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COLLECTIVE MEMORY, JUSTICE, AND LAND DISPUTES AFTER THE REPATRIATION OF THE CRIMEAN TATARS

The twentieth century was marked by radical social experiments concerning the redistribution of property in the countries of Soviet socialism. Collectivisation, political repressions, persecutions and mass deportations all resulted in large-scale property transfers. This paper addresses the issue of property loss during these deportations and the subsequent social movement for land rights during the massive, spontaneous repatriation of Crimean Tatars at the end of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first century.

The inevitable repatriation of Crimean Tatars to their ethnic homeland began in the 1970s and 1980s and continued for several decades, starting even before the collapse of the Soviet Union. The largest number of Crimean Tatars, however, immigrated to Crimea in the 1990s. In 2001, for instance, 249,714 Crimean Tatars lived in Crimea where they accounted for 12% of the entire population of the peninsula at the time (*Pro kilkist…* 2001).

Anthropologists have had a long-standing interest in issues relating to property, dating back to the institutionalisation of the discipline in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when research focused on traditional property relations in Indigenous societies (Turner 2017). From the second half of the twentieth century, studies of property in anthropology have revolved around a variety of topics, such as conflict, legal pluralism, social structure, kinship relations and inheritance, property and gender, politics and power relations, land and the commons (ibid.). The collapse of the Soviet Union was followed by increased scholarly interest in the processes of transition from collectivist to new forms of ownership in the countries of the former Soviet Union (Hann 2007). Anthropology has made important theoretical contributions to the study of property ownership by developing approaches that consider various factors influencing economic decisions, including subjective ones such as emotional attachment and belonging to the land or place, and notions of morality and justice (Ballard, Banks 2003; Fay 2008; Hale 2006; Meillassoux 1972; Turner 2017). Based on my research I argue, after Edward Palmer Thompson (1971), for a reading of Crimean Tatar land agitation in line with the notion of a moral economy

that is grounded in an understanding of the relationship between economic activity, moral norms and concepts of justice.

The connection between historical memory, land and territorial identity is a topic of research in many other social disciplines apart from cultural anthropology: history, cultural geography and sociology. In anthropology, space is considered both as a physical category and as a combination of human practices, memories, ideas, emotional bonds, customs and bodily experiences (Low 2009), while places are constructed or "produced" through the meanings that individuals or groups of people attach to them. Current studies of local commemorative practices echo various renderings of the concept of "places of memory", introduced by French historian Pierre Nora (1982), which remains pertinent in my study of the return migration of Crimean Tatars and the related land disputes that this return has engendered.

This paper is based on field research conducted in the period from 2003 to 2011 in Crimea and subsequently in the years 2015–2016 in Kyiv, complemented by an ongoing analysis of current media reports.[1] My fieldwork research in Crimea consisted of extensive participant observation among families with representatives of different generations of Crimean Tatars. About 300 respondents of different ages in Crimea were interviewed, alongside eight respondents who were forced to leave the peninsula after the annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation in 2014 and who were at the same time we spoke residing in Kyiv.[2] Most of the interviews were conducted in the format of in-depth, semi-structured, biographical narratives. Respondents laid recurring emphasis on ethnic culture and family history in the twentieth century, where many conversations started with reflections on individual experience and biography in the context of interlocutors' return to their homeland, which they considered to be the Crimean peninsula.[3]

DEPORTATION AND THE POLITICAL MOVEMENT OF CRIMEAN TATARS

The cultural landscape, identity and sense of territorial belonging of Crimean Tatars changed dramatically after their deportation in 1944 by the USSR from the Crimean Peninsula to Central Asia. The official reason for this deportation was the (false) accusation that the whole community was involved in a "betrayal of the Soviet Motherland" by cooperating with the invading German Army. According to a secret

[1] In 2003–2009 my field research was financed by Kyiv Taras Shevchenko University as part of my MA and PhD projects. From 2010–2011, one year's field research was financed and organised by the Institute of Art, Folklore and Ethnology, National Academy of Science of Ukraine.

