

**THE ZAPOROZHIAN LETTER TO THE TURKISH SULTAN:  
HISTORICAL COMMENTARY AND LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS**

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**I  
Historical Commentary**

One of the most famous cossack documents in the history of verbal abuse is a certain letter allegedly written by a cossack hetman to the Sultan of Turkey sometime between 1672 and 1680. Although the cossacks did little other than rape, pillage, and slaughter defenseless people in pogroms, e.g. that of 1648, they nevertheless managed to fire the romantic imagination of the nineteenth century, which could overlook their bestial behavior and see in them a hard-drinking, anarchistic group of free men and runaways. Thus it was that from 1878 to 1891 the Russian artist I.E. Repin created his painting "Zaporozcy pisut pis'mo tureckomu sultanu" - "The Zaporozhians Write a Letter to the Turkish Sultān", which now hangs in the Russian State Museum. An earlier version of the painting, along with a sketch entitled "Na vysokoparno - groznuju gramotu tureckogo sultana Magometa IV kosevoj Ivan Dmitrovic Sirko stovaryiscami otvecajut nasmeskami" - "Koshevoy Ivan Dmitrovitch Sirko and His Comrades Answer the Bombastic, Threatening Letter of the Turkish Sultan Mahomet IV With Mockeries", is housed in the Tret'jakovskij Gallery. The Moscow periodical *Ogonëk* had a special article on Repin with a full-color center-page reproduction of the Russian State Museum variant in its August, 1969 issue. The painting portrays a motley group of Slavo-Tatar ruffians sitting and standing around a scribe and laughing rowdily. The cause of their laughter is the letter discussed below.

In 1675 (Evarnickij 1895:517) or 1678 (Golobuckij 1957:320), the Sultan of Turkey and the Crimean Khan are said to have unsuccessfully attacked the Zaporozhian fortress of Sic' (Russian Sec'). Following this fiasco, the Sultan of Turkey supposedly sent a threatening missive to the Zaporozhian cossacks demanding their submission to him, to which the cossacks replied with an abusive parody of the Sultan's letter. Evarnickij (1895:516-517) appears to accept most of the situation as fact. Kostomarov (1872) expresses uncertainty regarding the Zaporozhian letter but says that in any case it was composed around the time and the place traditionally assigned to it. Storozev (Pokrovskij 1911:40-41) calls both letters "legendary", i.e. not authentic, but adds that they accurately reflect the spirit of the times.

The letter itself is assigned to 1675 (Evarnicki 1895: 517) or 1680 (Kostomarov 1872). It certainly could not have been written any later by Ivan Sirko (Russian *serko* 'grey dog'), to whom it is traditionally assigned, since he died in Sic' in 1680 (Sölov'ev 1962:231; Golobuckij 1957:437). The fact that the correspondence is in all likelihood apocryphal does not reduce its value. Apocrypha constitute an important and amusing factor in history. The apocryphal story of the death of Catherine the Great (unable to find a man large enough to satisfy her, she was crushed to death when the apparatus broke as a horse was being lifted to service her) is no less

amusing whether true or false, and it is of historical value, since it accurately reflects the attitude of some people toward the empress. Similarly, the story that Stalin had a reproduction of the abovementioned Repin painting hanging in his study, and that when visitors came he would stand before the painting and recite from memory the associate letter displays the wide influence of this letter in Russian thought, either because Stalin memorized it or because he is said to have done so. The fact that Repin spent thirteen years creating a canvas depicting the writing of the letter is another example of the influence it exerted, apocryphal or not.

