Until very recent time Crimean Tatars’ historical past almost wasn’t studied. Moreover, the earlier epoch (the very Golden Horde period) wasn’t taken into consideration at all. The question of the influence and the forms of manifestation of Golden Horde culture in Crimea couldn’t help attracting the researchers of Tatar past.

The town is considered to be established in the 13th century, when after the Mongol conquest of step Crimea it became the part of Golden Horde. Soon after the final establishment of Horde’s power the town of Kyrym was founded in the eastern part of the peninsular and became the administrative center of Crimean Yurt and the residence of emir of Crimea. In the period of Golden Horde domination the town had two names at the same time. Horders and Kyypchaks who represented the majority of the population of step Crimea called the town Kyrym. Italians (mostly Genoeses), who controlled the southern coast of Crimea and had the active trade relations there called it Solkhät – Solcati. The town was divided into two parts: Muslim part where emir’s residence was situated and Christian part inhabited by Italian merchants. These two parts were called Kyrym and Solkhat respectively.

The name of the town – Kyrym started referring soon to the whole peninsular. The flourishing of the town felt onto the 14th century. In this period Solkhat was a significant trade center on the Silk Road from Asia to Europe and was developing and building dynamically. At that very period the middle aged mosques were built. Their remnants preserved until now. The most famous of them is “Uzbek’s Mosque” built in 1314. Khan Uzbek built this mosque in 1314. Later he built madrasah (Muslim school preparing priests, teachers, and governmental servants) next to it. It preserved until now as one of the town’s main sights. The rubble walls and the portal of the main entrance lined with big tightly adjusted blocks. Working on linear pillars combining it with rich planting ornament the stone cutters showed high skill in making the portal. Inside of Uzbek’s Mosque were two rows of thin cut pillars with “stalactitical” capitals that formed an elegant bunch on the top.

Born in Kypchak sultan Beybars, the governor of Egypt having got the permission of Kypchak khan built a magnificent mosque in Crimea in order to immortalize his name and to glorify the place of his birth. Its walls were covered with marble and the top with porphyry. Apart from it the town had other buildings worth amazement, especially high schools that taught every science. The grand town, unexpected and incomparable, magnificent legendary mosques of Solkhat
Kurshum-Jami and Musk-Jami. When building “leaden” mosque Kurshum-Jami the craftsmen filled up the gaps between stones with lead to make the construction more durable and lasting. When building Musk-Jami – Musky Mosque – they added precious incense – musk to a mortar.

Turkish traveler Elviya Chelebi who visited the town in 1666 – 1667 admitted that “if I would describe every building of cathedral and quarter mosques, bath-houses, madrasah and many hundreds of thousands of other buildings that Adam’s kin couldn’t create, I would make a collection of tarikhs”. Then he gives the quantitative list of various establishments whose number testifies to truly substantial scale of the town. Only within the town walls there were one thousand and hundred of domical buildings and they could be seen within one pharsakh (6-7 kilometers). As a building material the builders used porphyry marble, turquoise tile, ruby tile, ambergris, musk, etc. In fact, the legend preserved the memory of the mosque the walls of which were covered with marble and the top with porphyry. Making a comparison he made the conclusion that the town of Kyrym was as huge, developed and decorated as middle-aged towns of Kufa, Kashgar, Cairo, Khaleb, Cordova, Athens, Paris, Amsterdam and others.

Polish traveler Martin Bronevsky who visited Solkhat in 1578 gives the following description of the town “Krem or Krim in Tatar is a town with a fortress surrounded by an ancient high and heavy wall differs greatly from the rest towns of Mediterranean Chersonese (as Ptolemy called it) due to its size and fame. It seemed like it was inhabited by the great people of Mohammed that came there from Asia already in recent time before Genoese came to Crimea. One could see Muhammadan temples and sanctuaries not only in the town, but outside it. They were decorated with Chaldean inscriptions carved in big stones. Many Turks and Tatars who live there and some Greeks told that their ancestors always remembered as though this town once had been inhabited by Persian people and was considered to be one of the first towns; science and arts flourished there. Indeed, judging from the remnants and the spacious place it was one of the most famous and the greatest towns of that time. Nowadays Tatars are called Crimea in honor of this town. There was a permanent mint where khan coined his money. Khan’s wives lived in one of the biggest castles of the town”.

