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THE HUMAN LANDSCAPE OF THE OTTOMAN BLACK SEA IN THE FACE OF THE COSSACK  
NAVAL RAIDS

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VICTOR OSTAPCHUK

THE HUMAN LANDSCAPE OF THE OTTOMAN BLACK SEA  
IN THE FACE OF THE COSSACK NAVAL RAIDS

For this collection of studies devoted to the Ottomans and the sea I would like to bring to the fore some aspects of the Ottoman experience in and around the Black Sea during a period when this hitherto secure, stable, and prosperous region became one of danger, destruction, and, in all likelihood, economic decline. From about the mid-16th century, and especially from the 1590s through the middle of the 17th century, Ukrainian and Russian frontiersmen developed a naval capability that allowed them to challenge and confound a great and still powerful empire. Emidio Portelli d'Ascoli, an Italian Dominican resident missionary in the Crimea, begins his unsurpassed *Description of the Black Sea and Tartary*, written in 1634, with ruminations on why the sea is called "black". After discussing the harsh and stormy conditions so common there («every day one hears of one or another ship being smashed against some cliff, so that the hearts of those sailing on that sea become darkened and often the hearts of their relatives and their clothes too become darkened») Portelli d'Ascoli puts forth the following claim:

However, if the Black Sea has always been furious from ancient times, then now it has become incomparably blacker and more terrifying, because of the many *saiche* (*chaikas*, Cossack long-boats), that lay waste to the sea and land... every year they bring such cruel harm, that the shores of the entire Black Sea have become completely uninhabitable, with the exception of some places protected by good fortresses. The Cossacks destroy, rob, burn, lead off into slavery, kill; often they besiege fortified cities, take them by storm, devastate, and burn them down.<sup>1</sup>

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1 – Portelli d'Ascoli, Emidio, *Descrizione del Mar Negro et della Tartaria*, published in the Italian original in Ambrosius Eszer, "Die «Beschreibung des Schwarzen Meeres und der Tatarei» des Emidio Portelli d'Ascoli O.P.", in: *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum*, XLII (1972), p. 199–249, esp. p. 203 and in Russian translation with lengthy commentary in A. Bert'e-Delagard [A. Berthier-Delagard], "Описание Черного моря и Татарии составил доминиканец Эмиддио Дортелли д'Асколи, префект Каффы, Татарии и проч., 1634" [A description of the Black Sea and Tartary written by the Dominican Emidio Portelli d'Ascoli, prefect of Caffa, Tartary and others 1634], in: *Записки Одесского общества истории и древностей*, XXIV (1902), p. 89–180, esp. p. 97–98.

This passage gives a compelling picture of the Black Sea and the Cossack impact on life there, yet it smacks of hyperbole, and brings to mind contrary tendencies in the way maritime exploits of the Cossacks have been portrayed in the historical literature. Ukrainian and Russian historiographies have, often uncritically, tended to make much of the significance of the “heroic era” of the Cossacks on the Black Sea for reasons of national pride, and also simply by virtue of fascination with an exciting and remarkable era.<sup>2</sup> Ottoman historical studies have not yet begun to give this topic sufficient weight in the history of the Ottoman empire. Ottoman historiography is unaware of the stark tableau depicted by Portelli d’Ascoli and other contemporary observers of an age in which major Black Sea ports such as Kili (Kilia), Akkerman (Bilhorod-Dnistrovs’kyi), Varna, Amasra, Sinop, Samsun, Trabzon (Trebizond), and even the suburbs of Istanbul were, in the words of the sources, “sacked”, “pillaged”, “burned”, and “destroyed”. Traditionally modern surveys of Ottoman history have treated the Cossack presence in the Black Sea episodically and perfunctorily, without contemplating its significance.<sup>3</sup> At the end of this

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2 – There are exceptions, the most notable being the classic multi-volume history of Ukraine by Mykhailo Hrushevs’kyi, VII of which, being devoted to the Cossacks from their origins until 1625, has just been published in English together with a modern commentary. Hrushevs’kyi’s treatment of the Black Sea career of the Ukrainian Cossacks is informative and does not overly idealize the Cossacks or try to conceal the predatory aspect of their activities (see n. 160). His access to Ottoman sources was limited by what little was available in translation at the time (relevant sections of J. Sekowski’s Polish translation of selections from Ottoman chronicles relating to the Commonwealth, in this case Na’ima), Hrushevsky, Mykhailo, *History of Ukraine-Rus’*, VII, *The Cossack age to 1625*, Serhii Plokhyy & Frank Sysyn (eds.), translated by Bohdan Struminski, Edmonton and Toronto, 1999. However, on the whole Ukrainian and Russian historians of the Cossacks have tended to accept the prowess of the Cossacks without question and too often forego a critical analysis of the sources. Although their treatment of the Cossack naval era can be of value, all too often they tend to accept every reference to a Cossack raid without question and even present undocumented or very poorly documented Cossack exploits as real, e.g., Iavorskyi, D.I., *Історія запорізьких козаків* [History of the Zaporozhian Cossacks], I, Lviv, 1990, p. 274-275 and *passim*; Alekberli, M. A., *Борьба украинского народа против турецко-татарской агрессии во второй половине XVI-первой половине XVII веков* [The Struggle of the Ukrainian People against Turco-Tatar Aggression in the second half of the 16th-first half of the 17th Centuries], Saratov, 1961, p. 131-166 *passim*; Sokuls’kyi, A., *Морські походи запорожців* [Naval campaigns of the Zaporozhians], Dnipropetrovsk, 1995; Tushin, Iu.P., *Русское мореплавание на Каспийском, Азовском и Черном морях (XVII век)* [Russian Seafaring in the Caspian, Azov, and Black Seas (17th century)], Moscow, 1978, p. 86-134, 162-170 (e.g., see n. 59). Some of the same faults of uncritical approach as well as frequent errors in dating specific Cossack expeditions and raids also plague Western studies on the Cossacks (e.g., see n. 59).

3 – A recent presentation of the Ottoman economy and society published by Cambridge University Press includes Halil İnalcık’s original discussion of Cossack pressure on Tatar pastoralism in the northern Black Sea steppes and Suraiya Faroqhi’s

study, the old roots of Ottoman historiography's virtual blindness to a troubled and significant phase of the empire's past are considered.

The aim here is to investigate some of the changed human realities of the Black Sea littoral during the period of Cossack incursions and depredations into the heart of the Ottoman realm, and to point to a more critical appraisal of the effects of the naval raids. The main focus will be on the types of situations in which the Ottomans and their subjects found themselves as a result of Cossack raiding operations in the immediate Black Sea basin. The concern will be with the human dimension – in both its physical and psychological aspects. To the extent to which the sources allow it, a microhistorical approach will be followed, seeking authentic information on actual occurrences not only from contemporary sources, but from sources as close as possible to actual events. While some of the known but perhaps somewhat forgotten sources will be called upon, also introduced will be new types of sources for this topic that will allow for a picture of what happened in the waters and on the coasts of the Black Sea

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balanced treatment of the international political role of the Cossacks in a summary of principal political events. However, the work gives the Cossack naval raids only a passing mention and there is no consideration of any possible impact on the Black Sea economy, İnalçık, Halil, Suraiya Faroqhi, Bruce McGowan, Donald Quataert, Şevket Pamuk, *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1600-1914*, Cambridge, 1994, p. 293-295, 426-428. Of those historians to write surveys of the Ottoman Empire, Halil İnalçık has been the only one to assign great significance to the Cossacks, e.g., by stating that the Ottomans were unable to engage them effectively and defend the Black Sea coast and by positing a decline of the trade and ports of the sea due to lack of security, İnalçık, Halil, "The heyday and decline of the Ottoman Empire", in: *The Cambridge history of Islam*, I, London, 1970, p. 324-353, esp. p. 350; *Idem*, *The Ottoman Empire. The classical age, 1300-1600*, London, 1973, p. 44, 105. Metin Kunt provides relatively extensive coverage of problems connected with Ukraine and the Cossacks in the 17th century and stresses the importance of the northern frontier, though his coverage of the Cossack Black Sea phase is episodic and does not attempt to assess any broader impact of the raids. Kunt, Metin, "Siyasal tarihi (1600-1789)", in: *Türkiye Tarihi*, III. *Osmanlı Devleti, 1600-1908*, Akşin, Sina (ed.), İstanbul, 1990, p. 11-69, esp. 17-18. Some awareness of the degree to which the Cossacks complicated Ottoman relations with the northern powers of Poland-Lithuania and Muscovy, though only one concrete reference to actual raids and virtually no recognition of their effect on the Ottoman economy, war efforts in other regions etc. can be found in Shaw, Stanford, *History of the Ottoman Empire*, I, *Empire of the Gazis*, Cambridge, 1976, p. 190-191, 192, see also p. 177, 201. There is hardly more than a sentence on the Cossack naval raids in Parry, V. J., "The period of Murad IV, 1617-48," in: *A History of the Ottoman empire to 1730. Chapters from the Cambridge history of Islam and the New Cambridge Modern History*, M. A. Cook (ed.), Cambridge, 1976, p. 133-156, esp. p. 149 and Mantran, Robert, "L'Etat ottoman au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle: stabilisation ou déclin?," in: *Histoire de l'Empire ottoman*, Robert Mantran (ed.), Paris, 1989, p. 227-264, esp. p. 229, 256. There is no mention of Cossack naval raiding activity in Matuz, Josef, *Das Osmanische Reich. Grundlinien seiner Geschichte*, Darmstadt, 1985 or McCarthy, Justin, *The Ottoman Turks. An introductory history to 1923*, New York, 1997.

during the Cossack onslaught that is more authentic and precise than was possible in prior study of this phenomenon. It is thereby hoped to point the way to a fresh and unbiased picture, in place of both the superficial one in Ottoman studies and the often less than critical one in Ukrainian and Russian historiography. While some of the fundamental problems connected with understanding and assessing the Cossack presence on the Black Sea will become apparent, the primary intent here is not to give an exposition of Cossack exploits and Ottoman countermeasures – tactics, international implications, changes in administrative or economic structures in response to the Cossack pressure, problems of cataloguing and classifying the raids, and other basic aspects are beyond the present scope.<sup>4</sup> Although there is interesting material on how the lives of individuals who were actually engaged in combating the Cossacks were affected (as opposed to other members of the *'askeri*, or “ruling” class), here *re'aya*, or tax-paying Ottoman subjects, both urban and rural, Muslim and non-Muslim, are given the centre stage. However, how the empire was affected at highest level – the sultan and his milieu – will also be considered. In any event, there is no pretense at completeness of coverage. Much of the presentation here being work in progress and limitations in length mean that more of a sampling than a survey of the Ottoman experience in the Black Sea during the “Cossack” era is provided.

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4 – Aside from the standard work of Hrushevs'kyi already cited, for an original and relatively recent survey of the Zaporozhian Black Sea raids largely based on Ottoman sources (mostly *Mühimme defterleri* [= MD], or rescripts of the imperial divan, preserved in the Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi [Istanbul]) as well as other sources see Berindei, Mihnea, “La Porte ottomane face aux Cosaques zaporogues, 1600-1637,” in: *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, I (1977), p. 273-307. An informative survey based on more traditional sources, albeit at times uncritically accepting the information provided in them, can be found in Tushin, *Русское мореплавание*, cit, p. 86-134, 162-170. On Cossack and Ottoman tactics as revealed primarily in Ottoman sources see Ostapchuk, Victor, “Five documents from the Topkapı Palace Archive on the Ottoman defense of the Black Sea against the Cossacks (1639),” in: *Raiyyet rûsûmu. Essays presented to Halil İnalcik on his seventieth birthday by his colleagues and students*, Cambridge, Mass., 1987, in: *Journal of Turkish Studies*, XI (1987), p. 49-104; *Idem*, “An Ottoman *gazânâme* on Halil Paşa's naval campaign against the Cossacks (1621),” in: *Adelphotos. A tribute to Omeljan Pritsak by his students*, Cambridge, Mass., 1991, (= *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* XIV, 1990), p. 482-521. On the Ottoman system of defense of the Black Sea against the Cossacks and resulting administrative changes see *Idem*, “The Ottoman Black Sea frontier and the relations of the Porte with the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and Muscovy, 1622-1628” (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1989), p. 166-257. For an interesting description of Cossack-Ottoman encounters off the Bulgarian coast in 1629 in an Ottoman poetic account recorded in an illustrated manuscript see Meredith-Owens, G. M., “Ken'ân Pasha's expedition against the Cossacks,” in: *British Museum Quarterly*, XXIV (1961), p. 76-82.

*The Ottoman Mare nostrum*

To more fully appreciate the Cossack impact on the Ottoman ruling class and subjects who lived on or visited the shores of the Black Sea and sailed its waters, it is necessary to understand what the sea meant to them prior to the Cossack onslaught. In modern historiography it is the common view that after the fall of Constantinople the Ottomans established a thalassocracy in the Black Sea, turning it into an "Ottoman lake" that lasted until the end of the 18th century when the northern seaboard was lost to the Russian empire. Indeed, the Black Sea's human and natural resources were harnessed to work largely, if not overwhelmingly, for the benefit of the empire very soon after 1453 and even prior to the final establishment of Ottoman control over the last non-Ottoman region on or near the coast, that is, before 1538 when the Bucak<sup>5</sup> was annexed.<sup>6</sup> The sea's economy in the first century of Ottoman rule has been studied sufficiently to produce a convincing picture of a flourishing region and of the post-conquest benefits that accrued to its population as well as to the Ottoman capital and state as a whole. The register of customs arrears (*defter-i bevaki*) of the port of Kefe (Caffa, Feodosia) for the years 1487-1490, drawn up after the subordination of the Crimean Khanate, the Ottomans' most serious potential opponent in the immediate region (1475) and after the seizure of the respective Danubian and Dniester ports of Kili and Akkerman (Cetatea Albă, Bilhorod-Dnistrovs'kyi) from Moldavia (1484), meticulously and comprehensively studied by Halil İnalcık, presents an already rather complex and differentiated trade system. Moving between ports such as Kili, Akkerman, Kefe, Tana (Azak, Azov), Trabzon, Samsun, Sinop, İnebolu, Kerpe, and of course Istanbul, were slaves, grain, fruit and forest products, fish and dairy products, wines, honey, salt, skins and hides, cotton and cotton goods, hemp and hemp products, minerals and mineral products, silken goods, spices, sugar, dyes, wool-

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5 – Southern Bessarabia, between the lower Dniester and lower Prut-Danube Rivers.

6 – While the Ottomans also established footholds at certain ports along the north-eastern, Caucasian and eastern, Georgian shores, such as Anapa and Sokhum, and there was some degree of recognition of their suzerainty by the Circassians, Abkhazians, Georgians, and others, in fact, their control of this coast was looser than others, though there was never a power there able to threaten Ottoman control of the Black Sea. The notion of the "Black Sea littoral" is somewhat subjective: how far inland does it extend? *E.g.*, Stanford Shaw considers that the complete Ottoman control of the Black Sea was achieved only toward the end of the 17th century with the conquest of Podolia in the 1670s, even though Podolia does not border the sea. Shaw, *Empire of the Gazis*, *cit.*, p. 213. In any event, the view here is that the so-called "Ottoman lake" came into being with the establishment of effective control over the sea itself and the main regions of the littoral, *i.e.*, by the first years of the reign of Beyazid II and the fall of Kili and Akkerman in 1484.



ens, and other types of goods.<sup>7</sup> Products of the coast and immediate hinterland, as well as those originating further afield in Poland, Lithuania, Muscovy, Central Anatolia, Iran, or even in more faraway lands, crossed and circulated around the Black Sea. İncalcık has also pointed out that along with control of the region came the deliberate Ottoman policy of directing the natural and human wealth of the Black Sea towards the new capital, a policy that became a major if not the decisive factor in the rapid growth of Istanbul to become the largest city in Europe by the first half of the 16th century.<sup>8</sup> Ottoman takeover and control of the Black Sea has been seen as no less than a foundation stone of the Ottoman empire's wealth and power. A near contemporary of these processes, the great Ottoman chronicler and intellectual İbn Kemal, after relating the events connected with the Ottoman takeover of Caffa in 1475, expresses his appreciation of the now safe and thriving Black Sea by proclaiming the following: «With the conquest of the aforementioned fortress, the Black Sea coast, which is a flourishing land, was annexed to the abode of Islam»; furthermore, with the takeover of the main fortresses in the vicinity of the Crimea, he states that «the Black Sea became fully controlled and...evil people of sedition no longer inhabited these parts, people of evil-intent were not able to remain on its shores, no places of ambush remained [there] for thieves and robbers...».<sup>9</sup>

Hyperbolic though İbn Kemal's assertion of security of the Black Sea may seem, remarkably, from the time of the Ottoman takeover of the sea until the arrival of the Cossacks there seems to have been virtually no activity resembling piracy on its waters and shores.<sup>10</sup> A systematic search of

7 – İncalcık has extracted these wares from the Kefe and Kili customs registers and grouped them into these categories, İncalcık, Halil, *Sources and Studies on the Ottoman Black Sea*, I, *The Customs Register of Caffa, 1487-1490*, Cambridge, Mass., 1996, p. 121-124, 135-137.

8 – İncalcık, Halil, "The question of the closing of the Black Sea under the Ottomans", in: *Ἀρχαῖον Πόντου*, XXXV (1979), p. 74-110.

9 – In the same section, referring to the concurrent conquest of Tana (Azak, Azov) İbn Kemal states that «from its port (*iskele*) a great amount of income was collected and delivered (to the state), in that place a famous port (*bender*) continued to function», İbn Kemal, *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osman. VII. defter (tenkidli transkripsyon)*, Turan, Şerafettin (ed.), Ankara, 1957, p. 386, 388.

10 – Prior to this, during Genoese and Venetian domination of navigation in the Black Sea, there were instances of piracy; Michel Balard gives the impression that it was not uncommon. However, it is clear that research specifically aimed at Black Sea piracy as opposed to Mediterranean piracy for the period of Italian commercial and naval ascendancy in both seas is needed. For instances of piracy in the Black Sea in the pre-Ottoman period see Balard, Michel, *La Romanie génoise. XII<sup>e</sup>-début du XV<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Rome, 1978, p. 156-157, 569, 587-598. Note that in the 1340s Umur Beg of Aydın made a raiding expedition into the Black Sea striking as far north as Kili, *Le destân d'Umûr Pacha (Düstûrnâme-i Enverî)*, Mélikoff-Sayar, Irène (ed.), Paris, 1954, p. 89-91.

the thousands of documents in the recently published volumes of the *Mühimme defterleri* or “Registers of Important (State) Affairs”, that is, the copies of rescripts issued by the imperial *divan*, or council of state, for signs of piratical activity (other than that of the Cossacks) has yielded no trace of any activity that could be construed as piracy.<sup>11</sup> Because the Porte controlled the Straits from the time of the second reign of Sultan Mehmed the Conqueror (1451–1481), possible intrusions by the various Christian pirates or corsairs who were a perennial headache for the Ottomans in the Mediterranean, were out of the question. Instead, what is meant here is pirate (or even coastal brigand) activity of local origin, what Suraiya Faroqhi has called «piracy on the local level» as opposed to «piracy in the grand manner»,<sup>12</sup> that is, local independent freebooters, what the Ottoman sources usually refer to as *levend* (“strong youth, irregular soldier”), *eşkiya* (“bandits, brigands”), *ehl-i fesad* (“trouble-making or seditious folk”), or *haram-zade* (“bastards, villains”). While such local piracy and brigandage was not uncommon in other parts of the empire – the inland regions of Rumeli and the Danubian principalities, Anatolia, the Aegean – there seems to have been very little brigandage on the immediate coast of the Black Sea.<sup>13</sup> That no pre-Cossack Ottoman era piracy is attested in the sources already scanned suggests a tendency. Without here bringing out differences in conditions in the Black Sea and

11 – Approximately 6,800 decrees in five of the recently published *Mühimme defterleri* were surveyed (MD 3, 5, 6, 7, 44 covering the years 1558–1560, 1564–1568, and 1580–1584). The survey primarily relied on the summaries and transcriptions of the documents in these volumes, and on the summaries in the only volume that does not give fully transcribed texts (MD 5). In order to assure more thorough coverage, the indices were not relied upon. Many of the *fermans* in these *Mühimmes* are concerned with banditry and piracy in other regions of the empire. However, only five documents concerning local brigandage that affected Black Sea villages or towns were found: at Gerze, near Sinop, in MD 6, nos. 1036, 1234, 1244; at Yoros in the northern reaches of the Bosphorus in MD 6, no. 1297; at İnebolu, on the Anatolian coast, in MD 7, no. 333. None of these cases qualify as piracy, as in all of them, land-based bandits raid a few boats or ships while the latter were in port. There are a few cases of Tatars harassing local boat traffic between Akkerman and Özi. MD 6, nos. 452, 463. MD 3, 5, 6, and 7 have been prepared for publication by the Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi and published in Ankara by the Turkish Directorate of State Archives under the respective titles 3, 5, 6, and 7 *numaralı Mühimme defteri* in 1993, 1994, 1995, 1998 (I have not been able to consult MD 12 which has also been published in this series). MD 44 has been published as *Mühimme defteri 44*, Ünal, Mehmet Ali (ed.), Izmir, 1995.

12 – I.e., international piracy supported by other states or in which pirates who in effect had their own state organization were involved, e.g., the Order of Malta, Faroqhi, Suraiya, *Towns and townsmen of Ottoman Anatolia. Trade, Crafts and Food Production in an Urban setting, 1520–1650*, Cambridge, 1984, p. 97–98.

13 – Faroqhi has found a case in the 1590s in which inhabitants of the Bosphorus village of Beykoz set up false beacons to cause a shipwreck on the rocks in order to rob passing ships. Faroqhi, *Towns and townsmen*, cit., p. 101 (MD 71, no. 306). A similar case occurred in the Bosphorus in 1564: MD 6, no. 160.



the Mediterranean Sea,<sup>14</sup> it can certainly be posited that the Black Sea must have indeed been one of the safer “well-protected” (as the Ottoman sources are wont to dub them) dominions of the empire. To go a step further, the sources examined give the impression that the Black Sea was not highly militarized, not unlike other internal regions of the empire. Pay registers (*mevacib defterleri*) show that coastal fortress garrisons were not large.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, it had virtually no naval infrastructure beyond that needed to supply the Ottoman fleet with ships and related raw materials.<sup>16</sup>

To more properly locate the Black Sea within the Ottoman scheme of things, one must be aware of the relative ease with which its takeover was achieved, and the modest military investment needed to maintain security on its shores and sea lanes and to hold a strong strategic position in the face of outside powers. To be sure, after the fall of Constantinople, the Ottomans were the strongest power in the Black Sea region, but the intelligent and efficient way in which they transformed it into an Ottoman *mare nostrum* was truly a grand imperial achievement. After closing the Straits, they seem to have understood that the quickest and easiest way to take control of the Black Sea was first to gain suzerainty over local powers and then take over major entrances to the sea, strategic ports, and key emporia: Amasra (Amastris), Sinop, Trabzon (Trebizond), Kefe (Caffa, Feodosia), Tana (Azak, Azov), Akkerman, Kili, and others. For example, the ruler of Moldavia, Stephen the Great (1457-1504), was an astute politician and a most able commander who could outwit, thwart, and even defeat the Ottomans in the 1470s. But in 1484 it was enough for Sultan Beyazid II (1481-1512), on his first campaign as sultan, to take the key ports of Akkerman and Kili at the mouths of the Dniester and Danube Rivers respectively, and Moldavia's fate was sealed as Stephen had no choice but to accept Ottoman suzerainty.

Yet the most ingenious and significant strategic accomplishment of the Ottomans in the Black Sea region was their coming to terms with the Crimean Khanate and the existing order in the great expanse of steppe-land to the north of the Black Sea, that is, the western terminus of the great Eurasian steppe known as the Dašt-i Qipčaq, or the Kipchak

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14 – Was it connected with physical or human geography? If so, why did the Cossacks succeed where other would-be pirates must have or would have failed? Was it because of the Cossack sanctuaries on the Dnieper and Don Rivers? Was it due to their naval and other skills?

15 – «The Black Sea was a quiet pond, free from the disturbances of arms and artillery», Refik, Ahmed, “Onuncu asırda açık deniz meselesi ve Azak muhasarası”, in: *Türk Tarih Encümeni Mecmuası*, XVII/94 (1926), p. 261-275, esp. p. 261.

16 – It was only in the 17th century that the Ottomans put into place a naval infrastructure specifically designed to counteract the Cossacks (e.g., the Danubian *şayka* fleet). By then, with fortress defenses bolstered and near annual expeditions into the sea by the ships of the Ottoman fleet, it can be argued that the Black Sea had become a substantially militarized region, Ostapchuk, “The Black Sea frontier”, *cit.*, p. 165-257.

Steppe.<sup>17</sup> Coming up against this region, the Ottomans seem to have demonstrated an understanding of the nature of the northern Black Sea steppes. To attempt to conquer this vast arid and sparsely populated region by brute force would have been a difficult and dubious task.<sup>18</sup> Instead of attempting to take direct control of the region or to liquidate its nomadic and semi-nomadic order, they established a mutually-beneficial economic and political relationship with the Crimean Khanate, a new state ruled by a dynasty of older and more prestigious lineage than the Ottomans, that of the Chingizid Gerrey clan. For with the Ottoman entry into the Black Sea, the Tatars began to mount greater and greater raids into the southern regions of Poland-Lithuania (mainly Ukraine) and of Muscovy to obtain captives for the vast Ottoman slave market.<sup>19</sup> This relationship, although not without its periodic problems, afforded the Porte sufficient influence within the Crimean Khanate to manipulate the Crimea and even to a significant degree the great steppe region to the north to its favour. This important development set the stage for the ensuing centuries.

The Ottomans seem to have been astute enough to know how to deal effectively with this region. Factors in their circumspection *vis-à-vis* one of Eurasia's greatest steppe zones may have been their own nomadic past, lessons learned in their frequent quagmires with the Turcomans in Eastern Anatolia, memory of their Seljuk forbears' subservience to the Chingizid Ilkhanids, and their own humiliation by Timur (1370–1405). And they were fortunate that their clients who inhabited this buffer zone were nomads who were masters at survival and warfare in it. For the "Wild Field", as it was known to its sedentary neighbors (e.g., *Dzikie Pole* in Polish), was a most formidable barrier blocking Poland-Lithuania and Muscovy from easy southward expansion to the sea.

Being the first not only to take control of the Black Sea but to establish a strong, stable, and mutually beneficial relationship with the main power in the steppes to the north, that is, the Crimean Khanate, the Ottomans in effect locked their northern neighbors, Poland-Lithuania and Muscovy, out of the Black Sea region for several hundred years as far as

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17 – On the details of the origins of the Ottoman-Crimean relationship and difficulties of unraveling the evidence on its initial phase, see İnalçık, Halil "Yeni vesikalara göre Kırım hanlığının Osmanlı tâbiliğine girmesi ve ahidname meselesi", in: *Belleten*, VIII (1944), p. 185-229.