Before proceeding with the actual analysis of the letter, some background material is in order with regard to Russian versions and English translations. I have found two distinct versions of the letter in its original language. One version, belonging to a certain priest named I. Kurylin from the village of Vysce-Tarasivky in the Ekaterinoslav (modern Dnepropetrovsk) district, was published in several works by Evarnickij (1894:98, 1895:518; cf. also Sfiubrav's'ka 1972:39), and this is the version quoted by Storozev (Pokrovskij 1911:40-41). It contains only one obscene word and will be referred to as version E (as in Evarnickij or Expurgated). When it is necessary to differentiate between the three publications of the letter mentioned above, E1 will be used for Evarnickij 1894, E2 for his 1895, and E3 for Storozev, i.e. Pokrovskij 1911. Another version was published by N.I. Kostomarov in 1872, and a normalized Ukrainian version of it is quoted by Golobckij (1947:124). It contains four taboo words, all scatological, and will be referred to as version K (as in Kostomarov or Kaka). When it is necessary to specify, the version published by Kostomarov will be referred to as K1, that of Golobuckij as K2. (The version of S. Rudanskij [Golobuckij 1957:124-125] is in verse and quite different from versions E and K. Since it is not truly epistolary, it will be excluded from consideration.) It should be noted that both Evarnickij and Kostomarov (but neither Storozev nor Golobuckij) also published the Sultan's letter to which the Zaporozhian letter was an answer.

Version E has been translated into English at least three times. First by William Cresson (1919:41-42), then by some writer for *Ripley's Believe It or Not* (1950?:165-167), and finally by Bernard Guerny (1959:615-616). The first translation is considerably condensed, totally bowdlerized, and contains several inaccuracies. The *Ripley* version is longer and slightly less inaccurate in places, but it contains numerous howlers elsewhere and is still bowdlerized. It should be added that the introductory paragraph of the *Ripley* version contains a number of errors. The letter is said to have provoked the attack on Sic', rather than vice versa, the Crimean Khan is unmentioned, the attack is dated at 1673, and Sirko is said to have died in Siberian exile in 1689. The Guerny translation is complete and accurate, but the one obscene word of version E is rendered as "- - - -" rather than the more literal "a - - - - e" or "as - - - - e", for the Russian versions of version E provide at least that much information. Neither version K nor the Sultan's original provoking letter has ever been translated into English, to the best of my knowledge. The Sultan's letter is an invaluable adjunct to the Zaporozhian letter, since the latter is a parody of the former, and not just a formless tirade of abuse.

This article will use Kostomarov's versions of both letters. The differences between Kostomarov's and Evarnickij's versions of the Sultan's letter are minute, but Kostomarov's appears to be closer to what the original should have been due to its more archaic style. In examining version K, however, a careful comparison will be made with version E. While both versions of the Sultan's letter are in standardized Russian and are not, therefore, of any particular linguistic interest, versions E and K are both in a language which might best be described as Late South East Slavic, or Middle Ukrainian, since it reflects many of the phonological changes which came to differentiate Ukrainian from Russian. In the letter, however, these changes are inconsistently rendered, and so it must be presumed that the processes were not completed or that Russian influence was considerable.

Before giving the actual text of the letters, one further problem - that of orthography - must be dealt with. Version E uses a Russian type orthography, K1 uses a Ukrainian type, and K2 uses normalized Ukrainian. In this, as in other matters, we shall follow Kostomarov. Thus *u* = Russian **ѹ** and Ukrainian *u* ; *i* = Russian *i*, **Ѣ** and *u*, Ukrainian *i* and *i*<sup>TM</sup> ; *e* = Russian *e* and **ѣ** and Ukrainian *e* and **є** . In the Sultan's letter, however, we shall use the modern Russian orthography, since only its content, not its form, is of interest.

## II The Letters

### The Originals:

#### 1. Султан Мухамед IV к запорожским казакам

Я, султан, сын Магомета, брат - солнца и луны, внук и наместник Божий, владетель всех царств: Македонского, Вавилонского и Иерусалимского, великого и малого Египта: царь над царями; властитель над всеми сущими; необыкновенный рыцарь, никем непобедимый; хранитель неотступный гроба Иисуса Христа; попечитель Бога самого; надежда и утешение мусульман, смущение и великий заступник христиан, повелеваю вам, запорожские казаки, сдаться мне добровольно и без всякого сопротивления, и меня вашими нападениями не заставьте беспокоить!

