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Searching for inclusive narrative: Crimean Tatars in Ukrainian films

*... no savage conquerors, no looters,
but equal to Zaporozhians – our ancestors*

*...не як дикі заїди, грабічники,
а на рівні з запорожцями – наші предки*

Omelian Pritsak!¹

Zarys treści: Kinematografia, w tym kinematografia ukraińska, jest wciąż niedocenianym źródłem w badaniach historycznych. Ukraińskie filmy doby niezależności stanowią natomiast bardzo interesujące i ważne źródło ilustrujące zmiany społeczne i różne perspektywy patrzenia na historię w okresie transformacji. Po 1991 r. określenie roli i miejsca Tatarów Krymskich w historii i społeczeństwie Ukrainy stało się istotnym wyzwaniem dla historiografii i państwa. Ukraińskie filmy fabularne z okresu 1991–2017 to dowody podejmowania prób zmierzenia się z tym tematem i reprezentacja różnych koncepcji dotyczących kwestii krymskotatarskiej.

Outline of contents: Films, including Ukrainian feature films, remain an undervalued source in historical research. However, Ukrainian movies produced in the period of independence are an interesting and important source and mirror social changes and various perspectives regarding history in the times of transformation. After 1991 it was a significant challenge for the state and historians to define the role of the Crimean Tatars in Ukrainian history and society. Ukrainian feature films from the years 1991–2017 are evidence of attempts to address and present various concepts related to this issue.

Słowa kluczowe: kinematografia ukraińska, Tatarzy Krymscy, narracja historyczna, film historyczny, Chanat Krymski

Key words: Ukrainian movies, Crimean Tatars, historical narrative, historical films, Crimean Khanate

¹ О. Прицак, “Що таке історія України?”, *Слово і час*, 1 (1991), р. 56, after: А. Портнов, *Історії істориків. Обличчя й образи української історіографії ХХ століття*, Київ, 2011, pp. 198–199.

On 24 August 2017 Ukraine celebrated its Independence Day for the 26th time. On this occasion, the Ukrainian Ministry of Information Policy launched a social campaign entitled “We’re different, but united” with posters presenting different social groups.² On the main streets of Kiev were mostly these presenting Crimean Tatars, (the Krymchaks).³ This group gained the right to return to its homeland from forced exile in the Soviet Central Asian republics only after the Supreme Soviet of the Soviet Union passed a relevant decision on 14 November 1989: “О признании незаконными преступными репрессивных актов против народов, подвергшихся насильственному переселению, и обеспечении их прав”.⁴ In the first decade of the existence of the independent Ukrainian state, the number of Crimean Tatars increased more than sixfold and as per the census in 2001 there were as many as 248,200 of them. They constituted almost 13% of the population in Crimea.⁵ In 2014 Russia started annexation of the peninsula and the Crimean Tatars had to choose between staying on the land of their ancestors and emigrating to the continental Ukraine. The annexation of Crimea highlighted the issue of the Crimean Tatars in the global media. It also proved how important, yet not accomplished task, has been in the independent Ukraine to come up with a new, coherent narrative about the past that would also include the history of the Crimean Tatars. That most traumatic episode of this history in the 20th century was the forced deportations that commenced on 18 May 1944 and was justified by the Soviet authorities using accusations of previous collaboration with the German occupant. The Ukrainian Verkhovna Rada officially proclaimed these events a genocide and on 12 November 2015 the Remembrance Day of the Genocide of the Crimean Tatar Nation was established (День пам’яті жертв геноциду кримськотатарського народу). Since then, it has been commemorated on 18 May.⁶

The Maidan protests in winter 2013–2014 drew the attention of the whole world to Ukraine for a time. However, research on the contemporary history of Ukraine has still focused on memory politics and the official discourse of the authorities. However, statements of the ruling elite are not fully identical with common memory of the society or with the narrative present in the texts of culture.

² Відзначення Дня Незалежності, <http://mip.gov.ua/news/1932.html> (access: 13.01.2018).

³ The issues related to the correct naming were addressed by Ahatanhel Krymsky; А. Кримський, *Студії з Криму*, Київ, 1930, р. 1; the Crimean Tatars refer to themselves as *Kyrymli*, which translates into Ukrainian as “кримці”, after: Українське національне інформаційне агентство ‘Укрінформ’, https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-other_news/2018926-deportacia-krimskih-tatar-v-1944-infografika.html (access: 11.01.2018).

⁴ <http://krym.rusarchives.ru/dokumenty/deklaraciya-verhovnogo-soveta-sssr-o-priznanii-nezakonnymi-i-prestupnymi-repressivnyh> (access: 15.02.2018).

⁵ The details of the census (Всеукраїнський перепис населення) from 2001, <http://2001.ukrcensus.gov.ua> (access: 2.02.2018).

⁶ Постанова Верховної Ради України Про визнання геноциду кримськотатарського народу, *Відомості Верховної Ради (ВВР)*, 49–50 (2015), р. 469, after: <http://zakon3.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/792-19>, (access: 25.01.2018).

The aim of this text will be to draw attention to films as a frequently neglected source in research on the contemporary history of Ukraine. This will be discussed on the example of narratives related to the Crimean Tatars and the relations between the Ukrainians and the Crimean Tatars in the Ukrainian films produced in the period of independence. The first part of the article will focus on the methodology of using films, mostly feature films, in historical studies. I will try to define precisely the subject matter of this research, as well as the tools, the scope of the study and other aspects I will consider in my research. The second part of the article will focus on the role of the Crimean Tatars in the history of Ukraine depicted in feature films produced after 1991.

