

POETRY TIME

Crimea and Crimean Tatars

Poems in English Translation



Edited and Introduced by
Inci A. Bowman



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FOREWORD

Poems presented in this anthology were originally posted to the Facebook page of the International Committee for Crimea during a six-month period, from November 2020 to May 2021. This was during the COVID-19 pandemic, a stressful time when most of us lived in partial isolation. We distributed 25 poems relating to Crimea and Crimean Tatars in English translation, originally written in Crimean Tatar, Russian and Polish. One group of poems by Adnan Onart was composed directly in English.

Several of the poems are well-known in Crimean Tatar literature, written by national heroes such as Numan Çelebicihan and Bekir Sıdkı Çobanzade. They express nostalgia for homeland Crimea, or declare their Tatar identity. Such a bold stand got the poets into trouble with Soviet authorities, as they were arrested and executed, or died in prison (Çelebicihan, Çobanzade, Giraybay and Kermencikli). Other poems relate to the tragic history of Crimean Tatars such as "Arabat Tragedy" and "Communist Bandit," or the rich culture of the indigenous people of Crimea such as "Çiğbörek," "Tepresh" and "Mother Water."

I would like to express my gratitude to Mübeyyin B. Altan, a veteran Crimean Tatar activist and author, who translated half of the poems presented in this anthology. His efforts provided the impetus to publish them previously on the Website of the International Committee for Crimea, and later share them on Facebook. The remaining poems were selected during the Spring months of 2021 from a variety of sources, most of which are listed in the Bibliography.

Inci A. Bowman

12 October 2024

Washington, DC

Cover illustration: Ayu-Dag, a well-known landmark in Crimea. Wikimedia Commons.



Illustration: A watercolor by Nina Jaba (1875-1942) from Zera Bekirova Collection.

NATIVE LANGUAGE (Tuvgan Til)

By Bekir Sıdkı Çobanzade

In this well-known poem, Bekir Sıdkı Çobanzade (1893-1937), Crimean Tatar scholar and poet, praises his mother tongue and tells how the Tatar language has been a source of inspiration and comfort during the times of sorrow.

I discovered you in Crimea, in Kazan,
 Found you when my heart was ebullient,
 overflowing.
 Walking sadly and hurt in far away lands,
 Walking with diminished hopes and dreams,
 Telling you my sorrow, I embraced you,
 Then your dazzling word rejuvenated me.
 Without your songs, and your poems,
 If the word "motherland" did not fill a
 heart,
 How can I wander around in far away lands,
 In far away streets, not knowing anything,
 not knowing anyone.
 Whatever you call yourself, a Turk or a
 Tatar,
 You are sweet as your taste is from God.

Turk or Tatar, they are your words,
 They are like a pair of gleaming eyes.
 At the gates of Vienna, in Kazakh land,
 We sang together in India and in China..
 Once the enemy understands you, he'll fall
 in love,
 A single melancholic word of yours will melt
 his heart. I want to hear you everywhere,
 Everywhere I want to knit epics from your
 pearls,
 If I teach you to birds and to wolves,
 You will be the darling of the orphans.
 If you penetrate into mosques, mihrabs and
 palaces,
 Once you reach the oceans and the edges of
 deserts,
 With you I will write decrees to the enemy,
 With your flashy words I will excavate his
 soul.
 When the angels interrogate me in my
 grave,
 When the angel of death slices my tongue a
 thousand times,
 "Speak to me in my native tongue!" I'll say,
 Singing in my native tongue I'll pass away.
 While anxieties nibble my soul away,
 And the endless stars strike my people,
 Oh, native tongue, no one else comes to my
 mind,
 Not even the enemy knows, you are the
 grand secret of mine.

Budapest, 1 June 1918

English translation by Mubeyyin B. Altan.

Source:

<https://iccrimea.org/literature/tuvgantil-eng-cobanzade.html>

Original version in Crimean Tatar:

TUVGAN TIL

Seni men Kırım'da, Kazan'da tabdım,
Cüregim kaynagan, taşqanda tabdım..
Cad elde mogayıb, açınıb cürgende,
Ümüdüm, hayalım şay tüşüp çürgende,
Moyunna sarıldım dertimni aytıb,
Bir güzel sözünmen özümne kaytıb..
Cırların bolmasa, manen bolmasa
"Curd" degen sözünmen cürek tolmasa
Ah nasıl cürermen gurbet yaklarda,
Tanışsız, bilişsiz yad sokaklarda?
Bilmiyimen Türük mü, Tatar mı adın..
Bek yaman tatlısın, Tanrıdan tadın..
Türük de Tatar da senin sözlerin,
İkisi iki çift munlu közlerin..
Viyana önünde, Kazak içinde
Barabar cırladık Hindlerde, Çinde..
Anlasın bir seni düşman da süyer,
Bir canık sözünmen cüregi iyer..
İstiyimen özünnü her yakta körmek,
Her yerde incinden destanlar örmek..
Kuşlarga, kaşkırğa üyretsem seni,
Sen bolsan öksüzünön könlünden süygeni..
Camige, mihrabga, sarayga kirsene,
Denizler, çöllernin çetine ersene..
Seninmen düşmanga yarlıglar yazsam,
Karuvlu sözünmen könlünü kazsam..
Kabrimde melekler sorgu sorasa,
Azrail tilimni bin kere torasa,
"Öz tuvğan tilimde ayt maga!" dermen,
Öz tuvğan tilimde cırlab ölermen..
Könlümnü kaygılar kemirib turganda,
Halkımnı tanışsız yıldız ırganda,
Tuvğan til, başkası aklıma kelmiy,
Bir büyük sırrımsın düşmanlar bilmiy..

Source: Ismail Otar, *Kırım Türk Şairi ve Bilgini: Bekir Sıdkı Çobanzade*. Istanbul: L. Yalkın Yayınları, 1999, p.139.



Illustration: "Undine" by Artur Rackham, 1811. Wikimedia Commons.

MOTHER WATER (Suv Anası)

By Bekir Sıdkı Çobanzade

"Mother Water," a poem by the well-known Crimean Tatar poet Bekir Sıdkı Çobanzade (1893- 1937), is based on a legend about the longest river in Crimea, Salgir or Salhyr. It originates from Chatyr-Dag, a mountainous massif, and flows north through Simferopol. Mother Water is a mythological figure, a young bride named Esmacık, who lives in Salgir and is responsible for the unpredictable course of the river.

Many Tatar children
Do not know who Mother Water is.
Let me tell you
So that she may be blessed.
Mother Water was born in a village,

Nearby, named Five Houses,
To a young mother and
A Mullah with a sparse beard.
With brown hair, a fair girl,
Named Esmacık,
Neglected until the age of ten,
Then confined to the house.
She fell in love with a youth,
With a handlebar moustache and rounded
eyebrows.
Mullah banned the youth,
Married the girl instead
To a friend of his, an old Hacı (pilgrim).
Let this be his way.
The girl stayed for three days.
A beautiful bride, as she was,
Then she jumped into the Salgır (Salhyr
River),
As she sought revenge on her Fate.
Now she wanders around aimlessly,
Summer, Winter and Spring, free spirited.
When the moonlight falls on Çatır (Chatyr
Mountain),
Water mills quiet down,
She comes out of the water, letting her hair
loose, and pondering.
She confides in the willows, finding comfort
and solace,
With her black eyes casting down, it is said.
The Star of our Fate trembles in the sky and
melts away.
White clouds become dark, it is said,
Young willows fade before the fall
and the Salgır dries up, it is said,
The roaring, overflowing and flooding.
Hence no settled villages near the water,
Linens washed in it may not come clean.
All of this, owing to the revenge of Esmacık.
We may deserve it! This is the fate of our
people.

Budapest, 8 October 1919

English translation by İnci Bowman.

