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**BUDZHAK AS A POLYETHNIC FRONTIER
IN THE SOUTH OF ODESSA REGION
(STROKES TO THE SETTLEMENT OF THE REGION AT THE END OF
THE 18th AND AT THE BEGINNING OF THE 19th CENTURIES)**

- Abstract -

On the materials of the documents stored in the Izmail archives (Izmail, Ukraine), the settlement of the fortress of Izmail and the town of Tuchkov by the representatives of different ethnic groups at the end of the 18th and at the beginning of the 19th centuries is being considered. The quantitative composition, manufacturing interests of Moldavians, Ukrainians, Russians, Armenians, Greeks, Poles, Jews of this period are analyzed.

Keywords: Budzhak, the fortress of Izmail, the town of Tuchkov, ethnic groups.

Budzhak is a historical region in the south of Bessarabia, located in the basin of the Dniester and Danube rivers and the Black Sea coast, which includes the southern regions of the Republic of Moldova and the southwestern part of Odessa region of Ukraine. It is one of the original regions of modern Ukraine and Moldova in geographical, linguistic, cultural, ethnic sense. The material and spiritual culture of Ukrainians, Bulgarians, Moldovans, Russians, Romanians, Germans, Gagauzes, Armenians, Romani and other peoples of the region has preserved many traditional features. Living for centuries in one territory, interacting and influencing each other, the ethnic groups of Budzhak created a complex mosaic of a regional multicultural space that expressively demonstrates the practice of ethnic and religious tolerance.

The objective study of counter-version issues of the historical and ethnic past of the peoples living in the Ukrainian-Moldovan borderland will help overcome stereotypes and open falsification of the common history through the establishment

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of intercultural dialogue against the background of the uniqueness of each of the national cultures, the dissemination of the experience of conflict-free coexistence of various ethnic groups in a polyethnic region.

The development of separate ethnic groups and traditional cultures in Budzhak has repeatedly attracted the attention of Ukrainian and foreign historians and ethnographers: M. Rusev and I. Grek¹, U. Fruntashu², V. Kushnir³, A. Ganchev⁴, M. Yarmolenko⁵ and others. Since the 1990s the issues of historical and cultural development of the ethnic groups of the multicultural Danube region are in the field of scientific attention of historians and local lore specialists of Izmail. Among recent studies, special attention should be paid to the works of A. Dizanova⁶, V. Tserkovnaya⁷, L. Tsyganenko⁸ etc.

In 2014, the book *Budzhak...*, edited by A. Kisse, A. Prigarin and V. Stanko was published⁹, and in 2015 a collective monograph under the leadership of Professor Y. Kichuk¹⁰ was published.

Numerous international and regional scientific conferences are devoted to the problems of ethnic culture of Bulgarians, Moldovans, Germans, Greeks. The traditional ones have become the international scientific forums “Danube is the Basis of European Identity” (Romania, Ukraine, Moldova), “South of Ukraine: Ethno-Historical, Linguistic, Cultural and Religious Dimensions” (Ukraine, Odessa), “Danube Scientific Readings” (Ukraine, Izmail), the problematic field of

¹ Grek I., Rusev N., *1812 as a Pivotal Year in the History of Budzhak and Transdanubia Settlers*, Кишинев, 2001.

² Fruntasu Iu., *O istorie etnopolitică a Basarabiei. 1812-2002*, București, Chișinău, 2002.

³ Kushnir V., *Industrial and Domestic Adaptation of the South-Western Steppe and the Low Danube Region Ukrainians (the Second Half of the 19th Century – the First Half of the 20th Century)*, Одеса, 2012.

⁴ Ganchev A., *Traditions of Mutual Aid in the Bulgarian Villages of South Bessarabia (the First Half of the 20th Century)*, Етнічна історія народів Європи, 1999.

⁵ Yarmolenko M., *To the Question of Social and Economic Development of Gagauz Colonies of Bessarabiain the 19th Century*, Наукові записки інституту етнонаціональних досліджень ім. І. Ф. Кураса, Вип. 29, 2006.

⁶ Dizanova A., *Traditional Cultures in the Multiethnic Danube Region: Specifics of the Development*, “Journal of Danubian Studies and Research”, № 5 (2), 2015.

