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Desperation, Hopelessness, and Suicide: An Initial Consideration of Self-Murder by Slaves in Seventeenth-Century Crimean Society

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Abstract

Suicide, a new issue in Crimean social history research, has not been dealt with in terms of the status of free persons and slaves. It is difficult to find reliable and detailed primary source about slaves' private lives and their expectations apart from some cases which focus on slaves as merchandise to be bought and sold, and examples of their release and escape. However, the Crimean Shari'a court records, which recently became available, provide researchers with such information on slaves as well as some incidental information on many topics such as their living conditions, their hopes for release, and reasons for their suicide. The purpose of this paper is to analyse the impact of society on slave suicides by examining the Shari'a court records of the Crimean Khanate from 1650 to 1675.

Keywords

Crimean Khanate – slaves – suicide – society – law – Emile Durkheim

The historiography of the early modern period of the Crimean Khanate was for a long time focused mostly on the political and administrative context owing to both the paucity of primary sources and the personal research interests of individual historians. Owing to the discovery of the Crimean Sharia court records, researchers of Crimean history have acquired valuable sources whose use promises to make a significant contribution to our knowledge of many new aspects of the social and economic history of the peninsula.[1] Researchers such as Nuri

1 İnalcık, Halil, "Kırım Hanlığı Kadı Sicilleri Bulundu", *Belleten*, LX/227 (1996), 165–91; Cihan, Ahmet and Fehmi Yılmaz, "Kırım Kadı Sicilleri", *İslam Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 11 (2004),

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Kavak,[2] Zeynep Özdem,[3] Natalia Krolikówska,[4] and Ömer Bıyık[5] have already published several studies by using the court records of individual Crimean cities.[6] In these studies, Crimean history has been analysed in the context of politics, society, law, and economics. It must be noted, however, that we are still at the very beginning of a long journey with regard to the Khanate's social history.

A great many phenomena, including violence, fear, emotion, death, loyalty, and status in the pre-modern period of Ottoman and Crimean society, are among the subjects that have not yet been fully explored. These notions, most of which are connected with personal feelings, are widely discussed and accepted in our modern society but they were viewed in a very different light in the seventeenth-century Crimea. One of these topics has proved particularly challenging for researchers owing to the lack of solid evidence, namely suicide. The earliest study of this difficult and sparsely attested phenomenon is *Suicide: A Study in Sociology* published by Émile Durkheim at the end of the nineteenth century. The primary aim of this article is to evaluate the validity of the arguments put forward by Durkheim on the subject of slave suicides in pre-modern societies.

Durkheim's classification divides suicides into four categories, namely egoistic suicide, anomic suicide, altruistic suicide, and fatalistic suicide. Slave suicide, which he classified as fatalistic suicide, was relegated to a mere footnote.

131–76; Turan, Ahmet Nezihi, "Kırım Hanlığı Kadı Sicilleri Hakkında Notlar", *Türk Kültürü İncelemeleri Dergisi*, 9 (2003), 1–16.

2 Kavak, Nuri, *Karasu Kazası (1683–1744): Kırım Hanlığı'nda Bir Yerleşme Örneği* (Bursa: On-Mat Öner Yayınevi, 2013).

3 Özdem, Zeynep, *Kırım Karasubazar'da Sosyo-Ekonomik Hayat 17. Yüzyıl Sonlarından 18. Yüzyıl Ortalarına Kadar* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 2010).

4 Krolikówska, Natalia, "Law and Division of Power in the Crimean Khanate: A Study on the Reign of Murad Giray (1678–1683)", University of Warsaw Institute of History, PhD. Dissertation, 2010.

5 Bıyık, Ömer, *Kırım'ın İdarî ve Sosyo-Ekonomik Tarihi (1600–1774)* (Istanbul: Ötüken Yayınevi, 2014).

6 The collection of the Sharia court records of the Crimean Khanate, which consists of 121 registers (*defter*), is preserved in fond no. 917 in the Otdel Rukopisey Rossiyskoy Natsionalnoy Biblioteki (ORRNB) in St Petersburg, Russia. At some point, likely in the 1920s, high-quality negative photographs were made from the original registers held in St. Petersburg and sent to Crimea. Of the presumably complete set of bound volumes of photographs only sixty-one were extant in 1992 when they were rediscovered in the State Archive of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and transferred to the İsmail Gaspıralı Crimean Tatar Library in Simferopol (Crimea) where they presently remain (Maryna Kravets, conversation with the author, 23 April 2018). Digital scans of the sixty-one volumes were subsequently made and brought to Turkey where one set was deposited at the Bilkent University Library and the other at the Islamic Research Centre (ISAM) in Istanbul.