Original version in Crimean Tatar:

SUV ANASI

Bek köb Tatar balası,
Bilmiy: Kim "Suv Anası"..
Toktanız, men aytayım..
Könlüne nur katayım..
Suv Anası, bir köyde,
Uzak tögül: "Beş Üy"de,
Tuvgan bir çaş anadan,
Bir de köse Molladan..
Kumral saçlı, appaçık;
Adı desen Esmacık..
On çaşınaç horlanagan,
Onda üyge kapangan,
Aşık bolgan bir çaşka,
Burma mıyık, cay kaşka..
Molla çaşnı kuvdurgan;
Kızga nikah kıydırgan..
Bir kart hacı dostuna;
Cibergen şay bolsunga..
Kız oturgan üç künçük,
Bolgan şaylı kelinçik.
Son atılğan "Salgır" ga;
Bahtdan açuv alırğa..
Şindi cüre başı boş;
Yaz, kış, bahar könlü hoş..
Ay "Çatır" ga konganda,
Suv tirmenler tınganda..
Suvdan çıkar, saçın çözer, tüşünür..
Sögütlerge sırrın aytar, tögünür..
Kara közü özlügünden iyer, diy;
Baht cıldızı kikde titrer, küyer, diy..
Canığından ak bulutlar kararır;
Küz kelmeden çaş söğütler sararır..
Bunun içündür "Salgır" nın şay kurması;
Son kuturup, çoşub, taşıb turması..
Bunun için katında köy barınmay;
Suvunda da ciyiz, keten arınmay..
Bütün bunlar Esmacıkın ahtıdır;
Oh bolsun şay! Biznin halknın bahtıdır..

Source: Ismail Otar, *Kırımlı Türk Şairi ve Bilgini: Bekir Sıdkı Çobanzade* (Istanbul, L. Yalkın Yayınları, 1999), p. 119.



Illustration: "Clouds in Crimea," Wikimedia Commons

CLOUDS, CLOUDS! (Bulutlar, Bulutlar)

By Bekir Sıtkı Çobanzade

Traveling clouds!

Çongar* and China-reaching clouds!

Take me along and let my heart be refreshed,
And my tears splash around my homeland.

Clouds, clouds!
The vetch-full clouds!

Red, green, yellow,
And belt-full clouds!
Let's travel to far away places,
Let's go to Salgır,** and see the linen bleaching
beauty!

Clouds, clouds!
I wish to die,
Then ascend for laughter in the sky.
Let's travel to the shores of oceans,
To have a closer look of face of Venus!

Clouds, clouds!
In reedy lakes,
With fluttering stars!
In endless deserts
Take me along when you pour with thunder,
When you reach the oceans through brushing
mountains!

Clouds, clouds!
Where do you come from?
What news do you have
From my hometown, from my mom?
Tell me, so we could cry silently,
Then set off, and wither away, together!

Clouds, clouds!
Travel to highlands,
And if you meet my darling Esmâ
Give her my greetings!
And wash away mom's tearful eyes,
Kiss her hands to ease her sorrows!

English translation by Mubeyyin B. Altan

*A city in northern Crimea

** The longest river in Crimea

Original version in Crimean Tatar:

BULUTLAR, BULUTLAR!

Bulutlar, bulutlar!
Gezici bulutlar!
Çongar'ga, Kitay'ga,
Yetici bulutlar!
Alınız meni de gönlüm açılın,
Közümden yaşlarım yurtına saçılın!

Bulutlar, bulutlar!
Burçak'lı bulutlar!
Al, yeşil, sarı,
Kuşaklı bulutlar!
Alınız, keteyik bek uzak yerlerge,
"Salgır" da ketenin agartkan dülberge!

Bulutlar, bulutlar!
Ölmek isteymen!
Ölgenson köklerde
Külmek isteymen!
Alınız, ketiyik deryalar çetine,
Karayık yakından Çolpan'ın betine!

Bulutlar, bulutlar!
Kamışlık göllerde,
Yıldızlar titregen
O uçsuz çöllerde.
Menide alınız gürüldep cavganda,
Tavlarsa sıypanıp deryaya avganda!

Bulutlar, bulutlar!
Kayerden kelesiz?
Köyümden, anamdan
Ne kaber bilesiz?
Aytınız, barabar tuydurmay cılayık!
Yollarga tuşeyik, sararıp solayık!

Bulutlar, bulutlar!
Yaylağa ketiniz!
Esmamı körseniz
Selamlar etiniz!
Çalkanız anamnın yaşlı közlerin!
Kolların opunuz, unutsun kederin!

Source:

<https://iccrimea.org/literature/bulutlar.html>



Illustration: "Flag and Anthem of Crimean Tatars." YouTube.com.

I PLEDGED (Ant Etkenmen)

By Numan Çelebicihan

The Crimean Tatar national anthem is based on this poem written by Numan Çelebicihan (1885-1918), the first president of the short-lived Crimea Republic, a national hero and poet. "Ant Etkenmen" dates from 1917 and relates to the nation's sorrowful experience in Crimea under Russian domination.

I pledged to heal the wounds of Tatars,
Why should my unfortunate brothers rot
away;
If I don't sing, don't grieve for them, if I live,
Let the dark streams of blood of my heart
go dry!

I pledge to bring light to that darkened
country
How may two brothers not see one
another?
When I see this, if I don't get distressed,
hurt, seared,
Let the tears that flow from my eyes
become a river, a sea of blood!

I pledge, give my word to die for knowledge
Knowing, seeing, to wipe away the
teardrops of my nation
If I live a thousand unknowing, unseeing
years, if I become a gathering's chief

Still one day the gravediggers will come to bury me!

English translation by Seyit Ahmet Kırımca

Source: *The Tatars of Crimea: Return to the Homeland*. Edward A. Allworth, ed. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1998, p. 74.

Source:

<https://icrimean.org/literature/celebicihan.html>



Illustration: "In the NKVD's Dungeon" a painting by Nikolai Getman (1917-2004).*

PRISON CELL (Bastırık)

By Numan Çelebicihan

This powerful poem by Numan Çelebicihan (1885-1918), Crimean Tatar national hero and poet, describes the horrible and depressive conditions in prisons administered by the Bolsheviks.

Four stone walls, and at top a tiny window,
Torment, rather than light enters here
through iron bars.

Ugly shadows, and green mold froths
everywhere,

A wooden bed, rotten food, and cold air
blows here and there.

The caretaker sweeps the floors, pouring
water over dirt,

Openly curses at one's mother, looking
straight at one's face.

The evenings spread their dark curtains
over this darkened place,

Loneliness brings live nightmares to one's

lonely face.
The poor heart palpitates, one feels goose
bumps everywhere,
First, one's spirit rises high, then drops right
to the empty floor.
The guards check this place, walking and
searching,
Checking on the heavy lock, four to five
times an hour.
To this locked, colder than ice, grave like
room,
Enters more good people than hard
criminals.
It is fait accompli once you enter here;
either you rot here,
Or you go insane, unable to endure the
unjust torture there.

English translation by Mubeyyin B. Altan.

The original version in Crimean Tatar:

BASTIRIK

Dört taş duvar, en töpede bir kiçkene
pencere,
Içke temir cabaklardan ışık tuvul dert
kire, Her köşede dim gölgeler, yeşil küfler
köpüre,
Yatak tahta, yemek fena, yerden suvuk
üfüre.
Hizmetçi de her kün bunu sulap, sulap
süpüre,
Kimerde bir anayın da sövüp sala köz köre,
Akşamlar bu kara evge kara perdeler kere,
Yalnızlıklar yalnız canga canlı tüsler köstere.
Garip cürek capalana, tenler, tükler ürpere,
Tozmay gönül havalanıp, alcala bomboş
yere,
Nöbetçiler gece gündüz, karap cürüp

teskere,
Kapıdaki avur kiltni her saat dört-beş
kere. Bu gögeli kardan suvuk kiltli kara
mezarga,
Yamanlardan daha fazla yahşi insan kop
kire,
Kirgenden son işler belli; tura tura ya cüre,
Ya da haksız azaplarga dayanılmay delire.

