



## The Northwestern European Frontier of the Ottoman State: The Steppe of Budjak in the Late 18<sup>th</sup> and the Early 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries

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### ABSTRACT

In the last quarter of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century, the territory known as the Steppe of Budjak can be considered as the last European Steppe frontier of the Ottoman state. An important component of this frontier was the policy of active colonization and the involvement of workers from neighboring countries. Such a policy was successfully pursued by the Ottoman state. As a result, various social and ethnic groups settled on the border and influenced the relations between the Ottoman and the Russian Empires. Among these groups, one of the most important was the Ukrainian Zaporozhian Cossacks, who created their own autonomous organization on the frontier – the Sich.

**Keywords:** Frontier, Ottoman State, Steppe of Budjak, Danubian Zaporozhian Cossacks (Potkalı Kazakları), Nekrasov Don Cossacks, Russian Empire



The Steppe of Budjak of the Ottoman State in the last quarter of the eighteenth century and the early part of the nineteenth century was localized to the territory of the interfluvium of the Dniester and Danube. In the literature, this area is known as Southern Bessarabia and Budjak (or Budzhak), now located in the southwestern part of the Odesa region of Ukraine. This territory was a continuation of the Great Steppe Frontier and the western border of the Great Eurasian Steppe. After the fifteenth century, this Ukrainian frontier became a Christian-Muslim frontier, a zone of military tension that determined the "historical fortune" of all "peoples on the frontier".<sup>1</sup>

Among the researchers who studied the Ottoman-Ukrainian Steppe of Budjak within context of the history of particular social or ethnic groups, it is crucial to mention the works of Ukrainian historians A. Bachynsky, O. Sereda and S. Mogulyova<sup>2</sup>, and of Moldavian historians V. Kabuzan, V. Zelenchuk and I. Chirtoage<sup>3</sup>, and of Turkish historians Feridun Emecen and Alper Başer<sup>4</sup>. The complexity of defining the border on the Danube between the Ottoman and Russian Empires has been mentioned in historiography many times, in particular, in the academic works written by V. Grosul, E. Chertan and others.<sup>5</sup> Most of these historians con-

