

USING THE UKRAINIAN ARCHIVES FOR THE STUDY OF JANISSARY NETWORKS IN THE NORTHERN BLACK SEA: RESEARCH PERSPECTIVES AND CHALLENGES

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Abstract

This article deals with the primary sources in the Ukrainian archives which pertain to the establishment and function of the networks of the Janissaries of the Crimean Khanate with their neighbors in the northern Black Sea frontier region. It demonstrates the extent to which it is possible to use this archival material in order to study the history of relations between the Janissaries of the Black Sea port-cities and the main powers of the steppeland, namely the Zaporozhian Cossacks and the Ukrainians of the Left Bank Hetmanate. The paper raises questions about the ways in which these groups were interacting with each other and at what levels, also focusing on how these established networks of the great steppe region were affected and transformed by the Ottoman-Russian struggle and the gradual expansion of the Russians to the south.

Keywords: Black Sea frontier, Janissaries, Zaporozhian Sich, Hetmanate, Russian Empire, Ottoman Empire, Ukrainian archives

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Kuzey Karadeniz'deki Yeniçeri Ağlarını Çalışırken Ukrayna Arşivlerini Kullanmak: Araştırma Perspektifleri ve Zorlukları

Öz

Bu makale, Kırım Hanedanlığı'ndaki yeniçeri ağlarının Kuzey Karadeniz sınır bölgesindeki komşularını kapsayacak şekilde tesisine ve işlevine dair Ukrayna arşivlerinde karşımıza çıkan birincil kaynaklara odaklanmaktadır. Bu materyaller eşliğinde, Zaporozya Kazakları ve Sol Kıyı Hetmanlığı'ndaki Ukraynalılar olarak sayabileceğimiz, bozkır diyarının başlıca güçleri ile Karadeniz liman şehirlerindeki yeniçeriler arasındaki ilişkilerin tarihi çalışırken elimizdeki arşiv materyallerinin ne ölçüde kullanışlı olabileceği gösterilmiştir. Bu çalışmanın gündeme getirdiği sorular ise bahsi geçen grupların hangi yollarla ve ne düzeyde birbirleri ile etkileşime girdiği ve aynı zamanda, Avrasya'nın muazzam stepleri boyunca yayılmış kurulu ağların Osmanlı-Rus çatışması ve Rusya'nın güneye doğru tedrici genişlemesi bağlamında nasıl etkilendiği ve dönüştüğüdür.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Karadeniz sınırı, yeniçeriler, Zaporozya Siçi, Hetmanlık, Rus İmparatorluğu, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu, Ukrayna arşivleri

The major port-cities of the northern coast of the Black Sea, such as Ochakov (Ott. Özü/Özi), Perekop (Ott. Or), Yevpatoria (Ott. Gözleve), Caffa (Ott. Kefe), Kerch (Ott. Kerç/Kerş), and Azov (Ott. Azak), had a strong concentration of Janissary forces and constituted a chain of fortresses which played an important socio-economic and geopolitical role on the Ottoman-Slavic frontier. These areas, for most of their early modern history, constituted hubs of significant commercial activity, communication, and interaction between different ethnic and religious groups. However, all of these traits could be subject to drastic changes according to historical circumstance; the warfare of the seventeenth century in the region, for instance, led to the transformation of the northern Black Sea steppeland and had a profound effect on the interface between the Janissaries of the abovementioned port-cities and their neighbors.

The aim of my study in the context of the research project JANET is to examine the social, cultural, and economic interaction of the Janissaries with the Ottoman Empire's neighboring powers in the abovementioned frontier during this age of change. To date, the role of networks established between the Janissaries, Cossacks, and Ukrainians, as well as their transformation during the eighteenth century due to the Russian penetration, has been completely neglected by researchers. The English, Russian, and Ukrainian historiographies mainly focus on

the military and political history of the steppe–borderland relations,¹ with only a handful of works referring to trade collaborations and activities among different actors in the wider region.² Furthermore, none of the works identifies or underlines the important presence and role of the Janissaries in the steppeland. All the same, sources in Ukrainian archives can cast new light on the multiple connections of the Janissary population inhabiting the Ottoman northern frontier with the three main powers of the region, namely the Cossacks, the Ukrainians, and the Russians.