While in the first part of my article I will consider theoretical works related to the analysis of sources, including academic literature in Polish, English and Ukrainian, in the second part I will discuss the specific sources that can be used to study the subject matter of this article. There are very few academic texts analyzing Ukrainian films produced in 90s and early 2000s published so far.⁷ This is why my aim is to present the key information about the content of the sources. First of all, I will focus on the plot of the films as well as production and distribution factors. I will also try to contextualize films in the debate on history going on in the period when they were produced, i.e. in 1991–2017. I will also mention the concepts of Ukrainian historiography from the previous period that are related to this subject matter. Due to the adopted methodological approach, I will not venture to verify historical discrepancies in the sources.⁸ I will not comment on the artistic value of the films or issues being research problems in film studies or cultural anthropology fields. The academic publications I refer to are not only pure historical studies yet represent and include also crossdisciplinary approach. However, as I already mentioned before, I will focus on the issues related to historical research. Apart from discussing films as a source, I will also mention press publications and Internet sources – mainly interviews with filmmakers.⁹ While referring to the context, I will also comment on educational materials, such as Ukrainian history textbooks approved to be included in the official curriculum.

⁷ Among the works published in Polish to date and related to various aspects of Ukrainian cinema, the following titles deserve attention: A. Matusiak, “Ukraińskie kino lat 90. XX wieku w poszukiwaniu tożsamości narodowej”, *Porównania*, 4 (2007), pp. 139–146, J. Kościółek, “Kondycja postradzieckiego kina ukraińskiego”, *Przegląd Wschodnioeuropejski*, 5/2 (2014), pp. 111–120 and M. Brynych, “Miedziane trąby milczą. Ukraińska kinematografia ostatniego dwudziestolecia: ucieczka od poezji”, in: *Raport o stanie kultury i NGO w Ukrainie*, eds. P. Laufer, M. Riabczuk. A. Saweń, Lublin, 2012, pp. 159–168.

⁸ Ethnographic and historical discrepancies referring to the film “Mamai”, which is mentioned in the article, are discussed e.g. by O. Брюховецька, “Mamai”, *Кіно-Темп*, 4 (2003) after: http://ktm.ukma.edu.ua/show_content.php?id=135 (access: 20.01.2018).

⁹ Unless stated otherwise, all the quotations from texts published in a foreign language (Ukrainian) shall be provided as translated by the author of the article.

As regards films as a historical source an comprehensive monograph on the subject written by an expert historian is still awaited.¹⁰ The majority of publications are either single articles or their collections. However, they only prove that films remain the domain of anthropologists, while historians continue to treat them with distrust. It seems that, although the arguments employed by sceptics have changed, not much has altered in this respect since Johan Huizinga protested against creating film archives, claiming that films only depict common knowledge or what is obvious.¹¹

In his article “Historiography and Historiophoty”,¹² Hayden White claims that movies require a completely different methodological approach, while Piotr Witek argues that it is necessary to use tools other than those regarded as relevant for the traditional criticism of written sources.¹³ This approach is controversial as it suggests that the source may be used only if the methodology for studying it is changed. However, a core problem is the tricky issue of defining the research area and subject matter. Films are still often discussed in the categories of historical truth, although it is a source that can be used mainly for the analysis of narrative and memory rather than actual facts from the past (especially regarding feature films).

The issue here is not about the analysis of the material in order to check its consistency with other sources, although this is also worth addressing. The aim of the study should be to examine the image of the past that was created by specific groups in a certain period. The analysis of the sources requires a deconstruction and contextualization of the message, so as to avoid the danger of “being captured by the source”. According to Larisa Briukhovetska, a professor of film studies at the Kyiv-Mohyla Academy:

The spectators expect a presentation of their own historical notions or a discovery of a new perspective on certain past events. A professional historian, who enjoys a certain authority in the society or has relevant mandate, evaluate a film with regard to its relation to the truth. It is mainly the truth that determines the social value of the film.¹⁴

¹⁰ Quite valuable works by M. Ferro, *Kino i historia*, Warszawa, 2011, P. Sorlin, *The Film in History: Restaging the Past*, Oxford, 1980 deserve attention, but because of the nature of the source, they would have to be updated. P. Sorlin himself defined his work as the presentation of the process of arriving at the proper methodology.

¹¹ Ch. Strupp, *Johan Huizinga: Geschichtswissenschaft als Kulturgeschichte*, Göttingen, 1999, p. 249, after: P. Burke, *Eyewitnessing. The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence*, London, 2010, p. 155.

¹² H. White, “Historiografia i historiofotia”, in: *Film i historia: antologia*, ed. I. Kurz, Warszawa, 2008, p. 359

¹³ P. Witek, “Metodologiczne problemy historii wizualnej”, in: *Ейдос. Альманах теорії та історії історичної науки*, (7) 2013, p. 255.

¹⁴ Л. Брюховецька, *Найцікавіша історія в Європі. Екранні версії*, Київ, 2014, p. 32, original quote: “Масовий глядач чекає власних історичних ялень або відкриття нової перспективи бачення давних подій.”

This statement is not the only example of the attitude to and opinion on the role of historians in the study of the cinematic representations of history.¹⁵ Unfortunately, while we try to use new sources, our approach and the schemes often remain unchanged. The aim of this article shall not be to study the “truthfulness of a film”, but rather to use it as a source for the debate about the past. The key point will therefore be not only the content, but also the context of the film and examined using texts related to the films themselves and to historiographic works.