Source:

<https://iccrimea.org/literature/celebicihan-poems.html>

**The Gulag Collection*. Washington, DC:
Jamestown Foundation, 2001, p. 30.



Illustration: "Proud, Lonely, Alive" by Yuri Hope. Pixel.com

FAREWELL TATARNESS!

(Savlıkman Kak Tatarlık)

By Numan Çelebicihan

This is a well-known poem by (1885-1918), the Crimean Tatar national hero and poet, and the first president of the short-lived Crimea Republic. Çelebicihan (1885-1918) reaffirms his devotion to his people and his Crimean Tatar identity.

Farewell, Tatarness, I am heading towards
the war,

My horse's head already turned towards
the next world.

I've lived for you Tatarlık, and if I die
without you,

How will I enter the Paradise that is empty
so.

The mountains turned over and the rivers
overflow,

Not only we, but even the angels are
shocked at how things go.

The young were shaken and the maidens
were battered,

Abandoning their children, the mothers fled
to deserts.

A clean life [ak omur] behind me, front of
me is death.

I doubt my dark path will last any longer.

Not fearing any danger, not being
frightened of shadows,
Stretches out my arm, uttering the word
Tatar at my last breath.

Akmescit (Simferopol), 1914/1915

English translation by Mubeyyin Altan

Original version in Crimean Tatar:

SAVLIKMAN KAL TATARLIK

Savlıkman Kal Tatarlık, men ketem cenkke,
Aımın başı aylandı ahret betke.

Senin için yaşadım, sensiz ölsüm,
Bilmem nasıl kirermen boş cennetke.

Avdarılğan altavlar, tamular taşkan,
Bu işlerge biz tuvul, melekler şaşkan.

Hırpalangan menlikler, xorlangan kızlar,
Balasın taslap anaylar çöllerge kaçkan.

Artıma baksam ak ömür, aldım da olum,
Kop uzamaz belliymen karangı yolum.

Karsambadan havetmey, kölgeden ürkme,
Son nefeste Tatar dep uzanır kolum.

Source:

<https://iccrimea.org/literature/celebicihan-poems.html>



Illustration: "Bouquet of Thorns" by Ann Medley. Mutualart.com

UNTITLED

By Fevzi Altug

This poem by Fevzi Altug (1878-1934), a Tatar nationalist and educator, is about the devastation caused by the Famine of 1921-1922 and the Bolshevik terror in Crimea. Altug was allowed to leave Crimea with his family at the height of the Famine in March 1922. The poem was written on a ship from Feodosia, Crimea, to Batumi, Georgia.

3 March 1922, between Feodosia [Kaffa or Kefe] – Novorossiysk

Devastating famine is bearing down on my homeland!

Many sighs, but no one listens when I mention our pain!

Babies and children are dying! Is this a Russian trick?

Talks about humanity, has the Russian fulfilled his desire?

Misery prevails in my green homeland, cries of distress reach the skies!

The Russian has no pity for the starving and dying, as we brothers just witnessed!

The revolutions revealed the great Russian character:

Devoid of compassion and decency. We saw the real friend of the people!

Those communists, rascals! They have no respect for the people!

Good for nothing, their comrades do not leave us without breaking into homes!

In essence, the Russian is like a bouquet of thorns;

One cannot hold it, nor smell it; but fades like a weed!

O Tatars, you remained slaves for a long time, you suffered harm!

Even if you lead your lives in subservience, they will still sell your shirt!

Why do you find yourselves in poverty?

You like the pleasures of bowing to the Russians!

Do you no longer love your homeland, your religion, and have you forgotten your Turkic origins?

The name and fame of Genghis Khan's people doomed to oblivion?

I believe eighty percent of Turk Tatars are trustworthy.

We need to have unity, strength, fairness and faith!

Russia is in chaos, and the whole world is watching bewildered!
Bolshevism is infested with its own germs!
Those yearning to be free have become Reds!
They contaminated our green homeland!
Even though I have dedicated my forty years to my nation,
I am grateful that I have not been infected by [Bolshevik] germs.
It is time that we, as a nation, know the path of life,
We must watch for our own well being!
We Tatars cannot go back and divert from our path!

English translation by Inci Bowman.

Source: Fevzi Altug, *Thornbush: Memoirs of a Crimean Tatar Nationalist and Educator Relating to the Russian Civil War and the Famine of 1921-1922*. Istanbul: Isis Press, 2004, pp. 60-61.

For further information about Altug, see: <https://iccrimea.org/historical/thornbush.html>

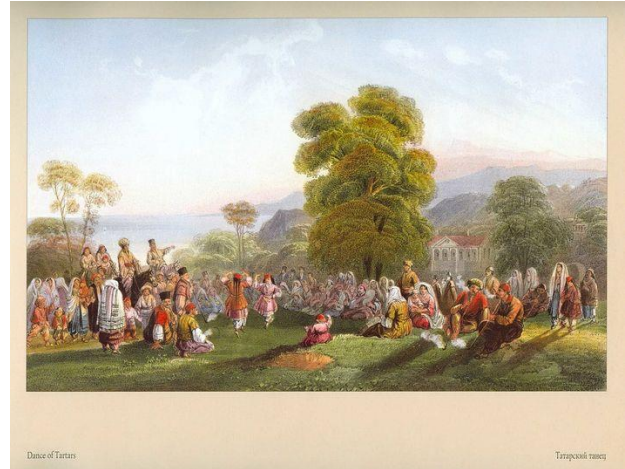


Illustration: "Dance of Tatars" by Carlo Bossoli. Wikimedia Commons.

TEPRESH ON THE TWIN MOUNDS

(Koş Obamın Teferrücü)

By Fevzi Altug

In his poem "Tepresh on the Twin Mounds," Fevzi Altug (1878-1934) describes a traditional Crimean Tatar outing in the countryside. "Tepresh" is a summertime event, like a picnic, that featured folk dances, belt-wrestling, horse riding and racing, and reciting ballads. Families gathered to enjoy meals together, and young men courted young ladies by reciting traditional couplets. Originally published in Crimean Tatar in 1932, Altug's poem conveys his childhood memories of a Crimean summer night spent with his grandmother in the 1880s.

In my beloved village,
On a moonlit light,
At home with an earthen roof
And grassy front,
Spreading a mat on the lawn
Sitting and smoking a pipe was my
Grandma.
Placing my head on her knee,

I laid down and watched the immense sky
Counting the stars.
Caressing my head, Grandma said:
“Oh, my boy,
If a star falls on your bosom,
You will rise to the sky,
Only God knows the count,
You don’t bother with that.”
I was a boy of four,
About fifty years ago,
Still remember it as if today.
Shining on the Twin Mounds
One could see
Like a fading star
A sign that was given,
Could be seen from all directions.
Get ready on a summer day
Teprech on the Twin Mounds.
Said to me Grandma:
“Look, look to the South,
Teprech on the Twin Mounds.”
By burning grass
They invite the elderly and the youth.
Thousands of people gather,
Families and children are to feast.
Early in the morning, we also
Go in the carriage
Take the grey horse as a spare.
After we arrive at the Mounds,
You may ride the grey horse
You may go racing.
Take your handkerchief
Race your horse.
If you prefer wrestling,
Tie your sash around your waist
Ask for your match.
If you wish, you may recite a ballad,
Take advice from an elderly:
Say “What is a ÇIN [a couplet]
To attract your attention,

My only wish
Is to impress you.”
You may become a bard
In the presence of your beloved.

English translation by Inci Bowman.

Source: Fevzi Altug, *Dikenli İlişkiler: Kıyımlı Bir Öğretmenin Anıları ve Şiirleri*. İstanbul: Türk Dünyası Araştırmaları Vakfı, 2005, pp. 120-23. See also:

<https://iccrimea.org/historical/thornbush.html>



Illustration: "Tatars Travelling on the Plains" by Carlo Bossoli. Wikimedia Commons.