Three research axes can be explored through the use of primary documents from the Ukrainian archives. The first axis is the examination of the political dimension of the effects that the domination of the steppe by the Russians had on the relationship between the Janissaries, the Crimean Tatars, the Ukrainians, and the Cossacks; the second is the exploration of the processes that led to the transformation of the existing internal and external commercial networks and to the creation of new trading conditions and entrepreneurial practices within the framework of a gradual alteration of the old cross-border land and sea trade routes in the region; the third is the analysis of the social and cultural interaction among the Janissaries, Crimean Tatars, and Zaporozhian Cossacks, as their geographical proximity led to the formation of closer interrelations and exchanges between them. With a view to addressing these three axes, the paper will present an overview of Ukrainian sources and will discuss the possibilities and challenges they present for the study of the interaction between the Janissaries and their neighboring non-Muslim actors on the steppe frontier. Studying these relations

¹ Brian Davies, *Warfare, State and Society on the Black Sea Steppe, 1500-1700*, London and New York 2007; Ferhad Turanly, “The Military Cooperation between the Crimean Khanate and the Zaporozhian Host in the Second Quarter of the XVIIth Century”, *Shidnoyevropeiskiy Istorychnyi Vistryk*, 11, (2019), p. 39-55; Victor Ostapchuk, “The Human Landscape of the Ottoman Black Sea in the Face of the Cossack Naval Raids”, *Oriente Moderno* (Nuova serie, *The Ottomans and the Sea*), 20/81, (2001), p. 23-95; Kirill Kočegarov, “The Moscow Uprising of 1682: Relations between Russia, the Crimean Khanate, and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth”, *The Crimean Khanate between East and West (15th-18th Century)*, (ed. Denise Klein), Harrassowitz 2012, p. 59-75; Taras Chukhlib, *Cozaki ta Ianychary. Ukraina y Chrystians'ko-mousoul'man'skich viinakh 1500-1700 rr*, [Cossacks and Janissaries. Ukraine in the Christian-Muslim wars, 1500-1700], Kyiv 2010; Ravil Deinkov, *Rossia, Toursia i Krimskoe Chanstro: geopoliticheskaia situatsia v Severnom Prichernomir'e v period c 30-x. gg XVIII v. po 1873 g.*, [Russia, Turkey and the Crimean Khanate: the Geopolitical Situation in the Northern Black Sea region, 1730s to 1783], Moscow Region State University, Ph.D., Moscow 2012; Dariusz Kolodziejczyk, *The Crimean Khanate and Poland-Lithuania International Diplomacy on the European Periphery (15th-18th Century). A Study of Peace Treaties Followed by Annotated Documents*, Leiden 2011.

² Iannis Carras, “Το δια θαλάσσης εμπόριο από την Καζακία και τη Ρωσία, 1696-1774”, [Maritime trade from Kazakia and Russia, 1696-1774], *Οι Έλληνες της Αζορρείας, 18^{ος} – αρχές 20^{ου} αιώνα*, [Greeks in the Azov, 18th-Beginning of the 20th Century], (eds. Evridiki Sifneos, Gelina Harlaflis), Athens 2015, p. 329-345; Aleksander Halenko, “Towards the Character of Ottoman Policy in the Northern Black Sea Region after the Treaty of Belgrade (1783)”, *Oriente Moderno* (Nuova serie, *The Ottoman Empire in the Eighteenth Century*), 18/79, (1999), p. 101-112; Alan W. Fisher, *A Precarious Balance: Conflict, Trade, and Diplomacy on the Russian-Ottoman Frontier*, Istanbul 1999.

and interactions only through the lens of Ukrainian archives can certainly generate distortions and methodological lacunae, and I am well aware that the view presented through the combined study of the abovementioned sources with the multitude of relevant documents preserved in the Russian³ and Ottoman/Crimean archives⁴ can offer a much more comprehensive picture. However, because of limitations in the length of the paper, I will restrict myself to analyzing only the Ukrainian archives.

Since this article seeks to present primary sources for the study of the multileveled interactions and connections in the region within a complex historical period, it is important to provide a brief outline of events. The second half of the seventeenth century witnessed a vital transformation of the political chessboard in Eastern Europe. By the end of the century, the existing balance between the leading powers in the vast Black Sea steppe, which stretched from the Prut river in the west to the Kuban river in the east, had dramatically changed. The rule of the Polish Kingdom over the territories of the Ukrainian steppe and the Cossacks eventually led to a series of social and religious tensions and revolts, which culminated with the great uprising of 1648. The great revolt under the leadership of Bohdan Khmelnytsky, hetman of the Zaporozhian Cossacks, gradually came to engulf the region in a period of wars and social uprisings that lasted decades. To succeed in his goals, Khmelnytsky turned to alliances, first with the Crimean Tatars and, after a short period, with the tsar of Moscow, a development which acted as the turning point for the Russian expansion into the Ukrainian territories of Poland. Although Khmelnytsky succeeded in controlling the biggest part of Ukraine, which became a domain ruled by the Zaporozhian Host, the opportunity for political self-determination that arose from the great revolt was finally lost on

³ The main core of documents relating to the impact of the Russian expansion to the south on the course of the development of the relations in the Black Sea Steppe are located in: Archive of Foreign Policy of the Russian Empire (Moscow) (AFPPE), Archival series no. 89 – Russian-Ottoman Relations 1720-1819; Archival series no. 90 – Diplomatic Mission in Constantinople, 1502-1801; Archival series no. 123 – Russian-Crimean Relations 1722-1803, and in the Russian State Archive of Ancient Acts (Moscow) (RSAAA), Archival series no. 123 – Collection of documents on Russian-Crimean Relations.

