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Source: *Journal of the Ottoman and Turkish Studies Association*, Vol. 6, No. 1, Ceremonies, Festivals, and Rituals in the Ottoman World (Spring 2019), pp. 103-120

Published by: Indiana University Press

Stable URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2979/jottturstuass.6.1.08

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The Peculiar Status of the Crimean Khans in Ottoman Protocol

Hakan T. Karateke

Abstract: This article examines the prominent status that the Crimean khans enjoyed in Ottoman court protocol, as compared to that of vassal princes of tributary principalities and envoys from sovereign states in the early eighteenth century. Through an analysis of a set of ceremonies staged for the designated Crimean khan, Mengli II Giray, in 1724, for the occasion of his installment, the article illustrates the extraordinary prestige shown to the khans in diplomatic ceremonial. As motives for such a configuration, the author cites the Crimean khanate's increasing importance as a strategic ally for the Ottomans as Russian power continued to grow during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The geopolitical realities aside, the role that the distinct Chinggisid lineage of the Crimean khans must have played to receive such an honorable reception in Istanbul cannot be underestimated.

Most diplomats in eighteenth-century Istanbul were resident envoys (*mukim elçi*), whose responsibilities were to act as an intermediary between their own governments and the Ottoman state, and to protect the rights and interests of their compatriots in legal and economic disputes in the Ottoman realms. No doubt, the tasks of a resident diplomat always involved a degree of intelligence gathering, and modern scholars have come to appreciate the detailed reports that envoys regularly composed and dispatched to their home countries. Maintaining an ambassador (*büyük elçi*) in the city required extraordinary expenditure, as such a mission involved a huge budget commensurate with its prestige, which was typically required to cover residence in stately mansions, the upkeep of large retinues, and the display of pomp. For these reasons, keeping a permanent ambassador was generally avoided by foreign powers. Other diplomatic emissaries in the city included ad hoc envoys, such as ambassadors extraordinary and envoys extraordinary (*fevkalade elçi*), who typically arrived charged with special diplomatic missions. Most mid-level envoys (*orta elçi*) were only received by the grand vizier in order to initially submit their letters of credence

Journal of the Ottoman and Turkish Studies Association, Vol. 6, No. 1, pp. 103–120
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or to take care of official business.[1] An audience with the sultan occurred rarely and was possible only for ambassadors or envoys extraordinary.

No member of a royal dynasty, let alone a king or a queen, visited the Ottoman court before the nineteenth century. Upon the defeat of his army in 1709 by the Russians at Poltava, the wounded King Charles XII of Sweden (r. 1697–1718) took up refuge in Ottoman lands. Though the king spent five years under Ottoman protection, the customary protocol did not require that he be invited to Istanbul or meet with the sultan. Heads of state and members of royal families began to frequent Istanbul only around the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Although the Ottomans struggled at first to determine the adequate degree of ceremonial pomp with which to receive royalty, a protocol was established by mid-century.

The rulers of the vassal principalities of the Ottoman state in some sense constituted an exception to the abovementioned practice, as these autochthonous princes or khans were technically *not* envoys.[2] While these resided in and ruled their respective semi-independent dominions, they were required to travel to Istanbul at the beginning of their tenure to be invested with their titles and on other occasions to pay homage to the sultan. Some also had a duty to pay a tribute to the Ottoman government. A careful study of how these visitors were received and how their ranks were perceived by the Ottomans will allow scholars to understand their status at the Ottoman court and how it might have changed over time.

This article will explore the stature of the Crimean khans in Ottoman protocol and compare it with that of vassal princes and envoys of sovereign states in the later seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Granted that an investiture ceremony required more pomp than a regular envoy visit, I inquire below as to whether a comparison of the relative privileges afforded by the protocol applied to rulers of the tributary principalities or to the envoys of sovereign states (*müste'men elçi*) teach us anything new about their status vis-à-vis the Ottoman state. The status of the Crimean Giray khans holds yet another level of complexity, as the khanate was an important strategic ally for the Ottomans since at least the fifteenth century, yet became even more important from the mid-seventeenth century onward, when the military power of Muscovy

1. Abdullah Naili, *Mukaddime-i Kavanin-i Teşrifat* [henceforth *Kavanin*], BOA, BEO Sadaret Defterleri 356, fol. 100a.

2. The changing status of the tributary principalities was discussed by Viorel Panaite, "The Legal and Political Status of Wallachia and Moldavia in Relation to the Ottoman Porte," in *The European Tributary States of the Ottoman Empire in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, ed. Gábor Kármán and Lovro Kunčević (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 9–42. On the accession ceremonies of the voivodes in Istanbul, see Viorel Panaite, *The Ottoman Law of War and Peace: The Ottoman Empire and Tribute Payers* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 2000), 351–59.

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expanded. Furthermore, the Crimean khan boasted a noble descent with a lineage harking back to Chinggis Khan (d. 1227), which was recognized as a particularly honorable lineage by the Ottomans as well.[3] Therefore, the issue of how ceremonials were conducted for the prospective khan as well as his rank in Ottoman protocol constitutes an intriguing historical problem. This article will thus gauge the relationship between these two polities as it was reflected in a register which concerns diplomatic ceremonial in the early eighteenth century with hopes of shedding new light onto a little-studied aspect of Ottoman-Crimean relations.