⁷ Tserkovnaya V., *The “Lower Danube” Euroregion as a Form of Cross-Border Cooperation*, “Journal of Danubian Studies and Research”, № 3, 2013.

⁸ Tsyganenko L., *The Ethnic Structure of the Nobility of the South of Ukraine (the End of the 18th – the 19th centuries)*, “Current Issues of Social Studies and History of Medicine”, № 1(5), 2015.

⁹ *Budzhak: Historical and Ethnographic Sketches of the Peoples of the South-Western Districts of Odessa Region*, 2014.

¹⁰ *The Ukrainian Danube Region in the Light of Humanitarian Studies*, Izmail, 2015.

which includes questions of spirituality, traditions, rituals in the Ukrainian culture and “neighboring” ethno-cultures.

Many of the modern ethnic groups of Budzhak originated from the period of the Ottoman Empire. According to A. Prigarin, at the turn of the 18th – the 19th centuries about two thousand families of “Bulgarians..., not less than 300 families of Russian old believers ..., about a thousand families of Armenians, as many families of Greeks, about 500 families of Jews ... lived in the Danube-Dniester interflaves. The number of Ukrainian Cossacks living along the Dniester and the Danube is hypothetically... no less than four thousand ... Between the Danube and Yalpuh ... the Moldavian population ... no less than three thousand families”.¹¹

After the next Russian-Turkish war (1807-1812) occur qualitative and quantitative changes in the ethnic composition of the inhabitants of the region. The materials of the Izmail archives allow us to state that by 1817 there were 9.389 people living in the town. Let's try to compare the indicators of the number of some ethnic groups' representatives who lived in the town and the fortress by the 1820s.

One of the most numerous ethnic communities of the town of Tuchkov and the fortress of Izmail in the first decades of the 19th century were **the Moldavians**.

An archival document of 1811 (“The official description of the residents of the fortress of Izmail with the indication of the national composition and previous residence”) cites data on more than 400 Moldavians registered in the fortress for this period.¹² Of particular interest is the graph on resettlement: the majority of respondents have a note “... *повзятийИзмаилапоявился в ономнажителствобезвсякоговида*” (they were on the territory of the fortress without any documents). As for the previous place of residence (based on archival data), the majority (134 people) came from behind the Danube. Almost 20% of those registered in the book indicated that they had lived in the fortress for a long time. A part of the residents from this list indicated their previous place of residence as: from Kiliyatint (46 people) (“tint” is the traditional subdivision of the Principality of Moldavia (1359-1859), from Tulcea (28 people). For example, Byne Kanche lived for a long time in the fortress of Izmail, in 1808 he fled to Kiliya, but in 1810 he returned to Izmail.

By the beginning of 1812 almost 1.500 representatives of the Moldavian ethnic group¹³ lived in the fortress and the district. A significant part of the representatives of the Moldavian ethnic group migrated to Budzhak from the territory of Northern and Central Bessarabia. The most common surnames of the

¹¹ *Budzhak: Historical and Ethnographic Sketches of the Peoples of the South-Western Districts of Odessa Region*, 2014, p.147.

¹² Municipal Institution of Izmail Archives (hereinafter referred to as МІА)/ Коммунальное учреждение Измаильский архив (далее КУИА), ф. 514, д. 1.

¹³ Tsyganenko L., *Ethnic Composition of the Inhabitants of Izmail Fortress at the Beginning of the 19th Century (Following the Local Archives)*, “Етнічна історія народів Європи”, К. УНІСЕРВ, Вип. 41, 2014, p. 22.

Budzhak Moldavians are Armanche, Surduk, Flore, Brynza, Terzi, Shishkan, Karatashan, Kishlyan etc. The main occupations are agriculture, fishing and peddling.

The archival data for 1817 indicate that there were 1.293 representatives of the Moldavian ethnic group living in the town of Tuchkov, and compared to other ethnic groups Moldavians were the third largest ethnic group and accounted for 19% of the total number of inhabitants.¹⁴

During the same period more than 150 Moldavians who constituted the second largest ethnic group of the inhabitants of the fortress (22.8%) officially occupied the fortress of Izmail.

