

FOUNDATION FOR RESEARCH & TECHNOLOGY – HELLAS  
INSTITUTE FOR MEDITERRANEAN STUDIES



Halcyon Days in Crete XII

A Symposium Held in Rethymno, 12–14 January 2024

# THE JANISSARIES

Socio-Political and Economic Actors  
in the Ottoman Empire

(17th–Early 19th Centuries)

*Edited by* Yannis Spyropoulos

CRETE UNIVERSITY PRESS



This volume presents the proceedings of the 12th Halcyon Days in Crete Symposium, held at the Institute for Mediterranean Studies in Rethymno from January 12-14, 2024, under the theme *The Janissaries: Socio-Political and Economic Actors in the Ottoman Empire (17th–Early 19th Centuries)*. Both the symposium and this publication were funded as part of *JANET: Janissaries in Ottoman Port-Cities: Muslim Financial and Political Networks in the Early Modern Mediterranean*, an ERC project exploring Janissary networks within and beyond the Ottoman Empire as integral to broader Muslim political and economic activity in the region.

Drawing on diverse sources and perspectives, this collection offers a fresh and comprehensive examination of the Janissaries beyond their traditional military role: it considers them as key figures in imperial politics and economic networks, while also highlighting various aspects of their lived experiences and societal interactions.

The 16 papers included in the volume explore a wide range of topics, shedding light on the Janissaries' financial and commercial ventures, credit mechanisms, and extensive networks – both within the provinces and across interprovincial and international frontiers. More importantly, rather than portraying them as relics of a declining empire, the studies present the Janissary Corps and its affiliates as dynamic agents of change who profoundly shaped the post-classical Ottoman world.

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info@cup.gr www.cup.gr

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Y.S.





## ABBREVIATIONS

BL	British Library (London)
BOA	Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi (Istanbul)
İÜK	İstanbul Üniversitesi Kütüphanesi
TSK:	Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi (Istanbul)
T SMA:	Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Arşivi (Istanbul)
<i>ActOrHung</i>	<i>Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae</i>
<i>ArchOtt</i>	<i>Archivum Ottomanicum</i>
<i>BSOAS</i>	<i>Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies</i>
<i>IJMES</i>	<i>International Journal of Middle East Studies</i>
<i>IJTS</i>	<i>International Journal of Turkish Studies</i>
<i>JESHO</i>	<i>Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient</i>
<i>OA</i>	<i>Osmanlı Araştırmaları – The Journal of Ottoman Studies</i>
<i>ROMM</i>	<i>Revue de l'Occident Musulman et de la Méditerranée</i>
<i>THR</i>	<i>Turkish Historical Review</i>
<i>TSAB</i>	<i>The Turkish Studies Association Bulletin</i>
<i>TSAJ</i>	<i>The Turkish Studies Association Journal</i>
<i>EI</i>	E.J. Brill's <i>First Encyclopaedia of Islam, 1913-1936</i>
<i>EP<sup>2</sup></i>	<i>The Encyclopaedia of Islam, New Edition (Leiden, 1960-2002)</i>
<i>EP<sup>3</sup></i>	<i>The Encyclopaedia of Islam Three (Leiden, 2007-)</i>
<i>İA</i>	<i>İslâm Ansiklopedisi (Istanbul, 1940-1979)</i>
<i>TDVİA</i>	<i>Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi (Istanbul, 1988-2016)</i>

## NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION

All terms and phrases originally written in non-Latin alphabets have been transliterated into the Latin script. A simple system of transliteration from the Arabic into the Latin alphabet has been adopted, and most diacritical marks have been omitted. No final -s- is added to plural nouns, such as *ayana*, *ulema*, and *reaya*.



## INTRODUCTION

# FROM RECORDS TO REALITIES OFFICIAL AND UNOFFICIAL DIMENSIONS OF JANISSARY IDENTITY

Yannis SPYROPOULOS\*

The enrolled Janissaries are indeed so numerous that if one could make a census of them, one might count several millions.

*Claude-Charles de Peyssonnel*<sup>1</sup>

The inhabitants of Istanbul and, especially, of provincial cities, towns, boroughs, and villages, ordinary people or noble, qualified or not, and tax-paying subjects made themselves Janissaries in order to be liberated from tax farmers, governors, and other officials, and everyone became Janissaries at once.

*Moravi Süleyman Penah Efendi*<sup>2</sup>

[I]t should be noted that there are three classes of Janissaries: 1. soldiers on active service, *Eschkindjis*; 2. individuals registered on the rolls of this militia, as supernumeraries, without doing service, nor receiving pay, exercising some trade, until they can fill the vacant places in the *Ortas*; they are believed to number more than one hundred and fifty thousand; 3. a large number of Ottomans of all conditions, who, taking pride in belonging to this first militia corps, adopted the name and turban of Janissary; they are called *Tasslacdjis*, aspirants.

*Ignatius Mouradgea d'Ohsson*<sup>3</sup>

THIS VOLUME COMPRISES THE PROCEEDINGS of the 12th Halcyon Days in Crete Symposium, convened at the Institute for Mediterranean Studies in Rethymno from 12-14

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\* Foundation for Research and Technology-Hellas, Institute for Mediterranean Studies.

1 F. Baron de Tott, *Mémoires du Baron de Tott, sur les Turcs et les Tartares, contenant les observations critiques de M. de Peyssonnel et la réponse de M. le Baron de Tott*, Vol. V (Maastricht 1786), 102.

2 A. Berker, 'Mora İhtilali Tarihçesi veya Penah Efendi Mecmuası, 1769', *Tarih Vesikalari*, 2/8 (1942-1943), 158.

3 I. M. d'Ohsson, *Tableau général de l'Empire othoman*, Vol. VII (Paris 1824), 332.

January 2024, under the theme: “The Janissaries: Socio-Political and Economic Actors in the Ottoman Empire (17th-Early 19th Centuries)”. Both the symposium and the subsequent volume have received funding as part of ‘JANET: Janissaries in Ottoman Port-Cities: Muslim Financial and Political Networks in the Early Modern Mediterranean’, an ERC project dedicated to exploring the operations of Janissary networks within and beyond the Ottoman Empire, viewing them as deeply intertwined with broader Muslim political and economic activity in the above region.

Although this volume was originally conceived and compiled as an independent publication, its contents to some extent continue, complement, and expand on those of the two other collective works already published within the framework of JANET.<sup>4</sup> In line with the project’s objectives, the 16 papers presented in this collection delve into a wide spectrum of topics within economic and political history, exploring various cases of financial and commercial enterprises, credit transactions, and networks forged by Janissaries, both within the provinces and across inter-provincial and international boundaries. Furthermore, the articles examine aspects of the political mobilisations of the corps, its socio-religious composition, and the web of relationships cultivated among its members and people of various ethnic and religious backgrounds. These contributions present us with new case studies and interpretations which challenge long-held perceptions of the Janissaries in the scholarly literature, advancing the discourse beyond the constraints imposed by conventional historiographical approaches. At the same time, the dialectic generated within this book raises a multitude of questions, potentially paving the way for new research endeavours that could redefine the field of Janissary studies in the years to come.

While it would be beyond the scope of this introduction to analyse each of the numerous intriguing issues raised by the authors, there is one overarching academic question that deserves special attention, as it resonates throughout all Janissary-related scholarship, especially as we move beyond the so-called ‘classical age’ of the Ottoman Empire: *who should we include in our research when examining the Janissary Corps?* I believe that this point of inquiry is crucial for reflecting on the contents of this volume, and thus merits discussion here.

As will become obvious to readers of these pages, this seemingly straightforward question poses a significant challenge for historians examining the Janissaries from the late sixteenth century onward. Indeed, despite the corps’ distinct status among Ottoman institutions, to date there is no standard definition of who constituted a Janissary, apart from convenient generalisations that leave ample room for

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4 Y. Spyropoulos (ed.), *Insights into Janissary Networks, 1700-1826* [special issue of *Cihannüma: Journal of History and Geography Studies*, 8/1 (2022)]; A. Yıldız, Y. Spyropoulos and M. M. Sunar (eds), *Payitaht Yeniçerileri: Padişahın “Asi” Kulları, 1700-1826* (Istanbul 2022).

interpretation. While sometimes necessary, any generalisations inevitably influence methodology and must be critically analysed. Particularly in a volume such as this, which draws the perspectives of 18 historians together in a collective work, it is imperative to address this complex issue from the outset, in spite of its difficulty.

The approach proposed here invites historians to conceptualise membership in the Janissary Corps as a dynamic process of inclusion and negotiation that transcended official definitions of who was a Janissary. This perspective emphasises the pivotal role that unofficial participation played in bolstering the corps' socio-economic and political influence, highlighting the importance of informal networks and affiliations in the broader context of Ottoman history. I argue that by understanding the Janissary Corps through this lens, we can better appreciate the multifaceted nature of its power and the extensive reach of its influence across various strata of society.

### *Counting the Janissaries*

Despite being primarily viewed as a military corps, the Janissaries were much more than that, both officially and unofficially. They were not only charged by the Ottoman government with numerous wartime functions but were also expected to undertake a variety of non-military tasks crucial for the empire's administrative and financial operations at both provincial and central levels. Recent scholarship has recognised that this multifunctional remit was an indispensable component of the Janissary institutional framework. Furthermore, the literature increasingly acknowledges the importance of multifunctionality for understanding the various manifestations of the unofficial political and economic activities that came to define the corps' character between 1600 and 1826, which is the central focus of this volume.<sup>5</sup>

Indeed, as is also evident from the contributions here, historians have now concurred that to fully appraise the Janissaries' role in Ottoman history from the late sixteenth century onward, their corps should be evaluated primarily as an entity defined by its socio-political and economic activities rather than solely in terms of its performance on the battlefield. However, despite this growing realisation, the identification of the Janissaries in historical research remains predominantly defined in

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5 Y. Spyropoulos, 'Κοινωνική, διοικητική, οικονομική και πολιτική διάσταση του οθωμανικού στρατού: οι γενίτσαροι της Κρήτης, 1750-1826' [Social, Administrative, Economic and Political Dimensions of the Ottoman Army: The Janissaries of Crete, 1750-1826], unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Crete, 2014; Idem, 'Janissaries: A Key Institution for Writing the Economic and Political History of Ottoman Muslims in the Early Modern Period', *Historical Reporter / Исторический вестник*, 29 (2019), 104-133.

military and titular terms. As I will explain, this approach treads a path determined by outdated perceptions of who the Janissaries *ought to be*, rather than looking at *who they truly were*.

Judging from the extensive literature on the corps, reaching down from Ottoman times to the present, there appear to be many different approaches to the problem of Janissary identification depending on the topic discussed. Different standards are often applied, for instance, when investigating questions that necessitate the quantification of the Janissary presence rather than others where numerical analysis is less crucial. Historians are more likely to develop methodologies for distinguishing who was a Janissary when dealing with demography, the economy, or military mobilisations than when analysing political events.

Indeed, most analyses of Janissary numbers come from historians studying the population composition of a city or region, economic groups such as guilds or taxpayers, and the Ottoman manpower mobilised in campaigns. Conversely, when examining incidents such as rebellions, the answers to questions about Janissary participation tend to be vaguer, primarily because sources often provide more details on the leadership of these mobilisations than on the participants. As a result, it is quite common for various violent shows of force to be labelled as “Janissary rebellions”, even when the extent of Janissary involvement remains unclear.

One might think that this is an unfortunate compromise, and that perhaps we should reserve quantitative analysis for cases where official numerical data and other clear determinants such as soldier titles are available. However, counting the Janissaries can be equally problematic even where such elements seem to be present.

In the case of military history, for example, the types of sources used by researchers often lead them to adopt an official perspective on who was a member of the corps. This approach may account for those whom official documents identified as Janissaries, excluding any elements only loosely affiliated with the institution and its military culture. In other words, historians often tend to include only seemingly ‘certified’ Janissaries who were recorded in the corps’ payrolls and could potentially be mobilised – at least at some point in their lives – during campaigns.

However, when setting out to determine the actual number of Janissary recruits based on the official figures recorded in payrolls, one is almost immediately confronted with the question of the extent to which Janissary pay certificates (*esame*) can be utilised as a measure of soldier manpower. This issue arises primarily for two reasons.

First, the existence of a vibrant *esame* market expanded significantly during the period of interest to us, resulting in an undetermined number of individuals who were not trained Janissaries and did not participate in campaigns but held pay certificates nonetheless. For the Ottoman administration, anyone holding a Janissary

*esame* was considered an active soldier, unless retired or disabled. However, the circulation of *esames* in the market allowed individuals to acquire multiple pay certificates, and gave rise to the practice of concealing the death of soldiers and selling their salaries to outsiders. Consequently, the number of *esames* recorded in payrolls did not accurately reflect either the actual military capacity of the corps or the number of people receiving salaries.

The second reason is that from the mid-seventeenth century onward, the Ottoman government increasingly began to employ ‘fixed-term contract’ Janissaries (*çalık yeniçeriler*) on a flexible basis during wars, without offering them permanent pay certificates.<sup>6</sup> These active soldiers enjoyed Janissary membership while they fought at the front, reverting to *reaya* status following the conclusion of each campaign. Consequently, *çalık* Janissaries are unaccounted for in most of the long lists of pay certificates that survive to this day. Yet the numbers of these Janissary-*reaya* hybrids who engaged in battle as active soldiers could far surpass the numbers of *esame* holders, numbering in the hundreds of thousands.<sup>7</sup>

To complicate matters further for historians, although the names of these individuals were recorded in catalogues held by provincial Janissary commanders (*serdars*),<sup>8</sup> to my knowledge, none of these lists appear to have survived in the archives. This absence renders their exact numbers and composition extremely difficult to discern through isolated quantitative and qualitative analysis.

Furthermore, up until 1703 the Ottoman government considered the aforementioned *çalık* Janissaries as fundamentally belonging to the *reaya* category, whereas from that year onward it essentially recognised them as ‘real’, ‘permanent’ Janissaries, despite still refraining from issuing them *esames*.<sup>9</sup> In other words, not only did the recorded Janissary certificates fail to account for the actual number of Janissaries in service, but even the Ottoman administration’s perception of who was a ‘real’ Janissary could undergo significant changes over time. This variability makes even seemingly simple questions, such as the size of the corps’ military strength, extremely difficult to answer.

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6 Y. Spyropoulos and A. Yıldız, ‘Pseudo-Janissarism (*Yeniçerilik İddiası*) in the Ottoman Provinces (with Special Reference to Adana): Its Emergence and Its Geographic and Socio-Economic Aspects’, in Y. Spyropoulos (ed.), *Insights into Janissary Networks, 1700-1826* [special issue of *Cihannüma: Journal of History and Geography Studies*, 8/1 (2022)], 16-17.

7 Ibid., 18.

8 İ. H. Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devleti Teşkilâtından Kapukulu Ocakları*, Vol. I (Ankara 1988), 330; A. Gül, ‘18. Yüzyılda Yeniçeri Teşkilatı’, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Atatürk Üniversitesi, 2020, 112.

9 Spyropoulos and Yıldız, ‘Pseudo-Janissarism’, 17.

To grasp the complexity of calculating the Janissary Corps' manpower through official sources, consider the following example: according to Ottoman payrolls, the corps comprised approximately 132,000 soldiers in around 1779.<sup>10</sup> However, just five years later a starkly different account is provided in the memoirs of Baron de Tott, a well-informed diplomat and seasoned military officer who was close to the Ottoman government and had participated in the Ottoman-Russian war of 1768-1774. As he states:

the abandonment of the rule, by destroying the spirit of this corps, has brought the number of those paid to 400,000 (the number of the enlisted is innumerable), and barely 20,000 are gathered.<sup>11</sup>

Despite his considerable knowledge of Ottoman military affairs, de Tott's estimates were most probably educated guesses, which, however, align closely with estimates by Ottoman officials in the late eighteenth century.<sup>12</sup> From his accounts, we can reasonably infer that the 400,000 soldiers he mentions included both *esame* holders and *çalık* Janissaries. Accepting these numbers as accurate suggests that the figures provided by Ottoman payrolls represented only one-third of the total manpower constituting the Janissary army. Those who actually marched to the front lines comprised an even smaller fraction, merely five percent of the total.

At this point it is important to underline that the above calculations exclude the "innumerable" Janissary affiliates mentioned by de Tott, who were unofficially enlisted in the corps' 196 regiments and were not expected to go to war. Yet these affiliates are crucial for understanding the substantial influence the Janissary Corps wielded over Ottoman society. Their inclusion highlights the pervasive reach of the Janissary identity beyond the battlefield and underscores their significant role in the empire's socio-political and economic structures. However, at the same time such an inclusion poses one of the greatest challenges for historians attempting to document the presence of Janissaries in these structures, a challenge which was also faced by the corps' contemporaries. In his work published in 1799, for instance, British diplomat, traveller and writer William Eton summarises the problem in the following words:

Strangers (and I include most foreign ministers, who are grossly imposed on by the ignorance of their drogomans or interpreters) are misled by the accounts they receive of the number of janizaries, of bostangees, of boatmen, of artisans, of shopkeepers,

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10 Gül, '18. Yüzyılda', 165.

11 F. Baron de Tott, *Mémoires du Baron de Tott*, Vol. III (Amsterdam 1784), 168.

12 Mahmoud Rayf Efendi, *Tableau des nouveaux règlements de l'Empire ottoman* (Istanbul 1798), 17; Idem, *Mahmud Râif Efendi ve Nizâm-ı Cedid'e Dair Eseri*, eds K. Beydilli and İ. Şahin (Ankara 2001), 66-67.



etc. without knowing that one and the same person is commonly in two or three of these capacities; for instance, almost every boatman is a bostangee or a janizary, and the greatest part of the shopkeepers and artisans are janizaries.<sup>13</sup>

Identifying Janissaries among non-military groups with heterogeneous compositions is particularly challenging. When historians attempt to determine how many Janissaries appear in tax records, guild registers, probate inventories, and other lists compiled by the Ottoman administration for financial or other purposes, the methodology often proves inadequate. For example, when explicit affiliation is not mentioned, one common approach to detecting Janissaries used by historians is to count only those who held specific titles closely associated with Janissary presence in relevant literature, such as *'beşe'* and *'agha'*.

The title *'beşe'*, used extensively by low-ranking Janissaries, is often interpreted as a strong indicator of Janissary presence. However, as also thoroughly explained by various authors in this volume, it was also bestowed upon soldiers of other imperial and local military corps, rendering it a largely unreliable statistical tool. Similarly, the title *'agha'*, used by high-ranking Janissary officers, was also employed by officers of other military corps and could refer to various non-military groups, serving as a marker of nobility, among other things. Similar objections can also be raised regarding a number of other titles traditionally treated as Janissary identifiers.<sup>14</sup>

Furthermore, it is questionable whether surveyors and scribes systematically identified Janissary titles and characteristics. Accepting different Ottoman records as credible in these terms assumes an intent to accurately document such details. Given the non-standardised recording methods of the early modern period, this assumption is precarious at best and requires a case by case evaluation.<sup>15</sup>

That said, I am not suggesting that we should disregard attempts to track Janissary numbers and titles in official sources. While these traditional methods usually capture only fragments of the full picture, they can still help us outline certain general trends. For example, although a declining number of garrison troops in a particular region should not necessarily be interpreted as a reduction in the number of Janissary affiliates there,<sup>16</sup> an increase in soldiers stationed in provincial fortresses often signals a rise in unofficial affiliations in the surrounding areas. Similarly, as

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13 W. Eton, *A Survey of the Turkish Empire* (London 1799), 281-282. Also, see Cengiz Kırlı's article in the present volume.

14 For different discussions of this methodological issue, see the articles of Hülya Canbakal with Aysel Yıldız, Cengiz Kırlı, and Dimitris Papastamatiou in this volume.

15 On this problem, see Cengiz Kırlı's article in the present volume.

16 See, for instance, A. Anastasopoulos and Y. Spyropoulos, 'Soldiers on an Ottoman Island: The Janissaries of Crete, Eighteenth–Early Nineteenth Centuries', *THR*, 8/11 (2017), 12-14, 17-19.

can be seen in a number of articles in the volume at hand, identifying Janissary titleholders in specific contexts – especially when combined with other evidence – can offer valuable insights into the economic and social influence Janissaries wielded within a particular group or region.<sup>17</sup> However, we must at all times remain conscious of the profound limitations inherent in such endeavours and approach the results with caution. Lastly, it is important to remember that from at least the seventeenth century onward, the Janissary Corps' political and economic power was rooted not simply in the number of active combatants, garrisoned troops, or title-bearers, but mainly in the extensive networks it established within Ottoman society.

### *Moving past stereotypical perceptions of Janissary identity*

The problem of Janissary identification extends well beyond such technicalities and term-related issues, delving directly into the realm of ideology. This is because the definition of who *should be considered* a Janissary is often closely related to one's ideal image of who a Janissary *ought to be*. For instance, if one focuses on the Janissaries' battlefield achievements, the ideal image is that of a loyal, self-sacrificing soldier dedicated to the expansion of the empire. Conversely, if one romanticises their role as rebels, they may be seen as champions of the common people's participation in imperial or local politics. Similarly, if one emphasises their economic role, they may be perceived as representatives of entrepreneurial forces promoting the empire's commercial life or defending the interests of small businessmen against state agents and Western capitalists. Additionally, all these idealised perspectives have their negative counterparts: Janissaries have often been viewed as responsible for the military downfall of the empire, as a reactionary force hindering progressive political reform, or as a financial drain on imperial economic resources. These perspectives inherently shape depictions of Janissary identity, allowing for the inclusion or exclusion of groups more or less closely associated with the corps and leading to more flexible or rigid definitions of Janissary membership. As a result, the interpretation of non-military outsiders' affiliation with the corps also varies significantly. Depending on which of these viewpoints modern historians adopt, such affiliations can be seen as genuine or false, as a symptom of decline or as an advantage.

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17 For an innovative methodology developed by Canbakal and Yıldız for detecting active Janissary soldiers through probate inventories, by combining military titles with multiple other identifiers, see their common article in the present volume.

The same holds true for the views presented by Ottoman and Western observers who were contemporary to the corps. In the Ottoman literature of the early seventeenth century, for instance, it is common to find authors who see the expansion of the Janissary Corps as a process of ‘intrusion’ by people who were not ‘real’ Janissaries, and praise the old days, when the army comprised “few (*az*) but genuine (*öz*) soldiers”, prompting the government to decrease the number of Janissaries and keep only those who were true soldiers in their ranks.<sup>18</sup> On the other hand, several Western observers of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century viewed the Janissaries as the people’s instrument of opposition against the government, and as such treated them as an extension of the will of the Muslim ‘nation’. These views do not only point to the different ideological standpoints of contemporary observers, but also reveal their diverse understandings of who should be recognised as part of the Janissary complex. Should, for instance, the ordinary people that participated in Janissary rebellions be counted among the corps’ affiliates? It is quite possible that Koçi Bey and Alfio Grassi would have had different opinions on the matter, and the same applies to modern historiography: there are works which treat rebellious crowds as parts of factions which were dependent on the guidance of the Janissary Corps for their political actions, and others that see them as largely independent actors having their own agendas.<sup>19</sup> Such distinctions, subtle as they may seem, can make a huge difference for historians when trying to understand the role and size of Janissary participation in popular uprisings, ultimately also giving rise to the question of whether these seemingly opposing views should be considered mutually exclusive.

Then comes the Janissaries’ own perception of affiliation to their corps, which is in my opinion even more crucial for addressing the question of Janissary identity. Interestingly, when examining instances where sources recount the stories of various actors who engaged with members of the corps, the picture that emerges often transcends simplistic narratives. These accounts reveal systems of dependencies that often extended far beyond any official Ottoman notion or modern interpretation of who could be considered a Janissary affiliate. For instance, consider the following indicative cases found in the sources:

Ottoman historian Cabi informs us that in early-nineteenth-century Üsküdar, most of the members of the Bostancı Corps were also members of the 75th *ce-maat* regiment of the Janissaries (*Bostancıyan dahi Yetmişbeş’ler ile söz ve ekseri*

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18 M. Sariyannis, *A History of Ottoman Political Thought up to the Early Nineteenth Century* (Leiden and Boston 2019), 202.

19 M. Sariyannis, ‘Unseen Rebels: The “Mob” of Istanbul as a Constituent of Ottoman Revolt, Seventeenth to Early Nineteenth Centuries’, *THR*, 10 (2019), 155-188.

*Yetmişbeş'e yoldaş olmalarıyle...*). According to him, not only did the *bostancı*s boast a parallel affiliation in two different Ottoman military corps, but they were also treated as full members of the 75th *cemaat* by the latter's soldiers, actively participating on their side in Janissary regimental infighting.<sup>20</sup>

In an imperial edict from 1709, we read that the fortress commander and the *çorbacı* (colonel) of the 18th Janissary *cemaat* based in Damascus illegally recruited two local peasants (Fellah) into the Janissary Corps. Subsequently, fifteen of their relatives refused to pay taxes, asserting, "now we are relatives of Janissaries" (*biz yeniçeri akrabasından olduk*).<sup>21</sup>

In his Memoirs, Baron de Tott refers to the following incident during his visit to the Ottoman fortress of Or (mod. Perekop) north of Crimea, in the mid-eighteenth century:

I received also a Deputation from the Janissaries of the Fort, who invited me to enrol my name in their Company; which offer I was as eager to accept as they were to take the customary Present of my welcome.<sup>22</sup>

Claude-Charles de Peyssonnel, French consul in Crimea, shares a similar experience:

Baron de Tott and I have contributed to increasing their [the Janissaries'] number. I was, like him, admitted to this militia in Perekop in 1758.<sup>23</sup>

Manouel Gedeon, a late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century historian of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate reports the following:

We probably had many clerics as Janissaries, not just one. The patriarchal synkellos Metrophanes, who shrouded the metropolitan of Heraclea, Panaretos, who died in May 1878 at the age of ninety-three, confirmed to us that he observed the tattoo on his left arm, which the Janissaries carried, engraved in green ink.<sup>24</sup>

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20 Câbi Ömer Efendi, *Câbi Târihi*, Vol. I, ed. M. A. Beyhan (Ankara 2003), 469.

21 Spyropoulos and Yıldız, 'Pseudo-Janissarism', 35; BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d.116: 175.

22 F. Baron de Tott and C.-C. de Peyssonnel, *Memoirs of Baron de Tott containing the State of the Turkish Empire and the Crimea during the Late War with Russia with Numerous Anecdotes, Facts, and Observations, on the Manners and Customs of the Turks and Tartars, to which are Subjoined the Strictures of M. de Peyssonnel, Translated from the French*, Vol. II (London 1786), 70.

23 F. Baron de Tott and C.-C. de Peyssonnel, *Mémoires du Baron de Tott*, Vol. V (Maastricht 1786), 102.

24 M. Gedeon, *Μνεία των προ εμού 1800-1863-1913* [Remembrance of Those before Me, 1800-1863-1913], Vol. I (Athens 1934), 403.

Cabi mentions the following incident involving an Armenian Janissary affiliate, which took place in 1811:

A miller, an Armenian infidel in Islamic attire, forcibly demanded and seized five okes of tobacco from an infidel tobacco seller. When the tobacco seller cried out in complaint, some people said, “It is shameful, comrade (*yoldaş*)”, and, while dealing with the miller infidel as per Islamic law, one of the coffeehouse workers said, “Hey, infidel, why are you talking nonsense?” and used force. The miller infidel cried out, “I belong to the 31st regiment, isn’t there anyone from the 31st [to defend me]?” When those present realised, “Hey, this man is an infidel”, they beat and oppressed him and took him to the Agha’s Porte, swearing at him. From there, the Segbanbaşı Agha reported this incident to the Sublime Porte, and the Çavuşbaşı Agha put him in prison. Even in prison, he cried out, “Isn’t there anyone from the 31st?” and was beaten and slapped there. When he was sent to the Divan-ı Hümayun, our esteemed lord, disguised, honoured the Sublime Porte with his presence. When His Majesty was informed of the mentioned incident, he immediately ordered his execution in front of the Imperial Gate.<sup>25</sup>

As the British ambassador Everard Fawkener informs us – reporting on clothing regulations imposed on non-Muslims in 1742 – other non-Muslims affiliated with the Janissary Corps could be luckier when arrested:

[T]he Servants of the Vizir who walk about the city to observe how these regulations are observed took up a Servant or dependent of a Jew, who is Agent or as they call it here BazarganBoshi [Bazirgân Baş], of the Agau [agha] & body of the Janisaries, on account of some part of his dress, on the way to the Vizir’s Palace they passt by the Station of one of the bodys of the ordinary Guard of the City, who are Janisaries, & the commanding Officer in each of those bodys of Guard is a Colonel or Chiorbagee [*çorbacı*]. The Servant as he passt told the Guard to whom he belonged, & they immediately took him from the Vizir’s People & sent him to some of their own Chambers; the Vizir displeas’d at this insult offerd to his Servants & authority, sent immediately to require this Person of the Janisar Agau; but he was told that the Body claimed him as one belonging to them, & woud be offended if he was taken out of their hands, & so the matter dropt.<sup>26</sup>

In yet another case mentioned by Cabi, Hacı Ahmed Efendi, an *ulema* who was arrested in 1809 for daring to complain about the unfair promotion patterns utilised by his colleagues was saved by the Janissaries in a similar fashion:

The sergeant, together with [Janissary] patrol soldiers, raided the house of Kapu Kethüdası Hacı Ahmed Efendi and arrested him. However, the patrol officers said to the sergeant, “We will take him to the Janissary Agha’s Porte according to our

25 Câbi Ömer Efendi, *Câbi Târihi*, II: 730.

26 R. W. Olson, ‘Jews, Janissaries, Esnaf and the Revolt of 1740 in Istanbul: Social Upheaval and Political Realignment in the Ottoman Empire’, *JESHO*, 20/2 (1977), 207.

procedure. You can take him from there and do whatever you want"... Since [Hacı Ahmed Efendi] had an *esame* worth fifty *akçes* from one of the Janissary regiments, the sergeant reported the matter to the Çavuşbaşı Agha. The Çavuşbaşı Agha sent a written note and a small delegation to the Janissary Agha, inquiring about the situation and asking for Hacı Ahmed Efendi's banishment.

The Janissary Agha replied to the Çavuşbaşı Agha, "According to the note and the abovementioned Hacı Ahmed Efendi's offence, his banishment is indeed necessary. However, the said person belongs to one of the Janissary regiments and has a Janissary pay certificate. Several people have requested that he be released considering the current situation. It would be best if he is punished by us following the customs of the corps, ensuring that it does not lead to further unrest".<sup>27</sup>

As is evident from these and several other cases, relying on a rigid official view of who a Janissary was can lead to misleading interpretations of how different Janissary affiliates saw themselves, and how they were perceived by the members of the corps and broader Ottoman society. Therefore, a number of questions inevitably arise: why should these 'unconventional' Janissary affiliates – for whom we would most probably find no Janissary identifiers in official sources – be excluded from a study of the corps' composition, and how would historical analysis benefit from such an exclusion? Similarly, to what extent were such people important to the corps, and how did they participate in or influence its stance on the Ottoman Empire's socioeconomic and political life? Should an individual's multiple identities – as a non-Muslim, a member of another military corps, a guild member, a farmer, a merchant, or a representative of the empire's religious and administrative establishment – prevent us from counting them among the Janissaries, especially when they could benefit from virtually the same privileges as any officially registered soldier?

While accounting for the unofficial dimension of Janissary membership undoubtedly makes it even more difficult for historians to determine the exact size of the institution, accepting this broader view is crucial for understanding the corps' transformation from the seventeenth century onward. Limiting ourselves to the pursuit of the elusive numbers of 'real' Janissary soldiers – unknown to us, the Ottoman administration, and even the Janissaries themselves –<sup>28</sup> adds little to our understanding of how the corps functioned as a socio-political entity. On the other hand, evaluating the Janissaries' contribution to Ottoman history in broader terms, by examining them as an inclusive social category or, more precisely, as an institutional

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27 Câbi Ömer Efendi, *Câbi Târihi*, I: 382.

28 D'Ohsson, *Tableau général*, VII: 331; "Il est impossible d'indiquer exactement le nombre effectif des Janissaires. L'Agha lui-même l'ignore, à cause de l'infidélité des rôles présentés par les chefs de cohorte, aux trois époques annuelles du paiement des troupes".

platform for various socioeconomic, financial, and political networks, provides endless opportunities for historical analysis.

*If anyone can be a Janissary, then who really is?*

One might reasonably claim that the approach proposed here leaves too much room for generalisation. However, adopting an inclusive view of Janissary identity does not mean unconditionally assuming that everyone was a member of the corps. Instead, it involves understanding how Janissary networks functioned and considering who benefited from Janissary protection and under what conditions.

Unfortunately, we cannot ask the historical subjects we encounter in the sources for evidence of their Janissary affiliation or determine how loose or tight their ties with the Janissaries were. As historians, we can, however, examine whether there were interests, motives, and protection-based relations that linked their actions to the corps.

For example, numerous cases recorded in Ottoman sources show that large segments of the population in certain towns and regions claimed to be Janissaries. While this claim might seem rather vague or insubstantial to us, as Ottoman official sources demonstrate, it had significant real-life consequences for those individuals. Consider the following:

An imperial order from 1707 notes that having managed to affiliate themselves with Janissary officers based either in Istanbul or their own region, most of the *reaya* in the province of Çıldır obtained false certificates and refused to pay taxes to the local authorities.<sup>29</sup> Similarly, a centrally produced document from 1714 reveals that the majority of the Muslim *reaya* in Zağra-ı Atik (mod. Stara Zagora) claimed tax exemptions due to their Janissary and *sipahi* affiliations.<sup>30</sup> A 1720 document states that most inhabitants of Ruscuk, Yergöğü, Niğbolu, Kule (mod. Ruse, Giurgiu, Nikopol, and Kula respectively), and other frontier *kazas* claimed to be Janissaries, and so refused to pay their sheep tax.<sup>31</sup> In 1783, the *kadı* of Larende (Karaman) reported that some years earlier the town's *reaya* had become Janissaries and, consequently, were refusing to pay taxes.<sup>32</sup> In 1789, an imperial order regarding the recruitment of soldiers in Bolu declared that the entire population of the area were

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29 BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d.115: 292-293/1261.

30 BOA, İE.ŞKRT.3/256.

31 BOA, C.ML.212/8704.

32 BOA, AE.SABH.I.35/2657.

Janissaries, making the enrolment of new infantrymen impossible.<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, in 1790, another imperial order indicated that when required to provide cavalry soldiers the majority of people in Çorum and Osmancık refused, declaring themselves to be Janissaries.<sup>34</sup>

In agreement with the passage by Penah Efendi quoted in the epigraph to this introduction, the motives for collectively claiming Janissary identity in these cases are evident, and primarily though not exclusively revolved around tax avoidance. Furthermore, it is obvious that such claims made to agents of the Ottoman administration were not acknowledged by the latter and would not have been made without the support of at least some factions within the Janissary Corps. This synergy is clearly illustrated, for instance, in Şükrü Ilıcak's article in this volume, which highlights the direct connections between the people of Prishtina and the Janissary establishment in Istanbul. These connections bolstered the Prishtiniots' claims against a governor (*mutasarrıf*) appointed by the Ottoman central government in their region. According to Ottoman official sources, the Prishtiniots claimed, "[W]e are Janissaries, we do not pay duties", and thus refused to pay taxes and recruit local soldiers for the Ottoman army fighting the Greek revolutionaries. However, the Ottoman administration never openly recognised their Janissary status.

Regardless of the view taken by Istanbul on the matter, from a historian's perspective this *en masse* identification of local populations with the Janissaries needs to be accounted for, as it could have immense consequences for these people's everyday life, directly influencing their socioeconomic activities and their relations with the central Ottoman government at both financial and political levels. The same applies to the Janissaries' increasing association with specific groups, such as certain guilds, parts of the imperial merchant class, immigrants arriving in the cities of the empire, and many others. Whenever such associations are attested in the sources, excluding any of these categories from our analysis for not being 'real' Janissaries would not only be arbitrary but also unhelpful, since it would make it virtually impossible to evaluate the Janissary Corps' economic and political leverage over Ottoman society.

One might argue that such alliances were primarily driven by opportunistic behaviour, thereby questioning their validity as indicators of Janissary identity. This perspective suggests that a 'real' Janissary should have enrolled in the corps with intentions beyond immediate, short-term benefits. However, historical sources are replete with instances of long-time Janissary members, active soldiers, and *esame*-holders who had invested significant sums of money to join the ranks, only to go

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33 BOA, HAT.182/8301.

34 BOA, C.AS.537/22465.



against the corps' political choices or even renounce their affiliation altogether when their personal interests no longer aligned with those of their comrades.

A notable instance of this occurred, for example, when thousands of Janissary affiliates willingly surrendered their illegally acquired *esames* in response to Grand Vizier Alemdar Mustafa Pasha's anti-Janissary policies: in 1808, a decree was issued requiring those who held *esames* unlawfully to present them to the empire's customs offices within 40 days, so they could be returned to the treasury. In return, those who complied with the order would not only be exempt from punishment but were also offered the choice of receiving either half the *esame*'s market value in cash or a salary worth half the value of the pay-ticket. This incentive apparently enticed a huge number of *esame* holders to exchange their tickets, resulting in the state collecting pay-tickets worth 100,000 *akçes* within just 10 days.<sup>35</sup> Additional examples include the Janissary soldiers who aligned themselves with the Mahmudian regime during the corps' dissolution in 1826, those who enlisted in Selim III's Nizam-ı Cedid, Alemdar Mustafa Pasha's Sekban-ı Cedid, and Mahmud II's Eşkinci Corps, and, notably, those who integrated into the Asakir-i Mansure-i Muhammediye Corps following the abolition of the Janissary Corps.

Janissary officers were well aware that the *esame* holders' allegiance could not always be taken for granted. When, for instance, they tried to rally bystanders to join the fight against the soldiers of Alemdar Mustafa Pasha, they intimidated the people they encountered on the road by reminding them that they had their names registered in their *ortas*. As the Ottoman chronicles inform us "some of these people were holders of Janissary *esames* worth one hundred, two hundred, or even six hundred *akçes*".<sup>36</sup> Later on during the ensuing battle, Janissary officers would start calling out those who did not engage in combat, angrily protesting that "While you take most of the Janissary Corps' pay, you just stand by and watch!".<sup>37</sup> These instances, among many others, illustrate the adaptability and varying loyalties within the Janissary ranks. Furthermore, they show that Janissary identity could be subject to negotiation, no matter what type of affiliation one had with the corps.

35 Şâni-zâde Mehmed 'Atâ'ullah Efendi, *Şâni-zâde Târîhi [Osmanlı Tarihi (1223-1237/1808-1821)]*, Vol. I, ed. Z. Yılmaz (Istanbul 2008), 88.

36 Câbi Ömer Efendi, *Câbi Târîhi*, I: 274; "kimin yüz, ikiyüz, altıyüz akçaya kadar yeniçeri esâmîsine mâlik imam ve yedekçi ve çukadar ve bostanî makûleleri".

37 Ibid., 284; "sizler Yeniçeri Ocağı'nın 'ulufesinin çoğunu ahz eder iken böyle durub seyirci olursunuz". For this incident, also, see M. Sunar's article in the present volume and A. Yıldız, 'A City under Fire: Urban Violence in Istanbul during the Alemdar Incident (1808)', in U. Freitag and N. Lafı (eds), *Urban Governance under the Ottomans: Between Cosmopolitanism and Conflict* (Oxon and New York 2014), 48-49.

This is a particularly important point to make. Embracing an inclusive approach to the question of Janissary identity entails a nuanced understanding of the dynamics fostered through negotiation and the flexibility this process afforded to those associated with the corps. Such a perspective illuminates how individuals within the Janissary context could assert their claims not only toward the Ottoman government and its representatives but also toward the Janissary Corps itself. What this reveals is the individual agency that ordinary people could exercise within the Janissary milieu, challenging the simplistic view of them as a docile mob at the beck and call of Janissary leaders. Instead, they emerge as autonomous agents capable of leveraging their association with the corps to their advantage whenever circumstances permitted. Consider, for instance, the following comments by Ali Bey el-Abbassi (Domingo Francisco Jorge Badía y Leblich) compiled in the early nineteenth century:

Every individual when the whim seizes him arms himself with one or two large pistols, a khandjear or large knife, or with what weapons he chooses, and says, *I am a soldier*; he then attaches himself to a division of janissaries, or to a pacha, an aga, or any other officer who consents to admit him into his service; the moment the thing ceases to please him, he throws down his arms, saying, *I am no longer a soldier*; and thenceforward lives undisturbed without being upbraided by any one with his desertion... The janissaries have indeed a degree of what is called esprit de corps, an estimable feeling when it is not too exclusive; but this does not suffice to prevent them from consulting occasionally their own interest, which is always their first concern; hence, if the motive of the summons suit them, they take up arms immediately, and attend muster: in any other case, they remain immovable.<sup>38</sup>

Loyalty, while potentially fragile and negotiable, was present, balancing between pragmatism, individual and collective interests within the Janissary framework. This flexibility should be viewed not as indicative of a lack of Janissary identity, but as evidence that Janissary identity was more vibrant and fluid than traditionally perceived. Furthermore, it highlights the capacity for transformation within the corps during its final two centuries. This richer, more colourful understanding of Janissary identity acknowledges its adaptability and the varied ways individuals could navigate and benefit from their association with this important military institution.

The inclusive approach proposed here might not be convenient for anyone seeking precise calculations – which, as explained, would in any case be precarious at best, no matter what one’s definition of Janissary identity is – but it does yield a much more intricate and nuanced understanding of the factors that made the Janissary Corps a formidable socio-economic and political force. For years, the corps was mainly examined through the oversimplifying lens of its contribution to Ottoman

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38 Ali Bey, *Travels of Ali Bey in Morocco, Tripoli, Cyprus, Egypt, Arabia, Syria, and Turkey, between the Year 1803 and 1807*, Vol. II (London 1816), 412-414.

‘decline’ by means of its own institutional and military ‘downfall’. However, it is now time to appraise the Janissary complex in all its complexity and sheer size. The concept of Janissaries encompassed a diverse array of identities, affiliations, and lifestyles, far beyond the conventional image of active soldiers. This broad understanding included barracked permanent soldiers living on their Janissary salary, active Janissary soldiers engaged in market activities, contracted soldiers mobilised only during wartime, Janissary family members, impostors who posed as Janissaries, investors in pay-certificates who enjoyed Janissary privileges without being recognised as corps members by outsiders, various non-Janissary *askeris* affiliated with and protected by Janissary regiments, artisans and entrepreneurs with ties to the corps, and many more. All these groups perceived themselves as part of the same protection system and felt entitled to certain benefits resulting from their connection with the Janissary institution. This shared perception of inclusion formed the foundation of Janissary identity during the period covered by this collective volume.

While not central to every paper published in the present book, the question of Janissary identification in the sources emerges as a recurrent theme that intersects with all topics discussed herein. Through presenting their unique perspectives, the authors enable readers to deepen their understanding and develop their own insights into the complexities of Janissary and Ottoman history. This collaborative exploration not only enriches the existing body of knowledge but also opens up new avenues for scholarly inquiry and interpretation.



The 16 essays in this volume are organised into five main thematic sections based on their primary focus, though most papers address a variety of topics that often intersect with those discussed in other parts of the book. Part I focuses on Janissary waqfs and money-lending, with the first two articles, by İrfan Kokdaş-Yahya Araz and Eunjeong Yi, primarily drawing on judicial court records. Eunjeong Yi’s paper deals with the functioning of Janissary regimental funds in seventeenth-century Istanbul, focusing on two main areas: the role of regimental waqfs in money lending, and their trade in commodities such as coffee and slaves. Additionally, the author discusses the possible connections between the economic activities of regiments and the prestige and networks of their senior officers. In her article, Yi challenges the conventional view that those Janissaries who engaged in business did so as individual soldiers rather than as members of entire regiments, and that those soldiers officially affiliated with their regiments were less involved in business activities than their artisan counterparts.

Kokdaş and Araz's joint paper examines the operation of Janissary regimental waqfs during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, with a particular focus on the functioning of loan markets in Ottoman Istanbul and Vidin. According to the authors, the regiments in those regions employed a range of legal mechanisms, such as surety, advance payment contracts, conditional leasing, and collateral arrangements, to develop sophisticated loan structures and maintain control over the real estate market. Furthermore, due to their local presence, Janissary regimental funds became central to transprovincial credit transactions, with fund administrators closely monitoring loan obligations, bolstered by their political influence in Istanbul.

Mehmet Mert Sunar's paper focuses on yet another type of Ottoman source, the probate inventory registers prepared during the confiscation of Janissary assets in the aftermath of the corps' abolition. The paper offers insights into the profile of Istanbul residents who had credit and business dealings with the Janissary Corps, while shedding light on the functioning of Janissary regimental funds. Last but not least, it examines the types of properties and businesses controlled by Janissary regimental funds and individual Janissaries, providing us with a panoramic view of Janissary credit transactions in early nineteenth-century Istanbul.

Kayhan Orbay and Ramazan Pantık's co-authored article is based on a different type of source, *vakfiyes* or endowment deeds, focusing on the case of early Ottoman Crete (seventeenth-early eighteenth centuries). Their paper demonstrates that when examined from the perspective of waqf establishment in the island's early Ottoman period, the Janissaries' influence, albeit substantial, was overshadowed by that of the central elites in Istanbul. It also provides an evolutionary perspective on the influence of *askeri* waqfs in a frontier setting, reminding us that the economic activities of Janissaries in the provinces are best understood when studied in conjunction with other prevailing institutional trends. These findings are in line with other academic works which suggest the gradual expansion of Janissary economic influence in the province in later periods. Indeed, it is in the second half of the 18th century that Cretan Janissary waqfs become more heavily involved in commerce, agriculture, and credit markets, with future research expected to explore the evolving networks and the role of Janissary waqfs in the island's transformation.

The essays in Part 2 of the volume deal primarily but not exclusively with the question of Janissary professional and commercial practices in a variety of Ottoman regions. Starting with Istanbul, Cengiz Kırılı's paper makes use of a series of surety registers (*kefalet defterleri*) compiled in the 1790s to provide us with an in-depth look at Istanbul's guilds and their relations with the city's Janissary workforce. The paper highlights the significant presence of Janissaries, not only as shopkeepers and itinerant workers, but also as guild administrators who acted as intermediaries

between the state and *esnaf* corporations in late eighteenth-century Istanbul. While discussing all of the above, Kırılı also raises a number of important methodological questions related to Ottoman recording practices and the use of Ottoman registers for detecting Janissary affiliations.

Dimitris Papastamatiou's essay examines the probate inventories of the Janissaries of Thessaloniki from 1750 to 1800. It starts by analysing social hierarchies within the local military as shaped by their property status, and proceeds to focus on the size and composition of Janissary properties, their investment strategies, entrepreneurial risks, and economic connections with local power brokers and entrepreneurs from other regions in the empire. The paper presents several notable cases of Janissaries who exemplify the characteristics of contemporary Ottoman proto-capitalists. As Papastamatiou explains, the community of Janissary businessmen was marked by social stratification and economic inequality which influenced their economic activities and entrepreneurial practices, with credit playing a crucial role in the development and expansion of the Janissary presence at the local level.

Moving further to the north, Aysel Yıldız's essay focuses on the economic role of Janissary merchants in the eighteenth-century Danubian trading zone. This study highlights how Balkan Muslim merchants, most of whom had military backgrounds, capitalised on new trading opportunities presented in the region during the early eighteenth century. It then proceeds to explore the significant tensions this expansion created between Janissaries and the local landed gentry, and the latter's response. As the author explains, these developments would force the Ottoman government to intervene and implement strict, state-controlled commercial policies. In turn, imperial intervention was to lead to the rise of licensed local merchants and an oligopolistic trade structure tied to Janissary networks that connected the Principalities with other surrounding Ottoman provinces and the imperial capital.

Anna Sydorenko's paper focuses on the northern extremities of the empire during the eighteenth century. It analyses the complex dynamics of Janissary networks operating at the crossroads between the Ottoman and Russian states, the Crimean Khanate, the Zaporozhian Cossacks, and the Ukrainians of the Left Bank Hetmanate. By utilising primary sources from Ukrainian archives, the author explores the nature and scope of commercial and political interactions among these diverse groups, and how they were influenced and altered by the ongoing Ottoman-Russian conflict and Russia's gradual southward expansion.

Part 3 of the volume is largely dedicated to Janissary political connections and [trans]provincial networking. In my own article, I investigate a case centred on the murder of a French diplomat's son by a low-ranking Janissary in Candia in 1811, an act which sparked a year-long confrontation between the French and Janissary protection systems. Of particular interest to this paper are the broader French and

Janissary networks mobilised across imperial space. By examining these developments, the paper explores the complex dynamics of power struggles, protection networks, and the interaction between diplomacy and violence within the Ottoman Empire. Furthermore, it offers insights into the negotiation tactics employed by Janissary networks to manoeuvre through the Ottoman Empire's complex political structures.

Şükrü Ilıcak's paper focuses on yet another instance of Janissary transprovincial political mobilisation which took place in the aftermath of the eruption of the Greek War of Independence. Ilıcak utilises a large corpus of Ottoman documents to offer insights into a historical event which he tags "The Prishtina Affair", during which the population of Prishtina allied with the Janissaries of Istanbul to fight against the appointment of a local governor (*mutasarrıf*). By delving into the details of this incident the author masterfully reveals a tangled web of clientelism and patronage networks that existed between the population of Prishtina and the 'Janissary party' at Istanbul, as represented by a number of influential junior officers known as the '*ustas*'.

Gülay Tulasoğlu's article turns our attention to Izmir, by addressing the question of the political and economic collaboration between the Kâtibzades, a local *ayan* family, and the city's Janissaries. In order to deduce the relationship between the Janissaries and the family, Tulasoğlu primarily focuses on the examination of their overlapping economic and commercial activities. Furthermore, she argues that during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, the Kâtibzade family created a mutually advantageous alliance with the Janissaries, which not only strengthened their position in Izmir but also served as a buffer against central political interference in their region.

Part 4 of the volume explores different angles of the familial, patronage, and sexual relations characterising the Janissary social and military milieus. In their shared article, Hülya Canbakal and Aysel Yıldız explore the integration of Janissary families and other Ottoman military members within the regional societies where they lived. Utilising an impressive dataset of over 2,000 inheritance inventories from six cities across three regions, the two authors discuss various aspects of Janissary family demographics over two centuries. The study reveals that while registered and active Janissaries exhibited some unique demographic patterns compared to other groups, there was a notable trend towards convergence among all groups during the eighteenth century, with the family structures of soldiers showing alignment with those of the local populations in their respective regions. Overall, as the authors point out, the demographic characteristics observed in the study suggest a movement towards more 'traditional family' structures from the Central Balkans to Southeastern Anatolia.

Linda T. Darling's paper also offers a *longue durée* analysis, covering a period from the late fifteenth to the late seventeenth century and focusing on Janissary patronymics found in salary registers. The article sheds light on key issues related to Janissary religious origins, identity, and recruitment that became prominent in the later Ottoman Empire. By analysing changes in Janissary backgrounds as reflected in their fathers' names and other identifiers, Darling's work shows that early stereotypes of Janissaries only partially fit the historical reality and that significant exceptions to these stereotypes foreshadowed trends observed in the later Janissary Corps.

Baki Tezcan's essay delves into the topic of Janissary folk poetry and the homoerotic relationships featured in it. By doing so, the author attempts to contextualise how these relations became socially acceptable in certain segments of Ottoman society at specific times, how the Janissaries were part of this cultural milieu in the seventeenth century, and how these relationships fell out of favour in the nineteenth century. He argues that two key factors likely contributed to the phenomenon's development: first, Ottoman upper-class urban society was characterised by slavery; and second, the process of socialising young boys into adulthood and their eventual professional roles occurred within a framework of gendered and often informal patronage relationships, where younger males were personally dependent on older males.

The fifth and final part of the book addresses topics also covered in other sections, such as Janissary patronage, economic, and political relations. However, the cases discussed here are placed in a separate section due to their relevance to a different organisational structure, namely the Egyptian Janissaries. By assigning these cases their own section, we aim to highlight the institutional differences between the Imperial Janissary army (*dergâh-ı ali yeniçerileri*) and the autonomous Janissary organisation in Egypt (*Mısır yeniçerileri/mustahfızan*), without excluding the latter. Including the Egyptian Janissaries in this volume allows us to create an initial comparative framework and identify commonalities in the socio-economic and political roles of this military institution and its members in comparison to its Imperial counterpart. We hope this approach will not only encourage further study of the Egyptian Janissaries from a comparative perspective but also pave the way for the inclusion of other North African Regencies in this discussion, namely Tripoli, Tunis, and Algiers, which had autonomous Janissary structures, as well.

In her article, Jane Hathaway explores a 1708 letter from the Cairo Geniza concerning a dispute over port customs in Damietta, which highlights the financial and administrative conflicts the Janissaries became involved in. The paper examines the significance of customs revenue for the Janissaries, the influence of Jewish merchants, and the growing power of the Kazdağlı household within the Egyptian Janissary structures at the time of the letter's composition. Hathaway also discusses the

temporary reform efforts led by Yusuf Bey al-Musulmani, a Jewish convert to Islam appointed to oversee customs and curb Janissary control in the region.

Finally, in his paper Abdülmennan M. Altıntaş discusses the case of Fellaḥ Salih, a prominent political figure in Egypt who had amassed a substantial fortune before his death in 1754. Following Salih's death, the central Ottoman government sought to confiscate his property by sending agents to Egypt, only to face considerable resistance by local actors. Among them, the Egyptian Janissaries argued that due to Salih's connections with the local Janissary establishment, the fortune rightfully belonged to them. This claim led to a protracted conflict between the two parties. The study examines Salih's rise from an orphan to a key political figure and his ties with Egyptian households and Janissaries. It also explores the inheritance dispute that emerged after his death, highlighting the legal practices in Egypt and the central authority that prolonged the debate.

In bringing together these diverse and thought-provoking contributions, this volume offers a multifaceted examination of the Janissaries' economic and political activities. By challenging entrenched historiographical narratives and presenting fresh interpretations, the collected essays encourage readers to reconsider the Janissaries not merely as a military institution but as a dynamic and influential force in the broader socio-economic and political fabric of the Ottoman world. As such, this volume serves both as a significant contribution to the field and as a foundation for future studies, inspiring scholars to continue exploring the far-reaching impact of the Janissaries in early modern history.



PART ONE

WAQFS AND MONEY LENDING



# JANISSARY REGIMENTS AND OFFICERS IN BUSINESS (1660-1700)

## REGIMENTAL WAQFS AND TRADE IN COFFEE AND SLAVES

Eunjeong Yi\*

### *Introduction*

DESPITE THE FAME OF JANISSARIES as the military and social force in the Ottoman world, historical knowledge about them is still very scant, especially regarding the ways in which they were involved in economic activities.<sup>1</sup> Janissaries have long been noted for encroaching on crafts and commerce, as recorded in Ottoman sources, and scholars have studied their interpenetration with guildsmen and infiltration into the civilian domain for several decades; we now know that some Janissaries engaged in large-scale business, long-distance trade, and moneylending, which made some of them quite rich according to documentary evidence from the seventeenth century.

Still, perhaps unconsciously, we tend to consider that the Janissaries were (or should have been) part of the state sector, and that their involvement in the marketplace was a corrupt anomaly to be condemned,<sup>2</sup> so that it has attracted less attention than it should have. Had we insisted on mainly regarding the Janissaries as villains who distorted normal, sound economic processes and regularly committed hideous crimes, we would never have felt the inclination to study their activities in detail. Especially those social historians of Istanbul who have conducted research on court records may have tended to overlook Janissaries and/or Janissary regiments when

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\* Seoul National University.

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2 For a critique of the state-centered view, see C. Kafadar, 'Janissaries and Other Riffraff of Ottoman Istanbul: Rebels without a Cause?', *IJTS*, 13/1-2 (2007), 114-116; D. Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire, 1700-1922* (Cambridge 2000), 44-46.

they appeared in their documents, regarding them as soldiers external to society.<sup>3</sup> That is, scholars understood them primarily as members of the military, and considered their economic activities illicit or deviant rather than necessary; this would have made such activities involving Janissary regiments even less interesting. But just for a moment, let us step into the shoes of post-classical Janissaries: would it have been possible for them not to engage in economic activities in the midst of a worsening budget deficit and mounting salary arrears, when even basic munitions were in short supply?

This paper aims to examine what the regiments – the centre of Janissary soldiers' military and political activities – were up against and how they had to adapt to new circumstances. This may yield a fuller answer to the question of how and why the phenomenon of Janissary involvement in often illicit economic activities spread so quickly and widely. I believe such an approach is becoming more feasible as increasing numbers of court records from Istanbul are published, given that mentions of Janissary regiments abound in them.<sup>4</sup> Now too, with the advent of some significant empirical studies that have used Janissary *mevacib* registers,<sup>5</sup> we are fortunately gaining basic background knowledge of the corps' overall numerical strength, the number of soldiers in each regiment, and how many soldiers in a given regiment were stationed where. With that in mind, let us explore what kind of economic activities Janissaries were involved in and why. We will mainly be using Istanbul court records<sup>6</sup>, with the addition of *mühimme* and *atik şikayet* registers from the second half of the seventeenth century.

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- 3 Janissaries of the late seventeenth century can be roughly categorised into two types, namely the soldier type and the artisan type. See G. Yılmaz, 'Blurred Boundaries between Soldiers and Civilians: Artisan Janissaries in Seventeenth-Century Istanbul', in S. Faroqhi (ed.) *Bread from the Lion's Mouth: Artisans Struggling for a Livelihood in Ottoman Cities* (New York 2015), 187.
  - 4 Janissaries' crimes were initially adjudicated and punished within the barracks, and serious crimes such as killings of civilians were handled by the grand vizier or Janissary officers. I. H. Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devleti Teşkilatından Kapıkulu Ocakları*. Vol. I: *Acemi Ocağı ve Yeniçeri Ocağı* (Ankara 1988 [3<sup>rd</sup> ed.], first published in 1943), 353-362. When they were mostly living in barracks, they would only have had limited chances to interact with civilians, and, naturally, did not show up in the *sicils* often. For example, during the 1610s Janissaries featured in the court records far less frequently than in the 1660s, when the serial keeping of registers at the central court of Istanbul recommenced after a hiatus of half a century.
  - 5 G. Yılmaz, 'The Economic and Social Roles of Janissaries in a Seventeenth-Century Ottoman City: The Case of Istanbul', unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, McGill University, 2011; A. Gül, '18. Yüzyılda Yeniçeri Teşkilatı', unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Atatürk Üniversitesi, 2020.
  - 6 Court records from Istanbul have been continuously published by İslam Araştırmaları Merkezi (İSAM) for the past decade or so, and have become so much more accessible in the form of pdf files (<https://kadicicilleri.istanbul>, accessed 22 January 2024). See also T. Kuran (ed.), *Mahkeme Kayıt Işığında 17. Yüzyıl İstanbul'da Sosyo Ekonomik Yaşam*. Vols V-VIII: *Vakıflar* (Istanbul

### *Economic activities on the regimental level – why were they needed?*

As is well known, what we call Janissary regiments, occasionally all referred to as ‘*odas*’ without distinction, also went by different names depending on when and in what context they were organised. There were 196 regiments in the mid-seventeenth century, 101 of which were *cemaats*, 34 *sekbans*, and 61 *bölüks*, as they were established at different times for checks and balances within the Janissary corps. A regiment originally had 70 to 80 soldiers in it, but by the mid-seventeenth century the salary register would more often than not include many more people, with some regiments easily going beyond a couple of hundred.<sup>7</sup>

According to *Kavanin-i Yeniçeriyân*, all activities involving Janissary soldiers in both peacetime and wartime had the regiment as their core.<sup>8</sup> Once trainees (*acemi oğlanları*) had been promoted as Janissaries and placed in their regiments, their lives revolved around the regiment: they ate, slept, were trained, and received their salaries in the regimental barracks; on the battlefield, soldiers in a regiment bivouacked together in tents pitched around that of the *odabaşı*, the junior officer in actual command of them. Although the official head of regiments was either a *çorbacı* or a *bölükbaşı*, it was the *odabaşı* who seems to have been in true control of the members and made crucial decisions in both war and peace.<sup>9</sup>

The government’s control over the Janissaries grew weaker and weaker as the post-classical age set in, and the importance of their regiments increased. A rather simple indication of this is seen in the changing contents of orders to move troops from one place to another, as recorded in the *mühimme* registers. In the mid-sixteenth century, when the Ottoman Empire was centrally controlled in military and financial terms, orders plainly directed the Janissary Agha to dispatch such and such a number of soldiers from one place to another and pay their salary from such and

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2010). The documents I cite come from the central court of Istanbul (İŞS), Istanbul Bab (İBŞS), Galata (GŞS), Eyüp (EYP), Rumeli Sadaret (RSM), and Ahi Çelebi (AHİ). I have included RSM defter no. 161 (1115-1116/1704), although it comes from the very early eighteenth century.

7 Yılmaz, ‘The Economic and Social Roles’, 251-267. Her database summarising the *mevacib defteri* BOA, KK.6599 from 1663-1664 shows that most regiments had more than 100 soldiers, sometimes reaching several hundreds. However, some exceptionally unsuccessful regiments had fewer than 100.

8 *Kavanin-i Yeniçeriyân: Yeniçeri Kanunları*, ed. T. Toroser (Istanbul 2008), 55-68.

9 C. Wilkins and E. Yi, ‘Between Soldier and Civilian: Janissaries in Seventeenth-Century Istanbul and Aleppo’, in R. Goshgarian, I. Khuri-Makdisi and A. Yaycıoğlu (eds), *Crafting History: Essays on the Ottoman World and Beyond in Honor of Cemal Kafadar* (Brookline, MA 2023), 573-575.

such resources.<sup>10</sup> Later, mobilising soldiers to the battlefield became more difficult, as we can see in orders from the 1630s explicitly stating that no attention should be paid to the excuses of those reluctant to join the campaign.<sup>11</sup> In the second half of the seventeenth century, the problem of soldiers refusing to go to war seems to have become an everyday occurrence, so much so that government orders would often say how many soldiers out of how many regiments should be mobilised, and that so-and-so of such-and-such regiment should head up this group of men;<sup>12</sup> we also see orders addressed to the *çorbacıs* to move their troops to a particular place from where a new campaign was to be launched.<sup>13</sup> It may have been that the regiments' negotiating power had so increased that the government had to deal with them individually.

In parallel, court records from the mid-seventeenth century onwards do not just include multiple mentions of Janissaries but also of Janissary regiments, in stark contrast to the beginning of the century. This phenomenon is evidence of the men and their regiments' increased involvement in the civilian life of Istanbul. In this paper, my concern is those who were specifically mentioned as "*racıl*" or part of "*dergâh-ı ali yeniçerileri*", especially those whose regimental affiliation is also given.<sup>14</sup>

The multi-faceted seventeenth-century crisis severely affected Janissaries. They staged many rebellions in response, some of which even ended in regicides and deepened the crisis still further. In the middle of the crisis, the significance of the regiments increased militarily, politically, and socio-economically. Regimental cohesion would generally intensify through battles and discipline, and may have grown even stronger in this period due to an increase in recruitment through existing

10 For example, see H. O. Yıldırım et al. (ed. and translit.), *7 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri (975-976/1567-1569)* (Ankara 1998), # 685, 791, 895, 901.

11 BOA, A.DVNSMHHM.d.85: #230, 382, 564.

12 Defterdar Sarı Mehmed Paşa, *Zübde-i Vekayiât: Tahlil ve Metin (1066-1116/ 1656-1704)* ed. A. Özcan (Ankara 1995), 498-499, 760-761; BOA, A.DVNSMHHM.d.99 (1100-1101/1688-89): # 36, 109, 112, 228; 100 (1101-1102/1689-90): # 377; 103 (1102-1103/1690-1691): # 34, 48, 49, 110, 221, 226, 231-232, 241, 445; 105 (1105-1106/1693-94): # 382; 111 (1110-1113/1698-1701): # 651, 1945- 1947, 2267, 2271, 2286, 2287, 2291, 2303; AŞ.10 (1097-1098/1686-87): # 208, 221, 283, 307, 309, 320, 323, 325, 400, 486, 487, 542, 553, 567, 651, 657, 721, 764; AŞ.30 (1110/1698): # 88-89, 91, 170.

13 BOA, A.DVNSMHHM.d.99: #112 (An order given to the *çorbacıs* of the 25th *cemaat* in Erzurum, the 54th *cemaat* in Kütayis, and the 79th *cemaat* in Ahıska, etc., *evail-i R* 1101/11-20 January 1690).

14 One tends to surmise that those who had the title of '*beşe*' were all Janissaries, but one cannot be sure, as some other types of soldiers also used the title. T. Açık, 'Beşe Unvanı Hakkında', *Tarih Dergisi*, 62/2 (2015), 46-54. See also the articles by Kırılı and Canbakal-Yıldız in this volume.

connections.<sup>15</sup> We can identify cases in which people who were related by kinship or from the same hometown were affiliated with a particular regiment.<sup>16</sup> In the sixteenth century the sons of deceased colleagues were increasingly admitted to regiments,<sup>17</sup> which exercised ever more control over whom to let in; perhaps the fact that individual regiments had widely varying numbers of soldiers<sup>18</sup> points to their autonomy regarding whom to take in and on what scale. Those regiments that included members with blood or regional ties would probably have had a sense of internal bonding that was pseudo-familial and intense; needless to say, for individual soldiers, the survival of their regiments and colleagues in military and economic terms was paramount.

It was thus only natural for regiments to take action in their economic and political interests whenever they deemed it necessary. That cohesion on the regimental level came to make up the core of soldiers' lives even in the marketplace and in peacetime is evidenced by the recurrent use in court records of phrases such as "barracks people" (*oda ahalisi*) or "barracks wayfarers" (*oda yoldaşları*), which suddenly increase in frequency in the second half of the seventeenth century.<sup>19</sup> Not only that, in all kinds of sources this is paralleled by an upsurge in references to Janissary regiments and their *odabaşıs*, who constituted the most crucial decision makers in all affairs related to the regiments, from moneylending to leading revolts.<sup>20</sup>

That the Janissary regiments started appearing in court records, which were mainly the domain of civilians, is an indication that they came to have more transactions within the civilian economy; and indeed, there were compelling reasons for this increase. In the late seventeenth century delayed salary payment was the norm, though how long the wait lasted may have differed each time.<sup>21</sup> Even the supply of

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15 Meanwhile, the idealised type of Janissary in the classical period, i.e. an exclusively non-Muslim-born soldier, should also be revised in the light of Linda Darling's article based on *mevacib* registers in this volume.

16 C. Wilkins and E. Yi, 'Between Soldier and Civilian', 571. İŞS.9: 77a/1 (18 Ramazan 1071/17 May 1661); 18: # 310 (25 Safer 1087/14 July 1670).

17 Uzunçarşılı, *Kapıkulu Ocakları*, I: 31 ff., mentions that Janissaries were first allowed to marry during the reign of Selim I (r. 1512-1520), and that their orphans were admitted to the regiments gradually. Linda Darling's article in this volume would seem to suggest that this phenomenon unofficially appeared even earlier.

18 Yılmaz, 'The Economic and Social Roles', 251-267.

19 Wilkins and Yi, 'Between Soldier and Civilian', 568-569.

20 Even as early as the 1622 rebellion in which Osman II was killed, the role of *odabaşıs* was crucial in making decisions. M. Sertoğlu, 'İbretnüma', *Belleten*, 11 (1947), 500 ff.

21 H. Sahillioğlu, '1683-1740'da Osmanlı İmparatorluğunun Hazine Gelir ve Gideri', in M. Genç and E. Özvar (eds), *Osmanlı Maliyesi: Kurumlar ve Bütçeler* (Istanbul 2006), 160-161, n. 31. See also E. Özvar, 'Osmanlı Devletinin Bütçe Harcamaları (1509-1788)', *ibid.*, 218 ff.

weapons and other munitions did not always run smoothly during major wars, such as the Cretan War (1645-1669) and the War against the Holy League (1683-1699).<sup>22</sup> Janissaries who had to risk their lives in battle preferred expensive, well-functioning weapons produced by master artisans, as is made plain in the early seventeenth-century *Kavanin-i Yeniçeriyân*: “Janissaries should buy guns; one cannot be brave with the guns provided by the state treasury” (*Yeniçeriye tüfek satın almak şarttır, hazine malı tüfekle o kadar erlik olmaz*).<sup>23</sup> In addition, it is noted that munitions procurement was largely handled by individual regiments, at least in the eighteenth century.<sup>24</sup> This is already very likely to have been the case in the late seventeenth century, given the budget deficit of the time. If so, not only those Janissaries who squarely engaged in business, but also those who thought of themselves primarily as soldiers had to make money as regiments as well as individuals.

In such a situation, a regiment that came to have closeknit blood, regional, and probably even emotional ties would have jumped on any opportunities to make money for its collective survival. The regiments’ economic activities, by definition, would have been unwanted by the government and civilians alike, and oftentimes went against the existing order in the civilian economy. Therefore, it is natural they do not appear as often as they ought to in comparison to their actual volume and frequency; what is shown in the court records must just be the tip of the iceberg. The relatively small number of documents that give us clues point to something much bigger nonetheless, with regimental waqfs as the central nexus of Janissary economic activities.

### *Moneylending through regimental waqfs*

The most legitimate and central of all the economic activities engaged in on the group level was moneylending through regimental waqfs. As is well-known, the Ottoman government allowed cash waqfs to make money from moneylending, with publicly fixed interest rate ceilings set in the *ihtisab kanunnames* (market inspection regulations). As early as the sixteenth century, many Muslims used lending as a way

22 Kâtib Çelebi, *Fezleke*, Vol. II, ed. Z. Aybicin (Istanbul 2016), 964, 971; Defterdar Sarı Mehmed Paşa, *Zübde*, 192, 199-200, 524, 527-528.

23 *Kavanin-i Yeniçeriyân*, 64; Serhat Kuzucu, *Osmanlı Ordusu ve Sefer Lojistiği (1453-1789)* (Istanbul 2017), 77. While the subsidy per soldier for the purchase of weapons (*keman bahası*) was 30 *akçes* a year, the prices of guns made by master artisans was 240, and those made by apprentices were 140, according to M. Kütükoğlu, *Osmanlılarda Narh Müessesesi ve 1640 Tarihli Narh Defteri* (Istanbul 1983), 225-226.

24 Gül, ‘18. Yüzyılda Yeniçeri Teşkilatı’, 721 ff.



of making money in the central lands of the empire.<sup>25</sup> Janissaries also became accustomed to the idea of having a common fund from early on; they were soldiers who risked their lives on a daily basis, and so naturally had to take care of the orphans of their deceased brothers-in-arms and impoverished Janissaries within the regiment.<sup>26</sup>

Meanwhile, there has not been much hard inquiry into the detailed *modus operandi* of these regimental waqfs, especially in a way that would document changes over time. Not much is known about them, and what we do know is concentrated towards the end of the Janissaries' institutional existence. One might surmise that these waqfs would motivate outsiders to join particular regiments, so as to be able to borrow money on advantageous terms,<sup>27</sup> but it is rather difficult to know the real dynamics there yet. With further research into the workings of such waqfs, we will be better able to understand the characteristics of Janissary regiments in this period.

As described in court records, the purposes for which regimental waqfs were founded almost invariably had to do with serving the organisation's needs (*oda mühimmat için*), presumably for the provision of munitions.<sup>28</sup> These are just mentioned in passing in a rather informal way, and one may want to double-check with *vakfiyes*, if available. Sometimes multiple documents on one waqf give the purpose of its establishment differently, for example, for military supplies for the regiment in one and for members of the regiment in another.<sup>29</sup> The waqf may have served multiple purposes;<sup>30</sup> since the most frequently mentioned was securing the necessities for war, soldiers would have perceived that to be its principal objective. This suggests that regiments themselves were shouldering the expenditures for war and that their waqfs functioned as the means to secure the money needed.

25 J. E. Mandaville, 'Usurious Piety: The Cash Waqf Controversy in the Ottoman Empire', *IJMES*, 10/3 (1979), 289-308; M. Çizakça, *A History of Philanthropic Foundations: The Islamic World from the Seventh Century to the Present* (Istanbul 2000), 45-56.

26 Uzunçarşılı, *Kapıkulu Ocakları*, I: 311-320. He further mentions that the early seventeenth-century Grand Vizier Kuyucu Murad Pasha also borrowed money from Janissaries on interest. See also Na'imâ Mustafa Efendi, *Tarih-i Na'ima*, ed. M. İpşirli, Vol. II (Ankara 2007), 374.

27 B. Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire: Political and Social Transformation in the Early Modern World* (Cambridge 2010), 205-207.

28 J. W. Redhouse, *A Turkish and English Lexicon* (Istanbul 1890[2<sup>nd</sup> ed.]), 2047.

29 The purpose of the 71st *cemaat*'s waqf is described differently in İŞS.9: 41b/2 and 46b/3.

30 Some regimental waqfs are mentioned as being founded for the poor of the regiment or for communal meals (*ta'amiye için*). At any rate, such varying descriptions of founding purposes remind us of Bursa guild waqfs, whose purposes are described by such terms as "necessities" (*mühimmat*), "communal meals" (*ta'amiye*), and "taxes" (*tekâlif*). See S. Faroqi, 'Ottoman Guilds in the Late Eighteenth Century: The Bursa Case', in Eadem, *Making a Living in the Ottoman Lands: 1480 to 1820* (Istanbul 1995), 105.

The Janissary regimental waqfs I have managed to identify in selected court registers from the second half of the seventeenth century numbered 67 in all. Their regiment numbers are as follows: 1, 2, 4, 7, 11, 12, 14, 20, 23, 25, 28, 30, 31, 34, 35, 36, 37, 39, 40, 42, 43, 46, 47, 49, 50, 54, 56, 57, 59, 63, 68, 69, 71, 73, 83, 87, 88, 89, 91, 93, 96 (among the *cemaats*), 1, 4, 10, 11, 13, 16, 18, 20, 21, 28, 30, 31, 37, 38, 42, 43, 46, 48, 52, 57, 58, 60, 61, 67 (among the *böliüks*), 12, 15 (among the *sekbans*).

Of the 196 regiments, 67 had their waqfs mentioned in the incompletely surviving series of Istanbul court records from the seventeenth century. Probably almost all regiments had waqfs – court records even show that beyond the Janissaries, *bostancı*, *topçu*, and *cebeci* units also had them.<sup>31</sup> The fact that cash waqfs were so widespread among the military units subject to central government control shows that they were under pressure to procure some funds of their own and that they learned from one another's example.

Needless to say, these military waqfs generated profits by lending money at interest. If they had only lent money to their members it would not have had much impact on urban society, nor would they have made a lot of money. Examining court records from the 1610s, one does not see regimental waqfs often, and even when they do come up, it is mostly as lenders to their own members.<sup>32</sup> In stark contrast, records from the late seventeenth century show Janissary regimental waqfs lending sums to a very broad spectrum of society.<sup>33</sup> We tend to hypothesise that they would have done so mostly to members of the regiments and those artisans or merchants who had connections with them, on the basis of the close ties they had developed with one another over a long period of time by the early nineteenth century. On the other hand, however, we may not want to focus only on Janissary-*esnaf* relations in examining Janissaries' running of regimental cash waqfs. One can surmise that the scale and clientele of money lending activities varied from regiment to regiment, though my sample of 82 loans is too small to make any conclusive remarks. On the

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31 Bostancı of Hasbahçe (AH.1: #164, 24 Z 1063/14 November 1653), *topçu* (GŞS.145: 117a/4, 8 Ra 1101/18 January 1690), and *cebeci* units (İŞS.19: 141b 1, 21 S 1093/28 February 1682).

32 Although I may have overlooked some, there are very few mentions of Janissary regimental waqfs in the court records of the 1610s. See İŞS.3: 10a/3 (31st *cemaat*, unknown date), 19a/2 (83rd *cemaat*, 3 R 1027/29 March 1618); 4: 29a/2 (1st *bölük*, *gurre-i* Ca 1028/15 April 1619). Among these, only the first two were cases of loans for regiment members.

33 In the second half of the seventeenth century, I found only six cases of loans for members of the same regiment, accounting for less than 10 percent. İŞS.12: # 56 (39th *cemaat*, 22 N 1073/29 April 1663), #222 (60th *bölük*, 26 L 1073/2 June 1663); 16: 43a/2 (42nd *cemaat*, 10 M 1076/22 July 1665), 54a/1 (68th *cemaat*, 16 M 1076/28 July 1665); İBŞS.11: #521 (52nd *bölük*, 3 N 1081/13 January 1671); İŞS.20: #148 (11th *cemaat*, 22 M 1100/15 Nov 1688).

whole, waqfs catered to a wide variety of borrowers, such as non-Muslim laymen<sup>34</sup> and clergymen,<sup>35</sup> Muslim women,<sup>36</sup> former *kadis*,<sup>37</sup> *seyyids*,<sup>38</sup> sons of high-ranking bureaucrats,<sup>39</sup> a tax farmer,<sup>40</sup> etc. The scale of loans also varied greatly, running from less than one hundred to thousands of *guruş*, with less than 10 percent of all loans exceeding 1,000 *guruş*.<sup>41</sup> The interest rate applied was most often 15 percent per year, though there were some exceptions involving both lower<sup>42</sup> and higher<sup>43</sup> rates; apparently, anything over 15 percent a year was prohibited, and the borrower could refuse in court to pay more, even if he had agreed to do so.<sup>44</sup> What is interesting is that even members of the same regiment were not necessarily given a more favourable rate; they too often paid a yearly rate of 15 percent.<sup>45</sup>

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- 34 İBŞS.11: #122 (an Armenian spinner, 23 C 1081/7 November 1670), İŞS.9: 41b/2 (a Greek, 3 Za 1071/30 June 1661); 16: 125b/2 (a Jew, 24 Ra 1076/3 November 1665).
- 35 İBŞS.46: #75 (10 L 1097/30 August 1686); İŞS.20: 67a/2, #316 (3 Ra 1100/25 January 1689).
- 36 İŞS.9: 152a/6 (14 S 1072/9 October 1661); İBŞS.46: #196 (17 B 1097/9 June 1686); İBŞS.46: #408 (6 Ş 1097/28 June 1686).
- 37 The waqf of the 57th *cemaat* lent money to a former *kadı* of Konya (İŞS 9: 160b/2, Safer 1072/September to October, 1661) and the 68th (*turnacı*) regiment waqf to a former *kadı* of Kütahya (İBŞS 3: #1141, 20 L 1077/15 April 1667).
- 38 İBŞS.46: #746 (47th *cemaat*, 10 L 1097/29 August 1686); İŞS.10: #729 (68th *cemaat*, 21 L 1072/8 June 1662).
- 39 An Ahmed Bey ibn Mustafa Pasha borrowed money from the 71st *cemaat* (İŞS.18: 143b/1, 8 R 1087/20 June 1676) and a Bayezid Bey ibn Kenan Pasha from the 20th *cemaat* (RSM.161: #307, 21 Ra 1116/23 July 1704).
- 40 The waqf of the 4th *cemaat* loaned 16 *kise* (here one *kise* equals 40,000 *aşes*) to Ahmed Agha, who collected taxes from Armenians (RSM.106: #254, 255, 18 L 1067/30 July 1657).
- 41 To give a couple of examples in which exceptionally large amounts were loaned out, the 71st *cemaat* loaned 4,600 *guruş* to Ebubekir Agha of Tyre (İŞS 9: 227a/1, 7 Ca 1072/29 December 1661), and the 38th *bölük* lent 6,550 *guruş* to a certain Ayşe Hatun (İBŞS 46: #196, 17 B 1097/9 June 1686). Other sizeable loans were mostly just over 1,000 *guruş*.
- 42 Some regiments charged only 10 percent a year. See İŞS.10: #100 (48th *bölük*, 29 B 1072/19 March 1662); GŞS.130: 46a 2 (47th *cemaat*, 7 Ca 1094, 4 May 1683); İBŞS.46: #746 (47th *cemaat*, 10 L 1097/29 August 1686); İŞS 20: #243 (25th *cemaat*, 13 S 1100/6 December 1688); RSM.161: #304 (87th *cemaat*, 20 R 1116/21 August 1704). The first case was about the money a former waqf *mütevelli* had to repay to the regimental waqf.
- 43 The 59th *cemaat* charged 20 percent for 6 months (İŞS.9: 4a/3, 15 Ş 1071/14 April 1661) and the 57th *cemaat* charged 10 percent for 80 days (İŞS.9: 160b/2, 20 S 1072/14 October 1661). It is not clear if these were their normal rates.
- 44 AHİ.1: #164 (24 Z 1063/16 October 1653) “*fi'l hakika onu onbir buçukdan ziyade murabaha caiz olmamağla...*”.
- 45 See for example İŞS 12: #56 (39th *cemaat*, 22 N 1073/30 April 1663), #222 (60th *bölük*, 26 L 1073/3 June 1663); 16: 54a/1 (68th *cemaat*, 16 M 1076/28 July 1665).

Loan agreements usually came in the form of a sale and lease contract, in which the interest payment was disguised in the form of rent. The Hanafi School of Law is well-known for justifying moneylending by endorsing such legal fictions (*hile/hiyal*).<sup>46</sup> In fact, most cash waqfs frequently used a legal fiction, i.e., the lender ‘buying’ the real estate of the borrower and receiving rent from the latter, rather than explicitly lending money on interest.<sup>47</sup> At the time, this was the most widely used form of mortgage loan, known as *bey’ bi’l-istiğlal*. Much less frequently *bey’ bi’l-vefa* was used, whereby the lender bought real estate from the borrower and then after a specified amount of time sold it back at a higher price (including the principal and interest); during the time under contract, the lender had the right to use the premises. In both types of loan, the real estate functioned as collateral. Especially in the case of *bey’ bi’l-istiğlal*, the borrower often got a loan against the house he or she owned and lived in, and continued living there while paying rent in place of interest; this made it a rather convenient form of mortgage loan, provided the borrower could pay the money back on time.<sup>48</sup> However, one rarely finds court record entries showing borrowers who had repaid their loan in full,<sup>49</sup> even if we assume that not many people wanted to have it recorded; there would have been many defaulters.

Anyone in arrears would have been in considerable trouble. The regimental waqf could do either of the following: 1) draw up a new contract, giving the borrower more time; or 2) sell the real estate in question at a lower price than its market value (a similar amount for which it was borrowed [*semen-i misilleriyle ahara bey*]), probably in order to sell it quickly and get cash) and give the borrower a small difference, minus the repayment – there were some contracts stipulating this would happen in case of default.<sup>50</sup> If this happened, the borrower would have incurred a substantial financial loss. In such cases borrowers apparently accepted the measure

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46 M. T. Mansoori, ‘Use of Hiyal in Islamic Finance and its Shariah Legitimacy’, *Journal of Islamic Business and Management*, 1/1 (2011), 74-75; *TDVİA*, s.v. ‘Hiyel’ (S. Köse), 170-178.

47 Janissaries sometimes called the interest “*çuha bahası*”. RSM.80: #276 (4 Ca 1059/15 May 1649); 106: #254 (18 L 1067/29 July 1657); İŞS.16: 79b/1 (3 S 1076/14 August 1665); İBŞS.46: #751 (10 L 1097/29 August 1686).

48 The real estate pledged was usually a house. 85.67% of all the *bey’ bi’l-istiğlal* cases in the seventeenth-century *sicils* of Istanbul and suburbs studied in an M.A. thesis involved houses as collateral. Ç. Mesci, ‘İstanbul Kadı Sicilleri Işığında Bey’ bi’l-İstiğlal Akidleri’, unpublished M.A. thesis, Marmara University, 2017, 91.

49 Mesci, ‘İstanbul Kadı Sicilleri’, 33-34.

50 İŞS.9: 40a/2 (68th *cemaat*, Za 1071/June to July 1661); 12: #56 (39th *cemaat*, 22 N 1073/30 April 1663); İBŞS.46: #196 (38th *bölük*, 16 B 1079/19 December 1668); İŞS.20: 4b/1 (58th *bölük*, 20 Z 1099/16 October 1688); 20: 51b/1 (25th *cemaat*, 13 S 1100/7 December 1688).

without resistance,<sup>51</sup> probably because they were dealing with the waqf of a menacing Janissary regiment.

Indeed, regimental waqfs were more than capable of getting their money back. When borrowers or their heirs refused to acknowledge their debt, the waqf administrator (who almost invariably doubled as the regimental *odabaşı*)<sup>52</sup> and his Janissary colleagues first went to court and established the fact that there was a debt to be paid by the accused, having some witnesses testify for their case, and then within a matter of days returned to register that they had received all the money due.<sup>53</sup> The very fact that they extracted repayment within such a short time seems to indicate that they blackmailed debtors with physical force. They must have been far more adroit at getting the money back than other cash waqf administrators. Murat Çizakça once mentioned that only about 20 percent of cash waqfs survived more than 100 years,<sup>54</sup> but Janissary regimental cash waqfs would have had a much better chance of staying afloat than those with limited means of protecting their funds against defaulters. With such competence in not losing money, it is not surprising to see regimental waqfs growing fast in a short period; for instance, the administrator of the waqf of the 46th *cemaat* increased the cash asset from 6,747 *guruş* to 8,244, i.e. 22 percent, during the four years he held the position.<sup>55</sup> When managed carefully, such regimental waqfs would grow quickly and steadily.

If the moneylending business of regimental waqfs had promising growth prospects, it was all the more important to scrutinise management by their administrators. The biggest threat to the waqf's survival must have been lax management, such as lending money without demanding collateral or using waqf money for private purposes. In such events, the waqf might become unable to function and the

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51 İŞS.18: 143b/1 (71st *cemaat*, 8 R 1087/18 August 1676).

52 The waqf administrators of Janissary regiments were often designated as *odabaşıs*, but almost as often they appear with no particular title in the court records. Possibly in many cases it was superfluous to mention that they were also the regimental *odabaşı*. However, in some rare cases the waqf administrators clearly had other positions than *odabaşı*, such as İŞS.4: 29a/2 (*korucu*, 1st *bölük*, *gurre-i* Ca 1028/15 April 1619); RSM.106: # 660 (*düzenbaşı*, 63rd *solak oda*, 12 C 1068/16 March 1658), #718 (*vekilharç*, 56th *kayıkçı oda*, 10 N 1068/10 June 1658).

53 For example, the court admonished a Greek Todori for not repaying a loan of 32,000 *akçes* borrowed 5 years earlier from the waqf of the 71st *cemaat* (İŞS.9: 41b/2, 3 Za 1071/30 June 1661), and in two days the waqf side came to court and registered that it had received all the money (İŞS.9: 46b/3, 5 Za 1071/2 July 1661). The 28th *cemaat*'s waqf *mütevelli* brought witnesses to court to prove that the sister of a former *mütevelli* had to repay what her late brother owed to the waqf, and eventually received all the money in question. İŞS.9: 189a/4 (9 Ra 1072/1 November 1661), 192b/5 (22 Ra 1072/14 Nov 1661), 245a/5 (6 Ca 1072/27 December 1661).

54 Çizakça, *A History of Philanthropic Foundations*, 33-34.

55 RSM.127: #69 (27 Za 1070/4 August 1660).

regiment would be incapable of securing funds to purchase military necessities. Uzunçarşılı says, “everyone in the regiment kept an eye on the waqf money and protected it so that the *odabaşı* who was called *oda mütevellî* could not have a chance to misuse it”.<sup>56</sup>

The few court documents that contain an internal inspection of regimental waqfs are thus worth perusal. It seems the regimental waqf’s administration was reviewed every year by seven to ten internally selected auditors (*nazır*), and although minute details are missing, records were made of the total sum of loans granted, interest earned, and how much revenue came in from other specified sources.<sup>57</sup> When the regimental waqf’s sum total of cash assets was given, it was usually in the thousands of *guruş*. A rather extreme case of embezzlement is found in the waqf of the 48th *bölük*, where the administrator misused 160,000 *akçes* – almost all the money held – to build himself a new house. Having failed to return the amount, he was required to repay it at the surprisingly low interest rate of ten percent.<sup>58</sup> What is amazing is that the regiment in question reacted so mildly; it merely demanded the principal and the interest.

In parallel with the yearly internal inspection, there often was a very tense moment before and after a new administrator was appointed. The incomer paid all his attention to establishing whether any hidden, unexplained earnings had been removed by his predecessor, who was on the defensive along with family and heirs, and usually had to return anything owed. Such battles of nerves are often found in court records.<sup>59</sup>

We do not know exactly how the regimental waqfs were involved in the war preparations of regiments in the seventeenth century. We may conjecture what happened from the *ocak bezirgan*, who was responsible for the central coordination of munitions procurement in the eighteenth century, in close cooperation with regimental waqfs.<sup>60</sup> The *başyazıcı*, who had supposedly played the same role before

56 Uzunçarşılı, *Kapıkulu Ocakları*, I: 311.

57 İŞS.10: # 100 (48th *bölük*, 29 B 1072/19 March 1662), #124 (48th *bölük*, 5 Ş 1072/25 March 1662), İBŞS.46: #231-232 (28th *bölük*, 15 B 1097/6 June 1686), #406 (16th *bölük*, 3 Ş 1097/25 June 1686);54: #376 (57th *cemaat*, 12 C 1102/12 March 1691); İŞS.22: #258 (43rd *bölük*, 13 L 1107/15 March 1696).

58 İŞS.10: # 100 (29 B 1072/19 March 1662), 124(5 Ş 1072/15 March 1662).

59 RSM.127: # 69 (46th *cemaat*, 27 Za 1070/4 August 1660); İŞS.9: 189a/4 (28th *cemaat*, 9 Ra 1072/1 November 1661), 245a/5 (28th *cemaat*, 6 Ca 1072/27 December 1661); 20: # 194 (18th *bölük*, 11 M 1100/4 November 1688); 21: 3b/1 (61st *bölük*, 14 Ra 1100/5 January 1689), 8a/1 (12th *sekan*, 29 Ra 1100/20 January 1689), 82a/1 (61st *bölük*, 10 B 1100/29 April 1689); İBŞS.54: #64 (50th *başyazıcı cemaat*, 24 Ca 1102/22 February 1691).

60 S. Kaya, ‘Yeniçeri Ocağı Bezirganlığım Hukuki Statüsü’, *Birinci İktisat Tarih Kongresi*

then, would have had similar relations with the waqfs. We cannot be certain, however; the only clear point is that a document drawn up for the handover of the 43rd *cemaat*'s waqf administration mentions how part of the revenue generated from interest was used for war expenditure (*masarif-i seferiye*).<sup>61</sup>

As mentioned above, Janissary regimental waqfs had become a means of effective moneymaking, already far exceeding the needs of mutual aid among the men of the regiment; their function must have been important for the soldiers' performance in war and for the organising of yearly rituals. Consequently, Janissary units adapted to prevailing conditions, i.e. they dealt with the insufficiency of munitions via the efficient management of regimental waqfs.<sup>62</sup> Up to that point, waqf lending was a legitimate economic activity within the scope of law and order; in addition, there are indications that Janissaries in the regiments became commercially active in the twilight area between licit and illicit, while keeping their identity as soldiers to one side.

### *Illicit (?) commerce on the regimental level*

The Janissaries' livelihood could not rest solely on waqf money-lending; given the chronic delays in salary payment, many other commercial activities on the individual (and presumably collective) level(s) were also needed. Although many Janissaries suffered from these delays and resultant poverty, they still had the physical force and military clout with which to make other people give way and grant what they wanted in commercial transactions and everyday life.

The Ottoman government could not just simply ban Janissaries' involvement in commercial activities for their livelihood, since it was not able to pay salaries on time, and even when payments did arrive, they were often made in debased silver coins. A high proportion of Janissaries were barely making a living.<sup>63</sup> In fact, their presence in the marketplace had been an irreversible, constant phenomenon ever

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*Tebliğleri*, 2 (2010), 81-82; *TDVİA*, s.v. 'Bezîrgân' (M. İpşirli), 103-104. See also BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d.227: 107/338 (*evahir-i Receb* 1223/11-21 September 1808), which mentions that some Jews called *bezîrgan* replaced *başyazıcı* seventy to eighty years before. I thank Yannis Spyropoulos for drawing my attention to this document.

61 İBŞS.46: #608 (2 N 1097/22 July 1686) on the 43rd *cemaat* waqf records, "*meblağ-ı mezburun nemasından ba'zı mesarif-i seferiyyeye otuz üç bin sekiz yüz altmış akçe harc ve sarf...*".

62 Gül, '18. Yüzyılda Yeniçeri Teşkilatı', 722, 762. In the eighteenth century, regiments that did not have enough funds would borrow from other regimental waqfs.

63 N. Nazlar, 'Some Aspects of the Organizational and Socio-Economic Role of the Janissaries (late 15th-early 17th c.)', unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Bilkent University, 2017, 116-122.

since the late sixteenth century. It became a problem, however, when their commerce reached such an extent that it hindered their military functions. By the mid to late seventeenth century Janissary engagement in business had grown substantially, and the *divan* documents of this period often deplored the fact that soldiers were not in the forts where they were stationed and claimed to be unavailable for campaigns, saying they were out of town conducting long-distance transactions.<sup>64</sup> For instance, in the spring of 1680, when the government planned to muster campaign troops at İsakçı (a fortress on the southern bank of the Danube in the Silistre region of Bulgaria), it sent out orders to *kadis* in seventeen towns by the Danube and the Black Sea in Romania and Bulgaria, to the effect that they should hunt for scattered Janissaries on business trips and have them join the expedition.<sup>65</sup> This demonstrates that Janissaries left their fortresses and travelled into all corners of their region for commerce. Such men often took their family and friends with them, and when they suffered accidents or met danger, their cases were mentioned in court documents.<sup>66</sup> Trade was not usually specified in terms of the commodities they dealt in, and even when mentioned, it is difficult to understand the context.<sup>67</sup> Janissaries sometimes became involved in the transportation business, profited in commodities such as grains and firewood, and illicitly resold woolen broadcloth (*çuha*) originally intended for Janissary uniforms.<sup>68</sup> Since they also had to remain soldiers, their trades needed to be something that did not require too much time or skill, could be carried out easily using force and organisation, and was not too far removed from their original duties in terms of space or the nature of activities.

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64 Gül, '18. Yüzyılda Yeniçeri Teşkilatı', 770; BOA, A.DVNSMHHM.d.92: 55/3 (*evasıt-ı Safer*, 1068/18-27 November 1657), on those Janissaries who deserted Platomone and moved to Larissa for commerce; BOA, A.DVNSMHHM.d.97: #145-146 (*evail-i Rebiülevvel*, 1091/30 April to 9 May 1680), on the need to return Janissaries scattered over many places for commerce.

65 BOA, A. DVNSMHHM.d.97: #145, 146 (*evail-i R*, 1091/30 April 1680). The Romanian and Bulgarian towns to whose *kadis* an order to find Janissaries and send them to the front was given are as follows: İbrail, Maçin, Hırsova, Rusçuk, Yergögü, Zıştovi, Niğbolu, Mangalya, Balçık, Hacıoğlubazarı, Varna, Prevadi, Şumnu, Eski Cum'a, Hezargrad, Tırnova, and Loçfa.

66 BOA, A.DVNSMHHM.d.97: #93 (*evail-i Za* 1090/3 December 1679, the murder of a Janissary and a civilian who had gone to Moldavia on business), #154 (*evail-i Ca* 1091/29 May-early June 1680, a brother of a Janissary traveling in Wallachia on business was killed), # 208 (undated, probably *Za* 1091/December 1680, a group of soldiers including Janissaries and more than 100 Laz with them who had been engaging in commerce in Moldavia attacked the palace of the *voyvoda* of Moldavia).

67 BOA, A.DVNSMHHM.d.95: 76/504 (*evail-i Za* 1075/15-24 May 1665, a Janissary of the 56th *bölük* sold a ship and received the money but did not hand it over); 96: 34/181 (*evasıt-ı R* 1089/1-10 June 1678, a retired Janissary bought iron rods in bulk with other people, but the boat carrying the cargo sank in front of the port and the iron was stolen).

68 BOA, A.DVNSMHHM.d.111: # 1840, 1844-1845, 1848 (L 1112/late March to early April 1701).



Here, we may want to question whether such widespread commercial activity by Janissaries would have been possible without their regiment's connivance. Most documents deploring (illicit) commercial activities do not mention that the regiments were themselves involved. Probably, those who got caught or otherwise found out did not want to embroil their unit, and this would have made any involvement much less visible than it actually was. However, given the practice of "*balta asma*" mentioned by Reşat Ekrem Koçu<sup>69</sup> and the fierce struggle between Janissary regiments over economic privileges in the eighteenth century,<sup>70</sup> we may conjecture that regiments often got directly involved in business relatively early on, despite the scarcity of documents pointing toward it.

Let us now look at some documented cases of Janissary regiments going into business; though only a few, they are fairly revealing. Among others, let us focus on the conspicuous trades in coffee and slaves.

First of all, it should be noted that coffee was an extremely popular consumer commodity, and one that would sell at very high prices.<sup>71</sup> Trade in Yemeni coffee was mostly conducted by Egyptian Janissaries, with the revenue from it providing the financial base for Egyptian Janissary factions.<sup>72</sup> Although the trade's profitability must have been known to their colleagues in other regions, we only rarely find documents recording Janissaries purchasing coffee<sup>73</sup> or coffeehouses<sup>74</sup> in seventeenth-century Istanbul *sicills*. Coffeehouses were considered disreputable<sup>75</sup> hotbeds of rumours and rebellions, and may have been something one would not have wanted to purchase out in the open. What is interesting is that a certain Bektaş Agha ibn Hasan bought a coffeehouse in Yeni Bahçe, a sparsely occupied area in

69 R. E. Koçu, *Yeniçeriler* (Istanbul 2004, first published in 1964), 388-391.

70 M. M. Sunar, 'İstanbul'da Yeniçeri Ortaların Karıştığı Sokak Çatışmaları', in A. Yıldız, Y. Spyropoulos and M. M. Sunar (eds), *Payitaht Yeniçerileri: Padişahın "Asi" Kulları, 1700-1826* (Istanbul 2022), 261-285.

71 Defterdar Sarı Mehmed Paşa, *Zübde*, 632-633.

72 J. Hathaway, 'The Ottomans and the Yemeni Coffee Trade', *Oriente Moderno*, Nuova Serie, 25/86/1 (2006), 161-171; A. T. Quickel, 'Cairo and Coffee in the Transottoman Trade Network', in A. Błaszczuk, R. Born and F. Riedler (eds), *Transottoman Matters: Objects Moving through Time, Space, and Meaning* (Göttingen 2022), 87-88.

73 A certain Janissary named Ismail bought 30 *vukiye* (=okka) of coffee from the estate of someone who had gone missing (BOA, A.DVNSMHH.d.92: 9/3, *evail-i N* 1067/13-22 June 1657).

74 A coffeehouse was bought and sold between Janissaries in Eskişehir at 13,000 *ağçes* (İŞS.10: # 585, 17 L 1072/4 June 1662).

75 İŞS.18: #78, 20 Z 1087/22 February 1677. When the *müezzin* of a *mahalle* mosque opened a coffeehouse, the people of the *mahalle* complained in court, and he was dismissed. Running a coffeehouse was considered beneath the dignity of a *müezzin*, and the existence of coffeehouses supposedly distracted people from prayer.

the northwestern part of Istanbul.<sup>76</sup> Curiously, this was just about a month before Murad IV banned coffeehouses, immediately after an immense conflagration in Istanbul (27 Safer 1043/September 1, 1633).<sup>77</sup> It is unclear whether this particular business could continue to operate after the ban, but the Janissaries' engagement in the wholesale and retail coffee trade had the potential to become a very lucrative activity, encompassing more than one regiment.

In light of the above, the following case culled from the court records is highly interesting. When it became known that their colleagues on the northern front were suffering as a result of pay arrears, the heads (*çorbacılar*) of two Janissary regiments (the 13th *bölük* and the 8th *cemaat*) stationed in Syria had their deputy (*kapı kethüdası*) in Istanbul purchase 6,281 *okkas* (1 *okka* was approximately 1.2 kg) of coffee to resell for more than 6,000 *guruş*. They were planning to give their colleagues on the front six months' worth of salary out of this revenue (... *zıkr olunan odaların hâlâ sefer-i hümayunda olan neferatın işbu doksan yedi senesi recec ve reşen mevacicleri için...*). The only reason why this transaction seems to have been recorded was that the *çorbacı*s wanted to reassure their deputy, who had already spent money to buy the coffee, that they would definitely pay him back.<sup>78</sup> Such deals would clearly have transpired more often than shown in court records.

In any event, what is clear from this case is that Janissary regiments did care about the well-being of their colleagues on the front, and that coffee was a convenient commodity with which to make a large amount of money fast. Dealing in wholesale or retail coffee did not require any professional skill. It is not surprising at the turn of the nineteenth century that coffeehouses were more often than not run by Janissaries, and were used by them for diverse purposes, serving as a place in which to drink coffee and smoke tobacco, but at the same time as "a cultural salon, a rebel headquarters, a police precinct, a Sufi lodge, a business office and a mafia club".<sup>79</sup>

As for the slave trade, although documents specifically showing regimental involvement are rare, clues pointing in that direction are rather compelling. Enslaving of freeborn people had been identified as a problem early on<sup>80</sup> and Janissaries

76 RSM.56: #100, *evail-i Safer 1043/early August 1633*.

77 Naîmâ Mustafa Efendi, *Tarih-i Na'îma*, II: 754-755.

78 İBŞS.46: # 142, 2 B 1097/2 May, 1686.

79 A. Çaksu, 'Janissary Coffee Houses in Late Eighteenth-Century Istanbul', in D. Sajdi (ed.), *Ottoman Tulips, Ottoman Coffee: Leisure and Lifestyle in the Eighteenth Century* (London and New York 2014), 131.

80 BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d.88: #296, 29 L 1047/15 March 1638.

were often suspected of being involved.<sup>81</sup> This is hardly surprising, given that some Janissaries are known to have broken into a bathhouse and kidnapped women as early as the 1630s.<sup>82</sup>

What is more, Janissaries most often appeared in court on slave-related issues, be it manumitting<sup>83</sup> or disputes over ownership.<sup>84</sup> Slave ownership was normally an elite phenomenon mainly restricted to the richest 20 percent of the population,<sup>85</sup> but slave-owning seems to have been relatively common among Janissaries, even by those who did not have titles or much money.

It cannot be a coincidence that Janissaries frequently appeared in court on slave-related issues; there seems to have been a deep-rooted reason why this intensified at one particular juncture. Janissaries often fought on the front line and were in an environment conducive to slave-capturing. In the border areas there were many who could legally be enslaved, and particularly during the war with the Holy League (1683-1699), the Ottoman government's position was to protect obedient Christians in the frontier regions but to enslave those who resisted or changed sides; edicts were issued to that effect.<sup>86</sup> Although the government tried in vain to prevent disorderly slave-hunting, the situation easily deteriorated into a soldier-run slave trade seeking high profits but not paying any *pencik* tax. Slaves were expensive commodities,<sup>87</sup> almost as highly priced as average houses,<sup>88</sup> and trading in them could be extremely

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81 İBŞS.46: #92 (*gurre-i B* 1097, 23 May 1686), #300 (23 B 1097/14 June 1686); İBŞS.54: #106 (*selh-i Ca* 1102/28 February 1691).

82 Mehmed Halife, *Tarih-i Gilmani*, ed. K. Su (Ankara 1999), 12.

83 There are many such cases, even just in İŞS.12 (1073-1074/1663-1664): #103, 168, 268, 524, 847, 1105, 1116, 1117, 1235. Among these, #1105, 1116, and 1117 are all manumissions by İbrahim Beşe of the 44th *cemaat*.

84 İBŞS.46: #92 (*gurre-i B* 1097, 23 May 1686), #300 (23 B 1097/14 June 1686); 54: #106 (*selh-i Ca* 1102/28 February 1691).

85 H. Canbakal and A. Filiztekin, 'Slavery and Decline of Slave Ownership in Ottoman Bursa, 1460-1880', *International Labor and Working-Class History*, 97 (2020), 63-65.

86 BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d.100: #147 (*evail-i L* 1101/7-16 July 1690), 206 (undated, probably *evahir-i Za* 1101/15 August to 4 September 1690).

87 Probably because slaves were such profitable commodities, voluntary soldiers (*gönüllüyan*) fighting against the Venetians when Chania was besieged (1692) were allowed to keep slaves for future sale; Y. Spyropoulos, 'Slaves and Freedmen in 17th-and Early 18th-Century Ottoman Crete', *Turcica*, 46 (2015), 184-185.

88 Canbakal and Filiztekin, 'Slavery and Decline', 68, Table 6 shows that the price of a West Eurasian female slave was more than 20,000 *akçes* in the second half of the seventeenth century. Meanwhile, the median house price in Galata in 1725 was about 200 *guruş* (about 24,000 *akçes*); Y. Çiftçi, 'An Analysis of the Ottoman Real Estate Market in 1725 through Galata and Bursa Judicial Records', *İçtimaiyat Sosyal Bilimleri Dergisi*, 5/2 (2021), 197.

lucrative whether one sold them right away or kept them for future sale. Regardless of their status, Janissaries had every reason to engage in slaving.

Here again, the question is whether the regiment got involved. Let us listen to the court statement of a man who had lived as a slave in Tokat and escaped, but got caught in Istanbul. A freeborn Christian from the town of Üstolni Belgrad (mod. Székesfehérvár), he had befriended the 6th *sekban* regiment, whose *çorbacı* converted him to Islam; he was later illegally enslaved by a certain Karnad Reis and sold away. He maintained that he was a Muslim and should never have been enslaved in the first place. Two Janissaries, one of whom had once been a member of the 6th *sekban* regiment, bore witness for him.<sup>89</sup> Though this may have been true, there is something strange about the story: somehow the man's Janissary connection failed to protect him against enslavement in the first place. He may later have made friends with Janissaries on the streets of Istanbul, where he would have been one of those lower-class men of every sect and ethnicity who informally joined Janissary regiments. He is more likely to have been enslaved by Janissaries on the northern frontier, who were professional slave traders, and might simply have induced Janissaries he later befriended to testify in his favour.

On top of this, one of the regimental waqfs adds interesting evidence on regimental involvement in the slave trade on the organisational level. The 28th *bölük*'s record of its annual internal audit in 1686, in which ten internally appointed inspectors (*nazırlar*) participated, shows that the regimental "slave house" (*köle muhafazası*) sent in 500 *guruş* to be added to the waqf's revenue.<sup>90</sup> This is the only such document to mention slave-related revenue; most regiments would have done an internal audit among themselves, and even if in court they would not have mentioned all the details. At any rate, the very fact that the regiment had a slave house seems to indicate that it was engaged in slaving on the collective level. One cannot know how many regiments took part in the trade, but those scholars working on related topics tend to regard the Janissaries' involvement as quite common after the seventeenth century.<sup>91</sup>

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89 İBŞS.54: #7 (23 Ca 1102/21 February 1691).

90 İBŞS.46: #231, 232 (15 B 1097/6 June 1686).

91 S. Conermann and G. Şen, 'Slavery is Not Slavery: On Slaves and Slave Agency in the Ottoman Empire, Introduction', in S. Conermann and G. Şen (eds), *Slaves and Slave Agency in the Ottoman Empire* (Bonn 2020), 22.

## *Officers and their regiments*

If, as suggested above, the regiments were actually conducting business or abetting their members in doing so, one can surmise that their officers were important forces behind such activities. Things may well have varied from one officer to another, but given that soldiers generally rose through the ranks they must have had strong bonds with the regiments they served in.

The *odabaşı*'s involvement was natural due to his central role in the organisation of everyday life in the regiment in war and peace; in the seventeenth century, he often played the central role of running the waqf as the *mütevelli*. The official heads of regiments – whether *çorbacı*s or *bölükbaşı*s – seem to have been less directly involved, considering that references to them are far thinner on the ground, but as we can see from the abovementioned *çorbacı*s who went into the coffee trade for their suffering soldiers on the front, they would not always have been merely passively involved.

More specifically, one may want to look into the high-ranking Janissary officers (*katar ağaları*). Except for the seniormost officers, such as *yeniçeri ağası* and *sekbanbaşı*, who had to concern themselves with managing the affairs of the whole Janissary Corps,<sup>92</sup> these high-ranking officers would have been able to take special care of their regiments. The *kul kethüdası* was the head of the 1st *bölük*, by far the biggest regiment in terms of manpower, the *zağarcıbaşı* the head of the 64th *cemaat*, the *samsoncubaşı* the head of the 71st *cemaat*, and the *turnacıbaşı* the head of the 68th *cemaat*, and so on. These were the highest rankers in the Janissary Corps in order of superiority,<sup>93</sup> but influence and/or promotion was not always in that order. They were placed in prominent positions in military marches,<sup>94</sup> were given important duties, and certainly had influence beyond the boundary of their own regiment.

Abdulkasim Gül, who has written an encyclopaedic dissertation based on many archival documents, says that officers from *çorbacı* and above were not as deeply involved in economic activities as rank-and-file Janissaries.<sup>95</sup> He suggests that senior men were constantly preoccupied with military activities and did not need to

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92 Although they too would often have had some special ties to regiments they had been with, they seem to have had no particularly connected cohesive unit under them. The *yeniçeri ağası* was supposed to be directly in charge of all the *ağa bölükleri* and *sekbanbaşı* the head of all the *sekban* units. E. Küçükyağcı, *Turnanın Kalbi: Yeniçeri Yoldaşlığı ve Bektaşilik* (Istanbul 2010), 77-79.

93 Uzunçarşılı, *Kapıkulu Ocakları*, I: 176; Gül, '18. Yüzyılda Yeniçeri Teşkilatı', 17.

94 Gül, '18. Yüzyılda Yeniçeri Teşkilatı', 456-457.

95 Ibid., 773.

engage in business, as they could gain enough perquisites and bribes on account of their office.<sup>96</sup> Would they have been at some remove from the economic activities under them? Occasionally we come across Janissary officers owning a lot of money or other assets,<sup>97</sup> and we may suspect that such wealth, at least partly, could have come from facilitating and endorsing their regiments' businesses, if not downright involvement. Officers would have been justifiably interested in helping businesses if they were aimed at procuring military supplies and helping the soldiers make a living, although we cannot afford to assume that their involvement was always so innocent.

One high-profile case of major officers involved in commercial activities occurred in the "Sultanate of Officers" period (Ağalar Saltanatı) in the mid-seventeenth century.<sup>98</sup> As is well known, the unfair and coercive commercial transactions they imposed on the merchants and artisans of Istanbul – hard selling copper, hazelnuts, salt, soap, cotton, mastic etc. at greatly inflated prices and compulsorily exchanging debased coins for gold – precipitated their downfall in the aftermath of a rebellion by market traders in 1651.<sup>99</sup> This was the period when Janissaries wielded great power, meddling in many types of businesses, including grain and meat provisioning. They also amassed real estate, and shops connected to them could violate official price ceilings (*narh*) with impunity, saying that they were connected to Bektaş Agha, a former Janissary agha who was the most audacious of the officers in power.<sup>100</sup> The same men were criticised for distorting the salary payment procedure and profiting from it.<sup>101</sup> When the abovementioned civilian revolt against their stranglehold broke out, ordinary soldiers did not side with them, contrary to their expectations. Interestingly enough, the last time they tried to impose unfair

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96 İŞS.22: # 274 (10 L 1107/12 May 1696), 312 (13 Za 1107/13 June 1696). The *çorbacı* of the 6th *sekbān* regiment complained that the lieutenants of the Janissary agha and *kul kethüdāsı* extorted money from him.

97 Quite apart from Janissary aghas who left valuable estates, we can see that a former *samsoncubaşı* left his family a *çiftlik* in Babadağı in Rumeli, worth 1,500 *guruş*. İBŞS 54: #408 (23 C 1102/23 March 1691).

98 This period was dubbed "Yeniçeri Ağalar Saltanatı". Koçu, *Yeniçeriler*, 313-330.

99 Na'imâ Mustafa Efendi, *Tarih-i Na'îma*, III: 1319-1320.

100 No biography of him is available other than *İstanbul Ansiklopedisi*, s.v. 'Bektaş Ağa' (R. E. Koçu), 2438-2442. He had been a *samsoncubaşı* and then a *zağarcıbaşı* in the early 1630s. Topçular Kâtibi Abdülkâdir Efendi, *Topçular Kâtibi Abdülkâdir (Kadri) Efendi Tarihi*, Vol. II, ed. Z. Yılmaz (Ankara 2003), 977; Na'imâ Mustafa Efendi, *Tarih-i Na'îma*, II: 813.

101 Kâtib Çelebi, *Fezleke*, 374.

taxes on the artisans and merchants, it was to secure money for salary payment for the soldiers.<sup>102</sup>

This case is especially highlighted by chronicle writers such as Kâtib Çelebi and Na'îma, who wanted to criticise the officers' abuse of power, though one may wonder whether the men in question were the exception in meddling in the civilian economy. While the budget deficit was snowballing and military expenditure could not be met easily, it would have been to some extent natural for officers to dabble in fundraising and moneymaking, although admittedly, their involvement was often illicit and criminal. At the same time, the market inspection (*ihtisab*) register for 1682 reveals that a substantial portion of the shops were listed in the names of men bearing military titles.<sup>103</sup>

Generally speaking, it may have been easier for the regiments under *katar ağaları* to secure advantageous conditions for commerce and other economic activities, as they had the most clout, and membership of them was highly prized. Some regiments under high officers, such as the 68th *cemaat* under its *turnacıbaşı* and 71st *cemaat* under its *samsoncubaşı*, appear in court records more often. Meanwhile, the 64th *cemaat* led by a *zağarcıbaşı* does not come up in court records at all. It is unclear whether this means their economic activities were negligible; the *zağarcıbaşı* as an individual is rather frequently found in court documents, buying real estate such as shops and land.<sup>104</sup> The fact that activities are not visible in court records may simply indicate that the regiment intentionally avoided the *kadı* court. Some regiments without a clear connection to high-ranking officers were commercially active, with their waqfs operating in a rather sophisticated way.<sup>105</sup> Meanwhile, in

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102 Naimâ Mustafa Efendi, *Tarih-i Na'îma*, III: 1319.

103 İhtisab Defteri, Atatürk Kitaplığı, Muallim Cevdet, B 2, lists 3,200 shops where a daily tax (*yevmiye*) was to be collected, 843 of which (roughly one quarter) were registered under individuals with military titles. Eunjeong Yi, 'Artisans' Networks and Revolt in Late Seventeenth-Century Istanbul', in E. Gara, M. E. Kabadayı and C. K. Neumann (eds), *Popular Protest and Political Participation in the Ottoman Empire: Studies in Honor of Suraiya Faroqhi* (Istanbul 2011), 109-111.

104 For example, in 1662 a *zağarcıbaşı* named El-Hac Hüseyin Agha ibn Ali purchased three shops (a butcher's, a greengrocer's, and an unspecified business) for 132,000 *akçes* (İŞS.10: # 164, 12 Ş 1072/1 April 1662), a grocery shop for 100,000 *akçes* (İŞS.10: #500, 12 L 1072/30 May 1662), and a *çörek* shop at 90,000 *akçes* (İŞS.10: #972, 15 Z 1072/31 July 1662). Considering that he purchased all the above properties within four months, he must have had a huge amount of ready cash. *Zağarcıbaşıs* seem to have been rather close to the men of the 49th *bölük*, given some private economic and legal actions where a member of the 49th was marginally involved. See İŞS.10: #1054 (23 Z 1072/8 August 1662) and İBŞS.3: #181 (22 Ca 1077/19 November 1666).

105 One noteworthy example in this period is the 57th *cemaat*; it comes up in the *sicils* rather frequently, administering its waqf in a sophisticated way, meticulously specifying the amount of silver content in a *guruş*, lending money out for a short period (80 days), and earning 1,070 *akçes*

comparison, the sheer numbers of soldiers in *katar ağaları*'s regiments would have put them at an advantage.<sup>106</sup> The fact that they had more soldiers probably means such regiments attracted more applicants,<sup>107</sup> which may have been an indication that they offered greater economic gains in addition to pride and prestige.