⁴ Most of the Crimean Khanate archives have not been preserved, creating serious obstacles for researchers. In the early 1990s, copies of the Crimean *Şerîyye* Registers (61 volumes) were discovered by Halil İnalçık in the I. Gasprinskii Crimean Tatar Library; the originals are kept in the Russian National Library (St. Petersburg). These copies were brought to the Ottoman archives of Istanbul in 1995. The Crimean *Şerîyye* Registers can be used for studying the function of Janissary networks in the port-cities of the Crimean Khanate, and as unique and complementary sources for the study of the complex Black Sea frontier relations; Halil İnalçık, “Kırım Kadı Sicilleri Bulundu”, *Belleten*, 60/227, (1996), p. 165-190. Regarding other sources on the Crimean Khanate, see, for example: Victor Ostapchuk, “The Publication of Documents on the Crimean Khanate in the Topkapı Sarayı: New Sources for the History of the Black Sea Basin”, *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, 6/4, (December 1982), p. 500-528; Refat Roustem Abduzhemilev (ed.), *Documents of The Crimean Khanate from Huseyn Feyzkehanov's Collection*, Simferopol 2017.

account of exhausting civil strife and the foreign invasion which followed. The period which started with the great revolt ended in 1686, when Cossack Ukraine was portioned between its neighboring powers. As the position of both the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and the Cossacks was weakened, Russia increasingly consolidated its control over the region vis-à-vis the other regional contenders, while the Ottomans and the Crimean Khanate tried to maintain the established political order by keeping the Russians away from the Black Sea littoral. Cossack Ukraine was eventually divided into three parts: the Right Bank returned to the hands of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, who nevertheless maintained only weak control over the area and recognized the Russians' sovereignty over the Left Bank Hetmanate and the Zaporozhian Sich.⁵ The political and geographical borders had shifted, generating a new reality and different social, cultural, and economic ways of interaction in the frontier zone. Under these new conditions, the port-cities of the northern Black Sea coast played an important role in the eighteenth-century Russian-Ottoman struggle for predominance in the region. After four Ottoman-Russian wars (1686-1700, 1710-1711, 1735-1739, 1768-1774), the Russians would finally manage to conquer all the fortresses which acted as bases for significant Janissary activity.

During these developments, the Zaporozhian Sich⁶ experienced what were probably the most radical geopolitical changes in its history. As a result of the turmoil of the seventeenth century, the Zaporozhian Sich lost its prominence as the center of Cossack Ukraine. Its main sources of revenue, namely military services and looting, were largely replaced by other economic activities such as fishing, grazing, and beekeeping, while trade activities with the North and South became a profitable venture for the local economy. In fact, although looting continued to take place occasionally, it no longer constituted an organized, officially sanctioned military activity.⁷ At the beginning of the eighteenth century, the Zaporozhian lands found themselves in the midst of the Great Northern War

⁵ For more information about the history of the Black Sea steppeland, see, for example, Brian Davies, *Warfare, State and Society*; Paul Robert Magocsi, *A History of Ukraine: the Land and its Peoples*, Toronto, Buffalo, and London 2010; Charles King, *The Black Sea: A History*, Oxford 2004; Robert E. Jones, "Opening a Window on the South: Russia and the Black Sea 1695-1792", *A Window on Russia, Papers from the V International Conference of the Study Group on Eighteenth-Century Russia*, (eds. Maria Di Salvo and Lindsey Hughes), Rome 1996, p. 123-130; Victor Ostapchuk, "Cossack Ukraine In and Out of Ottoman Orbit, 1648-1681", *The European Tributary States of the Ottoman Empire in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, (eds. Gábor Kármán and Lovro Kunčević), Leiden and Boston 2013, p. 123-152.

⁶ The term "sich" refers to permanently fortified camps that were built by Cossacks beyond the Dnieper rapids (in Ukrainian: *za porobamy*). The Cossacks living there became known as Zaporozhian Cossacks. The first *sich* was built in 1552 on the island of Mala Khortytsia in the Dnieper river. Therefore, the land on both sides of Dnieper river where the Zaporozhian Cossacks built military fortresses (*sich*) was called Zaporozhia. The term Zaporozhian Sich can also refer to the military and administrative organization of the Zaporozhian Host: see Orest Subtelny, *Ukraine: a History*, Toronto, Buffalo, and London 1994, p. 109.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 153, 175.