[2] The exact number of Crimean Tatars currently living in the city of Kyiv is unknown. According to the information from the prosecutor of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol Ihor Ponochevny, however, in total, thirty thousand Crimean Tatars have left Crimea for other regions of Ukraine since 2014.

[3] Research materials are stored in Kyiv Taras Shevchenko National University, at the Institute of Art, Folklore and Ethnology of the Academy of Science of Ukraine, as well as in my private archive.

decree of the State Committee for Defence of the USSR dated May 11, 1944, No. 5859, signed by Joseph Stalin, the operation to deport Crimean Tatars from Crimea to the Uzbek SSR and other soviet regions started on May 18, 1944. Over the following days, according to the official data, more than 191,000 people were deported from Crimea. The deportees were transported in freight wagons; many children and old people could not withstand the journey and died on the way to the Central Asian Republics. Just one year later, after WWII, the demobilised Crimean Tatars who had served in the Red Army would meet the same fate (Buhai 1992, p. 40). In the places of deportation the Crimean Tatar population lived, the deportees endured in extremely difficult conditions of special settlement system. The regime of forced special settlements with movement restrictions was cancelled only in 1956. Over the next twelve years, in the places of deportation, they were required to register every month, and were forbidden to visit neighbouring settlements, even in the case of the death of a relative. For non-compliance with the rules, offenders were sentenced to between twenty and twenty-five years of forced labour. A large number of people also died from malnutrition and various diseases in the first years after the deportation.

In the wake of the deportation of the Crimean Tatars to Central Asia, the connections between the community and its cultural landscape, land and spatial objects, such as cemeteries, mosques, shrines, houses and gardens, were lost. Immediately following Crimean Tatars' expulsion from their ancestral lands, the Soviet government started an ideological transformation of Crimean cultural space by renaming places bearing Turkic names, destroying Muslim cemeteries and mosques and resettling colonists from the central regions of Russia into cleared Crimean territories. Alongside these demographic and landscape transformations, Soviet authorities began a gradual process of eliminating or stigmatising Crimean Tatars in history textbooks; a few decades later little was remembered of the Crimean Tatar community on the peninsula. All of these official Soviet actions (forced replacement, rewriting of history, renaming of toponyms) can easily be understood within the frame of settler colonialist practices (Sviezhentsev 2021, pp. 604–608).

The colonisers' discourse of alienating the Crimean Tatar community was inherited by the Ukrainian official narrative in the first decades of independence, and rediscovering the Crimean Tatars' history and culture as an Indigenous people started only after the annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation in 2014 (Sviezhentsev & Kisly 2023). Inspired by the myths of the Soviet era, the colonial attitude remained dominant in the first decades of independence both in media discourse and in official statements. According to Soviet propaganda statements, the Crimean Tatars had been positioned as traitors, their culture considered less civilised than the culture of the Russian colonists. The ethnic origin of the Crimean Tatars became associated exclusively with the nomads of the Middle Ages, mainly with the Mongol invasion. After the annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation, however, the Crimean Tatar community and its political leaders acted as almost the only organised force that resisted occupation on the peninsula. The expressed pro-Ukrainian position of the Crimean Tatars made Ukrainian society rethink Tatars' role and significance in the recent history of Ukraine.

LANDSCAPE AND MEMORY

The experience of persecution, combined with the enduring sense of belonging to a particular place (Crimea), led to a large-scale political movement of resistance from the Crimean Tatars against the Soviet government, one that triggered a return migration; among the slogans of the repatriation movement was "We are on our native land!". This movement fought for the restoration of dignity and justice for parents and grandparents, as well as the desire to have an opportunity to die in their native land. The Crimean Tatars' began attempts to return to their ethnic homeland as early as the 1960s, particularly after a 1967 decree annulling the previous Soviet allegations against them. However, this "rehabilitation" did not entail a right to return. Nevertheless, from the 1960s until the 1980s many Crimean Tatar families still made short-term trips to Crimea, during which they attempted to find their natal townlands or their family property. They visited their native villages, returned to their abandoned homes, searched for the remains of desecrated cemeteries where their ancestors had been buried, and visited other local sites. They brought "gifts" from these natal localities for exiled relatives: water from wells, a handful of earth, an apple from a family garden. By the 1980s, these trips to Crimea had become a massive phenomenon. In that period, almost every Crimean Tatar family travelled to the peninsula for "memory vacations" before repatriation, trying to reconstruct, at least in their imagination, the places lost during deportation, the symbolic natal landscape and the physical territory.