18 – It should be remembered that less than a century earlier another great sedentary power, in fact one of the largest countries in Europe of the time, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania led by Vytautas, attempted to gain control over the northern seaboard of the Black Sea by building a series of fortresses in the region between the lower Dniester and the lower Dnieper Rivers, an effort that lapsed following defeats by the Tatars.

19 – On the Tatar raids and slave trade and for references to the main works on the problem see Fisher, Alan W., "Muscovy and the Black Sea slave trade", in: *Canadian-American Slavic Studies*, VI (1972), p. 575-594.

an possibility of gaining a foothold on the Black Sea was concerned.<sup>20</sup> This was certainly an achievement of world historical significance. With control of the sea's trade helping to insure a steady supply of slaves, food products, and raw materials, and with a steppe zone that, though not an obvious alluring object of conquest,<sup>21</sup> nevertheless, with its Tatar and Nogay masters, served as a kind of "active buffer"<sup>22</sup> constantly putting pressure on the powers to the north, the Ottomans had what may be called an "ideal situation".<sup>23</sup> The region was rich and safe while control of it

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20 – While the strong position of the Ottomans in the Black Sea is an incontrovertible fact, it is also true that there was no overriding interest on the part of the Commonwealth as a whole in expanding to the south (the exception being nobles in Ukraine who were engaged in colonizing the borderland and nobility circles that were keen on gaining a strong influence over Moldavia). In the case of Muscovy, there was traditionally (*i.e.*, prior to the 18th century) even less interest in expanding to the distant Black Sea, though there was a desire to neutralize the Crimean Khanate because of its slaving raids. Perhaps the strong Ottoman position in the Black Sea served to discourage advancement to the south. Certainly engagements in other directions usually made the northern powers reluctant to become involved in a Turkish war.

21 – The mouldboard plough, able to work the thick sod, was at the time not available in this region. For a discussion of this as a possible factor hindering the conquest of the steppe by settled folk see McNeill, William H., *Europe's Steppe Frontier, 1500-1800. A study of the eastward movement in Europe*, Chicago, 1964, p. 4-5. The virtual lack of local peasantry there to work the land, pay taxes, and become the basis for *timars* was yet another factor discouraging the Ottomans from extending direct rule and administration in the Pontic steppes. However, Halil İnalçık and Gilles Veinstein have pointed out that instead of the traditional centrally managed *timar*-driven imperial expansion, other forms of expansion driven by interests of local pastoralists did play a role in the steppes on the northwest shore of the sea. See İnalçık et al., *Economic and Social History*, *cit.*, p. 293-295; Veinstein, Gilles, "Les «çiftlik» de colonization dans les steppes du nord de la Mer Noire au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle", in: *İstanbul Üniversitesi İktisat Fakültesi Mecmuası*, XLI (1982-1983), p. 177-210.

22 – Evliya Çelebi makes a remarkably explicit articulation of this feature of the northern Black Sea frontier: «There is no war and struggle between the Moscow king and the padishah of the Ottoman dynasty. While they are in peace and amity, this Tatar army independently and in many groups goes on plundering expeditions, devastating and ruining the Moscow land... These infidels are so damned that if for five ten years they become freed from Tatar raids and if the [Moscow king's] state is given easy circumstances and allowed to be put into full order no other state will be able to face up to these accursed ones. They will invade the Cossack and Pole and draw up to the shores of the Danube and give the State of the Ottoman dynasty no peace», Evliya Çelebi, *Seyahatname*, VII, İstanbul, 1928, p. 524-525, cited in Aurel Decei, «Kara Deniz», in: *İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, VI, p. 241.

23 – Had the Ottomans not been the first early modern empire to gain a solid foothold on the northern shore of the Black Sea, the order and alignment of powers in the Desht steppes could have been radically different on the eve of the modern era, *e.g.*, a different alignment of the Crimean Khanate would have meant far reaching implications for the courses of Polish, Moldavian, Ukrainian, Russian histories. That is, if in the absence of Ottoman protection, it managed to survive for even a significant span of time, not to mention the three centuries of existence that the Khanate owed at least

was relatively easy and inexpensive. This was in sharp contrast to the long and difficult wars that the Porte had to fight to conquer and control European and Asian territories in its traditional theaters of expansion (for example, compare the security in the Black Sea with that in Anatolia with the many upheavals by the refractory Turcoman *kızılbaş* in the latter).

There are hints and even articulations in the sources that the Black Sea occupied a special place in Ottoman consciousness and conceptualization of their realm. This can be sensed in ibn Kemal's above characterizations of the Black Sea as a region after it came under Ottoman sway. For another example, Evliya Çelebi, the 17th-century Ottoman traveler who left an encyclopedic ten-volume account of what he saw and heard in practically every corner of the empire, concludes a discussion of the cosmography of the world's seas and oceans, their relative size, interconnectedness and so forth, with the following statement: «... but if the truth of the matter is looked at, the source of all the seas is the Black Sea».<sup>24</sup> Portelli d'Ascoli expresses the same notion and adds that no other sea flows into it and that it is not only the source, but the main supply of water for all the other seas (*fonte et padre dà acqua a tutti gl'altri mari*); he considers the sea's high elevation as the reason high winds and storms are prevalent there.<sup>25</sup> Having control of the world's "headwaters" and, to a great extent, having channeled its economy to meet the needs of palace and empire must have been a point of conscious or unconscious pride to the Ottomans.<sup>26</sup> When, at the end of the 17th century, the question of foreign

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in part to its association with the Ottomans. Cf. the Great Nogay Horde which in the middle of the 16th century ended up in the orbit of Muscovy largely because of, as in the case of the Ottoman-Crimean relationship, a complementary trade relationship (the Nogays became prime suppliers of horses to Muscovy, while receiving salt, iron, and other staples from the latter) and common political goals (rivalry with the Khanate of Kazan). On the Nogay-Muscovite relationship see İnalçık, Halil, "The origin of the Ottoman-Russian rivalry and the Don-Volga canal (1569)", in: *Annales de l'Université d'Ankara*, I (1947), p. 47-110, esp. p. 57-59, and Keenan, Edward Louis, "Muscovy and Kazan: Some introductory remarks on the patterns of steppe diplomacy", in: *Slavic Review*, XXVI (1967), p. 548-558, esp. p. 552ff.

24 – In a marginal note ...*amma hakikatuhu nazar olunsa cemi'i deryaların menba'ı Kara Denizdür*, Topkapı Palace Library (Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi), Bağdat 305, III, fol. 114v. This passage is missing in vol. III of the Ahmed Cevdet edition, Evliya Çelebi, *Seyahatname*, III, Istanbul, 1314/1896-1897, p. 320-321. I thank András Riedlmayer for checking this passage in a copy of the above manuscript. It was possible to locate this marginal note thanks to Robert Dankoff and Klaus Kreiser, *Materialien zu Evliya Çelebi*, II, *A guide to the Seyāhat-nāme of Evliya Çelebi. Bibliographie raisonnée*, in: (= *Beihefte zum Tübinger Atlas des Vorderen Orients*. Reihe B, Nr. 90/2), Wiesbaden, 1992, p. 39.

25 – Eszer, "Beschreibung des Schwarzen Meeres", *cit.*, p. 202, 203; Berthier-Delagard, "Описание Черного моря", *cit.*, p. 96, 97.

26 – For some ruminations on the urge to "possess and master headwaters" by various empires from the Greeks and Romans to the French and British, see Schama, Simon,

ships being allowed into the Black Sea was brought up, the Ottoman reply to the ambassador of the Russian empire Ukraintsev in 1699 echoed such a sentiment: «The Sublime Porte protects the Black Sea as if it were a chaste and innocent maiden whom no one could dare to harm; the Sultan would sooner permit someone to enter his own harem than to permit the sailing of foreign ships upon the waters of the Black Sea; this could only take place upon the collapse of the Ottoman Empire».<sup>27</sup> To better appreciate the grand imperial significance of the Ottoman takeover of the Black Sea, it should be noted no other power in history, before or after, was able to achieve the same degree and extent of control over both this sea and its shores for as long a period, the Pontic Kingdom of Mithradates VI (63–120 B.C.), the Roman and Byzantine Empires, the Genoese and Venetian commercial empires notwithstanding.<sup>28</sup>

Having an “ideal situation” in the Black Sea, the Ottomans had a freer and richer hand with which to pursue their conquests in central Europe, the Mediterranean, and in the East.<sup>29</sup> In addition to the factors of the physical and human geography of the steppe, surely Ottoman wariness of simultaneous wars on several fronts reinforced the lack of enthusiasm in expanding to the North. For these reasons the centuries-old Ottoman stance in the Black Sea was primarily a defensive one. There were discontinuities in this stance, when problems in the North or strategic considerations caused the Porte to abandon this policy. In such cases the experience of Ottoman forces usually showed that it was best to keep to the coast and leave the steppes beyond to the vassal Crimean Khanate. A striking example is the failed performance of Ottoman forces in the Dašt during the Don-Volga campaign of 1569, when the conditions of the steppe and opportunism of the Tatars combined to doom the mission and many of its troops.<sup>30</sup>

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*Landscape and Memory*, New York, 1995, p. 261-262. I thank Caroline Finkel for drawing my attention to this work in this connection.

27 – Carl M. Kortepeter’s translation of a quote in Decei, “Kara Deniz”, *cit.*, p. 245, Kortepeter, Carl M., “Ottoman imperial policy and the economy of the Black Sea region in the sixteenth century”, in: *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, LXXXVI (1966), p. 86-113, esp. p. 109. Cf. the French ambassador, Girardin’s comment in 1686 in connection with foreign navigation on the Black Sea: «the Grand Seigneur would sooner open the doors of his harem to foreigners», «Kara Deniz» (X. de Planhol) *EI*<sup>2</sup>, IV, p. 576.

28 – See Bratianu, Georges I., *La Mer Noire. Des origines à la conquête ottomane*, Munich, 1969, p. 88-89, 93-95, 324-328. Decei, «Kara Deniz», *cit.*, p. 241.

29 – Again articulated by Evliya Çelebi: «When there was no war and struggle between the State of the Ottoman dynasty and Moscow, the Ottoman dynasty was busy with *gaza* and *jihad* against other infidels», Evliya Çelebi, *Seyahatname*, *cit.*, VII, p. 524-525.

30 – For a study of the Don-Volga campaign as well as an interpretation of the Ottoman northern policy as one of active attention and involvement aimed at maintaining a balance of powers in the north so that no rival to Ottoman power in the Black Sea



Another example is the 1621 Hotin (Khotyn', Chocim) War, mainly provoked by the naval expeditions of the Ukrainian Cossacks, in which the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth withstood a full, sultanic expedition thanks in large part to the participation of the Cossacks themselves alongside its forces. The stalemate at Hotin (in effect an Ottoman reversal) contributed to the demise of Sultan Osman II (1618–1622); Cossack anti-Ottoman pressure instead of being reduced was exacerbated, thanks to the huge swelling of the Cossack ranks by the desperate Polish call for them to join alongside in the defense of the Commonwealth.<sup>31</sup> Even during the period of the so-called “active northern policy” in the final quarter of the 17th century, the behavior of the Ottomans showed that their goals were ultimately more defensive than offensive. Their actions during and after the 1678 conquest of Chyhyryn (Chehrin) in Ukraine show that instead of consolidating their rule over new territory, they did everything they could to make the region revert to the frontier that it had been in the previous centuries. Thus, instead of building up their presence in Cossack Ukraine, they demolished as many fortresses as they could, even if won in hard fought siege.<sup>32</sup> This can only point to the fact that the Ottomans were still thinking in terms of their traditional Black Sea policy of maintaining the advantageous situation that they had had in the region since the time of Mehmed the Conqueror, rather than in terms of aggression and expansion.<sup>33</sup>

The process of the establishment of the “Ottoman lake” is a topic requiring a more nuanced presentation than is possible here, and the portrayal of the first century or so of Ottoman control of the Black Sea as an “ideal situation” should be taken as a general characterization. There were problems in this region, for example, tension and near conflict when the reigning Crimean khan acted too independently in the eyes of the Porte, and similar difficulties in Moldavia. To be sure, the depiction of

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could emerge from that direction, see İnalçık, “Origin of the Ottoman-Russian rivalry”, *cit.* See also Kurat, Akdes Nimet, *Türkiye ve İdil boyu. 1569 Astarhan seferi, Ten-İdil kanalı ve XVI-XVII. Osmanlı-Rus münasebetleri*, Ankara, 1966.

31 – Ostapchuk, “Ottoman Black Sea frontier”, *cit.*, p. 23-48.

32 – See *Silahdar Tarihi*, İstanbul, 1928 and the *gazanname* entitled *Çehrin seferi* in Hajda, Lubomyr Andrij, “Two Ottoman *gazānāmes* concerning the Chyhyryn campaign of 1678” (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1984).

33 – The futility, questionable utility, and unforeseeable consequences of operating north of the Black Sea meant that the Ottomans had no expansionist policy towards Muscovy. Generations of Russian and Soviet historians, unable to distinguish between the northern policy of the Crimean Khanate and that of the Porte, mistakenly portrayed the Ottomans as always harboring expansionist ambitions against Muscovy (the eponymous “Turkish” or “Turco-Tatar aggression”). The epitome of this approach to Muscovite-Ottoman relations can be found in Smirnov, N.A., *Россия и Турция в XVI-XVII вв.* [Russia and Turkey in the 16th-17th centuries], I-II, in : *Ученые записки М.Г.У.* XCIV, Moscow, 1946.



the Black Sea as a prosperous region whose wealth greatly benefited the cause of empire in both economic and strategic terms is beyond question as far as the sources that have been brought to light in work of above all Halil İnalçık as well as Mihnea Berindei, Carl M. Kortepeter, and Gilles Veinstein are concerned.<sup>34</sup> However, the current state of knowledge of the Black Sea economy remains based on too narrow a source base. While the sources, for example, customs registers or survey registers (*tahrir defterleri*), can be detailed and voluminous in and of themselves, they are few and far between, particularly the former, which most directly relate to trade.<sup>35</sup> Thus it is scarcely possible to isolate cycles of economic growth and decline, variations in the content and quantity or more subtle “currents and eddies” of trade.<sup>36</sup> While there is ample *mukata’as*<sup>37</sup> documentation relating to customs duties for the Black Sea, because of the Ottoman practice often to change the content of *mukata’as* from term or tenure to term or tenure (usually three years), that is, bundling the various taxes in different combinations, it is very difficult to arrive at figures that can be meaningfully compared. In addition, however crucial a factor the Black Sea economy may have been in the larger Ottoman economy, currently there is no way of assessing its weight in comparison with that of other regions. Certainly before there can be a better understanding of the

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34 – İnalçık, Halil, “Bursa and the commerce of the Levant”, in: *Journal of the economic and Social History of the Orient*, III (1960), p. 131-147. *Idem*, “Closing of the Black Sea”, *cit.*; *Idem*, *Caffa Customs Register*, *cit.*; Kortepeter, “Ottoman policy and the economy of the Black Sea”, *cit.* For a summing up of a series of works by Berindei and Veinstein on the “Italian” and Ottoman Black Seas, see Gilles Veinstein, “From the Italians to the Ottomans. The case of the northern Black Sea coast in the sixteenth century”, in: *Mediterranean Historical Review*, I (1986), p. 221-237.

35 – In general, prior to the 18th century, extant Ottoman customs registers are scarce, which suggests that they may have been stored in one place and perished during one of the fires that occurred in Ottoman times, or during the deliberate destruction of Ottoman archival materials that occurred in the first years of the Turkish Republic.

36 – For example, while Berindei and Veinstein have on the basis of data in the *tahrir defterleri* for the *sancak* of Kefe proposed a sharp decline in the prosperity of the Black Sea ports during the first half of the 16th century, İnalçık has challenged their contention by pointing out how risky drawing conclusions on the basis of figures in two different *defters* can be, and indicated other sources that show a more vigorous economy. In other words, as he points out, it is necessary to be aware of changes in the composition of accounts as the result of altered forms of property-holding, changes in financial arrangements, or varying tax-immunities. See Berindei, Mihnea and Gilles Veinstein, “La présence ottomane au sud de la Crimée et en mer d’Azov dans la première moitié du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle”, in: *Cahiers du Monde russe et soviétique*, XX (1979), p. 389-465, esp. p. 438-441 and İnalçık, *Caffa Customs Register*, *cit.*, p. 109.

37 – Various taxes, often covering several nearby settlements, grouped together for collection by an individual or a team of agents (whether salaried government officials or private tax farmers).

Cossack impact on the Black Sea, and on the Ottoman empire as a whole, a sharper picture of region's economy through time is needed.

*The Cossacks and the "Ottoman lake"*

If the notion of the Ottomans' "ideal situation" in the Black Sea – the vibrant internal trade, strong strategic position, the secure shores and sea lanes – is even broadly accurate, then the irruption of the Cossacks into this relatively closed world must have come as a great shock. Certainly those Turks, Tatars, and others who braved the perils of the Black Sea steppes as travelers, herders, or warriors were acquainted with the Cossacks to some extent and had some experience in challenging or avoiding them, for many such types were themselves adept at steppe warfare and/or survival. In fact, the origins of East Slavic Cossackdom was deeply indebted to borrowings from the Tatars.<sup>38</sup> As to the inhabitants of the Black Sea littoral, in their relatively secure existence they must have been completely unprepared to deal with such fierce interlopers as the Cossacks. Given that the Cossacks did not erupt onto the Black Sea all at once in every corner, but rather in stages, each expansion of their field of action must have brought unprecedented terror and trauma to those affected. In his discussion of the post-Hotin peace negotiations between the Commonwealth and the Porte, the English ambassador to the latter in the 1620s, Sir Thomas Roe, whose information and insight on contemporary events and developments in the Ottoman empire and even beyond are unrivaled, aptly summed up the predicament in which the incursions of the Cossacks had placed the Porte, while articulating the prime importance of the Black Sea region in supplying Istanbul: «The vizier and this state (having nothing more in care than to shut up that backport, whereby they suffer much loss and dishonor, and cannot revenge it upon a fugitive people; which divides their naval army, being forced to send a portion of galleys to defend the trade, the best part of relief of the city coming from these coasts) resolved to give content to the Poles, and to assure the peace...».<sup>39</sup> What is of interest here are Roe's somewhat oblique parenthetical musings: a top priority for the Porte was to close the

38 – It is enough to recall the Cossack mode of dress and outward appearance or to become familiar with their Turkic military lexicon to become convinced of their formative contacts with the Turkic world. On the origins of East Slavic Cossackdom see Stökl, Günter, *Die Entstehung des Kosakentums*, Munich, 1953; on Turkic influences among the Ukrainian Cossacks see Pritsak, Omeljan, "Das erste türkisch-ukrainische Bündnis (1648)", in: *Oriens*, VI (1953), p. 266-298.

39 – Dispatch of 13 May 1623. In another place along a similar vein: «I find really, that this state (howsoever it juggleth) affects nothing more than to maintain that peace [with the Commonwealth], to secure that back-door of the Black Sea; which doth them more affronts, and give them more feares than a greater enemy; for hereby the relief of the city with victuals is much disturbed, and their force of gallies is divided and the enemy a fugitive, from whom they can neither reap honor, nor benefit», dispatch, of 30 May 1623. *The negotiations of Sir Thomas Roe, in his embassy to the Ot-*

thetical musings: a top priority for the Porte was to close the sea to the Cossacks against whom they were essentially unable to make an effective move; as things stood, while their fleet could not adequately control the Black Sea, it also could not be utilized at full, normal strength in the Mediterranean (as in the old days) owing to the need to defend Istanbul's most important lifeline, the supply of foodstuffs and other goods from the Black Sea.

For the Porte, there were several ironies connected with the rise of the Cossacks as a force capable of breaking into and wreaking havoc in its Black Sea preserve. One was that the first great challenge to Ottoman control of the Black Sea came not from the northern powers, Poland-Lithuania or Muscovy, but from the "freebooting" and "anarchic" Cossacks who were usually beyond the effective control of the two northern powers. Another even greater irony was that to a great degree, the Ottomans and Tatars were themselves responsible for the genesis of East Slavic Cossackdom, particularly the Zaporozhian Cossackdom of Ukraine. The perennial and brutal raids for captives by the Porte's client state, the Crimean Khanate, brought to the Turkic-Slavic frontier, the *ukraina* or "borderland" (whence the name Ukraine), conditions which were dangerous to the utmost, making normal, settled agrarian or town life impossible. These conditions were the primary factors which, within a generation of the establishment of the Ottoman-Crimean relationship, that is by the end of the 15th century, led adventurers, colonists, and those seeking to flee the burdens of Polish-Lithuanian rule to learn how to survive and defend themselves on this steppe frontier, and particularly in the region of the lower Dnieper River northward from the Crimean-Ottoman domain.

This Dnieper region, which became known as the Zaporozhia or "region below the cataracts",<sup>40</sup> was a largely wetland sanctuary made up of hundreds of confusing islands and channels and very difficult to penetrate and control.<sup>41</sup> Soon enough, armed with gunpowder weapons, its new in-

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*toman Porte, from the year 1621 to 1628 inclusive: containing a great variety of curious and important matters, relating not only to the affairs of the Turkish Empire, but also to those of the other states of Europe, in that period; his correspondences with the most illustrious persons... and many useful and instructive particulars....*, London, 1740, p. 141, 158-159.

40 – Depending on what was considered a cataract (*poroh*), there were between nine and 13 of them on the stretch of the Dnieper that goes North-South (approximately between the present-day cities of Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizhia), which made navigation all but impossible, thereby providing the Cossacks with a protective barrier against easy intrusion by the Lithuanian and, after 1569, Polish administration.

41 – *Viz.*, a contemporary description of part of the Zaporozhia: «...there is located a fairly large island with ruins on it. This island is surrounded on all sides by more than 10,000 other islands and islets, lying scattered about in an irregular, disordered and confusing pattern. Some of them are dry, and others are marshy. In addition, they are all covered with reeds as big as pikes, which prevent one from seeing the channels

habitants would learn how to go on the offensive, raiding first the Tatars' horse and sheep flocks and eventually also attacking the fortresses of their Ottoman overlords situated on or near the coast. By the mid-16th century, especially from the time of the charismatic chieftain Prince Dmytro Vyshnevets'kyi, the founder of the Zaporozhian Sich,<sup>42</sup> or "Dimitrash," as he was known to the Ottomans,<sup>43</sup> these frontiersmen would descend the Dnieper in their boats, known as *chaikas* in Ukrainian or *şaykas* in Turkish,<sup>44</sup> and attack the town and castle of Ōzi (Ochakiv) at the river's mouth. In the same period, in cooperation with Don Cossacks and Circassians, Vyshnevets'kyi put pressure on Tana, the Ottoman stronghold at the mouth of the Don River. In the next phase, the Zaporozhian Cossacks ventured further along the Black Sea coasts towards the Danube in the West and the Crimea in the East. By the last decade of the 16th century, they would regularly raid the coast from Akkerman to the mouth of the Danube and eventually further down the coast of Rumeli as far as Bulgaria (e.g., Ahyolı, Misivri, Varna, see below) and even to the entrance to the Bosphorus. And then, in 1614, without warning, came the Ottomans' greatest shock thus far: the Zaporozhian Cossacks appeared on the southern coast of the Black Sea, in Anatolia, thus demonstrating the ability to strike any shore.<sup>45</sup> By this time they were joined in their sea expeditions

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separating the islands», Guillaume Le Vasseur, Sieur de Beauplan, *Description d'Ukraine qui sont plusieurs provinces du Royaume de Pologne contenues depuis les confins de la Moscovie, jusques aux limites de la Transilvanie*, Rouen, 1660. English translation: *A Description of Ukraine*, Pernal, Andrew B. and Dennis F. Essar (trans. and ed.), Cambridge, Mass., 1993, p. 29.

42 – The main Cossack stockade-type stronghold located at different times on different islands of the Zaporozhia region of the Lower Dnieper.

43 – See Lemerrier-Quelquejay, Chantal, "Un condottiere lithuanien du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle le prince Dimitrij Višneveckij et l'origine de la *seč* zaporogue d'après les archives ottomanes", in: *Cahiers du Monde russe et soviétique*, X (1969), p. 258-279.

44 – For a description of the *chaika* see below p. 42-43. Because the Ottomans had their own river and sea boat known as *şayka*, which may have been an adaptation of the Cossack *chaika*, but was probably not identical to it, here the Ukrainian term for the Cossack vessel is used. Note that the Don Cossacks (see below) called their boats *strug* rather than *chaika*, which may or may not indicate any difference, though it is rather certain that the *chaika* as such was a Zaporozhian innovation. However, in this work for the sake of simplicity, the example of the Ottomans, who applied one name, *şayka*, to the naval boats of both Cossack groups (as well as to their own long boats), will be followed and all Cossack boats that raided the Black Sea will be referred to by one name, namely *chaika*, even though strictly speaking this may not be correct in the case of vessels of the Don Cossacks. Such a usage is not completely inappropriate as many Zaporozhians used the Don as their base of operations when conditions in Ukraine became too difficult because of Polish attempts to control them, or when access to the sea from the Dnieper was too hazardous because of a strong Ottoman presence at Ōzi.

45 – Including the Caucasian and Georgian coasts. However, here the encounters with the local population seem to have had a markedly different character. Although the

by the Russian Cossacks who had originated on the Lower Don River under conditions similar to and yet distinct from those of the Ukrainian Cossacks. Though their initial career on the Black Sea was more modest than that of the Zaporozhians, certainly from the 1640s on the Don Cossacks would take the upper hand in the assault on the Black Sea and continue their naval exploits well into the 1670s. Meanwhile the Ukrainian Cossacks diverted their energies in other directions: the great rebellions and wars of the second half of the 17th century, which included a life and death struggle with their Polish-Lithuanian suzerains.

Here it is necessary to comment on an aspect of the Cossack phenomenon with which Ottoman historiography is for the most part unfamiliar. Given the nature of Cossack activity in the Black Sea, it is natural to infer that the Cossacks were simply “pirates” or “bandits” and to raise comparisons with, say, Mediterranean piracy or other bandit activity. Certainly from the Ottoman perspective the Cossacks were nothing more than “bandits” (*eşkıya*). Indeed, the labels “piracy” or “banditry” may be applied to their activity in the Black Sea as typological categories.<sup>46</sup> However, Ottoman historians should also be aware that Cossackdom was a huge and complicated historical phenomenon and that while its naval phase can perhaps be labeled “piratical”, the Cossacks were by no means

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evidence needs to be sifted and analyzed, Soviet Georgian authors stressed the friendly relations between the Cossacks and the various principalities (Guria, Imereti, Mingrelia, Abkhazia, Dadyan) which they explain by common religion and anti-Ottoman interests. There are in the sources (Italian travel literature; Muscovite and English diplomatic materials) examples of Cossacks receiving supplies and sanctuary on this coast, as well as selling part of their booty there, including slaves (for an example of the latter, see below n. 121). Pietro della Valle, an Italian traveler to Iran in the early 17th century, on several occasions stressed that local rulers not only did not act against the Zaporozhians when these would venture to their shores, but even supported them with provisions and money and even contacted them to propose joint action against the Turks. Roe makes similar remarks. There were however cases when Georgian rulers turned Cossacks over to the Ottomans to demonstrate their loyalty. Muscovite diplomatic sources give explicit examples of Cossacks both finding common cause with the Christians of the Eastern Black Sea as well as raiding them. Which situation was more typical remains to be determined. Tivadze, T.G., “О взаимоотношениях населения западной Грузии с донскими и запорожскими казаками в XVII в.” [On the mutual relations of the population of western Georgia with the Don and Zaporozhian Cossacks in the 17th century], in: *Из истории украинско-грузинских связей* [From the history of Ukrainian-Georgian Ties], A.D. Skaba et al. (ed.), Kiev, 1971, p. 64-73; Svanidze, M. Kh., “Грузия, страны Причерноморья и Восточной Европы в первой половине XVII в.” [Georgia, the lands of the Black Sea and Eastern Europe in the first half of the 17th century], in: *Россия, Польша и Причерноморье в XV-XVIII вв.* [Russia, Poland and the Black Sea Lands in the 15th-18th centuries], Rybakov, B.A. (ed.), Moscow, 1979, p. 236-262.