Perhaps because Durkheim was uninterested in going abroad to conduct field research in the countries where slavery still lingered, his study makes no use of any contemporary cases of slave suicide. Instead he relies on information from previous periods about a remarkable number of the slave suicides, that is to say, fatalistic suicides. Durkheim described slave suicides as "a phenomenon which emerged from excessive regulations" by emphasizing "repressive rules, desperation, and lost hopes". In other words, he evaluates this situation as suicides of individuals whose futures were cruelly stolen and whose spirits were crushed by oppressive discipline. In his opinion, amongst the causes of fatalistic suicide, there existed the reason that one was not able to do anything against such inflexible rules, which resulted in desperation.[7]

A slave who felt overwhelmed and trapped directed the rage aroused by his owner towards himself. Added to this was the fact that he saw death as a way of salvation for himself as he realised that he would never again enjoy freedom, a prospect that was unendurable. That is to say, that while it seemed possible to cite some factors such as honour, glory, pride, prestige, and so on as the chief reasons for the suicides of free persons, physical conditions and social circumstances were the decisive factors in the case of slaves. It is very difficult to trace incidences of suicide in Crimea in the seventeenth century and particularly difficult to assess the causes of suicide on account of the lack of sources. However, there were rare incidents of suicide that became the subject of court actions. Consequently, it is the aim of this short study to make a preliminary investigation into the motivations for slave suicide and to examine to what extent the slaves' circumstances and living conditions contributed to such suicides using the Crimean court records as the main source.

Living Conditions of the Slaves in Crimea

Slaves were widely available in the Crimean Khanate and held by everyone able to afford them, from senior officials to ordinary land-owning villagers. Consequently the Crimean court records, compared with those of other regions, are filled with interesting cases relating to slaves. Suicide also features in these records as an important phenomenon giving slaves a means to terminate their servitude by way of breaking ties with life.

It is generally acknowledged that in the seventeenth century slave raiding and slave trading were among the main sources of livelihood of the Crimean

7 Durkheim, Émile, *Suicide: A Study in Sociology*, trans. John A. Spaulding (London and New York: Routledge Classics, 2002), p. 239.

Tatars. At certain times of the year, the Crimean Tatars raided the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Muscovy, and Circassian countries and enslaved the people they captured.[8] Many slaves thus acquired were trafficked to the Ottoman lands. The rest were made to work in Crimea in homes, in the fields, or were used as shepherds.[9] A slave who had been a member of a noble family or a senior statesman in his home country, could be reduced in captivity to the status of "property-with-voice" (*mal-i natık*).[10] Such people found their condition traumatic, especially as, in addition to their loss of status, they found themselves held in slavery in a country whose language, religion, and culture were unknown to them and quite different from those of their homeland.

Slaves either lived at their owner's house or in a hut outside the house called a "*kazak* room".[11] It is understood from several samples of the court records that the word *kazak* was used in Crimea for adult male slaves irrespective of their ethnic background. For instance a *kazak*, of Moldavian origin, called Kenan was described as a man of medium-height, having beady eyes and a beard.[12] While Andriy, of Ukrainian origin,[13] also defined as *kazak*, was recorded as being tall, having auburn eyebrows, blonde and with only one eye,[14] the physical appearance of Yaşlav, of Hungarian origin, was not specified.[15] Devletgeldi, of Georgian

8 Kaysunizade Nidai Remmal Hoca, *Tarih-i Sahib Giray Han*, ed. Özalp Gökbilgin (Ankara 1973), p. 31; Fisher, Alan W., "Muscovy and the Black Sea slave trade", in his *A Precarious Balance: Conflict, Trade and Diplomacy on the Russian-Ottoman Frontier* (Istanbul: Isis Press, 1999), pp. 27–46; Ostapchuk, Victor, "The human landscape of the Ottoman Black Sea in the face of the Cossack naval raids", *Oriente Moderno*, 81/1 (2001), p. 31; Davies, Brian L., *Warfare, State and Society on the Black See Steppe, 1500–1700* (London and New York: Routledge Press, 2007), p. 20.

9 Yaşa, Fırat, "Kırım Hanlığı'nda Köleliğin Sosyal ve Mali Boyutları", *Gaziantep University Journal of Social Sciences*, 13/3 (2014), 657–69.

10 Sahillioğlu, Halil, "Onbeşinci Yüzyılın Sonu ile Onaltıncı Yüzyılın Başında Bursa'da Kölelerin Sosyal ve Ekonomik Hayattaki Yeri", *ODTÜ Gelişme Dergisi 1979–1980 Special Volume* (1980), p. 73.

11 Crimean Court Records [hereafter CCR], vol. 14, f. 112; CCR, 18, f. 22. This and the subsequent references to the CCR cite volume and folio numbers according to the 61-volume collection held in the the İsmail Gaspıralı Crimean Tatar Library in Simferopol.