Those trips were followed, then, by their first, often unsuccessful, attempts to return to Crimea. The real mass migration of Crimean Tatars to the Peninsula finally took place between the late 1980s and the early 1990s. Interlocutors I spoke with always emphasised their connection with their homeland based on memories and emotions that persisted despite having built comfortable lives in Central Asia:

> *But despite the fact that we lived very well there, we had a good apartment, good neighbours, but we were drawn here. As I remember, I ran barefoot in Bakhchysaray. Childhood, memory remains. We went to the forest, collected dogwood. I have a memory from my childhood. That's why I was drawn here. And we are in the 1990s years, when there are already people* [other Crimean Tatars, who arrived in previous years]*, when it is already free* [as before]*, we arrived here. We bought this house, half a house* (Interview with Aishe, F, b. 1932, Beregove, 2003).[4]

The process of the mass migration of Crimean returnees to their native lands coincided with the crisis of the Soviet system and the collapse of the USSR. After Ukraine declared independence, its government adopted a number of laws that enabled the repatriation of Crimean Tatars. Having come to Crimea, the Crimean Tatar families were confronted with the issue of securing ownership of lands and housing. There were several ways to solve the problem of housing: buying a home or

[4] All names of informants have been changed. No real names are revealed used in the article to preserve the privacy of interlocutors.

an apartment with their own money; obtaining land for house construction from the state (these plots of land were usually inconveniently situated in remote villages); or squatting on land with the view to being recognised through subsequent legalisation (Vyatkin & Kulpin 1997). Among the factors influencing where they would take up residence, economic pragmatism played a large part, but access to infrastructure, job opportunities and administrative barriers also shaped residence patterns. In the late 1980s, for instance, Crimean Tatars had been prohibited from settling in southern areas of the peninsula or close to Simferopol in the centre.

Historically, before the deportation, the largest number of Crimean Tatars lived in the area of the Southern coast and in the central mountainous part of the peninsula. Two sub-ethnic groups of Crimean Tatars, Yuliboilu (inhabitants of the coast) and Tat or Ortalar (inhabitants of the mountainous middle strip of Crimea) lived there. Steppe Crimean Tatars or Nogai lived on the territory of the Crimean steppe in line with the cities of Yevpatoria in the West, Simferopol in the centre and Kerch in the East. But the Crimean Tatar steppe people were the least numerous group in the middle of the twentieth century. Equally, in Soviet times the Iouthern coast of Crimea was transformed into a tourist area with numerous sanatoriums, hotels and departmental institutions, explaining why a Crimean Tatar return to the South Bank was so complicated, as it met with resistance from local authorities (Sobolieva 2015, pp. 41–65).

Nowadays the largest number of Crimean Tatars continue to live in the central regions of the peninsula: Bakhchisaray, Simferopol, Bilohirsk. A high proportion of the population is located in the eastern part of the Peninsula (Leninsky, Nizhnyhirsky district, Feodosia). When asked why a particular family returned to a certain locality, the respondents usually indicated that at that moment they were guided only by the circumstances and settled "where it was possible". This can be exemplified by data gathered in different regions of Crimea in the period 2006–2011. As part of the study, I interviewed 212 people previously deported from Crimea by the Soviet authorities. Among them, only 19% (41 people) returned to the area where they were born and only 8% (17 people) returned to their hometown or village. However, a more detailed analysis of the results of this ethnographic research shows that the Crimean Tatar resettlement also has a territorial pattern that reflects pre-war and pre-deportation realities.

