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**THE RESTORATION OF THE COSSACK STATE BUILDING
TRADITIONS IN BUDJAK AND DOBRUJA AT THE END OF
THE XVIIITH – EARLY XIXTH CENTURIES**

- Abstract -

This publication offers a vision of the author on the causes of subsidence of the Zaporozhian Cossacks (Potkalı Kazakları) in the Ottoman Empire (Budjak and Dobruja) and how their status changed at the end XVIII century. Attempts to start thier own organization – Sich Zadunays'ka, while the Cossacks also perform military service. Based on archival documents, it was revealed that the Ottoman government welcomed the Cossacks to stay in the subordinate territory, but changed the potential place of establishment for their Sich. The Cossacks were dependent on the military-political situation in the Danube region. One of the factors were the Russian-Turkish wars and relations with Cossacks-nekrasivtsi (Ignat Kazakları).

It has been proven that one of the first organizations on the Danube, which had most of the attributes of the state building traditions of the Cossacks was a Sich in the village of Katyrllez (Sfântu Gheorghe). It was found that the Cossacks carried out various assignments and were local government officials, carrying protection with police service in the Danube fortresses. They also participated in the Russian-Turkish wars of the end XVIII - early XIX century, as part of the Turkish army.

Keywords: *Zaporozhian Cossacks, Ottoman Empire, Zadunays'ka Sich, Katyrllez (Sfântu Gheorghe), Dobruja, Budjak.*

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The demolition of the Zaporozhian Sich on June 3-5, 1775 resulted in the marching of a considerable part of Zaporozhian Cossacks to the boundaries of the Ochakiv region, the Dniestr and the lower reach of the Danube – i.e. the territories that belonged at that time to the Ottoman Empire. Another part of the Cossacks remained on Southern Ukrainian lands as a component of the Russian Empire. At that point they had to determine their place in the new conditions of life within the frames of two empires. It was not by chance that the Zaporozhians chose those lands – they had known the territory since the end of XVII century due to the Cossacks' crusades and Russian-Turkish wars. In the second half of XVIII century these territories of the Ottoman Empire most closely corresponded to the conditions of the steppe border zone being customary to the Zaporozhians, so they became the areas where it was possible to renew traditional economy and own organization – namely, the Sich lost in 1775.

The policy of the Ottoman Empire encouraged the setting of the Zaporozhians in Ochakiv, Budjak and Dobruja regions. In the XVIII century, the Turkish government was carrying out a specific policy as to these territories and their population for strengthening its power in these regions. That is why, local Turkish administration often closed eyes to the settling of fugitives from neighboring countries on the subject territories¹.

The immigration of the Zaporozhians caused a serious discomfort to the Russian government – according to the information of the border zone administration, the Sultan was inclined to consider the Zaporozhians as his subjects. In this way, the Ottoman Porte could exercise pressure on Russia. In the first place, by international community as a Muslim state that gave shelter to Orthodox Christians (according to Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca of 1774, Russia reserved the right to protect the Orthodox Christian population of the Ottoman Empire, which allowed intrusion in the internal affairs of the Porte); in the second place, the Ottoman government received support in its struggle with local feudal lords who opposed the state authorities and their reforms that began in 1774; in the third place, the Zaporozhians were familiarly acquainted with the terrain and in case of war with Russia could serve as an effective replacement for the Turkish army; in the fourth place, the existence of Zaporozhian Cossacks in the Ottoman Empire actually declared non-recognition of territorial acquisitions of Russia and it

¹ Bachyns'ka O., Istanbul colonization policy on the Danube lands in the XVIII century: Ukraine in the East-Central Europe (from the early times till the late 18th century), Kyiv, 2003, V.3, p. 243-252.

was considered by the Russian administration as a hostile act. The above mentioned circumstances determined the attitude of Russian authorities to the Zaporozhians, which was reflected in their name – in Russian documents “unfaithful” means Turkish or Zaporozhians from behind the Danube, in historic documents they received the name – “Zadunays’ki Zaporozhians” or “Zadunaytsi”. In this connection it can be marked that in Ottoman documents the Cossacks received the name of «Potkalı/Butkalı Kazakları», which distinguished them from other Ukrainian Cossacks - «barabashes», as well as from the Russian nekrasivtsi - «Ignat Kazakları». The name Butkal’ski or Potkal’ski Cossacks became widely spread from XVIII century.