Султан турецкий Мухамед

#### 2. Запорожцы - турецкому Султану

Ти, шайтань турецкий, проклятого чорта братъ и товариъ и самого люципера секретарь! який ти въ чорта лицарь, чортъ с[ер]ё, а ти и твое вѣйско поживае. Не будешь ти годенъ синѣвъ христіанскѣхъ пѣдъ собою мати; твоего вѣйска ми не боїмося, землею и водою будемъ битися ми зъ тобою. Вавилонский ти кухарь, македонскѣй колесникъ, іерусалимскѣй броварникъ, александрийскѣй козолупъ, великого й малого Египта свинарь, армянска свиня, татарскѣй сагайдакъ, камінецькѣй кать, подольскѣй злодіюка, самого гаспида внук и всѣго свѣта и пѣдсвѣта блазень, а юашого бога дурень, свиняча морда, кобиляча с [па] ка, різницька собака, некреенний лобъ, ж[оп]у бы твою чортъ паривъ! Оттакъ тобі козаки відказали, плюгавче, не вгоденъ еци матери вѣпникъ христіанъ. Числа не знаемъ, бо календаря не маемъ, місяць у небі, а годъ у книжиці а день такий и у насъ якъ у васъ, поцілуй за се въ г[узн]ю нас!

Кошовий отоманъ Захалченко со всѣмъ кошомъ запорозькимъ

### The Transliterations

1. Sultan Muxamed IV k zaporozskim kazakam

Ja, sultan, syn Magometa, brat - solnca i lunny, vnuk i namestnik Bozij, vladetel' vsech carstv: Makedonskogo, Vavilonskogo i Ierusalimskogo, velikogo i malogo Egipta: car' nad carjami; vlastitel' nad vsemi suscestvujuscimi; neobyknovennyj rycar', nikem perobedimyj; xranitel' neotstupnyj grob'a Isusa Xrista; popecitel' Boga samogo; nadeza i utensenie musul'man, smuscenie i velikij zascitnik xristian, povelevaju vam, zaporozskie kazaki, sdat'sja mne dobrovol'no i bez vsjakogo soprotivlenija, i menja vasimi napadenijami ne zastav'te bezpokoit'!

^ Sultan tureckij Muxamed

2. Zaporozcy - tureskomu Sultanu

Ty sajtan<sup>1</sup> tureckij<sup>2</sup>, prokljatogo corta brat" i tovarysc<sup>3</sup> i samogo ljucyperja sekretar<sup>4</sup>! jakyj ty v" corta lycar', cort" s[er]e<sup>5</sup>, a ty i<sup>6</sup> tvoe vs'ko<sup>7</sup> pozivae<sup>8</sup>. Ne budeš ty goden" syniv" xrystyjan'ski<sup>9</sup> pid<sup>10</sup> soboju maty<sup>11</sup>; tvogo vijs'ka<sup>12</sup> my ne boimošja<sup>13</sup>, zemleju i vodoju budem" byt'sja<sup>14</sup> my<sup>15</sup> z" toboju. Vavylonskyj ty kuxar'<sup>16</sup>, makedons'kyj<sup>17</sup> kolesnyk<sup>18</sup>, ierusalims'kyj<sup>19</sup> brovarnyk<sup>20</sup>, aleksandryjskyj<sup>21</sup> kozolup", velikogo j malogo<sup>22</sup> Egipta svynar', armjans'ka svynja, tatar'skyj<sup>23</sup> sagajdak<sup>24</sup>, kaminec'kyj<sup>25</sup> kat", podol'skyj<sup>26</sup> zlodijuka<sup>27</sup>, samogo gaspida<sup>28</sup> vnuk" i vsjogo svita<sup>29</sup> i pidsvita<sup>30</sup> blazen'<sup>31</sup>, a nasogo boga duren', svynjaca morda, kobyljaca s[ra]ka, riznyč'ka sobaka, nekrescennyj lob", z[op]ju by tvoju cořt" pariv<sup>32</sup>! Otčak" tobi kozaky vidkazaly, pljugavče<sup>33</sup>, ne vgoden<sup>34</sup> esi matery virnyx" xrystyjan<sup>35</sup>. Cisla ne znaem", bo kalendarja ne maem", misjac' u nebi<sup>36</sup>, a<sup>37</sup> god" u knyzyci a den' takyj i<sup>38</sup> u nas" jak" u<sup>39</sup> vas", pociluj za se v" g[uzn]o<sup>40</sup> nas"!