Such large realities are perhaps best viewed through the ethnographic lens of individual accounts of pragmatic decisions to settle for taking up residence in similar areas. Below is the story of Rustem who in 1976 tried to come back to the Bilohirsk region, which abuts his native Sudak region and has a similar landscape (a mostly mountainous and hilly area). His efforts, however, were not successful because of restrictions by local administrations and authorities. He moved to Kuban, a region situated in the South of Russia, from the Taman peninsula next to the Crimean steppe town of Kerch.[5] He was only able to return to Crimea after fifteen years, but

[5] The Kerch Peninsula, on which the city of Kerch is located, is the easternmost point of the Crimean Peninsula. It is separated by the Kerch Strait from the Taman Peninsula (administratively included in

during his stay in Kuban, the steppe region became familiar to him, so he decided to return to Kerch:

> *In 1976 I came from Central Asia and stopped in the Bilohirsk region. Then in 1976 there were very uncomfortable times for us, they kicked us out, they didn't register. And during this period* [April to October] *all the time we were struggling with local administration. And in the end, I was driven to a heart attack. Then such a heart attack was a serious illness, I was lying for 40 days. And we moved to Kuban. We lived there for 15 years. And all the time we went to the market in Kerch. Then it was the ferry. It was convenient. And all this time we were visiting Kerch, and during this time Kerch became dearer to me than other regions. And when, already in 1978, in 1988, in the 1990s, our Tatars began to come here, I landed right here. Since then, I have been the head of the Kerch mosque here* (Interview with Rustem, M, b. 1932, Kerch 2011).

Another interlocutor explains why his family returned to the steppe region of the peninsula. Alim's parents and great-grandfathers were born in the Western steppe Crimea. That is why, when they returned to the Motherland, they chose the steppe city of Evpratoria for resettlement and life. It was the steppe climate and landscapes that were most attractive to him:

> *– There was no other place back then, in this part. Only Yevpatoria, it was a sort of a centre.*
> *– But still not in Bakhchisaray? Are there Crimean Tatars, too?*
> *– I actually went to visit Bakhchisaray, or Simferopol, and I don't feel comfortable there. And here I come to Ismail-Bey – I feel at home* (Interview with Alim, M, b. 1967, Yevpatoria, 2010).

Crimean Tatar families, in spite of administrative and economic difficulties, then, chose to live in areas closely related to their ancestors' lands and localities (steppe, mountains, coastal regions) both generally in terms of geographical location but also drawn by the symbolic landscape. Even after the return, though, the tradition of visiting the ancestors' lands continued. An event called *koydeshler* is held annually, and involves a meeting accompanied by collective meals, prayers and other commemorative practices that unite the communities of the old villages:

> *He* [the husband] *went there with the children. Well, they found something there, those stones laid out there, you can see that there were houses, gardens. They walked there with their children. They found some dishes there. That's what my husband brought. At the beginning, they used to travel there every year* [...]. *They went there often, he drove with children, showed them* (Interview with Afise, F, b. 1966, Bakhchisaray, 2010).

During those nostalgic pilgrimage to these erstwhile places of residence, the repatriates reproduced in their imagination the old "remembered" Crimean landscape of innocence and childhood, lost after deportation. Some pieces of their former property (a brick from an old well, a stone from the house foundation), or things

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the Krasnodar Territory of the Russian Federation). It was between the Kerch and Taman peninsulas that the Kerch bridge between Crimea and the Russian Federation was built in 2018. Until then, the usual transport between Crimea and the Taman Peninsula was a ferry crossing.

that were rescued during the resettlement (a Koran, a towel) were thus turned into family relics, physically anchoring these memories across time and space.

