

Оригинальная статья / Original paper

<https://doi.org/10.22378/2313-6197.2025-13-4.888-900>

EDN: МНУТТИ

УДК 94(477.75)"15"+94(47).031+327(091)

CRIMEAN KHAN MEHMED GİRAY'S ATTEMPT TO REVIVE THE GOLDEN HORDE

Serkan Acar

Ege University

İzmir, Türkiye

serkan.acar@ege.edu.tr

Abstract. In the middle of the 15th century, the Golden Horde began to disintegrate, and the Tatar khanates emerged from its remnants. These khanates, which were struggling among themselves, were also in competition with the Grand Duchy of Moscow. In fact, at the end of the 15th century, there were three major power centers in Eastern Europe: the Crimean Khanate, the Grand Duchy of Moscow, and the Kingdom of Lithuania-Poland. In addition, after the conquest of Istanbul, the political balance north of the Black Sea changed and the Crimean Khanate became an Ottomans vassal in 1475. Mengli Giray, who stayed in Istanbul for a while and knew the Ottomans well, followed a balancing policy of his own and acted cautiously. However, his passionate and energetic successor, Mehmed Giray, aspired to revive the Golden Horde and did not hesitate to confront both the Ottoman Empire and the Grand Duchy of Moscow. He succeeded in briefly seizing the Kazan and Astrakhan khanates. However, it became clear that the political conjuncture of the period was not suitable for reviving the Golden Horde. Mehmed Giray ultimately paid the price of this great and courageous initiative with his life.

Keywords: Mehmed Giray, Crimean Khanate, Grand Duchy of Moscow, Ottoman Empire, Kingdom of Lithuania-Poland

For citation: Acar S. Crimean khan Mehmed Giray's attempt to revive the Golden Horde. *Zolotoordynskoe obozrenie=Golden Horde Review*. 2025, vol. 13, no. 4, pp. 888–900. <https://doi.org/10.22378/2313-6197.2025-13-4.888-900>

By the middle of the 15th century, the political stability in the Golden Horde had come to an end and the signs of disintegration became increasingly apparent. Independent states known as the Tatar Khanates emerged in the vast territory of the empire. The Kazan, Crimean, Qasim, Astrakhan and Sibir Khanates were governed by dynasties descended from Chinggis Khan. The situation of the Nogai Horde, which continued its activities in the same period, was different. These khanates, which were the second-generation successors of the Mongol Empire, were struggling with the Russians who were starting to gain strength, while competing with each other. The Ottoman Empire also intervened in the political events taking place in the north of the Black Sea from 1475 onwards. The Crimean Khanate, on the

© Acar S., 2025



Контент доступен под лицензией Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 License.
The content is available under the license Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 License.

other hand, was forced to recognize the supreme authority of the rapidly developing and expanding Ottomans shortly after its establishment.

The first rulers of the Chinggisid lineage who founded the Tatar khanates generally claimed to revive the Golden Horde and restore its former power. However, the polarizations between these states became increasingly intense and the Russians also got involved in these power struggles. Finally, in 1502, the Crimean Khanate, which made an alliance with the Grand Duchy of Moscow, dealt the final blow to the Golden Horde, which was already de facto disintegrating and fragmenting. Thus, the state in question came to an end legally and officially. However, it was hardly possible for a great state like the Golden Horde, which ruled Eastern Europe for approximately two and a half centuries and shaped many political formations around it, to be forgotten so quickly by its successors. Indeed, the idea of reviving this empire of the Chinggisid lineage continued definitively until the first quarter of the 16th century. It was also continued in later periods as a romantic ideal. Was it really possible to breathe a new life into the corpse of the Golden Horde, which had ceased to exist both in practice and in law? History has proven that the efforts made in this direction were futile. However, the determined initiatives undertaken by the powerful Crimean Khan Mehmed Giray, in his attempt to restore the Golden Horde, are certainly worthy of remembrance.

Mehmed Giray was the grandson of Hacı Giray, the founder of the Crimean Khanate, and the son of Mengli Giray, the father-in-law of Selim I. When Mengli Giray died in 1515, his son ascended to the Crimean throne that was vacated by him. According to Abdullah İbn Rıdvan, the author of the *Tevârih-i Deşt-i Kıpçak*, he had acquired the title of khan by the honourable order of the sultan (*ferman-ı âlî-şan ile han-ı zîşan olmuş*) [1, p. 26]. However, this statement of the Ottoman author who wrote his work in the 17th century needs to be questioned because it is known from historical sources that he was persona non grata in Istanbul. Mehmed Giray, who was known for his open hostility towards Russia, contrary to his father Mengli Giray who followed a very balanced policy against the Ottoman Empire, the Kingdom of Lithuania-Poland and the Grand Duchy of Moscow, was an extremely energetic, ambitious and passionate person. His open opposition to the Grand Duchy of Moscow before he even ascended to the throne and his organization of plundering raids naturally disturbed the Russian authorities. In addition, when Selim I went from Türkiye to Crimea to seize the Ottoman throne while he was a prince, a personal enmity arose between him and Mehmed Giray [4, p. 108–109].

This enmity was never forgotten within the Ottoman court. So much so that even in the works written in the 18th century, negative views were written about the khan. In fact, he was openly insulted and slandered. In fact, Seyyid Mehmed Rıza did not refrain from using the following harsh words about him when he was writing the famous Crimean history: “At that time, the khan had a son named Mehmed Giray, who had no successor. His nature was inclined to evil and quarrelsome. He had gained a reputation for his stupidity and mischief. He was the most distinguished of the disgraced”¹ [19, p. 113].

