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## LAND OWNERSHIP, GENERAL LAND SURVEY AND RUSSIAN COLONIZATION OF CRIMEA IN THE LATE EIGHTEENTH AND THE FIRST HALF OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURIES

Natalia Víctorovna Platónova

Aix-Marseille Université

29, avenue Robert Schuman, 13628, Aix-en-Provence, France.

Email: [natalia.platonova@univ-amu.fr](mailto:natalia.platonova@univ-amu.fr)

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8006-7130>

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**Abstract:** The initial stage of the Russian colonization of Crimea, which spanned from the end of the XVIIIth century to the mid-XIXth century, was characterized particularly by the settlement and the distribution of lands to incoming people. The issues relating to the land ownership became increasingly complicated, which had an impact on the social and economic life in the region. This paper examines how Russia's imperial authority tried to remedy it, on the one hand, by enacting a special land legislation and, on the other hand, by sending land commissions and land surveyors on the spot to investigate land conflicts and to demarcate the Crimean lands. Therefore, this study reveals the features of the land tenure system developed in Crimea after its annexation by Russia in 1783. This also provides insights into the integration process and how and by whom Crimea and its population were then governed. Following on from the General Land Survey conducted in the Russian empire since 1765, the demarcation of lands was carried out in the governorate of Taurida from 1798 to 1804 but a crucial step occurred with a particular procedure framework in 1829-1843, leading to provide a valuable cartographic and economic information. We conclude that the land commissions and surveying operations were useful instruments that helped to clarify and to regulate the land rights of both the native and non-native peoples of Crimea, as well as providing authorities with a better understanding of the challenges and specific characteristics of the region.

**Keywords:** Russian Empire, Crimea, Land ownership, Land survey, Historical Geography, Economic History.

### PROPIEDAD DE LA TIERRA, AGRIMENSURA GENERAL Y COLONIZACIÓN RUSA DE CRIMEA A FINALES DEL SIGLO XVIII Y PRIMERA MITAD DEL XIX

**Resumen:** La etapa inicial de la colonización rusa de Crimea, que se extendió desde finales del siglo XVIII hasta mediados del siglo XIX, se caracterizó particularmente por el asentamiento y la distribución de tierras a las personas que llegaban. Los temas relacionados con la propiedad de la tierra se fueron complicando cada vez más, lo que repercutió en la vida social y económica de la región. En este trabajo se estudia cómo la autoridad imperial de Rusia trató de remediarlo, por un lado, promulgando una legislación especial sobre tierras y, por otro lado, enviando comisiones de tierras y agrimensores para investigar sobre el terreno los conflictos de tierras y demarcar las tierras de Crimea. Por lo tanto, este estudio revela las características del sistema de tenencia de la tierra desarrollado en Crimea después de su anexión por Rusia en 1783. Esto también proporciona información sobre el proceso de integración y cómo y quién gobernó Crimea y su población en ese momento. A raíz del levantamiento general (Agrimensura general o Catastro general), que se lleva a cabo en el Imperio ruso desde 1765, la demarcación de tierras se llevó a cabo en la gobernación de Taurida de 1798 a 1804, pero se dio un paso crucial con un marco de procedimiento particular en 1829-1843, que llevó a proporcionar una valiosa información cartográfica y económica. Concluimos que las comisiones de tierras y las operaciones de agrimensura fueron instrumentos útiles que ayudaron a clarificar y regular los derechos sobre la tierra de los pueblos nativos y no nativos de Crimea, así como también brindaron a las autoridades una mejor comprensión de los desafíos y las características específicas de la región.

**Palabras clave:** Imperio ruso, Crimea, Propiedad de la tierra, levantamientos cartográficos, Geografía histórica, Historia económica

## INTRODUCTION

Russia emerged victorious from two wars against the Ottomans in 1769-1774 and 1787-1792. The Crimean Khanate gained his independence by the treaty signed in Kuchuk-Kainarji in 1774, but in fact it was placed under the Russian protectorate and finally, through military and diplomatic means, was annexed by the Russian Empire in 1783 (Fisher, 1970). It therefore became part of the newly founded Taurida region governed by Prince G. A. Potemkin, Catherine II's favorite and statesman who personally contributed to the annexation process (PSZ, Coll. I, vol. 22, no. 15925) (Fig. 1). He sought to convince the Empress and her entourage that the Crimea was not only of

geopolitical importance and symbolic value for Russia (the Catherine II's "Greek project") but also a source of numerous economic benefits. Potemkin put a lot of effort into building the Russia's Black Sea fleet and Sevastopol as the naval base and into promoting measures for the settlement and economic development of Crimea (Eliseeva, 2000; Bolotina, 2010). However, current studies tend to reassess the effectiveness of the government policies toward Crimea and to stress their social, economic, and environmental consequences. In fact, the integration of Crimea, with its Muslim Tatar population, into the Russian Empire had been a complex process, oscillating between imperial ambitions and territorial realities for half a century (Khrapunov & Konkin, 2017).

FIGURE 1  
MAP OF THE TAURIDA REGION 1792



Source: *Rossiiskii atlas iz soroka chetyreh kart sostoiashchii i na sorok dva namestnichestva Imperiiu razdeliushchii*. Sostavitel A. M. Vilbrekht, gravir A. Savinkov, St Petersburg, Geograficheskii departament Kabineta I. E.V., 1792. (*The Atlas of Russia composed of forty four maps dividing the Empire into forty two governorships*)

Indeed, the initial stage of the Russian colonization of Crimea was about settling and allotting of lands incoming settlers for agriculture and other projects. The distribution of lands was extensive but had not been well managed. The confusion of ownership rights and the lack of demarcation<sup>1</sup> of the property boundaries caused frequent conflicts. The Crimean Tatars felt that they were scorned and dispossessed of their land. As the auxiliaries to the state in the economic development of the region, the Russian nobles became involved in land disputes though they intended to benefit from the exploitation of the Crimean lands. Mutual understandings and land conflicts were exacerbated by the differences in language, religion, and culture.

In the present paper, we examine how the Russian imperial authority tried to remedy this situation. As we explain below, it did not initially aspire to use coercion. Its approach was, on the one hand, reviewing the land rights of the inhabitants of Crimea, and on the other hand, sending special commissions and land surveyors on the spot to investigate land conflicts and to demarcate both the state- and privately owned lands. We argue that their activity was beneficial, which contributed to ease the social climate in the region. Moreover, the Crimean land tenure was formalized and redefined under the law of the Russian Empire and according to its economic interests.

In 1765, Catherine II ordered to conduct the General Land Survey throughout the empire, which lasted until the middle of the nineteenth century. It was an ambitious and unique experiment in Europe at the time (German, 1910; Platonova, 2018a-b; Vodarskii, 1988). The purpose was a precise demarcation of the landholdings of individuals and drawing boundary lines between them and state lands, while providing a geographical and economic description of the various territories that make up the Russian Empire. However, it was not used as a basis for determining taxation, which was based on the soul tax (*podushnaia podat'*) introduced by the Peter the Great in 1718. When, around the end of the Catherine II's reign, such operation was completed in twenty-three governorates (*gubernia*), it was expended to the borderlands. It was carried out in Southern Ukraine and Crimea from 1798 to 1843, where the geographical, economic, ethnic, and social conditions posed new challenges and obstacles for surveyors.

1 Throughout the paper, we use the terms "demarcation" and "survey" synonymously.

There is an extensive literature, mainly in Russian, devoted to the development of Crimea before and after its incorporation into the Russian Empire (Zaitsev, 2021; Bolotina, Nepomniashchii & Belov, 2017). E. I. Druzhinina (1959) is the author of a reference book exploring various aspects of the Russian Empire's policy towards Crimea in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The subsequent works investigate demographic and economic changes and first and foremost the formation of landlord economy and the peasant life in the region (Sekirinskii, 1963 and 1984; Volodarskii and all., 2003). The reflection on how the implementation of the Russian rule affected the Crimean economy and the life of the Crimean Tatars continued in recent works, including through the prism of the land relationships (Konkin, 2006, 2007 and 2017; Martsinovskii, 2016; Kuz'mina, 2015 and 2016). The pioneering studies of G. F. Blumenfeld (1888), F. F. Lashkov (1896a, 1896b, 1897), and A. Voskresenskii (1904) remain valuable for their information on the land ownership and land use practices of the Crimean Tatars and the nature of the land conflicts that incurred after the Crimea joined Russia. In the present paper, we also draw on the works of S. P. Derii (1993) and D. V. Konkin (2020) in order to highlight the land ownerships and the mechanisms of resolving land disputes in Crimea in the end of eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries. Thanks to the works of I. V. Petrova (2013, 2014) and Stepanova (2019a, 2019b, 2020c), the peculiarities of the process of the General Land Survey in the southern provinces of the Russian empire can be understood.

