

Political-Personal Intrigue on the Ottoman Frontier in Hetman Bohdan Khmelnytsky's Relations with the Porte: The Case of Ramažān Beg vs. Velī Beg

Victor Ostapchuk

One of the more enigmatic aspects of the great Ukrainian revolt that began in 1648 is the foreign policy of its leader, Hetman Bohdan Khmelnytsky. Mykhailo Hrushevsky presented that policy as a conglomerate of several concurrent and to a large extent contradictory systems. That is, in his efforts to find a place in the international community for the new Ukrainian entity, the Cossack hetman navigated between and within several often overlapping systems of states and powers: an anti-Catholic bloc of Orthodox and Protestant states (Muscovy, Ukraine, Transylvania, Sweden, Moldavia, Wallachia) directed against the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth; an anti-Ottoman coalition involving Moldavia, Wallachia, and Transylvania—vassal states of the Ottomans—as well as Muscovy, the Commonwealth itself, and even Venice. Yet another system involved Ukraine and the Crimea—with, possibly, the Commonwealth—against Muscovy, the Don Cossacks, and the Circassians. Finally, there was the Ottoman system, in which Ukraine would find a place in the orbit of the Porte, alongside the Crimean Khanate, Moldavia, Wallachia, and Transylvania. What makes the international relations of this era so inscrutable is that Khmelnytsky operated within several of these systems at practically the same time. Also, the hetman's international strategies were clearly conditioned by unstable and changing internal and external exigencies. Frank Sysyn has recently proposed looking at Khmelnytsky's elasticities not only in terms of practical politics but also with regard to his use of political and cultural ideology as conditioned by the marginal, frontier status of Cossack Ukraine.¹ In doing so, we need to keep in mind that the hetman was a true son of the multiple frontiers that crossed and

¹ Frank Sysyn, "The Political Worlds of Bohdan Khmel'nyts'kyi," *Palaeoslavica* 10 (2002): 197–209, esp. 197–98.

converged in Ukraine of his time: the Slavic-Turkic, the Orthodox-Catholic, and the “European”-East Slavic, to name the most obvious ones.

Though there are gaps in our knowledge and understanding of all the directions of Khmelnytsky's foreign policy, arguably the most significant lacunae relate to the southern, Ottoman set of vectors, which included the Crimean Khanate, Moldavia, Wallachia, and Transylvania. Moreover, research on this sector has tended to focus on the hetman's relations with ruling elites in the centers, such as Istanbul, Bahçesaray (Bakhchysarai), Iași, and so forth. However, the hetman also had frequent contacts with representatives of subordinate levels of power, for example, Tatar *sultāns* (princes) and Ottoman *begs* (governors), contacts in which the lower players were not necessarily mere intermediaries between the hetman and the centers but also, quite often, independent actors as well, ready to subvert the aims and policies of their superiors in their own interests.

Presented here in facsimile, transcription, and translation are three documents preserved in the Topkapı Palace Archive (Topkapı Sarayı Arşivi, henceforth TSA) that have to do with such lower-level contacts. They relate to a conflict between two Ottoman officials at the frontier outposts of Özi (Ochakiv) and Qıl Burun (Kinburn)² at the mouth of the Dnipro River. A study of these documents sheds light on Khmelnytsky's relations with the Porte, the Crimean Khanate, and, indeed, the large region separating these players, commonly known to the Ottomans as the “Özi frontier” (*Özi serhaddi*).

The main heroes of our documents are Ramazān Beg (also known as Deñiz/Dengiz Oğlu [“son of Deñiz/Dengiz”] Ramazān Beg), governor (*sancaq begi*) of Qıl Burun as early as 1650 until late 1652, and Velī Beg (also known as Velī Ağā), governor of Qıl Burun from late 1652 for an indeterminate period. The first document (E 3495, henceforth **A**) is a report from an unknown official or, perhaps, a member of the garrison at Özi or Qıl Burun, who is identified only as Aḥmed. The other two documents (E 7604 and E 4749, henceforth **B** and **C**) are reports from the Crimean khan, İslām Gerey III (1644–54).³ None of the missives has a

² Located at the tip of a narrow sand spit on the left bank of the mouth of the Dnipro and opposite the fortress and town of Özi, the fortress of Qıl Burun (lit. “Hair Point”) was the seat of a province (*sancaq/livā*) comprising both sides of the lower Dnipro area (including the town of Özi itself). Özi in turn (though often in practice Silistre [Silistra] on the Danube) was the seat of a major governor-generalship (*beglerbegilik/eyālet*), roughly comprising the northwestern and western areas of the Black Sea region and containing the province of Qıl Burun.