In the normal course of promotion, a *turnacıbaşı* would be promoted to *samsoncubaşı* and then to *zağarcıbaşı*, although there were frequently exceptions.<sup>108</sup> Among these officers and their regiments, it would have been natural for some unofficial kind of cooperation relationship to develop. Although there is not much evidence pointing in that direction, the fact that the waqf of the 71st *cemaat* handed over its land to the then *zağarcıbaşı*<sup>109</sup> seems to imply the existence of such cooperative relations among those who were related through promotional and regimental networks.

With all of the above in mind, I have traced the 68th *cemaat* and 71st *cemaat* in the court documents. Of course there were regiments that were headed by higher officers, such as the 1st *bölük* under the *kul kethüdası*, which uniquely boasted more than 700 soldiers, and the 64th *cemaat* under the *zağarcıbaşı*, with more than 400; somehow, however, they did not come to court as often, and the *zağarcılar* in particular never did. That the waqfs of the 68th and 71st *cemaats* appear more frequently in court records, along with the volume of money they were loaning out, leads one to suppose that they were probably the most prominent and active of all regimental waqfs.

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each month from the real estate owned by its waqf. See İŞS.9: 160b/2 (20 Safer 1072/14 October 1661), BOA, A.DVNSMHHM.d.96: 124/622 (*evahir-i B* 1089/early to mid-September 1678); İBŞS.54: #376 (*evail-i C* 1102/early March 1691).

106 While regular regiments had 100 to 200 people, the 71st *cemaat* had 531, the 68th 468, the 64th 423, and the 1st *bölük* had 747 soldiers in the year 1663-1664, according to Yılmaz, 'The Economic and Social Roles', 251-267. There were regiments that had between 300 and 400 men, without any visible connection to high-ranking officers, such as the 24th, 37th, 51st, and 54th *bölüks*. The 57th *cemaat* mentioned in the previous footnote had 255.

107 Sunar, 'İstanbul'da Yeniçeri Ortaların Karıştığı Sokak Çatışmaları', 265 mentions that in the nineteenth century there was even competition among applicants who wanted to get into prestigious regiments.

108 These all originated from the guards who helped the sultan hunt, and also played important roles in battles. For those exceptions see A. Yıldız, 'Commanders of the Janissary Army: The Janissary Ağas, Their Careers and Promotion Patterns', in G. Theotokis and A. Yıldız (eds), *A Military History of the Mediterranean Sea* (Leiden 2018), 440, n. 48.

109 İŞS.22: 23b/1 (*selh-i B* 1107/4 March 1696). The waqf of the 71st *cemaat* handed a former *zağarcıbaşı* a piece of land on which there had been 9 shop units (*9 bab dükkan*) lost in the fire. He had previously rented the place, but there is no mention of why the ownership was transferred.



The 68th regiment was headed by a *turnacıbaşı*, who was rather low among the *katar ağaları*,<sup>110</sup> and its soldiers were given duties such as the raising of game birds like cranes, herons, and storks, and hunting dogs, overseeing *devşirme* child levy, collecting soldiers and taking them to battlefields, supervising the transfer of volunteers (*gönüllüyan*), guarding fortresses, and transporting materials through waterways.<sup>111</sup> This regiment only had a small number of soldiers who stayed in Istanbul, but its waqf comes up in local court records surprisingly often: of its soldiers, 423 were outside the city (403 of whom were in Crete, where a major war was ongoing) and 45 in Istanbul. This is in great contrast with the *samsoncular*, 99 of whose soldiers were outside the city and 432 within, and the *zağarcılar*, of whom 40 were out and 383 were in.<sup>112</sup> One may suspect that as the *turnacılar* were ordered to perform many duties in the provinces, they had opportunities to engage in long-distance trade along with their official assignments, though I have yet to find evidence to that effect. Some say that *turnacıbaşı* was a rather devaluated position, since there was more than one at a time, dispatched to multiple provinces. Still, given some incidents of bribery involving officers at that rank, probably even *ex-turnacıbaşıs* could (or believed they could) influence appointment to official positions or distribution of privileges.<sup>113</sup>

The regimental waqf of the *turnacıs* lent varying amounts of money to many different kinds of people. Among the borrowers were the *ex-kadı* of Kütahya, Armenian and Greek men, a dead *seyyid* (and his heirs), a Muslim woman, and a member of the same regiment.<sup>114</sup> Although I am not aware of the scale of the waqf's total cash assets or evidence of other commercial activities from the court documents, this does seem to be a rather active and robust waqf, with varied strategies for its assorted clientele: it lent 250 *guruş* (in this case 20,000 *akçes*) to a *zimmi* called Yamandi veled-i Atanaş in the form of *istiğlal*, receiving 2,000 *akçes* in rent for seven

110 TDVİA, s.v. 'Turnacıbaşı' (A. Özcan), 428

111 A. Pul, *Yeniçeri Ocağın 68. Ortası Turnacıbaşı* (Ankara 2016), 139-184.

112 The 1st *bölük* under the *kul kethüdası* and the 5th *bölük* under the *baş cavuş* also had most of their soldiers in Istanbul; see Yılmaz, 'The Economic and Social Roles', 251-267.

113 Some people asked *ex-turnacıbaşıs* to secure them an official position in the military or a tax-farming contract in return for bribes; when the desired result was not achieved, they sued the *ex-turnacıbaşıs* and recovered at least part of their money (İBŞS.54: #250, 11 C 1102/11 March 1691, #315, 13 C 1102/13 March 1691). An incumbent *turnacıbaşı* was successful in having the bakery shop he and his business partner ran get its privilege to make special high-quality bread (*has ekmek*) renewed; BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d.111: # 656 (*evastı-t* Ca 1111/4-13 November 1699).

114 EYP.49: #173 (12 R 1054/17 June 1644), 177 (13 R 1054/18 June 1644); İŞS.9: 40a/2 (Za 1071/ June to July 1661), 152a/6 (14 S 1072/8 October 1661); 10: #729 (21 L 1072/8 June 1662); 16: 54a 1 (16 M 1076/28 July 1665); İBŞS.3: #1141 (20 L 1077/14 April 1667).

months, which came to more than 15 percent interest per year;<sup>115</sup> in dealing with a family of a dead *seyyid* who had borrowed 1,000 *guruş* and failed to pay back (it is unclear for how long), the waqf took a jewelled belt and a candlestick from the family, sold them, and subtracted their prices from the money owed (250 *guruş* from the principal and 175 *guruş* interest) and declared the debtors had an outstanding balance of 750 *guruş*.<sup>116</sup> In yet another case of a loan, this time to a certain Abdullah Efendi (who seems to have been a *kadı*, given the way he was designated as “*fahr-ı kuzatı’l-İslam*”), the waqf stipulated when drawing up the contract that upon the borrower’s failure to repay, the property would be sold for an amount similar to the loan, and only the difference would be returned.<sup>117</sup>

The 71st *cemaat* is even more interesting. This regiment was called *samsoncular* because of its duty of raising a kind of hunting dog and guarding the sultan when he was out on a hunt. The head (*çorbacı*) of this regiment, the *samsoncubaşı*, had a say in making battlefield decisions, and because of his guard duty was probably very close to the sultan, as can be seen from Osman II’s plan to go on the *hajj* in the sole accompaniment of his *samsoncubaşı* and five hundred soldiers (most probably *samsoncular*) under him.<sup>118</sup> *Samsoncular* appear in court documents rather often, and both the scale and scope of their economic activities seem to have been more extensive than usual. Was this just a coincidence? Let us look into various aspects of their activities.

The *samsoncular* must have had considerable clout not just militarily or in terms of protocol, but were well-regarded and respected among other regiments. One rather interesting incident occurred as early as 1624, when some habitual thieves broke into the Janissary Yeni Odalar (literally, New Barracks), were caught and then hauled before court by the Janissaries. The person who spoke on behalf of all Janissaries present was the *aşçı* of the 71st *cemaat*.<sup>119</sup> This seems to indicate that his regiment was of rather prestigious standing.

The aforementioned Bektaş Agha was appointed to a position in Bursa in the aftermath of the rebellion mentioned earlier, but did not leave Istanbul, as he expected he would be assassinated on the way; instead, Bektaş Agha wanted to hide in the barracks of the 71st *cemaat*, but the regiment refused to let him. He had connections to the unit, as he had served under the *samsoncular* when he was *acemi oğlanı*, and

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115 EYP.49: #173 (12 R 1054/17 June 1644).

116 İŞS.10: #729 (21 L 1072/8 June 1662).

117 İŞS.9: 40a/2 (Za 1071/June to July 1661).

118 Naimâ Mustafa Efendi, *Tarih-i Na’ima*, II: 477,

119 RSM.40, #370, *evail-i M* 1034/13 October 1624.

had later once been a *samsoncubaşı*. The soldiers in the regiment neither hid him nor reported him to the authorities, adopting a neutral, independent stance.<sup>120</sup>

The loans from the 71st *cemaat*'s waqf were noteworthy in that they were much larger than those from other waqfs. The regiment loaned large amounts to people far from Istanbul<sup>121</sup>; if borrowers failed to repay their debts, men were dispatched long distances for debt collection,<sup>122</sup> apparently operating rather efficiently over a wide geographical area. The 71st *cemaat* seems to have been internally cohesive and externally well-networked. For example, when a member of the regiment sued a *çavuş* of the 54th *bölük* over the ownership of a female slave, the *cemaat* was able to bring in a witness from outside and some *şühudü'l-hal* (procedural witnesses) from other regiments' officers, so that their man eventually won the lawsuit.<sup>123</sup> This testifies to the clout and power of the 71st regiment.

There is only partial evidence for the officers' intervention in this study, and not much is clearly established. However, it is more than plausible that high-ranking officers would have supported their regiments' businesses: to begin with, it may not have been an accident that the *zağarcılar* and *samsoncular* were able to keep the majority of their members in Istanbul. In the eighteenth century, the 64th and 71st *cemaats* were among the most powerful regiments violently competing for economic opportunities.<sup>124</sup> The fact that regiments headed by very senior officers had more soldiers than other regular regiments seems to indicate that they were more popular; this may not just have been on account of their prestige, but also due to the real opportunities for economic gain they offered.

## Conclusion

In order to understand soldier-Janissaries and their economic activities, it is of tremendous importance to understand the nature of the regiment they belonged to. Although it may not have been their only important network, the regiment had become more and more important in every aspect over the course of the seventeenth century, in rebellions, recruitment, military mobilisation, and economic activities; the

120 *İstanbul Ansiklopedisi*, s.v. 'Bektaş Ağa' (R. E. Koçu), 2441.

121 The 71st *cemaat* waqf lent 1,150 *guruş* to Ahmed Bey ibn Mustafa Pasha, with a luxurious house in Kuşadası; İŞS.18: #523 (8 R 1087/19 June 1676).

122 To collect a debt of 4,600 *guruş* from a family of borrowers with military titles in Tire (near Izmir), the *mütevelli* dispatched a *beşe*; İŞS.9: 227a/1 (7 Ca 1072/28 December 1661).

123 İŞS.18: #431 (27 Ra 1087/8 June 1676).

124 Sunar, 'İstanbul'da Yeniçeri Ortaların Karıştığı Sokak Çatışmaları', 266-278.

negotiating power of Janissary units must have increased enormously. As more and more sons of Janissaries entered their fathers' regiments – which recruited men on their own initiative, especially during wars – and people from the same hometown clustered in particular units, it would not be surprising if they developed a pseudo-familial identity for their regiment.

The Janissary regiments had valid reasons for getting involved in economic activities in the seventeenth century; their salary and supplies often arrived late and were unsatisfactory. Even to properly function as a combat unit in war, they needed to make money. Having to survive collectively, even in the dire straits during the war against the Holy League in the 1680s and 90s, they needed to engage in legal and illegal economic activities. Since the government was unable to provide enough for them, it could not prohibit the Janissaries and their regiments from engaging in commercial activities, nor did it have the physical force to do so.

We may suspect that soldier-Janissaries' economic activities mostly centred around the regiment, though this is not immediately apparent in the documents that mention their participation in commerce. With the aid of some clues to regimental involvement in the coffee and slave trades, and the use of regimental waqfs in particular, we may speculate that Janissary involvement was actually much more extensive, in which case the instances mentioned above are just the tip of the iceberg. Judging from their cash waqf administration, regiments seem to have been resolute and strict when doing business, and those headed up by high-ranking officers may have had better chances of prospering.

# REGIMENTAL WAQFS AND JANISSARY FUNDS WITHIN LOCAL AND TRANSPROVINCIAL SETTINGS

THE CASES OF ISTANBUL AND VIDIN, 1720-1826

İrfan KOKDAŞ and Yahya ARAZ\*

THIS STUDY EXAMINES THE STRUCTURES AND WORKINGS of Janissary waqfs and funds at different localities in the Ottoman Empire during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. It attempts to shed light on the legal sphere and multilayered nature of waqf credit transactions by analysing how internal power relations, geographical mobility, local dynamics and connections with the Ottoman authorities shaped the credit policies of Janissary regiments. The study discusses waqf structures and their operations in a broad geographical setting, but places special emphasis on their credit networks around Istanbul and Vidin.

Although the Janissary Corps became highly decentralised throughout the eighteenth century, numerous Janissaries continued to be stationed in Istanbul. In the same period, Vidin also appeared as an important centre from which the regiments developed credit networks in the hinterland, in Wallachia, Moldavia, and on the northern shores of the Black Sea. The court records from these two cities thus allow us to delve deep into the nature of cases reflected in miscellaneous sources. The Vidin registers constitute a rich repertoire on the interactions of regiments along the Danube, while those from Bab, Ahi Çelebi and Davudpaşa courts in Istanbul offer a valuable glimpse into the economic activities of Janissaries as well as their relations with provincial actors. The choice of the three courts, especially Ahi Çelebi, in the capital is not coincidental given that throughout the eighteenth century they became highly specialised in matters related to credit transactions, wills, and the transfer of Janissary pay tickets (*esames*).<sup>1</sup> Court records from Istanbul and Vidin undoubtedly

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\* İzmir Kâtip Çelebi Üniversitesi, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, History Department and Dokuz Eylül University, Buca Education Faculty (Izmir).

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offer rich details on the local functioning of regimental waqfs in particular, while the registers of imperial rescripts addressed to Ochakiv (Ott. Özi) and Silistra (Ott. Silistre) constitute a valuable source in understanding the transprovincial regimental networks that encompassed the capital and the Danube-Wallachia-Northern Black Sea region. Since the systematic compilation of these registers started in around the early 1740s, the study mostly covers the period from 1740 to 1826, but also includes examples from the early eighteenth century.

Embedded in early modern Ottoman financial culture, Janissary regimental funds (*ortanın mühimmatına mevkuf nukud* or *orta malı*) functioned in a manner similar to other cash waqfs. There is in fact a relatively extensive literature on their workings, as the cash waqf controversy – which flared up after the 1540s and persisted throughout the following century in the Ottoman world – contributed to the proliferation of modern scholarly works on the subject.<sup>2</sup> From the very beginning of the debate, the validity of cash waqfs and the status of their revenues from interest-bearing loans were the central questions, with contentious debate on whether moneylending violated the religious ban on interest. It is therefore unsurprising to see that even recent studies have placed undue emphasis on aspects of lending procedures such as the legal treatment of loans and special sale-lease deals (*muamele-i şer'iyye, bey' bi'l-vefâ* or *bey' bi'l-istiğlâl*).<sup>3</sup>

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- 1 See İ. Kokdaş, 'İstanbul Esame Piyasası Üzerine Notlar (1750-1826)' in A. Yıldız, Y. Spyropoulos and M. M. Sunar (eds), *Payitaht Yeniçerileri: Padişahın "Asi" Kulları, 1700-1826* (Istanbul 2022), 157-199; Y. Araz 'İstanbul'da Yeniçerilerin ve Ailelerinin Vasiyetleri (1750-1826)' in A. Yıldız, Y. Spyropoulos and M. M. Sunar (eds), *Payitaht Yeniçerileri: Padişahın "Asi" Kulları, 1700-1826* (Istanbul 2022), 157-199. For a discussion on the specialisation of Istanbul courts in different matters see L. K. Elbirlik, 'Reflections of Modernity in the Eighteenth Century: The Specialization of the Davud Paşa Court in Marriage-Related Disputes', *ArchOtt*, 33 (2016), 119-137.
- 2 See, for instance, İ. Kurt, 'Nazarî ve Tatbikî Olarak Para Vakıfları', unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, İstanbul Üniversitesi, 1994; C. Çiftçi, '18. Yüzyılda Bursa'da Para Vakıfları ve Kredi İşlemleri', *Tarih Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 32/36 (2004), 79-102; M. Çizakça, 'Cash Waqfs of Bursa, 1555-1823', *JESHO*, 38/3 (1995), 313-354; J. E. Mandaville, 'Usurious Piety: The Cash Waqf Controversy in the Ottoman Empire', *IJMES*, 10/3 (1979), 289-308; E. Gara, 'Lending and Borrowing Money in an Ottoman Province Town' in M. Köhbach, G. Procházka-eisl and C. Römer (eds), *Acta Viennensia Ottomanica: Akten des 13. CIEPO - Symposiums (Comité International des Études Pré-Ottomanes et Ottomanes)* (Wien 1999), 113-119.
- 3 Ç. Gürsoy, 'Osmanlı'da Para Vakıflarının İşleyişi ve Muhasebe Uygulamaları: Davudpaşa Mahkemesi Para Vakıfları', unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, İstanbul Üniversitesi, 2015; Idem, 'Para Vakıfları Kapsamında Sosyo-Ekonomik Bir Analiz: Davudpaşa Mahkemesi Kayıtları (1634-1911)', *Bellekten*, 81/290 (2017), 159-190; S. Kaya, 'XVIII. Yüzyıl Osmanlı Toplumunda Kredi İlişkilerinin Hukuki Boyutu', *Türk Hukuk Tarihi Araştırmaları*, 3 (2007), 13-41; F. M. Emecen,

The above perspective has largely ignored a wide array of intertwined legal-administrative practices and personal connections, including the use of courts, petitions to the Imperial Council, appeals to high-ranking bureaucrats, and the recourse to institutional networks through which these waqfs flourished and enjoyed longevity. There are two reasons why it is particularly vital to problematise this shortcoming when investigating the nature of regimental funds. First, as is attested by cases of Janissary commercial investments, pay ticket transactions and bequests, the economic and administrative actions involving them appeared within the permeable space of personal connections and institutional bodies rather than within the dichotomies of legality-illegality, certainty-uncertainty, trust-written evidence, and corps disorder-Ottoman order. This means that each regimental fund had its own legal and financial cosmos through which some general patterns in their workings can be observed. Second, unlike most cash waqfs, Janissary funds worked in a transprovincial domain, as the corps increasingly came to acquire a decentralised character over the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Although the number of Janissary regiments grouped as *cemaats*, *bölüks* or *sekban bölüks* installed in the Ottoman capital slowly increased after the 1730s and throughout the rest of the eighteenth century, the bulk of soldiers continued to be stationed in imperial fortresses far from the Ottoman capital.<sup>4</sup> As Spyropoulos assiduously argues, Janissary common funds played a crucial role in the development of their empire-wide networks, while becoming ever more willing to find alternative ways to generate additional revenues through commercial investments and moneylending.<sup>5</sup> This meant that the waqf of any given regiment could be operating in different locations at the same time, like the branches of a corporate fund. Rotation of regiments from one fortress to another notwithstanding, the funds retained real estate investments at their previous locations. These two features determined the nature of their legal cosmos and multilayered functions in loan and real estate markets.

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‘Karadağ Beyi Durad Crnojević’in Teftiş Defteri (1492)’, *OA*, 57 (2021), 1-33; G. Salakidis, ‘Money Lending in 17th Century Yenişehir-i Fenar. The Case of the Cash Vakıfı’, in E. Balta, G. Salakidis and Th. Stavrides (eds), *Festschrift in Honor of Ioannis P. Theocharides*. Vol. II: *Studies on Ottoman Empire and Turkey* (Istanbul 2014), 411-426.

4 A. Yıldız, Y. Spyropoulos and M. M. Sunar, ‘İstanbul, Taşra ve Yeniçeriler’, in A. Yıldız, Y. Spyropoulos and M. M. Sunar (eds), *Payitaht Yeniçerileri: Padişahın “Asi” Kulları, 1700-1826* (Istanbul 2022), 13-36.

5 Y. Spyropoulos, ‘Janissary Politics on the Ottoman Periphery (18th-Early 19th C.)’, in M. Sariyannis (ed.), *Political Thought and Practice in the Ottoman Empire. Halcyon Days in Crete IX: A Symposium Held in Rethymno, 9-11 January 2015* (Rethymno 2019), 449-481.

### *The multiple faces of regiment funds in records*

One important dimension of the above reality was that regimental fund men including the waqf administrator (*mütevelli*), the elders (*ihdiyars*), and various officers (*ustas*) used the courts to record their intention to obtain money from borrowers or their guarantors (*kefils*), draft loan agreements, and approve accounting books. Register entries from the court in Vidin and Davudpaşa, Ahi Çelebi and Bâb courts in Istanbul attest that not all administrators were eager to appear in court. In the period from the 1750s to the abolition of the Janissary Corps, not once did any trustee of any regimental fund appear before the courts of Istanbul on matters concerning the funds in question. In the payroll survey carried out in the 1760s, there were 196 regiments or regiment contingents stationed in the Ottoman capital, only half of which we found represented by men in court on cases relating to their waqfs. The administrators, elders or *ustas* of populous regiments in Istanbul such as the 1st and 26th *bölüks* and the 36th *cemaat* were either entirely absent or only appeared once before a judge. Even regiments such as the 41st and 48th *bölüks*, and the 28th *cemaat*, which were very active in the loan market, did not send any fund administrator to the courts over the same period.

It is all the more noteworthy to observe a similar – and indeed even more marked – trend in Vidin, which developed into a garrison town in the eighteenth century with the expanding number of Janissaries and growing military-administrative functions of small fortresses (*palanka*). Janissaries were clearly key actors of massive credit operations in this period, not only across the Vidinese countryside, but also along the Danube and around Wallachia. Despite their extensive moneylending activities, however, the court records of Vidin are all but silent on such matters as contracts of regimental funds, demands by their *mütevellis* for the servicing of loans and the approval of fund account books by elders. Our knowledge of the loans extended by the regimental funds in the region is thus derived almost exclusively from probate inventories (*tereke*) and registers of imperial rescripts (*ahkam defterleri*). From a legal perspective, the almost total silence in the court ledgers of both Istanbul and Vidin is not entirely unexpected, since the conclusion of loan contracts was a private matter, and therefore not something mandatorily registered at court. Undoubtedly, this loophole made the fund's administrator a financially competent and powerful agent within the regiment, with control over a large amount of money. In 1748, for instance, the then *mütevelli* of the 49th *cemaat*'s cash waqf sued his predecessor for taking – in fact embezzling – 12,000 *guruş* and goods from the fund. The former won the case thanks to witness testimony;<sup>6</sup> but what concerns us here is the size of

6 İstanbul Müftülüğü Şer'iyeye Sicilleri Arşivi [Office of the Istanbul Mufti, Islamic Law Court



the debt owed to the regiment. Considering the very fact that the value of loans entered into court records in the 1740s and 1750s fluctuated over a wide range (from 15 to 2,250 *guruş*), the former *mütevelli*'s debt was impressive. This financial clout also led to the consolidation of the regimental funds' institutional capacity and at the same highlighted internal power hierarchies among regimental actors such as administrators, masters, Janissary ward officers (*odabaşıs*), and elders who exercised control over fund expenses and revenues.

One impressive facet of this institutional capacity manifested itself in the task of overseeing waqf accounting books. The appointment of *mütevellis* seems to have crystallised the administrative power of the *orta*'s honourable men. For instance, after Abdülkadir Agha was promoted to the post of *mütevelli* for the 11th *bölük*'s waqf in 1749, the expenditures and revenues of the past 13 years under the authority of former administrator Elhac Ahmed were inspected by the then *odabaşı* and four of his predecessors, the steward (*vekilharç*) and the cook.<sup>7</sup> The appearance of cook Mustafa Beşe was hardly a surprise, as a good chunk of regimental budgets was reserved for meeting food rations.<sup>8</sup> Having declared that the former administrator started his job with the fund's main capital at 800 *guruş*, all the auditors settled on clearing the waqf's credit and debit balance over the period from 1736 to 1749. The 76th *cemaat* experienced a very similar legal procedure in 1796, when the new *mütevelli* Alemdar Süleyman blamed his predecessor, Ahmed Odabaşı, for seizing money from the provincial pay tickets kept in the fund. This lawsuit is even more intriguing, considering that Süleyman's accusations against Ahmed revolved around the improper financial actions of the former over the previous five years.<sup>9</sup> Sources unfortunately do not tell us whether the men appointed by each regiment examined expenditures and incomes yearly and why the 11th *bölük* and the 76th *cemaat* did not feel the need to get a court certificate for auditing over periods as long as 13 and 5 years respectively.

Probably any change of *mütevelli* was a crucial moment for regimental funds; and as several court records indicate, it easily triggered contradictory claims over

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Registers Archive] (İMŞSA), Bab Şer'iyeye Sicilleri [Bab Court Registers] (BS), 194: 81a/3 (23 Z 1161/14 December 1748).

7 İMŞSA, BS.195: 80a/3 (14 S 1162/3 February 1749).

8 E. Gökçe, 'Bir Yeniçeri Ortasının Günlük Masrafları: 32. Ortanın Harcamaları Üzerine Bir Değerlendirme', *Osmanlı Medeniyeti Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 17 (2023), 77-106; M. Sunar, 'Daily Life in a Janissary Barrack in the Late Eighteenth Century Based on an Income and Expenditure Account of the 61st Ağa Bölük', paper presented at *4th Janet Workshop* (10 June 2023) in Thessaloniki.

9 İMŞSA, Ahi Çelebi Şer'iyeye Sicilleri [Ahi Çelebi Court Registers] (AS), 318: 6b/7 (24 C 1211/25 December 1796).

the account balance. In the winter of 1784, for instance, Elhac Mehmed Agha, *mütevelli* of the 15th *bölük*'s cash waqf, filed charges against the former administrator Tabancacı Ahmed Agha at Ahi Çelebi court. The proceeding started when Hafız Mustafa Efendi, the *bölük*'s scribe, took Ahmed Agha to court. According to Mehmed Agha, Ahmed Agha remained indebted to the waqf to the tune of 1,700 *guruş*, which was disclosed after the accounting books from his period of tenure were checked by himself and the *bölük*'s elders. All the auditing procedures in the trial were indeed handled outside court, and the validity of accusations was acknowledged by the defendant.<sup>10</sup> This litigation process was not unique, since only two months earlier Ahi Çelebi had court implemented a very similar legal procedure for the fund of the 33rd *bölük*. On that occasion, former administrator İbrahim Agha was invited to court by scribe Mehmed Sadık Efendi. The litigation process seems to have been a notarial procedure certifying investigation of the fund's revenues and expenditures in the former period, made by the current *mütevelli* Mehmed Agha, İbrahim Agha, and the elders of the regiment fund. In the end İbrahim Agha acknowledged his debt of 400 *guruş*.<sup>11</sup>

The men in each regiment also played a pivotal role in dispute resolution outside court, exclusively at the Janissary barracks. In a disagreement over the payment of a relatively small loan of 40 *guruş*, the administrator of the 19th *bölük*'s cash waqf initiated a lawsuit at Ahi Çelebi court against İbrahim Agha, the guarantor for credit owed by the deceased Kayserili Canbaz Mehmed Agha. A crucial part of the administrator's allegations was that 22 days before the trial, the defendant had in fact admitted in front of witnesses (*mahzar-ı şuhûd*) his full responsibility for paying the 40-*guruş* surety (*kefalet*) at the regiment's barracks (*neferât-ı mezkûreye mahsûs odada*).<sup>12</sup> It is worth noting that this conflict was only referred to court after the guarantor İbrahim breached his vow and did not return the money.

Transprovincial transactions by the waqfs further accentuated the administrative roles played by regimental elders. From imperial rescripts addressed to the authorities in the Danubian Basin and Wallachia, it appears that *mütevellis* were not left unaided when soliciting help from the ruling cadres. In numerous cases, the *mütevellis* submitted their petition to the imperial council together with their regimental elders and influential men, in order to collect debts from borrowers who had either been living in Danubian towns since time out of mind or had recently settled there. However, the elders or honourable men of the regiments did not constitute a homogenous group, as they would often exercise their institutionalised power over

10 İMŞSA, AS.277: 15b/16 (7 R 1198/29 February 1784).

11 İMŞSA, AS.277: 3b/15 (3 S 1198/28 December 1783).

12 İMŞSA, AS.223: 69a/7 (25 Ş 1175/21 March 1762).

both debtors and *mütevelli*s. For instance, because of the lingering Ottoman-Iranian wars in the 1730s, numerous soldiers from the 8th regiment of *sekbans* – including some of their ward officers and elders – set off for the fortress at Baghdad, where they had to cover expenses from the capital in their waqf. Since they held a significant portion of the fund's resources for their own needs, their comrades in Istanbul including other elders and honourable men of the regiment were desperately short of money, and so became intent on diverting as much cash as possible into their own hands. Under pressure from the 'needy' Istanbul group, officials in Baghdad petitioned the centre, begging for the appointment of a Baghdad resident and retired member of the same regiment named Hasan Odabaşı as *mütevelli*. According to their proposal, he would then manage the waqf's capital and send some money to Istanbul.<sup>13</sup> Elsewhere, in the spring of 1777 an imperial decree was sent to the Janissary commander of Ochakiv, in response to a petition submitted by the elders of the 28th *cemaat* on the regimental waqf's financial capacity and actions by the *mütevelli*, Serdengeçdi Başeskisi Elhac Ali. As he had been at Özi fortress and his accounting books had not, as such, been checked by the elders, they were deeply concerned over losses in the waqf capital.<sup>14</sup> They requested the sultan issue an order forcing the Janissary commander to send Elhac Ali to the capital with a delegate.

These examples unambiguously reflect the presence of competing powerful agents within the administrative mechanisms of the regiments, which functioned across a wide spectrum of relations ranging from consensus to struggle. We can glean information from court records suggesting that complaints by competing parties within regimental organisations over the use of waqf capital were not entirely unfounded, since everyone was well aware of the porous spheres of personal and waqf credit in Ottoman lending markets. In not a few cases, indebted individuals and waqf administrators crossed swords over the terms and status of loans. In 1774, for instance, Janissary İbrahim of the 100th *cemaat* sued the regimental fund's administrator to recover his pay ticket, maintaining that it had been withheld by the former *mütevelli*. Although he had to admit the fact that the new *mütevelli* was not his predecessor's legal heir, the claim was based on a tenuous difference between individual loans and waqf credits, since his pay ticket had been held by the former *mütevelli* possibly as a pledge (*rehin*) or due to İbrahim's refusal to repay a loan.<sup>15</sup>

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13 BOA, Bab-ı Asaflı Divan-ı Hümayun Mühimme Kalemi (A.DVSNMHM), 144: 605 (*evahir-i* Ca 1150/5-15 September 1737). See also A. Gül, '18. Yüzyılda Yeniçeri Teşkilatı', unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Atatürk Üniversitesi, 2020, 763.

14 BOA, Özi ve Silistre Ahkam Defterleri (A.DVNSAHK.ÖZİSİ.d), 21: 271, order no: NA (*evasıtlı* R 1191/18-28 May 1777).

15 İMŞSA, AS.254: 13a/4 (26 C 1187/14 September 1773).

Seyyid Mustafa was another individual who went to court to try his luck at recovering money from the fund of the 55th *cemaat*. In 1786 he had given 120 *guruş* to the regiment's *usta* and ward officer, and almost 7 years later formulated this loan as a debt owed by the waqf.<sup>16</sup>

In another case, the scribe of the 8th *bölük* İbrahim Efendi requested that his own regimental fund's *mütevelli* return his money from available capital, stressing that four years earlier Mehmed Odabaşı and Osman had taken 60 *guruş* from him to cover expenses at Özi fortress. Once Mehmed Odabaşı became *mütevelli* of the regiment's waqf, İbrahim referred to the amount as a debt owed by the common fund.<sup>17</sup> At around the same time, Kalaycı Mustafa Agha from the 1st *bölük* insisted on recovering his money from the waqf of the 58th *bölük*, in wording almost identical to that of İbrahim. Mustafa told the court how he had handed over 100 *guruş* to the former *odabaşı* of the 58th *bölük* in Özi.<sup>18</sup> All of the above claims were soundly rejected by the court, which decided in favour of the *mütevellis* and drew a bold line between personal and institutional loans. Thus, at first glance these lawsuits seem to have been fictitious trials aimed at strengthening the hand of *mütevellis*, as throughout the eighteenth century the *bölük*'s men formalised loan contracts with witnesses, deeds and guarantors, thereby cultivating an image of themselves as professionals who left little manoeuvre room for outsiders or borrowers.

This was not always the case, however. In several instances waqf administrators were unable to prove their claims, hence opening up room for negotiations, or did not have the authority to force debtors to make payments, meaning that disputes often ended in an amicable settlement or instalment agreements.<sup>19</sup> In the autumn of 1798, Ahmed Odabaşı, *mütevelli* of the 44th *bölük*, had difficulty in collecting a debt from a certain Ahmed Beşe. Before going to court, the *mütevelli* had probably made any number of attempts to recover a total debt of 600 *guruş*, but Ahmed Beşe withheld payment. A striking point in this dispute is the fact that the *mütevelli* did not support his own narrative with witness statements or written evidence; so perhaps outside court, the parties seem to have reached an amicable settlement with a payment of 400 *guruş*.<sup>20</sup> In this period, regimental waqfs routinely employed a

16 İMŞSA, AS.303: 61b/12 (18 Ş 1207/31 March 1793).

17 İMŞSA, AS.218: 41a/2 (28 M 1174/9 September 1760).

18 İMŞSA, AS.284: 51b/7 (19 L 1201/4 August 1787).

19 İMŞSA, BS.206: 90b/8 (3 S 1168/19 November 1754); İMŞSA, BS.209: 13b/10 (3 R 1168/17 January 1755); İMŞSA, AS.242: 94b/7 (6 B 1183/5 November 1769); İMŞSA, AS.221: 2b/12 (6 B 1174/11 February 1761); İMŞSA, AS.227: 53a/2 (22 Z 1176/4 July 1763); İMŞSA, AS.246: 4a/2 (26 R 1184/19 August 1770); İMŞSA, AS.324: 25a/4 (18 R 1213/29 September 1798).

20 İMŞSA, AS.324: 25a/4 (18 R 1213/30 September 1798).

pledge or/and guarantor (*rehin* or/and *kefil*) in devising loan contracts, but it is again noteworthy that both were missing in this case. Why the 44th *bölük*'s fund did not deploy these standardised tools in the debt contract remains unknown, but from the termination of another loan contract with Zeyneb Hanım at around the same time, we learn that the waqf was not ignorant of complex credit arrangements conducted with a pledge.<sup>21</sup> Sources do not give information as to whether *mütevelli* Ahmed Odabaşı preferred to reach a solution for a loan given by former waqf officials. Possibly squeezed by the regiment's men, out of court settlement may have been a strategy to recover as much money as possible, because the *mütevellis* not rarely returned empty-handed from litigation processes.

In the early 1820s, according to claims by *mütevelli* Seyyid Mehmed of the 60th *bölük*, it proved impossible to collect a debt of 390 *guruş* from the heirs of the late Ömer. In the litigation process, the waqf administrator tried to prove his claim by presenting some goods allegedly given by Ömer as a pledge for his debt. Speaking on behalf of all heirs, however, a non-Janissary named Ahmed denied the existence of the debt altogether and won the case, as the *mütevelli* could not provide any title deed or witness statement.<sup>22</sup> In this instance it is possible that the regimental waqf did not follow the provisions of the *muamele-i şer'iyye* standardised by Muslim jurists and so simply could not prove its claim. The regiment's soldiers were usually stationed in the eastern zones of the Empire, in places such as Baghdad, Faş, and Erzurum; with the rising expenses incurred in the Ottoman-Iran wars of the 1820s, the *mütevelli* probably tried his luck at recovering money. It is also equally possible that this was a personal loan supplied by Seyyid Mehmed, who then exploited his position as *mütevelli* to obtain his money from a non-Janissary. That being said, the *mütevellis* also got into disputes with their comrades over loan payments. In 1753, when the 7th *cemaat*'s *mütevelli* Ali Odabaşı desperately attempted to recover a debt of 200 *guruş* from Mumcu İbrahim Beşe, he had to sue İbrahim's son-in-law Elhac Mehmed Beşe as guarantor from the same *cemaat*. However, Mehmed declared that his guarantee only covered the principal amount of 170 *guruş*, excluding the "rate of return", i.e. interest.<sup>23</sup>

All these internal and external dynamics within regiments could explain why some *mütevellis* were more willing to appeal to courts in a specific period to register loan contracts and debts. It could also explain why court appearances by *mütevellis* were quite unevenly distributed over time. For instance, the *mütevellis* of the 9th

21 İMŞSA, Galata Şer'iyye Sicilleri [Galata Court Registers] (GS), 541: 78b/7 (25 R 1213/6 October 1798).

22 İMŞSA, AS.385: 78a/2 (27 Ra 1239/29 November 1823).

23 İMŞSA, AS.192: 62b/9 (16 B 1166/19 May 1753).

*cemaat* appeared seven times at Ahi Çelebi and Bab courts, six of them between 1820 and 1824, under administrator Seyyid İbrahim Agha.<sup>24</sup> Elhac Eyüp Agha was the only *mütevelli* of the 27th *bölük* to appeal to the courts. From 1816 to 1821 he stood in front of a judge on three occasions.<sup>25</sup> Likewise, Mustafa Odabaşı spoke for the interests of the 12th *sekban*'s waqf three times between 1760 and 1769, before and after which no other *mütevelli* from the regiment ever appeared in court.<sup>26</sup>

All these examples also show how personal relations, trust and power dynamics within the regiments and the formalisation of credit transactions shaped how the waqfs functioned. On the one hand, they seem to have developed complicated institutional mechanisms, as the elders and honourable men in the regiments maintained control over the actions of waqf administrators. But at the same time, the administrators' personal connections were closely intertwined with the financial networks within regiments, while in not a few cases the boundaries between personal and institutional regimental credit were permeable. These contradicting trends suggest that each regiment had its own way of functioning in financial and legal domains, as attested by the very uneven distribution of court appearances. Notwithstanding differences in their operations, the regimental waqfs shared a common feature, which was their ability to develop their own networks at various locations across a vast area.

### *The workings of regimental funds in a wide geographical context*

Our sources in this study were mostly generated by disputes over the workings of regimental funds, but despite this limitation, they demonstrate the impressive geographical extent of regimental networks. Their contours were not only determined by financial services, but also by their real estate holdings, integration into the *esame* markets and the functioning of other waqfs managed by the regiments' *mütevellis*. All these dynamics became visible particularly at times of military mobilisation and rotation of the Janissaries from one fortress to another. One recent study shows that even in distant corners of the Empire, *esame* holders had close relationships with prestigious men in regiments in the Ottoman capital, who played a decisive role in

24 İMŞSA, BS.362: 27b/5 (19 L 1235/29 July 1820); İMŞSA, AS.380: 59b/6 (11 S 1236/18 November 1820); İMŞSA, AS.386: 40b/5 (4 Z 1238/12 August 1823); İMŞSA, AS.386: 80b/3 (4 R 1239/8 December 1823); İMŞSA, AS.388: 78b/3 (11 M 1240/5 September, 1824); İMŞSA, AS.390: 27a/2 (8 Ca 1240/20 December 1824).

25 İMŞSA, AS.373: 6a/1 (4 Za 1231/26 October 1816); İMŞSA, AS.382: 37b/3 (21 S 1237/17 November 1821); İMŞSA, AS.382: 51a/2 (25 Ra 1237/20 December 1821).

26 İMŞSA, AS.219: 78a/1 (26 Ra 1174/5 November 1760); İMŞSA, AS.229: 24/2 (23 Ca 1177/29 November 1763); İMŞSA, AS.242: 94b/7 (6 B 1183/5 November 1769).

*esame* sales. With their sophisticated knowledge of the current market values of *esames*, these men even organised transactions and provided housing to *esame* holders who came to Istanbul from distant corners of the Empire to sell their assets.<sup>27</sup> From the few remaining accounting registers of these funds in the archives, we also learn that the regimental waqfs were entrusted with safekeeping provincial pay tickets (*taşra esameleri*).<sup>28</sup> It is difficult to judge the extent to which this safekeeping entailed the task of earning interest on the *esame* money, but from a dispute within the 76th *cemaat* in 1796, for instance, one may deduce that provincial *esames* were certainly not frozen assets for the funds. From 1791 to 1796 or thereabouts, former *mütevelli* Ahmed Odabaşı spent the money from provincial *esames* accumulated over the previous five years on the regiment's expenses. However, the new *mütevelli* declared in court that a total of 704 *guruş* from this money still remained in the hands of Ahmed Odabaşı, bringing witnesses to substantiate his claims.<sup>29</sup>

In this case, Ahmed Odabaşı was never questioned on the way he had used the *esame* money, so it seems that covering expenses from such sources of deposited money was business as usual for the funds and did not harm their institutional reputation. Quite to the contrary, this flexibility provided the funds with access to cash, especially in times of war. In the autumn of 1813, when the former *mütevelli* of the 75th *cemaat*'s waqf came before court to clear his accounts, the matter at stake was money given by Mustafa Efendi to the fund almost three years earlier. The fund had indeed taken 500 *guruş* from Mustafa, possibly somewhere along the Danube, where Ottoman-Russian military clashes intensified in the 1810s. The *mütevelli* then paid this amount to Mustafa's son İbrahim Efendi in Istanbul, as the former provided proof of the deposit via a letter possibly sealed by the regiment's men in the Danubian zone.<sup>30</sup> The money was not described as a loan, but as a kind of deposit kept and spent by the regiment to meet emergency needs.

Especially during military campaigns, it appears to have been common practice among soldiers to deposit their *esames* in the hands of the regiments' men. When Ömer Beşe bin Mehmed from the 36th *cemaat* made an appeal to receive accrued salaries of 190 *guruş* from the former administrator and the regiment's men, he claimed to have done exactly that. According to his statement, he entrusted his *esame* to Hasan Odabaşı when offering military service to the army at Hotin and other fortresses, and later held the fund's officials responsible for payment.<sup>31</sup> Besides

27 Kokdaş, 'Esame', 157-199.

28 BOA, Bab-ı Defteri Yeniçeri Defterleri Kalemî (D.YNÇ.d.), 34752 (9 M 1210/26 July 1795).

29 İMŞSA, AS.318: 6b/7 (24 C 1211/25 December 1796).

30 İMŞSA, AS.366:16b/10 (12 Ra 1228/15 March 1813).

31 İMŞSA, AS.265: 96a/1 (29 Za 1193/8 December 1779).

*esames*, cash money was also entrusted to the regiment. In a very interesting trial at Ahi Çelebi court around the summer of 1755, Çolak Elhac Hasan Agha, a retired soldier from the 97th *cemaat*, insisted on recovering his 770 *guruş* either from the regimental waqf or from the former *başeski* and cook. According to Hasan Agha's statement, both Başeski Ahmed Odabaşı and the cook Feyzullah Odabaşı witnessed that he had handed over his money to the common fund almost 25 years earlier in Hamedan – possibly during the Iranian-Ottoman clashes.<sup>32</sup> All these cases clearly point to the fact that the use of provincial *esames*, the participation of regimental officials in the *esame* market and money entrusted to regimental waqfs contributed to the smooth running of funds in and outside the Ottoman capital, thus enabling them to build up their links between the centre and the provinces.

The establishment of sub-waqfs<sup>33</sup> within and for the regiments had a similar role in this regard: by increasing the capital pool and extracting resources for the cultural cosmos of the Janissaries, they broadened regimental networks. In fact, setting up a new waqf by nominating the current *mütevelli* as guardian of the assets was not unknown among the Janissaries. In 1769, Trabzoni Elhac Osman Alemdar from the 25th *bölük* founded a new waqf with a capital of 100 *guruş*, and appointed the *mütevelli* of the regimental fund to administrate his sub-waqf. The charter stipulated that soup be prepared every Friday and distributed to the comrades of the same regiment.<sup>34</sup> Ebubekir Beşe from the 63rd *cemaat* did much the same with 170 *guruş* added to the capital of the regimental waqf.<sup>35</sup>

The regiment's men also managed other endowments, whose revenues were earmarked to buy oil, oil lamps or candles for symbolic monuments in the Janissary barracks. One of them was the tomb of Osman Baba, located in the vicinity of the 28th *bölük*'s barracks. There were perhaps several endowments with revenues reserved for the maintenance of this iconic tomb; the steward of the 61st *cemaat* managed the one founded by Sultan Abdülhamid I.<sup>36</sup> One court record from the early days of 1809 refers to the *mütevelli* of this waqf purchasing an olive orchard in Mytilene from a certain Manol. He sold his property to the waqf for 350 *guruş*, possibly due to debt, since the waqf later paid him back 100 *guruş*. The transaction between the waqf and Manol subsequently involved another contract with an annual rent of approximately 50 kg of olive oil, which may have been dispatched to

32 İMŞSA, AS.201: 67a/5 (27 Ş 1168/6 August 1755).

33 For the sub-waqfs see K. Yıldız, 'Osmanlıda Vakıf Teftişleri ve Vakıf İdaresinin Merkezileşmesi', *Türk Kültürü İncelemeleri Dergisi*, 42 (2019), 33-72.

34 İMŞSA, BS.244: 27a/1 (13 M 1183/19 May 1769).

35 İMŞSA, BS.200: 42a/1 (2 M 1164/1 December 1750).

36 İhtifalci Mehmet Ziya, *İstanbul ve Boğaziçi*, Vol. II, ed. B. Kabasoy (Kahramanmaraş 2021), 43.



Istanbul for the tomb of Osman Baba.<sup>37</sup> In this example, the administrator opted to hold the rural estate in order to maintain the supply of valuable agricultural produce, though in other cases *mütevelli*s were interested in holding onto shops or houses simply for rental revenues.

For example, the *mütevelli* of the 36th *bölük*'s waqf collected revenues from the shops of another waqf founded by Halil Odabaşı in Bender. In the endowment deed, Halil assigned the management of his waqf to the 36th *bölük*'s *mütevelli*. And when a fire damaged waqf shops around 1775, the *mütevelli* in Istanbul chose to name Seyyid Abdullah Agha, one of the Serdengeçdi commanders, as his trustworthy agent and dispatched him to Bender in the hope that the waqf's funds would be properly spent on repairing the shops.<sup>38</sup> One striking aspect of this case is that Serdengeçdi Abdullah was from the same *bölük*; more importantly, he was a local resident of Bender, where the 36th *bölük* had a limited number of comrades.<sup>39</sup> Therefore, the *mütevelli* did not simply send a letter to regimental officials in Bender to deal with the repair works. Similarly, in the second half of the eighteenth century, the 28th *bölük* and 61st *cemaat* were not units with any significant presence on the island of Mytilene either.<sup>40</sup> These examples thus highlight how the waqfs attached to Janissary funds managed their assets outside the capital thanks to regimental organisation, and assumed a decisive role in expanding their networks. Nevertheless, nothing could compete with moneylending activities in this role.

Moneylending primarily enabled regimental funds to venture into real estate markets in different provincial settings. It seems that in more than a few cases, foreclosure eventually ended with the sale of immovables to the funds, which acquired numerous properties through debtors defaulting on loans. The sale of Agop's immovable assets to the fund of the 27th *bölük* in 1816 is quite illustrative in this regard. Agop, the son of (*veled-i*) Artin, was possibly a merchant originally from Eğin in Eastern Anatolia but living in the Ottoman capital. From the seventeenth century onwards, Eğin was one of the Anatolian townlets that sent substantial numbers of Armenian migrants to Western-Northwestern Anatolian cities such as Istanbul and Izmir;<sup>41</sup> Agop was presumably one of those who tried his fortune in the Ottoman

37 İMŞSA, AS.353: 66a/2 (23 Za 1223/10 January 1809).

38 İMŞSA, BS.260: 48a/3 (29 Ca 1189/28 July 1775).

39 The bulk of the regiment's soldiers were in Faş, Özi, and Belgrade. See BOA, Maliyeden Müdevver Defterler (MAD.d), 824. This register contains data from 1183 to 1190 (1769-1777).

40 Compare BOA, MAD.d.3946; 6536; 824.

41 İ. Kokdaş, '17. Yüzyılda İzmir'e Ermeni Göçü: Acem Tüccarları ve Hemşehrilik Ağları', *Hacettepe Üniversitesi Türkiyat Araştırmaları*, 34 (2021), 227-253; B. Başaran, *Selim III: Social Control and Policing in Istanbul at the End of the Eighteenth Century* (Leiden 2014).

capital. Although sources do not specify when and where he crossed paths with the 27th *bölük*, at some point he took out a loan of 4,500 *guruş* secured against a house and vineyard in Eğin. After Agop died, the *mütevelli* sought to collect the debt from his heirs, who acknowledged it but were unable to repay it. Immediately thereafter, the heirs sold the pledged estates (*rehin*) to the regiment's *mütevelli* for 4,500 *guruş* to service the loan.<sup>42</sup>

In a similar manner, the 59th *cemaat*'s waqf took possession of a barley field and olive groves in the Saliçe region of Mytilene due to nonpayment of a debt amounting to 1,742 *guruş*. In 1787, the waqf's *mütevelli* Süleyman Agha bin Halil made a claim in court that this loan had been delivered by the former *mütevelli* Mustafa Agha to Mehmed Emin Agha, the chief Ottoman artilleryman (*topçubaşı*) in Mytilene. However, both Mustafa Agha and Mehmed Emin Agha died before the loan was serviced. As representative of the regiment's waqf (*vekil*), the deputy governor (*mütesellim*) of Mytilene then reached an agreement with Mehmed Emin Agha's heirs requiring that the above-mentioned landed estates be transferred to the fund. The new *mütevelli* later sold the olive groves and field to a certain Panayot for 1,742 *guruş*, in order to convert them into cash.<sup>43</sup> Properties subject to transactions of this type could occasionally be more diverse. In 1758, for instance, Şerife Ummuhani, the wife of Mustafa Agha, one of the former military officers at Van fortress (*turnacıbaşı*), relinquished a variety of estates in Bolu including fields, house, shares in an inn, a vineyard, and a rice field to the 100th *cemaat*'s waqf, to repay the regiment a sum of 2,453.5 *guruş*. In another case around ten years later, Mehmed Usta also sold his house in intra muros Modon to the 22nd *bölük*'s waqf for 200 *guruş*, apparently due to an outstanding debt to the regimental fund.

Illustrated by cases from Van and Eğin to the east, and Mytilene and Modon to the west, such examples attest to the enormous geographical range of the credit networks operated by regimental funds. They also provide insight into the functioning of these funds at the local and transprovincial levels. Şerife Ummuhani's husband may have borrowed the money when serving as one of the chief military officers (*turnacıbaşı*) at Van fortress. The 100th *cemaat*'s members stayed in Van, though in limited numbers, throughout the second half of the eighteenth century; it is plausible that Mustafa received the loan from Baghdad, where the regiment was very active in the second half of the eighteenth century. Mehmed Usta's borrowing from the 22nd *bölük* had to do with the geographical stationing of the regiments. The soldiers of the 22nd were scattered in various fortresses across the Morea, including

42 İMŞSA, AS.373: 6a/1 (4 Za 1231/26 September 1816); İMŞSA, AS.374: 44a/3 (28 R 1232/17 March 1817).

43 İMŞSA, AS.283: 70a/1 (10 Ş 1201/28 May 1787).

Monemvasia (Ott. Menevşe), Pylos (Ott. Avarin), Nafpaktos (Ott. İnebahtı), and Nafplio (Ott. Anaboli), so despite their small numbers in Modon, Mehmed Usta was always within reach of regimental comrades stationed nearby. As seen in the payroll registers prepared in the second half of the 1770s, the 59th *cemaat* was one of the regiments stationed on Mytilene, so for Mehmed Emin Agha, the chief artilleryman there, access to the regiment's cash also seems to have been relatively easy. The scale of all these intriguing connections is indeed bewildering to modern researchers, but at the same time it represented a major headache for regimental administrators, since it necessitated high-level formalisation of these transactions.

All of the above cases from Van to the Morea were recorded at the courts in Istanbul, which also indicates a high degree of mobility among borrowers. Bearing in mind that Janissary units periodically rotated to different fortresses, one could say that tracking credit payments and real estate transactions became colossal issues for the administrators. Efforts on the part of the elders and officers (*zabits*) of the 25th *sekban* regiment to register their real estate at the time of rotation is an illuminating example here. Having stayed in large numbers in Vidin for a while, some members of the regiment were later deployed to İnebahtı fortress in the mid-1760s, as confirmed by the rising presence of the 25th in the payroll register compiled a decade later.<sup>44</sup> On behalf of the regiment, Ahmed Usta came before court in the spring of 1766 to obtain a certificate proving the regiment's ownership of a garden in Vidin. The fascinating nature of this case lies in the fact that the regiment's fund had bought the garden almost 42 years earlier, yet decades passed before the elders and officers felt compelled to obtain a court document.<sup>45</sup> It seems that the regiment's men were attempting to retain their holdings in Vidin before heading to İnebahtı, for as the above-mentioned Baghdad example testifies, this departure perhaps meant a new *mütevelli* would be nominated for the İnebahtı branch, while some members of the regiment held onto their power in Vidin. In this instance the transfer to another fortress triggered the formalisation of a real estate transaction, but this could not solve problems in all cases; the fact that regiments were mobile but conducted financial activities over a wide geographical space necessitated an extensive network of prestigious men. It was exactly for this reason that regimental waqfs used a myriad of agents in both the capital and the provinces, including their honourable representatives (*vekils*), ushers (*mübaşirs*), the head commander of the corps (*Yeniçeri*

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<sup>44</sup> There were 1,473 registered soldiers in İnebahtı, 71 of whom belonged to the 25th *sekban* regiment.

<sup>45</sup> Nacionalna Biblioteka 'Sv. Sv. Kiril i Metodij' (NBSKM), Vidin Şer'iyeye Sicilleri [Vidin Court Registers] (VS), 78: 250-251 (7 L 1179/19 March 1766).

*Ağası*), judges, provincial governors, voivodes of the Danubian principalities, the Grand Vizier and the Sultan.

There are repeated references in miscellaneous documents to the capacity of the elders and administrators in provincial settings to track down borrowers, but in cases of nonpayment they did not hesitate to turn to their men in Istanbul and other prominent men in the provinces. From this perspective, the long-lasting conflict between Haseki Hüseyin from Selvi and the waqf of the 41st *bölük*<sup>46</sup> shows how the regimental funds operated credit networks in the provinces and utilised various agents in their work. Just as in Razgrad, Eskicuma and Lofça, there was no permanent Janissary garrison in Selvi, but the region was very closely connected to Janissary stations along the Danubian basin such as Vidin and Niğbolu.<sup>47</sup> It is thus hardly surprising to see that when the problems regarding Haseki's refusal to repay his loan reached the upper echelons of the Ottoman administration, the orders of the Imperial Council were usually addressed to the judge at Selvi (*Selvi kadısı*), the supreme commander of Vidin (*Vidin muhafızı*) and the provincial governor of Niğbolu (*Niğbolu Sancağı Mutasarrıfı*).

The problems seem to have started in the early 1740s, when Haseki declared his unwillingness to make loan repayments. According to the *mütevelli* and elders of the regiment's waqf, he invoked some groundless excuses for his refusal to honour his debt of 5,733 *guruş* to the regiment. Although we do not know where Haseki had borrowed this money, it was possibly not Vidin, but Istanbul, because from Elhac Hüseyin's petition in another record we are informed that Haseki was deeply engaged in Istanbul's loan markets, having borrowed money from Hüseyin there.<sup>48</sup> In any case, Haseki's refusal led the *mütevelli* and elders to charge an agent/usher from the corps (*ocak tarafından tayin edilen mübâşir*) to collect the debt in 1744. This appointment was in itself most astonishing; in disputes of this type, the regiments would first send a representative (*vekil*) with a letter verifying the debt. But in this case they authorised an agent, possibly from Istanbul, which leads us to believe that even before the spring of 1744 the regiment's waqf had made fruitless attempts to recover its money. In fact, the decree instructed the judge to imprison Haseki unless he settled his debts, which again corroborates the extraordinarily harsh tone of the dispute.

Around 18 months later, the judge of Selvi received yet another order regarding Haseki Hüseyin's debt, though this time it was also sent to the supreme commander

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46 BOA, A.DVNSAHK.ÖZSİ.d.2: 134, order no: 592 (*evasıt-ı* R 1157/23 April-3 May 1744); BOA, A.DVNSAHK.ÖZSİ.d.3: 232, order no: 854 (*evasıt-ı* Z 1158/3-13 January 1746); BOA, A.DVNSAHK.ÖZSİ.d.6: 43 (*evasıt-ı* Ca 1163/17-27 April 1750).

47 Compare BOA, MAD.d.3946; 6536; 824.

48 BOA, A.DVNSAHK.ÖZSİ.d.3: 232, order no: 857 (*evasıt-ı* Z 1158/3-13 January 1746).

of Vidin.<sup>49</sup> The previous order mentions a debt of 5,733 *guruş* as verified by the deed (*temessük*) and court certificate (*hüccet*), whereas the second order refers to a total debt of 5,328 *guruş*, consisting of two parts: 3,718 *guruş* had been extended via the deed, and the remaining 1,610 *guruş* had been given to Haseki Hüseyin with sureties (*kefalet*) from his son Hasan Sipahi and others from Selvi. Seemingly due to pressure from the regiment via administrative channels, Haseki Hüseyin had paid a small fraction of his debt before 1746, so the total debt was reduced from 5,733 to 5,328 *guruş*. More importantly, however, in the meantime the regiment also seems to have injected guarantors and sureties into what was possibly a renewed contract to secure the loan, since in the previous order no mention had been made of any such arrangement. This change echoed growing concerns on the side of the regiment's men about debt repudiation, which would explain why in the second petition the *mütevelli* reported that Haseki Hüseyin had artfully made over all his real estate to his son and others to avoid payment. The implication was that in the meantime the fund had forced him to sell goods in order to clear his debt.

These interactions between more than three parties may also have been affected by the status enjoyed by Hüseyin and his son Hasan. Both were prominent members of the military establishment in the region, and the regiment's officials respected their trustworthiness and titles not only when the loan was issued, but also at the time of debt collection. Under these conditions, securing the loan with guarantors and sureties seemed to best meet the regiment's needs. Open negotiations and tactics bore fruit: from the final decree sent almost four years later, again to the authorities in Selvi and Vidin, we learn that the debt had eventually been reduced to 1,610 *guruş*, either because the guarantors had made a payment or, on their initiative, Hüseyin and Hasan had probably paid the greater part of it.<sup>50</sup> This nightmare tormenting the 41st *bölük* for at least five years provides valuable insights into the functioning of regimental networks. First, even though the cash waqfs standardised legal arrangements in lending and borrowing, they were always open to negotiation, coercion and new tactics. Second, despite such standardisation, the funds could only operate within the web of administrative, judiciary and military authorities attested by the sources.

The same pattern is also echoed in attempts made by the 10th *bölük* in 1745 to collect a debt from a certain Topal Nikol, a resident of Bucharest. The regiment first tried to recover the money by sending a representative to its debtor, who, however, rejected the demand. The narrative in this record does not clarify where he had

49 BOA, A.DVNSAHK.ÖZSİ.d.3: 232, order no: 854 (*evasıt-ı* Z 1158/3-13 January 1746).

50 BOA, A.DVNSAHK.ÖZSİ.d.6: 43, order no: NA (*evasıt-ı* Ca 1163/17-27 April 1750).

borrowed the money.<sup>51</sup> Throughout the eighteenth century, the Janissary presence was always very strong in various fortresses along the northern Black Sea shores and the Danube<sup>52</sup>, so Nikol may have taken out the loan from one of these stations. Alternatively, he may have borrowed from the regiment's branch in Istanbul. Whatever the possible scenario, it looks clear that men of the 10th in Istanbul made an appeal to the Imperial Council to issue an order to the Wallachian voivode to help the regiment collect the debt.

In some cases, records indicate that men acting as debt collectors were sent not from local stations, but directly from Istanbul. When the elders and *mütevelli* of the 10th *bölük*'s waqf tried to get fund money back from Ahmed Karabelaoglu in Russe, they dispatched a letter from Istanbul together with a representative to ask Ahmed and his guarantor Elhac Süleyman to repay the sum. However, the representative was unable to complete the task due to advanced age; thus, to collect the debt he also sent out his own men, who were again harassed by Ahmed and his guarantor. This compelled the elders to apply to the Imperial Council, which in turn issued a decree addressed to the judge and the commander-in-chief of Russe (*Ruscuk serdari*) to intervene in the matter. The elders also commissioned a sergeant (*çavuş*) to collect the debt and solicited help from the head commander of the corps to dispatch a sealed letter with him.<sup>53</sup>

In some cases, however, the administrator and elders of the regiment chose an agent who was already outside Istanbul. This was precisely the case when Mustafa Agha from Lofça died indebted to the waqf of the 19th regiment. It seems that the regiment's men in Vidin were concerned that the heirs would seize Mustafa Agha's estate, and thus asked their brethren in Istanbul to press the Imperial Council to send a rescript to the commander-in-chief (*serdar*) and judge of Lofça. To collect the debt, they authorised a sergeant named Yusuf Çavuş, who was already in the region and could easily deal with the matter thanks to the imperial order.<sup>54</sup>

In such cases, when the elders of regiments and administrators designated a representative and sergeant locally in the district (*ol taraftan*) to collect the debt, the money was presumably remitted to the Ottoman capital; in other cases, the orders directed the local authorities to help deliver the cash to the *mütevellis* and elders at

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51 BOA, A.DVNSAHK.ÖZSİ.d.3: 241, order no: 901 (*evası-t* M 1158/12-22 February 1745).

52 A. Sydorenko, 'Using the Ukrainian Archives for the Study of Janissary Networks in the Northern Black Sea: Research Perspectives and Challenges', in Y. Spyropoulos (ed.), *Insights into Janissary Networks, 1700–1826* [special issue of *Cihannüma: Journal of History and Geography Studies*, 8/1 (2022)], 129-144.

53 BOA, A.DVNSAHK.ÖZSİ.d.3: 304, order no: 1132 (*evail-i* R 1159/23 April-2 May 1746).

54 BOA, A.DVNSAHK.ÖZSİ.d.6: 291 (*evası-t* Za 1164/1-10 September 1751).

the waqf's local station. For instance, when Kantarcı Elhac Usta Mustafa from the 15th *bölük* died in Vidin indebted to the waqf of the 97th *cemaat*, the regiment's men in the region were unable to control the estate, as his relatives seized it. Probably in response to the demand by the men in Vidin, one of the Janissary officers at Vidin fortress (*zabit*) received an imperial order requesting delivery of the money to Başeski Mustafa of the same regiment there.<sup>55</sup> A similar policy is seen in a dispute related to the collection of a debt owed to the 48th *bölük* almost 40 years later. When Elhac Ali Agha from Tırnova refused to repay his loan, an imperial rescript accompanied by a sealed letter from the head commander of the corps again informed the local authorities of the need to ensure payment was made to the local *mütevelli* and elders of the regiment.<sup>56</sup>

These dynamic patterns of debt collection imply the existence of diversified and formalised networks, but as the case of Haseki Hüseyin informs us, these networks were shaped by personal connections, status, trust, as well as circulating knowledge. In the instance of Bakırcı Hacı Mustafa's loan from the waqf of the 71st *cemaat*, all these factors dictated how the fund operated. In the autumn of 1726, the *mütevelli* and elders submitted a petition to the Imperial Council reporting that Hacı Mustafa owed the regiment a sum of more than 1,000 *guruş*. The latter promised to pay 510 *guruş* of this debt by setting out for Vidin and obtaining money from his nephew at the fortress. He begged to be provided with a signed letter naming him as a kind of representative in the region. Having sealed the letter, however, the regiment's men were informed that Mustafa already had many outstanding debts, which worried them because he was considered an untrustworthy person who could harm the waqf's finances. In response to a petition from the regiment, an imperial order addressed to Turnacıbaşı Musa, one of the commanders at Vidin fortress, warned him not to trust Hacı Mustafa and to help collect his debt under the supervision of *yamak* comrades (*yamak yoldaşı*) in the region. Delegated as their representative from Vidin, Kara Ali was authorised to transport the money to Istanbul.<sup>57</sup>

All these cases clearly raise the intriguing questions of why, how, and when money was circulated among different regimental stations or to what extent the branches in the Ottoman capital received payments. What makes these questions more interesting is the lack of any reference to bills of exchange (*poliçe*) in our sources. Although use of them was a common phenomenon in commercial and, more importantly, fiscal operations across Ottoman lands in the eighteenth century,<sup>58</sup>

55 BOA, A.DVNSAHK.ÖZSİ.d.4: 242 (*evail-i Z* 1160/4-14 December 1747).

56 BOA, A.DVNSAHK.ÖZSİ.d.26: 227 (*evail-i R* 1197/5-15 March 1783).

57 NBSKM, VS.19: 137 (*evasıt-ı Ra* 1139/5 November 1726).

58 E. M. Nye, "'A Bank of Trust': Legal Practices of Ottoman Finance Between Empires', *Journal*

and Janissary officials developed close connections with moneylenders (*sarrafs*) and utilised such bills,<sup>59</sup> the regiments do not seem to have resorted to this model of monetary circulation very often. This strategy may perhaps be accounted for in terms of the regiments' geographical distribution and the decentralised character of the Janissary Corps during this period.

In the Ottoman world, most money remittances by bill of exchange were driven by the needs of Ottoman local authorities to forward revenues to the Ottoman treasury through moneylenders and moneychangers. However, in this period the Janissary Corps became a highly decentralised institution, meaning that regimental waqf branches in the Ottoman capital did not employ monopolistic power to divert funds to themselves. In the documents we observe orders in sealed letters instructing representatives and ushers to redirect money to various places, rather than exclusively to their branches in Istanbul. These letters functioned not as letters of credit, but as typical loan certificates justifying collection of a debt, with representatives more often than not being assigned the task of physically transferring currency.

What appears from at least one record is the fact that even the *mütevelli*s themselves also resorted to the method in question. In the waning days of 1766, Elhac Receb Odabaşı, *mütevelli* of the 19th *cemaat*'s waqf, sued his predecessor Elhac Mehmed Odabaşı at Ahi Çelebi court and requested that the judge notify Mehmed of his debt to the waqf. The litigation process made it clear that the debtor physically shipped the amount of 165 *guruş*, which was deposited at the fund in Damascus by Serdengeçdi İbrahim Agha, a *sekban* in the city. The Damascus-Istanbul shipping service entailed a fee of 30 *guruş*, together with a daily wage entitlement of 30 *paras* for the former *mütevelli* as the money carrier.<sup>60</sup> Given that commission and brokerage fees for large monetary and commercial undertakings by bills ranged from less than 1 to 2 percent in this period,<sup>61</sup> these figures are indicative of how costly physical money shipments were, especially for small amounts, to say nothing of high risks that were simply not worth taking. High costs and risks hence played a role in limiting material transfers between the branches of regiments; and as official correspondence informs us, these factors often if not always led debt collection administrators to employ their own men attached to the fortresses, and channel the collected amounts to the respective regimental stations nearby.

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*of Early Modern History*, 27/6 (Online, May 2023), 502-525; E. Eldem, *French Trade in Istanbul in the Eighteenth Century* (Leiden, London and Köln 1999), 113-145.

59 Gül, '18. Yüzyılda Yeniçeri Teşkilatı', 764-767.

60 İMŞSA, AS.235: 79b/9 (25 B 1180/27 December 1766).

61 Eldem, *French Trade*, 114-209; D. Vlami, *Merchants on the Mediterranean Ottoman-Dutch Trade in the Eighteenth Century* (London 2023), 101-152.



Such money transfer methods were quite effective unless things went badly for the regiments in collecting debts. As indicated above, whenever they faced difficulties, the elders and administrators did not hesitate to solicit help from Ottoman provincial and central authorities. Recent work by Ellen Nye shows that state-backed legal practices, personal connections, trust, and systematised written documents formed an indispensable part of financial operations in the early modern Ottoman world.<sup>62</sup> This observation is corroborated by our findings on the functioning of regimental waqfs in the transprovincial domain. Several of them were able to orchestrate empire-wide financial operations thanks to their institutional capacity, personal connections, and broad geographical reach, yet this ability entailed the incorporation of state officials in their financial networks. These operations undoubtedly gave rise to a high degree of standardisation, especially in drafting loan agreements. However, it should be noted that the financial operations recorded in court records only show the official channels used by the Janissaries. Extortionist and illegal activities that were not always reflected in court records formed a significant part of their market operations.<sup>63</sup>

### *Regimental funds in different locations: strategies, networks and investments*

Debt collection management strategies and money transfers were clearly a byproduct of Janissary Corps decentralisation, which was accompanied by the integration of regiments into the local economy in different provincial settings.<sup>64</sup> This process reinforced the local functioning of their funds, which manifested itself, first and foremost, in the documentation of regimental loans in court records. As discussed earlier, regimental officials in Vidin were not inclined to visit court, whereas the

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62 Nye, 'A Bank of Trust', 502-525.

63 A. Yıldız and İ. Kokdaş, 'Peasantry in a Well-Protected Domain: Wallachian Peasantry and Muslim *Çiftlik/Kıslaks* under the Ottoman Rule', *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, 22/1 (2020), 177-185; M. M. Sunar, 'İstanbul'da Yeniçeri Ortalarının Karıştığı Sokak Çatışmaları (18. Yüzyıl sonu ve 19. Yüzyıl başları)', in A. Yıldız, Y. Spyropoulos and M. M. Sunar (eds), *Payitaht Yeniçerileri: Padişahın "Asi" Kulları, 1700-1826* (Istanbul 2022), 261-285; Gül, '18. Yüzyılda Yeniçeri Teşkilatı', 767-768.

64 Y. Spyropoulos and A. Yıldız, 'Pseudo-Janissarism (*Yeniçerilik İddiası*) in the Ottoman Provinces (with Special Reference to Adana): Its Emergence and Its Geographic and Socio-Economic Aspects', in Y. Spyropoulos (ed.), *Insights into Janissary Networks, 1700-1826* [special issue of *Cihannüma: Journal of History and Geography Studies* 8/1 (2022)], 10-24.

registers in Istanbul contain the details of loan arrangements made by many different regiments.

In records from the capital, the regimental waqfs were usually recorded under various terms such as “*ordu mühimmatına mevkuf nukud*”, “*orta nukudu*”, “*ortanın mühimmatına mevkuf nukud*” and “*ortanın nukud-ı mevkufesi*”. In those from Vidin, however, more specifically in probate inventories, uncollected debts owed to regiments were registered in a highly standardised legal phrase with little variation: “*deyn-i müsbet-i oda*”, “*deyn-i müsbet-i orta*”, or “*deyn-i müsbet-i meyâne*”. Additional terms such as “*orta malı*”, “*oda malı*”, “*orta akçesi*”, “*meyâne akçesi*”, and “*meyâne malı*” were inserted into the records to refer to the money of regimental funds.

One interesting point in the above records is the almost total lack of reference to the regiments’ waqfs. In only two instances, the waqf of the 25th *sekban* regiment was recorded as the creditor: in the first, the probate register for regimental officer Süleyman Odabaşı contains a debt of 70 *guruş* owed to the waqf (*mal-ı vakf-ı oda*).<sup>65</sup> In a similar vein, the second record is a probate inventory belonging to tobacco dealer İbrahim Beşe of the 25th *sekban*, who conducted business between Vidin and Plovdiv in the 1720s.<sup>66</sup> Settled in Plovdiv, İbrahim seems to have rented a room at the Vidinese Tahmis Han to keep bales of tobacco. After he died heirless, Janissary officer Hüseyin Agha sequestered the estate and sold his goods (tobacco); this prompted the regiment’s men, including Odabaşı Hüseyin Agha and Vekilharç Osman Agha, to demand repayment of a loan advanced by the regiment’s waqf to the deceased. Under these conditions, scribes entered the term “the regimental waqf” (*vakf-ı oda*) in the estate record, possibly on the initiative of his disgruntled brothers in arms, as another Janissary officer named Hüseyin Agha tried to sequester the property.

Given that İbrahim lived in Plovdiv, it is also possible that by highlighting the waqf’s role as creditor, Hüseyin Agha and Osman Agha secured their right over the estate against potential debtors and heirs from the same city. In the first instance, Süleyman’s title *odabaşı* suggests that scribes consciously inserted the term waqf and highlighted the institutional rather than personal character of the loan, perhaps as some sort of assistance for the regiment’s men, to mitigate the risk of future conflicts over their operating budget. Still, this is not so surprising for, as discussed earlier, the personal debts of ward officers were sometimes considered part of funds. It is also possible that the term waqf was used on the initiative of the regiment’s men, who anxiously saw the vast bulk of Süleyman’s belongings being handed over to his wife

65 NBSKM, VS.163: 36 (20 Z 1189/11 February 1776).

66 NBSKM, VS.19: 86 (8 Ca 1141/9 January 1729).

in repayment of his outstanding debts to her. Maybe by mentioning the waqf in discrete terms, the certificate secured the regiment's share in the estate, as the widowed Hadice had proved her claims with witnesses in order to collect the debt. Be that as it may, these two records are in fact exceptional among Vidinese court entries.

In the overwhelming majority of cases, scribes did not see any need to differentiate between the regiments and their waqfs from a legal perspective, as the funds of regiments did not act much differently than other numerous creditors in the loan market. One factor behind the standardisation of this recordkeeping practice in Vidin is the fact that the debts owed to regimental funds were strictly individual rather than collective loans. No less interesting is the rarity – virtual absence – of records even in Istanbul's Bab, Davudpaşa, and Ahi Çelebi courts regarding collective credit granted by the regiments. This observation is in tune with the findings of several studies on the activities of cash waqfs in the Ottoman capital and Anatolian towns, which highlight the fact that debtors to the funds were predominantly small-scale borrowers who received individual loans in order to meet daily needs. They also reveal that distributing capital to collectivities and partnerships did not dominate the operations of waqfs.<sup>67</sup> That being said, we have learnt from recent scholarly works that in some Rumelian centres like Bosnia and Salonika, cash waqfs were less risk-averse in lending to the collectivities such as villages and business partnerships.<sup>68</sup>

At this point one may quite reasonably wonder why regimental credit predominantly came in the form of individual loans, both in Vidin and Istanbul, where the Janissaries built alliances with artisan groups and villages in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In Istanbul's Ahi Çelebi and Bab court records we were only able to identify one case when, in around the 1760s, the 19th *bölük*'s waqf granted 400 *guruş* in credit to Peraşko, a seller of sweet fruit drinks, and his four partners Apostol, Şişman Kosta, Nikola, and Dimitri.<sup>69</sup> In a limited number of cases we observe credit offered to partners, though they were family members and stood surety for each other. In around 1754 the administrator of the 14th *cemaat*'s waqf in

67 C. Çiftçi, 'Bursa'da Vakıfların Sosyo-Ekonomik İşlevleri (1544-1588 ve 1749-1795 Yılları Arası Vakıf Muhasebe Kayıtları Işığında)', unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Ankara Üniversitesi, 2001, 238-240; Çizakça, 'Cash Waqfs', 313-354; M. E. Durmuş, 'Muhasebe Kayıtları Işığında 18. Yüzyılın Son Çeyreğinde Üsküdar Para Vakıfları', unpublished M.A. thesis, Sakarya Üniversitesi, 2016, 28-29.

68 M. Çizakça, 'Ottoman Cash Waqfs Revisited: The Case of Bursa 1555-1823', *Foundation for Science Technology and Civilisation*, Publication Id 4062 (2004), 18; M. I. A. Mohsin et al, *Financing the Development of Old Waqf Properties: Classical Principles and Innovative Practices around the World* (New York 2016), 41-42; Salakidis, 'Money', 411-426; H. V. Aydın, 'Selanik'te 18. Yüzyılın İlk Yarısında Para Vakıfları ve Kredi İşlemleri', *Tarih İncelemeleri Dergisi*, 29/1 (2014), 87-106.

69 İMŞSA, AS.224: 31a/2 (22 M 1176/13 August 1762).

Istanbul pursued Hahok and his wife Fatin, who had taken out a loan of 200 *guruş* as partners.<sup>70</sup> From a request made by the *mütevelli* of the 28th *sekban*'s waqf Süleyman Odabaşı in 1766, we also learn that brothers Mustafa Beşe and Feyzullah Beşe received a loan of 112 *guruş* in partnership.<sup>71</sup> It should nonetheless be noted that in these cases cooperation aimed at borrowing money did not represent any genuine business partnership: family members appear as partners probably because they possessed shares in real estate put up as a pledge (*rehin*) in loan contracts. This means that of the 203 identified loan contracts in Istanbul's Galata, Davudpaşa, Ahi Çelebi, and Bab courts, only one case makes explicit reference to a partnership. One possible reason for this extremely low figure is that loan contracts may have been registered in regimental accounting books, and any disputes settled out of court.

Yet it is also possible that the regiments had already successfully carved out potential niches for channelling their credit, and thus regarded collective credit as less lucrative and more hazardous. The credit policies of the 53rd and 56th *bölüks* and the 9th *cemaat* are good examples in this regard, capturing the flexible and varying credit strategies of regiments in the Ottoman capital. From 1753 to 1790 the *mütevellis* of the 53rd *bölük* appeared at Ahi Çelebi court 24 times, primarily to register loan contracts, the bulk of which laid down the procedures for real estate sale-lease deals in the hinterland of Üsküdar.<sup>72</sup> In these arrangements, the borrowers first turned over their real estates to the regiments, which then leased them to the borrower in exchange for rent that was actually interest.

It can be deduced from these contracts that the regiment used an interest rate of 15 percent for its credit contracts, much like its counterparts in the market. During the period under study, the regimental waqfs lent money at a rate of between 12 and

70 İMŞSA, BS.206: 90b/8 (3 S 1168/19 November 1754).

71 İMŞSA, AS.235: 17a/2 (19 S 1180/27 July 1766).

72 İMŞSA, AS.194: 46b/5 (3 Ra 1167/29 December 1753); İMŞSA, AS.194: 47a/1 (3 Ra 1167/29 December 1753); İMŞSA, AS.194: 47a/2 (3 Ra 1167/29 December 1753); İMŞSA, AS.194: 53b/3 (12 Ra 1167/7 January 1753); İMŞSA, AS.198: 62a/2 (27 Z 1167/15 October 1754); İMŞSA, AS.200: 62b/3 (7 R 1168/21 January 1755); İMŞSA, AS.200: 75a/1 (7 R 1168/21 January 1755); İMŞSA, AS.200: 90a/1 (28 R 1168/22 January 1755); İMŞSA, AS.203: 94a/1 (3 R 1169/17 January 1755); İMŞSA, AS.206: 21a/1 (30 M 1170/25 October 1756); İMŞSA, AS.210: 28a/2 (11 M 1171/25 September 1757); İMŞSA, AS.210: 30b/3 (15 M 1171/29 September 1757); İMŞSA, AS.210: 34a/2 (20 M 1171/4 October 1757); İMŞSA, AS.210: 46a/2 (19 S 1171/2 November 1757); İMŞSA, AS.210: 78a/3 (15 R 1171/27 December 1757); İMŞSA, AS.216: 21b/6 (11 Ra 1173/2 November 1759); İMŞSA, AS.219: 97b/4 (10 Ca 1174/18 December 1760); İMŞSA, AS.219: 97b/5 (10 Ca 1174/10 December 1760); İMŞSA, AS.219: 99b/5 (17 Ca 1174/25 December, 1760); İMŞSA, AS.219: 100b/2 (17 Ca 1174/25 December 1760); İMŞSA, AS.219: 100b/3 (17 Ca 1174/25 December 1760); İMŞSA, AS.223: 48b/10 (15 C 1175/12 December 1761); İMŞSA, AS.294: 89a/2 (7 Ra 1205/14 November 1790).

15 percent, so the 53rd *bölük* was no exception. However, the amounts loaned by the regiment fluctuated over a wider range, from 50 to 392 *guruş*, while the properties used in sale-lease deals consisted of houses, vineyards, gardens, and fields. With the exception of Hasan, Ahmed and Yunus Beşes, all borrowers were non-Muslims who were supposed to redeem the debt mainly, though not exclusively, in three years. The regiments often offered loans at a maturity ranging from 6 months to two years, so the three-year payment period in this case is surprising, making loans quite attractive to borrowers. Yet it may have been a deliberate strategy by the regiment's waqf: along the central arteries of Üsküdar, the 59th *bölük* was very active in building commercial and credit networks with artisans, porters, and other local inhabitants.<sup>73</sup> The 53rd's policy of offering long repayment periods and implementing sale-lease deals mostly from Gebze, Tuzla, and Darıca thus seems likely to have been a viable strategy aimed at bypassing the influence of the 59th *bölük*. It appears that this zone was not chosen by the regiment at random, either: at a markedly increased pace over the eighteenth century, migrants heading from Anatolia to Istanbul probably first tried their chances in the area from Üsküdar to Hereke, which at the same time became an important nexus for animal husbandry and agricultural production.<sup>74</sup> Granting credit thus afforded the regiment an opportunity to gain profitable agricultural estates in this area. The fact that Seyyid Hüseyin sold the *bölük* a vineyard in the village of Darıca in the closing months of 1759 shows how credit networks overlapped with regimental property accumulation strategies.<sup>75</sup>

Most of these property transactions likely resulted from the nonpayment of loans, which strengthened a unit's hold over commercial estates in specific locations. The 56th *bölük* was one regiment that exchanged real estate and trade licenses (*gediks*), particularly in the very small but commercially vigorous area stretching from Odunpazarı to Zindankapı. Its earliest commercial transactions in Odunpazarı appear in court records in around 1796, although the 56th's interest in the region probably dates back much earlier. In October 1796, the waqf sold Mehmed Beşe a bundle of goods and equipment within a greengrocery shop (*manav dükkânı*) with a *gedik* licence.<sup>76</sup> Over subsequent months, the regiment also sold two shops selling

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73 M. M. Sunar, 'Cauldron of Dissent: A Study of the Janissary Corps, 1807-1826', unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Binghamton University-SUNY, 2006, 65-70.

74 A. Uzun, 'İstanbul'un İlaşesi', *Antik Çağ'dan XXI. Yüzyıla Büyük İstanbul Tarihi*, Vol. VI (Istanbul 2015), 56-80; Başaran, *Selim III*, 115-148; Y. K. Özyaşar and C. Nacar, 'Marketing Sheep in the Ottoman Empire: Erzurum and its Trade Networks (Circa 1780s-1910s)', *Archiv Orientalní*, 91/1 (2023), 41-67.

75 İMŞSA, AS.216: 21b/6 (11 Ra 1173/2 November 1759).

76 İMŞSA, AS.316: 21b/4 (1 R 1211/4 October 1796).

onions and tobacco.<sup>77</sup> In the 1820s, *mütevelli* Mehmed Sadık Agha appeared before Ahi Çelebi court several times in order to register to sell and buy the *gediks* of shops around Odunpazarı and Zindankapı at extremely high prices. In 1821 he sold a *gedik* for a greengrocery shop for 4,500 *guruş*, while almost two and half years later he bought two *gediks* worth 12,000 *guruş*.<sup>78</sup>

The acquisition of *gediks* by the 56th *bölük* was hardly a surprise, since from the 1790s onwards regiments tended to use these licenses and shops more regularly as a pledge (*rehin*) in loan agreements, whereas vineyards, houses and gardens had been used for that purpose earlier on in the eighteenth century. This changing pattern evokes the flexibility of regimental waqfs in adopting different methods in their loan contracts. When the 9th *cemaat*'s waqf increased its presence around Tophane-Galata, it used a standard legal loan contract spelling out the alleged sale of clocks and books to the borrowers for a given price, which was in reality hidden interest. In 1820 *mütevelli* Seyyid İbrahim Agha extended 2,000 *guruş* from the regiment to Elhac İbrahim, with a maturity of 18 months; the loan required the sham sale of a clock and a book by Kuduri at 450 *guruş*, which again set the annual interest rate at 15 percent.<sup>79</sup> These terms may not have allayed the *mütevelli*'s apprehensions about repayment of the loan, so the partners recorded the borrower's oil shop (*yağcı dükkâni*) at the Kurşunlu Mahzen around Tophane as a pledge. Three years later the *mütevelli* did almost the same when he extended another loan of 2,300 *guruş* to the same İbrahim, but this time with the sale of two *fetva* collections, one volume of *Behcetü'l-Fetava* and *Fetava-yı Ali Efendi*.<sup>80</sup> Next year, a new loan of 2,000 *guruş* was offered to the same person, while Süleyman Usta, a resident in a shop just outside the Eski Yağcılar Kapısı around Galata, borrowed 4,000 *guruş* from the regiment's waqf at around the same time, pledging a woollen cloth workshop (*abacı dükkâni*).<sup>81</sup> Both credit arrangements entailed the sham sale of *fetva* books. In providing retailers along Uzunçarşılı with three loans totalling 3,200 *guruş*, the 40th *bölük*'s waqf drew up similar loan arrangements, again involving the sale of *fetva* books together with the use of shops and a *gedik* as a pledge.<sup>82</sup>

77 İMŞSA, AS.316: 22a/1 (1 R 1211/4 October 1796); İMŞSA, AS.319: 8b/5 (20 Ş 1211/18 February 1797).

78 İMŞSA, AS.382: 32b/3 (6 S 1237/2 November 1821); İMŞSA, AS.388: 49a/2 (5 L 1239/3 June 1824); İMŞSA, AS.388: 49b/3 (5 L 1239/3 June 1824).

79 İMŞSA, AS.380: 59b/6 (11 S 1236/18 November 1820).

80 İMŞSA, AS.380: 40b/5 (4 Z 1238/12 August 1823).

81 İMŞSA, AS.390: 27a/2 (8 Ca 1240/29 December 1824).

82 İMŞSA, AS.367: 33b/10 (26 C 1228/26 June 1813); İMŞSA, AS.370: 70b/11 (14 C 1230/24 May 1815); İMŞSA, AS.370: 76b/10 (8 Z 1230/11 November 1815).

All these examples confirm that at least some regimental waqfs in Istanbul were able to channel their resources to specific zones and sectors through standardised loan contracts, and exploit market opportunities with new flexible tools like *gediks*, which may explain why they were risk-averse in freezing large amount of capital in collective credit. We can infer from the Vidinese court records that although individual rather than collective loans dominated the waqfs' activities, this pattern vividly reflects the multilayered nature of Janissary credit in Vidin rather than simply the distributory role played by regiments.

In fact, the lack of collective credit in Vidin comes as a surprise, because during the *çiftlik* crisis of Wallachia in around the mid-eighteenth century, large amounts owed in debts to the Vidinese Janissaries became the bane of peasants and added fuel to the fire of rural discontent.<sup>83</sup> But even in surveys prepared on the socio-economic conditions of the region, it seems that rather than regimental funds, individual Janissaries and their partnerships emerged as the main creditors of villages. This pattern repeated itself in a large-scale debt settlement prepared in the summer of 1780 with the surety of Vidin's Mukabele Halifesi Seyyid Mustafa Efendi, head manager of the provincial treasury and tax collection. After defaulting on a total debt of 37,172.5 *guruş*, the deputies of soldiers from various military units around Vidin, particularly those in Adakale and Fethülislam fortresses, promised to pay off this loan in annual instalments over 11 years. The lenders in the payment contract were almost all rich Janissary commanders, other prestigious military men, members of established families, and women, but no regimental fund.<sup>84</sup> In fact, the contract speaks volumes about the role of regiments in the Vidinese market. Firstly, it documents pervasive indebtedness not only among peasants, but also among soldiers in the Danubian basin. Secondly, the contract pinning down the use of soldiers' salaries (*mevacibs*) as a reliable financial source for annual instalments indicates the importance of *mevacibs* in the Vidinese loan market. In fact, the salaries recorded in pay tickets were strong financial assets in market operations across the Ottoman Empire, since such tickets (*esames*) were easily traded especially in the Ottoman capital and circulated in other parts of the Empire.<sup>85</sup> As discussed earlier, safekeeping and trading tickets to cover expenses was also one of the main financial operations carried out by regiments. Irrespective of how low the salaries might be or how irregularly they were paid, they constituted a crucial means of access to cash.

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83 Yıldız and Kokdaş, 'Peasantry', 175-190.

84 NBSKM, VS.82: 151-154 (11 B 1194/13 July 1780).

85 Kokdaş, 'Esame', 157-199.

It should be reiterated that the Vidin-Niğbolu line became a permeable border zone in this period,<sup>86</sup> keeping frontier anxieties alive. In this context, the regimental funds appeared as one of the crucial lending institutions for soldiers to meet their cash needs. It was therefore no coincidence that the regiments in Vidin mainly granted credit to their comrades. In the hundred and more years from 1721 to 1826, court records contain 125 debt entries, 90 of which explicitly identified Janissaries together with their regiments. More importantly, in more than 80 percent of these cases the Janissaries took out loans from their own regiment. These figures prove that unlike the situation in Istanbul, the regiments worked in a more intra-Janissary and Muslim sphere in Vidin. Not surprisingly, in our data we only have six cases in which non-Muslims were indebted to regimental funds.<sup>87</sup>

At this point one might wonder to what extent these institutions satisfied their comrades' hunger for credit. Records on the one hand show that the Janissaries clearly had many alternatives when looking to borrow money, but on the other also testify to an unabated appetite for doing so in the region. In terms of strategy, it might thus be reasonable to expect the regimental funds to have relied on allocating smaller amounts of credit to as many clients as possible, yet this was not the case. The size of regimental loans was comparable to the market average in Vidin, and grew even higher especially after the 1760s, in a manner indicative of their financial capacity and role in the eyes of ordinary Janissaries (See Graph I). On one level the regimental waqfs acted as a common aid fund for their comrades, but on others they appear to have transferred large funds to moneylending and commercial activities. Take, for instance, the relationship between the 25th *bölük*'s fund and Serdengeçdi Fethizade Ahmed Agha, a moneylender around Vidin. In the 1770s the fund seems to have played a crucial role in financing this moneylender. When Ahmed died sometime in 1780, he left an inheritance worth 1,682 *guruş*. Although this was a modest inheritance by contemporary Vidinese standards, his probate hints at the extremely wide range of his credit activities.

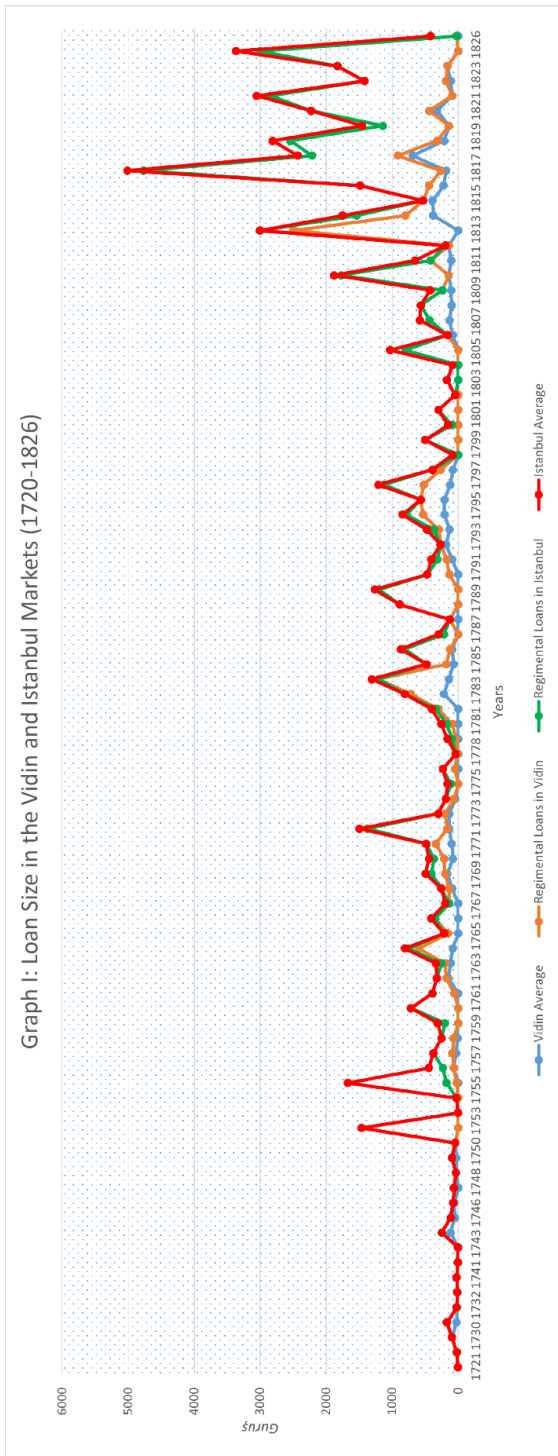
A portion of Ahmed Agha's wealth was frozen in a house and coffee shop, but a large part of his inheritance was tied to credit. For his moneylending activities he had formed a partnership with a certain David, a Jewish merchant, and advanced

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86 R. Gradeva, 'War and Peace Along the Danube: Vidin at the End of the Seventeenth Century', *Oriente Moderno*, 20/1 (2001), 152-162; Yıldız and Kokdaş, 'Peasantry', 175-190; V. Aksan, 'Whose Territory and Whose Peasants? Ottoman Boundaries on the Danube in the 1760s', in F. Anscombe (ed.), *The Ottoman Balkans, 1750-1830* (Princeton NJ 2006), 61-86.

87 The data are based on the court records of Vidin, NBSKM, VS.52; 8; 50; 49; 37; 35; 34; 53; 5; 11; 9; 25a; 39; 40; 44; 48; 54; 55; 56; 59; 60; 61; 62; 63; 66; 67; 68; 64; 65; 311; 69; 70; 71; 36; 77; 80; 79; 81; 82; 160a; 163; 57; 159a; 160; 84; 6; 18; 19; 38; 41; 346; 310; 169; 305; 46; 47; 167; 168; 161a; 78; 307; 74.





The data include 2,102 debt entries for Istanbul and 8,034 entries for Vidin. The number of regiment loans is 125 for Vidin and 203 for Istanbul. The registers used in preparing the data include: *a.* Özi ve Silistre Ahkam Defterleri [Registers of Imperial Rescripts Addressed to Özi and Silistre], 1-32; *b.* Ahi Çelebi Şer'iyye Sicilleri [Ahi Çelebi Court Registers], 185-390; *c.* Bab Şer'iyye Sicilleri [Bab Court Registers], 194-209, 211-218, 244, 247, 252, 260, 312, 322, 362; *d.* Davudpaşa Şer'iyye Sicilleri [Davudpaşa Court Registers], 60, 71; *e.* Galata Şer'iyye Sicilleri (Galata Court Registers), 541; *f.* Vidin Şer'iyye Sicilleri (Vidin Court Registers), 5, 6, 8, 11, 18, 19, 25, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 40, 41, 44, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 52, 53, 54, 56, 57, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 74, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 84, 159a, 160, 160a, 161a, 163, 167, 168, 169, 194, 195, 200, 206, 215, 244, 260, 305, 307, 310, 311, 318, 346, 362, 380, 386, 388, 390.

nearly 14,100 *guruş* to numerous inhabitants including Janissaries from different regiments. It seems that although Ahmed Agha was able to borrow money from some individuals like Hasan Beşe of the 25th *bölük* and Mehmed Agha of the 28th, the most important financial source for his enterprises was the fund of his own 25th *bölük*, to which he owed an extraordinarily large debt of 4,025 *guruş*.<sup>88</sup> In another instance, money from the 39th *bölük* seems to have been indispensable for the investments and business operations of Sereski Debbâğ Usta Hasan from the same regiment. His inheritance consisted of several animals, a tannery and valuable goods in the workshop; at the time of his death, he was indebted to his regiment to the tune of 1,170 *guruş*, almost a third of his total assets.<sup>89</sup>

Probably nothing better illustrates the complex ties between regiments and investors in the Danubian basin than the business networks of Yamak Osman Beşe of the 5th *bölük*. Judging from his probate compiled in 1764, it seems that Osman Beşe was a landlord and wholesale merchant of clarified butter in and around Wallachia and Vidin. He owned a half share in a *çiftlik*, agricultural lands, a watermill together with numerous animals, and beehives. From the detailed list of agricultural products listed in his probate, one can hazard a guess that his *çiftlik* was located deep in the Vidinese hinterland around Azor (Izvor?).<sup>90</sup> Unlike his comrades, he does not appear to have acquired an animal farm in Wallachia, probably because mid-century imperial policies ordering the demolition of these farms<sup>91</sup> dissuaded him from undertaking such an investment. He was nonetheless able to establish a foothold in Wallachia through large amounts of credit extended to numerous actors, including peasants in Tirelofçe, Kapudan Yane, and Manolaki, and local partners from Çernic and Karayova (mod. Craiova). Credit links between Osman Beşe and Wallachian actors were probably forged through *mudarebe* or *selem* contracts, which helped to secure the flow of commodities to Vidin.

In making these contracts and conducting lucrative business, Yamak Osman Beşe had the financial support of two critical agents in Vidin: Halil Agha and his own *bölük*'s fund. Sources unfortunately do not offer us details about Halil Agha himself, though from another probate inventory we learn that he was also one of the most prominent financiers of Serdengeçdi Mustafa Agha of the 31st *bölük*, who controlled rich agricultural and commercial assets together with money operations in both Vidin and Wallachia.<sup>92</sup> Like Yamak Osman Beşe, Mustafa Agha appears as one of the

88 NBSKM, VS.49: 119-23 (28 L 1196/6 October 1782).

89 NBSKM, VS.53: 107 (4 Za 1221/13 January 1807).

90 NBSKM, VS.61: 257-260 (29 Ra 1178/26 September 1764).

91 Yıldız and Kokdaş, 'Peasantry', 176-188.

92 NBSKM, VS.63: 137-139 (25 Ş 1176/11 March 1763).

wealthy providers of credit to peasants on the opposite bank of the Danube (*karşı yakada*), and was able to borrow money from rich entrepreneurs such as Ahmed Agha of the 31st *bölük* and Halil Agha, as well as from his own *bölük*'s fund. Halil Agha was not identified with any regiment, but was certainly a good *investor* keenly interested in business opportunities along the Danube. He handed over 940 *guruş* to Yamak Osman Beşe for the purchase of clarified butter either from Wallachia or from his *çiftlik* in Vidin. Yet the scope of the relationship between the two went beyond this transaction: for instance, at the time of Osman's death, he owed 4,439 *guruş* to Halil Agha, who also lent 5,300 *guruş* to Mustafa Agha at some point in the 1760s. Similarly, officials of the 5th *bölük* forged a bond with their comrade Yamak Osman Beşe, who owed a debt of 702 *guruş* to the fund in 1764.<sup>93</sup> One may wonder whether this loan resulted from an advance payment to Osman Beşe for provisioning the regiment with butter. The recurring appearance in court records of artisans, shopkeepers and merchants as debtors to the regiments leads us to believe that Osman Beşe was also one of the major suppliers of the 5th *bölük*'s soldiers. In any case, both Osman Beşe and Mustafa Agha's networks point to the active role played by the regiment's funds in the overlapping commercial and moneylending operations by investors.

All the above examples clearly point to the multilayered financial actions of regimental waqfs in the loan market, marked by a significant degree of local differences and similarities. As seen in Graph I, the average loan size offered by the regiments in Istanbul was almost parallel to that available in the city's general market in Istanbul, but significantly higher than in Vidin. Yet even there, the average loan size granted by regiments was comparable to local non-military levels. This shows that the regiments were well able to act as important agents in the credit market right up until the abolition of the corps. In conducting these operations, regimental waqf administrators developed varying attitudes toward the use of Ottoman courts for drafting credit contracts. In Istanbul, they sometimes appeared in court to register sale-lease deals and solve debt collection problems, whereas in Vidin the administrators seem to have preferred to record these deals almost entirely in their own registers outside court. Despite these differences, the regimental waqfs in both Istanbul and Vidin mostly chose to extend small individual loans to meet borrowers' daily needs. However, this does not mean that they did not extend large loans, especially to leading merchants and entrepreneurs; in certain instances the sums involved were immense, significantly driving up the average loan size granted by regiments. The study findings also show that regimental waqf credit policies were quite localised and diverse. In Vidin the largest amounts were extended to entrepreneurs who made investments in animal husbandry, agricultural production and trade

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93 NBSKM, VS.61: 257-260 (29 Ra 1178/26 September 1764).

along the Danube. In the Ottoman capital, borrowers were from almost all segments of society engaged in trade, farming, animal husbandry, crafts, and manufacturing. Although some of the regiments were very active in certain businesses and places around Istanbul and Vidin, they did not attempt to monopolise the credit activities and suppress the financial presence of other regiments in these sectors and areas.

### *Conclusion*

If truth be told, given the absence of accounting registers, the sources utilised in this study only offer a glimpse into the financial culture of regimental funds in the Ottoman world. Yet they still provide valuable information, especially on the complex and multilayered nature of waqf credit operations. They also show that the funds operated within a dynamic network consisting of bureaucrat-entrepreneurs, merchants, ordinary townsmen, artisans and villagers, as they were extremely flexible both in changing credit terms and in adapting to new financial means such as *gediks* in their transactions. One must however admit the fact that the sources consulted in this study pose many unresolved problems. For instance, one may wonder how the funds' out of court recordkeeping practices evolved over time, reflecting power relations within the Janissary Corps, or the ways in which funds developed connections with the big moneychangers in the Ottoman capital and other provincial centres. All the same, the study does offer us a significant glimpse into Ottoman financial culture and the activities of various agents in the loan markets, including waqf administrators, merchants, state officials, and moneychangers.

Recent studies show that in finding clients and collecting debts, moneylenders utilised a wide array of means, such as personal connections, official channels, sealed documents, and market dynamics.<sup>94</sup> Regimental funds did almost the same in their credit operations. In many respects, the workings of army waqfs were quite similar to their non-military counterparts: financial policies and institutional control were determined by internal power relations within the regiments, while there was a very permeable boundary between the individual strategies adopted by their administrators and official institutional policies. Again, as in the case of other endowments, there were several sub-waqfs operative within the main regimental waqfs. Yet one significant difference between regimental funds and other cash waqfs was the extremely wide array of transprovincial activities conducted by the former.

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<sup>94</sup> For instance, see Nye, 'A Bank of Trust', 502-525; Vlami, *Merchants*; B. Doumani, *Rediscovering Palestine: Merchants and Peasants in Jabal Nablus, 1700-1900* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London 1995).

Throughout the eighteenth century, the regiments increasingly functioned within transprovincial networks and developed differing strategies for local markets. As a result of the rising decentralisation of regiments over a wide geographical space, Istanbul branches of the regimental waqfs did not have monopolistic power over those scattered in different locations. These structural characteristics provided them with a significant degree of flexibility and financial capacity. Although most regimental loans were individual rather than collective, the funds also extended large amounts in credit to entrepreneurs, artisans, agricultural investors or shopkeepers, a policy which reflected the multilayered nature of their credit policies.

One of the interesting patterns raised by our data is the fact that the funds were able to increase the average loan size on offer, especially after the 1780s. In the highly inflationary environment and rising political opposition to corps activities during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries,<sup>95</sup> the regiments were able to keep their loan size on a par with the market level. It seems that they developed their financial capacity in this period through lucrative transactions in the *gedik* market. Be that as it may, the regimental funds were able to maintain their financial position in the market in the years preceding the abolition of the Janissary Corps. In a recent work on class conflicts in Ottoman and Turkish society, Alp Yücel Kaya has formulated the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as a period of intensified competition between the old and new bureaucratic bourgeoisie.<sup>96</sup> The latter, in an attempt to channel credit operations to the Istanbul-based bankers and institutions, deliberately aimed to undermine the commercial and financial power of local brokers and Janissaries. Therefore, it seems that the strong presence of the regimental funds in the market manifested itself in the political agenda during the early decades of the nineteenth century as well. The state policy designed to launch a cheap credit policy for villagers in Central Anatolia, Crete, and Danubian zone almost 15 years after the abolition of the corps, in manner unprecedented in Ottoman history,<sup>97</sup> may thus be no coincidence, as the new Tanzimat elites were still trying to chase the ghosts of the regimental funds – among others – in the loan market.<sup>98</sup>

95 Ş. Pamuk, 'Prices in the Ottoman Empire, 1469–1914', *IJMES*, 36 (2004), 453–468.

96 A. Y. Kaya, 'Türkiye'de Burjuva Devrimi (1908–1923)', *Devrimci Marksizm*, 55 (2023), 9–14.

97 Tübitak Project, *Ölüm ve Yaşam Arasında: 1845 Orta Anadolu Kuraklığı ve Kıtılığında Ankara ve Çevresi*, Project Id: 121K385 (TÜBİTAK 1001; 2021–2024). See also İ. Kokdaş, '1845 Orta Anadolu Kuraklığı ve Kıtılığında Devlet Kredileri', paper presented at the *III. Uluslararası Osmanlı Araştırmaları Kongresi (OSARK)* (September 7–9, 2022) in Istanbul.

98 M. M. Sunar, 'Chasing Janissary Ghosts: Sultan Mahmud II's Paranoia about a Janissary Uprising after the Abolition of the Janissary Corps', in Y. Spyropoulos (ed.), *Insights into Janissary Networks, 1700–1826* [special issue of *Cihannüma: Journal of History and Geography Studies*, 8/1 (2022)], 145–168.



# CONFISCATION OF JANISSARY *ORTA* FUNDS AND PROPERTY IN ISTANBUL FOLLOWING THE ABOLITION OF THE JANISSARY CORPS

Mehmet Mert SUNAR\*

## *Introduction*

IN THE DAYS FOLLOWING THE ABOLITION OF THE JANISSARY CORPS, Sultan Mahmud II's finance officials found themselves busy running after the properties and funds belonging to *ortas* and individual Janissaries outlawed by the state. From a legal point of view, the properties and financial funds of the Janissary Corps and its members were considered *beytülmâl*, or state property. Thus, their confiscation by the state treasury was simply a matter of course. As the financial resources generated through this process were funnelled to the newly founded Asakir-i Mansure army, government clerks prepared detailed registers on the collection of debts and the auctioning and transfer of Janissary properties. These registers provide invaluable data on the credit relations and mechanics of Janissary *orta* funds<sup>1</sup> which functioned as cash waqfs. They also list a portion of the properties owned by *ortas* and individual Janissaries in early nineteenth-century Istanbul. By utilising the data thus provided, the present study focuses on two subjects; firstly, it examines the mechanics of Janissary *orta* funds by looking at the lending process, debtors, types of surety, rate of returns, and supervision of funds. Secondly, it aims to fathom the social meanings and implications of these credit relations for the Janissary Corps and the Ottoman public in early nineteenth-century Istanbul.

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\* Istanbul Medeniyet University.

1 The size of a Janissary *orta* as a military unit varied considerably; some *ortas* were 'battalion' size, while others had enough men for a 'regiment'. Thus, the words 'battalion' or 'regiment' do not exactly correspond to it. Throughout this paper, the Ottoman term '*orta sandığı*' will be translated as 'Janissary *orta* funds'.

Even though Ottoman cash waqfs are a popular and hotly debated subject, those operated by the Janissaries have remained peripheral, as have *orta* funds.<sup>2</sup> Likewise, although the secondary literature has approached cash waqfs and credit relations from economic, legal, and religious perspectives, the socio-political meanings and implications of their credit relations have remained on the side-lines. An effort to understand the mechanisms of Janissary *orta* funds ideally needs to include all of the aforementioned perspectives, but for reasons of feasibility the present study is restricted to bringing the social and political side of Janissary *orta* funds into consideration. Since it is impossible to penetrate the social and political implications of Janissary Corps institutional credit relations without understanding how *orta* funds worked, the present study first has to examine the mechanics of these cash waqfs as much as the available data permits. However, I have to admit from the outset that this investigation will raise more questions than it answers, as the sources used here are not suited to clarifying certain issues that are key to understanding Janissary *orta* funds and their socio-political functions.

### *An imperfect confiscation: going after Janissary funds and properties*

As Sultan Mahmud II's government was desperately in need of financial resources for the newly founded Asakir-i Mansure army, a portion of the initial budget allocated for this purpose came from collecting the debts owed to Janissary *orta* funds and auctioning off Janissary properties. Assuming all 196 Janissary *ortas* had cash

2 Ö. L. Barkan and E. H. Ayverdi, *İstanbul Vakıfları Tahrir Defteri 953 (1546) Tarihli* (Istanbul 1970); N. Çağatay, 'Ribā and Interest Concept and Banking in the Ottoman Empire', *SI*, 32 (1970), 53-68; J. E. Mandaville, 'Usurious Piety: The Cash Waqf Controversy in the Ottoman Empire', *IJMES*, 3/10 (1979), 289-308; S. Öztürk, *Askeri Kassama Ait On Yedinci Asır İstanbul Tereke Defterleri (Sosyo-Ekonomik Tahlil)* (Istanbul 1995); M. Çizakça, 'Cash Waqfs of Bursa, 1555-1823', *JESHO*, 3/38 (1995), 313-354; Idem, 'Ottoman Cash Waqfs Revisited: The Case of Bursa 1555- 1823', *FSTC Paper*, No: 4062; İ. Kurt, *Para Vakıfları: Nazariyat ve Tatbikat* (Istanbul 1996); S. Kaya, 'Para Vakıfları Üzerine', *Türkiye Araştırmaları Literatür Dergisi*, 1/1 (2003), 189-203; Idem, 'XVIII. Yüzyıl Sonlarında Üsküdar Vakıflarının Gelir Kaynakları', *Divân Disiplinlerarası Çalışmalar Dergisi*, 29/15 (2010), 95-132; S. Kaya, M. E. Durmuş, İ. Bektaş and A. Akkaya, 'Muhasebe Kayıtları Işığında 18. Yüzyıl Para Vakıflarının Nakit İşletme Yöntemleri', *International Journal of Islamic Economics and Finance Studies*, 3/3 (2017), 50-62; T. Özcan, *Osmanlı Para Vakıfları: Kanuni Dönemi Üsküdar Örneği* (Ankara 2003); A. Şenyurt, 'Yeniçeri Ortaları Yardımlaşma Sandıkları', *Kocaeli Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, 33 (2017), 155-170; N. Y. Kayaçağlayan, 'XVIII. Yüzyılın İlk Yarısında Yeniçerilerin Politik ve Sosyo-Ekonomik Roller: İstanbul Örneği', unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Yıldırım Beyazıt Üniversitesi, 2018; Ç. Gürsoy, 'Osmanlı Esnaf ve Avarız Sandıklarının Günlük Hayata Katkısı', *Journal of History Studies*, 8/10 (2018), 121-142.



waqfs, the total amount of their capital and real estate would have constituted a considerable sum. Admittedly, not all *ortas* were of the same size or power, and some probably controlled small-size cash waqfs. Yet extrapolating from the available data, the total capital owned by Janissary *orta* funds must have amounted to millions of *guruş*, even by conservative estimates, and certainly should have provided enough money to establish the new army. However, in practical terms there were several reasons why the whole process of collecting this capital turned out to be more complicated than it seemed. In the heat of the last Janissary uprising, Yeni Odalar – the main complex housing the majority of the Janissary barracks – had been bombarded and burnt to the ground by troops loyal to Sultan Mahmud II, destroying the majority of the so-called *orta* chests used for the safekeeping of funds, along with documents, and pawned valuables belonging to Janissary *ortas*. It is clear from the official registers that some of these were hastily salvaged by government agents searching for *orta* chests, account books and other valuables in the flaming Janissary barracks. In the absence of reliable records, information on the capital, loans, and debtors of *orta* funds was provided by *mütevellîs*, the senior Janissary officers who had acted as the trustees of Janissary *orta* funds, as well as by *orta* clerks. They probably considered themselves lucky; while Sultan Mahmud II's administration was hunting down and punishing leading Janissaries, it needed their knowledge and cooperation to call in the loans owed to *orta* funds.<sup>3</sup>

The evidence suggests that Sultan Mahmud II's government could only collect a portion of the institutional and personal wealth of Janissaries. According to an account register listing the initial revenues for the new army, the total sum of the cash and valuables acquired through collection of the debts owed to Janissary *orta* funds and the sale of Janissary properties between the end of June and September 1826 was a mere 692,518 *guruş*.<sup>4</sup> Considering all the complications associated with the confiscation of such funds and properties, it is safe to argue that this was a small fraction of the total wealth held by the *ortas*.

Another obstacle in the way of debt collection was the government's desire to win over public opinion following the abolition of the Janissary Corps. Sultan Mahmud II needed to present the Ottoman public with the image of a merciful monarch, and forgiving some of the debts owed to Janissary *orta* funds was a good way of doing so. This meant that after discovering only a portion of the loans owed to *orta* cash waqfs, the government waived some of them to bolster positive public opinion. The haphazard character of the collection and confiscation process is also

3 BOA, Maliyeden Müdevver Defterler (MAD.d.), 9772 (1243/1827-28), 21.

4 BOA, MAD.d.11831 (21 Za 1241-29 Ra 1242/27 June 1826-31 October 1826), 3.

evident from the extant registers, which would take a separate discussion on the particularities of the data used in this study.

### *The registers*

So far, I have only managed to locate nine registers in the Ottoman Archives concerning the confiscation process. Two of those nine are labelled as “damaged” and inaccessible at present;<sup>5</sup> five of the remaining seven are probate (*muhallefat*) registers belonging to the Treasury. In addition to entries concerning Janissary funds and property, they also include other topics such as properties and cash belonging to people who died without heirs, or the confiscation of properties from Greeks accused of rebelling against the Ottoman Empire.<sup>6</sup> Of the last two registers in the group, the first is a revenue and expenditure log prepared for the newly founded Asakir-i Mansure army. It lists the partially collected loans of Janissary *orta* funds which were directly transferred to the Asakir-i Mansure army as revenue between the end of June and September 1826.<sup>7</sup> The second is a *mezad* (auction) register listing the real estate held by Janissary *orta* funds and individual Janissaries that was transferred to the endowment of Sultan Ahmed I.<sup>8</sup> This records the names of tenants and monthly rents of the real estate and *gediks*. It also includes a list of Janissary real estate and *gediks* auctioned to the public following the abolition of the Janissary Corps. Most of the entries in these registers deal with funds and properties in the capital, though there are a few relating to such assets in the provinces. It remains unknown whether there were separate registers for the provinces, or whether such matters were mainly dealt with locally.

The entries concerning Janissary funds and properties in the above-mentioned registers were dated between 1826 and 1827, with some degree of overlapping, since certain entries were repeated in more than one register. This complicates healthy data analysis when combined with other factors such as the haphazard recording style employed by clerks. For example, some entries do not include the value of

5 BOA, MAD.d.12001; 12966. These registers are in physically very poor condition and have been seriously damaged by humidity and bookworms. Unfortunately, it seems that they will remain inaccessible in the near future.

6 BOA, MAD.d.8390 (21 Za 1241-27 M 1247/ 27 June 1826-8 July 1831); 9765 (9 R 1239-9 Za 1247/13 December 1823-10 April 1832); 9766 (20 Za 1241-16 M 1253/26 June 1826-22 April 1837); 9772 ( 3 M 1243-18 R 1244/27 July 1828-28 October 1828); 12411 (13 Ra 1242-18 R 1249/15 October 1826-4 September 1833).