12 CCR, 15, f. 28.

13 Although a degree of ambiguity remains, by and large shari'a court records differentiated between Ukrainians and Russians. The former were normally called "Rus" or "Rusi", which accorded with their self-designation common in the seventeenth century (often rendered "Ruthenian" in English). Russians were usually recorded as "Moskof" or "Moskov," a reference to the seventeenth-century name of the Russian state, Muscovy, and perhaps to that of its capital, Moscow, as well.

14 CCR, 14, f. 67.

15 CCR, 13, f. 31.

origin, was recorded as being short, having black eyebrows and black eyes, and beardless;[16] Kerke, of Wallachian origin, was medium height, with a white beard and blue eyes.[17] All the examples above show that the term *kazak* was applied to male slaves of a certain age regardless of their ethnic background.

When persons captured in slave raids were brought to Crimea they changed status and found different lives waiting for them. The slaves, from virgin girls to young and strong men, and from children to the old, were classified according to the following categories: *kazak*, *gulam*, *abd* for men,[18] *marya*, *cariye* and *devke* for women,[19] *çora* and *doğma* for child slaves regardless of their gender.[20]

16 CCR, 10, f. 130.

17 CCR, 9, f. 28.

18 *Kazak* is used for male slaves of a certain age with beards regardless of their ethnic background. For examples see CCR, 8, f. 18; CCR, 9, f. 42; CCR, 11, ff. 11, 33, 41, 51, 55; CCR, 19, f. 49; CCR, 20, f. 55. A young male slave whose moustache had newly appeared was called *gulam*, Engin, Nihat, *Osmanlı Devletinde Kölelik* (Istanbul: Marmara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Vakfı Yayınları, 1998), p. 112. *Abd* is a descriptive word, which means male slaves like *gulam*, Brunschvig, R., "'Abd", *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., vol. 1 (Leiden: Brill, 1986), p. 24.

19 *Cariye* was the term used for female slaves who were not virgins. Virgin young girls were recorded as *devke* in the Crimean court registeres. See CCR, 18, f. 22. Another term for *cariye* of any age was *marya*. It has been suggested that the term is of Greek origin meaning female sheep, Şemseddin Sami, *Kâmûs-ı Türkî* (Istanbul: Enderun Kitapevi, 1989), p. 1206. The word is defined as "one who lacks female characteristics" in Doğan, Mehmet, *Büyük Türkçe Sözlük* (Ankara: Yazar Yayınları, 2011), p. 1160. There is also evidence that the term was sometimes used for old female slaves who were identified as "wizened *marya*" (*kart marya*) meaning "a woman without any charm," but on occasion it was also used for young girls sold at high prices. See Özdem, *Kırım Karasubazar*, p. 91. Evliya Çelebi also gives information about both *devke*s and *marya*s. See, for example, the account of Polad Ağa who went to the Crimean khan and said: "Sultânım bir bârgîr verseniz şu şehre bir çapul civerüp şu şılga kızlardan ve devkelerden alup Kırımğa doyum varsak ölyüdüğümüzge gam yemezdik", Evliya Çelebi, *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi Revan 1457 Numaralı Yazmanın Transkripsiyonu-Dizini*, ed. Y. Dağlı, S.A. Kahraman, vol. 6 (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2002), p. 32; "Âhır-ı kâr vakt-i zuhurda mâbeyne muslıhîn girüp yüz bin aded nâ-bâliğ kopnaları ve devke ve marya câriyeleri ulemâ ve sulehâ ve meşâyihân ve kudât ve biyim ve bikeçlere ve Kalga ve Nûreddîn ve Mansûrlu ve Sincivitlere ve Dayirli ve kapu kullarına yine ke'l-evvel ihsânlar edüp fâtiha tilâvet edüp birer altun kızılga alıncak oldu", Evliya Çelebi, *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi Bağdat 308 Numaralı Yazmanın Transkripsiyonu-Dizini*, ed. S.A. Kahraman, Y. Dağlı, R. Dankoff, vol. 8 (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2003), p. 15.

20 It is evident from the Crimean court records that child slaves of between six and seven years of age were called *çora* irrespective of gender, CCR, 10, f. 45; CCR, 11, f. 48; CCR, 13, f. 63; CCR, 14, f. 87; CCR, 16, f. 74. Mikhail Kizilov points out that *çora*s were slaves born in Crimean captivity, brought up there and speaking the Crimean Tatar language very well,

The slaves resorted to various ways of freeing themselves. Running away was one of the leading ways. Another way to obtain one's freedom was to win the owner's favour. This method of liberation relied on the willingness on the part of the slave-owner. There were various ways for the owners to liberate their slaves. These were *tedbir*, *mükatebe*, and *ümm-i veled.*[21] Slaves who could not obtain liberation, either accepted their situation and lived ever after in servitude or terminated their servitude by ending their lives.

