
Crimean Tableaux of Catherine II's Court as the Visual Record of the Russian Empire's Southern Expansion

Yelena Severina
Hamilton College
yseverin@hamilton.edu

Abstract:

This article analyzes celebrations of Russian military victories over the Ottoman Turks during Catherine II's reign on the examples of pictures (tableaux) featured in fireworks, illuminations, triumphal arches, processions, and instances of live theater. Performing the Crimean conquest via these artistic displays, from the early 1770s—the time when Crimea first begins to appear in them—and until Catherine's final years, served as a way of incorporating the peninsula as a part of the imperial design and of announcing the Crimean Tatar as the latest member of the Russian Empire's supporting cast. This paper argues that Crimea's changing status in the ceremonial culture of Catherine's court is reflected in these tableaux with their focus on the territory (Crimea) as opposed to its people (Crimean Tatars).

Keywords:

Fireworks, illuminations, tableaux, Crimea, Crimean Tatars, Catherine II, ritual, enacted colonization

During the most expansionist period of Catherine II's reign from the late 1760s into the 1780s, foreign policy successes were commemorated by the striking of medals, erection of obelisks and statuary, and festivals involving fireworks, coordinated pageantry, and pictorial displays, often referred to as illuminations. Tableaux, as they became known among the French-speaking nobility, or *kartiny* in Russian—so-called pictures—would figure in these elaborate spectacles and help to convey their narratives. Art historian Elena Sarieva explains how the construction of these tableaux involved two parts. The first (“the plan”) represented a wooden frame (5-7 meters in length) that had a drawing at its center, which was created with the help of a flammable cord that was saturated with chemicals. The drawing consisted of several allegorical figures and included a succinct explanation of the depicted scene. During the performance, the cord would be set on fire to burn and reveal images one after another, thus, making the multi-colored drawing glow in the darkness. The second part (“the illumination shield”) was carved out of wood and had a recognizable shape (such as a temple or gazebo) and reached 6-10 meters in length; it too would glow, but now with the help of many lanterns attached to its base.¹ Consisting of a

I would like to thank Roman Koropecy for suggesting improvements to different versions of this article and recommending its abstract for the Eighteenth-Century Studies: Ukrainian and Global Perspectives Conference of 2021. I am grateful to Maksym Yaremenko for taking an interest in my presentation and encouraging me to submit the article to *Вивлююка: E-Journal of Eighteenth-Century Russian Studies*. I am indebted to the two anonymous peer reviewers for their valuable input. I would also like to thank the State Hermitage Museum for allowing me to include images from its collections in this work.

¹ Elena Sarieva, “Feierverki v Rossii XVIII veka,” in *Razvlekatel'naia kul'tura Rossii XVIII-XIX vv. Oчерki istorii i teorii* (St. Petersburg: Dmitrii Bulanin, 2000), 91-92.

standalone "picture" or a succession thereof, these large-scale designs, which at the right time would be enhanced with various sources of light, delighted audiences of all social classes and represented, according to Sarieva, a kind of synthesis of the arts that combined pyrotechnics, portrait painting, theater design, sculpture, architecture, literature, and music.² Often referred to as "allegorical tableaux" (*allegoricheskie kartiny*) for their predominantly allegorical themes, they came to Russia from Western European court practices during westernization efforts of Peter I.³ Their inspiration, however, was in the extravagant festivals of the late 1660s, which were held at Versailles during the reign of Louis XIV of France and served as a model for cultural life at the court. Imitated by other European monarchs, these performances constituted "the allegory of royal power" that portrayed the French king as a figure of classical antiquity.⁴ "For Peter as Louis XIV, the festival was a symbolic equivalent of a coup d'état, creating miracles previously allowed only to God,"⁵ writes Richard Wortman. In his study of fireworks during the first half of the eighteenth-century, Simon Werrett notes the importance of the Russian Academy of Sciences to their development, as well as their didactic function as "a powerful vehicle for promoting the sciences, securing patronage, and educating Russian audiences."⁶ Werrett identifies fireworks as one of Peter's reforms, writes about the emperor's involvement with creating his own multi-colored effects in "an effort to teach civility to Russians by example," and describes their efflorescence during his niece's, Anna Ioannovna's reign, which is when fireworks attained an "ability to shape the image of the sovereign and her rule."⁷

From the time when she ascended the throne in 1762 until her death in 1796, Catherine continued the tradition of using fireworks and illuminations to promote her imperial agenda. Like Peter's court, Catherine's would also invite comparisons with the court of

² Ibid., 91.

³ Such use of political and secular allegories can be traced to Greco-Roman times. They continued to develop during the Middle Ages. Although referring to these tableaux as "allegorical" is common in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century sources, this is not entirely accurate, since their themes often extended beyond allegory. The example of the 1775 festivities, which is discussed later in this article, demonstrates Catherine's disapproval of allegory and her efforts to discourage its production.

⁴ Jean-Marie Apostolides, "From Roi Soleil to Louis le Grand," in Denis Hollier, ed., *A New History of French Literature* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 316.

⁵ Richard Wortman, *Scenarios of Power: Myth and Ceremony in Russian Monarchy*, vol. 1 (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1995), 45. The celebration that took place in 1693 constitutes one of the first uses of this artistic medium in Russia. The occasion was in honor of Prince F. Iu. Romodanovskii who was the mock tsar of Peter's "Transfigured Kingdom." One of the illuminations included an allegorical picture of "Hercules tearing apart the jaws of the lion," which, as Wortman points out, "symbolized the power of Peter's forces and his irresistible, superhuman will." Ibid., 45. For more on Romodanovskii's role, see Ernest A. Zitser, *The Transfigured Kingdom: Sacred Parody and Charismatic Authority at the Court of Peter the Great* (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 2004), 56-63.

⁶ Simon Werrett, *Fireworks: Pyrotechnic Arts and Sciences in European History* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010), 104. Werrett writes about the role of fireworks in promoting science to broader audiences, including the nobility, who were not keen on attending scientific lectures. For instance, a dominant theme of the fireworks staged for the birthday of Anna Ioannovna in January 1735 was cosmological. Ibid., 122-124. Additionally, none of the themes of these fireworks were of a religious nature insofar as Peter made sure early on to eliminate "the religious associations of pyrotechnics in favor of grand princely displays." Ibid., 106.

⁷ Ibid., 107 and 119.

Louis XIV. Vera Proskurina provides an example of a famous carousel of 1766 in St. Petersburg—a knightly tournament modeled on the Parisian carousel of 1662.⁸ For Catherine, however, who was born a Prussian princess, the immediate point of reference for these fiery spectacles would have been not the court of the king of France but those of two Prussian monarchs, Frederick William I and his son Frederick II. For example, one year after Catherine’s birth, in 1730, a fête in honor of Frederick William I was organized at Mühlberg. Celebrations stretched for several days and included fireworks, knightly tournaments, and a mock naval battle on the Elbe. For his part, according to Marvin Carlson, Frederick II “attempted to convert [Sanssouci] from a garrison town to a German Versailles, and further imitated Louis XIV in organizing in his capital [...] allegorical and theatrical festivals.”⁹ Although these occasions might not have been as lavish as those held at the court of the Sun King, they were still regarded as some of the most remarkable in Europe. Voltaire, who visited the Prussian king in 1750 (the future empress of Russia would have been eleven years old), even placed them above German achievements in the realm of theater. “I must admit that the Prussians do not create better tragedies than we do,” the philosophe writes, “but you would be hard pressed to create for madame the dauphin a spectacle as noble and gallant as that being prepared for Berlin,” a festival “worthy in every way of those of Louis XIV.”¹⁰ He was particularly enchanted with one such celebration that exhibited “forty-six thousand glass lanterns illuminating the square,” “three thousand soldiers under arms lining all the avenues,” and “four small armies of Romans, Carthaginians, Persians, and Greeks entering the lists and parading to military music.”¹¹

Whether a part of fireworks or intricate displays, tableaux conveyed the triumphs of Russia’s victories with frequent depictions of conquered fortresses, important battles, and the enemy’s fleet in flames. But despite their popularity, they represent just one kind of politically inflected performances at Catherine’s court and one of the many modes of cultural production. Others include odes written by court poets; state portraits and paintings commemorating events of the Russo-Turkish wars (many of which would circulate as engravings); plays and opera librettos that explore Russia’s journey from “the Varangians to the Greeks” (some written by Catherine herself); tapestries woven at the St. Petersburg Tapestry factory; historical accounts of Crimea.¹² All of these ideological genres,

⁸ Vera Proskurina, *Creating the Empress: Politics and Poetry in the Age of Catherine II* (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2011), 29-36.

⁹ Marvin Carlson, *Voltaire and the Theatre of the Eighteenth Century* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1998), 87.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 86-87.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² For the odes, see Vasilii Kapnist’s *Na zavoevanie Tavridy* (1784) and *Oda na vziatie pod Rossiiskuiu derzhavu Kryma i Kubani* (1784); Gavrila Derzhavin’s *Na priobretenie Kryma* (1784); Vasilii Petrov’s *Na priobretenie Kryma* (1784). For the state portraits, see Erin McBurney, “Art and Power in the Reign of Catherine the Great: the State Portraits,” PhD diss., (Columbia University, 2014). For engravings, see Dmitrii Rovinskii’s *Podrobnyi slovar’ russkikh gravirovannykh portretov* (St. Petersburg: Tip. Imp. Akademii nauk, 1886). For Crimea’s published histories, see Eugenios Voulgaris, *Réflexions sur l’état critique actuel de la puissance ottoman* (St. Petersburg: n.p., 1774); Gasparo Luigi Oderico, *Lettere ligustiche ossia Osservazioni critiche sullo stato geografico della Liguria fino ai tempi di Ottone il grande, con le memorie storiche di Caffa, Ed altri luoghi della Crimea posseduti un tempo da’ Genovesi* (Bassano: n.p., 1792); Stanisław Siestrzeńcewicz, *Histoire de la Tauride*

including tableaux, performed the same function, which was to glorify the monarchy. In what ways, then, were these tableaux different? What place do they occupy on the spectrum of performative activities utilized by state actors? At the time, when national theater was virtually non-existent and its repertoire consisted mainly of plays in French and German, tableaux offered a source of mass entertainment that was accessible to nobility and peasants alike. First and foremost, their advantage over the other genres was a wide-spread, unrestricted appeal to all classes.

This article seeks to show how Crimea and the Crimean Tatars were introduced into the popular imagination and ideological scheme of the Russian Empire over the course of the eighteenth century through a series of tableaux that were performed during important celebrations. Although the particular manifestations of this phenomenon were researched by Larry Wolff, Andrei Zorin, Richard Wortman, Andreas Schönle, Vera Proskurina, and other scholars who specialize in the Catherinian Age, mine is an attempt at an all-round analysis of this important aspect of the Russian Empire's political ideology. I begin this piece with a brief history of Crimea as a part of the Ottoman Empire and its role in various military disputes. I then address the presence of Crimea and the Crimean Tatar in these tableaux chronologically, from the events commemorating Russian victories over the Turks in the early 1770s; to the peace celebrations that marked the end of the first war in 1775; to the peninsula's annexation (as a part of Catherine's so-called "Greek Project") in 1783; to the empress's journey to Crimea in 1787; and, finally, to the signing of the peace treaty that marked the end of the Second Russo-Turkish War in 1791. Although this panorama sets the framework for a discussion of the visual record of Russian expansion in Crimea, constructing this record proved somewhat problematic due to absence of many illustrations of the discussed tableaux. Due to the ephemeral nature of these displays, many of them were never commemorated in engravings or drawings, and those that were sketched, engraved or described, appeared in the large-scale state events as opposed to smaller private functions. Their architects also remain unknown with the exception of those who authored designs that drew the most attention like Vasili Bazhenov with his plan of the 1775 celebrations on Khodynka field. As a result, the chronology of spectacles presented here relies largely on written records that were found in pamphlets, treatises, memoirs, letters, periodicals, and ethnographic descriptions. With the help of these sources, I attempt to understand the impact that these tableaux had on forming a way of thinking about Crimea and its peoples on the part of imperial officials, as well as their role as visual histories that articulated the process of Crimea's colonization. By studying these narrative spectacles, I focus on the distinction drawn between Crimea (the place) and the Crimean Tatars (the majority of its people) and try to understand why, while the former played a key role in the tableaux, the latter was absent from them.