7 BOA, MAD.d.11831 (21 Za 1241-29 Ra 1242/27 June 1826-31 October 1826).

8 BOA, MAD.d.9768 (13 L 1242-4 Ş 1248/10 May 1827-27 December 1832).

properties and *gediks*, or only give information on instalment payments rather than the total value of loans. Taken together with the fact that the government could only reclaim a portion of Janissary property and funds due to the chaotic situation during and after the abolition, these factors prevent us from reaching an estimate on the total number and value of properties, real estate, and *gediks* belonging to Janissary *ortas* and outlawed Janissaries in 1826. Still, these registers provide sufficient data for an initial analysis and study of Janissary *orta* funds.

Further account registers concerning individual Janissary *orta* funds are to be found in the Ottoman archives,<sup>9</sup> with valuable data and important leads on the workings of Janissary *orta* funds in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Overall, the above registers offer a unique bird's eye view of Janissary cash waqfs and properties, which are otherwise only found piecemeal under different classifications in numerous ledgers and documents, as well as in court records.

### *The mechanisms of Janissary orta funds*

Known by contemporaries as an *orta* chest (*orta sandığı*), a Janissary *orta* fund was simply a cash waqf established for the sole purpose of meeting the expenses of a particular Janissary *orta*. Although evidence is scanty, it can be assumed that all 196 Janissary *ortas* had a chest to serve this specific purpose.<sup>10</sup>

Since the Ottoman administration did not allocate any budget for the yearly expenses of Janissary *ortas*, each one had to maintain a profitable cash waqf to finance its expenses in peacetime. Even during wars and campaigns, the state was only

9 The earliest example of such registers in the Ottoman Archives can be found in the Baş Muhasebe classification, dating to the first half of the eighteenth century; BOA, Baş Muhasebe Kalemi Defterleri (D.BŞM.d.), 41042. Unfortunately, this is an incomplete register and I have not been able to identify which Janissary *orta* it belonged to. The earliest entry in it is dated 25 M 1149/5 June 1736 and the latest 1 C 1171/10 February 1758. For the registers recording the monthly expenditures and incomes of the 44th and 61st *bölük ortas*, see BOA, Yeniçeri Kalemi Defterleri (D.YNÇ.d.), 34603; 34811; 34954; MAD.d.5130; D.BŞM.d.41151; D.PYM.d.35601. The registers of the 61st *bölük* have recently been published; A. Gül (ed.) *İrad ve Mesarifat Beyan Olunur: Yeniçeri Ocağı 61. Bölüğün Gelir-Gider Defterleri (1163-1241/1750-1826)* (Istanbul 2023). For the parts of an account register of the 32nd *bölük*, also see BOA, D.YNÇ.d.34883. This has also recently been published, with some serious errors; E. Gökçe, 'Bir Yeniçeri Ortasının Günlük Masrafları: 32. Ortanın Harcamaları Üzerine Bir Değerlendirme', *Osmanlı Medeniyeti Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 17 (2023), 77-106.

10 Although Kayaçağlayan argues that some Janissary *orta* funds could not meet their own expenditures, she does not produce any evidence for her argument beyond a seventeenth century document which basically talks about financial difficulties in the general treasury of the Janissary Corps. N. Y. Kayaçağlayan, 'XVIII. Yüzyılın İlk Yarısında', 98, 114.

responsible for giving basic provisions to mobilised Janissaries. If called up, *ortas* had to pay any other expenditures incurred while campaigning from their *orta* funds, through letters of exchange (*poliçe*) which were then sent to their barracks in Istanbul for payment.<sup>11</sup>

The war and peacetime operation of a Janissary *orta* included many different expenses, the greatest being the preparation of daily messes. Everyday operation, maintenance and minor repairs to barracks also drew significant funds, to cover items such as candles and oil for illumination, the renewal and repair of furniture and utensils, cleaning and heating expenses, repairs to water and drain pipes, and other structural repairs carried out on the barracks. Expenditure on animals, tools, and other equipment used by mobilised members of the *orta* during wartime was another major cost the *orta* fund needed to deal with.<sup>12</sup> To do so, each *orta* fund had to make yearly profits by money lending. Like other cash waqfs, Janissary *orta* chests issued loans regularly to gain income from the interest they charged.

A senior officer in the *orta* called the *mütevelli*<sup>13</sup> was in charge of managing the *orta*'s cash waqf as a trustee, while other senior officers acted as a board, auditing the accounts fairly regularly. From the extant registers it appears that the accounts were checked yearly in most cases, though audits at irregular intervals varying from 12 to 26 months are also recorded.<sup>14</sup> At the closure of each accounting period, the senior officers of the *orta* would stamp their seals underneath the summary explanation written in the account book. It can be assumed that the *mütevelli* was responsible for how the capital of the *orta*'s cash waqf was invested and run, how funds were distributed as credits to borrowers, and how the return on those loans was spent on the *orta*'s needs. Even though on paper the accounts of Janissary cash waqfs seem to have been closely audited by the senior officers (also called as the elders) in each *orta*, it remains unclear how thorough such supervision was. However, if a Janissary

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11 BOA, D.YNÇ.d.34603: 25, 66, 70; MAD.d.5130: 50.

12 BOA, MAD.d.5130: 45-46.

13 *Kavanin-i Yeniçeriyân*, an important early seventeenth century source for the Janissary Corps, calls *orta* funds as *düzen akçesi*. However, *Kavanin* does not specify who ran the *düzen akçesi*. It only uses the plural when talking about lending money from these funds probably referring to all the senior officers in the *orta* as a board. It also gives some hints as to the origin of the Janissary cash waqfs, saying that this money was used for buying pack horses for Janissaries on campaigns; I. E. Petrosyan (ed.), *Mebde-i kanun-i Yenicheri Odzhagy tarikhi = Istoriia proiskhozhdeniia zakonov Ianycharskogo korpusa* (Moskow 1987), 173, 178-180.

14 While the accounts of the 44th *bölük* were audited yearly by its senior officers, the senior officers of the 61st *bölük* audited the *orta* fund accounts at irregular intervals, varying from a year to 26 months. BOA, MAD.d.5130; D.YNÇ.d.34603.

cash waqf could not make enough profit to meet its yearly expenses and started losing money, it can be assumed that the *mütevelli* would be held accountable.

Since Janissary *orta* funds were dependent on the interest from loans for their income, *mütevellis* had to make sure that the majority of the capital was distributed to borrowers. One important source when tracing the loans granted from Janissary cash waqfs comes in the form of court records, though it should be borne in mind that many *orta* fund loans were not formally registered. We can assume that the registration of such loans in court records was often incidental, concerning some other matter such as the death of a debtor, inheritance settlement, or a certain type of dispute. It can likewise be assumed that the *orta mütevellis* and elders only resorted to litigation process and courts on certain occasions, such as when internal disputes over funds arose, or when they were unable to collect a loan granted to a debtor with strong connections in the capital or provinces.<sup>15</sup> Normally speaking, collecting a debt from an ordinary Ottoman subject would not have posed a challenge to a Janissary *orta*, which could always resort to threats or use of violence. In fact, when we look at the profile of the *orta* funds' debtors, we see that they usually came from the lower and middle strata in Ottoman society. Debtors from the middle strata with powerful connections were not unknown, however, and recovering a debt from them could prove challenging. If the litigation process did not force a debtor with such connections to pay his/her delinquent debt, then the *orta* fund would try to secure an imperial order to recover its money.<sup>16</sup>

Court records also document individual cases distributed over long periods and in different locations. Thus, the use of extant registers in the Ottoman archives can surely fill some gaps in our understanding of Janissary cash waqfs, by providing us with a large data set at a specific location and time in history, namely Istanbul prior to the abolition of the Janissary Corps. However, as with any kind of historical evidence, these registers provide imperfect pictures of historical reality defined by the individuals who prepared them. One should not assume that the registers include every transaction conducted by *orta mütevellis*, who would have wanted to hide usurious and illicit practices or under-the-table dealings.

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15 For the activities of Janissary *orta* funds in the provinces, see Y. Spyropoulos, 'Janissary Politics on the Ottoman Periphery (18th-Early 19th C.)', in M. Sariyannis (ed.), *Political Thought and Practice in the Ottoman Empire. Halcyon Days in Crete IX: A Symposium Held in Rethymno, 9-11 January 2015* (Rethymno 2019), 449-481. Also see 'Regimental Waqfs and Janissary Funds within Local and Transprovincial Settings: The Cases of Istanbul and Vidin, 1720-1826' by İrfan Kokdaş and Yahya Araz in this volume.

16 For a petition by the *mütevelli* of the 31st *bölük* asking for state assistance in collecting a loan given to a local Janissary in Karahisar-ı Şarki, see BOA, Cevdet Askeri (C.AS), 474/19781 (undated).

Among the extant *orta* account registers, the one held by the 44th *bölük* is the most regularly and thoroughly kept of all, meticulously showing the *orta*'s expenditures and income for a period of at least six years, from October 1796 to August 1803.<sup>17</sup> The expenditures and income of the cash waqf fluctuated from year to year, and the yearly profits from the issued loans barely met the *orta*'s expenses. The cash waqf seems to have produced an average annual income of 3,500 *guruş*, whereas the average yearly expenses stood at around 3,600 *guruş*.<sup>18</sup> While the *orta* fund seemed to close this accounting period at a loss, it received some extra revenues and so closed its accounts with a profit of 519 *guruş*.<sup>19</sup> Still, this does not alter the fact that income and expenditures hung in a very delicate balance and that the *orta* needed some extra revenues to cover its losses.

A similar case can be observed in the account book of the 32nd *bölük*, though its cash waqf apparently owned less capital than that of the 44th. Unfortunately, we only have a portion of the book, covering less than a year. From 2 June 1809 to 4 May 1810 the *orta*'s expenditures reached 1,733 *guruş*, while its cash waqf generated 1,831 *guruş* in income from loans.<sup>20</sup> Since we do not have the rest of the account book, it is difficult to ascertain whether the *orta*'s cash waqf was also walking a tightrope, like the one operated by the 44th.

The other extant register belonged to the 61st *bölük* and is mainly an expenditure book, though it does contain a few odd pages listing some issued loans in a very untidy manner. Thus, it is only possible to analyse the *orta*'s expenses for a given period. In this case the bookkeeping was far from meticulous, and the accounts were only audited by senior officers at irregular intervals. For the sake of comparison, from 27 February 1797 to 16 October 1803 the *orta* spent 7,472 *guruş*, at a yearly average of 1,128 *guruş*.<sup>21</sup> Since it is not possible to deduce the yearly income of the 61st *bölük*'s cash waqf from the available data, we do not know if the yearly interest from the loans covered the *orta*'s expenditures.

In the case of the 32nd and 44th *böluks*, it is also possible to roughly estimate the size of loans made in the market by their *orta* funds. If we consider the legally approved rate of return (15%) for cash waqfs, their capital in loans can be calculated

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17 BOA, MAD.d.5130. During the editing process of the final draft of this article, I discovered in the Ottoman archives two more account registers belonging to the same *orta*, BOA, D.YNÇ.d.34954 and 34881. However, there was not enough time to finish their analysis and incorporate it into the article.

18 Ibid., 72.

19 As some of this deficit stemmed from mobilisation for the Egypt campaign in 1799, the *orta* received a contribution from the state to meet its campaign expenditures; *ibid.* 72.

20 BOA, D.YNÇ.d.34883: 10-11.

21 BOA, D.YNÇ.d.34603: 38-52.

for the given periods. The cash waqf of the 32nd had around 14,193 *guruş* in loans between 2 June 1809 and 4 May 1810, while that of the 44th lent out an average of 23,333 *guruş* yearly between October 1796 and August 1803. Compared with the sums that leading private money lenders (*sarrafs*) of the time dealt in when doing business with high-ranking state officials and rich merchants, these numbers do not appear very significant. For example, the total amount of 8.5 million *guruş* owed by six high-ranking Ottoman officials to the Jewish financier Şapcı Bahor in the time of Mahmud II surely dwarfed the capital owned by individual *orta* funds.<sup>22</sup> However, when we consider the fact that all Janissary *ortas* as well as other units in the Kapıkulu Corps owned cash waqfs, their total value becomes a very significant amount for the economy.<sup>23</sup> Even though they may be labelled micro-credit institutions individually, their collective effect on the economy was much greater. We should also keep in mind that the official financier (*Ocak Bazirganı*) of the Janissary Corps was one of the biggest financiers of the Empire and there is a need for detailed studies on this subject.

For the time being, our inability to locate the account registers of Janissary *ortas* in large numbers – if they do exist – prevents us from answering certain questions about Janissary cash waqfs. To take one example, we do not know what happened to their capital in the short and long terms. If a waqf made more than enough yearly profit to meet its expenses, the remainder was then added to the capital; if the opposite was the case, then the capital would shrink rather than expand. Only the account register of the 44th *bölük* provides a limited picture of its cash waqf in the short term. From 1796 to 1803, the income generated by the loans it had granted remained more or less the same, despite some slight fluctuations. From 1804 to 1809, there was a discernible decrease in incomes, with some fluctuations (Table I). Yet this came hand in hand with a noticeable decrease in expenditures, so annual income was enough to cover expenses. We do not know for sure if the yearly income of the 44th *bölük* continued to decrease after 1809, but from the probate registries prepared following abolition we can trace several loans belonging to the same *orta*.<sup>24</sup> This shows that the cash waqf continued to function until 1826. Still, we are

22 Y. Cezar, 'The Role of Sarrafs in Ottoman Finance and Economy in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries', in C. Imber and K. Kiyotaki (eds), *Frontiers of Ottoman Studies: State, Province, and the West*, Vol. I (London 2005), 67, 74. For a similar size credit relation between the governor of Vidin and Çirmen, Cemal Pasha, and his *sarrafs* Hüdaverdioğlu at the beginning of the nineteenth century, see A. Şahiner, 'The Sarrafs of Istanbul: Financiers of the Empire', unpublished M.A. thesis, Boğaziçi University, 1995, 40.

23 The units in the Armourer Corps (Cebeci Ocağı) also had cash waqfs to finance their yearly expenditures. See BOA, MAD.d.9766: 182, 183, 187, 213, 233-234, 236, 241-242.

24 BOA, MAD.d.9772: 125, 141, 193-194, 198-199; 9776: 185; 8390: 43.

Period	Income	Expenditure
4 October 1796-21 October 1797	109,930	125,247
22 October 1797-10 October 1798	118,620	106,112
11 October 1798-30 September 1799	120,123	78,422
1 October 1799-10 September 1800	120,824	186,561
11 September 1800-8 September 1801	114,630	126,953
9 September 1801-29 August 1802	111,979	85,097
30 August 1802-18 August 1803	123,720	97,280
19 August 1803-7 August 1804	117,300	89,600
8 August 1804-27 July 1805	83,124	100,237
28 July 1805-16 July 1806	92,422	77,143
17 July 1806-6 July 1807	76,940	66,523
7 July 1807-24 June 1808	102,720	76,570
25 June 1808-13 June 1809	55,340	81,256

**Table I:** The expenditure and income of the 44th *bölük orta* fund in *paras* between 4 October 1796 and 13 June 1809 (source: BOA, MAD.d.5130)

forced to admit that such limited data cannot offer a comprehensive answer to the above-mentioned question.

Although the capital that the *orta* funds had for lending would have been moderate, it did suffice to finance most local needs. Credit and loans were granted to a broad spectrum of people, many of whom resorted to small-scale lending. The large number of small and medium-sized debts owed to the *orta* funds shows that people from every walk of life practiced borrowing in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Istanbul. Following the abolition of the Janissary Corps, when the state treasury went after the people who owed sums to the *orta* funds, many of them presented petitions asking for regulation or relief of their debts. We can access part of the contents of their petitions from the imperial decisions recorded in the registers. In some rare cases, petitioners felt the necessity to legitimise why they had resorted to borrowing money from the accursed Janissary *ortas*, so it becomes possible to learn some of the reasons why people of moderate and limited means sought credit in early nineteenth-century Istanbul.



From these rare cases, we learn that Istanbul residents borrowed money from Janissary *orta* funds for urgent and basic needs such as paying for health treatment, repairing/expanding a residential house, or buying necessary equipment or commodities to run a business/trade.<sup>25</sup> Several debtors argued that they had taken out loans after falling on hard times, without going into specifics.<sup>26</sup> Then there are other individual reasons, such as an *imam* who took out a loan to repair a mosque, a son trying to settle his deceased father's debts, two business partners seeking a loan to start a new business venture, or a chimney pipe seller needing money to buy a new shop.<sup>27</sup>

In another entry, we learn about the unlucky case of the 59th *bölük*'s commanding officer (*çorbacı*), who bought his office with loans from various Janissary *orta* funds (including that of his own *orta*) six months before the abolition of the Janissary Corps. To find the 40,000 *guruş* required to purchase the post of *çorbacı* in the 59th, Seyyid Mehmed Agha borrowed 15,000 *guruş* from the funds of the 1st and 59th *bölüks* and the 9th *cemaat*. He obtained the rest from the specific fund of the Janissary Corps which handled the money belonging to the orphans of deceased Janissaries. To put it in Seyyid Mehmed's own words, even before he had laid his hands on a single *guruş* from his post's revenues, the Janissary Corps was abolished, and he was left with an enormous debt.<sup>28</sup>

### *Debtors*

Although the registers are very sparing in citing why Istanbul residents took out loans from Janissary *orta* funds, there are obvious reasons why debtors' identities are relatively easy to uncover, without necessarily learning everything about them. In many entries, all we have is a name with a very generic title that does not say much about the debtor. While "Efendi" and "Bey" could signify non-military status, this is not an absolute given, since we come across Janissary clerks who carried these titles. "Agha" is also another problematic issue; though some historians tend to take it as an exclusively military title, there are many instances that cast doubt on that assumption.

Still, there are many entries that give away debtors' occupations and social status. The lists of people who borrowed money from the *orta* funds include both

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25 BOA, MAD.d.8390: 5; 9772: 94, 172.

26 BOA, MAD.d.9772: 202.

27 Ibid., 90, 20, 98, 172.

28 Ibid., 159.

individuals with military titles and others without them, with the former apparently constituting the majority. Since our analysis depends on the data provided by the extant registers, there is always a significant margin of error. It is not possible to know what kind of status (civilians, Janissary affiliates, *çalık* Janissaries) these debtors without military titles claimed to hold. There is no need to enter into a lengthy discussion here on the problems associated with individual titles and their use in the early modern Ottoman Empire – we should simply note that while the analysis presented in this study is not free of such problems, it still provides an important contribution to our understanding of the role played by the Janissary *ortas* in the trade and credit networks of Istanbul.

Istanbul residents who sought loans from the *orta* funds included Muslim and non-Muslim men and women from different socio-economic backgrounds. In all likelihood, anyone with sufficient financial surety and necessary personal links could obtain credit from *orta* funds. It is not surprising, on the other hand, that the majority of debtors were merchants and artisans engaged in a wide variety of trades. Among this group, those engaged in the supply, preparation and consumption of food constitute the majority. Grain and flour merchants, pastry makers/sellers, bakers, olive oil and animal fat traders, greengrocers, grocers, egg sellers, candy makers, tahini sellers, cooks, and kebab sellers were listed as customers of *orta* funds in the registers. Other visible merchant/artisan groups that borrowed money from the funds included second-hand goods dealers, barbers, and coffeehouse owners. Artisans who manufactured/sold household utensils and tools, textile merchants, bathhouse owners, and shoemakers were other groups represented in small numbers in the registers.

It is noteworthy that the majority of debts were owed by individuals, with partners very rarely taking out joint loans from the funds. There are cases in which several merchants/artisans from the same occupational group and location obtained credit from the same *orta* fund, but their debts were recorded individually in the registers. This probably points to a situation via which one of the merchants/artisans had ties and access to a specific *orta* fund and acted as a link for his colleagues to enter into a credit relationship with it.<sup>29</sup> There are also some visible concentrations, whereby certain *orta* funds apparently did business with particular groups of merchants/artisans. However, one should note that these entries hint at the existence of such relations rather than providing definitive evidence of them. One example

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29 For several pastry makers (*çörekçis*) who borrowed money from the 25th *bölük*, see BOA, MAD.d.8390: 18. For various merchants and artisans from Galata and Tophane districts who entered into credit relations with the 9th *sekban bölük*, see *ibid.*, 20. For similar credit relations between greengrocers from Bayezid neighbourhood and the 32nd *bölük*; tahini sellers and the 9th *sekban bölük*; second-hand good dealers and the 9th *sekban bölük*, see also *ibid.*, 24, 26, 38.

is the 64th *cemaat* fund, which seems to have been the credit source of choice for the flour merchants of Unkapanı.<sup>30</sup> This may be related to the 64th *cemaat*'s strong presence in the markets of Galata and the Golden Horn. The 64th was not the only pretender to dominance in this region, but it had a marked presence among the flour merchants as a creditor. Another interesting case was the *orta* fund of the 9th *sekan bölük*, whose borrowers were mainly though not exclusively non-Muslim merchants and artisans, most of whom were Armenian and Greek second-hand goods dealers at Parmakkapı.<sup>31</sup> It is difficult to reveal the origin of such credit relations in the absence of any other available information; whether it was due to a deliberate choice made by *mütevellıs* or simply to a snowball effect among merchants remains unknown at present.

Even though the data set is very small, the presence of the 9th *cemaat* as a creditor for merchants and artisans in the district between Galata and Tophane is also an interesting one, since this was an area hotly contested by the 25th *bölük*, the 64th and the 71st *cemaats*.<sup>32</sup> It is probably misleading to think of them as having absolute control over business life in that region, however, as there is a tendency to dramatise such trends under the influence of primary and secondary sources that exaggerate mafia-type activities by Janissary *ortas*.

We should also mention both senior officers and rank-and-file Janissaries who borrowed money from *orta* funds. There is some overlap between this group and the previous one, since some of these Janissaries carried *esnaf* titles. Although they tended to borrow money from their own *orta*'s fund, this was not valid in every case,<sup>33</sup> as we know some soldiers sought and acquired loans from other *orta* funds. There were probably many different factors at play here, from the availability of credit to intra-*orta* relations or even personal choices.

Apart from merchants, artisans and Janissaries, those entering into credit relations with *orta* funds included mid- and low-ranking government functionaries, clerks, *imams*, and Muslim and non-Muslim women. Compared to the former groups, these categories are represented in very small numbers. In the case of women debtors, most inherited a deceased or absentee husband's debt rather than being direct recipients of loans. However, there were several instances in which both

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30 BOA, MAD.d.8390: 12-13.

31 Ibid., 19, 29, 38.

32 See note 29.

33 Mehmed Usta of the 22nd *cemaat* borrowing from the 69th *cemaat orta* fund, BOA, MAD.d.8390: 13; Halil Usta of the 43rd *bölük* borrowing from the 95th *cemaat orta* fund, *ibid.*, 22; Mustafa Agha of the 15th *bölük*, steward of the barbers, borrowing from the 64th *cemaat orta* fund, *ibid.*, 16.

Muslim and non-Muslim women sought credit from Janissary *orta* funds.<sup>34</sup> In one case, a certain Rabia Hanım, owner of a bathhouse in the Grand Bazaar, borrowed a considerable sum of 7,000 *guruş* from the 25th *cemaat* fund and mortgaged her bathhouse in return.<sup>35</sup> In contrast, Ayşe Hanım from Samatya took out a small loan of 50 *guruş* from the 33rd *bölük*'s fund, most probably for an urgent need.<sup>36</sup> Most importantly, there were three cases in which Muslim women assumed the role of creditors by extending loans to a Janissary *orta* fund and Janissary artisans. In the first case, a creditor named Fatma Hatun gave a loan of 894 *guruş* to the fund of the 39th *cemaat*. As surety for the loan, the fund pawned valuable silver items to her.<sup>37</sup> A woman creditor is an interesting case in itself, but the idea of an *orta* fund seeking a loan and literally pawning the *orta*'s silver is also highly intriguing in the context of this study. There are two possible explanations here. The simpler and more obvious one is that the 39th *cemaat orta* fund had some cash problems and had to resort to borrowing by pawning valuable items. The second explanation includes a bit of over-reading and speculation. Could this be a case of craftiness by the 39th *cemaat* fund trustee, who was re-pawning items already pledged to the *orta* fund by debtors? Such a move could only be meaningful if the trustee could run the loan at a higher rate of return. This might not be far-fetched speculation, considering how some waqf trustees exploited rate differences by simply borrowing waqf capital at a lower rate of return and lending it to *sarrafs* at a higher one.<sup>38</sup>

There is another entry in the register for a Fatma Hatun who was lending money to the boatmen in the Samatya district, though whether this is the same creditor mentioned above is impossible to tell in the absence of more information. As Sultan Mahmud II's government exiled the majority of the boatmen affiliated with the Janissaries and confiscated their boats after the abolition of the Janissary Corps, Fatma Hatun presented several petitions to demand settlement of her loans from the money acquired from their auction by the state.<sup>39</sup> In a third case, we come across a certain Ayşe Hatun, who also lent money to boatmen in Samatya.<sup>40</sup>

There was one further way for women to be a part of credit transactions with Janissary *orta* funds, albeit indirectly. When people needed to show collateral to take out loans from Janissary *orta* funds, the most commonly pawned items were

34 BOA, MAD.d.9776: 175; 9772: 137, 378; 8390: 15, 22.

35 MAD.d.9772: 378.

36 MAD.d.8390: 14

37 MAD.d.9776: 264.

38 Çizakça, 'Cash Waqfs of Bursa, 1555-1823;', 333-348.

39 MAD.d.9776: 267, 269.

40 Ibid., 233.

jewels probably belonging to female members of their families. Jewels and other precious stones were often the first items to be sacrificed in emergencies, and credit transactions became possible thanks to these valuables.

### *Collaterals and pawning*

In the majority of cases, borrowers had to show some kind of collateral to obtain a loan from a Janissary *orta* fund. At least on paper, the money-lending activities of these funds reveal some level of professionalism. The documentary evidence shows that *mütevellîs* took few financial risks when granting loans. The most common practice among borrowers was either to pawn valuable items or to mortgage their real estate when seeking money from the funds. In addition to the jewels and precious stones mentioned above, other objects regularly pawned included weapons, gold coins, and valuable textiles.

Following the abolition of the Janissary Corps, when debtors demanded these valuables back on condition that they repaid their debts to the Treasury, most of them received a negative answer, since the majority of pledges had either been burnt or lost during the destruction of the Janissary barracks at Yeni Odalar. Since these were *bey' bi'l-vefa* transactions, the state was bound to compensate the value of the lost items if the debtor had already repaid his/her debt to the Treasury.<sup>41</sup> When dealing with those in arrears, the Treasury simply erased their debts to compensate for the missing objects. In most of these instances the debtors were able to prove their cases as they had *temessüks*, simply signed tickets issued by the *orta* funds declaring the amount loaned and items pawned in return.

Apart from valuable items, *esames* (Janissary pay tickets) were used as collateral by borrowers, and often appear as pledges in the registers. As more and more civilians acquired pay tickets as revenue-generating investments in the Ottoman Empire, it was common to see civilians going into the Janissary barracks to collect three-monthly Janissary salaries in Istanbul. For many, this also provided a way of establishing some kind of connection with the Janissary *ortas* and their administrative personnel. As observed from the Janissary *muhallefat* registers, such connections could easily turn into credit relations, as *esames* were perfect collateral. In most cases where borrowers pawned pay tickets to a Janissary *orta* fund in return for a loan, those tickets came from the same *orta*. This shows that having an *esame*

41 *TDVİA*, s.v., 'Bey' bi'l-vefâ' (A. Bayındır), 20-22. Also see S. Kaya, 'XVIII. Yüzyıl Osmanlı Toplumunda Kredi İlişkilerinin Hukuki Boyutu', *Türk Hukuk Tarihi Araştırmaları*, 3 (2007), 23-26.

from a given *orta* was a good way of establishing a credit link with its fund. Since pay tickets were bought and sold as bonds in the market, some people accumulated large numbers of them in the process. As a recent study has shown, their value was calculated for each daily *akçe* they brought in as salary. Between the second half of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the average market value of a daily salary of 1 *akçe* was 10 *guruş*, notwithstanding fluctuations.<sup>42</sup> To give an example, if you had an *esame* worth a daily salary of 10 *akçes*, you could sell it in the market for 100 *guruş* or more, depending on the circumstances.

Although one might expect similar calculations when *esames* were pawned to *orta* funds, we find a completely different picture, as nearly all loan contracts came with their own unique conditions. We have some cases in which the borrower pawned pay tickets for less than loans, whereas in others they did so at much higher values than the sum they received. Some of these differences can be explained in terms of stipulations in *rehin* transactions<sup>43</sup>, such as who collected the salary while the *esames* were pawned. In many cases there were also more factors at play than a simple matter of technicalities. Some were probably related to the conditions of the loan contracts, which register entries are silent on, but we can still speculate that there were other economic and social considerations affecting the contracts. Social status, credibility in society, family and business networks, and being from the same region and background were very likely to have been such factors.

In the aftermath of the Janissary Corp's abolition, pawned *esames* became a frequent subject of petitions made by debtors to the state. While some of them agreed to forfeit their *esames* in return for erasure of their debts, others asked for them back on condition that they repaid outstanding amounts to the Treasury.<sup>44</sup> As Sultan Mahmud II's administration was trying to get rid of the *esames* in circulation, it

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42 İ. Kokdaş, 'İstanbul Esame Piyasası Üzerine Notlar (1750-1826)' in A. Yıldız, Y. Spyropoulos and M. M. Sunar (eds), *Payitaht Yeniçerileri: Padişahın Asi Kulları, 1700, 1826* (Istanbul 2022), 189.

43 *TDVİA*, s.v., 'Rehin' (H. Çalış and H. Hacak), 538-542. See also Kaya, 'XVIII. Yüzyıl Osmanlı Toplumunda Kredi İlişkilerinin Hukuki Boyutu', 27-32.

44 When Sultan Mahmud II's government reintroduced military reforms in the guise of *Eşkinci* regulations in 1826, rumours of a secret government plan to invalidate Janissary *esames* began to circulate in public places in Istanbul. Since a considerable number of Istanbul residents held *esames* and collected three-monthly salaries, this was very effective propaganda in turning them against the government. However, to counter this disinformation, Sultan Mahmud II's government issued an imperial order and had it read in mosques, declaring the government's commitment to honour *esame* payments as long as their holders were alive. Mehmed Esad Efendi, *Üss-i Zafer* (Istanbul 1293/1876), 66-67. The *esame* holder debtors of the Janissary funds attempted to utilise this official promise in their petitions.

refused the latter demands and destroyed pawned *esames* in return for erasing debts.<sup>45</sup> Many debtors also used the *esames* in their possession in order to clear their debts. In this process, the state defined a fixed price for the value of *esames*, at exactly the average market price; 10 *guruş* for each *akçe* of daily salary. A number of these petitions filed by former Janissaries make us question conventional images of how the abolition of the Janissary Corps proceeded. Some petitioners were comfortable enough to ask the state to forgive their debts, while others entered into negotiations to claim a portion of their *esames* back, when they were worth more than the debts owed to Janissary funds. These petitions draw a completely different picture from those generally found in the literature, portraying an atmosphere of terror in which Sultan Mahmud II's government relentlessly hunted down former Janissaries after the abolition of the corps.<sup>46</sup> However, as some recent studies have clearly showed, Sultan Mahmud II's government took a very pragmatic approach to the issue of Janissary *esames* in order to win over public opinion in Istanbul. It also tried to remain on good terms with provincial Janissaries who did not challenge the sultan's governance. In many provincial centres, former Janissaries were silently incorporated into the new army and new order.<sup>47</sup>

*Gedik* licenses were also used as collateral in credit transactions with Janissary *orta* funds, though to a lesser degree. Unlike *esames*, *gediks* were not pawned, but were subject to a different kind of credit transaction, known as *ferağ bi'l-istiğlal*.

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45 Even though Sultan Mahmud II was forced to make an official promise to honour existing *esames*, he and his administration were quite reluctant to carry it out following the abolition of the Janissary Corps. As in this case, they utilised every opportunity and informal means to get rid of the *esames*. Holders who went to government offices to validate their *esames* usually met with the threatening attitudes of clerks who had obviously been ordered to reduce the number and amount of pay tickets. Thus, holders exited the government offices with their *esames* validated but sometimes reduced by 1/3 or 2/3 in value and amount. Mehmed Esad Efendi, *Vak'anüvis Es'ad Efendi Târîhi, Bahir Efendi'nin Zeyl ve İlaveleriyle*, ed. Z. Yılmaz (Istanbul 2000), 775-776. Howard Reed also relayed that it was the new *Serasker* (Commander-in-chief) of the Asakir-i Mansure army, the former Janissary Hüseyin Agha Pasha, who personally scrutinised *esames* presented for validation. Reed argued that this further discouraged former Janissary and civilian holders from collecting legal income which Mahmud II's government had guaranteed. H. A. Reed, 'The Destruction of the Janissaries by Mahmud II in June, 1826', unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton University, 1951, 336. However, it would have been impossible for the new Commander-in-chief to examine all *esames* in person. Such examinations probably took place on an ad hoc basis, and were surely part of the government's scare tactics.

46 BOA, MAD.d.9776: 188, 209, 226, 228; 9772: 205.

47 Y. Spyropoulos, 'Κοινωνική, διοικητική, οικονομική και πολιτική διάσταση του οθωμανικού στρατού: οι γενίτσαροι της Κρήτης, 1750-1826' [Social, Administrative, Economic and Political Dimensions of the Ottoman Army: The Janissaries of Crete, 1750-1826], unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Crete, 2014, 358-363.

Since debtors who showed *gediks* as collateral also had the right to rent them back, and Islamic legal principles made it impossible for creditors to acquire permanent usufruct of such collateral even if the debtor defaulted on his debt or died with heirs, they were probably not very popular items for Janissary *orta* funds to accept as sureties.<sup>48</sup> However, in practice things could be quite different and more flexible than the principles applied by the book.

One particular example shows the complications related to such collaterals. A box seller named Ahmed obtained 2,000 *guruş* in credit from the 59th *bölük* fund by showing his shop's *gedik* as surety (*ferağ suretiyle istiğlal*), and promptly vanished for three years without paying the interest on his loan. The trustee of the 59th *bölük*'s fund then sold the *gedik* to someone else, by going to court, declaring Ahmed deceased and having a *hüccet* issued for the sale. As there was nobody around to claim his *gedik* at that time, the case would have been closed if the clerk of the 59th *bölük* had not forgotten to erase Ahmed's name from the list of debtors. Following the abolition of the Janissary Corps, the Treasury clerks discovered Ahmed's debt in the register of the 59th *bölük*. They also found out that he had a mother in Istanbul. When they demanded his debt from her, the story took a different turn. The mother petitioned the Treasury, saying that Ahmed was not dead, he had just migrated from Istanbul to a different city, and that even if he had passed away, as the trustee of the 59th *bölük* claimed, he still had relatives who would be his inheritors, so his *gedik* should not have been sold without their consent. Finally, the administration found a quick solution by clearing Ahmed's debt. It is not clear whether the Treasury gave his mother the chance to reclaim the *gedik* by paying back the amount owed. But since the *gedik* had already been sold to someone else, it is highly probable that the Treasury resorted to a *fait accompli*, so as to avoid further complicating the matter. In any event, this case once again reminds us that not everything went by the book in real life.

A considerable number of *gediks* belonging to Janissary funds throughout Istanbul are also listed in the extant *muhallefat* registers.<sup>49</sup> Given the incomplete nature of our data, this likely represents only a portion of the actual total. The Treasury clearly did not consider these *gediks* as part of loan transactions involving *orta* funds, but rather as their property. How the funds acquired these *gediks* is a pertinent question. One avenue for the acquisition was through endowments: Janissaries

48 *TDVİA*, s.v., 'Ferāğ' (Ali Bardakoğlu), 351-354. One should also consider that real life application of such rules did not always go by the book, and that there were many cases in which *gediks* and properties of delinquent debtors were sold without their consent.

49 For the list of *gediks*, see M. M. Sunar, 'Cauldron of dissent: A study of the Janissary Corps, 1807-1826', unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Binghamton University-SUNY, 2006, 224.



could bequeath their wealth or properties to their *ortas*. Even in the case of having legitimate heirs, a Janissary could still leave one third of his wealth/property to his *orta* by preparing a will. It is plausible that some *gediks* ended up in funds through this route.

How these *gediks* were used by *orta* funds is also unclear. At the time the Janissary Corps was abolished, were these properties long-held possessions rented out to tenants, or were they recently acquired *gediks* in the process of being sold? Given that *orta* funds also owned a considerable number of residential houses generating monthly rents, the former option seems more probable. While finding immediate buyers for residential houses in early nineteenth-century Istanbul might not have been easy, the same may not have applied to *gediks*. Therefore, it is likely that this was a deliberate choice, and that *orta* trustees preferred the steady income from rental houses and *gediks* for their funds as a form of diversification.

Like *gediks*, the circumstances under which residential houses came into the possession of *orta* funds are not entirely clear. In the *muhallefat* registers, there are instances where debtors pledged their homes as collateral in *bey' bi'l-istiğlal* credit transactions.<sup>50</sup> However, much like *ferağ bi'l-istiğlal* transactions, transferring these houses to *orta* funds in the event of defaulted debt was rather difficult, though not impossible.<sup>51</sup> The sole legal method of transferring such collateral to an *orta* fund required the debtor's consent to sell the property to settle the outstanding amount.

Donations by well-to-do Janissaries also emerge as a probable means for *orta* funds to acquire these houses, akin to *gediks*.<sup>52</sup> It was not uncommon for wealthy Janissaries to bequeath a sum of cash or real estate rents to their own *orta* funds to meet certain needs of their comrades. Inheriting properties from Janissaries who had died without an heir was another way for funds to acquire real estate, even though there was always the chance that powerful actors would interfere to acquire houses. This suggests that donations and inheritance were other possible routes for *orta* funds to obtain such residential properties.

The issue of delinquent debt is significant in the case of Janissary *orta* funds. What would happen if a borrower decided to default on their debt to a fund? According to Islamic practice, as long as the debtor paid their interest regularly, the

50 To give one example; “*İzmaragda nam Nasraniyyenin takdim eylediği bir kıta arz-ı hal meşhurmunda 37 cemaatin miyanesi malından olmak üzere istikraz etmiş olduğu 3.000 guruşa mukabil Der Aliyyede Hekim Ali Paşa Cami şerifi civarında Yeni Mahallede ber vech-i mülkiyye tasarruf olduğu bir bab menzili ba hüccet-i şeriiye rehin ve istiğlal etmiş...*” BOA, MAD.d.9776: 175.

51 Bayındır, ‘Bey’ bi’l-vefâ’, 20.

52 Several examples show that it was common practice in the eighteenth century for former well-to-do Janissaries to bequeath money or real estate rents to their *orta* funds. Kayaçağlayan, ‘XVIII. Yüzyılın İlk Yarısında’, 109-111.

loan would be renewed under the same terms at the end of each year. One notable example is that of Yağcı (Cooking oil merchant) Mustafa, who diligently paid the interest on his loan for four years, so the *orta* fund continued to renew his loan<sup>53</sup> However, in the case of unpaid interest, it is unclear at what point a debt was considered defaulted. While there are numerous loans with additions of *devr-i şer'i* or *güzeşte* to the capital in the *muhallefat* registers, these additions typically represent unpaid interest of one to two years. An exceptional case is that of Elhac Mehmed Said, who borrowed 2,000 *guruş* from the fund of the 48th *bölük*. He had accumulated 2,450 *guruş* in unpaid interest (*güzeşte*) when the Treasury requested payment of his debt after the abolition of the Janissary Corps. Calculating the yearly interest on his debt at the maximum rate (15%), it becomes evident that his delinquency had lasted more than 8 years.<sup>54</sup> Even though it was prohibited by Islamic law, there is also the possibility that compound interest was being charged, which would considerably decrease the duration of delinquency in this case. However, this is mere speculation since there is no indication in the register that such a practice existed.

Given the scarcity of long-term delinquent debts in the Janissary *muhallefat* registers examined in this study, several interpretations arise. One could posit that Janissary *orta* funds were notably successful in their credit transactions, facilitated by their robust surety mechanisms and the socio-political power they wielded as a privileged military group. Alternatively, it is plausible that the examples preserved in the *muhallefat* registers represent cases that were meticulously conducted and recorded, making them easier for the Treasury to reclaim in the aftermath of the Auspicious Event.

### *Loans*

Some scholars have argued that groups enjoying legal protection and political influence held advantageous positions in financial matters within the Ottoman legal system.<sup>55</sup> Could similar circumstances have applied to the Janissaries, and particularly to Janissary *orta* funds, in their credit transactions? Considering their socio-political

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53 BOA, MAD.d.9772: 190.

54 Ibid., 233. Since the register does not give any information on the interest rate, if we calculate it at 12%, his delinquency lasted more than 10 years. Even though it was prohibited by Islamic law, there is also the chance that compound interest was involved in this calculation, which would make the delinquency less than 8 years. However, there is no way of ascertaining that from the registers, and clerks and *mütevellis* would surely have hidden it even if it were the case.

55 T. Kuran and J. Rubin, 'The Financial Power of the Powerless: Socio-economic Status and Interest Rates Under Partial Rule of Law', *The Economic Journal*, 128/609 (2018), 759-761.

backing and propensity to resort to violence, one might speculate that Janissary *orta* funds were sufficiently confident their loans would be repaid. However, such assumptions may well oversimplify the intricate web of social and political factors at play in the Ottoman context. To fully understand the dynamics of Janissary *orta* funds' credit transactions, one must consider the multitude of social, economic, and political influences shaping their operations, beyond mere assumptions of confidence in repayment.

We must consider the possibility that the credit transactions recorded in the *muhallefat* registers represent relatively straightforward cases, which Treasury clerks could track and reclaim amidst the chaotic environment following June 15, 1826. It should be noted once again that the data used in this study is incomplete. Only 85 of the 196 Janissary *ortas* were mentioned in the extant *muhallefat* registers listing loans from *orta* funds. There is no information available on the remaining 112 *orta* funds. The uneven representation of the 85 *ortas* recorded in the registers suggests that there were additional ledgers documenting the probate inventories of the Janissary Corps.<sup>56</sup> It would be overly simplistic to assume that all registers of Janissary *orta* funds were meticulously maintained without any irregularities, such as informal or unrecorded credit transactions, and manipulation of figures. However, only a more detailed examination of court records could offer insights into the efficiency of Janissary *orta* funds in collecting and reclaiming loans, as well as any problematic credit transactions. By examining whether there were numerous cases of Janissary *orta* funds suing reluctant borrowers or of senior officers in *ortas* filing cases of abuse and embezzlement against *mütevellis* in the court records, we may gain some answers to the questions above. Similarly, an absence or scarcity of such cases would be also quite telling of the *orta* funds' success rate in collecting their loans.

The Janissary *orta* funds appear to adhere to the interest rate ceiling (15%) established for cash waqfs by the Ottoman central authority. None of the entries in the Janissary *muhallefat* registers explicitly outlines the rate of return on loans. However, when a debtor fails to pay the interest on their loan for one year or more, this amount (known as *devr-i şer'i* or *güzeşte*) is also recorded alongside their debt in the registers. The entries only specify the duration of unpaid interest when it exceeds one year. If the duration is only one year, the unpaid interest is simply designated as

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56 If the chest of a Janissary *orta* containing registers, documents, and pawned items had been burnt in the Janissary barracks and its clerk and *mütevelli* had been killed or gone into hiding during the Auspicious Event, Sultan Mahmud II's government had no way of tracking down its loans. I have not been able to find any evidence on the existence or number of such instances in the archives so far. Considering the fact that the Yeni Odalar hosted the barracks of 170 Janissary *ortas*, it would have been impossible to save all the registers and *orta* chests from the fire, which was started by bombardment and arson. Thus, it is highly likely that such events did occur.

*güzeşte* or *devr-i şer'i* without further detail. In cases where it is possible to calculate the rate of return from unpaid interest, the yearly interest rate is either 12 or 15%. The distinction between the application of these rates is not clear. Both 12 and 15% loans exhibit similar characteristics in terms of the collateral provided as sureties, and there are no attributes setting them apart in the titles used by debtors. Therefore, it is impossible to pinpoint the factors behind the difference in interest rates.

In common with the difference in applied interest rates, lending conditions also exhibit substantial variations. While some borrowers received loans on favourable terms, others were required to accept harsher conditions to qualify for their loans. In some cases, they provided collateral of less monetary value than the amount loaned, whereas in others the opposite was true. As the entries do not specify the duration of loans, it is not possible to know whether this was related to the borrowing period.

While it is natural to give priority to financial calculations when trying to get a grasp on the credit relations of Janissary *orta* funds, this is not enough in itself to understand the whole process. Without taking into account the social and cultural background within which these credit relations were established and conducted, our historical interpretation would be reductionist at best. In a social and cultural milieu where factors such as social hierarchies, kin networks, guild structures, and fellow-townsmanship played significant roles in interpersonal relations, credit contracts could also be easily affected by such criteria. Such factors could similarly be effective and coercive in dispute settlement and resolution in credit relations.

Even though the Janissary Corps provided an institutional umbrella under which all Janissary *orta* funds functioned, they formed part of a traditional economy where personal relations and networks were influential in credit transactions. Despite the collective managerial supervision of funds by all the senior officers in each *orta*, the board of elders was probably more interested in the end result than in checking every individual loan given by *mütevellis*. Their interference was no doubt limited to the cases where irregularities in an *orta* fund became too visible, or when they acted as intermediaries for loans granted to the people in their personal networks.

As mentioned above, having an *esame* or *esames* from an *orta* was a very effective means of acquiring a loan from an its fund. Similarly, personal networks through family or business relations must also have been very important in gaining access to Janissary *orta* funds. Having personal, business, or family relations with a Janissary who was influential in his *orta* could easily open doors for credit from the relevant fund. Having a relatively higher status in society or holding a government office could also provide some leverage in getting credit more easily and under more favourable terms.

One's trustworthiness or good reputation within the community could also play a role in securing a loan, even though these may seem abstractions without much

intrinsic value. However, the link between social and material ‘credit’ may have been much closer than one tends to think in the context of a pre-modern society. Such social credit was acquired and maintained through one’s relations with relatives, friends and neighbours, and the colleagues with whom one habitually dealt. In many cases, debtors pawned valuable items or *esames* of more or less the same market value as the amount of loans. These credit transactions show characteristics peculiar to impersonal credit markets, in which the *mütevellis* of *orta* funds seemed to be more concerned with borrowers’ assets than their reputation or trustworthiness. However, there are also numerous cases at opposite ends of this median, in which debtors either provided collateral worth far more or far less than original loans. Moreover, there is one more category that includes credit transactions in which debtors did not seem to show any collateral.

As we do not have the original contracts and are dependent on how much data the clerks of *muhallefat* registers chose to include in their entries, some of the cases in which debtors did not provide any collateral could include someone standing surety for loans. Since debtors did not renege on their loans, clerks probably saw no need to include any information on surety. Still, we cannot account for cases that included collateral of a much lower or higher value than loans with clerical omissions. For example, Salih, a box seller, not only pawned his *esames* at an average market value of 1,170 *guruş*, but also the title deed and *gedik* license of his shop for a 400 *guruş* loan from the 49th *bölük*.<sup>57</sup> In another instance, Selim from Kayseri took out a 1,000 *guruş* loan from the 67th *cemaat* by pawning two *esame* tickets with an average market value of 3,000 *guruş*.<sup>58</sup>

In some instance, the opposite of the above is true: debtors apparently provided collateral worth less than loans. Take, for example, the case of Nalçacı (heel iron maker/seller) Hasan, who pawned *esames* worth 800 *guruş* for a 1,000 *guruş* loan from the 64th *cemaat*, or that of Mehmed Aziz Efendi, a clerk, who pawned an *esame* with an average market value of 460 *guruş* for a 600 *guruş* loan. How did these debtors acquire loans despite showing collateral valued at less than the capital? A seventeenth-century credit transaction provides a clue as to how the debtors resorted to different methods of surety in a single transaction. To take out a 1,750 *guruş* loan from the 10th *bölük* fund, a certain Hüseyin Agha not only pawned numerous valuables, but also brought a co-signer who guaranteed that if the items did not cover the loan in the event that Hüseyin Agha reneged on his debt, he would make up the difference to the *orta* fund.<sup>59</sup> As the entries in Janissary *muhallefat* registers were

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57 BOA, MAD.d.9776: 174.

58 Ibid., 159.

59 Kayaçağlayan, ‘XVIII. Yüzyılın İlk Yarısında’, 114-115.

succinct and debtors agreed to settle their debts to the Treasury in all cases, including collateral worth less than loans, the clerks probably did not feel the need to mention co-signers. Another possible explanation is related to the salary payments of *esames* and the question of who collected salaries while pay tickets were pawned. In the case of Nalçacı Hasan, for example, if the remaining 200 *guruş* surety were collected in the form of salary payments by the 64th *cemaat*, this could explain the lower value of pawned *esames* vis-à-vis the size of the loan.

It is more difficult to account for cases involving collateral at a higher value than loans. If we try to explain these cases in terms of loan duration, we end up with unreasonably long terms. As the entries did not give any information on the borrowing periods, we can only attempt to deduce it from the yearly interest and the difference between the loan's capital and the value of the collateral. To give one example among many, coffeehouse owner Civelek İsmail Çavuş had to pawn his *esames*, bringing in a daily sum of 160 *akçes* from the 75th *cemaat* and 60 *akçes* from the 43rd *bölük* respectively, for a 500 *guruş* loan from the 75th *cemaat*.<sup>60</sup> The average market price for a 1 *akçe* daily *esame* was 10 *guruş*, making his *esame* tickets for 220 *akçes* daily worth 2,200 *guruş*. Calculated from the maximum yearly interest rate of 15%, the yearly interest on 500 *guruş* was 75 *guruş*. If we divide the difference between the loan's capital and collateral (1,700 *guruş*) to 75 *guruş*, the collateral would have covered yearly interest of 500 *guruş* for 22.6 years. Even if we assume that Civelek İsmail Çavuş was paying his loan from his pay ticket from the 43rd *bölük* worth 60 *akçes* per day, while regularly collecting his *esame* worth 160 *akçes* from the 75th *cemaat* even though it was pawned, this still does not explain why he had to pawn *esames* worth 2,200 *guruş* for a 500 *guruş* loan.

In the absence of solid evidence, we can tentatively argue that such discrepancies had much to do with the social factors and different background stories behind each credit transaction. If one went through proper networks and connections and had a good reputation and standing, the likelihood of securing a loan from a Janissary *orta* on favourable terms was probably very high. If the opposite was the case, it would similarly become difficult to acquire a loan on good terms. Take, for example, the case of a senior officer in the 59th *bölük* at the rank of *odabaşı*, who had to pawn his *esame* of 38 *akçes* for a loan of 250 *guruş* from his *orta* fund.<sup>61</sup> At face value, we could argue that this was a sign of an impersonal credit market with proper rules and without any exceptions, since a senior officer had to go through the proper channels and show collateral to get a loan from his *orta* fund. However, when one considers numerous examples bearing the characteristics of a personal credit market, it

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60 BOA, MAD.d.9776: 158.

61 Ibid., 209.

is possible to interpret the *odabaşı*'s case very differently. The reason behind the proper application of rules to the *odabaşı* of the 59th might be related to his lack of influence in the *orta*, or control of the *orta* fund by his rivals. Yet this is still in the realm of speculation or pure guesswork, without any proper evidence.

A similar situation applies to the rate of returns on loans. Cash waqfs charged lower interest than non-waqf lenders, since they could not go above the legally permissible rate ceiling (15%) for cash waqfs. A close look at the Janissary *muhallefat* registers shows that the loans given by *orta* funds bore either 12 or 15% yearly interest. There is no clear indication of what factors were influential in deciding the annual rates for loans. Veli Usta, who worked as a caulker in Üsküdar, borrowed 500 *guruş* from the 25th *bölük* at a rate of 12%, whereas Muytab İsmail, who made ropes from animal hairs, borrowed the same amount from the 17th *cemaat* at 15%.<sup>62</sup> As the durations were the same for both loans and no distinguishing features can be derived from the succinct entries in the *muhallefat* registers, it is not possible to discover the reason behind the 3% difference. There are numerous examples showing comparable differences in interest rates on loans given to debtors from *orta* funds. As with other terms and conditions, social factors such as familial, regional, and occupational networks, social and negotiating skills, social status, and other informal parameters probably played a role in setting the interest rates on loans from *orta* funds.

Our data shows that like other cash waqfs, Janissary *orta* funds issued loans at lower interest than the average market rates.<sup>63</sup> One may wonder whether this made them more popular among lower and middle-strata Istanbul residents in need of credit. As Janissary regiments were dependent on their cash waqfs to meet their expenditures, and maintained themselves mainly by money lending, *orta* funds had to issue loans regularly. It is interesting to see how the Ottoman state used or allowed cash waqfs to finance certain expenditures by its military institutions. Moving on from this, how did the Istanbul public perceive the Janissary *ortas*' role in the credit market? Did it make them unpopular as ruthless moneylenders or were they seen as providing a vital service for Istanbul residents in need of loans on more advantageous terms?

The large number of mid-sized loans issued by Janissary *orta* funds make it clear that they acted as small-scale credit institutions that were popular among artisans,

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62 BOA, MAD.d.8390: 13; 9772: 190.

63 For average market interest rates, see H. İnalçık, 'Capital Formation in the Ottoman Empire', *The Journal of Economic History*, 29/1 (1969), 139; K. Jenkins, 'Loans and Credit in Early 17th Century Ottoman Judicial Records: The Sharia Court of Anatolian Kayseri', *JESHO*, 16/2-3 (1973), 184; Kuran and Rubin, 'The Financial Power of the Powerless', 760, 772, 777.

small merchants, and Istanbul residents of modest means. Even though there were also what one might term ‘petty debts’ among the loans given by Janissary *orta* funds, their numbers were insignificant. One can assume these credit relations served a similar function to *esame* relations, in which civilians collected Janissary salaries from barracks, deepening the connections between Istanbul residents and the corps. *Mütevellis* who served as trustees of *orta* funds had closer ties to Istanbul’s guilds, artisans, and merchants because of their role in providing credit. There was no indication that the role of Janissary *orta* funds was negatively perceived by the public; I am not aware of any such references in official documents or popular culture. Another proof is the lack of such references in Es’ad Efendi’s *Üss-i Zafer*. If there were such a perception among the Ottoman public, the *Üss-i Zafer* would surely have brought up the issue and utilised it to its full potential against Janissaries, considering it did not miss the chance to exploit even the smallest market infraction by Janissary *esnaf* in early nineteenth century Istanbul. Janissaries would surely have appeared as ruthless usurers in the text, in addition to all of the other transgressions which Es’ad scrupulously emphasises in his overblown style.

Janissary *orta* funds undoubtedly functioned with the specific aim of making profits to cover their regimental expenses. Their trustees, *mütevellis*, were responsible for the preservation and augmentation of waqf funds. Neither *mütevellis* nor Janissary *orta* funds were benevolent or charitable in their credit dealings. Still, rather than attracting criticism from the public, the funds can be seen as providing a much-needed service for society, at lower interest rates than the average real interest rate in the market. Thus, the Ottoman public probably looked on them in the way they viewed other cash waqfs that functioned similarly in the Ottoman lands. One can assume that the credit relations offered by Janissary *orta* funds constituted just another thread in the complicated social, economic, and political networks that tied the Janissary Corps to Ottoman society.

## *Conclusion*

As stated at the outset, this study only presents some preliminary findings on Janissary *orta* funds, posing more questions than it answers. Moreover, some of the answers or arguments advanced in the study remain speculative at best, in light of the extant data provided by the Janissary *muhallefat* registers. In terms of the sources used, this paper has presented an imperfect and incomplete picture of Janissary *orta* funds. The data set we have drawn on has only answered certain questions, while leaving many unasked and unanswered questions. Since other sources such as court records are not used here, certain aspects and mechanisms of Janissary *orta* funds



remain unsolved. Yet this does not alter the fact that the Janissary *muhallefat* registers provide invaluable data on the workings of *orta* funds. As the loans they granted were merely incidentally entered in court records, often only in relation to some other business – the death of a debtor or an inheritance settlement – many instances of them went unrecorded. Janissary *muhallefat* registers fill this gap by giving us a chance to look at a segment of these loans collectively in the first half of the 1820s.

The *muhallefat* registers also show how deeply the Janissary Corps and its members penetrated the economic and social life of Istanbul. When senior officers were trying to recruit civilian bystanders to join the fight against *sekbans* during the Alemdar Incident by calling them by name and reminding them how they came to their *orta* barracks to collect salaries with the *esames*,<sup>64</sup> they were tapping the very same sociopolitical networks which made the Janissary Corps resilient against numerous reform attempts by the Ottoman political elite. Although one should be cautious as regards earlier studies claiming that Janissary *orta* funds acted as provident funds, it is clear that they did provide a crucial financial service to a broad spectrum of people, many of whom needed to resort to small-scale lending at more favourable interest rates.

*Orta* funds may not have been large enough to make a major impact on the economic life of Istanbul individually, but the total amount of their collective capital alongside that of the official financier of the Janissary Corps would have made the Janissary Corps one of the biggest credit institutions in the Ottoman Empire. That said, the amount of capital raised by the confiscation of Janissary funds and real estate following the abolition was not very impressive. As outlined at the beginning of the paper, there were several factors impeding the government's efforts to collect debts owed to Janissary *orta* funds. The burning down of the main Janissary barracks at Yeni Odalar resulted in the loss of most of the *orta* chests that contained account registers and pawned items. It is also unclear how many of the *orta* fund trustees and clerks were killed or went into hiding after the debacle of June 15th, 1826. If the chest of an *orta* was destroyed and its trustee and clerk perished or ran away, there was little chance of recovering its debts. Even if the trustees and clerks survived these events and were questioned by government agents, there was also the problem of memorising and listing all the debts correctly in the absence of registers.<sup>65</sup>

64 Cabi Ömer Efendi, *Câbî Târîhi*, Vol. I, ed. M. A. Beyhan (Ankara 2003), 284.

65 For example, when the clerks of the Treasury demanded the repayment of a loan of 3,300 *guruş* from the *orta* fund of the 28th *bölük* to Şekerci (Candy maker/seller) Hasan, the debtor claimed that he had already repaid the sum in full to the 28th *bölük orta* fund. When the clerks rechecked the records, it became clear that all the documents relating to the *orta* fund of the 28th *bölük* had been burnt in the Janissary barracks, and that it was the trustee (*mütevelli*) and the clerk of

As stated in this paper, fewer than half of the 196 Janissary *ortas* were represented in the extant probate registers. There may well have been more probate registers related to Janissary *orta* funds and real estate which have not survived to this day. Another explanation for this uneven representation might be related to the size and success of Janissary *orta* funds. There were probably Janissary *ortas* that possessed funds with insignificant amounts of capital, as the result of factors such as their personnel size (e.g. in the case of *sekban bölüğü*) or unsuccessful management of their cash waqfs. We should also keep in mind that there were also Janissary *orta* funds in the provinces which were very active in the provincial economy. Even though there are some entries on cash obtained from auctioning Janissary properties in the provinces, no specific or detailed entries on provincial *orta* funds in the registers were used in this study.

This study presents an imperfect and incomplete picture of Janissary *orta* funds and their credit relations. The data set used here has only answered certain questions, while leaving many others unanswered or even unasked. There are still many gaps in our understanding of Janissary *orta* funds, which can only be filled by more detailed studies in terms of sources used and periods covered.

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the *orta* who had informed the authorities of the loans. It also turned out that the loan had been recorded twice in a clerical error; BOA, MAD.d.9772: 21.

# HOW THE OTTOMAN MILITARY-ADMINISTRATIVE CLASS CONSTITUTED ITSELF AS A LOCAL POWER THROUGH WAQFS

A STUDY OF THE EARLY WAQF DEEDS OF CRETE

Kayhan ORBAY and Ramazan PANTIK\*

ALTHOUGH CRETE WITNESSED WAQF-MAKING ACTIVITY INCESSANTLY throughout the Ottoman period, the early waqfs on the island were mostly, but not entirely, established by the military-administrative class. Several were based on properties initially granted as private property by the Sultan. The charitable services provided by these waqfs, their employment capacity and the transfer of purchasing power through salary payments, expenditures, and endowed properties ranging from arable land, olive groves and mills to shops and houses embedded these institutions in the urban and rural economy and society. Moreover, their founders in the military and administrative classes became entrenched and influential actors in reshaping the economic, commercial and social life of the island. This paper examines previously unstudied endowment deeds concerning early Cretan waqfs in order to better understand how the Ottoman military-administrative class constituted itself locally by creating and maintaining economic power and asserting its members' socio-political influence through their charitable institutions, as well as by integrating their pre-existing political networks and kinship ties into the local fabric of the island.

As an island that came under Ottoman rule relatively late in the mid-seventeenth century and was located far from the centre of the empire, Crete was heavily influenced by waqfs in its Ottomanisation process, much like other regions conquered by the Ottomans in southeastern Europe. We do not see substantial dynastic waqfs on the island, as is typical in many regions far from the core provinces. Instead, Crete saw the establishment of such foundations primarily by the military and

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\* Middle East Technical University, Ankara, and T.C. Vakıflar Genel Müdürlüğü.

administrative bureaucracy. These waqfs, which were the largest on the island, played a leading role in establishing the waqf system and fulfilling the economic, social and other functions of charitable institutions.

This study aims to explore how the military-administrative class solidified its presence through waqfs during the first century of Ottoman rule in Crete. Drawing primarily on previously unstudied endowment deeds (*vakfiye/waqfiyya*) housed in the archive of the Directorate General of Foundations<sup>1</sup> (VGMA), we seek to understand how this class amassed economic power and asserted social influence, maintaining political networks, comradeship, and kinship ties on the island through their waqfs.<sup>2</sup>

While the endowment deeds provide valuable insight into these issues, a more complete and better understanding of them requires delving into court records. However, these records could not be included in the current phase of this research due to time constraints and the unavailability of many court registers. Our analysis focuses on 54 endowment deeds, which we believe provide a representative sample covering the majority of waqfs associated with the upper military-administrative class during the period under study. Of these deeds, 21 belong to the waqfs of pashas, 18 to Janissaries, and the remaining 15 to other members of the military-administrative class.<sup>3</sup> There are a total of 260 endowment deeds for Cretan waqfs between 1650 and 1897 in the archive,<sup>4</sup> though together with the institutions whose deeds have not been found but whose existence can be proven by the other documents in the VGMA archive, we estimate the overall figure to be approximately 500, possibly augmented by others in the court registers and other documents.<sup>5</sup> We believe that our current data can be expanded and supplemented by adding more endowment deeds and some other documents such as court registers (*şeriye sicilleri*) and survey registers (*tahrir defterleri*).

In Crete, as in many other places that came under Ottoman rule, the state – here the imperial dynasty – was active, albeit indirectly, in facilitating the establishment

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1 Vakıflar Genel Müdürlüğü Arşivi (VGMA).

2 Stavrinidis published some of the endowment deeds found in the Vikelaiia archive in Greek, see N. S. Stavrinidis, *Μεταφράσεις Τουρκικών Ιστορικών Εγγράφων* [Translation of Turkish Historical Documents], Vols I-III (Heraklion 1975-1978). The Istanbul Research Center for Islamic Culture and Arts (IRCICA) has published 14 endowment deeds that are used in this study, see H. Eren, M. Oğuz, Z. Mete, *Balkanlar'da Osmanlı Vakıfları: Yunanistan*, Vols II-III (Istanbul 2017).

3 The full list of endowments is presented in the annex.

4 These waqfs were mentioned in the registers of appointment certificates (*atik* and *esas*) and in the accounting registers.

5 The endowment deeds of some of these waqfs are found in the court registers in the Turkish Archive of Heraklion (TAH) and in the court registers of Crete housed in the VGMA and BOA.

of waqfs. Rather than being heavily involved in the establishment of large complexes with extensive revenues, as was the case in the core lands of Anatolia and Rumelia, the state paved the way for waqfs associated with the military-administrative class through land grants and sales. This preference may not have been related to the growing power of the bureaucracy over the sultan. The absence of large dynastic waqfs in Crete was no different from what we have seen in many regions annexed after the core provinces, though there were a few exceptions, such as the Haseki Sultan Waqf in Jerusalem and the Süleymaniye Waqf Complex in Damascus. Rather, the state prepared the ground for the waqfs of the military-administrative class through land and property grants and sales in Crete.

For the state, charitable institutions of the above type were instrumental in the Ottomanisation of the island. They were promoted as a tool for infrastructure development, the provision of basic needs and thus urbanisation, as well as for economic and commercial improvement and demographic recovery.<sup>6</sup> Critical to achieving these goals were waqf investments in agriculture and the urban economy, infrastructure investments to support commercial life, the employment opportunities provided by waqfs, and charitable and religious services.

Thus, through the waqfs of the upper military-administrative class, the state implemented its policies and entrenched itself and its high-ranking state officials on the island, in such a way that subsequent generations of founders established their own institutions and merged them with the mother ones. Land and property grants (*temlik*) and sales to high-ranking state officials, including *viziers*, *pashas*, treasurers (*defterdâr*), chamberlains (*kethüdâ*), fortress commanders (*dizdâr*) and Janissary aghas were aimed at consolidating their authority and increasing their loyalty.<sup>7</sup> We can assume that the state wanted to support their authority as its representatives and increase their influence. That being said, grants were also offered as a reward for the efforts of these classes in battle, as an incentive for fulfilling their sword-rights expectations and in recognition of their loyalty on a remote island.

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6 For waqfs as an instrument of urbanisation and settlement policy, see Ö. L. Barkan, 'Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Bir İskan ve Kolonizasyon Metodu Olarak Vakıflar ve Temlikler I: İstila Devirlerinin Kolonizatör Türk Dervişleri ve Zaviyeler', *Vakıflar Dergisi*, 2 (1942), 279-304; Idem, 'Vakıfların Bir İskan ve Kolonizasyon Metodu Olarak Kullanılmasında Diğer Şekiller', *Vakıflar Dergisi*, 2 (1942), 354-365; M. Kiel, 'The Vakıfname of Rakkas Sinan Beg in Karnobat (Karınâbâd) and the Ottoman Colonization of Bulgarian Thrace (14th-15th Century)', *OA*, 1 (1980), 15-32; A. Lopasic, 'Islamization of the Balkans with Special Reference to Bosnia', *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 5 (1994), 163-186; M. Greene, *A Shared World: Christians and Muslims in the Early Modern Mediterranean* (Princeton 2000), 83 ff.

7 E. Gülsoy, *Girit'in Fethi ve Osmanlı İdaresinin Kurulması (1645-1670)* (Istanbul 2004), 299 ff.

Although the complete conquest of the island took a long time, the cities of Chania (Ott. Hanya) and Rethymno (Ott. Resmo) fell within the first year of the siege, and waqfisation in these cities began immediately. Indeed, many waqfs set up by high-ranking bureaucrats were endowed in the first decades. If those established after the fall of Candia (mod. Heraklion, Ott. Kandiye) are also taken into account, most of the major waqf service buildings (foundations) such as mosques, *medreses*, fountains, and income-generating properties (endowments) such as villages, farmlands, olive groves, mills and shops were endowed by the waqfs of the upper military-administrative class during the first hundred years.<sup>8</sup>

Waqf-making started with redefinition of the legal status of endowed lands and urban properties. These were converted into state-owned (*mîrî*) properties, then granted or sold by the state, though the founders also bought properties for sale on the market. Rethymno is an interesting case worth mentioning. All abandoned buildings and their lands were owned by the state. Later, some buildings were granted and others sold to those who wanted to buy them. However, the land plots in Rethymno had already been endowed to the waqf of Sultan Ibrahim. Buildings could be privately owned, but the corresponding land rent (*mukâta'â-i zemîn*) had to be paid to the Sultan's waqf, most likely because the state wanted to maintain its control over land in the city.

The introduction of the waqf system and the increase in the number of foundations led to the reorganisation and alteration of urban space. New buildings were constructed, existing ones were converted, damaged buildings were reconstructed and repaired, and architectural styles changed. Imperial architects (*hassa mimari*) likely played a role in transforming properties donated or sold to the military-administrative class into waqf service buildings. There are records one might not expect to come across in endowment deeds, some of which inform us that two imperial architects, a judge, and other experts conducted measurements and surveys of the land plots and buildings of waqfs.<sup>9</sup> Most likely, the construction project was then designed with architectural drawings, building materials were decided upon, and repair and construction budgets were drawn up. Consequently, the imperial architects who were already present to repair the fortress were most likely involved in the transformation of significant symbolic buildings that were donated or sold to

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8 *Salname-i Vilayet-i Girit*, Matbaa-i Vilayet-i Girit, 1292/1875, 89 ff., *Salname-i Vilayet-i Girit*, Girit Vilayet Matbaası, 1310/1893, 185. When we look at the *salname* records, we see that most of the mosques, fountains, bridges, *medreses*, masjids etc. were actually built in the first decades following the conquest of the island.

9 The Waqf of Mahmud Agha, dated 1671, VGMA, 629: 10/5; The Waqf of Reisülküttâb Acemzade Hüseyin Efendi, dated 1671, Tapu ve Kadastro Genel Müdürlüğü Arşivi (TKGM), Kuyud-ı Kadîme Arşivi (KKA), Vakf-ı Cedid (VC), 28.

members of the military-administrative class on the condition that they be converted into waqfs.

The conversion of these symbolic buildings has already been documented in other studies.<sup>10</sup> A considerable number of them were in fact granted to the members of the military-administrative class, who subsequently turned them into waqf service buildings or income-generating properties. In doing so, they also allocated budgets for necessary repairs and construction works. For example, the waqf of Fazıl Ahmed's chamberlain Mahmud Agha was granted a church in Candia to be converted into a mosque. The building and its surroundings were cleaned, the ground was prepared and a new *mihrab* (mosque niche), *minber* (pulpit), and *mahfel* (private pew) were built. Additionally, two new domes and minarets were added, and a fountain and toilets were constructed.<sup>11</sup> Some symbolic buildings were converted into schools, public bathhouses or storerooms.<sup>12</sup> One monastery in Candia was turned into a bathhouse by the same waqf of Mahmud Agha.<sup>13</sup> The edict (*ferman*) issued after the fall of Candia, which was referenced in the endowment deeds, can be considered as official permission.<sup>14</sup> The text reads as follows:

[I]n the year 1669-70, after the fortress of Candia, which had been conquered and seized with the help of God and enlightened with the light of Islam, had been built and completely restored and repaired, an imperial decree arrived stating that the churches in the aforementioned fortress should be donated and assigned to those among the benefactors who request that they are converted into mosques and masjids...<sup>15</sup>

The granting of these buildings was in itself significant support for the waqfs of the military-administrative class. This text can be read as permission to establish a charitable foundation, which would allow the founder to construct his buildings on an existing edifice suitable for conversion. This could also be seen as an incentive, or even a strong expectation or order from the sultan.

10 I. Bierman, 'The Ottomanization of Crete', in I. Bierman, R. Abou-El-Haj and D. Preziosi (eds), *The Ottoman City and its Parts: Urban Structure and Social Order* (New Rochelle 1991), 53-75; *TDVİA*, s.v., 'Kandiye' (E. Gülsoy), 303-305; *EP*, s.v., 'Kandiya' (C. J. Heywood), 539-540.

11 The Waqf of Mahmud Agha, dated 1671, VGMA, 629: 10/5; The Waqf of Reisülküttâb Acemzade Hüseyin Efendi, dated 1671, TKGm, KKA, VC, 28.

12 The Waqf of Defterdâr Ahmed Pasha, dated 1671, VGMA, 724: 37/1.

13 The Waqf of Mahmud Agha, dated 1671, VGMA, 629: 10/5.

14 The Waqf of Reisülküttâb Acemzade Hüseyin Efendi, dated 1671, TKGm, KKA, VC, 28; The Waqf of Defterdâr Ahmed Pasha, dated 1671, VGMA, 724: 37/1.

15 *Ibid.*; '...1080 senesinde bi-inâyetillah-u Teâlâ feth ve teshîri müyesser ve şu'â-i nûr-u İslam ile münevver olan Kandiye Kalesi imâret ve bi'l-cümle ihyâ ve meremmet olundukta kal'a-i mezkûrede vâki' keniselerden cevâmi' ve mesâcid olmak üzere erbâb-ı hayrâtan tâlip olanlara hibe ve temlik oluna deyu hatt-ı hümâyûn saâdet-makrûn vârid olmakla...'

When establishing waqfs, founders waited for the decisive fall of cities, and subsequent grants and purchasing opportunities such as the purchase of vacant land parcels and abandoned buildings, most likely at a favourable price. In addition to the many damaged and abandoned structures that were repaired and later endowed, the founders constructed entirely new buildings, houses, shops, baths, mills, water pipes, fountains, and bridges.<sup>16</sup> As a consequence, new residential neighbourhoods and commercial hubs emerged, resulting in significant spatial transformations and the creation of new public spaces. It is evident that the founders of waqfs spent heavily on buying, repairing, and constructing properties.<sup>17</sup> Given the abundance of urban real estate available for purchase and endowment, a multitude of waqfs were established in cities, relying mostly on urban properties in the early decades. Later, along with the Ottomanisation of the island, smaller waqfs belonging to lower-ranking soldiers and ordinary people began to proliferate in the countryside, many of them being cash foundations. Thus, waqfisation commenced with the pioneering and relatively larger waqfs of the high-ranking state officials in the cities and spread to the surrounding rural areas.

It is possible to give some figures showing the weight of these waqfs in the urban economy. In the first survey of Candia, 313 shops were recorded in the city, of which 292 were sold to high-ranking government officials.<sup>18</sup> According to Evliya, the Waqf of Grand Vizier Fazıl Ahmed Pasha had 70 shops.<sup>19</sup> The survey register of 1670 shows that 75 shops were endowed to the waqf. Its endowment deed gives even higher figures: 94 shops, 40 storerooms or cellars (*mahzen*), and 46 two-storey rooms.<sup>20</sup>

These figures indicate a substantial investment in the construction and endowment of new commercial structures. Indeed, the endowment deeds frequently refer to properties designated as newly built (*müceddeden*). For instance, the waqf of Kethüdâ Mahmud Agha has 41 shops in the survey register.<sup>21</sup> However, its endowment deed lists 47 newly built two-storey rooms, 154 shops, a third of which were

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16 The Waqf of Defterdâr Ahmed Pasha, dated 1671, VGMA, *Rumeli Girit Defteri*, 724: 37/1; The Waqf of Mehmed Pasha, dated 1652, VGMA, 2790: 42; The Waqf of İbrahim Pasha, dated 1662, VGMA, 2790: 189; The Waqf of Yeniçeri Turnacıbaşı İbrahim Agha, dated 1671, VGMA, 571: 195/70; The Waqf of Musa Pasha, dated 1683, VGMA, 2790: 204.

17 Greene, *A Shared World*, 29 ff.; Gülsoy, *Girit'in Fethi*, 262, 266; Also see BOA, TT.d.798: 211-219.

18 BOA, TT.d.798. Also, see Gülsoy, *Girit'in Fethi*, 240 ff., 261 ff.

19 Evliya Çelebi, *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi*, Vol. VIII, eds S. A. Kahraman, Y. D. and R. Dankoff (Istanbul 2003), 223-225.

20 VGMA, 580: 140/78.

21 Gülsoy, *Girit'in Fethi*, 240 ff., 264 ff.



new, and 28 warehouses, 12 of which were new.<sup>22</sup> In short, whether purchased or newly built, high-ranking state officials endowed their waqfs with shops, workshops, and warehouses, giving them a dominant position in commercial life. Almost all the commercial buildings in the city of Candia belonged to such foundations. This illustrates how officials established a strong presence on the island via their waqfs, and wielded considerable influence in the realm of commerce.

A review of the available documentation reveals that only five of the examined waqfs included cash endowments. Of these, only one was a pure cash waqf, while the others were endowed with cash in addition to other assets. Despite their limited number, the amount involved was substantial compared to typical, ordinary cash endowments. This suggests that these waqfs likely played a significant role in the credit market. However, further analysis is needed to ascertain their actual impact, which will require access to the court records.

One noteworthy example is that of the waqf set up by Janissary agha Turnacıbaşı Ahmed Agha, endowed with 300 gold coins in 1671.<sup>23</sup> The governor of Candia, Vizier Numan Pasha, known as Giridli, endowed 180,000 *akçes* to his waqf.<sup>24</sup> Esad Pasha, who was the governor of Rethymno and son of Fazıl Ahmed's brother Mustafa Pasha, established a pure cash waqf and endowed 1,000 *guruş*, equivalent to 120,000 *akçes*.<sup>25</sup> These examples illustrate the significant financial resources donated to these waqfs and their potential influence on the economy.

The influence of the waqfs established by the military-administrative class further extended to the agricultural sector. Some of the founders had already been granted farmland as private property, which they later endowed to their waqfs. Many invested in agriculture, bought arable lands and olive groves, and built water pipelines, mills and granaries. For instance, the waqf of Fındık Hacı Mehmed Pasha, dated 1694, was endowed with 6,400 olive trees and four mills, two of which were for pressing olive oil.<sup>26</sup> It seems that investing in olive groves was a lucrative venture. The waqf of Ahmed Pasha was endowed 2,089 with olive trees and 21 mills.<sup>27</sup> These two waqfs also built bridges, the first with four arches and the second with three. The waqf of Musa Pasha in Rethymno, dated 1683, was endowed with 2,861 olive trees and some other fruit trees, along with three mills.<sup>28</sup>

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22 VGMA, 629: 10/5.

23 VGMA, 571: 195/70, dated 1671.

24 İstanbul Atatürk Kitaplığı (İAK), Muallim Cevdet Evrakı (MAE), Kutu: 36, Evrak: 18.

25 VGMA, 2790: 169, dated 1725.

26 VGMA, 743: 117/28.

27 TKGM, KKA, VC, 24.

28 VGMA, 2790: 204.

This waqfisation on the island brought about a number of legal, economic, commercial, architectural, social, and demographic changes. Waqf owners and their foundations emerged as new economic and commercial agents. As the economic and commercial lifelines of the island flowed through waqfs, their owners and managers wielded considerable power and influence, shaping the socio-economic fabric of the region. The waqfs were now both buyers and customers as institutions. Bazaars, shops, and warehouses were waqf properties, and economic and commercial life flowed through them. Tenants, retailers and producers paid rent to the waqfs and/or did business with them. This economic interplay extended beyond urban centres to rural areas, where villages, farmlands, mills powered by water, wind, or horses, water pipelines, olive groves, and oil press mills were owned by waqfs. Their impact on both urban and rural economies led to an enhanced influence for their founders and successors, who frequently assumed managerial roles within their institutions.

It is notable that although some waqfs were established by viziers, there was no major charitable complex or significant imperial waqf on Crete. There was no caravanserai on the island, and indeed it is doubtful that one was needed. Trade was conducted primarily by sea, so port warehouses were of greater importance. There was no hospital, no large monumental mosque, and no large *imaret* (public kitchen). The waqf of Gazi Hüseyin Pasha had an *imaret* of modest size in Rethymno, which served its employees, students, and esteemed guests. During Ramadan and on Friday evenings, a more sumptuous dinner was prepared. The kitchen was staffed by a cook, a baker, and a grinder, while a warden and a water-bearer also served in the *imaret*.<sup>29</sup>

Several reasons may account for the absence of a significant dynastic waqf complex. Firstly, the demand for charitable services might have been adequately fulfilled by the foundations set up by the military-administrative class and the relatively modest dynastic waqfs. Given that Crete was a frontier territory, it is likely that substantial portions of revenue were allocated to support the soldiers and state officials stationed on the island. For example, in 1670, an amount exceeding 14 million *akçes* was disbursed to sustain the army.<sup>30</sup> Following the grants and sales to the military-administrative waqfs, there may have been no income left to allocate to such a large waqf complex.

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29 VGMA, 610: 205/243.

30 BOA, MAD.d.658. There were 4,736 Janissary soldiers on the island in 1670.

### *Waqf employment and salaries as a mechanism for increasing influence*

One significant factor that contributed to the social and economic influence of the waqfs established by the military-administrative class was their capacity to provide employment. These institutions served as a mechanism for integrating their creators into the economy and society, elevating them to the status of wealthy benefactors. The employment thus provided to the Muslim population was also important for the Islamisation of the island. It was through the hiring opportunities provided by the waqfs that their founders emerged as employers. The endowment deeds we analysed (52 deeds in total) stipulated 383 job positions for both skilled and unskilled workers. Skilled workers included scribes, tax collectors, schoolteachers, *müder-rises*, preachers, and cooks. Unskilled workers – wardens, cleaners, candle lighters – typically worked part-time and received lower wages.

Of course, the relatively larger waqfs of the military-administrative class provided more extensive employment opportunities. To cite a few examples, the waqf of Ankebud Ahmed Pasha consisted of three mosques, a primary school, and several fountains, employing a total of 45 people. As the range of services and service buildings expanded, so did the number of employees.<sup>31</sup> The waqf of Gazi Hüseyin Pasha was a small complex in Rethymno with a staff of 57, thirty of whom were Quran reciters (*cüzhan*). The employment strategies of such foundations were important in promoting the founder's benevolent image by providing employment to the unskilled poor.<sup>32</sup> The waqf of Fazıl Ahmed Pasha employed 28 people and gave scholarships to 12 students. It had a *medrese*, a school, and a mosque.<sup>33</sup> Kethüdâ Mahmud Agha's waqf, which consisted of a mosque, a small *medrese*, and a primary school, employed 22 people, while six students received stipends.<sup>34</sup>

The payment of salaries, expenditures, and purchases made by the waqfs from both markets and producers served to enhance their influence within the economy, highlighting their role as redistributive institutions. Here we refer to the redistribution of income generated within the island, not outside. There was also an outflow of waqf revenues from the island, as the budget surpluses of the larger foundations established by high-ranking officials were transferred back to their founders.<sup>35</sup> Conversely, we have not come across any waqf that stipulated a regular transfer of

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31 VGMA, 742: 221/91, dated 1680.

32 VGMA, 610: 205/243, dated 1658.

33 VGMA, 580: 140/78, dated 1678.

34 VGMA, 629: 10/5, dated 1671.

35 For instance, see The Waqf of Ankebud Ahmed bin Ali Bey, dated 1680, VGMA, 742: 221/91; The Waqf of Defterdâr Ahmed Pasha bin Ataullah, dated 1671, VGMA, 724: 37/1; The Waqf

income to the island to finance its activities. This does not mean that money was not transferred to Cretan waqfs when it was occasionally needed, for instance to repair buildings following an earthquake.

The salaries paid to employees in waqfs is well worth examining, as the positions they provided served to enhance the prestige of the founders by making them philanthropic employers. Additionally, the institutions provided their employees with a secure job and livelihood, which in turn engendered gratitude towards the founders. Yet the salary levels at waqfs were also important, as they had to be sufficient to persuade individuals to remain on the island and earn a reasonable living. While the salary of the *müderri*s in the waqf of Fazıl Ahmed Pasha was 60 *akçes* daily (15 *guruş* per month), his counterpart in Mahmud Agha's waqf received only 20 *akçes* per day.<sup>36</sup> *İmams* were paid an average of 15-25 *akçes*, *müezzins* 10-12 *akçes*, teachers (*muallim*) 10 *akçes*, and their assistants 5 *akçes*. These salary levels are commensurate with the standards of the period. As might be expected, salary levels varied according to job status, but also varied for the same job according to the status of the waqf founder. For example, the salaries of those working in the Fazıl Ahmed Pasha and Hadice Turhan Sultan waqfs were higher than those for the same positions elsewhere.<sup>37</sup> One interesting point is that the pay received by scribes was generally lower than expected. It is likely that these individuals worked part-time, as there were no significant waqfs requiring a full-time scribe to maintain the accounts.

For those in low-ranking, part-time positions, salaries were quite low. For example, Quran reciters (*cüzhan*s and *devirhan*s) were paid approximately 2-3 *akçes* per day. In Hadice Sultan's waqf, however, their counterparts earned considerably more, receiving 10 to 15 *akçes* per day; in fact, all positions in this waqf earned higher salaries.<sup>38</sup> All salaries lost their purchasing power over time, eroded by price inflation. Consequently, as is often the case, we observe that some waqf employees took on multiple duties to compensate for the loss of income. We even found examples where this was provided for, in the sense that for some positions the waqf stipulated more than one task and therefore more than one salary from the outset. For instance, in the Fındık Hacı Mehmed Pasha waqf the *imam* was also the teacher,

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of Kaptanıderya (Grand Admiral) Mustafa Pasha bin Mehmed Pasha, dated 1750, VGMA, 579: 595/259 and 260.

36 VGMA, 580: 140/78, dated 1678; VGMA, 629: 10/5, dated 1671.

37 For the Waqf of Fazıl Ahmed, see VGMA, 580: 140/78; for the Waqf of Hadice Turhan, see VGMA, 744: 109/28.

38 VGMA, 744: 109/28, dated 1669.

so his total salary increased to 20 *akçes*.<sup>39</sup> In the waqf of Reisülküttâb Acemzade Hüseyin Efendi, the *imam* was also a teacher and scribe and received 22 *akçes* in total.<sup>40</sup> The *müezzin* in the same waqf was also an assistant teacher and candlelighter and received 14 *akçes* per day. The keeper, janitor, and tax collector were the same person, being paid 10 *akçes* in return for these three duties.

Although we cannot provide a figure for the total salary payments of all the waqfs analysed here, which would give us an idea of the size and weight of salary payments in the economy, we can present illustrative examples from a selection of large waqfs. The Gazi Hüseyin Pasha waqf disbursed 284 *akçes* per day for salary payments, amounting to 96,360 *akçes* per year.<sup>41</sup> The Fazıl Ahmed Pasha waqf paid its employees a total of 381 *akçes* per day (72 *akçes* for students), which came to 139,065 *akçes* per year.<sup>42</sup> In addition to cash payments, some employees were remunerated in kind. Such payments were typically made in grain, though on Crete they were made in olive oil. For example, the *imam* of the Haseki Ahmed Agha (Janissary agha) waqf in Chania was stipulated to receive 64 kg of olive oil annually.<sup>43</sup> It was also common practice to allocate accommodation to some employees. In the waqfs that were studied, houses were almost invariably allocated as lodgings for *müderresses*, *muallims*, *imams*, *hatibs*, *müezzins*, and *kayyims*.<sup>44</sup>

These waqfs provided secure employment and a regular source of income for those in the entourage of their founders, and for soldiers who wished to build a civilian life. Thus, waqf founders were also benevolent employers, for they decided who would be hired. Furthermore, they maintained their social influence and prestige through the employment capacity of their waqfs. They were thus able to establish a patronage network or employ their retinue there.

### *Waqfs and patronage networks*

Waqf institutions on Crete reflect power relations and patronage networks in the Ottoman bureaucracy. Senior military and administrative bureaucrats established the

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39 VGMA, 743:117/28, dated 1694.

40 TKGm, KKA, VC, 28.

41 VGMA, 580: 140/78, dated 1678.

42 VGMA, 580: 140/78, dated 1678.

43 VGMA, 583: 57/45, dated 1650.

44 For instance, the waqfs of Reisülküttâb Acemzade Hüseyin Efendi, Janissary İbrahim Agha, Kethüda Mahmud Agha, and Başdefterdâr Ahmed Pasha allocated houses as lodgings to their employees.

largest waqfs on the island, representing their power and influence in the bureaucracy. Endowment deeds reveal that the patronage relations transferred to the island in the early decades left lasting networks that could be traced for at least another century.

In the first decades of Ottoman rule preceding the fall of Candia, the largest waqfs in Rethymno were established by Gazi Hüseyin Pasha and his entourage. According to his two endowment deeds of 1658, he built a waqf complex comprising a mosque, *imaret*, school, and fountain in Rethymno, and two other mosques in Chania and Kissamos.<sup>45</sup> For his waqf, he endowed 31 mills in Rethymno, and 12 villages – five in Rethymno, three in Chania and four in Kissamos – which had been previously granted to him. With another *vakfiye*, 11 villages in Sfakia were endowed to Hüseyin Pasha's other waqf, bringing the total number endowed to his foundations to 23.<sup>46</sup> His son Ahmed Bey was also granted 13 villages, the income from which was 252,780 *akçes* in the survey register of 1650 and 476,223 *akçes* in the survey register of 1670.<sup>47</sup> Later, in 1687, all these villages were endowed to the waqf established by his father.<sup>48</sup>

The same Gazi Hüseyin Pasha was under the patronage of Hadice Turhan Sultan, the mother of Sultan Mehmed IV.<sup>49</sup> Following his execution in 1658, Hadice Sultan sought to repay her debt in return for his loyalty towards her via the waqf she established in Rethymno in 1669.<sup>50</sup> This consisted of a mosque converted from a church in the town, a bathhouse and a school. The salaries of 22 employees were paid with the income from the village of Pigi, which was endowed to her waqf.<sup>51</sup> One remarkable aspect of the *vakfiye* was that Valide Sultan stipulated certain conditions for the heirs of Hüseyin Pasha. Hadice Turhan Sultan had appointed Ömer Agha, her

45 The Waqf of Gazi Hüseyin Pasha, VGMA, 610: 205/243, dated 1658.

46 The Waqf of Gazi Hüseyin Pasha, VGMA, 734: 141/81, dated 1658.

47 N. Adıyeke, 'Fatih Paşalar'ın Kendilerine Armağanı: Osmanlı Girit'inde Temlik/Mülk Köyler', in A. Valerio (ed.), *Venetians and Ottomans in the Early Modern Age* [special issue of *Hilâl, Studi Turchi e Ottomani*, 6 (2018)], 100.

48 BOA, TS.MA.d.529/31.

49 *TDVİA*, s.v., 'Hüseyin Paşa, Deli' (M. İlgürel), 4-6; Abdurrahman Abdi Paşa, *Vekâyinâme*, ed. F. Ç. Derin (Istanbul 2008), 131. For Hadice Turhan Sultan's patronage ties, see L. P. Pierce, *Harem-i Hümayun: Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Hükümlerlik ve Kadınlar* (Istanbul 2002), 339-343.

50 The Waqf of Hadice Turhan Sultan, VGMA, 744: 109/28.

51 According to the survey register of Crete dated 1673, the income of the Valide Sultan Waqf in Pigi village derived from 524 decares of farm, 35 decares of vineyards, 1,358 olive trees and three decares of gardens. BOA, TT.d.822: 406. Also see E. Balta and M. Oğuz, *Livâ-i Rethymno Tahrir Defteri* (Ankara 2009), 159.

chamberlain and Hüseyin Pasha's son, to register the waqf. Ömer Agha was also the on-site manager of the foundation. Actually, he was the on-site manager of all the dynastic waqfs on the island with the exception of those in Candia, since his father had been involved in the establishment of such dynastic institutions on the island, in return for which the management rights had been left to his offspring.<sup>52</sup>

Nuh Agha, Gazi Hüseyin Pasha's eldest son, who was the chief gatekeeper of Topkapı Palace at that time, was appointed as primary manager of Hadice Turhan Sultan's waqf, with a daily salary of 20 *akçes* a day.<sup>53</sup> After Nuh Agha, the management was to pass on to the descendants of Gazi Hüseyin Pasha, who were to deliver 25,000 *akçes* from the waqf budget surplus to the palace's chief black eunuch every year, with the remainder to be used at their discretion.

Sarı Mustafa Pasha, one of the pasha's grandsons, would marry Saliha Sultan, the granddaughter of Hadice Turhan Sultan and daughter of Ahmed III. In 1728, Mustafa Pasha established a waqf for his grandfather Gazi Hüseyin Pasha's mosque in Chania, to which he made additions.<sup>54</sup> He endowed 10 shops in Chania and saw to unifying the management and supervision of the new waqf with that of his grandfather. His slave, Ahmed, was given a position in the waqf with the sole duty of reciting prayers for the salvation of Hüseyin Pasha's soul, in return for a good salary of 14 *akçes* per day.

The bond of patronage between Hadice Sultan and Gazi Hüseyin Pasha became a familial one in subsequent generations via the marriage of their grandchildren. The same bond was also cemented through their waqfs, as those established by Gazi Hüseyin Pasha and Saliha Sultan were managed by the descendants of Saliha Sultan and Sarı Mustafa Pasha.<sup>55</sup>

In Crete, the architectural and public transformations of the cities and the Ottomanisation of the island were largely determined by the first conquering pashas and the patronage network they brought to the island. In this context, Gazi Hüseyin Pasha implemented major changes on the island under the auspices of the central government, while at the same time acting as a nexus for the transfer of power at the local level through the appointment of his own protégés. Many high-ranking officials within his entourage established waqfs. One of them, Mehmed Pasha, the

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52 BOA, TSMA.529/31.

53 VGMA, 744: 109/28.

54 The Waqf of Mustafa Pasha, VGMA, 735: 45/21.

55 VGMA, *Der-saadet Esası*: 120: 220-222/1765-1779; VGMA, *Cezayir-i Bahr-i Sefid Esası*, 184: 86/680. Fatma Sultan, Saliha Sultan's daughter, was the manager of Gazi Hüseyin Pasha's waqf in Crete for most of the second half of the eighteenth century. In the late eighteenth century, the annual income of the waqf was around 16,000 *guruş*, of which Fatma Sultan's share came to 3,000 *guruş*; BOA, TS.MA.e.1097/35.

governor of Rethymno, established a waqf in 1652 and made some additions to his patron's mosque.<sup>56</sup> He endowed five shops and farmlands and appointed the *imam* of Gazi Hüseyin Pasha Mosque as the administrator of his waqf. Similarly, Mustafa Agha, *çorbacı* of the 73rd *cemaat* of the Imperial Janissary Corps, was among those who entrusted the management of his waqf to the same *imam*.<sup>57</sup> Like Mehmed Pasha, Janissary Mustafa Agha must have thought that his waqf would be better managed and more permanent, so he decided to unite it with that of Gazi Hüseyin Pasha. Musa Pasha and the Chief Treasurer Sofu Mehmed Pasha established the largest waqfs in Rethymno after those of their patron Gazi Hüseyin Pasha, to whom they owed their influence and power.<sup>58</sup>

Veli Agha, Gazi Hüseyin Pasha's chamberlain, endowed the properties granted to him by his patron to a waqf he established for the Kadiri lodge and mosque in the suburbs of Rethymno, which he converted from a church.<sup>59</sup> In addition to the Kadiri lodge, the first Bektashi lodge was also founded under Hüseyin Pasha's patronage, and went on to become the most influential lodge in Crete. Apparently situated in the immediate vicinity of the İnadiye fortress in Candia, it was built directly by Hüseyin Pasha and its endowment deed was issued in the name of Horasanizade Derviş Ali Dede, the first sheikh of the lodge, with an edict dated 1650, presumably in response to petition he had made to the capital. Hüseyin Pasha allocated the income to this waqf.<sup>60</sup> Fazıl Ahmed Pasha also benefited from the material and spiritual support of the Bektashi lodge, which played an active role in the conquest and Islamisation of the island.<sup>61</sup>

Another prominent patron on the island, whose entourage and family established waqfs and who brought his political network and family ties to the island, was Köprülü Fazıl Ahmed Pasha. He stayed in Crete for about three and a half years, accompanied by his mother Ayşe Hatun, his uncle Hasan Agha, his brother Fazıl Mustafa Bey and his cousin Hüseyin Bey, both of whom subsequently became viziers.<sup>62</sup> At least ten pashas from his family and entourage established waqfs in

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56 The Waqf of Mehmed Pasha, dated 1652, VGMA, 2790: 42.

57 VGMA, 2790: 140-194

58 The Waqf of Başdefterdâr Sofu Mehmed Pasha, VGMA, 747: 256/207, dated 1655.

59 For the waqf of Veli Agha, the chamberlain of Gazi Hüseyin Pasha, see VGMA, 2970: 6.

60 VGMA, 578: 223/69.

61 O. F. Köprülü, 'Usta-zâde Yunus Bey'in Meçhul Kalmış Bir Makalesi: Bektaşiliğin Girit'de İntişârı', *Güneydoğu Avrupa Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 8-9 (1980), 44-45; F. Maden, 'Osmanlı Arşiv Belgeleri Işığında Girit/Kandiye'de Horasanlı Ali Baba Tekkesi', *Alevilik Araştırma Dergisi*, 12 (2016), 14-15.

62 Silahdar Findiklili Mehmed Ağa, *Silahtar Tarihi*, Vol. I (Istanbul 1928), 526.



Crete.<sup>63</sup> The most important factor that attracted the Köprülü household and their entourage to the island was undoubtedly access to the political and socio-economic networks fostered by the waqf of Fazıl Ahmed Pasha and those of the pashas and aghas under his patronage.

The Köprülü pashas appointed as governors after Fazıl Ahmed Pasha were also the designated managers of the family waqfs. These openings and the influence and economic interests held by the Köprülüs are likely to have been a factor in the decision of some family members to leave their positions in the centre and settle in Crete or, more importantly, to claim the governorship of Crete.

In terms of their employment capacity, the diversity and richness of their real estate holdings, and the variety of services and budgets of their endowments, the largest and most powerful waqfs in Candia were established under the patronage of Grand Vizier Köprülü Fazıl Ahmed Pasha and those who rose to prominence under his patronage.

In Candia, Fazıl Ahmed Pasha converted a monastery into a mosque and built a waqf complex consisting of a school, a *medrese*, a fountain, and a library. But it was in its real estate holdings that the foundation's true strength lay. Ahmed Pasha demonstrated his political power by endowing the most important commercial and residential buildings in the city. Most of the 15 edifices he endowed were large mansions with multiple floors, each with ten to fifteen rooms, where the Venetian governor and high-ranking officials had previously resided. A total of 94 shops concentrated within the Candia fortress and the port area were endowed. There were also 40 cellars, mainly concentrated in the port area, and 46 two-storey rooms, with the upper floor typically utilised as living quarters and the lower floor serving as commercial spaces. Thus, Ahmed Pasha bought, repaired and endowed about a third of the 313 shops enumerated in the 1670 survey of Candia.<sup>64</sup> Also included in the waqf

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63 After Grand Vizier Fazıl Ahmed Pasha, his brother Fazıl Mustafa Pasha was appointed governor, followed by Mustafa Pasha's sons Numan Pasha, Sait Pasha, and Abdullah Pasha, and Numan Pasha's son Hafız Hacı Ahmed Pasha. In the same period, many pashas who were in the retinue of the Köprülü dynasty and had close relations with the family served in Crete. The most famous of these were Ali Pasha, the son of Merzifonlu Kara Mustafa Pasha; Grand Vizier Ali Pasha, a compatriot and chamberlain of Merzifonlu Kara Mustafa Pasha; and İbrahim Pasha, nicknamed Kethüda Pasha because he was the chamberlain of Köprülü Fazıl Mustafa and his sons Numan and Abdullah Pashas. For the political and architectural patronage of Köprülü Fazıl Ahmed Pasha and Merzifonlu Kara Mustafa Pasha, see M. F. Çalışır, *A Virtuous Grand Vizier: Politics and Patronage in the Ottoman Empire During the Grand Vizierate of Fazıl Ahmed Pasha (1661-1676)*, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Georgetown University, 2016; R. Pantık, *Merzifonlu Kara Mustafa Paşa Vakıfları: Yönetimi, Kentsel Gelişime Katkıları ve İktisadi Yapısı*, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Hacettepe University, 2021.

64 Gülsoy, 'Kandiye', 303-305.

endowment were around 20 water wells and cisterns, 37 wheat granaries, bakeries, plots of land, and gardens within the city, plus rural vineyards, orchards, farmlands, pastures, and three villages.

The power and central position of Köprülü Ahmed Pasha's waqfs grew and consolidated with those established by bureaucrats in his family and entourage, who unified their administration under the umbrella of his waqf. For example, Köprülü Numan Pasha, who served as governor of Candia on four occasions between 1703 and 1719, and died there, took over the administration of the Köprülü waqf from his father Fazıl Mustafa Pasha, and added a *medrese* to the waqf of his uncle Fazıl Ahmed Pasha.<sup>65</sup>

Hafız Hacı Ahmed Pasha, the son of Numan Pasha and manager of the Köprülü waqfs, contributed to the continuity of the foundations under his care while governor of Candia, by preparing two endowment deeds in 1745 and 1758. He built mausoleums for his father, Numan Pasha, and possibly for his sisters, plus a fountain and a school near the port in Candia. A total of 18 new positions were created following these additions to the Köprülü waqfs.<sup>66</sup>

Esad Pasha, the other son of Fazıl Mustafa Pasha, who died in Crete in 1726 while he was the governor of Rethymno, built a mausoleum for his son Halid Bey in Rethymno and established a waqf in his name. In the mausoleum endowment deed, 1,000 *guruş* were donated in cash and it was stipulated that two keepers of mausoleums were to pray for the soul of Halid Bey.<sup>67</sup>

Between the years 1670 and 1680, we can identify at least 11 waqfs established by people under the patronage of Köprülü Ahmed Pasha. At least five individuals, some of whom were already in the service of his father and also worked as Ahmed Pasha's chamberlains at different times, came to the island with the pasha and established waqfs there. The most prominent among them were Mahmud Agha, Ahmed Pasha's chamberlain, who established one of the richest waqfs in Crete; Şişman İbrahim Agha; Burunsuz Ahmed Agha; Siyavuş Agha; and Zülfikar Agha. All of them were promoted to the rank of pasha by their patron. Deputy chamberlain Receb Agha, chief auditor Acemzade Hüseyin Efendi, Ankebud Ahmed Pasha and each of his chamberlains also followed in their master's footsteps and established waqfs.

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65 *TDVİA*, s.v., 'Köprülüzade Numan Paşa' (A. Özcan), 265-267; M. Süreyya, *Sicill-i Osmani*, ed. N. Akbayar, Vol. IV (Istanbul 1996), 1265; Köprülü Kütüphanesi (KK), Vakfiye Defteri (VD), 12/2455.

66 The Waqf of Köprülüzade Hafız Ebülhayr Ahmed Pasha bin Numan Pasha, VGMA, 76: 46/3; KK, VD.12/2455.

67 VGMA, 2790: 169.

Although the waqf founders lost ownership of their properties when they declared them to be of waqf status, they rarely relinquished control over them, retaining management rights and keeping the budget surplus for themselves and their descendants. Often established as family waqfs, such institutions were intended to remain under family management. However, it is noteworthy that founders' sons also set up waqfs and sometimes merged them with earlier ones. Three generations of Findık Hacı Mehmed Pasha established waqfs on the island, which were eventually consolidated and managed by a single hand.<sup>68</sup> Captain Yusuf Pasha established a waqf in Chania, and his son Ahmed Agha, who also served as his *silahdar* (armourer), established one in Chania in 1655, which he later added to his father's waqf.

The continuity of existing waqfs was ensured by the addition of new ones. For instance, 19 new waqfs were incorporated into the existing foundation set up by Küçük Hacı İbrahim Agha in Rethymno.<sup>69</sup> Kara Musa Pasha, in conjunction with his son, established a waqf in Rethymno, to which 26 others were later added.<sup>70</sup> These newly established endowments typically consisted of cash donations, olive groves or a certain amount of olive oil, and were primarily intended to cover the expenses of the main waqf. Notably, a significant proportion of new waqfs were established by women, indicating a desire to contribute to charitable causes and a preference to entrust the management to existing institutions.

The waqfs established by Gazi Hüseyin and Fazıl Ahmed Pashas along with their family, retinue members and the people in their patronage network were crucial to the economic and architectural transformation and Ottomanisation of the island. In fact, state support and the incentives provided by creating favourable conditions for these people to establish waqfs encouraged further such investment on the island. The foundations set up by the upper military and administrative classes were often expanded by contributions from their descendants. The members of their entourage followed their lead and established some of the largest waqfs on the island. In conclusion, spearheaded as it was by the military-administrative class, the waqf system played a pivotal role in the Ottomanisation of Crete, facilitating economic growth, social cohesion and urban development.

The waqf-making activities of the military-administrative class were followed by smaller foundations set up by ordinary Janissaries, which merged with those of the upper military-administrative class. In most cases, Janissaries left the management

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68 The Waqf of Findık Hacı Mehmed Pasha, VGMA, 743: 117/28; The Waqf of Kaptanıderya Mustafa Pasha bin Kara Mehmed Pasha, VGMA, 579: 595/259 and 260.

69 BOA, Ev.D.14733, dated 1850.

70 BOA, Ev.D.14733, dated 1850.

of their waqfs to senior figures. For example, in the second half of the seventeenth century, many Janissary waqfs in Rethymno were administered by Bektashi Hacı Musa Dede, who was also the trustee of the Yahya Agha Mosque.<sup>71</sup> On the other hand, many founders opted to delegate the supervision of their waqfs to local Janissaries residing on the island, possibly because they wished to demonstrate solidarity within their military group by giving control of their endowments to others in the corps. But more importantly, by granting custody to the most powerful group on the island, waqf founders, whether military or civilian, secured a guarantee for them. Among those who entrusted their waqfs to the supervision of the Janissaries were corps members of different ranks, including Turnacıbaşı Ahmed Agha, Janissary Mustafa Agha of the 73rd *cemaat*, Ibrahim Agha from the 3rd *bölük*, as well as high-ranking state servants such as Fazıl Ahmed Pasha's chamberlain Mahmud Agha and Reisülküttâb Acemzade Hüseyin Efendi. In 1670, there were 4,736 Janissaries serving on the island. However, only 18 endowment deeds pertaining to Janissary waqfs have been found in the archive of the Directorate General of Foundations for the relevant period.<sup>72</sup> It is likely that further research through court records would uncover many more of them established at the time.

Research on later periods shows that from the second half of the eighteenth century onwards, Janissary waqfs were actively involved in the commercial and agricultural sectors and in the credit market.<sup>73</sup> For instance, Janissary families such as the Karakaşes, the Çalıks, and the Mirasyedis established family waqfs and emerged as prominent households who engaged in trade, manufacturing and tax farming.<sup>74</sup> Although it is beyond the scope of the present study, further analysis of endowment deeds in various archives would enrich studies on Janissary waqfs and networks in later periods. Our findings reveal that the households of the military-administrative class established an institutional base for themselves through waqfs that supported

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71 The Waqf of Üveys Agha, VGMA, 2970: 187; The Waqf of Hacı Alizade Mehmed Çelebi, VGMA, 2970: 184; The Waqf of Hasan Beşe, VGMA, 2970: 185; The Waqf of Cafer Bey, VGMA, 2970: 191; The Waqf of Kasım Beşe, VGMA, 2970: 191 ff.; The Waqf of Janissary Ahmed Çelebi of the 51st *cemaat*, VGMA, 2970: 188; The Waqf of Janissary Hasan Beşe of the 92nd *cemaat*, VGMA, 2790: 185; The Waqf of Janissary Şahin Beşe of the 8th *cemaat*, VGMA, 2790: 186.

72 BOA, MAD.d.658.

73 A. Anastasopoulos and Y. Spyropoulos, 'Soldiers on an Ottoman Island: The Janissaries of Crete, Eighteenth-Early Nineteenth Centuries', *THR*, 8 (2017), 20-23.

74 Y. Spyropoulos, 'Κοινωνική, διοικητική, οικονομική και πολιτική διάσταση του οθωμανικού στρατού: οι γενίτισαροι της Κρήτης, 1750–1826' [Social, Administrative, Economic and Political Dimensions of the Ottoman Army: the Janissaries of Crete, 1750-1826], unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Crete, 2014, 251-263; Anastasopoulos and Spyropoulos, 'Soldiers on an Ottoman Island', 24.

the transfer of their networks to the island. As a central institution in the Ottoman economic and social system, these waqfs played a crucial role in the transformation of Crete. Together with their networks, they continued to thrive and take firm root on the island over successive generations. Future studies will further explore the political and economic functioning of these networks, in which waqfs played a central role, as well as the emergence of prominent Janissary families on the island in subsequent periods. The new networks will then be examined in relation to the earlier ones included in this study, in order to demonstrate the articulation, competition, cooperation, and interweaving of emerging networks with previous ones.

## APPENDIX

## List of waqfs on Crete, 1650-1750

Name of Waqf	Document Type	Date	Establishment/ Main Service Location	Archive/ Classification	Register/ Box	Page	Record/ Document
Dergah-ı Ali Yeniçeri Ocağı Ağalardan Haseki Ahmet Ağa Vakfı	Vakfiye	1650	Hanya	VGMA	583	57	45
Derviş Ali Vakfı	Vakfiye	1650	Kandiye	VGMA	578	223	69
Veli Paşa Vakfı	Vakfiye	1651	Resmo	VGMA	2970	6	
Resmo Varoşunda Hayratı Vaki Merhum Resmo Muhafızı Mehmed Paşa Vakfı	Vakfiye	1652	Resmo	VGMA	2790	42	
Başdefterdar Sofu Mehmed Paşa Vakfı	Vakfiye	1655	Kandiye	VGMA	747	256	207
Hanya Fatihi Kaptanıderya Yusuf Paşa'nın Oğlu ve Silahları Ahmet Ağa Vakfı	Vakfiye	1655	Hanya	VGMA	988	281	180
Girid Fatihi Gazi Hüseyin Paşa Vakfı	Vakfiye	1658	Resmo-Hanya-Kisamo	VGMA	610	205	243
Girid Fatihi Gazi Hüseyin Paşa Vakfı	Vakfiye	1658	İsfakiye	VGMA	734	141	81
Resmo Kalesi Muhafızlarından Dergah-ı Ali Yeniçeri Çorbacılarından 73. Cemaatin Çorbacısı Mustafa Ağa b. Abdullah Vakfı	Vakfiye	1661	Resmo	VGMA	2790	140, 194	
Yeniçeri 51. Cemaatin Odabaşısı Ahmed Çelebi Vakfı	Vakfiye	1661	Resmo	VGMA	2790	188	
İbrahim Paşa Vakfı	Vakfiye	1662	Resmo	VGMA	2790	189	
Resmo'da Merhum Yahya Ağa Zaviyesinde Halveti Şeyhi Mehmet Efendi'nin Küttab Vakfı	Vakfiye	1663	Resmo	VGMA	2970	187	

Name of Waqf	Document Type	Date	Establishment/ Main Service Location	Archive/ Classification	Register/ Box	Page	Record/ Document
Girid Serdarı Ahmed Paşa Vakfı	Vakfiye	1665	Resmo	TKGM, KKA, VC	25		
Hatice Turhan Sultan Vakfı	Vakfiye	1669	Resmo	VGMA	744	109	28
Yeniçeri Ocağından Turnacıbaşı Ahmed Ağa b. Abdülmennan Vakfı	Vakfiye	1671	Kandiye	VGMA	571	195	70
Defterdar Ahmed Paşa b. Ataullah Vakfı	Vakfiye	1671	Kandiye	VGMA	724	37	1
Fazıl Ahmed Paşa Kethüdası Mahmud Ağa Vakfı	Vakfiye	1671	Kandiye	VGMA	629	10	5
Reisülküttap Acemzade Hüseyin Efendi b. Mehmed Vakfı	Vakfiye	1671	Kandiye	TKGM, KKA, VC	28		
Halen Kandiye Muhafızı olan Turnacıbaşı İbrahim Ağa b. Abdülkerim Vakfı	Vakfiye	1672	Kandiye	VGMA	989	87	66
Hacı Alizade Mehmed Çelebi Vakfı	Vakfiye	1675	Resmo	VGMA	2790	184	
Üveys Ağa b. Abdülmennan Vakfı	Vakfiye	1676	Resmo	VGMA	2970	187	
Sadrızam Fazıl Ahmed Paşa'nın Vekilharcı Receb Ağa Vakfı	Vakfiye	1676	Kandiye	TKGM, KKA, VC	13		
Köprülü Fazıl Ahmed Paşa Vakfı	Vakfiye	1678	Kandiye	VGMA	580	140	78
Yeniçeri 92. Cemaatin Vekilharcı Hasan Beşe Vakfı	Vakfiye	1678	Resmo	VGMA	2790	185	
Cafer Bey b. Osman Ağa Vakfı	Vakfiye	1679	Resmo	VGMA	2790	191	
Girid Muhafızı Ankebut Ahmed Paşa b. Ali Bey Vakfı	Vakfiye	1680	Kandiye-Resmo-Hanya	VGMA	742	221	91
Resmo Beyi Musa Paşa'nın Resmo Varoşunda Bina ve İhya Eylediği Cami Vakfı	Vakfiye	1683	Resmo	VGMA	2790	204	
Farisan-ı Yesar Sipahilerinden Mustafa Çavuş b. Abdullah Vakfı	Vakfiye	1687	Resmo	VGMA	2790	166	
Kasım Beşe b. Abdülvehab Vakfı	Vakfiye	1693	Resmo	VGMA	2790	191/192	
Girid ve Kandiye Muhafızı Fındık Hacı Mehmed Paşa Vakfı	Vakfiye	1694	Kandiye	VGMA	743	117	28
Yeniçeri Sarı Mehmed Beşe ve Yeniçeri 8. Cemaatin Yoldaşı Şahin Beşe Vekaletiyle Rahime b. Abdülmennan Vakfı	Vakfiye	1694	Resmo	VGMA	2790	186	
Gazi Hüseyin Paşa Tabyası Dizdarı Hacı Musli Ağa b. Abdurrahman Vakfı	Vakfiye	1698	Hanya	VGMA	583	277	210
Hanya Kadısı Ali Efendi b. Hasan Efendi Vakfı	Vakfiye	1719	Hanya	VGMA	748	2	2

Name of Waqf	Document Type	Date	Establishment/ Main Service Location	Archive/ Classifi- cation	Register/ Box	Page	Record/ Document
Kandiye Muhafızı Girid Serdarı Kaptanıderya İbrahim Paşa b. Selim Ağa Vakfı	Vakfiye	1722	Kandiye	VGMA	570	251	145
Mısır Valisi Kethüda İbrahim Paşa Vakfı	Muhasebe	1723	Kandiye	BOA, MAD.d.	1317	48-49	
Kandiye Muhafızı Girid Serdarı Kaptanıderya İbrahim Paşa b. Selim Ağa Vakfı	Vakfiye	1723	Kandiye	VGMA	570	254	146
Halen Resmo Muhafızı Köprülü Vezir Esad Paşa Vakfı	Vakfiye	1725	Resmo	VGMA	2790	169	
Musa Paşa Camii İmamı ve Hatibi Mustafa Efendi b. Şeyh Nasreddin Efendi Vakfı	Vakfiye	1727	Resmo	VGMA	2790	133	
Revan Kalesi Muhafızı Gazi Hüseyin Paşazade Mustafa Paşa Vakfı	Vakfiye	1728	Hanya	VGMA	735	45	21
Hanya'da Dergah-ı Ali Yeniçeri Ağası Vekili Haseki Mustafa Ağa b. Süleyman Vakfı	Vakfiye	1731	Hanya	VGMA	730	118	77
Sadrıali Kethüdası Niğdeli Hacı Ali Ağa b. Hasan Ağa Vakfı	Vakfiye	1731	İstanbul- Hanya	VGMA	578	228	72
Yerli Yeniçeri 3. Bölük Yüzbaşısı İbrahim Ağa Bin Süleyman Vakfı	Vakfiye	1732	Kandiye	VGMA	988	129	49
Yerli Kethüdası İbrahim Ağa ve Kardeşleri Mustafa, Mehmet ve Musa Ağalar ile Kız Kardeşi Rukiye Hatun Vakfı	Vakfiye	1732	Hanya	VGMA	629	670	462
Resmo Kalesi Sakinlerinden Yeniçeri Gönüllüyan-ı Yesar Ocağının 1. Bölüğünden Veyis Çelebi b. Mahmud Vakfı	Vakfiye	1732	Resmo	VGMA	2790	34	
Dergah-ı Ali Yeniçeri Keşide Çavuşlarından Hacı İsmail Çavuş Ağa Vakfı	Vakfiye	1734	Resmo	VGMA	2790	135	
Hasan Çelebi b. Kenan Vakfı	Vakfiye	1738	Kandiye	VGMA	582	422	329-1
Kethüda-yı Yesar Mustafa Bey b. Arif Bey Vakfı	Vakfiye	1742	Resmo	VGMA	2790	180	
Kandiye Muhafızı Vezir Numan Paşa b. Hasan Ağa Vakfı	Vakfiye	1743	Kandiye	İAK, MAE	Kutu: 36	18	
Dergah-ı Ali Yeniçerilerinden Kabalıade Hacı Hüseyin Ağa b. Ali Ağa Vakfı	Vakfiye	1743	Resmo	VGMA	2790	178	
Dedeoğlu Hacı İbrahim b. Mehmet Vakfı	Vakfiye	1744	Resmo	VGMA	2970	209	
Köprülüzade Hafız Ebülhayr Ahmet Paşa b. Numan Paşa Vakfı	Vakfiye	1745, 1748	Kandiye	KK, VD.	12/2455, 76	46	3
Kaptanıderya Hanya Muhafızı Mustafa Paşa b. Kara Mehmed Paşa Vakfı	Vakfiye	1750	Hanya	VGMA	579	595	259, 260





PART TWO

PROFESSIONAL AND COMMERCIAL PRACTICES



# JANISSARIES AND *ESNAF* IN LATE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY ISTANBUL

Cengiz KIRLI\*

THE PRESENCE OF JANISSARIES IN OTTOMAN ECONOMIC LIFE is well-known. There have been a number of studies demonstrating the heavy presence of Janissaries in urban economic life as tradesmen, shopkeepers, peddlers, boatmen or porters.<sup>1</sup> Contrary to the image of the mutinous Janissary as a shopkeeper or a tradesman rather than a

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\* Boğaziçi University.