It is possible to gain a better insight into slaves' suicides by analysing their social lives. It is crucial to discover how Crimean Tatars treated their slaves in order to understand the physical conditions to which slaves were exposed. Interesting information on this subject is found in the written reports of ambassadors, travellers, and missionaries who went to Crimea for various reasons. Their reports particularly emphasized that the Crimean Tatars behaved abusively towards their slaves and that they showed no compassion or kindliness towards them.[22] Thus a great majority of slaves would tell lies about belonging to noble families in the hope that their owner would treat them well.[23] In this way, they expected to be liberated in exchange for ransom. It is stated in the seventeenth-century Dominican missionary records that the Crimean Tatars

Kizilov, Mikhail, "Slave trade in the early modern Crimea from the perspective of Christian, Muslim and Jewish sources", *Journal of Early Modern History*, 11 (2007), p. 7. In the court records, however, *çora*s are understood to have been little boys not necessarily born as slaves in Crimea, since those born of slave parents are termed in the court records as "born" slaves (*doğma*), CCR, 11, f. 41. It has been suggested that some of the *çora*s were the ones who had been brought in by the raids. For example, in a document dated Cemaziülevvel 1060/May 1650, two *çora*s tried to escape with four horses, presumably trying to return to their homecountry. See Véliaminof-Zernof, V., *Matériaux pour servir à l'histoire du Khanat de Crimée* (Saint-Petersbourg: Imprimerie de l'Académie Impériale des Sciences, 1864), pp. 432–3.

21 A master could make an agreement with his slave to liberate him either voluntarily, or under certain conditions. A slave whose freedom had been promised to him, was more likely to work efficiently and not think of escaping. Another liberation method for female slaves only was by becoming a mother (*ümm-i veled*). A *cariye* who had a baby by her master could be liberated after he died. For further information see Erdem, Hakan Y., *Slavery in the Ottoman Empire and its Demise, 1800–1909* (Basingstoke: Macmillian Press, 1996), p. 152; Toledano, Ehud R., *As If Silent and Absent: Bonds of Enslavement in the Islamic Middle East* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007), p. 85.

22 Sroeckovsky, V.E., *Muhammed Geray Han ve Vassalları*, trans. Kemal Ortaylı (Istanbul: Su Yayınları, 1979), p. 47.

23 Bronevskiy, Marcin, *Kırım*, trans. Kemal Ortaylı (Ankara: Ege Matbaası, 1970), p. 54.

treated their slaves worse than their animals.[24] Although such harsh treatment of slaves was not wide-spread in pre-modern Islamic societies, it did sometime occur. Its occurrence in the Crimean Khanate may be a reflection of the regional slave culture which is not yet fully understood and which requires further investigation.

An examination of the court records of various Crimean cities between 1650 and 1675 also reveals examples of such treatment. İvan, of Georgian origin, who was of medium height, with a yellow beard and a crippled little finger on his left hand, and a female slave, of Ukrainian origin, called Kutlu Zaman who was tall with a white face, described their conditions in the court in 1672 by saying "our master Mahmud leaves us hungry and naked" and asked "let our master Mahmud sell us to someone else".[25] It is not difficult to predict that such conditions as being left hungry, wearing old rags, and being treated inhumanely would make a negative impact on slaves' minds. One way out of their desperate situation was to run away. In other words, the slaves who could not bear ill treatment attempted to escape, as was the case with the two slaves in the example above. The moment they were caught, they told the court of their wish to be sold to someone else under whose ownership they hoped to live in better conditions. However, "no matter what a slave says", he/she is sent back to his/her owner by the *kadı*.[26]

One of the escapees who wanted to end living in harsh conditions was a female slave called Gülşen. It is known from a record dated 1650 that she had attempted her first escape 14 years earlier, but that she had been caught. On her second escape attempt, she succeeded in reaching Kefe (modern Feodosia) from Bahçesaray, but had been again captured there.[27] This situation of Gülşen, who remained with her slave status for a very long time, could be seen as hopeless.

There were a few who made partially successful attempts. The records mention a slave called İvaz, of medium height with blue eyes, who ran away to his homeland, Wallachia, while he was the slave of a man called Deli Balta. At first glance, he may be thought to have been successful and rid himself of his

24 Kizilov, Mikhail, "Reports of Dominican missionaries as a source of information about the slave trade in the Ottoman and Tatar Crimea in the 1660s", in *Osmanlı Devleti'nde Kölelik: Ticaret, Esaret-Yaşam*, ed. Zübeyde Güneş Yağcı, Fırat Yaşa and Dilek İnan (Ankara: Tezkire Yayınları, 2017), pp. 110–11.

25 CCR, 18, f. 20.

26 Yaşa, Fırat, "Efendi-Köle İlişkisi Bağlamında Şeyhülislâm Fetvaları", in *Osmanlı Devleti'nde Kölelik: Ticaret, Esaret-Yaşam*, p. 215.