On the other hand, the views of the Crimean history expert and orientalist Vasili Dmitrievich Smirnov, who lived in the second half of the 19th century and

¹ “Ol zamânda hânın Mehmed Girây adlu bir ferzend-i nâ-halefî var idi. Tabî‘atı şerr ü şûra mâ‘il şanı humk u fesâd kendü zübde-i erâzil idi” [see 19, p. 113].

the first quarter of the 20th century, are somewhat different: “It is not possible to think that Selim I, when he was at odds with his father because of the throne and was a young adventurer, forgot the behaviour Mehmed Giray had shown him, changed his feelings towards him and trusted him. But time did not wait for the results of the showdown between these two who did not like each other. Because both of them did not live long, but Selim I died before, and thus a new period began in the history of the Crimean Khanate during the reign of Suleiman the Magnificent” [20, p. 244]. Although the famous historian shares this view, the situation was not like this at all. Because after Selim I died, the hatred towards Mehmed Giray within the Ottoman court did not end, but rather grew exponentially during the reign of Suleiman the Magnificent. Therefore, the distrust felt towards this Crimean Khan, who was undoubtedly a talented ruler, was obvious. This situation later became a bad memory from the Ottoman Empire's point of view and took its place in history.

After the Golden Horde was destroyed, the political balance in Eastern Europe changed and—former alliances disintegrated. Three important power centers emerged in the region due to the newly established order. These were the Crimean Khanate, the Grand Duchy of Moscow and the Kingdom of Lithuania-Poland. In addition, after the conquest of Istanbul by the Turks, the Ottoman Empire's influence in the north of the Black Sea naturally increased. Although the discussions on the conditions under which the Ottomans intervened in Crimea continue to some extent, Halil İnalcık's views on this issue are decisive: “We can definitely say that Mehmed the Conqueror took advantage of the internal conflicts in Crimea in the summer of 1475 to conquer Caffa and other ports, that the Giray's Crimea, who wanted to see stability in the khanate and were afraid of the attacks of the Golden Horde at that time, accepted his protection on their own and that the new situation was regulated by a certain agreement signed between the two parties” [8, p. 489].

Shortly after the final blow was dealt to the Golden Horde as a result of the alliance between the Crimean Khanate, which was under Ottoman protection, and the Grand Duchy of Moscow, Mengli Giray, who evaluated the changing political situation mentioned above, soon realized that he could no longer trust the Russians. This is clearly shown in a letter he wrote to the Khan of Kazan, Muhammed Emin, in the last years of his reign, in 1513 [22, p. 362]. In fact, this was one of the reasons why he left the administration of the Crimean Khanate to his son Mehmed Giray, who was an enemy of Russia. Immediately after ascending to the Crimean throne, in 1515, as the new ruler of the khanate, the latter sent a large delegation of envoys to Poland and wanted to confirm and renew the agreements made during the time of his father [17, p. 287–288]. Known for his opposition to the Russians, the Poles welcomed his request.

The borders of the Crimean Khanate and the area of sovereignty of the khan during the time of Mehmed Giray are also a matter of debate. According to Vladimir Yevgenevich Syroechkovsky, the homeland that passed from father to son included all the properties of the Crimean khans and princes, but the cities that were former Genoese colonies, namely the port cities in the south of the khanate, were not under control Mehmed Giray. In fact, this region had come under the rule of the Ottoman sultan since 1475. Therefore, the khan only had the steppe region of Crimea and the northern slopes of the Crimean Mountains [21, p. 4]. However, the

Crimean khan, who wanted to expand towards the west, east and north, would realize this desire, albeit partially, in the last years of his reign [23, p. 26].

According to Ottoman sources, nine cities and castles located on the coast of Crimea were the property of the Turkish sultan. These were offered to Mengli Giray as a bribe by the Amasya ruler, Şehzade Ahmed, during the period when Selim I was struggling with his brothers to sit on the Ottoman throne. In return, he was asked to detain or kill his brother Selim I in Crimea. Although Mengli Giray, who was experienced and insightful and knew the Ottoman Empire well, did not accept this offer, the proposal seemed reasonable to his young son Mehmed Giray, who was in the position of *kalgay* at the time² [5, p. 67]. One of the reasons why both Selim I and Suleiman the Magnificent, who followed his father's cause, did not forgive the khan after he sat on the Ottoman throne was this negative attitude he adopted.

From the end of the 15th century onwards, envoys had begun to exchange between the Ottoman Empire and the Grand Duchy of Moscow. On March 15, 1515, Grand Duke Vasili III sent his envoy Vasili Andreevich Koborov to Istanbul. The Russians, who aimed to find a strong ally against the Crimean Khanate and the Kingdom of Lithuania-Poland and thus to gain supremacy in Eastern Europe, tried to draw the Ottoman Empire to their side. On the other hand, the Moscow administration, which did not sever its relations with the Crimean Khanate, sent an envoy to Crimea in the second half of the same year to present the khan with a letter of friendship from the Grand Duke. However, the real purpose of this envoy was to hold meetings with Tatar statesmen who supported Moscow, especially Appak Mirza, to gather information and to bring together the opponents of Mehmed Giray [4, p. 110].