Crimea as a Part of the Ottoman Empire

(Brunswick: Pierre-François Fauche, 1800); Adam Naruszewicz, *Tauryka czyli Wiadomości starożytne i późniejsze o stanie i mieszkańcach Krymu do naszych czasów* (Warsaw: Drukarni N°. 646, 1805).

Historically represented as a segment of territory referred to as Little Tartary, Crimea belonged to the broader region of Tartary (*Tartaria* in Latin) which, according to the ideas of the Enlightenment, stretched from the Danube to the Pacific Ocean, and from the Arctic Ocean to the northern borders of Persia, India, and China.¹³ The first atlas of the Russian Empire, Joseph de L'Isle's *Atlas Russicus*, published by the Academy in 1745, marks the Crimean settlements as rectangles decorated with crescents—an emblem of the Tatar and Turkic worlds that would capture the spotlight in Russia's firework displays during the eighteenth century.¹⁴ Early encounters between Muscovy and the Khanate, which became a vassal of the Ottoman Empire in 1475, consisted of periodic raids by the Tatars on Muscovy's southern border for the purpose of replenishing the Khanate's supply of slaves. Despite its subordinate position, the Khanate occupied a unique status within the empire, in large part because of the Chingissid lineage of the khan (who outranked the sultan in the world of steppe politics). During the sixteenth century, competition between Muscovy and the Khanate for supremacy over the Caspian-Volga region resulted in the Fire of Moscow in 1571 and, one year later, the Khanate's defeat at the Battle of Molodi. Twenty years earlier, it was Prince Andrei Kurbskii who drew the tsar's attention to the necessity of Crimea's conquest and brought it up again during the 1570s in his famous polemic with Ivan the Terrible.¹⁵ Nikita Khrapunov writes that Kurbskii understood this conquest as the tsar's duty as a Christian and an executor of God's will.¹⁶ By the late seventeenth century, Muscovy's expansion as a regional power began to threaten the Khanate. One century later, the Crimean campaigns of 1687 and 1689 became the state's first attempts at taking control of the peninsula during the Russo-Turkish War of 1686-1700. While these efforts proved futile, they derailed Ottoman ambitions for further expansion into Europe. As for the drastic change of the situation in the Northern Black Sea Area, it was caused by the peace treaties of Karlowitz (1699) and Constantinople (1700) between the Porte, the Holy League, and Muscovy.¹⁷

Crimea again emerged as a desirable asset during western-inspired modernization and expansion of Russia's maritime power under Peter's rule. The conquest of Azov in 1696, after a two-week siege, marked the birth of the Russian fleet and navy. While the newly acquired Azov Fortress provided access to the Sea of Azov, Russia's dream of establishing itself on the Black Sea basin was again shattered in 1711 when, after the Russo-Turkish War of 1710-1711, the fortress had to be surrendered after the signing of the Treaty of Pruth. It

¹³ *Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, vol. 15 (Neufshastel: Samuel Fauche & Compagnie, 1751), s.v. "Tartarie."

¹⁴ "The decision to include a piece of territory located outside the boundaries of the empire," writes Kelly O'Neill about Crimea's presence in *Atlas Russicus*, "was a less than subtle articulation of the idea that that territory, though not yet within the tsar's domain, was in some meaningful way part of the Russian world." See Kelly A. O'Neill, *Claiming Crimea: A History of Catherine the Great's Southern Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), 19.

¹⁵ Andrei Mikhailovich Kurbskii, *Prince A. M. Kurbskii's History of Ivan IV*, ed. and trans. J. L. I. Fennell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965).

¹⁶ Nikita Khrapunov, "The Crimea Question in 'Western' Projects, Political Treatises, and Correspondence from the Mid-Sixteenth Century to 1783," *The Golden Horde Review* 9:4 (2021): 858, 870-871.

¹⁷ See, for example, D. V. Sen, *Russko-krymsko-osmanskoe pogranič'e: prostranstvo, iavleniia, liudi (konets XVII-XVIII v.)* (Rostov-on-Don: ALTAIR, 2020).

was not until the reign of Anna Ioannovna and her army's victorious campaigns during the Russo-Turkish War of 1735-1739 that Russia again secured the Azov Fortress. During the war, in 1736 and 1737, Russian troops invaded the Crimean Peninsula and devastated the most important cities and towns, which shocked both the Crimean Tatars and their patrons. As an Ottoman historian puts it: "[A]gain the goddamned Muscovites entered, like evil spirits, the clean body of the Crimea."¹⁸ The peninsula would take center stage again during the rule of Catherine, who continued Peter's expansionist mission and whose interest in Crimea, in the words of Alan Fisher, was "economic and political rather than national or ethnic."¹⁹ From the moment she ascended the throne, Catherine's advisors and correspondents would periodically bring up "the Crimean question."²⁰ While the majority of Crimea stayed under the jurisdiction of the khan, parts of the peninsula itself would remain under the direct administration of the Turks until the end of the Russo-Turkish war of 1768-1774. Thus, there was the Crimea, which was separate from the Khanate proper: the Ottoman possessions along the southern coast of Crimea and outside of it (Taman) first formed a *sancak* and later an *eyalet*. As for Crimea's annexation in 1783 and Russia's victory in the Russo-Turkish war of 1787-1791, these political events expanded the empire's hegemony and legitimized Catherine's power as Russia's sovereign in the conquered borderland.

Catherinian Tableaux of the Early 1770s

One of Crimea's earliest appearance as the centerpiece of a tableau took place at a private masquerade organized by Lev Naryshkin on July 29, 1772, in honor of Russia's recent military successes in an ongoing war against the Porte. Naryshkin remained one of Catherine's friends since her days as a Grand Duchess and invited the empress to his estate where the main attractions were located in a decorated grove. With respect to Catherine's attendance of this private event, it was not only about favoritism, but also about the interaction between unofficial (courtly) and official (state-diplomatic) patrons of these celebratory occasions, revealing personal initiative of courtiers eager to please their sovereign. The culmination of the evening was a specially constructed mountain that would part to reveal a Temple of Victory. Upon entering the temple, Catherine was presented with six tableaux praising her recent military campaigns.²¹ Since no illustrations from this event survived, it is not clear how big these tableaux were or how long they remained on display. Russian ethnographer Mikhail Pyliaev describes them in detail and notes that it was the sixth tableau that featured the 1771 conquest of Kefe (Feodosia) and "all of Crimea."²² A year earlier, Prince Vasili Dolgorukov (to be honored with the title "Krymskii") stormed the

¹⁸ Vasili Smirnov, *Krymskoe khanstvo pod verkhovenstvom Ottomanskoi Partii do nachala XVIII veka*, vol. 2 (Moscow: Rubezhi XXI, 2005), 57.

¹⁹ Alan W. Fisher, *The Crimean Tatars* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1978), 70.

²⁰ Khrapunov, "The Crimea Question in 'Western' Projects," 865-867.

²¹ The order of tableaux was: the Capture of Khotin (1769); the Battle at Larga River (1770); the Battle at Kagul River (1770); the Victory over the Turks at Chesme (1770); the Taking of the Fortress Town of Bender (1770); the Conquest of Crimea was the sixth and final tableau.

²² Mikhail Pyliaev, *Zabytoe proshloe okrestnostei Peterburga* (St. Petersburg: Izdanie A. S. Suvorina, 1889), 133.

Perekop line and held a decisive victory over the khan's army near Kefe on June 29, 1771, thus beginning the period of Russian occupation of Crimea.²³ Pyliaev provides the following description of the only Crimean tableau at Naryshkin's party: "Glory stands at the top and holds laurels in her hands in order to crown Russian heroes. Crimea is pleased being in the dominion of its wise possessor and expresses joy with these words written on the scroll: How sweet is my lot."²⁴ Most likely, the tableau was performed by the actors personifying two allegorical figures (Russia and Crimea). The propensity to suggest the outcome of important political events also appears in state portraits of the period. Stefano Torelli's famous allegory, Catherine II as Minerva celebrating her Victory over the Turks, which was painted around the same time, ca. 1770-1772, presents the empress as goddess Minerva who is riding in her chariot while surrounded by grateful peoples from the Russian Empire's southern borders. Erin McBurney points out the discrepancies in the painting's dates, from the time when the work was completed, signed, and dated by the artist (in 1771), to when it was installed at the palace (in 1772), to the official end of the war (in 1774).²⁵ Just as the Crimean tableau at Naryshkin's estate presented the Tatar land as already belonging to its "wise possessor," so too did Torelli's drawing foreshadow the war's outcome, which at the time of the work's creation was far from certain.

The uncertain outcomes in this Russo-Turkish theater of war, which stretched for most of the eighteenth century with the contested territories shifting hands, created an image of an enemy, as the one who continuously threatened the Christian state. Although never blatantly anti-Muslim, the adversary would appear in these productions, which capitalized on Russia's mission to protect Orthodox Christianity (symbolized in these tableaux by an imperial eagle or the sun) in the fight against Islam (symbolized by the crescent moon or a shackled prisoner).²⁶ The tradition of panegyric imagery showing confrontation between eagle and crescent entered Russian imperial discourse as far back as the seventeenth century, via Ukraine (and Polish Baroque culture).²⁷ In her study of the enemy image in Ruthenian and Muscovite printmaking, Liliya Berezhnaya credits Ruthenian monks with propagating the new imagery in Russian culture and being responsible for constructing the image of an enemy.²⁸ The drawing of a crescent moon destroyed by an imperial eagle (it would later be destroyed by lightning or a sword or spectacularly eclipsed by the sun) already made its debut during Peter's celebration of the capture of Azov via a tableau in an illumination from 1697: the tableau shows an imperial double-headed eagle shooting an

²³ The Treaty of Karasu Bazaar followed on November 1, 1772, with Russians and Turks proclaiming "alliance and eternal friendship" between their empires, and with the sultan's religious sovereignty over the Tatar Muslims to be eventually added as an important clause. See Fisher, 55-57.

²⁴ Pyliaev, "Staraia Moskva," 133.

²⁵ McBurney, "Art and Power in the Reign of Catherine the Great," 217.

²⁶ Catherine used the same excuse of protecting Orthodox Christians in order to justify her partitions of Poland.

²⁷ Emblems began to appear in Russian literature in the baroque poetry of Simeon of Polotsk. See, for instance, *Orel Rossiiskii* (1667). See Lidiia Sazonova, *Pamiat' kul'tury. Nasledie Srednevekov'ia i barokko v russkoi literature novogo vremeni* (Moscow: Rukopisnye pamiatniki Drevnei Rusi, 2012), 134-135.