I am grateful to the anonymous reviewer for her/his comments, and especially to Yannis Spyropoulos for his suggestions and corrections, which ultimately shaped this article in more ways than I could acknowledge here.

- 1 R. Olson, 'The Esnaf and the Patrona Halil Rebellion of 1730: A Realignment in Ottoman Politics?' *JESHO*, 20 (1976), 329-344; Idem, 'Jews, Janissaries, Esnaf and the Revolt of 1740 in Istanbul', *JESHO*, 22 (1978), 185-207; C. Kafadar, 'Yeniçeri-Esnaf Relations: Solidarity and Conflict', unpublished M.A. thesis, McGill University, 1981; Idem, 'Janissaries and Other Riff-raff of Ottoman Istanbul: Rebels without a Cause?', in B. Tezcan and K. K. Barbir (eds), *Identity and Identity Formation in the Ottoman World: A Volume of Essays in Honor of Norman Itzkowitz* (Madison 2007), 113-134; D. Quataert, 'Janissaries, Artisans and the Question of Ottoman Decline, 1730-1826', in D. Quataert (ed.), *Workers, Peasants and Economic Change in the Ottoman Empire, 1730-1914* (Istanbul 1993), 197-203; E. Yi, *Guild Dynamics in Seventeenth-Century Istanbul, Fluidity and Change* (Leiden 2004); M. M. Sunar, "'When Grocers, Porters and other Riff-raff Become Soldiers': Janissary Artisans and Laborers in the Nineteenth-Century Istanbul and Edirne', *Kocaeli Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, 17/1 (2009), 175-194; Idem, 'Cauldron of Dissent: A Study of the Janissary Corps, 1807-1826', unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Binghamton University-SUNY, 2006; F. Zarinebaf, *Mediterranean Encounters: Trade and Pluralism in Early Modern Galata* (Oakland, California 2018); N. Turna, 'Yeniçeri-Esnaf İlişkisi: Bir Analiz', in F. Demirel (ed.), *Osmanlı'dan Cumhuriyet'e Esnaf ve Ticaret* (Istanbul 2012), 21-42; G. Yılmaz Diko, 'Blurred Boundaries Between Soldiers and Civilians: Artisan Janissaries in Seventeenth-Century Istanbul', in S. Faroqhi (ed.), *Bread From the Lion's Mouth: Artisans Struggling for a Livelihood in Ottoman Cities* (New York 2015), 175-193; A. Yıldız, Y. Spyropoulos and M. Sunar (eds), *Payitaht Yeniçerileri: Padişahın "Asi" Kulları, 1700-1826* (Istanbul 2022); Y. Spyropoulos (ed.), 'Insights into Janissary Networks, 1700-1826' [special issue of *Cihannüma: Journal of History and Geography Studies*, 8/1 (July 2022)]; C. Wilkins and E. Yi, 'Between Soldier and Civilian: Janissaries in Seventeenth-Century Istanbul and Aleppo',

full-time soldier, portrayed by contemporary observers as the quintessential symbol of the so-called Ottoman decline from the seventeenth century onwards, new studies underline the blurring of the boundaries between Janissaries and civilians in social and economic activities to emphasise, and indeed to acclaim, the popular nature of Janissary rebellions against the Ottoman absolutist order. In court records, probate inventories, and government surveys on urban professions, historians have had considerable success in looking for qualitative and quantitative evidence to demonstrate the involvement of Janissaries in the urban economy.<sup>2</sup>

My contribution to this volume is yet another addition to this growing body of studies. Here, the focus will be on Istanbul, which, as the imperial centre, housed the largest number of Janissaries. However, unlike most of the scholarly works that rely on a sample of court records and probate inventories, or on available surveys in the archives that focus on a certain profession and so can demonstrate the Janissary presence in that particular occupation, this paper seeks to provide a much more comprehensive picture of the economic activity in the entire capital, via a set of registers prepared in the 1790s and named “*Kefalet Defterleri*” (Surety Registers).<sup>3</sup>

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in R. Goshgarian, I. Khuri-Makdisi and A. Yaycıoğlu (eds), *Crafting History: Essays on the Ottoman World and Beyond in Honor of Cemal Kafadar* (Boston 2023), 563-587.

- 2 Earlier surveys of Istanbul’s *esnaf* were usually conducted on a single profession, mostly because of the illicit connection between members of that particular profession and a recent Janissary rebellion, such as the 1671 and 1651-1652 surveys on boatmen, the 1730 survey on gardens, or the 1752 survey on bathhouses. For the 1730 survey on gardens: BOA, NFS.d.1, H-25-10-1145 (10 April 1733). For the boatmen surveys, with specific attention to their Janissary connection see, A. Altıntaş, ‘İstanbul Loncaları ve Yeniçeriler: Kayıkçı Esnafı Üzerine Bir Deneme’, in A. Yıldız, Y. Spyropoulos and M. Sunar (eds), *Payitaht Yeniçerileri: Padişahın “Asi” Kulları, 1700-1826* (Istanbul 2022), 133-156. For the bathhouse survey, N. Ergin, ‘The Albanian Tellak Connection: Labor Migration to Istanbul to the Hammams of 18th-Century Istanbul Based on the 1752 İstanbul Hamâmları Defteri’, *Turcica*, 43 (2011), 231-256.
- 3 Betül Başaran and I have been working on these registers for some time, and the findings presented here form part of this collective work. We have published some of our preliminary research in B. Başaran and C. Kırılı, ‘Some Observations on Istanbul’s Artisans During the Reign of Selim III (1789-1808)’, in S. Faroqhi (ed.), *Bread from the Lion’s Mouth: Artisans Struggling for a Livelihood in Ottoman Cities* (New York 2015), 259-277; C. Kırılı and B. Başaran, ‘18. Yüzyıl Sonlarında Osmanlı Esnafı’, in F. Demirel (ed.), *Osmanlı’dan Cumhuriyet’e Esnaf ve Ticaret* (Istanbul 2012), 7-20. Some of the individual registers have also been studied, see C. Kırılı, ‘A Profile of the Labor Force in Early Nineteenth-Century Istanbul’, *International Labor and Working-Class History*, 60 (2001), 125-140; B. Başaran, *Between Crisis and Order: Selim III, Social Control and Policing in Istanbul at the End of the Eighteenth Century* (Leiden 2014); N. Ertuğ, *Osmanlı Döneminde İstanbul Hammaları* (Istanbul 2008); Idem, *Osmanlı Döneminde İstanbul Deniz Ulaşımı ve Kayıkçılar* (Istanbul 2001); Idem, ‘Osmanlı Kefalet Sistemi ve 1792 Tarihli Bir Kefalet Defterine Göre Boğaziçi’, unpublished M.A. thesis, Sakarya University, 2000.

Beginning in 1792 and continuing over the following years, these registers were part of large-scale population surveys conducted by the government to enhance security and social control over the governed. The economic and political crisis following heavy military defeats by Russia and Austria was accompanied by rural uprisings across the Rumelian provinces known as “*Dağlı İsyamları*” (Mountaineer Uprisings), stoking fears of widespread political disorder on the part of the Ottoman government and the recently enthroned sultan Selim III. Although the practice of *kefalet* (bailing or standing surety) was an old Ottoman legal practice, the scale of its application in the 1790s was unprecedented. The surveys recorded all the adult male inhabitants of the towns in the zone where rural uprisings took place that showed them to be providing surety for one another, in an attempt to create a unifying system of incorporation, whereby individuals were linked to larger groups, and the actions of an individual could implicate the whole.<sup>4</sup>

This “close system of collective watchfulness”,<sup>5</sup> was similarly applied to Istanbul’s artisans and labourers, a sizeable proportion of whom were immigrants from the provinces, including the disorderly Rumelian towns. Although the ostensible purpose of these surveys on *esnaf*, updated every six months, was the identification and expulsion of those who stayed and worked in Istanbul without a guarantor (*kefil*), the wealth of demographic detail recorded in the registers suggests that the greater ambition was to render the entire working population of Istanbul visible, pointing to a new governing mentality.

The registers used in this study list all the shops, workshops, vegetable, fruit, and flower gardens, as well as the entire workforce in them, identifying masters, journeymen, and apprentices across greater Istanbul.<sup>6</sup> In addition, they contain information on all the boatmen and porters working in numerous docks, along with itinerant and freelance labourers, including water carriers, horse-cart drivers, woodcutters, fishermen, night watchmen, and gravediggers. Furthermore, several hundred inns and bachelors’ chambers were noted along with information on their keepers and residents in prodigious detail. In the majority of entries across the registers, the names and titles of individuals is provided, along with information on their province

4 E. Ünlü, ‘Dağlı İsyamları Sırasında Kefaletle Bağlanan Rumeli Şehirleri’, in M. Polat, A. Özdemir and Y. Çağlar (eds), *INCSOS VIII. Uluslararası Sosyal Bilimler Kongresi, 20-23 October 2022* (Tekirdağ 2023), 90-110.

5 M. Walzer, *The Revolution of the Saints: A Study in the Origins of Radical Politics* (Cambridge 1965), 221.

6 BOA, A.DVN.d.827, H-29-12-1206 (18 August 1792); 830, H-29-12-1206 (18 August 1792); 831, H-25-04-1207 (10 December 1792); 832, H-10-02-1208 (17 September 1793); 835, H-29-12-1207 (7 August 1793); 836, H-29-12-1207 (7 August 1793); 837, H-3-01-1208 (11 August 1793); 899, undated; D.BŞM.d.42648, undated,]; NFS.d..7, H-29-12-1207 (7 August 1793).

of origin if they were recent migrants, and their place of residence. No record is made in the registers of the working population in large state-owned enterprises such as the naval shipyard (*tersane*) and imperial arsenal (*tophane*), some marketplaces, such as the Grand Bazaar, and the several hundred taverns that were forcibly closed down by the state when the surveys were being conducted. Similarly, merchants and tradesmen feeding the capital's vibrant economy are absent. Although overall these registers fall short of providing a complete snapshot of the city's economic activity, they nevertheless offer an unprecedented amount of detail on almost all the retail, manufacturing, and service sectors in the Ottoman capital at the end of the eighteenth century, with information on the workforce of over 40,000 people who were employed in thousands of shops, hundreds of gardens, and docks, as shown in the tables below:

Register No	The Geographical Area of Coverage	Number of Shops and Fruit-Vegetable Gardens	Number of Labourers in Shops and Gardens	Number of Boatmen, Porters, and Others <sup>7</sup>	Number of Inns and Bachelors' Chambers	Total Number of Labourers
A.DVN.827	Beyazıt-Topkapı-Yedikule-Kumkapı	858	1,640	25	–	1,665
A.DVN.830	Tophane-Fındıklı-Galatasaray-Sirkeci	667	1,373	812	3	2,188
A.DVN.831	<i>Extramuros</i> Istanbul (the peninsula coastline)	2,588	7015	3,129	127	10,271
A.DVN.832	Galata	1,300	3,392	828	5	4,225
A.DVN.835	<i>Intramuros Istanbul</i> from Çemberlitaş to Sirkeci	1,324	3,926	42	49	4,017
A.DVN.836	Beyazıt-Odunkapısı-Süleymaniye	1,036	2,293	25	122	2,440
A.DVN.837	Vezneciler-Edirnekapı-Eğrikapı-Unkapanı	1,155	3,590	219	93	3,902
A.DVN.899	Both sides of Bosphorus from Kadıköy -Dolmabahçe to Anadolu and Rumeli Kavağı	2,739	7,019	2,523	139	9,681
D.BŞM.42648	Eyüp-Sütlüce-Hasköy	943	2,269	589	16	2,874
NFS.7	Kasımpaşa-Beyoğlu	879	2,517	413	12	2,942
<b>Total</b>		<b>13,489</b>	<b>35,034</b>	<b>8,605</b>	<b>566</b>	<b>44,205</b>

**Table I:** The geographical distribution of Istanbul *esnaf* according to the registers

7 Others include itinerant and freelance labourers such as water carriers, horse-cart drivers, woodcutters, fishermen, night watchmen, gravediggers etc.

Religion	Masters only in Shops and Gardens	Total Workforce in Shops and Gardens	Boatmen, Porters, and Other Itinerant Labourers
Muslims	60%	52%	72%
Greeks	19%	23%	8%
Armenians	12%	15%	13%
Jews	3%	3%	3%
Unidentified and undifferentiated <i>zimmis</i>	4%	7%	3%

**Table II:** Religious distribution of the workforce (% values rounded)

From the names recorded in the registers we can identify, with a high degree of accuracy, the confessional identities of the workforce, as Table II shows. The names are often accompanied by their titles, if they had any. These titles could be religious such as *hacı*, *acı*, *seyyid*, *monla*, or *imam*, or other titles that refer however vaguely to the recorded individual's social standing, such as *efendi*, *çelebi*, or *emir*. For our purposes, of greatest importance in this study are the known Janissary titles along with other military titles that allow us to identify, with some degree of accuracy, which corps the person in question belongs to, such as *bostancı*, *kalyoncu*, *topçu*, *cebeci*, and *sipahi*.

Two immediate problems emanating from the registers in connection with military titles need to be mentioned at the outset. The first has to do with early modern Ottoman recording practices, which are marked by a lack of uniformity and evenness across different registers. However comprehensive and unprecedented in terms of depth and scope these registers may have been, it should be remembered that they were prepared for the purpose of identifying people without sureties, and therefore the only consistent information provided across the ten registers studied here, as the clerks in charge of recording individuals would have been instructed, were the sureties that the working population provided for each other. All other information pertaining to recorded individuals seemed to have been left to the discretion of the clerk responsible for a particular region, which ultimately created blatant inconsistencies from one register to another. Equally troubling is the presence of such inconsistencies even within single registers. Some clerks, however, were much more attentive in identifying Janissaries by methodically entering the *cemaat* and *bölük* numbers of recorded individuals, leaving no doubt as to their Janissary identity. This is especially the case in the two registers<sup>8</sup> covering *intramuros* Istanbul, and to a lesser extent in the one covering the Tophane-Fındıklı region outside the walled

8 BOA, A.DVN.827 and 837.

city.<sup>9</sup> Almost all the recorded individuals with a regiment number appear in these three registers, and in seven other registers covering most of intra- and *extramuros* Istanbul, though the regiment numbers hardly ever appear where the only available information on a person's probable military status are the titles imprecisely associated with various corps. More importantly for our purposes, in these seven registers, the names of a significant number of known Janissaries identified in contemporary narrative sources and other surveys are not accompanied by any military titles, as if they had no connection with the corps. This means that the Janissary presence in Istanbul's working population is noticeably underrepresented in the statistical analysis provided in this study.

The second and related problem has to do with titles, which are, other than regiment numbers, the only way we can identify a person's Janissary status. These titles and what they identify are, in turn, part of the larger question of what Janissaries were understood to mean in the eighteenth century. As is well known, identifying someone as a Janissary does not necessarily mean that he was an active soldier, for the title refers to a wide variety of affiliations and identifications, such as Janissary impostors, *esame* holders (i.e. those who purchased the official title of Janissary to benefit from the corps' privileges, but had no other connection with the corps), non-Janissary military persons who were linked with and protected by the Janissaries, artisans and labourers with ties to the Janissary Corps, and members of the Janissary Corps who were involved in economic activities. Thus, based on this extremely imprecise identification, a very large Muslim population could potentially be identified as Janissaries in the late eighteenth century. When Çalıkzade Halil Agha, the voivode of the town of Bolu, was asked by Istanbul to draft 1,000 infantry soldiers from the local population to join the imperial army in 1789, he responded that it was impossible to recruit infantry soldiers from the town, because "the town community were as a whole from the Janissary class" (*mahall-i merkumun ahalisi bi'l-külliyen yeniçeri zümresinden olmağla miri askeri yazmak mümkün olmayub*).<sup>10</sup> Besides the implausibility of the (Muslim, adult, male) town population consisting entirely of Janissaries, the blurred distinction between civilian and military identity in official correspondence at the highest level is symptomatic of the problem at hand.

While the absence of accompanying titles does not necessarily imply a lack of Janissary affiliation, the presence of such titles does not automatically suggest Janissary identification, either. The biggest question here is what to do with the title of *beşe*, the most frequently used title, military or otherwise, running across the registers. It is used in Ottoman historical records so extensively and ubiquitously that

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9 BOA, A.DVN.830.

10 BOA, HAT.182/8301, H-29-12-1203 (20 September 1789).



any attempt to ascertain its strict and systematic identification remains elusive. The evidence overwhelmingly points to *beşe* being a military title, although there are some rare examples in the archives that it was used by civilians as well.<sup>11</sup> There are plenty of examples in Ottoman sources demonstrating that it was extensively used for low-ranking Janissaries, although it has now been well established that *beşe* was used as a title by other corps as well. Our registers support the observation that it was not a monopoly of the Janissary Corps. Nearly 30% of those affiliated with the *bostancı* corps in the records also have *beşe* as a title. It also appears, albeit with less frequency, alongside the titles *kalyoncu*, *topçu* and *cebeci*.

In this study, *beşe* is taken as a military title. In more than half of the records of the people with such a title, it appears as the only one, and it is highly likely that the people identified solely as *beşe* were the members of the Janissaries Corps. The reason for this rests on the assumption that titles of those belonging to *kapıkulu* corps other than Janissaries, such as *bostancı*s, *cebeci*s, and *topçu*s, were routinely written down across the registers to identify their members and to distinguish them from Janissaries, which gives the impression that, due to their sheer numbers among the workforce with military titles, the lone title of *beşe* served as the default identification for the Janissary Corps, requiring no further information.

Further, among the titles that appear frequently, *alemdar/bayrakdar*, *odabaşı*, *bölükbaşı*, *karakullukçu* were taken as Janissary titles, along with the titles of *çavuş* and *saka*, which are seen less often throughout the registers. As with the title of *beşe*, it is impossible to ascertain whether the people with these titles were Janissaries, or members of other *kapıkulu* corps. *Bey*, *efendi*, *emir*, and *çelebi* were almost certainly not military titles in the late eighteenth century, though they probably did have a military bearing in earlier periods. Therefore, unless accompanied by a military title such as *beşe*, the lone instances of *bey*, *efendi*, *emir*, and *çelebi* were not included in the calculations in this study.<sup>12</sup> On the other hand, whether the fairly frequently encountered title of *agha* is a military title also remains unclear. Although *agha* was generally used as a military title, indicating, in particular, the person's Janissary status in earlier periods, it seemed to have been used for both civilians and Janissaries in the late eighteenth century. *Agha* is taken to be a Janissary title in this study, because, on the one hand, some of the Janissaries that we know from narrative sources appear in the registers with the lone title of *agha*, and on the other hand, of the 42

11 T. Açıık, 'Beşe Unvanı Hakkında', *Tarih Dergisi*, 62/2 (2015), 37-64.

12 For the title of *çelebi* S: Yörük, "Çelebi Unvanı Hakkında Bir Değerlendirme", *Uluslararası Sosyal Araştırmalar Dergisi*, 4/18 (2011), 290-297. For the title of *emir*, I. M. d'Ohsson, *Tableau général de l'empire othoman*, Vol. IV, part 2 (Paris 1824), 555-566.

times it occurs, 40 appear in a single register (for Galata), indicating that the clerk surveying the region seems to have preferred the title to identify Janissaries.

Overall, as shown in Table III, the number of people bearing a military title who worked in shops and gardens, at the docks, or ran bachelor chambers/inns, was 3,926. Of this number, 384 were members of other corps, and 3,542 were Janissaries.<sup>13</sup> Of some 44,000 people recorded in the registers, the proportion of those with a military title is around 9%, 8% of whom were members of the Janissary Corps. The proportion of Janissaries to the overall Muslim workforce was around 16%.

	Janissary Titles Only	Other <i>Kapıkulu</i> Corps <sup>14</sup>	Total
Shops and gardens with military titles (masters and employees)	2,656	188	2,844
Boatmen, porters and itinerant labourers with military titles	844	196	1,040
Keepers of inns and bachelors' chambers	42	-	42
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,542</b>	<b>384</b>	<b>3,926</b>

**Table III:** *Esnaf* with military titles

In the 582 vegetable/fruit/flower gardens with a total workforce of 2,086, only 34 people bore a military title, and the majority of those worked in the 36 small flower gardens where a total of only 50 people worked. Perhaps this is not surprising, for the overwhelming majority of the workforce in orchards and vegetable gardens were Orthodox migrants from the central and western Balkans, and yet, given the commanding position of Janissaries in fruit and vegetable retail across Istanbul, the near absence of Janissaries in their production requires further scrutiny.

Janissaries mostly worked in shops. In nearly 13,000 shops, a total of 2,810 people bearing a military title were employed, of whom 2,248 were masters, and 562 were employed as journeymen or apprentices. Among those connected with the corps, Janissaries constituted the overwhelming majority, at over 93%.<sup>15</sup> The number of Janissaries as masters/shop owners were 2,215, meaning that of around 13,000 shops owner-masters, and of around 8,000 Muslim shop owner-masters, Janissary masters constituted around 16%, and 28% respectively. Put simply, at least one in

13 Of the 3,234 Janissaries, 1,004 of them have division (*bölük*) and regiment (*cemaat*) numbers. While 705 of them were stationed in various *bölüks*, 249 were in *cemaats* and 17 in *sekban bölüks*. Among the Janissaries identified with *bölük* and *cemaat* numbers, 20 of them appear as boatmen, 13 as innkeepers, and the rest worked in shops.

14 Bostancı, Cebeci, Sipahi, Kalyoncu, Topçu, Tulumbacı.

15 Only 195, (around 7%) of the workforce, bearing a military title other than Janissaries worked in shops. These were 98 Bostancı, 48 Topçu, 23 Cebeci, 16 Kalyoncu, and 10 Sipahi.

every six shops in Istanbul, and one in every four shops owned by Muslims were run by Janissaries at the end of the eighteenth century. However, while Janissaries appear strong in numbers as masters, the overall Janissary population in proportion to the total workforce in shops was remarkably low, at around 8%.

As Table IV shows, Janissaries predominantly worked within the walled city. The ratio of Janissaries to the total labour force in *intramuros* Istanbul is around 25%, but below 8% in *extramuros* regions. Approximately 25% of the shops inside the city walls were also run by Janissaries. The highest concentration was on the axis between Beyazıt and Aksaray, close to the Janissary barracks, where 845 of around 2,000 shops, or 42%, were run by Janissaries. The tendency to work in shops close to the Janissary barracks could have been a continuation of older practice rather than a necessary convenience, for very few Janissaries actually slept in the barracks. Of the data available for over 7,500 people in the registers where the residence of the recorded individual is mentioned, only 19 people indicated the Janissary barracks as their lodgings. We already know that from early on, Janissaries who got married would leave the barracks and live in their own homes, while those who

Register No	The Geographical Area of Coverage	Number of Shops and Fruit-Vegetable Gardens	Number of Laborers in Shops and Gardens	Number of laborers with a military title	% Value
A.DVN.827	Beyazıt-Topkapı-Yedikule-Kumkapı	858	1,640	459	27.9
A.DVN.830	Tophane-Fındıklı-Galatasaray-Sirkeci	667	1,373	189	13.8
A.DVN.831	<i>Extramuros</i> Istanbul (the peninsula coastline)	2,588	7,015	239	4.4
A.DVN.832	Galata	1,300	3392	105	3.4
A.DVN.835	<i>Intramuros Istanbul</i> from Çemberlitaş to Sirkeci	1,324	3,926	161	4.1
A.DVN.836	Beyazıt-Odunkapısı-Süleymaniye	1,036	2,293	29	1.3
A.DVN.837	Vezneciler-Edirnekapı-Eğrikapı-Unkaparı	1,155	3,590	474	13.2
A.DVN.899	Both sides of Bosphorus from Kadıköy -Dolmabahçe to Anadolu and Rumeli Kavağı	2,739	7,019	982	14
D.BŞM.42648	Eyüp-Sütlüce-Hasköy	943	2,269	104	4.7
NFS.7	Kasımpaşa-Beyoğlu	879	2,517	102	4.6
<b>Total</b>		<b>13,489</b>	<b>35,034</b>	<b>2,844</b>	

**Table IV:** The geographical distribution of people with military titles in shops and gardens

were single stayed in bachelor rooms or shops. Yet the fact that of the nearly 3,000 Janissaries only 19 indicated their place of residence as the barracks suggests if not serves as concluding evidence of how loose the connection was between Janissary title holders and the corps, with many acquiring titles to obtain privileges rather than serve as soldiers.

Outside the city walls, the area between Tophane and Sirkeci seems to have been the most densely populated by the Janissaries. However, only 61 of the 667 shops (40 Janissaries, 21 *topçu*, and other members of the corps) were run by people with military titles. The 129 people working in 17 bread and round-cake bakeries constituted the bulk of the Janissaries in this area.

Janissaries were heavily involved in certain professions, as Table V shows. What stands out in this list is their overwhelming presence in the coffeehouse business. Coffeehouses were by far the most numerous shops; about one in eight shops across Istanbul was a coffeehouse at the end of the eighteenth century. More than 40% of coffeehouses in the city were run by Janissaries, and aside from boating, it was the most significant business the Janissaries were connected with. From the time of their introduction to the imperial capital in the mid-sixteenth century, coffeehouses were almost immediately eyed with suspicion by the authorities for housing subversive political discourse, which resulted in their being closed down several times. The increasing involvement of Janissaries in the coffeehouse business from the seventeenth century onwards turned what were important social hubs from suspect to dangerous, as Janissary-led insurrections had become a permanent fixture of political life in the Empire. Coffeehouses often served as headquarters during times of Janissary uprisings. The revolt of Patrona Halil in 1730, for example, resulting in the dethronement of Ahmet III (r. 1703–1730), began in a coffeehouse. Similarly, Mustafa Agha, a prominent leader of the Kabakçı Mustafa revolt in 1807 that put an end to the reign of Selim III (r. 1789–1807), ran a coffeehouse in Atpazarı.<sup>16</sup> The close connections between Janissaries and coffeehouses led Mahmud II to close down all 2,076 of them in Istanbul after the abolition of Janissary Corps in 1826, marking the first wholesale closure in nearly two centuries.<sup>17</sup>

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16 A. Çaksu, 'Janissary Coffee Houses in Late Eighteenth-Century Istanbul', in D. Sajdi (ed.), *Ottoman Tulips, Ottoman Coffee: Leisure and Lifestyle in the Eighteenth Century* (London and New York 2007), 124.

17 Coffeehouses and barbers were surveyed in intramuros Istanbul as well as Eyüp, Galata, and Üsküdar. In addition to 2,076 coffeehouses, there were 1,668 barber shops across Istanbul in 1826. See Sahhâflar Şeyhi-zâde Seyyid Mehmed Es'ad Efendi, *Vak'a-nüvîs Es'ad Efendi Tarihi: (Bâhir Efendi'nin Zeyl ve İlâveleriyle) 1237-1241 / 1821-1826*, ed. Z. Yılmaz (Istanbul 2000), 641.

Barbershops were the second most numerous type of business after coffeehouses. Beyond barbering they too served as important social hubs and were often run by Janissaries, though at a significantly lower proportion than coffeehouses. Employing one-fifth of all the Janissaries in Istanbul, these two types of business required little capital and low skills, but a solid social network in society, which might explain why Janissaries tended to be concentrated there.

The next line of business the Janissaries were most often involved in was foodstuffs. About one-third of all greengrocers and butchers were owned by Janissaries, in addition to around 10 slaughterhouses, amounting to one fifth of the total. Provisioning the barracks with foodstuff was probably one reason for the involvement of Janissaries in Istanbul's food supply from early on.<sup>18</sup> Janissaries also worked as barley dealers, *helva* makers, and bakers. The significance of Janissary presence among bread bakers, a profession dominated by Armenians, is particularly noteworthy.

One very large sector where the Janissaries were conspicuously lacking, however, was textiles. In the dozens of textile-related occupations, from fluffing to spinning, from weaving to dyeing and printing of various fabrics, which employed several thousand people, very few members of the *kapıkulu* corps were to be found.<sup>19</sup> In 18 textile printing shops in Yenikapı and Üsküdar, for example, employing over 900 people, only one *odabaşı* and nine *bostancı*s were recorded.

In many other crafts, too, Janissaries were thin on the ground. Tanneries (*debbağhane*), and potteries (*çömlekçi*) for example, employing around 400 and 200 people respectively, employed only two Janissaries each. The same is true for shoemakers, except for light-shoe making (*yemenici*), in which they did have a hand.<sup>20</sup> All these observations show that Janissaries were more involved in retail than manufacturing, which also suggests that they were mostly involved in occupations that did not require high skills.

Other than working in shops and gardens, Janissaries also appear as boatmen, porters, and other types of itinerant labourers such as horse-cart drivers and water carriers. The registers recorded 1,040 people with military titles in this category, about a quarter of the total workforce in Istanbul connected with various military corps. Of these 1,040 individuals, Janissaries constituted the largest group at 81%,

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18 This seems to have been the case in other Ottoman cities as well. For Janissary control of the butchers' guild in late eighteenth-century Aleppo, see Quataert, 'Janissaries, Artisans', 200. See also H. L. Bodman, *Political Factions in Aleppo, 1760-1826* (Chapel Hill 1963), 63-64.

19 Quataert also notes the absence of Janissaries in the textile business, Quataert, 'Janissaries, Artisans', 200.

20 *Yemenici* meant both light-shoe maker and headkerchief maker; it is unclear which one is referred to in the registers.

Type of Shops	No. of Shop Owners with Military Titles	Total No. of Shops	% Value
Coffeehouse ( <i>kahvehane</i> )	682	1,634	42%
Greengrocer ( <i>manav</i> )	225	623	36%
Barber ( <i>berber</i> )	125	1,052	12%
Butcher ( <i>kasab</i> )	82	275	30%
Tinsmith ( <i>kalaycı</i> )	65	126	52%
Round-cake maker ( <i>çörekçi fırını</i> )	54	126	43%
Bread maker and seller ( <i>ekmek fırını</i> )	48	200	24%
Light-shoe maker ( <i>yemenici</i> )	42	241	17%
Pipe bowl maker ( <i>lüleci-çubukçu</i> )	41	208	20%
Helva maker ( <i>belvacı</i> )	40	92	43%
Barley dealer ( <i>arpacı</i> )	40	96	42%
Tobacco seller ( <i>dubani</i> )	34	458	8%
Knife maker ( <i>bıçakçı</i> )	34	91	37%
Fruit and Flower Garden ( <i>meyve ve çiçek bahçesi</i> )	34	352	10%
Coal seller ( <i>kömürcü</i> )	27	150	18%
Blacksmith ( <i>nalband</i> )	31	65	48%
Laundry ( <i>çamaşırcı</i> )	27	71	38%
Pickle maker ( <i>turşucu</i> )	26	66	39%
Roasted chickpea maker ( <i>leblebici</i> )	23	54	43%
Carpenter ( <i>doğramacı</i> )	23	99	23%
Tailor ( <i>terzi</i> )	21	437	5%
Herbalist ( <i>attar</i> )	21	331	6%
Glazier ( <i>camcı</i> )	19	50	38%
Kebab shop ( <i>kebabçı</i> )	19	62	31%
Bakers of ring-shaped breads ( <i>simitçi</i> )	17	73	23%

**Table V:** Involvement of military corps in trade and crafts (only shop owners in the top 25 non-itinerant professions with notable military representation)

while the remaining 19% (196 people) were from other corps, all of whom but six were from the Bostancı Corps.

Most of those connected with the military worked as boatmen. 920 of the 1,040 (88%) with a military title plied this trade, of whom 724 (79%) were Janissaries. Together with other members of the various corps, they constituted approximately 17% and 4% of boatmen respectively, amounting to 21% of the total number in the

trade in Istanbul, which was 4,346. Two-thirds of all Janissary boatmen worked at the dozens of piers lining the Bosphorus, where one in every three boatmen was a Janissary.

Though the volume of people with military titles among boatmen appears considerable, there seems to have been significant inconsistency and oversight on the part of the clerks recording those with military titles in the trade. Abdulmennan Altıntaş, who studied two surveys on boatmen in 1677 and 1752 in Istanbul, finds that in 1677 survey 38% of the total 1,292 boatmen belonged to various military corps, while in 1752, of the total 3,423 boatmen, people with military titles accounted for 57%.<sup>21</sup> Since a 36% decline in the space of 40 years seems improbable, a significant number of boatmen with military titles were evidently left unrecorded in our registers. That the military class continued to have an overwhelming presence among boatmen at the end of the eighteenth century is supported by contemporary narrative and quantitative sources. W. Eton in his *A Survey of the Turkish Empire* wrote in 1799 that:

Strangers (and I include most foreign ministers, who are grossly imposed on by the ignorance of their dragomans or interpreters) are misled by the accounts they receive of the number of janizaries, of bostangees, of boatmen, of artisans, of shopkeepers, etc. without knowing that one and the same person is commonly in two or three of these capacities; for instance, almost every boatman is a bostangee or a janizary, and the greatest part of the shopkeepers and artisans are janizaries.<sup>22</sup>

According to the results of the census conducted on Istanbul boatmen in 1802, 2,063 of the 5,151 Muslim boatmen were members of the military and 3,088 were civilians.<sup>23</sup>

21 Altıntaş, 'İstanbul Loncaları ve Yeniçeriler', 145 and 151-152.

22 W. Eton, *A Survey of the Turkish Empire* (London 1799), 281-282.

23 N. Ertuğ, 'Klasik Dönem Osmanlı İstanbul'unda Deniz Ulaşımı', in C. Yılmaz and A. Bilgin (eds), *Antik Çağ'dan XXI. Yüzyıla Büyük İstanbul Tarihi*, Vol. VI (Istanbul 2015), 429. See also, Idem, *Osmanlı Döneminde İstanbul Deniz Ulaşımı*, 114; C. Orhonlu, 'Osmanlı Türkleri Devrinde İstanbul'da Kayıkçılık ve Kayık İşletmeciliği', *Tarih Dergisi*, 16/21 (March 1966), 109-134; M. Mazak, 'İstanbul'da Kayıkçı Esnafı ve 1802 Tarihli Kayıkçı Esnafı Sayım Defteri', unpublished M.A. thesis, Marmara University, 1998. Mazak's thesis does not provide overall figures of the boatmen with military titles. Orhonlu, however, gives different figures (p. 127) than Ertuğ for the 1,802 boatmen survey with respect to the involvement of different corps: there were 6,572 boatmen and 3,996 boats in Istanbul in 1802. Of these boatmen, 5,184 were Muslims, 1,401 belonged to various military groups, and 3,783 were civilians. The surveys also recorded 924 Christians and 464 Jews among boatmen. The contradiction in figures likely stems from the fact that the survey only provided names and titles and, unlike some of the earlier surveys, did not clearly separate military personnel from civilians, and that the authors interpreted the military titles differently. Many thanks to Abdulmennan Altıntaş for pointing this out and sharing Mazak's thesis with me.

Type of Activity	No. of People with Military Titles	% Value Employed in the Occupation
Boatmen ( <i>kayıkçı</i> )	920	21%
Horse-cart Drivers ( <i>arabacı</i> )	31	22%
Porters ( <i>hamal</i> )	30	1%
Water Carriers ( <i>saka</i> )	24	16%

**Table VI:** Workforce in transport services bearing military titles

The problem of the working population with military titles being underrepresented is even more strikingly evident among porters. Our registers record only 31 Janissaries, and none from other military corps, working as backloading (*arka hamalı*), pole (*sırık hamalı*), and horseback (*at hamalı*) porters, out of a 2,868 strong workforce across Istanbul, only accounting for about 1%. Given that contemporary chronicles, travel accounts and individual surveys on porters all point to the overwhelming presence of Janissaries among the members of this profession, the 1% figure recorded here in these registers cannot possibly be considered accurate. According to the 1822 survey on porters in İstanbul, for instance, of the 2,919 porters, 470 were non-Muslims and the remaining 2,449 were Muslims, of whom 2,038 (83%) were either Janissaries or, to a lesser extent, affiliated with various other corps.<sup>24</sup> In his chronicle covering the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Cabi Efendi recounts several references demonstrating the heavy Janissary presence among porters. A certain İbrahim Agha from Tosya, the chief warden of porters working at Üsküdar Büyük İskele, for instance, was a member of the 59th *bölük* of the Janissary Corps, and all the porters working at the same pier were also his fellow townsmen. Although not overtly stated in Cabi's account, his fellow porters were probably also members of the 59th *bölük*, as is evident in İbrahim Agha's regular visits to the 59th's barracks to collect his own wages as well as those of his porters from Tosya – behaviour which, along with other misdeeds, ultimately brought about his own demise and eventual execution.<sup>25</sup> İbrahim Agha and his fellow porters appear in one of the registers used in this study.<sup>26</sup> Indeed, İbrahim Agha provided surety for 116 backloading porters (*arka hamalı*) and 20 horse-back porters (*at hamalı*) in Üsküdar Büyük İskele, all but six of whom were from Tosya. However, of the total of 136 porters, only three were recorded with the accompanying title of

24 Ertuğ, *İstanbul Hammalları*, 66.

25 Câbi Ömer Efendi, *Câbi Târihi: Târih-i Sultân Selîm-i Sâlis ve Mahmûd-i Sâni: Tahlil ve Tenskidlî Metin*, ed. M. A. Beyhan (Ankara 2003), Vol. II, 749-751. Cabi's anecdote on İbrahim Agha is also recounted in Başaran, *Selim III*, 142; and Sunar, 'Cauldron of Dissent', 65-66.

26 BOA, A.DVN.d.899: 7-8.



*beşe*, which demonstrates how negligent the clerks were in recording military titles in their surveys. And yet, it is worth mentioning that as he was listing 395 boatmen working at the same pier just above the entry on porters on the same page in the register, the very same clerk did not fail to record more than half of the names with their accompanying military titles of *beşe* and *bostani*. Such inconsistencies are difficult to explain, and certainly make it impossible to form a clear picture of the extent of Janissary involvement in commercial activities.

Cabi Efendi's anecdote on İbrahim Ağa also points to another important feature: the connection between occupations and geographical networks. The registers overall offer quite a clear picture that occupational preference was almost never an individual choice, but was largely based on established networks, the most important of which were provincial or regional. Being from the same province or region (*hemşehri*) seems to have been the most important factor determining choice of profession and workplace composition. It was common for people from the same region to be involved in the same profession and specialise in the same craft, almost always working side by side in shops, gardens, or piers. Of course, not many people were adventurous enough to risk travelling alone without a job and a place to stay in the empire's capital, with the faint opportunities it offered. Knowing someone in Istanbul from the same province was essential to increasing the migrant's chances of survival there, conceivably in return for loyalty, overwork, and low wages. It was an arrangement that no doubt automatically created a dependent and hierarchical relationship in craft associations and the workplace.

This also explains why the migrant workforce employed across Istanbul came from a rather limited number of towns when compared to the vast territories of the empire. Porters and boatmen in particular were among the two occupations where the immigrant workforce was the highest. The available data on 4,609 people from these two groups reveal that three-quarters of them were recent immigrants mainly from Anatolia, the majority of whom were Muslims. Many unskilled Muslim labourers from Anatolia often found jobs at piers as boatmen and porters with the help of their *hemşehris*, as is evident in the overwhelming predominance of one or the other Anatolian town in the workforce at piers.

The registers provide information on the migrant status of the more than half of the boatmen with military titles. While some 200 of them were registered as local (*yerli*), the hometowns of 324 people were identified. Here, the province of Kastamonu and towns located within a hundred-mile radius of it appear as the centre of a migration network sending the majority of the migrants to Istanbul, where they eventually acquired military titles along with their profession as boatmen. More than 200 Janissary boatmen from Kastamonu, Çankırı, Boyabad, Abana, Taşkoprü,

Çerkeş, and Safranbolu, all close to one another, worked at the piers on the Anatolian side, especially in Üsküdar.

Following the pattern throughout the registers whereby migrants from the same province specialised in the same professions, they also tended to work in the same place; most of the Janissary boatmen from the same hometown worked on the same piers. Of the 31 boatmen from Abana, for example, 25 worked at Üsküdar Büyük İskele and 4 at Üsküdar Ayazma; 38 out of 39 boatmen from Çerkeş were at Üsküdar Büyük İskele; of the 29 from Safranbolu, 27 were at Beylerbeyi, Çengelköy, Kanlıca and Üsküdar, all close to one another; all 14 from Boyabad worked at Kandilli and Üsküdar piers; and all 11 from Kemah at Ahırkapı pier.<sup>27</sup>

Similar to the employment patterns at piers, *hemşehri* connections seemed to have been important for Janissaries working in shops, too. However, the available evidence is insufficient for conclusive observations, due to discrepancies in the recording practices in different registers. As pointed out earlier, while Janissaries worked primarily as boatmen in *extramuros* Istanbul, where the records are more attentive to indicating workmen's hometowns, this information was rarely recorded for masters and hardly ever for their employees in registers covering the walled city, where Janissaries primarily worked in shops. And yet some available information may suggest that *hemşehri* networks were important, too, in craft specialisation and the choice of profession. In six separate round-shape bakeries (*çörekçi fırını*) around the neighbourhoods of Fındıklı and Tophane, for example, all six masters were from the province of Safranbolu, five of whom were members of the 25th *bölük*, and one of the 52nd. In addition to the masters, the entire workforce of 39 people in these six bakeries were all Janissaries, of whom 30 were from the 25th *bölük*, seven from the 5th and two from the 7th. Of the 39, all but two were from Safranbolu, as were their masters, one from Sinop and one from Yenişehir, all located in northern Anatolia near the Black Sea.<sup>28</sup>

Similar examples from the registers also suggest that Janissaries from the same province not only specialised in the same profession, but also worked side by side in the same workplace. Further, it seems that many Janissary regiments were formed on the basis of *hemşehri* connections, suggesting that the formation of Janissary

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27 For similar observations on the strong connection between *hemşehri* bonds and the composition of boatmen in various piers in earlier periods, see Altıntaş, 'İstanbul Loncaları ve Yeniçeriler', 155.

28 On Janissaries and migrant networks see also see also Y. Spyropoulos, 'Yunan Bağımsızlık Savaşı Sırasında Ele Geçirilen İki Yeniçeri Mektubunun Düşündürdükleri', in A. Yıldız, Y. Spyropoulos and M. Sunar (eds), *Payitaht Yeniçerileri: Padişahın "Asi" Kulları, 1700-1826* (Istanbul 2022), 42-43.

battalions was along the lines of geographical identity.<sup>29</sup> Cabi, for example, points to this tendency in his chronicle at the turn of the nineteenth century, noting that the members of the 25th *cemaat* were mostly from Erzurum and Van, and those of the 56th *cemaat* from Gerede.<sup>30</sup>

The overrepresentation of certain regiments and divisions throughout the registers, and the tendency for the Janissaries belonging to the same regiments to work in geographically close proximity also serve as evidence of this trend from a different angle. For example, there were 35 Janissaries from the 61st *cemaat* who mostly worked in Aksaray, Vezneciler; 20 from the 64th *cemaat* in Karagümrük, Kumkapı; 16 from the 94th *cemaat* in Fatih, Salmatomruk; and 89 from the 25th *bölük*, 21 from the 27th *bölük*, 80 from the 31st *bölük*, and 20 from the 32nd *bölük* in Unkapanı, Fatih.

As should be clear from these observations, *hemşehri* ties often overdetermined and reinforced Janissary identity. The dependent relationship between people from the same provinces translated into solidarity, first through recruitment into shops and crafts, and later into the Janissary Corps. This sense of camaraderie was further solidified through a sense of fellowship in regiments.

## Conclusion

The above snapshot of the Janissaries' presence among the *esnaf* of Istanbul provides us with a comprehensive and unique view that was difficult to see in other archival sources often used in previous scholarship. The registers reveal the density of Janissaries in the overall economic life in the empire's capital, the types of occupations and businesses they were mostly involved with, their geographical distribution in the city, as well as the role of *hemşehri* networks in their job specialisation and workplace composition.

Nevertheless, it is glaringly obvious that however comprehensive they might be in comparison to the other surveys in early modern Istanbul that usually concentrate on a single profession, they are utterly unreliable when it comes to providing a full picture of Janissary representation in Istanbul's workforce. According to the registers used in this study, Janissaries constituted 17% of shop-owners/masters, while the proportion of Janissaries to the overall workforce was around 8%. In the 1790s, the number of Janissaries registered in Istanbul was around 63,000-65,000, even though not all of them were probably in the city at the same time, as some may have

29 Başaran and Kırılı, 'Some Observations', 272.

30 Câbi Ömer Efendi, *Câbi Târîhi*, I: 440, 502.

been stationed elsewhere.<sup>31</sup> If we take this number as a rough indicator, this means that the proportion of *esnaf* Janissaries to their total number in Istanbul was less than 6%. This meagre number contradicts all contemporary accounts and modern scholarly works, however impressionistic and limited in their scope may be, on the involvement of Janissaries in Ottoman market activities.

As discussed above, Janissaries are markedly underrepresented in records of porters and boatmen, yet the only reason we know of this is due to the existence of systematic, comprehensive, and continuous surveys of these two occupations, more than for any other trade, as the Ottoman administration had long considered them unsavoury and unsuitable for the involvement of a large immigrant and Janissary population. In other words, the information on Janissaries in other trades recorded in the registers might be as unreliable as that for boatmen and porters.

These registers, then, tell us less about the overall representation of Janissaries in the economic life of the imperial capital than about the recording practices found in early modern Ottoman surveys. And yet, these same practices serve as an important reminder for future studies on Janissaries in several respects. First, early modern Ottoman surveys were not prepared as statistical censuses in the modern sense, in which multiple demographic aspects of the population are intentionally recorded. They were usually one-dimensional, prepared, more often than not, for taxation or policing purposes, while all other information was circumstantial and discretionary. The only consistent information to be found across the registers used in this study is the size and volume of the itinerant and non-itinerant workforce and individual records of surety for one another, as they were prepared with the express intention of expelling unsponsored immigrants from the imperial capital. All other information within registers, such as their residence, migrant status, hometown, military or religious affiliation, is of secondary importance from the perspective of those who conducted these surveys, and hence the discrepancies seen in different types of records across and even within individual registers. However, it should also be remembered that such information in early modern surveys, albeit unsystematic and sporadic, is often the only available demographic data on the workforce, and as long as it is supplemented and elaborated with information from other sources, it remains immensely valuable.

Second, as discussed in the preamble, often the only way to identify a person's military status is by the title or titles accompanying their names. However, these

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31 A. Gül, '18. Yüzyılda Yeniçeri Teşkilatı', unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Atatürk University, 2020, 179-189. Based on this dissertation see also, Idem, *Yeniçeriliğin Tarihi*. Vol. I: *Yeniçeri Ocağı'nın Teşkilat Yapısı ve Nefer Kaynağı* (Istanbul 2022) and *Yeniçeriliğin Tarihi*. Vol. II: *Yeniçeri Ordusu, Yeniçerilerin Hakları ve Mükellefiyetleri* (Istanbul 2022).

supposedly military titles are of limited value as indicators of Janissary identity, because some of the commonly used ones, such as *beşe*, are widely adopted by members of other corps, and even by civilians. To complicate matters more, while the presence of military titles did not prove Janissary identity, their absence did not necessarily denote the lack of a Janissary connection, either, when such affiliation was widespread among commoners. Furthermore, military titles acquired different meanings in different periods, and thus historicisation and contextualisation are of the utmost importance when delving into the imprecise world of Ottoman military titles.

Finally, and relatedly, it all comes down to addressing the question of what it meant to be a Janissary in early modern Ottoman society. From active Janissary soldiers to mere *esame* holders or impostors posing as Janissaries, from members of the Janissary Corps involved in economic activities in various degrees to the members of other corps protected by and affiliated with Janissary regiments, Janissaries were so deeply enmeshed in the everyday life of the commoners that it is impossible, and indeed futile, to define a single Janissary identity. We do not even know whether the individuals recorded with Janissary titles in the registers were self-professed Janissaries assuming one or more of the characteristics mentioned above or acknowledged as Janissaries by surveyors according to official criteria or their own personal identification. It is this close military-civilian entanglement and the ensuing confusion that is thoroughly reflected in early modern surveys, and it is thus vainly optimistic to expect anything better of them.



JANISSARIES AS ENTREPRENEURS  
AND CIVILIANS AS JANISSARIES  
IN THESSALONIKI DURING THE SECOND  
HALF OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY  
IDENTITY FLUIDITY, ECONOMIC HIERARCHIES,  
AND BUSINESS PRACTICES

Dimitris PAPASTAMATIOU\*

IN RECENT YEARS HISTORIANS HAVE DELINEATED and, in essence, redefined the Janissary phenomenon in the context of the dramatic transformations that took place in Ottoman society and the economy during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. As a matter of fact, the focal point of research into the Janissary Corps for the above-mentioned period has shifted from an institutional and political approach, depicting the corps in essentialist terms as a recalcitrant, obsolete, and ineffective military unit, to a more dialectic approach which takes into account the interplay between the military class and the unstable as well as intermittently varying domestic and international social and economic realities. The arguments have been deployed *in extenso* in recent literature, and constitute the stepping-stone of the JaNet project, part of which the present paper is. Another commonly accepted principle of contemporary research into the Janissary phenomenon concerns its plurality, namely, the complex modes of its manifestation which are contingent on local particularities, temporal conjuncture, and individual incentives, and, in their turn, diversify the Janissary phenomenon into a plethora of distinct versions. This intricacy necessitates thorough research into these diverse aspects of historical reality as evidenced in particular case studies. In this respect, this paper focuses on and delves into Janissary realities as they unfolded in Thessaloniki in the second half of the eighteenth century.

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\* Aristotle University of Thessaloniki.

### *Thessaloniki and its Muslim population*

Thessaloniki (Selanik in Ottoman Turkish) was a seminal Ottoman metropolis of the eighteenth century. The city, capital of the respective *kaza* and *sancak* of the same name, developed into a substantial hub of trade routes and networks in the Ottoman Balkans and the Mediterranean Sea. From the first decades of the eighteenth century, the city was transformed into a centre for gathering in and storing all the agricultural produce and handmade goods in Macedonia and Thessaly, and became the starting point for the most significant and busiest trade routes connecting the Ottoman Balkans to the major central European cities. In this respect, Thessaloniki also became a necessary staging post for all caravans travelling from frontier provinces such as the Peloponnese and Epirus to countries as remote as Hungary and Austria and cities like Buda, Leipzig, and Vienna. Additionally, due to the gradual settlement in the city of a highly energetic French community of merchants and missionaries after 1730, Thessaloniki grew into a key port for both domestic and international sea trade networks interconnecting distant Mediterranean harbours such as Marseilles, Naples, Leghorn, Alexandria, Istanbul, Smyrna, and Beirut. This commercial activity affected every sphere of economic life in the city, facilitated wealth distribution to its urban social strata, and, thus, rendered Thessaloniki one of the major gateways for the penetration of European capitalism into the Ottoman hinterland.<sup>1</sup>

Though the precise quantitative demography of the city before the nineteenth century remains a research desideratum, most reliable European observers who visited the city in the second half of the eighteenth century agreed that its population came to around 60,000-80,000 people, namely 30,000 Muslims, 25,000 Jews, and 15,000 Christians on average, along with an unspecified number of French permanent residents.<sup>2</sup> Little is known about Muslim Thessalonians. What is certain is that they did not form a homogeneous ethnic or linguistic group, but consisted of groups of miscellaneous geographical origin or cultural affiliation. The bulk of Muslim

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- 1 For the development of Thessaloniki into a major Ottoman port and a commercial hub in the eastern Mediterranean during the eighteenth century see M. Athanasiadou, *Εμπορικές σχέσεις Θεσσαλονίκης-Βενετίας κατά τον 18<sup>ο</sup> αιώνα* [Commercial Relations between Thessaloniki and Venice during the 18<sup>th</sup> Century] (Katerini 2006); F. Beaujour, *Tableau du commerce de la Grèce*, Vol. I, (Paris 1800); N. G. Svoronos, *Le Commerce de Salonique au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris 1956).
  - 2 For instance, Arasy, the French consul in Thessaloniki, estimated in 1777 that the overall population of the city totalled 70,000, namely 30,000 Muslims, 25,000 Jews, and 15,000 Christians. See M. Lascaris, *Salonique à la fin du XVIII<sup>e</sup> s.* (Athens 1939), 17-18. Likewise, French traveller Alex. Pisani reports in 1788 that from a total urban population of 80,000, there were 37,000 Muslims and 23,000 Jews, while the Christians and French together numbered 20,000. See K. Mertzios, *Μνημεία μακεδονικής ιστορίας* [Monuments of Macedonian History] (Thessaloniki 1947), 192.



urban residents consisted of turcophone descendants of the Yürüks who had been forcibly transported from the small town of Yenice-i Vardar in central Macedonia to Thessaloniki after the Ottoman conquest of the city in 1430; from the seventeenth century onwards, these early settlers were gradually joined by increasing numbers of Albanians arriving in the city in search of seasonal or permanent profitable employment. These newcomers swiftly earned an appalling reputation as mercenaries, serving as the armed retinues of magnates, criminals, and bandits, but also gained prominence as merchants, tax-lesers, craftsmen, and money lenders, often making huge fortunes.<sup>3</sup> The city's Muslim population was supplemented with the so-called *dönmes*, or ex-Jews, followers of Shabbatai Sevi and converts to Islam. Our knowledge about the economic activities and social status of these Thessalonians in the eighteenth century is very limited, yet they do not seem to have earned the socio-economic import they enjoyed in the second half of the following century.<sup>4</sup>

There was also a rather numerous gypsy community living in a particular district *intra muros*.<sup>5</sup> Above all, the Muslim urban population comprised the members of the provincial administration and their retinues, the city's Janissaries, and assorted officials such as the *kadı* and his employees, the *muhtesib*, and the *mültezims* (when they resided in the city).<sup>6</sup> Since officers such as the governor of the *sancak*, the local *kadı* and their retinues almost invariably came from other parts of the empire and held office in Thessaloniki for a year on average, or sometimes even less, their presence in the city was rather transient and their leverage certainly limited; thus, despite their political authority, they were not integrated into the urban social web and did not establish vested interests in the provincial economy. This means that for the short period of their incumbency, these officials relied on local elites, the support of which was indispensable for their political survival in the provincial power balance. By contrast, as will be emphasized in this paper, the members of the Janissary garrison established stable and permanent bonds with the urban population and its assorted occupational groups.

Alongside the local representatives of imperial authority, the Muslim population of Thessaloniki was boosted by an unspecified number of merchants, pilgrims, military personnel and sundry other officials, all passers-through on the move to

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3 For the Albanians of Thessaloniki see M. Mazower, *Salonica, City of Ghosts. Christians, Muslims and Jews 1430-1950* (London 2004), 105-108; Svoronos, *Le Commerce*, 9.

4 See M. D. Baer, *The Dönme. Jewish Converts, Muslim Reactionaries, and Secular Turks* (Stanford 2010), 5-12.

5 See E. Ginio, 'Neither Muslims neither Zimmis, The Gypsies (Roma) of the Ottoman State', *Romani Studies*, 14/2 (2004), 117-144.

6 For the administrative cadre and its members see Svoronos, *Le Commerce*, 13-27; Lascaris, *Salonique*, 19-21.

other provinces and regions of the empire, but still lodging in the city inns for long periods.<sup>7</sup> Finally, it is noteworthy that although the powerful *ayan* in the environs of Thessaloniki were not city dwellers, but residents of the surrounding villages and countryside, they definitely did exercise social and economic leverage among the urban population and assumed a crucial role in decision-making processes.<sup>8</sup>

Generally speaking, all the aforementioned Muslim Thessalonians are delineated in European sources such as consuls' reports or travellers' narratives, and more often than not even in recent historical literature, as a population whose welfare relied heavily on exploiting the two other religious groups in the city; they also showed limited interest in real economic and business enterprises, and were closely attached to state administrative mechanisms. For this reason, it is widely claimed that the energetic activities of French merchants after 1750 were the driving force and touchstone behind integrating Thessaloniki into international trade networks, followed by the respective enterprises of Jewish and Christian Thessalonians who monopolized the city's commercial ties with European ports after the outbreak of the French Revolution. This monochrome, orientalist, and biased misconception has been discredited in recent historical literature with the help of research into Ottoman archival material, which has clearly illustrated that Muslim Thessalonians from all walks of life and occupational affiliation did not assume a parasitic and despotic role, but were energetic participants in all kinds of urban entrepreneurial activity.<sup>9</sup> That being said, more research into Ottoman documents is necessary if we wish to unveil and decipher the economic mindset, business strategies, and social profile of Thessaloniki's Muslim urban residents.

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7 For these travellers see Ph. Kotzageorgis, 'A City on the Move. Non-Salonians in Thessaloniki and Salonians Abroad in the 18th Century According to the Ottoman Probate Inventories', *Archiv Orientalni*, 84/1 (2016), 105-137.

8 For the *ayan* of central Macedonia see İ. Kokdas, 'Money, Peasant Mobility, Çiftliks, and Local Politics in Salonika: 1740-1820', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 31/1 (2014), 135-146; D. Papastamatiou, 'The Structure, the Content and the Development of Large Estates in the Environs of Salonica during the Period 1697-1770', in E. Balta, G. Salakidis and T. Stavrides (eds), *Festschrift in Honor of Ioannis P. Theocharides. Studies on the Ottoman Empire and Turkey* (Istanbul 2014), 375-402.

9 E. Ginio, 'When Coffee Brought about Wealth and Prestige. The Impact of Egyptian Trade in Salonica' in *The Ottomans and Trade* [special issue of *Oriente Moderno, Nuova Serie*, 25(86)/1 (2006)], 93-107; D. Papastamatiou, *Wealth Distribution, Social Stratification and Material Culture in an Ottoman Metropolis. Thessaloniki According to the Probate Inventories of the Muslim Court (1761-1770)* (Istanbul 2017), 99-355.

### *Janissaries in Thessaloniki*

Thessaloniki served as a campsite for a rather significant number of Janissaries, if the downgraded and subsidiary military role of the city as a fort is taken into account. According to two of the Janissary payroll registers brought to light, studied, and analysed by the JaNet project, Thessaloniki hosted 1,416 and 2,739 Janissaries in 1762 and 1776 respectively.<sup>10</sup> As a matter of fact, in 1776 the city became the ninth largest seat of a Janissary garrison in the empire (Istanbul included). The garrison usually comprised a few members from an impressive plethora of regiments (*cemaat* and *bölük*), among which the 2nd, the 36th, the 44th, and the 72nd *cemaats* stood out in terms of their number of men.

Interestingly enough, European sources from the same period paint a different picture; for instance, in 1777 the French consul in Thessaloniki Arasy depicted the city as the campsite of a Janissary garrison of around 1,200 musketeers in total, divided among the four abovementioned regiments. Yet the same author added that the true number of Janissaries in the city was actually 15,000 men, meaning that the entire male Muslim population in Thessaloniki belonged to the corps.<sup>11</sup> Six years later, French general Mathieu Dumas repeats the very same estimates concerning both the number of the Janissaries as well as the unlimited participation of the city's Muslim male population in the corps, though he seems to have been well aware of the phoney identity of these so-called Janissaries.<sup>12</sup> At the turn of the century, another French consul, Felix Beaujour, drew what was in essence a similar conclusion; according to him, the 7,000 Janissaries who inhabited the city corresponded to the total of the male Muslim population.<sup>13</sup>

Equating the entire Muslim population of an urban setting with the military caste was typical among western observers visiting Ottoman cities. In their mind, almost all Muslim residents of a good many Ottoman urban settlements were men

10 See <https://janet.ims.forth.gr/site/1762> and <https://janet.ims.forth.gr/site/1776> respectively.

11 Lascaris, *Salonique*, 18-19.

12 L. C. Dumas, *Souvenirs du lieutenant général comte Mathieu Dumas de 1770 à 1836, publiés par son fils*, Vol. I (Paris 1839), 180: “La population de Salonique était à cette époque d’environ 70,000 âmes, dont 20,000 Juifs, 10,000 Grecs, 200 Francs, et le reste Turcs. La garnison se composait de 15,000 janissaires ; c’est-à-dire qu’on inscrivait sur le rôle tous les enfants mâles ; un tiers seulement de ce nombre recevait la paye, et n’aurait pu fournir 500 bon soldats”.

13 Beaujour, *Tableau*, I: 52: “Tout turk est ici janissaire, et tout janissaire est soldat. Dans tout pays où tout homme est soldat, on compte une femme, deux enfans et un homme. On peut lever à Salonique 7,000 janissaires: ces 7,000 janissaires donnent donc une population de 28 à 50,000 turks. Les registres des ortas portent 15,000 inscrits, ce qui indique le même résultat, parce que tout janissaire fait inscrire sur le rôle son enfant mâle dès qu’il vient au monde”.

of arms, among whom the Janissaries stood out in terms of demographic and socio-economic supremacy. This account reflects a seeming paradox, but implicitly delineates a complex, multifaceted and predominant reality in Ottoman cities. Recent research into the Janissary phenomenon has focused on the persistent penetration of the military class into guild structures and the parallel assumption of military titles by guildsmen and craftsmen. This process began in the sixteenth century as an occasional practice which secured some supplementary income for Janissaries and other military people; it underwent various phases, but by the second half of the eighteenth-century guildsmen and Janissaries were in many cases indistinguishable both to foreign observers and Ottoman officials. It really made no significant difference to them whether a Muslim townsman was a soldier involved, legally or not, in industrial production, or an artisan maintaining that he belonged to the military class.<sup>14</sup>

European and even most Ottoman sources from the eighteenth century commonly blur not only Janissaries and guildsmen but also distinct groups of the former – a rather understandable mistake, since Muslims legally or illegally claiming military identity were really artisans. In fact, as recent research has demonstrated, Janissaries could belong to one of several sub-groups; the Janissaries proper were the members

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14 This dynamic interplay between the soldiery – especially the Janissaries – and the guildsmen has been depicted in a good many groundbreaking books, dissertations, and papers, among which the following are the most relevant to our study: Y. Araz, ‘A General Overview of Janissary Socio-economic Presence in Aleppo (1700-1760s)’, in Y. Spyropoulos (ed.), *Insights into Janissary Networks, 1700-1826* [special issue of *Cihannüma: Tarih ve Coğrafya Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 8/1 (2022)], 55-77; Idem, ‘Kişisel Dünyalar, Aidiyetler ve Toplum: İstanbul’da Yeniçerilerin ve Ailelerinin Vasiyetleri (1750-1826)’, in A. Yıldız, Y. Spyropoulos and M. Sunar (eds.), *Payitaht Yeniçerileri: Padişahın “Asi” Kulları, 1700-1826* (Istanbul 2022), 63-100; C. Kafadar, ‘Yeniçeri-Esnaf Relations: Solidarity and Conflict’, unpublished M.A. thesis, McGill University, 1981; E. Radushev, ‘Peasant Janissaries’, *Journal of Social History*, 42/2 (2008), 447-467; Y. Spyropoulos, ‘Janissary Politics on the Ottoman Periphery (18th-Early 19th C.)’, in M. Sariyannis (ed.), *Political Thought and Practice in the Ottoman Empire. Halcyon Days in Crete IX: A Symposium Held in Rethymno, 9-11 January 2015* (Rethymno 2019), 449-481; Idem, ‘Κοινωνική, διοικητική, οικονομική και πολιτική διάσταση του Οθωμανικού στρατού. Οι γενίτσαροι της Κρήτης, 1750-1826’ [Social, Economic and Political Aspects of the Ottoman Army. The Janissaries of Crete], unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Crete, 2014, 225-242; M. Sunar, ‘Cauldron of Dissent. A Study of the Janissary Corps, 1807-1826’, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Binghamton University-SUNY, 2006, 33-54; Idem, ‘When Grocers, Porters and Other Riff-Raff Become Soldiers. Janissary Artisans and Laborers in the Nineteenth Century Istanbul and Edirne’, *Kocaeli Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, 17/1 (2009), 175-194; E. Yi, *Guild Dynamics in Seventeenth Century Istanbul. Fluidity and Leverage* (Leiden and Boston 2004), 132-143; G. Yılmaz, ‘Blurred Boundaries between Soldiers and Civilians. Artisan Janissaries in Seventeenth-Century Istanbul’, in S. Faroqi (ed), *Bread from the Lion’s Mouth. Artisans Struggling for a Livelihood in Ottoman Cities* (New York 2015), 175-193.

of the stationed and permanent garrison, appointed and, in principle, controlled by their senior officers in Istanbul, salaried by the imperial treasury and recorded in the pertinent payroll registers. Thus, their number was in theory known to the central government. By the second half of the eighteenth century, their regular rotation between various strongholds and positions around the empire, including Thessaloniki, had either ceased or become rare. This meant that a good number of them, usually denoted as *odulus* in the Ottoman documents, would be stationed in campsites, forts, and cities other than the official seat of their regiment, still obliged to follow their unit if need be. In contrast to *odulus*, *yamaks* were Imperial Janissaries who resided permanently in a place different from the official seat of their regiment, but who were usually exempt from any commitment to follow their unit on its campaigns. Alongside Imperial Janissaries, two sub-groups of Muslims claimed Janissary identity and privileges, among which special jurisdiction was the most seminal, in the most dubious and legally vague mode. The *çalıks* were acknowledged by the central government as Janissaries proper, but were not salaried during peacetime, while the *taslakçıs* were pseudo-Janissaries whose pretension was based on utterly illicit and suspect deals of assorted types with local Janissary officers. Both types of pseudo-Janissaries were deprived of a payroll certificate (*esame*), but de facto enjoyed the privileges of an Imperial Janissary. On the other hand, the *yerlüs*, a non-Imperial Janissary group which is often confused with the Janissaries, were *askeris* forming corps with auxiliary military assignments at the local or regional level. They were not listed in the Janissary payroll registers and were salaried from local government budgets, not the revenues of the empire's central treasury as Janissaries were. For this reason, they did not enjoy the prerogatives of Janissary Corps members.<sup>15</sup> This complex, multifaceted, and institutionally shifting reality is not even insinuated in Ottoman documents like *tereke*s, and thus Imperial Janissaries, be they *odulus*, *yamaks*, *çalıks*, or even *taslakçıs*, and *yerlüs*, are all indiscriminately mentioned or recorded as a uniform and homogeneous military class, usually identified with the guildsmen and the Muslim (male) population of Thessaloniki.

Moreover, outsider observers monotonously insist on a rigid and systematic delineation of the Thessalonian Janissaries as a numerous, undisciplined, and untrained militia of low military value, engaged in occupations, inclined above all to criminal and illicit deeds, as well as prone to causing social agitation and unrest, as

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15 For an exhaustive description of these groups, see Y. Spyropoulos and A. Yıldız, 'Pseudo-Janissarism (*Yeniçerilik İddiası*) in the Ottoman Provinces (with Special Reference to Adana): Its Emergence and Its Geographic and Socio-Economic Aspects', in Y. Spyropoulos (ed.), *Insights into Janissary Networks, 1700-1826* [special issue of *Cihannüma: Tarih ve Coğrafya Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 8/1 (2022)], 9-54; Spyropoulos, *Koinōvukī*, 68, 78, 155-157.

they considered themselves defenders of the public interest.<sup>16</sup> In this respect they were extremely unruly, defying the Sublime Porte and terrorizing Ottoman administrators, foreign merchants, political opponents and *reaya*. They supposedly understood their role as autonomous political agents and patrons of the grass roots as their *raison d'être*, and often took to rioting in defiance of the local authorities, the *kadı*, and even their own agha. Their income was unstable and, thus, their financial situation precarious, a fact that rendered them more prone to violence. If we are to believe the information offered by the reports of the Venetian consul, their disorderly activity led to bloody uprisings against the local authorities and their officers in May 1752,<sup>17</sup> September 1768,<sup>18</sup> and September 1789,<sup>19</sup> while in 1763 they faced each other in a bitter mini-civil war.<sup>20</sup> The motives for these riots are far from clear, yet it seems that control over the local economy and the imposition of political domination over the local authorities must have been crucial objectives for the mutineers.

Yet it would be misleading for us to interpret all domestic strife in Thessaloniki as an outcome and aftereffect of the political mobilization of the local Janissaries. Alongside the Janissaries, a good many other economic and political power-brokers co-acted either in alliance or in opposition to them. Greek and Jewish merchants, influential guilds with members from all three religious creeds, powerful *ayan*, nomads like Vlachs and Yürüks crossing the surrounding countryside and interacting

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16 For instance, see A. Bisani, *Lettres sur divers endroits de l'Europe, de l'Asie et de l'Afrique, parcourus en 1788 et 1789* (London 1791), 45: “*Cependant, à proprement parler, le Gouvernement est dans les mains des Janissaires. Ils sont ici de petits Despoties. Il y en a qui étant ivres ont tué, pour le seul plaisir de tuer, ou d' essayer leur poudre, un Juif ou un Grec. D'autres le font de sang froid et par trahison*”; F. de Tott, *Memoirs of Baron de Tott on the Turks and the Tartars. Translated from the French by an English Gentleman at Paris, under the Immediate Inspection of the Baron*, Vol. II (London 1785), 368-369: “The Turkish government displays its weakness more particularly at Salonica, by the opposition which despotism experiences there, on the part of the militia. The *Esprit de corps*, which increases every day by proper management, and assumes to itself the shreds of an impaired authority, has taken possession of Salonica. Several Pachas have been its successive victims; but this opposition to despotism, far from destroying its effects; serves only to multiply the tyranny, and the Janissary Aga, the chief who commands under him, and each private Janissary are so many tyrants, courted by the Porte, feared by the Pacha, and who make the whole country tremble. The custom of permanent garrisons amongst the Turks, joined to the want of discipline of their troops, give them, in some degree, the absolute property of the places in which they are stationed, where they exercise rights, consecrated by custom, maintained by their union, and which are in invariable opposition to what is intended, as established order”.

17 Mertzios, *Μνημεία*, 352-353 and 362.

18 *Ibid.*, 404.

19 *Ibid.*, 447-448.

20 *Ibid.*, 391-392.

with the urban population, members of the provincial administration, the *ulema* of the city, and the numerous dervishes, all formed a multilingual, multicultural environment where political interests and activities were intertwined in complex networks and rival alliances.

Furthermore, any oversimplified account of the Thessalonian Janissaries as a directorate of violence and self-assertion defies information deriving from the Ottoman sources. In this paper, we will emphasize this type of documentation which, though not very informative on political events, offers a clearer picture of Janissaries as part of the urban population fully integrated into the local economy and society. As will be demonstrated, Ottoman documentation underlines the assimilation of the military class into the urban milieu and discards this prejudiced depiction of the Janissaries as domineering and violent, self-gratifying powerbrokers. Moreover, the same documents offer an insight into social and economic inequalities, variations, and discrepancies in the interior of the military caste.

### *Terekes as a source on Janissaries*

This study is based on Ottoman probate inventories, the so-called *muhallefat defterleri* or *tereke defterleri*, which were edited and issued by the *kadı* of Thessaloniki.<sup>21</sup> *Terekes* are registers of the bequeathed estates of deceased men and women, prepared either by a Muslim judge or a specially appointed assistant of his called the *kassam*, with a view to dividing patrimony amongst legal heirs in accordance with the strict stipulations of Islamic inheritance law. The registration of property articles was supposed to be exhaustive, and was usually supplemented by an appraisal of the monetary value of the assets according to current market prices. Despite the numerous methodological impediments typical of *terekes* as a documentary source for historical research, they have been used extensively by scholars specializing in the Ottoman economy, especially regarding price evolution, wealth distribution, macro-economic development, and consumption patterns.<sup>22</sup>

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21 The Archive of the Muslim Court of Thessaloniki is held in the Historical Archive of Macedonia in Thessaloniki, Greece. Hence, for references to the material studied we will use the abbreviation HAM, standing for the Historical Archive of Macedonia, followed by the volume number, page number and a letter denoting the place of the *tereke* on the page. Monetary values are invariably estimated in *akçes*.

22 From the extensive literature on *terekes*, the following are most relevant to the aims of our study: K. Barbir, 'Wealth, Privilege, and Family Structure: the 'Askaris of 18<sup>th</sup> Century Damascus According to the Qassam 'Askari Inheritance Records', in T. Philipp (ed.), *The Syrian Land in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Century. The Common and the Specific in the Historical Experience* (Stuttgart

The aim of this paper is to offer a panoramic overview of the economic activity and property profile of the Janissaries in Thessaloniki between 1760 and 1800, on the basis of 468 military probate inventories from the twenty-four *muhallefat defterleri* issued during the above-mentioned period.<sup>23</sup> Since the total number of ledgers recorded in the years under study is enormous, our sample is both practical and selective. In particular, regardless of the wealth status of the deceased, all 427 military inventories from 1760-1770 were selected, studied thoroughly and subjected to statistical analysis, along with all 41 property ledgers of military personnel with a fortune greater than 500,000 *akçes* from the period 1771-1799. Thus, the sample purports to be exhaustive for an entire decade, in addition to including the most notable cases from the thousands of recorded military properties for the remaining period.

It is noteworthy that these *defters* also serve as property registers of civilians, *ulema*, women, and even Christians (though not Jews). Typically, the *askeris'* properties were recorded and apportioned to their heirs by a military *kassam* appointed only for this task by the *kadiasker* of Rumeli. This was definitely the case in other Ottoman cities and provinces or even in Thessaloniki from 1700 to 1750, though not in the second half of the century; of the fifty-one volumes with *tereke*s from the eighteenth century,<sup>24</sup> only thirteen, all dating from the first half of the century, were edited according to strict bureaucratic guidelines: eleven are military proper (*askeri*), and two civilian proper (*beledi*), while all the rest are of a mixed type, with no evidence whatsoever as to identity of the *kassam*.

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1992), 179-195; B. Ergene and A. Berker, 'Wealth & Inequality in 18th Century Kastamonu: Estimations for the Muslim Majority', *IJMES*, 40 (2008), 23-46; C. Establet and J. P. Pascual, *Familles et fortunes à Damas. 450 foyers Damascains en 1750* (Damascus 1994); R. Gradeva, 'Towards a Portrait of "the Rich" in Ottoman Provincial Society: Sofia in the 1670s', in A. Anastasopoulos (ed.), *Provincial Elites in the Ottoman Empire. Halcyon Days in Crete V: A Symposium Held in Rethymnon, 10-12 January 2003* (Rethymnon 2005), 149-199; J. H. Matthews, *The Ottoman Inheritance Inventory as an Exercise in Conceptual Reclamation (ca. 1600-1675)*, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Binghamton University-SUNY, 2001; Papastamatiou, *Wealth Distribution*, 125-355; G. Veinstein and Y. Triantafyllidou-Baladié, 'Les inventaires après décès ottomans de Crète', in A. van der Woude and A. Schuurman (eds), *Probate Inventories: A New Source for the Historical Study of Wealth, Material Culture and Agricultural Development* (Wageningen 1980), 191-204.

23 HAM, 99; 103; 105; 110; 112; 115; 117a; 117b; 122; 124; 128; 132; 136; 139; 140; 142; 144; 149; 152; 153; 156; 160; 163; 166.

24 There are 12 more *sicils* from the same period of mixed character, that is to say, they comprise *ferrals*, *kadi* verdicts, *buyuruldus* from the *vali* of Thessaloniki, *masarifat defterleri*, *tevzi defterleri*, *narh* registers, and other types of bureaucratic documents issued by the Islamic court, along with some scattered probate inventories.



This new bureaucratic vagueness is a corollary to the generic identity fluidity which blurred the demarcation lines between military and civilian properties. Probate inventories from our period showcase the integration of members of the military establishment in the provinces into local societies and economies. *Kadis* and military authorities were well aware of this reality and the annulment of the distinction between military and civilian property apportionment, a fact that apparently affected the whole procedure. Military men, members of the administrative bureaucracy and of learning and judicial institutions, Muslim laymen and non-Muslim *reaya* were all treated in the same manner.

In accordance with the rather impressionistic observations of western travellers and consuls, and the more accurate findings of recent research, more than half of the recorded deceased bore a military title. Of 682 registered Muslim males in the years 1700-1760, 427 or 62.60% bore a military title. Still, our documents do not offer any information as regards the precise military capacity of these people; we consider it highly implausible that all of them were Imperial Janissaries, yet it is not clear whether they were Imperial Janissaries (either *odulus* or *yamaks*), pseudo-Janissaries (*çalıks* or *taslakçıs*), or even soldiers in one of the various Local corps (*yertlüs*) established in the city. Since no *sipahis* were stationed in the city, and the other non-Janissary military corps such as the *topcu*yans or the *mustahfizans* were scantily manned,<sup>25</sup> and despite the rare occurrence of the term *yeniçeri* in the *terekes*, it seems that most deceased Muslims with military titles were linked to the Janissary Corps in one way or another. Some are registered with the number of their company, others are described as members of the entourage of the *vali*, while most bear the titles of *beşe* and agha. In this respect, despite the likelihood that some *beşes* or aghas in our sample may have been *yertlüs*, we will consider all these cases as members of the Janissary caste in the broadest sense, even if they were pseudo-Janissaries.<sup>26</sup>

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25 For example, Arasy emphasizes that the local *topçu* corps was manned exclusively by local *dönmes*. See Lascaris, *Salonique*, 19. Evita Dandali's forthcoming dissertation on the Janissaries of Thessaloniki, currently being conducted as part of the JANET project, shows that apart from Imperial Janissaries, a few Local corps were also stationed in the city, comprising a relatively small number of soldiers. See Evita Dandali, 'Οι γενίτσαροι στη Θεσσαλονίκη (18ος-αρχές 19ου αι.)' [The Janissaries in Thessaloniki (18th-early 19th centuries)], forthcoming Ph.D. dissertation, University of Crete.

26 Most scholars agree that *beşes* should be taken into account as Janissaries of some kind. For instance, see: Araz, 'A General', 60; Yi, *Guild Dynamics*, 139; Yılmaz, 'Blurred Boundaries', 187. As for the broader term '*ağa*', which may refer to any distinguished Muslim man, irrespective of his military or civilian identity, we include all the recorded aghas in the population under study, for we consider it safer for the deduction of reliable conclusions to maximize rather than minimize our sample. Since most aghas belonged to the wealthier strata, the inclusion of some

*Integration of Janissaries into the urban economy and society*

As has already been argued, westerners visiting Thessaloniki during the eighteenth century persisted in depicting the parasitic character of the Janissaries' coexistence with the *reaya*. Very few exceptions, such as the careful and observant William Leake and Richard Pococke, recorded the engagement of Janissaries in production and the local economy.<sup>27</sup> Yet nowadays we consider these accounts heavily biased, orientalist attempts to conceal European economic vested interests threatened by the entrepreneurial mobilization of the Janissaries. By contrast, documentary material from Arab cities such as Cairo, Damascus and Aleppo undoubtedly delineates the full-blown integration of the *askeris* into the urban economy and society.<sup>28</sup> Military personnel – mainly the Janissaries – were involved in guild mechanisms, participated actively in commerce and craftsmanship, invested systematically in urban and agrarian real estate, pursued careers in intensive moneylending, and ultimately intermarried with the locals. On the other hand, in the Arab cities of north Africa such as Algiers, *askeris* were more reluctant to interact with the local population and their economy.<sup>29</sup> This antithetic pattern stems from the intricacies and complexities of the fragmented institutional realities in the Ottoman eighteenth century, as described above. As will be shown, the documents under study exhibit the full-blown integration of Thessalonian Janissaries into the local society and economy.

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people who were not Janissaries in the sample will not dramatically affect our statistical analysis and its results, as the exclusion of all aghas would do.

- 27 W. M. Leake, *Travels in Northern Greece*, Vol. III (London 1835), 249 and 253: "The Janissaries are the garrisons of the fortified places, among whom are generally enrolled the greater part of the heads of families engaged in trade or manufactures, or who have landed property in the neighbouring plain... Silken gauze for shirts and mosquito curtains, are another fabric of the city, but the chief manufacture is the tanning and dyeing of leather, which is entirely in the hands of the Janissaries"; R. Pococke, *A Description of the East and some other Countries*. Vol. II, Part II: *Observations on the Islands of the Archipelago, Asia Minor, Thrace, Greece and Some Other Parts of Europe* (London 1745), 151: "The Turks drink much, and to that may be imputed their being very bad people in this place; the janizaries in particular are exceedingly insolent. They have a great manufacture of coarse woollen cloth in and about Salonica, which is exported to all parts of Turkey for the wear of common people".
- 28 For Aleppo see A. Marcus, *The Middle East on the Eve of Modernity. Aleppo in the Eighteenth Century* (New York 1989), 58-61; also, C. L. Wilkins, *Forging Urban Solidarities. Ottoman Aleppo 1640-1700* (Leiden 2010), 116-178; for Cairo see A. Raymond, 'Soldiers in Trade. The Case of Ottoman Cairo', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 18/1, (1991), 16-37; for Damascus see C. Establie and J. P. Pascual, *La gent d'État dans la société ottomane damascène. Les 'askar à la fin du XVIIe siècle* (Damascus 2011), 95-210.
- 29 T. Shuval, 'Poor Quarters / Rich Quarters: Distribution of Wealth in the Arab Cities of the Ottoman Empire. The Case of Eighteenth Century Algiers', *Turcica*, 32 (2000), 169-196.

The amalgamation of military and civilian groups is reflected in the striking numbers of Janissaries and pseudo-Janissaries (*taslakçıs* or *çalıks*) among recorded Muslims in the probate inventories. Yet since the distinction between assorted categories of Janissaries and other *askeris* is missing from the inventories, supplementary evidence is essential. In this respect, the number of marriages between *askeris* and women of civilian familial origin is indicative. In Thessaloniki, marriage was the predominant pattern of adult life for *askeris*; 401 military men, or 85.68% of our sample, were wedded. This proportion rises to 96.85% if we exclude the fifty-four Janissaries who died while visiting the city and were consequently registered as unmarried, due to lack of any relevant information accessible to the *kadı*.

Unfortunately, no information is noted in the documents about the family background of the Janissaries' wives. As their father's name is very rarely mentioned, no safe conclusions can be drawn concerning nuptial patterns and behaviours. On the other hand, a more precise picture emerges from the registers of women who died married to a Janissary: 235 of them were married to a *beşe*, while 55 of them were married to an agha. Of these 290 cases, only twelve women were daughters of aghas who had married an *askeri*, namely an agha also. All other recorded cases demonstrate a strong tendency among Janissaries to marry women from civilian social milieus, and thus refrain from forming a self-contained, exclusive elite closed to exterior members.

House ownership cannot be used as an integration criterion for military people, since private housing premises were a generic luxury unaffordable to most Thessalonians. Apparently, rented accommodation was the commonest option for most city dwellers, though the matter cannot be decided on the basis of *terekes*. This tendency only altered among the wealthier military strata; of 137 Thessalonian *askeris* with an estimated property worth more than 100,000 *akçes*, 102 or 74.45% owned a private house in the city, though the inventories do not mention the way of its acquisition. Yet irrespective of whether Janissaries could afford a private house or not, almost all of them lived within the city proper. From a sample of 414 recorded Janissaries who lived or were stationed permanently in the *kaza*, 380 lived in the city, and only thirteen dwelt in surrounding villages – for twenty-one more there is no entry as regards their residence. These military townsmen were not restricted to any specific quarters designated for *askeris* but were spread around the city, most residing within the boundaries of the Muslim neighbourhoods, though a good number of them even lived alongside Christians.<sup>30</sup> The spatial presence of Janissaries in

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30 Regarding this diffusion of people from all socio-economic strata and occupational identity in Thessaloniki as a seminal characteristic of Ottoman cities in the Balkans, see D. Papastamatiou and P. Kotzageorgis, 'Economic and Social Hierarchies within an Urban Context: The Case of

all quarters of Thessaloniki reflects the impressive expansion of the corps, with the admission into its ranks of Muslims from all parts of the city.

Additional evidence that military men were deeply rooted in the local urban milieu is the fact that nearly everyone's ancestral lineage, that is, the names of their father and grandfather, was known to the *kadı* and obviously to their fellow townsmen. By contrast, of the above-mentioned 414 Janissaries, only thirty or 7.24% were registered as "bin Abdullah bin Abdullah" and were seemingly unknown in the city or had no real ties with the local population.

This tendency for military and civilian groups to amalgamate into a uniform society, and the concomitant absence of a self-sustained military 'aristocracy', are further underlined by the lack of heredity in recorded titles and positions. Only fifteen out of 468 Janissaries examined – that is, no more than 3.20% of the entire sample – came from a privileged familial environment with a father of the same military identity. This incredibly small number possibly showcases that most Thessalonian Janissaries started their career as pseudo-Janissaries and depicts the limits of inter-generational property transition and the fluidity of class demarcation lines.

Social mobility was both legitimized and underpinned by the admission of those interested into the Janissary corps, while at the same time Imperial Janissaries were absorbed into local society. What triggered the mingling of both parties was their involvement in the local economy. Though inventories do not explicitly record any entrepreneurial ventures by the deceased, it is obvious that military men were exceedingly keen on risking involvement in assorted business enterprises; for example, all 137 wealthy Janissaries between 1760 and 1800 were engaged in at least one occupational activity irrespective of any military duties. Only 44 of them, or 32.11% of the sample, were involved in only one profession, whereas the remaining 93 Janissaries followed the generic entrepreneurial pattern of diversified investments and occupations.

The energetic participation of the Janissaries in the local economy is reliably evidenced in the well documented decade from 1760 to 1770. The following table shows the predominance of military men in major sectors of the Thessalonian economy.

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Thessaloniki in the Eighteenth Century', in M. Sariyannis (editor-in-chief), G. Aksoy-Aivali, M. Demetriadou, Y. Spyropoulos, K. Stathi and Y. Vidras (eds), A. Anastasopoulos and E. Kolovos (consulting eds), *New Trends in Ottoman Studies. Papers presented at the 20<sup>th</sup> CIEPO Symposium, Rethymno 27<sup>th</sup> June -1<sup>st</sup> July 2012* (Rethymno 2014), 84-98.

	<i>Akçes</i>	% of the respective sector in Thessaloniki
Money ownership	3,688,624	27
Urban real estate	9,967,652	48.18
Rural real estate	926,321	50.57
<i>Çiftlik</i> ownership	1,759,870	38.11
Animal husbandry	2,730,243	51.03
Technological equipment	590,189	69.37
Commerce	6,486,412	56.35
Tax farming	727,060	64.92
Loans	13,409,247	50.75
Debts	14,353,967	73.62

**Table I:** Janissary participation in various sectors of the local economy (1760-1770)

### *Titles, positions, and social stratification*

As has already been stated, military titles which in principle determined the duties, position, and salaries of their bearers help us identify the members of the *askeri* class. The major and most prevalent title was that of *beşe*, which denoted a low-ranking member of the army and was granted to 292 Thessalonians, or 62.39% of our sample. The more dubious title of *agha* amounted to 156 persons, or 27.35% of the sample. Titles such as *odabaşı*, *zabit yeniçeri*, or *çavuş yeniçeri* appear far less frequently. Equally low is the number of Janissaries bearing a religious honorific title. Only twenty-four of them had the honorary titles of *elzac* or *hacı*, and nine Janissaries enjoyed the title of *esseyid*. This is in accordance with the low proportion of religious honorary titles held by Thessalonians.<sup>31</sup>

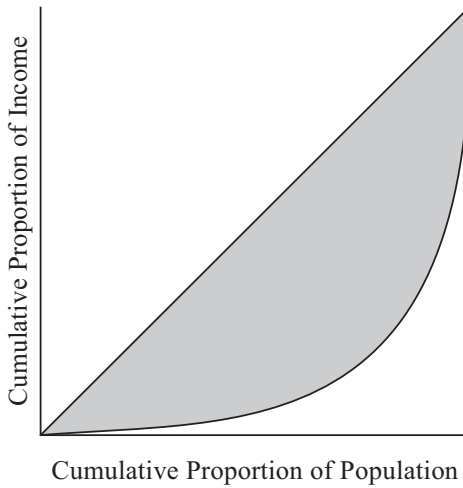
As stressed before, membership of the *askeri* class, and particularly in the Janissary Corps, would boost the economic standing of a Muslim Thessalonian, linking him with the more privileged social strata of the city and drastically improving his social mobility overall. Indeed, Janissaries' mean and median property values were higher than those of the general population.

	Mean Value	Median Value	Range of Values	Gini Co-efficient
<b>Thessaloniki</b>	97,959.23 <i>akçes</i>	26,227 <i>akçes</i>	601-3,151,248 <i>akçes</i>	0.7363
<b>Janissaries</b>	114,800.76 <i>akçes</i>	31,423 <i>akçes</i>	798- 3,151,248 <i>akçes</i>	0.7390

**Table II:** Median property values and Gini coefficient of Janissaries and the general population (1760-1770)

31 Only 25% of all Thessalonians belonged to any such exclusive group.

Gini Coefficient (G) = 0,73900

**Graph I:** The Lorenz Curve graph for Janissaries in Thessaloniki

The Gini coefficient and Lorenz curve show that despite the ostensible economic advantage of the military caste, its structural inequality was as extensive as that of the general urban population. In general, the stratification of the military caste was the same as that of Thessalonian society. The military caste deployed along a wealth spectrum dominated by an expansive ‘middle class’, or people with estimated fortunes spanning between 10,000 and 100,000 *akçes*, with very needy and wealthy men at its two extremes. In this sense, the Janissaries formed a highly stratified social group in the same way as that of the broader social context in Thessaloniki. The following small table describes this reality in the period 1760-1770.

	Number	%
Poor (<10,000 <i>akçes</i> )	86	20.14
Middle Class (10,000-100,000 <i>akçes</i> )	242	56.67
Rich (>100,000 <i>akçes</i> )	99	23.18
Total	427	100

**Table III:** The economic stratification of the Janissaries (1760-1770)

Still, this economic stratification is not based on titles. Despite the titular distinction between the *beşes* and the aghas, and the possible social precedence of the latter over the former, there is no strong correlation between the title and property owned; a good number of *beşes* enjoyed privileged participation in the higher echelons of

Thessaloniki, whereas some aghas died impoverished. This is clear from the data in the following table.

	Poor	Middle Class	Wealthy
<i>Beşe</i>	70	181	41
<i>Agha</i>	11	54	91
<i>Odabaşı</i>	2	4	2

**Table IV:** The relation between economic status and military title (1760-1770)

In general, the picture is one of widespread disparity and inequality among the members of each occupational and titular group. The *beşes* formed a stratum of indigent military men among the poorest of the city, while even their rich representatives were not among the most outstanding Thessalonians. Yet they predominated in a robust and numerous middle class of modest wealth. The aghas were middle classers of average wealth, but, above all, they formed the core of the Thessalonian upper crust. The following table illustrates this disparity in terms of the average values of Janissary patrimonies.

	<i>Beşe</i>	<i>Agha</i>
<b>Poor</b>	5,031 <i>akçes</i>	7,779 <i>akçes</i>
<b>Middle Class</b>	30,892 <i>akçes</i>	27,108 <i>akçes</i>
<b>Rich</b>	155,789 <i>akçes</i>	264,495 <i>akçes</i>

**Table V:** The property average (median) values of Janissaries (1760-1770)

Moreover, an inverse relation between economic status and wealth distribution is evidenced, namely, inequality and stratification intensified among members of wealthier groups. Needy soldiers were almost equal in their poverty, middle-classers had properties of roundabout the same monetary value, but polarization intensified among the wealthier Janissaries. This becomes evident from a comparison of the Gini coefficients of the abovementioned three groups.

	Poor	Middle Class	Wealthy
<i>Gini coefficient</i>	0.2196	0.3482	0.5065

**Table VI:** Gini coefficient of Janissaries by economic status (1760-1770)

This picture of inequality and polarization is more obvious when military patrimonies are examined. Although Janissaries owned almost half the city's shops, only seventy or 18% of all Janissaries possessed such premises. For instance, one Calli

Hasan Beşe bin Hüseyin owned a tannery, a barber shop, a shop making pearls, a saddle shop, a tobacco shop and an urban plot near the Burmalı mosque, very close to the Vardar Gate, at the western end of the city.<sup>32</sup>

In all, data extracted from the *tereke*s show that participation in the Janissary Corps would probably guarantee a brighter future for interested Thessalonians. Yet economic inequality was unavoidable, and a man of arms faced as much disparity, if not more, than a commoner. Military titles were coveted and pursued, and apparently meant a lot to their bearers and other aspirants, though possessing them would not necessarily result in prosperity.

### *Janissaries as economic agents*

Payroll *defters* studied by the JaNet project testify to the extremely low salaries paid to Imperial Janissaries during the second half of the eighteenth century. With an average daily salary of 13.07 and 13.83 *akçes* per person in 1762 and 1776 respectively,<sup>33</sup> Janissaries were left with no alternative but to get involved in the urban economy. In the same vein, *tereke*s describe Janissaries as highly active economic agents, supplementing their meagre fixed salary with various economic ventures: moneylending, urban and rural real estate ownership, industry, commerce, tax farming, animal husbandry, cash availabilities, investments in technology and vessels, but also non-productive expenses (garments, household items, weapons, luxury items) are *grosso modo* the major property categories which *tereke*s include in their entries. The following pie chart delineates the property structure of Thessaloniki Janissaries from 1760 to 1800.

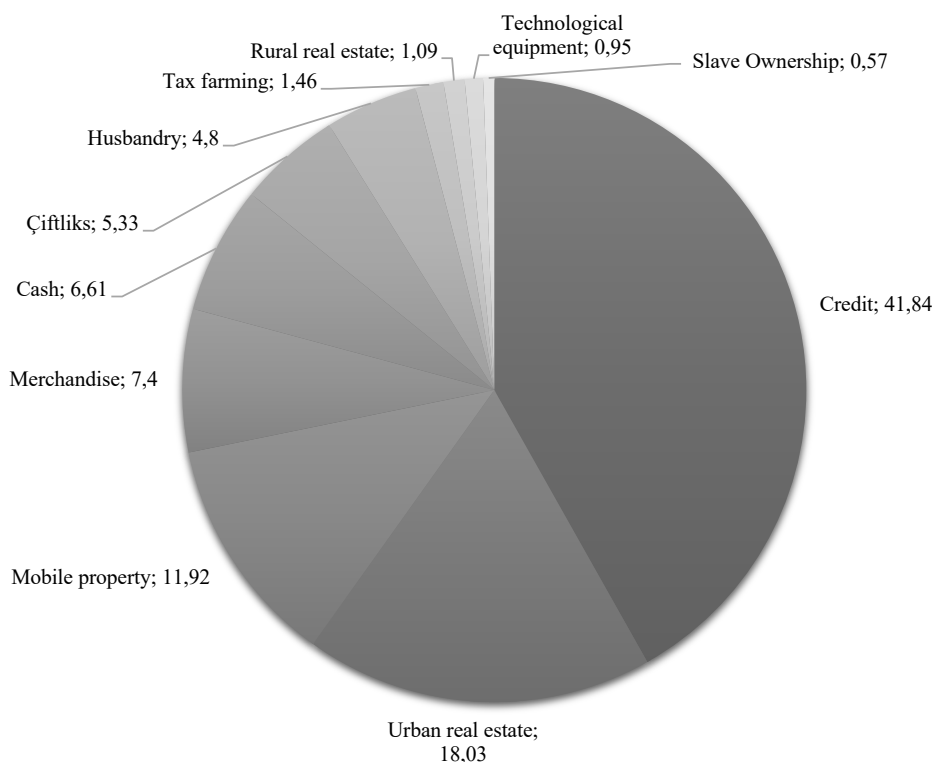
### *Lenders and tax-farmers*

Since credit was necessary for the conduct of any profitable business enterprise in the Ottoman economic environment, Thessalonian Janissaries were already seriously involved in the credit and moneylending networks of the city by the early eighteenth century. The *tereke*s contain long lists of names of Christians, Muslims

32 For the urban landscape and monuments of Ottoman Thessaloniki, see V. Demetriades, *Τοπογραφία της Θεσσαλονίκης κατά την εποχή της Τουρκοκρατίας, 1430-1912* [Topography of Thessaloniki during the Period of Tourkokratia, 1430-1912] (Thessaloniki 1983).

33 See [https://janet.ims.forth.gr/site/placechart?graph\\_key=79](https://janet.ims.forth.gr/site/placechart?graph_key=79) and [https://janet.ims.forth.gr/site/placechart\\_76?graph\\_key=79](https://janet.ims.forth.gr/site/placechart_76?graph_key=79) respectively. Janissary salaries in Crete were likewise excessively low. For details see Spyropoulos, *Κοινωνική*, 159-164.





**Graph II:** The Janissaries' property structure in percentages (1760-1800)

or Jews and Muslim or Christian villages in the *kaza* who either owed money to deceased military men or had lent money to them. Neither the reasons why this money was borrowed nor the interest charged are noted in the inventories. Likewise, it cannot be safely concluded whether the recorded sums were a fraction of the outstanding amounts or the entire loans.

Needy Janissaries totally abstained from these networks both as moneylenders and as debtors. Those in the middle class engaged in lending and borrowing apparently to conduct petty daily transactions, with the respective amounts being small. From 1760 to 1770, 61 of them had lent at least one amount, 56 were debtors, while 21 were both lenders and borrowers. Only 8 of the Janissary debtors died overindebted. Even when the number of loans or debts owed by a deceased individual seems significant, the respective amounts are small. The following table contains two typical examples of a lender and a debtor Janissary in the middle class.

Deceased	Transactor	Amount ( <i>Akçes</i> )
İbrahim Beşe bin Yusuf (lender) <sup>34</sup>	Hayindirzade	24,960
	Molla Hasan	1,560
	Mariner ( <i>gemici</i> ) Meşi	1,200
	Molla Mehmed	4,200
	Tanas <i>zimmi</i>	1,200
	Usta Yanni <i>zimmi</i>	915
	Hasan	600
	Kaftancı İstaki [Stathi]	1,080
Rope maker ( <i>muitab</i> ) Ali Beşe bin Abdullah (debtor) <sup>35</sup>	Seyyid Ahmed Çelebi	1,569
	Seyyid Şanı İbrahim	1,674
	Sirhan	4,920
	Saddle maker ( <i>saraç</i> ) Hasan Beşe	960
	Mehmed	525
	İbrahim	5,730
	His mother	13,930

**Table VII:** Two typical cases of Janissaries in the credit networks

The credit economy of Thessaloniki was controlled by wealthy Janissaries, in particular by those bearing the title of agha. From a sample of 99 well-off Janissaries in 1760-1770, 63 had granted at least one loan, with the total number of recorded loans reaching 500 transactions. In contrast to other occupations engaged in by rich Janissaries, where there is a strong concentration of wealth in the hands of only a few persons, credit activity retained a more open character and was both accessible to and popular among almost all members of the military upper crust. In other words, Janissaries in Thessaloniki were above all proto-bankers more than anything else, including their military position.

Two types of creditors can be discerned, those for whom loans were the unique means of wealth concentration, real bankers, and those who used loans along with other economic activities as a mode of capital formation. The former adhered to a strict credit policy without being interested in taking enterprising risks or investing their credit profits in other entrepreneurial ventures. Fourteen such archetypal lenders are recorded in the probate inventories; the following table lists five of the most important among them.

34 HAM, 99: 267b-268, dated 17 July 1762 (27 Zi'l-hicce 1175).

35 HAM, 103: 208-209, dated 7 July 1763 (25 Zi'l-hicce 1176).

Lender	Number of Loans	Total Amount	% of Patrimony
Ali Beşe bin Murad <sup>36</sup>	18	59,050	57.31
Yusuf Beşe bin Abdullah <sup>37</sup>	20	157,700	60.65
Hüseyin Agha bin Ismail Agha <sup>38</sup>	34	117,800	77.91
Bostancı Mehmed Agha bin Mustafa <sup>39</sup>	14	335,940	82.35
Kethüda Halil Agha bin Abdurrahman <sup>40</sup>	36	1,413,760	84.62

**Table VIII:** Some important Thessalonian Janissary bankers

The other 39 lenders employed more complex economic strategies, tending to maximize their profits through landownership, commerce, or craftsmanship. The relationship between these diverse economic activities cannot be traced, so it remains unclear whether lending constituted the source of primary capital accumulation, or was only the result of turnover from other enterprises. Interaction between them is highly plausible, but there is no decisive evidence for it.

A few examples can easily delineate the range of business opportunities available to daring Janissaries. One Elhac Salih Agha used landownership as a supplement to his credit activity; he was the owner of a *çiftlik* in the village of Nariş, and, at the same time, creditor of 20 compatriots of his who owed him 400,020 *akçes* in total.<sup>41</sup> Tosun Ahmed Beşe bin Mehmed Çelebi possessed four vineyards in the *nahiye* of Kelemerye in the south of Thessaloniki, in addition to 253,516 *akçes* in total owed to him by 18 debtors.<sup>42</sup> Elhac Abdurrahman Agha bin Elhac İbrahim owned 4 high-value shops and storehouses at the harbour and tobacco customs house in Thessaloniki, and was also owed 672,240 *akçes* lent to 14 Thessalonians.<sup>43</sup> Similarly, wheat merchant Musa Beşe bin Hasan's property comprised 59,550 *akçes* owed to him by 8 of his compatriots.<sup>44</sup>

Simultaneously, Janissaries took few risks by adopting low intensity borrowing practices, thus avoiding bankruptcy and insolvency. Although 46 wealthy Janissaries

36 HAM, 103: 219, dated 22 July 1763 (17 Muharrem 1177).

37 HAM, 99: 128-129, dated 17 April 1762 (23 Ramazan 1175).

38 HAM, 99: 224, dated 21 June 1762 (29 Zi'l-kade 1175).

39 HAM, 117a: 62b-63, dated 4 May 1769 (27 Zi'l-hicce 1182).

40 HAM, 99: 310b-312, dated 25 July 1762 (3 Muharrem 1176).

41 HAM, 99: 132b-133, dated 30 April 1762 (6 Şevval 1175).

42 HAM, 99: 321-322, dated 7 August 1762 (16 Muharrem 1176).

43 HAM, 117b: 48-50, dated 3 February 1770 (7 Şevval 1183).

44 HAM, 115: 70b-71, dated 24 April 1768 (6 Zi'l-hicce 1181).

– almost half of the wealthy deceased – owed money at least to one person, only 5 passed away overindebted, with the monetary value of their arrears exceeding the aggregate value of their assets.

The persons with whom Janissaries entered into credit relations came from all walks of life and were of varying religious affiliation and geographic origin. The following two tables show some tendencies.

	Number	%	<i>Akçes</i>	%
Muslims	129	25.75	2,657,198	21.62
military	105	20.96	2,033,868	16.55
Muslim villages	7	1.40	464,280	3.78
Christians	156	31.14	965,987	7.86
Christian villages	73	14.57	5,309,679	43.21
Jews	17	3.39	402,891	3.28
<i>waqfs</i>	1	0.20	129,600	1.05
unspecified	13	2.59	324,373	2.64
total	501	100	12,287,876	100

**Table IX:** Categories of debtors to Janissaries (1760-1800)

	Number	%	<i>Akçes</i>	%
Muslims	124	49.21	4,162,820	39.51
military	71	28.17	4,773,464	45.31
Muslim villages	1	0.40	2,400	0.02
Christians	13	5.16	68,258	0.65
Jews	11	4.37	735,640	6.98
<i>waqfs</i>	12	4.76	502,260	4.77
French	1	0.40	10,080	0.10
unspecified	19	7.54	281,175	2.67
total	252	100	10,536,097	100

**Table X:** Categories of moneylenders to Janissaries (1760-1800)

It is evident that the credit clientele of the Janissaries was almost equally divided between Christians and Muslims, though collective loans to Christian villages enjoyed the lion's share, at least in terms of monetary value if not number. These loans are highly likely to have been connected to taxes, and their intensity testifies to the financial penetration of the Janissaries into the surrounding countryside. On the other hand, the fact that Janissaries borrowed almost exclusively from Muslims, with some preference toward their colleagues, is an indication of solidarity between regiment members. The important role played by Janissary *waqfs* elsewhere is not observed in Thessaloniki.

Tax farming was either inaccessible to Janissaries or extremely unpopular among them. Only eleven Janissaries in the period 1760-1800 are recorded with some sort of *iltizam* involvement in their assets at the time of their demise. There are some indications that this situation began to change in the early years of the following century. It seems that just like landownership, tax farming in central Macedonia was under the strict control of powerful local *ayan* and powerbrokers from the imperial centre.

Two firm conclusions can be drawn from the quantitative data extracted from the inventories. Firstly, Janissary credit networks extended to both urban and rural populations, thus offering considerable opportunities for profit and wealth accumulation to members of Janissary regiments who were able or willing to invest money in this activity. Even if tax farming was beyond the entrepreneurial scope or potential of Janissaries, they took advantage of this fiscal practice by establishing credit relations with the Christian and Muslim villages in the surrounding countryside. Secondly, the growth seen in local Janissary Corps membership can largely be explained in terms of the open access it offered to credit sources, either as a lender or as a borrower. In other words, the process of integrating the military into local society was facilitated not only by amalgamation between the guilds and the Janissary regiments, but also by the credit opportunities that military identity offered.

### Çiftlik holders and landowners

Our sample comprises only 47 owners of at least one *çiftlik* in a period characterized by the rapid *çiftlikisation* of land. This number is small, yet comparable to the similarly low intensity of land ownership among civilian Thessalonians in the second half of the eighteenth century. The low priority these men accorded to land acquisition as an investment policy is also reflected in the low contribution of *çiftlik* ownership to the general wealth of the military caste. It is highly likely that the lack of interest Janissaries showed in land acquisition investments was mainly due to the control exerted over *çiftlik* ownership by wealthy *ayan* in the Macedonian hinterland.

Unfortunately, no information is recorded in the inventories concerning the size or cultivation quality of these few landed estates belonging to *askeris*; in this sense, the estimated average price of such a property at 90,433 *akçes* cannot be telltale. Even the quantities of crops recorded cannot be reliably related to the estate itself, nor can it be inferred whether they represented its annual output, a fraction of it, or past production stored for future use or sale. Typically, landed estates comprised unfailingly

a core of them, defined as the ‘huts of the estate’ (*çift damları*), complemented by flocks and herds of grazing animals, farm tools, and varying quantities of crops.

Thirty-six military men owned only one landed estate, while six more had two *çiftlik*s; all of them bore the title of agha. The privileged five *askeris* who possessed more than three estates are recorded in the following table.

Owner	Content	Village	Value
Hüseyin Agha bin Elhac Hasan Agha <sup>45</sup>	huts	Erikli	60,000
	huts (half share)	Nimis	42,000
	huts		42,000
Elhac Mehmed Emin Agha bin Elhac Ebu Bekr <sup>46</sup>	huts	Saraçlı	147,000
	huts	Tekir	28,260
	huts	Tekyelu	15,600
	huts	Lapra	15,690
	huts	Metangiçi	51,360
Elhac Abdalbaki Agha ibn Mustafa Agha <sup>47</sup>	huts, animals, crops	Kulpanca	300,000
	huts, animals, crops	Lapra	420,000
	huts, animals, crops	Çulcanlar	600,000
	huts, animals, crops	Kargolpo	480,000
	huts, animals, crops	Kavalar	360,000
Kapucubaşı Esseyid Abdulvahib Agha ibn Abdalbaki <sup>48</sup>	huts	Üç Evler	120,000
	huts	Apanomi	120,000
	huts	Apanomi	120,000
	reaya	Çınar Furnos	120,000
Kirişzade Haseki Mustafa Agha ibn Elhac Ahmed <sup>49</sup>	huts	[Silkanca]	66,600
	huts	Sedes	29,600
	huts	Kapucular	40,000
	huts, animals, crops	unspecified	240,000

**Table XI:** Five important Thessalonian Janissary-*çiftlik* holders

More popular among the Janissaries was the possession of small plots – mainly vineyards, and more rarely orchards – all of a size ranging from one to five *dönüms*. This type of ownership was more widespread among middle class Janissaries, who

45 HAM, 99: 324-325, dated 10 August 1762 (19 Muharrem 1176).

46 HAM, 110: 77-82, dated 12 April 1766 (2 Zi'l-kade 1179).

47 HAM, 149: 70-71, dated 1 August 1785 (25 Ramazan 1199).

48 HAM, 140: 216-218, dated 17 August 1781 (26 Şaban 1195).

49 HAM, 149: 50-52, dated 14 March 1785 (3 Cemaziyü'l-evvel 1199).

apparently found easier access to agriculture through possession of these small plots. The yield from these plots, in the form of grape must or fruit, provided them with some supplementary income or found its way into home consumption. On the other hand, wealthier Janissaries showed no great interest in cultivating small size vineyards or orchards. The following table contains comparable data collected from the inventories for the years 1760-1770.

	Title	Persons	Plots
Poor	<i>Beşes</i>	8	11
	Aghas	-	-
Middle Class	<i>Beşes</i>	51	65
	Aghas	4	4
Wealthy	<i>Beşes</i>	17	28
	Aghas	13	21

**Table XII:** Distribution of agricultural plots among *beşes* and aghas

Animal husbandry was another profitable productive activity for all interested Janissaries. The commonest livestock were herds of assorted types, whether buffaloes or bovines, and flocks of sheep and goats, while horses and camels were rarer.<sup>50</sup> Donkeys and mules were used mainly for transport and were possessed in small numbers (usually one per person) even by poor soldiers. Husbandry was more often than not linked with *çiftlik*s used as grazing fields. Thus, the aforementioned Kirişzade Haseki Mustafa Agha bred 53 oxen of various types and 613 sheep on his four *çiftlik*s. Still, ownership of large flocks and herds was not always accompanied by land on which to graze them, in which case the owner of the animals had to rent the necessary fields. A typical case was Osman Agha ibn Sinan bin Abdullah, who owned 30 oxen, 90 goats and 150 sheep, but no landed estate.<sup>51</sup>

In sum, Thessalonian Janissaries do not seem to have been excessively keen on spending capital on systematic land purchases, whether in the form of large landed estates or smaller plots.<sup>52</sup> Institutional hindrances must have been less of an issue than the predominance of powerful central Macedonian *ayan* on the field. Either the

50 Ahmed Agha bin Abdullah bred nine quite expensive camels. See HAM, 15: 64-65, dated 20 July 1765 (1 Safer 1179).

51 HAM, 144: 11-12, dated 15 February 1783 (12 Rebiü'l-evvel 1197).

52 For the contribution of Janissaries to the emergence and development of the *çiftlik* phenomenon in the northern Ottoman Balkans during the eighteenth century, see İ. Kokdaş, 'Janissaries and Conflicts over Rural Lands in the Vidin Region (1730-1810)', in Y. Spyropoulos (ed.), *Insights into Janissary Networks, 1700-1826* [special issue of *Cihannüma: Tarih ve Coğrafya Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 8/1 (2022)], 101-127.

city's Janissaries did not wish to clash with these mighty provincial notables, or the balance of power regarding land ownership had been consolidated irrevocably in favour of rural magnates before the second half of the century.

### *Craftsmen and merchants*

As stressed before, *tereke*s do not allow a clear-cut distinction between the discrete aspects of the bidirectional, dialectic process whereby Janissaries became involved in the core of urban economy as artisans and merchants on the one hand, and craftsmen and traders entered the Janissary corps on the other. Still, a web of people who were apparently both military personnel and members of the local market and industry are clearly mirrored in the inventories as being mobilized in the pursuit of profit.

Forty Janissaries in our sample can be traced as being actively involved in some urban occupation or craft. Although half of them were aghas, those denoted with their occupational predicate were mainly the humbler *beşes*. So, it is highly likely that people such as cheek-pea sellers (*leblebici*) Hüseyin Beşe bin Osman<sup>53</sup> and Hüseyin Beşe bin Mustafa,<sup>54</sup> miller (*değirmenci*) Küçük Ali Beşe bin Abdullah,<sup>55</sup> farriers (*nalband*) Halil Beşe bin Ömer,<sup>56</sup> Ahmed Beşe bin Abdullah<sup>57</sup> and Yusuf Beşe bin Abdalbaki,<sup>58</sup> dealer in yarns (*iplikçi*) Mehmed Beşe bin Muslih,<sup>59</sup> tanners (*debbag*) Hüseyin Beşe bin Yusuf<sup>60</sup> and Kara Mehmed Beşe bin Abdurrahman,<sup>61</sup> sawyer (*tahtacı*) Kara Hasan Beşe bin Mehmed,<sup>62</sup> halva maker (*helvacı*) Ömer Beşe bin İsmail,<sup>63</sup> rope-maker (*muitab*) İsmail Beşe bin Halil,<sup>64</sup> and barber (*berber*) İbrahim Beşe bin Abdullah<sup>65</sup> were genuine professionals and made their living through their craft. Yet despite the involvement of all the above-mentioned persons

53 HAM, 99: 138a, dated 2 May 1762 (8 Şevval 1175).

54 HAM, 117a: 38-39, dated 5 January 1769 (26 Şaban 1182).

55 HAM, 99: 212b-213, dated 12 June 1762 (20 Zi'l-kade 1175).

56 HAM, 99: 232a, dated 25 June 1762 (3 Zi'l-hicce 1175).

57 HAM, 112: 46a, dated 26 March 1767 (25 Şevval 1180).

58 HAM, 112: 77a, dated 3 July 1767 (5 Safer 1181).

59 HAM, 112: 63c-64, dated 18 May 1767 (19 Zi'l-hicce 1180).

60 HAM, 103: 86a, dated 15 November 1762 (27 Rebiü'l-ahir 1176).

61 HAM, 117a: 6b, dated 21 August 1768 (7 Rebiü'l-ahir 1182).

62 HAM, 110: 87-88, dated 19 February 1766 (9 Ramazan 1179).

63 HAM, 110: 131-132, dated 24 July 1766 (16 Safer 1180).

64 HAM, 112: 18, dated 30 November 1766 (27 Cemaziyü'l-ahir 1180).

65 HAM, 112: 21a, dated 29 October 1766 (25 Cemaziyü'l-evvel 1180).



in rather humble professions, they belonged to the wealthy urban social strata, as the aggregate value of their property ranged between 100,000 and 300,000 *akçes*.

On the other hand, some Janissaries owned shops (or shares in them) without apparently practicing the pertinent profession. These are examples of military people integrated into the world of craftsmanship (and perhaps the respective guilds), a type of proto-capitalist Janissary investors in industrial production. Typical examples, to name but a few, were Elhac Abdurrahman Agha bin Elhac İbrahim, whose real estate included among many other things a share in a quarter of a barber shop,<sup>66</sup> Mustafa Beşe bin Ramadan, who had a *bozahane*<sup>67</sup> and İsmail Agha bin Salih, with a share in a quarter of a soap factory (*sabunhane*).<sup>68</sup> A few Janissaries exhibited a more capitalist frame of mind and invested heavily in shop ownership, attempting to reap more significant profits from the industrial sector. The following small table shows the investments three Janissaries made in urban business property.