The details of the reception ceremonies outlined below are from an account of a set of ceremonies conducted for a designated Crimean khan who came to Istanbul to be confirmed for his position. The account is recorded in a protocol register, titled *An Introduction to the Rules of Protocol* (*Mukaddime-i kavanin-i teşrifat*), which was compiled by Abdullah Naili (d. 1758), master of protocol during the period 1743–47 and later grand vizier for a short period of three months in 1755. The author undertook this compilation in order for it to serve as a reference for matters of protocol at the Ottoman imperial court. As the author explains in his preface, Ottoman ceremony officers faced considerable difficulty in referencing the loose documents in the imperial archives. In his view, the office had then become almost completely dysfunctional because of this lack of organization in the office's archives. He therefore set out to compile descriptions of various court ceremonies of his time into a book.[4] Abdullah Naili doubtless had access to these documents during his tenure as the master of protocol. Unfortunately, an exact date for the ceremony under investigation here was not recorded in the protocol register, although a comparison with descriptions in imperial chronicles suggest that the investiture ceremony outlined below was conducted for Mengli II Giray's (r. 1724–30 and 1737–40) first appointment in 1724. This date accords with the dates of other envoy receptions in the protocol register, which range from the early 1720s to 1740s.[5]

3. For Ottoman views and classification of dynasties and particularly the Chinggisid lineage, see Cornell Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual in the Ottoman Empire: The Historian Mustafa Ali (1541–1600)* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 273–92.

4. *Kavanin*, fol. 1b–2a.

5. While clues in the protocol register suggest that the investiture ceremony described in the register was that of Mengli II Giray's in 1724, there is still a small likelihood that the particular ritual was for another khan. Among the supporting evidence is, for example, a note on the margin for a separate ceremony conducted for Selamet Giray which was recorded just after the one examined here. This must be Selamet Giray II (r. 1740–43) who was installed in 1740 (Note that the khan's name is misspelled in *Kavanin*, fol. 33a; but is correct in the copy at Türk Tarih Kurumu Library, Ankara, Y49, fol. 42a). Similarly, the description of a visit of the Crimean heir (*kalgay sultan*) in Istanbul immediately follows the section on the installments

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Below, I first provide an overview of the history of relations between the Crimean khanate and the Ottoman state up until the eighteenth century. This short section is far from being exhaustive, and is intended to provide the reader with a brief survey of the historical relations between these two polities. In providing the general contours of the shifting political dependencies of the powers at play over the early modern era, I intend to aid the reader in visualizing the backdrop of the transformations wrought in the eighteenth century. Given limitations of scope, my focus on the investiture ceremony for Mengli II Giray in the subsequent section should be seen as the main contribution of this article. In this respect, my main purpose here is to illustrate some of the more striking details of the ceremony and then to compare them with ceremonies staged for envoys from other contemporary nations and vassal polities so as to arrive at some conclusions regarding the nature of the relationship between the Crimean khanate and the Ottoman state as reflected in official state ceremonies.

The Crimean Khanate and the Ottoman State

The Crimean khanate grew independent from the Golden Horde and established its own sovereign polity in the early part of the fifteenth century. A few decades after the khanate had gained its independence however, civil strife broke out after the sudden demise of Haji Giray Khan (r. 1449–56 and again 1456–66) in 1466. After several years of continuous conflict, the Ottomans eventually intervened to settle the succession dispute—evidently upon the invitation of the chieftains who constituted the state council known as the *Karachı Bekler*.[6] The government of Sultan Mehmed II (r. 1444–46, 1451–81) had an interest in expanding the Ottoman realms north (particularly around the Black Sea in order to control the port cities), and had already been cooperating with Haji Giray Khan before his death. The Porte then supported one of the khan's sons, Mengli Giray III (r. 1478–1514), in defeating his brother and

of Crimean khans and is dated 30 January 1725, i.e., just a few months after Mengli II Giray's investiture. On the other hand, there are a few discrepancies (for instance, in the name of the estate home where the prospective khan was first received) with the specifics mentioned in the protocol register and Küçük Çelebizade İsmail Asım's narrative of the events in *Tarih*, edited by Abdulkadir Özcan et al. (Istanbul: Klasik, 2013), 3:1396–97.

6. For the origins and the organization of *Karachı Bekler*, see Beatrice Forbes Manz, "The Clans of the Crimean Khanate, 1466–1532," *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 2 (1978): 282–309; Mária Ivanics, "Die Şirin. Abstammung und Aufstieg einer Sippe in der Steppe," in *The Crimean Khanate Between East and West (15th–18th Century)*, ed. Denise Klein (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2012), 27–45.

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seizing power.[7] The Crimean khan subsequently pledged "to be friends with the sultan's friends and enemies to his enemies."[8]

In spite of this commitment to an Ottoman-Crimean partnership, evidence suggests that the Ottoman-Crimean relationship was continuously in flux, and at times strained, during the following centuries.[9] This said, the existing alliance seems to have been too valuable to give up, as both polities clearly benefited from it. The Ottomans often relied on the impeccable military craft of the Crimean Tatar outriders and frontline cavalry in their campaigns in eastern and central Europe against the Muscovite Russians, as well as in battles as far away as the Iranian front. In return, the Ottomans protected the khanate's interests; the Ottoman fleet and army kept several outposts on the Crimean coast and at strategic locations across the peninsula, protecting against the khanate's enemies in the north.

Unlike other vassal principalities—such as Moldavia, Wallachia, or Dubrovnik—the khans did not pay tribute to the Ottomans,[10] so the designation "tributary principality" does not apply to the khanate's status. In fact, the Ottomans themselves paid an annuity to the khan to subsidize some of his military expenses.[11] Furthermore, due to its strong ally, the khanate was able to collect tributes from the Polish king and Muscovite tsar in the sixteenth century.[12] Slave trade constituted a major source of income for Tatar raiders. The Ottoman demand constituted only one part of the lucrative markets for this trade.[13]

7. Akdes Nimet Kurat, *Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Arşivindeki Altın Ordu, Kırım ve Türkistan Hanlarına Ait Yarlık ve Bitikler* (Istanbul: Bürhaneddin Matbaası, 1940), 81–100; Halil İnalcık, "Yeni Vesikalara Göre Kırım Hanlığının Osmanlı Tâbiliğine Girmesi ve Ahidname Meselesi," *Belleten* 8 (1944): 185–229.