The Kingdom of Lithuania-Poland had repelled the Crimean Tatars' attacks with the annual taxes and tributes it paid. If it wanted to prevent plundering raids, the Grand Duchy of Moscow had to make payments as well. Indeed, the Crimean authorities openly conveyed these demands to the Russian envoy. The following words from Appak Mirza's mouth, recorded by the Russians between July and September 1515, are significant: "And when the winter comes and the rivers freeze, they will send those people back beyond the Dnieper, and they will cooperate with the [Lithuanian-Polish] king, and you will be hostile to them; but if you send a treasure-just as the king has done-through an honest envoy, they will know that you and them are on good terms"³ [18, p. 168]. Appak Mirza also stated that if they helped the king to capture Moscow, the tax they were paid would be doubled. From the perspective of the Moscow principality, the only way to break the influ-

² The letter sent by Şehzade Ahmed to Mengli Giray included the following statements: "Karındaşım Selim sizin cânibinize ilticâ eyledi. Maksûd-ı murâdı Rumili taraflarına ubûrdur. Hazret-i hanın muaveneti olmayınca iktidârı yokdur. İşte han hazretlerine fakîrâne tuhfemiz olsun... Umûmen Kefe vilayetinde vâki olan memleketler, mecmu-ı şehirleri ve kasabâtı hususâ birkaç pâre meşhûr ve nâm-dâr hisarlarıyla cümle sizin olsun. Mâlikâne tasarruf idin. Tek karındaşım ol canibe geçirmen" [see 5, p. 67].

³ The original text in Russian archive documents is as follows: "А как зима будетъ, и реки стануть, и имъ техъ людей за Днепръ перепроваживати; а съ королевемъ заодинъ будутъ, и тебе имъ недружба своя чинити; а толко пришлешъ своего доброго человека съ такою жъ казною, с какою король присылаеть, ино познають, межи васъ добро будетъ" [see 18, p. 168].

ence of the Kingdom of Lithuania-Poland was to pay more taxes to the Crimean Khanate than they did. However, the Russians, who thought that the Golden Horde's powerful days were over, paid tribute to Mehmed Giray, albeit reluctantly [11, p. 146].

In order to get rid of the tyranny of the Crimean Khanate, the Grand Duchy of Moscow tried to establish direct diplomatic relations with the Ottoman Empire during this period. The intensive exchange of envoys between the parties proves this. The Russians' strategy of bypassing the khan and reaching out directly to the Ottoman sultan was largely successful. Although the Crimean khan was aware that the trade between Istanbul and Moscow was conducted through cities under Ottoman rule such as Caffa and Azov, he had to tolerate this situation. Because Mehmed Giray had bad relations with Selim I and he did not want to anger the sultan further. It is obvious that the Russian administration, which was aware of the realities of this period and followed a meticulous and balanced policy in international relations, took sufficient advantage of the tension between the sultan and the khan. In the letters he sent, Grand Duke Vasili III wrote to the Crimean khan, although he addressed the khan as "The Great Tsar of the Great Horde, my brother Tsar Mehmed Giray"⁴ [18, p. 169] and mentioned the titles and epithets he wanted in official documents, he did not actually submit to the khan and did not recognize the political hierarchy of the Golden Horde period.

Mehmed Giray, who ruled over the Crimean Khanate, which was part of the Golden Horde, aimed to seize the Qasim, Kazan and Astrakhan Khanates and thus to collect the heritage of the Jochi Ulus under his own control. However, the Astrakhan Khanate and the Nogai Horde, which sided with the Grand Duchy of Moscow during this period, were a serious problem. According to Mehmed Giray, the Qasim Khanate, which was ruled by nobles belonging to the Crimean Khanate for twenty-six years between 1486 and 1512, was also the property of the Crimean khan. However, even during the time of Mengli Giray, Sheikh Avliyar, who was a descendant of the Saray khans and supported by the Grand Duchy of Moscow, seized the Qasim Khanate. This person was the grandson of the Golden Horde khan Küçük Muhammed and the son of Bahtiyar Sultan. Following this incident, Mengli Giray reminded the Russian envoy Mitya Ivanov, who came to Crimea, of the issue and expressed his complaint with the following words: "It used to be our homeland. How can you appoint our enemies over our men?" [2, p. 91–92]. Mehmed Giray understood that this problem, which was inherited from his father's reign, could not be solved through diplomatic means. Finally, in 1516, he took Hanzade Bahadır Giray with him and plundered the Qasim Khanate and the city of Ryazan. As a result of this great expedition, he left the sick and elderly prisoners he captured to die and returned to Crimea with a large number of captives and sold them in the slave market in Caffa⁵ [7, p. 42].

After this expedition, the Crimean Khanate's expectations from the Grand Duchy of Moscow can be summarized in four points: the prince's support in the expedition to Astrakhan, the dismissal of Qasim Khan Sheikh Avliyar, the release of Kazan Khan Abdüllatif, who was being held captive, and the increase in the

⁴ "Великие Орды великого царя брату Магмедъ-Киреа царя" [see 18, p. 169].

⁵ Although Hammer states that the number of prisoners was 108 thousand, it seems certain that this is an exaggerated figure.

amount of the annual tribute. The Moscow administration managed to fend off these demands with patience and tolerance, and gradually increased its influence in Eastern European politics. Michael Khodarkovsky's original observations on this issue are decisive: "Although generous payments from Poland were effective in obtaining the Crimeans for a short time, in the long run the Kingdom of Lithuania-Poland could not replace the strategic importance of the Grand Duchy of Moscow in the region. The Poles were far from being an active player in the rapidly changing politics of the steppe. However, Moscow controlled the Qasim and Kazan khanates, could easily influence the Nogais and could both strengthen and break the power of the Astrakhan Khanate, an enemy of Crimea" [11, p. 151–152].

The exchange of envoys between the Grand Duchy of Moscow and the Ottoman Empire, which was overwhelmed by Mehmed Giray's threats, continued unabated. In March 1520, a Russian envoy named Boris Golohvastov was sent to Istanbul. The real duty of the Moscow envoy, who complained about the Crimean khan to the Ottoman sultan, was to ensure that Himmet Giray, the son of Ahmed Giray, who was executed by Mehmed Giray for being a Russian supporter, was placed on the Crimean throne. If this plan could be put into practice, it was certain that the Grand Duchy of Moscow would be freed from the Crimean troubles. The proposal presented by the Russian envoy was also reasonable for the Ottoman Empire, which wanted to get rid of Mehmed Giray. Although Selim I passed away in the autumn of the same year and was succeeded by his son Suleiman the Magnificent, there was no change in the Ottomans' Crimean policy. Because the new sultan also had negative feelings towards the khan and was a direct witness to many incidents related to him [2, p. 111].

