

Roxolana: “The Greatest Empresse of the East”

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One of the most legendary women of early modern history, known in Turkey as Hurrem Sultan and in Europe as Roxolana, has always been and still remains a controversial figure. While controversies surrounded other powerful and famous women of her time — such as Catherine de’ Medici, Queen Margot, or Queen Elizabeth I — Roxolana’s precipitous career from a harem slave to the queen of the Ottoman Empire made her particularly fascinating, yet vulnerable to the judgment of many a historian and writer. Kidnapped from the Ukraine and sold into the Ottoman imperial harem in the early sixteenth century, Roxolana quickly became the favorite concubine (*haseki*) of Sultan Suleiman I, the Magnificent (1520–1566), and later, his beloved wife, the powerful sultana. In the course of their four-decade-long romance until her death in 1558, Roxolana reigned supreme not only in Suleiman’s heart, but also in his court, as his chief political advisor. The former slave exerted immense influence over imperial affairs and left an indelible mark on both Ottoman history and European imagination.

Various theories and interpretations have been offered throughout the ages to account for her long-term grip over Suleiman: her beauty, her joyous spirit and graciousness, her charming smile and infectious laughter, her witty and quick mind, her ruthless pragmatism and political genius, her manipulative and vile disposition, her musical talents, her use of sorcery and love potions, among others. The main problem with such interpretations is that they overstress Roxolana’s psychological traits and regard her actions as being outside the social and historical context in which she lived. Another problem with most representations of Roxolana’s life is that little factual information is known about her in the first place, as the sultan’s harem was inaccessible to both the Ottomans and foreign visitors. The primary Ottoman sources on Hurrem — such as her correspondence with Suleiman, the harem salary records,¹ Suleiman’s diaries and his poetic love letters to Hurrem,² as well as Suleiman’s and Roxolana’s letters to King Sigismund II August³ — provide

an authentic glimpse into her actions and psychology. However, these documents did not become known to the world at large until the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, when the dark image of Roxolana had been already formed.

All other depictions of Hurrem-Roxolana, starting with comments by sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Ottoman historians as well as by European diplomats, observers, and travelers, are highly derivative and speculative in nature. Because none of these people were permitted into the inner circle of Suleiman's harem, which was surrounded by multiple walls, they largely relied on the testimony of the servants or courtiers or on the popular gossip circulating around Istanbul. Even the reports of the Venetian ambassadors (*baili*) at Suleiman's court, the most extensive and objective first-hand Western source on Roxolana to date, were often filled with the authors' own interpretations of the harem rumors.⁴ Most other sixteenth-century Western sources on Roxolana, which are considered highly authoritative today — such as *The Turkish Letters* of Ogier de Busbecq, the Emissary of the Holy Roman Emperor Ferdinand I at the Porte between 1554 and 1562; the account of the murder of Prince Mustapha by Nicholas de Moffan; the historical chronicles on Turkey by Paolo Giovio; and the travel narrative by Luidgi Bassano⁵ — were derived from hearsay. For the most part, they demonize Roxolana as a ruthless schemer who constantly poisoned Suleiman's mind with her machinations, replicating the Ottoman belief that she used sorcery to entice him. For instance, English historian Richard Knolles, who called Roxolana “the greatest empress of the East,” portrayed her as a malicious, wicked, and scheming woman who fully controlled Suleiman's mind.⁶ This negative Western response to Roxolana was the result of numerous causes: the uncritical replication and proliferation of the Ottoman public's negative attitudes to Hurrem by early modern European observers; early modern Europeans' resentment of successful renegades as morally perverted people and their general misconceptions about the Ottoman slave system; and lastly, the early modern West's own fear of female authority.

While in the late seventeenth century Roxolana's image in Europe changed for the better, perhaps due to the general decrease of the Ottoman threat and the subsequent change in the attitudes toward the Turks,⁷ the tradition of demonizing Roxolana continued, almost by force of habit, in subsequent centuries. The publication of numerous Ottoman histories and relevant documents — such as Hammer's *Geschichte des Osmanischen Reiches* (1827–1835); Ranke's *Fürsten und Völker von Südeuropas* (1827); Zinkeisen's *Geschichte des Osmanischen Reiches in Europa* (1840–1863);⁸ and Alberi's edition of the Venetian reports (1840–1855) — in the nineteenth century rekindled the West's interest in Turkish history, but it also revived both the

Ottoman public's negative image of Hurrem and the early modern West's stereotype of Roxolana as a schemer. These solid historical studies contributed, directly or indirectly, to further propagation of the old-age image of Roxolana in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁹ One can still find abundant bias against Roxolana in modern Western and Turkish history and fiction.¹⁰ Yet, a number of serious historical studies have demonstrated Western misconceptions about the Ottoman harem and specifically about Roxolana's actions.¹¹

This article attempts to rectify the negative, one-sided, and (one might say) "patriarchal" view of Roxolana that dominated for centuries. In contrast to accusations of her as a witch and an unscrupulous social climber, this paper highlights Roxolana's strengths — her intelligence, education, willpower, and other talents — that enabled her not just to survive in the crowded world of the Ottoman imperial harem, but to come out triumphant. Furthermore, the paper will turn to the Eastern European (mostly Polish and Ukrainian) perspective on Roxolana, which defends her actions as necessary for her survival in the Ottoman slavery system. While there is no single systematic, non-fictional overview or analysis of Roxolana's life in English, apart from a couple of fictional works centering on Roxolana¹² or individual chapters and pages about her in history books,¹³ such works exist in Polish and Ukrainian, as well as in other European languages: e.g., by Julian Niemcewicz, Panteleimon Kulish, Szymon Askenazy, Agathangel Krymsky, Mikhail Hrushevsky, Volodymyr Hrabovetsky, Yaroslav Kis', Olena Apanovich, Irena Knysh, and others.¹⁴ In addition, the early modern chronicles of Marcin Bielski, Maciej Strykowski, Marcin Broniowski, Bernard Wapowski, and Mikhalon Lituan provide perspectives on Ottoman slavery and on Poland and Ukraine that have not been closely examined in Western scholarship.¹⁵ Yet, such Eastern European sources present a refreshing antidote to the old stereotypes on these issues. If anything, looking at Roxolana from a number of cultural perspectives enables us to form a more balanced view of this legendary woman.

Roxolana's emergence in the Ottoman imperial harem has been compared to the projectory of a meteorite or a bright comet in the night sky. She probably entered the harem around fifteen years of age, some time between 1517 and 1520, but certainly before Suleiman became sultan in 1520. Her rise from harem servant to Suleiman's *hasseki* must have been rather rapid, for after giving birth to her first son Mehmed in 1521, she bore the Sultan four more sons — Abdullah (b. 1522), Selim (b. 1524), Bayazid (b. 1525), and Jihangir (b. 1531, a hunchback) — and a daughter Mihrimah (b. 1522).¹⁶ That Roxolana was allowed to give birth to more than one son was a stark violation of the old royal harem principle, "one concubine mother — one son," which was

designed to prevent both the mother's influence over the sultan and the feuds of the blood brothers for the throne.¹⁷ The violation of this principle signaled to the outside world the emergence of a powerful female in Suleiman's court.

