

**BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH: SLAVES AND VIOLENCE IN
CRIMEAN SOCIETY IN THE LAST QUARTER OF 17TH
CENTURY***
**YAŞAM İLE ÖLÜM ARASINDA: 17. YÜZYILIN SON ÇEYREĞİNDE
KIRIM TOPLUMUNDA KÖLELER VE ŞİDDET**

Fırat YAŞA**

Abstract

The article focuses on how the legal process works for slaves who are subject to property law. In this study, factors such as violence, accusations of violence, and the internalization and legitimization of violence in Crimean society between 1675 and 1700 have been examined through the study of the experience of slaves. It will be evaluated separately whether the raiding -one of the crucial sources of livelihoods for the Crimean Tatars- had an impact on violent events in the daily life of the society. In particular, physical violence against the enslaved people will be discussed, and then the status of slaves exposed to violence in the Crimean qadi registers will be evaluated.

Keywords

Crimean Khanate, Qadi court, Looting raids, Violence, Slaves.

Öz

Bu makale şiddet karşısında eşya hukukuna tabi olan köleler için hukuksal sürecin nasıl işlediğine odaklanmaktadır. Mevcut çalışmada söz konusu sorunsal üzerinden 1675 ile 1700 yılları arasında Kırım toplumunda şiddet, şiddetin kanıksanması, içselleştirilmesi ve meşrulaştırılması gibi etmenler köleler üzerinden incelenecektir. Kırım Tatarlarının önemli geçim kaynaklarından biri olan yağma akınlarının toplum yaşantısında şiddet içeren olaylara etki edip etmediği ayrıca ele alınacaktır. Özellikle yağma akınlarında esir edilen kişilere uygulanan fiziksel şiddete değinilecek, ardından da Kırım kadı sicillerinde şiddete maruz kalan kölelerin durumları değerlendirilecektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler

Kırım Hanlığı, Kadı Mahkemesi, Yağma Akını, Şiddet, Köleler.

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INTRODUCTION

It has become quite common to address topics such as mental attitudes and emotions in recent historical writings. Nevertheless I believe it would not be wrong to say that we are still in the early stages in terms of the studies on Crimean and Ottoman social history in our examination of the private fears and expectations of the common people who paid taxes, either because of the lack of the primary sources or as a result of the preferences of historians in their choice of topics. In view of this, I intend to include the topic of violence in this category, that is, as an emotion or mental attitude, although it falls within the scope of such disciplines as psychology, philosophy, theology, sociology and law. Violence is a phenomenon which arises in every type of society and which is a complicated form of behavior to explain and understand. (Arendt 1997: 52) Despite the fact that this is not a totally modern phenomenon, as the topic of violence dates way back in history, studies lapse into silence especially for early modern societies.

There have been numerous studies of the treatment of slaves in the Crimean Khanate (and the Ottoman Empire as a whole) highlighting humane aspects, demonstrating that they could be treated well, that their life was not necessarily miserable, that they could even have careers that free people could envy, and that certainly their lot should not be seen as comparable to that of slaves in societies with harsher modes of slavery. (For some books and articles, see. Sahillioğlu 1980: 67-138; İnalçık 2008: 123-153; Faroqhi 2014: 129-142; Faroqhi 2017; Toledano 2007; Zilfi 2010; Erdem 1996) However, it is important to avoid presenting a simplistic, one-sided picture of the lives of slaves in a slave-owning society, be it on the whole a positive or a negative one, at least not without having first delved as deeply as possible into various aspects of their lives. This paper investigates some of the unpleasant sides of the lives of slaves in Crimea, particularly the incidence of violence.

Another question to consider is whether the raids of the Crimean Tatars into neighbouring lands (Muscovy, Ukraine, Poland, Moldavia, North Caucasus) to obtain booty and captives for Crimean and Ottoman slave markets, one of the Khanate's most important sources of livelihood, influenced the incidence of violence within Crimean society. Physical and psychological violence, especially when inflicted on people captured in these raids, will be evaluated on the basis of details of their daily life that can be gleaned from local court registers (qadi sicils). In addition, this paper investigates or assesses the following: the relative status of slaves, comparing the outcomes of court cases involving violence against them with those involving violence against other members of society; how often the use of physical force involved various weapons, such as knives, swords, firearms, and stones; methods followed by qadis during the judicial process; issuance of penal sanctions against masters who inflicted physical force and psychological torment on their own slaves.