8. İnalcık, "Yeni Vesikalara Göre," 209.

9. See Alan Fisher, "Crimean Separatism in the Ottoman Empire," in *Nationalism in a Non-National State: The Dissolution of the Ottoman Empire,* ed. William W. Haddad and William Ochsenwald (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1977), 57–76; reprinted in Alan Fisher, *Between Russians, Ottomans and Turks: Crimea and Crimean Tatars* (Istanbul: Isis Press, 1998), 79–92.

10. Natalia Królikowska, "Sovereignty and Subordination in Crimean-Ottoman Relations (Sixteenth–Eighteenth Centuries)," in *The European Tributary States of the Ottoman Empire*, 49.

11. Alan Fisher, "Les rapports entre l'Empire Ottoman et la Crimée: L'aspect financier," *Cahiers du Monde Russe et Soviétique* 13, no. 3 (1972): 368–81; reprinted in Fisher, *Between Russians, Ottomans and Turks*, 19–34.

12. Mária Ivanics, "Crimean Tatars," *Encyclopedia of the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Gábor Ágoston and Bruce Masters (New York: Facts on File, 2009), 199; Królikowska, "Sovereignty and Subordination," 49–50.

13. For the scope and the social implications of the slave trade in the Crimea, see Mikhail Kizilov, "Slave Trade in the Early Modern Crimea from the Perspective of Christian, Muslim, and Jewish Sources," *Journal of Early Modern History* 11, no. 1–2 (2007): 1–31.

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During the first century of this alliance, the khanate was more or less autonomous in its internal and foreign policies. Coins were minted in the name of the khan, and his name was mentioned in Friday sermons—two important indicators of autonomy in the Middle Eastern Islamic tradition of governance. By the later sixteenth century, however, the khanate could not avoid the growing Ottoman influence on its government as it is generally accepted that Islam Giray II Khan (r. 1584–88) recognized a more forceful Ottoman suzerainty. The sultan's name was now mentioned before that of the khan in the Friday sermons.[14] Moreover, as Ottoman influence on Crimean governmental affairs grew in subsequent decades, so did the influence of Ottoman Sunni culture on Crimean Tatars, particularly among the populations in the southern coastal regions of the Crimea.[15]

The khan continued to be selected at a diet by the four main tribes in Crimea, but from this era onward the result had to be ratified by the Ottoman central administration. The prospective khan, therefore, often journeyed to Istanbul in order to obtain the sultan's approval at an official reception ceremony. Yet the election was not always a smooth process. Several Crimean aristocratic factions had stakes in the khan's policies and were therefore directly involved in the vetting process. The candidate supported by the Ottomans was not always accepted without complications.[16] It therefore seems that the Ottomans' role in the election of khans also varied over time. For example, the Ottomans held the possible contenders to the khan's position (*hanzade*) or family members of the ruling khan in Istanbul as "dignified hostages" at estate homes in the environs of the city, or in towns as far as Yanbolu (Yambol, Bulgaria) to secure loyalty from the khan, but also to keep a reserve of candidates who favored Ottoman policies. This practice alone reflects the ambivalent relationship between these two polities.

Russians and the Crimean Tatars fought a number of wars during the sixteenth century which frequently elicited Ottoman support for the khanate. Tatar raiders continuously raided central Russian lands for the lucrative business of capturing slaves. Eventually, Muscovy took control of Tatar territories

14. Halim Giray Sultan, *Gülbün-i Hânân* as quoted in Ömer Bıyık, *Kırım'ın İdari ve Sosyo-Ekonomik Tarihi, 1600–1774* (Istanbul: Ötüken Neşriyat, 2014), 26. For other Crimean chroniclers' views, see Królikowska, "Sovereignty and Subordination," 47–48.

15. For example, see Yücel Öztürk, *Osmanlı Hakimiyetinde Kefe: 1475–1600* (Ankara: T.C. Kültür Bakanlığı, 2000); Hakan Kırımlı and Nicole Kançal-Ferrari (project coordinators), *Kırım'daki Kırım Tatar (Türk-İslâm) Mimari Yadigârları* (Istanbul: T.C. Başbakanlık Yurtdışı Türkler ve Akraba Topluluklar Başkanlığı Yayınları, 2016).

16. Several instances of khan appointments were analyzed by Sándor Papp, "Die Inaugurationen der Krimkhane durch die Hohe Pforte (16.-18. Jahrhundert)," in *The Crimean Khanate Between East and West*, 75–90.

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along the Volga River and enlarged its territories in the east all the way to the Caspian Sea. The Ottomans were almost always involved in these operations by providing support to the Tatars. The khanate's strategic importance for the Ottomans grew as Muscovy expanded under the rule of the Romanovs from the mid-seventeenth century onwards. While the Russian tsar stopped paying tribute to the Tatar khans by the beginning of the eighteenth century, the Ottomans continued to subsidize Tatar raids into Russian territories. Along with the legendary capabilities of the Tatar cavalry, the location of the Crimean Tatar khanate on the northern edge of the Black Sea was even more significant for Ottoman strategic interests. As the Ottomans did not lead many campaigns on the northern shores of the Black Sea after the sixteenth century, the Tatars constituted a military buffer zone between the Ottoman and Russian domains. Furthermore, as Muscovy sought to influence and recruit allies from their Orthodox co-religionists in Ottoman tributary principalities (Moldavia and Wallachia), the Tatar khanate stood out as an unswerving ally to the Ottoman Empire.[17]