Foreign diplomatic correspondence between the 1520s and 1550s was filled with the awareness of this powerful female presence behind the thick walls of the Sultan's harem. European observers and historians referred to her as "Roxolana," "Rosselane," "Roxa," or "Rossa," as she was believed to be of Russian descent. Mikhail Litvin (Mikhalon Lituan), a Lithuanian ambassador to the Crimea in the mid-sixteenth century, wrote in his 1550 chronicle: ". . . the beloved wife of the Turkish emperor, mother of his eldest son and heir, was some time ago kidnapped from our land."¹⁸ Navagero wrote of her as "[donna] . . . di nazione russa"; and Trevisano called her a "Sultana, ch'è di Russia."¹⁹ The belief that Roxolana was of Russian rather than Ukrainian descent may have resulted from the eventual misinterpretation of the words *Roxolana* and *Rossa*. In early modern Europe, the word *Roxolania* was used to refer to the province of *Ruthenia* (or *Rutenia*) in the Western Ukraine, which was at different times known under the names of *Red Rus'*, *Galicia*, or *Podolia* (that is, eastern Podolia that was under Polish control at the time), while present-day Russia was called *Muscovy*, or *Muscovy Rus'*, or the *Duchy of Muscovy*. In antiquity, the word *Roxolani* denoted both a nomadic Sarmatian tribe and a settlement on the Dniester River (presently in the Odessa region in the Ukraine).²⁰

As Samuel Twardowski, member of the Polish Embassy to the Ottoman court in the years 1621–1622 maintained, Turks told him that Roxolana was the daughter of an Orthodox priest from Rohatyn, a small town in Podolia not far from Lviv.²¹ The old folk song from the region of Bukovina that tells the story of a beautiful young Nastusen'ka (diminutive from Anastasia), who was kidnapped by the Tatars from Rohatyn and sold into the Turkish harem, confirms this information.²² According to the old Ukrainian tradition, Roksolana's name was Anastasia Lisowska, daughter of Gavriil and Leksandra Lisowski,²³ although many argue that this name is fictive and was invented in the nineteenth century.²⁴

While Ukrainian and Polish legends and sources extoll Roxolana's beauty that conquered the powerful Sultan, Venetian reports maintain that she was not particularly beautiful but rather small, graceful, elegant, and modest.²⁵ Yet her radiant smile and playful temperament made her irresistibly charming and won her the name of "Hurrem" ("Joyful" or "Laughing One"). She was known for her singing and musical ability, as well as for her skillful embroidery.²⁶ But most important, it is Roxolana's great intelligence and willpower that gave her an edge over other women in the harem. As all contemporary European observers testified, the Sultan was completely smitten with his new concubine.

She quickly ousted the mother of the Sultan's first-born son, the beautiful Circassian Gulbehar (Mahidevran, in other sources),²⁷ from the position of favorite concubine. Suleiman's love for Hurrem found powerful expression in his poetic letters to her.²⁸ When both Navagero and Trevisano wrote in their 1553 and 1554 reports to Venice that she was "much loved by her master" ("tanto amata da sua maestà"),²⁹ Roxolana was already in her fifties, long past her prime. After her death in April 1558, Suleiman remained inconsolable for a long time. She was the greatest love of his life, his soulmate and lawful wife, and a woman of extraordinary character.³⁰

Suleiman's great love for Roxolana was manifest in his exceptional treatment of his *hasseki*. To her benefit, the Sultan broke a series of very important traditions of the imperial harem. In 1533 or 1534 (the exact date is unknown), Suleiman married Hurrem in a magnificent formal ceremony, violating a 300-year-old custom of the Ottoman house according to which sultans were not to marry their concubines.³¹ Never before was a former slave elevated to the status of the sultan's lawful spouse.³² Moreover, upon marrying *hasseki* Hurrem, the Sultan became practically monogamous, which was unheard of in Ottoman history. As Trevisano wrote in 1554, once Suleiman had known Roxolana, "not only did he want to have her as a legitimate wife and hold her as such in his seraglio, but he did not even want to know any other woman: something that had never been done by any of his predecessors, for the Turks are accustomed to take various women in order to have children by them, or for carnal pleasure."³³

Roxolana became the first woman to remain in the Sultan's court for the duration of her life. In the Ottoman royal family tradition, a sultan's concubine was to remain in the harem only until her son came of age (around 16 or 17), after which he would be sent away from the capital to govern a faraway province, and his mother would follow him.³⁴ She would return to Istanbul only in the capacity of *valide sultan* (mother of the reigning sultan). In defiance of this age-old custom, Hurrem stayed behind in the harem with her hunchback son Jihangir, even after her three other sons went to govern the empire's remote provinces.³⁵ Moreover, she moved out of the harem located in the Old Palace (*Eskiserai*) to Suleiman's quarters located in the New Palace (*Topkapi*) after a fire destroyed the old palace.

Obviously, the Ottoman public did not appreciate Suleiman's total devotion to one woman and the ensuing radical changes in the harem hierarchy. As Bassano wrote about the public's reaction to Hurrem, "the Janissaries and the entire court hate her and her children likewise, but because the Sultan loves her, no one dares to speak"; and "every one speak[s] ill of her and of her children, and well of the first-born and his mother, who has been repudiated."³⁶ The public attributed Hurrem's power over Suleiman to

witchcraft, often calling her *ziadi*, or “witch.” This negative image of Roxolana was then transferred to Europe by Western diplomats and travelers and was added to the West’s own fear of female authority. Furthermore, the execution of Prince Mustapha in 1553, which many believed was instigated by Roxolana and her son-in-law Rustem Pasha, made her especially unpopular both in Turkey and in the West and sealed her negative image. The death of Mustapha was greatly lamented by the Janissaries and the court, where he was held in high regard and favored as the next sultan. The news that the Sultan executed his own son and heir sent shock waves in early modern Europe: it was perceived as a stark example of Asian atrocity.

As Pierce persuasively argues, the roots of the Ottoman public’s dislike of Hurrem lay in Suleiman’s breaking three important harem traditions for Hurrem: the concubine status of royal mothers, the reproductive principle of “one concubine mother — one son,” and the presence of a prince’s mother at her son’s provincial post.³⁷ Traditionally, the two roles of the sultan’s concubines — the sultan’s favorite (a sexual role) and that of mother of the prince (a post-sexual role) — were separated in the imperial harem, the separation made at the moment when the woman left the harem to follow her adult son to a province. In Hurrem, however, “these two functions were collapsed for the first time in the career of one woman,” as she was “caught between two conflicting loyalties: mother to the prince, and wife to the sultan.”³⁸ As a result, the Ottomans could not come to terms with Hurrem’s ambiguous status in the harem.