27 CCR, 3a, f. 56.

slave status. After living in Wallachia for six months, he went to Istanbul to trade and stayed there for a year, after which he went to Crimea and settled there. After having stayed there for four years, he was denounced as a runaway slave and once more reduced to the status of a slave.[28] As seen in this instance, even those who succeeded in escaping could actually find themselves with nowhere to go. Although escaping can be considered as a rebellion or an act of resistance against slavery, when it ends in failure, it reduces an individual once more to a state of desperation and hopelessness. It is hardly surprising that slaves, crushed under the harsh conditions of life would in the end prefer to commit suicide.

Apart from the references to the attempts at escape undertaken by slaves, there are also reports of the killing of slaves which show how little they were valued by Crimean society, presumably because in the Khanate slaves were inexpensive and plentiful and were therefore considered dispensable. An example of this is the fact that owners who killed their own slaves would inform the court that they charged no one for the death of these slaves. Hence, no one was required to pay the worth of the slave legally classified as property. When an owner killed his slave himself, he could not be punished legally, which was not the case when someone killed a slave belonging to another owner, since this was regarded as the destruction of the property of a free man. As an example of this, in December 1660, Aliş and Hacı Molla, who lived in Şeyh Mehmet Efendi village, first beat Andriy, the slave of a landowner called Arslan, with a stick and then suffocated and killed him. This caused no problem as the owner received the price of his slave, 1,000 *drachma* (*dirhem*) in silver, from the killers.[29] A life that was lost and gone forever incurred no criminal sanction.[30]

In the period under consideration the cases of murder of slaves in Bahçesaray were numerous. It is possible to see in the Bahçesaray city court records accounts of slaves who were killed by being hit on the head with a stick, murdered by having their ears, hands, and feet cut off, having their throats slit, and even being choked and thrown away by an unknown killer.[31] As slaves who

28 CCR, 11, f. 32.

29 CCR, 8, f. 103.

30 This situation is stated clearly in *fetva*s. For instance: "When Zeyd's slave is drunk and insensible, he enters the private harem. Zeyd is disturbed and kills [the slave] with a sword. For what is Zeyd liable? Answer: Apart from his sin, there is no punishment in this world", Imber, Colin, *Ebu's-su'ud: The Islamic Legal Tradition* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), p. 251.

31 CCR, 4, f. 24, 55; CCR, 8, f. 5, 102; CCR, 10, f. 135, CCR, 13, f. 63; CCR, 14, f. 15.

were killed meant loss of property, the owners resorted to the courts in order to secure compensation for their loss.

Suicides of Slaves

Suicide is not easy to track in sources, either among free men or slaves. Suicide attempts of free people, at least recorded ones, did not apparently amount to more than seven or eight between 1650 and 1700 in Ottoman Anatolia.[32] There are many reasons for this. Most important is the fact that the act of killing oneself was regarded as one of the major sins in all Abrahamic religions; an attempt at suicide also constituted an offense against the government and was severely punished; other factors such as the influence of living in communities, a social self-control mechanism, and moral and cultural values can be pointed out as well. In light of this, it is not surprising that since suicide attempts were rare, there are not many instances to study. Thus, in the years between 1650 and 1675 which I have studied, I have found only two cases relating to slave suicides. One of these cases, the more detailed of the two, is recorded in August 1673 in a statement by İshak, the son of Ovrahim who was a Jew from Çufutkale. According to the statement of İshak, a *kazak* slave was found hanged in a garden at the Tree Bridge (Ağaç Köprü). İshak immediately requested the court to investigate the crime scene and for a report of the findings to be prepared. This he did in order to protect himself from possible accusations by the slave's owner that he, İshak, had in fact murdered the slave himself. In the event of being unable to prove his innocence, İshak could have been forced to pay compensation to the owner. When the crime scene was investigated, it was recorded that a tall, old *kazak* slave (*amel-mande*) whose beard and hair had turned grey had committed suicide.[33]

The other suicide case occurred in the furrier's shop of el-Hac Hüseyin Bölükbaşı in Bahçesaray in 1677. A *kazak* slave named Şahin hanged himself with his waistband (*kuşak*) in the shop.[34] Because these data alone were available in the records, it is impossible to know the slave's origin or the reason

32 At the 14th International Congress of Ottoman Social and Economic History held on 24–28 July 2017 in Sofia (Bulgaria), Zeynep Dörtok Abacı referred to only seven or eight suicides or suicide attempts when she analysed 36 court registers from Bursa, Ankara, Konya, Trabzon, Manisa ve Ayıntab in her paper "Kendi Kendini İlhâk ya da Katl-ı Nefs: Pre-Modern Osmanlı Toplumunda İntihar Vakaları (1650–1700)".