Kosovyj otoman<sup>41</sup> Zaxarcenko<sup>42</sup> so<sup>43</sup> vsim" košom<sup>44</sup> zaporoz'kim<sup>45</sup>

## The Translations

1. Sultan Mohamed IV to the Zaporozhian Cossacks

I, the Sultan, son of Mohamed, brother of the Sun and Moon, grandson and vicegerent of God, sovereign of all kingdoms: of Macedonia, Babylonia, and Jerusalem, of Upper and Lower Egypt: king of kings, ruler of all that exists; extraordinary, invincible knight; constant guardian of the grave of Jesus Christ; trustee of God himself; hope and comfort of Moslems, confusion and great protector of Christians, command you, the Zaporozhian Cossacks, to surrender to me voluntarily and without any kind of resistance, and don't permit yourselves to trouble me with your attacks!

Turkish Sultan Mohamed

2. Zaporozhians - to the Turkish Sultan

You Turkish Satan, brother and comrade of the damned devil and secretary to Lucifer himself! What the hell kind of knight are you? The devil s[hit]s and you and your army swallow [it]. You aren't fit to have the sons of Christians under you; we aren't afraid of your army, and we'll fight you on land and sea. You Babylonian busboy, Macedonian mechanic, Jerusalem beerbrewer, Alexandrian goatskinner, swineherd of Upper and Lower Egypt, Armenian pig, Tatar goat, Kamenets hangman, Podolian thief, grandson of the Evil Serpent himself, and buffoon of all the world and the netherworld, fool of our God, swine's snout, mare's a[ssho]le, butcher's dog, unbaptized brow, may the devil steam your a[s]s! That's how the cossacks answer you, you nasty glob of spit! You're unfit to rule true Christians. We don't know the date because we don't have a calendar, the moon [=month] is in the sky, and the year is in a book, and the day is the same with us as with you, so go kiss our b[ut]t!

Chief Hetman Zaxarcenko with all the Zaporozhian Host

### III

#### Notes

Before proceeding with the numbered notes, I should like to make a general comment on the nature of the translation. While literalness has been the primary goal of the translation, I have sought to avoid sacrificing the tone of the letter for its sake. Thus, although the second person singular pronoun *ty* corresponds historically to English *thou*, I have chosen to use the modern English *you*. This is because the use of *ty* in the original gives the letter a tone of offensive familiarity, i.e. of insult, while the use of *thou* in the English translation would have given it a quaint, old-fashioned, almost Biblical (heaven forbid!) tone. Similarly, I have translated *kuxar'* as 'busboy', rather than with the more literal 'cook' or 'scullion', because the former is not as low-status, i.e. abusive, while the latter is too archaic to have the desired impact. The same situation motivated my translation of *kolesnyk* by the contemporary 'mechanic' rather than the literal 'wheelwright', since our modern mechanic can be said, in a way, to be the functional equivalent of the wheelwright of earlier times.

1. Glossed in E as *cort*" 'devil'.
2. E2 and 3 *turec'kij*.
3. E *tovarys*".
4. E *sekretar'*.
5. E *vykidae* 'puke, abort, void'.
6. E lacks *ty i*.
7. E *vijsko*.
8. E and K2 *pozirae* 'devour, eat up'.
9. E *xrestijans'kix*".
10. E3 *pod*".
11. Glossed in E as *imet'* 'have'.
12. E1 *vijska*.
13. E *boimos'*.
14. E *byt'cja*.
15. E lacks *my*.
16. *Kuxar'* literally 'cook, scullion'. See introduction to this section.
17. E *makedonsij*.
18. *Kolesnyk*" literally 'wheelwright'. See introduction to this section. E1 has *kolesnik*".
19. E2 and E3 *erusalims'kij*.
20. Glossed in E as *pivovar*" 'beerbrewer'.
21. E *aleksandrijskij*.
22. *Velikogo j malogo* literally 'great and small' or 'greater and lesser'.
23. E *tatarskij*.
24. Glossed in E as *koze*<sup>TMl</sup> 'goat'. Actually, *sagajdak* (also *sajdak* and *saadaik*) means 'crossbow' or 'quiver' (from Tatar *sagdaq* ). The word intended is *sajgak* (also *sajgai* from Chagtai *saigak* ) 'steppe antelope'. This mistake occurs in all published versions of the letter (v. addendum).