My source base consists of selected court cases involving violence recorded in the Crimean Khanate's qadi court registers, concentrating particularly on the period from 1675 to 1700.

I. The Theoretical Contours of Violence and Crimean Society

The term violence is defined as the use of force, strength and harsh actions; physical force. (Sami 2004: 661-662) Violence is a social fact and is based on aggression, whereas aggression is a socially acquired behaviour. (Ünsal 2005: 31) There is more than one form of

violence. Violence can also appear in various other forms, for example; oppression, torture, murder, punishment and rebellion. (Ünsal 2005: 32) This depends on which acts a society classifies as violence and the social structural features of the society, in other words this is closely associated with the cultural structure and the valid standards of judgment. (Han 2015: 18) Violence does not emerge from a single factor. Therefore, I assume it would not be wrong to classify violence as a social issue, in that it is generated from the environment. As a general rule it is better to claim that in the past violence was used as the means of restructuring in every society. Taking a period's characteristics into consideration, this suggests different standards of judgment.

Therefore, I shall start by addressing physical violence crime which here refers to a fierce and agonizing external act against the human body. Such an act constitutes a threat to wealth, life, health, physical integrity and individual freedom. In the same way that this includes acts against others such as injury, sexual assault, looting and abduction, and can also include self-induced actions in the form of suicide attempts.

How violence is represented within the community and accepted by society is also significant, since socially accepted violence is regarded as being justified. In fact, if violence is generally assumed as a way of life, this is not classified as a problem or crime and can even be approved as a means of solving problems. In the master-slave relationship, one is superior to the other in power, a situation that originates because one submits to being governed by the other and this relationship continues. To be more precise, with the change in status of one side towards the world, the fact that the relationship between one human being and another is based on violence is brought about by the subservient status of the inferior individual. (Oskay 2005: 188)

These characterizations not only portray certain aspects concerning the mentality of people today, but also regarding the early modern period of Ottoman and Crimean societies. In order to understand what violence meant in Crimean society; how this was perceived and whether this was internalized or not, we must first familiarize ourselves with the living conditions of the Crimean Tatars. Because, the geography in which it is lived is partially effective in shaping the livelihoods of the inhabitants. It should not be forgotten that there may be some distinction between societies dealing with agriculture and those who go to looting during certain periods of the year. Those participating in the looting raids have several warfare tools with them that make it possible to apply physical violence.

Officials, who travelled to Crimea for various missions in different periods, gave information about agriculture. For example, Marcin Broniewski, who travelled to Crimea, suggested that although the some parts of land in the region was fertile, very few Crimean Tatars were engaged in agriculture, and most of the land was uncultivated and abandoned.

Syroechkovskii explains that the Crimean Tatars owned large herds of livestock; that they lived a semi-nomadic life moving from one pasture to another. Like Broniewski, he also mentions the fertility of the land, and explains that the people did not cultivate the land, but made do with the natural growth and gathered the forage and fed this to their livestock. (Syroechkovskii 1979: 26) Additionally, Crimean Tatars who returned from the pastures to their winter homes would graze their herds of livestock on the fields they harvested. Evliya Çelebi, who was in Crimea, and Bakhchysarai particularly, in the 1660s, gives more detailed information compared with that of other travellers. Evliya Çelebi also recorded that the Crimean soil was fertile. He states that when seeds were scattered over the land, wheat grew to

the height of a she camel in six days; that black barley grew in one day, and crops greater than the plantation were harvested from the land. (Evliya Çelebi 2006: 229) Although this was exaggerated, Evliya Çelebi's records are considered to be significant in terms of explaining the fertility of the soil.

In brief, some parts of the Crimean peninsula is a region suitable for agriculture. However, according to travellers, the Crimean Tatars mostly chose livestock farming rather than cultivation of the land. It is known that, as a result of this, their semi-nomadic way of life continued even in the 17th century. It is generally believed that people engaged in agriculture are gentler, whereas those engaged in livestock farming are tougher, more violent people.