Until 1774, the khanate existed as a semi-sovereign polity in its relation to the Ottoman Empire, and it appears that the khans were treated more as respected allies than subordinate rulers. Yet contemporary inquiries into the nature of the relationship between these two polities are colored by the intervening political rhetoric and nation-building efforts of the twentieth century. For example, Soviet historiography depicted the Crimean khans as puppets who operated under the thumb of the Ottoman sultan.[18] On the other hand, many twentieth-century Tatars, eager to identify past glories, have claimed that the khanate was more or less an independent polity, and that the Ottomans depended heavily on their ally in the north.[19]

Reception Ceremonies for the Prospective Crimean Khan in Istanbul

When Saadet Giray III (r. 1717–24), who had been the khan since 1717, had a falling out with the Crimean notables, the latter group communicated their dissatisfaction with the khan to the Porte. Several points of disagreement are mentioned in the sources, not least the chieftains' diminishing shares of the

17. Virginia H. Aksan, *Ottoman Wars 1700–1870: An Empire Besieged* (Harlow: Longman/Pearson, 2007), 29–30.

18. Brian Glyn Williams, *The Crimean Tatars: The Diaspora Experience and the Forging of a Nation* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 41, 47; also see Alan Fisher, "Crimean Separatism in the Ottoman Empire," 84, fn. 4.

19. Natalia Królikowska-Jedlińska surveyed the historiography of, and the sources for the study of the Crimean khanate in a recent study: *Law and Division of Power in the Crimean Khanate (1532–1774): With Special Reference to the Reign of Murad Giray (1678–1683)* (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 1–38.

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large sums earned from slaves captured in the Caucasus. Seyyid Muhammed Rıza (d. 1756), a Crimean nobleman from the Afifi family and a contemporary to these events, details, based partially on his own observations, the disputes between different factions during Saadet Giray III's reign in his history.[20] If we take the available narratives at face value, the conflicts seem to have resulted due to power struggles among different factions of the Crimean notables, but also personal animosities seem to have played a role. Eventually, the *Shirin Bekler*, the most prestigious group of Crimean aristocrats, declared that they would not make their customary trip to Istanbul to participate in religious holiday ceremonies at the imperial palace in order to protest the incumbent khan. Upon failed efforts to reconcile both parties, and after several closed sessions of the imperial council, the Ottoman government decided to appoint Saadet Giray's brother Mengli II Giray, who had been living in an estate in Kadıköyü near Silivri, as the new khan. The new candidate arrived in Istanbul in mid-October 1724.[21]

According to descriptions provided in the protocol register, there were three different types of ceremonies concerning the appointment of a Crimean khan in the early eighteenth century. The first case involved the khan coming to Istanbul to be appointed for the first time at the beginning of his reign (under investigation here), while the second involved his traveling to the city for a renewal of his office. In a rare third scenario, a renewal of office could take place without the khan travelling to Istanbul, in which case the Ottomans would send his appointment letter along with the necessary gifts to Crimea.[22]

A study of Ottoman protocol registers reveal that the reception ceremonies of diplomatic emissaries were regulated by precise statutes. The pomp and privileges afforded, or lack thereof, collectively reflected the prestige

20. Muhammed Rıza, *Es-Sebü'ş-Seyyar fi Akhbar Müluk Tatar* (Kazan: Medrese-i aliyye-i imparatoriye, 1832). Barbara Kellner-Heinkele establishes the controversies during Saadet Giray's reign from various sources, including Muhammed Rıza's narrative: "Coping with the Rules of Rulership: Saʿādet Gerey Khān III in Crimean Tatar and Ottoman Historiography," *Finnish-Ugrische Mitteilungen* 32–33 (2008–09): 279–90; also see Królikowska-Jedlińska, *Law and Division of Power in the Crimean Khanate*, 31–32.

21. Küçük Çelebizade İsmail Asım, *Tarih*, 3:1396–97. An account of the disputes leading up to the installment of the new khan is also narrated by the eighteenth-century Crimean historian Abdülgaffar Kırımi in *Umdetü't-Tevarih*, ed. Necib Asım (Istanbul: Matbaa-i Amire, 1343/1924), 163–70. Cf. Barbara Kellner-Heinkele, "Who Was ʿAbdulghaffār el-Qirimī?: Some Notes on an 18th Century Crimean Tatar Historian," *Journal of Asian History* 32 (1998): 145–56; Królikowska-Jedlińska, *Law and Division of Power in the Crimean Khanate*, 30–31.

22. *Kavanin*, fols. 28a–33a. Cf. Türk Tarih Kurumu, Y49, fols. 34b–42b. Further details are from Küçük Çelebizade İsmail Asım, *Tarih*, 3:1396–97.

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of the countries the envoys represented.[23] In this connection, the ceremonies surrounding the appointment of a new Crimean khan were by far the most opulent conducted reception events by the Ottoman government for any diplomatic emissary in the seventeenth or eighteenth centuries. No envoy of any diplomatic rank was shown the esteem that the Crimean khan enjoyed. While the protocol registers recount very minute details of the rituals performed, I will use my limited space here merely to provide a general account of the reception of the khans and identify variations from other reception ceremonies for envoys of sovereign and vassal states. The summary below concerns the ceremonies performed for the appointment of a new khan.

Whether an envoy secured an audience with the grand vizier or the sultan upon his appointment to the Ottoman capital depended not only on the emissary's rank or the degree of friendship between his state and the Ottoman government at the time, but also on the amount and value of gifts he brought with him. In the case of special missions or embassies following the conclusion of treaties, the number of gifts was sometimes even specified by an article in the accord.[24] Mengli II Giray, however, not only arrived for his reception in Istanbul without gifts, but even the customary monetary donations and robes of honor he presented to Ottoman officials as a part of rituals were paid out of the Ottoman imperial treasury.[25]

The most precious gift an envoy could receive was a horse. This occurred rarely, as the cost of the horses' ceremonial accoutrements seems to have frequently exceeded the value of the horses themselves. The Ottoman court used a complicated lexicon for the various saddles, bridles, housings, and caparisons that is often hard for the modern reader to follow. As a sign of his unique position in Ottoman ceremonial protocol, the khan was presented with a *divan-bisâtlı* (lit. "[decorated] with a saddle pad of 'courtly' quality") horse after being ratified in his office. These were extremely precious horses with highly embroidered trappings, including a decorated harness, saddle, caparison, and stirrup covered with silver and gold. They were normally reserved for Ottoman dignitaries.