²⁸ Liliya Berezhnaya, "Imago hostis: Friends and Foes in Ruthenian and Russian Printmaking (Mid-Seventeenth-Beginning of the Eighteenth Centuries)," *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 31: 1/4 (2009-2010), 310.

arrow into a Turkish crescent, part of which is breaking off.²⁹ As for the depiction of a humiliated enemy or a group of enemies, in chains or humbly kneeling before their captors, it frequently appeared in Petrine engravings. Berezhnaya identifies captives ("antiheroes") as their staple motif and writes that in addition to "demonic characteristics," Turkish or Tatar enemies "unquestionably bore 'Oriental' or 'Muslim' features," were "clearly marked by their clothing, flags, and banners," and were often "personified as a lion, dragon, or a serpent, all apocalyptic symbols of the enemies of Christians."³⁰ These depictions continued to appear during Anna Ioannovna's campaigns against the Turks.³¹ Standing triumphant in celebratory tableaux would be the figure of Minerva, the goddess of wisdom and patron of the military arts and sciences, thus, inspiring the reigning empress—beginning with Anna Ioannovna, followed by Peter's daughter, Elizabeth, and eventually Catherine—to live up to this lofty image in the eyes of her people.

Tableaux in the 1775 Nationwide Celebrations

The territory (Crimea) would take center stage not as allegory but as a concrete geographical location during the Moscow celebrations in July of 1775. Despite Dolgorukov occupying the peninsula since the summer of 1771, no formal conquest followed until the treaty between the empires was signed in Küçük Kaynarca (present-day Bulgaria) on July 21, 1774, which put an end to the war and proclaimed the Khanate's independence from the Turks in all but religious matters.³² In preparation for the festivities, the empress ordered the imperial architect, Vasilii Bazhenov, to transform Khodynka field, a large space on the outskirts of Moscow, into Crimea: "Imagine that [Khodynka field] is the Black Sea and that the two roads leading from the city are rivers, with one being the Tanais (Don), and the other the Borysthenes (Dnieper). You will build the dining hall, Azov, at the mouth of the first [river] and the theater, Kinburn, at the mouth of the second," state the imperial instructions. "You will then construct the Crimean Peninsula out of sand, and this is where

²⁹ The Turks were not the only adversaries whose losses were celebrated in these festivals. The tableau from the 1710 illuminations in honor of Russia's victory in the Northern War with Sweden featured a Swedish lion that was being overtaken by a Russian eagle. See Dmitrii Rovinskii, *Obozrenie ikonopisaniia v Rossii do kontsa XVII veka. Opisanie feierferkov i illuminiatsii* (St. Petersburg: Izdanie A. S. Suvorina, 1903), 186. For "emnification" of Mazepa after the Battle of Poltava, see Jelena Pogosjan, "I. S. Mazepa v russkoi ofitsial'noi kulture," *Slavica* 6 (2004): 315-332.

³⁰ Berezhnaya, "Imago hostis," 321, 324.

³¹ One such tableau, from January 28, 1737, in honor of Anna Ioannovna's birthday, depicts Turkish and Tatar captives in chains beneath a fortification constructed out of their weapons. The inscription reads: "For the protection of the [Orthodox] faith and the God-given motherland." Another tableau from the same event features the defense line of Perekop, wherein the gates to Crimea are destroyed. The accompanying caption reads: "Destruction of the enemy's gates." The festivities for the anniversary of Anna Ioannovna's coronation again featured a conquered foe: "Having given up their weapons, the Turk and Tatar are humbly kneeling on the ground." Rovinskii, 215-16 and 220. Cf. The Parisian monument at Place des Victoires in 1685-1686 with its humiliating portrayal of four allegorized nations defeated by France—Spain, the Holy Roman Empire, Holland, and Brandenburg—as slaves who were chained to the foot of Louis XIV.

³² The Russian Empire would acquire the fortresses of Kerch, Enikale, Kinburn, and part of the Kuban region, while Russian vessels would be allowed to freely navigate Turkish waters through the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles. For details on the annexation, see Fisher, 51-80.

you will place Kerch and Enikale to serve as ballrooms [...] The Black Sea is to be covered with boats and ships, which you will illuminate.”³³ The panorama of a concrete map was made into an engraving that demonstrates a definitive movement away from allegory, the most common form of artistic narrative in neoclassicism, toward something simpler.³⁴ (Figure 1). Proskurina argues that “in rejecting the traditional scenario, [Catherine] attempted to be in command not only of the political situation (a real war), but also of the cultural paradigm of its representation.”³⁵ Indeed, the Crimean simulacrum made the empress’s plans crystal clear: although the peninsula would officially remain outside of the imperial realm for another eight years, Catherine’s “design” envisioned the territory as already comfortably situated within her empire’s boundaries. Moreover, the empress’s “symbolic geography” ambitiously expanded the perimeter of her “stage” to include not only its ultimate prize, “Crimea,” but “the real battleground” of the Black Sea.³⁶

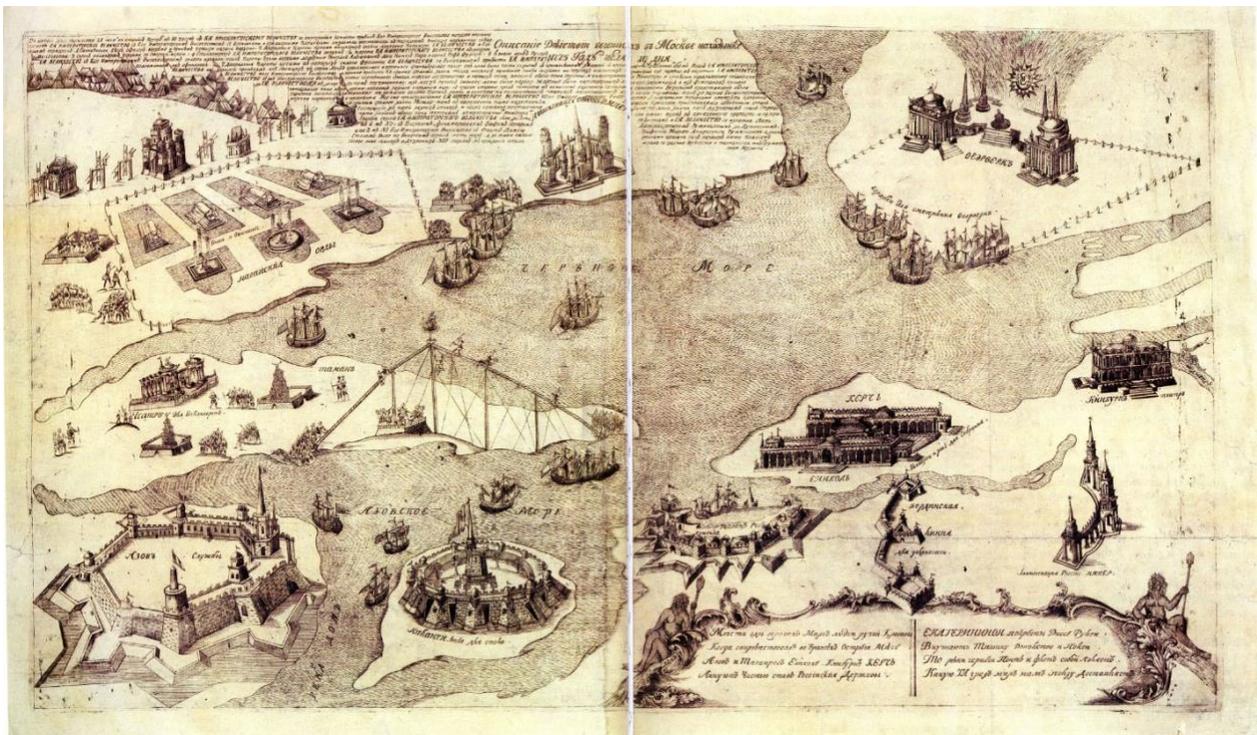


Figure 1: *Panorama of Khodynka Field in 1775* (Plan ansamblia uveselitel'nykh stroenii na Khodynskom lugu v Moskve. Engraving. RGADA, F. 192, Op. 1, D. 159).

³³ Iakov Grott, ed., “Pis'ma Ekateriny Vtoroi k Baronu Grimmu,” *Russkii arkhiv*, book 9 (1878): 16–17. Although Catherine wrote to Baron von Grimm and Frau Bielcke that recreating Crimea on Khodynka Field was her idea, the concept was likely developed by Bazhenov, who, together with Matvei Kazakov, was in charge of designing the festivities. See Vladimir Snegirev, *Zodchii Bazhenov: 1737–1799* (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1962), 110.

³⁴ Catherine confided to her longtime correspondent, Barron von Grimm, her distaste for “all those stupid, unbearable allegories” and “an extraordinary effort [that they required] only to produce something senseless.” Grott, 16–17.

³⁵ Proskurina, “*Creating the Empress*,” 184.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

With "Kinburn" masked as a theater, "Taganrog" as a marketplace, "Taman" showcasing acrobats (balancers), and "[the territory of] the Nogai hordes" allocated for entertainment and dining, Russian nobility flocked to the recreated "Orient." They strolled from one "locale" to another, attended opera Ivan Tsarevich, and donned expensive Turkic and knightly costumes for a masquerade.³⁷ This instance of cultural cross-dressing, with "actors" performing the identities of their neighbors, replaced an authentic encounter, whereas the elision of the Crimean Tatars from these events demonstrated a genuine mistrust and correlated with the volatility of the southern frontier. This kind of "orientalism" on display with its invocation of "Turkish" themes was not the one that was explored by Edward Said. Sara Dickinson describes Russia's encounter with Crimea as a preliminary process of "otherization," which she defines as "the production and circulation of images and stereotypes that expressed the region's 'otherness' or ontological difference from the norms of the dominant culture."³⁸ This dominant culture was, of course, Western European, and, as Dickinson points out, not only Russia was not a part of Western Europe but at this time it "had often been cast in the role of the West's Oriental other."³⁹ Several years later, and only months before Crimea's incorporation as a part of the Russian Empire, in December, 1782, Prince Grigorii Potemkin would write to the empress about the annexation as a necessary step toward complete control over the territory that Catherine so meticulously ordered to recreate on Khodynka Field: "With this acquisition you will achieve immortal glory such as no other sovereign in Russia has ever had. This glory will pave the way for yet another and greater glory: with the Crimea, will come supremacy over the Black Sea."⁴⁰

During this time, Crimea's multi-ethnic composition of the population included the Tatars who, according to Brian G. Williams, were divided into three distinct groups: "a heterogeneous collection of Nogai nomads, Tat mountaineers, and Yaliboyu coastal-dwellers (of the khan's subjects only the redoubtable Circassians of the Caucasus evaded Russian rule) who were further subdivided into powerful clans headed by hereditary beys."⁴¹ Along with the Tatars there also lived Jews, Karaites, Armenians, Goths, and

³⁷ Mikhail Pyliaev, *Staraia Moskva: rasskazy iz byloi zhizni pervoprestol'noi stolitsy* (St. Petersburg: Izdanie A. S. Suvorina, 1891), 58; *Moskva i ee okrestnosti* (Moscow: O. B. Miller, 1882), 398. See also Vasilii Maikov's, *Description of the Ceremonial Buildings on Khodynka*, as they represent benefits of the peace, which details the allegorical significance of each location: "the Don" represents commerce; "Azov" (as a dining hall) stands for the abundance that was expected from the peace; "Taganrog" (as a marketplace) symbolizes trade across the Black Sea; the bulls and fountains of "the Nogai hordes" depict the Tatar nation living in pleasure. See Vasilii Maikov, *Izbrannye proizvedeniia*, ed. A. V. Zapadov (Moscow-Leningrad: Sovetskii pisatel', 1966), 306-308.