Despite there were not so many of them, feature films produced in the independent Ukraine present various, interesting perspectives and changes in the perception of Ukrainian–Tatar relations since 1991. Surprisingly in those based on the history of the 16th to 17th century the Crimean Tatars issue is not a core problem, but only an episode or subplot. Such films as “Kozaky ydut” *Козаки йдуть* (1991, directed by Serhiy Omelchuk) or “Bohdan-Zynoviy Khmelnytsky” *Богдан-Зиновій Хмельницький* (2006, directed by Mykola Mashchenko) should be mentioned here.¹⁶ Films set in the abovementioned period represent a story of states, alliances and conflicts. They are closer to the stereotype of the “Christians and Muslims confrontation”¹⁷ mentioned by Andrii Portnov and Oleksandr Halenko,¹⁸ closer to the image of distinctiveness rather than mutual social and cultural relations. This approach, which marginalises the social aspect of the relations with the Crimean Tatars, is described in the book by Paul Robert Magocsi “*Україна. Історія її земель та народів*”.

Traditional historiography, which focuses on Ukraine, define the period from the mid-14th to mid-17 century as Polish or Lithuanian. Undeniably, in those times the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the Kingdom of Poland ruled in the majority of the Ukrainian territory and had a powerful influence on the political, economic and cultural development of Ukraine and its nations. However, at that time there was one more state, the Crimean Khanate, which controlled nearly one fourth of the territory of contemporary Ukraine; it exerted lasting influence on the development of the area also beyond its control.¹⁹

¹⁵ W. Olejniczak, “Film fabularny jako źródło historyczne”, in: *Media audiowizualne w warsztacie historyka*, ed. D. Skotarczyk, Poznań, 2008, p. 42.

¹⁶ For film titles not officially translated into English, in the article I use the form consistent with the transcription recommended by Library of Congress system.

¹⁷ А. Портнов, “До питання про образ Криму та кримських татар у творах західноєвропейських авторів XVI–XVII ст.”, in: *Матеріали Першої міжрегіональної історико-краєзнавчої конференції*, Дніпропетровськ, 1998, p. 188; original quote: “З одного боку, у Європі були досить широко відомі походи за ясиром (за підрахуванням Я.Дашкевича, Україна у XV першій половині 17 ст. втратила від цих набігів не менше 2-2,5 млн полонених і вбитих) та стереотипи християнсько-ісламського протистояння. З другого боку, існувала тенденція до ідеалізації Османської імперії, релігійна віротерпимість якої протиставлялася утискам православних і протестантів з боку католицької церкви.”

¹⁸ О. І. Галенко, “Про татарські набіги на українські землі”, *Український історичний журнал*, 6 (2003), p. 54.

¹⁹ П.Р. Магочі, *Україна. Історія її земель та народів*, Uzhhorod, 2012, p. 160.

The fact that both Ukrainian historiography and the cinema of independent Ukraine were politically-focused led to marginalizing social issues related to the impact of the Crimean Khanate and the Ottoman Empire on the territory of southern Ukraine. The abovementioned author, Paul Robert Magocsi, comments on these issues:

The slave trade was the most profitable component of the Crimean economy, which is why a large part of the territory south of the Kiev and Braclav voivodeships, between the southern section of the Bug River and the Dnieper River became virtually desolate and was later on known as the Wild Fields.²⁰

The theme of slavery was presented in a very interesting way in the first TV-series produced in Ukraine after 1991 “Roxelana” (directed by Boris Nebieridze). Its first season was shot in 1996–1998. Although it met widespread criticism for poor artistic quality, it is virtually the only example from that time of cinematic representation of a slightly different perspective of the relations between the inhabitants of the present Ukraine (including Crimean Tatars) and the Ottoman Empire from that time. It goes beyond the story of the suffering experienced by people abducted by the Crimean Tatars known from folk songs²¹ and reinforced by historiographers.²² The story of Roxelana – Anastasia Lisowska, who became the wife of Sultan Suleiman, was definitely the most spectacular, but not the only example of a career made in the Ottoman Empire, but probably also in the Crimean Khanate, by someone abducted in the territory of contemporary Ukraine. In the abovementioned book, Paul Robert Magocsi writes:

There was a group of slaves, both men and women, who managed to improve their position while living in the Ottoman world. These people converted to Islam and held various offices in military and public administration. Women found their way to the harems of the Ottoman elite.²³

²⁰ Ibid., p. 170, original quote: “Оскільки работоргівля являла собою найприбутковішу статтю кримської економіки, значна частина території на південь від Київського та Брацлавського воеводств між Південним Бугом та Дніпром майже обезлюдніла і отримала назву Дикого Поля. Фактично, самі ці землі уособлювали те, що владається у назву ‘Україна’ – прикордонна земля, кінець цивілізованої території і, як часто припускається, буферна зона між Польсько-Литовською державою на північному заході, Московією на північному сході, та Кримським ханатом і Османською імперією на півдні”.

²¹ Ibid., p. 168, original quote: “Традиція про страждання словян від турків міцно ввійшла в українсько-руське світосприйняття з допомогою речитативних епічних пісень, відомих, як думи.”

²² О.І. Галенко, *Про татарські набіги на українські землі*, p. 59.

²³ Ibid., pp. 169–170, original quote: “Існував також клас рабів, як чоловічої, так і жіночої статі які змогли полепшити своє становище, живучи в османському світі. Ці люди переходили на мусулманську віру і служили на різних посадах у військовій та державній адміністрації. Жінки забиралися до гаремів османської еліти. Найвідмішою з цих полонянок була народження в Галичині Настя Лісовська. Ввійшовши в історію під іменем Роксолани або

As regards the Crimean Tatars, they were portrayed in the TV series “Roxelana” as these who provided slaves to the Ottoman Empire.