23. For a published such register, see Hakan Karateke, ed., *An Ottoman Protocol Register, containing ceremonies from 1736 to 1808: BEO Sadaret Defterleri 350 in the Prime Ministry Ottoman State Archives, Istanbul* (London and Istanbul: Royal Asiatic Society and The Ottoman Bank Archive and Research Centre, 2007).

24. Cf. Joseph Freiherr von Hammer-Purgstall, *Geschichte des Osmanischen Reiches* (Pest: C. A. Hartleben, 1830), 6:164.

25. *Kavanin*, fol. 29b: "*ber vech-i mutad verilecek avâ'id taraf-ı mirîden verilmek âdet olmağla*."

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Arrival of the Crimean Visitor at the Davud Pasha Field in the Outskirts of Istanbul

The ceremonies corresponding to the khan's appointment stretched over more than ten days, during which numerous visits and rituals were performed and imperial insignia were presented to the newly-installed khan. The first welcoming ceremony took place in large luxurious tents put up at Davud Pasha field, a few kilometers west of Istanbul. The prospective khan was received here by the chief secretary to the grand vizier in internal affairs (*kethuda beg*), the chief sergeant-at-arms (*çavuşbaşı*), the commander of the cavalry regiments (*sipah ağası*), and the swordbearer ağa (*silahdar ağa*) in addition to some sixty marshals of the court (*çavuşan-ı divan*). These four officials are the second highest in rank in their respective career lines. The commander of the cavalry regiments, and the swordbearer ağa had more or less ceremonial functions: these highly trusted officials regularly stood directly behind the sultan in their gilded red garments and headgear.

The meaning and context behind the honorable reception that Mengli II Giray enjoyed becomes more transparent in light of the fact that Ottoman officials normally reserved the practice of welcoming their guest on the outskirts of Istanbul *solely* for ambassadors extraordinary, who arrived after the signing of a treaty or to ratify an existing one.[26] Regular envoys as well as princes from Moldavia or Wallachia or emissaries from Dubrovnik ordinarily travelled with their own retinues and thus entered the city by their own means if they arrived by a land route. By contrast, the attendance of such high-ranked officials as well as the banquet at the Davud Pasha field stand as remarkable signs of the prestige shown for the Crimean guest. Furthermore, although the three high-ranking Ottoman officials who usually participated in the welcome ceremony for ambassadors extraordinary were the chief sergeant-at-arms, the commander of the cavalry regiments, and the swordbearer ağa, the Ottoman government sent an official of an even higher rank in this case, i.e., the chief secretary to the grand vizier in internal affairs to welcome the Crimean khan, which should be seen as a further testimony to the esteem that the Ottomans demonstrated for the Crimean khan.

Such welcome meetings did not always flow without complications, however. In order to provide an indication of the extent to which the ranks of the officials participating in protocol was taken as a sign of prestige, let us turn to a similar ceremony provided for a Russian diplomat. In 1775, in the wake of the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca (1774) that marked the disastrous defeat of the

26. For example, see ibid., fols. 98a–100b, 112–115b. Cf. Mübahat Kütükoğlu, "XVIII. Yüzyılda Osmanlı Devletinde Fevkalâde Elçilerin Ağırlanması," *Türk Kültürü Araştırmaları* 27, no. 1–2 (1989): 199–231.

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Ottomans by the Russians, when the Russian ambassador extraordinary Prince Nikolai Vasil'evich Repnin (d. 1801) arrived at Küçük Çekmece, some twenty kilometers west of Istanbul, en route to the capital, Ottoman protocol dictated that he be welcomed by the chief sergeant-at-arms on the field of Davud Pasha and accompanied by him to the gates of the city. However, the chief sergeant-at-arms had fallen ill. When the grand vizier offered to have the ambassador welcomed by the treasurer of the office of protocol (*teşrifati kisedarı*), who had been appointed the chief sergeant-at-arms' deputy, the ambassador replied that under these circumstances he would not budge from his camp. The insistence of the Russian representative was no doubt due to his familiarity with the Ottoman protocol and ranks. Following a protracted exchange of letters, which even included an offer extended by the Ottoman authorities to have the ambassador send his personal physician to examine the chief sergeant-at-arms, the Ottomans were forced to officially appoint a new, temporary chief sergeant-at-arms to welcome the Russian emissary. The tension in this reception ceremony is obvious. While Ottoman internal correspondence makes it appear credible that the chief sergeant-at-arms had indeed become sick, the Russians felt that the Ottomans were trying to employ a ruse to demean their ambassador.[27]

Therefore, the ranks of the officials on the welcoming party, or at every step of the ceremonies for that matter, should be seen as indicators of the esteem that the Ottomans demonstrated, or lack thereof. The act of meeting the prospective khan with a group of high-ranking magnates was only the first gesture on the part of the Ottoman government, however. In fact, before the undertaking of a banquet and directly following the requisite coffee serving ceremony at the Davud Pasha field, when the party was leaving the tent for a break, all the officials with the exception of the chief secretary to the grand vizier in internal affairs kissed the hand of the Crimean dignitary as a sign of respect.[28]

Following the banquet at Davud Pasha field, the prospective khan made his way towards the city in a splendid procession and entered through the gate of Topkapı. He rode in the same row as, and to the right of, the chief secretary to the grand vizier in internal affairs, and Kara Bayram Ağa mansion in the vicinity of Ahurkapusu was decorated lavishly for the purpose of accommodating him as a guest. When the procession arrived in front of his residence, members of the party dismounted and formed two lines to greet the dignitary as he entered.[29]

27. See *Defter-i Teşrifat*, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, HO 153, 36b–38b; cf. Norman Itzkowitz and Max Mote, trans., *Mubadele: An Ottoman-Russian Exchange of Ambassadors* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 156–57.