Despite its technicalities, the activity of the land commissions and land surveyors can be discussed as a point of intersection between the political history and the economic and social history. The period under review is a crucial time, during which the Russian Empire aimed to integrate Crimea in its administrative and social system and to promote its economic development. In this paper we aim at elucidating the role of the land commissions and land survey operations in these processes in the light of the previous works and the analysis of a range of archival and printed sources. Thus, we hope to provide some insights on how and by whom the Crimea's land resources and population then were governed. We have also the opportunity to stress how the content of the concept of the property linked to the political, social, and cultural relationships.

The present paper is organized as follows. Section I explains the causes and forms of land conflicts in the social and economic context of Crimea after its annexation in 1783. In Section II, we first look at the debates in the Russian central government on the land ownership in Crimea. In Section III, we then show how a special commission worked to resolve land disputes from 1802 to 1810. Section IV retraces the Crimea's administrative and land issues in extraordinary commissions in 1816-1819. The implementation of the General Land Survey in the Taurida governorate in 1829-1843 and its results are discussed in the last section of the paper.

### THE RISE OF THE LAND CONFLICTS IN CRIMEA

Becoming a vassal of the Sublime Porte in 1475, the Crimean Khanate occupied the entire Crimean Peninsula and various adjacent areas of the mainland. Three ranges of mountains divide the territory of the peninsula into the northern flat area (Steppe Crimea) and the mountainous southern area (Mountainous Crimea), which includes the narrow coastal zone between the mountains and the Black Sea. The northern and southern slopes once were thickly forested, principally with oak, beech, and pine. The "yaylas" or mountain plateaus served to the Tatars for pasture. The main rivers of Crimea are Indol, Chornaya, Belbek, Kacha, Alma, and the longest Salgir River. The Tatars gradually switched their nomadic to a sedentary way of life and practiced cattle breeding and farming in the mountain valleys and river plains. The khan's residence was founded in 1532 in Bakhchisaray, which was subsequently developed as a major center of trade and craft of the khanate. A tenth on grain was levied on the users of the khan's lands, which was partly exported to the Ottoman Empire. The significant quantities of land and livestock were owned by the beys and murzas. The Shirin, Baryn, Yashlav, Argyn, Kypchak were the most influential clans during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Nominally, they were in vassal dependence of the khan, but in fact ruled their patrimonial possessions (beyliks) with their own administration and did justice on their fellow tribesmen. The murzas occupied a step lower on the social hierarchy and were in khan's military service. During the Russian-Ottoman wars the Crimean Khanate plunged into crisis, which led to a split within the ruling elite and to the collapse of its economy.

Catherine II formally proclaimed the incorporation of the Crimea into the Russian Empire on 8 April 1783 (PSZ, I, vol. 21, no. 15708). As required by the right

of conquest, the Russian Crown reserved the right of ownership on all Crimean khan's cultivated and uncultivated lands, including the forest areas and the salt lakes present in the western part of the peninsula. Catherine II promised to treat the Tatar people with respect and uphold their faith and customs. A series of privileges was granted to her new subjects in return of their loyalty. They were free from serfdom and exempted from the soul tax and military recruitment, which were a considerable burden on the Russian population. On 28 February 1784, a decree was issued allowing "the Tatar princes and murzas to enjoy all privileges of the Russian nobility" (PSZ, I, vol. 22, no. 15936). They had the right to acquire officer rank and to serve in provincial government. The decree of 9 November 1794 announced that "all merchants, lower townsmen, ordinary Tatars and others, whether of the Muslim faith or other national origin, who lived in Taurida and acquired lands under the khan rule through purchase, inheritance or other legal manner would retain the right to freely dispose them" (PSZ, I, vol. 23, no. 17265). However, these decisions did not prevent the emigration of the part of the Tatar population to the Ottoman Empire.

In June 1784, Potemkin prescribed to inventory the lands owned by the state in the Crimea (Lashkov, 1896a, p. 89). This task was entrusted to the former farmer Abdul-Khamit aga and M. Karatsenov, who was an employee in the Perekop customs. After one year, they compiled a statement that included 357 abandoned Crimean Tatar landholdings as well as the lands of the Christian Greeks and Armenians who were relocated during the war, by an imperial order of 1779, from Crimea to the Ekaterinoslav governorate (RGIA, f. 1305, op. 1, d. 32, l. 2; Lashkov, 1896b, vol. 24, pp. 53-54). It was subsequently emerged that the information was incomplete or inaccurate, but the authorities of the Taurida region repeatedly used it for the purposes of colonization.

To populate and develop the new southern territories of the empire, the Russian government undertook several displacements of state peasants from the various regions of Russia to the Taurida region. The land plots also were allotted to Cossacks, retired soldiers, old Believers, and even runaway serfs. Greeks, Armenians, Moldovans, and Western Europeans were invited to settle in the region (PSZ, I, vol. 22, no. 15988, 16130, 16249, 16559 and vol. 23, no. 17191). At the same time, after the war Catherine II allocated Crimean lands as grants to government officials and estate owners, provided that they devel-

oped agriculture and other industries in the region. Potemkin was granted for his service with 73 460 dessiatins<sup>2</sup> of land in the districts of Dnieper and Melitopol as well as 13 000 dessiatins in Baydar valley and around Foros and Limen in which he wanted to set an example of how to plant olive and mulberry gardens. Empress's close advisers Prince A. Viazemskii, P. Zavadovskii, and A. Bezborodko also received the large amounts of land in the Dnieper district. General-in-chief M. V. Kakhovskii, Admiral José de Ribas, a nobleman of Spanish origin, and vice-admiral N. S. Mordvinov, major-generals Popov and P. Alexiano, the Russian representative to the Crimean Khanate S. L. Lashkarev, Empress's kammerdiener Z. K. Zotov, among others, were recipients of the land grants. By an order of Potemkin 29 500 dessiatins of land were allocated to his personal secretary V. Popov in the Melitopol district. A merchant M. Faleev provided supplies to the building of the cities and shipyards of Nikolaev and Sevastopol, for which he was ennobled and had a grant of 6 500 dessiatins of land in the Simferopol district. The lands were also distributed to the highest Tatar nobility loyal to Russia, as was Mehmet-sha bey Shirin who became the head of the Government of the Taurida region established in 1783. He became an owner of Kokkoz, a big village located in the bank of the Belbek River (Lashkov, 1896a, vol. 25, pp. 98-113). All recipients gained the property right over the allocated lands according to the Catherine II's manifesto of 2 September 1793 (PSZ, I, vol. 23, no. 17149).

We can see the totals of convenient and inconvenient lands that were distributed to incoming people in the Taurida region from the statements of 1792-1794 presented by major-general S. S. Zhegulin, governor of Taurida from 1789 to 1796 (RGADA, f. 10, op. 3, d. 59, ll. 14-16; Lashkov, 1896a, vol. 25, pp. 98-113) (Fig. 2). The civil and military officials and estate owners received a total of 191 845 dessiatins of convenient land in the Crimean Peninsula (the districts of Simferopol, Theodosia, Evpatoria, Perekop) and 537 284 dessiatins in the steppes behind Perekop (the districts of Dnieper and Melitopol). This represents respectively 2% and 15% of the total areas of the Taurida region. The Russian landlords came to Crimea with their usual land use practices based on the serfdom system. New villages were founded, and serfs were moved from

other estates to live there. However, both large and small estates were challenged by the lack of labour forces. Thus, the landlords invited the Tatars to work on their lands or rented the land plots to them.

Each order for the allocation of lands was signed by the Empress or by the governor-general of New Russia Potemkin, who was replaced after his death in 1791 by Count P. A. Zubov. The geographical position of the lands to be allotted was only vaguely described in these orders, and land surveyors did not come everywhere to demarcate the limits of the properties. That was why in fact the newly arrived owners could occupy more lands than were allocated to them. Sometimes the land was considered as vacant to be distributed but was already occupied by the Tatars. Some new landowners deliberately appropriated or illegally used the Tatar neighboring lands. As a result, over the years the misunderstandings and disputes about land multiplied across the region.