In August 1778 the question of political status of the Cossacks was decided by the Sultan. Disregarding the protests of Russia, he officially admitted the Cossacks under his jurisdiction. In September 1778, Russian colonel P.Repninskyi informed that the Ottoman authorities intended to create a Sich on the Dniester, for which purpose a place was allocated between Bendery and Akkerman, and the Cossacks were given arms and horses². Taking into consideration these events, the Russian authorities gave instructions to O. Stakhiyev, the Russian Ambassador in Constantinople, demanding to claim from the Sultan to turn over the Zaporozhians as Russian fugitives. In case of denial, O. Stakhiyev was allowed to offer to the Sultan’s government to move the Zaporozhians across the Danube in exchange for the recognition of Ochakivska region as belonging to the Porte. The Russian offer was accepted the Ottoman Empire³.

On the decision of the Turkish administration, the Zaporozhians were to settle in Rumeli “in the villages situated at the distance from the Black Sea shores, 3-5 men in one village”. The conditions in which the Zadunays’ki Zaporozhians found themselves, as well as a number of measures taken by Russian government, aimed at the call of the Cossacks to Russia (such as amnesty, propaganda of Russian agents) resulted in returning of separate groups of Zadunays’ Zaporozhians to the Russian territory. The declaration of creating the “Faithful Cossacks Troops” out of former Zaporozhians (later “The Black Sea Cossacks Troops”) also influenced the resettlement of the Cossacks to Russia. At the same time the Cossacks moved not only to Russia but also to Principality of Moldova and to the Austrian Empire (they served as frontier guards at the Austrian-Turkish border on both banks of the Tysa river⁴). Migration from the Ottoman domain caused serious

² Bachyns'ky A., *Sich Zadunays'ka. 1775-1828*, Odesa: Germes, 1994, p. 19.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Kondratovych F., *Zadunays'ka Sich [po mestnym vospominaniyam i rasskazam]: Nevycherpni djerela pam'yati, t. II: Zadunays'ka Sich*, Odesa, 1998, p. 39-82.

changes in the attitude of the Sultan's administration to the Zaporozhians. The latter were most unwelcome in the situation of preparing to a new war with Russia. In this connection the Zaporozhians were again allowed their own military-administrative organization – Sich, which possessed certain autonomy. Probably, beginning from the middle of the 80's of the XVIII century it was situated in the village of Katyrlez in the Danube firth (now the village of Sfântu Gheorghe in the county of Tulcea (Romania)).

During the period of the Russian-Turkish War 1787–1791 the Zadunays'ki Cossacks took part in military activities on the side of Ottoman Empire. The Sultan mobilized the Cossacks and the firman thereof was read in Adrianopol to former Zaporozhian Cossacks “who are mostly fishing in the Danube now”⁵. The Zaporozhians avoided active participation in the military activities limiting their role to minor confrontations with brigades of Russian troops and the Black Sea Cossacks.

After the Russian-Turkish war of 1787–1791 the Zadunays'ka Sich continued its existence in Katyrlez. The majority of former Cossacks unsatisfied with their state in Russian, Moldavian and Austrian lands began to concentrate around this Zadunays'ka Sich in Katyrlez. The growth of Cossack population so close to the border provoked agitation with the authorities of Russia. As the result, the measures that had been tried in the past years, such as “amnesties”, “private invitations”, “infiltration of agitators”, were used again. Thus, in the 90's of the XVIII century, a merchant from Yelizavetgrad Ye. Klyonov repeatedly went to Katyrlez specifically with the purpose of moving Zadunays'ka Sich to Russia. Ye. Klyonov carried out negotiations with the Cossack chieftain, bought fisherman's boats to transport secretly the Cossacks to the Russian bank. “Zadunaytsi”, in their turn, demanded guarantees of safety and free lands in the vicinity of the city of Odessa⁶. However, not all Cossacks were glad to listen to the propositions of re-emigration. Thus, in the spring of 1794, Trohym Pomelo, the Cossack chieftain, who had occupied the position since 1791, was close to death due to his intention to transfer the Sich to Russia. The pro-Turkish Cossacks confronted him and besieged his house at night; having failed to find the chieftain they robbed the house⁷.