33 CCR. 16, f. 12.

34 CCR, 10, f. 79.

why he committed suicide. However, the court records show that in the years 1667 to 1672 there was an economic crisis in Crimea, which may perhaps have been a contributory factor to the suicide. It was recorded that in a single year, 1667–1668, the basic weight of a loaf of bread was changed 16 times decreasing from 460 grams just before this period to 120 grams at the end of the year.[35] The most significant factor for the continuous change in prices in 1668 was warfare. The impact of the war between Muscovy and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth can clearly be seen in the constant changing of the basic weight of a loaf of bread in relation to the price index which had a huge impact on the Crimean Khanate in the same year.[36] It has further been argued that there is a connection between these crisis conditions and the fact that the majority of cases of slave escape in the Crimean court records between 1650–1675 occurred in the period 1666–1677.[37] The economic conditions in Crimea were also adversely affected by another war, this time between the Commonwealth and the Ottoman Empire between 1672 and 1673 in which Kamaniçe (Kamianec-Podilskyy) was conquered by the Ottomans.[38] The fact that the Crimean Khanate, which was one of the vassal states of the Ottoman Empire, provided military support resulted in an increase in prices in Crimea. One therefore feels justified to argue that slaves were affected directly by the economic crisis in the Khanate and to suggest that this may well have been a contributing factor to slave suicides.

Conclusion

This article makes an initial attempt to relate suicide cases to the condition of slaves in Crimea between 1650 and 1675. Despite the paucity of primary sources, it is possible to draw some tentative conclusions. As the surviving records make clear, a suicide could not be explained by a single reason while factors relating to the quality of life were clearly influential. One option for a slave to break away from his/her enslavement was to escape, and that is something attested to in the court records. However, escaping in seventeenth-century

35 CCR, 16, f. 6.

36 Kurat, Akdes Nimet, *Rusya Tarihi Başlangıçtan 1917'ye Kadar* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 2014), p. 248.

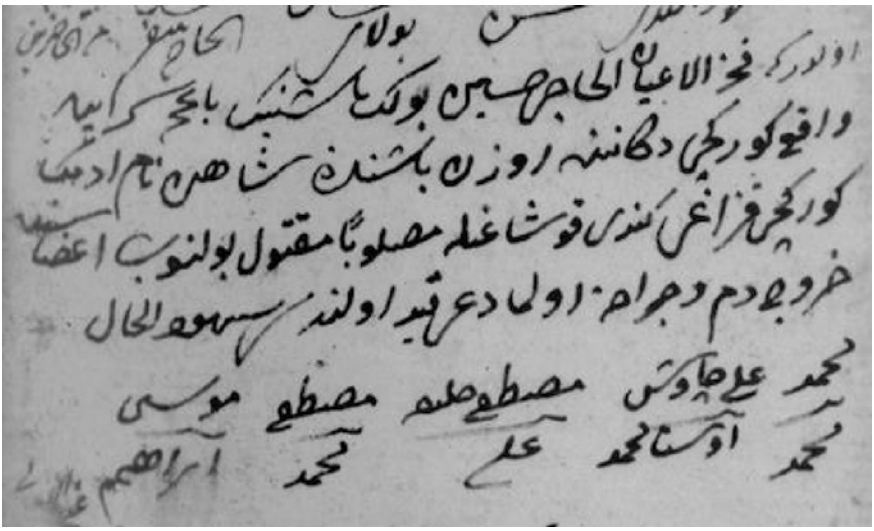
37 Yaşa, Fırat, "Bahçesaray (1650–1675)", Sakarya University Institute of Social Sciences, Ph.D. Dissertation, 2017, p. 185.

38 İnbaşı, Mehmet, *Ukrayna'da Osmanlılar Kamaniçe Seferi ve Organizasyonu (1672)* (Istanbul: Yeditepe Yayınevi, 2004), pp. 168–71.

Crimea did not necessarily lead to permanent freedom, as the case of İvaz referred to above demonstrates. Slaves were victims of assaults and murder, an incident either with no consequences for the perpetrator or with only a monetary one whereby a financial compensation was paid to the owner of the slave. The miserable conditions in which slaves in Crimea apparently existed, and the inevitable impact of the living conditions of the time, war, economic hardship, and famine, which further worsened the slaves' living standards, must all have contributed to the suicides among slaves. However, much must remain speculative owing to the dearth of evidence in the sources.