Name	Shops
Çorbacı Elhac Ali Agha ibn Hüseyin Agha <sup>69</sup>	Blacksmith's shop, carpenter's shop, painter's shop, tobacconist shop, mattress factory
Halil Agha ibn Mehmed <sup>70</sup>	Bathroom license, field surrounding an inn, shop, carpenter's shop, shop, mill, coffee shop, cauldron maker's shop, 5 shares in a storehouse, 19/24 shares in a storehouse
Kirişzade Haseki Mustafa Agha ibn Elhac Ahmed <sup>71</sup>	1/3 share in a storehouse, 2 unspecified shops, pharmacy shop, mill

**Table XIII:** Three Thessalonian Janissaries investing in multiple shop ownership

The spirit of investment is equally evident among those Janissaries who at the time of their demise owned only the license (*gedik*) for a shop but no premises, such as one Ahmed Agha bin Abdullah and one Abdülkerim Agha bin Elhac Mehmed, holders of the license for a coffee shop,<sup>72</sup> and a mill<sup>73</sup> respectively. In the same vein, a few others owned the tools of a trade, but no pertinent license or premises; this

66 HAM, 117b: 48-50, dated 3 February 1770 (7 Şevval 1183).

67 HAM, 115: 68-69, dated 16 May 1768 (28 Zi'l-hicce 1181).

68 HAM, 117a: 39-41, dated 3 February 1769 (26 Ramazan 1182).

69 HAM, 152: 13-15, dated 12 March 1786 ((11 Cemaziyü'l-evvel 1200).

70 HAM, 122: 33b-35, dated 12 July 1771 (29 Rebiü'l-Evvel 1185).

71 HAM, 149: 50-52, dated 14 March 1785 (3 Cemaziyü'l-evvel 1199).

72 HAM, 105: 64b-65, dated 20 July 1765 (1 Safer 1179).

73 HAM, 99: 300-301, dated 1 August 1762 (10 Muharrem 1176).

was the case with one Ahmed Agha bin Mehmed, owner of barbering equipment.<sup>74</sup> These two particular and seemingly paradoxical types of occupational investment probably stem from and reflect the professional mobility of the Janissaries and their occasional involvement in assorted employments. In fact, some of them seem to have been continuously searching for new professional opportunities and easy profit. In this respect, no tendency of the Janissaries toward particular professions can be traced in the *tereke*s, though tannery seems to have been a privileged and probably highly profitable occupational field for military men. Their relative preference for tannery was linked to their participation in the economically powerful tanners' guild, controlled exclusively by the local military class, and to the equally important and influential respective credit *waqf*. On the other hand, tanners might have assertively sought membership in the Janissaries regiments, thus inextricably interweaving the two worlds.

Nevertheless, involvement of the Janissaries in industry was only one of the many pathways leading to wealth and social hegemony, usually supplemented by commerce, agriculture, animal husbandry, or moneylending. In fact, commerce was the most privileged and favoured practice for those already engaged in craftsmanship. Moreover, by the second half of the eighteenth century, commerce had become such a widespread and popular economic activity among Thessalonians of all religious, linguistic, and racial affiliations that local Janissary involvement in it comes as no surprise. Unfortunately, *muhallefat defterleri* do not draw any distinction between foreign and domestic commercial activity, or imports and exports, nor do they contain any information about companies or trade networks. The commercial ventures of deceased Janissaries can be traced through the large quantities of merchandise they possessed and their astronomical value in monetary units. In this sense, at least thirty members of our sample can safely be described as merchants. The Table XIV records the most important of these *askeri*-merchants.

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74 HAM, 117b: 76-77, dated 12 March 1770 (15 Zi'l-kade 1183).

Name	Merchandise	Aggregate Value
Ömer Beşe bin Osman <sup>75</sup>	45 bundles of <i>yanbolu</i> and other types of fabric	183,138
İbrahim Beşe bin Mehmed <sup>76</sup>	Various quantities of silk	40,800
Salih Beşe bin Ali <sup>77</sup>	15 sacks of blue paint, 3,525 <i>kiyye</i> of grapes	62,990
Çolak Halil Beşe bin Elhac Hüseyin <sup>78</sup>	Various quantities of wood	32,901
Tahtacı Kara Hasan Beşe bin Mehmed <sup>79</sup>	Various quantities of corn (wheat, barley, legumes, oats)	43,870
Mustafa Beşe bin Ramadan <sup>80</sup>	Various quantities of corn (wheat, barley, rye, oats)	103,702
Bezesteni Mustafa Ağa bin Ali <sup>81</sup>	Various quantities of <i>yemeni</i> and other types of fabric, fez and turbans	171,970
Üzümcü Mehmed Ağa bin Hasan <sup>82</sup>	Various quantities of grapes, figs, legumes, and white paint	149,260
Ahmed Ağa bin Elhac İbrahim <sup>83</sup>	Various quantities of soap, coffee, sugar, pepper, grapes, tobacco, and locust beans	508,803
Bostani Mehmed Ağa bin İsmail <sup>84</sup>	Various types of caps and garments	351,205
Hüseyin Ağa bin Ahmed <sup>85</sup>	Tobacco	279,874
Ahmed Ağa ibn Elhac Hüseyin Ağa <sup>86</sup>	Tobacco	249,850
Langazalızade Mustafa Ağa ibn Ahmed <sup>87</sup>	Various quantities of corn (wheat, barley, rye, oats)	120,960
Haseki Elhac Mehmed Ağa ibn Abdullah <sup>88</sup>	Various quantities of corn (wheat, barley, rye, oats)	94,400

75 HAM, 99: 21-22, dated 24 October 1761 (25 Rebiü'l-evvel 1175).

76 HAM, 99: 75, dated 3 March 1762 (7 Şaban 1175).

77 HAM, 99: 290a, dated 22 July 1762 (29 Zi'l-hicce 1175).

78 HAM, 105: 12, dated 28 October 1764 (2 Cemaziyü'l-evvel 1178).

79 HAM, 110: 87-88, dated 19 February 1766 (9 Ramazan 1179).

80 HAM, 115: 68-69, dated 16 May 1768 (28 Zi'l-hicce 1181).

81 HAM, 103: 125-127, dated 27 December 1762 (10 Cemaziyü'l-ahir 1176).

82 HAM, 112: 62, dated 15 May 1767 (16 Zi'l-hicce 1180).

83 HAM, 99: 235-237, dated 27 June 1762 (5 Zi'l-hicce 1175).

84 HAM, 110: 55b-58, dated 3 April 1766 (22 Şevval 1179).

85 HAM, 115: 26b-27, dated 20 December 1767 (28 Receb 1181).

86 HAM, 124: 77-79, dated 21 January 1773 (27 Şevval 1186).

87 HAM, 128: 8b-9, dated 26 May 1774 (15 Rebiü'l evvel 1188).

88 HAM, 132: 25c-26, dated 10 April 1775 (8 Safer 1189).

Name	Merchandise	Aggregate Value
Lahanalı Elhac Mumiş Agha ibn Yusuf <sup>89</sup>	Various quantities of corn (wheat, barley, rye, oats)	87,060
Mustafa Agha ibn Ebu Hoca <sup>90</sup>	Various quantities of corn (wheat, barley, rye, oats)	122,995
Kirişzade Haseki Mustafa Agha ibn Elhac Ahmed <sup>91</sup>	Various quantities of corn (wheat, barley, rye, oats)	291,505
Kahveci Hasan Agha ibn Mustafa <sup>92</sup>	Various quantities of corn (wheat, barley, rye, oats)	103,805
Elhac Mehmed Agha ibn Ömer <sup>93</sup>	Various quantities of corn (wheat, barley, rye, oats)	150,240

**Table XIV:** Important Thessalonian Janissary-merchants

The merchandise of some merchants came from the agricultural yield of their *çiftlik*s, yet the majority of them did not possess any landed estates, thus forming a sort of genuine ‘bourgeois’ entrepreneur class with vested interests in urban business ventures. They traded mainly in cereals, fabric, garments, fruit, weapons, and tinder. A handful of them would also own a vessel, commonly a *kayık*, ship ownership being rather rare among Thessalonian Janissaries. One Kurdoğlu Beşe ibn Abdalbaki was an exceptional entrepreneur who directed his capital to sea-related ventures; he owned three *kayıks* of assorted sizes, a share in a fourth, the respective share (*sermaye*) in the cargo carried by the ships, and the *gedik* for a fish farm (*dalyan*).<sup>94</sup> All these Janissary merchants came from the upper crust in local society, while Janissary artisans with lower incomes and less property also dealt in commerce, but only as a corollary to their craftsmanship. In this sense, commerce was a class-determined activity mainly concerning Janissaries with extensive capital availability.

89 HAM, 136: 29b-30, dated 20 May 1777 (12 Rebiü'l-ahir 1191).

90 HAM, 139: 3a, dated 27 February 1780 (21 Safer 1194).

91 HAM, 149: 50-52, dated 14 March 1785 (3 Cemaziyü'l-evvel 1199).

92 HAM, 156: 36b-37, dated 1 May 1789 (5 Şaban 1203).

93 HAM, 166: 44, dated 15 January 1796 (5 Receb 1210).

94 HAM, 149: 116, dated 20 December 1785 (17 Safer 1200).

### *Non-productive capital*

Our serial data clearly show that the military caste did not invest in politics of ostentation, pretentious consumption, and material supremacy over their Thessalonian compatriots as a means of legitimizing their social hegemony. Their shabby clothes, worthless cutlery, cheap jewels, and low-priced horse tack demonstrate that their social authority did not depend on displays of luxury and resultant disassociation from the grass roots, but on real involvement in the city's economy. As a matter of fact, the small contribution of mobile property items to the general wealth of the Janissaries reflects a continuum of material culture in terms of quality among all Thessalonians, irrespective of their social standing or military occupation. In total, the monetary value of mobile property items does not exceed 12% (11.92%) of the aggregate value of all properties under study; the rate is even lower for wealthy military men: only 9.76% of the value of their fortune corresponds to mobile assets. Even the few exceptions to this pattern do not really deviate from the general norm; for instance, one Ahmed Agha bin Elhac İbrahim possessed 104 garments of assorted types, yet the estimated monetary value of this collection totalled just 81,686 *akçes*, or 3.22% of his fortune.<sup>95</sup> Even the presence of furs, one of the commonest symbols of wealth and social prestige, was rather limited; few well-off Janissaries owned more than three fur overcoats. One exception was one Kethüda Halil Agha bin Abdurrahman, the owner of fifteen fur overcoats, yet these items were of comparatively low price – their aggregate value was only 48,101 *akçes*, while their average price came to a mere 6,012 *akçes*. As might be expected, Janissaries enjoyed weapon ownership; only 48 members of our sample, that is 10.23% of the total, did not apparently own any weapons. Some were excessively fond of these tools of war. For instance, one Geliş Mehmed Agha bin Mustafa had a unique collection of 12 old swords (*kurada kılıç*), 4 swords (*kılıç*), 1 diamond-hilted dagger (*hancer*), 73 carbines (*filinta*), 14 pistols (*pistov*), 13 rifles (*tüfenk*), 1 long rifle (*kebir tüfenk*), 2 shields (*kalkan*), 20 iron parts of a rifle (*tüfenk timuru*), and 26 carbine flintlocks (*filinta çakmağı*), making it highly likely that he was a weapons trader.<sup>96</sup> Still, it should be stressed that weapon ownership was extremely popular among Thessalonians from all walks of life and religious affiliation, and, thus, military men do not stand out in this respect.

The military were not particularly keen on jewels either; with a median incidence of two pieces per person, their aggregate value scarcely amounted to 0.92% of military fortunes, a rate even lower (0.88%) in the case of rich Janissaries. Lastly,

95 HAM, 99: 235-237, dated 27 June 1762 (5 Zi'l-hicce 1175).

96 HAM, 110: 134-137, dated 3 August 1766 (26 Safer 1180).

the small number of slaves owned by them – only 28 concubines (*cariye*) were owned by 17 deceased Janissaries – further demonstrates the lack of demarcation lines between military personnel and the non-military urban population in terms of ideological capital.

### *Janissaries in transit*

One particular group of Janissaries who did not constitute an integral part of the local population, due to their temporary or chance presence in the city, were soldiers who died in Thessaloniki while passing through. These people are not easily traced in the *tereke*s. The origin of the deceased or the reason for their presence in Thessaloniki are only rarely recorded. Typical entries are those of Kara Ahmed Beşe bin Abdullah from the nearby town (*kasaba*) of Doyran,<sup>97</sup> Mürtaza Beşe bin Abdullah from Sarajevo,<sup>98</sup> and Yusuf Agha from Talanti, a small city in the *kaza* of Ağriboz,<sup>99</sup> all of whom died as visitors in Thessaloniki, yet without any illuminating information as to the reason for their visit being mentioned. War was sometimes alluded to as the cause for the mobility of Janissaries. For example, *serbetçi* Abdullah Beşe bin Abdurrahman died while he was heading to the front line of the imminent Russo-Ottoman war of 1768.<sup>100</sup> Likewise, Janissary, creditor, and camel owner Mehmed Beşe bin Hüseyin, originally from Isparta in Anatolia, passed away in Thessaloniki while he was moving to the front after the outbreak of the same war.<sup>101</sup> Some others died while on business in Thessaloniki: Ali Beşe bin Murad, a Janissary and creditor, hailing from a small village called Birdali in the *nahiye* of Vardar-ı Kebir, part of the *kaza* of Thessaloniki on the eastern bank of the Vardar river, passed away *intra muros* while trying to collect money from his 18 Thessalonian debtors.<sup>102</sup>

The military regiment of the deceased is occasionally remarked upon: Ahmed Agha bin Abdullah was recorded as a resident of Istanbul and member of the 32nd Janissary *orta* there.<sup>103</sup> Still, in most cases, the only hint that the deceased were passers-through or temporary residents in the city are the inns (*han*), coffee houses,

97 HAM, 99: 12a, dated 13 September 1761 (13 Safer 1175).

98 HAM, 99: 63b-64, dated 13 February 1762 (19 Receb 1175).

99 HAM, 117b: 71-72, dated 9 March 1770 (12 Zi'l-kade 1183).

100 HAM, 112: 79a, dated 21 July 1767 (23 Safer 1181).

101 HAM, 117b: 64, dated 22 February 1770 (26 Şevval 1183).

102 HAM, 103: 219, dated 22 July 1763 (17 Muharrem 1177).

103 HAM, 103: 91, dated 20 November 1762 (3 Cemaziyü'l-evvel 1176).

or *konaks* of the officials where they died. The examples are numerous; one Halil Beşe bin Abdullah died in the camp barracks of the 36th *cemaat*,<sup>104</sup> while *çukadar* İbrahim Agha bin Ali Agha died in the *konak* of the Janissary Agha.<sup>105</sup> One Abdullah Agha bin Abdurrahman passed away in the *konak* of the *mütesellim* Mustafa Agha,<sup>106</sup> and İsmail Agha bin Abdullah expired in the *konak* of the tobacco customs superintendent (*duhan gümrüğü emini*) Mustafa Agha.<sup>107</sup>

Our sample comprises 54 military men who were visitors or others passing through Thessaloniki. Except for 3 wealthy aghas, all the rest, namely 31 *beşes*, 16 aghas, 1 *çukadar*, and 2 *çavus*, were owners of properties conforming to strikingly common patterns; in effect, this typology describes a type of military man fairly prevalent in urban milieus like Thessaloniki. These people did not own any urban or agrarian real estate, animals, or means of transport, and were not involved in any type of credit relations with locals. All they carried with them were some basic clothes and utensils, though some would also have had the tools of their trade. For example, coffee maker Kara Hasan Beşe bin Abdullah had with him eleven pipes (*duhan çubuğu*), two coffee pots (*kahve ibriği*), two pairs of scales (*terazu*), a bench for his craft (*destgâh*), two wicker baskets (*zembil*) for coffee, and one sack of tobacco (*duhan çuvalı*).<sup>108</sup> He may perhaps have been the coffee maker of an *orta*. Almost all these travellers possessed some cash, which never exceeded 3,000 *akçes*, a sum which may have corresponded to their salary. They all had weapons, invariably one or two rifles (*tüfenk* or *filinta*), one or two pistols, a sword and a knife. Nine of them also owned a Quran. All died without any relatives or heirs being recorded whatsoever; their father was recorded as Abdullah, and their insignificant fortunes were expropriated by the army. It goes without saying that the recorded property items may only have been a fraction of their real fortune, located far from Thessaloniki.

Although the ledgers of these people in transit do not add much to the general depiction of the Janissary phenomenon in Thessaloniki, or even offer a distorted or biased picture of army people living just above the economic threshold of survival, they do depict some types of military people wandering the city streets.

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104 HAM, 112: 43b, dated 13 March 1767 (12 Şevval 1180).

105 HAM, 117a: 47b, dated 24 February 1769 (17 Şevval 1182).

106 HAM, 115: 7b, dated 23 August 1767 (27 Rebiü'l-evvel 1181).

107 HAM, 115: 2b, dated 1 August 1767 (5 Rebiü'l-evvel 1181).

108 HAM, 110: 34c-35, dated 7 January 1766 (25 Receb 1179).

### *Some conclusions*

Probate inventories offer a rather restricted, inflexible, and stereotypical perspective on the Janissary phenomenon, as the *kadis* moulded all recorded data to fit the rigid rationale of Ottoman bureaucratic logistics. Information and estimations regarding the political or social mobilization of the Janissaries are entirely absent, meaning that all pertinent conclusions drawn by historians remain tentative in nature. Even the identity of those deceased who were tagged *beşes* and aghas remain an unfathomable desideratum. Still, the very same documents maintain their evidential significance, as they pave the way toward a thorough analysis of the economic status, wealth distribution, and social stratification of the Janissaries – apart from the data offered regarding family and material culture issues, which are beyond the scope of our paper.

In this vein, the *terekes* of Thessaloniki testify, on the one hand, to the deep integration of Janissary Corps members into local society and, on the other, to the reverse process whereby the local Muslim community penetrated the ranks of the Janissary Corps. In essence, these two collectivities formed a unified societal corpus whose members displayed fluid institutional identities. Imperial Janissaries do not turn up *per se* in the ledger entries, yet a community of Muslims that indiscriminately claimed to be *askeri* and *reaya* at one and the same time did make a conspicuous appearance, even if after their demise, in the pages of the *muhallefat defterleri*. It is evident that for the *kadı* it made no difference whether these people were Imperial Janissaries, *yamaks*, *yerlüs*, or *taslakçıs* – a telltale indication of the new social realities in the Ottoman world. Social mobility through the admission of civilians into the Janissary Corps, and occupational flexibility through the entrance of Janissaries into the guilds and the world of commerce set the context for this new world.

Unfortunately, the inventories do not allow research into local networks (which undoubtedly must have existed), the role of immigrants in the growth of the Janissary Corps, or the political and social conflicts in which Janissaries of all categories became involved. Yet it becomes clear from our data that this community of Janissary-businessmen was characterized by social stratification and economic inequality, which in their turn determined the nature of their economic activities and entrepreneurial practices. In this respect, credit became the springboard for the development and growth of the Janissary phenomenon at the local level during the second half of the eighteenth century. Thessalonian Janissaries, irrespective of their financial situation, would incessantly lend, borrow, or both, entering into credit relations with diverse people and collectivities of the city and the surrounding



countryside. Other economic activities were more class-determined; commerce and shop multi-ownership were limited to wealthy Janissaries, while middle-classes had to content themselves with craftsmanship. The scope of Thessalonian Janissaries regarding land ownership was constrained by the walls of the city; rural real estate, *çiftlik* ownership, and tax-farming were beyond their interest or potential, at least until the end of the century. Of course, with few exceptions, most Janissary entrepreneurs followed the norm and developed their business practices in the most pluralistic manner, simultaneously running multiple projects. Finally, it is noteworthy that economic practices and enterprises, social mobility, clientele networks, and group clashes took place within a continuum of material civilization covering the entire Muslim community (in fact all Thessalonians), thus obviating the ideological hegemony of any economically powerful agent.



# FRANCHISED TRADE ON THE DANUBE

## JANISSARY ENTREPRENEURS AND THE LICENSED MERCHANTS OF WALLACHIA AND MOLDAVIA

Aysel YILDIZ\*

THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY WAS A PERIOD OF EXPANSION for the Muslim merchant classes, especially for those who conducted business around the Danube. It was the soldier entrepreneurs of the Danubian towns in particular who became an important component of regional, interregional and to some extent international trade in the region, with their multilayered and complex military, commercial and cultural ties with Balkan, Black Sea, and Istanbul-based comrades or traders. The expansion of commercial activities by these soldier merchants, initially in the towns around the Danube and then in the Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia, accelerated their integration into almost all sectors of existing trade circuits as investors, producers, or merchants. In response to local discontent at the rise of a landed Muslim soldier gentry and its increased commercial activities within the Principalities, the Ottoman authorities imposed a new trading system which banned productive investments by soldiers in Wallachia and Moldavia, and restricted commercial activities by granting exclusive trading rights to a limited number of franchised Muslim and non-Muslim merchants from the Danube.

The result of state intervention and the commercial restrictions imposed on the Principalities was to intensify princely and state control of human mobility and commercial activities to an unprecedented degree, and to create monopolistic trading rights in two main Danube trade circuits: regional and imperial commerce, franchised to a limited number of licensed (*fermanlı/tezkiireli*) entrepreneurs in the Danubian Basin, mostly involving Muslims of military background; and an Istanbul-based oligopsony of *kapan* (wholesale warehouse trade) merchants who enjoyed exclusive monopoly privileges on commerce in the Principalities. Designed

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\* Foundation for Research and Technology-Hellas, Institute for Mediterranean Studies.

to monitor the regional and imperial market by erecting barriers to entry and granting trading rights to state franchised chartered business companies, the new system thus turned the Danubian principalities into a restricted if not forbidden zone for non-authorised Muslim entrepreneurs. The present study is based on an examination of valuable registers of Muslim investors and authorised/licensed merchants in the region, and aims at making a modest contribution to the available literature by exploring the somewhat neglected commercial activities, business culture and identities of Muslim entrepreneurs in the Danubian zone, particularly as regards the rowdy merchant Janissaries of the period, who now lie silent in the depths of history.

The initial section below is devoted to the importance of the Danubian Principalities for regional, interregional, and international trade, and to a description of the symbiotic relations between the two sides of the Danube. The second section focuses on the expansion of Ottoman soldier entrepreneurs into the Principalities, their productive and commercial activities, and consequent state intervention. The identity of the authorised merchants conducting business under the new trading system and their role in provisioning the capital are the topics of the two last sections.

### *The Danubian Principalities and regional, interregional and imperial trade*

The Ottoman Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia lay north of the Lower Danube. In the eighteenth century, the natural boundaries of the Carpathian Mountains and the Danube and the Prut separated the twin provinces from Austrian Transylvania, Temeşvar (mod. Timișoara) and Boukovnia. The Pruth River divided them from Russian territories, and the Danube from Ottoman Bulgaria.<sup>1</sup> Close to the town of Fethülislam (mod. Kladova) and bordered by the Danube to the south, Transylvania to the north, Moldavia to the east, and finally Hungary and Austria to the west, Wallachia served as a buffer zone between the Ottoman and Habsburg Empire.<sup>2</sup> The

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- 1 W. Wilkinson, *An Account of the Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia with Various Observations Relating to Them* (London 1820), 1.
  - 2 For a commission report penned by Giridi Ahmed Efendi including detailed information on the historical geography of eighteenth-century Wallachia, see TSK, H. [Hazine], 445, fls. 6-30. For further details regarding the commission and the report, see C. Orhonlu, 'Ahmed Resmî Efendi'nin Eflak Coğrafyası', *Güney-Doğu Avrupa Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 4-5 (1975-1976), 1-14; V. H. Aksan, 'Whose Territory and Whose Peasants? Ottoman Boundaries on the Danube in the 1760s', in F. Anscombe (ed.), *The Ottoman Balkans, 1750-1830* (Princeton 2006), 61-86; A. Yıldız and İ. Kokdaş, 'Peasantry in a Well-Protected Domain: Wallachian Peasantry and Muslim *Çiftlik/Kırsaks* under the Ottoman Rule', *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, 22/1 (2020), 175-190; M. Gündoğdu, 'Girdli Hacı Ahmed'in Eflâk'ta Meydana Gelen Olaylar

Principality of Moldavia, on the other hand, constituted the northernmost border of the Ottoman Empire: to the south-east the Danube formed a natural barrier, and it was separated from Transylvania by the Carpathian Mountains. In the east, the Pruth served as another natural barrier between the province and Bessarabia.

Geographic location put both Principalities at the core of complex and overlapping trading circuits. As an important area for Balkan and Black Sea commerce, they had a crucial role in regional (Balkan), interregional (Black Sea), imperial (Istanbul), and international (European) trade. In the Middle Ages, long-distance trade connected Wallachia to Central Europe, Buda, and Germany, and dealings with the Byzantine capital were dominated by Genoese and Transylvanian merchants.<sup>3</sup> As the Ottomans subjugated the Balkan kingdoms and the Byzantine Empire, the Italians began to be replaced by Greek, Armenian, Jewish, and Ragusan merchants, while Romanian local nobles (*boyar*) and their agents became the main carriers of local products to the West.<sup>4</sup> With the firm establishment of Ottoman suzerainty in the Balkans and the Black Sea in the mid-sixteenth century, these regions were gradually closed to the international market and turned into a reserved trading zone that lasted until 1783.<sup>5</sup> By that time, the Ottoman policy of provisioning the capital and the army via private agents or trade associations was already well established.

A traditional agro-pastoralist economy prevailed in the eighteenth-century Danubian Principalities, with a high degree of specialisation. Animal husbandry and agricultural production were the basic means of livelihood for the local population and the main source of trading commodities in the two provinces. Sheep, cattle, and horses raised in the region were either exported or reserved for local consumption.

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Hakkında Kaleme Aldığı 1760 Tarihli Risalesi', unpublished M.A. thesis, Sakarya University, 2015.

- 3 L. Rădvan, 'On the Medieval Urban Economy in Wallachia', *Analele Științifice ale "Universității Alexandru Ioan Cuza" din Iași*, 56 (2009), 490-497; D. Chirot, *Social Change in a Peripheral Society: The Creation of a Balkan Colony* (New York 1976), 28-34.
- 4 T. Stoianovich, 'The Conquering Balkan Orthodox Merchant', *The Journal of Economic History*, 20/2 (1960), 238-241, 244; Rădvan, 'Medieval Urban Economy', 492-493, 498; Chirot, *The Creation of a Colony*, 33, 39-40; S. Raicevich, *Voyage en Valachie et en Moldavie* (Paris 1822), 60-61; V. Paskaleva, 'Osmanlı Balkan Eyâletleri'nin Avrupalı Devletlerle Ticaretleri Tarihine Katkı, 1700-1850', *Istanbul Üniversitesi İktisat Fakültesi Mecmuası*, 27/1-2 (1967-1968), 37-74; P. Cernovodeanu, 'Les échanges économiques dans l'évolution des relations roumanoturques (XV<sup>e</sup>-XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles)', *Revue des Études Sud-Est Européennes*, 16/1 (1978), 81-91.
- 5 For the local impact of the rise of Ottomans and the disruption of old trade routes, see Chirot, *The Creation of a Colony*, 39-56. For the eighteenth-century Ottoman policies of the Black Sea trade, see S. Laiou, 'The Ottoman State and the Black Sea Trade, 18th-Beginning of the 19th Century', in E. Eldem, S. Laiou and V. Kechriotis (eds), *The Economic and Social Development of the Port-Cities of the Southern Black Sea Coast and Hinterland, Late 18th-Beginning of the 20th Century* (Corfu 2017), 1-17.

The trade in livestock, dairy and apiculture products (animal fats, butter, cheese, hides, beeswax<sup>6</sup> and honey) was very advanced in the region. According to one estimate, more than four million sheep and goats were being raised in Wallachia in the early decades of the nineteenth century, and meat and honey were of the best quality.<sup>7</sup> Animals grazing in the vast plains of these provinces were driven to the slaughterhouses (*selhane/salhane*) in Silistre (mod. Silistria) and other Danubian towns for their fats (tallow, melted beef tallow called *çerviş*), *pastırma*, and other animal products.<sup>8</sup> The clarified butter consumed by Istanbulites was imported mainly from Wallachia and Danubian towns including Ruscuk (mod. Ruse), Yergögü (mod. Giurgiu), Niğbolu (mod. Nikopol), Silistre, İbrail (mod. Braila), İsmail (mod. Izmail), and Kili (mod. Kilia).<sup>9</sup>

Wallachia and Moldavia had intense commercial and symbiotic relations with the Ottoman towns on the other side of the Danube – the former especially with Varna, Vidin, and İbrail and the latter with Hotin (mod. Khotyn), Bender (mod. Tighina/Bendery) and again with İbrail. It was natural resources and the availability of vast fertile lands, meadows, and forests that defined the basic contours of economic relations on the two banks of the Danube. As most of the Ottoman towns were small garrison cities with limited or less fertile agricultural fields and grazing lands, villagers herded their animals or tilled the soil within the borders of the Principalities, with the permission of the imperial and local authorities. Lack of sufficient land to feed the townsmen compelled the residents of Hotin to cultivate lands in Moldavia – on condition that they paid landowners the required fees.<sup>10</sup> For the same reason, the villagers of İbrail, Bender, and Fethülislam were granted special permission to cultivate vacant lands in Wallachia, and those of Bender to graze their unbroke horses (*hergele*) and keep beehives in Moldavia.<sup>11</sup> The townsmen of Yergögü

6 Used for candle making. Regarding the beeswax industry of the region, see A. Kılınc, 'Eflak-Boğdan ve Karadeniz'de Bal ve Balmumu/Honey and Beeswax in Wallachia, Moldavia and the Black Sea', *Acta Turcica*, 3/1-1 (2011), 40-56.

7 T. Thornton, *The Present State of Turkey*, Vol. II (London 1809), 322-323.

8 BOA, C. ML. [Cevdet Maliye], 576/23638 (13 R 1196/28 March 1782).

9 BOA, A.DVN.SAHK.ÖZSİ.d. [Bab-ı Asafi Özi ve Silistre Ahkam Defterleri], 10, fl. 254 (*evahir-i L* 1172/17 June 1759).

10 52 villages around Hotin needed the lands on the other side of the Danube in 1749, and 58 of them in 1768, BOA, TSMA.e. [Topkapı Palace Museum Archive], 588/11 (*evahir-i B* 1162/7-15 July 1749); TSMA.e.882/1 (undated, catalogue date: 29 Z 1181/17 May 1768).

11 TSK.H.445, fls. 49-53; BOA, A.DVN.SAHK.ÖZSİ.d.16, fls. 103-104 (*evasıt-ı Ra* 1179/27 September-6 October 1765); C.HR. [Cevdet Hariciye], 35/1733 (*evasıt-ı L* 1173/27 May-5 June 1760); A.DVNS.DVE.d.77, fl. 172, order no. 381 (*evasıt-ı L* 1173/27 May-5 June 1760); 78, fl. 106, order no. 311 (*evasıt-ı Ş* 1168/23 May-1 June 1755); A.DVNS.MHM.d.116, fl. 72, order no. 309 (*evahir-i Za* 1120/3-12 March 1709).

were dependant on the meadows and fields they hired from the *boyars* (members of the local landed aristocracy) of Wallachia, as their own lands were “weak and the boundaries of the entire town stretch around one-hour in distance on all sides, since the residents have no area for a meadow they have always been in dire need of the lands of Wallachia”.<sup>12</sup> In a similar vein, the towns of Ruscuk and Kule (mod. Kula) needed wood and timber supplied by the Wallachians.<sup>13</sup> As we shall see below, the natural resources of the Principalities were of particularly vital importance for the seasonal herding cycles followed by Danubian cattle drovers (*sürekçi*). Likewise, Hungarian and Transylvanian shepherds needed the meadows of Wallachia to graze their herds, again by paying the required fees.<sup>14</sup>

The natives of the Principalities, on the other hand, needed the job opportunities and other resources on the other side of the Danube. They worked as seasonal labourers in the towns during harvest times. Some from both provinces moved to the Black Sea towns [İsakçı (mod. Isaccea), Karaharman (mod. Vadu), Mangalya (mod. Mangalia), Köstence (mod. Constanța), Balçık (mod. Balchik) and Hacıoğlu Pazarı (mod. Dobrich)] to work as reapers.<sup>15</sup> More importantly, of course, they found a ready and lively market for their own products.

The degree of mutual economic dependency and the importance of regional trade is clearly reflected in a report on Oltenia by an Austrian agent: during the Habsburg occupation of the region (1718-1739), the Austrian government introduced some restrictive policies such as a quarantine regulation that banned the Ottoman currency and suspended all commercial transactions with Ottoman subjects. According to the author of the report, however, these measures were detrimental to the economy of Oltenia, as “the inhabitants of this province derive their income from animals, honey, and butter which they are all accustomed to selling... in various neighbouring

12 BOA, A.DVN.SAHK. ÖZSİ.d. 8, fl. 178 (*evahir-i* B 1168/3-12 May 1755), The document is a collective petition by which the townsmen accused the voivode of demanding extra payments even though they had paid the required fees. See also A.DVN.SAHK.ÖZSİ.d.15, fl. 302 (*evahir-i* B 1178/14-23 January 1765), fl. 307 (*evail-i* Ş 1178/24 January-2 February 1765). The residents of Bender also claimed that they had very limited lands, which could be traversed in 2-3 hours; A.DVNS.DVE.d.78, fl. 106, order no. 311 (*evası-tı* Ş 1168/23-1 June 1755).

13 BOA, C. MTZ. [Cevdet Eyalet-i Mümtaze], 2/74 (*evail-i* S 1206/30 September-9 October 1791).

14 BOA, C.HR.57/2819 (*evası-tı* R 1175/9-18 November 1761). See also Raicevich, *Voyage en Valachie et en Moldavie*, 30-31.

15 BOA, A.DVN.SAHK.ÖZSİ.d.7, fl. 69 (*evası-tı* S 1166/18-27 December 1752); 12, fls. 6-7 (*evahir-i* Z 1174/24 July-1 August 1761), fl. 10 (*evahir-i* M 1175/22-30 August 1761), fl. 46 (*evahir-i* M 1178/21-30 July 1764); A.DVNS.DVE.d. [Düvel-i Ecnebiye Defterleri], 77, fl. 157, order no. 357 (*evail-i* Z 1172/26 July-4 August 1759). See also Mehmed Hâşim, *İmâ-yı Törehât-ı Bül-dânân: Osmanlı Beldelerinin Töreleri*, eds, F. Emecen and İ. Şahin (Ankara 2022), 210.

places of Turkey, and the merchants bring no other currency than Turkish".<sup>16</sup> Indeed, while a total of 60-70,000 sheep was sold to Ottoman merchants in 1722, the figure rose to 100,000 in the next year, but sharply decreased to 15,000 in 1724 due to government intervention. Since the policy of economic detachment from Ottoman trade also manifested itself in reduced sales of basic export items (especially beeswax and honey), the Oltenians eventually applied to the Austrian government for the bans to be suspended.<sup>17</sup>

The coexistence and symbiotic relations between the populations on the two banks of the Danube were thus not harmful to the interests of either party. Even the frequent disputes over commercial transactions and land or water use were instrumental in fixing the borders in minute detail to avoid future conflicts.<sup>18</sup> While the commoners on both sides benefited from commerce and land use, the voivodes obtained revenues by charging fees for economic activities: the *oyarit/oiiritul* (sheep tax), *yarbarit/vacarit* (cattle tax), and *dijmaratul* (honey-and-pig tax).<sup>19</sup> The local people, especially the *boyars* and monasteries, had a chance to receive cash revenues by renting their lands to the pastoralists or cultivators.<sup>20</sup> As said earlier, the cattle drovers of Danubian towns had to graze and winter their sheep and cattle in the Principalities. For that purpose, they hired the meadows from the *boyars* in return for

16 Arch. St. Sibiu, L 1-5/354, f. 21 as cited in Ş. Papacostea, *Oltenia sub stăpânirea austriacă (1718–1739)* (Bucharest 1998), 92.

17 Papacostea, *Oltenia*, 93-94. For a study of the social and economic impacts of Austrian occupation on the region, with special reference to the livestock sector, see İ. Kokdaş, 'Habsburglar Kara Eflak'a Gelirse: Vidin'de Hayvancılık Sektörünün Dönüşümü, 1695-1740', *Cihannüma: Tarih ve Coğrafya Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 5/2 (2019), 77-110.

18 BOA, TSMA.e.336/16 (5 B 1167/30 January 1754); BOA, A. DVN.SAHK.ÖZSİ.d.15, fl. 307 (*evail-i* Ş 1178/24 January-2 February 1765). For some selected examples of disputes over fishing rights in lakes and ponds (*balta*), see BOA, A.DVN.SAHK.ÖZSİ.d.12, fl. 2 (*evail-i* R 1174/10-19 November 1774); fl. 37-38 (*evail-i* Ş 1177/4-14 February 1764); TSK.H.445, fls. 54-57.

19 *Yarbarit* or *oyarit* fees were annual taxes imposed on animals grazed in Wallachia. In spring, 24 *akçes* were charged per head of cattle and 8 *akçes* per sheep; in winter 60 *akçes* per cattle and 8 per sheep from animal breeders, as the so-called winter fee (*kışlak resmi*) collected by the voivode. For further details, see BOA, A.DVNS.DVE.77, fl. 8, order no. 17-20 (*evahir-i* Z 1146/25 April-3 May 1734), fl. 10, order no. 26 (*evahir-i* Z 1146/25 May-2 June 1734), fl. 42, order no. 126 (*evail-i* Ş 1157/9-18 September 1744); BOA, AE. [Ali Emiri], SMHD.I. [Mahmud I], 10/668 (*evasıtı* C 1155/20 August 1742); BOA, A.DVN.SAHK.ÖZSİ.d.12, fl. 14 (*evail-i* R 1175/30 October- 8 November 1761).

20 BOA, AE.SMHD.I.10/668 (*evasıtı* C 1155/13-22 August 1742); BOA, A.DVN.SAHK.ÖZSİ.d.11, fl. 148 (*evail-i* Z 1173/15-24 July 1760); M. M. Alexandrescu-Dersca, 'Sur le regime des ressortissants ottomans en Moldavie (1711-1829)', *Studia et Acta Orientalia*, 5-6 (1967), 155.



30 *guruş* and paid a special tax called *barbarin* to the voivodes.<sup>21</sup> The animals purchased from the animal markets of Rumelia [particularly Wallachia, Dobruca (mod. Dobrogea), and Telliorman (mod. Teleorman)] were brought to Wallachia 20 days before the 5th of May to graze in hired meadows with water wells (*savad*), before being taken to the slaughterhouses for animal fats, *pastırma*, and other products. In winter the animals were kept in the province for 4 months.<sup>22</sup>

As for imperial trade, it was largely dictated by the needs of the imperial capital and the army. With a legal monopoly and encouragement to specialise in provisioning the capital, these provinces were considered a ‘backyard’ or the breadbasket/granary of the Istanbulites in official discourse – as is particularly evident in the Principalities being referred to as “*kiler mesabesinde*” in almost all bureaucratic correspondences,<sup>23</sup> though due to a shift in Istanbul’s grain provisioning hinterland, 70% of all grain had begun to be supplied from the Mediterranean rather than the Danube in the 1790s.<sup>24</sup> In addition to grain, trade in most of the basic animal products (honey, cheese, *çerviş*, tallow) and industrial items (beeswax), as well as livestock was not free, and they were expected to be destined for the capital. This provisionist role assigned to the Principalities became even more pronounced during the eighteenth century due to the increasing needs of the capital and the army. They were expected to provide certain amounts of grain in autumn and spring at officially fixed prices, usually below the market value.

There were several alternative routes connecting the capital to the Principalities: The main route that extended from Istanbul to Özi (mod. Ochakiv) was used by both

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21 Legally, they had to pay 30 *guruş* to the *moşiyeye* (landed estate) holders, 20 *akçes* as *barbarin* and 10 *akçes* as *vamar* (a customs duty) to the voivode, BOA, AE.SMHD.I.10/668 (*evasıt-ı C* 1155/13-22 August 1742); A.DVNS.DVE.d.77, fl. 29, order no 86 (*evasıt-ı C* 1155/13-22 August 1742); A.DVN.SAHK.ÖZSİ.d.8, fls. 239-240 (*evail-i Za* 1168/9-18 August 1755); 12, fls. 3-4 (*evasıt-ı B* 1174/16-25 February 1761).

22 BOA, A.DVN.SAHK.ÖZSİ.d.11, fl. 148 (*evail-i Z* 1173/15-24 July 1760); 12, fls 3-4 (*evasıt-ı B* 1174/16-25 February 1761). The cattle drovers of Silistre brought their animals to the slaughterhouse on Pastırma Island in the Danube (BOA, C.ML.576/23638 [13 R 1196/28 March 1782]), which was probably Prundu Island close to İbrail. There were some other slaughterhouses around Ploiesti. For further details, see F. Marinescu, ‘The Trade of Wallachia with the Ottoman Empire between 1791-1821’, *Balkan Studies*, 22/2 (1981), 296.

23 For a few selected examples, see BOA, A.DVNS.DVE.80, fls. 24-26, order no. 91 (*evahir-i Ş* 1189/17-24 September 1775); A.DVN.SAHK.ÖZSİ.d.12, fls. 5-6 (*evasıt-ı Z* 1174/14-23 July 1761), fls. 52-53 (*evail-i R* 1178/28 September-7 October 1764); A.DVNS.MHM.d.224, fls. 206-207, order no. 562 (*evahir-i Ş* 1221/3-11 November 1806).

24 S. Ağır, ‘The Evolution of Grain Policy: The Ottoman Experience’, *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 43/4 (2013), 582.

merchants and soldiers.<sup>25</sup> At İsakçı, there was another route that led to towns and cities on the banks of the Danube. It was the main route along which sheep and cattle were transported to the capital, while cereals were carried via the sea route.<sup>26</sup> Kalas (mod. Galatz) port, which increased its importance in the eighteenth century, was very important both for Moldavia and Wallachia in this regard, as there were public and private granaries available for wheat and other products.<sup>27</sup> Cargoes purchased by the merchants were loaded onto ships at the port and dispatched mainly to Istanbul, Iassi, and Bucharest, and sometimes also to Transylvania, Temeşvar and Serbia.<sup>28</sup>

As far as international trade was concerned, population growth and the urbanisation of Western and Central Europe in the eighteenth century increased the demand for Balkan products, which in return created prosperity in the region and increased the prices of local goods.<sup>29</sup> In the early decades of the eighteenth century, cattle constituted the most important merchandise exported to Austria;<sup>30</sup> a fivefold increase in animal prices (cattle and horses) in Central Europe during the early decades of the early nineteenth century created a strong impulse for the *boyars* to sell animals to Poland and Transylvania.<sup>31</sup> In the 1790s, the demand for beeswax also grew considerably in the international market.<sup>32</sup> With increased Habsburg-Ottoman commercial relations, Ottoman merchants expanded their trade to Austrian lands and established closer ties with the Habsburg markets, especially via Hermannstadt, Kronstadt, and Transylvania in the late eighteenth century.<sup>33</sup>

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25 This route passed through Istanbul, Çatalca, İnceğiz, Midye, Vize, Pınarhisarı, Kırkkilise, Fakih, Aydos, Prevadi, Hacıoğlu Pazarı, Divane Ali, Karasu, Babadağı, İsakçı, Tolcu, İsmail Geçidi, Tatar Pınarı, Yanık Hisar, Akkirman and finally Özi; Y. Halaçoğlu, *Osmanlılarda Ulaşım ve Haberleşme (Menziller)* (Istanbul 2014), 106-113.

26 For a list of ports between Istanbul and the Danube, see *ibid.*, 140-142.

27 Wilkinson, *An Account of the Principalities*, 80-81.

28 *Ibid.*, 82. İbrail was another important port for Wallachia; J.-L. Carra, *Historie de la Moldavie et de la Valachie avec un Dissertation sur l'état actuel de ces deux Provinces* (Neuchatel 1781), 168.

29 Stoianovich, 'Balkan Orthodox Merchant', 260-261, 355.

30 N. Elibol, 'XVIII. Yüzyılda Osmanlı-Avusturya Ticareti', unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Marmara University 2003, 81.

31 J. R. Lampe and M. R. Jackson, *Balkan Economic History, 1550-1950: From Imperial Borderlands to Developing Nations* (Bloomington 1982), 84.

32 Paskaleva, 'Osmanlı Balkan Eyâletleri'nin Avrupalı Devletlerle Ticaretleri', 55.

33 *Ibid.*, 37-74; Elibol, 'Osmanlı-Avusturya Ticareti', 39; 58, 60- 80; İ. Kokdaş, '18. ve 19. Yüzyıllarda Aşağı Tuna'da Habsburg Politikaları ve Nehir Ticaretinde İmparatorluklar Arası Rekabet', *Ordu Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 5/12 (2015), 181-183; N. Elibol, 'XVI.-XVIII. Yüzyıllarda Rumeli ve Orta Avrupa Arasındaki Ticaret Faaliyetleriyle İlgili

The expansion of trade created prosperity in Bucharest, which boasted more than 3,000 inns and restaurants for merchants and other visitors to the city.<sup>34</sup> One of the main groups to benefit from the economic boom were Ottoman Muslim merchants, especially the Janissaries and the – likewise Janissary – *yamaks*<sup>35</sup> serving at Danubian fortresses. This group had already managed to become an important but rowdy component of urban life in the region: there were more than 450 Laz *yamaks* engaged in crafts around Bucharest, and at least 6 inns<sup>36</sup> were run by them. They worked as fishermen, grocers, butter dealers, honey dealers, and cobblers in the city centre and neighbouring areas. Yet due to the problems they had with local people, most of them were deported from the town by governmental decision, and only 20-25 trustworthy merchants were allowed to stay in the town.<sup>37</sup> There was also a Muslim honey dealer community in Iassi, again composed of Laz *yamaks*.<sup>38</sup>

The soldier merchants were particularly powerful in regional and imperial trade. Most of the merchandise at Kalas and İbrail was transported by vessels belonging yet again to the Janissaries.<sup>39</sup> The *yamaks* of Trebizond also undertook the task of provisioning Istanbul and the Black Sea coasts with grain. One source describes them as follows:

In the beginning the grains were collected by Turkish merchants, the infamous of whom were the Lazes from Trebizond of the Janissary Corps. They used to arrive in Galati and Braila in the summer on ships. The habit was to find the goods here, which

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Bazı Tespitler', *Osmangazi Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, 5/2 (2014), 46-47; Stoianovich, 'Balkan Orthodox Merchant', 261-262.

34 Lampe and Jackson, *Balkan Economic History*, 88; Chirot, *The Creation of a Colony*, 66-68.

35 The term *yamak* refers to Imperial Janissaries permanently appointed to specific fortresses regardless of their regiment's location. Though the *yamaks* were also Janissaries, I prefer to refer to them either as Janissaries or *yamaks* in conformity with the original texts.

36 In the report, the inns of Bucharest are listed as Şerban Bey Hanı with 50 rooms, Zanfar Hanı with 30 rooms, Filisk? Hanı with 20 rooms, Tursina Vakfı Hanı with 15 rooms, Ekariş Hanı with 15 rooms and Kolça? Hanı with 20 rooms. At the end of the report, it is noted that six inns in the same city run by the Janissaries lie demolished, without clarification as to whether they were the same ones, TSK.H.445, fls. 21, 58.

37 Turnacıbaşı Süleyman was appointed inspector from the corps, tasked with investigating the case and punishing the culprits. BOA, A.DVNS.MHM.d.138, fls. 157-158, order no. 533 (*evahir-i Za* 1144/21-31 November 1731).

38 Most of these Laz *yamak* merchants were deported from the town with the help of a Janissary inspector following the accusations directed against the *yamaks*, and consequently all except some "trustworthy" honey dealers were deported from the town, BOA, A.DVNS.MHM.d.138, fls. 176-177, order no. 593 (*evasıt-ı Ca* 1144/21-31 November 1731).

39 Raicevich notes that those sailing to Trebizond were all Janissaries, whom he describes as notorious people never refraining from any kind of excesses, Raicevich, *Voyage en Valachie et en Moldavie*, 69.

they paid for when they had picked as much as they wanted; some also settled in the country, where they settled for a long time, treating the *reaya* with all characteristics of the Turk.... They wanted to take over all trade of the land.<sup>40</sup>

Due to the limited and sporadic nature of available data, it is more difficult to generalise about the Janissaries' role in international commerce, yet it seems that they were also involved in long distance trade too. One of the partners conducting business between the town of İsmail and Poland was a Janissary in the 64th *cemaat* called İbrahim.<sup>41</sup> Three other soldier merchants again from the same town were also involved commercial transactions in Poland.<sup>42</sup> In 1760s, there were some Janissary merchants among the Ottoman Muslim and non-Muslim subjects conducting business in Austria.<sup>43</sup>

### *Janissary entrepreneurs in the Danubian towns*

Rather than any increase in soldiers' commercial activities, it was their expansion into the Principalities as producers and investors during the eighteenth century that alarmed the local and imperial authorities. Their infiltration into productive sectors as domestic interlopers<sup>44</sup> is usually presented in complaints by the local landed gentry and voivodes in terms of brazen acts of violence, subordination, and exploitation for easy money, a point which is also frequently repeated in official documents and imperial discourse as well. From another perspective, however, it shows the rapid

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40 The same source notes that after the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca (1774), the Ottoman merchants once more resumed provisioning Istanbul, "*Instead of the Lajis, however, came Christian merchants, Greeks and Epitorians who paid as badly and cheated just as much, without having a sword in hand*"; E. de Hurmuzaki, *Documente privitoare la Istoria Românilor* (Bucharest 1897), x, xvii-xix.

41 He died in Poland, where had gone on business. BOA, A.DVN.SAHK.ÖZSİ.d.4, fl. 36, order no. 135 (*evahir-i* Ş 1159/8-16 September 1746).

42 The merchants in question – İbrahim Beşe, Mehmed Beşe, and Ahmed Alemdar – were arrested and imprisoned, and their properties in Poland were seized by the authorities for an unspecified reason. The Sultan intervened for their release and the return of the seized merchandise. BOA, A.DVN.SAHK.ÖZSİ.d.8, fl. 152 (*evasıt-ı* B 1168/23 April-2 May 1755).

43 Karamanlı Emir Ahmed from the 97th regiment, Molla Emir Hasan from the 12th regiment, Boşnak Molla Mustafa from the 97th regiment, Mustafa Ağa from the 43rd regiment; V. Popovic, 'Les marchands ottomans a Vienne en 1767', *Revue Historique du Sud-est Europeen*, 17/4-6 (1940), 169-170. See also Paskaleva, 'Osmanlı Balkan Eyâletleri'nin Avrupalı Devletlerle Ticaretleri', 51-52; Elibol, 'Osmanlı-Avusturya Ticareti', 86-87.

44 For the idea of "interloper", see R. Murphey, 'Provisioning Istanbul: The State and Subsistence in the Early Modern Middle East', *Food and Foodways*, 2/1 (1987), 222.

adaptability of Muslim Janissary entrepreneurs to supply and demand dynamics in regional, interregional, and imperial trade, as well as their capacity to behave according to an economic rationale.<sup>45</sup> In this section, after offering a very brief summary of Muslim soldiers' intrusion into the Principalities, I will limit myself to analysing their role in different economic sectors of the Principalities rather than focusing on violations by them or relations with the natives.<sup>46</sup>

In very general terms, those involved in crossing the borders and launching assaults in the region may be studied under two broad categories: temporary but frequent violations by imperial agents (administrators, messengers, tax-collectors, local judges); and more permanent and aggressive penetration by soldiers (Janissaries, and to some extent other soldiery) and commoners. Both types of activity intensified over the course of the eighteenth century. The first category concerned unauthorised state agents passing through Wallachia and Moldavia rather than taking alternative routes (going to İsaççı-İsmail to pass through to Özi, Bender or Hotin). Most of them crossed the Danube and forced the villagers to provide free food, fodder, and horses for themselves and their retainues.<sup>47</sup> As the villagers were too poor to afford such endless demands, the local authorities were ordered to prevent unauthorised passages,<sup>48</sup> and to warn those authorised not to collect any illegal fees or make requests from the local people.<sup>49</sup> Some tax-collectors on the other side also crossed the Danube to collect capitation tax (*cizye*) illegally from the locals, while local judges interfered in some legal cases or sent their agents to the Principalities in order to get extra court fees.<sup>50</sup>

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45 For a good example of the adaptability of Muslim entrepreneurs to new trading opportunities, see S. Laiou, 'The Black Sea Trade', 1-17.

46 Regarding this issue, see Yıldız and Kokdaş, 'Peasantry in a Well-Protected Domain', 175-190.

47 For some selected examples, see BOA, A.DVNS.DVE.d.77, fl. 8, order no. 18 (*evahir-i Z* 1146//25 May-2 June 1734), fl. 9, order no. 20 (*evahir-i Z* 1146//25 May-2 June 1734), fl. 11, order no. 29 (*evasut-i M* 1147/13-22 June 1734), fl. 11, order no. 30 (*evasut-i M* 1147/13-22 June 1734); 78, fl. 40, order no. 59 (*evahir-i B* 1142/9-17 February 1730).

48 BOA, A.DVNS.DVE.d.77, fl. 15, order no. 39 (*evasut-i M* 1148/3-12 June 1735), fl. 18, order no. 50 (*evail-i B* 1149/5-14 November 1736), fl. 19, order no. 54 (*evail-i Za* 1149/3-12 March 1737), fl. 30, order no. 88 (*evail-i B* 1155/1-10 September 1742), fl. 30, order no. 89 (*evail-i B* 1155/1-10 September 1742), fl. 41, order no. 123 (*evail-i B* 1157/10-19 August 1744); 78, fl. 40, order no. 59 (*evahir-i B* 1142/9-17 February 1730), fl. 42, order no. 129-131 (*evahir-i Ş* 1155/21-29 October 1742), fl. 46, order no. 143-144 (*evasut-i S* 1157/26 March-4 April 1744), fl. 50, order no. 157 (*evahir-i Z* 1159/4-12 January 1747), fl. 61, order no. 185 (*evahir-i N* 1161/14-22 September 1748); 79, fls. 50-51, order no. 120 (*evail-i Za* 1180/31 March-9 April 1767).

49 BOA, A.DVNS.DVE.d.79, fls. 50-52, order no. 120-121 (*evail-i Za* 1180/31 March-9 April 1767).

50 BOA, A.DVNS.DVE.d.77, fl. 5, order no. 6-7 (*evahir-i Z* 1146/25 May-2 June 1734), fl. 7, order

Violations of the second category had deeper socio-economic impacts and were the source of constant complaints by the voivodes and the local population. We have no clear idea about the advantages of being a Janissary in the Danubian Principalities. Yet it is obvious that carrying arms, being a member of military group with high degree of group solidarity, and being representatives of state power in the eyes of the commoners granted them a degree of superiority over the locals and thus rendered the latter more vulnerable to various assaults. However, the actions of the Janissaries who somehow passed into the Danubian Principalities were not always of the same kind, either: some wandered in armed gangs trying to get easy money from the commoners, some began to settle and establish landed estates (*çiftlik*) and animal enclosures/winter pastures (*kışlak*) in the region, while another group made business trips to the region to purchase merchandise from the local producers, sometimes forcing them to sell their products at prices lower than market value.

The real source of discontent for the voivodes and local *boyars* were the holders of winter pastures and landed estates in their own territories, as their presence weakened control over the human resources in a geography with a limited labour force, reduced their revenues due to tax evasion and finally diminished profits from trade. The rise of a landed Muslim soldier-gentry also meant increased rivalry over scarce resources and trade in the region. Indeed, a contemporary pro-*yamak*/Janissary observer underlines a similar point by noting that the main intention of the *boyars* in complaining about the Muslim soldier entrepreneurs was to increase their profits by eliminating their rivals and seizing produce from the local peasantry to sell to smugglers for resale in Istanbul.<sup>51</sup>

Some entrepreneurs' reluctance to pay customary taxes and fees was another source of complaint which caused loss of revenue for the voivodes and others.<sup>52</sup>

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no. 13 (*evahir-i Z* 1146/25 May-2 June 1734), fl. 7, order no. 15 (*evahir-i Z* 1146/25 May-2 June 1734), fl. 10, order no. 25 (*evahir-i Z* 1146/25 May-2 June 1734), fl. 16, order no. 43 (*evast-ı R* 1149/19-28 August 1736), fl. 26, order no. 79-80 (*evast-ı S* 1155/17-26 April 1742).

51 C. Orhonlu, 'Osmanlı Teşkilâtına Aid Küçük Bir Risâle: "Risâle-i Terceme"', *Belgeler*, 4/7-8 (1967), 44. According to the same author, the real source of revenue for the local *boyars* had previously been the fur trade with the Russians. The Russian merchants would bring and sell furs in the Principalities, which the *boyars* would then sell on in Rumelia and Istanbul. As the Russians later began to embark the furs at the port of Crimea to be transported and sold in Istanbul, the *boyars* were forced to engage in trading agricultural and dairy products (pp. 44-45).

52 BOA, A.DVNS.DVE.d.77, fl. 6, order no. 11 (*evast-ı L* 1145/27 March-5 April 1733), fl. 7, order no. 14 (*evahir-i Z* 1146/25 May-2 June 1734), fl. 8, order no. 17 (*evahir-i Z* 1146/25 May-2 June 1734), fl. 9, order no. 19 (*evahir-i Z* 1146/25 May-2 June 1734), fl. 10, order no. 26 (*evahir-i Z* 1146/25 May-2 June 1734), fl. 13, order no. 35 (*evail-i L* 1147/24 February-5 March 1735), fl. 19, order no. 52 (*evail-i L* 1149/1-11 February 1737), fl. 19, order no. 55 (*evast-ı L* 1149/11-21 April 1737).

On one occasion, three livestock traders of Janissary background, Emir Ali, Seyrekbasanoğlu Mustafa, and another Mustafa from İbrail, declined to pay the taxes required for grazing their animals in the pastures of Oraş, and imprisoned the sergeant (*çavuş*) and the *boyar* who insisted that they pay the fees.<sup>53</sup> Similar cases were also witnessed in Moldavia, as most of the Janissaries refrained from paying the fees for grazing their animals in winter pastures, keeping their beehives or cultivating land.<sup>54</sup>

Whatever the reasons may have been, the voivodes were highly instrumental in transmitting the problems of the Wallachian or Moldavian population to the capital. As Nándor Erik Kovács also emphasises, the voivodes frequently appear in Ottoman documents as petitioners on behalf of their subjects.<sup>55</sup> In his study of a local crisis in late eighteenth century Karaferye (mod. Veronia), Antonis Anastasopoulos deals with a similar issue, i.e. petitioning mechanisms and the possibility of state response. It seems that the locals considered petitioning the Porte to be the last resort, and the imperial authorities usually intervened in local affairs only after receiving reports from the provincial administrators as a means of checking. When the Porte was convinced that a local problem was urgent and critical, it would intervene to restore order on the principles of “justice and intervention in the name of *reaya*”.<sup>56</sup> Inspectors with extraordinary powers would then be sent to investigate the disorder in a specific location. In incidents involving commoners and Janissaries/*yamaks*, local Janissary officers would also be consulted, and in grave cases an inspector from the corps would be dispatched for further investigation. The question of whether the central authority was powerful enough to intervene in a local crisis, also posed by Anastasopoulos, is more intriguing. But in the mid-eighteenth-century crisis, both the voivodes and the central authority were powerful enough to impose certain restrictions over the trading and productive activities of Janissary entrepreneurs.

53 BOA, A.DVNS.DVE.d.77, fl. 30, order no. 87 (*evahir-i C* 1155/23-31 August 1742).

54 BOA, A.DVNS.DVE.d.78, fl. 46, fls. 140-141 (*evasıt-ı M* 1157/25 February-5 March 1744), fl. 46, order no. 145 (*evasıt-ı S* 1158/15-24 March 1745), fl. 47, order no. 151 (*evahir-i Z* 1158/14-22 January 1746), fl. 73-74, order no. 230 (*evahir-i B* 1165/4-12 June 1752); TSMA.e.588/11 (*evahir-i B* 1162/7-15 July 1749).

55 N. E. Kovács, ‘The Legal Status of the Danubian Principalities in the 17th Century as Reflected in *Şikayet Defteris*’, *Güney-Doğu Avrupa Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 25 (2014), 10-15.

56 A. Anastasopoulos, ‘Crisis and State Intervention in Late-Eighteenth Century Karaferye (mod. Veronia)’, in F. F. Anscombe (ed.), *The Ottoman Balkans, 1750-1830* (Princeton 2006), 11- 34. See also, H. İnalçık, ‘Comments on “Sultanism”: Max Weber’s Typification of the Ottoman Polity’, *Princeton Papers in Near Eastern Studies*, 1(1992), 49-72.

In response to petitions by the Wallachians and Moldavians, several commissions and inspectors were sent to the region during the eighteenth century.<sup>57</sup> The last one was headed by Giridî Ahmed Efendi, Elhac Mehmed Agha and a Janissary officer named Turnacıbaşı Hüseyin Agha, charged with the task of inspecting the disorder in Wallachia in 1760. Following the commission report penned by Giridî, the imperial authorities decided to take some measures in order not only to prevent violations but also to put a total stop to the productive activities of soldiers within the Principalities, by deporting them, destroying their estates, and finally by limiting and monitoring all Muslim commercial activities in the region. Instead of confiscation, however, it was decided to allow estate holders to keep their moveable property on condition that they evacuated the region within a limited period of time. Following their deportation, the seized lands would be restored to their original owners (peasants, *boyars*, or the monasteries).<sup>58</sup>

In his report, Ahmed Efendi made a special effort to convince the Sultan that the commission members did their best not to antagonise the Janissaries, by underlining that they consulted and obtained the consent of their commanders at every step.<sup>59</sup> When the decision was declared to the Janissary elders, as far as is reflected in the report, they consented to the deportation/evacuation and agreed that the soldier merchants could conduct business in local bazaars and return to their bases immediately after completing commercial transactions instead of staying longer in the region.<sup>60</sup> The Janissary officers then sent letters to all the soldiers in different parts of Wallachia, ordering them to leave their estates and return to their places of service as soon as possible, except for those merchant soldiers who had to stay a while to finish their

57 For some selected examples, see BOA, C.HR.69/3408 (*evahir-i R* 1163/30 March-7 April 1750); A.DVNS.DVE.d.77, fl. 44, order no. 132 (*evail-i Z* 1157/5-14 January 1745); fls. 46-47, order no. 138-39 (*evahir-i R* 1158/23 April-1 May 1745).

58 BOA, C.HR.16/780 (4 R 1174/13 November 1760).

59 For that reason, a *turnacıbaşı* was appointed as the member of the commission by the Janissary agha, TSK.H.445, fls. 36-38.

60 TSK.H.445, fls. 37-38: “*Madam memleket-i mezburede sükenâ peyda edüb yıl 12 ay anda meks ü ikamet ederler. Serseri makulesi anlara ittika ile anda geşt ü güzâr ve tahrîb-i bilâddan hâli olmayub irâde-i hümayun üzere nizam-ı memleket-i mezbûra emr-i muhaldir. Padişah-ı alem-penâh hazretlerinin nân nimetin yiyüb ve mevâcibin alub bundan sonra memur oldukları kala muhafazasını terk ve müstemirr-i fusûl-ı erbaa kefere memleketinde meks ü ikamet ve vaktiyle hicneti bize dahi sirayet ve isabet etmek ne demekdir ve Müslüman yoldaş olanlar memleket-i İslam’a rihlet ve hicret ve memur oldukları kala muhafazasında mukayyed olsunlar. Kaldı ki ticaret iradesinde olanlar ber muceb-i emr-i ali bazar yerlerinde muamelelerin edüb tekmil-i mesâlihlerinden sonra anda meks ü ikamete ne muceb? Şimden sonra bir ferdin anda meks ü ikametine rızamız yokdur”.*



business.<sup>61</sup> As we shall see in the next section, this line of thinking – restricted, non-residential trading rights – formed the basis of trade restrictions in the Principalities.

The commission members then set to work preparing the lists of estate holders and their moveable and unmoveable properties, to monitor the process of deportation, demolition of buildings, and the delivery of seized lands to the locals. According to the report, a total of 1,313 *çiftlik/kışlaks* and 83 mills were demolished in Kara Eflak (Wallachian Oltenia) and Eflak-ı Kebir (Wallachian Muntenia), in addition to 139 houses, 5 shops, 25 rooms (*oda*) and 3 storehouses (*mahzen*) in the former.<sup>62</sup> Though we do not have any detailed report in this regard, we know that around 1,600 winter pastures were destroyed in mid-eighteenth-century Moldavia.<sup>63</sup>

Apart from the general report, there are five different lists also prepared by the same commission, providing various types of information: The first contains the list of winter pastures and livestock held by Janissaries and others from Vidin in certain villages of Wallachia (BOA, TSMA.d.4222). The second contains the buildings available in the animal pastures owned by soldiers and commoners from Kule and Niğbolu in Telliorman and Aslantana (mod. Slatina?) attached to Wallachia (BOA, TSMA.d.9182). The third is a less detailed list, containing the names and regiments of winter pasture-holding Janissaries from Zıştovi (mod. Sviřtov) (BOA, TSMA.d.9182), while the fourth lists winter pasture owners from Hirsova (BOA, TSMA.d.4734). The final one is a partial list of Muslim landed estate or winter pasture holders in different parts of Wallachia, whose estates were broken up by imperial order (BOA, C.HR.35/1737) (see Table I).

Property Location	Date	Place of Service	Janissaries/ <i>Yamaks</i>	Other Soldiers	Others	Total Estate Holders
Wallachia	1753	Vidin	216	12	5	233
Telliorman Aslantana	1756	Kule, Niğbolu	162	14	12	188
Telliorman	1756	Zıştovi	50	-	-	50
Wallachia	1758	Hirsova	unspecified	unspecified	Unspecified	22
Wallachia	1760	-	unspecified	unspecified	Unspecified	213

**Table I:** Number, service, and place of service of estate holders from Danubian towns involved in animal husbandry and agricultural production in Wallachia<sup>64</sup>

61 TSK.H.445, fl. 58.

62 Ibid.

63 Alexandrescu-Dersca, 'Sur le regime', 148-160; TSMA.e.588/11 (*evahir-i B* 1162/7-15 July 1749).

64 Sources: BOA, TSMA.d.4222-1 (19 Z 1166/17 October 1753); 9182 (Za 1169/February 1756);

As the commission was authorised to investigate the problems in Wallachia, the information in these lists exclusively concerns that province and apparently only covers the regions where soldier expansion was most visible and problematic. Moreover, the number of soldiers and their properties (moveable or unmoveable) enlisted by the commission should be considered the minimum, since Muslim estate owners in the region had time to disappear and hide some of their property or remove it to the other side of the border before the inspectors arrived. Another problem is related to the details provided by the commission's lists. They do not include credit transactions between the locals and Muslim soldier entrepreneurs, which were actually one of the most important and widespread mechanisms for driving the native population into debt, mostly leading to their subordination and dispossession.<sup>65</sup> Since soldiers still had unpaid credits from the natives after being deported, the Sultan allowed them to pass into the province to collect their money under certain conditions.<sup>66</sup> Sometime after deportation, for instance, around 880 *kese akçes*<sup>67</sup> in debt was collected and transferred to Muslim creditors, mostly of Janissary background.<sup>68</sup> Apparently, there were still at least 170 *kese akçes* more in outstanding debts claimed by some soldiers.<sup>69</sup> If true, this means that credit transactions between the locals and soldiers roughly amounted to a total of 1,000 *kese akçes* (5,000,000 *guruş*). These high numbers alone prove the degree of capital accumulation in the hands of the Janissaries who invested in further credits, land, and business capital.

Despite all the above methodological pitfalls, the lists prepared by the commission contain very valuable information concerning the identity, proprietorship, and economic activities of Muslims within Wallachia. The earliest list dates to the year

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4734 (19 Ş 1171/28 April 1758); C.HR.35/1737 (28 Ra 1174/7 November 1760).

65 For more details on these issues, see Yıldız and Kokdaş, 'Peasantry in a Well-Protected Domain', 175-190.

66 Soldiers with promissory notes proving their credits from the Wallachians were allowed to cross the province by written permission of the voivode on the due dates of payment. No interest rate above a 10-11.5% limit was approved; TSK.H.445, fls. 46- 47. For the role of Janissaries in the credit sector and their capital accumulation, see also U. Aybudak and H. G. Aybudak, 'A Privileged Class in Everyday Life: Understanding the Janissaries' Role in Capital Accumulation', *ActOrHung*, 76/1 (2023), 129-147.

67 TSK.H.445, fl. 48. In the eighteenth century: 1 *kese akçe* = 50,000 *akçes*.

68 TSK.H.445, fl. 47.

69 According to the report, most of the remaining unpaid credits belonged either to *yamaks* from the town of Alaiye in southern Anatolia who were exiled from the fortress of Belgrade, or to Albanian soldiers. They later crossed the Danube and oppressed the locals for their debts, TSK.H.445, fl. 48. For some merchants from Alaiye residing at Belgrade and conducting trade in Vienna, see Popovic, 'Les marchands ottomans a Vienne en 1767', 168-169.

1753 and contains a total of 233<sup>70</sup> Muslims from Vidin, holding 201 different winter pastures in at least 100 villages in the Principality.<sup>71</sup> Apart from other clues, the list also makes it clear that investments in Wallachia were a soldier and Janissary/*yamak* affair: with the exception of five people whose service or status are not explicitly stated, there were 12 soldiers from three other military units.<sup>72</sup> All the rest were Janissaries/*yamaks* (92.7%), affiliated with 59 different regiments in the Corps and serving at the Vidin fortress (Table I). Among those regiments, the most heavily represented were the 12nd *bölük* (24 soldiers), the 64th *cemaat* (21 soldiers), the 42nd *bölük* (20 soldiers), the 5th *bölük* (13 soldiers), and the 31st *bölük* (11 soldiers), with the rest having fewer than 10 soldiers.

Property	Regiment		Total Number of Properties (Including all Regiments)
	12th <i>bölük</i>	64th <i>cemaat</i>	
Buildings ( <i>berdül/koşare</i> )	17	17	225
Cattle for breeding	1,088	1,283	10,475
Horses for breeding	162	0	162
Cattle	496	396	1,694
Horses	43	146	894
Wild donkeys	315	105	2,013
Shepherds	30	28	258
Beekeepers	0	4	77
Mixed (shepherds and <i>bergeleçis</i> )	23	14	87

**Table II:** Properties, livestock, and labour force in animal enclosures in Wallachia belonging to Janissaries of the 12nd *bölük* and the 64th *cemaat*<sup>73</sup>

All people on the first list were extensively involved in husbandry and specialised in animal breeding (oxen, cattle, and horses), as evinced by the species of animals found on their estates. Out of a total of 15,370<sup>74</sup> animals, 69.2% were breeding animals (10,637), particularly cattle (98.4%) and to some extent horses (*kısrak*).

70 In the report, it is noted that there was a total of 197 Muslim owners of animal, sheep, and beehives (*ashab-ı hayvanat, koyun ve kovan*); yet if we include the business partners and recurring names, the number comes to 233. Except for one case, the report does not explicitly state whether the recurring names belonged to the same person or not. Therefore, I preferred to treat them as different individuals.

71 BOA, TSMA.d.4222 (19 Z 1166/17 October 1753).

72 Nine *cebecis* (armourer), two *arabacıs* (waggoners), and a *bölükbaşı*.

73 Source: BOA, TSMA.d.4222-1 (19 Z 1166/17 October 1753).

74 In the document, the total of all animals is given as 15,555.

These animals were not just raised for animal fat, meat, or pastrami, they were also exported to other regions for reproduction. Though there is limited information in this regard, it seems that the breeding animals of the Danube were highly sought-after. In the 1790s, for example, a *çiflik* steward tried to bring breeding cattle from Vidin to be raised on a landed estate in Istanbul.<sup>75</sup>

Wallachia was very suitable for animal raising. Thanks to the fertile meadows of the region, according to the commission report, “should a 30-year-old buffalo graze for two months, it yields 60-70 *vukiyye* of tallow and 100 *vukiyye* of *çerviş* apart from pastrami”.<sup>76</sup> Husbandry and the livestock trade yielded high profits with relatively little human labour, satisfying demands for both internal and external markets. Indeed, just 422 people were sufficient to take care of more than 15,000 animals kept in these animal pastures. Half of the labour force (258 individuals) were shepherds, followed by beekeepers (*kovanacı*) (77 individuals,) and then herdsmen (*hergeleci*) (2 individuals), in addition to a mixed group of 85 (shepherd, beekeeper, and herdsmen) (Table II).

Although no beehives are mentioned among the animals kept on the above land, the existence of a considerable number of beekeepers proves that that some of the hives were either kept away from the estates or hidden from the commission members. Indeed, some of the missing animals – as well as cereals – were later discovered and presented in a separate list. On this supplementary list, the missing properties of 83 Janissaries affiliated with 13 different regiments are given,<sup>77</sup> itemising 878 beehives in addition to 3,174 *oboruk/oboruc*<sup>78</sup> of cereals (wheat, corn, and barley) and 4 *kıyye* of tobacco that were concealed from the commission. For instance, Kahici Mustafa Beşe of the 64th *cemaat*, who had 100 cattle for breeding herded by two shepherds in his animal enclosure around Tergazi on the first list, was reported as the owner of 5 beehives and 119 *oburuk* of corn (*kokoroz*) on the supplementary list. Sarı Mehmed from the same *cemaat* and his business partners, Elhac Salih Agha and Elhac İbrahim Agha, had 91 cows, 101 cattle for breeding and 20 wild horses raised by 10 shepherds, and had managed to hide their 42 beehives from the commission members by taking them to another district. Zor Ali Beşe from the 25th

75 BOA, A.DVNS.AHKR.d. [Rumeli Ahkam Defterleri], 45, fl. 85, order no. 356 (*evail-i M* 1206/31 August-9 September 1791).

76 TSK.H.445, fl. 15. 1 *vukiyye/okka/kıyye*= 1.282 kg (2.83 lb)

77 BOA, HR.132/6557 (17 M 1174/29 August 1760).

78 Lighter *obruk/oboruk/oboruc* = 22 *okkas*; heavier *obruk/oboruk/oboruc* = 44 *okkas*. 1 *okka* = 1.271 kg.

*bölük* had a total of 65 cattle for breeding and 3 hidden beehives, while his unspecified slave is reported to be the owner of 16 *oburuk* corn and 4 *kıyye* tobacco.<sup>79</sup>

The soldiers' infiltration areas were those closest to their places of service, mainly opposite fortresses. As far as Moldavia is concerned, the *yamaks* of Hotin and İbrail were particularly active in Moldavia, and those from Bender especially around Orhei, Lapușna and Soroca; those from Hotin installed themselves around Dorohoi, Botoșani and Hirleu.<sup>80</sup> As for Wallachia, while the Janissaries of Vidin expanded around the Karayova region, soldiers from Kule and Niğbolu built animal enclosures and apiary/beehive farms (*kovanlık*) in Aslantana and Telliorman, directly opposite their fortresses. Soldiers from Zıştovi, on the other hand, penetrated and established winter pastures mainly around Telliorman (Table I).<sup>81</sup>

Since there was very limited land reclamation, it seems that most of the farm enclosures were established in the midst of villages and towns either by seizure or renting, which might explain why no information is provided on the size of lands. All of the animal enclosures in Telliorman and Aslantana, held by 188 individuals from Kule or Niğbolu, were established within the territories of at least 56 separate *moşiyes* (*moşie*: estate), and in lands belonging to the monastery of Koze (Cozia).<sup>82</sup> The case of the *moşie* of Şiarha? is particularly striking, as it was shared by 31 different individuals mostly of Janissary origin.<sup>83</sup> Soldiers constituted the most numerous group in this list of individuals from Kule or Niğbolu. Apart from 162 individuals registered as Janissaries belonging to 18 different regiments, there were 14 soldiers from other military units.<sup>84</sup> Among the Janissaries, 86 percent were either from the 64th *cemaat* (79 soldiers) or the 11th *bölük* (60 soldiers) (Table I).

79 BOA, TSMA.d.4222 (19 Z 1166/17 October 1753); HR.132/6557 (17 M 1174/29 August 1760).

80 Alexandrescu-Dersca, 'Sur le regime', 147, 150, 159.

81 TSK.H.445, fl. 36; BOA, TSMA.d.9182 (Za 1169/February 1756); TSMA.e.588/11 (*evahir-i B* 1162/7-15 July 1749).

82 Hoknalı Uzun Ali Beşe and Hoknalı Uzun Mehmed Beşe, both from the 64th *cemaat*, had animal enclosures in the lands belonging to the monastery. The former had two rooms (*oda*), two animal pens (*çoşar/koşar*), one food cellar/store (*zamlık*), one apiary (*kovanlık*), and 22 peasant dwellings. The latter had one room, one animal pen, two food cellars, in addition to 16 peasant houses; BOA, TSMA.d.9182 (Za 1169/February 1756). For further details, see Yıldız and Kokdaş, 'Peasantry in a Well-Protected Domain', 177-178, 183-184. For similar examples from Moldavia, see Alexandrescu-Dersca, 'Sur le regime', 155.

83 Twenty-six Janissaries (13 from the 64th *cemaat*, ten from the 11th *bölük*, one from the 62nd *cemaat*, one from the 94th *cemaat*, and one from the 80th *cemaat*) in addition to three armourers and one soldier from local forces (*yerli kulu*).

84 Apart from seven armourers, four soldiers from local forces (*yerli kulu*), two cavalrymen (*fari-san*), and one *beşlü ağa*.

As in the case of Vidin, most of the estate holders from Kule and Niğbolu also specialised in husbandry and to some extent agricultural production, as may be inferred from the functions of the buildings (a slaughterhouse, *çoşare*; an animal pen, apiary, and buffalo barn, as well as mills) enumerated on the third list (BOA, TSMA.d.9182). Unlike other such lists, however, peasant dwellings (*reaya meskenleri*) are recorded here.<sup>85</sup> The average number of these houses per estate was 16.01, though some were larger than a village. For instance, the winter pasture in Şiarha? *moşiye* held by Beylendezoğlu Abdullah Beşe of the 11th *bölük* hosted 146 peasant dwellings; Hüseyin Alemdar of the 25th *bölük* had 81 peasant dwellings on his landed estate, while Elhac Ahmed Alemdar of the 64th *cemaat* had 78 (Table III).

Property	Regiment		Total Number of Properties (Including all Regiments)
	64th <i>cemaat</i>	11th <i>bölük</i>	
Buildings	289	203	674
Beehives	36	21	74
Mills	10	7	25
Peasant dwellings	1,301	986	2,995

**Table III:** Buildings on the estates of Janissaries of the 64th *cemaat* and 11th *bölük* serving at the fortresses of Niğbolu and Kule<sup>86</sup>

An additional list attached to the same register gives the names and regimental identities of 50 Janissaries from Zıftovi holding winter pastures in Telliorman (Table I). According to the entries, all were either from the 51st *bölük* (32 individuals) or the 47th *cemaat* (18 individuals), including an Islamic jurist (*müfti*) from the latter. The fourth commission list, this time giving the names of animal pasture holders from the town of Hırsova, contains even fewer details and includes the names of 22 people without any further information.<sup>87</sup> This group presents a different socio-economic profile from the estate holders of the aforementioned lists, as they were from the more established families in the town. Of 22 individuals, there is one supervisor (*nazır*), Elhac Halil Agha, one captain of the special police force responsible for maintaining public order in the Principalities (*beşlü ağa*) called İbrahim, one *exserdar*, and the father of the present *müfti* of the town, in addition to three members of established (*zâde*) families. There are four people bearing the title *beşe* and one

85 For more information, see Yıldız and Kokdaş, 'Peasantry in a Well-Protected Domain', 182-184.

86 Source: BOA, TSMA.d.9182 (Za 1169/February 1756).

87 BOA, TSMA.d.4734 (19 Ş 1171/28 April 1758).

*alemdar*. In the light of available clues, we may assume that there were at least two military officers (*serdar* and *alemdar*) affiliated with the Janissary Corps.

The fifth and final list prepared by the commission members contains the names of Muslim estate or winter pasture holders deported from Wallachia. It briefly mentions the name, title, and sometimes the place of origin of the holder, the location and status of his land (freehold or leased), as well as the condition of buildings (demolished or not). Unfortunately, some parts of this list are missing – it only includes five districts (Olet, Erciş/Arciş/Argeş, Ilfov, Muşcel/Muscil, and Balomiçe/Ialomita), despite claiming to contain twelve in all.<sup>88</sup> As said earlier, a total of 1,313 soldiers were deported from these towns. The partial list that has come down to us only gives the names of 213 individuals if we include business partners but exclude repetitions.<sup>89</sup> Since the scribe was not careful enough to provide regimental information, it is difficult to distinguish between Janissaries and others; yet on the basis of the previous lists and commission report, we may confidently argue that most of them were Janissaries (Table I).

Apart from the 12 mill (*asiyab*) owners in the above list, the rest are registered as landed estate/winter pasture holders. All their estates were established on the *moşiy*e lands held as freehold property (*mülk*); only 7 were ‘rented’ from local people. Once obtained, these lands could be sold and inherited as freehold property by Muslims, too. Elhac Mehmed Agha b. Halil, a *serdengeçdi ağa* of the 42nd *bölük*, for instance, had a *moşiy*e share worth of 2,000 *paras* in his probate inventory.<sup>90</sup> After the intruders were deported and lands were returned to their original owners, the renting or transfer of *moşiy*es to Muslims – especially Janissaries – was strictly forbidden by the Sultan.<sup>91</sup> Despite these orders, however, Muslim investment in land as well as the seizure, renting or purchase of *moşiy*e shares continued in subsequent periods.<sup>92</sup>

88 BOA, C.HR.35/1737 (28 Ra 1174/7 November 1760).

89 There are some overlapping names with the list of BOA, TSMA.d.4222; but since not all are identical, I preferred to treat them as two separate lists.

90 As might also be guessed, Mehmed Agha was involved in intensive productive, commercial, and credit relations with Wallachia: he had 100 cattle worth 23,710 *paras*, 570 sheep worth 22,800 *paras*, 63 pack animals worth 10,040 *paras*; 140 beehives worth 8,400 *paras*, as well as a total of 47,870 *paras* in unpaid credits from a group of non-Muslims. His total wealth was 386,064 *paras*. Vidin Şeriye Sicilleri [VŞS], 82, fls. 105-106 (15 R 1161/15 March 1748).

91 BOA, C. HR.16/780 (8 Ş 1173/4 R 1174/13 November 1760).

92 During the reign of Mahmud II, for instance, the holders of 23 *moşiy*es in Fokşan, Kalas, and other places were Muslims from İbrail, including some of Janissary origin. Some other people from the same town also held nine coffeehouses and two storehouses in Kalas; BOA, HAT.1141/45390-F (undated, catalogue date: 29 Z 1238/6 September 1823).

Most of the landed estates or animal enclosures held by the Janissaries, other soldiers, or a limited number of civilians in Wallachia were not large establishments requiring huge capital. Still, however, they do not seem to have been easily ignorable investments or the products of a self-subsistence economy. On the contrary, they appear to have been profit-oriented establishments destined to meet the supply and demand of local, interregional or international markets. It seems that the investors tried to increase their profits by making direct investments in Wallachia – or Moldavia – to enlarge their enterprises, obviously to reduce the cost of grazing or animal breeding, to run their establishment with a cheaper labour force, and more importantly to eliminate intermediaries by becoming directly involved in production. Thus, expansion into the Principalities should be seen as the Janissaries' attempt to gain control of a production sector in which they had comparatively limited influence until the eighteenth century.

We should also note that the productive and commercial activities of Janissary entrepreneurs – and others – were not always detached from each other. Mehmed Beşe b. Ramazan of the 19th *cemaat* was a typical eighteenth-century Janissary merchant living and conducting business in Vidin, but making investments as a producer in Wallachia. He was an ordinary soldier serving at Vidin fortress, who owned a house (2,400 *paras*), a mill (1,045 *paras*), a shop (611 *paras*), and a garden (110 *paras*) in Vidin, as well as 107 beehives worth 5,346 *paras* kept in the same town. He also had properties in Wallachia, including an unspecified number of beehives worth 771 *paras*, in addition to at least 160 sheep valued at 10,383 *paras* and wild horses worth 1360 *paras*.<sup>93</sup> In a similar way, Ömer Beşe from the 98th *cemaat*, serving again at Vidin fortress, had preferred to make investments in Wallachia. He had a house in Vidin worth 12,000 *paras*, but his basic source of revenue was from the animals he raised in Karayova (10 sheep valued at 400 *paras*, 22 cattle worth 4,800 *paras*, 5 horses valued at 5,800 *paras* and 14 beehives worth 500 *paras*), in addition to his loans to the Wallachian *reaya* (3,660 *paras*).<sup>94</sup> The abovementioned Salih Agha, who had a *moşiye* share at the time of his death, owned two houses in Vidin (worth 48,000 *paras*) and business capital of 140,000 *paras* in his business partnership with two Muslims.<sup>95</sup>

This dual identity of the Janissaries and other entrepreneurs in the Danubian towns led the Sultan and his ministers to take more radical measures following their deportation from Wallachia or Moldavia. Thus, the governmental strategy of banning all productive activities and keeping the physical presence of Muslims within

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93 His total wealth was 82,360 *paras*; VŞS.82, fl. 67 (18 L 1160/23 October 1747).

94 His total wealth was 38,768 *paras*; VŞS.78, fls. 128-129 (19 M 1179/8 July 1765).

95 VŞS.82, fls. 105-106 (15 Ra 1161/15 March 1748).



the Danubian provinces at a minimum was further strengthened and enlarged by a governmental decision suspending all trading activities except for a limited number of local licensed merchants, who were expected to conduct business under government-imposed regulations.

### *The licensed merchants of the new order*

The new system regulating Muslim commercial activities in the Principalities created a new category of traders known as licensed/authorised (*tezkiireli/serhadlii/deft-erli/kefilli*) merchants. At least in principle, this turned the Danubian Principalities into a franchised trade zone of Muslim-Janissary licensed merchants, in a region which already featured an Istanbul-based *kapan* oligopoly. In this section, I focus on the identities of the licensed Janissary merchants in the Danube area and their possible connections with merchants in the capital.

The trade restrictions in the name of “new order” (*nizam-ı cedid*) were first applied in Moldavia in the mid-eighteenth century. Following the deportation of Muslim entrepreneurs from the province, the imperial authorities granted the right of commerce within the Principality to just 100 merchants from the Danubian towns (50 active individuals with the right of passage and their 50 business partners). On 7 N 1167/28 June 1754, a title deed was secured from these merchants and their business partners or sureties by which they promised:

- i. Not to keep purchased cereals in stores, but to transport them directly to the capital without a single piece being sold to any other place or parties;
- ii. Not to demand free food and fodder from the *reaya* of the places they visited for trade;
- iii. To buy cereal with the mutual consent of both parties; to buy merchandise at its real market price, not below; and thus not to oppress the poor *reaya* and their families;
- iv. Not to decline to pay required taxes and fees, and pay in accordance with the ratio of the country;
- v. Not to stay in any places other than Iassi; and never to hold the houses they stayed in as private property;
- vi. Never to cultivate lands [in Moldavia];<sup>96</sup>

Thus, not only was the number of merchants restricted but they were also expected to conduct commerce under the conditions dictated above, with the basic purpose

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96 BOA, A.DVNS.DVE.d.78, fl. 136, order no. 381 (7 N 1167/28 June 1754).

of keeping them at a distance from local production and producers. In order not to further antagonise the Janissaries and other Muslim merchants, however, the Sultan and his ministers preferred to limit their presence and commercial activities rather than to completely deny their right of trade in these provinces. Under the new regulation, however, Muslim merchants were forced to trade on the same terms as locals (no free food or fodder, no purchases below market prices), to visit the region only for commercial purposes (no accommodation, no production), to pay the required fees (no tax evasion), and finally to direct their trade to provisioning the capital (transfer of cereals directly to Istanbul). Furthermore, only licensed merchants – active merchants, not their partners – were permitted to make business trips. Active licensees were expected to be alone during their visits, not even accompanied by their agents or servants. They were not permitted to dwell in towns or villages freely, as they had to present their certificates of permission at certain checkpoints.<sup>97</sup> Nor could they hire or buy any land or house or engage in non-commercial relations with the native people. Accompanied by local guards (*zabitan*), the authorised merchants were allowed to pass into Wallachia or Moldavia for bazaars, but had to leave the country as soon as their commercial transactions were completed.<sup>98</sup>

Following the example of Moldavia, a similar system was applied in Wallachia, reducing the number of merchants in the Danubian towns to 200 (100 active with the right of passage and 100 business partners),<sup>99</sup> and was then expanded to cattle drovers from İbrail and Silistre. The governmental decision to limit the number of merchants and impose strict trading rules was not well received in Wallachia. As in the case of Moldavia, it was initially decided to restrict their number to 100. The merchants opposed the decision by arguing that there were at least 1,000 merchants in the Danubian towns conducting business in the province. They also objected to the new rule about travelling solo on business and suggested that at least their servants should be registered as their business partners to accompany them on trips. Though the Porte declined this request, the total number of authorised merchants was finally raised to 200.<sup>100</sup>

There is no clear evidence as to how and according to what criteria authorised merchants were chosen, except for some vague wording such as being a “distinguished” and “trustworthy” member of the community. To obtain a state sanctioned trading license, candidates were expected to be “honest” and to have been involved

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97 Mehmed Hâşim, *İmâ-yı Törehât-ı Büldânân*, 205.

98 VŞS.78, fls. 99-100 (15 R 1179/1 October 1765), fls. 100-101 (3 Za 1179/18 October 1765).

99 VŞS.78, fls. 99-100 (15 R 1179/1 October 1765), fls. 100-101 (3 Za 1179/18 October 1765).

100 VŞS.78, fls. 100-101 (3 Za 1179/18 October 1765), fls. 110-12 (Z 1179/November-December 1765).

in commercial transactions with the Principalities for a certain length of time. They also needed sureties (*kefil*) and business partners (*şerik*), which is why they are sometimes referred to as *kefilli* merchants (with guarantors). As most of them were Janissaries, the active licensee had to apply to the local Janissary officer (Janissary *zabit* or *serdar*) to obtain a certificate of permission to present to the voivode's agents when crossing the border. If there was no problem with his papers, he was given a certificate of approval from the relevant voivode or his deputy.<sup>101</sup> An eyewitness account notes that authorised Muslim traders had to pay a fee of 6 *paras* to the clerk of the chief *beşlü ağa* to get a travel warrant on which their name and physical appearance would be noted. It was only then that a merchant would obtain a certificate of permission sealed by the voivode.<sup>102</sup> Upon the death of a licensed merchant, the relevant authorities were to be informed, and a new candidate was to apply for a trading license.<sup>103</sup>

Such a strict regulation system required several permissions from different authorities (voivodes and the local Janissary officers), meaning that they had to be updated regularly, and several copies kept in local and imperial registers.<sup>104</sup> Unfortunately, however, only a few of these lists have come down to us, showing the following: the 50 merchants authorised to conduct trade in Moldavia;<sup>105</sup> the 200 licensed Janissary merchants from Vidin authorised to conduct trade in Karayova (Table IV in the appendix);<sup>106</sup> the 59 authorised cattle drovers from İbrail (Table V

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101 VŞS.78, fls. 99-100 (15 R 1179/1 October 1765), fls. 110-12 (Z 1179/November-December 1765).

102 Mehmed Hâşim, *İmâ-yı Törehât-ı Büldânân*, 204-205.

103 VŞS.78, fls. 110-112 (Z 1179/November-December 1765).

104 VŞS.78, fls. 99-100 (15 R 1179/1 October 1765), fls. 110-112 (Z 1179/November-December 1765).

105 BOA, A.DVNS.DVE.d.78, fl. 136, order no. 381 (7 Ramadan 1167/28 June 1754): Reiszâde İsmail, Baluczâde Mustafa, Baluczâde Hüseyin, Hüsamzâde Ömer, Abdülkerim, Eskicioğlu Hasan, ...? Hüseyin, Şamlızâde İsmail, Hacı Alizâde Uzun Hasan, Hacı Ömeroğlu Hasan, Hacı Osmanoğlu Yahya, Balucoğlu Molla Mehmed, Alioğlu Mehmed, Mercanoğlu Ömer, Uzun Ali, Sarızâde Mustafa, Pehlivanzâde Mehmed, Kalyoncu İbrahim, Bekçi Hasan, Hacı Mustafazâde Ahmed, Aydınlı Hüseyin, Hacı Hüseyinzâde Ahmed, Uzun... (illegible), Baluczâde Hacı Ahmed, Elhac Salihoğlu Hüseyin, şeriki Molla Ahmed, Çolak Süleyman, Hacı Mustafazâde Hüseyin, Serdarzâde Mehmed, Hacı Hasan, İsmail, Küçük Hüseyin, Sarı Hüseyin, yeğeni Mustafa, Molla Hasan, *karındaşı* Abdülkerim, Bakkal İsmail, şeriki Salih, Hacı Mustafa, Ahmed, Kıyametoğlu Hasan, Celebzâde Ahmed, Kuyumcuzâde Mustafa, Köle Osman, Köle Şahin Mehmed, Alemdar Mehmed, Serdarzâde Mehmed, Çukadar Mehmed, Sarı Hüseyinoğlu Mehmed, Köse Şahin *tabi-i* Mehmed.

106 BOA, A.DVN.SAHK.ÖZSİ.d.12, fls. 135-136 (*evahir-i* R 1179/7-15 October 1765).

in the appendix);<sup>107</sup> and, finally, the list of 77 authorised cattle drovers from Silistre (Table VI in the appendix).<sup>108</sup> Even these four lists give us a good idea of the license holders' identity and commercial activities. As may be guessed, the Janissaries appear as the most dominant group among the merchants of the region, while non-Muslims are poorly represented. Of the 386 authorised merchants including business partners for the period from 1754 to 1765, there were only 5 non-Muslim cattle drovers from İbrail,<sup>109</sup> while 330 merchants were affiliated with the Janissary Corps.

To begin with the licensed merchants entitled to conduct trade in Moldavia, we have the names of those who signed the aforementioned title deed of 1754. Unfortunately, neither their profession nor their place of service is mentioned. Their titles suggest that a considerable number of them were from established (*zâde*) Muslim families. More than half of these merchants (27 individuals) belonged to 20 leading Danube families. A similar picture is also observable among the cattle drovers of İbrail and Silistre authorised to continue trading in Wallachia. Again, more than half (31 individuals) of the 59 cattle drovers from İbrail were members of 24 established families in the town;<sup>110</sup> this percentage is just over 31 percent (24 of 77 individuals) among their counterparts from Silistre, who belonged to 22 distinguished families (Tables V and VI).<sup>111</sup> Some houses were particularly powerful in terms of their commercial ties with the Principalities. The Baluczâdes had four members among the licensed merchants entitled to trade in Moldavia, while four members of the Mehmedcikzâdes were professional cattle drovers from İbrail.

The lists of drovers from İbrail and Silistre are detailed, containing not only the name but also the profession, place of service, and residence as well as the number of droves of herds (*sürek*) and the total number of animals they drove in each *sürek*. Regimental information on the Janissaries is also carefully recorded in these registers, which is helpful not only in identifying the Janissaries among these groups, but also among the authorised merchants of Moldavia who signed the title deed of 1754. The Hüsamzâde family, for instance, who appear both in the title deed of 1754 and among the cattle drovers of İbrail, were affiliated with the 64th *cemaat* in the

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107 BOA, D.BŞM.d.3597 (22 Ş 1174/29 March 1761); A.DVN.SAHK.ÖZSİ.d.12, fs. 143-144 (22 Ş 1174/29 March 1761).

108 BOA, D.BŞM.d.3596 (18 Ş 1174/25 March 1761).

109 BOA, D.BŞM.d.3597 (22 Ş 1174/29 March 1761); A.DVN.SAHK.ÖZSİ.d.12, fs. 143-144 (22 Ş 1174/29 March 1761): Kürkçü Konstantin, İstancol, Dirakomir, Gicol?, and Nikola.

110 BOA, D.BŞM.d.3597 (22 Şaban 1174/29 March 1761); BOA, A.DVN.SAHK.ÖZSİ.d.12, fs. 143-144 (22 Ş 1174/29 March 1761).

111 BOA, D.BŞM.d.3596 (18 Ş 1174/25 March 1761).

Janissary Corps;<sup>112</sup> the Kuyumcuzâde family with the 25th *bölük*;<sup>113</sup> the Pehlivanzâdes with the 64th *cemaat*;<sup>114</sup> and the Serdarzâdes with the 25th *bölük*.<sup>115</sup> The Reiszâde family, who signed the title deed of 1754, reappear among the cattle drovers of Silistre and had at least one member affiliated with the 59th *bölük* in the Janissary Corps.<sup>116</sup> Even these limited examples strongly suggest that most of those who signed the title deed were from established Danube families with close ties to the Janissary Corps. Moreover, relying on these three lists, we may confidently argue that the new governmental restrictions further strengthened the power of the Janissary-affiliated leading families in Danubian towns by providing them with exclusive trading rights in the Principalities.

With the exception of the list from 1754, the identities of merchants and – if existent – their business partners are carefully and systematically registered. The one from 1765, for instance, includes the names of 100 active licensed merchants and 100 business partners, both from Vidin, entitled to conduct trade in Karayova attached to Wallachia (Table IV).<sup>117</sup> All of those in the relevant document are recorded as merchants and registered as active fortress soldiers (*kale neferati*). Among this group, the Janissaries belong to 33 different regiments, with special care apparently being taken to prevent overrepresentation of any given regiment. Still, however, the number of merchants in each regiment is not identical, varying from 1 to 9. The groups most heavily represented with active Janissary merchants were the 83rd *cemaat* (9 soldiers), the 15th *cemaat* (9 soldiers), the 64th *cemaat* (7 soldiers), the 97th *cemaat* (6 soldiers), the 25th *cemaat* (5 soldiers), the 12th *cemaat* (4 soldiers), and finally 19th *cemaat* (4 soldiers). Their business partners present a similar picture: they belonged to 32 different regiments, with the best represented being the 12nd *bölük* (15 soldiers), the 22nd *bölük* (7 soldiers), the 42nd *bölük* (6 soldiers), and the 48th *bölük* (6 soldiers). It seems that in order to prevent intra-regimental

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112 Hüsanzâde Mehmed Çelebi Mehmed, an authorised cattle drover from İbrail, is mentioned as a Janissary from this *cemaat*. Another member of the same family, Ömer, is among the merchants who signed the title deed.

113 Kuyumcuzâde Mustafa Ağa, who appears in both the lists of the title deed and of the cattle drovers of İbrail, was the *serdengeçdi ağa* of the 25th *bölük*.

114 While Pehlivanzâde Mehmed appears in the list of the 1754 title deed, Mehmed Ali Çelebi and Halil Çelebi from the same family are referred to as the cattle drovers of İbrail and as members of the 64th *cemaat*.

115 There are two members of the Serdarzâde family, Mehmed and Ali, in the list of 1754. Mehmed is also mentioned among the cattle drovers of İbrail and as a member of the 25th *bölük*.

116 Reiszâde İsmail is among those who signed the title deed, and Reiszâde Elhac Osman Beşe among the licensed cattle drovers of Silistre.

117 BOA, A.DVN.SAHK.ÖZSİ.d.12, fls. 135-136 (*evahir-i R* 1179/7-15 October 1765).

collaboration the imperial authorities did not want active merchants and sureties or business partners from the same regiment, as there is no match between the regiments of active license holders and their partners. There is also the possibility that it was the Janissaries themselves who preferred such an arrangement, to share the pie out among as many regiments as possible and avoid any possible inter-regimental antagonism, especially given that they negotiated with the relevant authorities.

In a similar way, most of the cattle drovers from Silistre and İbrail<sup>118</sup> were active and registered Janissaries. They constituted 74 percent of the drovers (57 out of 77) from Silistre,<sup>119</sup> again proving the intense involvement of the Janissaries – especially those from the 62nd *cemaat* and the 59th *bölük* – in the livestock trade. At least 17,510 animals were traded by the cattle drovers of Silistre, sent to the slaughterhouses in a total of 130 droves of cattle. Adding the 9,880 animals from İbrail, this means that 27,390 animals were raised by the authorised cattle drovers – mostly of Janissary origin – from these towns, in the year 1761 alone. In the same list, a member of the 64th *cemaat* is registered as a money-dealer – in addition to being a cattle drover – while another one, Serdengeçdi Süleyman Agha, later became the Janissary *agha* and then the *serdar* of Silistre in 1792.<sup>120</sup> The Janissaries' dominance over the livestock trade becomes even more evident in the list of authorised cattle drovers from İbrail. Of 59 individuals in this category, 91.5 percent were Janissaries (54 soldiers), including eight *serdengeçdi ağas* and an *alemdar*. Members of the 64th *cemaat* (18 soldiers) and the 25th *bölük* (17 soldiers) almost completely dominated this profession in the town, and continued to do so in subsequent years.<sup>121</sup> As we have seen in the former section, the members of these two regiments were heavily involved in the husbandry and livestock trades in Wallachia.

Some regiments were particularly powerful in certain regions. The Janissaries of the 31st *cemaat*, for instance, created an immense network of information and commercial ties between İzmir, Istanbul, and Vidin, while their counterparts in the 14th *cemaat* managed to develop strong social and economic networks with Istanbul.<sup>122</sup>

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118 These documents are title deeds by which the cattle drovers promised to abide by the new regulations; BOA, D.BŞM.d.3597 (22 Ş 1174/29 March 1761); A.DVN.SAHK.ÖZSİ.d.12, fls. 143-144 (22 Ş 1174/29 March 1761); D.BŞM.d.3596 (18 Ş 1174/25 March 1761).

119 Twenty-three soldiers from the 62nd *cemaat*, 13 soldiers from the 59th *bölük*, 12 soldiers from the 47th *bölük*; seven from the 66th *cemaat*, one soldier from the 51st *bölük*, and one from the 55th *bölük*.

120 Silistre Şeriyye Sicilleri, 50, fl. 44 (5 N 1206/27 April 1792), fl. 49 (1206/1792).

121 BOA, A.DVN.SAHK.ÖZSİ.d.24, fl. 57 (*evasıtlı* L 1193/22-31 October 1779).

122 Y. Spyropoulos, 'Yunan Bağımsızlık Savaşı Sırasında Ele Geçen İki Yeniçeri Mektubunun Düşündürdükleri', in A. Yıldız, Y. Spyropoulos and M. M. Sunar (eds), *Payitaht Yeniçerileri: Padişahın "Asi" Kulları, 1700-1826* (Istanbul 2022), 48-49.

The *yamaks* of the 64th *cemaat* and 25th *bölük* had almost monopolised commercial transactions in the triangle linking Trabzon, Istanbul, and the Danubian zone, with strong regimental solidarity overlapping with their trading networks.<sup>123</sup> Together with the 59th *bölük*, the 25th *bölük* and the 64th *cemaat* were economically and politically very strong in the imperial capital. They were among the five regiments which dominated the Galata region as well as the wharfs close to Unkapanı. The head (*kethüda*) of the Karaköy port boatmen was from the 64th *cemaat*.<sup>124</sup> The Janissaries of the 25th *bölük* and 64th *cemaat* also maintained deep credit relations and trading networks with the *kapan* merchants. In the 1820s, for instance, 31 traders – mainly *kapan* merchants – borrowed a total of 70,180 *guruş* from the regimental funds of the Janissary Corps. Ten of them, including seven Unkapanı merchants and one Yağkapanı merchant, obtained a loan totalling 18,000 *guruş* from the 64th regiment. One flour dealer (*uncu*) and another Unkapanı merchant, on the other hand, borrowed money from the regimental fund of the 25th *bölük*.<sup>125</sup> The regiment's *yamaks* were also politically and economically powerful in Istanbul, as exemplified by the example of its trustee (*mütevelli*), Kazgancı Mustafa Agha, a rich copper dealer from Trabzon who wielded considerable power over the soldiers of the 25th, as most of them came from the same region. While he was exiled to Cyprus due to involvement in the 1807 uprising, the *yamaks* were sent to İbrail fortress, on the pretext that most of the soldiers and the fortress commander belonged to the same regiment.<sup>126</sup>

### *Licensed merchants of the Danube and kapan merchants in the capital*

In the available literature, the existence of local licensed soldier merchants entitled to conduct trade in the Principalities and their role in provisioning seems to have been somewhat ignored or unknown, while the local business partners of the *kapan*

123 For more details on the 64th *cemaat* and 25th *bölük* and their distribution outside the capital, see Y. Spyropoulos, *Janissary Networks in the Eastern Mediterranean (1700-1826)*, forthcoming monograph compiled in the framework of the ERC JANET project.

124 A. M. Altıntaş, 'İstanbul Loncaları ve Yeniçeriler: Kayıkçı Esnafı Üzerine Bir Deneme (1677-1752)', in A. Yıldız, Y. Spyropoulos and M. M. Sunar (eds), *Payitaht Yeniçerileri: Padişahın "Asi" Kulları, 1700-1826* (Istanbul 2022), 152.

125 BOA, MAD.d.9766, fls. 211, 277, 298; 9772, fls. 12, 92, 190; 8390, fls. 11, 12-14, 16, 18, 20. I would like to thank my colleague M. Mert Sunar for sharing this information with me.

126 A. Yıldız, 'Vaka-yı Selimiyye or the The Selimiyye Incident: A Study of the May 1807 Rebellion', unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Sabancı University, 2008, 523-524, 557-558; M. M. Sunar, 'Cauldron of Dissent: A Study of the Janissary Corps, 1807-1826', unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Binghamton University-SUNY, 2006, 67-73.

merchants have not yet been studied comprehensively. Murat Çızakça, for example, seems to have been unaware of the local licensed merchants; drawing on one particular document, he concludes that only the *kapın* merchants were authorised to trade in Wallachia.<sup>127</sup> In a similar manner, Columbeanu and Kazdađlı ignore the imposition of the new trading system and the rise of licensed merchants in the region in the mid-eighteenth century, while Bulgaru merely refers to commercial restrictions, without any reference to local licensed merchants.<sup>128</sup> Laiou is more concerned with the different categories of merchants conducting business in the region, and recognises the availability of Ottoman merchants in the *kapın* system.<sup>129</sup>

The newly imposed system of government sanctioned trading rights given to licensed local merchants was very similar to the legal monopolies granted to the private, state-licensed and Istanbul-based wholesale traders known as Unkapanı (specialised in the provisioning of cereals), Yađkapanı in Galata (specialised in butter, tallow and tallow suet), and Balkapanı in Tahtakale (specialised in honey, cheese and again animal fats).<sup>130</sup> The *kapın* merchants were also expected to obtain certificates of license in order to cross the Danube and conduct trade in Wallachia or Moldavia, under similar restrictions on non-residential commerce involving minimal contact with local producers. Partners or agents had to present their certificates to the voivode in order to be issued with a certificate of permission to enter the province.<sup>131</sup> They too were expected not to travel into the villages, but to purchase merchandise from the bazaars at ports – with similar conditions forbidding abuse of the locals or demands for sales below the market value. The merchandise would then be loaded onto ships to be unloaded at the capital.<sup>132</sup>

127 M. Çızakça, *A Comparative Evolution of Business Partnerships: The Islamic World and Europe with Specific Reference to the Ottoman Archives* (Leiden, New York and Köln 1996), 118-119.

128 S. Columbeanu, *Grandes exploitations domaniales en Valachie au XVIIIe siècle* (Bucharest 1974); B. Kazdađlı, '18. Yüzyılda İstanbul Unkapanı Tüccarları', unpublished M.A. thesis, 29 Mayıs University, 2022, 17-20; Alexandrescu-Dersca Bulgaru, 'L'approvisionnement d'Istanbul', 75-77.

129 Laiou, 'The Black Sea Trade', 4.

130 For more details on the *kapın* system, see S. Aynural, '18. Yüzyılın İkinci Yarısında İstanbul Kapan Tüccarları', *Türk Dünyası Araştırmaları*, 80 (1992), 207-214; Kazdađlı, 'Unkapanı Tüccarları'.

131 Kazdađlı, 'Unkapanı Tüccarları', 63-69.

132 For some selected examples, see BOA, C.HR.19/943 (*evasıt-ı* S 1206/10-19 October 1791); A.DVNS.DVE.d.80, fls. 50-51, order no. 153 (*evasıt-ı* B 1191/15-24 August 1777), fls. 98-99, order no. 323 (*evail-i* Za 1196/14-23 April 1782), fls. 128-129, order no. 432-435 (*evasıt-ı* Z 1199/15-24 October 1785), fls. 143-144, order no. 488 (*evahir-i* Z 1201/10-18 April 1787), fls. 169-173, order no. 578 (*evail-i* M 1207/19-28 August 1792), fls. 219-221, order no. 769 (*evasıt-ı* Za 1213/16-25 April 1799), fls. 226-27, order no. 801 (*evahir-i* M 1215/14-22 June 1800), fls.



The *kapan* merchants had oligopoly privileges in the Principalities and were similar in this sense to regulated companies in Europe.<sup>133</sup> They acted akin to chartered companies, with special permissions to trade in a given locality under state surveillance. In comparison to their European counterparts, however, *kapan* business companies were short-lived partnerships with modest business capital. The Unkapanı merchants had agents called “*yazıcı*” (literally scribes) empowered with a special trading license called a “*kapan tezkere*” and were financed by the active investor merchant to travel to the production region and make direct purchases.<sup>134</sup> On the other hand, Yağkapanı and Balkapanı merchants were private entrepreneurial business partnerships having one or multiple partners.<sup>135</sup> They mostly formed either *mudabara* or *inan*-type business partnerships. In the former, the principal partner financed and entrusted his capital to the other partner, who ran the business to share the profit depending on their agreements (joint profit or limited liability). In the *inan* type, the agent shared both the profit and the risk proportional to his investment.<sup>136</sup>

Due to the difficulties involved in transportation and travel in the early modern world, most *kapan* merchants preferred to choose their partners from among local traders, who were referred to in the relevant documents as “business partners from along the banks of the Danube” (*sevahil-i Tuna’da olan şerikleri*), or the *serhad* merchants operating in the Empire’s frontier regions.<sup>137</sup> Indeed, very few of the *kapan* merchants themselves went to the region in person (*kendi gider taifeden*) or sent their relatives or representatives; most found business partners from among

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259-60, order no. 890-906 (*evail-i* Ca 1218/19-28 August 1803), fls. 293-294, order no. 979 (*evasıt-ı* Ra 1228/14-23 March 1813), fls. 344-45, order no. 1094 (*evail-i* Ş 1239/1-10 April 1824), fl. 351, order no. 1108-1109 (*evail-i* N 1241/7-16 June 1826); 81, fls. 10-11, order no. 8-26 (*evasıt-ı* S 1206/10-19 October 1791).

133 Çızakça, *Business Partnerships*, 121-122.

134 Aynural, ‘Kapan Tüccarları’, 208-213; F. Gedikli, ‘Ottoman Companies in the 16th and 17th Centuries’, in K. Çiçek (ed.), *The Great Ottoman-Turkish Civilization. II: Economy and Society* (Ankara 2000), 187; Kazdağlı, ‘Unkapanı Tüccarları’, 82-84.

135 Aynural, ‘Kapan Tüccarları’, 211-212, 214.

136 For further details on both forms of partnerships, see Çızakça, *Business Partnerships*, 65-131; Gedikli, ‘Ottoman Companies’, 185-195; F. Gedikli, ‘16. ve 17. Yüzyıl Asır Osmanlı Şer’iyye Sicillerinde Mudarebe Ortaklığı: Galata Örneği’, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Marmara University, 1996.

137 “*Asitane-i saadetimde sakin tüccar-ı merkûmenin ve gerek serhadât ahalisinden tüccar-ı mer-kumenin kefil oldukları .... mezkur ve madud şerikleri*”. For further details, see BOA, A.DVNS. DVE.d.80, fls. 203-204, order no. 711 (*evahir-i* Z 1209/9-17 July 1795), fls. 293-294, order no. 979 (*evasıt-ı* Ra 1228/14-23 March 1813); A.DVNS.MHM.d.963, fl. 10 (*evasıt-ı* M 1206/10-19 September 1791); C.HR.46/2254 (*evasıt-ı* L 1208/12-21 May 1794); C.BLD.38/1888 (*evahir-i* S 1215/14-22 July 1800); 142/7058 (17 B 1211/16 January 1797).

the Danubian towns, as doing so was more convenient and cheaper. In the closing decades of the eighteenth century, there were only two Balkapanı merchants who preferred to travel to the Danube to conduct business in person.<sup>138</sup> Others chose their partners from among local figures. In the year 1761, *kapan* merchant Kadızâde Mehmed, based at Baltacı Han in Istanbul, had formed an *inan* type of business partnership with Seyyid Elhac Ahmed, a cattle dealer (*celeb*) from Şumnu (mod. Shumen). Due to his local knowledge and closeness to the trading zone, it was easier for the latter to pass into Wallachia to purchase and load animal fats, *pastırma*, and leather, and transfer them to his partner, Kadızâde, who in return assumed the task of unloading and distributing these commodities at the *kapan*.<sup>139</sup> Elhac Ali b. Mustafa, another Yağkapanı merchant, had Mehmedcikoğlu Mahmud Agha from İbrail as a business partner.<sup>140</sup> In 1802, Unkapanı merchant Mustafa's partner was Elhac Abdullah from İbrail, while Balkapanı merchant Odunkapılı İmamzâde Elhac Ahmed chose Göncüoğlu Molla Ali b. Mustafa from Ziştovi for the same purpose. In the business partnership between İmamzâde and Göncüoğlu, the former financed the latter to buy honey, animal fats, and cheese from the Principalities, and transfer them to the capital. In the two years of their partnership, Ali dispatched a total of 49,671 *guruş* to his local partner.<sup>141</sup>

Due to their deep involvement in local trade, it is not surprising to find some Janissaries among the local business partners of the *kapan* merchants. Derviş Ali was a Balkapanı merchant whose partner in Niğbolu was İbrahim Çavuş, a Janissary in the 64th *cemaat*.<sup>142</sup> Emir Ali of the 96th *cemaat* acted as agent for Unkapanı merchant Abdi Efendi, the former being the scribe (*katib*) of the same regiment.<sup>143</sup> İbrahim, another Yağkapanı merchant, had a business partnership with Janissary Yakub from Bender.<sup>144</sup> Another Istanbul-based merchant, Elhac Ali, preferred a

138 Kancızâde Hacı Mehmed and Kavcı Hacı Mehmed; BOA, A.DVNS.DVE.d.80, fls. 23-26, order no. 61-91 (*evail-i B* 1189/28 August-6 September 1775).

139 Ahmed died before crossing into Wallachia to supervise the cattle droving. For more details, see BOA, A.DVN.SAHK.ÖZSİ.d.14, fl. 186 (*evahir-i C* 1176/7-15 January 1763).

140 The partnership lasted until Ali's death in 1787. For further details, see C. Yılmaz (ed.), *İstanbul Mahkemesi 56 Numaralı Sicil (H. 1201-1203/M. 1786-1787)* (Istanbul 2019), 68.

141 C. Yılmaz (ed.), *İstanbul Mahkemesi 78 Numaralı Sicil (H. 1216-1217/M. 1801-1803)* (Istanbul 2019), 362-517-518.

142 He dispatched 1,180 *guruş* to İbrahim Çavuş to buy animal fats; BOA, A.DVN.SAHK.ÖZSİ.d.14, fl. 130 (*evahir-i S* 1176/11-29 September 1762).

