

HIERO-SLAVICA SOLYMITANA

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

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I

Historical Commentary

One of the most famous 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 "Zaporožcy pišut pis'mo tureckomu sultanu" – "The Zaporozhians Write a Letter to the Turkish Sultan", 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 koševoj Ivan Dmitrovič Sirko stovaryiščami otvečajut nasmeškami" – "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 *Ogonek* 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 Sič' (Russian *Sčč'*). 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. Storožev (Pokrovskij 1911:40–41) calls both letters "legendary", i.e. not authentic, but adds that they accurately reflect the spirit of the times.

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sěrko 'grey dog'), to whom it is traditionally assigned, since he died in Sič' in 1680 (Solov'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 Vyšče-Tarasivky in the Ekaterinoslav (modern Dnepropetrovsk) district, was published in several works by Ėvarnickij (1894:98, 1895:518; cf. also Šubravs'ka 1972:39), and this is the version quoted by Storožev (Pokrovskij 1911:40-41). It contains only one obscene word and will be referred to as version E (as in Ėvarnickij or Expurgated). When it is necessary to differentiate between the three publications of the letter mentioned above, E1 will be used for Ėvarnickij 1894, E2 for his 1895, and E3 for Storožev, i.e. Pokrovskij 1911. Another version was published by N. I. Kostomarov in 1872, and a normalized Ukrainian version of it is quoted by Golobuckij (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 Ėvarnickij and Kostomarov (but neither Storožev 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 some 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 Sič', 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,

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 Ėvarnickij'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 *u* and Ukrainian *u*; *i* = Russian *i*, *ї* and *и*, Ukrainian *i* and *і*; *e* = Russian *e* and *э* 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 существующими; необыкновенный рыцарь, никем непобедимый; хранитель неотступный гроба Иисуса Христа; попечитель Бога самого; надежда и утешение мусульман, смущение и великий защитник христиан, повелеваю вам, запорожские казаки, сдатьсь мне добровольно и без всякого сопротивления, и меня вашими нападениями не заставьте беспокоить!

Султан турецкий Мухамед

2. Запорожцы — турецкому Султану

Ти, шайтанъ турецкий, проклятого чорта братъ и товарищ и самого

військо поживає. Не будеш ти годень синів християнських під собою мати; твого війська ми не боїмося, землею и водою будем битися ми з тобою. Вавилонський ти кухарь, македонський колесник, іерусалимський броварник, александрийський козолуп, великого й малого Египта свинарь, армянська свиня, татарський сагайдак, камінецький кат, подольський злодюка, самого гаспида внук и всього світа и підсвіта блазень, а нашого бога дурень, свиняча морда, кобиляча с[ра]ка, різницька собака, некрещенний лоб, ж [оп]у бы твою чорт парив! Оттак тобі козаки відказали, плюгавче, не вгодень еси матери вірних християн. Числа не знаєм, бо календаря не маєм, місяць у небі, а годь у книжиці а день такий и у нас як у вас, поцлуй за се в [узн]о нас!

Кошовий отомань Захарченко со всім кошомь запорозькимь

The Transliterations

1. Sultan Muxamed IV k zaporožskim kazakam

Ja, sultan, syn Magometa, brat – solnca i lunny, vnuk i namestnik Božij, vladetel' vsech carstv: Makedonskogo, Vavilonskogo i Ierusalimskogo, velikogo i malogo Egipta: car' nad carjami; vlastitel' nad vsemi suščestvujuščimi; neobyknovennyj ryсар', nikem nepobedimyj; xranitel' neotstupnyj groba Isusa Xrista; popečitel' Boga samogo; nadeža i utešenie musul'man, smuščenje i velikij zaščitnik xristian, povelevaju vam, zaporožskie kazaki, sdat'sja mne dobrovol'no i bez vsjakogo soprotivlenija, i menja vašimi napadenijami ne zastav'te bezpokoit'!