Appendix

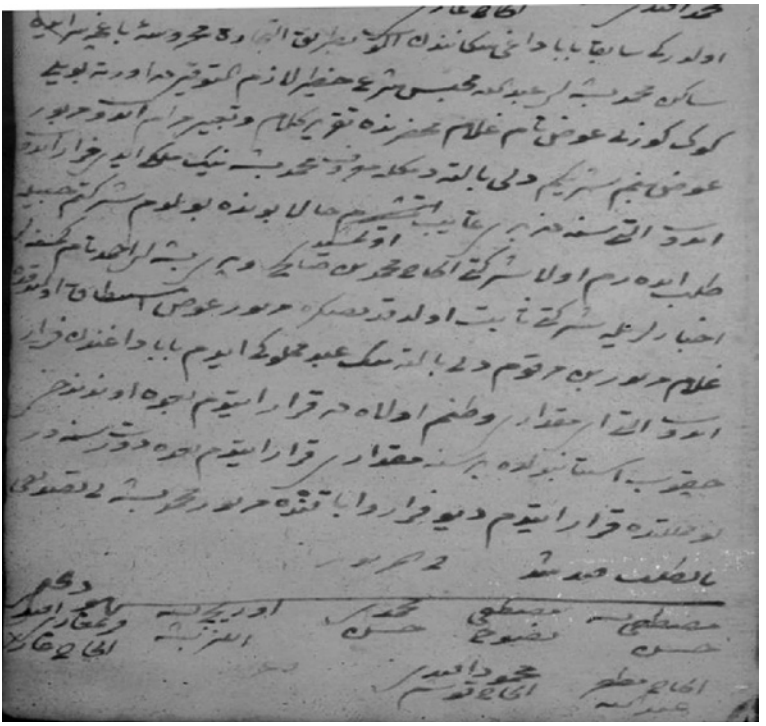
CCR 10, f. 79



Oldur ki fahru'l-a'yan el-Hac Hüseyin Bölükbaşı'nın Bahçesaray'da vaki' kürkçü dükkanında uzun başında Şahin nam ademin kürkçü kazağı kendi kuşağıyla masluben maktul bulunup a'zasından huruc-ı dem ve cerahat olmadığı kayd olundı.

Şuhudü'l-hal: Mehmed b. Mehmed, Ali Çavuş b. Usta Mehmed, Mustafa Halife b. Ali, Mustafa b. Mehmed, Musa b. İbrahim.

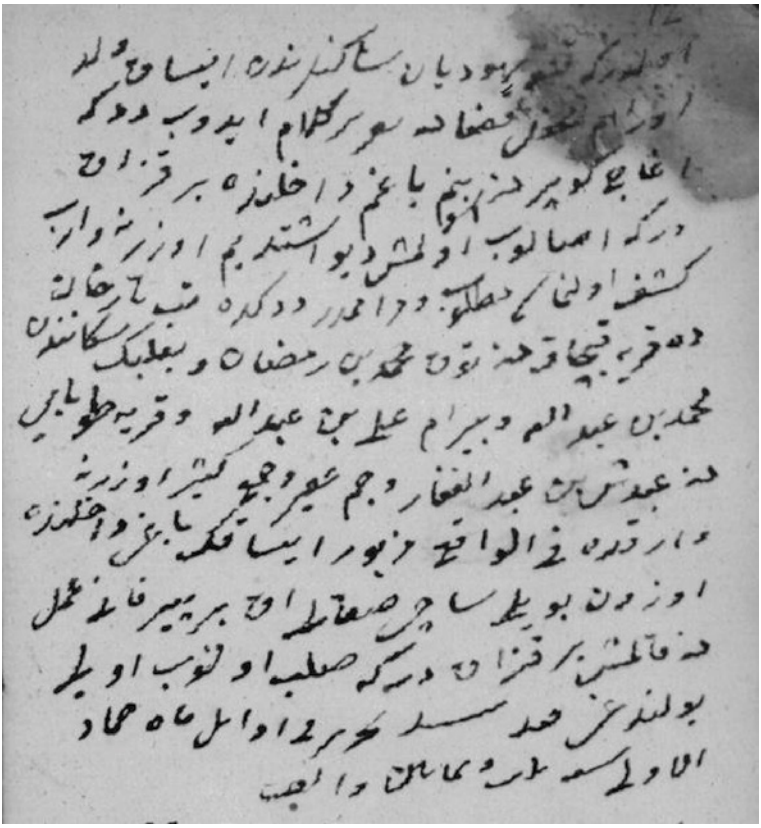
CCR, 11, f. 32



Oldur ki sabıkan Babadağı sükkanından olup bi-tariki't-tüccardan mahruse-i Bahçesaray'da sakin Mehmed Beşe bin Abdullah meclis-i şer'i hatır-ı lazımu't-tevkirde orta boylu gök gözlü İvaz nam gulam mahzarında takrir-i kelam ve ta'bir-i meram edüp mezbur İvaz benim şerikim Deli Balta demekle ma'ruf Mehmed Beşe'nin mülki idi firar edüb altı seneden beri gayib olmuşdu hala bunda buldum şirketim hasebiyle taleb iderim evvela şirketi el-Hac Mehmed bin Salih ve Piri Beşe bin Ahmed nam kimesneler ihbarlarıyla şirketi sabit old-ukdan sonra mezbur istintak olundukda gulam-ı mezbur ben merkum Deli Balta'nın 'abd-i memluki idim Babadağı'ndan firar edüp altı ay mikdarı vatanım Ulah'da karar itdüm ba'de ondan dahi çıkup İstanbul'da bir sene mikdarı karar itdüm ba'de dört senedir bu memleketde karar etdim deyu firar ve ibakında mezbur Mehmed Beşe'yi tasdiki bi't-taleb kayd şude fi'l-mezbur.