³ The documents are of the typical report (*‘arz*) type sent by Ottoman military and administrative officials, as well as the Crimean khan, to the sultan or one of his viziers. The honorific formulas of letters and reports by the Crimean khans to the Porte could be very elaborate; this is evident in the rhetorical flourishes of the *inscriptio* at the beginning of

specific addressee, and they could hardly have been intended solely for the sultan, Mehmed IV (r. 1648–87), who was a child at the time. But given that all three ended up being preserved in the TSA, the former sultanic archive, it is likely that at some point they were delivered to the palace, whether for consideration or deposit. **A** could have been meant for the grand vizier⁴ or other high official at the Porte.⁵ **B**, judging by the loftiness of the opening *inscriptio*, might have been meant for the sultan, especially given that Crimean khans, thanks to their high standing in the Ottoman hierarchy, typically wrote directly to the sultan. Again, however, an Ottoman vizier, in all likelihood the grand vizier, who was then Tarḥuncı Aḥmed Pasha, and not the young sultan was the actual recipient of the letter.⁶ **C**, its even more elaborate *inscriptio* notwithstanding, was not directly intended for the sultan, for the beginning and conclusion have invocations in the name of the Ottoman vizierate; hence the recipient must have been the grand vizier, Tarḥuncı Aḥmed Pasha.⁷

C. On the ‘*arz*’-type document, see my articles “The Publication of Documents on the Crimean Khanate in the Topkapı Sarayı: New Sources for the History of the Black Sea Basin,” *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 6 (1982): 500–28, and “The Publication of Documents on the Crimean Khanate in the Topkapı Sarayı: The Documentary Legacy of Crimean-Ottoman Relations,” *Turcica* 19 (1987): 247–76.

⁴ Internal politics during the early years of the then child sultan (b. 1642) was one of the Porte’s most turbulent. Over the timespan of these documents five grand viziers served: Qara Murād Pasha (21 May 1649–5 August 1650), Melek Aḥmed Pasha (5 August 1650–21 August 1651), Gürcü Mehmed Pasha (27 September 1651–20 June 1652), Tarḥuncı Aḥmed Pasha (20 June 1652–21 March 1653), Derviş Mehmed Pasha (21 March 1653–28 October 1654). See İsmail Hami Danişmend, *İzahlı Osmanlı Tarihi Kronolojisi*, 5 (Istanbul: Türkiye Yayınevi, 1971), 38–39. There is also somewhat contradictory information that Siyâvuş Pasha had a short term as grand vizier (21 August–30 November 1651); see Mehmed Süreyya, *Sicill-i Osmani*, vol. 5 (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı, 1996), 1518.

⁵ It should be noted that although the addressee of **A** is referred to as *sultān*, this title was also commonly used to refer to persons of high standing, and hence *sultānum*, as it occurs in **A**, can be translated into English as *inter alia* “my lord,” as well as “my [Ottoman] sultan.” See my article “Five Documents from the Topkapı Palace Archive on the Ottoman Defense of the Black Sea against the Cossacks (1639),” in *Raiyyet Rüsümü: Essays Presented to Halil İnalçık on His Seventieth Birthday by his Colleagues and Students*, 49–104, esp. 53, 65, 68 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Printing Office, 1987), vol. 11 (1987) of *Journal of Turkish Studies*.

⁶ For this reason most of the original letters from Crimean khans to the Porte are preserved in the former archive of the sultans (TSA), as opposed to what contains the archives of the grand viziers, today the Ottoman Archive of the Prime Ministry (BOA). See *Le Khanate de Crimée dans les Archives du Musée de Palais de Topkapı*, ed. Alexandre Bennigsen et al (Paris and the Hague: Mouton, 1978).

⁷ Documents **B** and **C** have been partly published (brief contents rendering only, without facsimile or text transcription) in *Le Khanate de Crimée*, 196–97. In that volume, document **C** is presented twice: once on p. 196, correctly, as E 4749, and then again on p. 197, with the archival reference code E 4743/2, as if it were a different document. From the

From 1650 until early 1653 Ramazān Beg occurs in the sources as a supporter, perhaps even a close ally, of Khmelnytsky. In late 1650, Ramazān Beg discovered on behalf of Antin Zhdanovych, Khmelnytsky's envoy returning from the Porte, that the substance of a secret Polish embassy headed by Wojciech Bieczyński to the Crimea was a plan to break up the Cossack-Tatar alliance, which was a mainstay of the hetman's war with Poland.⁸ In the spring of 1651, on the eve of the campaign that was to lead to the Cossack defeat at Berestechko, Ramazān Beg wrote a letter to the hetman in which he said that Velī Beg—whom he refers to as a “scoundrel of a man”—who was also in Özi/Qıl Burun at the time (then apparently in the role of lieutenant governor [*qa'im-maqām*]), had stopped the Tatars from setting out to join the Cossack army.⁹