(1700-1721), experiencing, as a result, the stage of resolution of two century-long struggles: on the one hand, that between Muscovy and Sweden for domination of the waters of the Baltic Sea and, on the other, that between the Russians and the Ottomans over the former's access to the Black Sea. The Cossack armies, under the hetman Ivan Mazepa, were requested to take part in both the Russian-Swedish and Russian-Ottoman wars. Eventually, however, the Zaporozhians switched from an alliance with the Russians to one with the Swedish King, Charles XII, in exchange for a status of autonomy under Swedish protection, a move which resulted in the destruction of the Zaporozhian Sich by Peter I. Subsequently, from 1711 until 1734, the Zaporozhians established their new headquarters in Oleshky, a Crimean territory, ruling their lands under the protection of the Crimean Khanate. During these years the Zaporozhians managed to form trade partnerships and social bonds with the inhabitants of the northern Ottoman frontier, an unexplored yet crucial issue which needs to be addressed when studying this important transitional period. Nevertheless, from almost the very beginning of this coexistence, a number of Zaporozhian leaders started to ask for their peoples' return to the tsar's protection, something which happened only in 1734. Within the framework of this new development, they regained their former lands and built a new *sich* close to their previous location.

The period of the New Zaporozhian Sich, from 1734 until its final destruction and absorption by the Russian Empire in 1775, is covered by the documents of the Archive of the Kosh (Head) of the Zaporozhian Sich from 1713 to 1776 (hereafter AKZS), located in Kyiv in the Central State Historical Archive of Ukraine. The poor condition of the AKZS, which causes great difficulties for researchers working on its collections, has its roots in the complex history of the archival series itself. After the destruction of the Zaporozhian Sich, the AKZS changed hands and location many times; for decades the archive was owned by the historian Apollon Skalkowski who collected its contents from different institutions and individuals. At the end of the nineteenth century, the AKZS was given to the Odessa Historical Archive and, at the beginning of the 1930s, to the Kharkiv Archive. After the transfer of the archive to the East during WWII, it was returned to Kyiv. Under these conditions, the collection of documents was rearranged and restructured many times; some of them were lost, and, most importantly, they suffered considerable damage.⁸ In the 1950s, in order to save the archival series, archivists made a copy of the archive on microfilm and published 33 transcribed files from a total number of 365.⁹ The largest section of the AKZS, 296 files, is

⁸ For the history of the AKZS, see Lubov Gistsova and Lioudmila Demchenko (eds.), *Arkhiv Kocha Novoi Zaporozhskoi Sichi, opis sprav 1713-1776* [Archive of the Kosh of the New Zaporozhian Sich, Catalog, 1713-1776], Kyiv 1994, p. 5-18; Olena Apanovich, "Arkhiv Kocha Zaporozhskoi Sichi" [Archive of the Kosh of the Zaporozhian Sich], *Archives of Ukraine*, 6, (1989), p. 13-27.

⁹ Lubov Gistsova (ed.), *Arkhiv Kocha Novoi Zaporozhskoi Sichi, korpus dokumentiv, 1734-1775* [Archive of the Kosh of the New Zaporozhian Sich, Corpus of Documents, 1734-1775], Volume 1, Kyiv, 1998; Lubov Gistsova (ed.), *Arkhiv Kocha Novoi Zaporozhskoi Sichi, korpus dokumentiv, 1734-1775*

located in archival series no. 200 of the Saint Petersburg Institute of History of the Russian Academy of Sciences. The majority of the documents of the AKZS are written in Ukrainian, Russian, and a mix of the Ukrainian and Russian languages, with a specific stylistic character inherent to the historical period. In addition, the AKZS contains documents in the Ottoman, Greek, Armenian, and Polish languages. Here, as mentioned earlier, I will be dealing only with the part of the AKZS preserved today in Kyiv.

This unique archival material demonstrates the political, social, cultural, and commercial relations of the Zaporozhian Sich with the Ottomans, the Crimean Khanate, the Left Bank Hetmanate, and the Russian authorities through a significant number of documents. The first and most valuable section of the AKZS refers to the formation and function of the Commissions of Inquiry with the participation of the authorities of the Crimean Khanate, the Janissaries, and the Cossacks, under the control of the Russians. The organization and function of the Commissions were under Russian jurisdiction, and under the direct control of the governor-general of Kyiv,¹⁰ whose important role in the development of steppeland relations will be discussed later. One of the Russian goals behind the establishment of the Commissions was to maintain stability in the region, but at the same time it was a direct way to control the relations of the Cossacks with the Crimeans, disrupting their natural development. Nevertheless, the records of these Commissions constitute an important archival source which reflects the whole spectrum of relations of the borderland steppe.¹¹

[Archive of the Kosh of the New Zaporozhian Sich, Corpus of Documents, 1734-1775], Volume 2, Kyiv 2000; Lubov Gistsova and Lioudmila Demchenko (eds.), *Arkhiv Kocha Novoi Zaporozhskoi Sichi, korpus dokumentiv, 1734-1775* [Archive of the Kosh of the New Zaporozhian Sich, Corpus of Documents, 1734-1775], Volume 3, Kyiv 2003; Lubov Gistsova and Lioudmila Demchenko (eds.), *Arkhiv Kocha Novoi Zaporozhskoi Sichi, korpus dokumentiv, 1734-1775* [Archive of the Kosh of the New Zaporozhian Sich, Corpus of Documents, 1734-1775], Volume 4, Kyiv 2006; Lubov Gistsova and Lioudmila Demchenko (eds.), *Arkhiv Kocha Novoi Zaporozhskoi Sichi, korpus dokumentiv, 1734-1775* [Archive of the Kosh of the New Zaporozhian Sich, corpus of documents 1734-1775], Volume 5, Kyiv 2008.