- 1 Yaroslav Dashkevych, "Ukrayina na mezhi mizh Skhodom i Zakhodom (XIV-XVIII st.)", *Zapysky Naukovoho tovarystva im. Shevchenka*. T.CCXII: Pratsi istoryko - filosofskoyi sektiyyi, 1991, s. 28-44.
- 2 Anatoliy Bachyns'kyy, "Dzherelo dlya vyvchennya istoriyi narodnoyi kolonizatsiyi Budzhats'koho stepu i ponyzzya Dunayu v kintsy XVIII – na pochatku XIX stolittya", *Naukovo-informatsiynyy byuletyn' Arkhivnoho upravlinnya URSSR*, Kyiv 1963, Vol. 4. S. 65–73; Anatoliy Bachyns'kyy, "Edyanskye nohay v stepyakh Nyzhneho Pobuzh'ya" (Tezy dopovidey XV naukovoyi konferentsiyi Instytutu arkeolohiyi NAS URSSR, Odesa 1972); Anatoliy Bachyns'kyy, *Sich Zadunays'ka. 1775-1828 rr.: Ystoryko-dokumental'nyy narys*, Odesa 1994; Svitlana Mohul'ova-Kayuk, "Zaporoz'ke kozatstvo i Velykyy Stepovyy kordon", *Istoriya: Dopovidy ta povidomlennya Chetvertoho Mizhnarodnoho konhresu ukrajinistiv*, Odesa; Kyiv; L'viv 1999, Ch. 1, pp. 241 – 247; Olexandr Sereda, *Sylstrensko-Ochakovskyyat eyalet prez XVIII – nach. na XIX v: admynystratyvno-terytorialno ustroystvo, selyshya y naselenye v Severnozapadnoto Prychernomorye*, Sofiya 2009; Olexandr Sereda, *Osmans'ko-ukrayins'ke stepove porubizhzhya v osmans'ko-turets'kykh dzherelakh XVIII st. [= XVIII. Yüzyıl Osmanlı Belgeleri Işığında Osmanlı-Ukrayna Bozkır Serhatti]*, Odesa 2015.
- 3 Vladimir Kabuzan, *Narodonaseleniye Bessarabskoy oblasti i Levoberezhnykh rayonov Pridnestrov'ya: konets XVIII – pervaya polovina XIX v.*, Kishinev: Shtiintsa 1974; Valentin Zelenchuk, *Naseleniye Bessarabii i Pridnestrov'ya v XIX v.: Etnicheskiye i sotsial'no-demograficheskiye protsessy*, Kishinev: Shtiintsa 1979; Ivan Kirtoage (Ion Chirtoagă), *Yug Dnestrovsko-Prutskogo mezhdurech'ya pod osmanskim vladychestvom (1484 – 1595)*, Kishinev: Shtiintsa 1992 and other.
- 4 Feridun M. Emecen, "Osmanli arhivni vidomosti pro region Akkerman-Bender-Ochakov i Hodjabey. XVI st." (Document's of Osmanian Archives about the region of Akkerman-Bender-Ochakov and Hodjabey. XVI century), *Chornomor'ska Mynuvshyna* (The Transactions of Department of Cossack History in the South of Ukraine), Volume 13, Odesa 2018, pp. 63-76; Alper Başer, *I Numaralı Özi ve Silistre Ahkam Defterinde Eflak ve Boğdan*. pdf (Records About the Wallachia and Moldavia in the First Ahkam Daftar of Özi Silistre) *I. Uluslararası sosyal Bilimler Arastirmalari kongresi, Bildiriler, Denizli 2015*, pp. 149-156; Alper Başer, "Osmanlı Devleti'ne Sıgınan Potkalı Kazakların İskânlarına ve Faaliyetlerine Dair Gözlemler (1775-1826)". *Uluslararası Türkiye-Ukrayna İlişkileri Sempozyumu: Kazak Dönemi (1500-1800)*. Bildiriler, Çamlıca Yayınları, İstanbul 2015, s. 535-554; Alper Başer, *Bucak Tatarları (1550-1700)*, Afyonkarahisar: Afyon Kocatepe Üniversitesi 2010 and other.
- 5 Vladislav Grosul, "Bukharestskiy mir 1812 g. i formirovaniye novoy yugo-zapadnoy granitsy Rossii", *Formirovaniye territorii rossiyskogo gosudarstva. XVI - nachalo XX v. (granitsy i geopolitika)*, Moskva 2015: <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/v/buharestskiy-mir-1812-g-i-formirovanie-novoy-yugo-zapadnoy-granitsy-rossii>; Vladislav Grosul, "Formirovaniye russko-turetskoy granitsy po Bukharestskomu miru 1812 goda", *Formirovaniye granits Rossii s Turtsiyey i Iranom. XVIII - nachalo XX v.*, Moskva 1979; Evgeniy Chertan, "Novyye dannyye ob ustanovlenii gosudarstvennoy granitsy Rossii po Dunayu v 1813-1817 godakh", *Vekovaya družba*, Kishinev 1961.

cerned themselves with diplomatic negotiations and general European policy, the political situation around the Danube principalities, and the Russo-Turkish wars in the last quarter of the eighteenth century and the early part of the nineteenth century. This article draws attention to the situation in the life of the local population on the frontier and attempts to resolve it by looking at the Russian and Ottoman authorities. Thus, the purpose of the publication is to highlight the relations of different social and ethnic groups with the administration on the frontier.

### **The Nature of the Steppe Frontier and Its Management**

In the second half of the eighteenth century, as in previous centuries, the territory between the Dniester and Danube rivers was a natural virgin steppe. This area had flooded rivers, Dniester, Prut and Danube, swampy coasts and estuaries which were covered with thickets of reeds. The Dniester-Danube coastline and the Black Sea coast had a whole system of freshwater and salt lakes. The fertile chernozem soil was crossed by dry ravines and covered with bushes. Most of the small rivers that flowed into the Black Sea and the Danube dried up during the summer. Contemporaries have repeatedly noted the weighty impressions after the trip to the steppe. In the middle of the eighteenth century, one of the Turkish travelers wrote that after his long journey "you could not find a stone having the size of a seal, as well as a tree in the length of a finger".<sup>6</sup> This nature was described by a Russian officer, Alexander Zashchuk: "The space of Budjak ... is a desert; the traveler's eyes will look in vain for an object on which to stop his gaze - no trees, not even mounds". In this desert, "there were nothing but grass and tall weeds; huge herds of wild horses of Budjak Tatars grazed in the steppe; there were very little cultivated and sown fields and they were only near the settlements; the agricultural plow did not cultivate the virgin soil, the plants were belong to those who decided to use them. The man was a temporary guest here, who is afraid to stay in this desert for a long time".<sup>7</sup> Along with this description of the "virgin wild desert", almost all contemporaries testified the high productivity of the region. Thus, at the beginning of the eighteenth century Dmytro Kantemir noted that these lands "are beautiful in their productivity and surpasses the riches of the mountains".<sup>8</sup>

From the second third of the eighteenth century, the official border between the Russian and the Ottoman states gradually moved to the Danube: after the Russo-Turkish War of 1768–1774, the border lay along the Southern Bug River, after the Russo-Turkish War of 1787–1791, it lay along the Dniester River, and after the Russo-Turkish War of 1806–1812, the border lay along the Danube.