46 – Such an approach has been recently taken in Tolmacheva, Marina A., “The Cossacks at sea. Pirate tactics in the frontier environment”, in: *East European Quarterly*, XXIV (1991), p. 483-512.



merely pirates. In Ukraine, Cossackdom was a social, political, economic, even a national movement that completely transformed the face of Ruthenian or Ukrainian society whose elite had been much depleted by Polanization, and whose peasant masses were in the “yoke” of serfdom. Cossackdom was a way of life with its own ideology and claims to political and social legitimacy that made an open and, as it turned out, an unresolvable challenge to the political and social order of the Commonwealth.<sup>47</sup> In the case of Russian Cossackdom, the situation was fundamentally different as it was always marginal in Russian history, never having anything approaching the same decisive effect on the Russian state or nation as did Ukrainian Cossackdom on the Ukrainian nation. Instead, it always remained a frontier phenomenon, be it on the Don, in the Caucasus, or in Siberia.

To return to the Cossacks and the Black Sea, there is no good record of the evolution of the Zaporozhian and Don Cossack naval craft and seamanship. By the end of the 16th century when confident forays into the Black Sea commenced, its Ottoman inhabitants and sailors encountered a new factor, unlike anything they had witnessed in the past: a versatile and efficient raiding vessel, known as the *chaika* or “seagull”, operated by intrepid marines armed primarily with modern, gunpowder weapons. Unfortunately there are only a few, relatively late descriptions of the mainstay *chaika*, the best being that of Beauplan, the French military engineer who served the Polish Crown in Ukraine in the 1630s and 1640s. According to him, it was a large boat, or a long-boat, (60 feet long, 10–12 wide, 12 deep; on occasion Ottoman sources even refer to it as a ship [*gemi*]) that could carry a relatively large crew of 40 to 70 well-armed and well-supplied Cossacks. Having no keel, but being very buoyant and difficult to sink<sup>48</sup> because of ample reed bundles attached to its sides, the

47 – From the 1620s it became involved in the struggle to revive Orthodoxy in the face of the Polish Counter-Reformation (which was aimed at the Commonwealth's Orthodox as well as Protestants). Of course the Cossacks were excellent soldiers (on land primarily as infantry) and military improvisers and innovators and had a spectacular career not only as rebels but also as mercenaries or as a self-contained host. When in 1648 Hetman Bohdan Khmel'nyts'kyi (1648-1657) led an uprising that turned into a long war against the Commonwealth (a war which was the beginning of the end of the existence of Poland-Lithuania as a state) the Ukrainian Cossacks became a force for state-formation which led to the so-called Hetmanate, a polity that maintained autonomy within the Russian empire until nearly the end of the 18th century.

48 – At least such is the impression that Na'ima gives in his account of the famous battle near Karaharman in 1625 where he describes *chaikas* full of water able to press on thanks to the attached reed bundles: «nihayet şaykaların talazlığında saz çubuklarından bir güne örilmiş bağlu desteler olmağla batmağa mani' olub su ile tolmağla içinde olan mela'in boğazına dek suya müstağrak cenk ederler idi», Mustafa Na'ima, *Ravzatü'l-Hüseyn fi hulaset ahbari'l-hafikayn*, II, Istanbul, 1281-1283/1864-1866, p. 359. See also Ostapchuk, Victor and Halenko, Oleksandr, “Козацькі чорноморські походи у морській історії Кятіба Челебі” [Cossack Black Sea naval campaigns in



Cossack *chaika* was not only suited for sailing in rivers and shallow waters, but was capable of weathering the high sea (though there were plenty of instances of *chaikas* succumbing to storms) and crossing over to the opposite shore of the Black Sea in 36 to 40 hours, according to Beauplan.<sup>49</sup> The *chaika* could operate with considerable stealth. Lying low in the water, it was difficult to observe from a distance, while it could track the large Ottoman galleys, undetected from afar.<sup>50</sup> Thanks to its maneuverability (e.g., it had rudders on both ends and could change direction without turning around) and the Cossack tactics, the *chaika* was a formidable naval craft. Beauplan, obviously comparing their naval tactics to their *Wagenburg* tactics,<sup>51</sup> which lent the Zaporozhians legendary prowess on land, refers to the *chaika* flotilla as a «mobile camp of the Cossacks upon the Black Sea, which is capable of assaulting the most important towns of Anatolia».<sup>52</sup> As will become evident from the specific examples given below, in the period when Cossack *chaika* flotillas and fleets were a realia and even a fixture of the Black Sea, the “Ottoman lake” as a safe and thriving heartland of the empire could only have been a myth.<sup>53</sup>

Being caught off-guard in their secure preserve without anything resembling an adequate defense system in place, the Ottomans’ search for countermeasures was a lengthy and difficult process of trial and error, with setbacks and advances along the way. Certainly through the first two decades of the 17th century, the Cossacks seem to have held the initiative

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the naval history of Katib Çelebi], in: *Mappa mundi. Studia in honorem Jaroslavi Daškevyč septuagenario dedicata*, New York, Kiev, Lviv, 1996, p. 341-426, esp. p. 382.

49 – Beauplan, *Description of Ukraine*, cit., p. 63-64, 67.

50 – *Ibid.*, p. 67-68. Here is an Ottoman articulation of this feature: «Because their *şaykas* [i.e., *chaikas*] are not large-bodied and are not visible and apparent from a far distance like the galleys of the people of Islam, they [are able to] discern the mountain-like galleys of the imperial fleet from a place twenty or thirty miles away and turn face to flight [without being observed first]», Ostapchuk, “*Gazânâme* of Hâlîl Paşa”, cit., p. 492, 497.

51 – I.e., reliance on *taburs* (Turkish) or *tabors* (Ukrainian)-wagon-camps kept together by chains and armed with gunpowder weapons; used with great effect by the Husites, Hungarians, and the Ottomans themselves *et al.* For a description of the Zaporozhian *tabor* and how it operated in the steppe, see Beauplan, *Description of Ukraine*, cit., p. 13, 56-57.

52 – Beauplan, *Description of Ukraine*, cit., p. 66.

53 – It is recognized that the topos “Ottoman Lake” (“Turkish Lake” in some works) has several levels of meaning. It can connote Ottoman control of the waters, control of all shores of the sea, and finally, significant economic and political control and integration. As to the second connotation, in the literature it is standardly applied after Süleyman I’s 1538 conquest of the Bucak. However, this is somewhat misleading as the Ottomans never had total control of the Caucasian and Georgian littorals (see n. 6).

over the Ottomans, as they were able to operate in veritable armadas of 100 to 200 and even 300 boats (amounting to at least 5,000, 10,000, and even 15,000 men respectively). By the second half of the 1620s, the Ottomans evolved a defensive system and were able to prevent such large Cossack expeditions from entering the sea from the Dnieper,<sup>54</sup> though the struggle went on for decades, with smaller Cossack raiding flotillas succeeding in causing considerable harm and damage, while tying up Ottoman flotillas sometimes even several times their size, flotillas whose ships were desperately needed in the Mediterranean Sea.<sup>55</sup> Certainly examples of experiences in the struggle with the Cossack *chaikas* of Ottoman fighting men from marines (*'azeb*), local cavalry (*farisan*), armorers (*cebeci*), and janissaries (*yeniçeri*) to fortress commanders (*dizdar*), local flotilla commanders (*kapudan*), and the grand admiral (*kapudan paşa*) could be presented here. Moreover the situation in the Black Sea affected sailors, fighting men, and ship captains from as far away as Chios, Kavala, Tunis, and Algeria, as every year, on a rotating basis, ships of the local Ottoman flotillas in the Mediterranean (the so-called *beg gemileri*) had to serve in the defense of the Black Sea.<sup>56</sup>

*The Cossack raids experienced: the case of Black Sea settlements*

What is really known about the experiences of Black Sea residents or visitors who suffered a Cossack raid? Such experiences can be imagined as terrifying and costly for the victims and fantastic or educated guesses can be made as to how such events transpired. Furthermore such conjurings can be supplemented by drawing on comparative material. However, a more rigorous, microhistorical approach, which assumes that events of the past have a distinct, even unique, “cast” and “texture”, and which is wary of applying data from analogous situations or acting on hunches based on them might lead to a new and unexpected view of these occurrences, from the cataclysmic and spectacular to the minor and mundane,

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54 – For the story of how the Ottomans finally managed to establish relative control over the mouth of the Dnieper, *i.e.*, make it virtually impossible for large Cossack fleets to enter the sea with impunity, see Ostapchuk, “Ottoman Black Sea frontier”, *cit.*, p. 166-257.

55 – See Ostapchuk, “Five documents”, *cit.*; see also n. 241.

56 – *E.g.*, see Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi, A.NŞT 1261; Ostapchuk, “Five documents”, *cit.* p. 54. As stated in the beginning of this article, the concern here is with the *re'aya* and the highest stratum of the society. For some examples of the experiences of combat forces see my earlier writings on the Cossacks that provide a sampling of various situations, such as guarding strategic waters, patrolling the sea, pursuing Cossack flotillas, open sea battles, and amphibious operations in rivers, lakes, and marshes. See Ostapchuk, “Five documents”, *cit.*; *idem*, “*Ğazānāme* of Hālil Paşa”, *cit.*; *idem*, “Ottoman Black Sea frontier”, *cit.*; Ostapchuk and Halenko, “Кятіб Челебі”, *cit.*

but in any case dimmed and obstructed by the nature of the source base.<sup>57</sup> It is perhaps surprising that although Cossack naval operations were common occurrences in the Black Sea during the early 17th-century heyday, there are virtually no direct depictions of the adventures and tribulations of those involved, and very little concrete information by which to assess effects. The most commonly utilized sources on the Cossacks in the Black Sea have been those recorded at a distance from the actual events, sometimes not only in space but also in time; for example, reports by foreign diplomats in Istanbul, texts of speeches in the Commonwealth's diet or provincial dietines discussing how to deal with the Zaporozhians who again threaten to bring Poland-Lithuania and the Ottoman empire to the brink of war, and so forth. Most often these sources make an extreme presentation of the given phenomenon. Be they diplomatic dispatch or parliamentary declamation, they tell of disaster upon disaster – in 1614 Sinop was “destroyed”, in 1616 Kefe was “razed”, in 1620 Varna was “burned”, in 1625 Trabzon was “sacked”, and so forth – few word depictions of extreme events, depictions that are, in fact, usually little more than cliché abstractions. Indeed, while these sources, when properly handled, can be valuable, if one listens to them with a critical ear one can sense a tendency toward the drastic, the dramatic, the consciously or unconsciously exaggerated rendering of events. Then there are the Ottoman chronicles, which contain much interesting and unique information, but which are quite tendentious as they are apt to minimize the frequency and effects of the Cossack raids and strive for a facesaving whitewash of unfortuitous events (see below). Finally, there are the relatively few extant documents by participants, for example, reports on operations against the Cossacks by Ottoman commanders, which, as shown elsewhere, can be quite revealing even though they seek to put Ottoman performance in the best light.<sup>58</sup>

First, an example of how an attack on a Black Sea city is depicted in an Ottoman narrative source. The 17th century Ottoman chronicle tradition turns to the Black Sea problem in earnest only after the first Cossack raid on the Anatolian shore. In his *Fezleke*, Katib Çelebi introduces the topic of the Cossacks in the Black Sea with the remarkable event of the last days of August or first days of September 1614:<sup>59</sup>

57 – Cf. introductory comments by Edward Muir, Carlo Ginzburg, and Carlo Poni in *Microhistory and the Lost Peoples of Europe*, Muir, Edward and Ruggiero, Guido (eds.), Baltimore and London, 1991, p. vii-xvii, 1-10.

58 – See Ostapchuk, “Five documents”, *cit.*, p. 50, 61-62.

59 – On problems of determining the exact date of this raid, see Ostapchuk and Halenko, “Кятіб Челебі”, *cit.*, p. 353. In the literature it is possible to encounter references to Cossack strikes against the Anatolian coast prior to 1614, but these are either erroneous and undocumented (e.g., Trabzon and Sinop in 1604 in Longworth, Philip, *The Cossacks* London, 1969, p. 29-30) or poorly documented (e.g., in Tushin, *Русское мореплавание*, *cit.*, p. 100, 162, without giving any reference, though

With the guidance of renegades who fled from the land of Islam [the Cossacks] came to the fortress of Sinop on the Anatolian shore and entered that old castle by surprise and caused much damage (*hasaret-i 'azime*)...they took [with them] the goods and families that they had plundered (*garet etdükleri emvali ve 'iyali alub*) and set out to sea.<sup>60</sup>

Writing half a century later, Naima, who for these years mostly repeats the *Fezleke*, here exchanges his pen for an artist's brush and adds a few strokes of his own. First he harks back to an old epithet for Sinop, «Island of Lovers».<sup>61</sup> «they called it the 'City of Lovers' (*medinatü'l- 'uşşak*)»; in other words read, before the arrival of the Cossacks, life here was calm, without worry, idyllic, even romantic. Here his basic notion concerning how the Cossacks ruined the atmosphere of life in Sinop is correct. But he also adds that the Cossacks destroyed Sinop to the extent that «that beloved town was turned into a desert (*beyaban*)».<sup>62</sup> This last detail is

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probably on the basis of a vague passage in a chronicle or other narrative source, it is stated that in 1575 the Zaporozhians captured Trabzon and Sinop, even making their way as far as Istanbul). This does not mean to rule out any contact with the Anatolian coast prior to 1614, e.g., by a flotilla that may have been blown off-course and ended up on the opposite shore. However, it seems clear from the resonance in the sources that in this year the first significant Anatolian raid occurred and in all likelihood it was indeed then that the given “navigational breakthrough” was made.

60 – Katib Çelebi, *Fezleke*, I, Istanbul, 1286/1869-70, p. 358. The rest of this section is devoted to relating Ottoman attempts to cut off the Cossacks on their return, which resulted in an engagement near the mouth of the Dnieper. For a facsimile, translation, and commentary of an almost identical passage from Katib Çelebi's naval history, *Tuhfetü'l-kibar fi esfari'l-bihar*, Istanbul, 1329/1911, p. 106, see Ostapchuk and Halenko, “Кятіб Челебі”, *cit.*, p. 350-354, 425-426. In a continuation of Francesco Sansovino's compilation of sources on the Turks, *Historia universale dell'origine, guerre, et imperio de Turchi...*, Bisaccioni is cited as giving information that prior to the attack on Sinop the Cossacks first appeared before Trabzon where they sunk several ships in port (cited in Berindei, “Porte face aux Cosaques”, *cit.*, p. 279). Stanisław Żółkiewski, the Polish Crown hetman, echoed this information in a diet speech and a letter, first stating that the region of Trabzon was attacked and later that the Cossacks raided the coast from Trabzon to Constantinople. However, his most detailed information for 1614 concerns the raid on Sinop (see n. 67). Джерела до історії України-Руси [Sources for the history of Ukraine-Rus'], VIII, Матеріали до історії української козаччини [Materials for the history of Ukrainian Cossackdom], pt. 1. Документи по рік 1631 [Documents up to 1631], Krypiakievych, Ivan (ed.), Lviv, 1908, p. 142; *Pisma Stanisława Żółkiewskiego kanclerza koronnego i hetmana z jego popersiem* [Letters of Stanisław Żółkiewski Crown Chancellor and Hetman with his portrait], Bielowski, August (ed.), Lviv, 1861, p. 513.

61 – *Ceziretül- 'uşşak* actually referred to the almost fully insular peninsula next to, i.e., on the east side of, Sinop. E.g., see the chronicle Tursun Beg, *Tarih-i ebü'l-feth* in İnalıcık, Halil and Rhoads Murphey, *The history of Mehmed the Conqueror*, Minneapolis and Chicago, 1978, fols. 88b, 146a.

62 – Na'ima, *Ravzatü'l-hüseyn*, *cit.*, II, p. 118.

probably directly or indirectly borrowed from the chronicle of Hasanbegzade who presents an even starker picture of the damage and harm done:

...going over the top of its [fortress'] ramparts and walls they entered inside and descended upon the center of the city and destroyed its circumference and edifices (*kusur*) and shed the blood of several thousand<sup>63</sup> men and woman and struck the mentioned city with the broom of plunder and the fire of devastation and they left neither name or nor sign (*nam u niğan*) of its buildings ('*imaret*'), turning it into a wilderness and a desert (*berr ü beyaban*).<sup>64</sup>

Such passages – incidentally, atypical for the Ottoman chronicle tradition, which tends to shy away from mentioning extreme negative effects of the raids – give the impression that the Cossacks brought a veritable holocaust to the shores of the Black Sea. There is little additional testimony to better qualify the extent of the destruction wrought by this ominous and pivotal raiding expedition. At this point there is only one relevant Ottoman document, a *ferman* issued by the imperial *divan* concerning the need to improve the town's defenses. It is not particularly telling in the way of the degree of destruction: «On that day the tribe of the Cossack bandits... came and burned all sides [of Sinop] (*etrafti ihrak*) and plundered the fortress' property and supplies (*emval ve erzagın garet*)». However, it reveals, almost in anecdotal terms, how the population of Sinop and its defenders were completely unprepared for this event. According to it, the garrison troops of Sinop, along with some of the city dwellers, set out to a distant village where at a weekly Friday bazaar trouble broke out between the *re'aya* and some bandits. It was when the garrison was away that the Cossacks appeared and overran their city. It is unclear whether the garrison and others went to the distant bazaar because of the trouble or also because they regularly participated in the village bazaar, for this *ferman* orders the bazaar to be banned and a new one established inside Sinop so that similar occurrences would not repeat themselves.<sup>65</sup>

The most concrete testimony on effects of the Sinop raid is from a speech delivered at a provincial dietine by the Crown hetman, Stanisław Żółkiewski, a man of great expertise on the Ukrainian Cossacks, thanks to his experience in combating them, and a man with informants in the Ottoman empire: «[They] plundered the fortress of Sinop, the Turks esti-

63 – “Several hundred” in the second manuscript, see n. 64.

64 – Ahmed Hasanbegzade, *Tarih-i al-i 'Osman*, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek [Vienna], H.O. 75, fol. 71v-72r; H.O. 19, 291r.

65 – Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi, *Mühimme defteri* 80 (henceforth MD only), p. 458, no. 1095. Reference to this document was found in Faroqhi, *Towns and Townsmen*, cit., p. 363.

mate the damage at 40 million<sup>66</sup> and the imperial naval arsenal (*cekaus [arsenal] cesarski*) that was there, galleons, galleys, everything went up in smoke». <sup>67</sup>

It would seem undeniable that Sinop suffered heavily in 1614, as this sensational event resonated far and wide. For example, just a few days after the raid, Muscovite envoys returning from Istanbul, while at Tana, received word that «the Dnieper Cherkasy [*i.e.*, Zaporozhians]<sup>68</sup> took the Turkish emperor's (*tsar*) city on the Black Sea, Sinop, destroyed it, and killed all of its people». <sup>69</sup> With the Sinop raid making a great impression on contemporaries, it stands to reason that the references to total destruction owe in part to hyperbole rather than completely to reality, as the chroniclers or their sources strove to evoke the great shock and trauma of this sudden debacle. Thus, Hasanbegzade's account of this calamity begins by referring to it as a «strange occurrence» (*ahval-i 'acib*) and ends with the epithet «happening full of horror (*ahval pür ehval*)». Yet, no matter how great the devastation, to be sure the city must have survived, for had it been anywhere close to fully destroyed, there would be some trace of such extreme consequences in the Ottoman archival sources.

An account that seems to have originated in much closer proximity to the actual event than those in the Ottoman chronicles is a one-page inscription in a Greek religious manuscript book kept by a certain monk, Metrophanes, from the Monastery of St. John the Baptist located on an island of the same name (Sveti Ivan) just off the coast of the Bulgarian town of Sozopol<sup>70</sup> in the Bay of Burgas. It concerns Cossack raiding activity on the Bulgarian coast between 1606 and 1616. Throughout much of the first half of the 17th century this stretch of coast was a favorite objective of Cossack raiding expeditions. Because of the obscurity of this inscription's publication, its rare and valuable testimony has not been

66 – If gold pieces were intended, this would have been an impossibly high sum. Perhaps the Ottoman silver coin, the *akça* which would have made for a more realistic though still huge figure, was meant?

67 – *Pisma Żółkiewskiego*, *cit.*, p. 513, see also p. 302. For a composite relation of this raid on the basis of the Ottoman and Polish sources see Hrushevsky, *Cossack Age*, *cit.*, p. 271-272.

68 – The standard Russian name for the Zaporozhian Cossacks was *cherkasy*, *i.e.*, Circassians. Any possible connections between the Zaporozhians and the Circassians remains an open question.

69 – *Документи російських архівів до історії України* [Documents from Russian archives on the history of Ukraine], I, *Документи до історії запорозького козацтва* [Documents on the history of Zaporozhian Cossackdom] (Turkish affairs [Турецкие дела] of the Muscovite Foreign Office [Посольский приказ]), Lviv, 1996, p. 71.

70 – On the south end of the bay opposite Ahyolı and less than 15 km southeast of Burgas.



given the prominence in the literature connected with the Cossacks and the Black Sea that it deserves.<sup>71</sup>

...Upon the West [shore of the Black Sea] certain ones called Cossacks have descended from Little Rus'<sup>72</sup> and have devastated the entire coast, [coming] on so-called *fustas*.<sup>73</sup> At that time they made their way to Varna in the month of July on the 27th day (1606) and burned and pillaged [that which is beyond] the fortress [and] most of the Christians. And many of them [*i.e.*, the Cossacks] were killed by the Romeians.<sup>74</sup> And in the year 7120 (1612) in the month of April [the Cossacks] made their way to Misivri<sup>75</sup> and looted and destroyed it. In the next year they made

71 – Metrophanes' inscription was transcribed, translated into Russian, and commented upon in Granstrem, E.E., "Заметка современника о набегах казаков на турецкие владения в начале XVII в." [A notice of a contemporary on the raids of the Cossacks on Turkish possessions in the beginning of the 17th century], in: *Восточный сборник* III (1972) [Moscow], p. 37-40. Granstrem provides a reference to a similar notice in a Mt. Athos Greek manuscript, concerning Cossack raiding activity in the Bosphorus in 1624: Istrin, V., "Греческая запись о набегах на Константинополь в начале XVII века" [A Greek inscription on raids on Constantinople in the beginning of the 17th century], in: *Журнал Министерства народного просвещения* (1898), pt. 318 [St. Petersburg], p. 42-48. Granstrem's fragment is from a manuscript held in the Russian National Library of St. Petersburg. Here I translate Granstrem's Russian translation of the Greek original, with reference to his commentary. However, thanks to the assistance of Albert Pietersma, the accuracy of the given translation of this important passage has been checked. Unfortunately, Granstrem only gave his transcription of the inscription, and no facsimile.

72 – *I.e.*, Ukraine (in the original Μικρὴς Ῥωσίας, "Little Rus").

73 – *Φούρα*, judging by the reluctance of authors to define *fusta* in the Ottoman context, a nondescript or poorly understood name for a boat or ship. Cf. Uzunçarşılı, İsmail Hakkı, *Osmanlı devletinin merkez ve bahriye teşkilâtı*, Ankara, 1948, p. 397; Bostan, İdris, *Osmanlı bahriye teşkilâtı. XVII. yüzyılda tersâne-i âmire*, Ankara, 1992, p. 21; Kahane, Henry, Renée Kahane and Andreas Tietze, *The Lingua Franca of the Levant. Turkish Nautical Terms of Italian and Greek Origin*, Urbana, 1958, p. 235. According to the latter work, it refers to some sort of ship. Granstrem, basing himself on Du Cange, *Glossarius ad scriptores mediae et infimae Graecitatis*, Lugduni Batavorum, 1688, considers it as referring to a small ship with two rows of oars. In any event, it is unlikely that the use of this particular term can cast any new light on what is already known about Zaporozhian raiding vessels, and more likely the term is used carelessly or in ignorance.

74 – *Ῥωμαίων*. Granstrem explains this as referring to the local population (Greeks) though he surmises that the author must have had in mind the local garrison. However, as "Rum" was a common Ottoman self-appellation, an alternative explanation is that it refers to the local Ottoman garrison.

75 – *Μεσημβρία* (Mesembria), Misivri in Ottoman, today the Bulgarian Nesebur, a port town located on a small peninsula less than 30 km northeast of Burgas, and about 25 km north northeast of Sozopol.

their way to Ahtopol<sup>76</sup> and pillaged it and on top of this burned it. Coming again, they made their way to Misivri and one more time pillaged it, worse than the first time. In 7124 (1616) they again, for a third time, pillaged Misivri, and went to a settlement, which is to be found outside [the fortress] at a distance of one day's journey and took possession [? – word not fully legible in the original] of all its property and took it away.

The concern with this passage here is not to identify the raids mentioned in it and collate its information with what is known from other sources, but instead, to learn what Metrophanes, who was in the relative proximity of these events, although apparently not an eyewitness, tells about the local population's experience during a Cossack raid. Two divergent observations may be made concerning the effects of the raids as related in his account. The first is explicit and concerns the great harm wrought by the Cossacks. In the four years mentioned (1606 Varna; 1612 Misivri; 1613 Ahtopol, Misivri; 1616 Misivri)<sup>77</sup> the Cossacks brought great disturbance and havoc to the Bulgarian coast which included considerable loss of property and life. While the important coastal ports suffered the most, even the hinterland was not safe (on Cossack penetration of the hinterland, see below).<sup>78</sup> However, in Metrophanes' account is an unintentional intimation that the destruction and carnage were less than his words suggest. The attack and pillaging of Misivri at least three times in five years, suggests that it was not "destroyed" in the first year (1612), as the relation claims, and that after this and ensuing expeditions, enough survived for the Cossacks to have reason to return. Even allowing for the ability to recover, it seems that there is at least some, if not a considerable degree of exaggeration in this account as well. To be sure, for the local population these raids were great calamities, but they were not total holocausts as the words of this monk taken at face value might lead one to believe.