On 17 September 1796, Catherine II ordered to Zubov to investigate disputes arising from the complaints of the Tatars on the improper allocation or illegal use of land, in a way that "the land that had been wrongly taken should be returned to its effective owner" (Lashkov, 1896a, p. 115). For this purpose, it was planned to establish a commission staffed by the officials from the Taurida region courts and provincial land surveyor. However, the project was not carried out (GARK, f. 799, op. 1, d. 445, l. 27-28; Konkin, 2020, p. 125).

Catherine II died in St Petersburg on 6 November 1796 and was succeeded by her son Paul I. On 12 December of the same year, he introduced a reform by which the Taurida region was incorporated into the governorate of New Russia consisting of 12 districts (PSZ, I, vol. 24, no. 17634). (Fig. 3). On 10 July 1798, a commission for the resolution of the land disputes was established in Ak-Mechet (Simferopol). Governor of New Russia himself, Count M. V. Kakhovskii, served as chairman (Lashkov, 1896b, vol. 24, pp. 65-66). A decision would be made after the commission heard explanations of the involved parties and examined documentary evidence presented by them. It was to be final.

Somewhat earlier, on 25 June 1797, Paul I issued a decree to conduct the General Land Survey in New Russia, which also concerned the governorates of Saratov, Orenburg and Simbirsk (PSZ, I, vol. 24, no. 18019). Its aim was that thought such operation the land disputes were effectively remedied "to ensure

2 A dessiatin (Russian: *desiatina*) is a land measurement used in tsarist Russia. It is equal to 2 400 square sazhen and is approximately equivalent to 1.09 hectare.







FIGURE 3  
MAP OF THE GOVERNORATE OF NEW RUSSIA WITH ITS 12 DISTRICTS, 1800



Source: *Rossiiskii atlas, iz soroka trekh kart sostoiashchii i na sorok odnu gubernii Imperii razdeliaushchii*. Sostavitel A. M. Vilbrekht, St Petersburg, Geograficheskii departament Kabineta I. E.V., 1800. (*The Atlas of Russia composed of forty three maps dividing the Empire into forty one governorates*)

complete peace of mind for all landowners from these governorates” (PSZ, I, vol. 24, no. 17901).

In practice, however, the demarcation of lands was primarily implemented in the mainland parts of New Russia. In 1798, the Perekop district was a larger territory than four years later, stretching from the Dnieper River to the Perekop Isthmus and the Lake Sivash and the northern part of the Crimean Peninsula. The surveyors started by working in the city of Perekop and its surroundings as a vital strategic point located on the isthmus that connected the Crimean Peninsula to the mainland. Around 1804, a total of 102 locations, called *dacha* in Russian, covering 1 589 311 dessiatins of land were demarcated. Among them were the Tatar villages, the Russian landlord estates such as Zavadov-

ka and Rogachik, the Bol’shaia Znamenka, Kamenka, Vodianaia slobodas established by the Russian state peasants, and the first settlements of European colonists (RGADA, f. 1355, op. 1, d. 1559; Stepanova, 2020b, pp. 608-615). As for the rest of the territory of the Crimean Peninsula, the Crimean land tenure, due to its complex nature, caused difficulties in land surveying. Surveyors were unfamiliar with the natural environment and the social and cultural life of the Crimean Tatars in general. The boundaries of their villages and landholdings often were vaguely described by them, by referring to the natural features of the land (plants, rocks, streams, etc.), their clan affiliation and family lineage, and local customs. The Ak-Mechet district was a place where many disputes were arising

between the Tatar communities and new landowners on the status of the allocated lands and the illegal use of land. In these conditions, only 340 935 dessiatins of land were surveyed in this district around 1802 (Lashkov, 1897, p. 67).

#### IN SEARCH OF WAYS AND MEANS FOR RESOLUTION OF THE LAND CONFLICTS IN CRIMEA

The situation of the land ownership in Crimea was compounded by the fact that the Russian landlords expressed their dissatisfaction. Some avoided responding to the request for explanations from the land commission on the dispute over land with the Tatars. The military governor of New Russia I. I. Michelson became aware of their concerns. He was appointed in his office by Paul I in 1800 and continued to administrate Crimea after the accession to the throne of Alexander I on 23 March 1801. In January 1801, A. Taranov, who was chosen as the representative of the landlords of Christian confession of the Ak-Mechet district in the land commission, sent to Michelson a note, in which he stated that "it would be contrary to justice to deprive the nobles of the lands which were allocated to them according to the imperial or governor-general orders [...]. As the development of land incurred significant costs, some have gone into debt, while others sold part of their other properties". Unlike the Russian landlords, the Tatars often did not have documents attesting their land ownership. To resolve the land conflicts, Taranov proposed that they were relocated from the Mountainous Crimea to the steppe zone. Thanks to this, "these lazybones, who subsisted on the sale of the fruits abundant in the region and on the destruction of forests, may be transformed into effective cultivators or engaged in the useful breeding of livestock, such as horses, cattle and sheep". Furthermore, he recalled that until then the presence of the Tatar people especially in the Southern Coast "seemed unreliable and in many ways politically harmful". Settling them inside the peninsula, "under trusteeship partly on the estates of the Russian landlords and partly on those of the Tatar nobles loyal to Russia, would represent, so to speak, a great security against the aims of the enemies of the Russian Crown" (Lashkov, 1896b, vol. 24, pp. 67-69).

In November 1801, provincial secretary V. Chernov addressed a petition on behalf of sixteen Russian landlords to general-prosecutor A. A. Bekleshov (Lashkov, 1897, pp. 64-67). They felt that their interests were harmed, and they were going to be ruined by the disputes over land with the Tatars and by the

unjust and illicit practices of the provincial officials. "Imbued with greed and covetousness", the Tatars used various means to claim the right to own lands which were distributed to them in the region. Later, on 28 March 1802, the same landlords submitted, through Chernov, another petition, but this time to the tsar (Lashkov, 1897, pp. 52-56). Drawing a bleak picture of the situation in Taurida, they claimed him to put an end to the disorders and to protect their own property, rights, and interests.

The Crimean landlords therefore took a unified position with regard to the land ownership in the region but also demonstrated a biased attitude, surrounded with prejudices, towards the Tatar people. Academician Peter Pallas was no exception. He travelled to the southern provinces in 1793-1794 and revealed the Crimean Peninsula's rich flora and fauna and values and way of the life of the Tatars in his "Remarks", followed by some reflections on possible economic improvements in the region. He was disappointed by the "beautiful valleys of the Southern Coast are inhabited by incapable, lazy and often dangerous Tatars" (Pallas, 1999, pp. 115-116). "Owing to its geographical location, climate and the nature of its soils, the Crimean Peninsula a unique country of the Russian Empire where all plants of Greece and Italy can be domesticated and cultivated [...] Why not breed profitably silkworms, grapes, sesame, olives, cotton, saffron, which until now are imported into the empire at great expense by the Black, Baltic and Caspian seas". However, the main obstacles for Crimea to be a flourished country were a small number of merchants and educated and enterprising people, while "the best parts of the country are occupied by the Tatars who from ancient times have been prone to destruction [...] This is the people that is cunning as to the government under which it lives, nurturing only the necessities of their existence [...] and does not conceive of cultivating any new plant or other enterprise [...] A particularly important reason preventing the successful development of Crimea is the uncertainty for the land ownership rights" (pp. 155-157). With Catherine's permission, Pallas settled in Crimea and lived there from 1795 to 1809. He had a house in Simferopol and a land in Sudak, where he experimented with cross-breeding vines and making wines. After becoming an owner of land located in the valley of the Shuli River, he soon had a dispute with the Tatar villages, which could have reinforced his strong view on them.

These issues took a new turn with the establishment of the New Russia Committee on 24 November



1801. It was composed of Emperor Alexander I's close advisers and senior officials such as V. P. Kochubei, P.A. Zubov, the future ministers of Justice and Commerce G. P. Derzhavin and N. P. Rumiantsev, the privy councillor Carl Ludwig von Hablitz, Bekleshov, and Mordvinov. They were called to discuss main problems and prospects of the administrative and economic development of Crimea (RGIA, f. 1307, op. 1, d. 1; for more details see Konkin, 2016b).