28. *Kavanin*, fols. 28a–28b.

29. Ibid., fol. 28b.

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The Investiture Ceremony

The next day was reserved for the new khan's visit to the grand vizier and the sultan as well as his confirmation ceremony. The officials involved in ushering in the prospective khan were even higher in rank than those who met him at Davud Pasha field. Indeed, it was the director of the imperial chancery (*reisülküttab*) and the chief sergeant-at-arms who fetched the Crimean khan from his mansion and accompanied him to the Sublime Porte along with twenty marshals of the court (*çavuşan*) in full regalia. Once the guest dismounted, he was ushered inside the building on the arms of the commander of gatekeepers (*kapıcılar kethudası*) and the ağa of salutation (*selam ağası*).[30]

At this point the grand vizier welcomed the khan standing in the middle of the council hall, then took a seat at the most prominent position in the room with his Crimean guest seated to his right and at the same level. To an accustomed eye, both of these gestures constitute an extraordinary show of respect to the prospective khan that was not provided to other comparable magnates. Take for example the voivodes of Walachia and Moldavia who came to Istanbul to receive headgear called a *kuka*, an Ottoman standard (*ʿalem*) and a horsetail (*tuğ)*—imperial insignia that symbolized the conferral of power. When the voivode came to the Porte to be received by the grand vizier, he had no ushers whatsoever and was made to wait in "the small room" (*kethuda beg dairesinde küçük odada*), rather than granted direct entry to the audience hall (*arz odası*). After being brought before the grand vizier, who received him seated, the voivode was obliged to kiss the hem of the vizier's kaftan at least twice during the ceremony and was expected to stand with his hands folded in front of him.[31] Emissaries of Dubrovnik, who came every third year to present tribute to the Ottomans, were also received much less respectfully than regular envoys or the prospective Crimean khans. Although the Dubrovnik emissary was usually allowed to sit on a stool, he was occasionally made to stand before the grand vizier.[32]

In any case, arrangements of Ottoman protocol usually allowed the grand vizier to avoid standing up when he met a foreign envoy. During receptions at the Sublime Porte for instance, the grand vizier ceremoniously entered the audience hall with his entourage only after he was informed that the envoy had arrived and had taken his seat there. At the reception in the imperial dome (*kubbe-i hümayun*) in Topkapı palace, the grand vizier would go so far as to vacate the dome where he was to receive the envoy as soon as he was informed that the envoy was approaching. He would then re-enter the dome from the

30. Ibid.
31. Ibid., fols. 98a–b, 99b–100a.
32. Ibid., fol. 100b.

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chancery hall a few moments later. In both cases the envoy had to stand when the grand vizier entered the room. This was the standard procedure for envoys in the eighteenth century.

While such behavior implies condescension, there is reason to believe that the grand vizier's practice of moving to the next room in anticipation of envoys was reserved principally for envoys of powerful states. Ordinarily he would receive agents who functioned as diplomatic go-betweens (*kapu kethudası*) for some states while seated on his sofa without leaving for the next room to affect a grand re-entry.[33] However, higher-ranking envoys demanded a more courteous reception. For the grand vizier to stand in reverence as the envoy entered the imperial dome was clearly out of the question. On the other hand, receiving the envoy of a powerful state while remaining seated was evidently too demeaning. Leaving the room thus solved this diplomatic conundrum by allowing the vizier to avoid standing up for the envoy as well to as avoid receiving him while seated. In light of these facts, the grand vizier's reception of the newly enthroned Crimean khan while standing in the middle of the council hall was indeed an extraordinary gesture on the part of the Ottoman official (*sadr-ı azam hazretleri odanın ortasından istikbal*).

Another remarkable gesture performed during the khan's audience with the Ottoman grandee took the form of allotting the prospective khan a seat next to the grand vizier.[34] Seating arrangements were often a point of dispute with envoys to the Ottoman Empire, as they were typically offered a simple stool which contrasted sharply in size, lavishness, and comfort with the sofa on which the grand vizier was seated. Moreover, the envoy's stool was often lower than the grand vizier's seat. Only a few envoys are known to have finagled a seat next to the grand vizier or his stand-in, the *kaimmakam paşa*, until the nineteenth century. The French ambassador the Marquis de Villeneuve, who signed the treaty renewing the 1673 "capitulations," succeeded in doing so in 1728; however Charles Marie François Olier de Nointel, on the other hand, was rebuked by the grand vizier Kara Mustafa Pasha (term 1676–83) in 1670 when he showed reluctance to sit on the stool.[35]

Although the envoys themselves generally only mention a "stool," the protocol registers indicate that there were at least two types of seats on which the envoys could be seated. The better of the two was a chair (*sandalye*) with a back and armrests, while the less prestigious one was the aforementioned "stool" (*iskemle*), which lacked these basic elements of comfort. The Russian

33. Ibid., fols. 109b–110a.

34. Ibid., fols. 28b–29a.

35. Bertold Spuler, "Die europäische Diplomatie in Konstantinopel bis zum Frieden von Belgrad (1739)," *Jahrbuch für Kultur und Gechichte der Slaven*, new series 11 (1935): 184, and *Jahrbücher für die Geschichte Osteuropas* 1 (1936): 359.