25. E1 *kamineckij*, E2 and 3 *kamenec'kij*.
26. E *podoljans'kij*.
27. *Zlodijuka* literally 'evil-doer' but modern 'thief'. Both Evarnickij and Kostomarov point out that this epithet and the preceding one refer to the destruction of Kamenets and Podolia by the Sultan. Kostomarov adds that since this occurred in 1672, the letter must have been written after that date.
28. Glossed in E as *d'javol''* 'devil'. Actually, *gaspida* means 'asp, serpent'. In view of the literal meaning and Evarnickij's gloss, I have chosen a translation implying the Original Tempter over Guerney's *basilisk*.
29. E *svitu*.
30. E1 *podsvitu*, E2 and 3 *pidsvitu*.
31. Glossed in E as *glupec''* 'fool, stupidhead'.
32. E *xaj by vzjav'' tebe cort''* 'may the devil take you'.
33. Glossed in E as *poganec''* 'rascal'. Since the root *plju-* refers to spit, and since the adjective *pljugavyj* means 'loathesome, despicable', I have chosen the translation *you nasty glob of spit* over Guerney's *thou basest of all runts*.
34. E *nevgoden''*.
35. E *xrestijan''*.
36. E1 *neba*.
37. E lacks *a*.
38. E lacks *i*.
39. E *jak'' i u vas''*.
40. E *pociluj za te os' - kudy nas''!* 'kiss us on the you-know-where!'.
41. E *ataman*.
42. E *Ivan'' Sirko*. I can find no reference to a hetmen from this period named Zaxarcenko. Kostomarov himself says that the letter must have been written while Sirko was chief hetman.
43. E *zo*.
44. E2 and 3 *kostom''*.
45. E *zaporozs'kim''*.

## IV

### Linguistic Analysis

Since the Zaporozhian letter was probably written in the southern Ukraine at the end of the seventeenth century, the main concern of this analysis will be the demonstration of the extent to which phonological, morphological, and lexical features which came to be distinctly Ukrainian are reflected in the letter. We will treat phonological developments first.

#### Phonology

1. Common Slavic *jat'* gives Ukrainian /i/: *zlod ijuka, sv ita, pidsv ita, r iznyc'ka, tob i knyzyč i, v irnyx", m isjac', neb i, poc iluj, vs im"*.
2. Common Slavic /o/ and /e/ give /i/ in closed syllables: *v ijs'ko, syn i v", p id"v i js'ka, p idsvita, v idkazaly, kam inec'kyj, but pod ol's'kyj vs. Ukr. pod il's'kyj, k os vs. Ukr. k is*.
3. Common Slavic /i/ and /y/ merge. In version K this is represented by *u*, while version E uses **Ѥ**. None of the nonnormalized versions are consistent, however. Thus K1 has **ѤИ** instead of **БИ**, **ХРИСТІАНЬСК ІХ** instead of **-КИХ**, **АЛЕКСАНДРІЙСЬКИЙ** for **-ДР ІЙСЬКИЙ**, **БАБІЛОНСКИЙ** for **БАБІЛ-**, **МАТЕРИ** for **МАТЕР** *i*, and the conjunction *i* 'and' is consistently spelt *u*. This last inconsistency could be a mere orthographic peculiarity, however, since *u* never occurs initially in Ukrainian. Thus the opposition *i/u* would not be distinctive, and the older spelling, viz. *u* could be maintained. Version E consistently has *i* or *u* after /k/, although **Ѥ** should be used if the orthography were to be consistent, e.g. *vyk ydae* for *vyk i ae* (cf. note 5), *kozak i* for *kozak y*, and all adjectives are in *-kij* instead of *-kyj*. Also note the words in notes 8, 9, and 35. Examples of the merger in version K are all those words with orthographic *u* where Russian has **Ѥ** while in version E the examples comprise words with **Ѥ** where Russian has *u*. Since, with all the abovementioned exceptions, versions E and K are both consistent, we shall only present the examples from version K illustrating the merger. The examples from version E would be all those words in version K with graphic *u* which are not mentioned here: *ty lycar', syniv", my, byt'sja, kobyljaca, nekresčennyj, virnyx", kosovyj*.
4. The pronunciation of /v/ and /l/ as [w] is reflected in the following words: *pariv"* (Rus. *paril*), *vgoden* (Rus. and Ukr. *ugoden*), *misjac' u nebi, a god" u knvzyci* (elsewhere the preposition is *v"*).
5. The conjunction *i* becomes *j* after a vowel: *velikogo j malogo*.
6. /r'/ becomes hard word-finally, although it can reappear as soft, e.g., when inflectional suffixes are added. This change is only reflected in the spelling of the word *sekretar"* (Rus. *sekretar'*) in version K. The words *lycar', kuxar',* and *svynar'* maintain the old spelling, while *ljucyperja* (Rus. and Ukr. *-ra*)