Sultan tureckij Muxamed

2. Zaporozcy – tureckomu Sultanu

Ty šajtan¹ tureckij², prokljatogo čorta brat" i tovaryšč"³ i samogo ljucyperja sekretar"⁴! jakyj ty v" čorta lycar', čort" š[er]e⁵, a ty i⁶ tvoe vijs'ko⁷ poživae⁸. Ne budeš" ty goden" syniv" xrystyjan'skix"⁹ pid"¹⁰ soboju maty¹¹; tvogo vijs'ka¹² my ne boimosja¹³, zemleju i vodoju budem" byt'sja¹⁴ my¹⁵ z" toboju. Vavylonskyj ty kuxar'¹⁶, makedons'kyj¹⁷ kolesnyk"¹⁸, ierusalims'kyj¹⁹ brovarnyk"²⁰, aleksandryjskyj²¹ kozolup", velikogo j malogo²² Egipta svynar', armjans'ka svynja, tatar'skyj²³ sagajdak"²⁴, kaminec'kyj²⁵ kat", podol's'kyj²⁶ zlodijuka²⁷, самого гаспида²⁸ внук" i vsjogo svita²⁹ i pidsvita³⁰ blazen"³¹, a našogo boga duren', svynjača morda, kobyljača s[ra]ka, riznyč'ka sobaka, nekreščennyj lob", ž[op]ju by tvoju čort" pariv"³²! Ottak" tobi kozaky vidkazaly, pljugavče³³, ne vgoden"³⁴ esi matery virnyx" xrystyjan"³⁵. Čisla ne znaem", bo kalendarja ne maem", misjac' u nebi³⁶, a³⁷ god" u knyžyci a den' takyj i³⁸ u nas" jak" u³⁹ vas", pociluj za se v" g[uzn]o⁴⁰ nas"!

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[ss]hole, 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 Zaxarčenko 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

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 *čort* "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 *požirae* 'devour, eat up'.
9. E *xrestijans* 'kix'.
10. E3 *pod*'.
11. Glossed in E as *imēt* '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 *makedonskij*.
18. *Kolesnyk*'' literally 'wheelwright'. See introduction to this section. E1 has *kolesnik*'.
19. E2 and 3 *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 *kōzēl* 'goat'. Actually, *sagajdāk* (also *sajdāk* and *saadāk*) means 'crossbow' or 'quiver' (from Tatar *sağdaq*). The word intended is *sajgāk* (also *sajgá* from Chagatai *saigāk*) '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 Èvarnickij and Kosto-

tion 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 Èvarnickij's gloss, I have chosen a translation implying the Original Tempter over Guerneý'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 čort*'' '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 'loathsome, despicable', I have chosen the translation *you nasty glob of spit* over Guerneý's *thou basest born of 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. È *Ivan*'' *Sirko*. I can find no reference to a hetman from this period named Zaxarčenko. Kostomarov himself says that the letter must have been written while Sirko was chief hetman.
43. E *zo*.
44. E2 and 3 *koštom*'.
45. E *zaporožs* '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/: *zlodijuka*, *svita*, *pidsvita*, *riznyc*'ka,

2. Common Slavic /o/ and /e/ give /i/ in closed syllables: *vij's'ko, syniv''*, *pid'' vij's'ka, pidsvita, vidkazaly, kaminec'kyj*, but *pod ol's'kyj* vs. Ukr. *pod il's'kyj, k oš* vs. Ukr. *kiš*.
3. Common Slavic /i/ and /y/ merge. In version K this is represented by *u*, while version E uses *ы*. None of the nonnormalized versions are consistent, however. Thus K 1 has *бы* instead of *би*, *христианьскіх* instead of *-ких, александрійський* for *-дрійський, вавилонский* for *вавіл-, матери* for *матери*, 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 *ы* should be used if the orthography were to be consistent, e.g. *vykydae* for *vykidae* (cf. note 5), *kozaki* for *kozaky*, 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 *ы* while in version E the examples comprise words with *и* where Russian has *u*. Since, with 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''*, *ny, byt'sja, kobyljača, nekreščennyj, virnyx''*, *košovyy*.
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 knvžyci* (elsewhere the preposition is *v''*).
5. The conjunction *i* becomes *j* after a vowel: *velikogo j malogo*.
6. /c'/ 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 *рь*, 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*), *našogo* (Rus. *našego*), *tobi* (Rus. *tebe*), *košovyyj* (Rus. *koševof*), *košom* (Ukr. *košem*); *kozaki* (Rus. *kazaki*) *otoman* (Ukr. *otaman*, Rus. *ataman*).
8. Epenthetic /v/: *vidkazaly* (Rus. *otkazali*).