When critics accuse Roxolana of manipulating and plotting against her harem rivals — Gulbahar, Grand Vizier Ibrahim Pasha, Prince Mustapha, and Grand Vizier Ahmed Pasha — they tend to overlook the fact that she had to fight for her own survival and the survival of her children in the very competitive world of the imperial harem, which was populated by hundreds of beautiful women and able men and ruled by the fratricide law. Hurrem was thus unjustly and harshly judged by her contemporaries for surviving and doing so brilliantly. Her rise from slave to sultana was not only the result of Suleiman’s love and benevolence, but also the result of her own intelligence, effort, and extraordinary political skill. Hurrem knew the Sultan’s nature very well³⁹ and skillfully used that knowledge to her advantage. On one occasion, Gulbehar, mother of the first-born Mustafa, overcome by jealousy, called Hurrem “sold meat” (“carne venduta”) and scratched Hurrem’s face very badly. When the envoy came to summon Hurrem to Suleiman’s quarters for the night, she refused to go on the grounds that she did not dare offend the Sultan’s eyesight with her disfigured looks. Suleiman insisted and upon seeing Hurrem’s bruised face, sent Gulbahar away to join her son Mustafa in the province of Magnesia.⁴⁰ Hurrem thus won a long-time battle with her archrival

by turning the unfavorable circumstance to her advantage. This episode is often cited as an example of Roxolana's manipulative nature, but it can also be seen as an example of her political genius.

Hurrem's power in the Sultan's court grew stronger with every passing year. As Navagero wrote in 1553, "there has not been in the Ottoman house a lady that has had more authority."⁴¹ Her authority showed not only in her firm grip over Suleiman's heart but also in her ability to compete with the male rivals in Suleiman's court, and to be a skillful sovereign and ruler. She was a keen advisor to Suleiman in political matters, particularly when he was absent from Istanbul on his numerous military campaigns. She regularly sent letters to the Sultan, in which, in addition to expressing her great love and longing for him, she also informed him of the situation in the capital and of any events that required his immediate attention or action.⁴² In being thus vigilant, she protected Suleiman's interests and contributed to the success of his reign. There is no doubt that Suleiman trusted her more than he did his male advisors.

Unlike other harem concubines before her, who had never risen above the level of harem rivalry, Roxolana had political ambition and was, it seemed, determined to achieve as much power and independence as a woman possibly could within the Ottoman slave system. She dared to have a voice in the government. She played an important role in Suleiman's diplomatic dealings and correspondence, often acting on the Sultan's behalf, when an assurance of his peaceful intentions and an exchange of gifts were necessary.⁴³ She also influenced the Sultan's diplomatic relations with other sovereigns and foreign embassies (see below).

As a public figure, Hurrem became known for her grand-scale building projects, which manifested her high status in the Ottoman dynastic family. Traditionally, "the endowments of royal concubine mothers were confined to provincial cities, while the sultan alone was responsible for the most splendid projects in the capital of Istanbul."⁴⁴ However, Hurrem earned the privilege to build religious and charitable buildings in Istanbul and other important cities of the empire. Hurrem's endowment (*Külliye* of *hasseki* Hurrem) in Istanbul, built in the Aksaray district called Avret Pazari (or Women's Bazaar; later named *Hasseki*), contained a mosque, medrese, imaret, elementary school, hospital, and fountain. It was the first complex constructed in Istanbul by Sinan in his new position as the chief royal architect. The fact that it was the third largest building in the capital, after the complexes of Mehmed II (Fatih) and Süleyman (Süleymanie mosque), testifies to Hurrem's great status.⁴⁵ She also built mosque complexes in Adrianopol and Ankara.⁴⁶ Her other charitable building projects included the Jerusalem foundation (called *Hasseki Sultan*), with a hospice and a soup kitchen for pilgrims and the homeless; a soup

kitchen in Mekka (imaret *Hasseki Hurrem*); a public kitchen in Istanbul (in Avret Pazari); and two large public baths in Istanbul (in the Jewish and Aya Sôfyâ quarters, respectively).⁴⁷

Despite her unpopularity with the Ottomans, Hurrem must have projected a rather impressive image as a public figure. In his works *Sebname-i Al-i Osman* (1593) and *Sebname-i Humayun* (1596), Ottoman historian Taliki-zade el-Fenari presented a very flattering portrait of Hurrem as a woman known for “her numerous charitable endowments, her patronage of learning and respect for men of religion, and her acquisition of rare and beautiful objects.”⁴⁸

It is as a powerful ruler and a person of extraordinary talent and intelligence that Roxolana is celebrated in Polish and Ukrainian history. Roxolana’s exalted status in these cultures is closely connected with the historical events of great significance: namely, the large-scale Tatar-Turkish slave trade that had been devastating these regions from the thirteenth century through most of the seventeenth century. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the Ottoman slave trade escalated to an unprecedented degree. Various sixteenth-century Polish chroniclers, such as Marcin Bielski, Joachim Bielski, Maciej Strykowski, Marcin Broniowski, Bernard Wapowski, and Joachim Jerlicz, wrote of the staggering statistics of these raids. Some of the most devastating raids happened in 1498–1500, when Tatars ravaged Galicia, taking 150,000 captives⁴⁹; in 1509, when they plundered Lviv and burned down Rohatyn⁵⁰; and in 1516, when 30,000 Tatar raiders captured 60 thousand Ukrainian people.⁵¹ During such raids, Tatars laid waste to villages and towns, killing everyone who resisted them and taking captive not only men and women, but also children and livestock.⁵² In the second half of the sixteenth century, 150,000–200,000 Podolians were taken into captivity. The devastating Tatar raids continued on a full-scale during the seventeenth century.⁵³ Overall, between the fifteenth century and the first half of the seventeenth century, about 2.5 million Ukrainians were kidnapped and sold into slavery.⁵⁴ The Ukrainian population was so decimated during that time that the “country did not recover from it for many generations.”⁵⁵

Contemporary sources also recorded the Tatars’ horrible treatment of Ukrainian captives, while the latter were being transported to the slave markets of the Crimea and Asia Minor:

... it is a sight that could touch even the cruellest of hearts, when a man is separated from his wife, a mother from her daughter, without any hope of ever being reunited, in the deplorable captivity of pagan Mahumetans, who will subject them to a myriad indignities. Their [Tatars’] brutality makes them commit the filthiest of deeds, such as raping maidens, violating married women in presence of their fathers and husbands, and even circumcising infants in front of the latter in

order to turn them to Mahomet. In the end, even the most callous of hearts would tremble among the cries and laments, tears and moans of these unfortunate Ruthenians. For while this people sings and howls in tears, these miserable folks are dispersed in different directions: some to Constantinople, some to the Crimea, others to Anatolia, etc. This is, in a few words, how Tatars take captive as many as 50 thousand souls in less than two weeks, and how they treat their captives upon dividing them amongst themselves and then sell them as they please when they return to their lands.⁵⁶

In this context, Ukrainians viewed Roxolana's destiny as a triumph of human will and intelligence, for she was directly connected with the ongoing tragedy, not only because she had been captured and sold at the slave markets, but also because she reached a position in which she could relieve the sorry lot of her captured compatriots. It is believed that during her tenure at Suleiman's court, Roxolana facilitated the Porte's friendly relations with Poland, who had dominion of the western Ukraine at the time. The Polish-Ottoman truces of 1525 and 1528 and the "eternal peace" treaties of 1533 and 1553 are frequently attributed to her influence.⁵⁷ As Polish and Ukrainian lands were devastated by constant Tatar and Turkish slave raids in which thousands of people were kidnapped and sold into slavery, maintaining friendly relations with the Ottomans was crucially important for the Polish kings Sigismund I and his son, Sigismund II August. The treaties allowed Poland significant leverage in negotiating the ransom and return of the captured.