6 Fillipp Brun, "Rumynskiye knyazhestva i Bessarabiya okolo poloviny XVIII v.", *Zapiski Bessarabskogo oblastnogo statisticheskogo komiteta*, Kishinev 1868, T. 3, pp. 295.

7 Aleksandr Zashchuk, Bessarabskaya oblast, S.Peterburg 1862, Ch. 1, pp. 48, 207, 324, 529.

8 Dmitro Kantemir, *Istoricheskoye, geograficheskoye i politicheskoye opisaniye Moldavii s zhizn'yu sochinitelya*, Moskva: Novikov 1987, s.57.

From the last quarter of the eighteenth century, the territory of Budjak was a part of the administrative unit, the eyalet of Ozi (Silistra-Ochakiv) of the Ottoman Empire. The eyalet was heading by *vali* of Silistra. Depending on the situation, the fortresses of Silistra, Akkerman and Ochakiv could have been the center of the eyalet. It was divided into sanjaks - Akkerman, Bender, Silistra and others, which were headed by Sanjakbeys.<sup>9</sup> The military garrisons of the Ottoman State were stationed in the fortresses of Akkerman, Kiliya, Izmail, and Ren and commanded by officers (*alaybeys*, *seraskers*). While the military operations were going on, *seraskers* commanded the garrisons and troops. There were also stationary rural settlements such as villages, hamlets and other types around the fortresses. These settlements were inhabited by both Christians and Muslims and were subordinated to the heads of administrative units smaller than the sanjak - *kaza*, *nahiye*.<sup>10</sup> The Christian population living in such areas was called *Raiya* (*subjects*): while the residents of the cities were Greeks, Armenians, Moldavians, Ukrainians, Russians, and Bulgarians, in the villages were living mostly Moldovans, Ukrainians and Russians

The Ottoman State had significant territories where there was a different level of social and economic development, dominated by different types of feudalism and mostly military in nature. Without administratively, socially, and economically unification of the state, it was very difficult to control the situation for the central government on the distant frontier of the Empire, which included the lands of Budjak. The crisis that engulfed and weakened the Ottoman Empire in the second half of the eighteenth century, affected not only economic issues, the organization of the army and social system, but also governance in the remote provinces of the empire. Local feudal lords (*ayans*) acted completely independently of the center, controlled most of the lands considering them as their property and had private troops, which were opposed to the state military units. As a result of a number of reforms between the 1760's and 1790's and the unsuccessful struggle of the central government with such a situation in the provinces, the government made concessions to the feudal lords. By the end of the eighteenth century, not only could a head of eyalet, but also a powerful feudal lord could have held the title of Pasha.<sup>11</sup> This undermined the discipline in the army; soldiers and officers, who served in fortresses, began to trade, engaged in handicrafts, or simply increased the taxes on the local community. As a result, the population in cities and villages was in the arbitrary control of officials and feudal lords.<sup>12</sup>

At that time, the Budjak Horde was roaming the territory of Budjak. It consisted of the

9 Olexandr Sereda, *Sylstrensko-Ochakovskyyat eyalet prez XVIII-nach. na XIX v: admynystratyvno-terytorialno ustroystvo, selyshta y naselenye v Severnozapidnoto Prychernomor'ye*, Sofiya 2009, pp. 67-112.

10 Olexandr Sereda, *idid.*, 2009, pp. 227-290.

11 See: Mixail Meyyer, *Osmanskaya imperiya v XVIII v. Cherty strukturnogo krizisa*, Moskva 1991, s. 81-97; *Istoriya Osmanskogo, obshchestva i tsivilizatsii*; pod red. Ekmeleddina Iskhanoğlu, Moskva 2006, s.45-62.

12 A. Tatarchevskiy, "Puteshestviye i deyatel'nost' barona Totta v kachestve konsula v Krymu v 1767 g.", *Universitetskije izvestiya*, Kyiv 1873, № 10, s.2-3.