STRUGGLE FOR THE LAND

At the beginning of the mass repatriation, particularly in the 1990s, after a place of residence was chosen, a long process of obtaining land plots and building houses began for the newly-returned Crimean Tatars. Legislative mechanisms for allocation of land plots and housing to repatriates were not regulated, which led to conflicts around land issues in Crimea. For decades, so-called *samozahvat* or squatting was the most commonly-used form of reclaiming land plots and housing for Crimean Tatar returnees.[6] For this purpose, self-organised groups of returnees found plots of land, mostly abandoned or in public use, arranged their fields of pickets and built temporary constructions that marked each individual plot. Subsequently, after a few years of negotiations with the local administration and some legal wrangling, Tatar ownership of those lands was recognised by courts (Zinych 2005). The process of recognition of land plots was stretched over time and lasted through the last decades of Ukrainian independence. The main logic of the land activities was the restoration of the right of returnees to own the land on the territory of their historical homeland. In the Ukrainian legal system (Zaplitna 2016) after the collapse of the Soviet collectivist farm system, only members of collective farms (kolkhoz) were able to receive a plot of land. Repatriates, who returned mainly from Central Asia in the 1990s, usually did not manage to become members of collective farms. As a result only "locals", the mostly Slavic population of Crimea, had a realistic chance of receiving land plots. For the Crimean authorities, Crimean Tatars were not locals, which resulted in the emergence of the resistance movement within the Crimean Tatar community in the 1990s and which lasted into the 2000s (Zinych 2005).

Restitution of old property would remain impossible, as the former property of Crimean Tatar families had long been redistributed among other residents of Crimea. Old Crimean Tatar houses had been inhabited for many decades by other people, typically Russians and Ukrainians, who had mostly been resettled on the peninsula after the deportation of Crimean Tatars. Even the Mejlis (a representative body for the Crimean Tatars) have never directly demanded or voiced the need for this fuller restitution, realising it would be an unrealistic demand. Since the restitution of property was out of the question, then, the Crimean Tatars invoked their moral right to engage in prolonged conflicts and to claim land titles. Not every family in Crimea could buy land, apartments or houses. This practice of obtaining housing in the Crimea, therefore, was the least common. The lands allocated from the state were often located in remote regions of the peninsula or in places with poorly developed

[6] Later some of the Slavic inhabitants (ethnic Russians and Ukrainians) of the peninsula took part in this movement. They joined Crimean Tatars squatting groups with the purpose of obtaining land for themselves.

infrastructure. Such settlements often lacked water and gas, and there were problems with transport. That is why Samozahvat or squatting became a massive phenomenon in Crimea in the 1990s and early 2000s.

A moratorium on the commercial sale and purchase of agricultural land was lifted only in 2021 (*Derzhheokadastr…* 2021). Before that, there had been no regulation of the agricultural land market which thus operated in a shadow sphere of bribery and corruption among local officials who were still responsible for distributing former collective lands. As argued by Alexand Bohomolov et al. (2012), under such circumstances, the position and claims of Crimean Tatars were the most transparent and unambiguous, unlike other parties to the conflict over land titles i.e. local officials, tenants from agricultural holdings, developers, or new owners of collective farms. The Crimean Tatars' demands for land ownership gave rise to a massive social movement, which united and mobilised a large number of participants, had its own activists and leaders and a complex structure (Bohomolov et al. 2012). This movement resulted in the restructuring of social relations in Crimea. Repatriates who fought for ownership of the land united in temporary organisations, so-called "protest fields", led by political leaders and public activists. Self-organised groups of returnees usually chose abandoned land for squatting, where temporary buildings marking future individual plots were built on these lands and protesters designed districts "streets of the future" and chose places for mosques to be built.

Thompson's "moral economy" is instructive here (Thompson 1971, p. 88). Studying the bread market in times of economic instability and crop failure, his focus was peasant riots as a direct action. The aim of such actions was to achieve:

> […] consensus as to what were popular and what were legitimate and what were illegitimate practices marketing, milling, baking, etc. This in its turn was grounded upon a consistent traditional view of social norms and obligations, of the proper economic functions of several parties within the community, which, taken together, can be said to constitute the moral economy of the poor. An outrage to these moral assumptions, quite as much as actual deprivation, was the usual occasion for direct action (1971, p. 79).