The data of 1820 record 690 representatives of the Moldavian ethnic group among the population of the town of Tuchkov who owned 81 stone houses, 3 dugouts, 2 cellars, 4 shops, 3 windmills, 64 vineyards. Among the wealthiest and richest were the families of Konstantin Gergi, Sultan Chirik, Dedush Harzhivan, Yan Balika, Tomas Karatashan, Shtefan Flore, Theodor Chimpshibash (all owned stone houses and vineyards). Among this group was an entrepreneur, Vasiliy Tabakar, the owner of a tannery.¹⁵

In the traditional list of economic preferences of representatives of the Moldavian ethnic group (agriculture, fishing, trade, day-work), there are several very specific occupations. It is a water carrier, a tailor, a butcher, a brewer, a baker.

Ukrainians represented a significant ethnic group. In one of the cases of Izmail Police Department Fund partial data for the year of 1810 are given. Most of the Ukrainians who settled on the territory of the fortress and the trading quarter were from the central provinces: Kherson, Ekaterinoslav, Kamenets-Podilsky, Kiev etc.¹⁶ A part of Ukrainians got to Budzhak through Moldavia. For example, Ivan Kulenko was engaged in cartage of goods, he moved from the province of Kherson first to Moldova and then settled in Izmail in 1809.

Some of the migrants fled from their masters and serfdom to distant Bessarabian steppes, hoping to get land and freedom here. For example, Andrei Scherban, who came from the province of Kiev, fled from the landowner prince Mobolitsky first to Ackerman, and then settled in Izmail; Gavriilo Dvinenko and his comrade fled from prince Lubomirsky (from Poland) first to Moldavia, and then to Izmail; Gritsko Moshin fled from count Pototsky from Kamenets-Podolsky province first to Odessa, and then to Izmail. The local administration was very calm about such migrants, seeking to populate the deserted Budzhak steppes by any available means.¹⁷

¹⁴ MIIA, f. 514, f. 12.

¹⁵ MIIA, f. 514, f. 33, pp. 14-39.

¹⁶ MIIA, f. 514, f.2.

¹⁷ MIIA, f. 514, f. 2, pp. 14-15.

Between April and August in 1811, 1.493 Ukrainians arrived in Izmail.¹⁸ Most of them were between 30 and 49 years of age. In 1817 Ukrainians was the largest ethnic group of the town of Tuchkov– 33.4% or 2.263 people.¹⁹ But in the fortress of Izmail, the Ukrainians were not so many – only 83 people.

By 1820 the town was the home to more than 2.5 thousand Ukrainians, in charge of whom there were 272 houses, more than 30 dugouts. Of the household and production buildings, representatives of the Ukrainian ethnic group owned 12 shops, 24 windmills, 28 vineyards. Among the Ukrainian population there were also first businessmen – Stepan Zenchenko, the owner of 3 stone houses, a bathhouse, a beer factory, a tavern and a windmill.²⁰ Among the main occupations of Ukrainians was farming, work for hire, cartage of goods. The crafts specialties among the Ukrainians of the town were many shoemakers, carpenters, blacksmiths.

The third significant group of ethnic migrants to the fortress of Izmail and the trading quarter were **Russians**. Only for the period from April to August 1811 arrived 354 people, not counting the Nekrasovite – old believers.²¹

As a rule, families of Russian settlers were quite numerous. So, Nikita Savvovich (63 years old) arrived from the province of Kursk and brought with him 30 other relatives; Ignat Ivanov (30 years old) moved from the province of Orel together with 25 family members.²² The archival data for 1817 indicate that in the town of Tuchkov lived 1.604 Russians accounting for 23.7% of the total number of residents.²³

By 1820 the town was home to more than 1.5 thousand ethnic Russians, most of whom worked for hire (about 400 people). Among Russians there were butchers, masons, merchants.²⁴

The active resettlement of **Greeks** in the region falls on the second half of the 18th century, when Greek merchants moved to the southern Ukrainian cities of the Russian Empire, including Odessa, Izmail, Ackerman, Kiliya, where they set up trading firms.²⁵ According to the information published in the scientific literature at the beginning of the 19th century more than 800 Greek trading firms operated in the

¹⁸ МІІА, ф. 514, ф. 4, pp. 54-84.

¹⁹ МІІА, ф. 514, ф. 12.

²⁰ МІІА, ф. 514, ф. 33, p. 69.