¹⁰ The institution of the Office of the Gubernia of Kiev was established in 1708 by Peter I as the highest administrative and military institution of the tsarist regime on the territory of the Gubernia of Kiev: Alexandr Bondarevskii, Leonid Otlivanov, Sergey Pil'kevich, and Vladimir Sheludchenko (eds.), *Tsentrāl'nyi gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii arkhiv USSR v Kieve: Putevoditel'* [Central State Historical Archive of the Ukrainian SSR in Kiev: Guide], Kiev 1958, p. 26.

¹¹ Alan Fisher, in his work focusing on the Russian annexation of the Crimea, maintains that the governor-general of Kyiv was appointed to deal with commercial disputes between Tatars and Cossacks. However the documents of the AKZS point to the existence of a much wider range of issues, including political, economic, and cultural matters, that were being examined, also pertinent to other populations of the region: Alan W. Fisher, *The Russian Annexation of the Crimea, 1772-1783*, Cambridge 1970, p. 25.

The Commission's members came together in the Zaporozhian Sich (in 1749, 1752, 1753-1754, 1763, 1764-65, and 1768)¹² to discuss and resolve conflicts between the three parties. Each committee reviewed the complaints that had been collected during the previous years. For instance, although the first Commission was held in 1749, it examined cases that had been recorded since 1740. Certainly, a resolution of all disputes was not always possible, due to disagreements between the parties or to the litigants' inability to gather evidence and document their claims. As a result, the Committees often had to interrupt their work, finding themselves in deadlock. The adjudication of each case was certified through the issuance of documents – often in two languages (Ukrainian and Ottoman) – bearing the final decision of the Committee. In other words, the abovementioned sources contain detailed descriptions of the conflicts, recording the time, place, and subject of the disputes and the names of the litigants, as well as the final judgements of the Commissions. The records were created based on petitions that were sent by the authorities of each involved party and the archive usually contains these petitions, the Commissions' direct answers, and records summarizing each case. Another kind of document that was produced by the Commissions is acquittal records, certifying that the person who had received a compensation made no additional claims against the payer. An indicative example of such an acquittal record, dated March 15, 1750, informs us, for instance, that a certain Janissary, Bekir Beşe (Bashe) of the 17th Cemaat (regiment)¹³ of Ochakov, certifies that he received compensation from the Zaporozhian Kosh for 43 stolen cattle and, thus, does not have any further claims. As case witnesses, the following Crimean inhabitants – among whom two were Janissary regimental officers – are recorded: Halil Ağa Gazi (? Gadzhi), Şakir (? Shagirey) Odabaşı (Odabasha), Ahmed (? Evmet) from Perekop, and Bölükbaşı (Buluk-Basha) Mehmed (Magmet).¹⁴

The main categories of cases found in such documents can be grouped as follows: a. theft of horses, cattle, sheep, trading goods, and personal belongings; b. murders, injuries; c. captivity-related events. Through the study of the registers of conflicts we can find instances of trade conducted between Crimean Tatars, Janissaries, Cossacks, Ukrainians, Russians, Greeks, and Armenians, as well as references to their political and social relations. A representative case is to be found in a petition brought by Mahmud Beşe (Mahmout Pasha) of Ochakov to the Kosh of the Cossacks, Vasiliy Grigorievich Sich, dated April 20, 1750. The petition informs us that a Janissary named Osman Beşe (Osman Pasha) hired a Cossack named Shpilka as a guard during his journey to the Zaporozhian Sich with his own

¹² Центральний державний історичний архів України, м. Київ/Central State Historical Archive of Ukraine, Kyiv, (TSDIAK of Ukraine), fond 229/opis 1/sprava 11; 12; 14; 17; 90; 97; 101; 139; 140; 144; 162; 163; 189; 191; 216.

¹³ Ottoman sources record the appointment of the 17th Cemaat to Özi in 1736: Devlet Arşivleri Başkanlığı Osmanlı Arşivi (BOA), Cevdet Askeriye (C.AS) 886/38074.