appears to have a gratuitously soft ending. As in the case of the spelling of *i* 'and', however, this is probably just a matter of preserving an archaic spelling. In some older Ukrainian dictionaries, nouns ending in morphophonemic *r'* are spelled *р'ѣ*, despite the fact that the pronunciation is hard in final position. Thus, *sekretar''* takes on the value of a misspelling indicating the true pronunciation of that epoch, while the other words, all spelled *r'* are morphophonemic spellings or graphic archaisms.

7. /e/ becomes /o/ after chuintantes and in certain words where Russian has /e/. There is also evidence of *okanie*, i.e. the pronunciation of unstressed /o/ as [o]: *tvogo* (Rus. *tvoego*), *vs'ogo* (Rus. *vsego*), *nasogo* (Rus. *nasego*), *tobi* (Rus. *tebe*), *kosovyj* (Rus. *kosevoj*), *kosom* (Ukr. *kosem*); *kozaki* (Rus. *kazaki*), *otoman* (Ukr. *otaman*, Rus. *otaman*).
8. Epenthetic /v/: *vidkazaly* (Rus. *otkazali*).
9. /c/ remains soft: *misjac'*, *knyzyci*.
10. /f/ is avoided: *ljucyperja* (Rus. *ljucyfera*, Ukr. *ljucypera*).
11. /s/ is hard: *budes''*, *tovarsč''* or *tovarys''*.
12. The adjectival suffix which is -sk- in Russian and -s'k- in Ukrainian occurs in both variants in all versions of the letter. For the fourteen words containing this suffix, the distribution is the following:

	-s'k-	-sk-	-sk-
K1*	10	2	2
E1	7	7	0
E2 and 3	9	5	0

\* K2 is normalized, and therefore has been excluded.

As can be seen, version K is the most consistently Ukrainian in its character. If the words *tatar'skyj* (E *tatarskij*) and *xrystyjan'skix''* (E *xrestijans'kix''*), which for version K were made to comprise the separate column -'sk-, are simply misspellings resulting from graphic metathesis, as seems most likely, since there is no justification for *r'* or *n'* in those words, then version K is much more consistently Ukrainian in this respect than any form of version E.

## Morphology

In terms of morphology, the various versions of the letter all show a mixture of Russian and Ukrainian features:

1. The Nominal System
  - a. The Vocative. All versions of the letter have *pljugavce* (from *pljugavec'*), which is a vocative form and shows the preservation of the first palatalization.

Although most of the letter is spent calling the Sultan names, this is the only vocative form. It is also the only single-word insult in the entire letter.

b. The Genitive. In modern Ukrainian, a large number of masculine nouns have their genitive singular in /u/. The words *svit*, *pidsvit*, and *Egipt* are all of this type. In version K, the genitive in /u/ is entirely lacking, while version E has /u/ for the first two words but not for the third.

c. The Locative. The form in /i/ is a phonological development (v. part 1 of the description of the phonology, in this section). The reflex of the second palatalization is preserved in version E's loc. sg. *knyzi* (nom. sg. *knyga*), while version K's diminutive *knyzyci* (nom. sg. *knyzyca*) does not permit the alternation to appear.