It is not known exactly what part Roxolana played in preventing the ongoing slave trade in her native land and in negotiating the release of Polish and Ukrainian captives. Neither this information nor her influence on Suleiman would have been recorded in state documents. Yet, Piotr Opalinski, Polish Ambassador to Suleiman's court in 1533, confirmed that through Roxolana's pleading, the Sultan forbade the Crimean Khan to bother Polish lands.⁵⁸ Although some historians argue that the reasons Poland was able to obtain those truces with the Ottomans were strictly political and had more to do with the common Polish and Ottoman anti-Hapsburg politics, the fact that Suleiman twice granted "eternal peace" to a non-tributary Christian neighbor was in itself amazing, as it was a radical departure from the Islamic principles governing their relations with "infidels." It clearly pointed to Poland's privileged status in Ottoman diplomacy.⁵⁹ Indeed, as von Hammer wrote, Polish embassies to Suleiman's court were more frequent than any other European embassies, and one of the most important issues on their agenda was the return of Polish captives to their native land:

From no other European court there appeared as many embassies as from Poland. For four years in a row came Polish ambassadors — and in

the mentioned year [1553] even twice — to the Porte, among whom were Nikolai Bohousz, Andrzej Burzki, Stanislaw Tenezynski, Andrej Bzicki, and Yazlowiecki, and in the following year Piotr Pilecki and Nikolai Brzozowski. The topics of their negotiations were the Turkish raids in Poland, the compensations of Queen Isabella, the return of the captives, and the renewal of friendship.⁶⁰

Altogether, about fifty Polish embassies were sent to the Porte in the course of the sixteenth century.⁶¹ Analysis of the ambassadorial instructions and diplomatic correspondence between the Porte and the Polish Crown during the sixteenth century reveals that there were a great many Polish captives in Turkey, and that the question of their liberation was frequently raised.⁶²

Two extant letters of Roxolana to Sigismund August reveal a close connection between the sovereigns of the two powers as well as her desire to assure favorable disposition of Turkey toward Poland.⁶³ In her first short letter to Sigismund II, Roxolana expresses her highest joy and congratulations to the new King on the occasion of his ascension to the Polish throne after the death of his father Sigismund I in 1548.⁶⁴ She also pleads with the King to trust her envoy Hassan Aga (her close servant who was by some accounts a convert to Islam of Ukrainian descent) who took another message from her by word of mouth.⁶⁵ In her second letter to Sigismund August, written in response to his letter, Roxolana expresses in superlative terms her joy at hearing that the King is in good health and that he sends assurances of his sincere friendliness and attachment towards Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent.⁶⁶ She also relates here Sultan Suleiman's great joy at receiving good news from the Polish sovereign ("that made him so joyous that I cannot express"), and she quotes the Sultan as saying: "with the old King we were like brothers, and if it pleases the All-Merciful God, with this King we will be as Father and Son."⁶⁷ Next, she assures the King of her willingness to defend his interests before the Sultan: "I will be very interested in this and will speak ten times more for the good and in favor of Your Majesty."⁶⁸ With this letter, Roxolana sent Sigismund II the gift of two pairs of linen shirts and pants, some belts, six handkerchiefs, and a hand-towel, with a promise to send a special linen robe in the future.

There are reasons to believe that these two letters were more than just diplomatic gestures, and that Suleiman's references to brotherly or fatherly feelings were not a mere tribute to political expediency. The letters also suggest Roxolana's strong desire to establish personal contact with the King. "Perhaps," writes one Ukrainian author, "they express her concern about her land, which was under Polish Kings, and her desire to help it out in any possible way?"⁶⁹ In his 1551 letter to Sigismund II concerning the embassy of Piotr Opalinski, Suleiman wrote that the Ambassador had seen "Your sister,

and my Wife."⁷⁰ Whether this phrase refers to a warm friendship between the Polish King and Roxolana, or whether it suggests a closer relation,⁷¹ the degree of their intimacy definitely points to a special link between the two states at the time.

While there is no known recorded evidence of Roxolana's help to her captive compatriots, Ukrainian popular memory provides its own time-honored testimony. One early modern Ukrainian folk song (*duma*) depicts the story of Marusia of Bohuslav (where "Bohuslav" is both a name of a Ukrainian town and a word meaning "praising God"), daughter of an Orthodox priest who ended up in a Turkish Pasha's harem. Although Marusia feels cursed for having accepted the hateful "Turkish luxury," on a bright Holy Saturday she frees 700 Ukrainian Cossacks from her master's prison:

Thus on the Day of the Resurrection
The Turkish lord sought the mosque's arcade
But into the hand of the captive maid
The keys of the dungeon dark he laid.
Then the captive maid was true
To the deed she had promised to do;
To the dungeon walls she came
And unlocked the door of the same;
Thus with the pasha's key
She set the captives free.⁷²

Because Marusia's life story is so similar to Roxolana's, some consider this *duma* to be about Roxolana.⁷³ It projects the image of Roxolana as a helper and an avenger for the suffering of her people.

Ukrainians also take pride in Roxolana's tenacity and independence, which they trace to cultural traditions in the Kiev Rus' of the eleventh-twelfth centuries. They maintain that Roxolana's independence and free spirit were instilled in her during her childhood years in Podolia, where she received her primary education. Suppressed on all sides by Polish and Lithuanian colonists and by Tatar and Turkish hordes, Ukrainians nevertheless saw themselves as inheritors of the great traditions of the Kiev Rus', where women enjoyed relative equality with men with regard to legal rights. On the other hand, Roxolana's personality is sometimes connected with a new type of a Ukrainian woman that came to the fore during the Cossack liberation movement (the late sixteenth-seventeenth centuries) — a Cossack woman who defended her home and land against foreign invaders along with Cossack men.⁷⁴ Roxolana's actions — such as her insistence on marriage with Suleiman and his *de facto* monogamy, her earning the highest *hasseki* salary (2,000 aspers/day), her tremendous legal dowry and wealth (5,000 ducats; multiple real estate), her ability to consolidate power in the harem through a network of

personal relationships, her relative freedom of movement, and her running the affairs of the harem in the same manner in which only *valideh sultans* did — are thus viewed in the context of the old Ukrainian tradition of female independence and self-reliance, and as the behaviors of a free-spirited Cossack woman.