¹⁴ TSDIAK of Ukraine, fond 229/opis 1/sprava 14.

ship, which was loaded with goods. During *namağ*, Shpilka attacked Osman in order to kill him, but, after the ensuing fight, the Cossack escaped without succeeding. Later, Osman hired another Cossack as a guard, but during the night, Shpilka returned to the ship with forty-seven more Cossacks, stealing all the goods and injuring Osman. The record of the stolen goods, which also contains their value, is written in Greek. The Kosh replied that, after thorough investigation, it was impossible to find Shpilka and suggested that the Janissary next time hired only Cossacks who had a passport.¹⁵

Such documents can reveal the various types of interactions which were taking place during the period in question. This particular case presents us with a commercial aspect – that the Janissaries were involved in the import maritime trade to the Zaporozhian Sich – offering us, at the same time, a rare detailed presentation of the type and value of the imported merchandise, which consisted of a variety of goods. Furthermore, if we leave Osman's misfortune of choosing the wrong guard to one side, we understand that the cooperation of Muslim merchants with the local non-Muslim population was probably not a rare occurrence. Some other illustrative cases of collaboration and interaction between Janissaries and Cossacks are to be found in a petition from 1742 that was examined by the Commission of Inquiry in 1749. The Janissary İmamoğlu (Imamoulou) from Perekop was robbed by his Cossack servant, Argat, who stole a significant amount of money – 400 Crimean thalers – and two sabers. One year later, two Perekopian Janissaries, Mehmed Beşe (Bashe) and Deli Beşe (Bashe), traveled to the Sich for trade, but when they reached the customs point, Zaporozhian Cossacks from the Nikitino district stole their horses.¹⁶ Of course, the nature of such collaborations was determined by the specific circumstances that prevailed in the frontier zone. The interaction of these actors depended on a fragile balance: neither side was safe and any relationship of cooperation could be well replaced by hostile attitudes. Furthermore, trading and travelling on the frontier posed many dangers, such as robberies and transgressive behaviors, which were often impossible to contain within one region owing to the movement of diverse populations and the changing political aspirations of the nearby states.

In addition to all this, the Commissions of Inquiry had to deal with various issues related to the geographical borders drawn between the Zaporozhians and the Crimean Khanate by the Russians. The lands situated close to the borderline were seen as a space of vital economic importance and were, thus, continually claimed by the people inhabiting both sides, through cultivation, fishing, herding, and looting, all of which constituted crucial sources of income for frontier societies with large semi-nomadic populations. As borderlines shifted and their control passed to the Russians, the Zaporozhians, Janissaries, and Tatars had to find new ways of coexisting and interacting. The documents shed light on a process of

¹⁵ TSDIAK of Ukraine, fond 229/opis 1/sprava 12/folio 9.

¹⁶ TSDIAK of Ukraine, fond 229/opis 1/sprava 11.

destruction or readjustment of the previous precarious balance of steppe-frontier life which lay between cooperation and confrontation, a process that often gave rise to conflicts. It is evident from the cases found in the Ukrainian AKZS that a considerable number of disputes were related to the transgressions of Janissary shepherds, mainly from the fortress of Perekop, who crossed the borders in order to graze their herds in the lands of the Zaporozhian Cossacks, a widespread practice in a region where husbandry was an integral part of both Janissary and Cossack economic activity.¹⁷ In the sources, one can find several characteristic examples of collaboration and movement of shepherds through the frontier region, such as a petition brought by the Crimean Tatars to the Zaporozhian Kosh in 1744-1745 which informs us that in August 1745 a certain Janissary, Karakule (Karakoullé), hired a certain Cossack, Jacob, to graze his sheep in Perekop.¹⁸ In a similar fashion, in the Register of the Russian customs officer, Captain Krivtsov, we can trace a significant number of animals that were transported from the Hetmanate through the Sich to Crimea: on October 19, 1747, a Perekopian Janissary named Mehmed Beşe (Bashe) and his six companions crossed the customs point on horses with 250 sheep and 100 cattle; a few days later, on October 29, another Perekopian Janissary named Mehmed Beşe and his three servants followed the same route on horses with 50 cattle, while the Janissary Ahmed Beşe, together with his 13 companions, headed to Perekop riding a carriage loaded with provisions, and bringing with them 64 cattle and 900 sheep.¹⁹

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The so-called *diary* (proceedings) of the Commission of 1749 provides a valuable insight into the function of the Commissions, their institutional and practical role in conflict resolution, and the political significance of this practice. The most important aspect of this multipage document is the unique view it offers concerning the ways in which the various members of the Commission understood and perceived the geopolitical fluctuations that the frontier region was experiencing and the extent to which the involved parties accepted or contested the changes enforced by the Russians.²⁰

A second category of documents which is to be found in the Ukrainian AKZS provides information on the external trade of the region. This category includes official letters exchanged between the Kosh and the heads of the fortresses of the Crimean Khanate, as well as other official correspondence and sources such as customs registers and regulations. These documents reveal the commercial ties which existed among the Russian Empire, the Hetmanate, the

¹⁷ TSDIAK of Ukraine, fond 229/opis 1/sprava 11; 12; 14; 17; 90; 97; 101; 139; 140; 144; 162; 163; 189; 191; 216.

¹⁸ TSDIAK of Ukraine, fond 229/opis 1/sprava 11.