Document A, Aḥmed's letter, lobbies for the removal of Ramazān Beg. It is undated and could have been written anytime in the early 1650s, though, obviously, before the latter was removed from office in Qıl Burun by late 1652.¹⁰ By contrast, although there are no dates in İslām Gerey's letters B and C, the dates on which they were delivered are indicated on their versos—10 Rebī' I 1063/8 February 1653 and 17 Rebī' I 1063/15 February 1653; they must have been composed a few weeks beforehand, sometime in January 1653. All three documents are presented here in full and can speak for themselves, so here I paraphrase only their main points: Ramazān Beg, who was originally appointed in his position by Bektaş Ağa (see below), was unpopular with the Özi frontier troops and population and bore responsibility for disorder and seditious plots, thievery of horses and slaves, and problems with the Cossacks and Moldavia (he had, for instance, allegedly at various times sent falsified letters to Khmelnytsky). After repeated complaints by the troops garrisoned at Özi, he was replaced by Velī Beg, who was supposedly able to get along with the local soldiery and residents. Rumors of an imminent

editors' rendering of the contents and description of these supposedly different documents it is clear that they did not realize they were dealing with a single, unique document and that “E 4743/2” in their volume is a mistaken reference. This was borne out by my inspection of E 4743/2 in the TSA: it is indeed a completely different document.

⁸ Mykhailo Hrushevsky, *History of Ukraine-Rus'*, vol. 9, bk. 1: *The Cossack Age, 1650–1653*, trans. Bohdan Strumiński, ed. Serhii Plokhy and Frank E. Sysyn (Edmonton and Toronto: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 2005), 133.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 231–32.

¹⁰ Information based on a letter from the grand vizier to Khmelnytsky dated 22 Muḥarrem 1063/23 December 1652 (see below), published in Jan Rypka, “Další příspěvek ke korespondenci Vysoké Porty s Bohdanem Chmelnickým,” *Časopis Národního muzea* 105 (1931): 209–31, esp. 221, 223.

return of Ramazān Beg to the governorship of Qıl Burun were met with protests by the Özi (and by implication Qıl Burun) garrison troops, who swore they could never get along with him. In C there is a reference to a scandal involving the seizure at Özi of several Cossack envoys on their way to the Porte “from the Polish king”—the letter surely meant to say “from the Cossack hetman”—confiscation of twenty thousand gold pieces that they had in their possession, and the envoys’ being sold into slavery.¹¹ This letter denies that Velī Beg was responsible for any violation of diplomatic protocol as, we will see below, Ramazān Beg claimed, and lays the blame for the incident, instead, on Ramazān himself.

It is impossible to corroborate or refute most of the accusations leveled in these writings. After his dismissal Ramazān Beg returned to Istanbul, where, having the advantage of being closer to key decision-makers at the Porte, he continued his campaign against Velī Beg in order to regain his *sancaq*. Among the six Ottoman letters to Khmelnytsky from the so-called Göttingen Codex (plus one from the Czartoryski Library in Cracow) that have been published by the Czech orientalist Jan Rypka, there is one, from Grand Vizier Tarḥuncı Aḥmed Pasha (who held office from 20 June 1652 to 21 March 1653) to the hetman, dated 23 December 1652, that implicitly accepts Ramazān Beg’s version of events (and, at the very least, that he was not responsible for the seizure of the Cossack envoys):

... since [my] coming to the grand vizierate there has been no lack of men coming and going from every direction to the threshold of good fortune [i.e., to the Porte] with letters of subservience (*‘ubūdiyyetnāme*). From you, our friend, neither a letter nor a man has arrived. While waiting for news from your direction explaining the reason for this, it was heard from Ramazān Beg, who was previously governor of Qıl Burun, that when men of yours were coming from your side to the gate of the center of imperial good fortune to display subservience, they were seized in the fortress of Özi and sold. When news to this effect was divulged a thorough investigation and search were carried out, and within one or two days men of yours named Vāşıl Yūrquvān (Vasyl Yurkovan [?]) and [name left blank] were found. And those in whose