The screenplay for “Roxelana” was based on a novel by Osyp Nazaruk first published in 1930 in Lviv under the same title. The novel was prohibited in the Soviet times, just like all the other books by this author accused of being nationalistic in his writing. The series was shot in Crimea and in Georgia, and the part of Roxelana was played by Olha Sums`ka, an actress well known by Ukrainian audiences. In an interview for *Ukraina moloda* newspaper Leonid Muzhuk, a co-writer of the screenplay and the former head of “UkrTeleFilm”, told about challenges of the production: “not everybody knew who Roxelana and Suleiman were; what times they lived in [...] And the subject matter itself – it was Ukrainian in a way, but it was necessary to understand the mindset of the East and be familiar with the Muslim world.”²⁴ There was no such knowledge and no idea how to include the experience of coexistence in a new narration about the past. The schemes from the Soviet times proved alive and extremely persistent; the common practice involved changing the names, notions and figures, while retaining the old conventions and language. This referred equally to many areas of life in Ukraine in the post-Soviet period, or maybe even to all areas, only to a varying extent. The lack of knowledge and the difficult social situation, but also the challenge of coming up with an idea for a new narrative that would not antagonise society – these were the main problems.

A sign that changes were about to come to the Ukrainian cinema appeared as late as 2003, with the film “Mamai”, a feature-length début by Oles Sanin, born in 1972 (31 at the time). This film director is recognized outside Ukraine mainly for his film “The Guide” (“Povodyr”) shot in 2014 and dedicated to the repression and extermination of the Ukrainian blind bards – bandurists. “Mamai” was produced with the support of the Ukrainian Ministry of Art and Culture. This film was the official Ukrainian entry for the Best Foreign Language Film at the Academy Awards in 2003. It is exceptional in many respects. The director combined various messages and different types of narrative in one film and made a single poetic story out of them. It is worth to mention, that Cossacks and Crimean Tatars are here not just representatives of certain states, but stand for the cultures that had long existed side by side in the large territory of contemporary Ukraine and had therefore affected one another considerably. The screenplay draws on elements of “*The Ballad of the three brothers of Azov*” and another piece well known among

Хуррем (її турецьке ім'я), вона стала улюбленою дружиною султана Сулеймана I Пишного та навпливовішою політичною фігурою в періоді навищої могутності імперії в сер. XVI ст.”
²⁴ Л. Мужик, “Роксолану” не пропустили через кордон, interview by Valentina Samchenko, *Україна молода*, 147 (2012), <http://www.umoloda.kiev.ua/number/2152/211/76661> (access: 12.01.2018); original quote: “[...] не всі розуміли, хто такі Роксолана і Сулейман; які були особливості часу, в який вони жили [...] Та ще й тема — ніби українська, однак треба було розуміти психологію людей Сходу, добре знати мусульманський світ.”

the Crimean Tatars entitled “*Songs of a dervish about three brave Mamluks*”. They are quoted in the original languages; a part from that there is hardly any dialogue in the film. It is a poetic story of a Cossack who escapes from a quarry in Crimea where he worked as a slave. He fled with his brothers, who abandoned him on the steppe only to be killed by the Crimean Tatars later on. The solitary Cossack is saved by a young Tatar woman who lives on the steppe with her daughter. The Cossack and the Tatar woman fall in love, but the Tatars do not approve of their relationship and the Cossack has to flee once again. The girl is left behind, expecting her lover’s baby.

Film experts noted Sanin’s cutting-edge approach. In the article “Ukrainian cinema rises from the ashes. Some reflections on the eve of Ukrainian Cinema Day” Dmytro Desiateryk wrote: “Oles Sanin [...] tried to offer a fresh view on Ukrainian history.”²⁵ Olha Briukhovetska also noted the original approach:

A juxtaposition of the epic stories of two nations, which used to live in the great steppe and fight with each other, but still continued to coexist in this single territory – this is the original idea of Oles Sanin. The originality of this juxtaposition [...] lies in the rejection of the “xenophobic” paradigm, as Vadim Skuratovsky named it, of Christian Cossacks, who always regarded Tatars as their enemies.²⁶

“Mamai” is the first film to show the coexistence and relations between the people from the two communities in the territory of contemporary Ukraine. This is a territorial, rather than national, approach to history and it fits in with the concepts present in Ukrainian historiography. Among the representatives of this trend we should recall Omelian Pritsak, the founder of the Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute (HURI). Andrii Portnov wrote that Pritsak “had one of the most unique talents as a historian – a flair for paradoxical thinking and the ability to construct schemes that explain the inexplicable”.²⁷ His way of thinking and non-standard perception of Ukrainian history was definitely affected by his experience as a researcher, historian and specialist in Turkic studies. In his article “Що таке

²⁵ D. Desiateryk, “Ukrainian cinema rises from the ashes. Some reflections on the eve of Ukrainian Cinema Day”, *The Day*, 44 (2010); <https://day.kyiv.ua/en/article/culture/ukrainian-cinema-rises-ashes> (access: 2.01.2018), original quote: “[...] tried to offer a fresh view on Ukrainian history in his drama Mamai. The initial scenes of the film are visually perfect, but because its dramatic concept was not thought out well enough, and the director lacked inspiration, Mamaj has remained nothing but a heroic attempt to renovate the historical genre.”

²⁶ О. Брюховецька, “Мамай”, *Кіно-Театр*, 4(2003), http://ktm.ukma.edu.ua/show_content.php?id=135 (access: 12.02.2018); original quote: “Зіставлення епосів двох народів, що жили по різні боки Великого степу і ворогували, але й водночас були причетні до єдиного простору цього степу, — оригінальна ідея Олесея Саніна. Оригінальність цього зіставлення [...] полягає у відмові від «ксенофобної» парадигми, як її назвав Вадим Скуратівський, козаків-християн, котрі в татарині завжди мали образ ворога.”