³⁸ Sara Dickinson, "Russia's First 'Orient': Characterizing the Crimea in 1787," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 3:1 (Winter 2002), 4. See also Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Random House, 1979).

³⁹ Dickinson, "Russia's First 'Orient'," 4.

⁴⁰ Viacheslav Lopatin, ed., *Lichnaia perepiska 1769-1791* (Moscow: Nauka, 1997), 155.

⁴¹ Brian G. Williams, *The Crimean Tatars: The Diaspora Experience and the Forging of a Nation* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 76. Original italics.

“Greeks” (Orthodox population originating from the Byzantine Period).⁴² The Russian state mentioned these ethnic groups rare in comparison with the Tatars who received their recognition during the 1775 festivities with an homage to their khan in a tableau of a triumphal arch.⁴³ The tradition of creating triumphal arches (made out of wood and later demolished) that would be integrated into the city’s infrastructure for important state events also came to Russia from Western Europe during Peter’s rule.⁴⁴ Built as entrances to the city’s center, these constructions served as examples of temporary architecture and so-called “triumphal complexes, which included additional props such as pyramids, small movable walls, paintings, and various military paraphernalia.”⁴⁵ Margaret McGowan describes the construction of triumphal arches during Renaissance as imitating Roman triumphs festooned with images reminiscent of the ancient world which were necessary to prestige of royals for whom they were erected.⁴⁶ “[The triumphal arch] had imposed its presence in France from early times when, at places like Oranges, the Romans had built a huge structure to indicate their ownership of the territory,” McGowan writes. “Once introduced into the triumphal entry, the arch remained as its most prominent feature, providing the principal source of symbolism and decoration and pointing obviously to its classical models.”⁴⁷ For Catherine’s entrance into Moscow during her coronation in 1762, the empress passed through a series of intricately decorated triumphal arches that were built at the city’s four major gates. McBurney writes about the significance of this imperial procession through each gate by comparing it with a “ceremonial conquest of the city” and notes how larger than life-size portraits of Catherine adorned each arch to afford the first official view on the part of most Muscovites of their new sovereign.⁴⁸

Several arches were constructed in 1775 in Moscow to celebrate the peace between the Russian Empire and the Porte. Built on Serphukhovskaia road for the entrance of Field Marshal Petr Rumiantsev-Zadunaiskii (who was credited with winning the war’s major battles by pressuring the Turks to accept the peace terms), one of the arches showcased an interior with seven complex tableaux. Unlike the plan of Khodynka Field, no drawings of these tableaux survived. Their detailed descriptions, however, appeared a short time later in the *Opisanie* (Description), a 41-page panegyric pamphlet describing the significance of

⁴² For instance, out of 140,000 inhabitants, which was Crimea’s total population at the time of the 1783 annexation, Jewish Karaites and Krymchaks comprised 1,407. See F. F. Lashkov “O Kameral’noe opisanie Kryma,” *Izvestiia Tavricheskoi uchenoi arkhivnoi komissii*, N° 2, (1887): 20-30, N° 3 (1887): 36-64, N° 4 (1887): 32-45, N° 6 (1888): 36-63, N° 7 (1889): 25-45, N° 8 (1889): 12-40.

⁴³ See, for instance, the medal commemorating the extraction of Christians from Crimea in 1778. Eleonora Piiaeva and Rodin Zelenkov, eds., *Puteshestvie v Krym: katalog vystavki 24 noiabria 2016 – 4 iunia 2017* (St. Petersburg: ARS, 2016), 21, no. 21.

⁴⁴ The first such arch was erected in Moscow to celebrate the capture of Azov in 1696. Seven triumphal arches were built several years later in honor of the victory at Poltava in 1709.

⁴⁵ Alla Aronova, and Alexander Ortenberg, *A History of Russian Exposition and Festival Architecture: 1700-2014* (London: Routledge, 2019), 48. Original italics.

⁴⁶ Margaret M. McGowan, “The Renaissance Triumph and its Classical Heritage,” in J. R. Mulryne & Elizabeth Goldring, eds., *Court Festivals of the European Renaissance: Art, Politics, and Performance* (Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate, 2002), 27, 29.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 37.

⁴⁸ McBurney, “The Renaissance Triumph and its Classical Heritage,” 158.

the allegorical symbols meant to commemorate the event.⁴⁹ According to this document, the sixth tableau (“Reward for promised loyalty”) for the first time introduced the ruler of the Crimean Tatars, who was depicted as taking an oath of allegiance and devotion to the Russian Empire.⁵⁰ Although it is not clear how the following images were created, whether as drawings or engravings or mounted displays, they would in any case have been accessible to anyone in Moscow. The *Opisanie* describes the tableau depicting Russia as a majestic woman in imperial robes who “extends her right hand to the khan or the ruler of the Crimean Tatars, who is kneeling before her and who, having put away his hat, saber, club, bow and quiver, swears his allegiance.”⁵¹ The pamphlet also notes that the khan is “identifiable because of the shield standing next to him, which bears Crimea’s Coat of Arms of an Owl.”⁵² This symbol was possibly known to those who just returned from the Crimean campaign: it appeared on the principal gate through the Perekop Line defending Crimea from the north.⁵³ Indeed, no mistake could be made in identifying the figure of the former enemy, who is not depicted abstractly; a Tatar who was once presented along with a Swede, a Turk, and a Traitor (i.e. Mazepa and the Zaporozhian Cossacks) in the arch’s decorations as opposing the figure of Peter.⁵⁴ This time, in addition to his shield, the inclusion of a bow and quiver—symbols of steppe power—would have distinguished the khan or at least marked the figure on this tableau as a Tatar. Two years later, in 1777, Ia. F. Schmidt produced the map of Crimea for the Academy, which presents the Tatar as the “helm” of

⁴⁹ The earliest example of these pamphlets was a book of emblems, *Symbola et emblemata*, commissioned by Peter I and printed in Amsterdam in 1705. When the Academy was still in charge of fireworks, these pamphlets were published in Russian as luxurious editions with large engravings. Their content also appeared in *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti*, the country’s oldest newspaper. Their audience were the courtiers and important guests who had the front seat to these fiery attractions. In the second half of the 1750s, when Petr Shuvalov was placed in charge of the artillery, which took over the Academy’s role in designing fireworks, newspapers no longer regularly published detailed information about these spectacles but special editions continued to be produced for nobility. For more information, see Andrei Kostin, “Zachem zhgli feierverki v XVIII veke,” accessed, October 19, 2022, <https://arzamas.academy/materials/1196>.

⁵⁰ The first tableau (“Victorious Russia”) depicts a female figure (Russia) in imperial robes and crown. She is armed with a shield and surrounded by broken Turkish swords, sabers, bows, and clubs. Two half-naked Turks, who are tied to trophies, sit opposite her as a fading crescent moon overhangs the landscape. The second (“In due time”) shows a woman personifying wisdom as she stands with one foot on a fish and holds scepter and orb. The third (“Show mercy”) has the Goddess of Mercy removing the shackles from a captured Turk. The fourth (“The heavens command to make peace”) is a picture of an Asian archer drawing a bow with a broken arrow. The fifth (“To the war’s blessed ending”) has the imperial eagle sitting on a trophy, and Genius, who sets the enemy weapons on fire. The seventh tableau (“The restoration of previous order”) allegorizes the loss of the Porte with a disintegrating trophy that is topped with a crescent and concludes the sequence. *Opisanie oboikh vnov’ postroennykh triumfal’nykh vorot, i upotreblennykh k ukrasheniū onykh allegoricheskikh kartin . . . kogda eia imperatorskoe velichestvo . . . prisutstviem sovim oshchastlivit’ soizvolila* (Moscow: Imperial Moscow University, 1775).

⁵¹ *Ibid.* Original italics.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ Peter Simon Pallas writes: “I observed the figure of an owl, hewn in stone, being the peculiar coat of arms of Tshingis Khan; which likewise appears to have originally belonged to the princes who reigned in the Crimea, and ought therefore to have been incorporated with the Great Seal of the Russian Empire.” See P. S. Pallas, *Travels through the Southern Provinces of the Russian Empire, in the years 1793 and 1794*, vol. 2 (London: John Stockdale, 1812), 7.

⁵⁴ Berezhnaya, “Imago hostis,” 323.

the cartouche. Without any emblems of the empire on this map, the Tatar, like a kneeling khan from the triumphal arch, represents the territory that is governed by his ethnic group. (Figure 2).

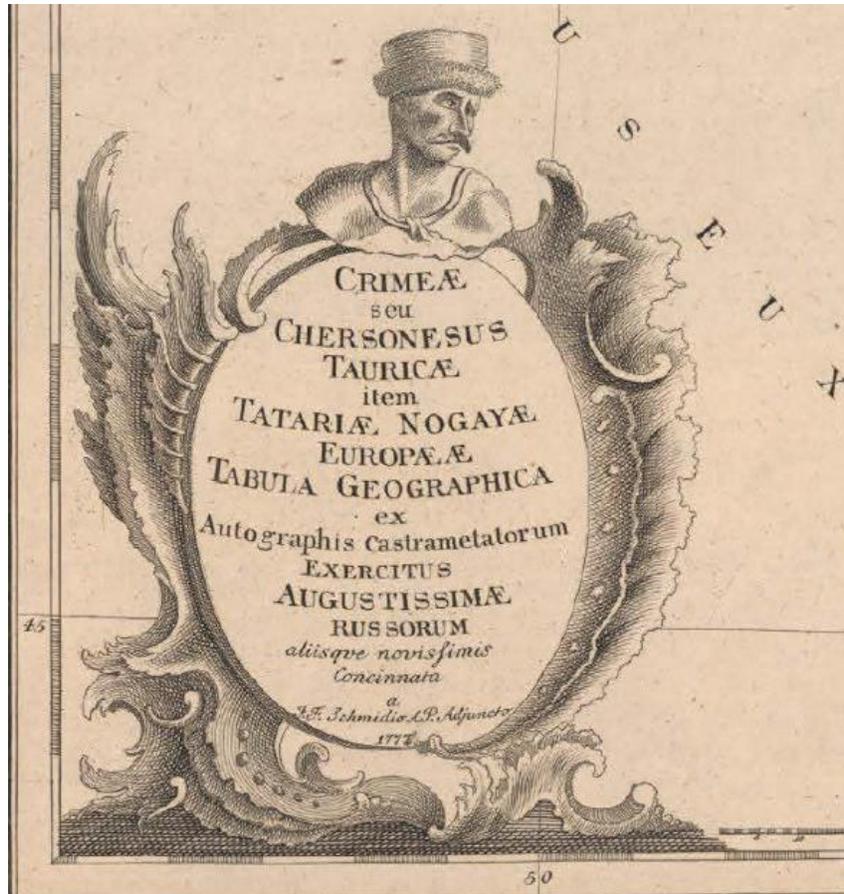


Figure 2: The cartouche on Ia. F. Schmidt's *Crimeæ seu Chersonesus Tauricæ item Tatariaë Nogayæ Europææ Tabula geographica* (1777).