Testimony on the effect of Cossack operations upon the inhabitants and infrastructure of the Black Sea that was often not far removed from

76 – *Ἀγαθόπολις*, Ahtopol, on the Bulgarian coast not far from the Turkish border and about 40 km southeast of Sozopol.

77 – Metrophanes' account does not include all Cossack raids in and between these years, even on this particular stretch of coast; e.g., in 1609 the vicinity of Varna was attacked by 30 *chaikas* and Varna itself was reportedly sacked, MD 76, no. 92 (cited in Berindei, "Porte face aux Cosaques" *cit.*, p. 278). However, it seems that during the Muscovite Time of Troubles, especially between 1607 and 1612, when much if not most of Ukrainian Cossack energy was channeled to marauding adventures as well as full-fledged military campaigns in the north, the Black Sea was spared the full brunt of Cossack fury. Cf. Iavornyts'kyi, D.I., *Історія запорізьких козаків* [History of the Zaporozhian Cossacks], II (Lviv, 1991), p. 11-24.

78 – From this testimony it is clear that although the Ukrainian Cossacks were Orthodox Christians just like the Bulgarians, Greeks, and others of this region, this did not make the latter immune from the effects of the raids of the former (on this matter see below).

the actual events both in time and space can be found in local *kadı* Sharia court records, that is, the *sicils*. Although *sicils* from the coastal settlements of Rumeli for the relevant period are not extant, *sicils* do survive and preserve unique data on various encounters with the Cossacks, both on land and at sea, for parts of the Anatolian coast – the Trabzon region in the East, and near the Bosphorus in the west.<sup>79</sup> In the 1620s, both the Zaporozhian and the Don Cossacks attacked the eastern Black Sea coast in the region of Trabzon time and again.<sup>80</sup> In the spring of 1625 a massive assault was made on Trabzon and its vicinity. A Cossack fleet as large as several hundred *chaikas*,<sup>81</sup> in the words of Thomas Roe, «sacked and burned the suburbs of Trebizond and all the adjoining coasts».<sup>82</sup> Despite the relative completeness and presumed reliability of Roe's dispatches, the phrase «sacked and burned» leaves much to the imagination. Finer details can be obtained from the Trabzon *sicils*. One entry records some of the damages rendered by this same raid to the *'imaret*<sup>83</sup> of the well-known Hatuniye mosque complex (*küllüye*), originally dedicated in 1515 by Sultan Selim I (1512–1520) in honor of his late mother Gülbahar Hatun. On a very water-damaged page, it is possible to make out the following testimony concerning the Hatuniye: «On the 21st of this month of Receb [1034]/29 April 1625 the accursed Rus<sup>84</sup> infidels overcame

79 – The latter was the area under the jurisdiction of the *kadı* of Üsküdar, which extended along the Anatolian coast as far as the fortress and town of Şile.

80 – There were apparently several Trabzon raids in the 1610s (1614, 1615, 1616, 1617), they are mostly poorly or scantily attested (with the exception of several raids in the last year, see Brekhunenko, Viktor, *Стосунки українського козацтва з Доном у XV-середині XVII ст.* [Relations of Ukrainian Cossackdom with the Don in the 16th-middle of the 17th century], Kiev, 1998, p. 139-140). The lesser and greater raids on Trabzon and its vicinity in the 1620s (1620, 1622, 1625, 1626, 1628 and also perhaps 1621 and 1623) are for the most part, better-attested raids. See Ostapchuk, «Ottoman Black Sea frontier», *cit.*, p. 31, 108-109, 124.

81 – At least 160 boats, which amounted to about 8,000 men; other sources give higher figures, e.g., the usually reliable English ambassador, Roe, gives 300 boats which would have meant about 15,000 Cossacks (Ostapchuk, «Ottoman Black Sea frontier», *cit.*, p. 109).

82 – Dispatch of 22 June 1625, *Negotiations of Roe*, *cit.*, p. 410.

83 – A complex of public buildings endowed by a *vakf*, such as a refectory for the poor, hospital, bathhouse, and workshop.

84 – The Ottomans used *Rus* or *Urus* inconsistently, sometimes meaning Ruthenian/Ukrainian and at other times, Muscovite/Russian, though for the latter *Moskov*/*Moskov* was also used. Perhaps they simply did not distinguish between these two main branches of East Slavs and hence *Rus*/*Urus* could be interpreted as denoting «East Slav.» Alternatively, according to the context it can be rendered by Ruthenian/Ukrainian or Muscovite/Russian. However, for this period, to translate invariably *Rus*/*Urus* as «Russian» is anachronistic and misleading.

(*müstevli olub*)<sup>85</sup> Trabzon and destroyed by fire altogether [the Hatuniye's] store-rooms (*kilur*), stables (*ıstabl ve ahur*), bakery (*fırın*), charity kitchen (*aşhane*), and workshop (*karhane*)». <sup>86</sup> Whether by this raid alone, or also because of subsequent ones, the Hatuniye apparently came close to being demolished by the Cossacks-according to *sicil*-entries from as late as 1631 and 1632, part of it still lay empty in ruins. In a *sicil*-entry from 1632 it is even noted that the mosque itself (*cami-i şerif*) had been burned (*ihrak*) and devastated (*harab*) and that experts (*ehl-i vukuf*) calculated that 245,000 *akças* were needed to repair the complex.<sup>87</sup> Other *sicil*-entries give evidence of damage to other parts of the city: in late January 1626, shops (*dükkan*) of the saddlemakers' market (*serraclar çarşısı*) and shops in other markets that had been burned, obviously in the previous year's raids, are recorded as still lying in ruins because the *vakf*, or pious foundation, in charge of them did not have the wherewithal to reconstruct them. Thus, outsiders were allowed to rent the remains of the ruined shops (*eser-i bina*) under long-term leases (30 years) with conditions that in addition to paying rent, they reconstruct them at their own cost.<sup>88</sup>

The Trabzon *sicils* give further evidence suggesting that it was not uncommon for the destructive effects of Cossack raids to be relatively long-lasting as proprietors and usufructuaries were unable or unwilling to bring a damaged site back to normal functioning.<sup>89</sup> In addition to the

85 – Although the sources are not unanimous, it is certain that the entire city with its fortress complex was not overtaken. Certainly the citadel (Upper Castle) held out while the lower fortress, which was closer to the waterfront, succumbed according to some accounts. The Hatuniye complex was located in the western suburbs and, accordingly, more easily attacked. See Ostapchuk, "Ottoman Black Sea frontier", *cit.*, p. 109-110.

86 – Turkish National Library (Milli Kütüphane [Ankara]), Trabzon şer'iye sicili 1823, fol. 22v. Although here only the day and month and not the year are indicated, in other *sicil*-entries in this register (see n. 99) clearly relating to events during the same raid three days later, the day, month, and year are written out, *i.e.*, 24 Receb 1034/2 May 1625.

87 – Trabzon şer'iye sicili 1824, fol. 35v; 1827, fol. 70v. For summary translations of these two entries see Jennings, Ronald, "Pious foundations in the society and economy of Ottoman Trabzon, 1565-1640", in: *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, XXXIII (1990), p. 271-336, esp. 331-332.

88 – Trabzon şer'iye sicili 1823, fol. 2v. See also Jennings, "Ottoman Trabzon", *cit.*, p. 300.

89 – Alan Fisher, on the basis of Evliya Çelebi's accounts of long-term devastation in the Crimea (when he visited in 1666-1667 some of the damaged or destroyed sites that he describes had been attacked by the Cossacks several decades earlier) and evidence from the Ottoman survey registers (*tahrir defterleri*), has suggested that there was a link between the Cossacks and demographic and economic decline in the Crimea, Fisher, Alan, "The Ottoman Crimea in the mid-seventeenth century. Some problems and preliminary considerations", in: *Eucharisterion. Essays presented to Omeljan Pritsak on his sixtieth birthday by his colleagues and students* (= *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* III-IV 1979-1980), Cambridge, Mass., 1980, p. 215-226.

above, there are the following examples: a *sicil*-entry from the beginning of 1626 states that several mills (*değirmen*), in a place which could not be determined because of fading of the ink, have laid in ruins for more than five to six years since the Cossacks came.<sup>90</sup> A 1633 *sicil*-entry reveals that «in the aforementioned well-protected [city of Trabzon], previously [perhaps during the events of 1625 recounted above] the accursed Rus bandits destroyed by fire the *bezzazistan*<sup>91</sup> that belonged to the *vakf* of the [Hatuniye] mosque (*cami-i şerif*) and '*imaret*». This entry is a copy of an imperial diploma (*nişan-i şerif*) granting a group of outsiders the right to take over the operations of this *bezzazistan* in exchange for paying the relevant *vakf* an annual 5,000 *akças*; this group outbid another party that had proposed to pay an annual 1,000 *akças*.<sup>92</sup>

This sampling of data on Cossack destruction and later consequences recorded in the Trabzon *sicils* provides a more realistic picture of the Cossack impact on Black Sea cities and towns than stock phrases such as «burned and destroyed» allow. Of course *sicil* registers were not drawn up with the aim of recording destruction wrought by Cossacks – it seems that mentions of damages found their way into the registers by happenstance rather than through someone's intention to provide a systematic record. Such details found their way into the *sicils* only because of specific circumstances brought about by the Cossack raids, for example, as mentioned above, circumstances that affected the legal and economic status of a given *vakf*, or, as will be seen below, contractual relations between parties. References to damages rendered to Trabzon suggest serious destruction and economic setback that lasted for months, even years. Moreover, because of the chance nature of the data that ended up in the *sicils*, the picture that emerges from them may very well be an underestimate. On the other hand, without minimizing the harm and damage wrought by the Cossacks, from these sources it is clear that nothing approaching total destruction in the affected districts of the city had occurred and that civic life did go on. While the picture provided by these documents is much more precise than that of the more common “burned and destroyed” type of testimony, there is no way of knowing whether other sites in the same quarters of Trabzon were as badly affected, if at all – the full extent and degree of the destruction remain open variables.

The Trabzon *sicils* occasionally provide glimpses of quantitative, as well as qualitative, effects of Cossack predations. In late summer 1620, the tax farmer in charge of the market inspection and brokerage fees (*ihtisab ve dellaliye mukata'ası*) for the city of Trabzon obtained a reduction in the annual revenue that he was to collect, from 65,000 to 55,000 *akças*, a reduction of 15 per cent. According to him, the revenue shortfall was

90 – Trabzon şer'iye sicili 1820, fol. 45r.

91 – Covered bazaar where valuables were sold (*bedesten*).

92 – Trabzon şer'iye sicilli 1828, fol. 96r.

the result of ships failing to come to Trabzon out of fear of the Cossacks, and therefore this particular *mukata'a* became fully reliant on remissions by merchants who arrived by land and thereby it registered a great shortfall in revenues.<sup>93</sup> Whether the statement that «ships do not come» is to be taken literally to mean “ships do not come *at all*” or that merely “fewer ships come than usual” cannot be determined. Were this document instead concerned with the customs duties of the port (*gümrük* or *iskele mukata'ası*) it might be possible to draw firmer conclusions as to the scale of reduction in shipping traffic at Trabzon. In any event a 15 per cent reduction in a tax revenue was significant. It should be noted that though the document indicates that loss of revenues related to sea traffic caused a great shortfall to the given *mukata'a*, there is no way of discerning what proportion of the merchants who now brought their wares by land had previously used ship transport – another vagary of this interesting document that makes comparison of the relative land and sea traffic volume before and after the raids risky.

In a *sicil* register from a few years later, in 1631, there is an entry that strongly suggests a very serious if not disastrous impact of Cossack raiding activity. It is a copy of an order to the *beglerbeği* of Batumi<sup>94</sup> stating that because the sub-province (*sancak*) of Trabzon is located on the coast, its population has been scattered and ruined by the Cossacks, and so it is necessary to reduce drastically the number of ‘*avariz haneleri*’<sup>95</sup> The central government gives strict orders to levy tax for 600 *hanes*<sup>96</sup> only, whereas 1,000 ‘*avariz haneleri*’ are registered.<sup>97</sup> A 40 per cent reduction must be an indication that by 1631, the effects of the Cossack ravages of the Trabzon coastal region had become grave.

Some of the documentation in the Trabzon *sicils* gives us specific information, again quantitative as well as qualitative, relating the effects of Cossack predations on coastal villages. One occasion for such *sicil*-entries was a fall in the revenues that tax farmers were able to collect as a result of the Cossack raids. Thus, in the Trabzon *sicil* for 1625 there are two separate entries covering a range of personal, commercial, agricultural, and other taxes (*ispençe*, *rüsum-i 'örfiyye*, *beytülmal*, *resm-i tapu*, *gümrük-i iskele*, ‘*öşr*, etc.) for two different sets of villages in the sub-

93 – *Rus-i menhus eşkıyası havfindan derya tarafından gemiler gelmeyüb ve karadan ticcar gelmek ile mukata'a-i mezbureye külli naks lazım gelüb*, Trabzon şer'îye sicilli, 1821, fol. 54r.

94 – A town more than 200 km east of Trabzon; an alternative name for the *beğlerbeğlik* of Trabzon.

95 – Households or groups of households from which the extraordinary taxes ('*avariz*) were collected.

96 – Literally “houses” meaning households as tax-paying units.

97 – Trabzon şer'îye sicilli 1822, fol. 96v.



district (*nahiye*) of Akça Abad.<sup>98</sup> These records first present the original amounts that the winners of bids to hold these two *mukata'as* for these two sets of villages contracted to deliver over a three-year period: 320,000 and 186,000 *akças* respectively. It is noted that the tax collections for the first year had been operating normally until «on 24 Receb 1034/2 May 1625<sup>99</sup> the accursed Urus came in 220 *şaykas* (i.e., *chaika*) and overcame Trabzon<sup>100</sup> and they plundered (*garet*) and devastated (*harab*) [such and such (the names could not be fully made out)] villages and [other] villages in the vicinity and took their little children (*sagar*), belongings (*emval*), and provisions (*erzak*) and the villages became ... deserted (*hali*)». As a result, the tax farmers of both *mukata'as* resigned their positions because they insisted that they would be unable to collect the taxes that they were under contractual obligation to deliver to the state. However, subsequently they managed to renegotiate their contracts at a reduced obligation of revenue collection, reducing their obligations by 14.0 and 13.3 per cent respectively. In one of the documents there is the stipulation that the new lowered tax intake was to be adhered to and under no circumstances increased by the tax farmer in the upcoming year; only when «the destroyed villages again become flourishing and prosperous (*ma'mur*)» was an increase in tax load to be contemplated. Thus it is evident that not only a prominent and prosperous city such as Trabzon, but also the more modest coastal villages of the Black Sea littoral were targets for the Cossacks. They were targets either by choice or circumstance (unlike the city, they were without formidable defensive works; perhaps the Cossacks relied on raiding villages in order to replenish their provisions). In addition, there is no doubt that both Muslim and Christian rural populations could suffer seriously at the hands of the Cossacks. That the local Christians were affected in this case is practically beyond challenge at least one tax specific to them, *ispence*, was a component of the *mukata'as* as affected by the Cossack raids.<sup>101</sup>

98 – Trabzon şer'iye sicilli 1823, fols. 36r, 48r. Akça Abad (today Akçaabat) is a coastal town just west of Trabzon.

99 – Notice that this date is three days later than the date give for the raid on Trabzon in the *sicil*-entry cited above (see n. 86). This is not a discrepancy, as from other sources it is known that there was a four-day battle in an unsuccessful attempt to take the lower fortresses of Trabzon, and in all likelihood the Cossack operation against the city did not end on this day as well. See *Историческое описание земли Войска Донского* [A historical description of the lands of the Don Host], I, Novocherkassk, 1869, p. 187-188.

100 – See n. 85.

101 – Strictly speaking, the fall in revenue potential of the given *mukata'as* could have been due to the inability to collect other taxes that were part of the *mukata'as*, taxes which both the Christians and Muslims paid. Conceivably, the Christians could have been unscathed or less so and the taxes specific to them could have continued to accrue according to plan, while it was the Muslims' inability to pay because they were targeted by the Cossacks, and the harm rendered to them that made the given

Can these reductions in tax-farm valuations be read as a measure of the level of Cossack destruction? While these records speak of the destruction of villages and the dispersion and impoverishment of peasantry, the eventual fall in the *mukata'a* valuations by 13.3 and 14.0 per cent would appear to belie the claim that the effects were so extreme. How substantial were the effects claimed in this and other laments of the *re'aya* recorded in the *sicil* from the same decade? For another example:

Because our villages are [located] on a road that is close to the sea, the accursed Rus bandits have come several times and suddenly attacked our villages and looted our possessions and valuables (*esbab u eskal*) and killed so many of us. Because of this most of us have become scattered and ruined and only a few miserable poor *re'aya* have remained. But [even] now those who come to collect *cizye*<sup>102</sup> demand from us [all] the *cizye* [that has accumulated] up until now, even for those who died or fled.<sup>103</sup>

Obviously some element of the never-ending game between taxpayers, who try to lessen their burden, and the state, which strives to maximize revenue, was a factor in such situations.<sup>104</sup> However, that the *re'aya* would dare to appeal to the central government on blatantly false pretenses seems hardly plausible. It appears that in such situations a compromise was usually effected in which the final adjusted lower *mukata'a* valuation would be less than it had been prior to the disastrous event, but greater than that requested by the tax farmer (or the *re'aya*). And, what is important for gauging the extent of destruction, these 13.3 and 14.0 per cent reductions in *mukata'a* valuation were probably less than the post-raid situation merited, that is, the final, adjusted, lower *mukata'a* valuation was greater than the amount justified by the actual damages and losses. It should be noted that even such per centages of fall in revenue were not trivial amounts. Clearly more cases need to be examined and analyzed, not only relating to Cossack attacks, but other disasters as well, including natural ones, such as earthquakes and floods, and especially those whose degree of damage is somehow corroborated by the sources.

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*mukata'as* less solvent. This is, of course, unlikely and without a doubt the Christians suffered as well. Nevertheless here is another example how *mukata'a* data can be indeterminate.

102 – Poll-tax levied on non-Muslim households.

103 – Trabzon şer'iye sicilli 1825, fol. 97r (3 Safar 1038/2 October 1628). The concern here over the *cizye* incontrovertibly shows that the non-Muslims in this region (mostly Orthodox Greeks) were seriously affected by the (Orthodox) Cossacks. On the problem of fellow Christians as victims of the Cossacks see below.

104 – Presumably the tax farmer might have been using the given mishap as a pretext to lower the valuation of the *mukata'a* that he was holding so as to deliver less to the state and reap a larger profit himself. However then he risked losing his tax farm to a competing higher bid in mid-term, as was usually allowed.

With such comparative analysis it might be possible to better assess how serious of a disaster an event followed by a seemingly small or modest, for example, a 10 or 15 per cent fall in revenue, really was. The following case relating to Varna recorded in the *Mühimme defterleri* supports the notion that appeals for a reduction of taxation because of losses caused by the Cossacks were resolved by a compromise between the priorities of the state and the needs articulated by the taxpayers.<sup>105</sup>

In 1627, the *cizye*-paying, that is, the non-Muslim *re'aya* of the city of Varna sent a petition to the Porte concerning the difficult situation that they found themselves in as result of a Cossack raid several years before. According to the petition, although 480 *hanes* are recorded in the register, those assigned to collect the *cizye* overestimated the population and entered additional *hanes* into the register, so that now they are collecting *cizye* for 770 *hanes*. In fact, several years ago there was a Cossack raid on Varna which was «sacked and plundered (*yagma ve garet*) and so many of [their community] were killed and injured that only 400 individuals [*nefer*, as opposed to *hane*/households] survived and these are extremely poor and without the capacity to pay [*cizye*] for so many *hanes*». <sup>106</sup> An investigation was launched from the capital and even the renowned *şeyhülislam* Yahya was called to look into the matter. With the state being reluctant to forgo revenue, the final decision involved shifting some of the due *cizye*, 70 *hane*'s worth, to villages able to bear an extra burden, but insisting on a 600-*hane* figure for the non-Muslim community in the city of Varna. <sup>107</sup> In other words, claiming wholesale carnage and requesting a very substantial reduction in their *cizye* liability, the non-Muslim community was only granted a lesser reduction.

It is not fully clear which figure the non-Muslim *re'aya* of Varna were objecting to and trying to have officially changed, the 770 *hane* that the *cizye* collectors had begun to impose, or the 480 *hane* formerly registered in the *defter*, though it seems that they were addressing the larger figure.

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105 – Negotiation and compromise in settling differences concerning the assessed and realistic tax burdens has been found in other contexts and was probably a not uncommon practice. For examples in a different region, see Singer, Amy, *Palestinian Peasants and Ottoman Officials. Rural Administration Around Sixteenth-Century Jerusalem*, Cambridge, 1994.

106 – While big raids of Varna are recorded under 1606, 1609, 1612, and 1616, probably the raid of August 1620 is meant here when a reported 150 Cossack *şaykas* were said to have «pillaged and entirely burned Varna, which has no less than fifteen or sixteen thousand souls» (... *les Cosaques avec 150 barques ravagent toute la mer Noire ayant pillé et entièrement bruslé Varne où il n'y avait pas moins de quinze ou seize mille âmes*), dispatch of the French ambassador to the Porte, Philippe de Harlay, comte de Césy, 25 August 1620 in: Turgenev, A.I. (ed.), *Historica Russiae monumenta/Акты исторические, относящиеся к России*, II, St. Petersburg, 1842, p. 412. See Hrushevsky, *Cossack Age*, cit., p. 342.

107 – MD 83, no. 113.

If it was a matter of returning from the new assessment to the old one, then that means they wanted a 38 per cent reduction. But as they were claiming that only 400 individuals remained, they must have been asserting that the losses were truly drastic, for the new *hane* figure would be 80 *hane* if a multiplier of, for instance, five individuals per *hane* is applied, or 200 *hane* if 400 *nefer* referred to adults only (that is two *nefer* per household; even less *hane* if households included extended families, *i.e.*, more than two *nefer*).<sup>108</sup> Given the vagueness of the wording of the document, one can only take into account various possible combinations of these figures and arrive at a range of possible reductions in the number of *hanes* requested by the *re'aya*, from 38 to 90 per cent. Which they were actually requesting cannot be determined; presumably the population loss was in proportion to one of the possible figures between these two extreme percentages.<sup>109</sup> What the state agreed on, which was to reduce the number of *hanes* in the *cizye* register from 770 to 600, meant that they were granting only a 22 per cent reduction. Implicit in its decision to recognize 600 *hanes* is that in all likelihood the 480 *hane* figure claimed by the *re'aya* was outdated – probably the population had increased since the previous survey.

In this document again the difficulty of gauging the effect of a raid on the basis of taxation data, at least as it is presented in such a document, is apparent. Did a 22 per cent reduction of the number of *cizye haneleri* mean that there was approximately a 22 per cent fall in the total population or at least in the segment of the population subject to the *cizye* tax, that is, the non-Muslims? In any event, given how reluctant the state could be to lose any income (again, note the transfer of 70 *hane*'s worth of *cizye* liability to other locales), and taking notice of the fact that after an investigation involving at least one figure of presumably great moral authority and prestige, there is no hint that the state rejected the basic veracity of the petitioning community's story, suggests that indeed the losses were not grossly exaggerated and probably greater than the final settlement reflects. Here too, it is likely that a compromise was effected between the amount that should have been assessed if the tax liability was to have been in line with the level of the surviving population and the amount the state had been expecting to receive before the protest. In other words, the actual losses were likely to have been greater than the 22 per cent recognized by the state (a substantial figure in itself), according to the possibilities that the figures as stated in this document allow, somewhere between 22 and 90 per cent. Without ignoring the vagaries of this

108 – Only relative figures are of interest here; arriving at any sort of absolute and precise demographic figures is not intended, and thus only a very rudimentary multiplier is applied.

109 – A reduction of 770 *hanes* to 80 *hanes* meant a decline of 90 per cent, 480 to 80 = -83 per cent, 770 to 200 = -74 per cent, 480 to 200 = -58 per cent, 770 to 480 = -38 per cent and, the most conservative figure, 770 to 600 = -22 per cent.

document, while Varna was not entirely destroyed, as the words of the French ambassador to the Porte, Philippe de Harlay, comte de Césy might lead one to believe,<sup>110</sup> and perhaps its population was not even decimated, as the non-Muslims of the city claimed, the effects of recent Cossack raiding activity on population, infrastructure, and economy must have been quite significant. Prior to the disclosure of this document there were no solid grounds for making such an assertion, as only vague and impressionistic testimony was available.<sup>111</sup>

Between the extremes of death and destruction, and survival unscathed and with property intact, a third fate awaited those who underwent a Cossack raid: to fall captive. Three examples of Cossacks taking captives have already been mentioned: the one in the passage by Portelli d'Ascoli quoted at the start of this paper, the information in the Ottoman chronicle account of the milestone expedition to Sinop in 1614 that the Cossacks «took [with them] the goods and families<sup>112</sup> that they had plundered and set out to sea»<sup>113</sup> and the disclosure in the documentation of a re-negotiated *mukata'a* contract which states that, aside from destroying villages, pillaging possessions, and seizing provisions, the Cossacks took little children (*sagar*).<sup>114</sup> Because the aim here is to provide specific, micro-level views of the human impact of the raids, further examples of Ottoman subjects taken captive by the Cossacks are in order.

In a 1639 report to the Porte by Piyale Kethüda, the vice-admiral of the Ottoman fleet (*kethüda-i tersane-i 'amire*), concerning nine Cossack

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110 – See n. 106.

111 – To probe Ottoman fiscal data in search of better indicators of the effects of Cossack raids than those provided by impressionistic data stemming from descriptive accounts is to ask basic even if obvious questions about the sources. It is analogous to the attempts to assess the degree to which the Ottoman fiscal data correlates with the performance of the Ottoman economy, e.g., Genç, Mehmet, “A study of the feasibility of using eighteenth-century Ottoman financial records as an indicator of economic activity”, in: İslamoğlu-İnan, Huri (ed.), *The Ottoman Empire and the World-Economy*, Cambridge and Paris, 1987, p. 345-373. From probes of the literature and conversations with colleagues it is my impression that much more empirical work comparing specific natural disasters, epidemics, wars, uprisings with possible fluctuations in fiscal data is needed in order, for example, to gain some indicators, if not absolutely quantitative, certainly less qualitative than those which are usually utilized to qualify an event as disastrous, having negative effects on the well-being of a society, economy, and so on.

112 – *'ıyal*, “household, including a man's wife, children and dependents” or the Turkish *'ayal*, meaning simply a man's wife or household, Redhouse, James, *A Turkish and English Lexicon...*, Constantinople, 1890, p. 1329-1330. Does the use of this term indicate that the Cossacks favored women and children as captives, rather than men? Cf. n. 115 where a document is referred to that mentions only women and children as captives of the Cossacks.

113 – See n. 60.