In fact, not only the Crimean Khan Mehmed Giray but also the Moscow Grand Prince Vasili III considered himself the heir of the Golden Horde. Indeed, he managed to place the puppet khans he wanted on the thrones of Qasim and Kazan. It is known that the Moscow princes had no ethnic or religious ties with the Golden Horde khans, but this issue of successor and predecessor should be taken seriously. In this context, the political and cultural effects of the Golden Horde on the Russians should be meticulously examined and the issue of how long-term coexistence shaped the Moscow administration should not be ignored. However, this issue is the subject of another study.

Continuing his policy of establishing direct relations with the Ottoman sultan, Grand Prince Vasili III sent his envoy Tretiak Gubin to Istanbul in 1521. The main purpose of the Russian envoy was to prevent the plundering raids organized by Mehmed Giray and his son in Russia. If the Ottomans brought up the pressure exerted by Moscow against the Kazan Khanate, an Islamic land, the Russian envoy would provide the necessary explanation and say that they had not harmed the Muslim population living there; a letter was even prepared to this effect. This letter, sent by Grand Prince Vasili III to Suleiman the Magnificent through his envoy and in which he denied the Crimean khan's claims regarding the Kazan Tatars, has survived to the present day and contains important information:

Now, according to what our sovereign heard, Tsar Mehmed Giray claimed in a letter to the sultan that the land of Kazan was his *yurt* (homeland) that our sovereign had made his enemy Şah Ali the tsar of Kazan, that he had ordered the destruction of their masjids (*mizgits*) and the construction of their own Christian churches and the hanging of bells in them. The Crimeans, just as in the past, delib-

erately lied and spoke false words, and now they do not hesitate to lie and speak such false words, considering Kazan as their *yurt*, but Kazan was not their *yurt* in the past, on the contrary, there were independent tsars in Kazan: Mahmutek and his son İbrahim were the tsars of Kazan, and after İbrahim, his son Muhammed Emin became the tsar, and by the grace of God, the Sovereign and Grand Prince of All Rus' submitted to our father Ivan. And the Sovereign and Grand Prince of All Rus', our sovereign father Ivan, by the grace of God, with his own hands made Muhammed Emin tsar of Kazan, and he remained there, subject to our sovereign father in every respect. And after that our sovereign father ordered Muhammed Emin Tsar to remain with him, and he placed his brother Abdullatif as tsar on the throne of Kazan with his own hands. And after that our sovereign father ordered Abdullatif Tsar to remain with him, and he placed Muhammed Emin Tsar again on the throne of Kazan, and Muhammed Emin Tsar remained subject to our sovereign in every respect until the end of his life. And when God's command was fulfilled and Muhammed Emin Tsar died, the *seyyids*, the *oğlans*, the *knyazs* [*begs*], the *içkis*, the *mirzas*, and all Kazan land submitted to our sovereign, asking him to appoint a tsar in Kazan. And our Sovereign Vasili, the Sovereign and Grand Prince of All Rus', by the grace of God, granted them Şah Ali Tsar as the tsar of Kazan and made him the tsar of this *yurt*, because the old tsars of this *yurt* were also subject to our sovereign. And our sovereign did not order them to destroy the masjids and did not order them to build churches and the bells were not rung there, and their masjids are still in their place as before, and all these nonsense words are uttered by the Crimeans"⁶ [18, p. 695–696].

⁶ “Ныне слышание у государя нашего, что Магмед-Гирей царь писал к салтану в своей грамоте, что будто казанская земля юрт их, и на Казани учинил государь наш царем Шыг-Алея царя недруга их и мизгити их будто государь наш велел разорити, а там велел церкви свои крестиянские поставити, да и колоколы будто велел повесити. Ино как наперед того крымцы неправыми своими умышлениями вставляли неправые слова, так и ныне не престанут ото лживых слов, такие неправые слова говорят, а называют Казань своею, ино изначала Казань юрт не их, а были на Казани опришние цари, царь был на Казани Мамутек, да сын его Ибреим, а опосле Ибреима сын его Магмед-Аминь бил челом отцу государя нашего Ивану Божьею милостью государю всеа Руси и великому князю. И отец государя нашего Иван Божьею милостию государь всеа Руси и великий князь учинил на Казани царем Магмед-Аминя царя из своих рук, и он там был, а во всей воле был отца государя нашего. А опосле того отец государя нашего Магмед-Аминю царю велел у себя быти, а на Казань посадил брата его Абдыллетифа царя из своих же рук, а опосле того Абдыллетифу царю отец государя нашего велел у себя быти, а на Казани посадил опять Магмед-Аминя царя, да и до своего живота Магмед-Аминь царь был во всей воле государя нашего; а как Божья воля ссталася, Магмед-Аминя царя в животе не стало, ино сеит в головах и уланы и князи и ички и мырзы и вся земля казанская государю нашему били челом, чтоб государь наш пожаловал дал на Казань царя, и государь наш Василей Божиею милостию государь всеа Руси и великий князь дал им на Казань царем Шыг-Алея царя и учинил его на том юрте царем, потому же как были на том юрте те прежние цари во государя нашего воле, а мизгитей им государь наш не веливал рушивати и церквей ставити не веливал, и звону тамо не бывало, и мизгити их по старому стоят, ино то крымцы все речи безлепичные выставляють” [see 18, p. 695–696].