The committee first became acquainted with the opinion given by the governor of New Russia on the problems of the land ownership in Crimea. Michelson outlined his views in a note dated January 1802, which was probably read by the tsar (RGIA, f. 1307, op. 1, d. 7, ll. 2-4). He reported that instead of developing the allocated lands, the new landowners began to appropriate lands, houses and gardens of the Tatars and increased fees paid by them for the use of land. He submitted to the committee the proposals outlining the way to resolve the land conflicts that resulted from these practices. He considered the distribution of lands in Crimea as "an unlawful act that was accomplished without respect for the monarch's will and with numerous irregularities". Above all, "the imperial power was never intended to distribute to individuals the lands that has been in the property of its new subjects" and even less "to make them enslaved by the landlords through these allocations of land" (RGIA, f. 1307, op. 1, d. 8, ll. 1-2). Therefore, to the astonishment of the Crimean landlords, Michelson recommended that a general review of the allocated lands and land rights should be carried out in the region. The lands that were illegally belonged by the individuals would be confiscated and returned to the Tatars. However, the owners could be compensated by the lands allocated in other localities of the peninsula.

In 1799 Mordvinov became an admiral and from 1799 to 1801 he was a vice-president of the Admiralty. He was known as a thinker motivated by the enlightenment and liberal ideas. He actively opposed the Michelson's proposals in the meeting of the New Russia Committee on 19 February 1802 and through "The view on the situation of Crimea" which he later submitted to Alexander I (RGIA, f. 1307, op. 1, d. 13, ll. 1-4; Mordvinov, 1872). He was concerned about the land ownership and land rights of the Tatars since he was a major Crimean landlord. Catherine II granted him land on the southern coast of the Crimea. He also owned land in Suuk-Su and vineyards in Sudak as well as a large estate in the Baidar valley acquired from Potemkin's nephew, major-general N. P. Vysotskii. He

was involved in dispute with several Tatar communities which accused him of seizing of their lands and refused to pay fees to him. In addition to his fears of having his Crimean estates confiscated, Mordvinov argued that the return of the lands granted to the Russian nobles to the Tatar peasants would be harmful to the principle of private property and the rights and the privileges of the Russian nobility in general. He advised to close the land commission. According to him, the prosperity of Crimea was linked only to the activities of the Russian estate owners and foreign colonists. He considered that the Tatars were unreliable and incapable of cultivating land and gardens. He wanted the Tatars to have a right to move from one locality to another, but the landowners could also, when they wished, evict them from their estates. However, it would be better to settle the Tatar people in the steppes of Crimea to solve the economic and land problems of the region.

Count Kochubei was one of the "young friends" with whom Alexander I shared his thoughts of reform in the Russian Empire and in 1802 became minister of Internal affairs. He brought "the Crimea issue" to the Unofficial Committee for discussion on 3 February 1802. Sometime later he presented a project, in which he stated that the allocations of land in Crimea took place "in a rather vague and uncertain manner", which led to numerous disputes and disagreements ruinous for all parties concerned. To remedy this situation, the protection should be given to the Tatars from claims of the landlords. It would be useful to reaffirm that "the Tatars were free people" and retained the same land rights that they had in the time of the Crimean Khanate. However, it was inexpedient to take away from the new landowners the granted lands they began to develop. However, the Tatars could continue to exploit them in return for payment of tithe on grain and labour services but no more than five or six days a year (RGIA, f. 1307, op. 1, d. 9, ll. 1-5).

The debate was enriched by the "Project on the splitting of the New Russia governorate and the organization of the administration and the economy in Crimea" prepared by Hablitz in 1802 (Konkin, 2016a). At Potemkin's request a Prussian-born scientist wrote a *Physical description of Tauride area* (1785). He served a vice-governor of the Taurida region from 1783 for ten years and a responsible of the management of the salt production in 1794. In the cited project, Hablitz advocated to fix the land tenure in Crimea in accordance with the Russian law, without infringing on the rights of the Tatars. All lands granted to

the Russian landlords, on which they had legal documents, should be approved to them in property. The Tatar peasants would have the right to own the land plots near a home and gardens. The General Land Survey should only be carried out in the peninsula after the land disputes have been settled. If the Tatars subsequently did not have enough land, they could receive additional land in the same villages or be allowed to move to other locations, at a rate of 20 desiatins per household in the Mountainous Crimea or of 60 dessiatins in the Steppe Crimea.

The committee's members formulated their observations and findings in the final report sent to the emperor on 3 March 1802 (RGIA, f. 1307, op. 1, d. 1, ll. 58-62). This topic was discussed by the State Council on 17 April 1802 (Arkhiv Gosudarstvennogo Soveta, 1878, vol. 3, part 1, pp. 844-854). The propositions of Mordvinov were not finally adopted, which were in part radical and favored the Crimean landlords. Emperor Alexander I and his government maintained the policy of protection and religious tolerance towards the Tatar population. The legal and administrative means were considered more relevant to remedy to land problems in the region.

#### THE COMMISSION ON THE SETTLEMENT OF LAND DISPUTES OF 1802-1810

Consequently, on 19 May 1802, Alexander I issued a decree that established a new commission with new staff and the twofold mission to settle the land disputes and to review peasant fees in Crimea (PSZ, I, vol. 27, no. 20276). The privy councillor and senator I. V. Lopukhin was appointed its chairman. Other members were the assistant-prosecutor of the temporary Land Survey Department in St Petersburg P. S. Lanskoi, the active state councillor M. V. Tumanskii, and the state councillors P. I. Sumarokov and B. I. Kreiter. In addition, the representatives of the Russian and Crimean Tatar landowners as well as of the Tatar peasant communities joined the commission.

Its main goal was "to investigate which lands belonged to the native people, which were vacant, and which had been illegally allocated and usurped, in order to determine the rights over land of both the Crimean Tatars and the new landowners". In this spirit, the decree provided the commission with the "Outline of guidelines", in which four categories of Crimean lands were distinguished as follows. The first consisted of the khan's domain, populated by the peasants holding arable or grazing lands in common property. The decree confirmed that after

the annexation of the Crimean Khanate into Russia there was no question of distributing the communal lands as grants to individuals. The second category concerned the lands that were owned by the beys and murzas, described under three different scenarios. In the first, the lands were left to their fate by those who emigrated to the Ottoman Empire. A second case concerned the lands held by the murzas who continued to live in Crimea. In a third case, the emigrants previously sold their landholdings to other persons. By the decree the new landowners were forbidden deprive the Tatars of property. In the event of the disagreement between landholders and peasants, the requests for a displacement procedure to other localities of the Crimea had to be made by the two parties to the authorities. The third category concerned the land plots and gardens that ordinary Tatars owned by purchase or inheritance before and after the Russian annexation of the Crimea. The fourth category included "the lands which were unoccupied during the khan's period or were discovered as such by Russia during the first survey and cameral description of the region". The general rule was when an uncultivated land was granted to a person, it was considered to belong to him. It was specifically stipulated that the provincial authorities were not allowed to allot the inhabited lands, and thus "the right of ownership over such lands could not be recognized to anyone". The villagers could not take possession of the lands belonging to the emigrated murzas but only exploit them. However, they may receive the supplement of land, but not exceeding 60 dessiatins per household.

The land commission renewed its work, sitting in Simferopol. It faced difficulties as soon as it tried to implement the mentioned decree. It appeared that the native land tenure lacked legal formality. As the Tatars often lacked written documents to back up their claims, the Russian authorities agreed that they proved on oath, according to the Muslim custom, their right to own the land plots in dispute. On 23 September 1802, as the representatives of the Christian landlords in the commission, the captain commander E. Sarandinaki and the collegiate assessor F. Poliakov presented a petition, in which they were indignant and warned that the Tatars were able to give contradictory evidence or to make a false oath to present as their own not only the lands allocated to the Russian landlords but also the lands belonging to the state (Lashkov, 1897, pp. 46-52). Given that, they wished that the decisions were primarily relying on written documentation.

By investigating land disputes, the commission provided changes in existed survey plans, if erroneous or incomplete. Several cases of misconduct of land surveyors were revealed. Given this, the commission suggested, in its report of 1802, that the surveyors needed more detailed instructions to continue accurately the demarcation of lands within the Crimean Peninsula.

In February 1803, Lopukhin went to St Petersburg and reported to Alexander I on difficulties in settling conflicts over land in the ground. Subsequently, the State Council provided additional guidelines, which were approved by an imperial decree of 23 April 1804 (PSZ, I, vol. 21, no. 21275).