As a result, it is well known that in the 17th century the majority of Crimean Tatars was engaged in livestock farming and that they owned large herds of livestock. (Syroechkovskii 1979: 36) As looting raids were one of their main sources of livelihood, horses were extremely important in the lives of Crimean Tatars. (Beauplan 1993: 50) Carrying out raids with strong, fast horses gave them the opportunity to seize more merchandise. In their own language, Crimean people refer to this as "çapula çıkma" or pillage raids. (Evliya Çelebi 2002: 32) In the years when raids were not carried out, there was food scarcity and this could cause major problems. When the Crimean Khan issued the decision to participate in the raids, aristocrat tribes in the region were ordered to prepare their troops and wait for a suitable opportunity. (Manz 1978: 300)

During certain times of the year, Crimean Tatars raided Ukraine, Poland and Muscovy/Russia, Wallachia, Moldavia, Circassia and their captives were brought back from those lands and sold as slaves. (Fisher 1999: 27-46; Ostapchuk 1989: 3) These raids were not carried out randomly, but generally during the harvest season in Poland-Lithuania and Russia, and when the rivers froze during winter months. Ahmet Cevdet Paşa pointed out that the Crimean Tatars would tell their children to pray for the rivers to freeze over, as this made access easier and saved them from wasting time building bridges to reach their destination. In this way, raiders who reached their target would succeed in returning to Crimea with large amounts of booty and plenty of slaves. (Ahmet Cevdet Paşa 1997: 11)

Such a way of life meant that the Crimean Tatars became famous for their looting raids and that the ports of Crimea continued to exist as a slave trade centre for a long time. As a supply centre, most Crimean Tatars were slave owners, unlike the inhabitants of Anatolia. Whereas owning a few slaves, a house and a shop was an indication of wealth in Anatolian cities (İnalçık 2009: 269), owning several slaves in Crimea was not a sign of wealth. In other words, slaves were not very valuable property in Crimea. (Yaşa 2017: 174) Therefore, when a violent incident took place, the Crimean Tatars could use violence against their slaves as well as another person's slaves. The death of a slave did not mean a great economic loss for them. For this reason, it can be said that their slaves are more quickly discarded than slaves in Anatolia. Because in the Crimea, a slave might cost an average value of 20-60 gold pieces. (Yaşa 2014: 669) The purchase of these slaves, customs tax, transfer to various cities of Anatolia, education, nutrition, selling in the market and many other factors are included in the price which increased the cost of a slave and it is not a property that everyone can have. Few of the middle level of society had a slave; there slaves were in the hands of the more wealthy people. For example:

On Şevval 1088 / November 1677, a Muslim kazak slave of Ukrainian origin named Devletgeldi came to the court of Bahchesarai, and sued his master Ivaz bin Murad, a resident of Ulaklı Village. According to Devletgeldi his master, Ivaz, had said "when my son Abdurrahman, who is a prisoner in the infidels' lands, returns to my house then let my slave be

free". It had already been three years since Abdurrahman came back from captivity. But Ivaz had not manumitted Devletgeldi. For this reason, Devletgeldi came to the court and requested to be released legally. When his owner Ivaz denied such a condition, the qadi of Bahchesarai asked Devletgeldi to present witnesses to the court. Mullah Mustafa bin Cumali and Haci Bayram bin Ahmed el-Hâc swore in the presence of the qadi, and as a result of the acceptance of their evidence, the decision was made to release Devletgeldi. (CCR, vol. 22, fol. 49)

This record is very important in terms of showing that Crimean Tatars were captured in other regions. It is not clear from the case record in which country Ivaz's son Abdurrahman was taken prisoner. Even if it was mentioned in court in which country he was captured, the clerks recorded it only as 'infidels' lands'. As to Devletgeldi, it is possible to say that he was a prisoner for more than three years. Since he came to the court, it means he could speak the Crimean Tatar language and had enough knowledge to think that the case would be concluded in his favour. However, it is unclear why he did not come to the court to be released right after Ivaz's son Abdurrahman returned to Crimea and instead waited for three years.

The possibility of raids on Crimean lands from neighbouring countries not only worried ordinary people, but also the state officials. For example, in an Italian report dated 1584, Mehmed Geray Khan, who participated in the Ottoman-Iranian War with his soldiers, left the battlefield and returned to the Crimea because a great Polish army had already reached Crimea for raids.