2. The Verbal System is basically Ukrainian

a. 3 sg. pres. in *-ø*: *sere*, *pozivae* (E and K2 *pozirae*)

b. 1 pl. pres. in *-mo*: *boimos'* but *budem*" (this form also occurs in Mod. Ukr.)

c. Infinitive in *-ty*: *maty*, but *byt'sja* (Mod. Ukr. *bytysja*)

d. Masc. past in *-v*" (phonetic [w]): *pariv*" (E *vzjav*" ) (Cf. part 4 of the phonology)

e. The form *esi* 'thou art' is a clear archaism. Mod. Ukr. has *je* for all persons, and Mod. Rus. has virtually eliminated the present tense of 'be'.

3. Pronouns" v. section 7 of the phonology.

4. Prepositions and Conjunctions: v. sections 4 and 5 of the phonology.

Lexicon

By way of studying the lexical characteristics of the Zaporozhian letter, we shall give a list of noteworthy lexical items in the order of their occurrence in the letter:

sajtan: This is a Ukrainian borrowing from Turkic. It is also found in East

Russian dialects, but the common Russian form is *satana*.

tovarysc": Literary Ukrainian is *tovarys*, as in version E, but the form with *sc* also occurs.

jakyj and jak": = Ukr., Rus. is *kakoj* and *kak*.

- lycar': = Ukr., Rus. is *rycar'*, which also occurs in Ukr.
- pozivae: This word does not occur with the meaning 'eat' in Rus. *Pozira-*  
is both Rus. and Ukr.
- maty, maem": = Ukr.
- brovarnyk": = Ukr. (from Polish), it also occurs in West Russian dialects.
- aleksandryjs'kyj: Ukr. *oleksandrijs'kyj*, Rus. *aleksandrijskij*.
- kozolup: I could not find this word in any modern dictionary.
- armjans'ka: Ukr. *virmens'ka*, Rus. *armjanskaja*.
- sagajdak": See note 24 (Section III) and addendum.
- kat": = Ukr. (from Polish), borrowed by Russian from Ukrainian.
- zlodijuka: = Ukr., also *zlodijuga*. The Russian is *vorjujga*.
- gaspida: = Ukr., Rus. is *aspida*.
- blazen': = Ukr., also in Vasmer's dictionary, and the dictionary by Dal', where it is labeled as Southern and Western and is glossed as 'minor, young and foolish, inexperienced'.
- riznyc'ka (from riznyk"): = Ukr., the Rus. *reznik* is dialectal, or refers only to a Kosher butcher.
- ottak": = Ukr., Rus. is *vot tak*.
- pljugavec': = Ukr.
- bo: = Ukr. (or archaism).
- se: = Ukr. (or archaism). Mod. Ukr. has *ce*.
- kos: also Ukr. *kis* 'cossack camp' from Turkic *kos*. Rus. *kos*.

In the E version we also have the Ukrainian *kudy* (Rus. *kuda*), *os'* (Rus. *vot*), and *zo* (Rus. *so*, which is the form used in the last line of version K). Also, the construction *xaj by* for the optative, which occurs in version E, is Ukrainian.

## ADDENDUM

After this article was written, an additional version of the Zaporozhian letter came to my attention. The third version is similar to those already studied, but it has some distinctive features worthy of comment. The differences in the number, order, and combination of elements, however, are such that the incorporation of this version into the framework of the article would be extremely awkward. I have thus decided to present the text of the letter with a brief commentary as an addendum. The letter appeared in volume five of *Kryptajdia* (originally edited and published by Friedrich Salomon Krauss in Heilbronn and Paris between 1883 and 1905, reissued by J.G. Blaschke Verlag, Darmstadt, 1975) pages 165-167, where it is said to have been collected in Niznij Dunavec, Dobrudza, in 1882. A version of the Turkish sultan's provoking letter is also given, but it does not differ significantly from the version already presented in the body of this article, except for the fact that it, like the version of the Zaporozhian letter with which it is given, is shorter and in a basically modern, normalized Ukrainian. Both letters were published with French translations. I will now give the text of the Zaporozhian letter as it appeared in *Kryptajdia* along with an English translation.