Active development of the Katyrlez Sich by Zadunaytsi and the re-distribution of land as a way of existence was bound to lead to a conflict with the

⁵ Bachyns'ky A., *Sich Zadunays'ka. 1775-1828*, Odesa: Germes, 1994, p.22-23.

⁶ *Nevycherpni djerela pam'yati, t. III: Khadjyby-Odesa ta ukrains'ke kozatsvo (1415-1797)*, Odesa, 1999, dok.V.39, p.28.

⁷ Bachyns'ky A., *Sich Zadunays'ka. 1775-1828*, Odesa, 1994, p. 29-32.

Nekrasivtsi (the Don Cossacks - Old Ritualists). In the quarrels between the two groups of Cossacks, the first and foremost subject was good land in the estuary of the Danube and fishing places, and only then different religious traditions. A crisis situation in the Ottoman lands in the 1780s up to the beginning of the XIX century in connection with the reforms of Sultan Selim III and grand vizir Alamdar Mustafa pasha (Bayraktar) in management, economics, army also influenced the relations between the two groups of Cossacks. Yilikoglu Suleiman-aga in Silistria, Osman Pazvand-oglu – in Vienna, Ibrahim Peglevan called Baba-pasha – in Izmail were among the opponents of the reforms. Zadunaytsi fought in the number of Turkish governmental forces with the specified feudal lords. Military units of Zadunaytsi were to submit to the governor of the fortress Braila. It is known that the brigades of the Cossacks from Braila were sent to settle quarrels between the forces of Terseniki-oglu and Yilikoglu Suleiman-aga⁸. One of such brigades consisted of more than 400 warriors: chieftain, clerk, one bash chaush (senior officer), two interpreters, 4 colonels, 4 chaushes, 3 artillerists and 400 Cossacks⁹.

According to the data of Russian scouts, the Zaporozhians who participated in the fight with Pazvand-oglu, received the permit to settle below the Old Kiliya in the dwellings of nekrasivtsi thrown from their homes by the Braila pasha. However, the Cossacks did not stay there long. According to the statement of Mykola Dibrova, one of Zadunaytsi, “when Pehlevan kept them on alert everybody moved from Seimen to Vilkovovo and Katyrlez to the lands allocated to them by the Braila governor”¹⁰. Between 1805 and 1806, the Nekrasivtsi in the structure of Pehlevan’s forces attacked Katyrlez, burnt the Cossacks’ homes and killed many of them. The Sich was ruined.

Facts prove the importance of Katyrlez existence for Zadunays’ Zaporozhians as a traditional Cossacks center. Though not much is known about this Sich because of the absence of sources, we shall consider the available information to determine its role and status both for the Cossacks themselves and for the Ottoman government. In our opinion, the Katyrlez Sich can be rightfully considered the center where the Zaporozhian Cossacks became institutionalized for the first time since 1775. It possessed all traditional components. Let us contemplate some of them. Sich traditionally was the place of residence of the management – the chieftain, privileged top leaders, kuren hetmans and only unmarried Cossacks. Married Cossacks used to live in villages and farms around the Sich. They were subordinated to the Ottoman

⁸ Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivleri (BOA), fon adı: HAT, dosya № 50, gömlek №2355a, sof.1.

⁹ BOA, fon adı: C.AS, dosya № 409, gömlek № 16908, sof.1.

¹⁰ Kondratovych F., *Zadunays'ka Sich [po mestnym vospominaniyam i rasskazam]: Nevycherpni djerela pam'yati, t. II: Zadunays'ka Sich*, Odesa, 1998, p. 50-62.

administration in Silistria, Tulcea or Braila.