Violence was not only a danger from neighbouring countries, but also a problem that occurred among the Crimean Tatars themselves. Sometimes the fights that began during the transport of looting were referred to the qadi court. (Yaşa 2017: 110-111)

During the transport of booty back to Crimea, none of the people wanted to give their possessions up willingly, and nobody wanted to accept captivity and become slaves. These raids made violence an essential part of their lives. Bronevskiy stresses that slaves belonged to a noble family, albeit a lie, in order to avoid being subjected to violence by the Crimean Tatars until they took them to the Crimea. (Bronievskiy 1970: 54) Mikhail Kizilov also informs that Dominican missionaries recorded that the Crimeans were cruel to their slaves and the slaves were subjected to constant violence. However, he does not hesitate to say that this situation is not only specific to Crimea. He cites the example of the murder of 73 Crimean Tatars captured in Russia. (Kizilov 2007: 22) These sources imply that, in the eyes of foreigners, being a slave in the Crimea means living under severe conditions. The records of slaves in the Crimean qadi registers show the extent to which they were subjected to violence.

II. Violence against Slaves in the Crimean Society

As in all other Muslim regions of the world, in 17th-century Crimean society, slaves were property that was bought and sold, and because they were subject to Islamic law, they have the right to live, sue, and be provided with maintenance (*nafaka*). (Sak 1992: 62-70) These rights prevented them from being subjected to a position of complete vulnerability position the hands of their master and others. However, there are some differences between theory and practice. First of all, when we make sense of the legal sanction of physically assaulting or killing a person with free human status, it becomes possible to analyse the situation of slaves subjected to violence.

The murder of a free person by someone else was a crime that required heavy sanctions. In Islamic law, the punishment of the guilty of murder is accomplished by applying the law of retaliation, or *lex talionis* (*qisas*). However, the relatives of the murdered person may

sometimes give up the qisas sentence and demand that the other party pay the compensation (blood money). (Layish 2006: 63-75; Mayer 1987: 171; Köroğlu 2011: 228) Thus, an accord of peace was arrived at between the murderer and the relatives of the victim. Given that the situation concerned free people who could fully defend their rights before the law, the exact same treatment was not applied when slaves were subjected to violence or killed by their master or another person—the owner of the deceased slave was supposed to receive blood money because he/she purchased the slave for a certain amount of money. But in the case whereby a slave was killed by his/her master, there would be no qisas or compensation (Schacht 1982: 128). Usually when the slave of the free man was subjected to violence by someone else, if the slave was injured, his master would ask the other party to pay the costs until his slave was healed.

It is possible to follow traces of violence in Crimea by examining the court records of the period. In Crimean court records, it is clear that the assaults were carried out with stones, sticks and canes found during the struggle, or with daggers, knives, hatchets, axes or swords that they had in their possession. When the use of firearms became more widespread, guns were also used as murder weapons. (CCR, vol. 26, fol. 9, 11, 12, 14, 15, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94)

In the court records I studied, apart from cases concerning property and surety, two or three cases in every ten entries involved violence against free people and slaves but the figures of beatings and murder of slaves were higher compared with that of free people. In other words, slaves were subjected to violence more often than free people in the court records. Moreover, violence inflicted on a free person was the topic of long disputes in the court, whereas for slaves, this was a totally different matter merely concerned with the enforcement of property law, because the slave who had suffered violence that resulted in being disabled and unable to work, or died from injuries was regarded simply as property.

There are many reports of the killing of slaves which proves how unvalued they were by Crimean society, presumably because in the Khanate slaves were inexpensive and plentiful and were therefore considered dispensable. An example of this is that owners who killed their own slaves would inform the court that they charged no one for the death of these slaves. Hence, no one was required to pay the value of the slave legally classified as property.

In the period in question, there were many murder cases of slaves in Crimea. It is possible to see accounts in Crimean court records of slaves who were killed by being beaten to the head with a stick, murdered by having their ears, hands, and feet mutilated, having their throats cut, and even being strangled and abandoned by an unknown killer. As murdered slaves meant the loss of property, the owners appealed to the courts in order to secure compensation for their loss. For example:

Muharrem 1103/10 October 1691, Abdulvahhab Efendi, who was declared to be one of the most prominent of the society (*fahru'l-a'yân*), sued Abdulvahhab ibn Ali in court. He alleged that Abdulvahhab's slave, Semen, was beaten by Abdulvahhab ibn Ali with a black sleigh. Abdul Wahhab ibn Ali did not deny the charge and verifies that he had beaten him. Semen was at risk of dying after this assault. The parties agreed after discussions between them and concluded an agreement through a mediator (*muslihûn*). According to the agreement, the person who assaulted the slave was to pay 500 akçe. In addition, if the slave died, he agreed to buy another slave for the slave's owner. (CCR, vol. 29, fol. 47)

In this case record, there is no information as to why the slave Semen was beaten, what his health status was, whether he was taken to a physician or how he felt. What is important is

Abdulahhab's concern about losing his property.