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ambassador Repnin had inquired at his 10 December 1775 reception whether he might be offered a chair, and his *chargé d'affaires*, a stool. The envoy's request was granted, most probably due to the Russians' geopolitical upper hand following their recent military victory over the Ottomans.[36] Occasionally, both seats would be modified slightly to accord with the importance of the envoy: a cover might be placed over the stool, or a more ornate chair chosen for the ceremony.[37] But no matter which seat was used, this matter of protocol was never well-received by the envoys, and remained an object of dispute well into the first half of the nineteenth century. The respect shown to the Ottomans' Crimean guest by being seated at the same level and next to the grand vizier should therefore be understood within this context.

As rare as it was for foreign emissaries to be granted an audience with the sultan, it did in fact occur, albeit under stricter circumstances. Ambassadors or special envoys might obtain an audience with the sultan, depending on their rank or the importance of their mission, and provided that they brought sufficient gifts. Until the early eighteenth century, voivodes of Walachia and Moldavia were unable to acquire a full audience with the sultan but were made to kiss the threshold of the door of the audience hall without being allowed to actually enter into the imperial presence (*arz odası kapusı aralığında zemin-bus birle ricat etdirilmek*). However, a note in Abdullah Naili's protocol register indicates that this practice had been breached for some time and would be discontinued from 1744 onwards.[38] The emissaries from Dubrovnik, on the other hand, did not have a meeting with the sultan on their reception program at all. They were brought to the imperial dome, where the Imperial Council (*divan-ı hümayun*) took place. There, the emissary would hand over the purse with the tribute in it.[39]

As for the Crimean khan's meeting with the sultan, a petition to enter the imperial presence was sent to the palace from the grand vizier's office. When it was returned with imperial approval, the party of the khan once again formed itself into a procession, left the Sublime Porte, and entered the Topkapı palace grounds through the Soğuk Çeşme Gate at the western walls (today's Gülhane). Officials in highly decorated ceremonial garb formed two lines on either side of the path leading to the Topkapusu Mansion in the palace. Although the sultan ordinarily received foreign envoys at the audience hall located just behind the Gate of Felicity (*bab-ı saadet*), the arrangement for the khan seems to point to a more casual, friendlier reception. After spending a good half-hour in the presence of the sultan, the guest was officially granted

36. *Defter-i Teşrifat*, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, HO 153, fol. 39a.
37. BOA, Kamil Kepeci 676, fols. 185a–185b.
38. *Kavanin*, fol. 100a.
39. Ibid., fol. 100b.

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the title of Khan of Crimea. He then received a fur-lined headdress (*kalpak*) replete with two aigrettes (*sorguç*) on its sides, a red velvet fur-lined robe of honor (*kapaniçe*) decorated with silver clasps and nine golden buttons, a bow (*keman*), an arrow (*tir*), and an ornate quiver (*tirkeş*). When taking his leave, the new khan also received a bedecked horse (*müzeyyen at*) from the sultan. A banner and standard (*sancak*, *alem*) were presented to him the next day.[40]

Given that making envoys wait for an imperial audience was an otherwise indispensable element of Ottoman reception protocol which often elicited great dismay from other diplomats, it is remarkable that at no time during the ceremonies was the Crimean guest made to wait. When an envoy was to be received by the sultan at Topkapı palace, the foreign envoy would be detained in front of the kiosk of processions (*alay köşkü*) until the grand vizier exited the Sublime Porte. This could take as long as ten to fifteen minutes. The Ottoman dignitary would then ride from the Porte to the palace, passing before the envoy, while the envoy himself would ordinarily be made to halt and wait at several points during the ceremony. When the envoy entered the palace gardens following the grand vizier, he was often stopped and made to wait until a chapter from the Quran was recited. When he finally arrived at the imperial dome where he would meet the grand vizier, he would be kept waiting still longer until the grand vizier returned to the room. Before he was admitted into the presence of the sultan, he would again be made to wait for several dignitaries to enter and leave the audience. Finally, before leaving the palace grounds, he would have to wait in front of the imperial bakery for members of the imperial council to leave.

It is instructive to note that the ranks of the officials and their places in parades were strictly regulated: The Ottoman protocol registers contain long lists of each and every official participating in a procession and exactly where they were supposed to ride in the train. Therefore, as was described above, the fact that the prospective khan was permitted to ride to the right of the chief secretary to the grand vizier in internal affairs, as he proceeded from Davud Pasha field to Istanbul, is noteworthy. The right side was considered to be more prestigious in Ottoman (but also in European) protocol. Regularly, the chief sergeant-at-arms, who was lower in rank in the hierarchy than the chief secretary, would escort ambassadors. Furthermore, when foreign envoys formed a procession, the chief sergeant-at-arms would ordinarily ride to the right of the envoy. If the procession were to pass through a narrow street, as it sometimes did in the district of Galata, the Ottoman official would proceed ahead of the envoy.[41] From the point when the khan officially received his title during

40. Ibid., fols. 29a–29b.
41. Ibid., fol. 106a.

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the audience with the sultan, his changed status was henceforth reflected in the flow of ceremonies. While the prospective khan was bound to ride to the left of the grand vizier on the way to the imperial palace, after he was proclaimed khan in the imperial presence, he was allowed to ride on the right of the vizier on the return journey. He was now ceremonially situated as higher in rank than the most senior official in the empire. The *alkış* ritual, or the greetings and congratulatory formulas recited in a loud chorus by the marshals, was also to be performed only *after* the investiture ceremony in accordance with the khan's heightened rank.[42]