¹⁹ Arkadiy Andreevskiy, "Materialy kasayushchiesia zaporozhtsev, s 1715-1774 g", [Documents concerning the Zaporozhians, 1715-1774], *Zapiski Imperatorskogo Odesskogo obshchestva istorii i drevnostei*, [Notes of the Imperial Odesa Society of History and Antiquities], Volume 14, Odessa 1886, p. 444.

²⁰ TSDIAK of Ukraine, fond 229/opis 1/sprava 11.

Zaporozhian Sich, the Janissaries, the Crimean Khanate, and the Ottoman Empire in general. The Zaporozhian Sich became a transit center for the trade between north and south, acting as a hub of local, intra-regional, and intra-imperial land- and sea-trade connections. The traditional Istanbul-Ochakov-Sich trade route continued, although new routes were also formed. Now, Ukrainian, Ottoman, Greek, and Armenian merchants were travelling to and from Poltava, the commercial center of the Hetmanate, which became an enduring point of trade on the route which extended from Gözleve and passed through Ochakov or Perekop. Certainly, the port-city of Gözleve, the customs of which were farmed out to a Janissary *ağa* – the fortress he was appointed to is unfortunately not specified – in the 1760s by Giray Han (Krim-Girey),²¹ was not the end of the trade route; it continued to Istanbul. The documents also record the type of goods and commercial practices employed, prominently reflecting the existing commercial collaboration between the region's Muslim and non-Muslim population. The Cossacks of Zaporozhia had established their own merchant routes and networks: as the Cossack archives show us, every spring, six to seven ships arrived from Istanbul via the Dnieper in the Cossack Sich, loaded with olive oil, wine, and fruit, with this traffic continuing throughout the summer. Although the steppe was a scene of rivalry and antagonism between the Russian and Ottoman Empires, the Ukrainians, Cossacks, Janissaries, Tatars, and other non-Muslim merchants managed to find a balance between the two major powers and continued to maintain commercial ties that had been established in previous periods.

The abovementioned document category, as well as providing evidence on the economic and political life of the political entities in the region, also offers the opportunity to monitor the complex social and cultural behavior of its inhabitants and the exchanges between them. Because of their nature and scope, these documents usually provide very little direct information on the social and cultural life of the frontier zone; however, such aspects are still perceptible when we try to read between the lines. When we examine the bigger picture of overlapping and alternating relations of confrontation and collaboration, especially between Janissaries and Cossacks, an image of intense cultural exchange and interaction emerges. For instance, the strong impact that the Janissary way of life and military practices had on the Cossacks, which is evident in the sources, is yet to be studied and presents us with the opportunity to engage in the exploration of a completely new field of research.

The Left Bank Hetmanate played an important role in the relations between the main powers of the Turkic-Slavic frontier. After the upheavals of the second half of the seventeenth century, the Hetmanate emerged as an autonomous political entity under Russian rule. In the beginning, it enjoyed self-governance when it came to its internal affairs, but its foreign policy and military sector were controlled by Muscovy. During the eighteenth century, the Russian policy in the

²¹ TSDIAK of Ukraine, fond 229/opis 1/sprava 157.

region leaned toward the extension of centralized rule and the restriction of the Hetmanate's autonomy, while continuing its active intervention in the political affairs of the Crimean Khanate and the Ottomans on the northern shore of the Black Sea. Despite all this, during this period the Hetmanate became the center of Ukrainian political, social, and economic life.

One of the principal instruments of Russian policy in the Hetmanate was the governor-general of Kyiv. The Russians favored a strong concentration of power in his hands due to the frontier status of the Kyiv Province, and a Russian law of 1737 gave him the right to intervene in the internal issues of the Zaporozhian Kosh, allowing him to control its foreign policy. The relationship between the main powers of the region is reflected in the archival series of the Office of the Gubernia of Kyiv (hereafter OGK), which is kept in the Central State Historical Archive of Ukraine (archival series no. 59) and includes 9,996 folders. The governor-general of Kyiv acted as an intermediary in the document flow between the Sich administration and the imperial court, while the Zaporozhian Kosh handled the document flow between the Hetmanate and the Crimean Khan. In addition, the Cossack authorities acted as an intermediary link in the correspondence between both the Hetmanate and the Russian government with the Crimean Khan. By integrating the Zaporozhian Cossacks into this imperial framework through the Hetmanate, the Russian control of the Zaporozhian region increased.