¹¹ Indeed these are surely the same as the envoys of Khmelnytsky seized in Özi to which a letter from the Porte refers (see below). It is interesting that here the Cossack envoys are called “spies,” as this may be symptomatic of İslām Gerey’s shift away from Khmelnytsky in favor of the Poles and an indication that this letter was meant for the anti-Cossack party at the Porte. Of course the 20,000 gold pieces (*altun*), a huge sum of money, intended as a gift for the Porte is also of interest: were they intended to sway the Porte in favor of military intervention on behalf of the hetman’s war effort?

hands they were were given their price and they were newly clothed ...
[and] dispatched to you and sent off with this letter of friendship.¹²

What we can be sure of, thanks to Khmelnytsky's letter to the Porte preserved in an Ottoman translation also in the TSA, written in January 1653—that is, at about the same time as **B** and **C**—is that as far as the hetman was concerned, Ramazān Beg's version was the truer one of the said events. This is not to imply the full veracity of Ramazān Beg—we can be fairly sure that in their mutual struggle neither Ramazān's nor Velī's prime concern was to provide an honest rendition of relevant events on the Özi frontier. But what is clear from Khmelnytsky's words is that until Ramazān Beg was dismissed in late 1652, he was Khmelnytsky's man at the vital Özi/Qıl Burun crossroads:

... [in the matter of] Ramazān Beg, who was previously the governor of Qıl Burun: due to a negative recommendation to our felicitous and great master, his majesty, our padishah, his province was conferred upon another. In this matter we write the truth [when we say] that it was his [majesty's] slave Ramazān Beg who caused this slave of his [majesty] to become a slave to his majesty, our felicitous and great padishah. We used to have good relations with him here; after he was dismissed, the situation became disordered. This slave of his [majesty] had sent a man of ours named Vāşıl (Vasyl) to Özi with some letters, [but] thereafter Ramazān Beg having been dismissed, our man did not return.... [And so] together with all of our Host, his [majesty's] slaves, we request that his [majesty's] slave Ramazān Beg be granted his own [former] province (*sancaq*), for he used to have good relations with us here. Since he is his [majesty's] true slave, we place our trust in him. As is written above, it was he who was the cause of our becoming slaves to our felicitous padishah [and] he has rendered rightful service to our fortunate padishah.¹³

Presumably İslām Gerey's claim, in **B**, that Khmelnytsky was dissatisfied with Ramazān's alleged duplicity and had communicated this to the khan was untrue, though anyone who has investigated the hetman's convoluted international contacts knows that he was not above double-dealing when the situation merited it. Thus it cannot be ruled out that Khmelnytsky had at some points "friendly" contacts with the anti-Ramazān party, including Velī.¹⁴ As to Khmelnytsky's reiteration in the

¹² Ibid., 220–24.

¹³ TSA, E 8548. Facsimile and translation in András Riedlmayer and Victor Ostapchuk, "Bohdan Xmel'nyc'kyj and the Porte: A Document from the Ottoman Archives," *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 8 (1984): 453–73, esp. 470–71.

¹⁴ Indeed, in a letter to Khmelnytsky written in 1651, Velī reminds the hetman that he was at the battle of Zboriv in 1649 and, calling him his "friend and brother," requests that

strongest terms that it was Ramazān Beg who should be credited with his acceptance of Ottoman suzerainty, it can, of course, be either an indication of a very special relationship between the two, or a mere rhetorical flourish. We have no indication whether the relationship was based on political expediency, material interest, personal compatibility, or some combination of these.

The three documents presented here give only a glimpse into an intrigue centered around the governorship of Qıl Burun that not only grew out of a local personal rivalry but also drew in and/or was stimulated by distant outside players—the Crimean Khan, the Ukrainian hetman, perhaps the Moldavian hospodar (Moldavia is mentioned in **A**), and last but not least, certain highly placed individuals at the Porte. In connection with the latter, the statement in **B** that it was originally Bektaş Ağa who grabbed (*aliverip*, lit. “suddenly took away”) the Qıl Burun governorship in favor of Ramazān Beg suggests that indeed the conflict at Özi and Qıl Burun was much more than a local, personal intrigue. At the Porte there was a pro- and an anti-Khmelnytsky party, respectively for and against committing the Ottomans more actively to the hetman’s struggle with Poland, including involving the Ottoman, as opposed to just the Crimean, army. Up until August 1651, when he was banished from politics and soon thereafter executed,¹⁵ Bektaş Ağa, former commander of the janissary corps (*yeñiçeri ağası*), was a prominent member of the pro-intervention party, with powerful influence at the court.¹⁶ This, combined with the fact that Ramazān was an ally of the hetman, while in all likelihood Velī was at least once responsible for acting against the hetman’s war effort (delaying the Crimean army from proceeding past Özi in 1651) and probably responsible for apprehending Cossack envoys on the way to the Porte, suggests that the Ramazān vs. Velī conflict was part of a struggle between two camps at the Porte. Let us recall that the eventual failure of the pro-Khmelnytsky faction to bring the Ottoman military into the war with Poland meant that the hetman was subsequently forced to

“if [Khmelnytsky] is to write to anyone, he also write to him” (*Arkhiv Yugo-zapadnoi Rossii* [Kyiv], pt. 3, vol. 4 [1914]: 559–60).

