Tatar*, p. 40.

³² G. Kotoshikhin, *op.cit.*, pp. 82-83; E. Matsuki, A diplomatic custom in Muscovy, *Mediterranean World*, XIV, Tokyo, 1995, pp. 17-29.

³³ The meaning and role of *pominki* in Muscovite-Crimean relations is the problem that needs a special study. See: A.L. Khoroshkevich, *Rus' i Krym*, pp. 226-271; A.L. Khoroshkevich, *Rus' i Krym posle padeniia ordynskogo iga: dinamika tributarnykh otnoshenii*, *Otechestvennaia istoriia*, 1999, No.2, pp. 69-79.

essentially forced to pay *pominki*. As a matter of fact, it was a subject of constant diplomatic negotiations between the Crimean Khanate and Muscovy. The latter always pleaded for a lesser *pominki*, and the former demanded more. And the Crimean ambassadors often insisted that *pominki* was cheaper than ransoming slaves, and made promises that no raids would occur in the years when *pominki* were paid. The promises, however, scarcely could be kept. In 1639 a very striking event happened that indicates symbolically the real power relationship between Muscovy and the Crimean Khanate. This year the Muscovite envoys bringing the *pominki* to the Crimean Khan were captured and could return to Moscow only after paying their “ransom.”³⁴

Pominki to the Crimean Khans, in addition to ransom for Russian captives, were a serious financial burden on the Muscovite government. During the reign of Ivan IV, the annual *pominki* averaged 10,000 rubles. According to Novosel'skii's calculation, total *pominki* for the 38 years from 1613 to 1650 amounted to 363,970 rubles. They did not pay *pominki* at all only in 1619, 1644 and 1645 during these 38 years. In short Muscovy paid a little less than 10,000 rubles annually in the first half of the 17th century. And the total expenditure spent by the Muscovite government for the diplomatic relation with the Crimean Khanate in the same period came to 907,970 rubles.³⁵ Considering the number of Tatar raids into Russia during these years, however, the “*pominki*” policy apparently had little result.

The only option left to stop the Crimean slave raids was a military one. As early as in 1558, Adashev, Ivan IV's advisor on foreign affairs, insisted that military operations against the Crimean Tatars and the creation of fortresses in the south were the only way to stop their raids, and tried to persuade his young sovereign to conquer the Crimean Khanate. In fact, Ivan IV had successfully subdued the Kazan Khanate in 1553. But Ivan IV rejected Adashev's foreign policy.³⁶ Until the end of 17th century the Muscovite government did nothing which could be considered as a positive military policy to remove the Crimean threat. Ivan IV and his successors realized very well that the Crimean Tatars supported by the Ottoman Empire were too strong both politically and militarily for Muscovy to directly oppose.

The initial efforts to build defense barriers (*cherta* or *zaseka*) to keep out the Tatars were begun as early as the 15th century. In the 16th century three defense lines were constructed on the southern frontier and populated by the government with townsmen, Cossacks, and Musketeers as local militia. These defense lines consisted of a series of fortified towns and long lines of felled-tree obstacles in the forested areas.³⁷ As these lines were located further and

³⁴ A. A. Novosel'skii, *op.cit.*, pp. 272-274; A. Fisher, *Muscovy and the Black Sea Slave Trade*, p. 589.

³⁵ A. A. Novosel'skii, *op.cit.*, pp. 437-442.

³⁶ G. Vernadsky, *The Tsardom of Muscovy, 1547-1682*, 2 vols, New Haven, 1970, pp. 87-92. J. Krizhanich, the Croatian friar who visited Muscovy in the second half of the 17th century also called for Muscovite military move against the Crimean Tatars. See: I. Krizhanich, *Politica*, ed. by M.N. Tikhomirov, Moscow, 1965, pp. 382-383, 482.

³⁷ For *zaseka* (or *zasechnaia cherta*) see: R. Hellie, *Enserfment and Military Change in Muscovy*, Chicago & London, 1971, pp.174-180.

further south in the 17th century, Tatar raids became less and less frequent and less successful. And more often Tatar raiding parties were interrupted by Russian forces or Cossack parties and if they had captives with them, lost them before returning to the Crimea.

R. Hellie divided the expansion of Muscovy into the steppe into three periods: to the mid-16th century, 1550-1650, and 1651-1750. By the end of the second period, the construction of the *zaseka* system had been so fortified that the Crimean Tatars no longer threatened the major populated areas. And by the end of the 17th century, the completion of the *zaseka* system combined with a growing weakness of the Crimean Khanate and the Ottoman Empire had created a situation where very few Russians were being taken to the Crimea as captive-slaves.³⁸

The economic effects of Tatar slave raiding were immense for Muscovite Russia. The insecurity and instability of life on the steppe caused many of the Muscovite peasants to migrate to the more inhospitable climes of Siberia rather than to the south where it was blessed with fertile black soil. As a result this contributed to the slow development of this area. It was not until 1687 that Muscovy decided to give a final blow to the Tatars and remove their damaging raids from the area. This task, however, was to take almost a century. Only Catharine II succeeded to find a final solution to the problem by annexing the Crimean peninsula in 1783. After that year this area developed to become known eventually as the “granary” of Eastern Europe.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 179-180.