²⁷ А. Портнов, *Історії істориків: Обличчя й образи української історіографії XX століття*, р. 199.

історія України?” he wrote: “all the processes of state structures ethnicities other than Ukrainian should be learned and studied alongside the Ukrainian ones. Then Crimean Tatars, for example, will not be perceived as savage invaders and looters, but will be regarded as our ancestors – just like Zaporozhians.”²⁸ This is the path that Paul Robert Magocsi decided to follow. His synthesis of Ukrainian history from 1996 is close to Pritsak’s territorial concept.²⁹ Magocsi argued that “our interest must focus both on the history of Ukrainians and on other nations currently living here: Russians, Jews, Belarusians, Tatars, Moldovans, Poles, Bulgarians, Hungarians, Romanians and Greeks.”³⁰

Studying various narratives enables us to create a more complex image, which is so important when examining the past of the areas that have been subjected to numerous partitions among various states, and nowadays form a single country. As Olha Briukhovetska wrote: “although in the film *Cossacks* and Tatar warriors keep fighting and killing each other, [...] they also complement one another and offer two equal perspectives.”³¹

The historical and social context should be taken into account here. From 1989 until the abovementioned census in 2001, after Crimean Tatars returned from Central Asia, this population in Ukraine increased nearly sixfold. This bred anxiety and problems in a state that had to cope with a series of economic and political challenges. We can learn more about that from an article written by the film director, Oles Sanin, himself. The text was entitled “Who is afraid of Mamai?”:

There are some people now who whisper that Crimean Tatars are a potential source not only of social unrest, but also of an armed outbreak in Ukraine. These are strange ideas, to say the least; they stem from bad intentions, or from a lack of knowledge about the contemporary Crimean Tatars and a lack of idea about the history of the relations between our nations (or as a result of adopting the colonial interpretation of the Soviet authorities, which employed the well-known approach of “divide and rule”).³²

²⁸ О. Прицак, “Що таке історія України?”

²⁹ Т. Stryjek, *Jakiej przeszłości potrzebuje przyszłość? interpretacje dziejów narodowych w historiografii i debacie publicznej na Ukrainie 1991–2004*, Warszawa, 2007, p. 592.

³⁰ P. Magocsi, *A History of Ukraine*, Seattle, 1996, pp. 1–9, after: Т. Stryjek, *Jakiej przeszłości potrzebuje przyszłość?*, p. 599.

³¹ О. Брюховецька, “Мамай”, original quote: “Хоча у самій фільмовій оповіді козаки і татарські воїни продовжують ворогувати і вбивати одні одних, [...] – вони доповнюють одні одних, пропонують два рівноправні погляди на одну подію.” A similar opinion is shared by historians such as, e.g. Б. Черкас, *Київ і Крим за доби Відродження: чужі світи, антагоністи чи партнери?*, in: *КРИМ: шлях крізь віки, Історія у запитаннях і відповідях*, ed. В. Смолій, Київ, 2014, p. 25.

³² О. Санін, “Хто боїться Мамай?”, *Кіно-Коло*, літо 2001, p. 23; full original quote: “Сьогодні є ті, хто нашіптує, що кримські татари це потенційне джерело не просто соціального, а навіть збройного вибуху в Україні. М’яко кажучи, це дивні твердження: вони або через лихий умисел, або через незнання сьогоdnішнього кримсько-татарського народу і через погане знання історії співіснування наших двох народів (або же через її знання в інтерпретацііко-

Interestingly, also Oleksandr Halenko, noted the existing stereotypes and the need to deconstruct them, in his article “Про татарські набіги на українські землі”.³³

As a result of the lack of a consistent, comprehensive historical policy in Ukraine, Soviet narration with its stereotypes and anti-Islamic prejudice proved to have a strong and permanent influence. In order to hear the voice of the Crimean Tatars themselves in the film, it was necessary to wait for a representative of the generation that grew up in Ukraine after 1989.

Marc Ferro, a French historian and film scholar, believed in the power and independence of cinema. He was convinced that this medium was a chance for all defeated and underrepresented groups neglected in the official narrative to become recognized.³⁴ I will discuss here multitude of factors involved in this process and the way in which such narratives change the official discourse. The films on the deportation of the Crimean Tatars in 1944 by a Crimean Tatar film director, Akhtem Seitablayev, will be examined here. Seitablayev was born in the same year as Oles Sanin in the town of Yangiyo'l near Tashkent. His parents were deported from Crimea as children.³⁵ The whole family returned to Bakhchysarai in 1989 and Seitablayev took up studies at the newly launched Crimean Tatar acting department.³⁶ After he graduated and spent a few years working in a theatre. He went on to study at the faculty of film direction and dramaturgy at the Kiev National I. K. Karpenko-Kary Theatre, Cinema and Television University and graduated in 1999.

In interviews, Akhtem Seitablayev often recall the story related to the clash of Crimean Tatar memory of the forced exile with the official Soviet narrative and recounts how the Crimean Tatar youth objected to the accusation that the whole Crimean Tatar nation had collaborated with the Germans.³⁷ The story of the deportation told from the perspective of the Crimean Tatars became the subject of his first feature-length film, “Haytarma” (“The Return”). The film was released

лоніальної рад. влади, що сповідувала відоме – іділяй і владарюй). І коли я замислюю над міжнародними конфліктами (росіяни – чеченці, серби – хорвати) то ставляю собі питання: чи є можливість мирного спілкування – І бачу відповідь на нашому історичному прикладі: така можливість реалістична тільки через любов. І в Мамаї це конкетна історія – любов доньки татарського народу до українця, кибутого рідними братами серед степу, любов, що перетворює його на отого мітичного козака Мамаєв”.