By this decree the General Land Survey was suspended in the Taurida governorate. The procedural issues relating to the resolution of land disputes were more detailed. The parties disputing the right to own land were obliged to present their explanations and supporting documents to the land commission within a month. One this delay has elapsed, no more documents could be brought in. The commission was taking a decision despite the non-appearance of one of the parties.

All documents of ownership (through grant, inheritance, or purchase) were divided between those created before and after the annexation of the Crimea into the Russian Empire. The old documents, particularly the Crimean khan's charters for grant of land and kadiasker's books,<sup>3</sup> were preferred to new in the resolution process. When the supporting documents were lost, the Tatars had to take an oath in the presence of both the mullah and the witnesses. But the oath was only valid if no doubt or dispute was expressed by the opposing party or the land commission.

However, the decree stipulated that when the claim of the old (i. e. Tatar) landowner was justified, but the new owner built a home, mill, fruit garden or manufacture on the land in dispute, he was allowed to keep land in its possession in return for payment a monetary compensation to the old owner. It can thus be seen that the imperial authority did not remain deaf

to the claims from the Russian landlords, who were confused and feared the confiscation of their Crimean estates.

Sumarokov, Kreider and Lanskoï in October 1803 and Tumanskii in the end of 1804 resigned their offices as the land commission's members. They were replaced by the collegiate councilors D. A. Kovalev and M. P. Shter and the Court councillor E. B. Veshniakov. On 25 June 1805, the chairman of the commission Lopukhin asked the tsar for his resignation. The active state councilor D. B. Mertvago, acting as civil governor of the Taurida governorate from December 1803, was appointed to this position. As Lopukhin notes in his memoirs, "the indigenous people, which was very fond of me, regretted my departure. This is even more remarkable and flattering for me considering that I should have been against it, defending justly the rights of the nobility and the new landowners" (Lopukhin, 1990, p. 162).

Thanks to a change in staff, the land commission worked intensively between 1805 and 1808. Following the Alexander I's reform of the local government in 1802, New Russia was subdivided into three separate governorates: Ekaterinoslav, Kherson and Taurida. The Taurida governorate was composed of seven districts: Dnieper, Melitopol, Perekop, Simferopol, Theodosia, Evpatoria, and Tmutarakan (PSZ, I, vol. 27, no. 20449). (Fig. 4). Shter was responsible for the resolution of land disputes arising in the Simferopol district and Kovalev in the districts of Perekop, Theodosia, and Evpatoria. The parties were called upon to address their dispute over land by reconciliation or by judgment. If necessary, the commission's members visited the villages to question both the claimants and defendants and other inhabitants about the features of the disputed land.

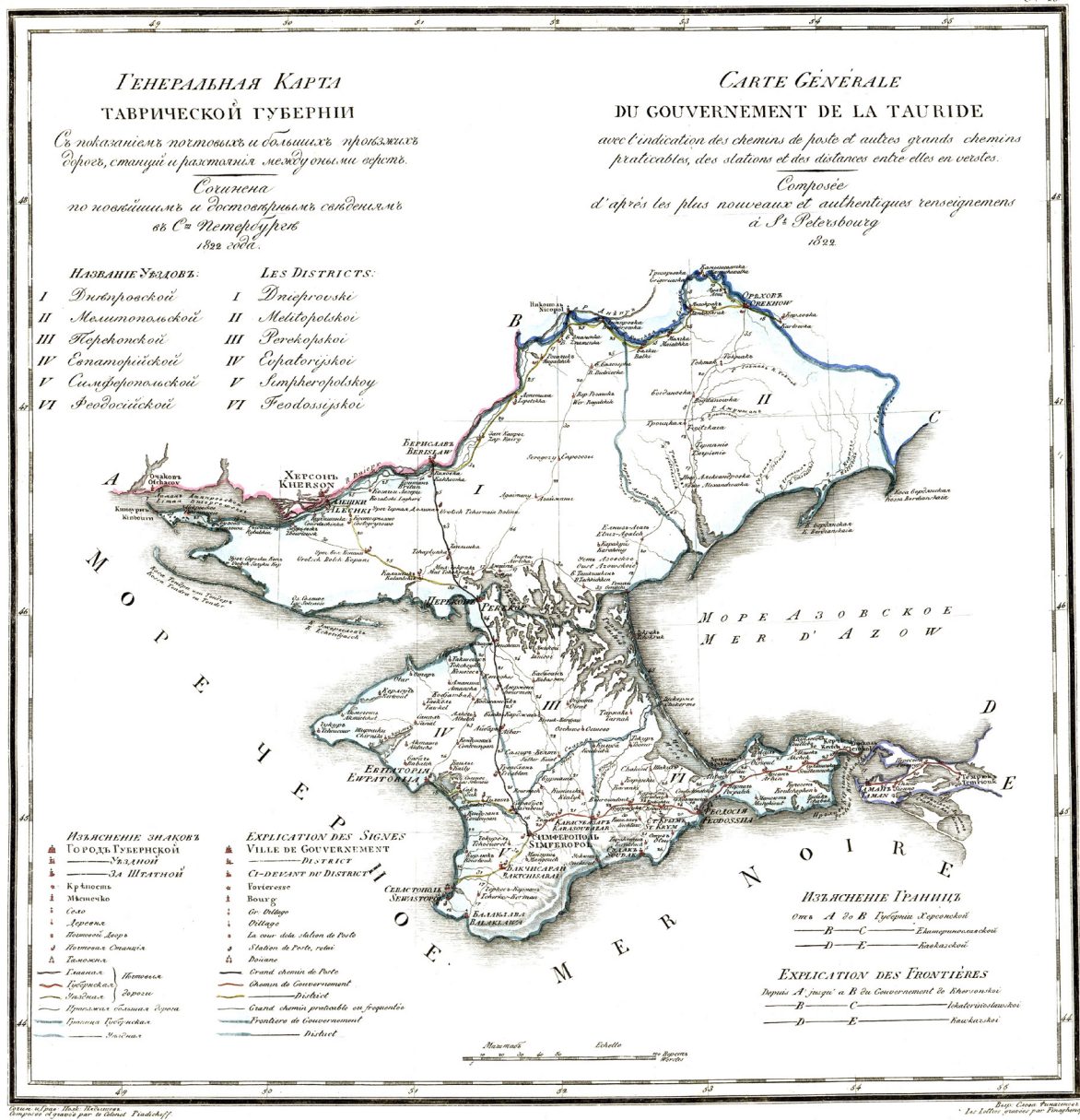
The land commission recommended the parties in conflict to reconcile, to which many agreed. A conciliation report was drawn up and signed by all parties involved in conflict. Otherwise, the opposing party had to provide additional evidence to support its claims. The decision shall be taken by a majority of the commission's members present at the meeting.

After the departure of Mertvago to the capital in 1807, the resolution of land disputes was ensured by Kovalev and Shter. During his service, Shter proved to be a competent, diligent, and honest official. He was made head of the land commission on 5 October 1808.

Since its establishment in 1800, the land commission resolved 398 cases in total (GARK, f. 24, op. 1, d.

3 Kadiasker's books are record books of judgments or court rulings of the Kadiasker Court. Kadiasker was the Senior Judge of the Shariah Court i.e. the highest judicial institution which also acted as Supreme Court of appeal. The records include court rulings of all judicial levels that required Kadiasker's approval. The Books of Kadiasker of Crimea are 61 volumes of judicial documentation of all kind composed between ss. XVII and XVIII.

FIGURE 4  
GENERAL MAP OF THE GOVERNORATE OF TAURIDA, 1822



Source: Geograficheskii atlas Rossiiskoi imperii, Tsarstva Pol'skogo i velikogo Kniazhestva Finlandskogo, Sostavitel' V. P. Piadyshev, St Petersburg, Voenno-topograficheskoe depo, 1827 (reedited in 1834). (Geographical Atlas of the Russian Empire, the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Finland).

315, l. 291). These include 127 claims that were filed against the Russian estate owners and 144 against the Crimean Tatar nobility. 106 decisions were rendered on complaints by the Tatars against provincial officials. 94 cases out of the total number of cases were concluded by conciliation.