¹⁵ [Evlīya Çelebi], *The Intimate Life of an Ottoman Statesman: Melek Ahmed Pasha (1588/1662) as Portrayed in Evliya Çelebi’s Book of Travels*, ed. Robert Dankoff (Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1991), 89; İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, vol. 3, pt. 1 (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1973), p. 259.

¹⁶ Bektaş Ağa was very influential early in Meḥmed IV’s reign; in one document even referred to as “the emperor’s adopted father” (Hrushevsky, *History of Ukraine-Rus’*, 57–58). Reiteration of his pro-Cossack stance can be found in a letter from the hospodar of Moldavia, who, after Bektaş’s downfall, stated that he “had adopted Khmelnytsky as a son” (*ibid.*, 417).

make his fateful choice and turn to Moscow for support. That such an important conflict at the Porte would also be played out on the local level on the Özi frontier, where the players were not mere automatons fulfilling the will of the sultan or grand vizier but were able to act in their own interests and/or in those of any particular faction—and thus to affect wider political and military outcomes—is interesting in and of itself. The argument here, therefore, is that certain crucial aspects of both domestic and international affairs on the grand central stage can be properly understood only with the help of documentation stemming from the periphery. Without documents such as the ones presented here, and only those relating to the central figures, we might never fully appreciate the complexities of Khmelnytsky's relations with the Porte. Finally, I refer the reader to the texts of the documents for nuances and atmospherics of political life on this frontier.

Documents

A. TSA, E 3495. Undated (prior to late 1652) From Aḥmed to an unnamed person at the Porte (Sultan Meḥmed IV or the grand vizier, or both; see n. 4).

format: 27.4 x 22.8 cm

watermark: none

invocation: none (top of the sheet cut off)

verso: oval seal (13 x 16 mm) behind and upside down in relation to the signature on the recto (facsimile not available)

هدایت ازلی بر بنده احمد یاور
[may] the eternal spiritual guidance assist the slave Aḥmed”

text:

[1] sa‘ādetlü ve ‘izzetlü ve mürüvvetlü sulṭānum¹⁷ ḥazretlerinüñ ḥuzūr-i sa‘ādet-muqarrerlerine envā‘-i ḥulūṣ ve ‘ubūdiyyet ile ‘arz-i bende-i bī-miqdār budur ki Öziye tābi‘ Qılburun begi olan [2] Ramazān ahālī-i vilāyet ile ve qul ṭāyfasıyla zindegānī üzere olmayub ve eṭrāf ve cevānibe muttaşıl kizb ü dürüğü mutazammın mektūblar gönderüb qazaq ṭarafıyla ve Boḡdān cānibi ile [3] mücib-i iḥtilāl olur mu‘āmeleden ḥālī olmayub ‘azl olunması serḥadd ahālīsiniñistirāhatine sebep edüğine ‘ilm-i bendegī lāḥiq olduğundan ḡayri Tatar ḥan ḥazretleri daḡi bu quluñuza mektūb [4] gönderüb mezkūr Ramazānuñ mücib-i iḥtilāl olur niçe mefāsindinden mā ‘adā dāyīmā kārı ol serḥadde at ve esīr sırqa étdürmekdür ref‘i lāzım ve mühimm olduğını asitāne-i sa‘ādete [5] ben-daḡi ‘arz eylemişim bu ḥuşuṣa siz daḡi muqayyed olub mezbūruñ ref‘ine ihtimām ve diqqat eylesiz deyü i‘lām ve işāret étmişidi livā‘-i mezbūruña Özi serḥaddinüñ emekdāri [6] ve ḥidmet-i ‘aliyye edāsına qādir kār-güzārı olub ahālī-i vilāyet ile kemāl-mertebe ḥüsn-i zindegānisi olan Velī qullarına ‘ināyet ve iḥsān

¹⁷ This word is written above the blank space to honor the addressee (the so-called *ellevatio*).