Although a return of the Zaporozhians to the protection of the Khanate was initially considered to be a potential threat, Russian intervention in the relations of the Zaporozhian Sich with the Crimean Khanate began to relax from the late 1750s onward. During this period, the OGK shows an increase in the direct correspondence between the Khanate and the Sich, providing us with a valuable insight into the ways in which and the extent to which the Russian authorities interfered in the relations of the Zaporozhian Sich with the Ottomans and the Tatars of the Crimean Khanate, as well as the types of relations which developed between the two sides. The archive of the OGK can be used as a complement to the sources of the AKZS, not only owing to the fact that it illuminates unknown instances of the diplomatic relations of the abovementioned states, but also because of its references to the function of the Commissions of Inquiry which, as explained above, mainly refer to interactions at the level of individuals. The files contain information on the procedure for the selection and appointment of the members of the Commissions, as well as detailed descriptions of the nature of the conflicts, giving us the opportunity to better understand the stakes involved and the institutional aspects which defined each case.²²

In terms of the trade conducted in the steppeland and the Black Sea littoral, the OGK reveals valuable evidence which allows us to trace the commercial ties

²² TSDIAK of Ukraine, fond 59/opis 2/sprava 789; 1285; 1514; 1707.

between the Muslim population of the Crimean Khanate and non-Muslim entrepreneurs such as Cossacks, Ukrainians, Russians, Greeks, and Armenians. Passports given to merchants in order to cross the borders, reports of the heads of the customs on the merchants passing through checkpoints and on the duties collected, and reviews of trade relations with the Crimean Khanate can provide valuable statistical data concerning the numbers of people and goods traveling in the region. Moreover, these documents disclose important information on the types of commerce, trade routes, and trade companies involved in this activity.²³ The salt trade was one of the most important sources of income for the Crimean authorities and Ukrainian merchants (*chumaks*). Salt caravans from the Crimean salt lakes of the fortress of Perekop and other places stretched from Crimea through the Zaporozhian Sich posts to the markets of the Hetmanate and beyond.

The Crimean authorities earned significant income from the export of salt; in 1748 at Perekop, for instance, the *chumaks* paid a customs duty of 35 *kopeczk* per empty carriage, also paying 1 *carbovents* and 5 *kopeczk* per loaded carriage on their way back, the cost of one carriage of salt being 4 *carbovents* and 11 *kopeczk*.²⁴ The traffic of *chumak* caravans was quite impressive. It is indicative that in 1746 – in the course of only one month, in November – twenty-eight merchants with seventy-eight journeymen crossed the Charichan outpost, close to the city Poltava in the Hetmanate, all of them loaded with salt and fish. Of course, robberies and attacks were a constant reality for the various parties that traded in the area. In 1744, for example, Cossacks returning from Crimea with a load of salt stole a horse from a Perekopian Janissary called Mehmed and six horses from a resident of Perekop called Esoubeps. A few years later, in 1748, three oxen and two horses were stolen by Tatars from a certain Cossack, Grigoriy Tutunnik, who was carrying a load of salt from the Perekop salt lake.

In both the AKZS and the OGK the export of cattle and horses from the Hetmanate and the Zaporozhian Sich to the Crimean Khanate occupies a special place. The Ukrainian merchants, apart from their exported goods, were often carrying with them a significant number of cattle and horses which they used as a kind of currency. Since, according to Russian law, it was forbidden to export gold and silver – in the form of coins or otherwise – from Ukraine, and the Crimean merchants and authorities refused to accept Russian copper coins, the Ukrainian merchants were selling their animals in order to have currency to buy salt and other goods. Needless to say, under such conditions the smuggling of gold and silver evolved into a very profitable business in the region.²⁵

²³ Indicatively, see TSDIAK of Ukraine, fond 59/opis 1/sprava 105-107; 112; 186; 281; 324; 654; 742; 807.

²⁴ Mykola Tyshchenko, *Narisi z istorii zovnisn'oi torzivli Ukrainy v XVIII st.*, [Essays on the History of Ukraine's Foreign Trade in the 18th Century], Bila Tserkva 2010, p. 100.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 90-125.

Ukraine was an important market for the Crimean Khans, who paid great attention to the proper organization of its commerce. In this framework, maintaining good relations with the Cossacks was a prerequisite for the smooth conduct of trade, as the Zaporozhian Sich, with its customs, acted as a transit-trade center for the entire region. As well as salt, other goods, such as soap, dry fruit, and pottery, were imported to the Ukrainian and Russian markets. Among these, Crimean wine was the most well known in Ukrainian and Zaporozhian fairs. The sources in the OGK also reveal the export trade from Ukraine and the Zaporozhian area to the Crimean port-cities of Özü, Gözleve, Kefe, and the Ottoman capital, with the famous Ukrainian cow butter, cereals, lard, cattle, horses, and sheep constituting the main goods which were exported to all of these areas via the sea.

The unique and largely unexplored archival documents of the Central State Historical Archive of Ukraine thus present us with direct proof of the great potential for the study of different aspects of the intertwined relations which existed between the main powers of the northern Black Sea frontier zone. The types of documents presented here can provide valuable insight into the political, economic, social, and cultural interaction between the Janissaries of the Crimean Khanate, the Zaporozhian Cossacks, the Ukrainians of the Hetmanate, and the Russians, allowing a comparative frame of study. These documents deserve significant attention from scholars of diverse historical fields, as they can offer a fresh outlook on the history of the region.

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