It is possible to find many entries in the court records similar to the case of Semen. While violence directed towards slaves was a more simple matter, it can be more costly when it is directed to a free person. Although it is very rare for a man who killed his wife to be sentenced to qisas by a qadi decision (Yaşa 2017: 105), it is important to show how severe the cost of violence against free people was. The penalty, often known as the blood money was much higher than the price of a slave.

For example, 23,000 akçes were collected as blood money from Solak Hasan b. Kasim, murderer of Mehmed b. Idris who was found dead in Balıkkayası in Istanbul and an accord of peace was reached. (Istanbul Court Records no. 12, 2010: 782) In another death record that was found in the Istanbul qadi court, the amount of penalty taken was 21,500 akçes. (Eyüp Court Records no 74, 2011: 323) Blood costs were high not only in Istanbul murder cases. In many Anatolian cities, a high amount of compensation was also paid. When Halil Beşe ibn al-Hâc Mehmed was killed in Konya, his relatives applied to the qadi court. When it was revealed who the killer was, he was asked to pay 400 qurushs compensation through a muslihun. (Konya Court Records no 45, 2015: 590) As pointed out above, death did not have to occur after physical violence in order to be required to pay compensation. For example, in 27 Cemaziye'l-âhir 1109/10 January 1698 Friday, in the Ankara qadi court, Ömer b. Safer asked Ali b. Yusuf for 15 qurushs and 2 black male mules as a compensation for his 4 broken teeth as a result of a fight. He applied to the qadi because Ali had not given one of the mules. (Ankara Court Records, vol. 47, fol. 45)

The above-mentioned records are presented with examples from different regions of Anatolia and information on the size of sums taken when free people were beaten. In other words, it is obvious that the same amounts are not taken in the killing of slaves and free people. In the Crimea, a slave trade centre, slave prices are low, as previously emphasized. However, slave owners who sometimes wanted to turn the situation into an opportunity after the slave was killed can demand a high sum from the person who killed his slave. For example, 19 Safer 1103/11th of November 1691, Umme Bike bint-i Abdulfettah Çelebi's dogma çora slave whose price was 90 gold pieces was found dead in the meadow of Neslişah Bike bint-i Maliş Agha. Umme Bike asked the qadi to examine the scene of the incident and after determining the place where her slave was killed, he decided that the owner of the meadow should pay 90 gold pieces, the slave's value, as the killer did not appear. (CCR, vol. 29, fol. 66) Umme Bike's aim is not to find out by whom and where her slave was killed, but rather to find someone to cover the damage to her property. The slave's name is not mentioned in the document but he is known to be born into slavery - dogma çora was one who was born from a slave mother and father. In other words, he was born in Crimean society and was not brought in the looting raids. Since he had not yet reached puberty, he was called being born çora. The term "dogma" was used for all slaves from birth to six to seven years of age, regardless of whether they were boys or girls. They were called çora from the age of six or seven until they reached puberty. In the records, those who are referred to only as çora were kidnapped and enslaved at a young age. Dogma çoras referred to child slaves who were born to slave parents in the Crimea and had not yet reached puberty. Child slaves were not very expensive because they had not reached physical maturity. Normally the dogma çora was sold at a price of 20 to 40 gold pieces. (Yaşa forthcoming) In this record, 90 gold pieces for the murdered slave child was quite a high price. The owner of the slave probably wanted to turn the situation into an opportunity and

succeeded.

All the examples of the cases I mentioned until now are concerned with the violence that slaves suffered. On the other hand, some slaves could kill their own masters. There were cases where slaves beat and murdered their masters - many examples of this can be found in the Istanbul qadi court records. I have never come across any information regarding slaves who beat and killed their masters in the Crimean court records. There are records that slaves hit and killed others, but not their masters. However, this does not mean such incidents did not occur.

In Zilhicce 1087/February 1677 Boluk bin Beg Bolad came from the village of Bardak and filed a complaint against Petre, the slave of Hızır from the same village. He told the qadi that this kazak slave deliberately stabbed him in the chest with a knife. Abdurrahman bin Osman from Bakhchessarai and Behram Gazi bin Ali from Han İli were confirmed as witnesses and the complaint was recorded. (CCR, vol. 22, fol. 98) Since the master was responsible for the situation and for the actions of the slave the testimony by the master was obtained in such violent cases. That is why it was normal that the name of the slave's owner Hızır is mentioned in the records. In this case the court record does not indicate if the victim was paid, or whether the slave was been punished.