With the 1775 festivities being held on the same day (July 10) all over the country for the first time in Russia's history, regions had an opportunity to put on their own celebrations in honor of the peace. Kostroma, Vologda, Kazan, Irkutsk, and other provinces presented their own firework shows. It is not clear who was put in charge of keeping records of these events (descriptions of which would be reprinted nearly a century later in regional newspapers, illustrations again omitted) or who were the major players in their construction, whether it was a person or a group of people and whether they were commissioned by government authorities to keep records or did so on their own initiative. Most likely, the scribes were from the local clergy who, in addition to being literate, were recording these occasions as a way of continuing with the tradition of keeping local chronicles. The absence of pictures in this case lies entirely in the nature of the sources—pamphlets or articles full of descriptions but no visual supplements. In contrast to Moscow, where the topography of Crimea was reproduced, the regions were concerned not with the

territory (Crimea) but rather with Russia's victory over its non-Christian enemy. This is not to say that imagery imbuing the conclusion of the war with religious significance was entirely absent in Moscow; in fact, the recreated "Black Sea" landscape of Khodynka Field was described as being decorated with glowing [Orthodox] crosses and with sails that strategically flew above crescent moons.⁵⁵

The provinces continued to exploit the image of a defeated Turk as an enemy who threatened world order but made no effort to clarify his ethnicity. Again, in contrast to Moscow's tableau of a triumphal arch where the khan ceased to be an abstract figure, provincial organizers exploited stereotypes from the times of Peter and Anna Ioannovna. Descriptions of the celebration in Vologda provide one such example. One of the processions showed a scene performed presumably by two actors: the Turk is kneeling before a young woman ("Russia") and is expressing gratitude for reconciliation, and swearing not to raise arms.⁵⁶ Another procession employed four young seminarists to represent four parts of the world: a young man personifying "Europe" holds a branch with a drawing of a Russian imperial eagle soaring above the Turkish crescent; the eagle is clutching the latter with its claws and eclipsing it with its shadow.⁵⁷ Yet another procession included an acted scene that introduced the image of the Turkish enemy (again, without any ethnic distinctions or requisites) with a newly acquired desire to convert to Christianity: a Russian convinces the Muslim, initially proud and arrogant, to live as a Christian and receives his enthusiastic response. "I am not only looking for friendship from you," the Turk eagerly obliges, "but I would like to be in your church."⁵⁸ The probable involvement of provincial clergymen in these local productions explains the significant presence of the themes of religious (Christian-Muslim) conflict with proselytism and conversion to Orthodoxy, and the participation of seminarists in these theatricals is reminiscent of a tradition that went back to the days of "school theater," i.e. Jesuit-inspired theatrical productions in seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century in Ukrainian and Russian Orthodox seminaries. The contrast between the shows in the capital, with their dismissal of allegory, and the provinces, where they were still reminiscent of Petrine times, can, perhaps, be explained by a shift that was occurring in the conception of these spectacles during this period. Sarieva explains that while fireworks and illuminations were gaining in popularity on the periphery, they were beginning to decline in the capital and gradually merge with theatrical performances for which the experience of creating complex

⁵⁵ *Moskva i ee okrestnosti*, 398.

⁵⁶ *Pribavleniia k vologodskim eparkhial'nym vedomostiam*, no. 14 (July 15, 1866), 532.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 533. Similar poses and appearances can be found in many allegorical representations of the conquered enemy in other nations as well, such as various depictions of Native Americans during the colonization of America. Europeans were also particularly fond of ridiculing the Turks after their defeats. For example, the 1571 carnival at Piazza San Marco, which was held after the victory of the Holy League over the Ottoman Empire at Lepanto (also known as "The Battle That Saved Europe"), was replete with similar "Turkish" themes; it included a mock procession of men dressed as "Turkish" prisoners in chains, colorful silk coats, turbans, and long berets, as they were marching to a chorus chanting "Turk the assassin, the heretic." See Belgin Turan Özkaya, "Theaters of Fear and Delight: Ottomans in the Serenissima," in Inge E. Boer, ed., *After Orientalism: Critical Entanglements, Productive Looks* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2003), 53.

⁵⁸ *Pribavleniia k vologodskim eparkhial'nym vedomostiam*, 545.

stage effects came in handy.⁵⁹ While exploiting the Christian-Muslim dichotomy, these provincial tableaux might not have been as sophisticated as the ones in Moscow, but the very act of attempting to restage the same concepts attests to the power of these ideological vehicles.

Catherine's "Greek Project" and Crimea's Annexation

By the late 1770s, Catherine was preoccupied with the "Greek Project," an ambitious scenario in which Crimea, once a land of classical Hellas, was to play an important part.⁶⁰ That said, logistics of this endeavour and the annexation of Crimea as its supposed part remain disputable, and there is no common opinion if this project was a real undertaking of "restoration" of Byzantium or a kind of "smoke screen" covering Russia's other plans. Highly disputable is the project's chronology. Andrei Zorin dates the first evidence of this project's existence to the mid-1770s, the years following the signing of the 1774 treaty, and credits Potemkin for encouraging the empress to consider the idea of partitioning the Ottoman lands between the Russian and Austro-Hungarian Empires, thus reclaiming Christian Byzantium and freeing Constantinople from Ottoman rule.⁶¹ However, it remains unclear whether the project was rejected in 1782 or not. Although the place of Crimea in it (if any) also requires clarification, today there is little doubt that, for a long time, Catherine considered the "buffer" role of the Khanate as the best choice, and decided to annex it by the end of 1782 only, under the pressure of the circumstances independent of her. This new venture was very much on the empress's mind in 1779 when her second grandson was born. By naming Grand Duke Constantine after the Byzantine emperor, Catherine ascertained her vision of seeing him rule over "Second Rome," thereby restoring the domain of its Christian neighbor. According to Zorin, establishing this line of succession would have created a perception of the "torch of enlightenment" (*fakel prosveshcheniia*) being passed from Greece to Russia directly without any intermediaries as opposed to a traditional route of it traveling from Greece to Rome to Western Europe and only then reaching Russia.⁶²

A medal was issued in honor of a noble birth, which depicted the Sophia Cathedral of Constantinople with a Christian cross as opposed to the Muslim crescent. Like Naryshkin before him, Potemkin too organized a private celebration at his estate shortly after the Grand Duke's arrival into the world, which included displays that drew attention to Russia's southern territories. The fête included a masquerade, a ball with fireworks, and one of the many attractions was a tableau with a drawing of a Greek temple that was placed onto a large barge floating in the middle of the lake; and while a chorus serenaded the guests in

⁵⁹ Sarieva, "Feierverki v Rossii XVIII veka," 96.

⁶⁰ Catherine outlined the project's logistics in a letter to Joseph II from September 10, 1782.

⁶¹ Andrei Zorin, *By Fables Alone: Literature and State Ideology in Late-Eighteenth—Early-Nineteenth-Century Russia*, trans. Marcus C. Levitt, Nicole Monnier, and Daniel Schlawff (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2014), 26-30.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 28.

Greek, various tableaux were illuminated above the water.⁶³ Although no illustrations of the grand fête survived, illuminated images supposedly included representations of various geographical places of the Russian Empire, as well as its recently acquired southern regions. This is an example of how the statist theme in a tableau was effective not only in wartime, but also in an aggressively expanding state commanded by a military-based noble ruling class guided by an imperial (i.e. martial) ideology. McBurney refers to the "Greek Project" as "the culmination of Catherine's symbolic scenario" and points out important images that start to appear, beginning with the extant portrait by Richard Brompton, Catherine II (ca. 1782-3), in which for the first time in the iconography of Catherine's portraits, ships at sea are pictured in the background.⁶⁴ Several years earlier, Heinrich Buchholtz's *Allegory of the victory of the Russian fleet over the Turks in the Turkish War of 1768-74* (1777) conveyed a similar aesthetic. The drawing depicts Peter who is looking at the figures of Chronos (time) and Glory. The latter is holding a medallion (with Catherine's image on it) and the map of Crimea and the Black Sea, while Russian troops below escort captured Turks across the bridge toward St. Isaac's Square, which is littered with Turkish battle standards. Thereafter the "Crimean" theme would continue to figure in the tableaux as a map or nautical background with the Russian fleet and would incorporate not just ethnic (people) or geographic (territory), but also military conquest, thereby emphasizing the state's power and its geopolitical standing.

During the years following the Küçük Kaynarca Treaty, Potemkin began the process of settling the southern lands of New Russia (*Novorossiiia*). As Roger Bartlett states, "what was remarkable was their extent, the breadth and intensity of colonizing activity [and] material was to be taken wherever it could be found; and the same approach characterized much of the foreign immigration of the time in New Russia."⁶⁵ Hence, for the population of the Crimean peninsula that had been "severely depleted in the preceding decade by war and disease, by the emigration of much of its Christian community in 1778 and by the departure to Turkish territory of many Nogay and Crimean Tatars after the annexation," the following years became a "period of intensive and systematic settlement activity."⁶⁶ Among the foreigners who flocked to the area as refugees, mainly from the Ottoman Empire, according to Isabel de Madariaga, were "Moldavians, Walachians, Bulgars, Greeks and Orthodox

⁶³ Aleksandr Brückner, *Potemkin* (Moscow: Terra, 1996), 54. For a recent study of Potemkin's life and involvement with Catherine's "Greek Project," see Sebag S. Montefiore, *Prince of Princes: The Life of Potemkin* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2001), 215-222.

⁶⁴ McBurney, "Art and Power in the Reign of Catherine the Great: The State Portraits," 31 and 301.

⁶⁵ Roger P. Bartlett, *Human Capital: The Settlement of Foreigners in Russia, 1762-1804* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 126.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 125; Isabel de Madariaga, *Russia in the Age of Catherine the Great* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1981), 364. When Venezuelan revolutionary Francisco de Miranda documented his visit to Crimea several years later, in December 1786, months before the empress's arrival, he noted the deplorable state of the peninsula since its annexation and the exodus of its indigenous population. See Francisco de Miranda, *Puteshestvie po Rossiiskoi imperii*, trans. Moisei Al'perovich, Valentin Kapanadze & Elena Tolstaia (Moscow: MAIK 'Nauka/Interperiodika', 2001), 38. See also Oleksandr Halenko, "Navishcho Krym potriben Rosii," in *Kryms'ki tatory: istoriia i suchasnist'* (do 50-richchia deportatsii kryms'kotatars'koho narodu). *Materialy mizhnarodnoi naukovoï konferentsii, Kyïv, 13-14 travnia 1994 r.* (Kyïv: Instytut natsional'nykh vidnosyn i politolohii NAN Ukraïny, 1995): 227-230.

Poles, who all had the advantage of the common religions, as well as Polish Jews.⁶⁷ Many of these settlers came from the foreign military units which fought on the Russian side during the war of 1768-74.⁶⁸ As a result, the effort to depict the Russian Empire as a home to people of all ethnicities and religious affiliations entered imperial discourse not only in the visual arts but in other genres as well; most prominently, panegyric odes. For instance, Vasilii Petrov's two odes to Potemkin (from 1778 and 1782) depict the Russian Empire as home for Orthodox Christians and anyone seeking refuge. Around this time, Johann Gottlieb Georgi's four-volume edition detailing all indigenous peoples of the Russian Empire and describing their customs, clothes, way of life, and distinct habits was published.⁶⁹ The government's patronage of ethnographers like Georgi (as was also the case with cartographers) was part of a deliberate policy of imperial expansion and population resettlement. Despite the unsettled period after the initial conquest of Crimea (one of the upshots of Tatar marginalization within the Khanate government), the "Greek Project," which could not be accomplished without Crimea's annexation, still preoccupied Catherine. However, the Crimean Khanate proved incapable of independence, according to Khrapunov, because of the internal instability of the Tatar polity that was impeded by tense international situation with the Ottoman and Russian Empires struggling for the influence on Crimea and supporting alternative pretenders to the khan's throne.⁷⁰

The peninsula was officially made a part of the Russian Empire, on April 8, 1783, which is the date that appears in Catherine's manifesto on the annexation, the document that was officially published and thus made widely known on July 21.⁷¹ The secret was kept until Potemkin "arranged the affairs" in Crimea and made the khan to abdicate and the Tatars to take the oath of loyalty to Russia.⁷² In the manifesto declaring her latest acquisition, Catherine blamed the Crimean nation for squandering its chance at independence and falling under the influence of the Turks. She ended the document with the (eminently enlightened) promise to honor the Crimean Tatars' property, houses of worship, religious beliefs, and to make no distinction between them and other members of the Russian Empire. Andreas Schönle writes that for those who chose to remain in Crimea, Catherine proposed "not only a mutually advantageous legal relationship but also a moral bond," according to which the Tatars could continue exercising the rituals of their faith but morally had to commit to their new sovereign.⁷³ To be sure, religious tolerance was an important aspect of Catherine's governance in the region, overseen by Potemkin, who appointed a governor assisted by a local board of Tatar nobles. Catherine's policy forbade the demolition of mosques and a forced conversion of the Muslim population to

⁶⁷ Madariaga, "Russia in the Age of Catherine the Great," 363.