As can be seen, this letter, which was in Russian but also included some Turkish words, was essentially a defence text⁷. According to the Russians there was no historical basis for Mehmed Giray's claim over the Kazan Khanate because no Crimean nobleman had sat on the Kazan throne until that point. However, as mentioned above, the Qasim Khanate had been ruled by the *Girays* for a period. There was really no question of destroying the masjids and building churches in Kazan at that time. However, since the Ottoman Empire was the patron of the entire Islamic world, this issue was specifically stated due to the sensitivity of the issue. The fact that Şah Ali, a member of the Saray dynasty, which had hostility with the Crimean khans, was made the Kazan khan was supposedly done in accordance with the request of the Kazan people. It is clear that the history of the Kazan Khanate was completely distorted in the letter and told from a Russian point of view. It was not right to show that the region had been under Russian rule since the earliest times. As for the reports sent by the Crimean Khan Mehmed Giray to Istanbul about Moscow, they were emphasized as false reports aimed at inciting the Ottoman Empire against the Russians.

According to Akdes Nimet Kurat, who evaluated the letter in question: "There was no need for the Russian envoy to explain all these details and convince the Turks because neither the grand vizier nor any other Turkish statesman asked Tretiak Gubin anything about the Kazan Khanate. Moscow's concerns about this issue were completely unfounded. Suleiman the Magnificent, who succeeded Selim I, does not seem to have even considered a tiny Islamic state in the north; he had much more attractive ambitions in other areas, the Balkans, the Aegean Sea and Central Europe. It is understood that Tretiak Gubin left Istanbul completely satisfied and when he returned to Moscow, he explained that the Turkish sultan had no interest in Kazan, thus alleviating all concerns of Prince Vasili III" [13, p. 72].

Although there is some truth in some of the issues stated by Akdes Nimet Kurat, it is not entirely possible to agree with all of her views. Because the primary reason the Ottoman administration did not put pressure on the Russian envoy and ignored some issues was that they wanted to somehow remove Mehmed Giray from the throne of the Crimean Khanate. The fact that the Russian envoy was not humiliated in Istanbul and left the capital satisfied was related to the Crimean khan being declared *persona non grata* by both the Ottoman Empire and the Grand Duchy of Moscow during this period. In addition, the fact that the Ottoman Empire and the Crimean Khanate were on different sides in the political polarizations in Eastern Europe was also a plus. Therefore, this attitude taken against the common enemy caused some of Moscow's faults to be ignored. Because the sultan's main priority was to get rid of the Mehmed Giray problem as soon as possible.

The Ottoman Empire sent an envoy named Sinan Çavuş to Crimea at the same time to inform him of the accession of Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent. The khan and the Crimean statesmen were ordered to perform a funeral prayer in absentia for the late Selim I and to undertake charitable works. The Crimean khan also sent Abdurrahman Beg, known for his hostility towards Russia, to the Ottoman capital to

⁷ In this letter, which is among the documents dated between April and August 1521 in the printed Russian archive documents collection, words such as *sultan*, *yurt*, *mescid*, *seyyid*, *oğlan*, *içki* and *mirza* are recorded in Turkish, while the words *khan* and *beg* are translated into Russian and are replaced by the words *tsar* and *knyaz*. The title of *Sovereign and Grand Prince of All Rus'* used for Vasili III in the document and repeated three times, is his official title. For a correct but nuanced English translation of this document, [see 15, p. 70].

congratulate the new sultan, and referred to the good relations in the past and asked for forgiveness for not being able to come and offer his servitude in person [6, p. 502–503]. Although the tension between the sultan and the khan was well-known to both parties, these rituals were performed for political reasons. However, the great hatred felt towards Mehmed Giray in the Ottoman capital did not end. In fact, according to Halil İnalcık who evaluated the northern policy of this period; “The Ottoman Empire considered the Grand Duchy of Moscow as an element of political balance in the north and also considered it a natural ally due to the wars it waged against the Kingdom of Lithuania-Poland. Mehmed Giray Khan expressed his loyalty to the sultan, but on the other hand, he renewed his alliance with the king of Lithuania-Poland, Sigismund, and launched a decisive attack against the Muscovites” [9, p. 356].

It is known that the Crimean khan wanted to develop political and commercial relations with the Kingdom of Lithuania-Poland during this period. In contrast, Suleiman the Magnificent made an official call to Mehmed Giray to conquer Hungary. Since the King of Hungary, Lajos II, was the nephew of Sigismund, the Ottoman administration thought that the Kingdom of Lithuania-Poland would support Hungary and expected help from the Crimean Khanate to prevent this. However, the Crimean Khan politely rejected the Ottomans' request by making some excuses. His reasons were as follows: The Polish king had been paying tribute to the Crimean Khan for a long time. Evliya Mirza, one of the leading figures of the Shirin clan, was held captive by the Polish people. The Crimean Khanate's old enemy, the former Golden Horde Khan Şeyh Ahmed, was also held captive by them as a threat. The Crimean khan sent his soldiers to the Kazan Khanate for help. Finally, if Mehmed Giray marched on the Kingdom of Lithuania-Poland, the Kazakhs and the Astrakhan Tatars could unite and occupy Crimea. But, according to the Polish historian Dariusz Kołodziejczyk, all but one of these five excuses put forward by the khan were lies. However, it was true that he sent troops here because he had sent his brother Sahib Giray to the throne of the Kazan Khanate. The Crimean khan, who had reached an agreement with the Kingdom of Lithuania-Poland and ignored the call of the Ottomans, accelerated his efforts to revive the Golden Horde, which was his greatest dream, between 1521-1523, taking advantage of the sultan's attempts to conquer Belgrade and Rhodes [12, p. 58-59].