Regarding the second aspect of its mission, the land commission prepared a report on the land use

rights and relevant fees of the Crimean Tatars which was submitted to the ministry of Internal affairs on 20 December 1809. In addition, in 1808 it conducted the assessment of the Crimean lands that were divided into several groups in terms of their natural qualities. The price ranged from 1 to 6 rubles per dessiatin of arable land and hayfields and from 50 to 500 rubles for fruit gardens (Lashkov, 1897, pp. 71-76). A list of all



Crimea's localities and villages belonging to the landlords was compiled in 1805 (Lashkov, 1897, pp. 84-154). The Commission also provided a table that correlated the Tatar and Russian measurement units for lengths, areas, and grain volumes. These documents were useful in the resolution of the land disputes and the land survey operations. The land commission was formally closed on 13 September 1810 (PSZ, I, vol. 31, no. 24349).

#### **CRIMEA'S ADMINISTRATIVE AND LAND ISSUES IN EXTRAORDINARY COMMISSIONS IN 1816-1819**

On 4 May 1816, Alexander I ordered Count Alexander de Langeron, military governor of Kherson, to investigate the acts of administrative impropriety in the Kherson and Taurida governorates. In particular, he was informed that "nearly half a million desiatins of unoccupied land were sold to individuals at low prices in Taurida, which was highly detrimental to the Treasury" (PSZ, I, vol. 33, no. 26254). Shortly after, a commission was established, for which Langeron prepared a detailed instruction (GARK, f. 23, op. 1, d. 9, ll. 3-6). It consisted of Zhegulin, rear admiral F. T. Bychenskii, major A. Arginskii, vice-governor of the Taurida governorate E. F. Zalfeld, provincial councillor M. I. Meyer, and provincial marshal A. Taranov-Belozorov. Two other members were of Tatar origin: major-general Kay bey Balatukov and major Seit Ibrahim aga Tashi who formerly served as kaymakan of the region of Perekop.

The commission functioned from July 1816 to November 1819 and initiated 254 cases, 139 of which deal with the land. 64 judgments were rendered on fraud, waste, mismanagement, and malpractices of the local officials. 51 judgments related to criminal activities and other local matters (see in detail Kravchuk, 2021 and 2022, pp. 877-879).

The civil governor of the Taurida governorate himself was under investigation. Holding this position from 1809, A. M. Borozdin became an influential figure in the region but was not a dedicated and efficient official. He knew little about the needs of the local population and gradually tired of his tasks of the governor, which were exercised daily by the vice-governor and his son-in-law, A. I. Shostak, to devote more time to manage his estates and cultural activities. Borozdin was taking advantage of his position as governor to force the Tatars to sell him a part of their lands on the Cape Placa, located on the shore of the Kuchuk-Lambat bay. Here he built a residence, surrounded by splendid park, which became a welcome place for

several Russian and foreign officials and intellectuals travelling to Crimea (see Kravchuk, 2013).

The construction of the Alexander Nevsky Cathedral founded in Simferopol in 1810 fell behind schedule. It was weakened and partly collapsed because of the wrong location. The inquiry revealed the embezzlement of public funds in the building works. Borozdin was one of those questioned. On 26 August 1816, he addressed a letter to the minister of Justice D. P. Troshchinskii, in which he tried to defend himself from accusations made against him (GARK, f. 23, op. 1, d. 9, ll. 52-56). He argued that they were a consequence of the quarrels of the members of the commission with him. They, except for Bychenskii, owned lands in Crimea and were involved themselves in the purchase of the state lands at low prices. Thanks to this, Borozdin avoided being sanctioned for his misconduct and abuse of authority, except that he was relieved from his office on 20 July 1816. However, the same year he was recruited to a position in the Land Survey Department in St Petersburg.

Emperor Alexander I visited Crimea twice: first time was from 8 to 20 May 1818 and then from 24 October to 2 November 1824. The goals and the itinerary of his trips were different from a six-month journey that Catherine II started in 1787 through the newly acquired territories. It was an important event that aimed at demonstrating Russia's success in the Black Sea region and its spiritual and political connection to the Greek and Byzantine heritage (Brikner, 1885; Zorin, 2001, pp. 97-156). In 1818, leaving Warsaw, where he attended a meeting of the Polish Sejm, Alexander I, accompanied by a small retinue of officials, including military minister A. A. Arakcheev, came to the southern Ukraine and Crimea. He planned to visit cities and local institutions as well as to inspect the Second Army and the military settlements created from 1816 (Schilder, 1898, vol. 4, pp. 82-108, 368-371; Shamanaev, 2014).

During the Alexander I's journey through the Crimean Peninsula, the Tatars complained to him about the disputes with the landlords and their poor situation. These complaints were transferred to the commission by Arakcheev who remained in Simferopol for a short time (GARK, f. 23, op. 1, d. 292, ll. 2-3). He probably had in mind to pursue the implementation of military settlements in the country and especially in Crimea, by considering the need to secure the country in case of a possible conflict with the Ottomans. But this project has not been pursued because it would be a costly operation which required land purchases and delocalization of the Tatar villages.

After his return to the capital, Alexander I intended to review the situation of the Taurida governorate. In particular, he deplored the slowness of the commission in resolving the land conflicts, especially if the interests of the large landlords and senior officials were involved. As a result, the Committee for handing complaints from the Tatars in the Taurida governorate was established on 3 December 1819 (PSZ, I, vol. 36, no. 28014). This time it was decided to dispense with the participation of the provincial nobility in the committee. It was made up of officials who enjoyed the trust of Alexander I and were well acquainted with the local realities such as senator Hablitz, A. S. Lavinskii, a civil governor of the Taurida governorate from 20 July 1816 to 28 December 1819, and Shter. His service in the land commission was an important step in his career, by which Shter gained a promotion to the rank of the active state councillor and became senator.

The committee had to present thoughts for the land tenure in Crimea was based “on the fair and mutual benefit” of its inhabitants. It reviewed the number of existing land disputes and approved or rejected decisions taken by the previous commission. Among other things, it reflected on how to make the Crimean Tatars taxpayers of the Russian Empire. The proposal to submit them to the soul tax was rejected, arguing that it was inappropriate for the Muslims. The establishment of the land tax was also unsuitable as the General Land Survey had not been completed in the peninsula. Finally, the committee proposed to establish on a temporary basis the tax on the Tatar peasant houses. The project was approved by Alexander I on 12 April 1821, but has not been put into practice (RGIA, f. 1306, op. 1, d. 8, ll. 40-49; see in detail Konkin, 2017, pp. 99-100). Urban or rural Tatar commoners continued outside a unified taxation system of the Russian Empire, paying only taxes for a range of the local needs during most of the first half of the nineteenth century.

These issues returned to the governmental agenda under the rule of Nicholas I (1825-1855). The draft of the statute on the state residents and landowners in the Taurida governorate was elaborated, basing partly on the 1809 report of the land commission. It was examined by the State Council and approved by the tsar on 28 September 1827 (PSZ, Coll. II, vol. 2, no. 1417).

This is an important regulation that enshrined the social status of the Crimean peasantry and a specific land tenure system in the Taurida governorate. The designation as “state residents” (*kazennye poseliane*) was associated with the peasants living on the state land or the landlord estates as well as with those who

had the land plots in personal property (Art. 16). All had the personal freedom (Art. 1) and the freedom of movement within the same governorate. They could bring claims to the courts against anyone who harassed or physically attacked them (Art. 10).

The statute removed the ambiguity that existed regarding the status of communal lands, stipulating that their occupants had the right to freely use them but now were not allowed to sell them, because all these lands belonged to the State. Regardless of whether the land was owned by the state or the landlords, the Tatar peasants had the right of ownership to their houses and gardens. Henceforth the agreements between peasants and landlords on the use of land and relevant fees had to be in writing and approved by the provincial Treasury office (Art. 24).

According to this statute, “old” or “new” landowners, whether they were noble or not, had the full right of ownership over land, including to sell, transfer, mortgage, exchange, or lease their lands, if they had the documents attesting their ownership (Art. 31).

It was reaffirmed that the waqfs<sup>4</sup> remained in the inviolable property of the Muslim clergy and the schools attached to the mosques. Their right to these lands could be proven by the spiritual wills made either during the donor’s lifetime or after his death or other relevant documents.