143 BOA, A.DVN.SAHK.ÖZSİ.d.25, fl. 123 (*evahir-i B* 1195/23 June-2 July 1781).

144 BOA, A.DVN.SAHK.ÖZSİ.d.21, fl. 269 (*evası-ı R* 1191/19-28 May 1777).

*serdengeçdi ağa* from the 7th *bölük* serving at İbrail fortress as his business partner – the latter transferred merchandise worth 34,000 *guruş* to him within 3 years.<sup>145</sup>

More systematic information can be obtained by checking the lists of local business partners of the Istanbul-based *kapan* merchants. In the year 1775, three active traders out of 31 Yağkapanı and Balkapanı merchants were from Silistre, Özi and Yergöğü, and 25 of their business partners were locals in Ruscuk, Yergöğü, Silistre, or Ziştovi.<sup>146</sup> The cases of the Mehmedcikzâde and Pehlivanoğlu families are very instructive, due to their overlapping connections with local licensed and *kapan* trade. As might be recalled, three members (Molla Mahmud, Molla Memiş, and Molla Ahmed Çelebi) of the former family were among the authorised cattle drovers of İbrail and were affiliated with the 1st *bölük* of the Janissary Corps. Mahmud Agha, from the same family – if not the same Mahmud as above – appears as an active *kapan* merchant, proving that there were overlapping commercial networks of Janissaries, local and *kapan* merchants. On the other hand, one member of the Pehlivanoğlu family among the authorised cattle drover families of Silistre, who was affiliated with the 64th *cemaat* of the Janissary Corps, had a business partnership with Yağkapanı merchant Yağcıoğlu Molla Mehmed.

In 1791, 21 business partners of 53 Yağkapanı and Balkapanı merchants were from the Danube, half being from the town of Yergöğü.<sup>147</sup> Around the same date, the Pehlivanzâde family continued business in Moldavia as *kapan* merchants, while the Sabszâdes from İbrail and the Manavzâdes from Silistre are mentioned among the Balkapanı and Yağkapanı merchants.<sup>148</sup> The former family was affiliated with the 64th *cemaat* and the latter with the 62nd *cemaat*. In another list, dated 1802, 10 business partners were from Danubian towns, including a merchant holding the title of *alemdar*.<sup>149</sup> The next year, in which the scribe took additional care to note the place of origin of the *kapan* business partners, there were 11 local partners from Ruscuk, 9 from İbrail, and finally 4 from Bucharest.<sup>150</sup>

Since the local business partners of the Istanbul-based *kapan* merchants were also considered the part of the system with permission to trade in the Principalities, they did not necessarily need local licensed merchants to conduct business in

145 BOA, A.DVN.SAHK.ÖZSİ.d.30, fl. 229 (*evahir-i* Ra 1207/6-14 November 1792).

146 BOA, A.DVNS.DVE.d.80, fls. 23-26, order no. 61-91 (*evail-i* B 1189/28 August-6 September 1775).

147 BOA, A.DVNS.DVE.d.81, fls. 10-11, order no. 8-26 (*evası-tı* S 1206/10-19 October 1791).

148 BOA, A.DVNS.DVE.d.80, fls. 169-1731, order no. 578-635 (*evail-i* M 1207/19-28 August 1792).

149 BOA, D.MKF.d. [Mevkufat Kalemi Defterleri], 31156 (N 1216/January February 1802).

150 BOA, C.İKTS.30/1461 (19 N 1219/22 December 1804).

these provinces. Apart from the *kapan* merchants, however, there was another group of merchants (*berrani*, literally meaning outsiders) who were affiliated with the Yağkapanı system but still maintained their commercial ties in Wallachia or Moldavia. The *berrani* had shops around the *kapan*, but for unspecified reasons were not officially registered as *kapan* merchants. As they had no state sanctioned trading rights in the Danube, they had to conduct their business via local merchants, as noted in one relevant document.<sup>151</sup> If we make an educated guess, we may assume that most of their business partners were licensed local traders, as they were the only group other than the *kapan* merchants authorised to trade in the Principalities; since we do not have the lists of licensed merchants in the 1800s, this remains an assumption and requires further research. In 1803, there were a total of 45 *berrani* merchants working with 48 business partners. All but two were Muslims, with a striking number of Crimeans (three among the Istanbul-based merchants and nine among the local partners), in addition to seven merchants from Danubian towns. At least six of them seem to have been Janissaries (two *alemdar* from the Istanbul-based *berranis* and three from local business partners, in addition to a Janissary from the 29th regiment).<sup>152</sup>

The local licensed merchants continued to conduct trade and co-exist with the *kapan* merchants both in the early eighteenth century and in later periods.<sup>153</sup> The trade regulations imposed in response to Janissary expansion into the Principalities survived even after the destruction of the Janissary army. Following the abolition of the Corps in 1826 the regulations continued to be employed, though civilians obviously replaced authorised merchants of Janissary background.<sup>154</sup>

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151 BOA, A.DVNS.DVE.d.80, fls. 372-373 (13 M 1218/5 May 1803): “*Berrani tabir olunur Eflak ve Boğdan memleketlerine duhul etmeyüb yedlerinde dahi evâmir-i münife olmayub ancak ol havâlîde şerikleri olmak takribiyle Galata Yağkapanı’nda dekakin ashâbı olan tüccarın şürekâlarının esâmileridir*”.

152 BOA, A.DVNS.DVE.d.80, fls. 372-373 (13 M 1218/5 May 1803).

153 BOA, A.DVNS.DVE.d.81, fl. 168, order no. 540 (*evahir-i Z* 1229/4-13 December 1814); 82, fl. 15, order no. 31 (*evasıt-ı R* 1236/16-25 January 1821), fl. 26, order no. 77 (*evahir-i Za* 1237/9-18 August 1822); HAT.1141/45390 (11 L 1238/21 June 1823). All of these documents concern the passage of unauthorised merchants into the Principalities either by pretending to be *kapan* or local licensed merchants or simply by illegal means. In the final document it is noted that some people have already started building mansions again in Moldavia, having seized the properties and farms of innocent people, demanded free food and fodder from the locals, and forced them sell their merchandise below market value. In response, the imperial authorities warned the local functionaries to enforce the old regulations and not allow anyone except those authorised into the region.

154 BOA, C.HR.49/2426 (*evahir-i Ş* 1242/20-28 March 1827).

## *Conclusion*

This study has attempted to make a modest contribution to the available literature by placing Muslim entrepreneurs within the regional and interregional commercial scene of the eighteenth-century Balkans, with a particular emphasis on the Danubian trading zone and the identities and economic activities of Janissary merchants. Balkan Muslim merchants of mainly military background (especially the Janissaries stationed at fortresses along the Danube) were quick to seize the new productive and trading opportunities and gain a share in the region's lively trade networks.

Their rapid penetration into the Principalities and the considerable expansion of productive and trading activities conducted according to their own rules and distinct culture created discontent, especially among the landed gentry of Wallachia and Moldavia. The consequent governmental response to the Janissaries' overwhelming ascendancy, initially in the economic sectors of the Danubian towns and then in the Principalities, created a strictly state-monitored commercial life and caused the rise of licensed/authorised local merchants, akin to the Istanbul-based *kapan* merchants responsible for provisioning the capital. The result was the establishment of an oligopolist trade structure both at the regional and imperial levels, mostly overlapping with the regimental and information networks of the Janissaries.

The mid-eighteenth-century centralist and restrictive trade policies of the Porte in the Principalities further strengthened the commercial ties between authorised Janissaries and the imperial capital, and increased their role in provisioning the capital with meat, animal fats, *pastırma*, honey, as well as cheese and other commodities. A sense of belonging, group solidarity, and benefiting from established networks provided a serious advantage to the Janissaries in their trade in different parts of the Empire and connected them to different markets. The presence of the Janissaries in almost all parts of the imperial domains provided a ready channel for the flow of information, credit transactions and the transportation of commodities, as well as the availability of a ready pool of business partnerships. As most of the Muslim merchants from the Black Sea and the Balkans as well as those at Istanbul were either Janissaries or Janissary-affiliated people, the importance of this group in the commercial history of the Ottoman Empire cannot easily be ignored.

## APPENDIX

**Table IV:** List of licensed Janissary merchants from Vidin authorised to conduct business in Karayova, attached to Wallachia (source: BOA, A.DVN.SAHK.ÖZSİ.d.12, fls. 135-136 [*evahir-i R* 1179/7-15 October 1765])

Name of Active Licensed Merchant	Regiment of Active Licensed Merchant	Name of Business Partner	Regiment of Business Partner
Esseyyid Ömer Beşe	26th <i>bölük</i>	Esseyyid Molla Ömer	97th <i>cemaat</i>
Mahmud Beşe	26th <i>bölük</i>	Mustafa Beşe	97th <i>cemaat</i>
Hüseyin Beşe	26th <i>bölük</i>	Ali Beşe	97th <i>cemaat</i>
Uzun Mehmed Beşe	46th <i>bölük</i>	Molla İbrahim	1st <i>bölük</i>
Bosnalı Hasan	46th <i>bölük</i>	Süleyman Beşe	1st <i>bölük</i>
Ahmed Beşe	46th <i>bölük</i>	Molla Mehmed	1st <i>bölük</i>
Bosnalı İbrahim	46th <i>bölük</i>	Osman Beşe	4th <i>bölük</i>
Esseyyid Ali Beşe	66th <i>cemaat</i>	Hüseyin	5th <i>bölük</i>
Süleyman İbrahim	12th <i>cemaat</i>	Topal Ali Beşe	5th <i>bölük</i>
Bosnalı Hüseyin	12th <i>cemaat</i>	Kara İbiş	5th <i>bölük</i>
Hasan Beşe	12th <i>cemaat</i>	Molla Ahmed	5th <i>bölük</i>
Bekir Beşe	12th <i>cemaat</i>	Emir Osman	5th <i>bölük</i>
Salih Beşe	15th <i>cemaat</i>	Süleyman Beşe	6th <i>bölük</i>
Emir Salih	15th <i>cemaat</i>	İbrahim Beşe	6th <i>bölük</i>
Bosnalı Ahmed Beşe	15th <i>cemaat</i>	Hasan Beşe	6th <i>bölük</i>
Kara Mehmed	15th <i>cemaat</i>	Osman Beşe	7th <i>bölük</i>
Esseyyid Molla Abdullah	15th <i>cemaat</i>	Ali Beşe	7th <i>bölük</i>
Emir Molla Mahmud	15th <i>cemaat</i>	Mehmed Beşe	7th <i>bölük</i>
Nalıncı Mustafa	15th <i>cemaat</i>	Mahmud Beşe	8th <i>bölük</i>
Kara Hüseyin Beşe	15th <i>cemaat</i>	Yusuf Beşe	8th <i>bölük</i>
Nalıncı Hüseyin	15th <i>cemaat</i>	Abdülmüttalib	12th <i>bölük</i>
Filordinli Halil	16th <i>cemaat</i>	Hüseyin Beşe	12th <i>bölük</i>
Emir Hasan	17th <i>cemaat</i>	Ali Beşe	12th <i>bölük</i>
Halil Beşe	17th <i>cemaat</i>	Molla Mustafa	12th <i>bölük</i>
Abdi Beşe	17th <i>cemaat</i>	Abbas Beşe	12th <i>bölük</i>
Süleyman Beşe	19th <i>cemaat</i>	Mustafa Beşe	12th <i>bölük</i>
Molla Cafer	19th <i>cemaat</i>	Molla Osman	12th <i>bölük</i>
Hasan Beşe	19th <i>cemaat</i>	Emir Süleyman	12th <i>bölük</i>
Sıgılı Hacı Ahmed	19th <i>cemaat</i>	Emir Mustafa	12th <i>bölük</i>
Eyüb Beşe	23rd <i>cemaat</i>	Emir Ali	12th <i>bölük</i>
Hasan Beşe	23rd <i>cemaat</i>	Halil Beşe	12th <i>bölük</i>
Çavuşzâde Ahmed Molla	23rd <i>cemaat</i>	Ahmed Beşe	12th <i>bölük</i>

Name of Active Licensed Merchant	Regiment of Active Licensed Merchant	Name of Business Partner	Regiment of Business Partner
Hüseyin Beşe	24th <i>cemaat</i>	Hacı Memiş	12th <i>bölük</i>
Emir Mehmed	24th <i>cemaat</i>	Uzun İbrahim	12th <i>bölük</i>
Kürd Mahmud	25th <i>cemaat</i>	Hacı Hüseyin	12th <i>bölük</i>
Halil Beşe	25th <i>cemaat</i>	İlyas Beşe	15th <i>bölük</i>
Abdi Beşe	25th <i>cemaat</i>	Emir Ömer Beşe	15th <i>bölük</i>
Karşlı Mehmed	25th <i>cemaat</i>	Mehmed Beşe	16th <i>bölük</i>
Pehlivan Mustafa	25th <i>cemaat</i>	Kara Mehmed	17th <i>bölük</i>
Süleyman Beşe	27th <i>cemaat</i>	Bekir Beşe	17th <i>bölük</i>
Emir Ahmed Beşe	30th <i>cemaat</i>	Aydınlı Ali Beşe	22nd <i>bölük</i>
Murtaza Beşe	35th <i>cemaat</i>	Hüseyin Beşe	22nd <i>bölük</i>
Mustafa Beşe	35th <i>cemaat</i>	Mustafa Beşe	22nd <i>bölük</i>
Osman Beşe	35th <i>cemaat</i>	Mehmed Beşe	22nd <i>bölük</i>
İbrahim Beşe	38th <i>cemaat</i>	Emir Ömer Beşe	22nd <i>bölük</i>
Mehmed Beşe	38th <i>cemaat</i>	Mustafa Beşe	22nd <i>bölük</i>
Emir Mehmed Beşe	38th <i>cemaat</i>	Mustafa	22nd <i>bölük</i>
Osman Beşe	39th <i>cemaat</i>	Osman	25th <i>bölük</i>
Mustafa Beşe	43rd <i>cemaat</i>	Salih Beşe	25th <i>bölük</i>
Hasan Beşe	43rd <i>cemaat</i>	Musa Beşe	25th <i>bölük</i>
Esseyid Sinan	43rd <i>cemaat</i>	Kürdoğlu İbrahim	25th <i>bölük</i>
Ahmed Beşe	44th <i>cemaat</i>	Eyüb İbrahim	25th <i>bölük</i>
Hacı Yusuf	49th <i>cemaat</i>	Mustafa Beşe	27th <i>bölük</i>
Ali Agha	49th <i>cemaat</i>	Emir Abdullah	29th <i>bölük</i>
İbrahim	50th <i>cemaat</i>	İbrahim	29th <i>bölük</i>
İsmail Beşe	55th <i>cemaat</i>	Mehmed Beşe	31st <i>bölük</i>
Ömer Beşe	55th <i>cemaat</i>	Mehmed	31st <i>bölük</i>
Veli Beşe	55th <i>cemaat</i>	Mehmed	31st <i>bölük</i>
İsmail Beşe	64th <i>cemaat</i>	Süleyman Beşe	31st <i>bölük</i>
Hacı Mustafa	64th <i>cemaat</i>	İbrahim Beşe	32nd <i>bölük</i>
Kara Mustafa	64th <i>cemaat</i>	İbrahim	32nd <i>bölük</i>
Abdurrahman Beşe	64th <i>cemaat</i>	Ali Beşe	32nd <i>bölük</i>
Emir Osman	64th <i>cemaat</i>	Emir Yusuf	33rd <i>bölük</i>
Mehmed Agha	64th <i>cemaat</i>	Emir Abbas	33rd <i>bölük</i>
Süleyman Agha	64th <i>cemaat</i>	Ahmed Beşe	34th <i>bölük</i>
Ali Beşe	64th <i>cemaat</i>	Süleyman Beşe	36th <i>bölük</i>
İsmail Beşe	68th <i>cemaat</i>	Halil Beşe	36th <i>bölük</i>
Zeynel Beşe	68th <i>cemaat</i>	Ahmed Beşe	36th <i>bölük</i>
Ömer Beşe	71st <i>cemaat</i>	Mahmud Beşe	41st <i>bölük</i>
Ahmed Beşe	71st <i>cemaat</i>	Saka Osman	42nd <i>bölük</i>

Name of Active Licensed Merchant	Regiment of Active Licensed Merchant	Name of Business Partner	Regiment of Business Partner
Emir Ali	73rd <i>cemaat</i>	Ahmed Beşe	42nd <i>bölük</i>
Hacı İbrahim	75th <i>cemaat</i>	Molla Ahmed	42nd <i>bölük</i>
Hasan Beşe	75th <i>cemaat</i>	Çalık Ali Beşe	42nd <i>bölük</i>
Molla Ahmed	75th <i>cemaat</i>	Karındaşı Ali Beşe	42nd <i>bölük</i>
Süleyman Beşe	76th <i>cemaat</i>	Balcızâde Ali Beşe	42nd <i>bölük</i>
Kara İbrahim	76th <i>cemaat</i>	Uzun Mustafa	43rd <i>bölük</i>
Kürd Süleyman	77th <i>cemaat</i>	Hüseyin Beşe	43rd <i>bölük</i>
Hasan Beşe	77th <i>cemaat</i>	Uzun Ali Beşe	43rd <i>bölük</i>
Uzun Mustafa	77th <i>cemaat</i>	Hacı Hüseyin	45th <i>bölük</i>
Emir Mehmed Beşe	79th <i>cemaat</i>	İsmail beşe	45th <i>bölük</i>
Mehmed Beşe	79th <i>cemaat</i>	Mehmed Beşe	45th <i>bölük</i>
Ömer Beşe	82nd <i>cemaat</i>	Köprülü Hasan	46th <i>bölük</i>
Hüseyin Beşe	83rd <i>cemaat</i>	Karakollukçu Ahmed	46th <i>bölük</i>
Süleyman Beşe	83rd <i>cemaat</i>	Emir Hasan Beşe	48th <i>bölük</i>
Hasan Beşe	83rd <i>cemaat</i>	Yusuf Beşe	48th <i>bölük</i>
Kadri Beşe	83rd <i>cemaat</i>	Emir Ali Beşe	48th <i>bölük</i>
Osman Beşe	83rd <i>cemaat</i>	Ömer Beşe	48th <i>bölük</i>
Derviş Beşe	83rd <i>cemaat</i>	Ahmed Beşe	48th <i>bölük</i>
İdris Beşe	83rd <i>cemaat</i>	Emir Ali	48th <i>bölük</i>
Hüseyin Beşe	83rd <i>cemaat</i>	Zeynel Beşe	52nd <i>bölük</i>
Halil Beşe	83rd <i>cemaat</i>	Süleyman Beşe	61st <i>bölük</i>
Süleyman Beşe	91st <i>cemaat</i>	Ramazan Beşe	10th <i>sekban</i>
Bosnalı Ali Beşe	91st <i>cemaat</i>	Halil Beşe	10th <i>sekban</i>
Hasan Beşe	91st <i>cemaat</i>	Kara Mehmed	19th <i>sekban</i>
Süleyman Beşe	97th <i>cemaat</i>	Abdullah Beşe	19th <i>sekban</i>
Hasan Beşe	97th <i>cemaat</i>	Küçük Ali Beşe	19th <i>sekban</i>
Kara Mehmed Beşe	97th <i>cemaat</i>	Ahmed Beşe	26th <i>sekban</i>
Molla İbrahim	97th <i>cemaat</i>	Molla Ahmed	26th <i>sekban</i>
Ahmed Beşe	97th <i>cemaat</i>	Memiş Beşe	30th <i>sekban</i>
Dülger Ahmed Beşe	97th <i>cemaat</i>	Mustafa Beşe	30th <i>sekban</i>



**Table V:** List of authorised *sürekçis* (cattle drovers) from İbrail (sources: BOA, D.BŞM.d.3597 [22 Ş 1174/29 March 1761]; A.DVN.SAHK.ÖZSİ.d.12, fls. 143-144 [22 Ş 1174/29 March 1761])

Name	Regiment	Service	Number of Süreks	Sürek Animals
Saraçzâde Elhac Hasan Agha	64th <i>cemaat</i>	<i>Serdengeçdi</i>	3	360
Küçük Osman Agha	64th <i>cemaat</i>	<i>Serdengeçdi</i>	3	360
Mataracızâde Osman Agha	25th <i>bölük</i>	<i>Serdengeçdi</i>	3	360
Kulunzâde Elhac Mehmed Agha	5th <i>bölük</i>	<i>Serdengeçdi</i>	2	240
Aşçı Elhac Mustafa Agha	25th <i>bölük</i>	<i>Serdengeçdi</i>	1	120
Kuyumcuzâde Mustafa Agha	25th <i>bölük</i>	<i>Serdengeçdi</i>	1	120
Şirinzâde Elhac Abdullah Agha	5th <i>bölük</i>	-	3	380
Elhac Uzun Ahmed Agha	5th <i>bölük</i>	<i>Serdengeçdi</i>	2	240
Bülbülzâde Hasan Agha	60th <i>bölük</i>	-	2	240
Yaverizâde Molla Mustafa	64th <i>cemaat</i>	-	2	240
Elhac Hüseyin Alemdar	64th <i>cemaat</i>	<i>Alemdar</i>	2	240
Derviş Esseyid Ali Çelebi	64th <i>cemaat</i>	-	2	250
Mehmedcikzâde Süleyman Agha	64th <i>cemaat</i>	-	1	120
Ballı Musazâde Elhac Süleyman	4th <i>bölük</i>			
Mehmedcikzâde Molla Memiş	4th <i>bölük</i>	-	2	240
Mehmedcikzâde Ahmed Çelebi	1st <i>bölük</i>	-	2	240
Molla Bakkal Memiş	25th <i>bölük</i>	-	1	120
Kesredlizâde Elhac İsmail Agha	4th <i>bölük</i>	-	2	240
Şeyh damadı İsmail Çelebi	5th <i>bölük</i>	-	2	240
Pehlivanzâde Halil Çelebi	64th <i>cemaat</i>	-	1	120
Pehlivanzâde Mehmed Ali Çelebi	64th <i>cemaat</i>	-	1	120
Çürük Alizâde Hüseyin Çelebi	64th <i>cemaat</i>	-	2	245
Çürük Alizâde Ahmed Çelebi	64th <i>cemaat</i>	-	1	120
Kurbetzâde Ömer Beşe	64th <i>cemaat</i>	-	1	125
Hüsanzâde Mehmed Çelebi	64th <i>cemaat</i>	-	1	120
Sipahizâde Mustafa Çelebi	1st <i>bölük</i>	-	1	125
Sipahizâde Mehmed Beşe	64th <i>cemaat</i>	-	1	120
Ali Agha şeriki Kürd Hüseyin	25th <i>bölük</i>	-	1	120
Elhac Kirli Hüseyin	25th <i>bölük</i>	-	1	125
Kırzâde Salih Beşe	25th <i>bölük</i>	-	1	120
Uzun Hüseyin Beşe	25th <i>bölük</i>	-	1	120
Elhac Hüseyin şeriki Kara Mehmed Beşe	25th <i>bölük</i>	-	1	120
Kazaz Mustafa Agha	25th <i>bölük</i>	-	1	120
Davudzâde İsmail Beşe	4th <i>bölük</i>	-	1	120
Tiryakizâde Ahmed Beşe	25th <i>bölük</i>	-	1	120

Name	Regiment	Service	Number of Süreks	Sürek Animals
Çavuşzâde Mehmed Agha	25th bölük	-	1	130
Elhac Abdullahzâde Ömer Beşe	64th cemaat	-	1	120
Molla Kahveci Ahmed	64th cemaat	-	1	120
Köle Ömer Beşe	25th bölük	-	1	120
Bakkal Ömer Beşe	4th bölük	-	1	120
Sinaplı Hüseyin Çelebi	56th bölük	-	1	120
Karakaş Ahmed Beşe	64th cemaat	-	1	120
Elhac Kel İbrahim Çelebi	25th bölük	-	1	120
Koyuncu damadı Süleyman Agha	5th bölük	-	1	120
Şahinzâde Mustafa	25th bölük	<i>Serdengeçdi</i>	3	360
Bacarızoğlu İsmail Çelebi	32nd cemaat	-	1	120
Serdarzâde Mehmed Çelebi	25th bölük	-	1	120
Uzun Ahmed Beşe	60th bölük	-	1	120
Sabsızâde Osman	64th cemaat	-	1	120
Mehmedcikzâde Molla Mahmud	1st bölük	-	1	120
İmamzâde Elhac Hasan	25th bölük	-	1	120
Küçük Salih Beşe	5th bölük	-	1	120
Tonbulzâde Mustafa	64th cemaat	-	1	120
Piri Dedezâde Molla İsmail	4th bölük	-	1	120
Kürkçü Konstantin <i>zimmi</i>	-	-	1	120
Abacı İstanco <i>zimmi</i>	-	-	1	120
Drakomir <i>zimmi</i>	-	-	1	120
Gicol? <i>Zimmi</i>	-	-	1	120
Bezzaz Nikola <i>zimmi</i>	-	-	1	120

**Table VI:** List of licensed *sürekçis* (cattle drovers) from Silistre  
(source: BOA, D.BŞM.d.3596 [18 Ş 1174/25 March 1761])

Name	Regiment	Service	Number of Süreks	Sürek Animals
Arabzâde Süleyman Agha	62nd <i>cemaat</i>	-	4	500
Elhac Süleyman Efendi	-	-	5	630
Elhac Toklu Ahmed Agha	62nd <i>cemaat</i>	-	6	740
Esseyyid Elhac Attar Ali	-	-	6	750
Esseyyid Elhac Attar Mehmed	-	-	2	250
Esseyyid Elhac Veli	-	-	2	280
Elhac Kara Ahmed	-	-	1	140
Uzunzâde Elhac Süleyman	-	-	1	135
Müftüzâde Elhac Ahmed	47th <i>bölük</i>	-	1	155
Melikizâde Molla Ahmed	62nd <i>cemaat</i>	-	1	160
Zebun Alemdar damadı Ali Beşe	59th <i>bölük</i>	-	1	150
Elhac Kara Ali Agha	59th <i>bölük</i>	-	2	260
Receb Ağzâde Esseyyid Mustafa Agha	62nd <i>cemaat</i>	-	3	370
Berkoğlu İbiş Beşe	47th <i>bölük</i>	-	1	145
Berkoğlu İsmail Agha	47th <i>bölük</i>	-	4	500
Esseyyid Elhac Hasan Alemdar	62nd <i>cemaat</i>	<i>Alemdar</i>	1	160
Şişman Osman Agha	62nd <i>cemaat</i>	-	1	150
Esseyyid Elhac Kocalı Ali	59th <i>bölük</i>	-	1	145
Elhac Uzun Ahmed	62nd <i>cemaat</i>	-	1	165
Esseyyid Ali Bey	47th <i>bölük</i>	-	2	260
Kalyoncu İbrahim Beşe	62nd <i>cemaat</i>	-	1	150
Kalyoncu Osman Beşe	47th <i>bölük</i>	-	1	125
Hamamcı Elhac Hasan	62nd <i>cemaat</i>	-	3	380
Kalavi Elhac Abdullah	47th <i>bölük</i>	-	1	165
Hasan Beşe, Reiszâde Süleyman şeriki	-	-	1	155
Elhac Tiryaki Mehmed Alemdar	66th <i>cemaat</i>	<i>Alemdar</i>	1	165
Esseyyid Elhac İbrahim	47th <i>bölük</i>	-	2	300
Kalavi Elhac Hasan	-	-	1	140
Çavuşzâde şeriki Haffaf Uzun Mustafa Beşe	-	-	2	300
Özili Mehmed Beşe	-	-	1	165
Zebun Mehmed Alemdar	47th <i>bölük</i>	<i>Alemdar</i>	1	155
Çatalcavi Elhac İsmail	-	-	1	170
Hafız Abdullah, Elhac Hasan karındaşı	-	-	1	130
Kızıloğlu Hasan Beşe	59th <i>bölük</i>	-	1	140
Tahir Mehmed Agha	66th <i>cemaat</i>	-	1	165
Elhac Mustafa	62nd <i>cemaat</i>	-	4	500
Esseyyid Molla Hasan	-	-	1	140

Name	Regiment	Service	Number of Süreks	Sürek Animals
Esseyyid Elhac Musa Agha	47th bölük	-	1	150
Esseyyid Abdullah Alemdar	55th bölük	<i>Alemdar</i>	1	140
Esseyyid Mustafa Molla	66th cemaat	-	2	310
İsmail Beşe ve şeriki Konstantin	-	-	2	300
Esseyyid Halil Yazıcı	-	<i>Yazıcı</i>	2	250
Boyacızâde şeriki Kara Mustafa	59th bölük	-	1	120
Tatar Mehmed şeriki Abdullah	62nd cemaat	-	1	130
Elhac Hasanzâde Ömer Agha	62nd cemaat	-	1	120
Elhac Tatar Osman	47th bölük	-	1	140
Çiğdemzâde Ahmed Agha	47th bölük	-	1	140
Süleyman Efendi damadı İsmail	-	-	1	150
Yazıcızâde Mustafa Agha	59th bölük	-	1	160
Halil Efendi damadı Esseyyid Hüseyin Komlak?	-	-	1	140
Balıkçı Halil Çelebi	-	-	1	120
Muamelecî Elhac Ahmed	62nd cemaat	-	1	300
Reiszâde Elhac Alioğlu Elhac Osman Beşe	59th bölük	-	1	140
Avezzâde Süleyman Agha	66th cemaat	-	1	130
Suturizâde Elhac Mustafa Agha	62nd cemaat	-	9	1000
Elhac Süleyman Alemdar	62nd cemaat	<i>Alemdar</i>	1	140
Topculu Elhac Mehmed	62nd cemaat	-	2	300
Suturizâde Osman Beşe	62nd cemaat	-	2	310
Manavoğlu Mehmed Beşe	62nd cemaat	-	1	130
Hafizzâde yeğeni Numan	62nd cemaat	-	1	125
Düğecizâde Elhac Mustafa Alemdar	59th bölük	<i>Alemdar</i>	1	130
Esseyyid Elhac Veys	66th cemaat	-	3	400
Şerif Elhac Hüseyin	62nd cemaat	-	4	500
Hallaç Bamkov? Elhac Hüseyin oğlu İbiş	62nd cemaat	-	2	240
Sarı Mehmed Molla	-	-	1	120
Pazarbaşızâde Abdullah Beşe	59th bölük	-	1	120
Fındıklıvi Molla Osman	-	-	1	130
Gökçüoğlu Elhac Hüseyin oğlu İbiş Agha	59th bölük	-	1	140
İstanbullu Çelebi Ağa'nın Mehmed	47th bölük	-	1	130
Emirköylü Elhac Solak Ali	51st bölük	-	1	120
Furuncu'nun Ali	59th bölük	-	1	125
Dallızâde Ömer Beşe	59th bölük	-	1	130
Kör Elhac Hüseyin oğlu Elhac Mehmed	62nd cemaat	-	1	140
Elhac Çakal Osman	59th bölük	-	1	150
Tolcuvi Elhac Ebubekir	62nd cemaat	-	2	230
Hanoğlu Hasan Beşe	66th cemaat	-	1	130
Koluklu Halil Beşe	66th cemaat	-	1	140

# JANISSARIES AT THE CROSSROADS

## ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL DYNAMICS IN THE NORTHERN BLACK SEA REGION (1734-1774)

Anna SYDORENKO\*

### *Introduction*

THE FORTRESSES AND PORT CITIES OF OCHAKOV (Ott. Özi), Perekop (Ott. Or), and Kinburn (Ott. Kılburun) were strategically located in the northern borderlands of the Ottoman Empire. The eighteenth century saw the northern Black Sea coast as a frontier between the expanding Russian Empire, the Ottoman Empire, and the Crimean Khanate. This area was frequently contested, with Russia seeking to secure access to the Black Sea and expand its influence southwards, while the Ottomans and Crimean Tatars aimed to maintain control over these strategic territories. The northern Black Sea region became a focal point where the economic and political interests of the Ottoman Empire, Crimean Khanate, Zaporozhian Host, Hetmanate, and Russian Empire converged and frequently clashed. This intersection created a turbulent environment characterised by frequent conflicts, shifting alliances, collaborations, and a constant struggle for dominance.

The fortresses and port cities of Ochakov, Perekop, and Kinburn were critical military, administrative, and trade hubs in the northern Black Sea region during the eighteenth century. These cities were strategically positioned at the crossroads of essential trade routes and geostrategic centres, making them focal points where the economic and political interests of the abovementioned states and empires converged, leading to frequent conflicts or collaborations.

This paper aims to investigate the political and economic interactions of the Janissaries from the Ochakov, Perekop, and Kinburn fortresses with neighbouring powers in this frontier area during a period of significant transformation. It examines the final decades before the conquest and annexation of this region by the

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\* Foundation for Research and Technology-Hellas, Institute for Mediterranean Studies.

Russian Empire, focusing specifically on the years 1734 to 1774. This time span is characterised by escalating Ottoman-Russian tensions, increasing Russian territorial ambitions, and shifting alliances with local powers such as the Crimean Tatars, the Zaporozhian Cossacks and the Hetmanate. This timeframe captures the socio-economic and geopolitical shifts that reshaped interactions between the Janissaries and neighbouring entities, as Russia's steady penetration into the region impacted long-standing trade networks, military alliances, and cross-cultural exchanges. The Janissaries served as key intermediaries in trade and economic activities, influenced by the broader objectives of the Ottoman Empire and Russia. Their involvement highlights the escalating struggle for control over this strategically significant frontier.

So far, researchers have largely overlooked the role of networks formed between the Janissaries, Zaporozhian Cossacks, and Ukrainians, as well as their evolution throughout the eighteenth century due to Russian expansion. English, Russian, and Ukrainian historiographies primarily concentrate on the military and political history of steppe-borderland relations, with only a few works addressing trade collaborations and activities among the various actors in the broader region.<sup>1</sup> One significant work that sheds light on the multifaceted relations of the Janissaries with

1 O. Sereda, 'Ozi Steppe on the Ottoman-Ukraine Border', *The Journal of Southeastern European Studies*, 35 (2020), 17-34; Idem, *Османсько-українське степове порубіжжя в османсько-турецьких джерелах XVIII ст.* [The Ottoman-Ukrainian Steppe Borderlands in Ottoman-Turkish Sources of the 18th Century] (Odesa 2015); B. Davies, *Warfare, State and Society on the Black Sea Steppe, 1500-1700* (London and New York 2007); F. Turanly, 'The Military Cooperation between the Crimean Khanate and the Zaporozhian Host in the Second Quarter of the XVIIth Century', *Східноєвропейський історичний вісник [East European Historical Bulletin]*, 11 (2019), 39-55; V. Ostapchuk, 'The Human Landscape of the Ottoman Black Sea in the Face of the Cossack Naval Raids', *Oriente Moderno* (Nuova serie, *The Ottomans and the Sea*), 20/81 (2001), 23-95; K. Kočegarov, 'The Moscow Uprising of 1682: Relations between Russia, the Crimean Khanate, and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth', in D. Klein (ed.), *The Crimean Khanate between East and West (15th-18th Century)* (Harrassowitz 2012), 59-75; T. Chukhlib, *Козаки та яничари. Україна у християнсько-мусульманських війнах 1500-1700 рр.* [Cossacks and Janissaries. Ukraine in the Christian-Muslim Wars, 1500-1700] (Kyiv 2010); R. Deinkov, 'Россия, Турция и Крымское Ханство: геополитическая ситуация в Северном Причерноморье в период с 30-х гг XVIII в. по 1873 г' [Russia, Turkey and the Crimean Khanate: The Geopolitical Situation in the Northern Black Sea Region, 1730s to 1783], unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Moscow Region State University, 2012; D. Kołodziejczyk, *The Crimean Khanate and Poland-Lithuania International Diplomacy on the European Periphery (15th-18th Century). A Study of Peace Treaties Followed by Annotated Documents* (Leiden 2011); I. Carras, 'Το δια θαλάσσης εμπόριο από την Καζακία και τη Ρωσία, 1696-1774' [Maritime Trade from Kazakia and Russia, 1696-1774], in E. Sifneos and G. Harlaflis (eds), *Οι Έλληνες της Αζοφικής, 18ος - αρχές 20ου αιώνα* [Greeks in the Azov, 18th-Beginning of the 20th Century] (Athens 2015), 329-345; A. Halenko, 'Towards the Character of Ottoman Policy in the Northern Black Sea Region after the Treaty of Belgrade (1783)', *Oriente Moderno* (Nuova serie, *The Ottoman*

neighbouring powers is by Svitlana Andreeva. Despite primarily focusing on the relationship between the Zaporozhian Cossacks and the Crimean Khanate, it provides valuable insights into these complex interactions, offering a deeper understanding of the political, economic, and social dynamics at play. Andreeva's research highlights the interconnectedness of these populations and underscores the significant impact of their relationships on the broader region's history.<sup>2</sup> Volodymyr Golobutskyi, a Ukrainian Soviet historian, provides important insights into the interfaces between the Cossacks and the Janissaries of the northern Black Sea coast through his study of the Zaporozhian Sich (the physical settlement and stronghold where the Zaporozhian Cossacks lived, organised, and governed themselves, as well as the centre for their military and political leadership [Kosh]). Golobutskyi's work is important in understanding the broader context of steppe-borderland relations.<sup>3</sup>

However, none of these works adequately highlight the significant presence and role of the Janissaries in the steppeland. Their contributions are often underestimated, and historians frequently overlook the distinctions between the Janissaries and the Crimean Tatars. This oversight results in a lack of recognition of the unique influence the Janissaries exerted in the region. The failure to differentiate between these groups obscures the political, military, and economic impacts of the Janissaries on the steppeland's history. Therefore, closer examination is necessary to appreciate the distinct and important role the Janissaries played in shaping the dynamics of the northern Black Sea frontier.

The present paper is based on archives from the Central State Historical Archive of Ukraine, which houses the Archive of the Kosh (Head) of the Zaporozhian Sich (AKZS), containing documents from 1713 to 1776, though the main core of documents covers the period 1734-1774. These documents are crucial for studying the political, social, cultural, and economic relations on the northern Black Sea frontier. The archive's complex history and the various languages of its documents (Ukrainian, Russian, Ottoman, Greek, Armenian, Polish) reflect the region's diverse interactions. Despite its poor condition and historical fragmentation, the archive offers valuable insights into interactions between the Zaporozhian Cossacks, Crimean Tatars, Janissaries, and other regional powers. The archival documents from this period contain a rich array of materials reflecting the political, social, and economic

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*Empire in the Eighteenth Century*), 18/79 (1999), 101-112; A. W. Fisher, *A Precarious Balance: Conflict, Trade, and Diplomacy on the Russian-Ottoman Frontier* (Istanbul 1999).

- 2 S. Andreeva, 'Взаємини Запорозжя і Кримського ханства періоду Нової Січі (1734-1775 pp.)' [Relations between Zaporizhzhia and the Crimean Khanate in the Period of the New Sich (1734-1775)], unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Zaporizhzhia National University, 2006.
- 3 V. Golobutskyi, *Запорізька Січ в останні часи свого існування 1734-1775* [Zaporizhzhian Sich in the Last Days of its Existence, 1743-1775] (Kyiv 1961).

dynamics of Janissary interactions in the northern Black Sea region. One major category includes records of the Commissions of Inquiry (AKZS), established by Russian authorities to mediate conflicts and maintain stability between the Janissaries, Zaporozhian Cossacks, Crimean Tatars, and Ukrainians. These records capture detailed accounts of disputes, resolutions, and official proceedings, providing insight into the conflicts arising from cross-border trade, thefts, injuries, and land claims. Each case in the documents includes specifics such as the names of the parties involved, items of dispute, and the geographical locations of the incidents, sometimes with resolutions. Through petitions and complaints, the archival material also illuminates the Janissaries' involvement in local trade, often in collaboration with Cossacks and other regional actors, demonstrating a unique interplay of commercial, political, and cultural interests in a volatile frontier environment.

Complementing this, the Office of the Gubernia of Kyiv archive reveals the extent of Russian administrative control over the region and its relations with neighbouring states, providing additional insights into trade, diplomacy, and conflict resolution. In the Hetmanate, Russian policy heavily relied on the authority of the governor-general of Kyiv, who wielded concentrated power due to the frontier status of Kyiv Gubernia. Under a 1737 law, he was authorised to intervene in the internal affairs of the Zaporozhian Kosh, including oversight of its foreign policy, thereby enhancing Russian influence. The governor-general facilitated communication between the Sich administration and the imperial court, while the Zaporozhian Kosh managed interactions between the Hetmanate and the Crimean Khanate. This framework significantly strengthened Russian influence over the Zaporozhian region. Initially, Russian authorities perceived the potential for the Zaporozhians to realign with the Crimean Khanate as a threat. However, by the late 1750s Russian intervention in the Sich's dealings with the Khanate began to diminish, as evidenced by the increasing direct correspondence recorded in the Office of the Gubernia of Kyiv (OGK) archives. These archives, housed in the Central State Historical Archive of Ukraine, illuminate the complexities of diplomatic relations among the Zaporozhian Sich, the Ottomans, and the Crimean Tatars, offering valuable insights into Russian interference and the dynamics of these relationships. Additionally, the OGK archives provide information on trade across the Black Sea littoral, documenting commercial networks among Muslims in the Crimean Khanate and non-Muslim entrepreneurs, including Zaporozhian Cossacks, Ukrainians, Russians, Greeks, and Armenians. Trade records – such as merchant passports, customs reports, and duties collected – yield statistical data on goods and people traveling through the region, outlining trade routes and enterprises.<sup>4</sup>

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4 For a discussion on the use of Ukrainian archives, including their history, challenges, and



The sources in Ukrainian archives can provide new insights into the numerous connections between the Janissary population in the Ottoman northern frontier and the three main powers in the region: the Zaporozhian Cossacks, the Ukrainians, and the Russians. Obviously, examining these relations and interactions solely through the lens of Ukrainian archives and published sources<sup>5</sup> may lead to distortions and methodological gaps. A more comprehensive and accurate understanding could be achieved by integrating these Ukrainian sources with the extensive array of relevant documents preserved in Russian and Ottoman/Crimean archives. The combined study of these diverse sources would provide a richer and more nuanced picture of the historical dynamics at play. However, in this paper, I will primarily focus on the Ukrainian archives, acknowledging their limitations while aiming to highlight the unique perspectives they offer.<sup>6</sup> This approach seeks to contribute to the broader

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potential in studying the presence of Janissaries on the Northern Black Sea Frontier, see: A. Sydorenko, 'Using the Ukrainian Archives for the Study of Janissary Networks in the Northern Black Sea: Research Perspectives and Challenges', in Y. Spyropoulos (ed.), *Insights into Janissary Networks, 1700-1826* [special issue of *Cihannüma: Journal of History and Geography Studies*, 8/1 (2022)], 129-144. <https://doi.org/10.30517/cihannuma.1131057>.

- 5 Published sources utilised for this article: A. Andreevskiy, 'Матеріали, касаючіся запорожцев с 1715 по 1774 гг.' [Documents Concerning the Zaporozhians, 1715-1774], *Записки Императорского Одесского общества истории и древностей* [Notes of the Imperial Odessa Society of History and Antiquities], 14 (1886); Idem, *Материалы по истории Запорожья и пограничных отношений(1743-1767)* [Documents on the History of Zaporozhzhia and Border Relations (1743-1767)] (Odessa 1893); L. Gistsova, (ed.), *Архів Коша Нової Запорозької Січі, 1734-1775: корпус документів* [Archive of the Kosh of the New Zaporozhian Sich, Corpus of Documents, 1734-1775], Vol. I (Kyiv 1998); Eadem (ed.), *Архів Коша Нової Запорозької Січі, 1734-1775: корпус документів* [Archive of the Kosh of the New Zaporozhian Sich, Corpus of Documents, 1734-1775], Vol. II (Kyiv 2000); Eadem (ed.), *Архів Коша Нової Запорозької Січі, 1734-1775: корпус документів* [Archive of the Kosh of the New Zaporozhian Sich, Corpus of Documents, 1734-1775], Vol. III (Kyiv 2003); Eadem (ed.), *Архів Коша Нової Запорозької Січі, 1734-1775: корпус документів* [Archive of the Kosh of the New Zaporozhian Sich, Corpus of Documents, 1734-1775], Vol. IV (Kyiv 2006); Eadem (ed.), *Архів Коша Нової Запорозької Січі, 1734-1775: корпус документів* [Archive of the Kosh of the New Zaporozhian Sich, corpus of documents 1734-1775], Vol. V (Kyiv 2008); S. Andreeva, 'Матеріали з історії Південної України XVIII ст. у фондах Архіву зовнішньої політики Російської імперії' [Documents on the History of Southern Ukraine in the 18th Century in the Holdings of the Archive of Foreign Policy of the Russian Empire], *Записки науково-дослідницької лабораторії історії Південної України Запорізького держ. ун-ту : Південна Україна XVIII-XIX століття* [Notes of the Research Laboratory of the History of Southern Ukraine of ZDU: Southern Ukraine in the 18th-19th Centuries], 7 (2006), 13-34.
- 6 One such limitation is, for instance, the lack of reference to fortresses on the northern Ottoman border which were important hubs of Janissary activity, such as Khotyn (Ott. Hotin). For some basic literature on the above fortress, see Ö. Bıyık, 'Osmanlı-Rus Hududunda Bir Kale: XVIII. Yüzyılda Hotin', *Tarih İncelemeleri Dergisi*, 29/2 (2014), 489-513; *TDVİA*, s.v., 'Hotin' (D. Kołodziejczyk), 253-254; M. Kaczka, 'Pashas and Nobles: Vernacular Diplomacy and Cross-

discourse by presenting underexplored aspects of the Janissaries' interactions with neighbouring powers, laying the groundwork for future studies that incorporate a wider range of archival materials.

### *Geopolitical dynamics in the Black Sea steppe*

During the eighteenth century, the prevailing power dynamics among the dominant entities in the vast Black Sea steppe – from the Prut River in the west to the Kuban River in the east – had significantly altered, heavily influencing the dynamics of the function and development of the Ottoman fortresses in the region. By the latter half of the seventeenth century, major shifts had also reshaped the political landscape in the Black Sea steppe region. Polish control over Ukrainian territories and the Cossacks had led to mounting social and religious tensions, which erupted in a major revolt in 1648. Led by Bohdan Khmelnytsky, hetman of the Zaporozhian Cossacks, this uprising triggered decades of warfare and unrest. Seeking strategic support, Khmelnytsky first allied with the Crimean Tatars and later with Moscow's tsar, a pivotal decision that catalysed Russian influence in Ukrainian lands. Although Khmelnytsky managed to establish control over much of Ukraine as a Cossack-led state, civil strife and external invasions ultimately derailed this opportunity for Ukrainian political self-rule. The tumultuous period concluded in 1686, with the division of Cossack Ukraine among its powerful neighbours.

With the Cossacks and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth weakened, Russia solidified its hold over the region, while the Ottomans and the Crimean Khanate sought to preserve their influence and prevent Russian access to the Black Sea. Consequently, Cossack Ukraine split into three regions: the Right Bank, nominally restored to Polish control; the Left Bank Hetmanate, recognised under Russian authority; and the Zaporozhian Sich. This reconfiguration created new social, cultural, and economic dynamics in the frontier zone, with port cities along the northern Black Sea coast becoming vital to the eighteenth-century Russian-Ottoman rivalry. After four Ottoman-Russian wars (1686-1700, 1710-1711, 1735-1739, 1768-1774),

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-Border Networks in Ottoman-Polish Diplomatic Relations, 1699-1730', in H. Topaktaş and N. Królikowska (eds), *Türkiye-Polonya İlişkilerinde Temas Alanları (1414 2014)* (Ankara 2017), 523-535. M. Kaczka and D. Kołodziejczyk (eds), *Turecki pasza i szlachta: korespondencja osmańskiego gubernatora Chocimia Iliasza Kołczaka paszy ze szlachtą Rzeczypospolitej z lat 1730–1739* [Turkish Pasha and the Nobility: Correspondence of the Ottoman Governor of Khotyn, Ilyas Kołczak Pasha, with the Nobility of the Commonwealth from 1730–1739] (Warsaw 2020).

the Russians ultimately succeeded in capturing all the fortresses that had served as bases for significant Janissary activity.

In the midst of these developments, the Zaporozhian Sich underwent profound geopolitical changes. The turbulence of the seventeenth century had reduced its prominence as the core of Cossack Ukraine, while looting and military service – its main revenue sources – were increasingly replaced by fishing, grazing, beekeeping, and trade. Although occasional raids continued, looting was no longer an organised military pursuit. By the early eighteenth century, the Zaporozhian lands became embroiled in the Great Northern War (1700-1721), which involved two major conflicts: Muscovy's struggle with Sweden for control of the Baltic, and its contention with the Ottomans over Black Sea access. Under hetman Ivan Mazepa, the Cossacks initially fought alongside Russia in both conflicts. However, they later shifted allegiance to Swedish King Charles XII, seeking autonomy under Swedish protection. This alliance with Sweden led to the destruction of the Zaporozhian Sich by Peter I, forcing the Zaporozhians to relocate to Oleshky in Crimean territory from 1711 to 1734. During their time under Crimean Khanate protection, the Zaporozhians fostered trade and social connections along the northern Ottoman frontier – a vital yet underexamined aspect of this transitional period. Soon after settling in Oleshky, some Zaporozhian leaders sought to return to Moscow's rule, a request granted in 1734 when they reclaimed their former lands and reestablished a new Sich near their old location.<sup>7</sup>

### *Regulation of relations and border management*

The Belgrade Peace Treaty of 1739 represented a pivotal milestone in the history of international Black Sea steppe relations, marking the formal southward advancement of the Russian-Turkish border. Nevertheless, the Ottomans successfully preserved their steppe frontier, keeping Russian influence far from the coastline and prohibiting the establishment of a Russian fleet in the Black Sea. Russian merchants

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7 For a detailed analysis and presentation of the political and military dynamics in the Black Sea steppe see, for example, Davies, *Warfare, State and Society*; P. R. Magocsi, *A History of Ukraine: The Land and its Peoples* (Toronto, Buffalo, and London 2010); C. King, *The Black Sea: A History* (Oxford 2004); R. E. Jones, 'Opening a Window on the South: Russia and the Black Sea 1695-1792', in M. Di Salvo and L. Hughes (eds), *A Window on Russia, Papers from the V International Conference of the Study Group on Eighteenth-Century Russia* (Rome 1996), 123-130; V. Ostapchuk, 'Cossack Ukraine in and out of Ottoman Orbit, 1648-1681', in G. Kármán and L. Kunčević (eds), *The European Tributary States of the Ottoman Empire in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Leiden and Boston 2013), 123-152; V. Aksan, *Ottoman Wars, 1700-1870: An Empire Besieged* (London 2007).

were compelled to use Ottoman ships for their trade. This stipulation demonstrates the Ottomans' strategic control over maritime commerce in the region. Despite these maritime restrictions, the Ottomans granted Russian merchants the same commercial privileges as other foreign subjects, indicating a willingness to make economic concessions while maintaining strategic military and territorial control.

The Belgrade Treaty of 1739 regulated relations between the Ottoman and Russian Empires and their vassals from 1739 to 1768. Key provisions included Article 3, which designated Azov as a buffer zone and prohibited Russia from maintaining a fleet in the Black and Azov Seas. Articles 2, 4, and 15 emphasised the need for border delimitation which would affect the traditional order of coexistence in the steppe, while Article 10 provided a detailed mechanism for resolving border disputes through the involvement of officials from both sides.

Article 10 of the Belgrade Treaty, mandating that all disputes between frontier populations be addressed by border governors and commandants, established a framework for the maintenance of order in the border areas. This legal provision served as a foundation for the orderly management of the frontier zones for many years, highlighting the treaty's role in fostering stability and cooperation, which was nevertheless not always achievable.

The Belgrade Treaty laid the legal groundwork for a range of economic, commercial, political, and ethno-cultural interactions among Russian, Ottoman, Ukrainian, Zaporozhian, and Tatar populations during the largely peaceful period from 1739 to 1768. Its provisions reflect both the strategic and economic considerations of the time, underscoring the complexity of Ottoman-Russian relations in the Black Sea region.<sup>8</sup>

One of the important outcomes of the Belgrade Treaty were the Commissions of Inquiry established to resolve conflicts and disputes among the Janissaries, Crimean Tatars, and Zaporozhian Cossacks under Russian jurisdiction. These Commissions convened multiple times, including in 1749, 1752, 1753-1754, 1763, 1764-1765, and 1768, to address various issues such as theft, injuries, murders, and captivity-related events. Each commission reviewed complaints collected over the years, often examining cases that spanned multiple years. For instance, the first Commission in 1749 addressed disputes dating back to 1740. The process involved collecting evidence, issuing bilingual documents (Ukrainian and Ottoman), and sometimes reaching deadlock due to disagreements among the parties.

The records from these Commissions provide detailed descriptions of the conflicts, including the time, place, subject of the disputes, names of litigants, and final judgments. For example, an acquittal record from 1750 mentions Janissary Bekir

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8 Andreeva, 'Relations between', 37-39.

Beşe receiving compensation for stolen cattle from the Zaporozhian Kosh, with witnesses listed from the Crimean region. Such documents highlight the varied interactions in the frontier, including trade and travel, which often involved risks such as robberies and transgressive behaviours due to the unstable political landscape. Beyond conflict resolution, the Commissions had to address border-related issues, as the lands near the borderline were economically vital. Janissary shepherds frequently crossed into Zaporozhian lands for grazing, leading to disputes. Records reveal instances of collaboration, such as a Janissary hiring a Cossack to graze sheep in Perekop. These documents underscore the complex, cooperative, and sometimes confrontational nature of frontier interactions, driven by economic necessity and geographical proximity. The detailed records of the Commissions also illustrate the broader geopolitical context, including the Russian effort to maintain stability and control in the region.<sup>9</sup>

### *The strategic and economic importance of Ochakov, Perekop, and Kinburn in the eighteenth century*

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the fortress port city of Ochakov emerged as a crucial stronghold for defending the Ottoman Empire's northern borders, where substantial Ottoman military forces were stationed.<sup>10</sup> Ochakov controlled access to the Dniester and Southern Bug rivers, key waterways for regional trade and military movements. The city developed as a vital transit port facilitating the exchange of goods between Istanbul, Crimean port-cities, Zaporozhian, Ukrainian lands, and Russian territories. The bustling port served as a hub for merchants from different parts of the Ottoman Empire and northern powers, fostering trade exchanges and reinforcing its significance as both a maritime and land trade node.

Ochakov's strategic location on the right bank near the mouth of the Dnieper River allowed it to take advantage of the natural topography, being constructed on

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9 Центральний державний історичний архів України, м. Київ/Central State Historical Archive of Ukraine, Kyiv, (TSDIAK of Ukraine), fond 229/opis 1/sprava 11; 12; 14; 17; 90; 97; 101; 139; 140; 144; 162; 163; 189; 191; 216; fond 59/opis 1/sprava 1707; S. Andreeva, 'Комісії для вирішення взаємних претензій татар і запорожців періоду Нової Січі' [Commissions for Resolving Mutual Claims between the Tatars and the Zaporozhians during the Period of the New Sich], *Записки науково-дослідницької лабораторії історії Південної України Запорізького держ. ун-ту: Південна Україна XVIII-XIX століття* [Notes of the Research Laboratory of the History of Southern Ukraine of ZDU: Southern Ukraine in the 18th-19th Centuries], 1 (2006), 40-47.

10 Sereda, 'Ozi Steppe', 18.

a small slope. The prominent pier known as Hasan Pasha provided access to stone warehouses, serving as a hub for loading and unloading goods. The lower part of Ochakov, with its numerous shops, cafes, vibrant market area, and various port facilities, reflected its importance as a bustling economic hub. In contrast, the upper part of Ochakov accommodated garrisons, residential houses, and administration buildings, emphasising its role as a military stronghold. The city's large garrison of 1,719<sup>11</sup> soldiers in 1762 underscores its critical role in the defence and control of the region, particularly given its strategic location at the crossroads of major trade routes and waterways on the right bank of the Dnieper River. This significant military presence highlights Ochakov's importance as a vital stronghold in the region (Table I). The layout of the city, with a clear division between its lower and upper parts, highlighted the distinct functions and strategic significance of different sections, reflecting, in other words, the city's layered social and spatial organisation, which was influenced by both its strategic military role and its economic activities.

Place of Appointment	Number of Soldiers
Özi	1,719
Kilburun	172
Or	631
Kefe	979
Rabat	326
Kale-i Cedid	696

**Table I:** Manpower per place of service in the main fortresses of the Northern Black Sea coast (1762)<sup>12</sup>

During the eighteenth century Ochakov evolved into a notable political centre, due to its proximity to the boundary of the Ottoman Empire. This transformation occurred in a period marked by the gradual expansion of Russian influence towards the northern coast of the Black Sea. The city's position as a frontier fortress made it pivotal in the ongoing power struggle between the Ottoman Empire and expanding Russian influence. Ochakov became a focal point for diplomatic negotiations, military manoeuvres, and territorial disputes.

11 It is important to note that the official payroll records for the garrison only accounted for salaried soldiers, excluding the numerous pseudo-Janissaries active in this port and throughout the wider region. For an in-depth analysis of the phenomenon of pseudo-Janissarism in the Ottoman provinces, see Y. Spyropoulos and A. Yıldız, 'Pseudo-Janissarism (*Yeniçerilik İddiası*) in the Ottoman Provinces (with Special Reference to Adana): Its Emergence and Its Geographic and Socio-Economic Aspects', in Y. Spyropoulos (ed.), *Insights into Janissary Networks, 1700-1826* [special issue of *Cihannüma: Journal of History and Geography Studies* 8/1 (2022)], 9-54.

12 Source: <https://janet.ims.forth.gr>. The data on the website come from BOA, MAD.d.6536.

Non-Muslim inhabitants, including Greeks, Armenians, Jews, and Zaporozhian Cossacks resided outside the city walls of Ochakov and in the Ochakov steppe. The surrounding area under the fortress's jurisdiction was home to villagers and peasants, maintaining a clear distinction between the fortified core and the surrounding settlements. The Janissaries' interaction and coexistence with other non-Muslim populations require thorough exploration to fully understand their dynamics.<sup>13</sup>

The Ochakov southeastern boundary was marked by a sandy spit known as Kinburn, which was manned by Janissaries. Located at the mouth of the Dnieper River, it served as a defensive outpost protecting the river entrance and was crucial for both naval and land operations. The Janissaries recognised the significance of the Kinburn spit, and constructed additional fortifications to secure it. With a garrison of 172 Janissaries (Table I) in 1762, Kinburn played a crucial but more modest role in the defence of the region compared to larger fortresses like Ochakov and Perekop. The relatively small number of soldiers stationed at Kinburn suggests that, while strategically important for controlling access to the Dnieper River, it did not support a large permanent population of Janissaries. Although the outpost was located within the territory of the Crimean Khanate, the Zaporozhian Cossacks were granted the right to establish a customs, military, and administrative point there. Traditionally, the Cossacks moved to the area for fishing and salt extraction, establishing temporary settlements. This movement was usually seasonal, although some Cossacks stayed throughout the year. Confrontation between the Zaporozhian Cossacks, Janissaries, and Tatars began in the 1740s, when the Janissaries asserted their role in the significant salt trade (Image I).<sup>14</sup>

In contrast, Perekop, with a garrison of 631 soldiers (Table I), was a more significant fortress, given its strategic location on the isthmus connecting the Crimean Peninsula to the mainland. The existence of around 400 houses within Perekop suggests a more substantial and stable civilian population, likely supported by the critical military and economic activities in the area. Perekop's role as a checkpoint for goods and military forces between Crimea and the mainland attracted a mix of military personnel and traders, contributing to a more developed and permanent population than at Kinburn.<sup>15</sup>

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13 Andreevskiy, *Documents Concerning*, 8, 13, 16.

14 A. V. Zubkov, 'Малодосліджені сторінки Прогноївської паланки (кін .XVIст. – 1792 р.)' [Little-Known Pages of the Prohnoivska Palanka (Late 16th Century-1792)], *Таврійський степ: Альманах [Tavria Steppe: Almanac]*, 1, (1999), 23-28; TSDIAK of Ukraine, fond 229/opis 1/sprava 30, 50, 138, TSDIAK of Ukraine, fond 59/opis 1/sprava 1581, folio 2-12.

15 Andreevskiy, *Documents Concerning*, 17.



**Image I:** Ochakov and Kinburn fortresses at the mouth of the Dnieper River<sup>16</sup>

### *Land and maritime trade and routes*

Janissary merchants were central to regional trade, importing a diverse range of goods – including metal products, weapons, wine, tobacco, dried fruits, pottery, leather goods, soap, and various food supplies – from the markets of the Crimean Khanate and Ottoman ports, particularly Istanbul. These imports were then distributed throughout the Zaporozhian Sich and across Ukraine, integrating those areas into a broader trade network.<sup>17</sup> Unfortunately, available Ukrainian records do not provide detailed statistical data on the volume of these imports. However, numerous administrative documents underscore the significance of this trade. Recognising its critical importance, in 1744, 1745, and 1748 the governor-general of Russia

16 Source: *Wahre Abbildung der durch die Gloreiche Russische Waffen den 2. Julii 1737 mit Sturm eroberten Vestung Oczakov*, <https://www.digam.net/document.php?dok=4844>.

17 TSDIAK of Ukraine, fond 59/opis 1/sprava 1581; O. Varabanov, 'Товарооборот Черноморской торговли в XVIII в.' [Black Sea Trade Turnover in the 18th century], *Материалы по археологии, истории и этнографии Таврии* [Materials on Archaeology, History and Ethnography of Tavria], 3 (1993), 279-284; M. Tyshchenko, *Нариси з історії зовнішньої торгівлі України в XVIII в.* [Essays on the History of Ukraine's Foreign Trade in the 18th Century] (Bila Tserkva 2010), 25-26, 103, 107.



instructed the Hetmanate authorities to meticulously record the trade movements from the Ottoman Empire and the Ottoman fortresses of the Crimean Khanate to the Zaporozhian Sich and Hetmanate. The directive aimed to monitor the flow of goods, highlighting the strategic value placed on these trade routes and their impact on the regional economy.<sup>18</sup>

In 1760, the Russian government issued a decree prohibiting the export of horses and butter to Crimea. This protectionist policy caused considerable concern for the Janissary Agha (no name mentioned) of Perekop, who saw the decree as a significant disruption to frontier trade. The Agha argued that such restrictions undermined the economic stability of the region, where the trade of these goods had been vital. The prohibition not only affected the livelihoods of local traders but also strained longstanding commercial relationships between the Crimean and Russian territories. The Agha expressed his distress, pointing out that the decree ignored the interdependence of these frontier economies and warned that continued enforcement could lead to heightened tensions and economic hardship on both sides of the border. His concerns highlighted the broader impact of the Russian protectionist policies on regional trade dynamics and the intricate balance of cross-border commerce.<sup>19</sup>

In 1763, the Kaymakam (Deputy Governor) of Özi, Osman Agha, lodged a formal complaint with the Kosh regarding the prohibition against importing metal products and weaponry to the Zaporozhian Sich. He emphasised the “traditional character of the trade” between the two regions, arguing that the established commerce was not only economically beneficial but also deeply rooted in their historical relationship. Osman Agha warned that if the prohibition was not lifted, he would escalate the issue by reporting it to the Crimean Khan. His plea underscored the critical importance of maintaining trade connections for the prosperity of both regions.<sup>20</sup>

The Janissary merchants facilitated the export of local Ukrainian and Zaporozhian resources, such as livestock, wood, fish, furs, and cow butter, to the markets of Ochakov and Perekop. From there, the goods were transported to the bustling markets of the Crimean Khanate and even as far as Istanbul. The strategic locations of Ochakov and Perekop as both transit ports and land hubs played a pivotal role in their economic activities, positioning them as crucial intersections on trade routes that connected Russia, the Hetmanate, and the Zaporozhian Host with the Crimean Khanate and the Ottoman Empire.<sup>21</sup>

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18 TSDIAK of Ukraine, fond 59/opis 1/sprava 1582.

19 Golobutskyi, *Zaporizhzhian Sich*, 310-312.

20 TSDIAK of Ukraine, fond 229/opis 1/sprava 138, folio 23.

21 TSDIAK of Ukraine, fond 229/opis 1/sprava 63, folio 110-111; Barabanov, ‘Black Sea Trade’, 279-284.

The economic dynamics and natural resources of the areas surrounding these fortresses greatly influenced their import and export activities. Ochakov and Perokop evolved to serve dual functions: they were not only vital transit points that facilitated trade across borders, but also served as significant import centres to satisfy local demands for food and other essential goods. This dual functionality of the two cities underscores their essential role in regional trade networks, effectively linking vast and diverse territories through robust commercial exchanges. Their ability to adapt and respond to the economic needs and resources of their regions was key to their sustained importance in the trade dynamics of Eastern Europe and beyond.

The maritime trade routes extended from Ochakov to the Zaporozhian Sich via the Dnieper River and then by land, or to the Crimean Khanate port cities from Ochakov port or by land through Perokop and further to the south. Ottoman ships could sail directly to the Zaporozhian Sich or to the port at Ochakov. Perokop served as a major land hub from which merchant caravans travelled to northern markets and further south. However, from 1762, the Crimean Khanate implemented protectionist policies that significantly altered these trade dynamics.

On July 10, 1762, the Crimean Khan officially informed the Cossack leader Gryhoriy Fedorov of the cancellation of the direct sea trade route from Ochakov to the Zaporozhian Sich. Instead, a new route was established: Ochakov-Perokop-Gözleve (mod. Yevpatoria)-Sich. Under the new regulations, large Ottoman ships were banned from entering Zaporizhzhia. Goods had to be offloaded near Ochakov onto smaller riverboats, which then transported the merchandise to Perokop by land. From Perokop, the goods had to be transported overland to Gözleve, where they were subjected to duty payments before continuing their journey, as the customs there were farmed out to a Janissary Agha.<sup>22</sup>

This policy shift created a significant obstacle to the Zaporozhian Sich's trade with Ottoman ports. The new route added layers of complexity and additional costs due to multiple handling and duty payments. The prohibition on large ships entering Zaporizhzhia disrupted the efficient flow of goods, severely impacting economic activities in the region. These changes underscored the increasing control exerted by the Crimean Khanate over regional trade, reflecting broader geopolitical strategies aimed at consolidating power and economic influence over vital trade routes.

The Zaporozhian Cossacks repeatedly sought assistance to restore the old sea route by appealing to the Kyiv Governor-General, the Zaporozhian Kosh, the Crimean Khan, the Pasha of Ochakov and various Ottoman officials. They also made attempts to resolve the issue independently. However, it was only through the intervention of the Russian government that the matter was finally addressed,

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22 TSDIAK of Ukraine, fond 229/opis 1/sprava 157; *ibid.*, KMF 9/opis 2/sprava 135.

as Russian merchants' interests were also adversely affected by the Khan's customs policies.

In 1765, under pressure from O. Nikiforov, the Russian consul in Crimea, Selim Giray, the successor to Crimean Khan Kırım Giray, annulled the payment imposed by the Janissary Agha. This intervention by the Russian government helped to alleviate trade disruptions and restored more favourable trading conditions for both Cossack and Russian merchants.<sup>23</sup>

### *Complex interrelations and trade practices in the eighteenth-century Black Sea region*

Entrepreneurial collaboration between the Janissaries, Zaporozhian Cossacks, and other non-Muslim merchants was extensive, demonstrating tightly knit economic interrelations. During this period it was commonplace for individuals to engage in trade transactions on an instalment basis or on credit. By mutual agreement, often documented in writing, a merchant could defer full payment for goods or make only a partial payment upfront, with the remaining balance typically being settled after the merchant had successfully resold the goods.

Numerous examples illustrate these trade practices. On June 13, 1756, a Cossack named Ivan Chornyî complained to the Kosh about his debtor, a Janissary of Perekop, Kara Mehmed, who "bought tobacco from Chornyî on credit for the price of four hundred and forty rubles in Russian ruble coin".<sup>24</sup> In 1763, İbrahim Beşe, a Janissary merchant from Perekop, travelled to the Zaporozhian Sich to buy lard and collect debts totalling 16 *karbovanets*.<sup>25</sup> On August 3, 1763, in Perekop, Cossack Andriy Trohymovskiy sold goods on credit to Janissary Kara Kouloukoun Mourgat (Karakollukçu Murad?) Beşe for 54 *karbovanets* and 60 *kopecks*. The Janissary returned 38 *karbovanets* on time, but the rest remained in debt.<sup>26</sup> In 1762, two Janissaries from Perekop, Chort (Çürüt?) Hasan, and Emir Salih, loaned 852

23 TSDIAK of Ukraine, fond 229/opis 1/sprava 157.

24 TSDIAK of Ukraine, fond 229/opis 1/sprava 30, folio 56.

25 TSDIAK of Ukraine, fond 229/opis 1/sprava 138, folio 244; *Karbovanets* is the Ukrainian name for the ruble of the Russian Empire, which originated in the eighteenth century, see: V. A. Solomiî (eds), *Енциклопедія історії України* [Encyclopaedia of the History of Ukraine], Vol. IV (Kyiv 2007), 107. One silver ruble in the 1780s was equal to 1.25 piasters (*guruş*) (conversion is based on information from the following source from 1786: Th. C. Prousis, 'Risky Business: Russian Trade in the Ottoman Empire in the Early Nineteenth Century', *History Faculty Publications*, 9 [2005], 211). Also, 100 *kopecks* equaled one *karbovanets*.

26 TSDIAK of Ukraine, fond 229/opis 1/sprava 138, folio 132.

*karbovanets* at the customs point at the Zaporozhian Sich to two merchants, Ignat and Oleksi, from Elisavetograd.<sup>27</sup> This practice was largely influenced by the significant risks associated with transporting large sums of cash across the volatile Black Sea steppes, where the threat of theft or loss was ever-present. Additionally, merchants often faced a lack of sufficient capital to complete transactions immediately, necessitating the use of credit and instalment payments to facilitate trade.

The organisation of trade and credit in this manner was feasible despite the absence of a unified legal framework across the region. The success of these transactions relied heavily on the support and cooperation of border and central administrations, which played a crucial role in facilitating trade and ensuring that merchants could use these specific trade practices.

The maintenance of traditional relationships and networks was vital. Merchants often operated along well-established trade routes and relied on long-standing connections with other traders, local authorities, and border officials. Relationships were built on trust and mutual benefit, helping to smooth the process of credit-based transactions. Merchants could leverage their reputations and histories of reliable trade to negotiate favourable terms and ensure that agreements were honoured. However, trade was not always smooth and without problems, often relying on a fragile balance. Many cases illustrate the complexities of these interactions. In 1774, a Janissary named Ahmed and his companion bought sheep in the Zaporozhian Sich on a bill of exchange. Due to Ahmed's insolvency, the Ottoman court ordered that the sheep be transferred to other merchants with a four-month deferral of payments. This decision was subsequently confirmed by the Ochakov Pasha, and the Zaporozhian Kosh was duly informed.<sup>28</sup>

In 1749, Mahmud, the Pasha of Ochakov, informed the Kosh that a Greek merchant named Yanakii Mundzia had purchased merchandise worth 250 *akçes* from Mahmud, a Janissary of Ochakov, to sell in Zaporozhye. At that time, a Greek present in Zaporozhye testified that Mahmud owed 900 *akçes* and 10 *paras*. Yanakii Mundzia disclosed that his agreement with the Janissary had been made in 1743, stipulating that Mundzia would sell the goods provided by the Janissary outside the borders of the Khanate and that the profits would be divided equally between them. Over the two years following their agreement, the Janissary employed various tactics to avoid paying the full amounts owed to Mundzia. Frustrated by these ongoing deceptions, Mundzia decided to retain the 250 *akçes* as compensation for the unpaid sums. Additionally, he demanded the remaining 900 *akçes* owed to him. The situation highlighted the complexities and risks inherent in the mercantile practices of

27 TSDIAK of Ukraine, fond 229/opis 1/sprava 216, folio 35.

28 Andreevskiy, *Documents Concerning*, 33; TSDIAK of Ukraine, fond 229/opis 1/sprava 346.

the time, especially in regions where formal legal enforcement mechanisms were weak or non-existent. It also underscored the importance of trust and reputation in commercial relationships. The Janissary's failure to honour the agreement not only strained his relationship with Mundzia but also likely damaged his standing among other merchants and trading partners.<sup>29</sup>

This incident serves as a testament to the intricate web of economic interrelations that characterised trade in the region. Regardless of their ethnic or religious backgrounds, merchants frequently engaged in cross-cultural trade, relying on mutual agreements and personal integrity. The involvement of figures like the Pasha of Ochakov and the Kosh further illustrates how local authorities played pivotal roles in mediating disputes and maintaining the delicate balance of economic cooperation. The case of Yanakii Mundzia and Mahmud the Janissary is a vivid example of the challenges and intricacies of eighteenth-century trade, where personal agreements and trust were paramount, and where the resolution of disputes often required the intervention of local leaders and the assertion of individual rights against deceptive practices.

In addition to practical considerations of safety and trust, the use of credit and instalment payments allowed for greater flexibility in trade. Merchants could manage their cash flow more effectively, invest in larger quantities of goods, and expand their trading operations without being constrained by immediate cash availability. This system of credit and instalment payments thus played a crucial role in the economic dynamics of the region, fostering trade and facilitating economic growth despite the challenging conditions. Overall, the intricate interplay between merchant agreements, border administration support, and traditional trading relationships formed the backbone of a resilient and adaptable trade system. The system enabled merchants to navigate the dangers of the Black Sea steppes and thrive in an environment where formal legal structures were limited.

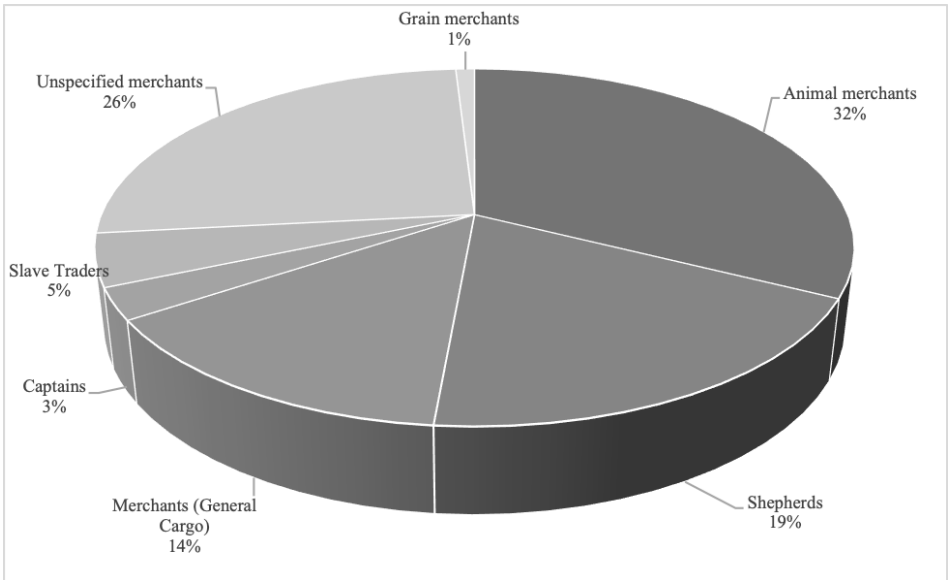
## *Economic and trade activities of the Janissaries of Ochakov and Perekop*

### 1. Animal trade

The role of animal trade was crucial in the frontier zone economy, with a significant portion of Janissary merchants – 32% (Graph I) – importing cattle, horses, and sheep from the Zaporozhian Host and Ukrainian lands to Ochakov and Perekop. The Zaporozhian region had a considerable advantage in cattle breeding due to its favourable natural conditions, which contrasted with the relatively arid lands around

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29 Andreevskiy, *Documents Concerning*, 68-71.



**Graph I:** The economic activity of the Janissaries of Ochakov and Perekop, 1741-1775

Ochakov and Perekop. The involvement of Janissary merchants in the animal trade indicates the strategic and economic importance of livestock in the region. The Zaporozhian Host, with its advantageous natural conditions, emerged as a key supplier of livestock, capitalising on its superior cattle breeding capabilities. This was particularly significant given the less favourable conditions in Ochakov and Perekop, making these areas reliant on imports to meet their needs. Stock animals were essential for several aspects of life and the economy. The substantial purchases by Janissary merchants suggest a high demand for livestock products, driven by their multifaceted uses. Food, leather, and wool were essential for daily life and trade, while horses and cattle were crucial for transportation and labour. Janissaries often purchased entire herds to meet the demand for these goods.<sup>30</sup>

Significant transactions are observed throughout the period under consideration. For instance, in October 1747, a Janissary named Mehmed Beşe from Perekop accompanied by six companions purchased 250 sheep and 100 cattle in Ukraine. They successfully traversed the Zaporozhian Sich on their way back to Perekop. Many

30 Kh. H. Lashchenko, 'До історичної географії часів Нової Січі: шляхи, броди, переправи як елементи єдиної системи сполучень' [Towards a Historical Geography of the New Sich: Roads, Fords, and Crossings as Elements of a Unified System of Communication], *Південна Україна 18 – 19 ст.* [Southern Ukraine of the 18th-19th Century], 3 (1998), 96-105.

examples of animal trade recorded in the Ukrainian archives show the importance of this category of trade. In 1761, a Cossack named Ivan Shvydkyi submitted an official complaint to the Zaporozhian Kosh about the Perekopian Janissaries Alla Kay and Dzhumane (Ali Kaya? and Cuma?), who bought 500 sheep from him but did not pay for them.<sup>31</sup> Many years later, in March 1775, another Janissary named Ahmed from the 46th *orta* (the exact type of Janissary regiment is not mentioned) and his companions acquired 500 sheep in the Zaporozhian Sich.<sup>32</sup> The scale of this trade is underscored by the large numbers involved: in 1774, Janissary merchants bought a total of 2,000 sheep from the Cossacks. This figure surged to 14,000 in the following year, highlighting the rapid growth and importance of the livestock trade.<sup>33</sup>

The acquisition of large herds by Janissaries indicates their role not just as consumers but also as intermediaries in a broader trade network, possibly redistributing these animals to other regions or within their own port cities. Furthermore, these transactions underscore the economic interdependence between the Cossack territories and the Janissary-controlled regions. A reliable supply of livestock from the Zaporozhian Host would have been crucial for the stability and prosperity of the frontier economy. In turn, this trade would have provided the Cossacks with essential goods, currency, or other resources, strengthening their own economic position. In conclusion, the animal trade between the Zaporozhian Host and the Janissary merchants was a cornerstone of the frontier economy, illustrating the complex interplay of natural resources, economic demand, and regional trade networks. The significant involvement of Janissaries in this trade highlights the essential role of livestock in meeting the needs of food, clothing, and transportation in the region.

## 2. Shepherding activities

One significant aspect of the economic relations between the Janissaries and the Zaporozhians involved the use of the latter's fertile lands for grazing. The establishment of fixed state borders during the eighteenth century, which often did not align with the traditionally fluid Zaporozhian-Tatar boundaries, led to competition over the economic use of neighbouring territories. The limited natural resources around Ochakov and Perekop compelled the Janissaries to utilise the more fertile Zaporozhian lands for their needs.

Traditionally, the Cossacks accommodated their neighbours by leasing their land for various purposes, a practice that began in earnest at the end of the seventeenth

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31 TSDIAK of Ukraine, fond 229/opis 1/sprava 97, folio 97, 107.

32 TSDIAK of Ukraine, fond 229/opis 1/sprava 346, folio 12-13.

33 TSDIAK of Ukraine, fond 229/opis 1/sprava 50 and 80.

century. In the southern part of the Cossack lands at the beginning of the period, they clearly expressed their attitude towards the land requests of Moscow. In 1743, when the Russian Count Weissbach in asked them about the Ottomans and Tatars who grazed their cattle on Zaporozhian pastures, the Cossacks declared: “Enough land will be left for both us... and for the sake of a good neighbourhood, we will not refuse to keep their animals there”.<sup>34</sup> This was a widespread practice in a region where husbandry was an integral part of both Janissary and Cossack economic activity – a traditional activity established during previous decades because of the loose definition of borderlines in the steppe land region. Plenty of cases show that Janissaries of Perekop and Ochakov crossed the Zaporozhian checkpoints to graze their animals in Cossack lands. Also, we can trace characteristic examples of collaboration between Cossack shepherds and Janissaries, where the latter hired Cossacks to graze their animals. These movements are recorded in the period after the Russo-Ottoman war (1735-1739) and up until 1752, when the border policy enforced by the Russians became more restrictive. Grazing arrangements allowed the Zaporozhian Cossacks to receive compensation from the Janissaries for the use of their pastures. Additionally, to circumvent the need for official permissions and fees associated with grazing, the Janissaries often employed Zaporozhian Cossacks as herders. This mutually beneficial arrangement ensured that the Janissaries could graze their livestock on the fertile Zaporozhian pastures without bureaucratic hurdles. In 1754, Janissary Barangazi (Bayram Gazi?) Agha travelled to Zaporozhie to transfer a petition from the Crimean Khan and the Pasha of Perekop to obtain permission to graze their herds on Zaporozhian lands.<sup>35</sup>

If we consider the numbers provided by payrolls as corresponding to the actual number of Janissary affiliates in the region, it can be estimated that approximately 19% (Graph I) of the Janissaries from the ports of Ochakov and Perekop were engaged in shepherding activities. These animals were a vital resource, providing both food and transportation across the expansive dry lands of the region. The economic interactions centred around grazing not only highlight the pragmatic relationships forged between the Janissaries and the Zaporozhians, but also underscore the interdependence that characterised their coexistence in the northern Black Sea frontier.

### 3. Timber supply and resource management in the borderlands

The supply of timber was a critical concern for the Janissaries, who required it for various domestic purposes such as building and heating. In addition to their

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<sup>34</sup> Tyshchenko, *Essays on the History*, 19.

<sup>35</sup> TSDIAK of Ukraine, fond 229/opis 1/sprava 21; Andreevskiy, *Documents Concerning*, 130.



need for pastures for cattle, the Janissaries increasingly turned their attention to the forested territories under the control of the Zaporozhian Cossacks. These forests, though limited in resources, were of significant interest to multiple parties in the region. The Russian government's trade regulations concerning timber and timber products naturally extended to Ukraine, but no specific decrees or orders prohibited the export of timber and wood products from Ukrainian territories outright. This regulatory ambiguity allowed Ukrainian officers to exploit the situation, enabling the Zaporozhian Cossacks to pursue a relatively independent policy regarding their forest resources.

The Zaporozhians were acutely aware of the finite nature of their forest resources. Recognising the importance of sustainable resource management, the Kosh administration implemented strict regulations to ensure the rational use of timber within their territories. These regulations extended to monitoring deforestation activities both by their own Cossacks and by foreign entities operating in the borderlands. The Kosh administration's approach reflected a broader strategy of resource conservation and self-regulation in a region where the competition for natural resources was fierce.<sup>36</sup>

Despite these efforts at regulation, pressures from neighbouring territories often compelled the Zaporozhians to make rational decisions regarding their timber resources. Shortages of timber among their neighbours, particularly the Crimean Tatars and Janissary authorities in Ochakov and Perekop, created a situation where the Kosh administration had to carefully balance their own resource needs with the demands of external parties. In many cases, the Kosh met the requests of Tatars and Janissary border chiefs by granting them limited access to the Zaporozhian forests. Permissions were typically granted for logging in specific volumes and locations, reflecting the careful negotiation and resource management strategies employed by the Cossacks. This is evident in 1763, when Hüseyin Agha, a Janissary commander from Ochakov, formally requested permission from the Kosh to cut wood in the Zaporozhian territories.<sup>37</sup> The request was granted, illustrating the Cossacks' willingness to engage in mutually beneficial agreements, even with those who might be considered adversaries. Similarly, in 1774, İsmail Pasha of Ochakov, along with Janissary Sun (Sunullah?) Agha, personally sought permission from the Kosh administration to cut timber.<sup>38</sup> These requests were either granted as favours or ar-

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36 Andreeva, 'Relations between', 85; L. Gistsova and L. Demchenko, 'Щоб захищавши леса... можна було і напередкі чем користуватись', [So That, Having Saved the Forests... They Could Be Used in the Future], *Архів України* [Archives of Ukraine], 5/6 (1991), 75-84.

37 TSDIAK of Ukraine, fond 229/opis 1/sprava 138.

38 TSDIAK of Ukraine, fond 229/opis 1/sprava 346.

ranged as part of commercial transactions, highlighting the nuanced diplomacy and economic interdependencies that existed in the region.

These examples underscore the importance of timber as a strategic resource in the eighteenth-century borderlands of the northern Black Sea region. Through careful management of their resources and an ability to negotiate with powerful neighbours, the Zaporozhian Cossacks played a key role in the region's political and economic landscape. Pragmatic exchanges of timber rights reflect the broader context of survival, cooperation, and competition that defined the relationships between the various powers vying for influence in this contested frontier. The Kosh's ability to navigate these challenges not only ensured his own community's resilience but also contributed to the delicate balance of power in the region.

#### 4. Salt trade

The salt trade was a crucial source of income for the Crimean and Ottoman authorities, Zaporozhian Cossacks, and Ukrainian merchants. Salt was consumed within the broader economies of Poland, the Ukrainian territories, Russian lands, and the Crimean Khanate. It was used extensively for preserving fish and meat and played a crucial role in managing the diet of sheep flocks, which were vital to the Crimean economy. Administered regularly after the sheep returned from pasture, salt was essential in helping maintain their body weight.<sup>39</sup> Salt caravans originating from the Crimean salt lakes of Perekop, Kinburn, and Gözleve extended through the Zaporozhian Sich posts to northern and western markets, as well to Istanbul and Anatolia via the port at Gözleve. Each location within this trade network played distinct roles, with varying levels of production and quality influencing the region's overall economic landscape. The salt industry within Crimea's customs area belonged to the Khan and Kalga-Sultan (the deputy or second-in-command to the Crimean Khan), who farmed it out to Tatars, Janissary officials, Armenians, Karaits, Jews, and Zaporozhian Cossacks.<sup>40</sup>

The primary centre of salt production was near Perekop, where extraction was concentrated around two large lakes. Only Galyal-gel was actively developed, while Red Lake remained untouched. The strategic importance of Perekop's salt production lay in its capacity to supply vast quantities of high-quality product to various regions, underpinning a significant portion of the local economy.<sup>41</sup> Salt exports

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39 S. Parke, *A Letter to Farmers and Graziers on the Advantages of Using Salt in Agriculture and in Feeding Various Kinds of Farming Stock* (London 1819 [4<sup>th</sup> ed.]), 50-52, 66-67.

40 Zubkov, 'Little-Known Pages', 26; K. Verner (ed.), *Памятная книжка Таврической губернии* [Tavrida Governorate Yearbook] (Simferopol 1889), 4-6.

41 TSDIAK of Ukraine, fond 229/opis 1/sprava 11, 69.

from Perekop were directed to the Zaporozhian Sich, the Hetmanate, and the Polish and Russian markets. Exports were dominated by Ukrainian merchants known as *chumaks* and Cossack traders, utilising their extensive knowledge of regional trade routes and their organisational skills.<sup>42</sup> The scale of this trade is exemplified by the fact that in 1752, approximately 10,000 carts laden with salt were exported to Poland alone. This immense quantity underscores the significant demand and the pivotal role of Perekop's salt in the Polish market. Similarly, in 1755, around 2,000 carts were exported from the Zaporozhian Sich to Russian markets, and about 4,500 carts were sent to the Hetmanate.<sup>43</sup> These figures illustrate the extensive reach and importance of the Crimean salt trade network, further emphasised by the Cossacks' sale of approximately 10,000 carts of salt to Poland before the Russo-Turkish War.<sup>44</sup>

The trade routes for transporting Perekop salt were meticulously planned and maintained, passing through numerous tributaries of the Dnieper River and including crossings over the Dnieper itself. To facilitate the smooth movement of goods, customs posts, bridges, and ferries were established along the routes to collect duties and crossing fees. These infrastructures were crucial not only for revenue collection but also for ensuring the efficiency of the trade caravans.

The economic impact of maintaining salt trade routes was significant, relying heavily on a structured system of duties and crossing fees imposed on both exporters and importers. In the Crimean Khanate, the authority to establish crossings was an exclusive right of the Khan's officials. These officials could transfer the right to private individuals, commonly known as 'tax-farmers' (*откупщик*). This permission was farmed out from the Khan to Janissaries or to a Zaporozhian individual, who subsequently transferred the right to the Zaporozhian Host. A notable instance of this occurred in 1755, when with the Khan's consent Perekop *kaymakam* Ablam Murtaza Agha was granted the right to establish a crossing on the Belozerka River. In 1747, merchants crossing the Belozerka River were required to pay 4-5 *kopecks* per large carriage and 2 *kopecks* per smaller carriage. Similarly, in 1764, Khan Kırım Giray authorised the Zaporozhian Petro Nosenko to construct a bridge over the Rogachik River and collect crossing fees.<sup>45</sup> These systems of duties and crossing fees not only provided revenue for the Crimean Khanate, Janissaries, or Zaporozhian Cossacks, but also underscored the strategic importance of salt trade routes. For example, at Perekop in 1748, merchants were required to pay a customs duty

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42 On *chumaks* see: I. S. Slabeev, *З історії первісного нагромадження капіталу на Україні* [On the History of Initial Capital Formation in Ukraine] (Kyiv 1964).

43 TSDIAK of Ukraine, fond 229/opis 1/sprava 27.

44 TSDIAK of Ukraine, fond 229/opis 1/sprava 218.

45 TSDIAK of Ukraine, fond 229/opis 1/sprava 161.

of 1 *karbovanets* and 5 *kopecks* per loaded carriage with various goods, while carriages loaded with salt were charged a significantly higher rate of 4 *karbovanets* and 11 *kopecks*.<sup>46</sup> This premium for salt-laden carriages reflects the vital role salt played in the economy, being a critical commodity for preservation and trade. The imposition of fees indicates the Khanate's understanding of the economic leverage these trade routes provided. By controlling and taxing the routes, the Khanate not only bolstered its treasury but also exerted control over a crucial economic activity, highlighting the intersection of economic policy and strategic governance in the region.

Within Crimea's customs framework, the salt industry gave rise to a complex system involving various stakeholders. The Khan and Kalga-Sultan held significant control over the trade, but the rights to produce and trade salt were often farmed out to a wide-ranging group of individuals, including Tatars, Janissary officials, Armenians, Karaits, Jews, and Zaporozhian Cossacks. Such diverse involvement indicates the inclusive and multifaceted nature of the Crimean and frontier economy, where various ethnic and religious groups played essential roles in sustaining trade.

The main merchants exporting Perekop salt were Cossacks and *chumaks*, who transported it to northern and eastern hinterland markets. Trading practices varied by time and region. In the case of the Perekop salt lakes, merchants either collected the salt themselves or bought it pre-collected. Salt extraction from the lakes, known as "*vyvolochka*", occurred from July to October and was labour-intensive.<sup>47</sup> Large-scale work required the seasonal hiring of workers, and the Crimean side actively engaged Cossacks for this purpose. For instance, on September 15, 1763, the Janissary of Ochakov, Mushtuk (Müştak?) Boşnak, requested a significant number of Cossack workers due to a labour shortage.<sup>48</sup> Cossacks involved in salt extraction would travel to Crimea and stay for extended periods, sometimes up to a year. In 1763, the Kosh ordered the recall of the Cossacks to Zaporozhye because the Ochakov *kaymakam* had forbidden them from spending the winter there, as salt collection occurred during summer and early autumn. However, the Cossacks were reluctant to comply with this order.<sup>49</sup>

Apart from Janissaries, *chumaks*, and Zaporozhian Cossacks, Armenians, Jews, and Karaits were also involved in the salt trade. The French consul Baron de Tott, who visited the Perekop lakes in 1767 and observed the process of salt extraction and sale, noted that the "salt-pits are farmed out either to Armenians or to Jews and Armenians". He also mentioned that no buildings were constructed to store the

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46 Tyshchenko, *Essays on the History*, 100.

47 TSDIAK of Ukraine, fond 229/opis 1/sprava 11, sprava 12.

48 TSDIAK of Ukraine, fond 229/opis 1/sprava 138, folio 42, 51.

49 *Ibid.*, folio 29.

collected salt, which was simply piled up in “heaps” and often lost to rain.<sup>50</sup> Karaites were involved in the profitable salt trade from the Gözleve salt-pits.<sup>51</sup> The consumer markets for Gözleve salt included the Caucasus region, Istanbul, and Anatolia, with transportation by ship. The price fluctuated based on demand, ranging from 4 to 6 piasters per heap (1 heap = 108 *pud* or *pood*<sup>52</sup>) in 1765. Yearly income from the sale of Gözleve salt reached 7,000 piasters (2,000 silver rubles). The salt from the Per-ekop and Gözleve pits was of much higher quality than that of the Kinburn lakes.<sup>53</sup>

The Kinburn salt-pits, comprising five small lakes with shallow puddles, became part of Ottoman territories due to the Treaty of Belgrade. This shift led to confrontations between the Janissaries and the Zaporozhian Cossacks, as the area was traditionally where the Cossacks sourced their salt and established customs points. Despite new regulations, the Zaporozhians continued to sail to Kinburn to collect salt for many years, defying Ottoman control. The profitable salt trade in the region fuelled struggles between the Cossacks and the Ochakov Janissaries, resulting in numerous complaints and demands from the Janissaries to rid them of illegal competition, and even armed attacks, until the outbreak of the Russo-Turkish War in 1768.

The Janissaries of Ochakov frequently attacked the Zaporozhian Cossacks to prevent them from collecting salt, while the Cossacks continued to sail to Kinburn Bay waters from the Azov Sea and to arrive by land from the Ochakov side. Conflicts intensified in 1742; Selim Giray Khan even sent an edict to the Janissaries in Ochakov in June 1746 explaining and warning that:

Cossacks who are subjects of Russia were allowed to take out the salt that they needed from Kılburun and its surroundings and from the lakes which were under the control of the Khans, and it is further ordered that you do not interfere with it and those who interfere with it will be punished... I order that you do not interfere with the businesses of these Cossacks and that you do not try to take your shares from their activities, or try to appropriate a lake, or try to hinder their activities.<sup>54</sup>

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50 F. Baron De Tott, *Memories of the Baron de Tott, on the Turks and the Tartars. Translated from the French, by an English Gentleman at Paris, under immediate inspection of The Baron*, Vol. II (Dublin 1785), 81.

51 Z. A. Firkovich, *Сборник старинных грамот и узаконений Российской империи касательно прав и состояния русско-подданных караимов* [Collection of Ancient Charters and Statutes of the Russian Empire on the Rights and Status of Russian Citizens, the Karaites] (Saint Petersburg 1890), 104, 105.

52 *Pud* or *pood* is a unit of mass equal to 40 *funt* or 16.3805 kg.

53 Verner, *Tavrida Governorate Yearbook*, 4-5. Currency conversion is based on information provided by the source.

54 BOA, A.DVNSNMH.d.2: 99/85 (19 Ca 1159/9 June 1746).

The attacks continued nonetheless, with a notable incident in 1752 when a group of Janissaries attacked and injured Cossack officers and the head of the Cossacks in Kinburn, Timofey Sukura and Andriy Kosov, who were collecting salt in the area. The Ochakov Janissaries aimed to capitalise on the new borderlines by taking over salt extraction and trade. The main consumer markets for Kinburn salt were the Zaporozhian Sich and the Hetmanate. This important incident became a turning point as regards the entrenched right of the Cossacks to collect salt there.<sup>55</sup>

The Janissaries of Perekop played a pivotal role in the organisation of salt exports, demonstrating proactive communication strategies that were essential for the efficient operation of the trade. They took the initiative to inform the Zaporozhian Kosh of the upcoming salt ‘harvest’, thereby inviting merchants to engage in trade. This proactive engagement was crucial in ensuring the smooth operation of the salt trade, as it helped merchants plan their journeys accordingly.

Merchants traveling across the steppes to Crimea had to take great care to stock up on water for themselves and their cattle, as water was scarce in the arid steppe region. Recognising this, the Janissaries undertook the repair and maintenance of steppe wells, which were vital sources of water for the merchants. This was a significant undertaking that facilitated the journey of the merchants and their animals.

For instance, in June 1764, Yakub Baba, superintendent of the Perekop salt lake, dispatched a Janissary named Mustafa Beşe to the Zaporozhian Kosh. Mustafa Beşe carried a gift and a letter that read:

...we collected more salt than last year... I ask you to send two carts, and promise to send you the purest salt for your expenses. In addition, there is enough water and grass in the Crimea, as well as on the way, so there is peace for the journey of *chumaks*, and there is enough food for their animals. I ask you to send the *chumaks* for salt without delay, for which I promise to thank you.<sup>56</sup>

This proactive communication ensured that merchants were well-informed about the availability of salt and the favourable trading conditions, thereby encouraging them to partake in the trade without hesitation.

Despite the Janissaries’ efforts to repair and maintain the wells, there were complaints from Cossacks and merchants about the charges imposed for accessing well water. This practice reflects the broader economic dynamics of the region, where resource management was tightly controlled and monetised, often leading to tensions among different groups involved in the trade. Merchants and *chumaks* had to pay to water their cattle, reflecting the prevailing order in these borderland areas and its impact on journeys across the steppe.

55 Andreevskiy, *Documents Concerning*, 118, 213-214

56 TSDIAK of Ukraine, fond 229/opis 1/sprava 138, folio 14.

## 5. The role of hired labour in the economic interrelations of Janissaries and Zaporozhian Cossacks

One notable aspect of the intricate and complex interrelations between the Janissaries of the borderlands and other non-Muslim inhabitants, specifically the Cossacks, was the use of hired labour. As previously mentioned, the Janissaries often sourced the manpower they lacked and needed from the Zaporozhian Sich. The economic activities of the Janissaries with their neighbours required a labour force that was not only abundant but also familiar with the unique political, environmental, economic, and social conditions in the region.

Known for their resilience and adaptability, the Zaporozhian Cossacks provided an ideal workforce for the Janissaries. They possessed valuable merchant skills, geographical knowledge, and physical endurance, making them indispensable to the Janissaries' economic enterprises. Collaboration between the Janissaries and Cossacks went beyond simple trade transactions; it encompassed a symbiotic relationship where both groups benefited from the other's strengths. In 1745, a Janissary named Mehmed Beşe of Ochakov hired a Cossack to graze his herds,<sup>57</sup> recognising that the Cossack's knowledge of the best grazing locations would not only save him from the bureaucratic and time-consuming process of seeking permission from the Zaporozhian authorities but also mitigate the risks of being robbed or attacked on the steppe frontier. Many times, Janissaries hired Cossacks as bodyguards, servants, or guides on river or land trade routes. A typical case is to be found in a petition brought by Mahmud Beşe of Ochakov to the Kosh of the Cossacks, Vasiliy Grigorievich Sich, dated April 20, 1750. The petition informs us that a Janissary named Osman Beşe hired a Cossack named Shpilka as a guard on his journey to the Zaporozhian Sich with his own ship, which was loaded with goods. During *namaz*, Shpilka attacked Osman to kill him, but ended up having to flee.<sup>58</sup> Janissary İmamoğlu from Perekop was robbed in 1742 by his Cossack servant. Three years later, Ahmed Beşe and his companions hired two Cossacks as guides on a business trip to the Zaporozhian Sich and then to the Hetmanate.<sup>59</sup>

For the Janissaries, hiring Cossack labourers meant gaining access to a pool of individuals who were well-versed in navigating the challenging terrain of the Black Sea steppes. These men could handle the rigours of long-distance travel, manage the transportation of goods, and ensure the safe passage of merchandise through potentially hostile territories. The Cossacks' intimate knowledge of local geography and

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57 TSDIAK of Ukraine, fond 229/opis 1/sprava 12/folio 9.

58 TSDIAK of Ukraine, fond 229/opis 1/sprava 12/folio 11.

59 Ibid.

their ability to endure harsh conditions were crucial in facilitating the Janissaries' trade and logistical operations.

Moreover, the Zaporozhian Cossacks brought with them a deep understanding of the region's political landscape. Their insights into local power dynamics, tribal affiliations, and the intricate web of alliances and enmities allowed the Janissaries to operate more effectively within a complex and often volatile environment. This political acumen was essential in negotiating safe passage, securing trading rights, and avoiding conflicts that could disrupt economic activities.

Furthermore, the social conditions of the region necessitated a close working relationship between the two groups. Often viewed with suspicion by local populations due to their military background and foreign origins, the Janissaries relied on the Cossacks to bridge the gap between themselves and the local communities. The Cossacks, with their established presence and social networks, facilitated smoother interactions and negotiations, helping the Janissaries integrate more seamlessly into the regional economy.

In conclusion, the role of hired labour, particularly the involvement of Zaporozhian Cossacks, was a crucial component of economic interrelations between the Janissaries and their non-Muslim neighbours. This collaboration extended beyond mere economic transactions, encompassing a complex web of political, social, and logistical interdependencies. The Cossacks' skills, knowledge, and resilience complemented the Janissaries' economic ambitions, resulting in a dynamic and mutually beneficial partnership that underscored the interconnected nature of the region's economic landscape.

## *Conclusion*

This study has examined the multifaceted role of the Janissaries in the northern Black Sea region from 1734 to 1774, emphasising their unique position as active participants in both economic and political affairs within a highly contested geopolitical landscape. Stationed in key port cities such as Ochakov, Perekop, and Kinburn, the Janissaries extended their influence beyond safeguarding Ottoman interests by engaging in trade and diplomacy with various local actors, including the Zaporozhian Cossacks, Crimean Tatars, and Hetmanate Ukrainians. This new perspective highlights their substantial impact on trade networks, alliances, and regional stability during a period of heightened tensions between the Ottoman and Russian empires.

Archival sources, particularly from the Central State Historical Archive of Ukraine, used here for the first time in the study of the Janissaries, show that the Janissaries frequently collaborated with local powers. They adapted their roles as



intermediaries in ways that balanced Ottoman directives with local economic and political needs. Their flexible approach enabled them to negotiate and protect their interests across borders. Records indicate that Janissaries participated in trade and mediated disputes, including those related to land claims. Their partnerships with Zaporozhian Cossacks and other regional communities reveal a strategic approach to sustaining influence and authority in this volatile frontier.

The Janissaries played an integral part in the region's economic networks, frequently collaborating with Zaporozhian Cossacks and adapting to shifting power dynamics. Their alliances with local actors were flexible, adjusting in response to emerging threats or opportunities. Furthermore, their involvement in mediating disputes indicated a role that extended beyond merely enforcing Ottoman policies; they acted as negotiators with a vested interest in maintaining the region's economic and political equilibrium.

While this study relies significantly on Ukrainian archives, it recognises the limitations of such a perspective and the valuable insights that Ottoman, Russian, and Crimean sources may provide. Despite these constraints, the findings presented here enhance our understanding of the Janissaries' interactions along the Ottoman frontier and emphasise the importance of multi-archival approaches for future studies.

In conclusion, the activities of the Janissaries in the northern Black Sea region exemplify their adaptability and significant influence during a period of substantial geopolitical transformation. Their engagement extended beyond mere representation of Ottoman interests; they played a proactive role in shaping local economies, forging strategic relationships, and navigating the complex power dynamics of the region. Their interactions with neighbouring communities show that the Northern Black Sea was a dynamic frontier where economic, political, and cultural interests intersected and evolved. By focusing on the economic and political roles of the Janissaries, the aim of this research is to deepen our understanding of the forces that shaped the region during the eighteenth century and contribute to the broader study of frontier dynamics within the Ottoman and Russian Empires.



PART THREE

POLITICAL CONNECTIONS



# THE MURDER OF A FRENCHMAN BY A JANISSARY; OR, WHEN TWO PROTECTION REGIMES COLLIDE

Yannis SPYROPOULOS\*

This mode of unexpectedly attacking [European] powers is certainly attended with great inconveniences; but moderation with the Turks is attended with still more. Moderation towards foreigners is a matter of course with governments, and the Turks, in politics, know not how to act but by fear. The divan, besides, dare not, to please a European power, brave the opinion of the soldiery. The government follows here, more than anywhere else, the impulse of the people. The will of the sultan does not do everything, as some think it does. Here despotism is organized, and has its hierarchical degrees. The firmans are unsuccessful in the metropolis against the will of the *U'lemas*, and in the provinces against the jatagan of the janisaries. The virtue of these diplomas has been for a long time vain and nugatory. The powerful Turks kiss the firmans with respect, and tear them to pieces.<sup>1</sup>

*Félix Beaujour*

## *Introduction*

ON 17 APRIL 1811, ALİ BAYRAKDAROĞLU, a Janissary of the 18th *bölük* regiment and guard at the office of the *defterdar* of Crete and incumbent *mütesellim* (deputy governor) of Candia (Ott. Kandiye) Hacı Hasan Efendi, went to the bakery owned by Elie Boze (Ott. İlia Bozo), the eldest son of the French vice-consul on Crete, Alexandre Boze (Ott. Aleksandri Bozo). Ali demanded that the bakery workers hand over all the bread in the store to make rusks, probably for the town's Janissaries.

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\* Foundation for Research and Technology-Hellas, Institute for Mediterranean Studies.

1 F. Beaujour, *View of the Commerce of Greece, Formed After an Annual Average, from 1787 to 1797*, trans. Th. Hartwell Horne (London 1800), 453-454.

After receiving a negative answer – initially from the workers and then from Elie Boze himself – Ali pulled out a knife, stabbed Elie under the left side of his chest and ran away. The wound proved to be fatal and resulted in the latter passing away on 20 April 1811.<sup>2</sup>

This criminal act would lead to an intense year-long confrontation between the French and Janissary protection systems in Crete and other Ottoman provinces, a showdown which was to result in the mobilisation of a great number of Ottoman local and imperial officials, powerbrokers, and European diplomats in various locales, and – most interestingly for the purposes of this paper – of the wider French and Janissary networks at the local and imperial level. By investigating these processes, this paper aims to explore the complexities of power struggles, protection networks, and the interaction of diplomacy and violence in the Ottoman Empire in the early nineteenth century. As I will claim, the tale of Boze’s family helps us gain deeper insight into the various negotiation tactics used to maneuver through the complex framework of power and influence in the empire’s provincial and central administration. Ultimately, the case presented here resonates as a reflection of broader dynamics shaping the Ottoman state of affairs in the early modern period.

The main sources used in writing this article were discovered in the Archives Diplomatiques in Nantes (ADN), the Archive of the Ministère des Affaires Etrangères in Paris (MAE), the Turkish Archive of Heraklion (TAH), and the Ottoman Archives at Istanbul (BOA). Among them we find several petitions by the involved parties to the Porte and to various diplomats, imperial edicts, and, most importantly, the correspondence between Alexandre Boze – the father of the deceased – and Florimond de Faÿ de La Tour-Maubourg, the secretary of the French ambassador Horace Sébastiani. Through the above-mentioned documents we can not only reconstruct many of the events related to the above incident in [often excruciating] detail, but also gain access to a great deal of information on the negotiation tactics and the official and clandestine processes employed by the involved parties as they struggled to gain the upper hand in this strife.

### *Mobilising networks, creating alliances, and fighting over Istanbul’s favour*

Immediately after Elie Boze’s passing, his family took action to ensure his killer would be punished, firstly by addressing the local leading authorities. Initially,

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2 Archives Diplomatiques de Nantes (ADN), Constantinople, Correspondance avec les Échelles (CE) (Série D), Candie, 2 (22 April 1811).

Elie's younger brother, who was a dragoman, i.e. held a translator's *berat* which placed him under the Capitulatory regime, along with Mr. Barbier, the Austrian commercial agent, presented themselves to the *mütesellim* (deputy governor) and the agha (commander) of the Janissary unit in Candia, demanding that justice was served. During their visit, they informed the two officials that if their request was not satisfied, they would leave their posts, an act which implicitly amounted to a threat of triggering the dynamic intervention of the foreign powers they represented.

In order to appease them, the deputy governor and the agha zealously promised that their demands would be met. On the orders of the above-mentioned officials, various guards combed the city until six o'clock in the evening in search of Ali Bayrakdaroğlu, while the next day (April 21), four detachments of Janissaries were dispatched to various districts in the province. Despite these reassurances, the relatives of the deceased were far from relieved; quite on the contrary, they were deeply concerned that the very same guards who had been sent to arrest Ali might eventually help him escape, as "in such cases the *mütesellim* makes the abominable use of low-ranking officers who allow the wrongdoers to do as they please".<sup>3</sup> After all, it should be underlined that Ali was himself one of the *mütesellim*'s guards.

The second step taken by the family of the deceased was to try and reach the Ottoman authorities in Istanbul. In order to do so, on April 21, Alexandre Boze and Barbier returned to the *mütesellim* and appealed for the issuance of an *ilam* (report) by the *kadı*. The *mütesellim* initially promised them that he would satisfy their demand, only to send them away later, claiming that the judge had been warned by various Janissary officers not to issue such a report until the soldier detachments had returned from their mission to track down the killer. The reasoning used by the Janissaries was that any report sent to the capital should mention the murderer's arrest. In the meantime, Alexandre, who was convinced that these delays were part of a plan to help Ali escape, requested that the body of the deceased be examined, which, to his disappointment, was done in a "non-European" way. The *mütesellim*, who wanted to appease the frustrated father and convince him that he was indeed taking some action against the Janissaries, relieved the soldiers in the 18th *bölük* of guard duty at his office and replaced them with those of the 30th *bölük*. However, in the eyes of Alexandre, none of his essential demands had been met: the killer was still on the loose – probably fleeing the island at that very moment – while the family of the deceased was being forced to waste valuable time and delay sending a much needed *ilam* to Istanbul, which could push through the punishment of the culprit and those who had helped him escape.<sup>4</sup>

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3 Ibid.

4 Ibid.

The fourth step taken by Alexandre at this stage was to address the French authorities on Crete, in Istanbul, and in Paris. On April 21, he first sent a letter to Mr. Renard, the French consul in Chania (Ott. Hanya), who sent a report the next day to the French foreign minister Jean-Baptiste Nompère de Champagny.<sup>5</sup> That same day (April 22) Alexandre proceeded to send a letter to the secretary of the French ambassador in Istanbul, in which he explained all the details of the case. In this letter he requested the latter's assistance, noting that, "otherwise [if the culprit is not punished], this place will become worse than Chania and, consequently, uninhabitable".<sup>6</sup>

As can be deduced from the sources, at the same time the local Janissary networks were busying themselves in an effort to protect Ali Bayrakdaroğlu from punishment. The first thing they did was to allow their comrade to flee Candia. The special jurisdiction enjoyed by the Janissary Corps made this task quite easy, as a Janissary could only be arrested by his own comrades.<sup>7</sup> In this framework, M. J. Tancoigne, a French traveller who happened to be in Chania around the time of the incident, reported that:

The Janissary barracks (*kichla*) enjoy the right of asylum; that is to say that when a thief, an assassin, or a man condemned to death, manages to take refuge in the place where the sacred cauldrons of the regiment are kept, he can only be removed with the consent of the barracks chiefs; and the latter, in order not to compromise or lose such a revolting privilege, always make sure to help the criminals who come and throw themselves into their arms escape. No Janissary can be punished or imprisoned for an ordinary offence, except in the interior of his *kichla*.<sup>8</sup>

Murder, however, was no ordinary offence, and if the right procedures were followed by the interested parties, they could result in the severe punishment of both the criminal and those of his comrades who let him go. The Janissaries knew that although a provincial governor or a judge could not easily inflict a sentence on them directly, they did have the power to spur the government of Istanbul into action. It needs to be clarified at this point that despite the Janissaries' right of special extradition, the Divan-ı Hümayun acted as a supreme court which had jurisdiction over matters involving the corps, and could adjudicate all kinds of cases related to its

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5 MAE, Correspondance Consulaire et Commerciale (CCC), La Canée, 21: 164-166. In this report, the family name of the murderer is mistakenly noted as "Tchorbadgioglou" (Çorbacıoğlu).

6 ADN, Constantinople, CE, Candie, 2 (22 April 1811).

7 T. Toroser (ed. and trans.), *Kavanin-i Yeniçeriyân: Yeniçeri Kanunları* (Istanbul 2008), 81.

8 J. M. Tancoigne, *Voyage à Smyrne, dans l'archipel et l'île de Candie*, Vol. I (Paris 1817), 105-106. Also, see J. Bowring, *Report on Egypt and Candia* (London 1840), 154. For yet another case, from Chania, of a Janissary criminal escaping custody with the support of his comrades in 1817, see MAE, CCC, La Canée, 22: 378-380.



members. This, in the mind of the officers of the 18th *bölük*, meant that the officials empowered to petition the imperial court on such an issue – the [deputy] governor and the *kadı* in this case – had to be approached and convinced not to do so; and this is exactly what they did: they first approached the *kadı* and prevented him from issuing an *ilam* which could be used by the Boze family to petition the imperial council. As Alexandre notes in one of his letters, as part of this plan they also offered the deputy governor 10,000 *guruş* to prevent the case from reaching the Sultan’s court.<sup>9</sup> Boze, who obtained this information from “a trustworthy person” within the local administration, mentions that the *mütesellim* resisted the bribe. The willingness of the *kadı* to postpone the issuance of an *ilam*, on the other hand, was read as a clear indication that he had welcomed the payoff.

The deputy governor’s reluctance to accept the 10,000 *guruş* was probably the result of the arrival, in the meantime, of Candia’s newly appointed governor, Eğribozlu Bekir Pasha. The arrival of the pasha meant that any authority the *defterdar-cum-mütesellim* Hasan Efendi had on the issue would be annulled in the next few days. In view of this development, one might expect the Janissaries would also try to bribe the pasha, and that is exactly what Alexandre believed they did, noting that “we know with certainty the amount of 20 purses was offered to the deputy governor to settle the case, and he did not accept it. The offer that will be made to the pasha to abuse his position will undoubtedly be much greater”.<sup>10</sup>

Although we cannot be sure about the amount of money given to the new pasha, we do know that in 1817 another regiment in Candia offered the city’s governor 15,000 *guruş* to act in its favour and prevent its banishment, a fact which supports Alexandre’s assumption.<sup>11</sup> No matter what the sum was, it should be underlined that the money used to bribe the officials was offered by the regiment’s *odabaşı*,<sup>12</sup> i.e. the *mütevelli* (fund administrator) of the *orta*’s waqf, a clear indication that it came from the regiment’s common fund. After all, other sources clearly show that the fund capital of regimental waqfs on Crete was often used by Janissaries as a means of creating both financial and political leverage.<sup>13</sup>

9 ADN, Constantinople, CE, Candie, 2 (22 April 1811).

10 ADN, Constantinople, CE, Candie, 2 (1 May 1811).

11 For this incident, see F. W. Sieber, *Ταξιδεύοντας στη νήσο Κρήτη το 1817* [Travelling on the Island of Crete in 1817], trans. D. Moustri (Athens 1994), 268-272; BOA, HAT.511/25076; TAH.42: 153-154; TAH.43: 156.

12 ADN, Constantinople, CE, Candie, 2 (20 June 1811).

13 For instance, four years after the incident in question, a Janissary agha in Candia avoided execution by sending 800,000 *para* to Mahmud II to “forgive his opposition”, after first getting a loan worth 213,800 *paras* from the waqf of the 37th *cemaat*, of which he was a leading

The confrontation between the two sides was to intensify over the next few days. The French consul in Chania wrote a letter to the deputy governor of Candia, which was handed over to him by the Austrian commercial agent Barbier and Alexandre Boze's younger son. Furthermore, after Bekir Pasha assumed the administration, both Alexandre and the Austrian agent each presented him with a petition. However, Boze was disheartened by the pasha's reaction to his demands: he reluctantly read a few lines, saying that the matter had already been brought to his attention upon his arrival, and that he had already given orders for the murderer's arrest. He also attempted to downplay the issue, mentioning that such incidents happened constantly and everywhere, "even in the Sultan's palace", and prompted Boze to reach a compromise with the Janissaries.

Alexandre was now furious, convinced that the pasha had been already bought off by the murderer's officers. Yet, despite his frustration, he tried to at least put some pressure on Bekir Pasha to speed up the issuance of an *ilam* by the *kadi*. In doing so, he managed to extract a promise – accompanied with some "ironic remarks and insults" – that he would receive his *ilam* soon.