Even if this image of Roxolana is highly romanticized, one has to acknowledge her diverse talents and extraordinary intelligence, fortitude, and willpower — the gifts with which she “bewitched” Suleiman and the rest of the world. In the afterword to his novel, *Roksolana* (1979), Ukrainian writer Pavlo Zahrebel’ny defends Roxolana’s actions as her right to the “pursuit of happiness,” the pursuit of her unique individuality, which is the ultimate measure and purpose of human life.⁷⁵ Roxolana had to deal with the vicissitudes of foreign captivity and compete with innumerable people under the very cruel circumstances. She was able not only to survive but also to triumph over those circumstances. Sometimes, says Zahrebel’ny, a person’s life is so hard that he or she has little time to reflect on abstract principles and is instead forced to solve real-life problems very promptly, when it is only “either” or “or,” only “to be” or “not to be.” Such was Roxolana’s life, and she won victory over a slave’s lot with the power of her considerable will and intelligence.⁷⁶

Endnotes

Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are mine.

1. See Leslie Pierce, *The Imperial Harem: Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), which is based primarily on the analysis of the Suleiman-Hurrem’s correspondence and of the harem’s privy registers, contained in the Topkapi museum in Istanbul.

2. For the English translations of Suleiman’s poetry, see vol. III of E.J.W. Gibb, *A History of Turkish Poetry* (vols. I–VI; London, 1900–1907); and Talat S. Halman, *Suleyman the Magnificent Poet* (Istanbul: Dost, 1987).

3. See Szymon Askenazy, “Listy Roxolany,” *Kwartalnik Historyczny* X (1896): 113–17.

4. Most pertinent to my topic are the reports of three Venetian *baili* at Suleiman’s court: Pietro Bragadino (1526), Bernardo Navagero (1553), and Domenico Trevisano (1554). All three reports were published by Eugenio Alberi in *Relazioni degli Ambasciatori Veneti al Senato*, Ser. III, vols. I–III (Firenze, 1840–1855).

5. See Luigi Bassano da Zara, *I costumi et i modi particolari de la vita de Turchi* (Roma, 1545); Ogier Ghislain de Busbecq, *Augerii Gislentii Turcicae legationes epistolae quatuor* (Paris, 1589), as well as the English editions used in this article, *The Four Epistles of A.G. Busbequius, Concerning his Embassy into Turkey* (London: F. Taylor and F. Wayt, 1694); and *The Turkish Letters of Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq, Imperial Ambassador at Constantinople, 1554–1562* (Trans. E.S. Forster; Oxford: Clarendon, 1968; 1927); Paolo Giovio, *Turcicarum rerum commentarius* (Paris, 1531) and *Historiarum sui tempores* (1552); and Nicholas de Moffan, *Soltani Solymanni horrendum facinus in proprium filium*

(Basle, 1555), which was published in English translation in William Paynter's *Second Tome of the Palace of Pleasure* (London, 1567).

6. *Generall Historie of the Turkes* (London, 1603), 759.

7. Jean Marmontel's novella "Solyman II", from his *Contes moraux* (Paris, 1764), perhaps best illustrates this "new" European attitude to Roxolana. Here the image of Roxolana as a charming, witty, and independent European woman replaces, if only for a brief period of time, the old image of her as an unscrupulous schemer.

8. See Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall, *Geschichte des Osmanischen Reiches* (vols. I–X; Pest, 1827–1835), particularly vol. III, 227, 269 ff.; Leopold Ranke, *Fürsten und Völker von Südeuropas im sechzehnten und siebzehnten Jahrhundert* (vols. 1–4; Berlin, 1827), particularly vol. 1, 35 ff.; and Johann Zinkeisen, *Geschichte der europäischen Staaten: Geschichte des Osmanischen Reiches in Europa* (vols. I–VII; Hamburg/Gotha: Perthes, 1840–1863), particularly vol. III, 23 ff. Ranke's study appeared in an English translation by W.K. Kelly, *The Ottoman and the Spanish Empires in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (London, 1843). Hammer's study, which was based on an extensive, thirty-year-long research of the Ottoman archives, and which also exists in a French translation (*Histoire de l'Empire ottoman*; vols. I–IX; Paris, 1835–1843), was and still is very influential and widely used by historians. It was never translated into English; however, Edward S. Creasy used it abundantly in his popular *History of the Ottoman Turks* (London, 1878).

9. See Nicolae Jorga, *Geschichte des Osmanischen Reiches* (vols. 1–21; Gotha: Perthes, 1908), particularly vol. 3; and Fairfax Downey, *The Grande Turk: Suleyman the Magnificent, Sultan of the Ottomans* (New York: Minton, Balch, & Co., 1929).

10. See, for instance, Johannes Tralow, *Roxelane: Roman einer Kaiserin* (Zürich: Scientia, 1944); Harold Lamb, *Suleiman the Magnificent Sultan of the East* (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday, 1951); and Antony Bridge, *Suleiman the Magnificent* (New York: Granada, 1983).

11. See Albert H. Lybyer, *The Government of the Ottoman Empire in the Time of Suleiman the Magnificent* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1913); Leslie Pierce, *The Imperial Harem*; and Godfrey Goodwin, *The Private World of Ottoman Women* (London: Saqi Books, 1997). Pierce's book, which views Hurrem's actions as directly connected to her position in the hierarchy of the Ottoman slave family, remains the best and most sustained defense of Roxolana so far.

12. See the novels by Aileen Crawley, *The Bride of Suleiman* (New York: St. Martin's, 1981) and *The Shadow of God* (New York: St. Martin's, 1983); and by Colin Falconer, *The Sultan's Harem* (New York: Crown, 2004).

13. See Downey, *The Grande Turk: Suleyman the Magnificent, Sultan of the Ottomans*; Lamb, *Suleiman the Magnificent Sultan of the East*; Bridge, *Suleiman the Magnificent*; and Andre Clot, *Suleiman the Magnificent: The Man, His Life, His Epoch* (London: Saqi Books, 1992; trans. from French, Paris, 1989).