Soon after Russia annexed Crimea Solkhat was renamed into Levkopol subjected to Catherine’s experiment – an attempt to turn it into a special center of silkworm breeding. It resulted in nothing, except for disfiguration of the town that lost in many respects its eastern color. In order to build the new town according to the typical hackneyed dull pattern old houses and buildings were used that were barbarically destroyed. The new “Stary Krym” (called “Levkopol” didn’t catch on) literally was built “on the bones” of the former Stary Krym. The antiquities of the ancient Crimean capital are buried under the provincial poor town. The archeological expeditions worked in Solkhat in 1925, 1926 and 1928. The head
of the expedition in 1925 and 1926 was Borozin Il’ya Nukolaevich, the Chairman of the Scientific Association of Oriental Studies of Central Executive Committee of USSR. Among the expedition’s members were Usein Bodaninsky, the head of Bakhchisaray Palace – Museum who was at that time the member of the Central Commission on Study of Oriental Cultures of South Russia, Crimea and Caucasus and the Central Commission on Study of Tatar Culture in the Scientific Association of Oriental Studies Under the Central Executive Commission of USSR, A. S. Bashkirov, architect B.P. Zasypkin, I.L. Ernst, P.I. Gollansky, O. Akchokrakly, painter K. Bogaevsky. The result of the expedition was studying of many various grave stones, the types of monumental *durbe*, burials in group graves.

The grave stones of the upper layer usually have two rows of round holes that sometimes reached the number of ten. The old inhabitants explained that thus was shown how many decades lived the dead.

Low monolithic coffin-shaped grave stones with gable roof of the headstone are close to these monuments. These monuments resemble the monuments of Persia, Bukhara, Khiva, Caucasus. Though, there they may not always be made of stone, but loam.

The frame of the next-the more perfect monuments became narrower. They stand on a high pedestal prominent on its sides. The beaks and the frame of the headstone acquire the form of architectural constructions such as *durbe*, and madrasah decorated with the ornamental pattern and inscriptions.

The walls were usually decorated with crossing oblong and sharp small squares representing a peculiar eastern meander symbolizing eternity.

Some of the headstones had the edifying inscriptions: “The world is a perishable home, the future world is eternal one” “As you live you shall die”.

During the works in *Solkhat* all the interesting monuments of the town were registered and mapped. The archeological excavations were held. The monuments of architecture and ethnographic finds were studied. The excavations of caravanserai that located next to the main entrance to the town were held in order to determine the typical features of *Solkhat* as an important trade centre. By the time of the excavations the remains of the walls of this pentagonal building with tower-shaped accessory buildings occupied an area of 2500 m$^2$. During the excavations of the caravanserai many rooms were found designed for the visitor merchants where they found safe shelter after they went through the check-out and marking of their goods. During the examination of the caravanserai’s ruins a water pipeline was found which was made of ceramic pipes. Later on, during the construction works the remains of a whole net of water supply system were time and again found in *Stary Krym*, It supplied the town with the water from several nearby springs. Moreover, big underground canals were found in different parts of the town more often taken for some secret passages. In fact it was one of the
medieval water-supply systems – so called *kyazirs*, widely spread in Asia Minor, in the towns of Central Asia.

The location of the caravanserai testifies to the vicinity of the market that evidently once was surrounded by various workshops of *Solkhat*’s craftsmen. The remains of one of them – pottery – were discovered during the excavations.

The excavations in *Solkhat* unearthed coins both foreign and coined at the mint of this very town. The earliest of them were dated 1291 and 1295.

During the works in *Solkhat* a lot of time was given to investigation of “Uzbek’s madrasah” that bordered with the mosque built in 1314. By the time of the excavations a single part of the building that preserved were the fragments of the walls with square niche spanned by half-circular arch and the bordering rooms in the northern part and the similar complex in the southern part. After the portal was unearthed it was determined that a part of a doorway, a threshold and a part of a pavement in front of it and also a part of monumental pylon were preserved. A stone block with capital of a semi-column decorated with ornamental pattern was found among the fragments.

The niches of a smaller size in the side walls, in pylons of portal niche were of the same form as the main niche of the portal. The side niches were of the same square form and the same type of semi-column framing bridged with stalactitic semidome.

*Solkhat*’s portals prominent out of the walls are similar to Seldzhuki’s ones up to the minutest detail. As the excavations showed there was huge rectangular exedra with monumental half-circular arch right to the west at the entrance through the main portal to the entrance hall of the madrasah. By its sides there were *durbe*-shaped cubiform rooms located symmetrically of almost equal size covered by hemispheric domes.

The spacious courtyard of “madrasah” was faced with huge flags. “Madrasah” was one of the most monumental and highly artistic buildings of the town. The total area of the ruins comprised 819 m\(^2\).

During the excavations in 1925 *durbe* was unearthed in the western part and a part of the southern pylon of the front door in the eastern part.

*Durbe* had floor covered with flags with blue shimmer. The headstone itself was also richly decorated.*Stary Krym*, its main architectural constructions were studied in 1970-1990 M. G. Kramorovsky, S. M. Sidorenko, O. P. Dombrovsky). In conclusion I would like to say that the first Crimean Tatar capital that once economically and culturally flourished would gradually rise from the ashes.