⁶⁸ Bartlett, "Human Capital," 124.

⁶⁹ See Johann Gottlieb Georgi, *Opisanie vsekh v Rossiiskom gosudarstve obitaiushchikh narodov, tak zhe ikh zhiteiskikh obriadov, ver, obyknovenii, zhilishch, odezhd, i prochikh dostopamiatnostei* (St. Petersburg: Pri imperatorskoi Akademii Nauk, 1776-1779).

⁷⁰ Khrapunov, "The Crimea Question in 'Western' Projects, Political Treatises," 869.

⁷¹ Viacheslav Lopatin, *Povest' o Potemkine, kniaze Tavricheskom* (Moscow: Akademicheskii proekt, 2018), 284-295.

⁷² Khrapunov, "The Crimea Question in 'Western' Projects, Political Treatises," 869.

⁷³ Andreas Schönle, "Garden of the Empire: Catherine's Appropriation of the Crimea," *Slavic Review*, 60:1 (Spring, 2001), 12.

Christianity.⁷⁴ Hence, the aim of her conquest was about Reason and Enlightenment as opposed to being driven by religion. In this respect, many of the performances on the subject of religious conversion in the provinces would have appeared outdated to any visitor from the capital. The empress's "self-representation as an enlightened ruler," writes Robert Crews, was responsible for inaugurating "a new paradigm for the treatment of her Muslim subjects."⁷⁵ Still, despite the religious freedom, the Crimean Tatars who wanted to remain in Crimea had to take an oath of allegiance to the empress, and anyone who refused to do so had to flee.

Tableaux of Catherine's 1787 Crimean Visit

In the beginning of 1787, Catherine undertook her famous journey through the southern part of her empire. It lasted six months, from January 2 until July 11, and included a visit to Taman, Kuban, Kherson, and a recently incorporated Crimea, a part of a new Tauride region (*Tavrisheskaia oblast'*).⁷⁶ The journey's purpose, according to Guzel Ibneeva, was to demonstrate to Turkish and European powers that Russia had permanently established itself in the Northern Black Sea region and Crimea.⁷⁷ The grand voyage covered 6000 kilometers and involved a retinue of 3000 soldiers and sailors. In his analysis of the empress's travels, David Griffiths highlights the importance of this Crimean venture which not only introduced the empress to her latest subjects but also fulfilled the imperial agenda of finally visiting the southern part of the country.⁷⁸ At this time, similarly to the Crimean Khanate always controlling extensive lands outside Crimea, the Russian administrative units, like Taurida region, also included vast territories to the north of the Crimean Peninsula. The voyage was permeated with ludic imagery of mythic and imperial splendor, from the empress's fascination with the figure of Iphigenia, who served as Artemis's priestess in Tauris, to its overarching theme of traveling to Byzantium (triumphal arches at

⁷⁴ Catherine's policies were radically different than those of Peter I. Although the first Russian emperor undertook such tasks as commissioning a Russian translation of the Qur'an (in 1716), he also ordered changing the status of Russia's Muslims, for whom conversion to Christianity would become "a prerequisite in the landowning service elite." Robert D. Crews, *For Prophet and Tsar: Islam and Empire in Russia and Central Asia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 37.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 39.

⁷⁶ Taurida (sometimes spelled as Tauride by the English and the French) was the new name of Crimea based on non-existent Greek *Ταυρίς, -ίδος, which appeared in the Modern Period perhaps in mis-translation of Euripides' Ἰφιγένεια ἐν Ταύροις as Iphigenia in Tauris (should be: Iphigenia among the Taurians). In the Russian Period, the toponym was used to emphasize the classical heritage of the region. The attested form Ταυρικὴ, or Taurica in Antiquity referred to the southern area of the peninsula populated by the Taurians. The Taurians really lived in this area—at least since their contemporaries, the Hellenes of Chersonese regularly mentioned them in epigraphy as actual enemies or partners.

⁷⁷ Guzel Ibneeva, *Puteshestviia Ekateriny II: opyt "osvoeniia" imperskogo prostranstva* (Kazan': Kazanskii gosudarstvennyi universitet, 2006), 140.

⁷⁸ "By the start of 1787 [Catherine] had covered much of Russia. She had visited the Baltic region to the North (1764), the Middle Volga to the East (1767), the fruits of the first Polish partition to the West and Northwest (1780), and the Northern waterways to the North and East (1785). Missing only was the South. Less than four years after she had annexed that land she had toured it as well (1787)." David M. Griffiths, "Catherine II Discovers the Crimea," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, 56:3 (2008), 347.

the entrances to the cities through which Catherine passed, were emblazoned with the motto “The Road to Byzantium.”⁷⁹ Although the empress’s voyage represented “a literal embodiment” of the “Greek Project,” due to the change in the political situation in the 1780s, the prospects for this project’s accomplishment “were becoming increasingly dim and were put off indefinitely,” which made the theme of Crimea cease to be subordinate to that of Constantinople and take on increasing autonomy.⁸⁰ From the valedictory fireworks in St. Petersburg hailing Catherine’s departure for the Orient to the spectacular illuminations in the Tauride region, the trip became inscribed throughout with various metaphors that suggested its theatrical nature. Catherine’s traveling companions, Count de Ségur and Prince de Ligne, refer to it as “a magical picture” (*le tableau magique*) and endless celebrations (*des fêtes continuelles*) respectively, whereas recent scholarship describes the journey as apotheosis of Catherine’s reign and a series of tableaux vivants.⁸¹ As for a metaphor of the empress’s ultimate destination, Schönle writes about the new province being conceived as a garden in order to bolster the identification of Crimea with the Garden of Eden.⁸²

The palace’s official Kammerfurier’s Journal provides the best descriptions of festivities that were held during Catherine’s Crimean visit. These included illuminations of mosques and living quarters (*zhiloe stroenie*) in Bakhchisarai, all of which were certainly seen by the local Tatars.⁸³ As for the “living pictures,” the Journal informs that the Orthodox and Muslim clergy held their respective religious services upon the empress’s arrival, met the empress, and were invited to join her and other dignitaries for a ceremonial dinner.⁸⁴ However, it was a series of performances that was orchestrated by Potemkin at various stops on Catherine’s tour towards her destination that became legendary. Afterwards, in his conversation with Catherine’s son and heir, Prince de Ligne claimed that not everything about these stories were a fable: “Il y a eu de l’escamotage, mais il ya eu beaucoup de réalité.”⁸⁵ Some of these performances involved indigenous peoples, who took part in the rituals which had important political significance and served as a means of introducing the local elites to the political culture of the Russian state.⁸⁶ Such was the case during the empress’s stay at a palace that was built for the occasion of her visit to Kyiv, where, in the

⁷⁹ McBurney, “Art and Power in the Reign of Catherine the Great,” 324.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 322; Zorin, *By Fables Alone*, 105.

⁸¹ The journey was documented by the empress herself in her correspondence with Baron von Grimm and Frau Bielcke, as well as by her secretary, Aleksandr Khrapovitskii, and other travelling companions who, in addition to de Ségur and de Ligne, included the prince of Nassau-Siegen. For the complete account of the journey, see Aleksandr Brückner, “Puteshestvie Ekateriny II v Krym,” *Istoricheskii vestnik* 21 (1885), no. 7: 5–23; no. 8: 242–64; no. 9: 444–509.

⁸² Schönle, “Garden of the Empire: Catherine’s Appropriation of the Crimea,” 2–3.

⁸³ *Kamer-fur’erskii tseremonial’nyi zhurnal 1787 goda* (St. Petersburg, 1886), 464 and 471.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 461–469.

⁸⁵ Charles Joseph de Ligne, *Fragments de l’histoire de ma vie*, vol. 1 (Paris: Plon, 1927), 109. Other sources created by the eyewitnesses of the imperial travel also insisted that they saw some of “Potemkin’s tricks.” See, for instance, Melchior Adam Weikard, *Taurische Reise der Kaiserin von Russland Katharina II* (Koblenz, 1799), 147.

⁸⁶ Ibneeva, *Puteshestviia Ekateriny II*, 155.

words of Count de Ségur, "the whole East congregated to see the modern Semiramis."⁸⁷ Cossacks, Kyrgyz, and Kalmyks, among others, as well as Tatars, showed their submission "to the yoke of a woman, and of a Christian" by taking part in this "magic theatre."⁸⁸ As the imperial journey progressed in the direction of the empire's latest acquisition, Potemkin continued to "decorate" the steppe with natives: the scenes ranged from military maneuvers by Cossacks "in 'their Asiatic and picturesque costumes' to the nomad Tatars with their tents and camels."⁸⁹

While escorted by Tatar regiments during her entrance into Bakhchisarai, an incident took place that was described in detail by several of the empress's travelling companions and that could also be viewed in itself as a (non-intentional) "living picture" during which the Tatars saved the empress's life. "[Catherine's] carriage was ponderous, and the horses which drew it spirited and intractable [...] We expected every moment to see the carriage overturned and dashed to atoms," Count de Ségur remembered. "At length, after having passed, nobody knew how, over some of the rocks without any accident, fate directed that the horses should stop of their own accord at the beginning of a street, and this they did so abruptly that many of them fell. The carriage, at this last violent check, ran upon their bodies and would have been overturned, but for the assistance of the [Tatar] horsemen who held it up by main force."⁹⁰ This was just one of many instances where Catherine witnessed firsthand the degree to which Potemkin had succeeded in transforming, according to Schönle, "an unruly nomadic horde into a smartly dressed, disciplined, and loyal regiment in regular formation."⁹¹ As they travelled through the Tatar villages, Potemkin ordered the number of people, including the elders, greeting and bowing to the monarch along the path, be increased.⁹² The people proceeded to formally acknowledge their new sovereign. Ferdinand de Mëys's famous allegory depicts the supposedly warm welcome by presenting the empress riding in a chariot throughout her domain. She is surrounded by her latest subjects who kneel before her and who, despite their oriental dress, resemble Russian peasants. (Figure 3).

⁸⁷ Louis-Philippe Ségur, *Memoirs and Recollections*, vol. 3 (London: Henry Colburn, 1827), 45.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 128. The popular myth of "Potemkin villages," which emerged at this time, was likely a creation of Potemkin's political rivals and was already in circulation before Catherine's trip began. See Aleksandr Panchenko, "Potemkinskie derevni' kak kul'turnyi mif," *XVIII vek*, no. 14 (1983): 93-104.