It was not a coincidence that Mehmed Giray was the only one to use the title of “Great Khan of the Great Horde, Sultan of Desht-i Kipchak and All Mongols”⁸ [24, p. 2] in the decrees of the Crimean khans, which were actually decrees. We have also mentioned above that he was addressed as “Great Khan of the Great Horde” in Russian diplomatic documents.

After all, Mehmed Giray, who succeeded in placing his brother Sahib Giray on the throne of the Kazan Khanate in 1521, gradually increased his pressure on Russia. As is known, during this period, there was a relentless struggle between the Crimean Khanate and the Grand Duchy of Moscow to dominate the Volga basin. While this struggle, which was mostly fought to dominate Kazan, sometimes ended in favour of the Russians and sometimes in favour of the Tatars, the Crimean Khanate gained great superiority in Desht-i Kipchak politics with the accession of Sahib Giray, who was at least as powerful and capable as his older brother, to Kazan. Indeed, Mehmed Giray, who marched on Moscow with his brother in the same

⁸ “Ulu Ordanung Ulu Hanı Deşt-i Kıpçak Barça Mogol Padişahı” [see 24, p. 2].

year, inflicted great losses on the Russians in the battles. According to the agreement, Vasili III agreed to pay taxes to both the Crimean Khanate and the Kazan Khanate [3, p. 180].

As a result of this campaign, it was understood that the ghost of the Golden Horde had not yet fully withdrawn its hand from the Russian lands. In 1523, the Crimean khan marched on Astrakhan and captured the city after the Kazan Khanate. Apparently, he planned to place his son Bahadır Giray on the Astrakhan throne [25, p. 90-91]. However, Mehmed Giray's success was not permanent. Because during the Astrakhan siege, a secret plot was organized in Crimea to depose the khan. In addition to the Shirin begs, other tribal begs who had a say in the administration of the khanate also participated in this plot. Evliya Mirza, who was freed from the Kingdom of Lithuania and Poland, also joined these people. The Shirin begs sent a letter to Istanbul and openly declared that they had paid homage to Saadet Giray, who had previously gone to the capital with Selim I [12, p. 60].

In this letter, which angered Suleiman the Magnificent and has survived to this day, Mehmed Giray was accused of very serious accusations⁹. As can be seen, the letter claimed that Mehmed Giray met with Rafidhi Safavids day and night, displayed immoral behaviour, constantly drank alcohol, and oppressed statesmen and the people. It was also written that he sent spies to the Safavids, that he would seize the Astrakhan Khanate and make it the capital and make an alliance with the Shiites. With this document, in which the names of the Tatar aristocrats who complained about the Crimean khan were mentioned one by one, Saadet Giray, who

⁹ “Hazret-i sultân-ı azam-ı kâmyâb. Edamallahu ikbâlehû yevmi’l-hisab fahrû’s-selâtin sultân hazretlerinin hâkîpây-ı şerîfine yüzin koyub ubûdiyyet ettikten sonra marûz-ı muhibbâne ve îlâm-ı muhlisâne olunan oldur ki eğer bu muhibb-i muhlislerin tarafınızdan istifsâr olunursa bihamdülillah-i ve’l mennihi sağ ve salim-i devam-ı devletiniz ve kemâline bi’l-gudüvvi ve’l-âsâl mülazım bilünüb mustaribü’l-hâl ve münkesirü’l bâl olub yürürüz zirâ pâdişahımızın ker etmez olduğu gice ve gündüz revâfız Âcemleriyle dir musâhabet-i fıska başlayub içmekten başkaldırmaz memleketinin musâlahâ mühimmeleri fevt olur oldu ve oğlanların zulm ü cevri reâyâ üzerine vâfir olduğu sebebler ekâbir ve âyanın ve memleket ve reâyânın bi’t-tabi menfurı olub ayağıımıza düşdiler ve dahi iki kimesneyi Kızılbaş’a casus gönderdi âni bizden gayr-ı kimesne bilmez ve badehû cem-i memleketi Or Ağzı’ndan çıkarmak ister zira Hacı Tarhan’ı alıb taht idünüb Kızılbaş birle ittifak-ı bir etmekdir murâdları biz âna razı değilmiz âb-ı ecdâdımızın ol tarafa müteveccih olduğu yokdur ve hem hudâvendigâr hazretlerinin kullarımız nan ü nemegin basub âna asi olmak murâdımız değildir imdi siz padişahımızın oğlusuz hudâvendigâr hizmetinde yedi ve sekiz yıldan berü kulluğın idersiz ola ki bir gün hudâvendigârın eyyâm-ı devletinde ber-murâd olmak ümidiyle yürürsüz imdi gayret ve hamiyet idersiz bana ve paşaya rekîn-i emriniz üzerine olası zirâ bu tarafın mecmuası sizi talibdir ağam Ağış Beg ve ağam Hûdayâr ve inilerim Evliya Mirza ve Aydişke Mirza ve Tokuzek Mirza ve Ciharyâr Mirza kulunuz Cibân Giray ve Bağırgan ve Çağırgan mirzalar ve bundan gayrı ulu ve kiçi begler ve mirzalar oğlanlar da Abdullah Oğlan ve Mamış Oğlan ve begler de Mamış Beg ve Mangit’da Şah Mehmed Mirza ve Mehmed Sultan Mirza ve Bubey Mirza bu mecmuları Hak celle ve âlâdan sizi taleb iderler ve başlarını sizünçün ortaya koyub ittifaklarını bir idüb ahd ü yemin etdiler vallahi billahi tillaahi Hazret-i Resûlallah ruhiçün sözümüzde hilafımız yokdur ve eğer bu andlarımıza itimad olunmazsa hudâvendigâr hazreti sizi bu tarafa göndersün siz gelmeden ânların emrini hudâvendigâr eyyâm-ı tasarrufunda tamam idelüm Allah inâyetiyle ândan sonra bâki fermân dergâh-ı muallânızındır”. The original of this document, probably written in 1523, is in the Topkapı Palace Archives. A facsimile and French translation have been published [see 14, p. 106–108].