Thompson's theory of "moral economy" was repeatedly deployed and widely extended in successive historical works (Frevert 2019). Looking at the practices of land-squatting by Crimean Tatars through the prism of the theory of moral economy they were acts of direct action aimed at exercising the right to privatise land by Crimean Tatars. The chief "moral economy" argument of the Crimean Tatars has been for a recognition of unfair punishment for historically non-existent crimes that led to their expulsion from their native land. Returning to their native land, receiving land and building new homes can partly offset the losses they experienced during the time of repression. One of the political leaders of the Crimean Tatar community described the community's position regarding land relations in post-Soviet Ukraine:

> We asked for the adoption of normative documents according to which land would be issued free of charge to returning Crimean Tatars, but the local authorities said that there were no grounds

> for this. Then people started just occupying vacant plots. Thus, about 300 new settlements and micro-districts appeared in the Crimea, which de facto stood on lands that were not registered in any way. And this problem was solved (Zhylin 2017).

Another popular belief was the idea of the continuity and inheritance of the land title: great importance was attached to the legitimisation of requirements for receiving plots. There were disputes between Crimean Tatars, and Ukrainian and Russian citizens, regarding who could claim the land title: those who were born on the land; those who had been working there for a long time; or those whose ancestors were born there. It is also evident from the land disputes that the collective interests of the group has had greater symbolic capital than individual claims. For the Crimean Tatars, the approach of mass collective squatting has focussed this symbolic capital in protest fields that sometimes had thousands of participants. During squatting protests Crimean Tatars occupied mainly abandoned lands with no farms on them, where according to the traditional beliefs of Crimean Tatars, cultivating and arranging abandoned lands is a noble calling.

As Bohomolov et al. (2012) correctly point out, the principle of morality and the discourse of restitution of lost property are the bases for those ideas of obtaining land through squatting. The very act of deportation and the resulting loss of land rights and their own houses as material objects is perceived by Crimean Tatars as a Soviet crime. Restoration of rights to lost property, as stated, remains technically impossible, which is why representatives of the Crimean Tatar community have considered it fair to demand land for the Crimean Tatars where possible, rather than property. According to their shared sense of justice, obtaining lands should partially compensate for the material losses suffered by the Crimean Tatars as a result of their maleficent eviction from their native lands. In an article in the local press in 2016, a Crimean Tatar man comprehensively described the Crimean Tatars' approach to the concept of land as private property. His position strongly implies that it is a popular notion among Crimean Tatars that members of the Crimean Tatar community as an indigenous people have a "natural" right to receive land in private ownership in their native Crimea. He writes that the land:

> is the basis of human wealth. It is the main means of production. Lack of ownership or use of land makes a person vulnerable, dependent on any circumstances, drives him to the land in search of food, depriving him of his roots and the people of their integrity (Seitbekirov 2016).

American anthropologist Greta Uehling, considering the issue of squatting on the land by representatives of the Crimean Tatar community, noted that the main strategy of the returnees was to appeal to self-sacrifice, and the whole process of property reclamation had expressive performative forms (Uehling 2004, p. 222). The construction of private houses and the "land activism" of the first years of repatriation made Crimean Tatars prominent social actors in the Crimean landscape. So-called "compact settlements" with new buildings, mosques and minarets are now situated in every region in Crimea. These new localities create a completely new public space and image of villages and towns on the peninsula.