buyurılmaq ricāsına ‘arz olınmışdur [7] kemāl-i lütf ve keremlerinden bu bābda verilen ‘arz-i bendegī mücibince livā’-i mezbūr merqūm Velī qullarına şadaqa ve ihsān buyurılmağla bu qulların memnūn buyurmaları bābında emr ü fermān sa‘ādetlü ve mürüvvetlü sulṭānum [8] ḥazretlerinüñdür

bende Aḥmed

translation:

This is the report with [all] forms of sincerity and servility by the worthless slave to the felicity-possessing presence of his excellency/majesty, my felicitous and powerful and generous lord/sultan (*sulṭānum*, see n. 5):

Ramaḏān, who is the governor (*beg*) of Qıl Burun, which is subject to [the province (*beglerbegilik*) of] Özi, is not on good [terms] with the people of the provinces or the [imperial] soldiery (*qul tāyfası*). He sends letters in all directions containing his continuous lies and falsehoods. He does not refrain from acts that cause trouble with the Cossack side and with the Moldavian side. Besides it becoming a part of my servile knowledge that his dismissal would be the cause of comfort for the inhabitants of the frontier, his majesty the Tatar khan has sent a letter to this slave of yours [in which] he communicated and pointed out saying, “The said Ramaḏān is the cause of disorder. Besides seditious plots, his constant activity is to cause the stealing of horses and captives on that frontier. I, too, have petitioned the threshold of felicity [i.e., the Porte] that his removal is necessary and important. You must also be diligent in this matter. Pay great attention and heed to the removal of the aforesaid.” A petition has been made requesting that Velī, slave of his majesty, who is a veteran and skillful official of the Özi frontier capable of performing the exalted service as [governor] and is in perfect harmony with the people of the province, be favored and bestowed with the above-mentioned province. With the granting and bestowal of the above-mentioned province to the said Velī, slave of his [majesty], with perfect favor and benevolence according to the servile petition given in this matter, the order and command in the matter of his [majesty’s] making this slave of his happy belongs to my felicitous and generous sultan, his majesty.

The slave Aḥmed

B. TSA, E 7604.¹⁸ From the Crimean khan İslām Gerey III to unnamed person at the Porte (Sultan Mehmed IV or Grand Vizier Tarḥuncı Aḥmed Pasha, or both; see n. 4). Received in Istanbul on 10 Rebī‘ I 1063/8 February 1653.

format: 41.5 x 27.5 cm

watermark: crown with six-pointed star and crescent

invocation: Hüve, He (i.e., Allah), 1.5 cm below top edge, 23 cm above text (not shown in the facsimile)

verso: a note in the upper right corner *Tatar ḥandan fī 10 rā sene 63*, “from the Tatar khan on 10 Rebī‘ I year [10]63 (8 February 1653)”; oval seal (9 x 13 mm) behind and upside down in relation to the *ṣaḥḥ* on the recto: اسلام کرای بنده, [İslām Gerey the slave]

¹⁸ First published in synopsis form in *Le Khanate de Crimée*, 196–97.

text:

[1] dergāh-i felek-medār ve bārgāh-i gerdūn-veqār tūrābına ‘arz-i bende-i şadāqat-kārları budur ki bundan aqdem Bektaş Ağa Deñiz Oğlu Ramazān [2] demekle ma‘rūf olan tevābi‘ine Qıl Burun begligin aliverüp serħadd qulu ile imtizācları qābil olmaduđından ğayri Özi hatmānına [3] niçe def‘a sāhte mektūplar gönderüp kizb ve hilelerin hatmān bu cānibe yazup ve Cankermān qulu dađı ‘azīm şikāyet edüp qurbumuzda [4] olmađla bu bendelerine ‘arz ve maħzar göndermeleriyle rikāb-i hümāyūnlarına ‘arz olınuqda Qıl Burun begligi taraf-i hümāyūndan Velī Beg qullarına [5] tevcih ve ihsān buyu[rı]lup vilāyet ħalqı ile kemāl imtizācı olup uđur-i hümāyūnda cān ve başla ħidmetde iken Ramazān dedikleri [6] mebde’-i fesād tekrār bir alay hileler edüp manşıba tālīb olduđın Cankermān ħalqı işidüp der-i devlet-medāra ‘arz etmişlerdür [7] Ramazān dedikleri ħaramzāde ile Cankermān ħalqınuñ bir vecihle imtizācları qābil ve mümkün degüldür qurbumuzda olmađla cümle aħvāllerine vuqūfumuz [8] olup böyle serħadde ol-maqule şahş gönderilmek lāyıq-i dīn ü devlet degüldür bāqı emr ü fermān der-i ma‘delet-‘unvānlaruñdur

şahh

translation:

He! (the invocation)