114 – Trabzon şer'iye sicilli 1823, fol. 36r.

*chaikas* that caused considerable trouble in the Black Sea that summer but were in the end overcome, it is said that the Ottoman forces liberated not only captured children whom the Cossacks had managed to bring as far as the mouth of the Dnieper («13 or 14 little boys – Muslim children between the ages of 7 and 8»), but several women as well.<sup>115</sup> Beauplan's invaluable description of Ukraine and neighboring lands is one of the very few Christian sources to venture any information on the proportion of human ware in the Cossacks' "catch" and its possible fates: «returning home with much booty and a number of slaves [*quelques esclaves*, i.e., some slaves], usually young children, whom they keep in their own service or give as gifts to the lords of their homeland. No old people are detained, unless they are judged rich enough to buy their freedom by paying ransom».<sup>116</sup> It should be noted that the existence of Muslims or others as slaves (or even as servants) on 17th-century Polish or Ukrainian estates is an unresearched topic. Beauplan's implication that the captives were relatively few seems plausible; certainly it is difficult to imagine that the numbers of Ottoman subjects that the Cossacks brought back could compare with the thousands of East Slavs that the Crimean Tatars annually drove across the steppes to supply the huge Ottoman slave market.<sup>117</sup> As to Muscovy, although there was both serfdom and a status resembling or equivalent to slavery known as *kholopstvo*, investigation is needed to determine if the Don Cossacks in any systematic way sold or delivered their Black Sea captives to Muscovy, kept them as laborers, or only tried to ransom them.<sup>118</sup> But at this point, when dealing with the unstudied problem of the Cossacks' human chattel, one should be ready for surprises in the data, which may or may not have represented a typical situation. In 1622, de Césy reported that in a raid on the Anatolian shore near the Bosphorus (see n. 132) the Cossacks «have left their marks [of destruction] and led away more than a thousand captives in *kara mürsels*<sup>119</sup> that they had captured».<sup>120</sup> Aside from a possible trail of

115 – Topkapı Sarayı Arşivi, E.2891/1. Ostapchuk, "Five documents", *cit.*, p. 94.

116 – Beauplan, *Description of Ukraine*, *cit.*, p. 11.

117 – On the Crimean slave trade and for further references, see Fisher, "Black Sea slave trade", *cit.*, On the Ottoman market for slaves, see İnalçık, Halil, "Servile labor in the Ottoman Empire", in: *The Mutual Effects of the Islamic and Judeo-Christian Worlds. The East European Pattern*, Brooklyn, NY, 1979, p. 25-52.

118 – Richard Hellie's large study of *kholopstvo* (bond slavery), while mentioning Tatar military captives being enslaved, has no information of the Don Cossacks dealing in captives. Hellie, Richard, *Slavery in Russia, 1450-1725*, Chicago, 1982, p. 67-70, 99-100. In a personal communication, Michael Khodarkovsky informs that he never encountered any systematic trafficking in captives with Muscovy by the Don Cossacks. He believes that most *kholopy* in Muscovy of Turkic origin came not from the Crimean Tatars or Ottoman Turks, but from the various Muslim peoples from the East and Southeast, such as Kazan Tatars, Bashkirs, and Nogays.

119 – A type of small cargo ship (*Caramussals* in the French text).



had captured».<sup>120</sup> Aside from a possible trail of captives taken in the Black Sea by the Cossacks leading back to Ukraine and Poland or to the lower Don and Muscovy, it is highly likely that a significant proportion were sold to the Abkhazians, Mingrelians, and other peoples of the Caucasian and Georgian coasts not fully under Ottoman control. In a Trabzon *sicil* document from the early 1640s there is the following testimony by an individual who managed to return to his homeland after a long captivity: «20 years ago the accursed Rus made me a slave (*esir*) and sold me to the Georgian land (*Gürce vilayeti*)».<sup>121</sup>

In the case of Tatar raids in Ukraine and southern Muscovy there is a relatively clear picture of the fate of Slav captives, either enslavement in the Crimea, or being sold and transported to Ottoman lands proper.<sup>122</sup> In the case of the Cossacks, although their booty consisting of human alongside material chattel is beyond question, it is at this point prudent to mince words and avoid the term “enslavement” for the simple reason that the fate of their captives is poorly documented and remains largely a mystery: what were the relative proportions of those who ended up in some form of servitude and those who were returned for ransom?<sup>123</sup> On the whole, most sources that mention the Cossacks taking captives do so in passing, almost casually, without hinting at the purpose of such activity or the fate of the unfortunates.

Modern historians of the Cossacks too have passed over such mentions without comment. Indeed, in Ukrainian and Russian historiographies, the Cossacks are usually depicted as liberators of Eastern Slavs from Crimean or Ottoman captivity. Moreover, the liberation of enslaved Cossack brethren or other countrymen has been considered one of the main purposes of the Cossack naval expeditions. As in any frontier phenomena, moral categories tended to be vague in such matters. The Cossacks taking captives or committing atrocities is not incompatible with their viewing themselves as carrying on a just struggle of retribution against their bellicose, slave-taking neighbors to the South. Even contemporary sources that were not only unapologetic of the Ukrainian Cossacks, but even hostile to them, recognized a connection between their expeditions

120 – Dispatch of 12 July 1622, *Historica Russiae*, *cit.*, p. 420.

121 – Trabzon şer'iye sicilli 1829, fol. 10r.

122 – Of course, while slavery was usually a regrettable condition, in Muslim societies it was regulated by law and custom, and the fate of a slave was not always that of abject misery and manumission was not uncommon. See İnalçık, “Servile labor”, *cit.*

123 – Aside from Beauplan's above reference to ransom, the chronicle of Hasanbegzade relates how in 1629 the Cossacks took Muslim captives who «had to be ransomed for a heavy price», Hasanbegzade, *Tarih-i al-i 'Osman*, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, H.O. 75, fol. 122r. Those relatively few captives taken for military purposes, *i.e.*, to gain intelligence about the enemy (so-called “tongues”, *jazyk* in East Slavic languages, *dil* in Turkish), are not considered here. This was a practice common in all lands and on all sides.

and the Tatar slaving activity.<sup>124</sup> One wonders if the Cossacks took only Muslims as captives, as in the cases related by Piyale Kethüda and Hasanbegzade's chronicle. Below are examples of their robbing Christians but releasing them rather than taking them captive. Finally, though there is evidence that the Cossacks did liberate slaves in the Black Sea, so far Ottoman evidence of their taking Turkish and Tatar captives outnumbers evidence of the same origin of their liberating their own kind, whereas the sources stemming from the other side of the frontier, that is, from the Slavic suggest the opposite trend.<sup>125</sup> Which is closer to the true situation remains to be established.

Coastal towns and villages, being unprotected by formidable walls, were the settlements most vulnerable in the face of the Cossacks. To get a sense of the scale of the devastation of all types of Black Sea settlements, one needs only to follow the descriptions of Evliya Çelebi which indicate that many of the ports and coastal settlements visited by him suffered at the hands of the Cossacks, some repeatedly.<sup>126</sup> One might expect that the 17th-century Cossack onslaught would have brought about a change in Black Sea settlement patterns. Indeed there is some evidence of relocation of settlements away from the shore. Thus, in his description of Kovarna,<sup>127</sup> Evliya states that at the edge of the shore are some wheat granaries (*bugday mahzenleri*), a landing stage (*iskele*), fresh-water wells,

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124 – See Beauplan, *Description of Ukraine*, *cit.*, p. 66. D'Ascoli comments that the Cossacks were merciless to those in the Crimea who kept slaves or dealt in them, and would kill on the spot any such person, even if they were Christian. Thus many Armenians involved in the slave trade were killed by the Cossacks, Eszer, "Beschreibung des Schwarzen Meeres", *cit.*, p. 204, 209; Berthier-Delagard, "Описание Черного моря", *cit.*, p. 98, 101. Of course, eventually it was impossible to sort out if a Tatar raid into Ukraine was an act of unprovoked aggression or itself a response to a Cossack raid and vice versa, as the raid and counter-raid cycle of violence became a fact of life on this frontier.

125 – D'Ascoli implies that they liberated slaves in the Crimea, Eszer, "Beschreibung des Schwarzen Meeres" *cit.*, p. 204; Berthier-Delagard, "Описание Черного моря", *cit.*, p. 98. Remarkably, very little evidence of Cossacks freeing slaves of the Ottomans has been encountered, though perhaps not enough material has been canvassed. However, there is a remarkable *mühimme* document from 1637 stating that every year the Cossacks arrive at a mine in the area of the port of Bendereğli (Ereğli, on the western Anatolian coast) in order to liberate the four to five hundred Cossack slaves who were toiling there. In the process of freeing their brethren, the Cossacks took Muslims captives (*esir*), plundered possessions, and delivered great destruction to the mine itself, twice even managing to set it on fire. MD 88, no. 346.

126 – Especially vols. I, II, III, and V. For a survey of the Cossack devastation that Evliya Çelebi found all over the Crimea, see Fisher, "Ottoman Crimea", *cit.*, p. 216-222.

127 – Today Kavarna, a town on the northern Bulgarian shore, northwest of Varna just beyond Balçık.

«and nothing else; because of the fear of the Rus (*Urus*) all of their build-ings (*'imaret*) are on the top of a mountain». <sup>128</sup>

It has been suggested that typically pirates could not venture far inland from their ships.<sup>129</sup> However, as far as the Cossacks were concerned, there is ample evidence that they did proceed inland, leaving their boats behind under guard or, if there was even a small river, going up it in their *chaikas*, taking advantage of the craft's shallow draught. Beauplan mentions that the Cossacks would sometimes venture as far as a "league" inland (1 French league = 4.445 km).<sup>130</sup> Even deeper penetrations inland could occur. Portelli d'Ascoli makes a startling claim, informing that «sometimes they go by day and by night so as to pillage some rich place inland (*dentro terra*)». <sup>131</sup> This has already been seen in the Greek monk Metrophanes' account of raiding near Misivri («[they] went to a settle-ment...at a distance of one day's journey»). In July 1622, de Césy re-ported that the Cossacks came in 30 boats within 15 leagues (67 km) of the capital and took an Anatolian town called Caudria five leagues (22 km) inland from the Black Sea.<sup>132</sup> This was probably today's Kandira.<sup>133</sup> Two months later, Muscovite envoys I. Kondyrev and T. Bormasov, go-ing the last leg of their journey to Istanbul by land because a storm had wrecked their ship, happened to be passing through these same parts and found a scene of terror and devastation. They described the villages around Kandira (which they call Kandra) and along the inland road to the Bosphorus as being deserted, with their inhabitants hiding in the forests for fear of the Cossacks.<sup>134</sup> In fact, when the party of Kondyrev and Bor-masov first came ashore at a bay (*liman*) near Kandira they found ten ships that had been waiting out a storm. When the crews of these ships sighted the party they mistook it for marauding Cossacks and fled their ships to nearby villages and hamlets, which caused another local panic. According to the envoys, Kandira itself, which had had about 500 house-holds, was completely burned out. The local inhabitants eventually in-formed the envoys that the neighboring villages had also suffered the same fate that summer.<sup>135</sup>

128 – Evliya Çelebi, *Seyahatname*, III, *cit.*, p. 355.

129 – Faroqhi, *Towns and Townsmen*, *cit.*, p. 99.

130 – Beauplan, *Description of Ukraine*, *cit.*, p. 67.

131 – Eszer, "Beschreibung des Schwarzen Meeres", *cit.*, p. 204; Berthier-Delagard, "Описание Черного моря", *cit.*, p. 98.

132 – Dispatch of 12 July 1622, *Historica Russiae*, *cit.*, p. 420. This is the same raid as the one mentioned above in which captives were taken away in captured *kara mürsels*.

133 – Inland from Kerpe which is east of Şile and Ağva, and is about 15 km upstream by the Baba Deresi.

134 – Their road took them from Kandira to Beykoz on the Bosphorus, almost midway between the Black Sea and Istanbul.

135 – *Историческое описание*, *cit.*, p. 170-171.

In 1640, an account by a member of an ambassadorial mission of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth to the Porte, while en route to Istanbul by land, when passing Pravadi,<sup>136</sup> describes its castle as being situated «on a cliff and [partly] made of the cliff» and being «shamefully» neglected and ruined. However, as this point the author of the account muses that after all, «the Zaporozhian Cossacks, bypassing the castle, often made incursions into the town by descending on ropes off the cliff [directly] into the town».<sup>137</sup> An example of remarkable capability to penetrate inland, at least in the opinion of the Ottomans, is documented in a *ferman* from September 1624 registered in the *Üsküdar kadi sicils*: As the Cossack bandits have in recent times have been very active on the Black Sea and brought great damage and harm to the Anatolian coast, there is a good chance that they would go ashore and attack the town of İznik (*kasaba-i İznikmid*), almost 80 km south of the Black Sea coast at Şile as the crow flies. The *sancakbeği* of Kocaeli is warned and that he is responsible for organizing the patrolling and defense of the area.<sup>138</sup> Evliya Çelebi's description of Koyulhisar in the north-central Anatolian *sancak* of Şebinkarahisar, gives an extreme example of the vulnerability of areas that in no way qualify as being coastal, and suggests the shock and horror that a local population and its authorities must have undergone. In connection with Koyulhisar,<sup>139</sup> he mentions the Black Sea settlement of Pençsenbe (Pençsenbih) Bazarı<sup>140</sup> that he says, can be reached from Koyulhisar on foot in a day's journey. This prompts him to relate that «once in the time of Sultan Ahmed I (1603–1618) the Dnieper Cossacks (*Özi kazagı*, i.e., the Zaporozhian Cossacks) came out of the sea [at Pençsenbih Bazarı] and passing over the mountains, raided and plundered the suburbs of this fortress and then fled».<sup>141</sup> With their capability of going inland either with or without their vessels, the Cossacks invite comparisons with the Vikings who would also venture inland, sometimes quite far, whether on foot or, like the Cossacks, taking advantage of the shallow draught of their ships, going up-river (in fact Cossack *chaikas* and Viking ships were approximately the same size and had some similar design features, such as the lack of a deep keel).

136 – Today Provadiia, about 60 km inland from Varna and about 75 km by way of several rivers.

137 – The diary of Zbigniew Lubieniecki in Walaszek, Adam (ed.), *Trzy relacje z polskich podróży na wschód muzumnan'ski w pierwszej połowie XVII wieku* [Three relations from Polish journeys to the Muslim East], Cracow, 1980, p. 110.

138 – İstanbul Muftuluğu, Üsküdar mahkemesi 6/147, fols. 22v. Published in Akgündüz, Ahmet (ed.), *Şer'îye Sicilleri*, İstanbul, 1989, II, p. 150-152.

139 – A town and fortress about 80 km south of Ordu as the crow flies.

140 – Probably today's Perşembe, on the Anatolian coast just northeast of Ordu.

141 – Evliya Çelebi, *Seyahatname*, II, İstanbul, 1314/1896-1897, p. 198.

Inland penetrations notwithstanding, most vulnerable to Cossack raids were those who lived along major waterways, meaning not only on the Black Sea coast, but also along the major rivers and channels connected to it. Earlier mention was made of the famous Cossack raids into the Bosphorus of 1624,<sup>142</sup> when Yeniköy and other suburbs of Istanbul (in the various sources also named are Sarıyer, Tarabya, İstiniye, and Büyükdere) were, judging by most reports, severely damaged,<sup>143</sup> bringing considerable terror to the population of the capital itself.<sup>144</sup> In fact, there were also incursions into the Bosphorus in 1615, 1617, 1621, and 1627, though these are not as well-documented as the ones of 1624.<sup>145</sup> By the last decade of the 16th century, the delta and lowest reaches of the Danube, at times even as far upstream as Harsova and perhaps even Silistre (Silistra) and beyond, had become unsafe because of Cossack penetration and even “infestation” of the river. For example, the key lower Danubian port towns of Kili, İsmail (Izmail), İbra’il (Braila), İsakçı (Isaccea) and Tulça (Tulcea) were all targeted by the Cossacks. By the 1590s, villages in this area were described as being destroyed and abandoned, while traders were said to be unable to navigate or even cross the river.<sup>146</sup> As late as the first decades of the 17th century it was necessary to mobilize local forces

142 – “Raids” rather than “raid” because in this year there were actually three separate Cossack operations in the Bosphorus. For an analysis of the Cossack activity in the Bosphorus in 1624 based on various sources, both Ottoman and non-Ottoman, see Ostapchuk, “Ottoman Black Sea frontier”, *cit.*, p. 78-83; see also Ostapchuk and Halenko, “Кятіб Челебі”, *cit.*, p. 370-374, 420-421.

143 – «Sacked and burned all the houses of pleasure [i.e., *yalis*] on both sides of the river as far as the castles (Rumeli Hisarı and Anadolu Hisarı?)», dispatch of 20 July 1624, *Negotiations of Roe*, *cit.*, p. 257.

144 – Again Roe: «never was seen a greater feare and confusion», *ibid.* Cf. «Les Koszaques... saccager un gros bourg nommé Neocris qui touche aux tours de la Mer Noire a la veue du Serrail du G. Seig<sup>r</sup> et plus proche d'ici que plusieurs maisons de plaisir... Et apres avoir demeuré plus de six heures en terre brulant et ravageants quantité de belles maisons sur le bord du Canal...», De Césy, dispatch of 21 July 1624, *Historica Russiae*, *cit.*, p. 426-427. See also Evliya Çelebi, *Seyahatname*, I, Istanbul, 1314/1896-1897, p. 458, 459, 460-461.

145 – The subject of Cossack activity in the Bosphorus needs to be studied and clarified, as some of the incursions are poorly attested and their effect has been exaggerated by Slavic historians of the Cossacks. Thus, it is not uncommon for the literature to accept without question that on more than one occasion, the Cossacks attacked and even sacked Istanbul itself, which was hardly the case. Again the account and chronology of Cossack raids by Tushin is overly inclusive in its choice of data, i.e., practically any Cossack raid mentioned in every possible source is included without an analysis of the veracity of the given mention (e.g., its origin, authority, distance from the event, etc.). Such a maximalist presentation of the data may tend to exaggerate the frequency of Cossack raids, Tushin, *Русское мореплавание*, *cit.*, p. 108, 109, 111-113, 162-170.

146 – MD 69, no. 194; MD 70, nos. 207, 321, 323; MD 71, no. 171; MD 82, no. 63; Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi, *Maliyeden Müdevver Defteri* 9820, p. 186, 223.

and even send in the ships of the imperial fleet to protect this important supply route for military provisions to the Hungarian front, and for grain, meat, and fish bound for Istanbul.<sup>147</sup> There is also evidence that the Cossacks were able to set up, even for extended periods of time, something akin to forward bases in the large delta of the Danube, lying in wait in the reedbeds so as to ambush Ottoman shipping. Despite the fearsome reputation of the Cossacks, at times they and the local population found common cause. In 1618, an order had to be sent to officials in the lower Danube drawing attention to the fact that the Cossacks had entrenched or fortified (*tahassun*) themselves in reedbeds and entered into cooperation with local *re'aya* who kept illegal fishing weirs (*dalyan*) which provided sustenance for the Cossacks; moreover, these locals acted as guides (*ki-laguz*) in the delta's complicated maze of channels.<sup>148</sup>

The *sicils* also provide an unprecedented glimpse of complications that the Cossack raids brought to various business undertakings and personal transactions that compelled affected parties to go to court. In 1624, two Greek cauldron-makers (*kazgancı*) were contracted by a certain Süleyman Çelebi to repair the ruined cauldron of the Old Bathhouse (*Kohne Hamam*) of the Sultan Mehmed *vakf* in Trabzon. They were supplied with necessary copper for the repair and were paid 3,000 *akças* ahead of time for at least part of the labor. In the meantime, the Cossacks came and, in the words of the two cauldron-makers, «plundered near and far» taking also the cauldron, which the two Greeks claimed to have repaired. In their testimony, they insisted that they tried several times to deliver the repaired cauldron, but that Süleyman Çelebi kept procrastinating, as he was not yet ready to reinstall the *hamam*'s heat source. Süleyman Çelebi, for his part, claimed that the cauldron-makers had not done the work and therefore they were liable for the loss. After an investigation, the court decided that the two Greeks were telling the truth and forbade the litigant from pursuing any further claims against them.<sup>149</sup>

Other cases involved disputes over personal belongings lost to or immovable property destroyed by the Cossacks. Typically one party had lent to or deposited with another party something of value. After the Cossacks seized or ruined the given item(s), the court was asked to decide whether or not the party holding the goods at the time was to be held liable for the loss. Thus, in 1626 in a village near Akça Abad, after the Cossacks looted unspecified goods (*eşya*) belonging to two *zimmis*,<sup>150</sup>

147 – During the 1621 Hotin (Khotyn') campaign, the imperial fleet had to guard the pontoon bridge at İsakçı by which Osman II's army crossed the Danube, and even had to fend off a Cossack attack on the bridge. See Ostapchuk, “*Gazānāme of Halil Paşa*”, *cit.*, p. 505.

148 – MD, no. 63. See Berindei, “La Porte face aux Cosaques”, *cit.*, p. 286-287.

149 – Trabzon şer'iye sicilli 1820, fol. 34v.

150 – Non-Muslim subjects; they were required to pay the *cizye* or Islamic poll tax.



which had been in safe deposit (*emanet*) in a chest (*sandık*) located in the house of a Muslim, a court action to confirm liability of the house owner was commenced,<sup>151</sup> while in 1625, 90 *dirhems* of silver left with a jeweler, which fell into Cossack hands, became the subject of a similar suit.<sup>152</sup> Another situation is documented in a 1627 *sicil*-entry that is a copy of a new patent (*nişan*) indicating the status and state-stipend of a prayer-reciter (*du'a-gu*) who had lost his old patent during a Cossack raid.<sup>153</sup> Yet another *sicil*-entry, from 1628, registers the sale of a property that had been destroyed by the Cossacks with the provision that the purchaser brings no complaints of defects against the vendor.<sup>154</sup> In an Üsküdar *sicil* from 1622, there is record of an unidentified Christian community suing for the right to rebuild its church inside the Şile fortress that had been ruined during a Cossack raid and thereafter turned into a *mescid*.<sup>155</sup>

Hitherto mention has been made of instances of the Cossacks harming Ottoman Christian subjects, most often their own co-religionist Orthodox Greeks and Bulgarians. Of course these facts are at odds with much of Ukrainian and Russian historiography, where Cossackdom has tended to be viewed as a sort of crusader phenomenon dedicated to the struggle against the unbeliever Turks and Tatars. The issue of the Cossacks and liberation of their countrymen enslaved by the Tatars and Ottomans has already been touched on. Moreover, in this historiographic tradition, a related aim of the Cossack naval raids was to avenge and even prevent the never-ending Tatar raids for slaves and go on the offensive against the Turks, who are viewed as the sponsors of the death and destruction brought to the East Slavic lands by the Tatars. There is little in the way of sources to provide a better notion of the “mental equipment” of the sea-going Cossacks and assess the nature of their religiosity. The evidence brought to bear here raises interesting questions on the degree of their religiosity, the nature of their religious consciousness, and their perceptions and attitudes towards the Greek, Bulgarian, Armenian, and other Christian inhabitants of the Ottoman Black Sea. Presently there are no direct sources that shed light on any possible Cossack cognizance of their harming their co-religionists in Ottoman lands (or for that matter, the degree to which they even recognized Ottoman subject Greeks and other Orthodox as co-religionists, and if they did, what possible justification for the violence was put forth). The Cossacks may have simply been indiscriminate and random in their choice of targets, given the fact that there was a great

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151 – Trabzon şer'iye sicilli 1823, fol. 6r.

152 – Trabzon şer'iye sicilli 1820, fols. 41r, 42v.

153 – Trabzon şer'iye sicilli 1825, fol. 12v.

154 – Trabzon şer'iye sicilli 1825, fol. 25r.

155 – İstanbul Muftuluğu, Üsküdar mahkemesi 6/138, fol. 134v.

number of Christians in Trabzon and these latter could have been subjects to harm according to the law of averages.<sup>156</sup>

As was often the case in other frontier contexts, perhaps here too religious lines were not so important to the Cossacks (it is known that at times they cooperated with Muslims, their “official” foes – for example, with the Tatars). The undeniable harm suffered by Christians may well indicate that the notion of religion among the Cossacks could be rudimentary and superficial, though this need not have been the case and care should be taken against swinging from one simplistic extreme to another. Aside from the argument that their Christian victims happened to be innocent bystanders, so to say, “in the line of fire”, there could have been various justifications for such violence – be they genuine or hypocritical – for example, that the Christian subjects served the “pagan Turk”, were his collaborators, and so forth.<sup>157</sup> This aspect of the Cossack raids seems to defy simple explanation, for there is evidence that the Cossacks at times did “honor” lines of religious allegiance and did not raid Christian populations indiscriminately.<sup>158</sup> For example, as mentioned above, on the Georgian and Caucasian coasts, the Cossacks were known to spare and even cooperate with local Christian populations; below are examples of Cossacks sparing the lives of Ottoman Christians, though there are no explicit and certain clues as to possible motivations. Moreover, from the sources brought to bear by Mykhailo Hrushevs’kyi, it is clear that the ideal of the Cossacks as fighters for the faith, whether or not it was shared by a significant number of them, was already current in the first quarter of the

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156 – According to Heath Lowry’s study of the *tahrir defterleri* for the city of Trabzon, towards the end of the 16th century, Christians (Armenians, and above all, Greeks) were still a significant portion of the population. The Christians may have been even more vulnerable to Cossack attacks as, according to Lowry’s data, they were more concentrated in the suburbs, while the Muslims were a majority within the walled city, Lowry, Heath W., *Trabzon Şehrinin İslâmlaşma ve Türkleşmesi, 1461-1583*, Istanbul, 1981.

157 – In the 16th century, the problem of Christians raiding Christians was an actual issue in connection with the anti-Ottoman raiding activity of the *uskoks* in the Adriatic. In their case, there was an easier argument to justify violence against Ottoman Christians as most of those targeted by the Catholic *uskoks* were Orthodox, in other words, in the minds of Latins, “schismatics.” In addition, arguments were invoked to the effect that the Ottoman Christians were legitimate targets because they “serve the Turk” (*martoloses*, Christian Ottoman auxiliary forces, were especially despised and brutalized by the *uskoks*), Bracewell, Catherine Wendy, *The Uskoks of Senj. Piracy, Banditry, and Holy War in the Sixteenth-century Adriatic*, Ithaca and London, 1992, p. 187-199.

158 – Possibly there was a difference in the religiosity and consequent behavior of the Zaporozhian and Don Cossacks.