Indeed, just a few hours later, on May 1, Alexandre received the much sought-after *ilam*, only to face yet another disappointment as, instead of underlining the unjust nature of the act, the judicial report falsely stated that there had been a big fight between his son and the murderer, without even mentioning that the former had died of his injuries. Furthermore, the text presented Alexandre and his late son not as French citizens, but as Ottoman subjects, and Alexandre as being not a vice-consul, but a merchant.<sup>14</sup> This, as I will explain later, was an astute move on the part of the Janissaries, exploiting palpable discontent in Istanbul with the Europeans over their tactic of inflating their economic and diplomatic networks through the large-scale acceptance of *reaya* as protégés. On top of that, the *kadi*'s report presented the murderer as a "mentally ill individual" (*aklında hiffet olan*), further extenuating his actions.<sup>15</sup>

Boze was now convinced that the Janissaries had corrupted almost every Ottoman local official who could have a say in the case. In response, he wrote another letter to the French ambassador to report developments and ask him to pull some strings in the Ottoman capital to resolve the issue. Furthermore, he paid yet another visit to the pasha, submitting a written request which demanded the issuance of a new, correct *ilam*, while subsequently forwarding a copy of the request, which could

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officer; TAH.42: 12-19. For yet another incident of attempted bribery of a pasha, see BOA, HAT.500/24476.

14 ADN, Constantinople, CE, Candie, 2 (1 May 1811); (undated appendix in Ottoman script).

15 ADN, Constantinople, CE, Candie, 2 (undated appendix in Ottoman script).

be used as evidence, to his superiors in Istanbul.<sup>16</sup> This time Alexandre also took the Austrian dragoman with him and insisted that the latter supervise the recording of the *ilam*, trying to ensure that the new judicial report would not contain any false information. As the mourning father's tenacity left his adversaries in no doubt that the obstacles elaborately placed in his way would not dissuade him from pursuing the punishment of the assassin and his regiment, the clash between the French and the Janissaries was to escalate even further, implicating an increasing number of individuals and institutions.

As all of the above was unfolding, on the 30th of April, the Janissary detachment which had been sent to the nearby town of Rethymno to find the murderer returned, and Boze received the sad news that, as he had foreseen, the very same detachment had actually assisted Ali Bayrakdaroğlu in escaping from the coast of Chania, putting him on a ship headed for Smyrna. Boze's informant was an English lord named John Friott, who had crossed paths with one of the 18th *bölük* regiment's leading officers. According to Friott, the *usta* of the *orta* had asked him to intervene in order to "settle the case", i.e. to convince Boze to reach some sort of compromise with the Janissaries. However, the Englishman, in a remarkable display of European solidarity in the midst of the Napoleonic Wars, replied to the Janissary that he would do no such thing, pompously stating that "this case concerns all Europeans and is tantamount to a declaration of war", while he repeated the same words to the *mütesellim*, the pasha, and the Janissary agha when he subsequently visited Candia.<sup>17</sup>

The Janissaries were counting on the negative effect that the war between France and Great Britain – still in full swing at the time – would have on relations between the European diplomats on Crete, anticipating the existence of anti-French sentiment that could be harnessed to their purpose. However, as we have seen, from the day after Elie Boze's death the agent of the Austrian Empire and the Austrian dragoman had supported Alexandre with great zeal in his fight against the Janissaries.<sup>18</sup> Now that the English of Crete also seemed to be taking a stance in support of the French diplomat, the risk involved in the local administration's effort to protect the Janissaries radically increased. As a result, for the first time the balance of power began to tilt in Boze's favour.

The reasons behind this unanimity among the Europeans living on Crete are not only to be sought in some obscure idea of common European identity/solidarity. There were also far more mundane motives uniting the foreign diplomats and merchants on Crete, as can be detected in Boze's choice of phrase in one of

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16 Ibid.

17 ADN, Constantinople, CE, Candie, 2 (3 May 1811).

18 ADN, Constantinople, CE, Candie, 2 (1 May 1811).

his letters, where he notes that, if his case is not vindicated, Candia “will become uninhabitable”.<sup>19</sup> In order to better understand why the French and other Europeans felt that fighting against the Janissary networks was a matter of survival for their presence on Crete, one has to look at the economic developments on the island going back to the previous century.

During the 1700s, Crete’s economy shifted towards olive oil production, which became a key trade commodity. French merchants initially dominated this market, supplying olive oil to soap factories in Marseilles. However, as time went by, local Cretan soap factories also emerged, facilitated by French merchant trading companies, which also acted as credit institutions. Cretan producers capitalised on growing markets, attracting more French capital and intensifying competition. However, reliance on French loans led to Cretan merchants accumulating debt, causing an economic downturn and bankruptcies. The inability of Europeans to recover their money and create their own soap industries on the island was directly connected to growing and often violent resistance on the part of Muslim olive-oil producers and soap manufacturers, with the support of local Janissary networks.

Additionally, amidst the Seven Years’ War and the French Revolution, French shipping and capital withdrew from Crete, prompting local merchant influence to rise. Consequently, the Janissary regimental funds’ importance as credit organisations on the island grew significantly. In this framework, wealthy Muslim families involved in the Janissary networks played diverse roles in the olive oil and soap trade: as ship owners, tax farmers, landowners, manufacturers, and traders. As a result, the late eighteenth century saw family-run businesses vertically controlling the previously European-funded olive oil and soap production process, as well as most of its maritime trade, supported by Janissary funds.

Via this process, the industry in Candia moved from small workshops to large-scale factories. Christian representation declined as major Muslim families gained influence, leading to the emergence of Janissary-affiliated families as prominent soap makers and merchants who ventured into the industry by acquiring factories and resources. As a result, by 1811 Christian ownership had disappeared entirely, with only a few members of the island’s military elite owning soap factories.<sup>20</sup>

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19 ADN, Constantinople, CE, Candie, 2 (22 April 1811).

20 Y. Spyropoulos, ‘Janissary Politics on the Ottoman Periphery (18th-Early 19th C.)’, in M. Sariyannis (ed.), *Political Thought and Practice in the Ottoman Empire. Halcyon Days in Crete IX: A Symposium Held in Rethymno, 9-11 January 2015* (Rethymno 2019), 471-473 and *passim*; Idem, ‘Janissary Inter-Provincial Economic Practices during the 1821 Greek War of Independence’, in M. Ch. Chatziioannou and S. Laiou (eds), *Wealth Accumulation and Entrepreneurship in the Ottoman Empire, 18th-20th Centuries* (New York 2025), 107-122.

These developments not only affected French interests on the island, but those of all European merchants, who mainly traded in the above-mentioned commodities.

The gradual displacement of European economic influence in Candia by the rise of Janissary entrepreneurial activity is reflected in both Ottoman judicial and European consular sources, which, as early as 1755, note periodic difficulties in conducting trade there. For instance, the temporary suspension of French trade is recorded in 1764 and a significant reduction in 1769, with a simultaneous increase in Chania and Rethymno. This is also evident from the noticeable decline of the Candia French community in 1773, as reported in French consular correspondence. In 1780, complete cessation of French trade in Candia is noted, with an increase in Chania, while only ten French ships called at Candia in the whole of 1784. As a result, in 1786, discussions officially began on abolishing the vice-consulate there due to decreased activity.<sup>21</sup> Napoleon's invasion of Egypt made matters even worse and, although European presence in the city continued, the challenges faced by the diplomats and merchants owing to the Janissary takeover of the local economy made everyone realise that their main competitors on the island were not other European traders, but the local Muslim entrepreneurs supported by Janissary interests.

All of the above offer us a better understanding of the reasons behind the united stance of the Europeans, which sent chills down the spine of Candia's Janissary elite. As Boze writes in one of his letters to the secretary of the French ambassador, "I cannot, sir, depict to you the panic and terror which grips them in fear of the punishment they deserve".<sup>22</sup> Given Ali Bayrakdaroglu's escape, the Janissaries knew well that the French diplomats' focus would now turn to punishing the murderer's regiment; and disciplining an *orta* could only mean one thing: banishment from the island.

Exiling an *orta* had serious repercussions for both the regiment and its members. In Crete, as in most provinces of the empire, Janissary *ortas* were highly localised, mainly comprising members of Cretan origins, and making substantial investments in the local economy. The 18th *bölük*, the regiment in question, had maintained an

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21 For some characteristic examples of French sources noting the difficulties that French and Europeans in general faced in Candia, see Archives Nationales de France (ANF), Affaires Étrangères (AE), B<sup>1</sup>, La Canée, 10 (4 March 1755; 21 March 1755; 5 August 1755; 6 November 1756; 20 February 1758); 11 (17 November 1761; 3 December 1761; 16 December 1761; 7 February 1764); 12 (7 December 1769; 1 March 1770); 13 (23 January 1773; 11 October 1773); 16 (12 June 1780); 17 (31 December 1782); 18 (3 February 1785; 29 May 1786; 6 November 1786); 19 (10 December 1786). Also, for the early nineteenth century, see MAE, CCC, La Canée, 20: 334-337.

22 ADN, Constantinople, CE, Candie, 2 (3 May 1811).

almost continuous presence in Candia since 1736,<sup>23</sup> a period of 75 years during which it had gradually established itself as an important player in the local market. Thus, abandoning Crete for years would result in a serious setback for its economic ventures. Although, as we will see, regimental representatives were always left behind in such cases to continue managing the *orta*'s property and investments, most of the leading officers who had a say in its affairs would be forced to follow the regiment to its place of banishment. This, in turn, would not only lead to the discontinuation or shrinking of ongoing and future economic ventures, but would also leave their followers without patrons.

From the viewpoint of most of the regiment's affiliates, the possibility of being left without protection was much greater than having to move away from their businesses and families. As eighteenth-century traveller Richard Pococke mentions by way of illustration:

[I]f any one of the companies are ordered away, those only go who please, and they make up their number as they can, and then the persons who refuse to go belong no more to that company.<sup>24</sup>

Effectively, this meant that for as long as the regiment was absent, its soldiers who remained on Crete lost any economic benefits and other protection they normally enjoyed as Janissaries and could more easily fall prey to the local government and their competitors. This is, for instance, how a French consul in Chania describes the anxiety felt by those Janissary affiliates whose regiments were due to be sent away:

[T]hey feared that if they accepted exile, they would be forced to follow the cauldron<sup>25</sup> and that if, on the other hand, they remained behind without support, they would be at the mercy of the pasha, who would mistreat them.<sup>26</sup>

The threat of an impending banishment was enough to alarm not only the officers of the threatened *orta*, but those of the other Janissary regiments based in Candia, i.e. the 14th, 37th, and 42nd *cemaats*, and the 30th *bölük*. Although rivalries between the city's regiments sometimes could arise, the five *ortas* were generally on good terms with each other, and their members were often connected through familial and other bonds, a fact that put pressure on Janissary officers to unite against

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23 TAH.18: 70.

24 R. Pococke, 'A Description of the East', in J. Pinkerton (ed.), *A General Collection of the Best and Most Interesting Voyages and Travels in All Parts of the World*, Vol. X (London 1811), 619.

25 The regiment's cauldron was of great symbolic importance for its members, and followed the *orta* wherever it was stationed.

26 R. Pashley, *Travels in Crete*, Vol. II (Cambridge and London 1837), 182.

the prospect of the 18th *bölük*'s banishment. Most importantly, the remaining four regiments knew that – at a symbolic level, if nothing else – they had to fend off any challenge to their authority as the leading political and financial institutions in the province, especially when that challenge came from their main economic competitors, the Europeans. In light of this information, it comes as no surprise that from this point on all the Janissary regiments in Candia closed ranks against Boze and his cause.

As the two opposing camps rallied their forces and tried to create all possible alliances against each other, the Janissaries resorted to an unexpected move: they tried to approach Candia's Orthodox Christian clergy. The *ustas* of the five regiments went to the house of the Greek-Orthodox archbishop and requested that he write a letter to the government in Istanbul, maintaining that Boze's claims were false. The archbishop diplomatically demurred, however, on the grounds that as an Orthodox cleric it would not be appropriate for him to interfere in the affairs of the French, fearing that his position might be compromised.<sup>27</sup>

Although we do not know the exact details of this visit, an informed guess would be that the Janissaries asked the archbishop of Crete to support their claim that Alexandre Boze and his murdered son were, in fact, not French, but local Greek-Orthodox *reaya*. We have already seen that this argument was propounded in the *ilam* which the Janissaries made the local *kadı* write and, given that the archbishop was often considered by the Ottoman administration to be answerable for the actions of the island's Greek-Orthodox community, this sounds like the most plausible explanation. The idea behind this move was quite shrewd: it aimed to create a certain impression in the central government by conflating and offsetting two largely unrelated issues – a murder, on the one hand, and the alleged *reaya* origin of a French diplomat, on the other – while taking advantage of the increasing distrust felt by the Ottoman administration toward foreign diplomats over the question of European protection offered to Ottoman subjects.

Ever since Abdulhamid I's reign, the central Ottoman administration had been engaged in an effort to limit the increasing influence of European states on the empire's non-Muslim *reaya*. This effort escalated during Selim III and Mahmud II's time, through the issuance of numerous decrees which not only targeted those Ottoman subjects who abusively gained European protection, but also enacted a number of measures aimed at actively restricting the access of former *reaya* to diplomatic posts. One of these measures was an explicit ban on people of *reaya* origins becoming consular agents and vice-consuls. Other decrees were also issued aimed at severing any familial and proprietorial relations developed between *reaya* and

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27 ADN, Constantinople, CE, Candie, 2 (3 May 1811).

protégés, by forbidding the latter from owning real estate in the empire and stating that, if they were to marry local women, their children should be considered Ottoman subjects.<sup>28</sup>

The Janissaries were well aware of all these restrictions and regulations and, by focusing on revealing Boze's *reaya* status, they aimed to defame him and his family, and, in turn, totally discredit the allegations made against them. The Janissaries' implied accusations were not entirely inaccurate. Boze's spouse was Greek-Orthodox<sup>29</sup> and at least one of his sons held a dragoman *berat*,<sup>30</sup> while his other son, referred to as "French" in one of his father's letters,<sup>31</sup> was the owner of a local shop and married to a woman from Istanbul.<sup>32</sup> Despite their self-proclaimed 'Frenchness', in most documents in the Ottoman language the Bozes were addressed and even named themselves as "Bozo",<sup>33</sup> while the names of the father and son were written as "Alexandri" and "İlia" respectively, all pointing to their Greek-Orthodox origin.

At any rate, the sources make it clear that the family was very close to Candia's Orthodox community. For instance, in one of his letters Alexandre refers to the fact that the local Christians "considered his son a martyr" and "hoped that their tyrants would be punished". Moreover, according to Boze, the archbishop had the courage to stand in front of a large crowd of local residents who accompanied his son's body to the Church of Saint Matthew – an Orthodox monastery –<sup>34</sup> where they buried him.<sup>35</sup> In view of this display of solidarity between the Greek-Orthodox community of Candia and the Boze family, it hardly comes as a surprise that the Janissaries tried

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28 A. İ. Bağış, *Osmanlı Ticaretinde Gayri Müslimler; Kapitülasyonlar-Berathlı Tüccarlar Avrupa ve Hayriye Tüccarları (1750-1839)* (Ankara 1983), 41-43.

29 ADN, Constantinople, CE, Candie, 2 (1 September 1811).

30 ADN, Constantinople, CE, Candie, 2 (22 April 1811).

31 Ibid.

32 AND, Constantinople, CE, Candie, 2 (18 November 1811).

33 In some of the documents produced by the central administration the name is also written as "Bozer", with the letter "ز" replacing "ر", probably due to a misspelling of the orthography used by Alexandre himself.

34 For the monastery of Saint Matthew (Hagios Matthaios) in Candia, see M. Sariyannis and Y. Spyropoulos, 'Το οθωμανικό αρχείο του σιναϊτικού μετοχίου του Αγίου Ματθαίου στο Ηράκλειο Κρήτης (1673-1849)' [The Ottoman Archive of the Sinai Monastery's Dependency of Hagios Matthaios in Herakleio, Crete (1573-1849)], in *Σιναϊτικά μετόχια σε Κρήτη και Κύπρο* [The Sinai Monastery's Dependencies in Crete and Cyprus] (Athens 2009), 71-98; M. Sariyannis, 'Συμβολή στην ιστορία του σιναϊτικού μετοχίου του Αγίου Ματθαίου στο Ηράκλειο' [A Contribution to the History of the Sinaite *metochion* of St. Matthew in Iraklio], *Αριάδνη* [Ariadne] 16 (2010), 137-168.

35 ADN, Constantinople, CE, Candie, 2 (22 April 1811).



to disrupt these bonds by making the archbishop testify to Boze's illegal status as a vice-consul.

### *Istanbul finally takes sides*

Alexandre's next letter to the French embassy in Istanbul is dated 20 June 1811, and is filled with expressions of enthusiasm and gratitude. He thanks the secretary of the French ambassador for having contributed to the issuance of two *fermans* in his favour, which arrived from Istanbul within seven days. The *fermans* were sent with a *turnacıbaşı* (high-ranking Janissary officer) and three Janissary *çavuşes* charged with exiling the 18th *bölük* to the fortress of Monemvasia (Ott. Benefşe/Menekşe) in the Peloponnese.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, Istanbul gave no quarter to the local officers who had taken the Janissaries' side: in one of the *fermans*, a copy of which was registered in the *kadı* records of Candia,<sup>37</sup> the central administration rebukes the *kadı*, the *mütesellim*, and the agha of the Janissary unit of Candia for having sent an *ilam* and two petitions (*ariza*) respectively, in which they tried to predispose the government toward disfavouring Boze by claiming that Alexandre and his deceased son were *zimmi reaya*, that the former was a merchant, and that the murder was the result of Ali's deranged condition.

That being said, despite severely criticising Crete's officials for their stance, the *ferman* basically let them off the hook, containing only a simple warning to the governor that he should not allow any delays in executing the regiment's punishment. This was very mild treatment of the above-mentioned individuals, given that the *ferman* explicitly notes that "they did not ensure the murderer's arrest and punishment" (*ahz ve ceza-yı katilliğinin şeran icrasına bakılmayarak*), that "they sent misleading reports" (*itibara gayri şayan tahrirat irsal eylemeleri*) and that "it became clear that the Janissary agha and the rest of the said [officials] let the above-mentioned murderer escape due to their association [with him]".<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, the order did not bring Bekir Pasha into the picture – even though, as we have seen, there were serious indications that he had been bribed. In other words, despite its seemingly strict diction, the *ferman* only ordered the punishment of the 18th *bölük*.

At this point it is worth noting that although the *ferman* clearly expressed disapproval at the Ottoman officials' display of favouritism toward the Janissaries, it did

36 ADN, Constantinople, CE, Candie, 2 (20 June 1811).

37 TAH.40: 124.

38 Ibid., "yeniçeri zabiti ve sair-i mumailerhimin katil-i merkumu istishab suretiyle fırar ettirmiş oldukları zahir olan mevaddan olmakdan naşi...".

not exactly corroborate most of Boze's claims either, as the narration it offers largely opposes the one given by Alexandre in his French-language letters: according to the order, Alexandre was, as the Janissaries had claimed, a merchant and a *zimmi* and so was his son. Moreover, the *ferman* maintains that there was indeed a long altercation between Elie and Ali, that the latter was initially unarmed, but that because he was "unable to endure the bickering, he grabbed the knife of a *zimmi* who was passing by in the street, stabbed him under the left side of his chest, and immediately ran away".<sup>39</sup> Additionally, the order claims that Ali managed to escape despite his "officers running after him and making an extreme effort to arrest him".<sup>40</sup> Reading all this, one is left wondering, firstly, why Istanbul decided that it was the 18th *bölük* that had to be punished rather than Candia's high-ranking officials, and secondly, why in his letter to the embassy Boze claimed that this particular *ferman* "contained the whole affair as it happened" (*le premier contenoit toute l'affaire comme elle s'est passée*), when it so openly contradicted his own narrative.<sup>41</sup>

Although this particular *ferman* does not give any explanation as to why it held the 18th *bölük* responsible for Ali's escape, it does elaborate on why Boze's alleged illegal status was not accounted for as an argument against him. The rationale in this case is quite clear and leaves little room for misinterpretation:

It is, indeed, forbidden to Christian states to appoint *reaya* as consuls and vice-consuls and, in the past, I have corroborated my proclamations on this matter with imperial orders. However, this is not an affair which is related to the consular office, but a case of murder, and in such cases everyone, be it a Muslim, a Christian, a subject of a foreign state, or a *reaya*, is treated equally. Punishing a murderer is an established Quranic precept and, even if the abovementioned Christian was a *reaya*, the arrest and the enforcement of the legal punishment of the one who dared to murder him is a sacred obligation, resulting from the protection offered to a *zimmi*.<sup>42</sup>

39 TAH.40: 124; "*mersum İlia ile bir mikdar niza ve nizaları dur ve diraz olduğunda, nöbetçi-i mezbur tahammül edemeyüb sokakdan mürür eden bir zimminin Çerkeş bıcağını kapub mersumu sol memesi altından zarb ve derakab fırar etmiş ise de...*".

40 Ibid.; "*verasından zabitan be-gayetle ahz ve girifte ikdam olunmakda iken...*".

41 ADN, Constantinople, CE, Candie, 2 (20 June 1811).

42 TAH.40: 124; "*vakia reayadan düvel-i nasaraya konsolos ve konsolos vekili nasbi memnuatdan ve bu babda mukaddemce dahi evamir-i aliyem neşdiyle tekid kılındığı vahimaidan (?) olub, ancak bu husus konsoloslüğe dair olmayub katil maddesi olmağla, katil maddesinde Müslim ve Nasara ve düvel tebaası ve reaya yeksan olub, katilin cezası görülmek nusus-ı katia-ı Fırkaniyye ile müsbet olub, mesfur reayadan ise dahi katiline ictisar eden merkumun ahziyla mücazat-ı meşruasının icrası feriza-i zimmeleri...*".

The second *ferman* sent to Candia, copies of which can be found both in TAH and in BOA,<sup>43</sup> deals with the 18th *bölük*'s punishment and the arrest of the murderer, and, unlike the first one, openly turns against the regiment's officers. Overall, the narrative used is the same as above: Elie is again treated as a *zimmi*; there was a long altercation between the latter and the Janissary; and Ali was initially unarmed. Yet this time, the part where the officers of the regiment did their best to arrest the killer is missing. Instead, this *ferman* strongly criticises the officers of the *orta*, because "it has been revealed that they allied with the above-mentioned murderer and let him escape".<sup>44</sup> As a consequence, the edict orders and arranges the details of the banishment to Monemvasia "of the cauldron, the officers, and all the soldiers of the above-mentioned *orta*, as a whole".<sup>45</sup>

A search in the Istanbul archives reveals that the two *fermans* sent to the authorities of Candia were not the only decrees issued on the case. There was at least one further order written at the same time as the other two (*evasit-ı Cemaziyelevvel / June 12-21*), which was addressed to the authorities of Smyrna and can be found in two copies, as a longer unbound document and as a shorter *mühimme* record.<sup>46</sup> This *ferman*, which addresses the *voyvoda* and the *naib* of Smyrna, informs them that "it has been rightly reported and verified that the killer has left the island of Crete and is currently located in Smyrna in order to flee",<sup>47</sup> and orders Ali's arrest and imprisonment.

Istanbul had finally spoken, openly taking the side of Alexandre Boze and the French diplomats: despite not corroborating many of Boze's claims, it first declared that it would not tolerate any corruption of Ottoman officials that would work in favour of the murderer and his regiment; second, it expressly ordered the regiment's exile; and third, it launched an inter-provincial manhunt against the murderer. The French had every reason to be satisfied and Boze was more than enthusiastic about this outcome. All that remained now was the implementation of these orders... What could possibly go wrong?

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43 TAH.40: 123; BOA, C.AS.209/8976.

44 TAH.40: 123; "*katil-i merkumu ortası zabitanı istishab ederek firar etdirdikleri sudur-ı işaat olunmuş olduğu...*".

45 Ibid.; "*orta-ı mezkur kazan ve zabitan ve bi'l-cümle neferat ve heyet-i mecmuasıyla Benefşe kalesine nefy ve ırsalına mübaderet emeniz*".

46 BOA, C.ZB.22/1075; A.DVNSMHM.d.233: 73/175.

47 BOA, C.ZB.22/1075; "*katil-i merhum Girid adasından firar ve 'l-yevm medine-i İzmir'de meks ve firar üzere olduğu bu defa sahihan ihbar ve tahkik olunduğu...*".

*The Sultan has spoken! Now what?*

Above the *mühimme* record ordering the arrest of Ali Bayrakdaroğlu by the authorities of Smyrna, there is a small note dated 20 Cemaziyülahir 1226 (12 July 1811). The note, written almost a month after the decree, contains the following brief update on the case: “although, after the arrival of this order in Smyrna, the above-mentioned killer was imprisoned, it has now been reported that he is no longer there”.<sup>48</sup> One of Boze’s letters to the French embassy, dated July 15, gives us more information about Ali’s disappearance from the prison in Smyrna. More specifically, Alexandre reports that he had been informed that the murderer was now in Egypt and that he had even sent a letter to his officers, letting them know of his safe arrival at the court of the Egyptian governor, Mehmed Ali Pasha.<sup>49</sup>

In order to make sense of this surprising turn of events, one first has to comprehend why the killer chose this escape route in the first place. The Ottoman archives show that Ali was neither the first nor the last Janissary to travel to Smyrna so as to avoid arrest on Crete. When, for instance, a violent Janissary uprising broke out in Candia in 1762,<sup>50</sup> some of the Janissaries who had participated in it fled to the same city.<sup>51</sup> Similarly, when in 1799 a member of the wealthy Cretan Janissary family by the name of Mohoğlu was accused of extracting slaves from the imperial arsenal in Istanbul, he also escaped to Smyrna to avoid arrest.<sup>52</sup> In yet another instance of such an attempt, in 1816, the powerful agha of the Janissaries of Candia, Mustafa Karakaş, unsuccessfully tried to flee to Smyrna and then Egypt after Sultan Mahmud II ordered his execution.<sup>53</sup>

48 BOA, A.DVNSMHM.233: 73/175; “*işbu emr-i ali lede’l-vürud katil-i merkum mahbus olunmuş ise de ol tarafda mevcud olmadığı ihbar olunduğunu...*”.

49 ADN, Constantinople, CE, Candie, 2 (15 July 1811).

50 For this rebellion, see M. Sariyannis, ‘Rebellious Janissaries: Two Military Mutinies in Candia (1688, 1762) and their Aftermaths’, in A. Anastasopoulos (ed.), *The Eastern Mediterranean under Ottoman Rule: Crete, 1645-1840. Halcyon Days in Crete VI. A Symposium Held in Rethymno, 13-15 January 2006* (Rethymno 2008), 257-268.

51 In an unexpected twist, one of these Janissaries had the misfortune of crossing paths with the very pasha who had previously persecuted him in Crete. Meanwhile, this pasha had been assigned to an administrative role in Güzelhisar, located in the northern region of Smyrna. For this story, which had a happy ending for the Janissary in question, see R. Chandler, *Travels in Asia Minor, and Greece: or an Account of a Tour Made at the Expense of the Society of Dilettanti*, Vol. I (London 1817), 236-237.

52 BOA, C.BH.123/5992.

53 Karakaş was eventually arrested and executed off the island of Kos. For this case and the relevant sources, see Y. Spyropoulos, ‘Κοινωνική, διοικητική, οικονομική και πολιτική διάσταση του οθωμανικού στρατού: οι γενίτσαροι της Κρήτης, 1750-1826’ [Social, Administrative, Financial,

All of these individuals chose to head for Smyrna because of the powerful Cretan Janissary networks established there as early as the mid-eighteenth century. According to Ottoman sources, a community of Muslim Cretan soldiers had been founded in the city to facilitate trade between Crete and Egypt, while its members, following a common Janissary practice, leveraged their military status to evade customs and other taxes. In the decades following the formation of the community of Muslim Cretans, their presence became more prominent and tightly linked with local authorities and other Janissaries living there.

Various sources reveal instances such as the appointment of Cretan officials to head Smyrna's customs office, a place that appeared to be a site of political agitation for local soldiers. Additionally, Cretans were often chosen as heads of the local Janissary unit during this period. This was, for example, the case in 1770 when, following events including the Orlov Revolt in the Peloponnese, the Daskalogiannis Rebellion in Crete, and the Battle of Çesme, the Janissaries of Smyrna carried out a series of massacres against the local Orthodox Christian population. Similar bloody events with Cretan Janissaries as protagonists also took place in 1797 and 1821.

These Janissary officials worked to create a strong network of Cretans in the city – involving both military and non-military figures – consistently interconnected with the Janissary units of Crete. Simultaneously, the strengthening of Cretan Janissary elements in Smyrna occurred as the economic power of the Janissaries in Crete grew, leading to the establishment of a stable Cretan trading network with Egyptian ports such as Alexandria and Damietta, where other large Cretan communities were established. Ottoman and Arabic sources of the time are replete with accounts of Muslim merchants from the island engaging in trade with Egypt, transporting coffee and grain from Egypt to Smyrna and Istanbul, as well as carrying Cretan and Smyrna soap and olive oil to these destinations.<sup>54</sup>

In light of the strong inter-provincial Janissary networking which connected Crete to Smyrna and Egypt, Ali's escape route seems only natural. All of the above also help us understand that it was most probably the same Cretan Janissary connections in Smyrna's garrison that ensured he absconded from prison following his arrest there. Moreover, we can see that choosing to end his journey in the semi-autonomous province of Egypt was a well-calculated move, given that the *de facto* Ottoman central government's jurisdiction would be limited there. Especially if, as

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and Political Dimensions of the Ottoman Army: The Janissaries of Crete, 1750-1826], unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Crete, 2014, 255.

54 For all of these developments and the relevant sources, see Y. Spyropoulos, 'Διακοινοτική βία στη Σμύρνη το 1821: μια ευρύτερη οπτική των γεγονότων' [Intercommunal Violence in 1821 Izmir: A Broader View of the Events], forthcoming in E. Gara (ed.), *Οθωμανική Κρίση και Ελληνική Επανάσταση* [Ottoman Crisis and the Greek Revolution] (Athens).

Boze maintains, Ali Bayrakdaroğlu's Janissary connections helped him find a niche in Mehmed Ali's court, the likelihood of him getting punished were close to zero.

While Ali was breaking out of prison in Smyrna, Boze was anxiously waiting for the 18th *bölük*'s exile from Candia to be enforced. His conviction that the punishment would be implemented was enhanced by the fact that, following the arrival of the two *fermans* which criticised the local administration for its stance, the pasha insisted that their orders be carried out within five days. These pressing circumstances created considerable commotion among the local Janissaries. All the members of the 18th *bölük* immediately convened a meeting in their barracks and decided to enlist the help of the unit's Janissary agha. The regimental *odabaşı* visited the latter and tried to bribe him to intervene and change the pasha's mind. However, the agha replied that, given the arrival of two *fermans* ordering the banishment, his hands were tied.<sup>55</sup>

Despite the regiment's initial unsuccessful attempt to convince the administration to overturn the decision made in Istanbul, it seems that their efforts did bear some fruit, considering that the 18th *bölük* was still in Candia twelve days later. According to Renard, the French consul, the regiment's prolonged stay was owing to the intervention of some of the most rich and powerful notables on Crete – all with close connections to the local Janissary networks –<sup>56</sup> and an extra 8,000 *guruş* given by the regimental officers to the pasha, who was apparently still negotiating with them.<sup>57</sup>

In any case, it seems that the negotiations did not lead to any tangible results and that the Janissaries of the 18th *bölük* decided, for the first time, to approach Boze himself, in a last-ditch attempt to reverse the course of things: they sent a merchant Janissary from another regiment to his house to offer him 1,500 *guruş* as blood money for his son's death, and to ask him to prevail upon the pasha to pull some strings and cancel the banishment. When Alexandre haughtily declined, the members of the regiment did not react calmly: Boze was notified that the soldiers of the 18th *bölük* were now plotting his murder, as well as that of Barbier, the Austrian agent who had actively supported the Boze family throughout the whole crisis. In response, the pasha, who was informed of these ill intentions, ordered the *ustas* of

55 ADN, Constantinople, CE, Candie, 2 (20 June 1811).

56 Apart from the incumbent *defterdar* Hacı Hasan Efendi, Renard also mentions the names of ex-*defterdar* Bedri Efendi and Hanyahoğlu Hasan Ağa. For these individuals and their connections with the Janissaries of Crete, see Spyropoulos, 'Οι γενίτσαροι της Κρήτης', 248-249, 257, 271-272, 295, 296, 333, 352.

57 ADN, Constantinople, CE, Candie, 2 (2 July 1811).

the other four Janissary regiments of Candia to keep an eye on their comrades, holding them responsible should anything happen.<sup>58</sup>

After mobilising a number of other local notables for their cause and being unable to change the administration's decision, the Janissaries were eventually forced to hire a ship for 950 *guruş* and depart on the 10th of July.<sup>59</sup> As Boze informs us, the trip cost a total of 4,000 *guruş*, a sum which was extracted from the city's *reaya* "although the regiment has the money to pay this expense".<sup>60</sup>

At least one of Istanbul's orders had been executed. All the same, the much-anticipated banishment was not destined to bring an end to Boze's troubles. First of all, despite the fact that Istanbul had ordered the transfer to Monemvasia of all the soldiers in the 18th *bölük*, only 28 of them actually boarded the ship.<sup>61</sup> Given that a couple of years earlier, the 18th *bölük*'s manpower in the town comprised 100 recorded individuals (not counting the *yamaks* permanently appointed and residing in the fortress, or any unpaid affiliates),<sup>62</sup> we can see that the vast majority of its members remained in Crete. This was a source of great anxiety for Boze, whose life was literally hanging by a thread: on July 11, some of the regiment's members organised an assassination attempt against him, which, though unsuccessful, terrified his five-months-pregnant daughter-in-law – Elie's widow – to the point of miscarriage. "This would have been my only grandson" writes a devastated Alexandre in one of his letters to the embassy, expressing his strong desire to be appointed elsewhere.<sup>63</sup>

Alexandre also notes that the departed Janissaries had left behind "an ex-*odabaşı* and a *yamak çavuş*" to handle the affairs of the remaining soldiers "with the hope of writing to their government in order to quickly obtain a pardon and the return of the regiment", and pleads with the secretary of the French embassy to act "in order for the regiment to be banned from this place permanently".<sup>64</sup> The truth is that it was standard practice for transferred Janissary regiments to appoint representative officers – especially *odabaşıs* – wherever they left behind investments requiring their attention.<sup>65</sup> However, as we will see, Boze was right to believe that the regiment had already started taking action to secure its swift return to Candia.

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58 Ibid.

59 ADN, Constantinople, CE, Candie, 2 (8 July 1811); (15 July 1811).

60 ADN, Constantinople, CE, Candie, 2 (15 July 1811).

61 Ibid.

62 BOA, D.YNÇ.d.34893: 7.

63 ADN, Constantinople, CE, Candie, 2 (15 July 1811).

64 Ibid.

65 See, for instance, TAH.31: 103-104. In 1771, while the 37th *cemaat* was posted to Nafplio, its

According to the sources, a certain Mehmed Senerci, an *ex-usta* of the 18th *bölük*, had approached the pasha for help both in reinstating the regiment and in retaliating for its banishment. The arrival of a *ferman* that criticised the ease with which some consuls granted patents of protection to *reaya*, as well as to their daughters who married Europeans and their children, offered the ideal opportunity to put pressure on Boze and the Europeans who had collaborated with him. First the pasha furloughed the dragomans of France and Austria and then, on Senerci's prompting, he launched an investigation into the *reaya* origins of Boze and Barbier. When questioned as part of the process, the archbishop and the Orthodox elders of the city claimed that Boze was from Marseille, but married to a Greek woman, and that the Austrian was from Verona, despite having a Greek mother. Not only had the local Orthodox community covered for Boze once again, but the archbishop even informed him that the pasha was looking for an excuse to secure a pardon for the 18th *bölük* and confirmed that he was giving a helping hand to the Janissaries to act against Alexandre.<sup>66</sup>

Under such overwhelming pressure, Boze's feeling that he could no longer live in Candia solidified into a conviction. The situation reached breaking point for him when a ship arrived from Istanbul bringing the news that a certain member of the 18th *bölük* named Hüseyin Agha Odabaşakis had managed, through the intervention of his connections in the capital and by paying 3,000 *guruş*, to obtain a pardon for his regiment.

Odabaşakis (the ending '-akis' stands for '-oğlu' in Cretan Greek dialect) was a member of the Janissary family of Odabaşıoğulları, which we know had at least one member living in the Balkapanı district of Istanbul and acting as a trading agent for Janissaries there.<sup>67</sup> The family's connection with the 18th *bölük* and its contacts with Istanbul can be also corroborated through the probate inventory of a certain Süleyman Odabaşıoğlu, who died in 1813 during a visit to the Ottoman capital. Among Süleyman's debts we find 14,400 *paras* owed to the common fund of the above-mentioned regiment and 1,120 *paras* owed to its *mütevelli*, Çalıkzade Mehmed Agha.<sup>68</sup> Although we cannot know for sure whether it was Süleyman who paid the money to obtain the pardon for the regiment, what we definitely do know is that

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*odabaşı* launched proceedings against a private individual in the religious court of Candia to claim a building in the town as part of the regiment's common fund.

66 ADN, Constantinople, CE, Candie, 2 (1 September 1811).

67 For this individual and other members of the Odabaşıoğlu family, see Y. Spyropoulos, 'Yunan Bağımsızlık Savaşı Sırasında Ele Geçirilen İki Yeniçeri Mektubunun Düşündürdükleri', in A. Yıldız, Y. Spyropoulos and M. M. Sunar (eds), *Payitaht Yeniçerileri: Padişahın "Asi" Kulları, 1700-1826* (Istanbul 2022), 50-54.

68 TAH.41: 59-60. For Çalıkzade Mehmed Agha as the *mütevelli* of the 18th *bölük*, see TAH.41:35.



less than two months after the latter's departure from Candia, a *çavuş* was sent to Monemvasia to bring the 18th *bölük* back to Crete.<sup>69</sup> In essence, the *orta* was never punished.

### *Conclusion*

In November the exiled members of the 18th *bölük* landed back on Crete. Boze immediately sent his daughter-in-law to Istanbul and wrote a letter to the embassy urgently requesting, once again, that he and his younger son be appointed elsewhere "in order to avoid the malice and the poisonous glance of the Cretan soldiers who live only to harm us".<sup>70</sup> Alexandre's request was granted in April 1812; he subsequently moved to Chania, together with his remaining son, waiting for the right opportunity to leave the island once and for all.<sup>71</sup> The letter informing us of these developments was to be his last communication in the capacity of French vice-consul of Crete, an island which he and his entire family abandoned following the murder of his first-born son, the closing down of their family business, the death of his unborn grandchild, an assassination attempt and an investigation against him, as well as several months spent fruitlessly pursuing the punishment of his son's murderer and his accomplices.

This tragic story has a great deal to tell us about the function, power, and limitations of the European and Janissary systems of protection in the Ottoman Empire. Obviously, in this head-on collision the Janissaries triumphed over their opponents, but the process was neither linear nor easy, and involved all kinds of layers of agency, diplomacy, negotiation, and violence.

The first thing that needs to be underlined is the role of Istanbul as an arbitrator that either camp had to win over to achieve its goals. The Sultan and his *divan* acted as a supreme court which constituted the ultimate legitimising force for the two protection systems. At a lower level stood the leading Ottoman provincial authorities, such as the governor, the *mütesellim*, and the *kadı* of Candia, who acted as the primary intermediaries between the conflicting parties and Istanbul. Since these officials were the central government's direct representatives in the provinces, gaining their favour was crucial to addressing and influencing the former. A close second to them in this chain of hierarchy came the high-ranking authorities within the two systems' own administration: the ambassador and his secretary, the heads

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69 ADN, Constantinople, CE, Candie, 2 (1 September 1811).

70 ADN, Constantinople, CE, Candie, 2 (18 November 1811).

71 ADN, Constantinople, CE, Candie, 2 (3 April 1812).

of Janissary units, etc. These office holders could leverage their status as influential members of institutions that had to be reckoned with by both the local and the central administration. Also important in this respect was the position of some lower officials in these institutions, such as the consular authorities and the leading Janissary regimental officers on Crete. Following the latter came a multitude of other groups, whose networks of power were directly entangled with or dependent on the two opposing parties. These groups, which included individuals such as local notables, representatives of local Christian communities, European and Ottoman merchants, etc., could develop various types of relationships with the above systems of protection that often extended beyond official lines, but did not exclude institutionalised connections either.

This hierarchy was not absolute and could change according to an individual's personal influence in this complex system of relations. All the same, the mobilisation of these groups created numerous opportunities for the development of diverse negotiation tactics. Some of these tactics, for instance, were based on a feeling of solidarity, reciprocation, and common interest. Venality was also crucial in the process of finding or motivating allies, especially when the latter were either not dependent on the protection networks of the interested party or when the risks resulting from openly defending the latter were high. At this level, the management of Janissary regimental common funds played a decisive role as the main tool used for shaping decisions, as well as for preventing or containing damages.

Another intriguing aspect of the conflict was the creation of 'grey zones' by the two parties in order to manipulate Ottoman legal concepts and prejudices to their advantage. Accusations of lawlessness and illegal activities were flung at each other, a strategy designed to divert attention from their own misdeeds while discrediting opponents. Threats, bluffing, intimidation, and violence were integral to this negotiation process, as well. The Janissaries' control over a pool of rowdy elements and their access to violence added a constant layer of menace, shaping the decisions of their adversaries.

Yet another important element of this conflict, which needs to be underlined here, was the inter-provincially networked nature of the two systems, which, in the case of Janissary networks, was also combined with their empire-wide official remit as law-enforcers. Both the French and the Janissaries had powerful connections extending outside Crete, to Istanbul and elsewhere, and both took advantage of them. After all, most of what Boze managed to achieve through diplomacy was thanks to his networks in the Ottoman capital. On the other side, the Janissaries of Crete utilised their own connections in Istanbul, Smyrna, and Egypt to effectively annul Boze's initial successful attempt at exiling the 18th *bölük* and to help Ali Bayrakdaroğlu escape. Throughout this process, the Janissaries' special jurisdiction

and policing functions in and beyond Crete were crucial to their success in protecting their comrade.

Considering all of the above, it is also important to look at the actual stakes involved for the two systems. Boze was a diplomat, albeit a low-ranking one, a position that could, to a certain extent, justify what emerges from the sources as the mobilisation of French diplomats for his protection. However, the lengths to which the Janissaries went in order to protect a simple rank-and-file soldier – a *beşe* as indicated in a number of Ottoman sources –<sup>72</sup> who came from a small village in eastern Crete, is astonishing, to say the least. Of course, there is always the possibility that Ali Bayrakdaroğlu was an important figure with extensive connections within Candia's military networks. However, a thorough investigation of the *kadı sicilleri* in the city points in the opposite direction.<sup>73</sup>

In my view, instead of basing our analysis on the functioning of personal connections, it would be more useful to focus on the economic and political backdrop to this struggle, and the repeating patterns which set the stage for the narrated chain of events. Indeed, the tenacity of the victim's family and the power of its connections led the local Janissary networks down an inescapable path which would force them to flex their muscles to the extreme. However, as explained, Ali was neither the first nor the last Janissary to be spirited away by his comrades; this was the way the Janissary networks usually reacted in such situations. The perseverance displayed by both sides can be much better understood when considering that, as explained, the French and the Janissaries represented two competing economic camps on the island. Under these circumstances, standing for one's affiliates in this showdown – regardless of their place in their institution's hierarchy – was seen as the measure of each system's protection capacity. In other words, the ultimate stakes in this complex conflict did not simply revolve around one person's individual interests and personal clout, but represented a broader economic and political reality, rendering this case a microcosm of the larger power dynamics at play in the Ottoman Empire during the early nineteenth century.

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72 BOA, A.DVNSMHM.233: 73/175; BOA, C.ZB.22/1075; TAH.40: 123, 124.

73 For the only reference to Ali and some of his family members I was able to discover, see TAH.37: 109. In the source, Ali appears among the accusers of a gang of criminals who had murdered the *subaşı* of the village of Limnes, close to Humeriako, Ali's own village. Ali is referred to as an inhabitant of Humeriako and a member of the Janissary garrison of Candia.



# THE PRISHTINA AFFAIR, 1821-1823

## A CASE OF JANISSARY INTERVENTION IN IMPERIAL POLITICS

H. Şükrü İLİCAK\*

WHILE CONDUCTING RESEARCH AT THE OTTOMAN STATE ARCHIVES for my doctoral dissertation on the Greek Revolution, I came across a remarkable abundance of documents centred around the town of Prishtina (Turk. Priştine) and its intricate connections with the Janissaries of Istanbul, particularly during the initial two years of the Revolution. I meticulously collected these documents and put a mental bookmark on the topic until the launch of the JaNet project. Delving into the depths of these documents unveiled layers upon layers of complexities, revealing a web of interconnectedness among a multitude of actors involved in events that I would term ‘The Prishtina Affair’.

This uncharted episode in Ottoman history, teeming with a captivating array of events, stands out as one of the concluding moments of ‘meaningful discourse’ between the ruler and the ruled in the early nineteenth century.<sup>1</sup> When the inhabitants of a modest province in the Ottoman Balkans rose against their long-standing *mutasarrıf* (sub-governor), insisting on his replacement, Sultan Mahmud II found himself compelled to listen, perhaps more attentively than most Ottoman sultans, as he lacked the ability to unilaterally impose his will upon his subjects.<sup>2</sup>

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\* Foundation for Research and Technology-Hellas, Institute for Mediterranean Studies.

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1 For the term ‘meaningful discourse’ and the formation of ideology in the newly conquered Arab lands in the early sixteenth century, see R. Abou-El-Haj, ‘Aspects of the Legitimation of Ottoman Rule as Reflected in the Preambles of Two Early Liva Kanunnameleri’, *Turcica*, 21-23 (1991), 373-383.

2 For a discussion of the Janissaries’ influence on Sublime Porte politics as a case of limited government, see B. Tezcan, ‘Lost in Historiography: An Essay on the Reasons for the Absence of a History of Limited Government in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire’, *Middle Eastern Studies*, 45 (2009), 477-505.

The Sultan's reluctant attention stemmed from the fact that the locals had capitalised on a pivotal historical moment by leveraging the Janissaries' ascendancy to influence in imperial politics – a development rooted in the Greek Revolution – to their advantage. Allied with the Janissary complex,<sup>3</sup> the Prishtiniots succeeded in rallying the Janissaries of Istanbul to their cause over a two-year period, during which Prishtina endured a spate of open conflict and violence between its residents and the *mutasarrif*. In the course of this period, the *mutasarrif* was expelled from Prishtina and reinstated three times in response to the protests of the rebels, and, in turn, pushbacks by the Sublime Porte.

These developments caused considerable strain within the Sublime Porte and spurred the Ottoman chancellery to produce some one hundred documents. Fortunately, we are privy to multiple perspectives on the course of events, particularly through the petitions submitted by the locals – a perspective that is lacking in the case of a series of Janissary uprisings that occurred in several provinces in the wake of the Greek Revolution.<sup>4</sup>

### *Prishtina: the location of the 'Affair'*

Prishtina, now the capital of the Republic of Kosovo in the heart of the central Balkans, was denoted as part of Albania in the Ottoman documents produced in the 1820s.<sup>5</sup> Administratively, it functioned as a *kaza* within the *sancak* of Skopje (Turk. Üsküp). During the sixteenth century, the *kaza* of Prishtina rose as a hub for

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3 I adopt the term 'complex' from Christine Philliou, who used it for the Phanariots in her Ph.D. dissertation. See C. Philliou, 'Phanariot Networks and the Remaking of Ottoman Governance in the first half of the Nineteenth Century', unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton University, 2004. I will interchangeably use the terms 'corps' and 'complex' in this article. When Ottoman documents refer to the *Ocak*, I will specifically use the term 'corps'.

4 For the Janissary uprisings in the aftermath of the Greek Revolution, see H. Ş. Ilıcak, 'A Radical Rethinking of Empire: Ottoman State and Society during the Greek War of Independence, 1821-1826', unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 2011, Ch. 2. For the Janissary uprisings in the broader region of Izmir and their relation with political events that took place in Istanbul, Manisa, Kuşadası, Ayvalık, Crete, Erzurum, Kayseri, and elsewhere, see Y. Spyropoulos, 'Διακοινοτική βία στη Σμύρνη το 1821: μια ευρύτερη οπτική των γεγονότων' [Intercommunal Violence in 1821 Izmir: A Broader View of the Events], forthcoming in E. Gara (ed.), *Οθωμανική Κρίση και Ελληνική Επανάσταση* [Ottoman Crisis and the Greek Revolution] (Athens).

5 The Ottomans used the term *Arnavudluk* as a cultural-geographical designation for the region inhabited by Albanians. Much like Kurdistan, it does not refer to a specific geographical area with precisely defined borders. Throughout this article I will translate the term *Arnavudluk* as 'Albania', reflecting its usage in the historical documents of the period.

mining and trade, with significant silver, zinc, and saltpetre mines scattered across the broader region.<sup>6</sup> However, the productivity of these mines had notably declined by the early nineteenth century.<sup>7</sup>

Owing to the administration of the mines, by 1821 Skopje had held distinctive status as a *nezaret* (administration)<sup>8</sup> for nearly two and a half centuries.<sup>9</sup> This distinction was marked by the simultaneous presence of both a *mutasarrıf* and a *nazır* (superintendent). Unravelling the dynamics of this arrangement and the specific mechanisms governing the allocation of resources and authority between the *mutasarrıf* and the *nazır* would necessitate extensive research; however, hints in some sources suggest that the *nazır* wielded greater influence.<sup>10</sup>

By the 1820s the rural area surrounding Prishtina was predominantly inhabited by Geg Albanians,<sup>11</sup> notably segmented into two distinct factions: the Llaps and the Gallaps (or Gollaks).<sup>12</sup> This division likely represented clans situated in opposing hilly areas. A significant Turkish-speaking community dwelled within the town, though accurately assessing its proportion in relation to the overall population remains challenging.

6 For the mining activity in the broader Prishtina region, see R. Anhegger, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Madenler ve Madencilik*, trans. Talat Havzoğlu and Yahya Çiftçi (Ankara 2022), Vol. I.

7 E. Kul, '1703 Tarihli Bir Rapora Göre Kratova, Köstendil, Üsküp, Trepçe ve Jejene Madenlerinin Islahı', *Belleten*, 80/288 (2016), 395-410.

8 D. Gjorgiev, 'Knowledge Transfer among Muslim Communities in Ottoman Balkan Society: Cultural and Social Aspects based on the Case Study of Two Dictionaries from 1827 and 1836/37', in D. Gutmeyr and K. Kaser (eds), *Europe and the Black Sea Region: A History of Early Knowledge Exchange (1750-1850)* (Zürich 2020), 213.

9 The first document that labels Skopje as a *nezaret* dates back to 1578. See BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d.34/96.

10 Historically, the *nezaret* of Skopje was under the control of the Albanian Recep Paşa-zâde dynasty. Recep Paşa-zâdes were also military figures, suggesting that the *nazır*'s responsibilities extended beyond the administration of the mines and tax collection. See Sahhâflar Şeyhi-zâde Seyyid Mehmed Es'ad Efendi, *Vak'anüvis Es'ad Efendi Târîhi (1821-1826)*, ed. Z. Yılmaz, (Istanbul 2000), 46 (n. \*).

11 There were two major ethnocultural Albanian groups: the Tosks and the Glegs. The Tosks inhabited the areas south of the Shkumbin River (Alb. Toskëria: the land of the Tosk Albanians; Turk. Toskalık), while the Glegs dominated the north (Alb. Gegëria: the land of the Geg Albanians; Turk. Gegalık). These groups spoke mutually unintelligible dialects and had different customs and ways of life. They also had a history of frequent conflict with each other. The Ottoman authorities, recognising these pre-existing divisions, viewed the Albanians through this lens of two distinct groups.

12 Salih Pasha (Grand Vizier) to Mahmud II, undated, BOA, HAT.19352.

The available sources do not provide enough information to determine the proportion of individuals associated with the Janissary complex in relation to the town's total population either. Nor do they shed much light on the nature or extent of this affiliation. It is intriguing to note that not a single document produced by the Sublime Porte during this period explicitly labels the Prishtiniots who rose up and sought the assistance of the Janissaries in Istanbul as 'Janissaries', whereas contemporaneous documents refer, for instance, to "the Janissaries of Aleppo" or "the Janissaries of Bosnia". Instead, the Sublime Porte referred to them as the "populace of Prishtina" (*Priştine ahalisi*) or the "seditionists of Prishtina" (*Priştine müfşidleri*). This is not to imply that they were not Janissaries, but it does raise the question of why they were not overtly designated as such, as was the case elsewhere. The name Janissary was only associated with the population in three extra-state narratives: two petitions filed by the Janissaries of Istanbul mention "their comrades in Prishtina";<sup>13</sup> on one other occasion, when the Prishtiniots refused to pay duties, they justified it on the grounds that "they were Janissaries", and therefore exempt from such obligations.<sup>14</sup> Whether this lack of explicit designation by the Sublime Porte stemmed from the absence of a formal Janissary regiment in Prishtina, or whether those identifying as Janissaries were merely a faction of the urban population somehow associated with the complex – or even whether one could align oneself with the Janissary party without actually belonging to the corps – remains uncertain, as the available documents do not provide a clear answer to this question.

Christians, including Serbian, Albanian and Gypsy communities, made up about a quarter of the town's population. There was also a very small Jewish community.<sup>15</sup> Non-Muslims were among the complainants in the 'Affair', and hints in the documents discussed below suggest that they also sought Janissary protection against the *mutasarrıf*.

During the period examined in this article, Prishtina's strategic significance stemmed from its location along the Bosnian highway (*Bosna caddesi*) and its adjacency to Serbian territory, as well as Tepedelenli Ali Pasha's domains. By 1817 a semi-autonomous Serbian administration had emerged, encompassing the *sancak* of Smederevo (Turk. Semendire) and its twelve *nahiyes*, situated south of the

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13 See Petition from the Janissaries to Sublime Porte, undated, BOA, HAT.36884-B: "*medine-i Üsküp nezaretinden Priştine kazaları fukara yoldaşlarımız ez-kadim medine-i Üsküp nazırlarına merbut olup*"; Mehmed Usta to Sublime Porte, undated, BOA, HAT.17334-A.

14 Hurşid Pasha (governor of Rumelia) to Sublime Porte, 26 November 1821, BOA, HAT.21086.

15 G. Öztürk and S. Karaçam Atam, 'Temettuat Defterlerine Göre 19. Yüzyılın Ortalarında Priştine', *Türklük Bilimi Araştırmaları*, 30 (2011), 283-310; *TDVİA*, s.v., 'Priştine' (M. Kiel), 346-348.



Danube.<sup>16</sup> The revolt led by Tepedelenli instigated turmoil in the southern parts of Albania, prompting concern from the Sublime Porte about its potential spread to the northern regions. Coupled with the Greek Revolution, this created an exceedingly precarious situation throughout Rumelia. The recent pacification of the Serbs and their uncertain stance regarding the Greek uprising added to the complexity.<sup>17</sup> The tumultuous events in Prishtina frequently disrupted communication between Istanbul and Bosnia, a matter of significant concern for the Sublime Porte. This was particularly crucial as the alternative route traversed Serbian territory via Nish, which was notably unsafe during this volatile period.<sup>18</sup> Consequently, due to these numerous factors, the Sublime Porte deemed any unrest in the Prishtina region during this period to be exceptionally hazardous and intolerable.

### *Malik Pasha: the antihero of the 'Affair'*

The antihero of the 'Affair' was Cinoğlu or Cin Ali Paşa-zâde Malik Pasha, a Geg Albanian magnate hailing from Prishtina. Preliminary research allows us to trace his family's lineage back to the first decade of the eighteenth century, when they held considerable influence over the greater Skopje region. By the late 1780s Malik Pasha had emerged as the patriarch of the Cinoğlu dynasty, serving in the Ottoman forces during the Russian war.<sup>19</sup> In the 1790s we find him leading campaigns against the *Dağlı* bandits.<sup>20</sup> In the first two decades of the nineteenth century, his contributions were particularly significant in the Sublime Porte's efforts to quell the Serbian uprising.

By the 1820s Malik Pasha was in old age and held the position of *mutasarrıf* of the *sancak* of Skopje. Owing to his advanced years, he wielded a sort of paternalistic

16 The term employed by the Sublime Porte to refer to the Serbian territories was "*Sırp*lu", which in itself has no geographical or political connotation.

17 See for example, Celal Pasha (governor of Bosnia) to Sublime Porte, 15 November 1821, BOA, HAT.22216; Salih Pasha (Grand Vizier) to Mahmud II, undated, BOA, HAT.19369.

18 See for example, Summary of the letters dispatched by Hüseyin Pasha (castellan of Nish), 26 September 1823, BOA, HAT.21254; "*bu ihtilal sebebiyle Bosna caddesi dahi üç mahdan berü mesdud olub Bosna'dan Dersaadet'e ve Dersaadet'den Bosna'ya amedşod idenler Niş'den mürur ve Sırp lu derunundan güzar eylemekde olduđu*".

19 Throughout his career, Malik Pasha held the title of *mîr-i mîrân*, meaning a pasha of two-horse-tails. This was due to the general rule that the Sublime Porte only granted vizierdom (i.e., three horsetails) to Albanians under extraordinary conditions. According to official documents, Malik Pasha consistently maintained a loyal profile towards the Ottoman state.

20 For the *Dağlı* bandits, see F. Anscombe, 'Albanians and "Mountain Bandits"', in F. Anscombe (ed.), *The Ottoman Balkans, 1750-1830* (Princeton 2006), 87-113.

authority over the neighbouring Geg pashas,<sup>21</sup> being referred to as their “*Ahi Baba*” by the Sublime Porte.<sup>22</sup> Bahir Efendi, who wrote an addendum to the imperial annalist Esad Efendi’s *History*, characterised him as a “useful and temperate Albanian”.<sup>23</sup>

Malik Pasha was first and foremost a warlord, adept at mobilising the autonomous Albanians within his domain for both his and the Sublime Porte’s interests. However, the Albanians’ loyalty to him was rather unstable and not unconditional.<sup>24</sup> The allegiance of the townsfolk, on the other hand, could only be maintained through coercion during this period, and their disenchantment with their administrator triggered widespread alarm both within the region and the imperial capital.

### *The initial phase*

‘The Prishtina Affair’ unfolded in early April 1821, as Malik Pasha prepared to dispatch his nephew Yaşar Pasha along with one thousand soldiers to join the siege of Tepedelenli Ali Pasha in Ioannina (Turk. Yanya). The *nazır* of Skopje, Silahşör Ömer Agha, incited unrest among the people of the *sancak*. This led to uprisings in several *kazas*, which culminated in the residents of Prishtina forcibly expelling

21 The “*Gega pašaları*” mentioned in the documents included the *mîr-i mîrâns* of Vranje (Turk. İvranya), Dukagjin (Turk. Dukakin), Gjakova (Turk. Yakova), Prizren, Ohrid, Elbasan and Tetovo (Turk. Kalkandelen). See for example, Sublime Porte to Hurşid Pasha (governor of Rumelia), 16 July 1822, BOA, Ayniyat Defteri (BEOAYN.d.), 576: 30.

22 Sublime Porte to Köse Mehmed Pasha (governor of Rumelia), 27 February 1823, BOA, BEOAYN.d.578: 111. In the document, the Grand Vizier discusses placing Malik Pasha under the command of the governor of Rumelia and asserts that in his role as the *Ahi Baba* of the Geg Pashas, if attached to his command, Malik Pasha would be instrumental in mobilising additional Geg Pashas for service in the Morea. Clearly, the reference to the term “*Ahi Baba*” did not pertain to his role within a guild, but rather to his esteemed position among the Geg pashas due to his advanced age; “*Malik Paşa bendeleri şimdiki halde her ne kadar kudretli değil ise de Gega pašalarının Ahi babası makamında olarak mumaileyh dahi memur kılınsa sair Gega pašalarının kullanılmasına badi olacağından*”.

23 Sahhâflar Şeyhi-zâde Seyyid Mehmed Es’ad Efendi, *Tarih*, 46 (n. \*).

24 When Malik Pasha faced challenges passing through the Greek blockade and became stranded at Domoko (Turk. Dömeke) while on his way to Nafpaktos to assume his new office, the majority of his household disbanded and deserted his camp, leaving him with only 150 cavalrymen. See, Salih Pasha (Grand Vizier) to Mahmud II, undated, BOA, HAT.32504; Hurşid Pasha (governor of Rumelia) to Sublime Porte, 26 November 1821, BOA, HAT.21086. Malik Pasha never reached Nafpaktos to assume his office; Emin Agha, *kethüda* of Governor Hasan Pasha of Sivas, served as the interim castellan of Nafpaktos from March 1821 to March 1822. See BOA, HAT.38980-A.

Malik Pasha from the *kaza*<sup>25</sup> and then closing the Bosnian highway.<sup>26</sup> According to an official account, the sequence of events could be ascribed to Ömer Agha's pro-Tepedelenli leanings – as implied by Celal Pasha, governor of Bosnia – potentially aimed at diverting the Sublime Porte's focus from suppressing the Tepedelenli uprising.<sup>27</sup> Conversely, an unofficial account alleges that the turmoil arose from Malik Pasha's withholding and covert handling of the imperial bounty allocated for the troops. Instead of utilising these funds, Malik Pasha imposed levies on the Prishtiniots to cover expenses for both his troops and those he enlisted from the community.<sup>28</sup>

Subsequently, Malik Pasha left his nephew in his place and departed to join the Ioannina army. The Sublime Porte relieved Ömer Agha of his office and the *nezaret* was entrusted to Hurşid Pasha, governor of Rumelia and commander-in-chief of the Ioannina army.<sup>29</sup> Yet unrest persisted, leading to a conflict between the residents of Prishtina and Yaşar Pasha that escalated to open confrontation and bloodshed.<sup>30</sup>

In early June 1821, Hurşid Pasha reinstated Malik Pasha in Prishtina by mandate, and the Sublime Porte deemed the sedition to have been quelled.<sup>31</sup> Those who had previously revolted against Malik Pasha dispersed out of fear, but not before dispatching a sizeable contingent to the imperial capital to lodge a complaint against him. Eventually, on June 25, around five hundred men from Prishtina reached the bridge of Küçük Çekmece in the vicinity of Istanbul, where they were apprehended. Fifty of them were permitted to proceed to the capital, while the rest were detained at the location.<sup>32</sup>

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25 Sublime Porte to Hurşid Pasha, 15 April 1821, BOA, BEOAYN.d.610: 60-61.

26 Celal Pasha (governor of Bosnia) to Sublime Porte, 15 June 1821, BOA, C.DH.17000; Summary of documents regarding Prishtina, 6 February 1822, BOA, HAT.21429.

27 In his letter to the Sublime Porte, Celal Pasha, governor of Bosnia, wrote that the people of Prishtina had expelled Malik Pasha “due to inducement from a certain place”, referring to Tepedelenli Ali Pasha. He believed the expulsion was orchestrated “to sow disorder in that part of Albania as well”. See, Celal Pasha (governor of Bosnia) to Sublime Porte, 15 June 1821, BOA, C.DH.17000.

28 Summary of documents regarding Prishtina, 28 March 1822, BOA, HAT.39479-E.

29 Sublime Porte to Hurşid Pasha, 15 April 1821, BOA, BEOAYN.d.610: 60-61.

30 Celal Pasha (governor of Bosnia) to Sublime Porte, 15 June 1821, BOA, C.DH.17000.

31 Sublime Porte to Hurşid Pasha (governor of Rumelia), 17 June 1821, BOA, BEOAYN.d.573: 39; Sublime Porte to Celal Pasha (governor of Bosnia), 26 June 1821, BOA, BEOAYN.d.573: 61.

32 Grand Vizier to Mahmud II, undated, BOA, HAT.17051; Sublime Porte to Hurşid Pasha (governor of Rumelia), 3 July 1821, BOA, BEOAYN.d.610: 71. According to the imperial annalist Şanizade, the complainants detained at Küçük Çekmece were three hundred Albanian cavalrymen and infantrymen. See, Şânî-zâde Mehmed ‘Atâ’ullah Efendi, *Şânî-zâde Târîhî [Osmanlı*

Hurşid and Celal Pashas both asserted that Malik Pasha, as a loyal servant of the Sublime State, played a crucial role in maintaining the region's stability, and that his continued presence there was imperative. Despite their proposal that the government should overlook the grievances and instead apprehend the ringleaders,<sup>33</sup> the Sublime Porte had to step back when the disgruntled Prishtiniots rallied the Janissary complex for their cause.

The specifics surrounding the initial Janissary intervention in support of the townsfolk remain ambiguous. However, a telling clue surfaces in a letter from Grand Vizier Salih Pasha to Hurşid Pasha, stating the urgent need to "silence the complainants" through the relocation of Malik Pasha, thereby highlighting the involuntary nature of the Sublime Porte's actions. Faced with the collective journey of the Prishtiniots to the imperial capital and the compelling narrative of the brutality exercised by the Malik Pasha household, it appears highly likely that the Sublime Porte had to yield to the Janissaries' insistence on their behalf.<sup>34</sup>

The Prishtiniots managed to summon Mustafa Agha, a *Turnacı* (i.e., a senior Janissary officer) from Istanbul, to take on the role of *serdar* (Janissary commander) of the town, to facilitate Malik Pasha's departure from Prishtina.<sup>35</sup> The latter was to be relocated to Nafpaktos (Turk. İnebahtı) in early July, and Palaslı-zâde İsmail Pasha, who hailed from a Tosk Albanian dynasty, was appointed his successor.<sup>36</sup>

### *The ustas in imperial politics*

The success of the Prishtiniots in making their voices heard and ousting a warlord-cum-governor who had ruled the region for almost forty years was grounded in the recent ascension of a certain stratum of the Janissaries, the *ustas* (lit. masters), to a position of greater control over empire-wide decision-making process.

The *ustas* were junior Janissary officers at the regimental level. Their organic connections with the common folk, stemming from their presence among the ranks of the *esnâf* (artisans and tradesmen), endowed them with the ability to mobilise the

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*Tarihi (1223-1237/1808-1821)*], Vol. II, ed. Z. Yılmaz (Istanbul 2008), 1248; Sublime Porte to Necib Efendi (*baruthane nazırı*), 25 June 1821, BOA, BEOAYN.d.573: 59.

33 Celal Pasha (governor of Bosnia) to Sublime Porte, 15 June 1821, BOA, C.DH.17000.

34 Sublime Porte to Hurşid Pasha (governor of Rumelia), 3 July 1821, BOA, BEOAYN.d.610: 71.

35 Sublime Porte to Malik Pasha (*mutasarrıf* of Skopje), 20 December 1821, BOA, BEOAYN.d.610: 93; Celal Pasha (governor of Bosnia) to Sublime Porte, 15 November 1821, BOA, HAT.22216.

36 Sublime Porte to Hurşid Pasha (governor of Rumelia), 3 July 1821, BOA, BEOAYN.d.610: 71; Salih Pasha (Grand Vizier) to Mahmud II, undated, BOA, HAT.17051.

lower classes of the Janissaries almost at will. Lord Strangford, the British Ambassador from 1821 to 1824, characterised them as “the most turbulent and dangerous characters among the chiefs of the Janissaries”.<sup>37</sup> Concurrently, Robert Walsh, Chaplain of the British Embassy in Istanbul during the same period, observed that the Janissaries regarded the *ustas* as their protectors.<sup>38</sup>

All sources concur that by the early nineteenth century, the *ustas* had come to dominate the entire Janissary complex. Nevertheless, mystery still obscures the precise juncture when they established this dominance, and exactly what this shift meant for the internal dynamics of the Janissary complex and Ottoman society as a whole. This uncharted territory holds the potential for an exceptional doctoral dissertation topic.<sup>39</sup>

In any event, Ottoman documents suggest that by 1821 it was not the Janissary Agha or other senior Janissary officers who held sway over the affairs of the Janissary complex, but rather an informal cohort of some thirty *ustas*.<sup>40</sup> As Aysel Yıldız has noted, the role of the Janissary Agha had already taken on a symbolic nature. From the seventeenth century onward, Janissary Aghas were increasingly selected on the basis of their cooperation with the Sublime Porte against insubordinate Janissaries and their ability to keep them in check.<sup>41</sup> Documents pertaining to the

37 Strangford to G. Canning, 28 February 1823, The National Archives (TNA), FO.78-114/19. Strangford’s correspondence with London was published by Th. C. Prousis in four volumes (Isis Press, Istanbul, 2010-2017).

38 R. Walsh, *A Residence at Constantinople; During a Period Including the Commencement, Progress, and Termination of the Greek and Turkish Revolutions*, Vol. II (London 1836), 509. See also M. M. Sunar, ‘Cauldron of Dissent: A Study of the Janissary Corps, 1807-1826’, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Binghamton University-SUNY, 2006, 109 and *passim*.

39 For a preliminary discussion on the *ustas*, see H. Ş. Ilıcak, ‘A Radical Rethinking of Empire: Ottoman State and Society during the Greek War of Independence, 1821-1826’, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 2011, 216-218.

40 For the *ustas*’ influence on imperial politics in the wake of the Greek Revolution, see H. Ş. Ilıcak, ‘The Greek War of Independence and the Demise of the Janissary Complex; A New Interpretation of the “Auspicious Incident”’, in M. Sariyannis (ed.), *Political Thought and Practice in the Ottoman Empire. Halcyon Days in Crete IX: A Symposium Held in Rethymno, 9-11 January 2015* (Rethymno 2019), 483-493. Determining the exact number of *ustas* requires thorough research. According to the traditionally accepted figure, there were 196 Janissary *ortas* (regiments), with each *orta* having at least one *usta*. Considering the different types of *ustas*, such as *tayin ustas* and *seğirdim ustas*, their total number would likely be in the hundreds. The Janissary regiments in the provinces also had *ustas*. For Crete see, Y. Spyropoulos, ‘Κοινωνική, διοικητική, οικονομική και πολιτική διάσταση του οθωμανικού στρατού: οι γενίτσαροι της Κρήτης, 1750-1826’ [Social, Administrative, Financial, and Political Dimensions of the Ottoman Army: The Janissaries of Crete, 1750-1826], unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Crete, 2014, 79, 123.

41 A. Yıldız, ‘Commanders of the Janissary Army: The Janissary Ağas, Their Career and Promo-

‘Prishtina Affair’ illustrate the Agha’s diminished function as a mere intermediary conveying messages between the *ustas* and the Sublime Porte, as well as the *ustas*’ distrust of the Janissary Agha.

If we are to believe Strangford’s account, in the aftermath of the Greek Revolution, the Sultan and his favourite, Halet Efendi, lived in “continual terror”<sup>42</sup> of the Janissaries, and the Sublime Porte “was obliged to temporise and to do many things contrary to its judgment and intentions for the sake of keeping them in good humour”.<sup>43</sup> The Sublime Porte preferred to maintain limited and imperfect authority over the Janissaries rather than risk inciting open insurrection by opposing their wishes.<sup>44</sup>

As a direct consequence of the turmoil sparked by the Greek Revolution and the Janissaries’ distrust of the Halet Efendi party, probably extending to the higher echelons of the Janissary complex, the *ustas* pushed for participation in the administration of state affairs. Following a tumultuous series of days marked by Janissary demonstrations in early May, their demand was granted. On May 5, 1821, for the very first time in Ottoman history, the Janissary Agha and two *ustas* were permitted to partake in meetings of the Imperial Council (*Meclis-i Şûrâ*), inaugurating a two-year period of direct *usta* intervention in Sublime Porte politics. Strangford aptly described this shift as “époque making”.<sup>45</sup>

At this point, what likely fomented resentment at the Sublime Porte more than the Janissaries’ reluctance to engage in warfare or their resistance to military reform was the increasingly interventionist role assumed by the *ustas* in state affairs. Matters as critical as appointing new *voyvodas* in Moldowallachia<sup>46</sup> and formulating the content of diplomatic notes addressed to European ambassadors<sup>47</sup> became contingent upon the scrutiny and approval of the *ustas*. They also meddled in the selection of provincial and central state administrators, endeavouring to place their own associates in these positions. However, the overwhelming human and material toll of the Greek Revolution was legitimised over the next two years by the inclusion

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tion Patterns’, in G. Theotokis and A. Yıldız (eds.), *A Military History of the Mediterranean Sea: Aspects of War, Diplomacy, and Military Elites* (Leiden 2018), 397-462.

42 Strangford to Castlereagh, 25 April 1822, TNA/FO.78-107/22.

43 Strangford to Castlereagh, 25 September 1821, TNA/FO.78-101/18.

44 Ibid.

45 Strangford to Castlereagh, 25 May 1821, TNA/FO.78-98/41. Sunar, on the other hand, sees the participation of junior Janissary officers as the result of Halet Efendi’s policy, underlining the latter’s close relation with the Corps; Sunar, ‘Cauldron of Dissent’, 181-185

46 Strangford to Castlereagh, 10 May 1822, TNA/FO.78-108/8.

47 Strangford to Castlereagh, 5 March 1822, TNA/FO.78-107/1.

of the most contentious segment of society in the state's decision-making process, and the conflicts between the Janissaries and the state did not escalate to the point of open revolt.

'The Prishtina Affair' represented one such case of *usta* intervention, but with magnified intensity. Also, the notable presence of Albanians within the Janissary complex might elucidate the keen interest of the *ustas* in the affairs of the Prishtinots. Anecdotal accounts from the period suggest a vibrant interconnectedness of Albanians living in the imperial capital with their respective hometowns, reflecting some sense of shared 'Albanianness' among them.<sup>48</sup>

### *The 'Janissary party' in Prishtina*

According to information compiled by Hurşid Pasha, the key figures within the 'Janissary party' in Prishtina included the former *naib* of the town; Hasan Bey; the former *serdar* of Prishtina, Priştineli Emir Ali; and the former *alaybey* of Vushtrri (Turk. Vulçitrın, Serb. Vuçitrn), Bekir Bey, and his brother Mehmed Bey. Hurşid Pasha pinpointed these individuals as the main instigators of sedition, propelled by personal ambitions to deliberately incite the impressionable populace.<sup>49</sup> Little else is known about these individuals, yet their titles indicate that they had secured several significant positions in the region's administration, particularly within the domains of the law, the Janissary complex, and what remained of the *timar* system by that time.

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48 The first account is by Pisani, the dragoman of the British Embassy, who reported that in November 1821, two of Tepedelenli's grandsons were exiled to Erzurum following their father Veli Pasha's execution, allegedly due to the influence of Albanians within the corps: "To have given effect to this measure but an apprehension lest the presence of these two interesting youths might encourage murmur and ill-will among the discontented, particularly the Albanians established in this town all of them in an inferior line of business, but who are very numerous and of the Janissary party"; Pisani to Strangford, 9 November 1821, British Library Add MS 36301, folio 178. The account by the French *chargé d'affaires*, on the other hand, illustrates how actions taken against specific Albanians in the imperial capital could impact the Albanian provinces. In April 1824, an Albanian *usta* from the 1st Janissary regiment, "who held the respect of all his compatriots" was strangled. The *chargé d'affaires* conveyed the assumption that this execution, coupled with the strangulation of one of Hurşid Pasha's Albanian "colonels" – who arrived in Istanbul to claim owed money by the Sublime Porte for his mercenaries – might disrupt the Sublime Porte's recruitment efforts against the Greek insurgents in the Preveza region, which was an Albanian stronghold at the time. See AMAE Turquie 238, Annex to dispatch No. 110., 20 April 1824.

49 Sublime Porte to local authorities along the route from Prishtina to Istanbul, 19 February 1822, BOA, BEOAYN.d.610: 114.

Unless future research unearths substantial data in unstudied registers, we may never attain a comprehensive grasp of the socio-legal structures that evolved in Prishtina during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, particularly regarding the involvement of the Janissaries in the land regime.<sup>50</sup> Nevertheless, insights gleaned from an examination of the documents regarding the ‘Affair’ indicate that the crux of the matter revolved around the *mukataas*, with contention over these resources unfolding between those local notables aligned with the Janissary complex and others aligned with the central state.<sup>51</sup> It appears probable that with the *ustas*’ ascendancy in influencing imperial politics, the ‘Janissary party’ in Prishtina glimpsed an opportunity to assert control over the *mukataas*, and consequently took decisive action. This assumption gains weight when considering their decades-long silence on matters related to Malik Pasha’s rule.

As in the realm of any socio-political conflict, a myriad of factors underpinned this episode. Competition for resources was merely one aspect of the issue, and the economic nature of the conflict did not negate the fact that the locals had long endured oppression from the Malik Pasha household. Such a scenario fosters a narrative of ‘contested tyrannies’ between the ruling party and the locals. While both Celal and Hurşid pashas excoriated the leaders of the Prishtiniots as *mütegallibe*, or oppressors, the Prishtiniots painted a picture of extensive violence, attributing hundreds of arbitrary killings to Malik Pasha and his nephews.

It appears that the leaders of the Janissary party rallied the populace by promising liberation from all state-enforced obligations. Confronting Hurşid Pasha’s officers, the Prishtiniots reportedly asserted, “We are Janissaries, we do not pay duties (*Biz yeniçeriyiz, tekâlifât vermeyiz*)”, and rejected the provision of soldiers for the Ioanina army, as well as winter soldiers, government-procured provisions (*mubâyaa*), the *jizya* tax, and the tithes of villages under the *nezaret* of Skopje.<sup>52</sup> Hurşid Pasha’s rather disgruntled account suggests that the Prishtiniots had either recently aligned themselves with the Janissary complex, or that they introduced a new feature to being a Janissary in Prishtina by refusing to pay duties that they had previously honoured. Regardless of this, it is evident that, for the populace, being a Janissary primarily meant protection from the warlord dynasty and exemption from duties – a

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50 For a study on the Janissaries’ role in the land regime in Vidin, see İ. Kokdaş, ‘Janissaries and Conflicts over Rural Lands in the Vidin Region (1730-1810)’ in Y. Spyropoulos (ed.), *Insights into Janissary Networks, 1700–1826* [special issue of *Cihannüma: Journal of History and Geography Studies*, 8/1 (2022)], 101-127.

51 For Malik Pasha’s version of the narrative on the economic conflict, see Malik Pasha (castellan of Sofia) to Sublime Porte, 26 September 1823, BOA, HAT.21254-B.

52 Hurşid Pasha (governor of Rumelia) to Sublime Porte, 26 November 1821, BOA, HAT.21086.



status they successfully maintained for two consecutive years, but ultimately had to pay for in the later period.

### *The second phase: Hurşid Pasha pushes back*

The reassignment of Malik Pasha to Nafpaktos due to the *ustas*' intervention marked the conclusion of the initial phase in 'The Prishtina Affair'. Once again, the Sublime Porte presumed that the case was closed. This presumption is evident from a *hatt-ı hümayun* issued by the Sultan, indicating that the Janissaries had discontinued pursuit of the issue by late September 1821.<sup>53</sup>

Nevertheless, interest in Prishtina was rekindled among the *ustas* when Hurşid Pasha appointed three nephews of Malik Pasha as *ayan* to three *kazas* in Skopje – specifically Prishtina, Novobërda (Turk. Novaberde, Serb. Novo Brdo), and Vushtrri. While the inhabitants of the last two *kazas* reportedly expressed contentment with the appointments, the Prishtiniots did not accept Melik Bey as their *ayan*, and unrest broke out yet again.

The Prishtiniots conveyed a petition to the Sublime Porte through the agency of the Janissary Agha. The petition contended that Hurşid Pasha had appointed Melik Bey as the *ayan* in ignorance of his prior deeds, and that Melik Bey had marshalled a group of unruly individuals and attempted to enter Prishtina by violent means.<sup>54</sup> They raised complaints about the cruelty and transgressions of the Malik Pasha household: the nephews, “driven on their uncle’s instigation, engaged in selfish pursuits, causing unjust killings, seizing properties, and subjecting numerous individuals to various oppressions, to the extent that they could no longer tolerate”.<sup>55</sup> The Prishtiniots claimed that they would be forced to abandon their land and scatter, using the trump card historically played by a rural population against the state before resorting to open revolt. Consequently, they appealed to the Sublime Porte, urging the appointment of an *ayan* unconnected to the Malik Pasha household.<sup>56</sup>

Additionally, in a bid to prevent the reappointment of Malik Pasha or his nephews, the people of Prishtina entered into a legally binding pact among themselves. They consented to the religious stipulation of divorcing their wives (*tâlik-i talâk* or

53 Mahmud II's *hatt-ı hümayun*, 25 September 1821, BOA, HAT.22084.

54 Salih Pasha (Grand Vizier) to Mahmud II, undated, BOA, HAT.32504.

55 Petition from the populace of Prishtina, Vushtrri and Novobërda to Sublime Porte, undated, BOA, HAT.19441-C.

56 Sublime Porte to Hurşid Pasha (governor of Rumelia), 23 August 1821, BOA, BEOAYN.d.610: 81; Salih Pasha (Grand Vizier) to Mahmud II, undated, BOA.HAT.32504.

*talâk-ı selâse*) – purportedly in case of their failure or insufficient efforts – affirming their full awareness that such a reappointment would lead to their dispersal.<sup>57</sup> With this pact, they invoked “a legitimate excuse based on the Sharia”, asserting that “Malik Pasha’s return to their district to assume control and authority contradicted this justification”. They also vowed to journey to the imperial court en masse if Malik Pasha attempted to return to Prishtina.<sup>58</sup>

In resorting to this method, the people of Prishtina opted for a radical means of communicating to the state that they had no alternative, and that they were resolute in their determination. The prospect of thousands of men divorcing their wives and breaking up their households would prove scandalous and challenge the legitimacy of the state. The seriousness with which the Sublime Porte treated the matter implies that *talâk-ı selâse* must have been a legally and morally charged concept. This pact would be a legal issue that the Sublime Porte would have to deal with in the months to come.

Hurşid Pasha expressed reservations about acceding to the petition from the Prishtiniots. The Sublime Porte’s response to his letter, on the other hand, reflected the realpolitik in the imperial capital: “The points raised by Your Excellency are valid and in line with the core of the matter. However, the conditions and workings of this place [Istanbul] are known to Your Excellency. If we overlook their complaints, it is apparent that this will foster even more discontent during this period of disturbance”.<sup>59</sup> The Sublime Porte, by referring to “the conditions and workings of this place”, essentially alluded to the heightened tutelage of the Janissary complex over its affairs. During a period when Istanbul witnessed frequent crowd action – particularly led by the Janissaries against the Greeks<sup>60</sup> – the Sublime Porte found

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57 *Talâk-ı selâse*, or “triple divorce”, refers to a final divorce. According to Islamic law, divorce (*talaq*) occurs when the husband utters the phrase “I divorce you” to his wife. A man has the right to divorce his wife three times, with the possibility of reconciliation after the first two divorces. However, after the third *talaq*, reconciliation is precluded unless the wife marries someone else first. In the event of a “triple *talaq*”, where the man pronounces the phrase “I divorce you” three times in one sitting, the divorce is deemed definitive. See, A. Shukri, *Muslim Law of Marriage and Divorce* (New Jersey 2009), 30; *TDVİA*, s.v., ‘Talak’ (H. I. Acar), 496-500.

58 Petition from the populace of Prishtina, Vushtrri, and Novobërda to Sublime Porte, 17 February 1822, BOA, HAT.19441-A; BOA, HAT.19441-C.

59 Sublime Porte to Hurşid Pasha (governor of Rumelia), 23 August 1821, BOA, BEOAYN.d.610: 81.

60 For Janissary crowd action in the wake of the Greek Revolution, see H. Ş. Ilıcak, ‘A Radical Rethinking’, Ch. 2.

itself compelled to yield to their demands and directed Hurşid Pasha to take the necessary measures to silence the Prishtiniots' complaints.<sup>61</sup>

Having arrived in Istanbul in June, the Prishtiniots rallied both the *ustas* in the capital and their compatriots back home to ensure the appointment of an agreeable *ayan*. The letter they sent to Prishtina is a remarkable document that has endured to our day because it was inadvertently delivered to the governor of Bosnia, who, in turn, forwarded it back to Istanbul.<sup>62</sup> It holds significance in showcasing the operations of the *ustas*, the Janissary complex, and the overall functioning of the Ottoman state and society.

In their letter, the Prishtiniots in Istanbul implored their fellow countrymen to gather and promptly send the money demanded by the *ustas* for their facilitation in the appointment of the *ayan*. Stressing the urgency, they suggested that, if necessary, even selling their houses and farms was warranted. They reported that the *ustas* had imposed a 15-day deadline; otherwise, a negative outcome was anticipated. The Prishtiniots also conveyed that the *ustas* had reminded them of their outstanding dues, possibly related to Malik Pasha's reassignment to Nafpaktos, and questioned "with what face they brought up the *ayan* issue" when such impending matters remained unresolved. The *ustas* made it clear that settling the outstanding dues would expedite the *ayan* issue, assuring the Prishtiniots that managing the matter through a writ and a petition could be accomplished – describing it as a one-day task. In conclusion, the Prishtiniots passed on greetings from Hasan Usta, Osman Usta and Ahmed Usta, stressing, "For God's sake, do not bring embarrassment upon us. Because the *Ocak* has never invested such efforts for anyone before (*Zira bö[y]le Ocak gayreti bir kimseye olmuş değildir*). Put forth your utmost endeavours [to collect the money]. God willing, everything will be better from now on".<sup>63</sup>

According to Celal Pasha, who exposed the plan of the Prishtiniots, certain troublemakers among them [i.e. the Janissary party] were actively involved in orchestrating the appointment of an *ayan* who would be amenable to their schemes, because they did not trust that a *serdar* would be competent enough to manage important state affairs, conduct transactions or supervise the handling of public funds.<sup>64</sup>

As the revolt in Prishtina extended to Gjakova (Turk. Yakova), reports revealed that the locals had executed the town's *mütevelli* (trustee) along with several of his

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61 Sublime Porte to Hurşid Pasha (governor of Rumelia), 23 August 1821, BOA, BEOAYN.d.610: 81.

62 Letter from the Prishtiniots in Istanbul, undated, BOA, HAT.22084-A.

63 Ibid.

64 Celal Pasha (governor of Bosnia) to Sublime Porte, 25 September 1821, BOA, HAT.22084.

associates, including a *bostancı* sent on business from Istanbul.<sup>65</sup> Celal Pasha expressed concern that the revolt might expand to other locations, and that if it were up to him, he would urgently reinstate Malik Pasha in the *kaza* and exterminate the instigators.<sup>66</sup>

The Prishtiniots also installed an officer, a certain Ali Bey, described by Celal Pasha as a complacent man lacking the capability to administer the *kaza*. This appointment allowed them to “act according to their own pleasure” and “buy and sell [the *mukataas*?] as they desired”. Celal Pasha also found evidence of wine houses (*meygede*) established in two or three locations, contributing to the spread of their disruptive influence on other *kazas*.<sup>67</sup> Eventually, unrest reached Vushtrri, where the residents ousted the *emin* and installed his infant nephew in his position. As the region was situated in Albania, a part of which was already in revolt, and in close proximity to the Serbian provinces, Celal Pasha argued that leaving Prishtina in a state of revolution would be unacceptable.<sup>68</sup>

Celal Pasha exhibited heightened concern regarding the evolving situation in Prishtina and its potential ripple effect on neighbouring provinces, especially considering the social structure of Bosnia. He noted that “Not most, but nearly all the inhabitants of Novi Pazar (Turk. Yenipazar) and Sarajevo (Turk. Saraybosna) were engaged in the Janissary cause”, and it was evident that any disruptions in these areas could progressively spread elsewhere.<sup>69</sup> Celal Pasha’s apprehensions were not unfounded, as the most significant reaction to the abolition of the Janissary complex occurred in Bosnia five years later. This reaction culminated in an open rebellion encompassing the entire province. Unrest in Bosnia persisted for a decade.<sup>70</sup>

As the threat of spreading rebellion warranted Malik Pasha’s reassignment to Prishtina, the Sublime Porte yielded to the Prishtiniots’ request and opted to dispatch an *ayan*, given the incessant stream of their representatives and petitions to Istanbul causing recurring complications.<sup>71</sup> The Sultan was particularly alarmed because “Two wise, prudent and seasoned viziers such as Celal Pasha and Hurşid

65 Celal Pasha (governor of Bosnia) to Sublime Porte, 25 September 1821, BOA, HAT.22084; Salih Pasha (Grand Vizier) to Mahmud II, undated, BOA, HAT.16416.

66 Salih Pasha (Grand Vizier) to Mahmud II, undated, BOA, HAT.32504.

67 Celal Pasha (governor of Bosnia) to Sublime Porte, 15 November 1821, BOA, HAT.22216.

68 Salih Pasha (Grand Vizier) to Mahmud II, undated, BOA, HAT.19312.

69 Celal Pasha (governor of Bosnia) to Sublime Porte, 15 November 1821, BOA, HAT.22216; “*Yeni-pazar ve Saraybosna ahalisinin ekseri değil, hemen küllisi yeniçerilik davasında olduğundan*”.

70 For the Janissary uprising in Bosnia after the complex’s abolition, see F. S. Turan, *The Ottoman Empire and the Bosnian Uprising: Janissaries, Modernisation and Rebellion in the Nineteenth Century* (London 2014).

71 Salih Pasha (Grand Vizier) to Mahmud II, undated, BOA, HAT.32504.

Pasha asserted that if Prishtina were not granted to Malik Pasha, it would fuel sedition, potentially escalating into a significant conflict right in the heart of Rumelia (*Rumeli'nin çak vasatında*).<sup>72</sup>

Eventually, an *ayan* was appointed in the shape of *Kapıcıbaşı* Ali Agha, formerly steward to the late castellan of Belgrade Ali Pasha, and Melik Bey was ordered to proceed to Hurşid Pasha's army.<sup>73</sup> Accompanying the *kapıcıbaşı*, the Janissary complex dispatched a high-ranking Janissary officer, a *turnacı*, in accordance with the Prishtiniots' request.<sup>74</sup>

Nevertheless, the actions of the Sublime Porte led to further complications. In the midst of the Greek Revolution, there was yet another faction that the Sublime Porte could ill afford to alienate: the Geg Albanian *mîr-i mîrâns* – in other words, pashas of two horsetails – situated in the neighbouring *sancaks*. These were hereditary warlords who, like Malik Pasha, ruled over provinces populated by Gecs. Hurşid Pasha relayed the deep offence felt by the Geg pashas in his retinue, due to the “Prishtiniots' ruination of Malik Pasha's household”. They found it unacceptable that Malik Pasha had been left in a state of misery and destitution despite his longstanding service to the state. The Geg pashas were apprehensive that tolerating the troublemakers in Prishtina would lead to the spread of sedition to their domains, particularly to the *sancaks* of Kruševac (Turk. Alacahisar), Prizren, Dukagjin (Turk. Dukakin), and Vranje (Turk. İvranya), all of which were in the vicinity of Skopje.<sup>75</sup>

Here, we witness the weighty dilemma confronted by the Sublime Porte: on the one hand there was the burgeoning Greek Revolution and the pressing need for troops to suppress it, where the Geg pashas' contribution was indispensable. On the other hand, the constant threat posed by the Janissaries in Istanbul left both the Sublime Porte and the Sultan in a state of perpetual vulnerability. Concurrently, regional instability was being exacerbated by the conflict with the Prishtiniots, who were in open defiance of the central state and its agents. This intricate scenario typified the precarious thresholds of a complex equation that placed immense strain on the Sublime Porte and tested its capacities to the extreme.

Hurşid Pasha emphatically urged the Sublime Porte not to heed the demands of the Prishtiniots. He suggested that until the conclusion of the Tepedelenli revolt, Malik Pasha should be restored to his former position in Skopje. Failure to do so, he

72 Mahmud II's *hatt-ı hümayun*, undated, BOA, HAT.19312.

73 Salih Pasha (Grand Vizier) to Mahmud II, undated, BOA, HAT.19312; Sublime Porte to Hurşid Pasha, 15 November 1821, BOA, BEOAYN.d.610: 88.

74 Sahnâflar Şeyhi-zâde Seyyid Mehmed Es'ad Efendi, *Tarih*, 46-48.

75 Hurşid Pasha (governor of Rumelia) to Sublime Porte, 26 November 1821, BOA, HAT.21086.

warned, would result in the deterioration of the situation and the potential spread of unrest to the neighbouring Geg territories.<sup>76</sup>

Hurşid Pasha also asserted that the region surrounding Prishtina was inhabited by Serbs on one side and rebellious Albanians on the other, and that Malik Pasha had succeeded in intimidating and subduing both groups in the past. However, if his absence from the area were to persist, the encroachment of rebellious Albanians posed a clear threat to security – an outcome Hurşid Pasha believed even the Serbs would welcome. It was therefore unacceptable, he concluded, to take the word of the Prishtiniots and risk jeopardising the Sultan’s domains.<sup>77</sup>

As a result, on December 17, the *sancak* of Skopje was restored to Malik Pasha, who was entrusted with the task of safeguarding the imperial domains against corruption and revolts.<sup>78</sup> Both the *turnacı* and the *ayan* were recalled to Istanbul to prevent any interference in his governance.<sup>79</sup> The Sublime Porte communicated with the relevant Janissaries via the Janissary Agha, advising them against “giving credence to the seditious requests” put forth by the Prishtiniots.<sup>80</sup> Hurşid Pasha issued directives to several Geg and Bosnian pashas, instructing them to provide Malik Pasha with military support in the event of any resistance to his entry into Prishtina, and to execute all those who opposed his return.<sup>81</sup>

Accompanied by his relative Mahmud Pasha of Prizren, Malik Pasha pitched camp at Gjilan (Turk. Gilan), a village six hours from Prishtina, to gauge the reaction of the Prishtiniots. When İsmail Agha, an emissary of Hurşid Pasha, announced the state’s intention to reinstate Malik Pasha, the populace in Prishtina symbolically handed İsmail Agha the keys to their homes and shops, indicating their readiness to disperse.<sup>82</sup>

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76 Ibid.

77 Salih Pasha (Grand Vizier) to Mahmud II, undated, BOA, HAT.19369; Sublime Porte to Hurşid Pasha (governor of Rumelia), 20 December 1821, BOA, BEOAYN.d.610: 91-92.

78 Summary of documents regarding Prishtina, 6 February 1822, BOA, HAT.21429.

79 The return of the *turnacı* was deliberated at the Imperial Council, and the Sublime Porte directed the Janissary agha to send a missive to the *turnacı*, summoning him back to Istanbul. However, complications arose when the *turnacı* responded, asserting that the Prishtiniots would not let him go. As a result, in March 1822, a higher-ranked officer of the corps, a *ser-turnayı* named Rüstem Agha, was dispatched to Prishtina by an imperial firman to facilitate the return of the *turnacı*, and to mediate the tensions between Malik Pasha and the local populace. See, Salih Pasha (Grand Vizier) to Mahmud II, undated, BOA, HAT.19403.

80 Sahhâflar Şeyhi-zâde Seyyid Mehmed Es’ad Efendi, *Tarih*, 46-48; Salih Pasha (Grand Vizier) to Mahmud II, undated, BOA, HAT.19403.

81 Summary of documents regarding Prishtina, 28 March 1822, BOA, HAT.39479-E.

82 Ibid.

Rather than resigning themselves to their fate, the Janissary party in Prishtina persisted in advancing their cause. They sent urgent appeals to the imperial capital, detailing the long history of harsh oppression by the Malik Pasha household, and expressing their mistrust of his assurances of amnesty and lenient governance based on their past experiences.<sup>83</sup> In a petition carrying the seals of approximately two hundred individuals – encompassing “the *ulema*, imams, preachers, descendants of the prophet, sheikhs and all the poor and weak residing in the *kazas* and towns of Prishtina, Novobërda and Vushtrri” – the locals accused the Malik Pasha faction of “causing the deaths of over fifty fellow Muslims and seizing the properties and belongings of many others, all done without adhering to Sharia law prerequisites, trials, or inquiries, solely for their own benefit”. Declaring his intent on forcibly entering Prishtina, Malik Pasha was steadily amassing troops and imposing various hardships on the poor across the three *kazas* to assert his authority.<sup>84</sup>

The petition further accused Malik Pasha of appropriating properties belonging to waqfs, orphans, and deceased soldiers’ estates through illegitimate means. They claimed he extorted taxes under the guise of customary dues and “forcibly married off many of their children to whomever he wished. He separated the daughters of the Christian *reaya* from their mothers and fathers by force and confined them in his harem. And subsequently they sold [the girls] among themselves for varying prices of a hundred, two hundred, or three hundred piasters. And besides these, the acts of rape[?] (*kesr-i urz*), plunder, and various other forms of oppression committed by Malik Pasha, his nephews, and their entourage, were countless and immeasurable”.<sup>85</sup>

In conclusion, the Prishtiniots insisted that “they had lost all sense of security and placed no trust in Malik Pasha whatsoever”.<sup>86</sup> They appealed for compassion from the Sublime Porte, requesting that Malik Pasha and his retinue abstain from entering Prishtina and instead reside in a town within or near the *sancak* of Skopje.<sup>87</sup>

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83 Petition from the populace of Prishtina, Vushtrri and Novobërda to Sublime Porte, 17 February 1822, BOA, HAT.19441-A. The Prishtiniots asserted that, at some point in the past, despite having previously pardoned over 160 fellow Muslims, Malik Pasha later massacred them all and seized their properties, acting in defiance of the Sharia.

84 Ibid.

85 Ibid. There are no Christian names on the seals in the document. It seems that their complaints were made by Muslim neighbours on their behalf.

86 Ibid.

87 Summary of documents regarding Prishtina, 6 February 1822, BOA, HAT.21429.

### *The third phase: pilgrimage to Istanbul*

Bound by the *talâk-ı selâse* oath, in which they pledged to resist the reinstatement of the Malik Pasha household's rule, the populace of Vushtrri, Novobërda, and Prishtina – numbering three thousand in total – departed for Istanbul in groups to petition the Sublime Porte for justice. They took their “eight-year-old sons with them and left behind their young, wailing children as if they were pawns”.<sup>88</sup> *Kapıcıbaşı* Ali Ağa, who had briefly served as *ayan* in the preceding months, observed that “certain naive individuals, both knowingly and unknowingly, had taken this oath” and, finding no legal recourse to revoke it, felt obligated to embark on this arduous journey. The extent of participation by the populace was such that, reportedly, only about 150 invalidated supporters of Malik Pasha remained in Prishtina.<sup>89</sup>

To the Sublime Porte, however, the arrival of the Prishtiniots in Istanbul was “mere harassment of the Imperial Stirrup”. The Porte considered it impermissible for the troublemakers of Prishtina “to meddle with and defy the will of the Sublime State for the sole purpose of furthering their own interests”. Referring to Malik Pasha's four-to-five-decade tenure in Prishtina, and citing his reputation for good governance, moderate behaviour, and concern for his people, his presence in Prishtina was considered essential to keeping both the rebellious Albanians and the Serbs in check. To address the situation, the Sublime Porte issued an order that the Prishtiniots be warned of the consequences of their actions through the Janissary complex. If they persisted, the Janissary Agha would be ordered to punish and exile some of their leaders.<sup>90</sup> The Grand Vizier stressed that Malik Pasha was not the kind of person the Prishtiniots were making him out to be, and assured the Sultan that upon his return, he would show kindness and ensure the well-being and security of the people.<sup>91</sup>

According to Malik Pasha's version of the story, when he arrived in Gjilan, a large number of people from both the *kaza* and the town gathered to pray for the well-being of the Sultan and the Pasha. Accompanied by Mahmud Pasha of Prizren, Malik Pasha proceeded towards Prishtina, extending Hurşid Pasha's amnesty order along the way, and fostering positive relationships with the locals. The Prishtiniots complied with the amnesty order and welcomed Malik Pasha to the town. However,

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88 Petition from the populace of Prishtina, Vushtrri and Novobërda to Sublime Porte, undated, BOA, HAT.19441-C.

89 Summary of documents regarding Prishtina, 28 March 1822, BOA, HAT.39479-E.

90 Sublime Porte to Hurşid Pasha (governor of Rumelia), 12 February 1822, BOA, BEOAYN.d.610: 100.

91 Summary of documents regarding Prishtina, 6 February 1822, BOA, HAT.21429.



the main instigators of the sedition – the former *naib* of Prishtina; Muhsin Bey; Bekir Bey (the former *Alaybeyi* of Vushtrri), his brother Mehmed Bey; and Emir Ali (the former *serdar*) – had already departed from Prishtina at the head of impressionable locals, whom they had coerced to travel to the imperial capital to file complaints against Malik Pasha.<sup>92</sup>

Hurşid Pasha promptly dispatched letters to local authorities along the routes to Istanbul, instructing them to prevent the passage of these individuals and detain them.<sup>93</sup> He mandated that if they reached Istanbul, their testimonies should be dismissed, and they should be exiled to remote towns.<sup>94</sup> Furthermore, he warned that severe punishment awaited any officials permitting their passage to Istanbul.<sup>95</sup> The Sublime Porte also instructed Malik Pasha not to seek revenge on the Prishtiniots for their past actions or dealings. Instead, he was advised to conduct himself wisely and maintain a high level of care and attention in his dealings with the populace, even though it was by no means permissible for the troublemakers in Prishtina to oppose the will of the state.<sup>96</sup>

Meanwhile, Malik Pasha directed the Prishtiniots to return home and attend to their own affairs, as orders for the arrest and exile of those inciting public unrest had been issued. He also informed the Sublime Porte that the sedition caused by these individuals in the past year had finally been suppressed. Allowing these troublemakers to relocate and settle in other districts, however, might reignite unrest and impede tax collection.<sup>97</sup>

By the end of March 1822, the ‘pilgrims’ encountered roadblocks at Plovdiv (Turk. Filibe) and Edirne. Their compatriots who had remained behind informed them of the siege imposed upon the town of Vushtrri by Malik Pasha, Osman Pasha of Novi Pazar, and Mahmud Pasha of Prizren, along with five to six thousand soldiers. The troops plundered villages, looted possessions, and torched houses, resulting in

92 Salih Pasha (Grand Vizier) to Mahmud II, undated, BOA, HAT.32377; Malik Pasha (*mutasarrıf* of Skopje) to Sublime Porte, undated, BOA, HAT.19441-B.

93 Sublime Porte to *mutasarrıf* of Çirmen; *ayan* of Silivri, Tekfurdağı and Serres; *nazır* of Plovdiv, *voyvoda* of Pazarçık; *Çorbacı* of Pravişte, 19 February 1822, BOA, BEOAYN.d.610: 114.

94 Salih Pasha (Grand Vizier) to Mahmud II, undated, BOA, HAT.32377.

95 Hurşid Pasha (governor of Rumelia) to *kadı* and *ayan* of Plovdiv, 15 March 1822, BOA, HAT.39479-G.

96 Sublime Porte to Malik Pasha (*mutasarrıf* of Skopje), 12 February 1822, BOA, BEOAYN.d.610: 100.

97 Malik Pasha (*mutasarrıf* of Skopje) to Sublime Porte, undated, BOA, HAT.19441-B.

numerous fatalities. The locals' plea to their blocked compatriots bound for Istanbul underscored their critical reliance on the backing of the Janissary complex:

We have received word that your passage from Edirne and Plovdiv to Istanbul is being obstructed. Nevertheless, please, by any means necessary, ensure that one or two people – whether they turn into birds and soar through the air – gain entry to Istanbul to present our petition directly to His Majesty the Sultan. They must inform the *ustas*, *çavuşes*, and *odabaşıs* of our plight. May they, for the love of God and Muhammad Mustafa [the Prophet], strive to save these unfortunate souls from the oppressor and these tribulations. For what is happening to us has never befallen anyone else in this world.<sup>98</sup>

In turn, those detained in Plovdiv penned a letter addressed to various types of *ustas* and officers and their comrades in the corps in general (*çavuş ustalar*; *odabaşılar*, *cemaat ve bölük ustalar ve cümle Ocak yoldaşları hazeratları*). They urgently appealed:

For the sake of Almighty God, the Prophet's reverence, the glorious Sultan's blessed life, the lives of the princes, and the love of our corps' founding *pîr* (patron saint), please, rescue these poor and distressed souls from this sorrow and hardship. As we have always found solace and satisfaction within the corps, we humbly request that you do not abandon your vulnerable comrades to misery, leaving us destitute and adrift on the roads, far from our homelands and separated from our families. We implore you to champion our cause in every way, speaking favourably on our behalf and exerting your influence to aid us.<sup>99</sup>

At the top of the same letter, a high-ranking janissary, *Serturnâyi Bekir Bey*, who had been detained in Edirne, addressed all the *ustas* (*Benim candan azizlerim, cümle ustalar hazeratları*), and informed them that "if they failed to receive their support this time, their situation would become extremely dire. The residents of the 'three *kazas*' [Prishtina, Vushtrri and Novobërda] might scatter and face ruin".<sup>100</sup>

The *nazır* of Plovdiv described the two hundred or so Prishtiniots who arrived in his city as *esnâf* and *esâfil* (riff-raff). As it was impossible to disarm and detain such a large group of men, the gates of the inns they entered were chained to prevent them from leaving. Several of their leaders were summoned to court and informed of the imperial decree forbidding them to take a single step towards Istanbul. The Prishtiniots asserted their lack of rebellious intentions, expressed their compliance with the imperial orders and Hurşid Pasha's mandates, and emphasised that they had no choice but to express their plight and present their petition. According to their

98 Letter of Prishtiniots, 26 March 1822, BOA, HAT.19441-J.

99 Letter of Prishtiniots, 3 April 1822, BOA, HAT.19441-G.

100 Ibid.

account, most of them had travelled along the Sol Kol (Via Egnatia), while others were still on their way. They formed a convoy of more than two or three thousand people and, according to the *nazır*, forcibly detaining them would cause serious unrest. During their stay in the inns for a few days, none of the people marked for arrest were found; all of them were identified as *esnâf* and *reñçber* (labourers). Even if detained, the *nazır* expected them to collectively break the chains and move resolutely towards their destination. Incarcerating such a large group and possibly handing them over in chains to Hurşid Pasha risked provoking discord and fighting. Hence, apprehensive of the consequences, the entire population of Plovdiv pleaded for their peaceful return to their province, employing gentle and artful approaches. After discussion and persuasion, the Prishtiniots agreed not to proceed any further. They were escorted out of Plovdiv and returned home peacefully via the Pazarçık highway.<sup>101</sup>

On the other hand, the leaders of the Janissary party, the *naiibs* of Prishtina and Vushtri, were detained in Edirne, and their banishment to suitable Anatolian districts was authorised by the *Şeyhülislam*. Similarly, the *Alaybey* of Vushtri, Bekir Bey, who was also detained in Edirne, was slated for exile in Anatolia. Reports indicated that Muhsin Bey, Mehmed Bey, and the former *serdar* of Prishtina, Emir Ali, were traversing the route to Istanbul from Serres via the Pravişte highway. Instructions were issued to the authorities in charge to obstruct their entry into Istanbul.<sup>102</sup>

### *The fourth phase: the ustas push back harder*

Despite all these measures, a few Prishtiniots managed to find an alternative route to Istanbul and “dared to present their petition at the Imperial Stirrup, as they had nowhere else to turn but to Almighty God and His Imperial Majesty”.<sup>103</sup>

The Prishtiniots also delivered letters to the corps. According to the Grand Vizier, some Janissary officers (i.e., the *ustas*), possibly after accepting bribes, approached the Janissary Agha to facilitate submission of the Prishtiniots’ petition. Despite attempts by the Agha to stifle the *ustas*, their persistence eventually led him to declare that the Imperial Council had unanimously agreed upon Malik Pasha’s return to

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101 Mehmed Agha (*nazır* of Plovdiv) to Salih Pasha (*mutasarrıf* of Çirmen), 26 March 1822, BOA, HAT.39479-A; Mehmed Agha (*nazır* of Plovdiv) to Sublime Porte, 28 March 1822, BOA, HAT.39479-B.

102 Salih Pasha (Grand Vizier) to Mahmud II, 26 March 1822, BOA, HAT.39465.

103 Petition from the populace of Prishtina, Vushtri and Novobërda to Sublime Porte, undated, BOA, HAT.19441-C.

Prishtina and that as this was a definitive imperial decree, he dared not express any dissent. He pondered proposing to the Sublime Porte that the state should appoint a *kapıcıbaşı* and the corps a *turnacı* to reconcile matters between Malik Pasha and the Prishtiniots. Additionally, assurances could be given that the townsfolk would be protected against oppression, harassment, punishment or exile in retaliation for their grievances against the Pasha. The *ustas* concurred with this plan. However, given the Prishtiniots' previous oath of *talâk* to stop Malik Pasha entering their town, the *ustas* requested a solution be found in accordance with Sharia law.<sup>104</sup>

The Grand Vizier recognised that since the Prishtiniots had undertaken the journey to Istanbul to present their grievances, "it would not befit the Sublime State's glory to disappoint and summarily dismiss them". In line with the Janissary Agha's proposal, the Imperial Council authorised the appointment of *Kapıcıbaşı* Muhsinzâde Mehmed Bey and *Turnacı* Rüstem Agha to expedite the return of the populace from Edirne, Plovdiv, and those still en route to their province. These emissaries were tasked with facilitating a reconciliation through a formal agreement (*hüccet*) in court, where Malik Pasha would pledge to refrain from seeking retribution against the populace, and the populace would commit to obedience.<sup>105</sup>

The *Şeyhülislam* issued four fatwas regarding the oath of *talâk*, with two of them explicitly indicating the invalidity of the oath pronounced by the people on a matter beyond their capability to prevent. The Janissary Agha was ordered to dispatch the fatwas to Prishtina.<sup>106</sup>

Although several *ustas* initially supported the Janissary Agha's proposal, they convened with all their colleagues the following evening and unanimously agreed to Malik Pasha's dismissal. By morning they presented a united front, demanding Malik Pasha's removal, despite the Agha's "tearful pleas and fervent appeals". The Agha reported that his entreaties "fell on deaf ears", and instead, his efforts only served to intensify the *ustas*' resolve, fuelling their insistence and mounting pressure. Eventually, the *ustas* dispersed, returning to their barracks with a resolute declaration: "If permission for Malik Pasha's dismissal was not granted, they would refuse to attend the Agha's office when summoned, or participate in the Imperial Council. And if that did not work, they would cause disturbances for the Sultan".<sup>107</sup>

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104 Salih Pasha (Grand Vizier) to Mahmud II, undated, BOA, HAT.19441.

105 Ibid.

106 Ibid.

107 İsmail Agha (Janissary Agha) to Sublime Porte, undated, BOA, HAT.19441-E; "*müşarunileyhin azline müsaade olunmazsa bade'l-yevm bizleri Kapu'ya matlub eylediğin vakit Kapu'ya gelmeyüz ve Meclis-i Şura'ya gitmeyüz. Dahi olmazsa, hakpa-yı hazret-i cihandari efendimiz hazretlerini tasdi' ideriz*".

The *ustas*' threat proved to be remarkably effective. Despite the representations made by Hurşid and Celal Pashas and the critical situation prevailing in the region, the Sublime Porte, faced with "no immediate alternatives but to comply with the *ustas*' demands", decided to transfer Malik Pasha from Skopje to join the entourage of Sırrı Selim Pasha in Sofia. To ensure stability in the *sancak* and prevent further unrest, a decree was promptly issued and sent to the Janissary Agha, informing him of Malik Pasha's imminent dismissal and instructing him to communicate this news to the *ustas*.<sup>108</sup>

The Sublime Porte directed Hurşid Pasha to promptly organise Malik Pasha's relocation from Prishtina to Sofia, emphasising the importance of avoiding speculation among the Geg pashas. The Grand Vizier crafted a letter to Malik Pasha designed to prevent any unease, explicitly stating that the move from Skopje was not a reflection of distrust but an imperative response to the prevailing circumstances. The letter sought to reassure Malik Pasha, recognising his steadfast service and loyalty, by assuring him of an appropriate and fitting position in the immediate future.<sup>109</sup>

The Janissary Agha promptly informed the *ustas* of the decree regarding Malik Pasha's dismissal. Nevertheless, over the course of two consecutive days, a group of approximately twenty to thirty *ustas* visited the Agha's office to voice their concerns about the future administration of Prishtina. Given that Skopje had yet to be assigned to another official, this uncertainty added to their apprehension. The *ustas* expressed their lack of confidence in the current situation and demanded an urgent and public announcement regarding the assignment of Prishtina to a new official, if Malik Pasha had indeed been dismissed.<sup>110</sup>

The *ustas* further insisted on the immediate removal of Malik Pasha from Prishtina, and the pardon and return of the exiled Janissary party leaders. They sought the issuance of an imperial firman designating a *turnacı* to be resident in Prishtina as the *serdar*, tasked with facilitating the return home of the petitioners detained in Istanbul, Edirne, Plovdiv, and other locations. The *ustas* explicitly stated that in the absence of a prompt response on the Prishtina matter that same day, they would instigate disturbances at the Imperial Stirrup come Friday.<sup>111</sup>

When the Grand Vizier inquired of the Janissary Agha about the choice of *serdar*, he replied, "I am not going to get involved. Whoever they choose, so be it".<sup>112</sup> He mourned that, as with his predecessor, the *ustas* had never heeded his counsel,

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108 Salih Pasha (Grand Vizier) to Mahmud II, undated, BOA, HAT.19318.

109 Salih Pasha (Grand Vizier) to Mahmud II, undated, BOA, HAT.33098.

110 Salih Pasha (Grand Vizier) to Mahmud II, undated, BOA, HAT.19332.

111 Ibid.

112 Ibid.; "ben karışacak değilim. Kendüleri kimi intihab iderler ise varsun o gitsün".

and expressed that he would no longer be able to make the *ustas* listen to him from that point forward. The Grand Vizier indicated that there was no alternative but to accede to the *ustas*' demands. The drafts of the appointment decrees were first sent to the *ustas* for review before being sent to their respective destinations.<sup>113</sup>

Meanwhile, the Sultan was considering the Janissary Agha's precarious position regarding his tenure and deliberating on the possibility of his removal. Although the Agha admitted his inability to control the corps, the Grand Vizier noted that his words did not clearly indicate whether this was due to a lack of confidence in the Janissaries or to his own anger and resentment. The Grand Vizier also suggested that the Janissary Agha might not be in immediate danger, as the *ustas* were given free rein in all matters. However, it remained unclear whether this was indeed the case, or whether the *ustas* were looking for a pretext to intimidate the pro-state elders in the corps, with a view to a complete separation from and severance of ties with the state.<sup>114</sup>

Despite the ambiguity surrounding the phrase "complete separation from and severance of ties with the state", it undeniably carries considerable weight. Was the Grand Vizier simply referring to the withdrawal of the *ustas* from the Imperial Council? Or was he hinting at a concrete rupture that might have catalysed the emergence of civil society in the Ottoman Empire? If the latter, what might the possible outcome have been? We will never know the answers to these questions, but the very fact that the Grand Vizier alluded to this possibility, and that the Sultan did not seem surprised, suggests that it was a topic of discussion.

The Grand Vizier's deliberations vividly portray the precarious situation and the central state's cautious approach in managing the *ustas*:

Since it was evident that the Janissary Agha was in fact a man loyal to the state, whether the *ustas*, offended by this trait of the Agha, would refrain from reacting if the Agha were not dismissed immediately; or whether, alternatively, they would create trouble later to justify his dismissal; or would become even more emboldened if the Agha were dismissed now; or might claim, "We did not demand the Agha's dismissal"; or would rejoice, no definitive judgment can be made on this matter whatsoever.<sup>115</sup>

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113 Ibid.