10. /f/ is avoided: *ljucyperja* (Rus. *ljucyfera*, Ukr. *ljucypera*).
11. /s/ is hard: *budeš''*, *tovarsč''* or *tovarsš''*.
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 *pljugavče* (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. *knygu*), while version K's diminutive *knyžyci* (nom. sg. *knyžyca*) does not permit the alternation to appear.
2. The Verbal System is basically Ukrainian
 - a. 3 sg. pres. in -Ø: *sere, poživae* (E and K2 *požirae*)
 - b. 1 pl. pres. in -mo: *boimos'* but *budem''* (this form also occurs in Mod. Ukr.)

- 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:

šajtan:	This is a Ukrainian borrowing from Turkic. It is also found in East Russian dialects, but the common Russian form is <i>satana</i> .
tovaryšč'':	Literary Ukrainian is <i>tovaryš</i> , as in version E, but the form with <i>šč</i> also occurs.
jakyj and jak'':	= Ukr., Rus. is <i>kakoj</i> and <i>kak</i> .
lycar':	= Ukr., Rus. is <i>rycar'</i> , which also occurs in Ukr.
poživae:	This word does not occur with the meaning 'eat' in Rus. <i>Požira-</i> is both Rus. and Ukr.
maty, maem'':	= Ukr.
brovarnyk'':	= Ukr. (from Polish), it also occurs in West Russian dialects.
aleksandryjs'kyj:	Ukr. <i>oleksandrijs'kyj</i> , Rus. <i>aleksandrijskij</i> .
kozolup:	I could not find this word in any modern dictionary.
armjans'ka:	Ukr. <i>virmens'ka</i> , Rus. <i>armjanskaja</i> .
sagajdak'':	See note 24 (Section III) and addendum.
kat'':	= Ukr. (from Polish), borrowed by Russian from Ukrainian.
zlodijuka:	= Ukr., also <i>zlodijuga</i> . The Russian is <i>vorjuga</i> .
gaspida:	= Ukr., Rus. is <i>aspida</i> .
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. <i>reznik</i> is dialectal, or refers only to a Kosher butcher.
ottak'':	= Ukr., Rus. is <i>vot tak</i> .
pljugavec':	= Ukr.

se: = Ukr. (or archaism). Mod. Ukr. has *ce*.
koš: also Ukr. *kiš* 'cossack camp' from Turkic *koş*. Rus. *koš*.

In the E version we also have the Ukrainianisms *kudy* (Rus. *kuda*), *os'* (Rus. *voj*), and *zo* (Rus. *zo*, 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 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 *Kryptadja* (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 Nižnij Dunavec, Dobrudža, 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 *Kryptadja* along with an English translation.

The Letter

Одповідь Султанові турецькому од козаків запорожських.

Який ти у чорта лицарь: чорт сере, а ти і твоє військо поїдаєте! Ти олександрійський броварник, козацький сагайдак, подольський кат, вірменська свиня, свиняча морда, кобиляча срака, різницька собака! Не будеш-ти годен синами християнськими володіти, ми землею і водою, битися будемо з тобою, нехрещений лоб, мати твою їб!...

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

The Transliteration

Odpovid' Sultanovi turec'komu od kozakiv zaporožs'kyx

Jakyj ty u¹ čorta lycar': čort sere a ty i tvoje vijs'ko pojidajete²! Ty olexsandrijs'kyj brovarnyk, kozac'kyj sagajdak³, podol's'kyj kat, virmens'ka svynja, svynjača morda, kobyljača sraка, riznyc'ka sobaka! Ne budeš-ty⁴ goden synamy xrvstians'kvmv voloditv⁵ my zemleiu i vodoiu butusia budemo z toboiu nasъ

My čisla ne znamem, kalendarja ne majem, a den' u nas jak u vas: pociluj u⁷ guzdno⁸ 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 *nexreščenyj lob, mat' tvoju job* is the most poetic). The French translation gives *carquois* '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 *матір твою їб 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* 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.

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