EMIGRATION (Hicret)

By Hamdi Giraybay

"Emigration" by Hamdi Giraybay (1901-1930) was based on a true story. This long poem, written in 1923, describes how Crimean Tatar villagers were deceived by a Russian swindler and eventually lost their land. The confiscation of land was one of the major reasons why Crimean Tatars left Crimea in waves throughout the 19th century. Giraybay was arrested by Soviet authorities and accused of being a nationalist. He died in a Moscow prison in 1930.

One day a blue eyed infidel,
stormed into the village as fast as wind.
He wanted to meet the whole village at
Kultepe.

Who knows who he is, or what he is?
What does this Kazak say? What does he
want?

Let us go and hear him out.
Where did he come from? What did he
come for?

Let us hear what has to say.
"I hope he is not Nabor; Oh, God! Please

have mercy!"
said young fugitives (dodging the Russian
draft)

Whatever it is, the folks got mellowed, and
the entire village gathered at Kultepe.
Finally the weird Kazak with bulging eyes,
arrived with the head of the village, galava.
In his own language he said a lot of things,
and praised the village folks:

"Moya znayit Tatarin", "Xorosh!"
"Soldat" Kadir listened carefully and
translated:

This man came from Petersburg....
He has a few horses that he wants
to graze in our land just for a few months.
He is begging us to help him. In return
he also will help us and pay us in gold...
He has come from St Petersburg. How
should

a simple peasant know the customs of this
stranger.

Sir galava (village chief) finally spoke: "Well
people, what do you say to this (proposal)?
Could he graze his horses in our land
just for a few months?"

Well it is "Nabor" time, let him graze them
this summer if that is all he wants.

This will keep him quiet for a while. Besides,
what can we say when the (galava),
representative of the government puts it
this way. There is
no need for payment; perhaps he will give
us a hand

when he returns to St. Petersburg.
He can ask the tsar to pardon the young
fugitives (draft dodgers). Let him use
his influence where he can.

With these thoughts, the entire village
agreed to his request, with one exception
Bekbar aqay who said:" He might

have a trick up his sleeve". But the folks did not listen to Bekbar aqay. Instead, they all fell for Kazak's sweet talk. "Spasiba (thank you), spasiba! So xorosho(nice) you all are, I really like you Tatars!" Well now, the old certificates (of land ownership) is no longer valid, you need to obtain new ones" he said. "Sir Galava, what does this mean, is there really such a law?" As soon as the translator Kadir finished his translation, the stranger, angrily popping his eyes open, delivered a long speech and said: "Of course, it is so, and there is such a law. You have only two months to have your certificates changed." "Well, if we send our certificates to change, they probably will lay around the office for three months, at least. You are going there anyway; Could you, Mr Kinyaz(Kazak) please do us a favor, exchange these certificates for us," said Ali Bay. "Ok, Ok! give me the certificates, I'll do it for you. Just show me where your land is! Let me show them to Prstav- he'll bring your new cerificates in a week." "Thank you your highness, sir kinyaz, for the favor you are doing us." Then kinyaz and the galava collected the old certificates; he left with all the certificates in his pocket. A few days later the grazing land of the village was full of horses, Not four, not five but over five hundred. A few months later he got sick, and died in St Petersburg.

He had brought his horses just for few months; but it has been a year, no sight of any departure yet. His next to kin came and shouted: "I am the owner of these lands!" He began measuring and marking (the land) from the center of this town. He did not touch only one land which was the village's cemetery land. Well, the old kinyaz had taken our certificates, and changed them all to his name. That is why his next to kin entered our village as if he owned it all, leaving the simple peasants without any land. When one of Kinyaz's men entered, the land of Kurtaqay, and tried to measure what he owned as land; It was the wife of Kurtaqay, Erzade who stood tall against this intruding man. She grabbed an iron rod used for measuring land, Lifted up against the Zemzemer and said: "I am sixty years old and until this day, no one mistreated me!" And then she began to chase the Zemzemer man. She paid no attention to those who begged her to stop. Kazak was in a daze and did not know what to say except, "postoy, postoy!" With all her anger Erzade said: "Postoy, mostoy, I don't know and I don't care. No one can cheat me and enter my land!" Kazak realized finally that he was helpless against Erzade who cried and cried with anger all day long. Towards the evening all the Kazaks returned, spreading terror by yelling "Tatarin (Tatars), if you oppose and talk,

You will be punished so severely
that no one will be able to walk.
With such threats thrown at them by
infidels,
the villagers gathered after the Cuma
prayers when Molla said: "There is no life
for Muslims here in this land no more!
It is time to move to Aktoprak, there!
Katip aqay said with tears in his eyes:
"Icret (migration) is now a must,
from now on we can't stay in a land
owned by the enemy of our religion."
Thus the emigration soon began.
People began to leave their fatherland;
leaving their homes, even their barns
full of goods and grain behind.
The only one who opposed to Icret,
Bekbar aqay said: "Hey cemaat,
think about it first. Don't do it.
Don't leave your fathers' and ancestors'
land. Let us torch his (kazak's) palace,
what can he do to us.
He is only one against the whole village
of us! I had told you so,
I had told you not to trust!"
All the talk of Bekbar aqay, could not
convince the folks who said:
"It is Allah's will. It is the end, Ahir Zaman!
It is our destiny, our Kismet; food, no more
water for us to have no more !"
The whole village migrated, moved out
within just a month.
The homes turned into ghettos, where is
that lively town?
Even the birds, nested under the roofs,
screamed in pain.
Bekbar aqay remained to fight,
to fight against the Kazak,
the new owner of the land.
He never lost his dignity, never became a
slave,

despite all the pressure put on by Kazak,
the new owner of the land.
Bekbar aqay died in his own bed,
in his own house, in his fatherland.
He was buried in his own plot
in his own village's cemetery land.
His children and grandchildren
continued to fight, awaiting for justice,
justice for all.
They, at the end, were able to rebuild
a home on the vakif land.

Free English translation by Mubeyyin Altan.

Source:

<https://iccrimea.org/literature/hicret.html>

I AM A TATAR (Tatarım)

By Cemil Kermencikli

"I am a Tatar" and similar patriotic poems that Cemil Kermencikli (1891-1942) wrote got him into trouble with the Soviet authorities. He was arrested in 1937 and accused of being an enemy of the people. He was sent to Arkhangelsk Labor Camp, where he died in January 1942. A teacher, poet and writer, Kermencikli was one of Crimean Tatar intellectuals eliminated by Stalin's government.

A cloud is hanging over my head,
Telling me: " Forget about your Tatarhood!"
No, my friend, forget it,
And keep these words in mind forever:
No matter what you say, I am a Tatar, son
of a Tatar,
And will always be proud of my Tatarhood.
The gentle spring breeze may be blowing,
Bitter and brutal winds may surround me,
The earth, sky, mountains, rocks, and the
oceans,
May rise to stop me from walking on,
Even then I will not search for an alternate
route,
I will lie down right there,
But insist on saying – I am a Tatar, son of a
Tatar.
Ominous lightning may be flashing forever,
There may be thunder striking here and
there,
Rain, snow, hail and ice may be pouring
down for a thousand year,
Floods may be destroying everywhere,
I will be rising, falling and sinking,
Even then, as I am being buried, I'll insist on
saying that I am a Tatar!
Even when the earth perishes, the oceans

overflow and cascade,
And the sun and the moon become afraid
and disappear,
Even when the earth and sky unite
To denounce and conceal the Tatarhood,
I will destroy the earth and the sky,
Before I denounce my Tatarhood,
Because I am and will always be a Tatar!
The Archangel Gebrail may become your
witness,
Angel Mikael may ruin my destiny,
Azrael [the angel of death] may appear with
his sword,
Esrafil [another angel] may recite his last
prayer,
I will insist on justice for a thousand year,
And when rejected, I will still insist on
saying - I am a Tatar.
When the throne of God changes hands
(worlds),
When the tablet of God's decrees appears
in front of my eyes,
And all hell breaks loose and tells me that I
am not a Tatar,
I will push them all aside and
As I enter Hell, I will remain a Tatar.
Even when the powerful is your ally,
And they ask the Huris of Paradise,
Even when every nationality is given a place
in Paradise,
But Tatars are evicted from there,
I will burn in Hell,
But will insist on saying - I am a Tatar, I am a
Tatar, and I am a Tatar.