³³ О.І. Галенко, *Про татарські набіги на українські землі*, р. 60.

³⁴ M. Ferro, *Kino i historia*, р. 11.

³⁵ А. Сеїтаблаєв, “Режиссер ‘Хайтармы’: Я благодарен генконсулу России за неимоверный пиар нашей картины”, interview conducted by Т. Kharchenko, *Українська правда*, 22 July 2013, <http://life.pravda.com.ua/society/2013/07/22/134332> (access: 29.01.2018).

³⁶ А. Сеїтаблаєв, “Кожен кримський татарин мріяв про своє кіно”, interview conducted by П. Свято, *Кіно-Театр*, 5 (2013), http://www.ktm.ukma.edu.ua/show_content.php?id=1532 (access: 27.01.2018).

³⁷ А. Сеїтаблаєв, “Ахтем Сеїтаблаєв: Якщо Наталі Портман чи Шарліз Терон прийдуть зніматися до татарина — про це напишуть усі”, interview conducted by Т. Teren, *Україна молода*, 124 (2013), <http://www.umoloda.kiev.ua/number/2324/164/82680> (access: 6.01.2018).

in 2013, a few months before the events in Maidan and on the precise anniversary of the commencement of the deportations, on 18 May.

The film tells the story of Amet-khan Sultan, a pilot and a national hero of the Crimean Tatars, who also received the title of Hero of the Soviet Union. After the Germans were defeated and the Red Army entered Crimea, the commanders allowed Sultan to visit his family in Alupka. His visit coincided with the beginning of the forced deportation of the Crimean Tatars organised by the NKVD.³⁸

The film had a budget of 1.5 million dollars and was funded by the Crimean Tatar businessman and owner of the ATR TV channel, Lenur Ismailov. There were, however, considerable problems with the promotion and distribution of the film. The director blamed the sponsor for lack of experience and insight.³⁹ In Ukraine the film was shown in many cities, and practically everywhere in Crimea, as Seitablayev said. In Kiev it was shown in one cinema, and in Moscow there were only private screenings. Due to a misunderstanding with the sponsor, the film was not shown at the Odessa film festival.⁴⁰ Paradoxically, it got recognized not because of marketing activities, but because of comments on blogs and in social media, and mainly because of a scandal caused by the Russian Consul General in Simferopol, Vladimir Andreev. He referred to the Crimean Tatars as traitors and tried to prevent the film screenings, saying that it distorted the truth about the Great Patriotic War. He also prevented the film from being shown to Russian pilots, the students of Amet-khan Sultan.⁴¹ The community of Crimean Tatars and the Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs demanded that the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs dismiss the consul. As Akhtem Seitablayev said, after this scandal, there were 20% more people – other than Tatars – coming to see the film.⁴²

“Haytarma” was shot in Crimea: in Alupka, Bakhchysarai and Sudak. By May 2013 the film director had already announced that next year in spring he would start shooting his next film project in Crimea – one related to the history of

³⁸ В. Самченко, “Режисер Ахтем Сейтаблаєв зняв другу стрічку про кримських татар ‘Чужа молитва’”, *Україна молода*, 059 (2017), <http://www.umoloda.kiev.ua/number/3160/164/111674> (access: 15.01.2018).

³⁹ А. Сейтаблаєв, original quote: “Фільм знімався передовсім для кримських татар, але, звісно, ніхто не планував, що нашу роботу можна буде переглянути лише в кількох кінотеатрах. На жаль, іноді так трапляється: люди, які вкладають кошти у виготовлення певного культурного продукту, потім не знають, що з ним робити. Я багато можу розповісти про те, як нерозумно сьогодні ‘використовують’ фільм ‘Хайтарма’, чому нас не було на фестивалі в Одесі і не буде на ‘Молодості’, про те, як мені не дозволяли на презентації в Києві подякувати команді... На жаль, історія цього фільму складається не так ідеально, як мені б хотілося”, after: <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/24989586.html> (access: 13.02.2018).

⁴⁰ А. Сейтаблаєв, *Режиссер “Хайтармы”: Я благодарен генконсулу России за неимоверный пиар нашей картины.*

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² А. Сейтаблаєв, *Кожен кримський татарин мріяв про своє кіно.*

the Crimean Tatars.⁴³ He did not go ahead with his plan. In spring 2014 the Russian occupation of Crimea started. The film entitled “Chuzha molytva” („Чужа молитва”/ “Another’s Prayer”) was finally shot in Georgia. Chufut-Kale was ultimately replaced by the rock-hewn town of Uplistsikhe.⁴⁴ The film was produced with the financial support of the state, which covered one third of the production costs. The 1+1 TV channel, co-owned by Ihor Kolomoisky, also contributed to these expenses. The première took place in 2017, on the symbolic date of 18 May.