17th century, and was by no means an invention of romantic 19th-century historians.<sup>159</sup>

It should be kept in mind that the Cossacks were not a monolithic mass, but a very heterogeneous group made up of not only former peasants and burghers, but also nobles, gentry, even clerics, whose religiosity or morality need not have been uniform. Moreover, Cossackdom, like any social phenomenon, was constantly evolving and it was precisely during the heyday of the naval raids, in the 1610s and 1620s, that the Ukrainian Cossacks and the Ruthenian Orthodox Church began to support each other; by 1621, when Hetman Petro Sahaidachnyi enrolled the entire Zaporozhian Host into the Kievan Confraternity, the Cossack and Ruthenian Orthodox Church movements merged to form a united front against the anti-Orthodox policies of the Commonwealth. Hrushevs'kyi did not seek to conceal the role of booty as a motivation for Cossack military operations. He even pointed out that among the Cossacks there were those wont to disguise their yearning for plunder behind religious motives and would have few qualms about harming Orthodox Slavs no less than Muslim Turks if a given situation required this.<sup>160</sup> However aside from exhibiting no awareness that the Cossacks were harming Christians in the Ottoman empire,<sup>161</sup> Hrushevs'kyi insisted that Cossack brigands so evocatively depicted by him as "steppe wolves" (see n. 160) were a minority of the Ukrainian Cossacks of the time.<sup>162</sup> The picture presented here may require a reassessment of the nature of pre-Khmel'nyts'kyi era Ukrainian Cossackdom, allowing for a greater role for predatory motivations.

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159 – Thus, a 1621 memorandum by Ruthenian Orthodox bishops sent to the Polish Crown portrays the Cossacks as Christendom's greatest warriors against the infidels: «It is certain that no one in the world, except God, renders as much benefit to enslaved Christianity as do the Greeks with their ransoms, the Spanish king with his strong fleet, and the Zaporozhian Host with its courage and victories», Hrushevs'ky, *Cossack Age*, *cit.*, p. 305-306.

160 – «Yet we know of the Cossacks' inclination to cloak their border hunt for booty in the idealistic garb of a struggle 'against the enemies of the Holy Cross.' Thus, we can understand that even a wild freebooter, who, when the need arose, would be equally unsparing of his coreligionist, an Orthodox Muscovite or a Belarusian, as of a Muslim, found it pleasant to sense a higher mission in Cossack life, to have some ideological framework for his rampages in the steppe borderland. The idea of defending the religious interests of their people ... could not have failed to strike a responsive chord in the souls even of those steppe wolves», Hrushevsky, *Cossack Age*, *cit.*, p. 304.

161 – Far as is known, although bits of the evidence pointing to the fact that Christians were harmed by the Cossacks have been published earlier (e.g. the testimony of Metrophanes, see n. 71), here for the first time incontrovertible direct evidence of non-Muslim inhabitants of the Ottoman Empire being harmed by the Cossacks is presented.

162 – Hrushevsky, *Cossack Age*, *cit.*, p. 305.

*Encounters at sea: the case of merchants*

Moving on from the shore settlements and hinterland to the sea itself, what were the experiences of those who served on private merchant ships in the face of Cossack interlopers? Again, the preference here is for sources with authentic information originating close to an event. But before turning to such materials, a sampling of more traditional sources whose authors were further removed from actual scenes of action is in order, as their possible sources need not have been very far removed. Beauplan describes how the Cossacks sneaked up on ships by moving in from the direction of the setting sun which blinded the seamen on the targeted ship and how, once the sun fully set, they would track the vessel until approximately midnight when they would rush in, rapidly boarding and overcoming their victims before the latter could realize what was happening. «Thereupon, the Cossacks loot the ship for what they can find in the way of money, and goods that are small of bulk, and that water will not damage. As well, they remove the cast iron cannon, and everything else they may judge to be of use, before scuttling the vessel and her crew».<sup>163</sup> Portelli d'Ascoli, probably not without some exaggeration, states that the damage caused by the Cossacks on the coast was nothing compared with that rendered at sea and goes on to elaborate as follows: «on sea not a single ship, no matter how big or well-armed is safe from them should it meet with them in calm weather. The Cossacks have become so bold that not only with equal strength, but even 20 *chaikas* do not fear 30 galleys of the padishah, as is seen every year in practice; indeed three years ago the Cossacks took two galleys and chased the rest of them».<sup>164</sup> When a ship was close enough to the shore, there was hope for the crew, but little or none for their goods or vessel. Thus, in 1621, between Sinop and Bafra, a crew abandoned its ship and fled for the shore out of fear of the Cossacks;<sup>165</sup> as was seen above, the same occurred near Kandira in the following year.

There are relatively frequent cases of the Cossacks taking over merchant ships and even sailing them, while the original crews either fled, were killed, or were taken captive.<sup>166</sup> Stanisław Żółkiewski, the Polish

163 – Beauplan, *Description of Ukraine*, *cit.*, p. 68.

164 – Eszer, “Beschreibung des Schwarzen Meeres”, *cit.*, p. 204; Berthier-Delagard, “Описание Черного моря”, *cit.*, p. 98.

165 – Katib Çelebi, *Tuhfet*, *cit.*, p. 108; facsimile, translation, and commentary in Ostapchuk and Halenko, “Кятіб Челебі,” *cit.*, p. 357 ff., 422-424. Is this an indication of the utility of what seems like wanton cruelty and brutality, *i.e.*, such behavior gave the perpetrators a fearsome reputation which led to less resistance on the part of the target populations and allowed for more efficient extraction of booty?

166 – Katib Çelebi, *Tuhfet*, *cit.*, p. 108, 109; see Ostapchuk and Halenko, “Кятіб Челебі,” *cit.*, p. 357 ff., 365 ff., 421-424; Roe, dispatch of 3 August 1624, *Negotiations of Roe*, *cit.*, p. 265; De Césy, dispatch of 12 July 1622, *Historica Russiae*, *cit.*, p. 420. For an instance of several empty ships, abandoned or captured, that were later

Crown hetman, in a letter to the king dated 20 February 1617, referring to the new situation during the previous two years on the southern shore of the Black Sea, provides us with vivid testimony of the great fear that the new Cossack presence had brought to the Anatolian coast and how it affected Ottoman shipping:

... for the Cossacks have snatched away from them the possession and navigation of the Black Sea which the Turks [have had] in peace from [olden times]<sup>167</sup>, and have [ruined]<sup>168</sup> their main ports and until now no one has [effectively] resisted them [*i.e.*, the Cossacks]. They have routed their sea hetman (who after the emperor...is [ranked] among the viziers [*i.e.*, the *kapudan paşa*])...and all the ports are in great fear and besieged [by terror];...[a certain contact (name unclear)] saw and heard plenty of this. He quickly [related to] me...(lacuna in text) [how] when the Cossacks came to Trabzon, thereafter [some Turkish ships] made their way from Trabzon to Constantinople sneaking along from port to port and stopping and taking their goods...and their things off the ships, and having found out that there were no Cossacks they again loaded their ships, while in each port such a great fear arose among the inhabitants, both on the European and Asian shores, that they petitioned the sultan (*Cesarz*): if he does not protect them then they will pay tribute to the Cossack.<sup>169</sup>

To be sure, shipping merchants could no longer act as freely as they must have in the pre-Cossack era of the “Ottoman lake,” and those who did venture to sea risked losing much. Even the Bosphorus, which, being next to the capital must have been as secure a waterway as there could be, was no longer safe.<sup>170</sup> Although Cossack operations in the Bosphorus in 1624 were apparently not the first incursions into the Straits, it seems that the very rich Greek merchant ships based there and properties on its shores, particularly in Yeniköy (which may have been what drew the Cossacks so relatively deeply into the Bosphorus), were caught completely off

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recovered by state authorities, see Trabzon şer'iye sicilli 1825, fol. 55r. It should be noted that for certain crew members, being taken captive may have entailed temporarily piloting or manning the oars of their ship at the behest of their captors until it would be abandoned or scuttled. Possible motives for commandeering a ship include to make it back across the sea with booty and captives, or to use the ship as a sanctuary during storms. For examples and a discussion of these uses, see Ostapchuk and Halenko, “Кятіб Челебі”, *cit.*, p. 357, 365-367.

167 – Here there is a gap in the text with at least one word partly missing (*od[dawna]*, “from [long ago]”?).

168 – Here another lacuna (*wy...*) which is perhaps *wy[niszcyli]*, “destroyed”. The author probably had in mind what the Cossacks had done on the coast of Rumeli, and were in the last two years beginning to do on the Anatolian side.

169 – *Pisma Żółkiewskiego*, *cit.*, p. 249.

170 – However, see n. 13.

guard, even though Cossack activity in the Black Sea as at one of its all-time peaks. The near-contemporary Ottoman Armenian Eremya Kömür-ciyan (1637–1695) wrote the following: «[The Cossacks] raided the Turkish houses and robbed the rich Rum captains (*re'is*). They opened the coffers (*sandık*) of these [rich] people as if they were their old acquaintances and they took what was inside and fled as if they had themselves put it there».<sup>171</sup> Concerning this same event, Gédoyne le Turc, the French consul in Aleppo, wrote from the island of Chios having just left Istanbul that after the Cossacks «sacked, pillaged, and burned everything, killing indiscriminately the Greeks like the Turks, they made off with more than a million gold [pieces]».<sup>172</sup>

Again it is the *kadı sicils* that provide a closer view of situations that arose when Ottoman merchant ships, owned or captained by both Muslims and non-Muslims, were encountered by the Cossacks at sea. None of the cases here involved fatalities, though lack of fatalities is not necessarily a significant pattern as matters involving fatalities might simply not have found their way into the court books for lack of a surviving litigant or defendant.<sup>173</sup> In 1619, a *zimmi* inhabitant of Kefe, probably a Greek,<sup>174</sup> while carrying *moruna* (white sturgeon) in his *şayka* from Taman,<sup>175</sup> was intercepted by Cossacks just as he was nearing the Anatolian coast, near Yarabolı (?).<sup>176</sup> For some reason, while the Cossacks took his sails, they only took half of his money and fish, leaving the other half of his fish, three anchors, three gold pieces (*altın*), and other unspecified items in his *şayka* that they altogether jettisoned out to sea (*deryaya salıverüb*). How Qostantin survived and made it to shore is not revealed, but when he did, he learned that his boat and remaining cargo had fallen into the hands of the state (*miri*). The victim entered into litigation with a tax-farm official (*nazır*) to get his belongings back.<sup>177</sup> Apparently the problem of owners or captains losing their ships as a result of Cossack operations was not

171 – Eremya Çelebi Kömür-ciyan, *İstanbul tarihi. XVII. asırda İstanbul*, Andreasyan, Hrand D. and Kevork Pamukciyan (eds.), Istanbul, 1988, p. 42–43.

172 – [Louis Gédoyne,] *Journal et correspondance de Gédoyne "Le Turc", consul de France à Alep 1623–1625*, Boppe, A. (ed.), Paris, 1909, p. 146–147.

173 – Though such records in the *sicils* are not inconceivable, e.g., litigation by an inheritor for property of the deceased, or between surviving inheritors over shares.

174 – *Kostantin Todoris* in the Ottoman text.

175 – East of the Crimea, across the Strait of Kerch.

176 – Perhaps Yarbolı (map of J. J. Hellert, "Arménie et Kurdistan", 1838) which is just west of Büyük Liman, or Yuvabolı which is a few kilometers further west (according to the map of Turkey issued by the Harita Genel Müdürlüğü, 1936); perhaps these were the same places. In any event, apparently a coastal town west of Trabzon and Akça Abad, and for sure not Tireboli/Dreboli (Tripoli; located much further west and just east of Giresun), as in both occurrences (see n. 179) it clearly written with an initial *ye* rather than *te*.

177 – Trabzon şer'iye sicilli 1821, fol. 3v.



uncommon, as several additional similar cases can be found in the Trabzon *sicils*; here too the Cossacks had jettisoned vessels along with excess cargo which fell into state hands, forcing the captain or owner(s) to file a claim through the *kadı* court.<sup>178</sup>

Another group of cases involved suits between partners operating a ship. In the aftermath of an encounter with the Cossacks, whether on the high sea or in port, problems would emerge between the partners over recouping resulting losses and expenses. In a case from 1626, a *zimmi* captain (*reis*) of a private ship, whose name could not be deciphered and consequently whose ethnicity has not been determined, came to the *kadı* court to level a complaint against a Muslim captain with whom he had been operating a ship in partnership. While they were in the harbor of Yaraboli, the Cossacks intercepted them and were ready to destroy their ship. But the *zimmi* managed to save himself, his partner, and the ship by offering to pay 30 gold coins (*sikke-i altun*, *sikke-i hasene*) immediately and arranging for an additional 30 in short time. That more money could be obtained, on land or from a nearby ship, meant that the Cossacks must have allowed someone to leave the ship and fetch the extra money. When 60 gold coins were handed over to the Cossacks, they freed these future litigants along with their ship. But when the *zimmi* captain asked the Muslim captain to reimburse him for the 30 gold coins paid for him, the latter began to procrastinate. After obtaining the impartial testimony of a third party, the court ordered the Muslim *reis* to pay his share.<sup>179</sup> Evidently such encounters with the Cossacks did not necessarily mean loss of life (contrary to Beauplan's above-cited statement that captured ships would be scuttled with their crew) or even of all property at hand, be it a vessel or its cargo, as the Cossacks would take what they needed or wanted, often stripping a ship of useful sailing equipment such as sails<sup>180</sup> and anchors,<sup>181</sup> as well as foodstuffs. The sparing of lives and even property is a feature of the Cossack raids which was not previously evident.

The greatly altered conditions in the "Cossack-infested" former "Ottoman lake" must have meant dire consequences for commercial traffic, the extent of which can only be speculated upon at present. In the late 15th and 16th centuries, before the Cossacks entered the scene, with the Black Sea apparently spared of local piracy, there must have been little risk in going out to sea with goods beyond inclement or unpredictable sailing conditions. As the Cossacks appeared, first on the northern Black Sea coast in the mid-16th century, then on the coast of Rumeli in the 1590s, and eventually all shores by the middle of the 1610s, merchants would have had to react to take this new factor into account.

178 – Trabzon şer'iye sicilli 1822, fols. 27r, 44r-44v; 1825, fol. 55r.

179 – Trabzon şer'iye sicilli 1823, fol. 10r. Cf. Trabzon şer'iye sicilli 1825, fol. 41r.

180 – Trabzon şer'iye sicilli 1821, fol. 3v; 1822, fol. 27r.

181 – Trabzon şer'iye sicilli 1822, fol. 27r.

The greatly heightened risk must have led to a reduction in traffic and higher shipping costs. Putting to sea now meant preparing for and dealing with a factor completely alien to the old Ottoman Black Sea. Those who did choose to venture into the Black Sea must have taken measures to lessen the risk.<sup>182</sup> Perhaps they relied on a kind of “early warning system” that the sources mention. For example, Beauplan informs that, when it was learned that the Cossacks entered the Black Sea «...the alarm is then sounded throughout the whole country, even as far as Constantinople. The Great Lord (the sultan) sends messengers all along the coasts of Anatolia, Bulgaria, and Rumeli, warning that the Cossacks have put to sea, so that everyone may be on his guard».<sup>183</sup> There may have been other adjustments to the altered realia of the sea which can only be speculated upon. Perhaps mariners counted on the chance that the Cossacks might miss them on the open expanse of the sea. In connection with such a possibility, there are all sorts of potential factors and variables. Although not enough is known about precise sea lanes in the Black Sea, as there were specific itineraries, such as Kerpe-Kefe, İnebolu-Kefe, Sinop-Kefe, and Trabzon-Kefe,<sup>184</sup> did these itineraries have their specific, shortest or otherwise advantageous sea-lanes (e.g., determined by prevailing winds or currents)? Did the Cossacks know these lanes and lurk along them?<sup>185</sup>

182 – A puzzling aspect is the lack of evidence of Ottoman naval escort for merchant ships. Whether evidence on this remains to be discovered, or convoys were present but were simply too self-evident to be mentioned in the sources, or for some reason did not accompany merchant shipping, cannot be determined at present. Cf. the not uncommon references to escorts for transport ships in the eastern Mediterranean, e.g., an order in 1565 that sufficient galleys escort a supply ship from Egypt to Rhodes: ...*esbab gemisine kifayet mikdarı kadarıa koşub...* MD 6, no. 1331 (for publication see n. 11).

183 – Beauplan, *Description of Ukraine*, cit., p. 67.

184 – E.g., see İnalçık, *Caffa Customs Register*, cit., p. 114-116.

185 – There is some evidence that the Cossacks were familiar with navigation techniques based on the stars and other celestial bodies, and even using maps, see Beauplan's mention that the Zaporozhians at sea carried quadrants (though perhaps solar clocks as *quadran* in the original French could have meant solar clock rather than quadrant), Beauplan, *Description d'Ukraine*, cit., p. 57. The English translation, giving “compass” with no commentary, is probably incorrect, Beauplan, *Description of Ukraine*, cit., p. 66. It has been argued rather convincingly that there is substantial direct evidence that the Cossacks oriented themselves according to the stars when traveling on land and circumstantial evidence that they used quadrants, clocks, and maps when at sea, and that it may have been nearly impossible for them to sail in the Black Sea by dead-reckoning, see Korolev, V.N., “Технология донского казачьего мореплавания на Азовском и Черном морях в XVII в (мореходные инструменты и карты)” [The technology of Don Cossack seafaring in the Azov and Black Seas in the 17th century (seafaring instruments and maps)], in: *Торговля и мореплавание в бассейне Черного моря в древности и в средние века* [Trade and Seafaring in the Black Sea Basin in Antiquity and the Middle Ages], Rostov-na-Donu, 1988, p. 107-133.

Would merchants now avoid these and sail in more roundabout and less predictable routes? Another point worth noticing is that the relevant *kadı* court cases give the impression that ships or boats often sailed alone. Perhaps a solitary vessel had more of a chance of slipping past the Cossacks? Could the desire to avoid being spotted by the Cossacks partially explain the apparent popularity of smaller ships or boats, such as the *şayka*?<sup>186</sup>

The sailing by cabotage with ships being unloaded at each port until it was considered safe to proceed as described by Żółkiewski above must have been extremely time-consuming and costly. As it would seem to have been unworkable, the question arises whether such careful cabotage really was practiced beyond the initial period of shock when the Cossacks first developed the capability to appear on the opposite shore of the Black Sea, and if it was, was it a norm? Certainly Żółkiewski's stark scenario suggests that commercial sailing became a next to impossible undertaking. Pertinent here is the above-cited passage from the 1620 Trabzon *si-cil*-register, «because of the fear of the Rus bandits, ships have stopped coming from the direction of the sea»<sup>187</sup> which, though probably an overstatement, points to substantially if not radically altered conditions in the region. As there is little available data from which statistics can be derived (for example, because of the paucity of surviving 17th-century Ottoman customs registers), reliable evidence of a decline, not to mention the degree of a decline, in the level of Ottoman commercial shipping in the Black Sea during the Cossack heyday will be hard to come by, though it is too early to pronounce this problem as insolvable without further probing the sources and quest for new approaches. In any event, it is difficult to imagine that the level of sea traffic remained anywhere close to what it had been in the past. One should look for a growth in traffic along the Rumelian “right wing” (*sağ kol*) land route from Istanbul to Moldavia, the Commonwealth, as well as to Ottoman territories on the northern rim of the Black Sea – Akkerman, Özi, and even beyond, to the Crimea and Muscovy.<sup>188</sup> If it turns out that because of Cossack expeditions during the late 16th and first half of the 17th centuries, this slower but more secure land route came to be preferred over the faster, more efficient, that is, at least formerly, cheaper sea route, would mean that a major transformation in Black Sea realities had taken place.<sup>189</sup>

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186 – One should also be aware that vessels sailing in smaller groups or solo and/or being smaller in size could have been dictated by the capacity of given markets, or the means of merchants.

187 – See n. 93.

188 – This road went via Edirne, crossing the Danube at İsakçı, or if proceeding slightly to the east, in the passable western end of the delta, crossing an arm of the Danube first at Tulça and then another one at İsmail.

189 – This has been claimed but not demonstrated in Bennigsen, Alexandre and Chantal Lemerancier-Quelquejay, “Les marchands de la cour ottomane et le commerce

*Cossack terror and the Ottoman mind*

Concomitant with much of the testimony detailing the various physical effects of the Cossack raids that have been brought to bear is evidence of other effects, affecting the sphere of *mentalité* – for example, conceptions of and attitudes toward the phenomenon, and especially psychology – surprise and shock, fear and terror, stress that inhibits normal, habitual activity, tensions and disputes over property loss or deals gone wrong, and, of course, distress and anger over loss of life, or injury to pride and dignity. Thus, the above inhabitants of Kandıra were so terrified of the Cossacks that they hid out in the forests, and at first mistook even the traveling Muscovite envoys for Cossacks; indeed the horror of those caught by surprise, be they inhabitants of a non-coastal town or village or a ship's crew seized in the middle of the night, is not difficult to imagine. Moreover, as has been suggested, aside from those directly harmed, the loss of the “Ottoman lake” which had for so long been taken for granted was likely to have been a traumatic experience for individuals from various strata of the society, including those who were not in direct or at least obvious danger from the Cossacks, but whose livelihoods were somehow connected with the sea (not only economically, but also politically). The well-informed and perspicacious observer, Hetman Żółkiewski, sensed the change that occurred with the 1614 “opening” of the Anatolian coast by the Cossacks: «Not only have [the Turks] such great harm [from this raid], but they will have to be in fear over those Asian shores, which they had had as the most convenient [of places], for prior to this from no one, nor from these Cossacks, has there ever been alarm and danger since the Turks conquered Asia Minor». <sup>190</sup>

While doubts can be harbored concerning the veracity of Evliya Çelebi's details connected with people, places, events, and dates, behind some of his hyperbolized accounts, exaggerated or embellished for purposes of entertainment, may often lie reliable disclosures on subjective aspects of a given event or phenomenon, such as psychological reactions by its participants or the aggregate psychological atmosphere. Reference has already been made to the signs of Cossack destruction that Evliya found on the Rumelian and Anatolian coasts. Alan Fisher has brought to the fore a similar picture given by Evliya of town after town in the Crimea devastated by the Cossacks.<sup>191</sup> The Ottoman gentleman traveler's frequent references to the Cossacks gives his account of the Black Sea a certain eerie quality. At times he and his companions seem almost haunted by Cossacks. When passing along the coast between Akkerman and Özi, Evliya describes dangerous places where Cossacks lurk and where way-

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des fourrures moscovites dans la seconde moitié du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle”, in: *Cahiers du Monde russe et soviétique*, XI (1970), p. 362-409, esp. 374.

190 – *Pisma Żółkiewskiego*, cit., p. 513.

191 – Fisher, “Ottoman Crimea”, cit., p. 216-222.

farers are pounced upon unawares and carried off. At one point, his party spent the night among the ruins of a fortress at Ot Yarik on the estuary of the Dniester River opposite Akkerman, built back in the days of Beyazid II and destroyed to its foundations by the Cossacks. That night, in this “most perilous of places”, Evliya and his companions were unable to sleep out of fear of Cossacks.<sup>192</sup> His powerful patron, vizier Melek Ahmed Paşa, then governor of Özi, seems at times also haunted by the Cossacks. Thus, on at least two occasions he recounts to Evliya nightmares about the Cossacks.<sup>193</sup> During a bloody, week-long, Cossack siege of Özi by land and sea, a certain ‘Ali Çelebi went up a minaret with Evliya to view the Cossacks down below. Upon beholding the unfolding battle he remarked as follows:

But these devils... are frisky fighters, the swine. They don't care whether they live or die. They have absorbed thousands of cannonballs and have been decimated by 200 bombshells, but this hasn't deterred them in the least. These devils have been battling continuously for nine hours. Don't you see how they remove their dead, then freshen up and resume fighting? I'm really afraid of these infidels!<sup>194</sup>

The fearsome reputation of the Cossacks which could compel crews simply to jump ship and flee for shore upon sighting *chaikas* has been mentioned several times; again one is reminded of the perilous and frightful predicament of crews during night which was apparently a favorite time for the Cossacks to board and seize a ship. Foreign diplomats on more than one occasion witnessed great frights, even mass panics by the population of Istanbul and its suburbs. In March 1625, after the Bosphorus raids of the previous year, Thomas Roe reported that the news of Cossack presence in the Black Sea and rumor that their number exceeded 300

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192 – Evliya Çelebi, *Seyahatname*, V, Istanbul, 1315/1897-1898, p. 176. In other places the Cossacks would hide out in forests or scrub-growths (*ormanlık*), or inside reed-beds (*sazlık*) and accost Tatars on their way back to the Crimea; the Tatars too are described as being in great fear of the Cossacks, Evliya Çelebi, *Seyahatname*, V, *cit.*, p. 186; *Idem*, *Seyahatname*, VII, *cit.*, p. 521.

193 – In the first dream, Melek Ahmed Paşa «while squatting to relieve [himself]» is poked in the back by a bunch of Cossacks, dressed in sheepskins, whom, out of anger at this indecency, he proceeds to slaughter, whereupon his friends drink the Cossacks' blood. In the second dream, which was on the eve of a Cossack siege of Özi, Melek Ahmed Pasha dreams of thousands of eagles landing on the fortress, terrorizing the people, clawing at some, and eating up others. Fortunately the eagles are destroyed by a mysterious fire that breaks out in the fortress. Evliya saw this dream as good omen, as the eagles were seen to represent the Cossack enemy about to attack Özi, *The Intimate Life of an Ottoman statesman. Melek Ahmed Pasha as portrayed in Evliya Çelebi's Book of travels (Seyahat-name)*, trans. and comm. Robert Dankoff, Albany, 1991, p. 201, 215.

194 – Dankoff, *Intimate Life*, *cit.*, p. 215.

*chaikas* brought about the following scene: «All the inhabitants of the Bosphorus do daily retire to the [walled] city [of Istanbul]. The feare is generale».<sup>195</sup> Even in 1626, a year when the Zaporozhians must have been weakened following their setback in the great naval battle of Karaharman in July 1625, and their reversal in a confrontation with Polish Crown forces at Kurukove Lake in October 1625, the situation in the Ottoman capital was still very tense.<sup>196</sup> In the following spring, Roe wrote that with a rumor of 700 Zaporozhian boats, now with Polish support, being ready to set out and attack near Istanbul,

all the villages on the Bosphorus, to the gates of Constantinople tremble, and the city is not without fear; softened by certain prophecies and astrologians, who foretell a great blow from a Northern people. Twenty galleys keep [watch at] the mouth of the channel (the Bosphorus): the captan bassa (grand admiral) with about 40 more will depart within 10 days, almost already conquered by his own and the common fears.<sup>197</sup>

According to de Césy, even a relatively small number of *chaikas* spotted at the entrance to the Bosphorus in 1621 caused a panic:

The fright is so great that it is not possible to express it. Sixteen boats of the Cossacks have these last days passed up to the column of Pompey near the entrance of the canal of the Black Sea [i.e., the Bosphorus] taken some *kara mürsel* [cargo ships], burned and sacked some villages from which the sudden panic was such that many people from Pera and Kasım Pasha as far as the arsenal have begun to move their possessions to Constantinople.<sup>198</sup>

De Césy observed that even «the rumor of four boats of the Cossacks in the Black Sea troubled them here [in Istanbul] more than would the plague in the Morea or in Barbary, so much do they fear this side [i.e., the Black Sea]».<sup>199</sup>

Roe's reference to predictions and prophecies of a catastrophe at the hands of "a Northern people" circulating in Istanbul suggests an eerie and unsettling atmosphere similar to that evoked by Evliya Çelebi in his recollection of fears and anxieties bestirred by the Cossacks. The degree of

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195 – Dispatch of 22 March 1625, *Negotiations of Roe, cit.*, p. 362-363. Cf. «The Cossacks have entered the Black Sea and given many alarms to the city», dispatch of 30 May 1623, *Negotiations of Roe, cit.*, p. 158.