English translation by Mubeyyin B. Altan

Original version in Crimean Tatar:

TATARIM

Bas ustumde dolasiyiir bir bulut
Mana diyur "Tatarligin, sen unut!"
Xayir dostum, sen bu dertten farig ol,
Su sozleri xatirinde eyi tut:
Sen ne dirsens, Tatar oglu Tatarim,
Tatarliktir o benim iftixarim!
Latif baar ruzgarlari kuserse,
Dort tarafdanc acci yellers eserse,
Yerler, kokler, daglar, daslar, denizler,
Yuz ceviriip yollarimi keserse,
Yol aramam, ortalikta yatarim
Ammaderim- Tatar oglu Tatarim!
Korkunc semsek, ic durmayip cakarse,
Er tarafi yildirimlar yakarse,
Bin yil yagmur, burcak, kar, buzlar yagip,
Dusen seller ortaligi yikarse,
Yukselirim, alcalirim, batarim,
Yer altina kirsem, yine Tatarim!
Dunya batsa, derya tassa, caglasa,
Ay, kunes de korkup kacsa, aglasa,
Yedi kat yer, yedi kat kok birlesip,
Tatarligi inkar etse, saklasa,
Yeri, koku birbirine katarim,
Inkar etmem, yine Tatar, Tatarim!
Cebrail sana shaatlik iderse,
Mikhail de kismetimi keserse,
Azrailin elinde kilic kelip,
Esrafil de son suresini okurse,
Ukuk uzerinde bin yil yatarim,
Red iderse, zorle derim- Tatarim!
Ars-i ala axirete inerse,
Levx-l mexfuz koz ogume kelirse,
Yedi ceennem, sekiz cennet, bir sirat,
Avaz keser, Tatar degilsin derse,
Cumlesin bir tarafa atarim,
Ceenneme kitsem, yine Tatarim!
Almanlar senden taraf olurse,
Cennet urilerinden soralirse,
Er millete Cennetten yer verilirse,
Tatar olan, Cennetten kuvulurse,
Abdiya- cihande, yanarim,
Lakin yine Tatar, Tatar, Tatarim!

Source: Ercivan Kermencikli, "Dehsetli Gecmisni Xatirlap." *Yildiz*, No. 2 (March-April) 1991, pp. 60-61. See also: <https://iccrimea.org/literature/kermencikli.html>



Illustration: Arabat Arrow (Arabat Spit), Findway, Google Images.

ARABAT FACIASI – BALLADA (Arabat Tragedy)

By Loman Suleyman

This long poem about the Arabat Tragedy, describes a horrible historic event that took place in Crimea. Two months after the deportation of Crimean Tatars in May 1944, the military authorities in Crimea discovered that a group of Tatar villagers were still living on the lonely Arabat spit by the Sea of Azov. Afraid of reprisals from Stalin's government, the military quickly rounded up the villagers and drowned them in the shallow waters of the Azov.

Azov (The Sea) surges with sorrow, and with rage in her heart.

As if the blood in her body wishes to transcend by overflowing the fields.

Displaying anger at times, at times she cries slamming her head on rocks, as the shores turn to mourning.

My eyes full with tears,

I walk to the shore, rhyming my poem
(with) the waves themselves.
The lightning hits as if it splits
the bosom of the clouds.
It is thundering, and my bloody wounds
worsens my pain.
In Sivash there is sadness, sorrow,
and hatred fills her soul.
(Even) the mild caressing of the wind,
is unable to calm this lake.
I asked this sea, this lake:
Who left you in this horrible state?
My heart wants to know from you,
who plunged you to the rocks?
Strongly roared the sea,
as if she took a deep breath,
there was a total silence,
one could hardly hear a voice.
Forty seven years have gone by
The wounds of the dreadful May [1944]
tragedy have increased, not ceased.
Let the children always remember
that horrific event,
the dungeon- like dark night.
Who (now) will greet the dawn?
As the souls ached until this day.
The sky darkened, as if the clouds'
curtains covered her face.
And the horizon all around,
have shed tar-like tears.
Sadness covers the surroundings,
in every step there is horror and fear.
What awaits those who remained (survived)?
There is gloom at every step.
The inhabitants of Arabat village
are still unaware of their fate.
As rulers of the mighty State,
whatever will they be thinking?
Wherever will they send the Tatars?
Will they come to shoot them now?
Wail -outcry heard everywhere,

men, women, young and old
were uprooted from every corner!
The sea overflowed at that moment.
They load ed the people on to the barge,
as if loading some animals.
Bloody tears shed by pack of children,
as if the sky was falling on them.
Falling rain intensified,
As if a storm broke loose.
Death is never this harsh,
the barge is swaying as if it is gulping.
The old barge has never seen
such cargo in all its life,
never carried such men,
never knew such a tragedy.
Fear and tears of inhabitants,
(with) their arms spread, old men are
praying, such is the great tradition.
Perhaps help will soon arrive,
so were hoping some.
The fate was harsh on mothers,
who tried to embrace their children,
as the barge moved so quietly...
The voices of the unfortunate folks
shook the earth at that moment,
at the dead center of the sea, (was)
a tragedy, an apprehension, a grief.
- "O Gracious!" cried an old man
what is this horror we are seeing?
My God what calamity for us?
The time we spent in exile
during the war, wasn't that enough?
What is the fault (crime) of these people?
Didn't they shed enough tears?
Do they ever have a chance? Shouldn't
"uncle" (Stalin) drown in children's tears?
Shouldn't the "traitor" be crushed
under the homeland's soil and rocks?
Hey! Listen all mothers!
Embrace your children, and kiss them (now),
as disaster is fallen upon us.
There is no one to rescue us,
the entire people (everyone) will be
drowned.

Farewell young and old, farewell kinsfolk!
 This is our last meeting.
 Be blessed those who survive (remain),
 the time of death is upon us.
 A revolting voice soared from the waves.
 There is mourning at the sea, at the lake,
 people are taking their last breath.
 The barge collapses, disintegrates,
 the last horror, the final groan.
 In the water, struggle,
 hundreds of innocent men (and women).
 Tears shed by all these people,
 do not fit into the sea,
 it feels as large boulders and rocks,
 their hearts ache just as well.
 Soon after the grayish waves
 soar as if sobbing.
 They are invoking the people,
 they are mourning. They are crying:
 - Hey people! Keep in sight this tragedy.
 Travel all around this planet, if you will,
 which ocean, which sea
 has witnessed such meanness (turpitude),
 (Where in the world have) innocent young
 men and women, and the entire residing
 people have drowned in such dominant
 waters? Truehearted they were all,
 those, who drowned in this sea.
 The new generation will never forget
 the Armageddon-like night in May [1944],
 the people's cry and the horror.
 Then the wreaths will float
 in the salty Sivash and the Azov (Sea).

English translation by Mubeyyin B. Altan

Source: <https://iccrimea.org/surgun/arabat-ballad.html>



Illustration: "As the sun rises" by M.B. Altan, 2024.

We are pleased to include here a poem written of by a well-known Crimean Tatar activist and translator of many of the poems in this anthology into English.

I 'M HOPING (Umutlanam)
 By Mübeyyin Batu Altan

During World War (II) years,
 Crimea Occupied by enemies
 Her people loaded on to cargo trains
 Deported all to far away places.

I am hoping tomorrow
 We'll return to Crimea.
 And inform the entire world
 Of Crimean Tatars' sorrow.