Nogai tribes and it was mainly their territorial association with the center in the village of Gankishla (Khankishla, Kishla Khanului; now the village of Udobne, Belgorod-Dniestrovsky district, Odessa region). Between the 1760s and 1770s, all *Raiyas* and Nogai tribes made up 55.7% of the steppe population between the Dniester and the Danube.<sup>13</sup>

For the most part, Europeans did not distinguish the Nogais from the Crimean Tatars, they called them Tatars, but in fact ethnically the Nogais had nothing in common with the Crimean Tatars, their appearance, history and lifestyle were different. The Budjak Nogais made their living by cattle-breeding.<sup>14</sup> The steppe of Budjak was an ideal place for cattle-breeding. The plundering of neighboring Ukrainian and Moldavian territories had a crucial place in the life of the Horde. The attacks of the Budjak horde on Ukrainian and Moldavian lands were extremely brutal and destructive. The presence of fortresses provided the Nogais, firstly a protection from persecution, and secondly, an ability to easily get rid of looted property and captives. The captives, in most cases, were sold as slaves by the Nogais and were used in the farms.

With the entrance of Russian troops into the territory of Budjak in 1806 and its annexation to the Russian Empire in 1812, most of the Nogais migrated to Tavria (Crimea) on Molochnye Vody.

All this information shows that the natural conditions of the region provided an opportunity for the development of agriculture and livestock, for the production of agricultural products, but during the second third of the eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries, they were not fully utilized, and the central government's control over the local regions was weak.

### **Real Life in the Steppe Frontier of Budjak**

In the eighteenth century, the Ottoman government adopted a specific policy towards the frontier of Budjak. In our view, there were *two interrelated components (directions)* of this policy. Each, in its own way, aimed to strengthen the Ottoman authority on the frontier and to colonize the Steppe.

*The first direction* was carried out by the official institutions and the government of the Ottoman state. It was characterized by the desire to leave the Nogais in the region. *The second direction* was embodied by the local Ottoman administration and the feudal lords. It was defined by the attempts to attract and retain by all possible means (benefits, hiring, captivity, hiding, sale, etc.) cheap labor in the region and, accordingly, in their own farms. As a result of this, the local Ottoman administration often controlled the fugitive settlements in the territory. The population who fled to Budjak, escaped the serfdom of the Russian and the

13 Anatoliy Bachyns'kyi, idid., 1972, s. 416; Olexandr Sereda, idid., 2009, pp. 67-112; Pavel Dmitriyev, *Narodonaseleniye Moldavii: po materialam peregisey 1772-1773, 1774 i 1803 gg.*, Kishinev: Shtiintsa 1973, s.33.

14 Elena Druzhinina, *Kyuchuk-Kaynardzhiyskiy mir 1774 goda. (Ego podgotovka i zaklyucheniye)*, Moskva 1955, s. 42-43.

Austrian Empire. However, the only real right that the fugitives acquired was to sell their labor. Most of the population became wage laborers on the farms of the Ottoman feudal lords and local rich people. Often, fugitives hired by an owner were quickly recruited by another or they wandered across different parts of the frontier in search of work. Thus, the local administration unconsciously pursued a policy of settlement and development of the frontier. It is possible to find the several examples of this policy within the documents of the diplomatic structures of the Ottoman state and Russia, as well as examples of biographies of the inhabitants of the frontier.

The Ukrainians and other populations of the neighboring territories with Budjak were the supplier of labor, which directly developed the lands of the frontier. One of the events that led to the appearance of such workers in the region was the Russo-Turkish war of 1735-1739. Throughout the war, the Budjak Horde conducted military operations directly in the territory of Budjak with regular units of the Russian army and the Zaporozian Cossacks raiding the Ukrainian border lands and capturing the local population (captives were called "yasir").<sup>15</sup> Sometimes the "yasir" fought back. Thus, in 1736 the Cossacks fought back and 7,000 captives were taken from Ukrainian lands, but some of the captives remained with the Horde.<sup>16</sup> Ottoman merchants were also the helpers of the Ottoman administration, they would hire the Cossacks and peasants for various jobs and would cross the Russian-Turkish border with them. They would come to the lands of the frontier, but then merchants often left them to their fate or sold them. In 1734, the Russian ambassador of Constantinople (Istanbul), Ivan Nepluev informed the General Military Bureau about these Ottoman merchants: "they transported the Cossacks to the Ottoman state and left them there". Almost at the same time, the General Military Bureau noted that "Greek and Bulgarian merchants took our subjects - Ukrainians with them to the Ottoman state".<sup>17</sup> These subjects called themselves Wallachians and Serbs and they crossed the border. So, the Zaporozhian Cossack K. Savlyushenko hired a merchant who went to Akkerman. When they arrived at the city, the merchant sold him to Turk Yusuf, for whom Savlyushenko worked for 12 years. Another Cossack, I. Kostenko, was his captive companion.<sup>18</sup> The Russian authorities tried to return their subjects, but the serasker of Budjak, sabotaged the implementation of agreements on the mutual transfer of fugitives and captives.