#### THE RENEWAL OF THE GENERAL LAND SURVEY IN THE TAURIDA GOVERNORATE

The need to renew the General Land Survey in the Taurida governorate was discussed in the State Council as early as 1820, but only on 24 January 1829 a decree was approved by Nicholas I to conduct such operation (PSZ, II, vol. 4, no. 2617). To accomplish it, the surveying of the Dnieper and Melitopol districts were entrusted to the Ekaterinoslav Land Survey Office. Simultaneously, two bodies were established in Simferopol: The Land Survey Office chaired by lieutenant colonel F. Zaloga, succeeded in September 1830 by the former prosecutor of Perm P. Kharin, and the Land Survey Commission headed by Shter, which included two officials from the ministry of Justice and two rep-

4 A waqf is an inalienable charitable endowment under Islamic law (a type of mortmain property). It involves a donation of a real estate and non-expendable property (a plot of land, a building) for Muslim religious or charitable purposes. An imperial decree «On the waqfs in Crimea» was issued on 22 March 1829 (PSZ, Coll. II, vol. 4, no. 2761).

representatives of the landowners (one from Christians and one from Muslims). It had to decide all unresolved cases in which the titles or property boundaries were questioned. These bodies were charged of surveying the districts located on the Crimean Peninsula. A set of instructions to guide land surveyors was inserted into the decree.

Each team consisted of two to five surveyors and was accompanied by the translators to visit places, as required by the decree. When demarcating the lands occupied by the Russian state peasants and European colonists, surveyors had to ensure that their size did not extend beyond what was by government orders. The surveying of the lands occupied by the Tatar communities should be carried out in the presence of their representatives. The limits of each village were represented by a general line on plans.

Several landholdings were already demarcated during the General Land Survey in New Russia in 1798-1804. However, since the surveyors now acted under special instructions, they had to review the documents of ownership and to determine the boundaries of each property in the field. The Christian and Muslim landowners had to attest the property boundaries according to the separate forms for oath and declaration documents provided by this decree.

When the boundaries of the property were recognized *de jure*, surveyors undertook geodetic measurements. When the neighbors disputed the dividing line of adjacent lands, they were asked to provide evidence within a deadline to the Land Survey Office. Plans were drawn up only then the land disputes were finally settled.

If there were no ancient titles or their authenticity was doubted, surveyors had to clarify how long and how the murzas or ordinary Tatars owned their lands before starting the demarcation's work.

Not only the state- and privately owned lands but also the waqfs were affected by the survey operation. For this purpose, the mufti as the head of the Muslim clergy of Crimea was requested to provide to the Russian authorities a statement that showed the seize of each waqf, when and by whom it was donated to the mosques and schools and where it was located. Surveyors could not demarcate the waqfs without the presence of the representatives appointed by the mufti.

The surveyors had to complete their work by marking the limits of the surveyed dachas through marker

materials. These were to be stone pillars instead of wooden pillars placed in the ground bearing the Russian coat of arms or deep holes filled with stones. However, in towns and areas with stony ground, it was necessary to make boundary mounds 1,5 arshins high and place pillars.

As this task required "a special knowledge and art", it was planned to delegate the experienced surveyors from the St Petersburg Land Survey Department in Crimea. Several retired engineering officers were also recruited. 110 300 rubles was allocated annually for the salaries and operating expenses of the land survey institutions in Simferopol (PSZ, II, vol. 4, no. 3032, annex, pp. 18-19). Despite this, there was a shortage of staff. It was partly covered by sending in Crimea officials after the end of the demarcation of lands in the Ekaterinoslav and Kherson governorates. In addition, several general and staff officers from the General Staff of the Russian armed forces were appointed to supervise the land survey work. The most commonly tools used by land surveyors were the chains and theodolites. As it was difficult to measure by parallel lines lands located in the mountainous region, they could use the method of rhombic lines, as stipulated by the decree of 1832 (PSZ, II, vol. 7, no. 5639).

In the final step of the land survey process, two types of plans were compiled. Plans for each dacha were drawn up on a scale of 100 sazhen to an inch (1:8400). These were then incorporated into general district plan on scale of 1 verst to an inch (1:42000), accompanied by the "economic notes" (*ekonomicheskie kommentarii*). These documents provide information not only on the amounts and the quality of arable and other types of land of each district, but also on its geographic features, including relief, soil, and types of flora and fauna, and its various ethnic and social groups.

The territory of the Dnieper district was a flat steppe area that was bordered by the Black Sea in the west and south-west, by the Dnieper River in the north, and the Lake Sivash in the south. It bordered the Melitopol district to the east. The borders of the Melitopol district were the Sea of Azov in the south, the Konka River in the north-east and the Berda River in the east. The two territories were very sparsely populated until the end of the Crimean Khanate and then the Russian government allotted lands to peasants, estate owners, and foreign colonists for the purpose of cultivation. Private landholdings were built along the Dnieper River flowing into the Dnieper Estuary, on the coastal areas of the Black and Azov Seas,

the Utlyuk estuary and Bolshoy and Maly Utlyuk Rivers. They neighbored the villages established by the Tatars and the Russian and Ukrainian state peasants along the roads from Perekop to Aleshki, Mariupol, and Orekhovo.

In 1833 and 1834, Odintsov and Melnikov conducted the surveying of lands available in the two districts. As we can see from the economic notes for the Dnieper district, the total of the surveyed area was 613 503 dessiatins, 81 773 dessiatins (13%) of which were arable lands and 2 746 dessiatins were inconvenient lands. 389 102 dessiatins (63%) were covered with herbaceous vegetation and were used for haymaking. 54 dachas were populated by 32 203 souls of the two sexes (RGADA, f. 1355, op. 1, d. 1552, 1553 and 1558; Stepanova, 2020a, p. 57). The Melitopol district had 49 dachas, with a population of 10 077 souls, that covered a total of 251 946 dessiatins of land. The area of arable lands was 28 006 dessiatins (11%); 206 491 dessiatins (82%) was under hayfields and pastures (RGADA, f. 1355, op. 1, d. 1558; Stepanova, 2020a, pp. 57-58). The Tatar population was traditionally engaged in animal husbandry. The main activity of the state peasants and privately owned serfs consisted of the crop farming. The black and grey sandy that prevailed in such geographical area provided good yields of rye, barley, wheat, and millet without fertilizer. But sometimes the crops were partially destroyed by the scorching wind. The Russian estate owners were increasingly involved in animal breeding, specifically fine fleeced sheep breeding.

There were still significant amounts of unpopulated lands in the Melitopol district during the first half of the nineteenth century. Alexander I decided to relocate the state peasant religious sects known as the Dukhobors and Molokans in the left bank of Molochnaya River, with the aim to develop agriculture in it and to purge the Orthodox population of the internal provinces from "harmful influence" of the sectarians. The boundaries of each of their villages were demarcated. At the same time, the Russian authorities promoted the settlement of the European colonists and in particular the Mennonites of Danzig and Prussia on the left bank of the Molochnaya River in the 1820s. More than forty settlements formed the Molochny Mennonite Settlement, which was contained in the survey documents as a separate dacha with a total area of 67 131 dessiatins. Its members held the land plots in property and the privilege of exemption from taxes.

In the south-eastern part of the Taurida governo-

rate, the Theodosia district adjoined the Black Sea from the south, the Kerch-Yenikal strait from the east and the Sea of Azov from the north-east. In the 1830s 66 dachas covering 27 695 dessiatins of lands were demarcated. They include 10 388 dessiatins (37.5%) under steppe, 2 012 dessiatins (7.3%) of arable lands and 230 dessiatins (1%) under vineyards and orchards. 5 730 dessiatins (20.7%) were appropriate for hayfields and 402 dessiatins (1.5%) for pastures. Most of lands suitable for farming were in the southwestern part of the district because of its natural environment. However, chernozems often were mixed with rocky, clay and gristly or sandy types of soil, and there were some places that were with solonchaks. The Tatars cultivated crops on these lands and raised livestock, while the foreign colonists such as the Anatolian Greeks were involved in vegetable growing and cattle breeding (RGADA, f. 1355, inv. 1, d. 1560-1564; Stepanova, 2020b, pp. 616-617).