was in Istanbul, was invited to the Crimean throne. However, most of the allegations in question were open slander and most likely the Ottoman pashas in Crimea were also involved in the discrediting of the khan. When both the Russian and Ottoman documents are evaluated together, it is possible to say that Mehmed Giray fell victim to a plot jointly organized by the Grand Duchy of Moscow, the Ottoman State and the Crimean tribal aristocracy. It is known that the assassination of the khan was carried out by the Nogais.

The historical verdict given by the Russian historian Nikolai Mikhailovich Karamzin about Mehmed Giray is also noteworthy: “While the son of Canibek, who died in Astrakhan, was ruling, the khanate was seeking Russian protection but could not defend itself against Mehmed Giray’s aggression. The khan laid siege to Astrakhan and deposed Hüseyin. He captured this important trade city. However, he realized his long-standing ambition and became the ruler of the three khanates that were the successors of the Golden Horde: Crimea, Kazan and Astrakhan. His goal was to unite them into a single state. Thus, he would expand eastwards and capture the Nogai Horde, the Shibanids and the Siberian Khanate. He would also capture Khiva and threaten the West with a new barbarian invasion by extending from the Caspian Sea to Iran and then to Siberia” [10, p. 572]. But it is well known that these ambitions were later realized by the Russians.

As a result, the Crimean Khan Mehmed Giray tried hard to revive the Golden Horde. However, even when the international situation seemed favourable, the serious problems inherited from the empire could not be overcome. While the competition between the Crimean Khanate, the Grand Duchy of Moscow and the Kingdom of Lithuania-Poland continued intensely in Eastern Europe, the Ottoman Empire, the ruler of the khanate, was struggling with Christians in the Mediterranean World and the Balkans, with the Shiite Safavids in Eastern Anatolia and the Caucasus, and with the Sunni Mamluks in the Middle East and Egypt. It was not possible for the Ottomans to leave the Crimean Khanate unattended in such a situation. However, Mehmed Giray did not hesitate to act independently and, in fact, achieved some success by capturing both Kazan and Astrakhan. This era represented the peak of the khanate's political and military power. When Mehmed Giray died in 1523, the situation changed suddenly, and the expansion of the Crimean Khanate stopped. The restlessness of the tribal aristocracy and the constant intervention of the Ottomans were also a plus. Over time, the khanate lost all chance of competing with the Russians [16, p. 428]. Thus, the geopolitics of the steppe was reshaped and the supremacy passed completely to Moscow. Tsar Ivan IV occupied Kazan in 1552 and Astrakhan in 1556. The events that followed determined the fate of Crimea, the Caucasus, Turkestan and Siberia.

REFERENCES

1. Abdullah İbn Rıdvan. *Tevârih-i Deşt-i Kıpçak an Hıttâ-i Kırım veya Tevârih-i Tatar Hânân-ı Kadim ve Ahvâl-i Deşt-i Kıpçak*. Ed. by M. Akif Erdoğan-Selçuk Uysal. İzmir: Ege Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2012. (In Ottoman Turkish)
2. Acar S. *Kâsım Hanlığı (1445–1681)*. İstanbul: IQ Kültür Sanat Yayıncılık, 2008. (In Turkish)
3. Acar S. *Kazan Hanlığı-Moskova Knezliği Siyasi İlişkileri (1437–1552)*. Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2013. (In Turkish)