15 "Vsepoddaneyshiye doneseniya gr. Minikha. Ch. 1: Doneseniya 1736–1737 gg.", *Sbornik voyenno-istoricheskikh materialov*; pod red. A. Z. Myshlayevskogo, S.Peterburg 1902, Vyp. XII, ss.133, 147, 151; Vsepoddaneyshiye doneseniya gr. Minikha, Ch. 3: "Doneseniya 1739 goda i generalitetskiye rassuzhdeniya", *Sbornik voyenno-istoricheskikh materialov*; pod red. A. Z. Myshlayevskogo, S.Peterburg 1903, Vyp. XIII, ss. 231-232, 258-260.

16 Olexander Gurzhiy, Taras Chukhlib, *Get'mans'ka Ukraina*, Kyiv 1999, s.178 (Gurzhiy, Chukhlib).

17 Foreign policy archives of the Russian Empire (Arkhiv vneshnei politiki Rossiiskoi Imperii (AVPRI)), f. 69, spr. 272, ark. 213.

18 Arkhiv Yugo-Zapadnoy Rossii, izdavayemyy Vremennoyu komissiyey dlya razbora drevnikh aktov, vysochayshe utverzhdennoy pri Kiyevskom voyennom, Podol'skom i Volynskom general-gubernatore, T.III: Akti pro gaydamakiv (1700-1768), Kyiv 1876, s.404-405.

It should be noted that the Ottoman government, seeking to secure the southern steppes, also issued official orders for the frontier to attract people from neighboring countries to these areas. Cossack Osavul (Colonel) Vasyl Reshetov informed the Kyiv Provincial bureau in March 1761. According to the information, the local Ottoman administration had been instructed to take care of the settlement of the land. Those who agreed to the transition were offered various benefits and "tax relief with useful rules". For this reason, V. Reshetov reported that the refugees on the frontier settled from the territories of Slobidska, South and Right-Bank Ukraine and "those people are moving from these territories quickly," and their settlements were actively increasing.<sup>19</sup>

Despite the numerous conventions and agreements made in the second half of the eighteenth century between Russia and Turkey on the return of prisoners and fugitives - including Articles of the Treaty of Kuchuk-Kainarji (*Küçük Kaynarca Antlaşması*) of 1774, which specifically took into account the bilateral extradition of fugitives, etc. - they were not fully implemented.<sup>20</sup>

The Russian government also provided special instructions for the identification and return of fugitives from the frontier.<sup>21</sup> These measures were coordinated with the governments of Moldavia, Wallachia and the Ottoman administration of Budjak. During the years 1779 and 1780, the Russian administration promised several benefits and privileges in manifestos, called for the return of those who were in various circumstances in the Steppe of Budjak, including "ordinary ranks of the military regular and irregular units, state's and landowner's peasants, the Zaporozhian Cossacks and the Ukrainians from the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth" (*Rzeczpospolita*). These Ukrainians who decided to take advantage of the Russian government's proposals also tried to get land.<sup>22</sup>

Attempts initiated by the Russian diplomats to return the fugitives were partly unsuccessful, because they were hiding in Budjak's "Tatar villages".<sup>23</sup> During the interrogation of one of the caught fugitives, it turned out that the locals had given them the following advice: "do not roam in different places and do not wear Russian clothes, but look like Moldovans, both in clothes and hair".<sup>24</sup>

19 Central State Historical Archives of Ukraine in Kyiv (Tsentrāl'nyy derzhavnyy istorychnyy arkhiv Ukrayiny, m. Kyiv), f. 59, spr. 4654, ark. 48-48 zv.

20 Elena Druzhinina. Kyuchuk-Kaynardzhiyskiy mir 1774 goda. (Ego podgotovka i zaklyucheniye), Moskva 1955, ss. 350, 357-358.