The film “Chuzha molytva” is set in World War II, just like “Haytarma”. It is a story based on the life of Seida Arifova (1916–2007) – during World War II a housemistress in an orphanage for Crimean Tatar children in Bakhchysarai. Seida Arifova, who died in 2007, was honoured as one of the Righteous Among the Nations. She saved 88 Jewish children, hiding them from the Nazi and then Soviet authorities. In old age she returned to Crimea. Although she tried, she never traced those she managed to save. In the film, Seida is approached by a boy named Yitzhak, who was hiding from the Nazi along with other Jewish children. Although it was a risk, Seida decided to help them. In order to boost their chances of survival, she taught them Tatar prayers and language. When she is summoned to an investigation, she does not say a word, even when she is tortured. In the meantime, the children are subjected to an “exam”. Their knowledge of a Tatar prayer saves their lives. The film also draws on fragments of other biographies of people who had saved Jews in Ukraine.⁴⁵

The film director expressly outlines the purpose he had when shooting the film: “I want to give Tatars some hope that Crimea will be Ukrainian.”⁴⁶ After the abrupt change in the political situation, the idea to include the history of the Crimean Tatars in the new Ukrainian narrative of the past became a protest against the Russian policy, as well as the politics of memory: “we’re talking about Soviet authorities when in fact we mean Russians. Even though the word ‘Russia’ is never used”.⁴⁷ Both of the abovementioned films directed by Seitablayev are an objection against reproducing the Soviet narrative of the Great Patriotic War and of the past in general. Both “Haytarma” and “Chuhza molytva” constitute a condemnation,

⁴³ Id., *Режиссер “Хайтармы”: Я благодарен генконсулу России за невероятный пиар нашей картины.*

⁴⁴ I. Столярчук, П. Хлапоніна, “На камені утворилася калюжа у формі карти України з Кримом”, *Gazeta.ua*, 23 May 2017, https://gazeta.ua/articles/culture-journal/_na-kameni-utvorilasya-kalyuzha-u-formi-karti-ukrayini-z-krimom/774148 (access: 15.01.2018).

⁴⁵ Українське національне інформаційне агентство “Укрінформ”, 16 May 2017, <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-crimea/2229342-seitablaev-rozpoziv-pro-cuzu-molitvu-i-pro-mriu-znati-film-mi-povernulisa.html> (access: 15.02.2018).

⁴⁶ I. Столярчук, П. Хлапоніна, “На камені утворилася калюжа у формі карти України з Кримом”, original quote: “Трагедію народу показав через одну історію. Хочу дати татарам надію, що Крим буде український”.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, original quote: “[...] розповідаємо про радянську владу, а маємо на увазі російську. Хоча слово ‘Росія’ не звучить жодного разу”.

mainly of the totalitarian regime.⁴⁸ Although “Haytarma” deals with forced deportations of the Crimean Tatars, it also shows the actions and behaviour of the soldiers who had to obey their commands;⁴⁹ it also features the honourable figure of major Krotov.

In mid-2013, Akhtem Seitablayev treated the statement presented by the Russian Consul General as his individual, personal opinion: “It was the reaction of the Consul General rather than the Russian state. The Consul General does not stand for the whole of Russia. Thank God, I have lots of friends back in Russia”.⁵⁰ Over the next few months, though, this opinion had to be reviewed.

Interestingly, Crimean Tatars themselves had some objections to “Haytarma”, accusing it of being “Soviet”. As if the Hero of the Soviet Union was used to refute the allegations concerning the Crimean Tatars’ collaboration with the Germans. The way the film director responds to these accusations is an interesting voice in the current debate about the Soviet episode in the history of Ukraine – the experience of being part of and functioning within a totalitarian state:

If you mean we are showing that the Soviet Union was something like one big family, where people used to live in harmony (although there were artificial divisions, and in the Soviet times 59 nationalities were subject to deportation – 48 to partial deportation and 11 to wholesale), then yes, this is what we have shown. Crimea has long been multinational and multi-religious. [...] If you are speaking about Soviet character as an atmosphere, if this is to be the mood of the film, its music and so on, then I guess it is not bad. Among our film crew we talked a lot about how we should strive to make films as fabulous as “Only Old Men Are Going to Battle” in the presentation of life on the front and the atmosphere of a film. If we managed to take a step in this direction, it is our great victory.⁵¹

Neither “Haytarma”, nor “Chuzha molytva” are simple stories with victims on one side and perpetrators on the other. Although the film about Seida does not say

⁴⁸ А. Сейтаблаев, *Кожен кримський татарин мріяв про своє кіно*.

⁴⁹ Id., *Режиссер “Хайтармы”: Я благодарен генконсулу России за невероятный пиар нашей картин*, original quote: “Поэтому в нашем фильме мы хотели показать, что среди тех специально обученных людей, были люди с большими сердцами, которые понимали что происходит, и старались хоть как-то смягчить участь депортированных.”

⁵⁰ Ibid., original quote: “это была реакция не российской стороны, а генконсула России. Генконсул это – еще не вся Россия. У меня в России, слава Богу, очень много друзей.”

⁵¹ Ibid., original quote: “Если вы имеете в виду, что мы показываем, что Советский Союз был чем-то вроде одной большой семьи, где люди (несмотря на то, что их искусственно разделяли несмотря на то, что в советское время было депортировано 59 народов – 48 частично, а 11 полностью) гармонично жили вместе, то да – мы это показывали. Крым вообще издревле был многонационален многоконфессионален. [...] Если вы говорите о советскости как о некоей атмосфере внутри фильма. Не знаю, что это – цвет фильма, музыкальный ряды так далее, то это тоже неплохо. Потому что мы в съемочной группе много говорили о том, что хорошо бы стремиться к таким великим фильмам как ‘В бой идут одни старики’ во всем, что касается отображения фронтовой жизни, атмосферы фильма. Если у нас это хоть чуточку получилось, то это огромная победа.”

so directly, the film director states in the interviews: “It was one of Crimean Tatars, who denounced Seida to the Gestapo. The girl was held at the Gestapo headquarters for two weeks; they broke all her ribs, but she did not admit to anything”.⁵² On the one hand we have officer Krotov in “Haytarma” and, on the other, anonymous informers from the Crimean Tatar community in “Chuzha molytva”.