4. Acar S. Kırım Hanı Mehmed Giray'ın Sebeb-i Mevti. Doğu Avrupa Türk Mirasının Son Kalesi Kırım. Edited by Yücel Öztürk. İstanbul: Çamlıca Basım Yayın, 2015, pp. 103–120. (In Turkish)
5. Celâlzâde M. Selimnâme. Edited by Ahmet Uğur-Mustafa Çuhadar. Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1990. (In Ottoman Turkish)
6. Feridun Bey. Mecmûa-yı Münşeat. Vol. II. Edited by es-Seyyid Mehmed Saîd. İstanbul: Takvimhane-i Amire, 1265 (Hijri). (In Ottoman Turkish)
7. Hammer-Purgstall J. von. Kırım Hanlığı Tarihi. Translated by Seyfi Say. İstanbul: İnsan Yayınları, 2013. (In Turkish)
8. İnalçık H. Kırım Hanlığı'nın Osmanlı Himayesi Altına Girmesi Meselesi. III. Türk Tarih Kongresi 15-20 Kasım 1943, Kongreye Sunulan Tebliğler. Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1948, pp. 478–489. (In Turkish)
9. İnalçık H. Osmanlı-Rus Rekabetinin Menşei ve Don-Volga Kanalı Teşebbüsü. *Belleten*, 1948, vol. 12, no. 46, pp. 349–402. (In Turkish)
10. Karamzin N.M. İstoriya Gosudarstva Rossiiskogo. Moscow: Eksmo, 2008.
11. Khodarkovsky M. Türkistan ve Avrasya Steplerinde Rus Yayılmacılığı-Bir Sömürge İmparatorluğunun Oluşumu (1500–1800). Translated by Mehmet Akif Koç. İstanbul: Selenge Yayınları, 2021. (In Turkish)
12. Kołodziejczyk D. The Crimean Khanate and Poland-Lithuania. Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2011.
13. Kurat A.N. Türkiye ve İdil Boyu (1569 Astarhan Seferi, Ten-İdil Kanalı ve XVI–XVII. Yüzyıl Osmanlı-Rus Münasebetleri). Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu 2011. (In Turkish)
14. Le Khanat de Crimée dans les Archives du Musée du Palais de Topkapı. Présenté par Alexandre Bennigsen, Pertev Naili Boratav, Dilek Desai, Chantal Lemerrier-Quelquejay. Paris-Den Haag: École des hautes études en sciences sociales-Mouton, 1978. (In French)
15. Pelenski J. Russia and Kazan Conquest and Imperial Ideology (1438-1560s). Paris: Mouton, The Hague, 1974. (In English)
16. Penskov V.V., Penskaya T.M. Crimean imperial “Project” in the 1st third of the 16th century: a “window of opportunity” opened and closed. *Zolotoordynskoe obozrenie = Golden Horde Review*. 2024, vol. 12, no. 2, pp. 414–434. <https://doi.org/10.22378/2313-6197.2024-12-2.414-434> (In Russian)
17. Pułaski K. Machmet-Girej, chan Tatarów perekopskich i stosunki jego z Polską (1515–1523). Szkice i Poszukiwania Historyczne. Serya Druga. St. Petersburg: Nakładem księgarni K. Grendyszyńskiego, 1898. (In Polish)
18. Sbornik Imperatorskago Russkago İstoričeskago Obşçestva (SİRİO). Tom 95. İzdanı pod redaksiyu G.F. Karpova i G.F. Ştendmana. St. Petersburg: Tovarişçestvo “Peçatnya S.P. Yakovleva”, 1895. (In Russian)
19. Seyyid Mehmed Rıza. Es-Seb'üs-Seyyâr fî-Ahbâr-ı Mülûki't-Tatar (İnceleme-Tenkitli Metin). Edited by Yavuz Söylemez. Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2020. (In Ottoman Turkish)
20. Smirnov V.D. Osmanlı Dönemi Kırım Hanlığı. Translated by Ahsen Batur. İstanbul: Selenge Yayınları, 2016. (In Turkish)
21. Syroechkovsky, V.E. Muhammed-Geray i Ego Vassalı. Moscow: State University Press, 1940. (In Russian)
22. Togan Z.V. Umumî Türk Tarihine Giriş. İstanbul: Enderun Kitabevi, 1981. (In Turkish)
23. Ürekli M. Kırım Hanlığı'nın Kuruluşu ve Osmanlı Himâyesinde Yükselişi (1441–1569). Ankara: Türk Kültürünü Araştırma Enstitüsü, 1989. (In Turkish)
24. Velyaminov-Zernov V.V. Kırım Yurtuna ve Ol Tarafılgara Dair Bolgan Yarlıglar ve Hatlar. Edited by A. Melek Özyetgin-İlyas Kamalov. Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2009. (In Crimean Tatar)

25. Zaytsev I. Astrakhan Khanate. Moscow: Institute of Oriental Studies, 2006.
(In Russian)

ПОПЫТКА КРЫМСКОГО ХАНА МЕХМЕД-ГИРЕЯ ВОЗРОДИТЬ ЗОЛОТУЮ ОРДУ

Серкан Аджар

Эгейский университет

Измир, Турция

serkan.acar@ege.edu.tr

Резюме. В середине XV века Золотая Орда распалась и на ее месте возникли татарские ханства. Эти ханства, враждовавшие между собой, конкурировали также с Великим княжеством Московским. Фактически в конце XV века в Восточной Европе существовало три крупных центра власти: Крымское ханство, Великое княжество Московское и Литовско-Польское королевство. Кроме того, после завоевания османами Константинополя политический баланс на севере Черного моря изменился, и Крымское ханство с 1475 года стало вассалом Османской империи. Менгли-Гирей, который некоторое время оставался в Стамбуле и хорошо знал османов, придерживался собственной политики балансирования и действовал осторожно. Однако его страстный и энергичный преемник Мехмед-Гирей хотел возродить Золотую Орду. Ради этой цели он не колеблясь пошел на конфронтацию как с Османской империей, так и с Великим княжеством Московским. Ему удалось, хотя и на короткое время, взять под свое влияние Казанское и Астраханское ханства. Однако стало ясно, что политическая конъюнктура того периода не способствовала возрождению Золотой Орды. В конечном итоге Мехмед-Гирей заплатил за эту смелую инициативу своей жизнью.

Ключевые слова: Мехмед-Гирей, Крымское ханство, Великое княжество Московское, Османская империя, Королевство Литовское-Польское

Для цитирования: Acar S. Crimean khan Mehmed Giray's attempt to revive the Golden Horde // Золотоордынское обозрение. 2025. Т. 13, № 4. С. 888–900.
<https://doi.org/10.22378/2313-6197.2025-13-4.888-900> EDN: MNYTTI

ИНФОРМАЦИЯ ОБ АВТОРЕ

Серкан Аджар – доцент кафедры истории факультета литературы, Эгейский университет (35040 Эрзене р-н, Борнова / Измир, Турция); ORCID: 0000-0003-1642-9269.
E-mail: serkan.acar@ege.edu.tr

INFORMATION ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Serkan Acar – Associate Professor of the Department of History, Faculty of Letters, Ege University (35040 Erzene Mahallesi, Bornova / İzmir, Türkiye); ORCID: 0000-0003-1642-9269. E-mail: serkan.acar@ege.edu.tr

Поступила в редакцию / Received 4.08.2025

Поступила после рецензирования / Revised 24.11.2025

Принята к публикации / Accepted 02.12.2025