21 Dokumente privind istoria Romaniei. Colectia eudoxiu de Hurmuzaki. Vol. 1: Raporte conculare Ruse (1770 - 1796), București 1962, p. 70.

22 Central State Historical Archives of Ukraine in Kyiv (Tsentrāl'nyy derzhavnyy istorychnyy arkhiv Ukrayiny, m. Kyiv), f. 1820, spr.6, ark.5-28.

23 Foreign policy archives of the Russian Empire (Arkhiv vneshnei politiki Rossiiskoi Imperii (AVPRI)), f. 69, spr. 200, ark. 48-49 zv.

24 Idid., f. 69, spr. 246, ark.250.

Despite protests of Russian diplomats, Turkish border authorities continued to receive Russian fugitives. To sum up, in a report written in December 1801, the chief of the Russian border outpost, Brigadier Katarzhi, said that the leaders of the Russian regiments on the Ottoman border reported that "half of the fugitives had not returned yet".<sup>25</sup>

### The Cossack Factor of the Frontier

The Ottoman state conducted a specific policy towards the Zaporozhian Cossacks. The poor Zaporozhian Cossacks were fishing in large groups in Budjak during the existence of the New Zaporozhian Sich between 1734 and 1775. Seasonal work especially was frequent.<sup>26</sup> In April 1755, the governor-general of Kyiv emphasized that "after the opening of the water, a large number of Zaporozhian Cossacks sailed to the Ottoman lands for fishing".<sup>27</sup> An unknown author, in the middle of the eighteenth century also noted that they "served as day laborers for the inhabitants of Ochakov, Akkerman, Bender and Kiliya"<sup>28</sup>. Another unknown author that lived in the middle of the eighteenth century also mentioned that in addition to fishing, they "served as mercenaries for the inhabitants of Ochakov, Akkerman, Bender and Kiliya". In 1775, the New Zaporozhian Sich was destroyed by Russian troops, and some of the Cossacks moved to the territory of the Ottoman state.

Hence, the Steppe frontier was constantly narrowed due to the colonization of the Russian Empire, it was losing its typical features and the possibility of further strictly unregulated ways of life. So Budjak in the last quarter of the eighteenth century and the early part of the nineteenth century most corresponded to the conditions of the Great Steppe Border, which was well known to the Zaporozhian Cossacks. It was this border and the steppe that became an area possible for the restoration of economic and state-building traditions for them.<sup>29</sup> This was facilitated by the policy of the Ottoman state. In August 1778, the question of the political situation of the Cossacks was resolved: the sultan's government, despite the protests of Russia, officially accepted the Cossacks under its jurisdiction. In September 1778, the Russian Colonel Repninsky announced that a Sich on the Dniester was intended to be established by the Ottoman authorities, for which "a place was determined between Bender and Akkerman",

25 Anatoliy Bachynskyy, *Narodnaya kolonyzatsyya Prydnunayskykh stepey v XVIII – nachale XIX vv.: Dys. ... kand. yst. nauk* (Odesa: I. I. Mechnikov National University, Ukraine, Odesa 1969, s.134).

26 Volodymyr Holobuts'kyy, *Zaporoz'ka Sich v ostanni chasy svoho isnuvannya.1734-1775*. Kyiv: Vyd-vo ANURSR, 1961. S.58-67.

27 Anatoliy Bachynskyy, *idid.*, 1969, s. 92; Central State Historical Archives of Ukraine in Kyiv (Tsentral'nyy derzhavnyy istorychnyy arkhiv Ukrayiny, m. Kyiv), f.59, spr. 2584, ark.2-3.

28 Mixail Guboglu, "Turetskiy istochnik 1740 g. o Valakhii, Moldavii i Ukraine", *Vostochnyye istochniki po istorii narodov Yugo-Vostochnoy i Tsentral'noy Evropy*, Moskva 1964, s. 146; Fillipp Brun, *Krym v polovine XVIII v.*, Odesa 1867, s.5.

