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OTTOMAN COSSACKS AND MULTIETHNIC MIGRATION TO ISTANBUL'S SUBURBS AFTER THE CRIMEAN WAR: THE FOUNDING OF ADAMPOL, THE COSSACK COMMUNITY IN GALATA, AND THE CRIMEAN TATAR SETTLEMENT OF SAZLIBOSNA

The period following the Crimean War (1853–1856) marked a profound transformation in the demographic and social geography of the Ottoman Empire. Istanbul – already a major center of imperial administration and military infrastructure – became one of the most dynamic zones of resettlement. Three communities in particular illustrate the complexity of the post-war migration process: the village of Adampol (Polonezköy) concentrated mostly polish origin migrants, the Cossack community concentrated in Galata, and the Crimean Tatar settlement in the çiftlik of Sazlibosna. Although these communities differed in origin, status, and cultural background, they shared a common feature: each benefitted from the direct or indirect patronage, lobbying, and mediation of Ottoman Cossack officers, who acted as intermediaries between migrant groups and the imperial administrative apparatus.

The present talk, based on Ottoman archival documentation, census records, diplomatic correspondence, and European consular reports, evaluates the parallel development of these three communities and situates them within wider patterns of imperial demographic engineering in the Tanzimat and post-Tanzimat periods. It argues that Ottoman Cossack officers – many of them themselves refugees from the Russian Empire lands – played a pivotal role in enabling newly arrived populations

to acquire resident status, land, and economic opportunities in both the European and Asian parts of the imperial capital.

1. The Founding and Early Development of Adampol (Polonezköy / Adam-köy)

Adampol was founded in the 1840s by Polish political exiles associated with Prince Adam Czartoryski and the Hôtel Lambert network. Its location on the Asian side of Istanbul placed the community within a rural zone of the Bosphorus hinterland, but after the Crimean War it acquired a new strategic significance. A considerable number of Polish military refugees, including former officers of the Ottoman Cossacks, settled in or around Adampol after being demobilized.

Ottoman Cossack officers supported Adampol's development in several ways.

First, archival documents indicate that Cossack commanders issued letters of recommendation that helped Polish refugees secure temporary residence rights and exemption from certain taxes. The same mediators interacted with local kadıs and müdirlik authorities to ensure legal recognition of property boundaries around the village.

Second, Cossack units stationed in Üsküdar and the Bosphorus region frequently employed Polish craftsmen, translators, and transport workers. This provided incoming settlers with stable incomes and facilitated their integration into the Ottoman labour market.

Third, Ottoman Cossack officers acted as guarantors in conflicts between newly arrived Poles and Greek or Armenian landholders in neighbouring villages – conflicts that were common in the 1850s–1860s due to unclear land rights. Their influence helped maintain administrative protection for Adampol and strengthened its position relative to other foreign-origin settlements.

In the broader regional context, Cossack-mediated support for Adampol paralleled similar Ottoman practices in Bursa, Kütahya, and Aydın, where Polish and Circassian migrants were settled during the same decades. The Ottoman administration used these communities as stabilizing buffers in semi-rural zones around major cities.

2. The Cossack Community in Galata: Urban Integration and Administrative Patronage

The second major community examined in this study is the Cossack population of Galata – the district on the European side where a significant number of Cossack defectors and their families concentrated after the Crimean War. Unlike Adampol, Galata was an urban space with a mixed population of Greeks, Armenians, Jews, Levantines, and Muslims. The integration mechanisms thus differed considerably.

Ottoman Cossack officers played a particularly important role in facilitating the settlement of newcomers in Galata. Their activities can be summarized in several categories:

1. Administrative Mediation:

Cossack leaders regularly accompanied migrant applicants to municipal offices and acted as intermediaries in the process of registering households in population registers (*nüfus defterleri*).

2. Housing Allocation:

Galata's dense rental market made accommodation difficult for refugees. Cossack officers negotiated rental contracts with Greek and Armenian landlords and prevented exploitative rent increases – a problem frequently mentioned in diplomatic archives.

3. Employment Networks:

Galata's proximity to the port and military infrastructure allowed Cossack officers to place migrants in occupations such as loading/unloading, naval logistics, horse transport, ferry work, and auxiliary guard duties. In many cases, Cossack officers themselves hired Slavic and Balkan migrants into marine-related or postal transport services.

4. Security and Community Mediation:

As semi-recognized imperial auxiliaries, Cossack officers mediated disputes between migrants and long-standing residents, reducing tensions in a densely populated district where ethnic conflicts were common. Their involvement strengthened social cohesion in mixed neighbourhoods.

The Cossack presence in Galata mirrored Ottoman strategies applied in other Balkan urban centers, such as Sofya, Sliven, and Plovdiv, where military intermediaries helped integrate diverse migrant populations into complex multiethnic environments.

3. The Crimean Tatar Settlement of Sazlıbosna: Cossack-Backed Rural Resettlement in the European Periphery of Istanbul

The Sazlıbosna çiftlik north-west of Istanbul became a major reception area for Crimean Tatar refugees after 1856. Although governed by a combination of local landholders and imperial administrators, its rapid expansion was actively supported by Cossack officers stationed in the region.

Their influence manifested in three principal ways:

1. Land Allocation and Settlement Planning:

The Cossack leadership provided official confirmations that certain Tatar families had served alongside Ottoman Cossacks during the war, enabling them to obtain preferential access to agricultural plots.

2. Security Guarantees:

Due to the peripheral location of Sazlıbosna, bandit raids and disputes over pastureland were common. Cossack guards frequently patrolled the area

and maintained order, making the settlement more attractive for incoming families.

3. Infrastructure Advocacy:

Cossack officers supported petitions for the construction of wells, roads, and small bridges, which were necessary for agricultural development. Archival petitions show that they played a key role in accelerating approval of such projects.

These developments parallel Crimean Tatar resettlement patterns in Dobruja, Varna, and Samsun, where military intermediaries also influenced land distribution and community organization.

4. Comparative Perspective: Cossack Patronage across the Ottoman Empire

A comparative examination of Adampol, Galata, and Sazlıbosna demonstrates the systematic nature of Cossack involvement in post-war migration management. The study identifies common mechanisms across the three communities:

- accelerated registration and acquisition of resident status;
- economic integration via employment networks tied to Cossack units;
- mediation between migrant communities and local authorities;
- preferential access to land or rental housing;
- security guarantees and conflict resolution;
- parallel application of these practices in the Balkans and Asia Minor.

The experience of the Ottoman Cossacks aligns with imperial policies used in regions such as Anatolia, Thrace, and northern Bulgaria, where military-administrative actors shaped multiethnic settlement patterns after the Crimean War.