In any case, the khan stayed at least another week in Istanbul upon the conclusion of the investiture ceremonies. On the third day of his stay, the grand vizier paid him a visit at his mansion to congratulate him on the title. Other viziers followed. A few days later the khan returned the favor by visiting each vizier at his own home. Several days after this, the khan was received once more by the sultan. He then remained in Istanbul a few more days. Finally, he and his retinue were accompanied by Ottoman grandees to the Davud Pasha field in an extraordinary procession. Following a farewell banquet there, the Crimean party set out for their own lands.[43]

Conclusion

Diplomatic reception ceremonies are processes that are difficult to interpret for outsiders. Diplomatic prestige may be apparent in pomp and spectacle, but can also be encoded in the smaller details of ceremonies. Based on my analysis of both of these elements in the imperial protocol surrounding the appointment of the khan of Crimea, there is no doubt that the khan enjoyed an extraordinary prestige, almost strangely so, in the Ottoman throne city in the early eighteenth century. Indeed, before he was ratified as the khan of Crimea, his rank was stipulated just below that of the grand vizier in the protocol. Yet it was raised even higher after he was officially granted the title, making him ceremonially the highest ranked individual after the sultan in the empire. This honorable treatment in protocol obviously carried little or no executive powers with it.

Of course, envoy reception ceremonies did not exist independent of the international relations and policies operative at the time of their occurrence. Alliances between two states—or, in this case, an empire and a vassal entity with special status—could result in the emissary's receiving special attention, indulgence, favor, or pomp. To be sure, the khanate had always been a key strategic ally for the Ottomans. As described above, with the expansion of the military power of Muscovy during the course of the seventeenth century, the

42. Ibid., fol. 29a.
43. Ibid., fols. 29b–30b.

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Crimean Tatar khanate continued to constitute a useful buffer zone against a possible Russian expansion towards the south. For this reason, the Ottomans constantly resorted to the military craft of the Crimeans in their campaigns in eastern and central Europe.

In the eighteenth century, growing Russian ambitions and the waning of Ottoman military might have affected the position of the Crimean khanate between the two empires. Virginia Aksan's apt observation on the subject emphasizes the importance of Tatars for both Russians and Ottomans: "All of the treaties between the Romanovs and the Ottomans took up the matter of control of the Tatars, and just as often they were the excuse for breaking the peace between the two empires."[44] Eventually, the third article of the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca following the Ottoman defeat in the 1768–74 Russo-Ottoman War stipulated that the Ottomans cede independence to the Crimean khanate, which soon came under Russian influence. Hence, as the Ottomans began to busy themselves at saving their own empire by implementing reforms, Empress Catherine the Great (r. 1762–96) proceeded to annex Crimea in 1783, thus marking the beginning of Russian suzerainty over Crimea for more than two centuries.[45]

While the Ottomans likely made their best effort to secure a khan who was most sympathetic to their interests throughout their long relationship with the khanate, it seems that they wanted to support their candidate without appearing to be meddling excessively in Crimean affairs. They also acted as arbiter between competing parties for the throne of the khan and the Crimean notables. More importantly, the extraordinary prestige that the Crimean khan enjoyed in Istanbul should be seen as a part of Ottoman efforts to demonstrate how much they valued this strategic friendship. Diplomatic ceremonial was one important component of Ottoman efforts to prolong this beneficial alliance. As I have demonstrated throughout, the khan was allotted a level of prestige in Istanbul that was not shown to any other diplomatic emissary—not even those from powerful sovereign states.

Did the fact that the khan was a Muslim play a role in this equation? To my mind, there is no obvious indication that this was so. As mentioned above, in contrast with the tributary principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia where the Russians sought influence on their Orthodox co-religionists, the Tatars were apparently not seen by the Ottomans as an entity that could potentially come under Russian sway. However, religious affiliation alone should not provide a satisfactory explanation for the longevity of this complex alliance. If anything,

44. Aksan, *Ottoman Wars*, 30.

45. Alan Fisher, *The Russian Annexation of the Crimea 1772–1783* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1970); Virginia H. Aksan, *An Ottoman Statesman in War and Peace: Ahmed Resmi Efendi, 1700–1783* (Leiden: Brill, 1995).

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the fact that the Ottomans respected the distinct Chinggisid lineage of the Crimean khans may have played a more important role. This was apparently such a common sentiment within and beyond the confines of contemporary Ottoman political thought that the Crimean khans were occasionally referred to as possible contenders to the Istanbul throne, should the Ottoman dynasty expire or be removed by force.[46]

While the 1724 investiture ceremony of Mengli II Giray in Istanbul is little more than a snapshot from a highly staged ceremonial performance, it can nevertheless provide modern historians with an important lens for understanding the longstanding alliance of the Ottoman Empire and the Crimean Khanate in all of its ups and downs. To be sure, a more complete picture of the khan's position in the Ottoman world will only be made possible through further comparison of the degree of hospitality the khan enjoyed in Istanbul during different time periods alongside further study of the extent to which his treatment in imperial protocol reflected the changing nature of inter-polity relations.

Acknowledgements: I would like to thank Nükhet Varlık, editor of JOTSA, and Sinem Erdoğan İşkorkutan and Ozgen Felek, the editors of this special volume, for their flexibility in accommodating my article in this issue at a very late date. I benefited immensely from the comments by Arlen Wiesenthal, the anonymous reviewers, and Nükhet Varlık on this essay.

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46. For some examples, see Feridun Emecen, "Osmanlı Hanedanına Alternatif Arayışlar Üzerine Bazı Örnekler ve Mülahazalar," *İslâm Araştırmaları Dergisi* 6 (2001): 63–76; Hakan Kırımlı and Ali Yaycıoğlu, "Heirs of Chinghis Khan in the Age of Revolutions: An Unruly Crimean Prince in the Ottoman Empire and Beyond," *Der Islam* 94, no. 2 (2017): 496–526.

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