29 Olena Bachyns'ka, "Prydnunays'kyy kray – terytoriya vidnovlennya derzhavotvorchykh tradytsiy ukrayins'koho kozatstva naprykintsi XVIII-XIX st.", *Naukovi zapysky: Zb. prats' molodykh vchenykh i aspirantiv*, Kyiv 2001, T.6, ss. 263-274.



namely in Kuchurgan, the Cossacks were provided with weapons and horses. Colonel Gnat was appointed as Koshovyi, who received the rank of two bunchuks (horse tails) pasha, but the real establishment of the Sich as an autonomous organization did not come. In the light of these events, the government of empress Catherine II gave instructions to the ambassador of Constantinople O. Stakhiev in which she demanded that the sultan extradite the Cossacks and fugitives of Russian subjects. In case of refusal, O. Stakhiev was allowed to offer the sultan's government the relocation of the Cossacks across the Danube in exchange for the transfer of Ochakiv to the Ottoman state.<sup>30</sup>

When the Cossacks, who sought happiness on the Dniester and the Danube, were presented, they told their stories about themselves. For example, Dmytro Kapinos, the Danube Cossack, said that he and his father and his brother joined the Black Sea Army, where "the Kish otaman (chief Cossack post) was Zakxaryi Chepiga, the judge was Anton Holovaty.... ." His father and two brothers were sent to serve in the flotilla. During the storm of Ochakov, Dmitry's father was wounded and died in Kinburn. After the capture of Ochakov, some Cossacks went to the Kuban and, but some of them refused to go there and went into Turkish possession. His uncle Ivan Kapinos had his own boat so he took his brothers across the Danube." Another Danube Cossack, Josip Bilyi, was born in 1759 in Kharkiv. In 1771, he went to the Zaporozhian Sich with the Cossack Chumaks. After its destruction, he ran away to "Kherson and worked there for two years", and then he came to Stanislav. In 1787, he "enlisted with the Cossacks under the command of Sidor Bily and served until the end of the war." He participated in the assault on Ochakov, where he was wounded, and when the Cossacks went to Kuban, he remained in Galati and fished near Akkerman and Izmail along with many other Black Sea Cossacks.<sup>31</sup>

The Russo-Turkish wars in the last quarter of the eighteenth century and at the beginning of the nineteenth century not only changed the state borders between the Ottoman state and the Russian Empire, but also made adjustments to the daily life of the population of the Steppe of Budjak. It started the migration processes in Budjak, because during the hostilities the population had to save lives, and then resume life under the policy of a new state - Russia.

Two groups of the Cossacks lived in the territory of Budjak; Ukrainian Zaporozhian Cossacks and Russian Old Believers. The first group is known as the Danubian (Turkish or Ukrainian) Zaporozhian Cossacks (Potkali Kazakları) the second one is called the Nekrasov Don Cossacks. Most of the settlements of these groups of Cossacks were located in the borders and their economic activities were associated with fishing at the estuary of the Dniester and Danube rivers. According to many researchers, the relationship between these two groups was different. They

30 Olena Bachynska, *Kozatstvo v "pislyakozats'ku dobu" ukrayins'koyi istoriyi (kinets' XVIII – XIX st.)*, Odesa: Astroprint 2009, s.92.

31 Central State Historical Archives of Ukraine in Kyiv (Tsentral'nyy derzhavnyy istorychnyy arkhiv Ukrayiny, m. Kyiv), f. 245, spr. 8, ch.1, ark. 344-345.

had disputes over fishing grounds, but they did not have conflict over religious issues. At the same time, the relations between the Zaporozhian and Nekrasov Cossacks were affected by the crisis in the middle of the Ottoman possessions of the 1780s and the early nineteenth century, associated with the reform of Sultan Selim III (1789-1808) in the fields of administration, economy and military affairs. At that time, strong and arbitrary ayans appeared who did not support the reforms and weakened the authority of the central government. Among the opponents of the reforms in Izmail there were two bunchuks (horse tails) Pasha and Ibrahim Peglevan. The Danubian Cossacks fought as part of the Ottoman army with these feudal lords for more than eight years, along with the leaders in Dobrudja and Rumelia. In return for this, the Nekrasov Cossacks supported Ibrahim Peglevan. According to Mykola Dibrova of the Danube Cossacks, Pasha Peglevan, to whom the Nekrasov Cossacks were subordinated, "did not give peace, all the Cossacks (Ukrainian Cossacks) moved to Vilkoovo and to the other lands assigned to them by the Braila Nazir and lived there for up to three years".<sup>32</sup> After the Russo-Turkish war of 1806-1812, they went to the main center of Nekrasov Cossacks' settlements, the village of Verkhniy Dunavets at the mouth of St. George, and occupied it. In this village, Sich was established (now the village of Verkhniy Dunavets (Dunavățu de Sus) in Tulcea County, Romania).