196 – Perhaps this is because the Cossack losses at both Karaharman and Kurukove were not as great as claimed in the Ottoman and Polish sources respectively. On Karaharman and problems associated with this event see Ostapchuk, "Ottoman Black Sea frontier," *cit.*, p. 112-118, Ostapchuk and Halenko, "Кятіб Челебі," p. 375-382; on Kurukove see Hrushevsky, *Cossack Age, cit.*, p. 428-436.

197 – Dispatch of 16 May 1626, *Negotiations of Roe, cit.*, p. 509.

198 – Dispatch of 17 June 1621, *Historica Russiae, cit.*, p. 414.

199 – Dispatch of 18 June 1622, *Historica Russiae, cit.*, p. 420.



alarm that arose when there was word of activity by even small Cossack raiding parties is significant. In 1639, a year when the Cossack presence in the Black Sea was not particularly great, the vice admiral of the imperial fleet, Piyale Kethüda, in a report sent from Özi to the Porte, expressed in vivid and telling terms the great fear that spread along the shores of the sea when the Cossacks entered it once more that season: «The above-mentioned accursed ones set out again and a great fear of their inflicting harm and hurling flames of destruction to the shore settlements of the heartland became widespread».<sup>200</sup> The depiction of the inhabited coast of the Black Sea as *iç il yalıları*, that is, “shores or shore settlements of the interior land (heartland)”, harks back to the notion of the “Ottoman lake,” the internal and safe preserve of the Porte. This passage gives the impression that even after several generations of perennial Cossack presence, the Black Sea was still considered an inner sanctum of the empire and their trespasses were abhorred as violations of it.

The psychological impact of the Cossack intrusions into the Ottoman Black Sea made its mark not only on civilian inhabitants and on officials and commanders who had to react and seek remedies to the threat, but also on those in the higher echelons of power including the sultan himself. It is probably telling that there are not infrequent references to the sultan's reaction to news of Cossack depredations in the sea. When the shocking news of the sacking of Sinop in 1614 broke, the grand vizier, Nasuh Pasha was so afraid of the sultan's reaction that when Ahmed I asked him if such information was true, he steadfastly denied it. When various messengers from the stricken areas with the tragic news and pleas for help (*feryad u figanlar*) arrived in the capital, and the sultan realized that Nasuh Pasha was withholding the truth, he became incensed with him; some Ottoman chronicles regard this as the beginning of Ahmed's extreme anger with Nasuh Paşa, which, as the chronicles agree, was a contributing cause of his execution a few months later.<sup>201</sup> The wrath of the sultan was so great that it was noticed almost immediately in the Polish sources. In a letter to King Zygmunt III (1587-1632), Żółkiewski relates the following:

200 – «Mela'in-i mezburin tekrar varub iç il yalılarına isal-i mazarrat ve ilka'-i na'ire-i hasaret etmeleri havfı müstevli olmuşdı», Topkapı Sarayı Arşivi, E.2891/1. See Ostapchuk, “Five documents”, *cit.*, p. 85-96, esp. p. 88, 93-94.

201 – İbrahim Peçevi, *Tarih*, II, İstanbul, 1283/1866-1867, p. 342; Katib Çelebi, *Fezleke*, I, *cit.*, p. 358; Na'ima, *Ravzatü 'l-hüseyn*, *cit.*, p. 119. For a lengthy exposition of Nasuh Pasha's over-ambitiousness and other faults that led to his downfall (but no mention of the Sinop incident) see “The Fall of Nassuf” and following sections in Richard Knolles, *The generall historie of the Turkes, from the first beginning of that nation to the rising of the Othoman familie, with all the notable expeditions of the Christian princes against them ... With a new continuation, from yeare of Our Lord 1629 vnto the yeare 1638 faithfully collected*, [London], 1638, p. 1334-1337.

News of the sack of Sinop quickly reached Constantinople. Great was the consternation and anxiety, for that was a very rich city, in peace and untouched, since that part of Asia Minor was taken by Murad the First (sic: *Amurat pierwszy*). The Emperor (*Cesarz*) was so distressed that he wanted to order the hanging of the vizier Nasuh Pasha (Nasaff basza); he was mitigated by the pleas of his own wife and daughter and other fair-headed ones (women), and [so] he did not go through with his execution, but beat him with an iron mace, [an act] which has now become divulged all over Constantinople.<sup>202</sup>

According to Richard Knolles' history of the Ottoman empire *sub anno* 1620, when news of Cossack presence in the sea reached the sultan, «the grand Signor took it in great scorn, that such a base and rude people should come and affront him so near his doors».<sup>203</sup> On 1 May 1622, two-and-a-half weeks before Sultan Osman II was deposed and killed, de Césy reported that when word arrived in the capital that the Cossacks were close by in the Black Sea and had taken several ships, the young sultan went into such a rage that he threatened to decapitate the grand vizier and the main treasurer (*defterdar*) if within the next day they did not send galleys to the Black Sea.<sup>204</sup> Although the grand vizier, Dilaver Paşa, and the *defterdar*, 'Abdülbaki Paşa, were loyal to Osman,<sup>205</sup> his impetuous outbreak must have further discredited him in the eyes of the faction that was determined to overthrow him.

Roe suggests how disruptive Cossack activity in the Black Sea could be to the everyday workings of the state: when it was divulged that they had entered the Black Sea and took «prizes and assail[ed] a town...the council [i.e., the imperial *divan*] broke up in rage and haste to send out to prevent their further invasions».<sup>206</sup> There were occasions in which the Cossacks penetrated the Bosphorus close enough to the sultan that he could see, if not the *chaikas* themselves, the smoke rising above torched towns or villages. Żółkiewski recalls how, when 80 *chaikas* struck in the Bosphorus in 1615, «close to Constantinople between Misewna and Archioka», the sultan, who happened to be nearby on a hunt, «could see the smoke from his pavilion (?)»,<sup>207</sup> for the Cossacks had burned these two ports; having walked away very upset, the emperor dispatched the artil-

202 – Written in Bar, 30 October 1614, Krypiakievych, Ivan (ed.), *Джепела*, cit., I, p. 148, no. 107.

203 – Knolles, *Historie of the Turkes*, cit. p. 1398.

204 – Dispatch of 1 May 1622, *Historica Russiae*, cit., p. 417.

205 – Danişmend, İsmail Hami, *İzahl Osmanlı tarihi kronolojisi*, III, Istanbul, 1972, p. 306 ff. Idem, V, Istanbul, 1971, p. 31, 263.

206 – Dispatch of 5 April 1623, *Negotiations of Roe*, cit., p. 142-143.

207 – Tent, lodge? (*pokoj*, literally “room”).

lery».<sup>208</sup> In the first 1624 Bosphorus raid, both de Césy and Gédoyne recount Sultan Murad IV (1623–1640) witnessing the destruction from the distance of his palace grounds. De Césy has him on his horse at the edge of the sea in front of the Saray, trying to organize some defensive forces, all of whom «witnessed the resolve of this tribe astonishing and dreadful»;<sup>209</sup> Gédoyne comments that the Cossacks made this great havoc in full view of the sultan who could only watch helplessly.<sup>210</sup>

In the substantial remnants of the archives of the Ottoman sultans preserved in the Topkapı Palace Archive, there is a series of single-sheet reports from the reign of Sultan İbrahim (1640–1648) on matters referred directly to the sultan.<sup>211</sup> These documents cover affairs such as salary disbursements from the inner treasury (*iç hazine*), deliveries of gifts, appointments of officials, diplomatic developments, assignments and movements of ships, problems caused by inclement weather (e.g., shipwrecks), and so forth. Although the sender is usually not explicitly indicated, most often it is clearly the grand vizier;<sup>212</sup> some may have been from other viziers, especially the *kapudan paşa* and the *defterdar*, others from the Crimean khan or even important provincial governors (*beğlerbeğis*). Because the documents were intended for the eyes of the sultan they are written in a careful *nesih* script, as sultans did not usually have training

208 – *Pisma Żółkiewskiego*, *cit.*, p. 303. Although both of these settlements were apparently in the Bosphorus, as they were, in the words of the Crown hetman, close to Istanbul, Misewna (Misewna) could not be identified satisfactorily. Archioka may indeed be ancient Archeion which the Turks knew as Ortaköy, less than 5 km from the promontory of the Topkapı Palace (Sarayı Burnu), Gökbilgin, M. Tayyib, “Boğaziçi-Tarihte Boğaziçi”, in: *İslâm Anskilopedisi*, II, Istanbul, 1970, p. 671–692, esp. p. 673 (map), 675. I do not agree with the identification by the editors of the Hrushevs’kyi translation of these two place names with Nesebur (Misivri) and Ankhialo (Ahyoli) on the Bulgarian coast. Hrushevsky, *Cossack Age*, *cit.*, p. 276, n. 140. These could not have been considered “close to Constantinople” and, moreover, although I have no firm record of the whereabouts of Sultan Ahmed I in the summer of 1615, it is less than likely that he had hunting grounds so far from the capital.

209 – Dispatch of 21 July 1624, *Historica Russiae*, *cit.*, p. 426–427.

210 – Dispatch of 24 July 1624, *Journal de Gédoyne*, *cit.*, p. 146–147.

211 – Topkapı Sarayı Arşivi, E.7002 and E.7022 (henceforth only E. [evrak]). Almost all of these documents are undated, but they are attributed to İbrahim’s reign in the *fiches* that accompany each document. Perhaps such an attribution was based on external evidence, such as what other materials these documents were originally stored with? The one dated document that I came across is from late 1051/early 1642, i.e., definitely from the reign of this sultan (E.7022/654). An identification of the persons named in these documents can lead to a more definite dating, which is perhaps one of the bases of their attribution to İbrahim’s reign. In those documents that I was able to inspect, some of the persons mentioned in them, such as Piyale Kethüda and Vizier Ken’an Paşa, were still active in the first years of İbrahim’s reign.

212 – In the first half of İbrahim’s reign, when these documents were apparently written, the grand vizier was still Sultan Murad IV’s last grand vizier, Kemankes Kara Mustafa Paşa, (1638–1644). Danişmend, *Osmanlı kronolojisi*, V, *cit.*, p. 36.

and practice in the reading of cursive chancery scripts. Although they contain many of the same formulae as do 'arz-type documents (petitions, reports), these documents are best classified as *telhises*.<sup>213</sup> In the top left corners of these documents are notations made by the sultan, so-called *hatt-i hümayuns* written in the characteristic "awkward" hand of the sultan.<sup>214</sup> Some are carefully drawn out in an even simpler, almost "childish" *nesih* than that of the main body of the given document. Others are in a very rough, unpracticed, and often hardly legible hand and frequently in unconventional or erroneous orthography, that was typical of Ottoman sultans. Among these it was possible to isolate 15 *telhises* concerning Cossack activity on the Black Sea and counter-measures taken against them.<sup>215</sup> Here they are of interest not so much for their interesting data on the naval expeditions of the Cossacks and their encounters with the Ottomans, but rather for the hints they provide on the sultan's awareness and perception of the given phenomenon, and his interest and concern with it.

These documents deserve a separate, fuller treatment; here only some examples are drawn upon. A *telhis*, perhaps from the *kapudan paşa*, reports that villagers in the *kaza* (district) of Amasra have made it known that nine Cossack *chaikas* have arrived nearby. Immediately ten galleys of the imperial fleet that were 150 miles (*mil*) away were sent out to find the Cossacks. It seems that these galleys were contacted by couriers (*ulak*), for it is later said that *ulaks* have been dispatched along both the Anatolian and Rumelian coasts bearing orders that these *chaikas* be intercepted and not the slightest harm be allowed to occur anywhere. In response to this upbeat notification of early warning and rapid reaction, apparently before any destruction had been wrought, Sultan İbrahim

213 – Summary of a report made especially for the sultan. Although most of these documents begin with 'arz-i *bende-i bi-mikdar ol-dur ki*, (the report of the worthless slave is as follows), occasionally the document refers to itself or others like it by the term *telhis* (E.7002/86, E.7022/641, 653). For a recent and quite comprehensive treatment of the *telhis*, see Fodor, Pál, "The grand vizierial *telhis*. A study in the Ottoman central administration, 1566-1656", in: *Archivum Ottomanicum*, XV (1997), p. 137-188.

214 – "Imperial writing," "royal inscription," "sultanic writ," "royal writ", an order or instruction written by the sultan himself, usually upon a document submitted to him. Naturally documents bearing a *hatt-i hümayun* carried particular force and weight. For an analysis of the *hatt-i hümayuns* of Murad IV, see Murphey, Rhoads "An Ottoman view from the top and rumblings from below: The sultanic writs (*hatt-i hümayun*) of Murad IV (r. 1623-1640)", in: *Turcica*, XXVIII, (1996), p. 319-337.

215 – Given the still rudimentary nature of the Topkapı archive's catalogue, it was not possible to determine how many of the documents in E.7002 and E.7022 are indeed *telhises* to İbrahim bearing his *hatt-i hümayuns*. Judging by the sub-numeration of the single-sheet documents (*varaka*) under these two archival code numbers, they contain a possible total of 742 *telhises* with *hatt-i hümayuns* (i.e., E.7002/1-86 and E.7022/1-656).

scrawled on the document a barely legible exhortation: «God is gracious. Their heads will be lowered. Attentiveness is necessary. Whatever is required we will do it».<sup>216</sup>

In a different communication, the archival *fiche* of which indicates that it was from the grand vizier, but which appears to be rather from the *kapudan paşa*, the situation augurs less well: a letter from the Kefe *beğlerbeği* informed that 15 Don *chaikas* had set out and encountered in the Strait of Kerch a private merchant ship (*rençber gemisi*) which the Cossacks burned, thereupon proceeding to enter the wide sea. This *telhis* states that there is a possibility that they will bring further harm, and requests permission to do all that is necessary to prevent this, including barring warships from returning from the Black Sea and sending them back into the sea the moment information on the whereabouts of the Cossacks emerges. Now in a tone more stern, İbrahim noted at the top of the document: «May they set out upon the Muscovites (?). May they defend as is proper and necessary. May they give (?) to the *kapudan* [*paşa* that which he needs]. May preparations be carried out. May there be no negligence».<sup>217</sup>

A third *telhis*, clearly from someone in Istanbul, probably the grand vizier, aside from problems in the Black Sea, reports on matters connected with a heat wave and the situation on the Hungarian frontier. As to the Black Sea, the document summarizes a report from the region with better news than the previous *telhis*. Twelve *chaikas* raided some villages near Baba Dağı (Babadag), just south of the mouth of the Danube, but unspecified defensive forces surprised and overwhelmed the Cossacks, killing some, capturing others, and even managing to wound and take alive some of their main leaders (*belli başlı hatmanları*). The document goes on to discuss what must have been a matter of importance to the given mind-set. It explains why the severed heads of the dead Cossacks have not yet been sent to the center – the *hatmans*<sup>218</sup> were still too injured to travel (it is understood that in interests of economy it was preferred to bring the heads and captives together on one ship). An impression is given that the Cossack heads were no less important as trophies than the live Cossack officers. İbrahim's reaction to this *telhis* is in rather general terms, but includes a malediction clearly directed first and foremost against the Cossacks: «We have become aware of all the matters. May all

216 – «Hüda kerimdür onlardan baş aşağı olurlar takayyüd lazımdür ne iktiza ederse edelüm», E.7022/640. I thank Eleazar Birnbaum for his assistance in reading this *hatt-i hümayun*.

217 – «Moskovlara (?) varsunlar bir hoşça gerekçe gibi gözedsünler kapudana versünler (?) tedarik etdürsün ihmal olmasun», E.7022/636.

218 – Normally in the Cossack context, the *hetman* was the head of the Zaporozhian Host, but *hatman* in the Ottoman text here obviously designates lesser officers.

enemies end in a mean death! Be attentive and may [everyone] carry out your orders». <sup>219</sup>

Indeed in this series of documents a definite keenness on the part of the sultan concerning the delivery and presentation before him of the severed heads of vanquished Cossacks can be discerned. In another instance, both the *telhis* and its *hatt-i hümayun* demonstrate that the matter of Cossack heads was significant enough to warrant the direct attention and involvement of the sultan. At the town of Rize the *beğlerbeği* of Trabzon held nine Cossacks that he had captured and the severed heads of two others. The report states that the captured Cossacks and two heads were dispatched to the imperial *divan* and at the end of it a request is made for special permission to transfer thereafter the live Cossacks to the jurisdiction of the imperial naval arsenal in Istanbul. The sultan's answer is detailed and to the point (even though, without knowing the actual context, its exact indications are not so obvious): «Bring the nine persons to the garden (of the palace, arsenal?), and with all speed do with the two heads as the *kethüda yeri* <sup>220</sup> says. And as to other affairs, be attentive and do not be negligent». <sup>221</sup> In addition to captured Cossacks, Roe noticed the importance assigned to the procedure of delivery of severed heads directly to the sultan for his close inspection, and recognized it as practically a ritual. Though Roe makes it clear that this presentation of the heads was strange to him, relating an actual scene in which severed heads were brought in for personal examination by the short-reigned Sultan Mustafa I (1617-1618, 1622-1623), whose stability, indeed mental health, were open to question, the ambassador considers his personal examination of them as an encouraging sign that the troubled sultan was not too withdrawn from affairs at hand, had a “normal” interest in the world around him, including the regular business of statecraft: «At the return of the gallies from the Black Sea, who brought some Cossack prisoners alive, and some heads of the dead, he would see them all brought before him, a custom unusual. This and some answers he hath given, makes us judge him active». <sup>222</sup> In other words, the inspection of dead heads was all part of a day's work for a right-minded sovereign. Decapitation was considered a demeaning and humiliating mode of execution and display of heads was especially applied to rebels and those guilty of perfidy before

219 – «Cümle ahval ma'lumuz oldu hemişe a'da hur-i hakir olsunlar ki (?) her ahvala takayyüd edesiz beca buyursun», E.7022/641.

220 – A certain janissary officer who served the *ağa*, or the commander, of the corps.

221 – «Tokuz nefer[i] bağçeye getüresun iki kellei bi-ta[‘]cil kethüda yeri dedüğü gibi edesün emrümdür ve sair ahvala dahi mukayyad edesün ihmal etmeyesün», E.7022/592. In Katib Çelebi's naval history there are depictions of hundreds of Cossack heads being brought to the sultan along with captives, Katib Çelebi, *Tuhfet, cit.*, p. 108, 109.

222 – In a section entitled “Discourse of the Changes of the Emperor Mustafa... September and October 1623”, in: *Negotiations of Roe, cit.*, p. 179.



the sultan and the state.<sup>223</sup> However, while the procedure of displaying heads, for example, in front of the first or second gates of the palace has been treated, that of delivering heads to the sultan for his inspection seems not to have attracted specific attention in the literature. Given these examples and others,<sup>224</sup> there is no doubt that such a regular procedure existed.

Among these undated *telhises* sent to Sultan İbrahim, are five devoted to an operation to track and hunt down six Cossack *chaikas* active between Ahtopol (Ahtopoli) and Varna. Report by report, the grand vizier (in all likelihood) details the movements of the six *chaikas* – near Ahtopol they were unable to seize any booty (*doyumluk*) so they turned around and traversed the coast northward, combing its shores and wandering in and out of various out-of-the-way places (*koltuk yerlerde dolaşdukları*), making their way toward Varna. Into these reports of their movements the grand vizier inserts details of the Ottoman tracking operation and preparations to strike against them – the dispatch of couriers to gain intelligence on their strength and location, the organization and coordination of various land and sea forces (with types and numbers of ships being named), and so forth. The final extant *telhis* of this series reports of an engagement in progress with these six *chaikas* in which the Cossacks end up abandoning their boats, spilling onto the shore in flight, with the Özi forces<sup>225</sup> following in pursuit. This report was apparently sent in the heat of the operation, for the final outcome is not given, only a hope, invoking God, that none of the Cossacks would succeed in escaping (according to its text, this report was delivered by a ship of one of the local Mediterranean fleets [*beğ gemileri*] assigned to serve in the Black Sea that season). Unfortunately these five *telhises* have only *pro forma hatt-i hümayuns*, saying «we have received this news»,<sup>226</sup> so there is no hint

223 – Cazacu, Matei, “La morte infâme. Décapitation et exposition des têtes à Istanbul (XV<sup>e</sup>-XIX<sup>e</sup> siècles)”, in: Veinstein, Gilles (ed.), *Les Ottomanes et la mort. Permanences et mutations*, Leiden, 1996, p. 245-289. For an example of the heads of rebels and of enemy troops killed in war being brought to Istanbul, see Hasanbegzade, *Tarih-i al-i ‘Osman*, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, H.O. 75, fols. 114v, 115r.

224 – *Kelle götürmek*, “to delivery with all speed” (lit. “to carry off a head”) has its origin in the procedure of express delivery (e.g., by mounted couriers) to the center of heads of those, for whatever reason, prominent persons who had been executed, Pakalın, Mehmet Zeki, *Osmanlı tarih deyimleri ve terimleri sözlüğü*, II, İstanbul, 1971, p. 238.

225 – *Özi kulları*, probably the garrison troops of the Özi fortress complex. If so, then probably by the time of this report the Cossacks had made their way from Varna to the mouth of the Dnieper.

226 – «Our royal» or «imperial» or «felicitous knowing [of this] has occurred» (*ma‘lum-i humayun olmuştur*, *ma‘lum-i şahanum olmuştur*, and *ma‘lum-i sa‘adetüm olmuştur*), E.7022/548, 637, 644, 645, 646.

of the sultan's reaction to this series of events.<sup>227</sup> Nonetheless it is interesting that such an isolated sequence of events, an incursion by a small Cossack raiding party, was considered important enough to warrant the repeated attention of the sultan (especially when compared to the fleets of even hundreds of *chaikas* that plied the Black Sea a generation earlier).

Since İbrahim's *hatt-i hümayuns* are probably chance remnants from what was once a much richer stash of documents,<sup>228</sup> it is impossible to venture a statistical argument on the basis of these documents as to the significance of these events and problems in the eyes of the Porte, as compared with other developments and issues. Nor are they incontrovertible proofs of a particularly strong reaction to the Cossack threat by the sultan, though clearly he was far from indifferent to it. To indulge in an impressionistic reaction to these *telhises*, the image of disturbing news of Cossack interlopers out in the nearby Black Sea repeatedly intruding the recesses of the palace and the consciousness of İbrahim, nicknamed *Deli*, "the Crazy," can be a compelling one. In any event, part of the value of these documents is in their being rare and authentic traces of a sultan's personal reaction and involvement in the Cossack problem, not only as an observer, but as an active participant, as can be observed from the specific, albeit laconic, reactions and instructions recorded in some of the *hatt-i hümayuns*. Even in the case of the last five *telhises*, where there are no specific instructions or endorsements coming from his hand, that he was receiving ongoing and perhaps nearly day-to-day reports indicates a definite level of involvement in the given affair, even on the level of micro-management. Certainly the sultan had a role in the decision-making process.<sup>229</sup>

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227 – Of course the presence of a *hatt-i hümayun* specific in content is not a necessary condition for the given event to have had any sort of effect on the sultan. In other words, a *pro forma* "we have been apprised of the situation" is not a sufficient condition for the given information having no significance to the recipient (such *pro forma* acknowledgments are quite common in the given series of *telhises*).

228 – It is not certain that all 742 documents of E.7002/1-86 and E.7022/1-656 constitute *telhises* with İbrahim's *hatt-i hümayuns*. If they do, that would mean that over the span of his reign he received an average of fewer than two *telhises* per week, which seems like a small number (certainly not the pace at which he was receiving the documents relating to the Cossack operations on the Rumeli coast just discussed). For this reason it can be supposed that either much is missing due to loss or, because of opaqueness or imperfections of the Topkapı archive's catalogue, much remains to be discovered by the archivist or researcher.

229 – This is no trivial statement. It should be noted that the picture that emerges from these and the other *telhises* with *hatt-i hümayuns* is somewhat at variance with the typical notion of the so-called "sultanate of the women", when the harem was very involved in the affairs of the state, and when between it, the grand vizier, and other top officials, the sultan has been considered of marginal importance to the actual workings of the palace and state.

While it is not easy to gain a well-documented and distinct notion of how the sultan and other members of the ruling class perceived and reacted to the Cossacks, in addition to fleeting glimpses of sultans such as Ahmed I and Osman II falling into a fury at news of their operations, the extreme hatred and cruelty that would often be directed at captured Cossacks by the sultan is certainly a telling indicator. The ritualistic delivery of captured Cossacks and severed heads was evidently a component of the “triumph ceremony.” It seems that whenever Cossacks were defeated and captured by the Ottomans, some would be slaughtered on the spot while the rest would be brought in triumph with their *chaikas* to Istanbul for presentation. At this ceremony a number would be executed (often by torture), while thereafter the rest would be enslaved, typically as galley oarsmen. The Ottoman narrative sources sometimes even specify the ways in which the Cossacks were put to death. For example, when 200 captured Cossacks were brought before Osman II when he was at the bridge spanning the Danube at İsakçı on the way to Hotin in 1621, they were beheaded, cut in half at the waist, impaled on hooks, or shot with their own arrows.<sup>230</sup> In a *gazanâme* devoted to the exploits of Halil Paşa, who was the *kapudan paşa* during the Hotin campaign, the wrath of the sultan and satisfaction with which the Cossack interlopers were put to death is even more graphically described:

His [majesty] made an order that the seized infidel *chaikas* be brought a place close to the imperial tent which was on the edge of the waters of the Danube River.... Those swine – who were deserving of destruction – as they were brought opposite that furious lion who seizes the enemy, they stirred up his [majesty's] emotion of anger and rage and raised the waves of the sea of his [majesty's] anxiety. Because of this, he desired the execution of those accursed ones in various ways and to make thereby a spectacle and diversion. Some of them were set on fire back in their own ships [i.e., *chaikas*]. Atop the flowing water occurred a show of hellish fire. Some of them were tied between the sea dragon-like ships and the parts of their bodies were separated from one another and turned into food for the schools of fish. As for others, they had their punishment meted out on the shore of the river – their principal members (*a'za-yi re'ise*, heads, limbs, and other vital body parts) were crushed under the feet of enraged elephants and their wicked souls were reunited with the fire of hell. Thereafter, some of the violence of the rage of the padishah, whose gravity is as that of the celestial sphere, found calm.<sup>231</sup>

Even allowing for flights of rhetoric in the depiction of the rage and anxiety of the sultan, certainly the display of emotion ascribed to him and the cruelty of the executions and satisfaction that they brought must have

230 – Katib Çelebi, *Fezleke*, I, *cit.*, p. 406.