14. See Julian Niemcewicz, *Zbiór pamiętników historycznych o dawnej Polsce* (vol. 2; Lipsk, 1839); Vladimir Antonovich and Mikhail Dragomanov, *Istoričeskiia pesni malorusskago naroda* (vol. 1; Kiev, 1874); Panteleimon Kulish, *Istoriia vossojedineniia Rusi* (vols. 1–3; Moscow, 1877); Agathangel Krymsky, *Istoriia Turechyny* (Kyiv: Akademia Nauk, 1924); Mieczyslaw Opalek, *Roksolana* (Lwów, 1928); Michael Hrushevsky, *A History of Ukraine* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1941); Olena Apanovich, "Marusia Boguslavka — istorychna postat'," *Nauka i zhyttia* 15.3–5 (1965): 9–13, 27–31, 13–15; Irena Knysh, "Imperators'ka kariera Anastazii Lisovs'koi: u 405-ti rokovyni smerti slavetnoii Roksoliany," *Novy Sbliakb* (1966): 36–52; May 29, 2003; <www.geocities.com/nspilka/library/roksolana.html>; Yuri Kolisnichenko, "Sultansha z Rohatyna," *Vitchyzna* 34 (May 1966): 213–17; Yaroslav Kis', "Lehendy i fakty pro Roksolanu," *Arkhiv Ukrajinu* 6 (1970): 25–31;

Yevhen Kramar, "Slavetna ukrainka v sultans'komu dvori," *Robotyns'ka zemlia: zbirnyk istorychno-memuarnykh, etnografichnykh i pobutovykh materialiv* (ed. Uliana Liubovich; vol. 1; New York: Central Committee "Rohatynshchyna," 1989; 106–18); Volodymyr Hrabovetsky, *Roxolana v istorii* (Ivano-Frankivs'k, 1993); and Dariusz Kołodziejczyk, *Ottoman-Polish Diplomatic Relations (15th–18th cc.)* (Boston: Brill, 2000). For other European sources on Roxolana, see Radovan Samardžić, *Sulejman i Rokselana* (Beograd: Jugoslavijapublik, 1987); Michel Sokolnicki, *La Sultane Roxelane* (Ankara, 1959); and Willy Sperco, *Roxelane: Épouse de Süleyman le Magnifique* (Paris: Nouvelles éditions Latines, 1972).

15. See Michalon Lituani, *Michalonis Lituani de moribus tartarorum, lituanorum et moscorum* (Basle, 1550); Marcin Bielski, *Kronika Polska Marcina Bielskiego*, 1576 (vol. 2; Warszawa, 1856); Maciej Strykowski, *Kronika Polska, Litewska, Żmódzka i wszystkiej Rusi Macieja Strykowskiego*, 1582 (Warszawa, 1846); Marcin Broniowski, *Stephani I. Poloniae Regis nomine bis in Tartariam legati, Descriptio Tartariae*, 1595 (Vindobonae, 1746–1748); and Bernard Wapowski, *Kroniki Polski B. Wapowskiego* (Warszawa, 1874).

16. Sources disagree widely on how many sons and daughters, and in what succession, Suleiman had by Roxolana. Many early modern sources mention three sons (Selim, Bayazid, and Gehangir) and one daughter, Mihrimah. Yet, some sources mention four sons (Mehmed/Mahomet, Selim, Bayazid, and Gehangir), and some other state that Mahomet, who died in 1543 of small pox, was another concubine's son. In his 1526 report, Bragadino mentioned Selim as Roxolana's first son (b. 1521), Marat as second son (b. 1523), and Mamet as third son (b. 1525). See Alberi, *Relazioni degli Ambasciatori Veneti al Senato*, Ser. III, vol. III (Firenze, 1855), 102. Trevisano, however, mentions Mehemet as Suleiman's first son, and Selim, as his second son. See *Relazioni*, Ser. III, vol. I (Firenze, 1840), 116. Hammer lists Mehmed, Jahanguir, Selim, Bayazid, and Mihrimah as Hurrem's children. See *Geschichte des Osmanischen Reiches*, vol. III, 792. Abdullah, who died three years after his birth in 1522, is seldom listed among Roxolana's children. I follow Pierce's list, which is based on Hurrem's habit of mentioning all her children's names in her letters to Suleiman. See *The Imperial Harem*, 60.

17. For more detail on the "one mother — one son" principle governing the Ottoman imperial harem's reproductive politics, see Pierce, *The Imperial Harem*, 58–59.

18. I refer here to the Russian translation of two chapters from Litvin's chronicle: "Otryvky o nraakh tatar, litovtsev i moskvityan. Izvlechenie iz sochinenia Mikhaila Litvina, 1550," (Trans. K. Melnik; *Memuary otnosiashchiesia k istorii iuzhnoi Rusi*; ed. Vladimir Antonovich; vol. I; Kiev: Korchak-Novitski, 1890), 19. For other references to Roxolana's Ukrainian origin in Eastern European scholarship, see Kulish, *Istoriia vossojedeniia Rusi*, vol. 3, 343–44; V.D. Smirnov, *Krymskoe khanstvo pod verkhovenstvom Otomanskoi Partii do nachala XVIII v.* (St.-Petersburg, 1887), 425; and Krymsky, *Istoriia Turechyny*, 184.

19. Alberi, *Relazioni degli Ambasciatori Veneti al Senato*, Ser. III, vol. I (Firenze, 1840), 74; 115.

20. See Krymsky, *Istoriia Turechyny*, 185–86 n. 2; and "Roxolana," *Radians'ka entsyklopedia istorii Ukrainy*, vol. IV (Kyiv, 1972), 7.

21. Że ja siostrą Soliman królewską nazywa.
Podłego z Rochatyna popa była córą,
Oddana niewolnicą do szaraju, którą
Z urody jej Soliman tak podobał sobie,
Że nad wszystkie sołtany przeniósł ją w ozdobie.

See "Przeważna legacya i.o. Krysztofa Zbaraskiego . . . do Najpotężniejszego sołtana cesarza tureckiego Mustafy, w roku 1621 . . . Przez Samuela z Skrzypnej Twardowskiego," *Poezye Samuela z Skrzypny Twardowskiego* (Kraków: K.J. Turowski, 1861), 169. Krymsky

argues that count Rzewusky used this information and passed it onto Hammer. See *Istoriia Turechyny*, 184 n. 2.

22. V Rohatyni, na zarinku,
Tam tatory vkraly divku,
Vkrally divku Nastusen'ku,
Chornobryvu, moloden'ku,
Taj zabraly v Turechynu,
Taj prodaly do haremu.

See Mykhailo Orlich, *Roksoliiana, tsariivna soniachbna Opillia* (Lviv: Triada plus, 2002), 58–59.