The events associated with the Crimean annexation by the Russian Federation in February and March 2014 led to a wave of political migration of Crimean Tatars to Mainland Ukraine. This migration was triggered by economic factors (sanctions, inaccessibility of the Western economy, unfavourable conditions for small businesses) and political repression by the Russian authorities that both Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars were subjected to in the occupied territories. According to data from Anton Korynevych, a representative of the Ukrainian President in the Autonomous Republic (AR) of Crimea, between 2014 and 2021 nearly 100,000 Crimean Tatars and Ukrainians left AR Crimea (*Skilky krymskykh tatar…* 2021). This reality of occupation and forced migration today rekindles the problem of property loss, as forced migrants claim that they are in the same situation as their parents and grandparents were. The annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation led to an unfettered series of violations of Ukrainian private and state property rights. According to estimates in 2015, direct losses of state and private property amounted to 1 trillion hryvnias (more than USD 44 billion) (Tishchenko 2015, p. 24). Violation of property rights have continued in the following years. The Decree of the President of the Russian Federation (No. 201, dated April 20, 2020) established a ban on Ukrainian citizens (and in general, all foreigners) from owning land plots in most regions of Crimea.[7] Ukrainian authorities officially announced that this decree was illegal and void, and that Ukrainian citizens should keep their property documents. The Ukrainian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dmytro Kuleba, has emphasised that the right of ownership will unequivocally be restored after the end of the occupation of Crimea (ukrinform.ua 26.03.2021). Through the example of land disputes, we can see powerful return of old tropes of disenfranchisement through the annexation of territories, aggression, crimes against human rights and political unilateralism increase uncertainty and contested claims regarding property and civil rights in Crimea.

CONCLUSIONS

The spontaneous and massive repatriation of Crimean Tatars that took place at the turn of the twenty-first century was accompanied by demands for establishing historical justice and the return of land titles (Uehling 2000; Williams 1997; Zaloznaya & Gerber 2012). Memories of natal lands and ancestral houses were a consolidating factor for these demands during the repatriation. Believing that trauma resulting from political repression and forced migration may be partially offset by the acquisition of land by returnees, the repatriation process itself emphasised the implementation of the right of Crimean Tatars to live on their own land. The demand to receive property became the central political slogan for the mobilisation movement and

[7] The land in Crimea at that time was owned by a significant number of Crimean Tatars who left Crimea after 2014 and who now live in other regions of Ukraine. They are citizens of Ukraine and are thus subject to this law.

the political struggle for the rights of Crimean Tatars. This demand for the return of property was based on a principle of moral economy. Since old houses had long since been destroyed, or were inhabited by others, the possibility of restitution of these former properties was not entertained. Land acquisition and building their own homes has thus become perceived by Crimean Tatars as their final recourse to achieve full repatriation.

Thus, the struggle to legalise the land rights of Crimean Tatars has transformed into an organised mass social movement largely reforming social relations in Crimea and economic practices in the field of land ownership. This activism in turn formed Crimean Tatars into a prominent social force. The building activities of Crimean Tatars has also greatly transformed the cultural landscape of Crimea. The presence of Crimean Tatar districts, places of "compact residence" for Crimean Tatars, has made them visible on the peninsula. The events related to the 2014 annexation of Crimea and the redistribution of state and private property in the region have further complicated land conflicts on the peninsula. Powerful ideological pressure, administrative persecution and legal transformations in today's Crimea have thus re-politicised the land issue, both in the symbolic sense and in the concrete legal context.

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COLLECTIVE MEMORY, JUSTICE, AND LAND DISPUTES AFTER THE REPATRIATION OF THE CRIMEAN TATARS

Key words: Crimean Tatars, deportation, land ownership, repatriation

This article is devoted to the meaning of identity and belonging in the processes of defending land rights. The twentieth century was marked by an unprecedented scale of rejections of land ownership claims and forced redistributions of property in the countries of the Warsaw Pact member states. Forced confiscation of property and collectivisation consequently changed the landscape of land ownership in these countries. In some border territories of the historical Soviet Union, which includes the present-day Crimean peninsula, ethnic deportations of the autochthonous population had a decisive influence on the redistribution of land ownership. Separated from their ethnic lands, the Crimean Tatars formed an identity that maintained a clear connection to the lost territory and homeland. This connection was one which expressed a political resistance that continued during the entire Soviet period until a mass and spontaneous repatriation took place. This repatriation was organised under the rallying cry of restoring justice through a return of Crimean Tatars to their ethnic homeland. After the successful return of a large part of the Crimean Tatars, the fight to restore land rights began. This fight generated a great political resonance in Crimea and led to a significant reorganisation of the cultural landscape of the peninsula.

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