Kleynodes (attributes of power) were obligatory symbols of Sich. At that time, among such symbols were known a bayrak (badge-flag), bunchuk (horsetail - staff of Cossack hetman), pernach (Colonel's mace) and Seal. In the investigation of F. Vovk, the scientist, it was marked that Zadunaytsi used "Turkish bunchuk... each kuren had its own bayrak – a sort of sign made of red cloth with a white half-moon and 6 stars instead of the Sich flag. If a Cossack died, this bayrak was displayed in front of the kuren as honors of war to the deceased"¹¹. Besides, there is evidence of the the Zaporozhians themselves as to the flag and other symbols: "The flag was really and one pernach, ... flag ... was of yellow color with a white half-moon in the middle"¹².

At the end of 90s of the XVIII century there emerged a seal of Zadunaytsi. Its occurrence certainly witness the defined status of Cossacks. Thus, the above mentioned merchant Ye. Klyonov in January 1796 p. asked from the chieftain Yakym Gardovyi for "five plankets with a military seal for the Cossacks to pass across the border"¹³. The seal had no images, only the text "سرکرده قزاقلرینک پوتقالی" – "Potkalı kazaklarının ser-kerdesi koşovıy. 1217"¹⁴ – "Chieftain of Potkal'ski Cossacks. 1802/1803".

There traditionally was a square with a church, kurens (Cossacks dwellings), stores of foodstuffs, arms, etc. in the territory of the Sich. Cossack troops were formed by kurens, though in case of necessity they joined Turkish brigades as groups. Some documents allow suggesting that the territory from which taxes were collected for supporting the Cossacks was Wallachia (Eflak voyvodası)¹⁵.

An important fact that attests the status of Katyrlez Sich is the presence of married Cossacks and children born in the territory of the Sich. The majority of married Cossacks lived in clay houses, they were engaged in fishing and pursued a trade in the Danube estuary and applied for work. The majority of Cossacks in the Katyrlez Sich originated from the former Zaporozhian Sich, they preserved its military experience, spirit of freedom and traditions, while elements of non-Cossack origin usually were of no significance.

¹¹ Kondratovych F. *Zadunays'ka Sich [po mestnym vospominaniyam i rasskazam]: Nevycherpni djerela pam'yati, t. II: Zadunays'ka Sich*, Odesa, 1998, p.81, 87.

¹² Central State Historical Archives of Ukraine in Kyiv, f.245, op.1, spr.8, p.1, ark.345.

¹³ *Nevycherpni djerela pam'yati, t. III: Khadjyby-Odesa ta ukrains'ke kozatsvo (1415-1797)*, Odesa, 1999, dok.V.39, p.31.

¹⁴ Derzhavnyi akhiv Odes'koyi oblasti (The State Archives of Odessa Region (oblast), f.1, op.214, spr.11(1816), ark.150.

¹⁵ Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivleri, fon adı: C.AS, dosya №409, gömlek № 16908, sof.4; dosya №505, gömlek № 21087, sof.4; fon adı: Hat, dosya №50, gömlek № 2355a, sof.4.

After the Katyrlez Sich was ruined by Nekrasivtsi, it remained a consolidating center for the Cossacks. Zadunaytsi led by chieftain Gnat Koval moved to Braila under the protection of the governor Akhmed-pasha. Privileged persons, like clerk Danilo Bilyy and clergy were also in Braila together with the chieftain. It can be assumed that Zadunays'kyi kish (camp) was situated in Braila, while Katyrlez remained the center for Zadunaytsi, though it was not renewed as the Sich due to Russian-Turkish war that began in December 1806.

Before November 1806 almost two thousand Zaporozhians were transferred from Izmail to Braila. On the order of the governor of Braila, other Zadunaytsi, particularly from Kiliya, Vilkove, Galati, Balchik, Machin, began to concentrate in the fortress.

