

Urban Culture in Nineteenth-Century Crimea

Abstract

The colonial discourses of civilizational ethos in the Muslim lands of the Russian empire, as well as the ideas of belonging expressed by intellectuals from among the Tatar, Turkestani and Caucasian Muslims of the second half of the nineteenth– early twentieth century created a rich ground for discussing the identity of Russians themselves and their self-perceived role of “mediators” between the West and the Orient. In this context, the Russian policy toward urban renewal expressed a varying degree of “tolerating regional idiosyncrasies.” The acceleration of Russian settling to Crimea in the nineteenth century brought about the creation of new cities, spa resorts, touristic alpine clubs and new infrastructure, but also led to the reconfiguration of older cities inhabited by Muslim population. Through the prism of abundant travel guides and newspaper articles paired with visual sources, it becomes possible to reconstruct the mental map of Crimean urban centers from a colonial and an emerging national point of view. The discourse of Orientalism, visible in these sources, was supported by the new colonial imagined geographies, which objectified the natural and urban landscapes based on their “Oriental” outlook.

Bio

Anna Guboglo is a doctoral student and a prae-doc assistant at the Institute of Eastern European History at the University of Vienna since 2020, with academic interests in heritage studies, specifically in archaeological and architectural heritage in the Russian and Ottoman imperial contexts.