231 – Ostapchuk, “*Gazânâme of Halil Paşa*”, *cit.*, p. 501, 512-513.

been in keeping with the actual attitude and emotions of the sultan toward the presence of the Cossack menace in his “backyard”.<sup>232</sup> Of course the cruel punishment of these most hated enemies may have had a deterrent purpose. On the other hand, it must have produced a cycle of greater brutality as the Cossacks would be determined to fight to the maximum knowing the possible horrendous fate that awaited them in case of capture.

Yet along with psychological release, the staging of triumphs served another purpose, which can be termed both psychological and political, namely propaganda. When, as often was the case, the campaign in the Black Sea did not go as well as was hoped for or claimed, a triumphant return through the Bosphorus and into Istanbul with captured Cossacks and *chaikas* in tow would be mounted, staging a greater victory celebration than was actually merited. After the much-touted victory at Karaharman in 1625 a great triumph was enacted on the return to Istanbul, even though, according to various non-Ottoman sources, the outcome was not as sensational as it was made out to be.<sup>233</sup> While the *kapudan paşa* proudly delivered to the capital a large train of *chaikas* and captured Cossacks (270 souls according to Roe, more than 800 according to Katib Çelebi), Roe makes a caustic aside, that his return and reception was «as if Pompey had again finished the piratique war, that almost famished Rome» and then adds what he considered the true sentiment of the admiral at this celebration: *Non de victoria, sed de non victo triumphavit*. In other words, the triumph was for having survived and not lost the entire fleet.<sup>234</sup> A similar spectacle was put on after İbrahim Paşa managed to intercept, just inside the mouth of the Dnieper, part of the Cossack fleet returning from the great raid on Sinop in 1614. Much was made of this encounter to assuage somewhat the losses and humiliation at Sinop, so that those who could have been blamed for the given debacle could save face before the sultan of – a mere 20 captured Cossacks were sent to the Porte where they were turned over to the unfortunate residents of Sinop who had come to lament their losses, so that they could wreak vengeance upon them.<sup>235</sup>

232 – For other instances of triumphs staged after successes over the Cossacks with the participation of the sultan, see Katib Çelebi, *Fezleke*, II, *cit.*, p. 74, 211. *Negotiations of Roe*, *cit.*, p. 439.

233 – *E.g.*, as the fleet limped back, it itself was hit by bad weather, losing additional ships. Meanwhile the Cossacks, perhaps even the same ones defeated at Karaharman, attacked Kili on their return journey. Even the Ottoman chronicles admit that the outcome at Karaharman was mostly due to very good fortune – a sudden storm favored the galleys and took sure victory away from the Cossacks.

234 – Dispatch of 19 September 1625, *Negotiations of Roe*, *cit.*, p. 439; Katib Çelebi, *Tuhfet*, *cit.*, p. 111; Ostapchuk, “Ottoman Black Sea frontier”, *cit.*, p. 113-118; Ostapchuk and Halenko, “Кятіб Челебі”, *cit.*, p. 376, 382, 417.

235 – *Ibid.*, p. 350-352; Hrushevsky, *Cossack Age*, *cit.*, p. 271.

The intense hatred reserved for the Cossacks can be sensed in the language of the Ottoman chronicles and documents, where the words *kazak* or *Rus*, in the context of the Black Sea, scarcely occur without an accompanying curse, most commonly *mel'un*, "accursed." The impression given is that imprecations were levied upon the Cossacks with greater frequency than against the other "infidel" enemies of the Porte. Evliya Çelebi recounts a scene, which, though applying to the Crimean khan, would probably be much the same if it were the Ottoman sultan in his place. Khan Mehmed Gerey IV (1641-1644, 1654-1666) pursued and captured a joint Cossack and Kalmyk (Kalmuk) raiding party that had made a serious incursion into the Crimea, but was now back in the steppes beyond the Crimea. He was said to have killed the Kalmyks on the spot, whereas the Cossacks were brought back to the Crimea and tortured to death, «killing each one with the most violent punishment». <sup>236</sup> All of these examples suggest that the hatred directed at the Cossacks was not merely for the death and destruction delivered by common pirates or bandits. Undoubtedly the intensity of the Ottoman reaction was also connected with the Cossack ruination of the Porte's secure and prosperous domain and their disruption of its ongoing campaigns in the East and West, where the "true calling" of the Ottoman state lay. Naturally, as Roe so aptly puts it, the psychological (for example, the humiliation and frustration) and the physical effects of the Cossack depredations (for example threat to Istanbul's day-to-day food supply), went hand in hand: «... the Black Sea... doth them more affronts, and give them more feares than a greater enemy; for hereby the relief of the city with victuals is much disturbed, and their force of gallies is divided and the enemy a fugitive, from whom they can neither reap honor, nor benefit». <sup>237</sup>

This prompts mention of a related factor contributing to the Ottoman disposition toward the Cossacks. Regardless of the degree to which *gaza* was or was not a motivation for early Ottoman expansion, by the 16th and 17th centuries, the notion of being *gazis* – champions of struggle with the domain of the unbeliever through raid and conquest in the name of expansion of the domain of Islam – must have been an integral and substantial part of Ottoman self-consciousness (certainly it was ubiquitous in the rhetoric of chronicles and other narrative sources). In the Black Sea, long a part of the *Darü'l-Islam*, the Ottomans were put into an unusual situation, for with the coming of the Cossacks they were decidedly put on the defensive. The *Darü'l-Islam* was under constant threat and the Ottomans' inability for decades to eliminate this threat, if not, like true *gazis*, by going on the offensive and conquering the place of origin and refuge of the "accursed unbelievers," then at least by being able to mount an ef-

236 – Evliya Çelebi, *Seyahatname*, VII, *cit.*, p. 487-488, cited in Fisher, "Ottoman Crimea", *cit.*, p. 217.

237 – See n. 39.

fective defense,<sup>238</sup> meant that they were placed in a very frustrating and even shameful predicament. Soldiers, commanders, and men of state showed few signs of being particularly eager to serve and wage war in the Black Sea. Already possessing a most favorable strategic and economic situation in the region, there seems to have been little desire to fight for what was the empire's "birthright" anyway. Instead the main drive of the ruling and military establishment was to expand in central Europe, the Mediterranean, and on the Eastern frontier. Military activity in the Black Sea probably had less to offer in the way of booty (the main prizes were Cossacks as slaves, their weapons, supplies, boats, and perhaps their booty – altogether not insignificant, but presumably still less attractive than what, for example, the better-settled Habsburg or Mediterranean territories had to offer) and virtually nothing in the way of territorial gain (for example, territory out of which new provinces could be carved and in which new *timars* created, or at least with abundant peasantry which could be taxed). Being in what was essentially the predicament of a partisan war with an elusive but dangerous enemy must have been demoralizing for both troops and commanders.<sup>239</sup> The Ottoman fleet was primarily a one-sea-at-a-time force. Usually the main fleet, the Istanbul-based 40 galleys, served its campaign season either in the Mediterranean or in the Black Sea. Traditionally it was better suited for and more used to operating in the former, whence many of its traditions and much of its naval expertise had originated, and where there was a better support infrastructure as well as a permanent auxiliary presence (the *beğ gemileri*).<sup>240</sup> Thomas Roe makes frequent reference to the absence of the fleet from the Mediterranean, when almost year after year it was forced to serve in the "Ottoman lake."<sup>241</sup>

There is a tendency in relevant Ottoman chronicles that is symptomatic of Ottoman reluctance and regret at the expenditure of energy and resources in the Black Sea "better spent" elsewhere. On the surface, the most authoritative Ottoman chroniclers of the 17th century, Katib Çelebi and, largely borrowing from him, Naima, present the Cossacks in the Black Sea as an episodic and marginal phenomenon with which the Ottomans were able to cope almost as a matter of course. Ottoman forces

238 – Note that the Arabic word *gazā* denotes an offensive, aggressive action, such as a raid, assault, or invasion. In Lane's dictionary, the definition of *gazawāt* includes «the act of repairing to fight with [or to fight with and plunder] the enemy [in the country of the latter (stress added)]», Lane, Edward William, *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, London, 1877, p. 2257.

239 – For examples of difficulty in mobilizing troops to serve in the Black Sea, see Ostapchuk, "Ottoman Black Sea frontier", *cit.*, p. 170-176.

240 – On the difficulties of the galleys in operating against the Cossacks, particularly in the shallow waters of the northern Black Sea, see Ostapchuk, "Five documents", p. 58-60.

241 – *Negotiations of Roe*, *cit.*, p. 236, 247, 357, 410-411, 453.



prevail in practically every section devoted to encounters with the Cossacks. The impression given is that there hardly was a “Cossack problem” in the Black Sea worthy of mention. It is not an exaggeration to state that the eight sections on the Cossacks that Katib Çelebi extracted from his *Fezleke* and included in his naval history *Tuhfet ül-kibar fi esfari el-bihar* constitute the overwhelming bulk of the main Ottoman chronicle tradition’s presentation of this phenomenon in the Black Sea.<sup>242</sup> This presentation maintains that the Cossacks appeared as a true threat only in 1614, and thereafter in only six or so out of 23 years (in the *Tuhfet*: 1616, 1621, 1624, 1625, 1638, 1639 plus a few years with supposed lessor activity)<sup>243</sup> did they cause any noteworthy difficulties in the sea.

The gist of the chronicle version of this epoch is as follows. In the few named years the “accursed” Cossack bandits caused some trouble in the waters and shores of the Black Sea and lowest reaches of the Danube River by attacking a few towns and villages, while of cities, sacking only Sinop (in 1624 Yeniköy is said to have lost a only few shops [*dükkan*] to fire, though there is substantial evidence of a harsher turn of events). Absent is any mention of damage and harm rendered to, for example, Trabzon and Varna and their vicinities of which first hand evidence was provided above. Ottoman forces engaged the Cossacks in several naval encounters and in all of them they either annihilated, captured, or put the Cossacks to flight.<sup>244</sup> Lack of references by the chronicles under other years even to events with such propitious endings implies that in those years the Black Sea was immune to Cossack incursions and attacks or that nothing significant enough to warrant mention occurred. Embarrass-

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242 – Some of the titles alone point to tendentiousness: 1. The beginning (*sic*) of the appearance of the Cossacks on the Black Sea (1614); 2. The campaign of Mahmud Paşa (1616); 3. The campaign to defend the bridge over the Danube (1621); 4. The defeat of the Cossacks in the battle of Taman (1621); 5. The coming of the Cossacks to Yeniköy (1624); 6. The campaign that destroyed the Cossacks at the battle of Karaharman (1625); 7. The campaign of Piyale Kethüda (1638); 8. The campaign of Piyale Kethüda (1639). A ninth section in a different part of his naval history is on naval warfare in the Mediterranean and Black Seas. Katib Çelebi, *Tuhfet*, *cit.*, p. 106-114, 150-151. For a facsimile, translation, and comparison of these sections with relevant passages in the *Fezleke* and Naima, see Ostapchuk and Halenko, “Кятіб Челебі”, *cit.*

243 – *E.g.*, 1622 and 1629. See n. 244, 252.

244 – Aside from Cossack activity in these years, one can find only a few other, brief mentions of encounters with the Cossacks: a naval battle in 1622 off the cape of Kaliakra, northeast of Varna, Katib Çelebi, *Fezleke*, II, *cit.*, p. 27; an expedition against the allied Crimean Tatars and Zaporozhians in 1624 which does not speak of Cossack naval raids, but only of land operations in the Crimea, *ibid.*, p. 59-61; brief references to the Cossack occupation of Tana between 1637 and 1642, *ibid.*, p. 190, 224-25. The pattern of coverage of the chronicle of Topçılar Katibi differs from the main tradition: though it cannot be said that it gives a fuller coverage, he does provide some other episodes. See also n. 251.

ing or disastrous occurrences are mentioned only in passing or more often simply passed over – for example, a reversal, perhaps even a serious defeat, of the Ottoman fleet near the mouth of the Danube in 1615 and the subsequent malicious destruction of captured galleys at the mouth of the Dnieper before the eyes of the garrison at Özi;<sup>245</sup> the great raid on Kefe in 1616;<sup>246</sup> in 1625, several weeks prior to the battle of Karaharman, the humiliating destruction at Özi of the fleet of Saksakı Paşa who was sent to guard the mouth of the Dnieper with 180 vessels (frigates).<sup>247</sup> These are but a few examples of occurrences skipped by the chronicles.

No less misleading is the mainstream Ottoman chronicle tradition's coverage of the commencement of Cossack activities in the Black Sea. Although by the 1590s the Zaporozhians expanded their range of operations beyond the northern seaboard and began their descent down the coast of Rumeli, reaching the entrance of the Bosphorus by 1614 if not earlier,<sup>248</sup> coverage in the main chronicles begins with the section devoted to what is presented as the first major expedition in the Black Sea, namely, what was, in fact, the first attack on Anatolia, that is, the Sinop raid of 1614. In Katib Çelebi's *Tuhfet*, this section is in fact entitled "The beginning of the appearance of the Cossacks on the Black Sea."<sup>249</sup> Obviously this raid in the heart of the empire was a great shock, which may

245 – Based on Żółkiewski's testimony. A Polish translation of a letter from a vizier claims the opposite, Hrushevsky, *Cossack Age*, cit., p. 276. In any event, on the basis of Italian and Muscovite sources it is very clear that 1615, on which the Ottoman chronicles are silent, was a difficult year for the Ottomans in the Black Sea, Welykyj, Athanasius G. (ed.), *Litterae Nuntiorum Apostolicorum historiae Ucrainae illustrantes*, III, 1609-1620, Rome, 1959, p. 122, 123, 125; *Документи російських архівів до історії запорозького*, cit., p. 78-83.

246 – *Pisma Żółkiewskiego*, cit., p. 304; *Документи російських архівів до історії запорозького*, cit., p. 105. See Hrushevsky, *Cossack Age*, cit., p. 277-278. For the most recent and the fullest presentation of this operation, based on new Muscovite sources, see Brekhunenko, *Стосунки українського козацтва з Доном*, cit., p. 133-136. Moreover, under this year, in which there was Cossack raiding activity near Trabzon, Samsun, Varna, and the Bosphorus and serious reversals for the fleet, only a few vague lines are allotted in *Tuhfet* concerning the fleet's coming across some Cossack *chaikas* and six galleys being grounded in shallow water. See Berindei, "La Porte face aux Cosaques", cit., p. 280-281; Ostapchuk and Halenko, "Кятіб Челебі," cit., p. 355-356, 425.

247 – In the evening of the first day of the 'idü'l-fitr, or festival marking the end of the month of Ramadan, Saksakı was ashore in Özi for "dinner" (to use Roe's word, which probably meant a *bayram* feast) only to be «surprised by the Cossacks and hardly escaping, lost all his fleet and many of his men», dispatch of 30 July 1625, *Negotiations of Roe*, p. 426; See also Hrushevsky, *Cossack Age*, cit., p. 418-419; Ostapchuk, "Ottoman Black Sea frontier", cit., p. 112-113.

248 – *Документи російських архівів до історії запорозького*, cit., p. 70. See also Berindei, "La Porte face aux Cosaques", cit., p. 275-279.

249 – Katib Çelebi, *Tuhfet*, cit., p. 106.

partly explain the prominence and significance allotted to it. But the cities, towns, and villages on the coast of Rumeli and in the lower reaches of the Danube ravaged in the two decades prior to Sinop (*viz.* the vivid testimony of Metrophanes),<sup>250</sup> to which there are virtually no references in the chronicles, were not on a distant frontier that could be overlooked by accident or because of their marginality. The *Fezleke* acknowledges the pre-1614 Cossack operations with a brief aside: «At [the time of our] predecessors there were [Cossack] raids upon villages in the Danube and on the seacoasts».<sup>251</sup> The first era of Cossack strikes against the northern seaboard, including the meteoric career of Vyshnevets'kyi/Dimitrash, seems to be absent in the sixteenth century chronicles, at least in those that have been published.<sup>252</sup> The evidence that has accrued from Ottoman

250 – There is no doubt that the picture of heavy raids on this coast in these years presented by Metrophanes is correct, though his data concerning the Cossack raiding activity on Rumeli coast in 1606, 1612, 1613, and 1616 needs to be collated with data in other sources, such as dispatches of papal nuncios or their agents in Venice and Istanbul that indicate raids on the same coast in these same years, as well as other, intervening years, Welykyj, Athanasius G. (ed.), *Litterae Nuntiorum Apostolicorum historiae Ucrainae illustrantes*, II 1594-1608, Rome, 1959, p. 263-264; *ibid.*, III 1609-1620, p. 32, 33, 71, 72, 98, 99, 102, 103, 109-110, 111. For other instances, including those documented in the *Mühimme defterleri*, see Berindei, “La Porte face aux Cosaques”, *cit.*, p. 275-279.

251 – Katib Çelebi, *Fezleke*, II, *cit.*, p. 358; repeated in Na'ima, *Ravzatü'l-hüseyin*, *cit.*, p. 118. The wording in Katib Çelebi's naval history is more generous: «in [the time of our] predecessors it became the custom of the Don and Dnieper Cossacks to plunder the shores of the Danube and the sea», Katib Çelebi, *Tuhfet*, *cit.*, p. 106. Note that Katib Çelebi's and Naima's chronicles start with the year 1000/1591-1592, when serious Cossack incursions into the Black Sea were already taking place.

252 – As the purpose here is to use the contemporary or near contemporary chronicles as a source on the Ottoman *mentalité*, there is no pretense of evaluating the chronicles as sources for *la histoire événementielle*, for which they are, shortcomings notwithstanding, valuable sources. Further work is needed on the 16th-century chronicles and the chronicles that straddle both the 16th and 17th centuries. I have only had the opportunity to check those of Lutfi Paşa, Selaniki, Hasanbegzade, and Pechevi. Selaniki has some significant entries (relating to Cossack depredations in 1594 and 1595), Selâniki Mustafa Efendi, *Tarih-i Selâniki*, İpşirli, Mehmet (ed.), Istanbul, 1989, p. 363, 481-483. The case of Hasanbegzade is interesting. While he covers the 1614 Sinop raid he makes no mention of the other “major” Cossack episodes on the Black Sea according to the “official version” of Katib Çelebi (see n. 242). He also notes the 1622 battle off Kaliakra mentioned in the *Fezleke* (see n. 244), Hasanbegzade, *Tarih-i al-i 'Osman*, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, H.O. 75, fol. 99r. On the other hand in a different manuscript there is also the mention of episodes not mentioned in the other chronicles. In 1622, a successful, albeit minor encounter with two *chaikas* apparently in the Sea of Azov which resulted in the freeing of Muslim captives, capture of 30 Cossacks, and delivery to the Porte of more than 30 Cossacks heads, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, H.O. 19, fol. 309r. Another such “unique” mention is of a foray into the sea in late 1629, when the Cossacks took advantage of the absence of the main fleet and devastated unnamed regions of the sea, taking many

documentary sources betrays that something is amiss in the Ottoman chronicles. For example, the frequent record in the *Mühimme defterleri* of the activity of Vyshnevets'kyi and his successors is a clear indication of the increasing amount of the Porte's attention that the Black Sea required.<sup>253</sup>

Clearly the histories, largely written for the glory of the Ottoman dynasty, avoided the unpleasanties of the real situation in the Black Sea. Rather than casting light on the "backwater" sea where the *gazi* was reluctantly forced into the role of beleaguered and frustrated defender, the chroniclers displayed a much keener interest in developments on the expanding frontiers that "legitimized" the Islamic empire. In the pre-Cossack era, the chronicles focused scant attention on the Black Sea because this was a region that could be taken for granted, and only when troubles emerged, such as sedition or revolt in Moldavia or the Crimea, would attention be turned to it. However, when what was surely the gravest and most protracted crises in the Ottoman Black Sea took hold, the chroniclers, and no doubt other members of the ruling class, tried to avoid admitting that the sea's former "pristine" state no longer existed, and clung to the ideal of the Black Sea as a prosperous and secure sanctum of the empire that did not require more than a modicum of attention. Whether such a presentation of the history of the Black Sea was deliberately or subconsciously perpetrated, the resulting "chimera of the Ottoman lake" has led modern historians to uncritically and unwittingly accept and perpetuate the notion of the Ottomans having three centuries of undifferentiated control of and security in the Black Sea.

Naturally narrative sources provide the initial framework for our understanding and presentation of history. Often this becomes a permanent or long-lasting paradigm which succeeding generations of historians flesh out and modify, and less often radically remake or completely reject. So it has been with the Black Sea. The chronicles, along with their great collator, Hammer, bequeathed a schema in which there was no place for the Cossacks in the Ottoman *mare nostrum*, a schema which practically the entire field of Ottoman historical studies continues to accept and perpetuate. At best modern scholarship finds room for episodic references to a few Cossack raids and battles, which is

Muslims captive who could only be ransomed for a heavy price, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, H.O. 75, fol. 122r. In any event, Hasanbegzade's few mentions of Cossack activity in the Black Sea also portray the phenomenon as less than momentous in their impact, even though in the relations of the Sinop raid and the incident in the Sea of Azov the seriousness of the attacks is suggested. Judging from the lack of references to early Cossack Black Sea activity in Hammer's history of the Ottoman Empire or Danişmend's chronology of Ottoman history, both of whom based their works largely on the chronicles, it appears that the observation here on the scarcity of mentions of the Cossacks in them, particularly for 16th century, is close to the mark.

253 – For a sample of frequent references to the early Cossacks in the *Mühimme defterleri* see Lemerrier-Quelquejay, "Višneveckij et la *seč* zaporogue", *cit.*

few Cossack raids and battles, which is no accident as modern historians have followed the lead of the main Ottoman chronicle tradition, in the 17th century headed by Katib Çelebi and Naima.<sup>254</sup>

### *Conclusion*

In tracing the human landscape of the Ottoman Black Sea, this article has separated the effects of the Cossack onslaught into the physical and the psychological aspects. Interestingly enough, it is much easier to establish the presence and discern the effects in the mental sphere rather than in the physical. Although the physical consequences of a Cossack raid might be thought to be weightier than the psychological ones, the latter were certainly more widespread. While an entire coastal population may have been possessed by fear of a sudden ravage, not to mention the perturbation caused in the empire's nodes of power and responsibility, such as the palace and imperial naval arsenal, in a given raiding season only a limited number of settlements would suffer, the intensity of their experience notwithstanding. The range of the psychological could be great not only in space but also in time. Thus, in the last quarter of the 17th century, when Cossack raids on the sea were a thing of the past, the Ottomans exhibited a lingering anxiety lest the depredations resume<sup>255</sup> and a clear distrust of the Ukrainian Cossacks even though, periodically since the time of Khmel'nyts'kyi, the Ukrainians sought Ottoman suzerainty in their strivings to escape Polish and eventually Russian rule. Though Khmel'nyts'kyi and other hetmans offered Ukraine to them practically on a "silver platter," the Ottomans responded with extreme caution and ultimately with refusal. While such behavior in part stems from their greater interest in traditional vectors of expansion and the old defensive northern policy, the trauma suffered in the era of Cossack ascendancy on the Black Sea was no doubt a significant factor.

As far as the physical consequences of the raids are concerned, a more nuanced presentation of the raids based on real examples has revealed that while they were much more serious than has been recognized by most Ottoman historians, they were not always fatal or ruinous for those affected. The human landscape in the aftermath of Cossack strikes was littered not only with death, destruction, and displacement, but marked by looted personal possessions, lost documents, broken agreements, aborted transactions, and lawsuits to reclaim property or to determine who would ultimately bear a loss. For the time being, a more exact qualitative charac-

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254 – See n. 3. However again, this does not mean that the chronicles are completely unreliable. Often a proper analysis can yield unique and invaluable information, e.g., see Ostapchuk, "Ğazānāme of Ĥalīl Paşa", *cit.*; Ostapchuk and Halenko, "Kiatib Chelebi", *cit.*

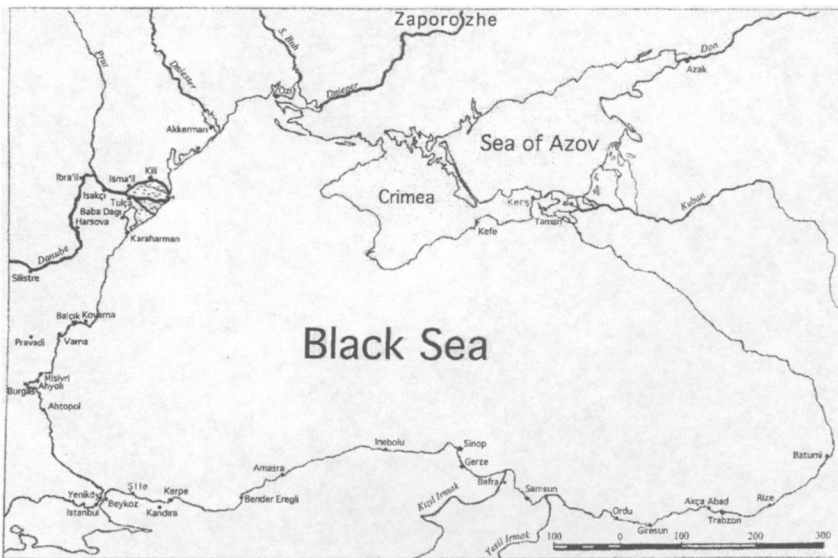
255 – One of the proofs of this is their assiduity in keeping strategic fortresses such as Özi in a state repair in the second half of the 17th and in the 18th centuries.



terization of the effects is possible, which has become possible thanks to new sources for this topic introduced here.<sup>256</sup> More rigorous quantification and comparison with the effects of other phenomena, such as the Celali uprisings or natural disasters remains an elusive goal.

While the actual Cossack expeditions were not the main object of inquiry, it is clear that better chronological and typological catalogues of the raids, and a deeper understanding of the motives and methods of operation, are needed before the human impact of this phenomena can be more thoroughly mapped. Also more data is needed on the Black Sea economy before and during the Cossack era to determine the degree to which the proposed “ideal situation” possessed by the Ottomans in this region prior to the Cossacks is valid and to ascertain the extent of the apparent economic decline thereafter. However, at this point it can be stated with confidence that, whatever the substance of Ottoman control of the Black Sea was, the idea of an Ottoman *mare nostrum* had such a formative influence on Ottoman strategic thinking and historical vision that it not only had a great effect on the perception of the harsh realities of the age by 17th century statesmen and intellectuals, but also largely fixed the view from the vantage point of modern historiography. In this connection the Ottoman chronicles have proved to be a relatively rich and reliable body of evidence.

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256 – I of course have in mind the *kadi sicil* record. It should be noted that *sicil* documents relating to the Cossacks have been cited in two earlier studies not concerned with the Cossacks: Jennings’s study of the *evkaf* of Trabzon refers to and quotes several such documents (see n. 87, 88) while among the examples of *sicil* documents in Akgündüz’s catalogue is a full document concerned with the Cossack threat (see n. 138).