⁹⁰ Ségur, *Memoirs and Recollections*, 142.

⁹¹ Schönle, "Garden of the Empire: Catherine's Appropriation of the Crimea," 18.

⁹² Ibneeva, *Puteshestviia Ekateriny II*, 168.



Figure 3: Jean-Jacques Avril l'Aîné's Triumph of Catherine. Allegory on the Journey of Empress Catherine II into Crimea (1790). Author of the original painting: Ferdinand de Mëys (ca. 1788). The image is used courtesy of The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, Russia.

Another performance in Crimea was arranged by Catherine herself as an opportunity to enlighten her retinue to respect the customs and habits of the Tatars. Prince de Ligne and Count de Ségur decided to see Tatar women unveiled, and somewhere in the vicinity of Bakhchisarai they found “three women seated, washing their feet in a limpid stream.”⁹³ The Tatars were aggrieved: a few men tried to punish the observers. Moreover, the empress publicly scolded the adventurers: “Gentlemen, this is a very ill-advised amusement.” She told them. “You are living among a people conquered by my arms; and I wish their laws, their religion, their manners, and their prejudices to be respected.”⁹⁴ This scene can also be viewed in the light of the empress’s love for theatrical effects and her idea of the theater as a mean of polishing the customs, enlightening the morals, and shaping the public mind.

⁹³ Ségur, *Memoirs and Recollections*, 155.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 157.

On May 26, 1787, a firework show took place in Karasu Bazaar (Belogorsk) of which no illustrations or detailed descriptions survived. Ibneeva writes that while Catherine was enjoying the spectacle from the palace, the locals gathered near the top of a mountain to observe the fiery figures in the sky, which included wheels and a shield, but were soon scared off the mountain by the loud pyrotechnics.⁹⁵ During this time, there were drawings made of Catherine's journey, certainly by the empress's order, by William Hadfield and Vasilii Petrov. Hadfield was a young artist who was invited to join the delegation and sketch its various stops.⁹⁶ One of Hadfield's twenty-six watercolors depicts the former khan's palace in Bakhchisarai with the coaches which carried the distinguished guests, standing near Russian soldiers and people wearing oriental dress, obviously Tatars. The caption calls this the "palace of Her Imperial Majesty," thus underlining the new status of the former khans' residence.⁹⁷ (Figure 4).

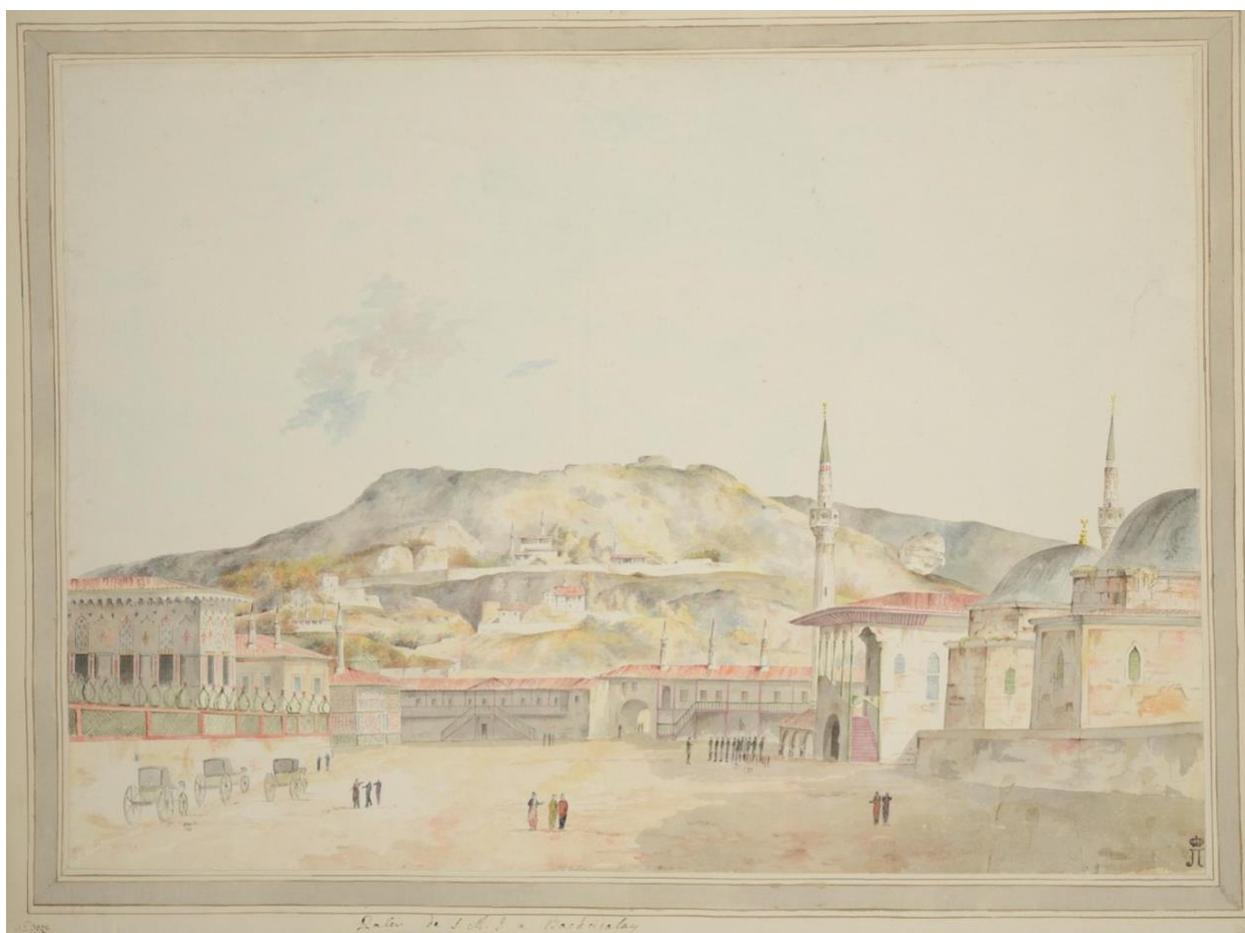


Figure 4: William Thomas Hadfield's *The Palace of Her Imperial Majesty in Bakhchisarai* (1787). Series "The travel to the Crimea, accomplished by Her Majesty the Empress of All Russia in 1787" (*Voyage de la Crimée*

⁹⁵ Ibneeva, *Puteshestviia Ekateriny II*, 173.

⁹⁶ His album, *Voyage de la Crimée fait par Sa Majesté Impériale de Toutes les Russies 1787*, was presented to Catherine.

⁹⁷ Piiaeva and Zelenkov, eds., *Puteshestvie v Krym: katalog vystavki*, 34, no. 47.

fait par Sa Majesté Impériale de Toutes les Russies 1787). Image used courtesy of The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, Russia.

As for the imperial visit, it remained circumspect, evidenced by the fact that out of her southern sojourn of seven months, the empress's visit in Crimea lasted only eleven days.⁹⁸ However, even after leaving Crimea, the peninsula continued to figure in the program of the empress's travels. The celebrations of this prolonged venture culminated in Moscow on June 28 during celebrations of the twenty-fifth anniversary of Catherine's accession to the Russian throne. The court poet Mikhail Kheraskov wrote a plan of the event which reverted to familiar allegorical themes and, according to Zorin, emphasized the country's new geo-climactic realignment. One scene in Kheraskov's libretto introduced four Geniuses, each representing one of the four parts of the world, as they explained how they were glorified in the Russian Empire. The last one to speak was "Genius of the South" who claimed to possess everything that the other three did and more, including the empire's latest acquisition (Crimea), "a kingdom flowing with milk and honey."⁹⁹ This poetic description of a new territory as God's Promised Land goes all the way back to Muscovite culture and Peter himself calling St. Petersburg his paradise.¹⁰⁰ It should be recalled, writes Zorin, how often throughout the century Russia had been referred to as "the North" and "the septentrional power" (*polnoshchnaia*, "midnight"), while the Turks were "sons of the South" (*poludnia*, "midday"), to appreciate how radical this rhetoric was.¹⁰¹ Suffice it to say that Catherine went to considerable lengths to advertise the latest acquisition to her subjects as a place where one could live; a place which until then was perceived with fear and suspicion since many infectious diseases came to Russia from the south.¹⁰²

Tableaux in the 1792 Celebrations

The second Russo-Turkish war of Catherine's reign began shortly after her return from Crimea in 1787 and ended with the signing of the Treaty of Jassy in 1791, which ascertained a Russian victory and the failure of the Turks to reclaim Crimea.¹⁰³ The war's outbreak, writes Crews, helped to focus "the regime's attention on the creation of an Islamic establishment under imperial direction."¹⁰⁴ As for the promises made to the Crimean Tatars, Schönle notes that Catherine kept her side of the bargain by taking the administrative measures to integrate the Tatar population into the empire and by going to

⁹⁸ After arriving in Perekop at the end of June, the travelers, who were escorted by a regiment of twelve hundred Tatars, speculated about what would happen if their escorts decided to "scamper away with a couple of Sovereigns [Catherine and Emperor Joseph II] who had come, in defiance of the rights of men and of all treaties, to seize upon their country, dethrone their princes and destroy their independence." Ségur, 140.

⁹⁹ Quoted in Zorin, *By Fables Alone*, 115. The reference is from the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament (Exodus 3:8; Numbers 14:8; Deuteronomy 31:20; Ezekiel 20:15; etc.)

¹⁰⁰ See Peter's letter to Aleksandr Menshikov from April 7, 1706. *Pis'ma i bumagi Imperatora Petra Velikogo*, vol. 4 (St. Petersburg: Gosudarstvennaia tipografiia, 1900), 207.

¹⁰¹ Zorin, *By Fables Alone*, 115.

¹⁰² Halenko, "Navishcho Krym potriben Rosii," 230.

¹⁰³ The date of the Jassy Peace Treaty is December 29, 1791 (old style) or January 9, 1792 (new style).

¹⁰⁴ Crews, "For Prophet and Tsar," 50.

considerable lengths to accommodate her Islamic subjects; this included “ordering public buildings and fountains to be built for the benefit of the people and establishing a justice system that allowed non-Russian speakers to be judged by members of their own community in their own language.”¹⁰⁵ During the war, Catherine’s historical opera, *The Early Reign of Oleg*, premiered at the Hermitage Theater on October 22, 1790. It was, however, written much earlier, in 1786, and represented a collection of tableaux that supposedly relayed episodes from Oleg’s rule. A Frenchman, who saw a performance of the opera, commented that “the design of subjugating Turkey is alluded to, even when celebrating a peace with the country.”¹⁰⁶ Not long after, Crimea’s status as a part of the empire was reflected in Aleksandr Vilbrekht’s 1792 map of the Tauride region via a cartouche that has an eagle sitting at the entrance to the Greco-Roman temple with the motto “Rejoice Artemis” (*Blazhenstvui Artemida*). Two figures stand before it—a female (probably allegoric “Russia” who carries a shield that has the double-headed imperial eagle on it) and a male (likely “Crimea” who holds a crescent in his hand)—with “Russia” taking “Crimea” to the temple. (Figure 5).



Figure 5: A fragment of Aleksandr Vilbrekht’s 1792 map of Tauride region, *Karta Tavricheskoi oblasti*.

¹⁰⁵ Schönle, “Garden of the Empire: Catherine’s Appropriation of the Crimea,” 14.