This is the report of his [majesty’s] faithful slave to the dust [on the floor] of the court [at] the hub of the universe and of the place of audience [of] dignity and good fortune:

Previously Bektaş Ağa snatched the governorship (*beglik*) of Qıl Burun for [one of] his dependents, who is known as Deniz Oğlu Ramazān. Besides not being able to get along with the *serħadd qulu*¹⁹ he [Ramazān] several times sent spurious letters to the Özi hetman. The hetman wrote here [about Ramazān’s] lies and plottings. Also the soldiers (*qul*) of Cankermān²⁰ made a serious complaint. When, upon their sending a collective report to this slave of his [majesty’s], since they were in our vicinity, [in turn] a report was made [by this slave] to the imperial presence of his [majesty] and Velī Beg was appointed to and invested with the governorship of Qıl Burun by the imperial presence. He [Velī Beg] got along with the soldiery of the province. While he was in the service of the imperial cause, [not even sparing] his own life (*can ve başla* “with his soul and head”), the origin of sedition who is called Ramazān again made a whole array of intrigues. The soldiery of Cankermān heard that he was seeking [Velī Beg’s] position and sent a report to the Porte around which good fortune turns.²¹ There is no possibility or chance for the soldiery of Cankermān to get along in any way with the bastard who is called Ramazān. With our proximity we are cognizant of

¹⁹ *serħadd qulu*—Ottoman frontier-garrison soldiery, which included janissaries, timariot cavalry, and other military groups.

²⁰ Cankermān—a designation for the town and fortress of Özi, originally used by the Tatars but also found in Ottoman sources along with the name Özi.

²¹ This may be a reference to A.

all his affairs. It is not befitting of the religion and the state for this type of person to be thus sent to the frontier. The final order and command is the Porte's, whose name (*‘unvān*) is justice.

[The above] is correct[ly written] (*ṣaḥḥ*)

C. TSA, E 4749.²² From the Crimean khan İslām Gerey III to an unnamed Ottoman vizier (probably Tarḥuncı Aḥmed Pasha, see n. 4). Received in Istanbul on 17 Rebī‘ I 1063/15 February 1653.

format: 58.8 x 32.4 cm

watermark: five-pointed crown over shield-shaped coat of arms

invocation: *Hüve* 1.5 cm below top edge, 24.5 cm above text (not shown in the facsimile)

verso: note in the upper right corner *ḥandan gelen mektūbdur fī 17 rā sene 63*, “a letter coming from the khan on 17 Rebī‘ I year [10]63 (15 February 1653)”; oval seal (9 x 13 mm) behind and upside down in relation to the *ṣaḥḥ* on the recto اسلام كراى بنده, [İslām Gerey the slave] (seal not available in facsimile)

text:

[1] mevqıf-i refī‘-i celīyü’ş-şān-i vezāret ve fermān-rānī ve maḥfil-i menī‘-i müşeyyedü’l-erkān-i şadāret ve kām-rānī lā zāle mü’ebbeden bi’t-te’yīdātü’r-rabbānī [2] şavb-i devlet evbine kemāl-i ta‘zīm ve tekrīmle zimmet-i iḥlāşumuza iltizām olınan du‘ā-yi beqā-yi zāt-i sūtūde ḥişāllerine taqdīm ve tevqīrden soñra ‘arza-dāşt-i [3] muḥliş-i ḥālişü’l-bālleri budur ki ḥālā Özi serḥaddinde Qıl Burun sancaqına mutaşarrıf olan Velī Beg bendeleri ḥaqqında Dengiz Oğlu Ramazān Beg dīvān-i [4] pādişāhīye çıqıp Lēh qıralından rikāb-i hümāyūna gönderdükleri qazaqları tutup ve ellerinde hediyeye ḥarīqı ile gönderdükleri yigirmi biñ altunların alup [5] qazaqları bey‘ etdi deyü isnād etmiş bu maqūle ḥaramzādeniñ şıdqi ve kızbini bilmek qatı āsān degül-midür on günde bir adam Cankermāna gelüp ve gidüp [6] müşkilleri ḥal olunur eger bu vāqi‘ ise Ramazān dedikleri şaḥş kendi etmiş olur ol cāsūslar aḥz olınuqda Ramazān kendi Qıl Burun begi idi [7] ve cāsūsuları tutup bey‘ etdüren Ramazān Begüñ vekīli olan Qarğalı Meḥmed Ağa edügin cemī‘-i ḥalq bilmişdür ol vaqitde Velī Beg Cankermānda bulunmamışdur [8] aqçanıñ aşlı da yoqdur eger var ise aqça Ramazān Begde olur dīvān-i pādişāhīde kızb edüp bir adama isnād etdügi için ol [9] aqçayı Ramazān Begden taleb olunmaq lāzım degül-midür ki bir daḥi bir kimse bu maqūle kızb etmeye cür‘et etmeye bāqī eyyām-i şadāret-i ‘uzmā ve vezāret-i kübrā mü’eyyed bād