Worst of all slanders,
 Thrown at my people,
 And the world has sympathized,
 With suffering Crimean Tatars.

I am hoping tomorrow
 We'll return to Crimea
 And inform the entire world
 Of Crimean Tatars' sorrow.

In the cities of Uzbekistan,
 And the deserts of Central Asia,

Kadievs, Cemilev's and others
Fighting for Crimean Tatars.

I am hoping tomorrow,
We'll return to Crimea
And inform the entire world
Of Crimean Tatars' sorrow.

Boston, 1988

The original version in Crimean Tatar:

UMUTLANAM

Cihan harbi yıllarında,
Qırım duşman kollarında,
Millet yuk vagonlarında
Bızını sürgün ettiler.

Umutlanam, çunku yarın,
Bız Qırımğa kaytacakmız,
Qırımtatarın derdini,
Bız cihanga aytacakmız!

İftiranın en buyugu,
Atıldı Qırımtatarına.
Butun dünya tacıplana,
Milletimin halına.

Umutlanam, çunku yarın,
Bız Qırımğa kaytacakmız.
QırımTatarın derdini,
Bız cihanga aytacakmız!

Sibiryanın illerinde,
Orta Asya çöllerinde,
Kadiyevler, Cemilevler,
Vatann için küreşeler.

Umutlanam, çunku yarın
Bız Qırımğa kaytacakmız.
Qırımtatarın derdini
Bız cihanga aytacakmız!



Illustration: "Black Clouds" by Zarema Trasinova, 2004.

STAND UP! (Kalk Ayakka!)

By Eskender Fazıl

A true veteran of the Crimean Tatar National Movement, Eskender Fazıl (1934-2003) was only ten years old, when his family was deported from the homeland Crimea. He faced the prejudices and hardships of living in exile and joined the National Movement in 1955. In his poem "Stand Up!" [Kalk Ayakka!], written in Moscow in 1987, Fazıl encourages his people to return to Crimea and "live with great pride in motherland."

You are a small nationality, your rich history
Grew pale because of distress, grief and
torment.

Your heavy and troubled destiny,
Blackened by slander and tragedy.

By depriving you, your rights and justice,
They mixed blood in your tears.

By enslaving you without hesitation,
They deported you from your homeland so
dear.

The angry and wild Black Sea roared,
Rushed to extinguish my burning
motherland.

The old Chatirdag, distressed and worried,
"Where are the Tatars going?" she cried.

Yes, they ordered: "Let no Crimean Tatar
trace remain!"
But you were able to survive (as a nation)
just the same.
Years passed, in distress and pain,
Through a brave struggle, your honor you
were able to retain!
Despite your burial grounds are filled with
martyrs,
Your determination to fight never died.
Everyone knew and understood,
Your tragedy, no one could ever hide.
Stand up!
Lift your bowed head!
Live with great pride in motherland.
Enough! Wipe your tears off!
You deserve all the fame and fortune in
your name!
Stand up!
Motherland is calling you to return!
The extinct hearths wait for you.
Place your roots near the grand Chatirdag!
Motherland, with praise and cheers, will
embrace you!

English translation by Mubeyyin B. Altan

Source:

<https://iccrimea.org/literature/fazil.html>

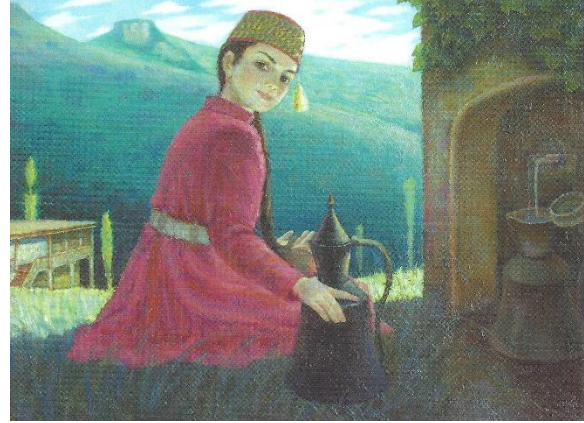


Illustration: "Ozenbas," a painting by Ali Belalov.*

BUT LOOK (Amma Bak Ya...)

By Eskender Fazil

In his touching poem "But Look," Eskender Fazil emphasizes the importance of cultural values and traditions in the survival of an ethnic group. The Crimean Tatars were subjected to political repression, famine and forced relocation, and yet they survived, he says. Fazil was ten years old when his family was deported from Crimea and he later became an active member of the Crimean Tatar National Movement.

Our destiny is written on dark pages:
Tatar people scattered around everywhere!
But Look! Tatars have not lost
Their tradition and their way of life,
anywhere!
Deported from their motherland and
tormented,
With death they struggled, and they
starved.
But look, Tatars righteously,
Their objectives they reached and their goal
they obtained!
They endured thousands of obstacles,

In a cauldron of tortures they boiled.
But look, even during the harshest time,
To "Xaytarma" [1] they still danced.
In many different lands they were forced to
settle,
They made adjustments to different foods.
But look, even then Tatars were able to
feast,
On Kalakay [2] and Çiborek [3] at their
homes.
Strong enough to squeeze water out of
stone,
They turned dust into gold.
But really look, when they speak their
native tongue,
The coldest heart even softened and melted
away.
[Crimean] Tatars, of course, will always be
Tatars,
They just have to feel it in their bones.
But look, how wonderful it will be,
When Crimean Tatars can reside in their
Crimea, their homes.

New York, 1990

English translation by Mubeyyin Altan.

[1] "Xaytarma" is the national dance of
Crimean Tatars.

[2] "Kalakay" is a special Crimean Tatar
bread.

[3] "Çibörek" is a popular dish, turnovers
filled with ground beef and deep fried.

Source:

<https://iccrimea.org/literature/fazil.html>

*In: *Qırımtatar Ressamları*, edited by İsmet
Zaatov. Simferopol, 2008, p. 165.



Illustration: "Spring in Crimea" by V. Eremenko.

NAVREZ (Nowruz)

By Rıza Fazıl

*The arrival of Spring is celebrated by many
peoples in the world, including the Crimean
Tatars. Known as "Nowruz" or "Navrez" in
Crimean Tatar, the occasion is marked by
festive events and gatherings of families
and friends. It is a time for friendship,
renewal and joy.*

When the plow is lodged into the misty soil,
And the shepherd drives his flock to the
desert,

I rejoice seeing the early appearance of
NAVREZ,

Seeing the smiling sun's greeting life.

NAVREZ is the first step taken towards the
fields,

It lets you appreciate the gratifying feelings
of labor,

NAVREZ, it is the celebration of spring for
us,

As the most pleasant sentiments begin with
NAVREZ.

I walk around envying the world that day,
I smell the fragrance of spring everywhere,

NAVREZ, it brings beauty to the homeland,
Since my youth I have been in love with her.

English translation by Mubeyyin Altan.

The original version in Crimean Tatar:

Buvlanğan topraqqa sançılsa saban,
Çöllerge qoyların aydasa çoban.
Sevinem körüp men, Navrez kelgenin,
Ayatnı selâmlap küneş külgenin.
Navrez - o tarlağa birinci adım,
Yürekten sezdire hoş yemek dadın.
Navrez - o ilk baar bayramı bizde,
Eñ hoşnut duyğular başlay Navrezde.
Şu künü dünyağa suqlanıp kezem,
Er yerde ilk baar qoqusın sezem.
Navrez o — ketire yurtqa yaraşıq,
Men oña yaşlıqtan olğanım aşıq.

Source: *Yanı Dünya* (Simferopol), 21 March 2009.

See also:

<https://iccrimea.org/reports/navrez.html>



Illustration: "Crimean Lowland," by the Russian painter Nikanor Chernetsov. Wikimedia Commons.