In an interview with the film director, the journalist Tetina Teren compared “Haytarma” to “Katyn” by Andrzej Wajda. She was talking about a film that would be understood and accepted by a whole society and would bring people together. The journalist claimed that films about the Ukrainian Insurgent Army or “A Prayer for Hetman Mazepa” by Yuri Ilyenko could not fulfil this task.⁵³ It seems, though, that this comparison does not fully address the issue related to historical memory in Ukraine.

The intention behind Seitablayev’s films is to convey an idea, to reach as many people as possible in Ukraine and abroad. The same aim had Jamala with her song “1944”, which won the “Eurovision” song contest in 2016 and was used in the film “Chuzha molytva”. In November 2017, during a visit to the Kyiv National University of Culture and Arts, Seitablayev said: “We deliberately did not shoot brutal scenes, so that our film could be watched by children. And my dream has come true: the Ukrainian Minister of Education, Liliya Hrynevych, said the film would be included in the official school curriculum.”⁵⁴ Currently, not all Ukrainian history textbooks on the market include information about the deportation of the Crimean Tatars in 1944 or their return after 1989.⁵⁵ During a press conference, Sebastian Anton, the actor who played the part of the SS officer Heinrich Ahnenerbe in “Chuzha molytva” said: “The film may give the impetus to start a debate and encourage reflection on the conflict on the official level. This was, sadly, neglected after the collapse of the USSR.”⁵⁶

⁵² Ibid., original quote: “Кто-то из своих же крымских татар сдал Саидэ гестаповцам. Девушку продержали в гестапо две недели, ей сломали все ребра, но она ни в чем не призналась.”

⁵³ А. Сейтаблаев, *Ахтем Сейтаблаев: Якщо Наталі Портман чи Шарліз Терон прийдуть зніматися до татарина — про це напишуть усі*.

⁵⁴ <http://knukim.edu.ua/novunu/ahtem-seyitablayev-pro-kino> (access: 10.02.2018), А. Seitablayev’s address of 16 November 2017; original quote: “Ми навмисне не знімали жорстоких сцен, аби діти змогли подивитися кінострічку. І моя мрія збулася: Міністр освіти України Лілія Гриневич сказала, що цей фільм увійде до шкільної освітньої програми’, – зауважив режисер. ‘Із самого початку ми знали, що цей фільм не для масштабних показів у кінотеатрах. Але моя команда завжди притримується однієї концепції: ми знімаємо те, про що не можемо мовчати’, – підкреслив Ахтем”.

⁵⁵ http://pidruchnyk.com.ua/11klas/istorija_ukrainy11 (access: 3.02.2018). Although this information is presented in a different form, it is nevertheless part of textbooks for Form 11 written by S. Pometun, N. Gupan, F. Turchenko and A. Strukevych, yet it is absent from the textbook by S. Kulchytsky.

⁵⁶ <https://tsn.ua/glamur/film-ahtema-seyitablayeva-chuzha-molitva-pro-tragediyu-krimskotatarskogo-narodu-pokazhut-po-vsiy-ukrayini-930777.html> (access: 5.01.2018), original quote: “Фільм може стати імпульсом до дискусії і підштовхнути до переосмислення конфлікту

Summing up, the development of the historical narrative in Ukraine after 1991 varied among different areas of social life and within the time. The films by Akhtem Seitablayev are an example of the presence of the Crimean Tatars and their voice in contemporary Ukrainian cinema. This voice is also a sign of the choice, and a declaration of being a part of the Ukrainian society. It is a call to create a common narrative about the past, a history that will also include the Crimean Tatars, as well as the relations between the Ukrainians and Tatars, not only from the political, but also cultural perspective.

The film “Mamai”, on the other hand, is proof that the mutual influence between people of various origins, including the Crimean Tatars, is noticed not only by historians, but also in various texts of culture. Just as in “Roxelana”, the area of today’s Ukraine in the film by Oles Sanin is not only an area where the Russian East clashes with the Polish West. It is also a place where the world and culture of Islam are alive and represented by the Crimean Tatars. Cinematic representations reflect various ideas present in Ukrainian historiography, as well as social changes related to the return of the Crimean Tatars after 1989. Movies are an attempt to address challenges related to the experience of a totalitarian system that has been affecting the narrative on the past in Ukraine for quite a long time. Even the few examples listed in this article present contested Ukrainian attempts to deal with their own past. Olha Briukhovetska wrote in her review of “Mamai”: “Actually, we have never had a single history. All of us are Mamai – Nobody.”⁵⁷ The question about the future of the Ukrainian past remains an open issue, but the presence of the image of Crimean Tatars in historical films as a component of the historical narrative is a fact.

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на офіційному рівні. Справа в тому, що після розпаду СРСР такого переосмислення не відбулося.”

⁵⁷ О. Брюховецька, *Мамай*, original quote: “Насправді цієї єдиної історії у нас ніколи й не було, ми всі Мамай, Ніхто”. In the text there is the explanation that the word Mamai means “nobody” in the Crimean Tatar language.

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- Kozaky ydut (Козаки йдуть), 1991, dir. Serhiy Omelchuk
- Bohdan-Zynoviy Chmelnutskyi (Богдан-Зиновій Хмельницький), 2006, dir. Mykola Mashchenko
- Roxelana, 1996–2003, dir. Boris Nebieridze
- Mamai, 2003, dir. O. Sanin
- Haytarma, 2013, dir. A. Seitablayev
- Chuzha molytva (Чужа молитва), 2017, dir. A. Seitablayev

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