ṣaḥḥ

translation:

He! (the invocation)

May the high station of the manifest renown of the vizierate and its [ability to] enforce orders and may the unassailable court of the unshakeable columns and its fortune last forever, supported by divine aid many times afforded. After pre-

²² First published in summary translation in *Le Khanate de Crimée*, 196.

senting and honoring with a prayer for the continuation of his majesty, who possesses praiseworthy attributes, [the rendering of which] with perfect glorification and veneration in the direction of good fortune's straight path is demanded by the obligation of our sincere attachment, this is what is submitted by a friend of his majesty who possesses a sincere heart:

Dengiz Ođlı Ramazān Beg has come forth to the *dīvān* of the padishah and concerning Velī Beg, his [majesty's] slave who is now in possession of Qıl Burun on the Özi frontier, imputed that he seized Cossacks sent by the Polish king to the imperial presence, took twenty thousand gold pieces (*altun*) sent by the way of a gift that were in their possession, and sold the Cossacks. Is it not easy to the utmost to know [the difference between] the truths and lies of such a bastard? For, every ten days a man comes and goes to and from Cankermān and all doubts and difficulties are resolved. If this [incident] happened, the person whom they call Ramazān caused it himself. When those spies [i.e., the Cossack envoys] were taken, Ramazān himself was the governor (*beg*) of Qıl Burun. All of the soldiery knows that Qargalı Meḥmed Ağa—the deputy of Ramazān Beg, who is [actually] the one who caused the spies to be seized and sold—did it. At that time Velī Beg was not in Cankermān. There is also no basis to the [story about the] money. If there is, the money is with Ramazān Beg. Because he has lied before the *dīvān* of the padishah and imputed against another man, is it not suitable that that money be demanded from Ramazān Beg so that a person would not dare to tell such lies again? May the everlasting days of the grand vizierate be strengthened.

[The above] is correct[ly written] (*şahh*)

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DAVID R. MARPLES is a Distinguished University Professor of history at the University of Alberta and director of the CIUS's Stasiuk Program on Contemporary Ukraine. He is the author of twelve books on twentieth-century Ukraine, Belarus, and Russia, most recently *Heroes and Villains: Creating National History in Twentieth-Century Ukraine* (2008).

YURI MYTSYK is a professor of Ukrainian history at the Kyiv-Mohyla Academy National University, an archpriest of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church-Kyiv Patriarchate, and the head of the Department of Monuments of the Princely and Cossack Periods at the Institute of Ukrainian Archeography and Source Studies of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine. A specialist in the history of Cossack-era Ukraine, Ukrainian church and regional history, and Ukrainian archeography, he has written over 1,300 articles and over thirty books and archeographic publications, most recently *Lystuvannia mytropolyta Ilariona (Ohiiienka)* (2006), *Chyhyryn: Hetmanska stolytsia* (2007), and *Albaruthenica: Studii z istorii Bilorusi* (2009).

VICTOR OSTAPCHUK is an associate professor in the Department of Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations at the University of Toronto. A specialist in Ottoman historical archaeology and in the Porte's relations with Muscovy, Poland, and Ukraine, he is the author of *Warfare and Diplomacy across Sea and Steppe: The Ottoman Black Sea Frontier in the 1620s* (forthcoming).

ULIANA M. PASICZNYK is the managing editor of the Hrushevsky Translation Project of the Peter Jacyk Centre for Ukrainian Historical Research at the CIUS Toronto Office. Previously she was the managing editor of *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*.

SERHII PLOKHY (PLOKHII) is the Mykhailo S. Hrushevsky Professor of Ukrainian History at Harvard University. A specialist of the intellectual, cultural, and international history of Eastern Europe, he has lived and taught in Ukraine, Canada, and the United States. His recent publications include *Unmaking Imperial Russia: Mykhailo Hrushevsky and the Writing of Ukrainian History* (2005), *The Origins of the Slavic Nations: Premodern Identities in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus* (2006), *Ukraine and Russia: Representations of the Past* (2008), and *Yalta: The Price of Peace* (forthcoming 2010).

ANDRZEJ POPPE is a professor emeritus of Warsaw University and a leading Polish authority on the history of medieval Eastern Europe and Kyivan Rus'. He

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