²¹ МІІА, ф. 514, ф. 4.

²² МІІА, ф. 514, ф. 17, p. 45.

²³ МІІА, ф. 514, ф. 12.

²⁴ МІІА, ф. 514, ф. 33, pp. 127-180.

²⁵ Tsyganenko L., *The Greeks of Southern Bessarabia in the 19th Century*, „Наукові записки з української історії: 36.наук. статей”, Вип. 36, Переяслав-Хмельницький, 2015, pp. 24-30.

Russian Empire.²⁶ Success in the development of regional trade created favorable conditions for the development of Greek communities in the cities of Southern Bessarabia.

The archival materials of the beginning of the 19th century (1808) indicate that among the inhabitants of Ackerman, Greeks constituted 21%, and they were classified as “indigenous people”.²⁷ In Izmail, the number of Greeks was much smaller. So from May to August in 1811, only 13 Greeks appeared in the fortress and the trading quarter.²⁸

Comparing the documents for 1817 and 1818, we can trace the dynamics of changes in the number of members of the Greek ethnos in the town of Tuchkov and the fortress of Izmail. So, in 1817, 85 Greeks: 66 men and 19 women officially lived in the town of Tuchkov.²⁹ In comparison with the representatives of other ethnic groups who lived in the city, Greeks accounted for only 1.25% of the total population of Tuchkov, which at that time was 6,772 people.³⁰ On the territory of the fortress of Izmail in 1817 there were 44 ethnic Greeks (22 men and 24 women) who settled here in the time of Turkish dominance.³¹ In 1818 the number of Greeks in the town of Tuchkov was 131 people (88 men and 43 women).³²

Among the archival documents of this period, mention is made of the 9 “noblemen of the Greek nation”: K. Popazoloprasin, D. Popandopulo-Korfino, K. Sochaglo, P. Varnaiot, A. Zaravino, O. Nesterovich, M. Dragichevich, I. Duma, K. Vainusky.³³ However, the author was not able to find any documents confirming the aristocratic origin of these families. Nevertheless, they were well-off people, whose property was stone houses, and the sphere of activity was commerce.

“Noblemen of the Greek nation” were not the only ethnic Greeks, about whom we found information in the Izmail archive. One of the lists mentions 49 Greek surnames with a detailed description of their wealth and sphere of activity.³⁴ Most of the Greeks from this list – more than 53% – are merchants and traders who owned mills, brick factories, stores, shops, “Greek coffee houses”. In total,

²⁶ Arsh G., *The Secret Society “Filiki Eteria”*, M., 1965, p. 40.

²⁷ *Budzhak, Historical and Ethnographic...*, p. 344.

²⁸ MIIA, f. 514, f. 4, p. 58.

²⁹ MIIA, f. 514, f. 12, pp. 6-7.

³⁰ Tsyganenko L., *The Greeks of Southern Bessarabia in the 19th Century...*, p. 28.

³¹ MIIA, f. 514, f. 12, p. 8.

³² MIIA, f. 514, f. 12, pp. 58-59.

³³ MIIA, f. 514, f. 33, p. 7.

³⁴ MIIA, f. 514, f. 33, pp. 9-14.

according to our calculations, in 1820 the Greek community of the town of Tuchkov consisted of 141 people (99 men and 42 women).³⁵

Documents of the Izmail archives for 1817 show that in the town of Tuchkov lived more than 30 Polish noblemen, who moved to the region at the end of the 18th century.³⁶ And it is interesting that most of this number were men. It is important to note that among the 663 civilians of the fortress of Izmail at the beginning of the 19th century there was not a single Pole.³⁷ By 1817 representatives of the Polish ethnic group accounted for only 0.25% of the total number of residents of the town of Tuchkov.³⁸ By 1820 the number of ethnic Poles in the city is increasing – they already number 82 people³⁹, among whom the most numerous were the families of Branovsky, Tsykhanovsky, Petrovsky, Stadnitsky, Blazhievsky and others. The main economic activities of the Poles were trade, farming, wage work.⁴⁰

In archival documents, most Polish residents of the city are designated as nobles – “Polish noblemen”. However, a detailed analysis of their property gives reason to doubt this characteristic. Will you agree that it looks rather strange when a representative of an aristocratic family lives in ... a dugout? And there were a majority of such “Polish noblemen” in this period!