Sometimes slaves would steal, and when they were caught, they were exposed to violence and even killed. Mahmud Çelebi ibn el-Hâc Ahmed's slave Devletgeldi is an example of this situation. According to a document dated 1677, Devletgeldi broke into the house of a man named Osman bin el-Hâc Ibrahim to commit burglary at night. Osman seized the slave and hit his head with a stick two or three times. The slave died from this beating. Therefore, Mahmud Chelebi demanded that the slaves' worth 40 gold paid by Osman. Regardless of whether he was killed by his master or by someone else, the slave was considered to be a property and therefore legal sanctions based on property law would be applied. When the value of the slave was paid to the other party, the matter was resolved.

CONCLUSION

In this article, the violence experienced by slaves in Crimean society has been illustrated with examples from the court records. Of course both free persons and slaves suffered from violence, but criminal sanctions on perpetrators were heavier when the victim was free person. Therefore, slaves were more vulnerable to violence not only at the hands of their masters but also from the wider public.

On the basis of the court records it is obvious that was mostly male slaves, being more integrated into society, were exposed to violence. In all of the examples given throughout the study, the master sought redress from the courts when someone else harmed his slave. This was considered to be a necessity to sue for damages for loss of property, rather than to seek punishment for the actual act of violence incurred on a slave. The phenomenon in question was a necessity of the time and was quite a normal situation. Factors such as the loss of someone who would work in jobs requiring labour rather than the feelings of a slave who was crying, suffering and shouting when violence was applied were more prominent in terms of the master. Even though he was regarded as property, a slave could become a violent person. The will of this 'semi-human being' was accepted as dependent on his master and it was revealed that the master was held responsible for his slave's actions. One of the findings is that slaves sometimes acted against the people around them and used violence. But, in the documents examined, there are no slaves directing violence against their master. While it was common for black slaves to kill their masters in Istanbul, it can be said, in the light of the available data, that slaves of

northern origin very rarely made such an attempt against their masters.

EXTENDED SUMMARY

In the 17th century, the Crimean Khanate rose to a dominant position in the Black Sea slave trade. The Crimean Tatars, who made their livelihood more with livestock rather than agriculture, made looting raids to neighbouring countries at certain times of the year and kidnapped people along with cereals and various animals and returned to their hometown. In the 17th century, there was so much plundering that the vast majority of people in Crimea were slaves. Compared to Anatolia, slaves were not very valuable commodity in this peninsula because it was a slave supply centre.

One of the ways to enslave a free person during the period in question was to restrain him or her with physical violence. Because no one would want to be a slave of someone whom he did not know in a totally unknown society with his own free will while he was free. In other words, enslavement required the use of violence taking into consideration of the period's conditions. The notes and memories of diplomats, missionaries and travellers coming to Crimea in various ways contain rich information. One of them is that the prisoners of the Crimean Tatars lied that they belonged to noble families in order to stop abuse against them. Thus, they could find a way to avoid being exposed to violence for a certain period of time. In addition to the raids, it is possible to see in the qadi registers, which are the local sources of the period, that the slave was subjected to violence by the master or someone else. In this study, rather than psychological violence that slaves were subjected to, the cases that resulted in physical assault and death are examined. Due to the limited content of sources unfortunately it is not possible to determine how slaves thought or felt about violence. For this reason, it becomes necessary to evaluate them on the status of 'property' imposed by the society in which they live. In other words, the main purpose of this study is to understand the differences between the position of being subject to property law and the situation in court.

Since the master purchased his slave for a certain amount, he had the right to use him. However, the slave also under Islamic law had the right to life, material support and to sue. The right to life, the most fundamental of these rights, has sometimes been violated by violence. Differences between theoretical law and practice also gain importance in this context. When the master killed his own slave, he would tell the court that he killed his slave himself and that he has no complaint against anybody. This situation makes the slave's life vulnerable to the master. However, when the slave's body was assaulted by someone other than the master, or when the slave kills a slave, it was considered usurpation of another's property and some sanctions would be imposed by the qadi. The aim of this study is to evaluate the legal sanctions in the cases mentioned in some of the Crimean qadi registers between 1675-1700.

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