Since M. S. Vorontsov took office of the governor-general of New Russia and Bessarabia in 1823, Taurida has undergone changes. He started the building of the network to supply cities with drinking water. A road connected Simferopol, Alushta, Yalta and Sevastopol were built at his initiative, to which the Tatar population contributed. Vorontsov organized the growing of grapes and the making of wine in the whole Crimean Peninsula as well as in Bessarabia. The southern coast of the Crimea formed a separate district of Yalta in 1838 (PSZ, II, vol. 13, no. 11080). (Fig. 5). It was characterized by brown soils formed under dry forests and shrubs typical of the Mediterranean climate. These soils were known as particularly favorable for the viticulture and horticulture. In 1838, the Magarach educational institution at the Nikita Botanic Gardens, located close to Yalta, was established for the needs of the wine industry. Vorontsov possessed the best vineyards and wine cellars that were situated at his estates of Ai-Danil, Massandra and Alupka. The palace built by Vorontsov at the foot of Mount Ai-Petri can be rightly called a world architecture masterpiece. The palace and park were being built over a period of 20 years from 1828-1848 by English architects E. Blore and W. Hunt (see Galichenko, 2008; Krasnolutskii, 2020). In the 1820s there were only four or five Russian estate owners in the southern coast of the peninsula, in 1837 their number increased to 105. They included Borozdin in Kuchuk-Lambat, Count L. S. Pototskii in Livadia, Princess A. S. Golitsyn in Koreiz, the Naryshkin in Foros and Miskhor, who had at least 200 vines in each of their estates (Skal'kovskii, 1853, vol. 2, pp. 129-130 and 208-210).



FIGURE 5  
A FRAGMENT OF THE GENERAL SURVEY LAND PLAN OF THE YALTA DISTRICT



Dating to the 1830s, this plan shows the location of all land properties in the villages of Miskhor, Koreiz and Gaspra. In particular, the parcel numbers below refer to the lands occupied by the Tatar communities in Koreiz and Miskhor (1, 1656 dessiatins 347,5 square sazhen) and in Gaspra (2, 847 des. 895 sq. saz.); village Alupka (3, 1994 des. 190 sq. saz.) owned by Count M. S. Vorontsov and others as well as Vorontsov's other land parcels in Gaspra (20, 1 des. 1116 sq. saz. and 21, 2023 sq. saz.); land (4, 87 des. 2 192 sq. saz.) owned by Olga Naryshkina, the major's widow, in Miskhor; estate (6, 4 des. 1296 sq. saz.) of state councillor V. P. Zavadovskii; lands (7, 41 des. 590 sq. saz.) and (8, 11 des. 942 sq. saz.) owned by Princess A. S. Golitsyn; estates of Bunagi (13, 10 des. 323 sq. saz.) and Findi (18, 13 des. 2 115 sq. saz.) of colonel Prince S. I. Meshcherskii; Aianoga lands (28, 176 des.; 29, 70 des., and 30, 120 des.) owned by Mulla Ali, an official of the fourteenth rank of Tatar origin.

Source: RGADA, f. 1356, op. 1, d. 52 / 5512, l. 1 and f. 1354, op. 480, part 1 (The survey land plans of all properties of the Yalta district arranged alphabetically, dating from 1830 to 1834).

Not surprisingly, when Vorontsov acted to develop the economic life in Taurida and to improve its local government, he expressed concern about the situation of the land ownership. The surveying of the Crimean lands took longer than expected. Obviously, it was he who inspired actions to improve the situation, which were announced by Nicholas I in his two decrees of 21 February 1833. The preamble of the first decree, entitled "On land law in the Taurida governorate" (PSZ, II, vol. 8, no. 5994), noted the Russian government's previous efforts "to bring the obscure land law that existed in the region as close as possible to certain principles" and to resolve many land disputes arising

from the "mixture of old and new laws". To continue in the same way, Nicholas I expressed a wish, on the one hand, "to give the new indulgence and favour to landowners and to establish the land ownership on firm foundations" and, on the other hand, "to outline ways for the development of the agriculture and industry in the Taurian Peninsula". However, the novelty of this decree was that in the Southern Coast the Tatar communities now were allowed to sell their lands. It required only that the land plot to be sold did not exceed one third of the total area of the lands held by the village and that two thirds of its members consented. The transaction was subject to the approval

by the local authorities. In addition to the selling fees, ten rubles for each dessiatin of land were charged on behalf of the peasant community.

By the second decree signed on 21 February 1833 (PSZ, II, vol. 8, no. 5995), the land survey process in the Taurida governorate was placed under a personal supervision of Vorontsov. As result, the Land Survey Commission was transferred from Simferopol to Odesa<sup>5</sup>. The Land Survey Office functioned in Simferopol until its closure on 12 November 1841 (PSZ, II, vol. 16, no. 15013). In total, 1 686 dachas covering 2 105 108 dessiatins of land were surveyed in the Taurida governorate (Petrova, 2013, p. 165). Nevertheless, a number of the boundary dispute cases were in process of resolving. They were transferred to the Land Survey Commission in Odessa, which was closed by a decree of 30 June 1843 (PSZ, II, vol. 18, no. 16993).

## CONCLUSIONS

After its joining to Russia in 1783, Crimea experienced the large inflows and outflows of population and the redistribution of lands. The issues relating to the land ownership became increasingly complicated, raising social tensions and affecting the economic transformation of the peninsula.

Alexander I and his government met to find appropriate solutions to regulate the land ownership in Crimea, when they realized that it was a necessary condition to pursue the process of its integration into the Russian Empire. A special legislation was enacted in 1802 and 1804 to clarify and to secure the rights of owners and users of land, which was developed under his successor to the throne. In 1801, an extraordinary commission was charged with the task of resolving disputes arising between the native and non-native peoples, avoiding the local administrative system. From 1816 to 1819, another commission investigated irregularities in local government. Through the related materials we have some idea of the world of the local administration and its practices at that time. But this commission was less effective in dealing with land matters. Lastly, the demarcation of lands was considered as important to the final resolution of social conflicts about land in the region, by making precise measurements and by showing the boundaries of the landholdings on plans.

5 This city was a place of official residence of the governor-general of New Russia and other administrative bodies. It increasingly became an important Russia's seaport, attracting merchants from different towns or countries to trade various products.

The Russian imperial authority demonstrated a clear concern to legitimate and to better secure the land ownership in the region. Henceforth the recognition and the transfer of the land property rights as well as the land market transactions were to be carried out according to the Russian laws. However, the modern concepts relating to the private property and land law were used with care toward the indigenous people. The full ownership rights over land (*abusus, fructus and usus*) was recognized to the elite of the former khanate, which was subjected to the procedure of examination of supporting evidence. The communal lands were a particular form of land ownership in place in the Crimean Khanate, which was unusual for the Russian Empire. In the beginning of the Russian rule the communities were recognized with the inalienable collective property rights over their lands. But in the subsequent decades, it was a larger group of Crimean peasants who were reduced to being only usufructuaries of the lands. They had personal freedom and the right to use land while the ownership of which belonged to the state. The decree of 21 February 1833 took a new approach which was supposed to promote the land tenure based on individual ownership and the formation of the land market in Crimea. As a line of future research it will be interesting to examine the consequences that it produced on the Tatar population and the Crimean economy.

In the entire time during which it operated, the mission of the land commission was quite delicate not only because of organizational constraints but it balanced with the expectations and interests that enable from the native people and the Russian landlords. In this paper, we show the mechanisms for the resolution of land disputes which included the amicable settlement and financial compensation. It should be noted, however, that the Crimean Tatars failed to obtain the return of the lands in dispute in most cases when the new landowners developed farming and manufacturing activities on them.

The General Land Survey began in the territory of the former Crimean Khanate in 1798 but it was suspended. The second and more crucial step occurred from 1829 to 1843. A particular procedure framework was conceived to accomplish it. Despite such operation was long, the results were not disappointing. They were both cartographic and economic in nature. The economic notes by land surveyors provide a more detailed information than the early descriptions on the geography, economy, and population of Crimea during the studied period. The study of these documents has a special relevance for

bringing to light the features of the land tenure system in Crimea as well as the changes and challenges inherent in the process of its economic colonization by the Russian state peasants, nobles, and foreign colonists.

Through their daily presence in the field, the land commission and land surveyors were in the contact with the old and new inhabitants and had the opportunity to learn about the various aspects of the Crimean life. Through their action the Russian authorities were enabled to gain a better understanding of the environmental, economic, and social realities of Crimea after its annexation by the Russian Empire. The land commissions and land surveyors thus became useful instruments of government that helped to overcome specific land problems existed in the region, but also, given its economic potential, to reflect on possibilities for the development of Crimea. They were active in the implementation of government's orders in the region, which was affected by the two major administrative reforms in 1796 and 1802. But in the late eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth centuries there was a continuing need to strengthen control over the local administration, while the Crimean Tatar elite wanted to be more involved in the local government affairs.

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RGADA - The Russian State Archive of Ancient Documents, Moscow.

RGIA – The Russian State Historical Archive, St Petersburg.

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