DEDICATED TO THE BRIGHT MEMORY OF MY MOTHER MAKSUDE

By Lenifer Mambetova

A poem by Lenifer Mambetova about the homeland Crimea and beautiful Crimean countryside. A prize-winning Crimean Tatar poetess, Mambetova lives in Simferopol. The tragic loss of homeland and the yearning for Crimea are themes of her poetry.

The Crimean evening. Pink Distances.
A day falls slowly asleep.
And with aquamarine sadness
Houses in Tatar villages stand.

Flattened wings of a magic bird,
Flying over the Qyshqara village.
It strains its body from the effort,
While crying in a child's ringing voice:

"Hello, my native land!
There once lived my kartbaba.
I don't need any outlands"
And the earth answered: "Hello!..."

Majestic mountains nod to me,
Fields demand grassy admiration.

And high seas say:
"Remember, this is your homeland! ..."

Sleep melted. Gently touching
My mother's cheek to my cheek:
"My daughter - the sun has woken up,"
My mother's hand dandled me ...

English translation from the original Russian
by Translation Center "Altima Group."

Source: *My Homeland, Oh My Crimea*.
United Kingdom, 2015, page 68.



Illustration: "Coming Back," a painting by Irfan Nafiyev.*

MY GRANDFATHER LYATIF

By Lenifer Mambetova

Another poem by Mambetova. It is dedicated to her grandfather, who was a good and respectable man; and yet he was deported and died away from home.

Gray trees look like shades,
I see grandfather's house in the mist.
A quiet Tatar village means to me
A holy and a sacred place ...

The years have passed.
The world seems so fragile,
My memory of the deserts like a myth.
For a moment, I hear the sounds of a violin,
Here is the place where grandpa lived.
His name was Lyatif.

My mother used to tell me about grandpa,
That he was wise and frank: and honest man,
He used to teach children the Koran:
They came from Tartar farms to learn from him.

He worked as teacher in a Tatar school,
While being a loving husband and a dad,
He used to truly love our Crimean land,
And was sincere in his nature to all around him.

Now I recall these stories once again,
I feel deep sorrows and grief,
I want so badly, my grandpa Lyatif,
To come to you and then to kiss your hand

These beams of sunshine are quietly going down
Grandfather's house seems closer in the fume.

Now I regret one thing - that his tomb
Is on non-native and foreign grounds ...

English translation from the original Russian
by Translation Center "Altima Group."

Source: Lenifer Mambetova, *My Homeland, Oh My Crimea*. United Kingdom: Herfordshire Press, 2015, pages 106-107.

*In: *Qırımtatar Ressamları*, edited by Ismet Zaatov. Simferopol, 2008, p.119.

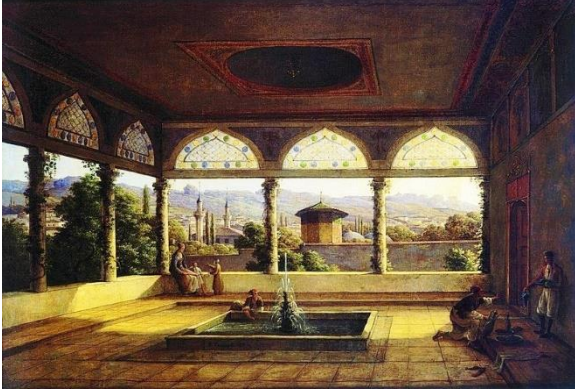


Illustration: "View of the Bakhchisarai Palace" by Nikanor G. Chernetsov. Wikimedia Commons.

BAKHCHISERAI BY NIGHT

By Adam Mickiewicz

No poetry collection relating to Crimea and Crimean Tatars would be complete without a poem about Bakhchisaray (Bahçesaray). The well-known Polish poet Adam Mickiewicz visited Crimea in 1825. This is one of the two poems he wrote about the famous seat of the Crimean Khanate. Mickiewicz describes a peaceful evening scene in Bakchisaray and alludes to the splendor and might of the past rulers of the Khanate.

From out the mosques the pious wend their way;
 Muezzin voices tremble through the night;
 Within the sky the pallid King of Light
 Wraps silvered ermine round him while he may,
 And Heaven's harem greets its star array.
 One lone white cloud rests in the azure height—
 A veiled court lady in some sorrow's plight—
 Whom cruel love and day have cast away.
 The mosques stand there; and here tall cypress trees;

There—mountains, towering, black as demons frown,
 Which Lucifer in rage from God cast down.
 Like sword blades lightning flickers over these,
 And on an Arab steed the wild Khan rides
 Who goes to Bakhchiserai which night hides.

English translation by Edna Worthley Underwood.

Source: Project Gutenberg

<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/27069/27069-h/27069-h.htm...>

Crimean Tatar translation by Şakir Selim:

BAĞÇASARAY GECESİ

Namaz bitti, ses-şamata yatışmaқта,
 Sakinlikke sinip ketti ezan sesi;
 Tıñ gecenin kümüş tüslü padişası
 Al ufuqqa - yaresine aşırmaқта.
 Koknin harem yıldızları milt-milt yana;
 Bir bulutçiq kezip yüre aqçıl çıray,
 Dersin aqquş göl içinde yuqusıray,
 Aq gerdanı altın suvnen yaldızlana.
 Yol üstünde kolge taşlay bir kiparis,
 Minareler etrafında qaya-dağlar,
 Dersin sarıp alğan dehşet qara İblis.
 Birden közni küçlü şemşek qamaştırı,
 Dağlar üzre keçip Faris şiddetle
 Gecenin zift qaranlığın aydaştırı.
 Adam Mickiewicz

Source: Adam Mikiewicz, *Sonety Krymskie. Qırım Sonetleri*. Warszawa, 1996, p. 21.

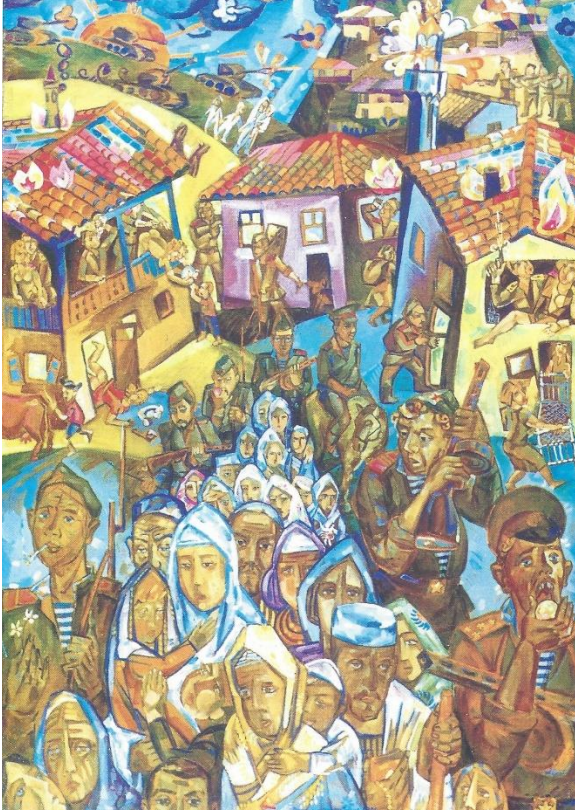


Illustration: "Eviction of the Crimean Tatar people," 1994, by Ismet Veliullayev.*

COMMUNIST BANDIT

By Adnan Onart

An award winning poem by Adnan Onart, "Communist Bandit" refers to the ruthless nature of the deportation of Crimean Tatars in 1944 -- no one was spared, even the partisan "heroes" with Soviet medals.

Thousands of Crimean Tatar men serving in the Soviet Army were also sent to places of exile. This poem won an award at the Third Annual Nazim Hikmet Poetry Festival in Cary, North Carolina, in 2011.

18 May 1944, 12 am, Bahçesaray, Crimea.
For Bekir Osmanov

His picture had sprouted all over the town,
on the walls of the city hall,
at the entrance of the mosque,
even in the small coffee houses, as if to

celebrate the early summer
in all languages: in Russian, Tatar
and of course, German:

COMMUNIST BANDIT. MOST WANTED!