Some historians believe that the appearance of **Armenians** in Budzhak dates back to the 19th – the early 20th centuries when significant groups of the Armenian people left the lands of the South Caucasus and Eastern Turkey, moving first to the Crimea, and later to southern Bessarabia – Belgorod (Ackerman), Kiliya.⁴¹

In the 15th – the 17th centuries, the Armenian communities of Budzhak established close economic ties with European trading cities, while Kiliya and Ackerman took the key positions in international trade in the region.⁴² Apart from trading operations, the Armenians of Budzhak were engaged in making carpets, colored leather, weaving, making weapons.

³⁵ Tsyganenko L., *Greek Nobility in the Life of the South Ukrainian Cities (the Second Half of the 18th – the 19th Cent.)*, “Діалог культур: Україна – Греція: культурна політика ХХІ ст. в європейській ретроспективі”, Київ, 2016, p. 37.

³⁶ МІА, f. 514, f. 6, p. 7, 58.

³⁷ МІА, f. 514, f. 6, p. 8.

³⁸ МІА, f. 514, f. 12.

³⁹ МІА, f. 514, f. 7, p. 8.

⁴⁰ МІА, f. 514, f. 7, p. 9.

⁴¹ Tsyganenko L., *Ethnic Composition of the Inhabitants of Izmail Fortress at the Beginning of the 19th Century (Following the Local Archives)*, “Етнічна історія народів Європи”, Вип. 41, К. 2014, p. 21.

⁴² Козур Y., *Armenians in Bessarabia*, “Кур’єр недели”, № 35, 30 апреля 2010.

At the beginning of the 19th century Armenians occupied a separate block on the territory of the fortress of Izmail, they had their own church. By the beginning of 1812, only 349 Armenians lived in the fortress.⁴³ The most numerous Armenian families included the Zadurovs, the Khachadovs, the Sarkisovs, the Karabiberovs, the Agunovs etc. According to the data of 1817, only 12 Armenians lived in the town of Tuchkov, while in the fortress of Izmail the Armenians constituted the majority – 273 people or almost 40% of its inhabitants.⁴⁴

In 1820, an independent Armenian cemetery was founded in Izmail⁴⁵, the wooden Armenian church of St. George functioned, which owned 2 houses. The service in the church was led by four priests and their assistants. The main occupation of the Armenians of Izmail was trade, although among others there were silversmiths, tailors, gardeners.

In 1817, 80 representatives of **the Jewish** ethnic group were officially registered in the town of Tuchkov that accounted for 1.2% of the total number of residents.⁴⁶

The archival materials for 1820 allow us to establish that, on the one hand, the authorities did not treat the local Jews kindly: the Jewish prayer house (existed since 1812) disappears from the city statistical records. On the other hand, the authorities not particularly interfere with the Jews to move to the Danube land.⁴⁷ The total number of the Jewish population in the town of Tuchkov is of 364 people. The most popular occupation among the Jewish population of the town was peddling and the sale of hot wine. Of the total number of the Jewish community in the town, only 1 person (!) was engaged in agriculture.

Time passed. The authorities and rulers changed. The periods of active colonization of the Budzhak steppes were followed by the periods of stagnation and outflow of population. Representatives of each of the ethnic groups made an invaluable contribution to the development of the economy and culture of the region, putting a lot of effort and money to develop it. For several centuries it was the Budzhak region that became the platform for the formation of a model of conflict-free coexistence of representatives of various ethnic groups, their mutual influence and mutual enrichment.

⁴³ Tsyganenko L., *The Armenians of Southern Bessarabia in the Social and Economic Development of the Region in the 19th Century*, “Південь України: етно-історичний, мовний, культурний та релігійний виміри”, Одеса, 2015, p. 406.

⁴⁴ МІА, f. 514, f. 12, p. 8.

⁴⁵ *Budzhak: Historical and Ethnographic...*, p. 198.

⁴⁶ МІА, f. 514, f. 12, p. 21.

⁴⁷ Shevchuk T., “Historical and Cultural Heritage and Collective Remembrance of the Local Community”, in *The Ukrainian Danube Region in the Light of Humanitarian Studies*, Izmail, 2015, pp. 178-198.