The Peace of Bucharest of 1812 did not clearly define how the border between the two states should lie along the estuary of Danube. It is notable that the establishment of the border at the estuary of the Danube faced with resistance from both the Russian and the Ottoman sides. Nekrasov Cossacks and Turkish Ukrainian Cossacks, who were helped by the locals of Vilkoovo with "shouts, curses and ridicule" broke the established boundaries.<sup>33</sup> Obviously, this situation was a microhistorical case of the frontier. The Cossacks had struggles in preserving the traditional economic life but later it influenced the military-political situation in the region and became the subject of diplomatic disputes until the new Russo-Turkish war of 1828-1829. The local authorities of both countries were directly involved in the regulation of difficult relations between the local population on the right and left banks of the Danube and tried to draw a line of demarcation, despite the hard conditions. The documents reveal the daily life events at the border: the movement of Nekrasov and Zaporozhian Cossacks or the local population; correspondence between the leaders of the Danube Flotilla, captain S. Popandopulo, and the two bunchuks (horse tails) pasha of Tulcea Pasha Yunus. Thus, after July 1817 in particular, the Russian border services were informing about the settlements of the Nekrasov Cossacks on the islands of the Kiliya estuaries, which had to remain neutral. Despite the difficult relations between the Nekrasov and the Ukrainian Zaporozhian Cossacks on the islands of the Danube Delta, they fished peacefully together, and it is likely that the Russian and Ottoman officials created tension for them by constantly interfering in their economic affairs by fulfilling the terms of the peace treaty.<sup>34</sup>

32 Olena Bachyns'ka, *idid.*, 2009, s.108.

33 National Archives of the Republic of Moldova (Arhiva Națională a Republicii Moldova), f.2, spr. 220, ark. 56,159.

34 State archives of Odesa region (Derzharkhiv Odes'koyi oblasti), f.1, op. 218, spr.17 (1826).

At the same time, the Russian Empire was preparing for a new war with the Ottoman state, and as early as 1821, the General Russian Command worked out projects and routes for the Russian army to the Danube and the Balkans. In 1826, these plans intensified due to growing European attention to the Greek question. The problems that Russian military leaders faced were the small number of flotillas they could send to the Danube Theater of War, the inability to maneuver at the estuary of the Danube, the lack of knowledge about the floodplains, straits, shallow channels and the territory of future battles. At the same time, the Danubian Cossacks had such knowledge, as well as light boats (Chajky), and, according to the researchers, the position they had in the Ottoman army thanks to their military skills, made it possible to block the actions of the Russian army. This was confirmed by the correspondence of the Chief of the General Staff of Russian troops I. Dibich with the Novorossiysk Governor-General Mikhail Vorontsov in 1826. Thus, I. Dibich noted that the Danubian Zaporozian Cossacks "could cause significant damage in the rear of the army if it moves to Varna and Shumla". He further asked for information about the Danubian Zaporozian Cossacks and proposals for measures "in case of war with the Ottoman state, which could be carried to exterminate or relocate these Cossacks to the Russian Empire".<sup>35</sup> After the Russo-Turkish war of 1828-1829, the Steppe Frontier finally disappeared.

Thus, in the last quarter of the eighteenth and the early nineteenth century in the north-west of the Ottoman state there was a territory that could be characterized as the last European steppe frontier. In historical literature, this area is known as Steppe of Budjak. The Ottoman state conducted a specific policy of colonization in this territory. On the one hand it had to implement the provisions of peace treaties with the Russian Empire and extradite the Russian subjects, on the other hand, the local Ottoman officials and feudal lords were interested in using fugitives from Russian territories as labour in their farms. As a result, the territory of the frontier had a very mobile and conditional border, which created a tense situation on its demarcation, especially the estuary of the Danube between the two Russo-Turkish wars of 1806-1812 and 1828-1829. The Cossacks became important in the relations in the Budjak's frontier and in the existence of the official border. The Turkish Zaporozian Cossacks tried to restore their autonomous organization (Sich), and this contributed to the emergence of a significant number of residents from neighboring territories of Budjak. The relations between the Zaporozhian and Nekrasov Cossacks, who lived on the border and the Ottoman and Russian villages and fortresses created the specifics of this frontier. The daily life of these people was disrupted by big politics, and they tried to preserve their old traditions and adapt new conditions by all possible means, but this did not often satisfy the local border administration of the Ottoman and Russian states.

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35 Ibid., ark.115.

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