23. See Orlich, *Roksoliiana, tsariivna soniachbna Opillia*, 23.
24. See Kis', "Lehendi i fakty pro Roksolanu," 26; and Volodymyr Hrabovetsky, *Narysy istorii Prykarpattia* (Ivano-Frankivs'k, 1993), 132–33.
25. Cf. Bragadino: "giovane ma non bella, ma aggraziata e *menuetta* (piccina)"; Navagero: "modesta." See Alberi, *Relazioni degli Ambasciatori Veneti al Senato*, Ser. III, vol. III (Firenze, 1855), 102; Ser. III, vol. I (Firenze, 1840), 74.
26. See Askenazy, "Listy Roxolany," 113.
27. Many sources called Gulbehar a "Circassian": e.g., "la circassa" (Navagero); "una donna circassa" (Trevisano). See Alberi, *Relazione degli Ambasciatori Veneti al Senato*, Ser. III, vol. I (Firenze, 1840), 74, 75, 77; and Ser. III, vol. III (Firenze, 1855), 115.
28. Translated by Talat S. Halman, in *Suleyman the Magnificent Poet*.
29. Alberi, *Relazioni degli Ambasciatori Veneti al Senato*, Ser. III, vol. I (Firenze, 1840), 74; 115.
30. Cf. the words of Antonio Barbarigo written of Roxolana in 1558 (the year of her death): ". . . era questa donna libera padrona della vita di questo Signore, dal quale era sommamente amata." See Alberi, *Relazioni degli Ambasciatori Veneti al Senato*, Ser. III, vol. III (Firenze, 1855), 148.
31. For an early modern account of the wedding festivities, discovered as a journal entry in the Genoese Bank of St. George in Constantinople, see Barnette Miller, *Beyond the Sublime Porte: The grand Seraglio of Stambul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1931), 93–94.
32. *The Turkish Letters of Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq*, 28–29.
33. ". . . dopo che la conobbe, che non solamente ha voluto averla per legittima moglie e tenerla per tale nel suo serraglio, ma, siccome è la fama, non ha voluto dappoi conoscere altra donna: cosa non piu fatta da alcuno delli suoi predecessori, essendo i Turchi soliti di pigliare ora una, or un' altra donna, si per aver figliuoli, come per lor piaceri carnali." See Alberi, *Relazioni degli Ambasciatori Veneti al Senato*, Ser. III, vol. I (Firenze, 1840), 115–16.
34. Here is how Busbecq explains, in his second Turkish letter, why adult sons did not live with the sultan: ". . . now-a-days, 'tis the Custom of the *Turkish* Emperors, never to permit any one of their Sons, when once they are grown up, to set their Foot within the gates of *Constantinople*, (whilst they are alive) for fear they should ingratiate themselves with the Soldiery, and so set up for themselves." See *The Four Epistles of A.G. Busbequius, Concerning his Embassy into Turkey* (London: F. Taylor and F. Weyt, 1694), 131.
35. Pierce, *The Imperial Harem*, 90.
36. Bassano, *I costumi et i modi particolari de la vita de Turchi* (Roma, 1545), chap. xiv.
37. Pierce, *The Imperial Harem*, 58.
38. Pierce, 89–90. Pierce further explains the ambiguity of Hurrem's legal status: "For the sultan's favorite, to foster the son's success was to undermine the husband's authority."

See *The Imperial Harem*, 90. The public thus could not tell whether Hurrem was loyal to her husband or to the princes, as the system did not allow a compromise in this regard.

39. Cf. Navagero: “. . . molto bene conosce la natura del Gran-Signore.” See *Relazioni degli Ambasciatori Veneti al Senato*, Ser. III, vol. I (Firenze, 1840), 74–75.

40. See Navagero’s 1553 report in *Relazioni degli Ambasciatori Veneti al Senato*, Ser. III, vol. I (Firenze, 1840), 75; 77.

41. “. . . non fu mai nella casa ottomana alcuna donna che avesse maggior autorità.” See *Relazione degli Ambasciatori Veneti al Senato*, Ser. III, vol. I (Firenze, 1840), 74–75.

42. Cf. Pierce’s comment on the significance of Hurrem’s letters to the sultan during his Safavid campaign, “With the grand vizier and other important statesmen accompanying the sultan on campaign, Hurrem undoubtedly performed a crucial role through her vigilance over affairs in the capital. That the sultan asked her to forward letters to other members of the family suggests that she also functioned as a secure communications link.” See *The Imperial Harem*, 65.

43. As Pierce put it, Suleiman “purposely spoke through Hurrem when peace was his aim.” *The Imperial Harem*, 221.

44. See Leslie Pierce, “Gender and Sexual Propriety in Ottoman Royal Women’s Patronage,” *Women, Patronage, and Self-Representation in Islamic Societies* (Ed. D. Fairchild Ruggles; New York: State University of New York Press, 2000, 53–68), 56.

45. See Appendix I, “Vakfiye of Hurrem Sultan,” in Esin Atil, *The Age of Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent* (Washington: National Gallery of Art; New York: Abrams, 1987), 287.

46. See St. H. Stephan, “An Endowment Deed of Khâsseki Sultân, Dated the 24th May 1552,” *The Quarterly of the Department of Antiquities in Palestine* 10 (1944: 170–94): 172–73; and Ihan AkIit, *The Mystery of the Ottoman Harem* (Istanbul: AkIit, 2000), 98.

47. Stephan, “An Endowment Deed of Khâsseki Sultân, Dated the 24th May 1552,” 172–73.

48. Quoted in Christine Woodhead, “‘The present terrour of the world’? Contemporary Views of the Ottoman Empire c. 1600,” *History* 72 (Feb. 1987: 20–37), 28.

49. Hrushevsky, *A History of Ukraine*, 333.

50. See *Kronika Polska Marcina Bielskiego*, 1576 (vol. II; Warszawa, 1856), 952; and *Kronika Polska, Litewska, Żmódzka i wszystkiêj Rusi Macieja Strykowskiêgo*, 1582 (vol. II; Warszawa, 1846), 355.

51. See *Kronika Polska, Litewska, Żmódzka i wszystkiêj Rusi Macieja Strykowskiêgo*, vol. II, 388.

52. See Broniowski, *Stephani I. Poloniae . . . Descriptio Tartariae*; here references are made to the Russian translation of Broniowski’s work, “Opisanie Kryma,” in *Zapiski Odesskago obschestva istorii i drevnostej* (Odessa, 1867; 333–67), vol. VI, 362 ff. See also Guillaume Beauplan, *Description d’Vkranie, qui sont plusieurs Prouinces du Royaume de Pologne* (Roÿen, 1660), 42 ff.

53. See, for instance, Olena Apanovich, “Mariusia Boguslavka — istorychna postat’,” *Nauka i zhyttia* 15.3 (1965): 11.

54. See Yaroslav Dashkevich, “Iasyr z Podillia v druhij polovyni 16-ho viku,” *Bibliografii staroi Ukrainy, 1240–1800* (Kyiv, 2000), vol. 4, 29.

55. Hrushevsky, *A History of Ukraine*, 151.

56. “. . . c’est vne chose qui toucheroit le coeur des plus inhumains, de voir lors la separation d’vn mary d’auéc sa femme, d’vne mere d’auéc sa fille, sans esperance de se pouuoir iamais reuoir, entrans dans l’esclauage deplorabile de payens Mahumetans, qui leur font milles indignitez. Leur brutalité leur faisant cômmettre vne infinité de saletez, comme de violer les filles, forcer les femmes presence des peres & de leur maris: mesme circoncir leurs enfans deuant eux pour ettre prefentez à Mahomet. En fin le coeur des plus insensibles

tremiroit d'entendre les cris & les chants, parmi les pleurs & gemissemens de ces malheureux Rus. Car cette nation chante & hurle en pleurant, ces miserables sont donc separez par cy par là, les vns pour Constantinople, les autres pour le Crime, & d'autre pour la Natolie, &c. voila en peu de mots, comme les Tartares font des leuées & des rafles de peuples au nombre de plus de 50. mil ames, en moins de deux semaines, & comme ils traitent leurs esclaves, après auoir fait leurs partages, puis les vendent selon que bon leur semble lors qu'ils sont retournez en leurs pays." See Beauplan, *Description d'Vlerantie*, 46.