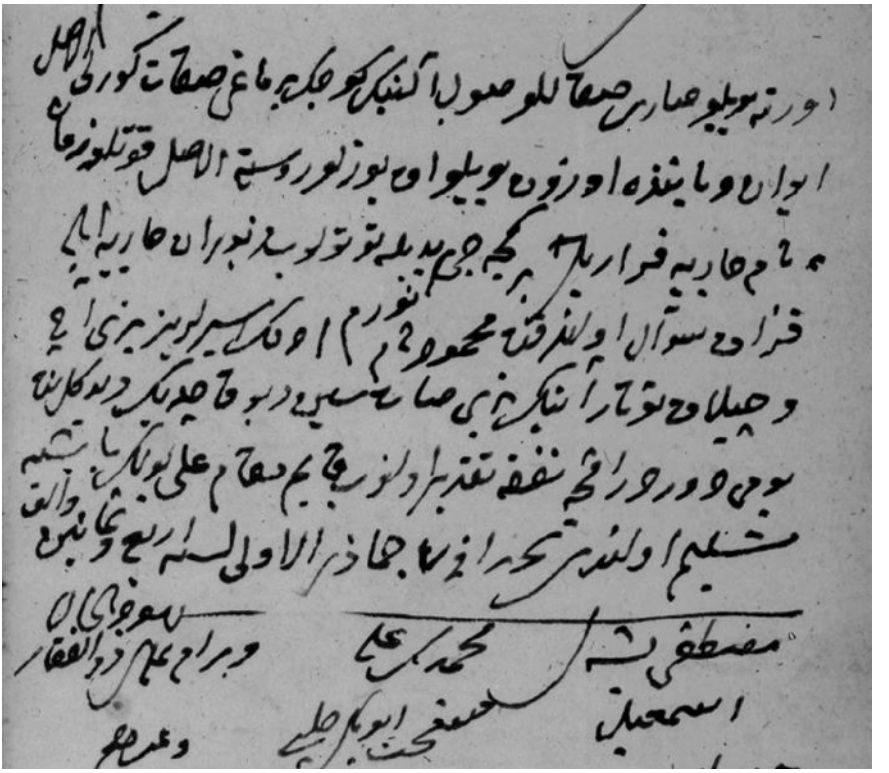
Şuhudü'l-hal: Mustafa b. Hasan, Mustafa [b.] Nasuh, Mehmed b. Hasan, Oruç Beşe [b.] Ellez Beşe ve Temur Gazi Efendi [b.] el-Hac Gazi.

CCR. 16, f. 12



Oldur ki Kal'a-ı Yahudiyan sükkanından İshak veled-i Ovrahim mahfel-i kazada takrir-i kelam edüp dedi ki Ağaç Köprü'de benim bağım dahilinde bir kazak direğe asılub ölmüş deyu işitdim üzerine varup keşf olunması matlub ve muradımdır dedikde Dib Tarhan'da karye-i Kıpçak'dan Tok Mehmed bin Ramazan ve Balbek sükkanından Mehmed bin Abdullah ve Bayram Ali bin Abdullah ve karye-i Tobay'dan [?] Abdiş bin Abdulgaffar cem'-i sahir ve cem'-i kesir üzerine vardıkları fi'l-vaki'-i mezbur İshak'ın bağı dahilinde uzun boylu, saçı sakalı ak bir pir-i hani amel-mande kalmış bir kazak direğe salb olunub ölü bulunduğu kayd şude tahriren fi evail mah Cemaziye'l-evvel sene salis ve semanin ve elf.

CCR, 18, f. 20



Orta boylu sarı sakallı sol elinin küçük barmağı sakat Gürciyyü'l-asıl İvan ve yanında uzun boylu ak yüzlü Rusiyyetü'l-asıl Kutlu Zaman nam cariye firariler bir gece cürm-ü nevrim yediyle tutulup mezburan cariye ile kazak su'al olundukda Mahmud nam ademin esirleriyiz bizi aç ve çıplak tutar anın bizi satsın deyu kaçdık dediklerinde yevmi dörder akçe nafaka takdir olunub ka'immakam Ali Bölükbaşı'ya teslim olundı tahriren fi 7 Cemaziye'l-evvel li-sene erba'a ve semanin ve elf.

Şuhudü'l-hal: Mustafa Beşe b. İsmail, Mehmed b. Ali, Muhtesib Ebubekir Çelebi, ve Bayram Ali b. Zülfikar ve gayrihum.