On the eve of the war, in addition to Brăila, military reservations of Zadunaytsi were located in Ruscuk, Galati, Izmail, Kiliya, on the islands of the Danube estuary, the Cossacks also served in the Turkish river fleet. They were distinguished by high combatant value and, what is most important, the knowledge of convenient places to cross the Danube. Based on the evaluation of Oleksandr Langeron, the General Officer Commanding on the Danube, about three thousand of Zadunaytsi stayed in the fortress of Braila, who could make more harm than the Turks and the Tatars, he also underlined that only Zaporozhians knew convenient places of floating in the Danube, which proved especially useful at the seizure of Izmail by Russian troops in 1790. There are other data attesting a large number of Zadunaytsi who supported the Braila governor at the beginning of the war. Particularly, the fact that he opposed the Ruscuk ajan, future Grand Vizir Mustafa pasha (Bayraktar) with 3-4 thousand of Zaporozhians. That was why the Russian military commanders had to use all means to attract Zadunays' Zaporozhians to their side by promising them benefits similar to those enjoyed by the Black Sea Cossacks in Kuban.

At the beginning of December 1806, General Ivan Mikhelson, the Commander-in-Chief of the Russian army suggested to the Braila governor to surrender. The latter replied that he was utterly surprised by this proposition because the Ottoman Empire was not in a state of war with Russia and he would defend the fortress. Having understood that Braila shall not be as easy a game as Akkerman, Khotyn, Bendery were earlier, the Russian troops took their time. Nevertheless, the main task of the Russian commanders was to dissociate the garrison of Braila which still despite the decampment of the Cossacks at the end of 1806, numbered more than 1500 Cossacks.

The replacement of the Braila garrison was realized not only on a centralized basis but by recruiting separate persons, generally of non-Cossack origin, by the Cossacks themselves. Specifically, Onysym Guba originated from

landlord's peasants of Poltava province, during four years he had been on long trips with his father as a chumak and he came to Akkerman as a barge hauler, then to Khotyn. After Khotyn was captured by the Russian troops (in November 1806) he went over to join the Poltava kuren. Yakiv Ponomaryov originating from state peasants of Poltava province made his living in Odessa, then by fishing in Akkerman; having learnt that Russian troops attacked the Moldavian principality, he went over to Braila and joined the Zaporozhians serving in Dyad'kivs'kyy kuren. In the same kuren under chieftain Lukyan served Yakiv Boychenko, a bondman from Yelizavetgrad region, who lived in Vilkovce and was fishing until he joined Braila Zaporozhians in 1806.

During 1809 there were several attempts to seize Braila, however, it capitulated on the 21st of November (3rd of December) 1809. The military commander Abdul Kakman Pasha signed the capitulation. 1100 horsemen, 4100 infantry soldiers, 11300 Muslim habitants left together with the governor. Zadunays' Zaporozhians that remained in the Turkish army moved from Braila to the Ruscuk fortress. This march to Ruscuk was led by chieftain Semen Kalnibolotskyy. Because the Braila governor Ahmet Pasha and the Ruscuk governor Omer Pasha knew the excellent combat qualities of Zaporozhians, their attitude towards them was very positive.

After the war ended and the Bucharest Agreement was signed in 1812, Dobruja remained the only territory where the Zadunays' Zaporozhians could recommence their Cossack traditions. They received replacement from Ukraine and in 1812 set out on the march against the Nekrsivs'ki settlements, began building a new church in Katyrlezi, though they never renewed the Sich. The new and the last Zadunays'ka Sich was founded by Zaporozhians in 1813 in the village of Verhniy Dunavets on the Georgiyevskyy estuary (now in Romania). The Dunavetska Sich like the Sich in Katyrlezi complied to traditional Zaporozhian pattern and management. It opened a new stage in the history of Zaporozhians.

Thus, in the territory of Ottoman Empire after 1775 Zaporozhians obtained a chance to renew traditional methods of economic and organizational life. Such indefinite status lasted for more than ten years and depended on the military and political relations between the Ottoman and the Russian empires. From the end of the 80s of the XVIII century, the Zadunays' Zaporozhians managed to obtain official recognition and renew their autonomous organization – Sich in the village of Katyrlez on the Danube, that had existed till 1813 and had the majority of attributes of a Cossack Sich of XVI-XVIII centuries. The Cossacks served in the structure of the state with Turkish troops during local governmental conflicts and Russian-Turkish wars at the end of the XVIII and the beginning of the XIX centuries.