¹⁰⁶ Charles Masson, *Secret Memoirs of the Court of St. Petersburg; particularly towards the end of the reign of Catherine II, and her commencement of that of Paul I* (London: H. S. Nichols & Co., 1895), 76.

More than a year later, in September 1793, the festivities in honor of yet another peace were in order; they stretched for several days but lacked the splendor of the previous celebrations. According to the *Opisanie*, one firework display featured a temple of Janus (to represent the Porte), which was constructed on the Tsaritsyn Meadow (the Field of Mars), where it would disappear in flames and become replaced with a temple of Glory (to represent Russia's victory). A tableau featuring a woman holding an olive branch above the coats of arms of both empires stood for the long-awaited peace.¹⁰⁷ (Figure 6).

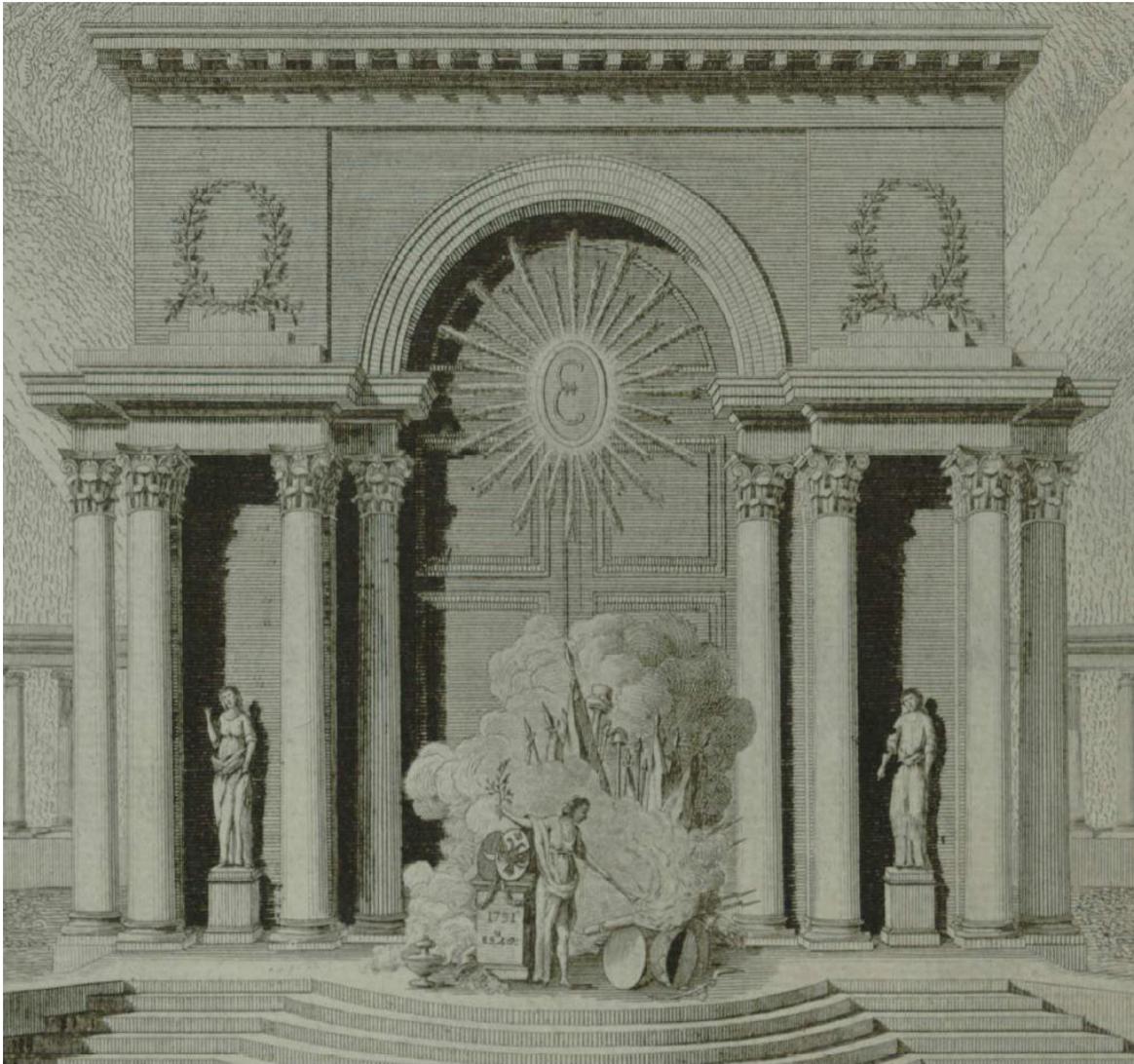


Figure 6: A close up of a temple of Glory and a figure of a woman in front of it. She is holding an olive branch above the Russian and Turkish coats of arms. *Opisanie feierverka, po okonchanii torzhestva na sluchai zakliuchennago mira, . . . predstavennago v Sanktpeterburge na Tsaritsynom lugu, Sentiabria 15-go dnia 1793 goda* (St. Petersburg, 1793).

¹⁰⁷ *Opisanie feierverka, po okonchanii torzhestva na sluchai zakliuchennago mira, . . . predstavennago v Sanktpeterburge na Tsaritsynom lugu, Sentiabria 15-go dnia 1793 goda* (St. Petersburg, 1793).

Two weeks earlier, a celebration was organized by the Cadet Corps in St. Petersburg that omitted many of the distinctive emblems that had once marked these tableaux extolling Russia’s triumph over the Turks. This was again due to the fact that fireworks were gradually losing their appeal, glamor, and ornateness. The *Opisanie* provides a description and illustrations of the event, which was enjoyed from the riverbanks, streets, and the city’s squares. Despite the waning popularity of allegory as well, the familiar visual evocations—another temple, figures of Minerva and Glory, the Russian imperial eagle, Catherine’s monogram, etc.—still managed to delight the crowds. This time, however, the Cadet Corps varied their celebration with a theatrical procession that included a parade of twenty-six nations of the Russian Empire, represented by people in their national dress who were carrying olive branches as a sign of peace. The Crimean Tatar, however, was not a part of a lineup that included a Kazan Tatar and a Don Cossack. The inscription below the list of nations claims that “the newest members of the state” were also present at the temple as they joined others and placed their olive branches onto the altar.¹⁰⁸ However, the included illustration exudes a spirit akin more to a masquerade than of an ensemble of the empire’s subjects. (Figure 7 and Figure 8). It appears that once tableaux were no longer focused on narratives of conquest, the Crimean Tatars were not given a role to play.

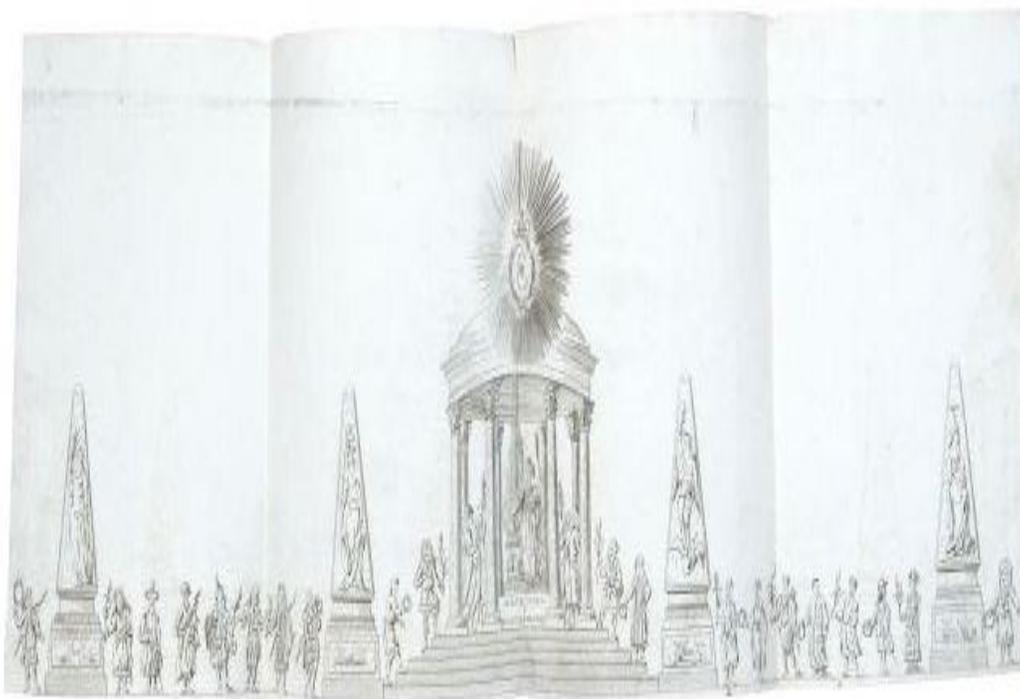


Figure 7: The “parade of nations” of the Russian Empire organized by the Cadet Corps in 1793.

¹⁰⁸ *Opisanie illiuminatsii v imperatorskom shliakhetnom sukhoputnom kadetskom korpuse 2 sentiabria 1793 goda . . . o zakliuchenii mira s Ottomanskoiu portoiu . . . v Sankt Peterburge, pri onom zhe Korpuse* (St. Petersburg, 1793).



Figure 8: An enlarged fragment of the “parade of nations.” *Opisanie illiuminatsii v imperatorskom shliakhetnom sukhoputnom kadetskom korpuse 2 sentiabria 1793 goda . . . o zakliuchenii mira s Ottomanskoiu portoiu . . . v Sankt Peterburge, pri onom zhe Korpuse* (St. Petersburg, 1793).

If Peter’s greatest legacy was territorial expansion to the north, territorial expansion to the south was one of the defining moments of Catherine’s enlightened absolutism. Like other modes of ideological production, tableaux fulfilled their purpose as visual manifestations of imperial plans, brought to life through the confluence of ritual and enacted colonization, and glorified the monarch’s heroic military deeds. Despite vague descriptions and the lack of illustrations, the continuous use of these artistic displays during state celebrations attests to their effectiveness in scripting the imperial message. During the late 1760s and early 1770s, these tableaux functioned as precursors to the actual conquest of Crimea. While the 1774 treaty created the Khanate as an independent state, historians continue their debate over Catherine’s intentions, whether she ever really wanted to formally annex the peninsula or maintain it as a buffer, which means that the depiction of Crimea as “Russian” at Naryshkin’s estate in 1772 and on the 1775 “map” of Khodynka Field were bold acts of claiming rather than a celebration of possession. As a part of the “Greek Project” that aimed to liberate Constantinople from the Turks, Crimea’s annexation informed the empress’s 1787 journey that put an ideological spin on her frontier acquisitions—peace, liberation, religious freedom, and light for darkness. But with the political situation resolving through the last years of Catherine’s reign, which included the Hellenization of the peninsula, these tableaux became dull and repetitive. Following the onset of Catherine’s final war against the Turks, this Crimean “theater” appears to have fulfilled its function and was no longer offered a stage. Such decline in popularity during the 1790s can be explained by the rapid development of the national theater for which many of the techniques utilized in these spectacles were adapted (although fireworks continued to exist, they did so on a smaller scale or at private functions).¹⁰⁹ As for the Crimean Tatar, he never became a legitimate presence in these productions, was neither allowed to transcend his history as a Turkish vassal nor trusted enough to “play” himself. His eventual

¹⁰⁹ Sariieva, “Feierverki v Rossii XVIII veka,” 97.

disappearance into the multiethnic array of nations of the Russian Empire during the 1793 festivities became yet another egregious example of foregoing any effort at cultural translation and a lost opportunity to give voice to the empire's most-recently integrated subjects.