His eyes wide open – astonished
at the listed reward.

His rescue of the three partisans
from a Gestapo prison in the North
in the middle of a snow storm,
had brought him the highest of his honors:

*Partisan of the Patriotic War – First Class
and a bullet – a mother's prayer away from
his spine.*

Only a year later,
when crammed into the cattle car
by the NKVD agents, next to me,
he immediately kissed my hand:

*Don't worry, dede, he said.
They'll understand soon,
this is a terrible mistake.*

As soon as they closed the door though,
he started to cry:

*Nazi collaborator,
enemy of the proletariat, he sobbed.
How can I take that?*

His medals were stripped away,
but the bullet next to his spine
stayed forever there.

Source:

<http://www.afterallpoetry.org/poems/communist-bandit>

*In: *Crimean Tatar Artists*, Ismet Zaatov,
comp., Simferopol, 2008, p. 127.



Illustration: Ivan Aivazovsky, "Sea Coast," 1886. Wikimedia Commons.

BOLSHEVISM AND THE FISH

By Adnan Onart

On 23 February 1918, Numan Çelebicihan, beloved leader of Crimean Tatars, was executed by the Bolshevik command of the Black Sea Fleet in Sevastopol, Crimea. His body was thrown into sea. In "Bolshevism and the Fish," Adnan Onart imagines how this tragic event might have taken place on the shores of the Black Sea.

February 23, 1918, On a cliff overlooking the Black Sea

"You've heard the orders," said the one;
"The orders from the mouth of a drunken man are not orders," replied the other.

There laid Numan Çelebi Cihan,
the first president of the Tatar Crimean's.
Naked, except for one shoe,
his chest black-red.
Two holes: one over his eyebrow, left,
the other right in the middle of his
forehead.

"Orders are orders," insisted the one
with the kitchen knife in his hand.
"We are butchers as he said;

we do this kind of thing for a living.
For our own survival,
we need to do what he said."

The other did not have a knife.
"The man is dead as a stone.
Cutting him into pieces
will not make the son of a bitch deader."

"But the fish," replied the other.
"Ain't we, Bolsheviks the friends
of the oppressed and the fish."
They were not drunk, but they laughed.

That night, Çelebi Cihan's mother
recited the most forceful prayer of her life,
not for the soul, but for the safe
(maybe even glorious) return of her son.
That night, the Black Sea
did not get any blacker.

Boston, 2001

Source: Adnan Adam Onart, *The Passport You Asked For*. Nicosia: The Aelos Press, 2006, p. 96-97.



Illustration: Musa Mamut, RFE/RFL

LENIN HOSPITAL

By Adnan Onart

This poem by Adnan Adam Onart is about Musa Mamut (1931-1978), a Crimean Tatar martyr. He drenched himself with gasoline and lit a match, while a policeman waited to take him to the police station. Musa Mamut became a legendary figure, representing the utmost love for one's homeland and a symbol for the Crimean Tatars who yearned to return to homeland Crimea at any cost.

*"Lenin Hospital" is a part of a trilogy of poems about Musa Mamut. "The Barn" is given below and "The Police Station" are included in Onart's book of poetry, *The Passport You Asked For*, 2006.*

23 June 1978, Besh-Terek, Crimea

*Musa, my Musa,
spirit of my spirit,
life giver to my children,
the flame of our righteous fight!*

*Woman, interrupts the man in white,
can you positively identify the corpse?*

The woman turns around,
looks the coroner in the eyes,
without a touch of hesitation.
Yes, she replies, *this is my Musa all right.*

*How, asks the coroner astonished,
how can you tell?*

She becomes silent for a moment,
then gets closer to the rusty,
metallic tray,
points to a tiny cloud of ashes
rising from a hole –
in what used to be three hours ago –
the chest of a human body.
*His heart, she says,
can't you see, his heart still burning
for Crimea,
our stolen ancestral land.*

*Pathetic Tatar, murmurs the coroner,
pushes the drawer
back into the refrigerator,
closes the door,
verifies the latch
and quickly fills out the form:*

CAUSE OF DEATH:

Combustion, self-inflicted

DEGREE OF BURNS:

Fourth degree – 90%

IDENTIFICATION:

Negative

NOTE:

*Even his wife could not recognize the
dead.*

Source: Adnan Adam Onart, *The Passport You Asked For*. Nicosia: The Aelos Press, 2006, p. 84-85.



Illustration: Private collection.

ÇİĞBÖREK, ÇİĞBÖREK [cheeboerek]

By Adnan Onart

A poem about the most famous Crimean Tatar dish.

Şehremini, İstanbul's Tatar neighborhood, early 50's

Mother softly sings along
with a barely audible tune from the radio,
which fills the room with what is almost a
melody,
disrupted with static and scratchy sounds.
“Zekiye,” exclaims my Grandma, kneading,
and wakes my mother from her floating
dreams: “Listen to my instructions,
watch carefully what I do.”
She adjusts her scarf with the back of her
hand.
“Our farm near Bahçesaray mocked the
horizons, our orchard invented each spring
new colors for figs, new flavors
for blackberries and peaches!”
She pushes her fist into the shapeless
dough.
“O those corrupt traitors with paunches
deeper than bottomless pits!
Our Khan should have poured molten lava,
– as your late father used to say –
down their treacherous throats.”
Her hands are covered with white flour,
gobs of dough stuck to her fingers.
“The way I mix this minced beef,

the way I mold this dough, this simple dish,
Çiğbörek,
with its noble celestial shape is the only
thing left to us from our beloved land, our
Crimea.”

My Grandma turns off the radio.
Half an hour later, they'll walk
into our dining room carrying together
a tray of heaped half-moons
to a table surrounded by the whole family:
Father, my two older brothers and three
young sisters
aunts, uncles, husbands, wives, and kids,
and also the four young students
living next door far away from their homes,
are silent as athletes at a starting-line,
not only eyes, but bodies and souls
fixed to the exact spot where the immense
plate is going to land,
tense so as not to be one second late
in responding to grandma's magical words
“Bereketli bolsın! Abundance to this table,
blessings to you all! “

And for a moment we all be transformed
into nothing but hungering mouths. No
thoughts of Bahçesaray.
No cares for the orchards mocking the
horizon.
No one will cry for awhile
for our lost ancestral land, Crimea.

Source: [After All \[Adnan Adam Onart\] Poetry - Çiğbörek \(afterallpoetry.org\)](https://afterallpoetry.org)



Illustration: "Wood Lark" by Frederick .W. Frohawk (FineRarePrints.com)

BOZTURGAY

By Adnan Onart

The poem "Bozturgay," which means Woodlark, is not about a bird but about a group of Crimean Tatars who are being deported from Crimea. Under duress, they wonder where they are being taken to and start singing the popular Crimean Tatar song "Boztorgay." As the poem suggests, in our darkest moments we find comfort in our cultural traditions.*

18 May 1944, 10 pm, Bahçesaray Train Station,
Crimea

Then a silence as absolute as darkness.
"Where are they taking us," asked a woman's voice from the opposite corner.
Then silence again.
"To Siberia," replied a man's voice somewhat closer to me.
"They are going to warm the frozen skies with Tatar ashes!"
Then silence.
"Crematoria express," murmured a younger voice,
"Crematoria express."
"Crematoria express," echoed multiple

voices.
"Crematoria express," someone chuckled.
Then another.
Then another.
Before long the whole car was shaking with our laughter.
Then silence.
Then we started to sing "Bozturgay," that silly song about a bird.

Source:

<https://www.afterallpoetry.org/poems/bozturgay>

*Woodlark (*Lullula arborea*) is a European songbird that lives in open spaces sparsely populated with trees. It is known for its melodious song.

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After All [Adnan Adam Onart] Poetry: <https://www.afterallpoetry.org/>