57. Niemcewicz, *Zbiór pamiętników historycznych o dawnej Polsce*, 336.

58. Opašek, *Roksolana*, 13.

59. Kołodziejczyk, *Ottoman-Polish Diplomatic Relations, 15th–18th cc.*, 117–18.

60. "Von keinem europäischen Hofe erschienen an der Pforte damahls häufigere Gesandtschaften, als von Pohlen. Vier Jahre hintereinander kamen Pohlische Gesandte, in dem letzten deren gar zwey, an die Pforte, nach dem oben erwahnten Nicolaus Bohousz, Andreas Burzki, Stanislaus Tenezynski, Andreas Bzicki, Yazlowiecki, und im folgenden Jahre Peter Pilecki und Nikolaus Brzozowski. Der Gegenstand ihrer Verhandlungen waren die Einfälle der Türken in Pohlen, die Entschändigung der Königin Isabella, die Zurückstellung der Gefangenen, die Erneuerung der Freundschaft." See Hammer, *Geschichte des Osmanischen Reiches*, vol. III, 315. See also Hammer's references to other Polish embassies to the Porte on pp. 258, 289, and 727.

61. L. Bazylev, "Pol'sko-turetskie diplomaticheskie sviazi v XVI veke," *Rossia, Pol'sha, i Prichernomorie v XV–XVIII vv.* (ed. B.A. Rybakov; Moskva: Nauka, 1979, 12–27), 18.

62. Wladyslaw Henzel, "Problema jasyria v pol'sko-turetskikh otnosheniakh XVI–XVII vv.," *Rossia, Pol'sha, i Prichernomorie v XV–XVIII vv.* (Moskva: Nauka, 1979, 147–58), 152.

63. Roxolana's letters to Sigismund II (August) were discovered in 1896 in a French translation (done by Ant. Crutty on October 25, 1789). See Askenazy, "Listy Roxolany," 113–17. They are presently held in AGAD (Archiwum Głównym Akt Dawnych) in Warsaw: AKW, Dz. tur., k. 68, t. 110, no. 218. See Zygmunt Abrahamowicz, *Katalog dokumentów tureckich. Dokumenty do dziejów Polski i krajów ościennych w latach 1455–1672* (Warsaw, 1959). See also references to these letters in Kołodziejczyk, *Ottoman-Polish Diplomatic Relations, 15th–18th cc.*, 119 n. 12; and Jan Reychman, *Historia Turcji* (Wrocław, 1973), 87 n. 16.

64. Askenazy suggests 1550 as an approximate date these letters were written. See "Listy Roxolany," 115.

65. Below is the complete text of Roxolana's first letter to Sigismund I: "Nous faisons savoir à la sublime connoissance de S. M. le Roi, qu'ayant entendu votre avènement à la Royauté après la mort de Votre Père, Nous Vous félicitons, prenant Dieu le Très Haut à témoin, combien de joie et plaisir notre coeur ressentit à cette agréable nouvelle. C'est donc la volonté de Dieu à laquelle Vous devez Vous résigner et conformer à Sa prédestination et décrets. C'est pourquoi Nous Vous avons écrit cette présente lettre amicale et envoyée aux pieds du trône de V. M. par notre serviteur Hassan Aga, lequel en arrivant avec l'aide de Dieu, Nous Vous prions instamment à tout ce qu'il représentera de bouche à V. M. de lui prêter pleine foi et croyance, comme venant directement de notre part. Du reste je ne sais pas quoi Vous dire de plus qui soit un secret pour V. M. La très humble servante Hasséki Sultane." See Askenazy, "Listy Roxolany," 115.

66. "... le désir d'amitié que Vous témoignez à Votre sincère amie, comme aussi les témoignages de Votre sincère amitié et attachment envers S. M. l'Empereur." See "Listy Roxolany," 116.

67. "... avec le vieux Roi Nous étions comme deux Frères, et s'il plaît à Dieu le Tres Miséricordieux, avec ce Roi nous serons comme Père et Fils." Italics original. See "Listy Roxolany," 116.

68. “. . . je m'intéresserai et parlerai dix fois de plus en bien et en faveur de V. M., m'engageant en cela à la reconnaissance de monâme.” See “Listy Roxolany,” 116.

69. “Mozhe, tse turbota pro ridnu zemliu, iaka bula pid panuvanniam poľskoho korolia, i namahannia sultanshy dopomohty jii riznymy sposobamy?” See Kis', “Lehendy i fakty pro Roksolanu,” 30.

70. See “Przeważna legacya . . . Przez Samuela z Skrzypnej Twardowskiego,” 169; and Niemcewicz, *Zbiór pamiętnikóv historycznych o dawnej Polsce*, 237. For more on Suleiman's 1551 letter to Sigismund II, see Ananjasz Zajęczkowski, “List turecki Sulejmana I do Zygmunta Augusta w ówczesnej transkrypcji i tłumaczeniu polskiem z r. 1551,” *Rocznik Orientalistyczny* XII (1936): 91–118.

71. According to persistent rumors, Roxolana was an illegitimate daughter of King Sigismund I and Leksandra. The story goes that before she was married to Gavriil Lisowski, Roxolana's mother, Leksandra, from the town of Kniazh, served at the King's court and had a romantic affair with him. It was also rumored that Roxolana, or Nastia Lisowska, was called “princess” in her childhood. See, for instance, Orlich, *Roksoliana, tsarivna soniachna Opillia*, 23. This rumor may have been an attempt on the part of the population to account for Roxolana's “innate” royalty.

72. The English translation of this *duma* appears in C.H. Andrusyshen and Watson Kirkconnell, *The Ukrainian Poets, 1189–1962* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1963), 25.

73. See Orlich, *Roksoliana, tsarivna soniachna Opillia*, 27.

74. See L. I. Haidaj, *Istoria Ukrainy v osobakh, terminakh, nazvakh i poniattiakh (vid naidavnishykh chasiv do Khmel'nychyny)* (Lutsk: Vezha, 2000), 166–67.

75. Zahrebel'ny quotes Goethe's words in this regard: “Volk und Knecht und Überwinder/Sie gesteht zu jeder Zeit/Höchtes Glück der Erdenkinder/ Sei nur Persönlichkeit.” See *Roksolana* (Kyiv: Tast-M, 2000), 629–30.

76. Zahrebel'ny, *Roksolana*, 630.