### The Letter

#### Одповідь Султанові турецькому од козаків запорожських

Який ти у чорта лицарь: чорт сере, а ти і твое військо поїдаєте!  
Ти олександрійський броварник, козацький сагайдак, подольський кат,  
віменська свиня, свиняча морда, кобиляча срака, пізницька собака! Не  
будеш-ти годен синами християнськими володіти, ми землею і водою,  
битися будемо з тобою, нехреєний лоб, мать твою ёб!...

Ми числа не знаєм, календаря не маєм, а день у нас як у вас:  
поцілуй у гуздо насъ!

### The Transliteration

#### Odpovid' Sultanovi turec'komu od kozakiv zaporozs'kyx

Jakyj ty u<sup>1</sup> corta lycar': cort sere a ty i tvoje vijs'ko pojidajete<sup>2</sup>! Ty  
oleksandrijs'kyj brovarnyk, kozac'kyj sagajdak<sup>3</sup>, podol's'kyj kat, vormens'ka svynja,  
svynjaca morda, kobyljaca sraка, riznyc'ka sobaka! Ne budes-ty<sup>4</sup> goden synamy  
xrystijanš'kymy volodity<sup>5</sup>, ŷmy zemleju i vodoju, bytysja budemo ŷ toboju, nexrescenyj  
lob, mat' tvoju job<sup>6</sup>!

My ciska ne znajem, kalendarja ne majem, a den' u nas jak u vas: pociluj u<sup>7</sup>  
guzdno<sup>8</sup> nas'!

### The Translation

## Answer to the Turkish Sultan from the Zaporozhian Cossacks

What the hell kind of knight are you: the devil shits and you and your army eat [it]! You Alexandrian beerbrewer, Cossack quiver, Podolian hangman, Armenian pig, swine's snout, mare's asshole, butcher's dog! You're not fit to command the sons of Christians, we'll fight you on land and sea, unbaptized brow, fuck your mother!

We don't know the date, we don't have a calendar, but the day with us is the same as with you: kiss our ass!

The differences are readily apparent from a comparison of the two texts and the notes in the body of this article, and so I will restrict my comments to a few salient features.

1. In those places where the forms of the preposition *v/u* are in free variation, *u* was chosen as opposed to *v* in E and K.
2. *pojidajete* 'you eat'.
3. *sagajdak* : This difference is the most interesting (although *nexrescenyj lob, mat' tvoju job* is the most poetic). The French translation gives *čarquois* 'quiver' for *sagajdak* , but it is the different adjective, viz. *kozac'kyj* 'Cossack' (vs *tatar'skyj* "Tatar' in versions E and K) which suggests that perhaps *sagajdak* , and not *sajgak* 'steppe antelope', was actually intended. Given the shape and function of a quiver, i.e. it is sheath-like (cf. Latin *vagina* 'sheath' and 'cunt') and is used for holding long, straight, rigid objects, could the epithet *kozac'kyj sagajdak* possibly be interpreted as being a metaphorical rendering of some insult such as 'The Cossacks fuck you' or at least 'The Cossacks fill you full of their arrows'? Since the nature of the letter is otherwise quite direct, it seems unlikely. Nevertheless, the possibility cannot be dismissed without further evidence.
4. The hyphen should not be there.
5. *volodity* 'to command'.
6. *mat' tvoju job* 'fuck your mother' (literally 'I/you/he/it fucked. . .'): This insult is taken directly from the Russian. Even when it is uttered using Ukrainian words, which would be *МАТ ІР ТВОЮ ІЇ* *matir tvoju jib* (actually, the pronunciation would be more like *jeb* , but I have chosen to use *ji* as a transliterating device to distinguish *i*<sup>TM</sup> from *ε* which I transliterate *je* .), the speaker is felt to be swearing in the "Muscovite" manner. This is the only Russianism in the text.
7. See note 1.
8. This is illiterate. It should be *guzno* .

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