114 Salih Pasha (Grand Vizier) to Mahmud II, undated, BOA, HAT.19512; "*yoksa bunlar devlete mail olan ihtiyarlarımı dahi birer bahane ile ihafe idüb, külliyyen devletden müfarakat ve kat-ı rişte-i ünsiyet etmeye say itmekte olduklarına*".

115 Ibid. Like most documents in this series, the above document is also undated. Yet since we can be certain that the events took place in the spring of 1822, during İsmail Agha's tenure, we know that the discussion mentioned above did not result in his dismissal.

It was at this point that another intriguing development occurred, as Malik Pasha attempted to influence the *ustas*' decision regarding his removal from Prishtina or, failing that, to secure the appointment of his relatives as *ayan* in Prishtina, Vushtrri and Novobërda by offering them bribes. However, the letters he sent to the *ustas* were delivered to the Sublime Porte by Malik Pasha's agent in Istanbul, leading to a lively discussion on whether these letters should be forwarded to the *ustas* or not. This discussion is quite fascinating, as it reveals the intricate thought and decision-making processes within the Sublime Porte, and also underlines the central government's concern about the possible reaction of the *ustas*.

The Grand Vizier envisioned various scenarios, the first of which involved Malik Pasha's letter to the *ustas* being delivered by his messenger, supposedly unbeknownst to the Sublime Porte. If, with the promised funds, he could persuade the *ustas* either to allow Malik Pasha to remain in Prishtina or, failing that, to allow his relatives to assume the role of *ayan*, that would be considered acceptable by the Sublime Porte. Conversely, if the Sublime Porte's pretence of ignorance of the letters crumbled and suspicions arose about its knowledge of the monetary transactions, the *ustas* might reject the offered money. Even if this hypothetical scenario were unfounded, given that several Prishtiniots in the Janissary party were still in Istanbul, and reports indicated that the fifty thousand piasters they had promised to the *ustas* were safely stored somewhere in Istanbul for future delivery, the *ustas* could still refuse Malik Pasha's money to honour their previous commitment.<sup>116</sup>

If, on the other hand, the *ustas* attributed Malik Pasha's offering of money and seeking refuge in them to machinations by the Sublime Porte, and if Malik Pasha insisted on staying in Prishtina, they could stir up discontent against the Sublime Porte. The *ustas* could insinuate that the state was capable of expelling Malik Pasha if it wished, and they could blame the Sublime Porte for its negligence. The Grand Vizier therefore recognised the wisdom of not sharing these documents with the *ustas* in any way.<sup>117</sup>

Another scenario revolved around Malik Pasha's possible determination to remain in his domain. Given his correspondence lamenting the potential ruin of his household which had endured forty to fifty years, it seemed likely that Malik Pasha, recognising that the matter was unequivocally due to the mischief of the Janissaries, might stubbornly refuse to leave Prishtina. Consequently, the neighbouring Albanian pashas, fearing the situation's ripple effect, might zealously support Malik Pasha and pose further challenges.<sup>118</sup>

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116 Salih Pasha (Grand Vizier) to Mahmud II, undated, BOA, HAT.19352.

117 Ibid.

118 Ibid.

A less likely scenario considered the possibility of reconciliation. If the letters were delivered to the *ustas*, ostensibly without the cognizance of the Sublime Porte, there might be an opportunity for consensus between Malik Pasha and the *ustas*. As the Grand Vizier suggested, given human nature's tendency to protect those who seek refuge, the *ustas*' previous hostility towards Malik Pasha might dissipate. They might agree to keep his relatives as *ayan*, while insisting that he leave Prishtina for Sofia.<sup>119</sup>

Caught between a rock and a hard place, the Sublime Porte decided to return the complete set of letters Malik Pasha had sent to his agent and the *ustas*. The final decree addressed to him explicitly stated that his correspondence with the Janissaries and promises of money were not sanctioned by the state. Consequently, he was ordered to leave Prishtina immediately and move to Sofia, leaving the matter of appointing *ayan* to the discretion of the local population.<sup>120</sup>

Meanwhile, the *turnacı* bound for the post of *serdar* in Prishtina reached Skopje but could not proceed to his destination due to resistance from Malik Pasha, who had aligned with Mahmud Pasha of Prizren and was reluctant to leave Prishtina. We see that the Sultan was not surprised: "Of course, Malik Pasha does not want to leave his homeland in the hands of the enemy. When he lost hope with us, he sought refuge here and there [in the *ustas*?]".<sup>121</sup>

Malik Pasha's efforts to overturn his dismissal proved futile. In early May 1822, he left Prishtina for Sofia, marking the conclusion of the fourth phase of 'the Prishtina Affair'.<sup>122</sup>

### *The fifth phase: power vacuum in Prishtina and usta intervention*

The fifth phase of the 'Affair' unfolded in the aftermath of the Battle of Dervenakia, the humiliating defeat of the Ottoman forces by Greek revolutionaries in the Morea in the first week of August 1822. For months, all Ottoman commanders had eagerly awaited the arrival of the Geg pashas to launch the expedition to the Morea, but they dragged their heels, giving various excuses.<sup>123</sup> Mahmud Pasha of Drama,

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119 Ibid.

120 Salih Pasha (Grand Vizier) to Mahmud II, undated, BOA, HAT.19305.

121 Ibid.

122 Sahhâflar Şeyhi-zâde Seyyid Mehmed Es'ad Efendi, *Tarih*, 92-94.

123 For the role of the Albanians in the Greek Revolution see, H. Ş. İlicak (ed.), "Those Infidel Greeks": *The Greek War of Independence Through Ottoman Archival Documents*, (Leiden 2021), Introduction; H. Erdem, "Perfidious Albanians" and "Zealous Governors": Ottomans,



Commander-in-chief of the Morea army, oversaw the tally of soldiers at the Bridge of Alamana, disbursed their salaries and provisions, and dispatched them into the Morea on July 22, pinning his hopes on reinforcements from the Geg pashas to secure the rear of his army. He reported that there could be a fiasco if the Geg pashas and supplies did not arrive in time.<sup>124</sup>

Sure enough, his fears were realised. By mid-July only two Geg pashas had arrived, Mahmud Pasha of Leskovac (Turk. Leskofça) and Lokman Paşa-zade Arslan Pasha. Despite the fact that Hurşid Pasha sent them letters threatening to seize their abodes and revoke their offices, the rest of the Geg pashas did not appear for another month. According to Hurşid Pasha, the delay was caused by Mahmud Pasha of Prizren due to the affair in Prishtina. He claimed that Mahmud Pasha had done some good during the siege of Ioannina. However, as if to affirm his Albanian heritage – which implied a seditious nature, a stereotype among Ottoman administrators regarding Albanians – he allowed crucial matters to come to a standstill over trivialities.<sup>125</sup> Eventually, the debacle at Dervenakia occurred when the Albanian mercenaries deserted their posts, citing insufficient provisions as a pretext.<sup>126</sup>

When the Geg pashas finally made their appearance in the Lamia region in September, they refused to advance into the Morea on the pretext of the onset of winter.<sup>127</sup> Some of them lingered with their small retinues until February 1823, even though their soldiers had deserted the army by December 1822.<sup>128</sup> The attitude of the Geg pashas was described by Hurşid Pasha as “treachery beyond description”.<sup>129</sup>

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Albanians, and Turks in the Greek War of Independence’, in A. Anastasopoulos and E. Kolovos (eds), *Ottoman Rule and the Balkans, 1760-1850: Conflict, Transformation, Adaptation* (Rethymno 2007), 213-237.

124 Mahmud Pasha (Commander-in-chief of the Morea army) to Hurşid Pasha (governor of Rumelia), 22 July 1822, BOA, HAT.39064-E.

125 Hurşid Pasha (governor of Rumelia) to Sublime Porte, 19 July 1822, BOA, HAT.40267; “*mir-i miranların bu vechile geç gelmelerine Priştine maddesinden dolayı Prizrin Sancağı Mutasarrıfı Mahmud Paşa sebep olmuş olup, eğerçi mumaileyh Yanya maslahatında bir mikdar iş görmüşse de Arnavudiyü'l-asl oldüğünü icra ederek işte böyle biraz vesileyle umur-ı mühimmenin tatiline badi olmuş olmağın*”.

126 Joint letter from Mahmud Pasha of Drama, Erib Pasha and Seyyid Ali Pasha to Hurşid Pasha (governor of Rumelia), 22 August 1822, BOA, HAT.39917-J; “*zahiresizlik münasebetiyle askerî beyninde bi-esas kıl ü kâl tekevvün ve ihtilal zuhur idüb*”.

127 Hurşid Pasha (governor of Rumelia) to Sublime Porte, 16 October 1822, BOA, HAT.39913; Sublime Porte to Hurşid Pasha (governor of Rumelia), 25 October 1822, BOA, BEOAYN.d.577: 77.

128 Sublime Porte to Mehmed Pasha (governor of Rumelia), 22 February 1823, BOA, BEOAYN.d.578: 104.

129 Hurşid Pasha (governor of Rumelia) to Sublime Porte, 16 October 1822, BOA, HAT.39913-D;

A later report suggested that they were reluctant to engage the Greeks because they harboured significant grievances over Malik Pasha's ordeal and were apprehensive of a similar fate for themselves.<sup>130</sup> Be that as it may, Dervenakia served as a moment of clarity for the Sublime Porte, which had initially been confident and hopeful of quelling the Greek uprising that summer, but now faced a challenging reality. In response, the Sublime Porte alleged a conspiracy behind the defeat, as reports from the commanders indicated no shortage of food supplies.<sup>131</sup>

As fresh petitions streamed in from Prishtina in the latter half of August, the Sublime Porte found itself in an increasingly vulnerable position. The initial shockwaves from the defeat empowered the Janissaries to implicate the Halet Efendi party for the state's failure to suppress the Greek uprising. At the same time, however, the tribulations of the Prishtiniots began to lose relevance even among the *ustas*, as the Greek Revolution began to test not only the legitimacy of the state, but also that of the Janissary complex itself.

Hence, when the Prishtiniots complained of ongoing harassment by the Malik Pasha faction due to the proximity of Sofia and demanded that Malik Pasha be transferred to a more distant province, even the *ustas* began to discuss the need for the Sublime Porte to grant permission for the requested matters, so that "the whining (*sızıldı*) of the Prishtiniots would cease altogether".<sup>132</sup>

In their petitions, which were delivered to the Janissary Agha by two *ustas*, the Prishtiniots asserted that although Malik Pasha had been expelled from Prishtina, his nephews and soldiers were still in the region, tormenting and abusing the populace. Due to the proximity of Sofia to the "three *kazas*", they frequently visited Prishtina, spreading rumours of Malik Pasha's imminent return. To make matters worse, Mahmud Pasha of Prizren was inciting Albanians in the mountainous regions to descend upon the Bosnian highway and disrupt travellers. According to the Prishtiniots, this provocation aimed to create the impression that "Malik Pasha's absence from Prishtina had resulted in the closure of the Bosnian highway", thus fostering circumstances for his return.<sup>133</sup> The Prishtiniots stressed that "once again,

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"*hele bu defa Gega pašalarının eylediği hıyanet tarife gelmez*".

130 Abdullah Pasha (Grand Vizier) to Mahmud II, undated, BOA, HAT.34691.

131 Mahmud II's *hatt-ı hümayun*, undated, BOA, HAT.16535; "*bunda elbette bir fesad var*"; Hurşid Pasha (governor of Rumelia) to Sublime Porte, 31 August 1822, BOA, HAT.33837; "*Mora ordusunda vuku bulan işbu keyfiyet-i garibe [...] Mora ordusu zahiresizliği bahane iderek bozulmuş idükleri*".

132 Salih Pasha (Grand Vizier) to Mahmud II, 6 September 1822, BOA, HAT.19419.

133 Summary of petitions from the populace, 6 September 1822, BOA, HAT.19419.

it was inevitable that they would all suffer ruin and be forced to leave their hometown to journey to Istanbul to lodge complaints".<sup>134</sup>

The Prishtiniots also raised concerns about the authority vacuum in their *kaza*, as the Sublime Porte had not designated a replacement for Malik Pasha after his departure from Prishtina. Consequently, crucial matters of governance had juddered to a halt, leaving the people in confusion. Historically, the "three *kazas*" had been under the jurisdiction of the *Nezaret* of Skopje. Therefore, they requested approval for the transfer of their district's administration back to the *Nezaret*. This petition was approved by the Sublime Porte.

In his note to the Sultan, the Grand Vizier categorically stated that the accounts concerning Malik and Mahmud Pashas and the nephews were entirely false. Considering that the pashas were Albanians with a significant following of tribes and clans in those regions, and that Mahmud Pasha would be stationed in the Morea while Malik Pasha oversaw Sofia, it was inadvisable to bring harm to them. Any such harm could lead to further troubles in Albania. In view of the myriad ongoing issues surrounding the state, any action of this nature was deemed entirely inappropriate. The Janissary Agha received instructions to communicate this situation to the *ustas* in a tactful manner.<sup>135</sup>

By mid-November 1822, lack of progress on the initial petition prompted the Prishtiniots to resend their plea.<sup>136</sup> This time, a petition endorsed by "the entire corps and its officers" (*bilcümle Ocaklı ve zâbitân kulları*), and delivered by a certain Mehmed Usta, reiterated the demand of the Prishtiniots for the governance and management of Prishtina by the *nazır* of Skopje.<sup>137</sup> In his own note, Mehmed Usta expressed grief that Malik Pasha and his nephews had committed various atrocities and cruelties, including rape and murder of the population, and "had used other Janissaries [in the region] as slaves".<sup>138</sup> Shortly thereafter, the *ustas* presented petitions from the residents of Vushtrri and Novobërda to the Janissary Agha advocating for an imperial decree to administer these towns under the *nazır* of Skopje, similar to the arrangement in Prishtina.<sup>139</sup>

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134 Petitions from the populace, 19 August 1822, BOA, HAT.19419-A; 19 August 1822, BOA, HAT.19419-D; 19 August 1822, BOA, HAT.19419-F; 15 August 1822, BOA, HAT.19419-G.

135 Salih Pasha (Grand Vizier) to Mahmud II, 6 September 1822, BOA, HAT.19419.

136 Hasan Hüsnü (*naib* of Prishtina) to Sublime Porte, 11 November 1822, BOA, HAT.36884-A.

137 Janissaries to Sublime Porte, undated, BOA, HAT.36884-B; Abdullah Pasha (Grand Vizier) to Mahmud II, undated, BOA, HAT.17334.

138 Mehmed Usta to Sublime Porte, undated, BOA, HAT.17334-A; "*sair Yeniçeri kullarını esîr-veş istimal eyledikleri*".

139 Abdullah Pasha (Grand Vizier) to Mahmud II, undated, BOA, HAT.19509.

The *ustas'* petition came at an exceedingly critical time for imperial politics. Halet Efendi was exiled on November 10 following a Janissary uprising, and Hurşid Pasha died ten days later. At this juncture, the Sultan and the Sublime Porte could not afford to alienate the Janissaries in the slightest. The Sultan was uneasy about the *ustas'* intervention on behalf of the Prishtiniots, claiming to his Grand Vizier, "On the day I visited the Sublime Porte, I delivered a memorandum, and now the things I mentioned [in it] are slowly starting to unfold. May the Almighty bring about a good outcome. If this continues this way, it won't yield a favourable result. And you should discuss it secretly with some people who are wise and whose word is trustworthy for a favourable outcome".<sup>140</sup> Unfortunately, locating the Sultan's memorandum within the Ottoman State Archives and discerning the exact cause of his concern has proved to be an all but impossible task.

Once again, but for the final time, the Sublime Porte found itself compelled to acquiesce to the demands of the *ustas*. As a result, on November 30, the *sancak* of İçel in Anatolia was assigned to Malik Pasha and tasked with safeguarding Sofia, and the "three *kazas*" were placed under the administration of Recep Paşa-zâde Hıfzı Bey, *nazır* of Skopje.<sup>141</sup> This solution struck a middle ground, providing Malik Pasha with a source of income and preventing his relocation to a more distant province, all while enabling the Janissary party's demands to be met.

Malik Pasha penned a petition to the effect that although he was currently in Sofia, his nephews each resided in a different place, and his family was enduring misery. If the reinstatement of his nephew Melik Bey in Prishtina was not feasible, he asked for permission to reinstate his other nephew Hurşid Bey in the town of Novobërda, so that at least his scattered household and dependents could gather in one place. The Grand Vizier considered it impossible to fulfil the request, while the Sultan noted he was "very saddened by Malik Pasha's letter". As a result, the Sublime Porte sent another letter to Malik Pasha, assuring him that the state harboured no grudges against him, that his services were not forgotten, and that he would be rewarded in due time.<sup>142</sup>

### *The final phase: the nazır vs. the mutasarrıf*

The final phase of the Affair began in the summer of 1823, but was preceded by fundamental changes affecting the fate of the Janissary complex earlier that year. Due

<sup>140</sup> Mahmud II's *hatt-ı hümayun*, undated, BOA, HAT.19509.

<sup>141</sup> Firman draft, 30 November 1822, BOA, C.DH.10532.

<sup>142</sup> Abdullah Pasha (Grand Vizier) to Mahmud II, undated, BOA, HAT.34691.

to the chaotic economic and political situation and the apocalyptic mood resulting from the Greek Revolution, the people's need for security took precedence over all other considerations. Under these circumstances, the state successfully initiated the severing of the Janissaries' ties with the lower strata of society, effectively stripping them of their ability to 'do politics'. As a result, the removal of the *ustas* from the political scene did not spark a Janissary rebellion. The state was then able to launch vigorous *Usta/Janissary* hunts, expelling them from Istanbul by February 1823, and publicly executing *ustas* by August 1823 – an event that Strangford described as “unprecedented”.<sup>143</sup>

Perfectly aware of the *ustas*' situation in Istanbul,<sup>144</sup> Malik Pasha strategically moved to reclaim his domain in the summer of 1823, creating an atmosphere where regional peace seemed contingent upon his presence. Reports suggested that he had continued to sow unrest in the region since his departure for Sofia, causing the local population to prefer his rule to upheaval.<sup>145</sup>

The situation escalated when the *Nazır Hıfzı Bey* demanded soldiers from the “three *kazas*”, leading to an uprising. On the instigation of Malik and Mahmud Pashas, the Albanians in the countryside fiercely resisted Hıfzı Bey, despite his sizable force of five to six thousand soldiers. The Albanians successfully expelled Hıfzı Bey and his brother, and blocked the Bosnian highway for almost three months.<sup>146</sup> They declared their refusal to provide soldiers or provisions unless the *sancak* was returned to Malik Pasha.<sup>147</sup>

Amidst the turmoil, two distinct factions emerged in Prishtina: the first, comprising supporters of Malik Pasha, included Albanians from the villages of Prishtina and half of the town's population. The second faction, backing Hıfzı Bey, consisted of the remaining townspeople (implicitly the Janissary party) and the populace of

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143 For details regarding the demise of the *ustas*, see İlicak, ‘A New Interpretation of the ‘Auspicious Incident’.

144 Silahdar Ali Pasha (Grand Vizier) to Mahmud II, undated, BOA, HAT.16421; “When Malik Pasha was dismissed from Prishtina, he was told, ‘For the time being, you should leave Prishtina and go to Sofia. When the time comes, the Sultan's permission will be given to you again’. Knowing that his expulsion from Prishtina was solely based on the intervention of the Janissaries, and now having heard of their brokenness (*sınıklık*), it is possible that he had given license to the Albanians to mobilise to retake Prishtina”.

145 Summary of documents dispatched by Hüseyin Pasha (castellan of Nish), 26 September 1823, BOA, HAT.21254.

146 Ibid.

147 Silahdar Ali Pasha (Grand Vizier) to Mahmud II, undated, BOA, HAT.16421.

Vushtri.<sup>148</sup> When the Albanians in the countryside sought to appeal to the Sublime Porte for the return of Malik Pasha, the Janissary party in the town disagreed and faced the threat of an attack by the Albanians.<sup>149</sup>

According to Hüseyin Pasha, castellan of Nish, the rebellion's root cause did not solely originate from Hıfzı Bey's actions but rather from the absence of authority in Prishtina, which had fostered an environment of lawlessness. Hüseyin Pasha was also confident that the reinstatement of Malik Pasha in Prishtina would likely lead to the devastation of three-quarters of the town's population, and definitely cause the populace to resume harassing [the Sublime Porte].<sup>150</sup>

During discussions regarding the rebellion in Prishtina, as the Janissary Agha conveyed, "Although Malik Pasha had been dismissed and expelled from Prishtina at the *ustas'* insistence, praise be to God, those within the corps who meddled in state affairs were duly banned and expelled. Therefore, there is no reason why Prishtina should not be restored to Malik Pasha, as it was in the past". The Agha even asserted his intention to exile the *turnacı* in Prishtina on account of his inappropriate conduct.<sup>151</sup>

Thus, by the end of September 1823, there were no obstacles to Malik Pasha's reinstatement in Prishtina, a decision unanimously endorsed by the Imperial Council.<sup>152</sup> In early November, the Pasha entered Prishtina, extending pardons to all.<sup>153</sup> He declared that the rift between him and the Prishtiniots had ceased to exist, as they had pledged obedience to him, and requested an edict be issued absolving them of their past transgressions.<sup>154</sup>

Malik Pasha most likely died in December 1823, as his nephew Yaşar Pasha was referred to as the *mutasarrıf* of Skopje by the Sublime Porte in a document dated January 9, 1824.<sup>155</sup>

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148 Summary of documents dispatched by Hüseyin Pasha (castellan of Nish), 26 September 1823, BOA, HAT.21254.

149 Ibid.

150 Ibid.

151 Silahdar Ali Pasha (Grand Vizier) to Mahmud II, undated, BOA, HAT.16421.

152 Summary of documents dispatched by Malik Pasha (castellan of Sofia), 13 August 1823, BOA, HAT.21254.

153 Malik Pasha (*mutasarrıf* of Skopje) to Sublime Porte, 5 November 1823, BOA, HAT.21410-D.

154 Malik Pasha (*mutasarrıf* of Skopje) to Sublime Porte, 7 November 1823, BOA, HAT.21410-B.

155 Sublime Porte to Mehmed Emin Pasha (governor of Rumelia), 9 January 1824, BOA, BEOAYN.d.1713: 97.

## Conclusion

‘The Prishtina Affair’ emerges as a captivating and intricate case of Ottoman political adaptability during challenging times, both at the imperial and local levels. It transpired in the midst of what I call ‘de-*ayanisation*’; to all intents and purposes, a civil war between the Ottoman central state and a myriad of provincial magnates of varying calibres, religions, ethnicities, and levels of popular support that began following the end of the Russian War of 1806-1812.<sup>156</sup> Drawing from official Ottoman documents and chronicles, we can map out a series of urban and rural uprisings led by provincial magnates across the empire in opposition to the Sublime Porte’s policy of replacing them with or converting them into imperial agents and appropriating their *mukataas*. De-*ayanisation* gained considerable traction in the Anatolian provinces, but its momentum in Rumelia faltered with the outbreak of the Greek Revolution.

After nearly a decade of internal strife, significant portions of the empire lay in ruins, and the Sublime Porte had exhausted its military manpower reserves. The elimination of some of the most powerful provincial political and military brokers had profound implications for troop recruitment. Provincial magnates were toppled hastily without their networks and infrastructures being replaced with viable alternatives. Consequently, the imperial agents who supplanted the magnates faced immense challenges in recruiting, mobilising, and financing soldiers to confront the Greek insurgents, and ultimately found themselves literally at the mercy of Albanian military contractors and mercenaries.

Thus, the Greek Revolution came to be the ‘great aligner’, fundamentally reshaping the dynamics of provincial politics, particularly in the Albanian provinces. Plentiful evidence indicates that Albanian power brokers did not regard the Sublime Porte’s struggle against the Greek insurgents as their own. Hesitant to put on a united Muslim front against the ‘infidels’ that the Sublime Porte so desperately desired, yet unable to openly express dissent, they constantly navigated between the dictates of the state and the constraints of local populations, facilitating the rise of factions, old and new.

Factionalism reached a whole new level in Prishtina with the involvement of the Janissary complex.<sup>157</sup> ‘The Prishtina Affair’ stands apart from other provincial Janissary uprisings that erupted in the wake of the Greek Revolution. The uprisings

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156 For de-*ayanisation* see, H. Ş. İlicak, ‘The Decade prior to the Greek Revolution: A Black Hole in Ottoman History’ in P. Kitromilides (ed.), *The Greek Revolution in the Age of Revolutions (1776-1848), Reappraisals and Comparisons* (London 2021), 139-149.

157 For provincial factionalism in the post-Tanzimat period see, U. Bayraktar, ‘Reconsidering Local

in Izmir, Manisa and Kayseri were overtly anti-government, with the Janissaries expressing their dissatisfaction with the Greek Revolution by blaming it on the state and targeting local officials and leaders of the religious establishment. In these towns, the Janissaries also unleashed a wave of collective violence against non-Muslims, motivated mainly by the desire to loot their property.<sup>158</sup>

The Prishtiniots, on the other hand, were driven by a more pragmatic and local concern. They sought protection from the impositions of a local warlord dynasty and strategically utilised the Janissaries' growing influence in imperial politics to mediate with the state on their behalf. Although not explicitly stated in the documents, it is likely that they also aimed to prevent the *mukataas* from passing out of their hands to imperial agents. However, the intensity of 'The Prishtina Affair' was amplified by the turbulent political landscape of the time. The confluence of the Tepedelenli and Greek revolts created an atmosphere of heightened instability, even rendering unrest in a relatively modest province like Prishtina a significant factor in imperial politics. Amidst the backdrop of concurrent revolts and power struggles, the impact of the 'Affair' extended far beyond its immediate reach, reflecting the fluid nature of provincial politics and the interconnectedness of events within the Empire during this volatile period.

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versus Central: Empire, Notables, and Employment in Ottoman Albania and Kurdistan, 1835–1878', *IJMES*, 52 (2020), 685-701.

158 For these Janissary uprisings see, Y. Spyropoulos, 'Διακοινοτική βία στη Σμύρνη το 1821'.



THE JANISSARIES  
AND THE KATİBZADE FAMILY IN IZMİR  
ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL INTERACTIONS  
IN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE  
(18th-EARLY 19th CENTURIES)

Gülay TULASOĞLU\*

THE RISE OF THE KATİBZADE FAMILY occurred at a time when the demilitarisation/ decentralisation of the Janissaries had already taken place. During this period, the Janissaries were involved in various activities such as production, trade, and active participation in different guilds. A consistent pattern emerged in port cities like Izmir, whereby Janissaries developed close ties with guilds and other actors that profited from trade. By examining Katibzade waqf assets over three generations, my contribution explores the overlap between the economic activities of the family and the Janissaries in Izmir. The involvement of the Katibzades in trade and production points to close collaboration, arguably even a patron-client relationship between them and the city's Janissaries.

I propose that the intimate collaboration between the Janissaries and the ruling elites in the Ottoman provinces led to the targeted elimination of key individuals, strategically aimed at both weakening Janissary influence and implementing *de-ayanisation* across the Ottoman territories. Katibzade Mehmed Efendi inherited and managed an established production and trade network in Izmir that operated in conjunction with the Janissaries, governing the city for over a decade until his execution. His position rendered him a prime target for the Ottoman centre's new Janissary policy. In 1816, the central government endeavoured to dismantle the strong alliance between the Janissaries and the influential Katibzade family in Izmir as part of a broader strategy not only to re-imperialise the province, but also to undermine Janissary power throughout the empire.

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\* Independent researcher.

## *Introduction*

Interest in the Janissaries has grown significantly in recent scholarship, as researchers have delved into their historical contexts and the roles they played in cultural, economic, and societal significance in both the Ottoman centre and provinces.<sup>1</sup> Against this background, inquiry into the relationship between local power holders and local Janissaries has become imperative, and should also extend to the dynamics of power relations between the two. Often categorised and conceptualised within the framework of the unruliness of the Janissaries, recent scholarship on the political and socioeconomic power they wielded prompts the question of whether a symbiotic relationship existed between ruling elites and Janissaries as power brokers in the Ottoman provinces. Yannis Spyropoulos's contribution to how the process of financial emancipation of Janissaries from centrally controlled institutions took place, using the example of Crete, is pivotal in this regard.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, in the case of Izmir, the execution of *voynoda* Katibzade Mehmed Efendi in 1816 marks a turning point. That this event was a consequence of his association with the Janissaries has been acknowledged by Frangakis-Syrett, yet deeper motivations prompting the action of the central state remain unexplored.<sup>3</sup>

Recent historiography concerning the *ayan* at the turn of the nineteenth century indicates that the removal of local power brokers formed part of the broader paradigm of re-imperialisation prevalent at the time.<sup>4</sup> Driven by the imperative of the central state to ensure its capacity to mobilise military forces when necessary, the de-*ayanisation* strategy is viewed by Ilicak as reflecting the necessity for the central state to recalibrate its relationship with nobles in the provinces. According to the same scholar, a favourable moment had arrived when the Peace of Bucharest concluded in May 1812. It was then that alterations in Russia's imperial agenda in the post-Napoleonic era created conditions which enabled certain factions within

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1 Y. Spyropoulos (ed.), *Insights into Janissary Networks, 1700–1826* [special issue of *Cihannüma: Journal of History and Geography Studies*, 8/1 (2022)]; A. Yıldız, Y. Spyropoulos and M. M. Sunar (eds.), *Payitaht Yeniçerileri: Padişahın “Asi” Kulları, 1700-1826* (Istanbul 2022).

2 Y. Spyropoulos, ‘Janissary Politics on the Ottoman Periphery (18th-Early 19th C.)’, in M. Sariyannis (ed.), *Political Thought and Practice in the Ottoman Empire. Halcyon Days in Crete IX: A Symposium Held in Rethymno, 9-11 January 2015* (Rethymno 2019), 449-481.

3 E. Frangakis-Syrett, *The Commerce of Smyrna in the Eighteenth Century (1700-1820)* (Athens 1992), 65.

4 That there was not a linear transition from decentralised to centralised state is also shown in A. Yayıoğlu, *Partners of Empire: The Crisis of the Ottoman Order in the Age of Revolutions* (Stanford, CA 2026).

the Ottoman state to diminish the influence of provincial power brokers and launch a de-*ayanisation* initiative aimed at reasserting central authority in the provinces.<sup>5</sup>

There is no doubt that Katibzade, representing the strength of provincial *ayan*-ship, was eliminated in the wake of Mahmud II's re-imperialisation project that culminated in centralist policies. This article argues that by eliminating the *voyvoda*, Mahmud II achieved two goals simultaneously: the eradication of local authority with a concomitant reassertion of central state authority, and the weakening of the province's Janissaries in the province. Therefore, the central questions of this article are whether the relationship between the governor of İzmir, who was of *ayan* background, and the Janissaries in İzmir influenced the decision of the Ottoman centre to eliminate the governor, and if so, what objectives the central government pursued with this action.

Existing research literature provides valuable insights into the conditions prevalent for the functioning of a coalition between the Janissaries and the ruling elite in İzmir. Throughout the history of İzmir, there were moments when collaboration between the Janissaries and local power brokers became crucial for the governance and functioning of the city. One notable instance was the uprising of 1727-28, marked by the absence of a close bond between the city's *voyvoda* and the Janissaries. M. Aktepe has shown how this led to a significant upheaval that lasted for two years, originating as a clash between the Janissaries and the *serdars* of the *voyvoda*, culminating in the deposition of the latter.<sup>6</sup> The turmoil persisted even after the appointment of a successor, as the Janissaries of İzmir rejected his appointment as well. The research literature depicts this unrest as a precursor to the Patrona Halil uprising, suggesting that a certain Emir Ali, instigator of the İzmir uprising, was a close associate of Patrona Halil.<sup>7</sup>

Yet another pivotal moment in the historical narrative was the 1797 uprising of the Janissaries and subsequent fire in İzmir. Various factors contributed to the outbreak of this unrest, as Ottoman sources and consular reports make clear. N. Ülker has shown that tensions between the so-called *Frenks* i.e. the Europeans, and the *voyvoda* of Bornova in İzmir seem to have sparked and fuelled the unrest. Believing

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5 For the concept of re-imperialisation" see Ş. İlicak, 'The Decade Prior to the Greek Revolution: A Black Hole in Ottoman History', in P. Kitromilides (ed.), *The Greek Revolution in the Age of Revolutions (1776-1848), Reappraisals and Comparisons* (London and New York 2021), 141.

6 M. Aktepe, '1727-1728 İzmir İsyanına Dair Bazı Vesikalar', *İÜEF Tarih Dergisi*, 8/11-12 (1956), 71.

7 Ibid.

that he had been removed from his post due to the intervention of the *Frenks*, the *voyvoda* of Bornova intensified the discord during this period.<sup>8</sup>

It is noteworthy that Izmir's status as a prominent trade centre played a key role in the above event. The economic significance of the city provoked a growing population influx, particularly of single men including Venetian citizens from the Adriatic, who acted as contemporaneous rivals to the Janissaries, especially in their role as porters.<sup>9</sup> According to F. Tansuğ, both the uprising and the fire were "manifestations of the accumulated frustrations among the Janissaries", exacerbated, it is fair to say, by competition with rival Venetian subjects hailing from the Adriatic.<sup>10</sup>

Curiously, shortly before the abolition of the Janissaries beginning in 1821 and ending in 1822/23, another upheaval involving the Janissaries occurred in Izmir.<sup>11</sup> I propose that in their capacity as city *ayan*, the Katibzades likely maintained a close relationship with the Janissaries, not least in the case of Mehmed Efendi, who served as *voyvoda* of Izmir for over a decade. Disturbances during the 1820s can be attributed to the destabilisation of administrative structures following the execution of Mehmed in 1816 and the subsequent exile of his men, who had held significant positions within the city. This punishment precipitated a power vacuum in Izmir, ultimately culminating in the Janissary uprising of 1821.

My approach to exploring the connection between the Janissaries and the Katibzade family is twofold. I begin by examining the extent, the kind, and the nature of the family's capital and business activities in Izmir, using the waqfs established by them. Doing so allows me to assess the extent of intersections and overlaps between

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8 N. Ülker, '1797 Olayı ve İzmir'in Yakılması', *Tarih İncelemeleri Dergisi*, 2/1(1984), 122-23; B. F. Slars Ikomonos, *Izmir Hakkında Tetkikler*, trans. Arapzade Cevdet (Izmir 1932), 262. N. Ülker refers to the following document: BOA, C.DH.295/14720 saying that Mehmed Agha, who held the position of *voyvoda* of Bornova the previous year, engaged in a dispute with the *Frenks* [...] and that he was captured and imprisoned by Karaosmanzade. This action was prompted by the complaint and claim of the *Frenks*, alleging that Mehmed Agha had joined the group and was involved in the murder of some "kefere" by shooting.

9 The Treaty of Campo-Formio, signed on 17 October 1797, marked the end of the Venetian Republic and its partition between France and Austria; just before the end of the Republic, people working on Venetian trade ships had to find ways to survive. See F. Tansuğ, 'Revisiting the Escalation of Intercommunal Violence in Izmir (1897): "Anti-Greek" or a More Complex Dynamic', in F. Castiglione, E. L. Menchinger and V. Şimşek (eds.), *Ottoman War and Peace. Studies in Honour of Virginia H. Aksan* (Leiden and London 2019).

10 Tansuğ, 'Revisiting the Escalation', 420.

11 See R. Clogg, 'Smyrna in 1821: Documents from the Levant Company Archives in the Public Record Office', *Μικρασιατικά Χρονικά* [Asia Minor Chronicles], 15 (1972), 313-357; T. Prousis, 'Smyrna in 1821: A Russian View', *University of North Florida: History Faculty Publications* 16 (1992), 145-168. According to Prousis, as early as 1821, the local municipality in Izmir had completely lost control over the Janissaries; *ibid.*, 146.

these realms and the typical occupations and lifestyle of the Janissaries in what was a powerful trade centre. I substantiate this hypothesis with actions undertaken by the Ottoman central authority once the head of the family had been removed on the eve of the abolition of the Janissaries, namely the execution of Katibzade Mehmed Efendi in 1816.

My research relies predominantly on Ottoman sources as well as travellers' narratives. Unfortunately, however, I have not yet had the opportunity to consult the relevant reports by European consuls in any depth. I am keenly aware that these reports, particularly those related to İzmir, encompass a wealth of information not only about trade but also about the intricacies of daily life.<sup>12</sup> Given this limitation, I must exercise caution in drawing definitive conclusions.

### *The rise of the Katibzades in İzmir*

The Katibzades' rise in the cultural, social, economic and commercial life of İzmir began in the eighteenth century. The family was rooted in the *müderris* tradition, inheriting a lineage deeply embedded within the so-called scholarly rank of *ulema*. As *ulema*, or more precisely as *müderris*, the Katibzades maintained an integral link to İzmir's intellectual, social, and juridical spheres.<sup>13</sup> Since members of the *ulema* could pass their profession on to their sons and grandsons, they were able to create well-established families and thus gained the potential to intervene in political processes in the Ottoman provinces.<sup>14</sup> From the eighteenth century onwards, contemporaneously with decentralisation in the Ottoman administration, second generation *ulema* who built on the wealth and experience accumulated by their fathers were able to establish themselves as powerbrokers in the province.<sup>15</sup> The first Katibzade Mehmed Efendi, too, was a *müderris* at the beginning of the eighteenth

12 G. Tulasoglu, "His Majesty's Consul" in Saloniki: Charles Blunt (1800-1864), ein europäischer Konsul als Agent der Modernisierung in der Osmanischen Provinz (Berlin 2015), 55-67.

13 Although the term *müderris* primarily referred to educators in madrasas who taught various subjects, their respected status in society often led to them being assigned additional responsibilities beyond teaching, such as conducting investigations, inspections, serving as mediators, or providing expert opinions. They were sometimes appointed as *naib* (deputy of the *kadi*) until a new *kadi* was appointed and, in certain instances, participated in judicial inquiries alongside judges. It was customary for *müderris* to become *kadıs* later in their careers or to advance to the position of *müftü* according to their rank; *TDVİA*, s.v., 'Müderris' (N. Bozkurt), 467.

14 S. Yılmaz, 'XVIII. Yüzyıl Sonlarının En Zengin İzmirli: Hacı Osman Efendi', in R. D. Özbay et.all. (eds), *Birinci İktisat Tarihi Kongresi Tebliğleri*, Vol. II (İstanbul 2010), 655.

15 H. İnalçık, 'Centralization and Decentralization in Ottoman Administration', T. Naff and R. Owen (eds), *Studies in Eighteenth Century Islamic History* (Carbondale, Ill. 1977), 41-42.

century. Ahmed Reşid Efendi, his son, was elevated to the rank of an *ayan* upon his appointment as one of the four administrators of the eighteen-member council in Izmir.<sup>16</sup> It was he who established the Katibzade family's power base. From the mid eighteenth century onwards, Ahmed Reşid and his descendants became *ayan* associated with the rank of the *müderris*, trade, administration, tax collection, and the recruitment of soldiers in Izmir.<sup>17</sup>

It is notable that Ahmed Reşid, the first *ayan-müderris* of the family, died in 1759 while trying to evade a state decision to eliminate him. Disguised as a woman, he tried to escape the city by boat, but was caught in a storm and drowned.<sup>18</sup> After his death the government decided to confiscate his property; the confiscation record (*muhallefat defteri*) lists only properties and goods outside the city, except for his house, which was sealed.<sup>19</sup> Judging from the confiscation register, the source of Ahmed Reşid's wealth would appear to be land and farming. Yet examination of the deed for the waqf he established in 1750 and the list of its contents in Izmir suggests otherwise. He endowed a large amount of his property in Izmir to his waqf, the management of which he ascribed to his family.

Besides public and religious buildings and institutions, the entries registered in Ahmed Reşid's waqf deed reveal his participation in the commercial life of Izmir.<sup>20</sup> Most striking in this respect are storehouses (*mahzenler*) at the waterfront, in close proximity to the storehouses associated with the customs house for Anatolian goods (*mevve gümrüğü*). Several other storehouses were located in inns (*han*).<sup>21</sup> Needless to say, storehouses were crucial for keeping goods safe and sometimes concealed.<sup>22</sup>

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16 G. Veinstein, 'Ayan de la région d'Izmir et le commerce du Levant (deuxième moitié du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle)' *ROMM*, 20 (1975), 132.

17 Y. Özdemir, 'An Asset During the Formation of Izmir: The Katibzade Family', in C. Özgün (ed.), *Izmir: Search of the Past* (Izmir 2020), 99-111.

18 BOA, C.ML.39/1754.

19 BOA, D.BŞM.MHF.47/4.

20 VGMA (Vakıflar Genel Müdürlüğü Arşivi), 587: 247/303: In the Cami-i Atik quartier, in the proximity of Anatolian goods customs house (*Mevve Gümrüğü*) there were: a mosque, a school for children (*talim-i sıbyan*), a public fountain below the school, and aqueducts; a stone *medrese* with nine rooms on the ground floor, plus a classroom and a library on the upper floor; a bedroom, a laundry room, two toilets and water tap, with a separate house for the professor (*müder-ris*); and a Quran reading room. All of the above also had attachments.

21 In the Kasap Hızır neighbourhood, in two of his inns, Piriç Hanı (a large commercial building) and one without a name, there were 26 storehouses; VGMA, 587: 247/303.

22 The significance of storehouses for future generations is the subject of another academic article currently in development.

Ahmed Reşid Efendi also endowed three inns in 1750: Telekli Hanı,<sup>23</sup> Pirinç Hanı<sup>24</sup>, and Laz Hanı.<sup>25</sup> These were large commercial buildings which included several shops, manufactories, and apartments/rooms for rent.

Four years after the establishment of the waqf, in 1754, Ahmed Reşid endowed it with further properties he had recently bought. Among them were two more inns.<sup>26</sup> The mills, shops, and various manufactories from which the waqf derived its income contributed to the commercial life of the city. As striking as the storehouses are residential buildings identified as *yahudihane* (House of Jews) and *rumhane* (House of Greeks) in his waqf deed. *Yahudihanes* were multi-story tenement houses where scores of poor Jewish families lived together.<sup>27</sup> Ahmed Reşid had a total of eight such *yahudihanes* and one *rumhane*. Interestingly, none of the *yahudihanes* were located, as might be expected, in the poorest neighbourhoods (the Jewish quarters of Basmane, Tilkilik, and İki Çeşmelik); all of them were in the Cami-i Atik neighbourhood, while the House of Greeks was in Kasap Hızır.<sup>28</sup> Middle class Muslims made up the bulk of residents in Cami-i Atik, where the prominent Katibzade family also lived.

The assets in Ahmed Reşid's waqf remained. Following his death and the confiscation of his property, some family members were exiled, some became *müderris*, while others took administrative appointments.<sup>29</sup> Yet in spite of these obstacles, the

23 Situated in the Hatuniye Quarter, Telekli Hanı was bordered on one side by the Doksanlızade soap factory, on another by the Hatuniye mosque and by public streets on the other two. It contained several apartments (on the ground and upper floors), plus a stable, a drinking fountain, toilets, a courtyard and numerous outward-facing shops on the ground floor; VGMA, 587: 247/303.

24 In the Cami-i Atik neighbourhood, consisting of 13 storehouses and a grocery shop; VGMA, 587: 247/303.

25 In the Cami-i Atik neighbourhood, consisting of upper several ground and upper floor houses, a fountain, a stable, a kitchen and a courtyard; VGMA, 587: 247/303.

26 The names of the inns are not recorded, but both were in the Kasap Hızır neighbourhood. One was described as bordering the Hüseyin Beşe *han* on one side and the *han* of a *zımmi* on another, a public street on another, etc., and included 17 rooms on the upper floor, 13 storehouses on the ground floor, two shops, a well, a toilet, a courtyard, a stable, and two shops opening onto the street. The other inn was next to the *han* owned by the famous Köprülüzade Fazıl Ahmed Pasha; VGMA, 587: 249/307.

27 See C. Şişman, 'Yahudihane', *Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World*, Executive Editor Norman A. Stillman, consulted online 15 March 2021; Ş. Yücel, 'Minority Heterotopias: The Cortijos of İzmir', *Architectural Research Quarterly*, 20/3 (2016), 245-256; U. Saruhan, 'Unutulmuş Toplu Mülkiyet Formları, Yahudihaneler ve Kortejolar', *Hukuk Dergisi*, 2 (2020), 210-211; R. Meseri, 'Mine Tanaç Zeren ile Söyleşi: İzmir'de Yahudi Yerleşimleri Üzerine', *Meltem: İzmir Akdeniz Akademisi Kitabı* (December 2016), 118.

28 VGMA, 587: 247/303; VGMA, 587: 249/307.

29 Özdemir, 'An Asset', 103.

solid basis that remained enabled the family to continue its rise; Ahmed Reşid's son Osman, father to Katibzade Mehmed Efendi, became one of the richest persons in the city.

### *Consolidation of power in Izmir: Katibzade Osman Efendi*

Like his father Ahmed Reşid, Katibzade Osman Efendi was both an *ayan* and a *müderris*.<sup>30</sup> According to a French resident of Izmir who spent his early years in a factory near the Katibzade estate, Osman Efendi was the city's wealthiest man.<sup>31</sup> Osman established a waqf of his own in 1789.<sup>32</sup> Compared to that of his father, the assets from which Osman's charitable foundation derived its income were even more intertwined with everyday economic life in Izmir. As he seems to have been more cautious than his father, the first thing he converted into a waqf was his *konak* (mansion).<sup>33</sup>

Osman's mansion was a large, three-storey house in the Cami-i Atik neighbourhood, entirely emblematic of the family's considerable affluence and stature. Most probably built around an inner courtyard, it included several apartments/rooms on the lower, middle, and upper floors looking inward, surrounding a Turkish bath (*hamam*) with a dressing room, several toilets, a garden with fruit trees, a pool, and running water. On the outer side there were further apartments/rooms on the lower, middle, and upper floors. The estate also encompassed a stable and a hay barn (*saman damı*). In front of this latter outhouse were a pavilion (*köşk*), a café room (*kahve odası*), another pool, running water, a further courtyard, and another outhouse.<sup>34</sup>

The list of properties includes a soap factory (*sabunhane*) in Izmir, reportedly in the vicinity of the estate.<sup>35</sup> Since Ahmed Reşid's time, the Katibzade family had been in possession of a significant number of olive trees.<sup>36</sup> The presence of both olive trees and soap factory suggests involvement in the olive oil industry, a topic to which I shall return shortly.

Besides the estate, the waqf encompassed four *yahudihanes* in the middling neighbourhoods of Cami-i Atik, Kefeli, and Hatuniye, as well as seven further

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30 BOA, C.AS.115/5171.

31 Yılmaz, 'Hacı Osman Efendi', 657.

32 VGMA 607: 234/351.

33 Ibid.

34 Ibid.

35 Ibid.

36 BOA, D.BŞM.MHF.47/4.



apartment buildings and forty-two shops, stores and manufactories in the city centre. These commercial venues reflect active participation in many aspects of the city's everyday life. Among the shops were coffeehouses, grocery shops, barber shops, oil stores, corn stores, water stores, a silk thread store (*ibrişimci*), Turkish pancake (*gözleme*) shops, and bakeries, grocery cellars, candy shops, poulterer shops, laundry stores, masonries, glassmaker stores, bread stores, timber merchants, joineries, shoemaker shops, gold and silver smiths,<sup>37</sup> and even a restaurant (Chef Manol's store/*Aşçı Manol dükkani*).<sup>38</sup>

The numerous *yahudihanes* and *rumhanes* indicate that the Katibzades were heavily involved in İzmir's house rental market. The assets of Osman's waqf together with the shops, inns, *yahudihanes*, *rumhanes*, tenements, and storehouses belonging to the waqf of Ahmed Reşid certainly played an important part in the local economy and the formation of power coalitions.

### *Looming centrifugal power in İzmir: Katibzade Mehmed Efendi*

At the time of his death from natural causes, Katibzade Osman Efendi was the wealthiest man in İzmir. His possessions and the waqf he left to his family were administered by his eldest son, Katibzade Mehmed Efendi, who by the time of Osman's death was also the *voyvoda* of this important port city.<sup>39</sup> Mehmed had four brothers and three sisters.<sup>40</sup> Like his father, he was the most influential and wealthy man in İzmir in his time, and was to remain the most famous Katibzade. In 1806 he was appointed governor of İzmir and therefore had access to additional sources of income, such as collection of the *cizye* and *avarız* taxes.<sup>41</sup> During Mehmed Efendi's time the family became so significant and powerful that they virtually monopolised access to key positions, leading to conflicts with other influential families in İzmir, such as the Osmanzades.<sup>42</sup>

37 It was in the Jewellers' Bazaar (*kuyumcular çarşısı*); VGMA 607: 234/351.

38 VGMA 607: 234/351.

39 Ibid.

40 Yılmaz, 'Hacı Osman Efendi', 657.

41 BOA, AE.SMST.IV.13/1009.

42 Y. Özdemir, 'Bir Voyvodanın Ölümü: Kâtibzâde Mehmed Efendi'nin İdamı', *İzmir Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 6 (2017), 152. According to Özdemir, the execution of Katibzade Mehmed Efendi should even be attributed to the conflict between these two families.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, when the Janissaries were significant actors in the city's economic life, the Katibzades occupied key positions there.<sup>43</sup> According to Cabi's chronicle of the reigns of Selim III and Mahmud II, Mehmed Efendi was the governor (*voivoda*) of Izmir, while another of his brothers was the head of the local customs office (*büyük gümrükçü*, actually the head of the customs for Anatolian goods, i.e. the *meyve gümrükçüsü*<sup>44</sup>). A third brother was the head of custom for European goods (*efrenç gümrüğü*), and the fourth the *ayan* of Izmir, while the fifth, a member of the *ulema*, held the post of *naib* (deputy for the absentee *kadı*) in the city. Thus, by holding critical offices in the most important trade centre in the Ottoman Empire, the Katibzades effectively controlled the city.<sup>45</sup> Like other *ayan* families of the time elsewhere in the Ottoman Empire, they established a kind of 'family company' in Izmir.<sup>46</sup> The existence of the Katibzades' 'family company' was no secret to the centre, as during the Russo-Ottoman war, for example, both Katibzade Mehmed Efendi and his brother Mustafa were charged with enrolling soldiers from Izmir for the sultan's armies.<sup>47</sup>

Since Katibzade Mehmed Efendi was also involved in regional and international trade, his interreligious collaborations and trade networks have not gone unnoticed by historians.<sup>48</sup> The way he advanced his personal agenda while serving as governor of Izmir will be the subject of a separate article. Not surprisingly, most of the activities of the coalition headed by Katib Mehmed Efendi came to light following his execution by Hüsrev Pasha in 1816. The measures taken after his death reveal the Ottoman centre's objective concerning this trade centre: the weakening of the bond between the ruling elite and the Janissaries.

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43 Spyropoulos, 'Janissary Politics', 455.

44 Ahmed Agha was obviously the head of customs for Anatolian goods (*meyve gümrükçüsü*). See BOA, C.EV.250/12556.

45 Cabi Ömer Efendi, *Cabi Tarihi (Târih-i Sultân Selîm-i Sâlis ve Mahmûd-ı Sâni). Tahlîl ve Tenkidli Metin*, ed. M. A. Beyhan, Vol. II (Ankara 2003), 788.

46 A. Yıldız, *Kenar Adamları ve Bendeleri: Tirsinikli İsmail Ağa ve Alemdar Mustafa Paşa'nın Adamları Manuk Mirzayan ve Köse Ahmed Efendi* (Istanbul 2018), 23.

47 Şâni-zâde Mehmed 'Atâ'ullah Efendi, *Şâni-zâde Târîhi*, ed. Z. Yılmazzer, Vol. I (Istanbul 2008), 313-314.

48 S. Laiou, 'Economic Networks in the eastern Mediterranean: Kâtiboğlu Mehmed Efendi of Izmir and his Christian Partner', *Mediterranean Historical Review*, 34/2 (2019), 181-194.

### *Severing the ties: dissociating the ruling elite from the Janissaries*

There is no doubt that the Katibzades were one of the most influential families in the biggest export centre of the Ottoman Empire during the governorship of Katibzade Mehmed Efendi. Furthermore, as revealed by their various endowments, the family's investments demonstrate how closely their activities were intertwined with economic life in the city. Given the commercial activities of the Janissaries in the Ottoman centre and provinces, it is reasonable to assume there was close cooperation between the Janissaries and the Katibzades.<sup>49</sup> Therefore, it is not surprising to observe that the measures taken by the central government following the elimination of Mehmed Efendi primarily targeted not only the entire family, but also the Janissaries.

In fact, although the reasons behind the execution of Katibzade Mehmed Efendi are manifold, most contemporary accounts agree that the principal one was his connection with the Janissaries. According to these accounts, it was the robust ties between the *voyvoda* and the city's Janissaries that granted him a form of protection and a kind of immunity. For example, the US traveller G. Barrel, who visited Izmir just after Katibzade Mehmed's execution, commented that the *voyvoda* "held the government of Smyrna upwards of twenty years against the will of Grand Seignior, who had tried many methods to displace him. Governors were appointed without effect, as they dared not face the Janissaries".<sup>50</sup> The British naval officer C. C. Frankland, who was in the city a few years after the abolition of the Janissary Corps, concurred. According to Frankland, the Porte had harboured suspicions regarding Mehmed Efendi's association with the Janissary party. Aiming to eliminate the Janissaries, the Sultan believed that by eliminating Katibzade Mehmed Efendi, whom he considered their leader, he could instil fear among the "Ortas" in Izmir and the "Pashalic" in order to "render it easy for him to place in the vacant seat a man devoted to his views", that is, someone aligned with his objectives.<sup>51</sup>

49 For insights into the economic activities of Janissaries in the Ottoman provinces see Y. Spyropoulos, 'Janissary Politics'; C. Çiftçi, 'Osmanlı Taşrasında Yeniçerilerin Varlığı ve Askerlik Dışı Faaliyetleri' *Osmanlı Tarihi Araştırma ve Uygulama Dergisi/OTAM*, 27 (2010), 27-57. In providing an overview of research literature concerning the Janissaries, G. Yılmaz documents the economic activities of Janissaries in the Ottoman centre in her 'Blurred Boundaries between Soldiers and Civilians: Artisan Janissaries in Seventeenth Century Istanbul', in S. Faroqhi (ed.), *Bread from the Lion's Mouth: Artisans Struggling for a Livelihood in Ottoman Cities* (New York 2016), 175-193.

50 G. Barrel, *Letters from Asia written by a Gentleman of Boston to his Friend in that Place* (New York 1819), 16.

51 C. C. Frankland, *Travels to and from Constantinople, in the Years 1827 and 1828, or Personal*

Indeed, the new governor appears to have been someone who adhered closely to the directives of the central government and executed its orders faithfully. Judging from contemporary accounts, it seems that the central state's *de-ayanisation* policy proved effective. This is suggested by Barrel, a first-hand observer of events in Izmir, who commented: “[Katibzade Mehmed Efendi's] successor, Kiamil Agha, brings to my mind the fable of the frogs reversed – they had a serpent, and they now have a log”.<sup>52</sup>

The close relationship between the Janissaries and the *voivoda* had certainly not escaped the attention of the French traveller J. M. Tancoigne when he visited Izmir during the lifetime of Katibzade Mehmed Efendi in 1812. According to him, the *voivoda* commanded a considerable and, in his words, “disorderly group” of Janissary soldiers who were consistently engaged in seeking opportunities for plunder and causing disorder: “This *mutesellim* commands a large and unruly force of Janissaries, whose sole pursuit appears to be pillage and disorder. The frequent fires that devastate this commercial hub of Anatolia afford them ample occasions to indulge their inclination toward plunder”.<sup>53</sup>

Measures taken after the execution of Katibzade Mehmed Efendi suggest that Istanbul was fully aware of the collaboration between the Janissaries and the Katibzades, and sought to break it by eliminating him. On the very night of Mehmed Efendi's execution, 1,500 individuals fled Izmir for fear of reprisals.<sup>54</sup> It is highly likely that many of these individuals were his close business partners, concerned about potential repercussions.<sup>55</sup> After this significant exodus the central government might have contented itself by implementing measures against those who had fled. However, Hüsrev Pasha not only compiled a new list of individuals to be banished from Izmir, but also took additional steps which seem to be specifically directed against the Janissaries.<sup>56</sup>

Upon closer examination it becomes clear that further measures implemented by the central government were aimed at preventing potential uprisings, and therefore

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*Narrative of a Journey from Austria, through Hungary, to Constantinople; and from that City to the Capital of Austria, by the Dardenelles, Cyprus, Syria, Vol I (London 1829), 271.*

52 Barrel, *Letters from Asia*, 16.

53 “*Ce mutesellim a sous ses ordres une soldatesque nombreuse et turbulente de Janissaires, que ne demandent que pillage et désordre, auxquels les incendies qui ravagent si souvent cet entrepôt du commerce de l’Anatolie, procurent de fréquentes occasions de s’abandonner à leur penchant pour la rapine*”. J. M. Tancoigne, *Voyage à Smyrne, dans l’archipel et l’île de Candie* (Paris 1817), 29-30.

54 BOA, HAT.286/17152; 494/24250.

55 Laiou, ‘*Economic Networks*’.

56 BOA, HAT.1555/39.

explicitly targeted *odabaşıs* (Janissary officers at the regimental level), porters, and soap factory (*sabunhane*) workers, as well as inns (*han*) and coffeehouses (*kahvehane*) frequently visited and occupied by the aforementioned groups.<sup>57</sup>

In the eyes of the Ottoman authorities, inns, referred to as “*hanlar*”, were “gathering spots for both local and foreign communities, often witnessing unruly behaviour and various acts of banditry”.<sup>58</sup> Therefore, representatives (*mütesellims*) of inns together with *odabaşıs* had to officially appear in court with an authorised seal (*buyuruldu*) from Kapudan Hüsrev Pasha. Since Kapudan Hüsrev Pasha’s presence in İzmir prompted a group of “corrupt individuals” totalling one thousand five hundred people to flee, they were no longer allowed refuge in the inns. However, those engaged in trade were permitted to reside there, subject to the approval of their guarantors (*kefilli*). Furthermore, those carrying guns were no longer allowed to stay in *hans*.<sup>59</sup>

It is highly likely that the armed individuals prohibited from occupying rooms were, in fact, Janissaries. Furthermore, innkeepers were strictly instructed not to accommodate anyone without a guarantor (*kefil*), or to allow gatherings in their establishments. Immediate reporting to the court of law and the police (*zabitler*) for swift action was mandated, if any banned individuals, fugitives or those displaying disruptive behaviour were observed in the inns. Additionally, innkeepers were obligated to act as guarantors for one another, and similarly, coffeehouses known “as meeting places for bandits (*eşkiya*)” in İzmir had to provide mutual guarantor support.<sup>60</sup>

Another target of the measures were coffeehouses. As C. Kırılı has pointed out, coffeehouses “were used as headquarters for the Janissaries, the elite soldiers of the sultan that significantly shaped Ottoman politics from the seventeenth century until the corps was abolished”.<sup>61</sup> Furthermore, it was determined that coffeehouses (*kahvehaneler*) should be closed during night-time, and no firearms should be displayed on their walls. One main reason for these regulations was that the establishments described here were not simply coffeehouses, but included rooms on their upper floors typically rented out as accommodation to bachelors. Ottoman central authorities considered such arrangements “places of disgrace” (*mekan-ı erazil*), also because they housed games, joy, and entertainment equipment like *alat-ı levh u tarab*, as

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57 BOA, HAT.686/33314.

58 Ibid.

59 Ibid.

60 Ibid.

61 C. Kırılı, ‘Coffeehouses: Public Opinion in the Nineteenth Century Ottoman Empire’, in A. Salvatore and D. F. Fickelman (eds), *Public Islam and the Common Good* (Leiden 2004), 76.

well as clothes belonging to prostitutes. In the view of the authorities, these rooms had to be destroyed and systematically cleared out. Consequently, overnight stays in such establishments were prohibited and even the owner was only allowed to sleep there with the approval of a *kefil* (guarantor).<sup>62</sup>

Other measures taken after the execution of Katibzade Mehmed Efendi focused on porters, small business owners, and soap factory workers. It is important to be aware that soap factories (*sabunhane*) played a crucial role in the textile industry in Europe, especially in France and England. The demand for Ottoman olive oil was specifically linked to soap production for the textile industry.<sup>63</sup> As Yannis Spyropoulos has uncovered, Cretan Janissary networks dominated the olive oil trade.<sup>64</sup> Given the Katibzades' involvement in both soap production and the olive business, it is reasonable to expect there was a close relationship and cooperation between them and the Janissaries, particularly as regards the Janissary olive oil network.

Of course, the Janissaries' involvement in various economic activities such as trade and production is well known, as is their active participation in different guilds, particularly in the influential porter's guild.<sup>65</sup> That they did the same in Izmir, therefore, is no particular surprise. Given the consistent pattern observed in other port cities, it seems only logical that porters were a particular target of punitive measures.<sup>66</sup> According to an entry in the Ottoman archives, the porters in Izmir engaged in disruptive behaviour to secure their positions at *Efrenç Kapısı*, resulting in incidents of violence, including murder (*katl-i nefis*).<sup>67</sup> As a result, porters were required to function as mutual guarantors to ensure their adherence to the law, in

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62 Şâni-zâde Mehmed 'Atâ'ullah Efendi, *Şâni-zâde Târîhi*, 759; BOA, HAT.686/33314.

63 Ottoman olive oil exports were used in the making of soap for the European textile industry. See E. Frangakis-Syrett, 'Market Networks and Ottoman-European Commerce, c. 1700-1825', in *The Ottomans and Trade* [special issue of *Oriente Moderno*, Nuova Serie, 25(86)/1 (2006)], 109-128.

64 Y. Spyropoulos, 'Κοινωνική, διοικητική, οικονομική και πολιτική διάσταση του οθωμανικού στρατού: οι γενίτσαροι της Κρήτης, 1750-1826 [Social, Administrative, Economic and Political Dimensions of the Ottoman Army: The Janissaries of Crete, 1750-1826]', unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Crete, 2014, 211-213, 270-280.

65 It is worth noting here that since Mahmud I granted the Janissaries the right to exemption from customs duties on imported goods, they found it easier to engage in trade. Y. Baş, 'Merkez ve Taşrada Yerleşik Yeniçeri-Halk Çekişmesi', *Elektronik Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, 13/49 (2014), 338.

66 In port cities it was common for Janissaries to have a close connection with guilds that benefited from trade, such as the porters' guild. S. Laiou, 'Economic Networks', 188; B. Çelik and T. Demir, 'III. Selim Döneminde Osmanlı Devleti'nde İzmir Şehrinde Bazı Olaylarda Adem-i Merkeziyetçi Unsurlar', *İzmir Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 7 (2017), 140.

67 BOA, HAT 686/33314.

a similar manner to those engaged in trade and coffee shop owners. The decree in question encompassed individuals residing in both Muslim and non-Muslim neighbourhoods, but focused particularly on small business owners (*esnaf*), porters (*güm-rük hamalı*), and soap factory labourers (*sabunhane hamalı*), all of whom were now obligated to adhere to guarantorship requirements.<sup>68</sup>

It is evident that a punitive strategy was enacted to sever the ties between the city's producers, traders, soap factory workers, porters, and the long-dominant Katibzade family in these areas. We can infer that the Janissaries were the primary focus of the measures implemented concerning inns and coffeehouses.

### *Conclusion*

As has been shown in the present context, particularly after the execution of Katibzade Mehmed Efendi, the authorities focused their attention on both *odabaşıs* and specific locations in İzmir with the dual aim of establishing order and preventing potential uprisings. These locations were primarily places inhabited or frequented not only but predominantly by bachelors, such as inns, chambers above coffeehouses, and coffeehouses themselves. Additionally, the focus extended to certain professions such as small business owners and workers, port and customs house porters, as well as soap factory workers in İzmir. These were precisely the places and occupations in which Janissaries were active.

It appears that the Janissaries strongly endorsed the dominance of the Katibzades, as they maintained a symbiotic relationship that proved mutually beneficial. Moreover, it seems that, among other motives, the execution of Katibzade Mehmed aimed at severing the robust connection between the Janissaries and a potent authority figure in the Ottoman province. This punishment of a local power holder thus needs to be seen in the framework of the Sultan's Janissary policy in the Ottoman provinces.

There is no doubt that Katibzade, as a strong *ayan* in the province, was eliminated in the wake of Mahmud II's centralist policies. But by eliminating this particular *voyvoda*, Mahmud II achieved two goals simultaneously: the eradication of local authority so as to reassert central state authority in the framework of re-imperialisation,<sup>69</sup> and the weakening of the Janissaries in the province. Mehmed

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> See footnote 5.

Efendi was succeeded by a highly acquiescent leader, meaning that the Janissaries not only lost a crucial ally but were effectively intimidated. This in turn led to the forced expulsion or silencing of some members, to an extent that rendered them incapable of retaliation.



PART FOUR

FAMILY, PATRONAGE, AND SEXUALITY



# FAMILY COMPOSITION AMONG THE OTTOMAN SOLDIERY AND COMMONERS (1626-1826)

Hülya CANBAKAL and Aysel YILDIZ\*

## 1. Introduction

THIS ARTICLE AIMS TO EXAMINE THE FAMILY COMPOSITION of the Janissaries and other members of the Ottoman military from a long-term, comparative perspective. We study the soldiery in six cities in three regions in Anatolia and the Central Balkans from 1626 to 1826 and compare their families with those of the local commoners. The main question we explore is ‘diversity versus uniformity’ across classes/occupations and regions. Our question is informed by the debates on historical family formations and their relationship with transitions to modernity, for example, in terms of fertility behaviour, human capital formation and growth, which have lately found new life as an outgrowth of the Great Divergence discussions.<sup>1</sup>

We set out from Todorova’s work on Balkan families, where she challenges taxonomies with geographical referents that can be traced back to Hajnal’s classification of historical family formations and marriage patterns as ‘European/West European/Northwest European’ and ‘East European/Eastern/non-European/traditional’.<sup>2</sup> This

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\* Sabancı University and Foundation for Research and Technology-Hellas, Institute for Mediterranean Studies.

1 J. L. van Zanden, T. de Moor and S. Carmichael, *Capital Women: The European Marriage Pattern, Female Empowerment, and Economic Development in Western Europe, 1300-1800* (Oxford 2019); A. M. de Pleijt, J. L. van Zanden and S. Carmichael, ‘Gender Relations and Economic Development: Hypotheses About the Reversal of Fortune in Eurasia’, in C. Diebolt with A. Rijpma, S. Carmichael, S. Dilli and C. Störmer (eds), *Cliometrics of the Family. Studies in Economic History* (Cham 2019), 149-172.

2 J. Hajnal, ‘European Marriage Patterns in Perspective’, in D. V. Glass and D. E. C. Eversley (eds), *Population in History, Essays in Historical Demography*. Vol. I: *General and Great Britain* (New Brunswick 1965), 101-143; J. Hajnal, ‘Two Kinds of Preindustrial Household Formation System’, *Population and Development Review*, 8/3 (1982), 449-494.

model was later refined by Laslett as ‘Western’, ‘West central/middle’, ‘Mediterranean’ and ‘Eastern’.<sup>3</sup> As historical case studies have accumulated since the 1960s, however, the dualism and blanket geographical referents of early works have come under criticism.<sup>4</sup> The main thrust of this critical literature has been the diversity of family formations on both sides of the ‘Hajnal line’, which extended from Lenin-grad to Trieste and divided Europe (and the world) into two zones of very different domestic regimes.

This model covered Ottoman Europe as ‘the Balkans’, i.e., the ‘East’, starting from Hajnal’s own work, though most of the relevant studies utilised source material from the post-Ottoman Balkans. Prominent characteristics of ‘Eastern’ families were nearly universal early marriage, high fertility, and large and complex households. Yet other parts of the Ottoman Empire have not been examined in these terms, possibly because the issue at stake has been defining and locating ‘Europeanness’, rather than exploring the applicability of the model to other geographies – although other vague categories like the ‘Oriental/Islamic/Arab family’ have applied by default to the Ottoman lands in past scholarship. For their part, scholars working on the Ottoman Empire have not worked with these taxonomies either. Notable exceptions other than Todorova are Duben and Behar, who characterise Istanbul families in the

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- 3 The two transitional types introduced by Laslett – ‘West central’ and ‘Mediterranean’ families – stood between the ‘West’ and the ‘East’ in terms of the ‘method of domestic group formation’ (upon marriage or fission of large households), ‘marriage demography’ (nuptiality, age at marriage), household composition (simple versus joint families), and ‘organisation of work and welfare’. P. Laslett, ‘Family and Household as Work Group and Kin Group: Areas of Traditional Europe Compared’, in R. Wall, J. Robin and P. Laslett (eds), *Family Forms in Historic Europe* (Cambridge 1983), 513-563; P. Laslett, ‘Characteristics of the Western Family Considered over Time’, in P. Laslett (ed.), *Family Life and Illicit Love in Earlier Generations* (London 1977), 12-49. For further elaborations of the model, see M. Mitterauer, ‘Family Contexts: The Balkans in European Comparison’, *The History of the Family*, 1/4 (1996), 387-406; J. M. Halpern, K. Kaser and R. A. Wagner, ‘Patriarchy in the Balkans: Temporal and Cross-Cultural Approaches’, *The History of the Family*, 1/4 (1996), 425-442.
- 4 J. Goody, ‘Comparing Family Systems in Europe and Asia: Are There Different Sets of Rules?’, *Population and Development Review*, 22/1 (1996), 1-20; M. Szołtysek, ‘Spatial Construction of European Family and Household Systems: A Promising Path or a Blind Alley? An Eastern European Perspective’, *Continuity and Change*, 27/1 (2012), 11-52; M. Szołtysek, B. Ogórek and S. Gruber, ‘Global and Local Correlations of Hajnal’s Household Formation Markers in Historical Europe: A Cautionary Tale’, *Population Studies*, 75/1 (2021), 67-89; M. N. Todorova, ‘On the Epistemological Value of Family Models: The Balkans within the European Pattern’, in Eadem, *Scaling the Balkans: Essays on Eastern European Entanglements* (Leiden, Boston 2018), 284-299; J. Sperling and S. Kelly Wray (eds), *Across the Religious Divide: Women, Property, and Law in the Wider Mediterranean (ca. 1300-1800)* (New York London 2010); T. Dennison and S. Ogilvie, ‘Does the European Marriage Pattern Explain Economic Growth?’, *The Journal of Economic History*, 74/3 (2014), 651-693.

late nineteenth and early twentieth century as ‘Mediterranean’, and rural families of Anatolia as ‘Eastern’ as per Laslett’s taxonomy.<sup>5</sup> Regarding the Ottoman Balkans, Todorova paints an even more complicated picture, arguing that family formation and marriage patterns in some parts of the region shared certain characteristics with the ‘Western family’ while the ‘Mediterranean family’ prevailed in northeastern Bulgaria in terms of marriage age and incidence, and ‘multiple family’ households prevailed in tribal and mountainous regions where animal husbandry was the dominant mode of subsistence.<sup>6</sup> By these criteria alone, i.e., kinship systems, ecology and the mode of subsistence, all of which had a bearing on family types, one would expect the rest of the Ottoman Empire to have been even more diverse.



Present scholarship on Ottoman family formations and demographics in the early modern period relies heavily on probate inventories (*tereke*) as they provide information on heirs, namely, the conjugal family and other kin who were entitled to a share from inheritance. As valuable as the existing works in this rather underdeveloped field are, most tend to deal with sporadic cases, and remain reticent about their sources and methodology. Differences in family formations across social strata, regions and change over time rarely enter the picture.<sup>7</sup> By the same token, when they examine social strata separately, for example, tax-paying subjects (*reaya*) and the ruling elite (*askeri*), they do not offer clear definitions. Another group of studies that uses diverse sources deals with military families more often. These are monographs on individual households or the elite stratum in a particular region. They provide meticulous accounts of the political and economic ‘enterprise’ of the family, but their demographic characteristics stay outside the picture.<sup>8</sup>

5 A. Duben and C. Behar, *Istanbul Households: Marriage, Family and Fertility, 1880-1940* (Cambridge 1991); A. Duben, ‘Turkish Families and Households in Historical Perspective’, *Journal of Family History*, 10/1 (1985), 75-97.

6 M. N. Todorova, ‘Situating the Family of Ottoman Bulgaria within the European Pattern’, in Eadem, *Scaling the Balkans: Essays on Eastern European Entanglements* (Leiden, Boston 2018), 262-283; Eadem, *Balkan Family Structure and the European Pattern: Demographic Developments in Ottoman Bulgaria* (Washington 1993), 41-42.

7 Some notable exceptions are J. Tucker, ‘The Arab Family in History: “Otherness” and the Study of the Family’, in J. Tucker (ed.), *Arab Women: Old Boundaries, New Frontiers* (Bloomington 1993), 195-207; Doumani, *Family Life*; C. Establet and J. P. Pascual, *Familles et Fortunes a Damas, 450 Foyers Damascains en 1700* (Damascus 1994); Kenneth M. Cuno, *Modernizing Marriage: Family, Ideology and Law in Nineteenth-and Early Twentieth-Century Egypt* (New York 2015).

8 M. L. Meriwether, *The Kin Who Count: Family and Society in Ottoman Aleppo, 1770-1840*

This study addresses some of these gaps by examining the demographic characteristics of families in distinct social groups: Janissaries, other soldiery, and commoners, using probate inventories. The purpose of the comparison is to find out whether Janissary families and those of other military men in different regions of the empire resembled each other more than they resembled the commoners in the localities where they lived and died. One might expect the soldiers serving across the realm to have common dispositions by virtue of their occupation and their organisational connection. Contrariwise, similarity between the family and marriage patterns of the active soldiers and commoners in a certain region would be a sign of the power of regional domestic cultures, themselves determined by a host of local factors. By ‘commoners’, in this study we refer to people who held no socio-occupational titles and were likely to represent the economically modest sections in a society (Appendix). We deliberately exclude the non-military elite for simplicity’s sake, because their inclusion (a) dictates a multi-layered occupational approach and (b) calls for an additional set of identification criteria to tackle ambiguities related to ‘civilian’ titles. Their exclusion leaves the social panorama incomplete without distorting it.<sup>9</sup>

Since probate inventories from before the seventeenth century are rare, we start our survey from 1626, going two centuries backwards from the abolition of the corps. Therefore, we cannot compare the military and the commoners in the early periods when the lived political culture of the Ottoman administration was closer to its ideal version, which dictated a categorical division between two estates, the ruled (*reaya*) as the producers on one side and the agents of the ruler (*askeri*) on the other. The same culture also dictated that upward mobility from *the former* into the *latter*, especially the so-called intrusion of commoners into the central military establishment (*kapıkulları*) was kept under control. Our investigation starts from a period when signs of ‘corruption’ and ‘degeneration’ in the socio-political system, a

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(Austin 1999); L. Schatkowski-Schilcher, *Families in Politics: Damascene Factions and Estates of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries* (Stuttgart 1985); J. A. Reilly, *A Small Town in Syria: Ottoman Hama in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (Oxford 2002).

- 9 Our preliminary examination of the probates of non-military ‘public servants’ such as prayer leaders, teachers, deputy governors/tax collectors (*mütesellim*) on the one hand, and ‘potential public servants’ such as *efendis*, *mollas*, *hafizes*, who constituted part of the civilian social/economic elite, suggests that their marriage behaviour was closer to that of the active and potential soldiers than that of the ‘commoners’.

	Janissaries	Other military	Potential military	Public employees	Potential public employees	Commoners
Rate of polygyny	11.3	11.5	11.0	13.5	9.2	5.6

favourite and overused theme in the decline literature,<sup>10</sup> had already started, and as far as the Janissaries were concerned, the processes of localisation through marriage and *esnafisation* were underway.

Even before the seventeenth century, there were multiple mechanisms of interaction and mobility between commoners and the military. Let us consider the central army alone during the *devşirme* period. Turkish Muslim families in Anatolia served for several years as hosts for teaching Turkish, Turco-Islamic culture and religion to the recruited youths, while the sons of active, retired, or deceased Janissaries provided new manpower to the troops.<sup>11</sup> As early as the seventeenth century, the main source of recruitment to the Janissary Corps was evidently the sons of Janissaries, who were by default candidates for membership in the corps. In the years 1646-1649, the sons of Janissaries provided roughly 80% of Janissary manpower, rising to 90% in the 1670s, whereas the contribution of novices (*acemi oğlan*) was 3.3% and 0.4% respectively in those two periods.<sup>12</sup> With the virtual end of the *devşirme*, Muslim families became the main recruitment pool for the corps, and Muslims of every background were admitted through legal, extra-legal, or illegal means. Legal recruits were the sons of Janissaries known as *kuloğlu*, *acemi oğlanı*, while extra-legal recruits were voluntary converts called *nevmüslims*. Finally, bribing and

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10 For an overview of decline literature, see D. A. Howard, 'Ottoman Historiography and the Literature of 'Decline' of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries', *Journal of Asian History*, 22/1 (1988), 52-77; M. F. Çalşır, 'Decline of a "Myth": Perspectives on the Ottoman Decline', *Tarih Okulu/The History School*, 9 (2011), 37-60; O. Bouquet, 'From Decline to Transformation: Reflections on a New Paradigm in Ottoman History', *OA*, 60 (2022), 27-60; C. Kafadar, 'On the Purity and Corruption of the Janissaries', *TSAB*, 15/2 (1991), 273-280; L. T. Darling, 'Ottoman Political Thought and the Critique of Janissaries', in M. Sariyannis (ed.), *Political Thought and Practice in the Ottoman Empire. Halcyon Days in Crete IX: A Symposium held in Rethymno, 9-11 January 2015* (Rethymno 2019), 117-136; Eadem, *The Janissaries of Damascus in the Sixteenth Century, Or, How Conquering a Province Changed the Ottoman Empire* (Berlin 2019); Eadem, 'Crime Among the Janissaries of Ottoman Golden Age', in F. Castiglione, E. L. Menchinger and V. Şimşek (eds), *Ottoman War and Peace: Studies in Honor of Virginia H. Aksan* (Leiden and Boston 2020), 13-34.

11 For the levy and training of the *devşirme* boys, see G. Yılmaz, 'Becoming a *Devşirme*: The Training of Conscripted Children in the Ottoman Empire', in G. Campbell, S. Miers and J. C. Miller (eds), *Children in Slavery Through the Ages* (Ohio 2009), 119-134; G. Veinstein, 'On the Ottoman Janissaries (Fourteenth-Nineteenth Centuries)', in E.-J. Zürcher (ed.), *Fighting for a Living: A Comparative Study of Military Labour, 1500-2000* (Amsterdam 2013), 115-134. For the recruitment and training of non-*devşirme* boys, see Y. Spyropoulos, 'Children of Janissaries and Janissary Youths Beyond the Devşirme (17th-early 19th c.)', forthcoming in Y. Araz and İ. Kokdaş (eds), *Çocukluk Halleri* (Istanbul).

12 Based on data in A. Gül, '18. Yüzyılda Yeniçeri Teşkilatı', unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Atatürk Üniversitesi, 2020, 80-82.

marketing pay tickets were common illegal ways of entering the corps.<sup>13</sup> Thus, even though the fusion of commoners and the military accelerated in the eighteenth century, especially after the decentralisation of the Janissary military structure and the end of the rotation system at the beginning of the same century,<sup>14</sup> means of interaction and cultural influence had already been in effect before 1626.

The cities we examine are Sofia and Manastir in the Central Balkans, Manisa and Bursa in Western Anatolia, and Ayntab and Diyarbakir in Southeastern Anatolia. The family unit we are interested in is the conjugal family alone, not the household, as our source does not provide information on living arrangements and cohabitants. We take the conjugal family as a proxy for households, but any comparison with historical household types has to be considered as tentative. The study focuses on four characteristics of family formation: a) the incidence of celibacy versus nuptiality; b) the incidence of polygyny as reflected in the number of surviving wives; c) the number of surviving children as proxy for fertility and mortality; and d) the sex structure of surviving children.

Family size, i.e., the number of wives and children, and the sex structure of the children together also open a window onto the norms that governed gender relations, a fundamental constituent of the domestic scene, and offer a glimpse of the strength of patriarchy prevalent in different regions and different social groups. Patriarchy is also a characteristic measured in the comparative study of family types associated with specific geographies, typically, the ‘Eastern/traditional family’. Polygyny speaks for itself as a medium and expression of male power, while high fertility and sex ratios (number of males per 100 females) correlate with male-dominant regimes in both modern and historical societies.<sup>15</sup> Too many births affect female health and life expectancy negatively.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, sex ratios reflect the relative mortality of

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- 13 Ibid., 54-91; Spyropoulos, ‘Children of Janissaries’; E. Radushev, ‘“Peasant” Janissaries?’, *Journal of Social History*, 42/2 (2008), 447-467; A. Minkov, *Conversion to Islam in the Balkans: Kısve Bahası Petitions and Ottoman Social Life, 1670-1730* (Leiden and Boston 2004), 72-77, 128-129, 183-184.
- 14 Regarding this process, see Y. Spyropoulos, ‘Janissary Politics on the Ottoman Periphery (18th-Early 19th c)’, in M. Sariyannis (ed.) *Political Thought and Practice in the Ottoman Empire. Halcyon Days in Crete IX: A Symposium Held in Rethymno, 9-10 January 2015* (Rethymno 2019), 449-481; A. Yıldız, Y. Spyropoulos and M. M. Sunar, ‘İstanbul, Taşra ve Yeniçeriler’, in A. Yıldız, Y. Spyropoulos and M. M. Sunar (eds), *Payitaht Yeniçerileri: Padişahın “Asi” Kulları, 1700-1826* (Istanbul 2022), 13-36.
- 15 M. Szołtysek, F. J. B. Tapia, B. Ogórek and S. Gruber, ‘Family Patriarchy and Child Sex Ratios in Historical Europe’, *The History of the Family*, 27/4 (2022), 702-735.
- 16 S. D. Dilli, S. G. Carmichael and A. Rijpma, ‘Introducing the Historical Gender Equality Index’, *Feminist Economics*, 25/1 (2019), 31-57; N. Golmakani, E. Fazeli, A. Taghipour and M. T. Shakeri, ‘Relationship Between Gender Role Attitude and Fertility Rate in Women Referring to



males and females, and can give away son preference – which can manifest itself in ways as benign as stopping behaviour and as violent as girl infanticide. Either way, a female-deficient family formation is associated with patriarchy.

Our expectations regarding the marriage patterns and families of soldiers, and Janissaries in particular, are the following: most of them would have been single and younger than other population categories, in line with the requirements and risks of military life. This should partly apply to their commanders as well. We also assume that those who married did so late on in life. Therefore, they must have had fewer children than others, and most of their children must have been minors at the time of their death. Due to their age, again, monogamy may have been more common, but some may have also practiced polygyny, as they were comparatively mobile people on campaigns or serving in places mostly away from their places of origin. As for the gender composition of their children, we have no hypotheses to set out with, although one may speculate that due to their profession, characterised by hierarchy and a masculine ethos, members of the military may have had a stronger preference for sons than the general population.

The rest of this paper is organised as follows. Section 2 introduces the data, the demographic categories we examine, and the method we use to identify them. An extensive appendix provides further details of our method. Section 3 presents the findings under two subheadings. First, we provide descriptive statistics comparing the military and commoners in two periods: 1626-1725 and 1726-1826. This allows us to see the patterns of change over time. Second, we replot the findings in a regional perspective. Section 4 summarises the findings and concludes.

## 2. Sources and method

Research into family demography in the late Ottoman Empire relies on census data and vital records, whereas scholarship on the early modern period has to rely on narrative sources if we exclude the limited research scope provided by tax surveys and scattered church records. One unique source that allows quantitative inquiry

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Health Centers in Mashhad in 2013', *Iranian Journal of Nursing and Midwifery Research*, 20/2 (2015), 269-274; Z. Spéder and B. Kapitány, 'How are Time-Dependent Childbearing Intentions Realized? Realization, Postponement, Abandonment, Bringing Forward', *European Journal of Population*, 25 (2009), 503-523; G. Kaufman, 'Do Gender Role Attitudes Matter? Family Formation and Dissolution among Traditional and Egalitarian Men and Women', *Journal of Family Issues*, 21/1 (2000), 128-144. S. R. Johansson, 'Welfare, Mortality and Gender: Continuity and Change in Explanations for Male/Female Mortality Differences over Three Centuries', *Continuity and Change*, 6/2 (1991), 145-153.

into early modern demography are inheritance inventories, which provide valuable information on family size and structure at the last stage in the decedents' life cycle. Inheritance inventories also lend themselves to regional, temporal, and social comparison, due to their highly standard format, hence their popularity in a wide array of quantitative and narrative studies. The research potential and limitations of probate inventories have been discussed in a large number of publications.<sup>17</sup> To save space and to avoid repetition, we point out here only those problems that can affect the study of family formations and demography.

- i. *Nuptiality*: (a) We cannot show age-specific nuptiality in this study, as the records do not mention the age of the deceased. We guesstimate for now that our average decedent was in his forties. To give an idea of male nuptiality in this age group, in 1900, it was 97% in some 'eastern' examples, and between 80% and 91% in Western Europe. In 1885, the respective rate was 94.6% in Istanbul.<sup>18</sup> (b) The method by which we find the ever married is not flawless either. What we look for is whether the decedent had a surviving spouse or children. One could also detect a widower if he owed money to a late wife, and the court deducted the debt from the man's estate and paid it to one of the wife's heirs. If none of these conditions applied, one could mistake a widower for a single man.
- ii. *The number of surviving children*: Present scholarship based on probate inventories systematically confuses the number of surviving children with true fertility, whereas probates tell us nothing about total births. If a child dies before s/he is sexually reproductive and leaves no conjugal heirs, s/he does not exist as far as property management is concerned. In a high mortality demographic regime, as in the Ottoman Empire, most decedents should be expected to have fathered more children than those seen in the inheritance records. Thus, the 'number of surviving children' stands for the interaction of fertility and mortality rates, which are unknown even for the nineteenth

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17 For a recent survey of the relevant literature, see H. Canbakal and A. Filiztekin, 'Wealth and Demography in Ottoman Probate Inventories: A Database in Very Long-Term Perspective', *Historical Methods: A Journal of Quantitative and Interdisciplinary History*, 54/2 (2021), 94-127.

18 The 'traditional' family data represent Bulgaria and Serbia. In Western Europe, Spain stood remarkably close to the 'eastern' model with a never-married rate of 4% in the 45-49 age group. Hajnal, 'European Marriage Patterns in Perspective'. In the nineteenth century, the United States stood between the 'east' and the 'west'. See M. Haines, 'Long-term Marriage Patterns in the United States from Colonial Times to the Present', *The History of the Family*, 1/1 (1996), 15-39. For Istanbul, see Duben and Behar, *Istanbul Households*, 123. For Bulgaria around the middle of the nineteenth century, see Todorova, *Balkan Family*, 41-46.

century.<sup>19</sup> There are no records that can be used for the early modern period, except perhaps church records for Christians. Yet relative fertility can be estimated across regions or periods using the probates when no major variation in mortality is expected.

- iii. *Polygyny*: The condition of past polygyny in a decedent's life cannot be shown even if he is survived by a wife, and we know that he also had former wives. This is because the simultaneity of these marriages cannot be shown. Thus, our polygyny estimates are life cycle specific.
- iv. *Sex ratios*: Since the age of children is rarely specified in probate records, one can only generate two broad age categories: 'adult children' and 'minors'. The 'adults' could be any age in the range of 15-30, and the minors could be 0-15 in the absence of a physical sign of puberty before 15, or 0-9 for girls and 0-12 for boys.<sup>20</sup> Thus, comparison of the sex ratios from probate inventories with expected sex ratios based on modern or historical studies only yields approximate results. However, when the discrepancy between expected sex ratios and our observations is big, approximate results also add considerably to our understanding of Ottoman family demographics.

As for the data, the study uses 2,401 probate inventories that belonged to the urban male Muslim population. We have taken them from two databases: Manastır, Manisa, Bursa, Ayntab and Diyarbakir material is from Canbakal (2008-2012), while Sofia material has been kindly provided by İrfan Kokdaş.<sup>21</sup> We have omitted rural and non-Muslim inventories because their representation is irregular and limited. We have also omitted decedents who are explicitly identified as 'visitors'

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19 E. Erünal, 'Examining Age Structure and Estimating Mortality Rates in Ottoman Bursa Using Mid-Nineteenth-Century Population Registers', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 57 (2020), 179-196 offers the earliest estimates.

20 According to Hanafi Law, both boys and girls were considered to have reached puberty after the age 15. The youngest possible age of pubescence was 12 for boys and nine for girls in the absence of physical proof of puberty, *TDVİA*, s.v., 'Bulûg' (A. Bardakoğlu), 413-414. We expect most adult children to be below 35, as life expectancy in Turkey was 35 for both sexes as late as 1950. F. C. Shorter and M. Macura, *Trends in Fertility and Mortality in Turkey, 1935-1975* (Washington 1982), 6. We also guesstimate that the deceased fathers would have been at least 30 years old in order to have adult children. They had to have been at least 15 when they begot a child, and another 15 years would have passed before the child reached puberty.

21 TÜBİTAK Project no 108K034 and titled 'Distribution of Wealth in the Ottoman Empire, 1500-1840/Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Servet Dağılımı, 1500-1840' (2008-2012). For sampling details, see Canbakal and Filiztekin, 'Wealth and Demography', 94-127. The Sofia dataset involves all records.

Population Categories	1626-1725		1726-1826		Total	
	Number of Observations	Share in Period Dataset (%)	Number of Observations	Share in Period Dataset (%)	Number of Observations	Share in Dataset (%)
Janissaries	40	4.8	99	6.3	142	5.9
Other military	53	6.3	84	5.4	137	5.7
<i>All active military</i>	<b>93</b>	<b>11.1</b>	<b>183</b>	<b>11.7</b>	<b>279</b>	<b>11.6</b>
Potential military	255	30.3	445	28.5	697	29
<i>All military</i>	<b>348</b>	<b>41.4</b>	<b>628</b>	<b>40.3</b>	<b>976</b>	<b>40.6</b>
Commoners	493	58.6	932	59.7	1,425	59.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>841</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,560</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>2,401</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Manastır	23	2.7	207	13.3	230	9.6
Sofia	94	11.2	349	22.4	443	18.5
Manisa	245	29.1	310	19.9	555	23.1
Bursa	302	35.9	281	18.0	583	24.3
Ayntab	177	21.0	272	17.4	449	18.7
Diyarbakir	0	0.0	141	9.0	141	5.9

**Table I:** Dataset

in the record, but included those who died in inns and may be permanent residents (Table I).

We divided the remaining probate population into two major categories as commoners and military groups. At the first stage of differentiation we categorised people with no honorific or socio-occupational titles as commoners, and those with the titles *agha*, *beşe*, and *bey* as military. It is of course possible that the absence of a title in the records is due to an incidental omission. Indeed, that is what we found out after examining each *tereke* in detail. With the help of some of the criteria to be explained below, we transferred 156 such names to the military category, either as active or as potential military. These names make up about 10% of the untitled decedents, which is not insignificant. The remaining people with no titles belonged to a socially and economically modest stratum. As for those with military titles, we grouped them into three subgroups as the Janissaries, the Other Military, actively involved in military service, and finally, an indeterminate group which we call the Potential Military. We then employed six more criteria to classify those with military titles into these three groups (Table II).

The principles by which honorific titles were used in the Ottoman Empire are not yet fully understood, and it is difficult to differentiate the use of the titles as a

	Janissary	Other Military	Potential Military
Profession	24	95	13
Regiment	14		
Rank	38		34
Court Procedure	45	23	
Court Fees	18		
Military Service		19	
Title			652
Total	139	137	699

**Table II:** Criteria used to classify decedents with military titles

manifestation of prestige from their use as a professional marker (especially in the case of *agha*, *bey*, and *beşe*). Ranks and professional titles that were denotative of multiple positions and often used by the members of several military corps, palace retinues, state agents or local dignitaries further complicate the picture. Yet with close reading of the inventories, we have set up a number of criteria by which some of the active military staff can be identified with certainty. Some of these can be identified as Janissaries, though some Janissaries may remain hidden among the Active Military due to lack of positive markers. Similarly, some active soldiers stay hidden among the Potential Military for lack of positive evidence. The rest of the Potential Military may be title-usurpers or hold the title by custom, seniority, or some other criterion of high status. The principles of classification used are:

- i. Profession:* If the military corps of the deceased is specified in the document, we count him as a professional soldier regardless of his honorific title or non-military occupation.
- ii. Regiment:* Regimental information is important for identifying the active military in the absence of an honorific title. It can also be used to ascertain military identity when the decedent holds a rank, title or nickname denoting multiple possibilities.
- iii. Rank:* In the absence of any reference to a specific military corps, a person is identified as active military if ranks peculiar to a military corps are mentioned. This is particularly helpful in the case of Janissaries. If both the rank and regimental information are given, we have considered the latter the most relevant.
- iv. Service:* In cases where a person died during military service (death in a campaign or on guard duty), we have considered him an active soldier.

- v. *Court Procedure*: If an ordinary decedent left no heirs, or if he was survived only by a widow, his entire property in the first case, and three fourths of it in the second case were seized by the imperial treasury or *vakıf* authorities where relevant. In the case of an active member of a specific military corps, the property was taken over by his military corps. This principle proved particularly useful for identifying Janissaries within the Potential Military.
- vi. *Court Fees*: If a fee was assigned to the supreme judge (*kazasker*) as part of the expenses of the inventory, we considered the decedent an active soldier regardless of his honorific titles. If a specific fee was charged for a Janissary officer (*serdar*, *odabaşı*, *yeniçeri ağa*), we classified him as an active Janissary.
- vii. *Socio-occupational titles*: If a decedent with the title *beşe*, *agha*, or *bey* did not meet any of the above criteria, we classified him as part of the Potential Military.

After the probate population is thus divided, the Commoners make up about 60% of the probate population, and the Potential Military constitute about 30%. Thus, the two together decide the overall patterns and trends. Throughout the two hundred years we cover, the distribution of the inventories among the four groups in the dataset stays stable. One should note, however, that the number of Janissaries and other active soldiers we have been able to identify for the first one hundred years is rather limited, which calls for extra caution when assessing the results for that period. Similarly, the datasets for some of the cities examined do not cover the whole 200-year period. This creates some biases, but we take them into consideration when assessing the results.

### 3. Findings

In this section, we first examine the differences between families in the four groups, and the changes that occurred in family demography from 1626-1725 to 1726-1826. We then go on to compare the three regions.

#### 3.a. Family demographics in two periods

##### i. Nuptiality

The incidence of nuptiality is particularly relevant for the social history of the Janissaries, as it is known that they were expected to be single combatants, always ready at the barracks or fortresses to take up arms instead of busying themselves with

family issues. While the rule of celibacy was not applied to other Ottoman soldiers, the Janissary Corps was originally founded as the guardsmen of the Sultan. Therefore, imperial authorities tried to restrict their number by limiting the recruitment pool to *devşirmes* and *kuloğlus*, and to keep them socially and spatially isolated from the rest of society by constraining them to living in the barracks in Istanbul.

Despite examples of Janissary marriages from early periods in the history of the corps, and the absence of reliable evidence showing that they were indeed prohibited from getting married, both contemporary narratives and modern sources consider celibacy as a rule and Janissary marriages as a development beyond the control of the imperial authorities. The right of marriage, according to these authors, was granted to some military officers (such as *çorbacı*s) and older members of the corps by sultanic approval, especially during the reign of Selim I (r. 1512-1520). Yet the rule was relaxed by the sultans over time and ignored by the Janissaries.<sup>22</sup>

In our data, the Janissaries did indeed stand out, with the lowest incidence of marriage in 1626-1725 (48.8%), and continued to display a pattern distinct from all others in the following century. That being said, many more of them (62.4%) were married in 1726-1826 (Chart I). Most of the earlier quantitative studies on this topic concern Istanbul,<sup>23</sup> and suggest that a similar pattern may have prevailed there as well, namely, 45%-50% in 1604-1668<sup>24</sup> and 66% in 1718-1730. However, a caveat is in order. These studies either fail to explain who counts as a 'Janissary'

22 The basic source of information on the celibacy rule is a sixteenth-century memoir-like account titled *Kavanin-i Yeniçeriyân* (*The Rules of the Janissaries*); T. Toroser (ed.), *Kavanin-i Yeniçeriyân: Yeniçeri Kanunları* (Istanbul 2011), 36, 40, 59-60, 204. Most later historians followed the arguments in this source, providing similar details. Küçükyağcı adds a new dimension by pointing out the Bektashi affiliation of the corps members and the rule of celibacy (*mücerredlik*) in this religious order. He also mentions an early sixteenth-century observer, a certain 'Spanish Petro', who wrote that the rule of celibacy was valid at that time. For further details, see E. Küçükyağcı, *Turna'nın Kalbi: Yeniçeri Yoldaşlığı ve Bektaşilik* (Istanbul 2009), 136-138, M. S. Y. Sanz, *Türkiye'nin Dört Yılı, 1552-1556*, trans. A. Kurutluoğlu (Istanbul 1974). Ricaut, a mid-seventeenth century British diplomat, notes that although the greatest part of the army consisted of bachelors, it was rather a matter of personal choice for purposes of military advancement than an official ban. P. Ricaut, *The History of the Present State of the Ottoman Empire* (London 1686), 366.

23 For early eighteenth-century Istanbul, see N. Y. Kayaçağlayan, 'XVIII. Yüzyılın İlk Yarısında Yeniçerilerin Politik ve Sosyo-Ekonomik Rollerini: İstanbul Örneği', unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt Üniversitesi, 2018; M. Akbel, 'Tereke Kayıtlarından Hareketle Yeniçerilerin Sosyo-Ekonomik Durumları', *Tarihin Peşinde/The Pursuit of History*, 15 (2016), 257-278; T. Öztürk, '*İstanbul'da İnkâmet Eden Yeniçerilerin Miras Kayıtları Üzerinden Sosyal Yaşantılarına Mikro Bakış (1748-1750)*', unpublished M.A. thesis, Akdeniz University, 2021.

24 G. Yılmaz, 'The Economic and Social Roles of Janissaries in a 17<sup>th</sup> century Ottoman City: The Case of Istanbul', unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, McGill University, 2011, 110.

(Kayaçağlayan 2018) or use loose criteria (Akbel 2016, 261-262; Öztürk 2021; Yılmaz 2011). For example, more than half of the Janissaries in the latter study do not qualify as Janissaries by our criteria of classification. Thus, the incidence of marriage among Istanbul Janissaries may have been different from our three regions. A small sample from Adana also points to regional diversity. Though remarkably close to the region of ‘Southeastern Anatolia’ in our study, it shows a marriage rate much lower (30%) than our findings on Janissaries in the eighteenth century.<sup>25</sup>

The remaining three population groups – the Other Military, the Potential Military and the Commoners – were closer to one another, with a marriage incidence of 82% to 95%, and an overall average of 87% (Table III). Change from one period to the next was negligibly upwards. Thus, overall, nuptiality at death was within the historical range for the 45-49 age group in Western *and* Eastern Europe in 1900, while Janissary nuptiality was closer to that of men in their 20s.

	Population	Married (%)	Polygamous (%)	Number of children per married decedent	Probable number of children per married decedent <sup>26</sup>	Share of minors	Sex Ratio (minors)
1626-1725	841	87.0	10.6	2.0	2.0	44.5	122.2
1726-1826	1560	87.4	7.1	1.9	2.0	48.1	110.2

**Table III:** Family demographics

## ii. Polygyny

Scholarship in recent decades has shown that contrary to deep-rooted assumptions, polygyny was practiced by a small minority of Muslim men in the Ottoman Empire. Most studies based on probate inventories point to polygyny rates below 10%, and to the wealthy top of the social pyramid as the main practitioners.<sup>27</sup> However, trends

25 From a dataset compiled by Aysel Yıldız on the Janissaries of eighteenth-century Adana. The dataset has 258 probate inventories drawn from 37 court registers dated 1719-1761. Adana Şerhiye Sicilleri, no. 1, 4-6, 12-14, 16-18, 23, 26-28, 30-36, 38, 44-45, 50, 52, 65, 104, 125, 129-136. See also Y. Spyropoulos and A. Yıldız, ‘Pseudo-Janissarism (*Yeniçerilik İddiası*) in the Ottoman Provinces (with Special Reference to Adana): Its Emergence, Geographic and Socio-Economic Aspects’, in Y. Spyropoulos (ed.), *Insights into Janissary Networks, 1700–1826* [special issue of *Cihannüma: Journal of History and Geography Studies*, 8/1 (2022)], 32-48.

26 Includes unborn children x 0.5, assuming 50% survival rate before puberty.

27 Meriwether, *The Kin Who Count*, 124-125; A. Kurt, ‘Osmanlı Toplumunda Poligami’, in G. Eren (ed.), *Osmanlı*, Vol. V (Ankara 1999), 397-405; K. M. Cuno, ‘Ambiguous Modernization: The Transition to Monogamy in the Khedival House of Egypt’, in B. Doumani (ed.), *Family History In the Middle East: Household, Property, and Gender* (New York 2003), 250; Idem, ‘Modernizing Marriage’, 71; Ö. Demirel, ‘1700-1730 Tarihlerinde Ankara’da Ailenin Niceliksel Yapısı’,



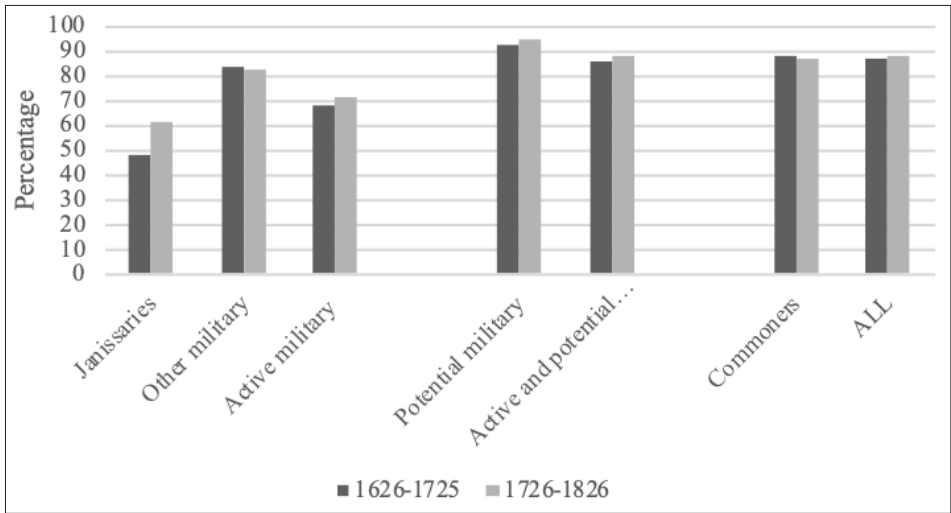


Chart I: Nuptiality

of change over time have received little attention so far. Duben and Behar, for example, showed that polygyny declined in late Ottoman Istanbul (2.51% in 1885 and 2.16% in 1907),<sup>28</sup> and conjectured that the trend must have started earlier. Our study confirms this.

According to our dataset for 1626-1725, the Other Military stood out with a remarkably high rate of polygyny (21.1%), followed by the Potential Military (15.9%) and the Janissaries (15.8%). These figures are much higher than what Öztürk's data show for Janissaries in contemporary Istanbul, namely, 4.7%.<sup>29</sup> At this point we cannot tell whether the discrepancy is related to methodological differences or whether it is real and reflects regional peculiarities. As expected, the Commoners had the lowest incidence of polygyny (6.6%), while the Potential Military stood in between (Chart 2).

Polygyny was one feature of family demographics that changed most remarkably over time. It declined from 10.6% to 7.1% in the whole dataset from 1616-1675 to

*Belleten*, 54/211 (1990), 951; H. Gerber, 'Anthropology and Family History: The Ottoman and Turkish Families', *Journal of Family History*, 14/4 (1989), 412; M. C. Zilfi, "'We Don't Get Along': Women and *Hul* Divorce in the Eighteenth Century', in M. C. Zilfi (ed.), *Women in the Ottoman Empire: Middle Eastern Women in the Early Modern Era* (Leiden and New York 1997), 294-295.

28 Duben and Behar, *Istanbul Households*, 148-149.

29 S. Öztürk, *Askeri Kassama Ait Onyedinci Asır İstanbul Tereke Defterleri (Sosyo-Ekonomik Tahlil)* (Istanbul 1995). Cf. Yılmaz, 'The Economic and Social Roles of Janissaries', 110.

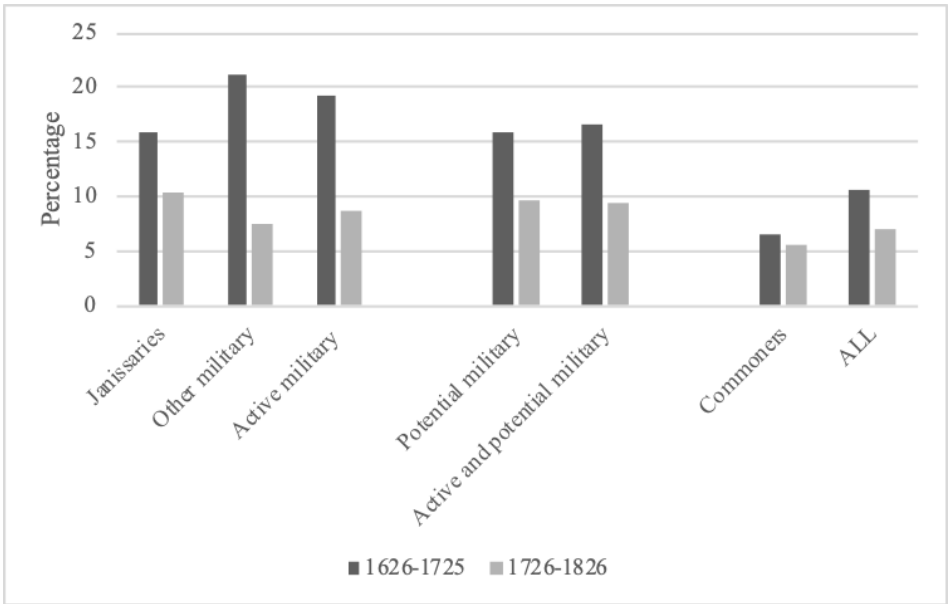


Chart II: Polygyny

1726-1826 (Table III).<sup>30</sup> The direction of change was the same in all social groups, but much stronger among the military. The population share of polygamous soldiers more than halved, and the practice receded even among Commoners. In other words, the conjugal preferences of all the groups we examine tended to converge, approaching those of the Commoners in the eighteenth century. These findings corroborate the hypothesis that the decline in polygyny seen in nineteenth-century Istanbul may have had a longer history. Yet available studies on eighteenth-century Istanbul itself show contradictory results concerning the direction of change there.<sup>31</sup>

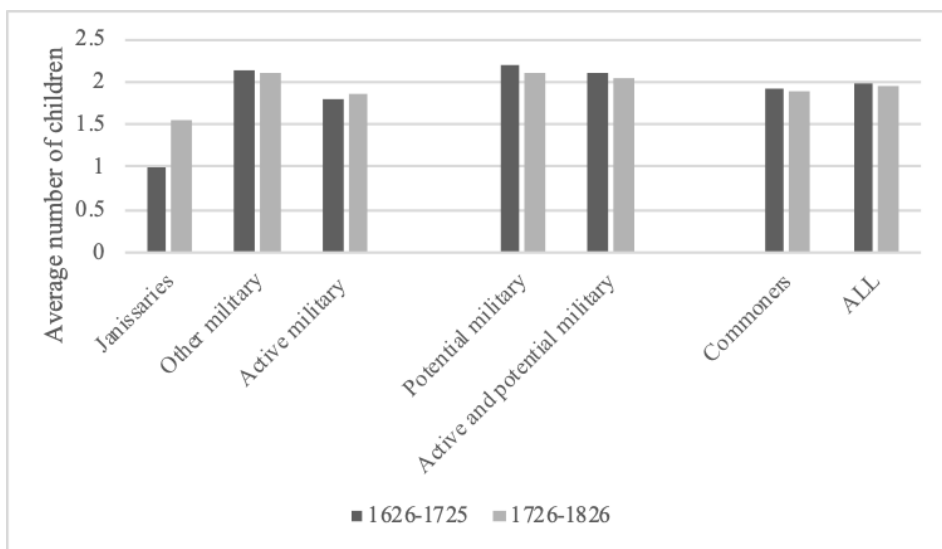
### iii. The number of surviving children

To the best of our knowledge, the only long-term study of fertility in Ottoman lands is the work of Kokdaş.<sup>32</sup> Studying the number of surviving children of the decedents

30 We do not consider former wives who had passed away before the decedent, because even if we know that the decedent had another spouse at the time of his death, we cannot establish that the two marriages overlapped. Therefore, our estimate of polygyny reflects only the incidence of multiple wives at the time of death.

31 Akbel, 'Tereke Kayıtları', 261-262; T. Kara, 'III. Ahmed Devrinde İstanbul'da Sosyal ve Kültürel Hayat', unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Ondokuz Mayıs Üniversitesi, 2014, 176-177.

32 İ. Kokdaş, 'Preliminary Observations on the Demographic Roots of Modern Childhood in the



**Chart III:** Number of surviving children

in probate inventories as a proxy for fertility in Vidin, Ruse and Sofia in 1670-1855, Kokdaş has identified a shift towards smaller families among the wealthy stratum, especially among title-holders, and highlighted this shift as a change in fertility behaviour and a precursor of the low fertility patterns observed in the late nineteenth-century in the same region. Our findings lend partial support to this observation.

Earlier studies have argued that Janissary fertility rates were below the average for commoners.<sup>33</sup> Our findings confirm this for our first period. The average number of children in Janissary families was one, which implied very small families (Chart III). The Commoners were survived by 1.9 children per married decedent, while the Other Military and the Potential Military left behind slightly more descendants. The all-inclusive average was 2.0, which is not significantly changed by including unborn babies in the child count. These figures show a very fragile demographic regime, even though they obviously do not represent the fertility rate. If they did, it would imply that the regions examined would have faced depopulation without immigration.

Ottoman Empire: Wealth, Children and Status in Ruse, Vidin and Sofia, 1670-1855', in G. Yılmaz and F. Zachs (eds), *Children and Childhood in the Ottoman Empire, from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* (Edinburgh 2021), 103-128.

33 Kayaçağlayan, 'Yeniçerilerin Politik ve Sosyo-Ekonomik Roller', 84; Öztürk, 'Yeniçerilerin Miras Kayıtları', 66-70; Akbel, 'Tereke Kayıtları', 262.

Even today, the global population replacement rate is 2.3, i.e., for the population to remain stable, each woman (reproductive couple) must have at least 2.3 children.<sup>34</sup> In the very high child mortality environment of the early modern period, the replacement rate had to be much higher. In fact, even though true fertility rates in the regions we examine must have been higher than 2.0, depopulation was still a possibility if the children who had died before their fathers were minors and died without progeny. This too was a strong possibility in a pre-modern mortality regime.

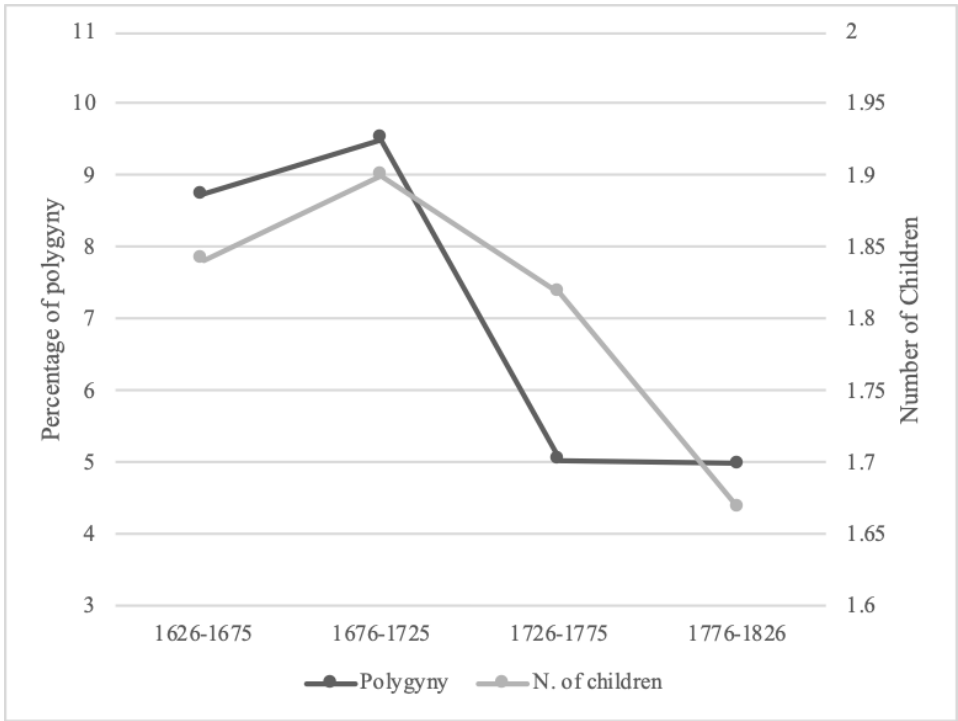
In the next one hundred years, the number of surviving children declined slightly in all groups except the Janissaries. They were survived by more children (1.5) in 1725-1826, which, thus, tended to converge with the rest. We think that the enlargement of Janissary families was probably related to a rise in the average age of the Janissaries. As more of them struck roots where they served, their life expectancy increased, and they fathered more children.

As for the small shrinkage in family size among the other groups and the overall average, it does seem to corroborate a shift toward smaller families. However, we do not know at this stage whether fewer children survived because fewer had been born, or because more had died. Undoubtedly, more had died, for example, in the decades around the turn of the nineteenth century when a devastating pandemic and environmental, economic and political difficulties took a heavy toll on the population. However, evidence from Western Anatolia shows that the decline in the number of children actually started in the first half of the eighteenth century when the economic situation was good, and there was a lengthy period without wars and particularly devastating epidemics (Chart IV). In other words, at least in Western Anatolia, the decline between 1726 and 1826 may not have been due to the mortality crisis after the 1780s alone. Similarly, the fact that the decline was more pronounced in families of the Potential Military, the wealthiest among the four groups, i.e., those who were the least likely to suffer from taxing standards of living, suggests that fertility patterns might indeed have been changing. This clearly corroborates Kokdaş (2021). That said, we still defer definitive conclusion on this topic until further evidence accumulates, given that population studies date the demographic transition in the Balkans and Turkey region to the twentieth century.<sup>35</sup>

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34 <https://database.earth/population/fertility-rate/2023>. The fertility rate in late nineteenth-century Istanbul was 3.5, already lower than pre-industrial rates; Duben and Behar, *Istanbul Households*, 161, 165. Also see Shorter and Macura, *Trends in Fertility* for remarkably high fertility rates in early twentieth-century Anatolia.

35 Todorova, *Scaling the Balkans*, 245-248; Shorter and Macura, *Trends in Fertility*; C. Bakar, S. Oymak and I. Maral, 'Turkey's Epidemiological and Demographic Transitions: 1931-2013', *Balkan Medical Journal*, 34/4 (2017), 323-324; M. M. Yüceşahin and E. M. Özgür, 'Regional



**Chart IV:** Polygyny and surviving children in Western Anatolia

iv. The gender of surviving children

The gender distribution of children as well as in the adult population result from a combination of the biological chances of birth and survival, and the historical circumstances that define access to resources and life risks posed by the gender division of labour.<sup>36</sup> Thus, at a basic level, sex ratios in any historical period reflect the difference between the birth rate and the age-specific mortality rate for each gender. So, sex ratios of the minor children in our study show the ratio between the number of surviving minor boys (births minus deaths) and the surviving girls in the same age group. At the same time, these ratios cast light on social organisation and the norms that assign different values to males and females and distribute survival-determining rights and risks accordingly. Thus, the gender distribution of the surviving children in our study says as much about the norms behind the family

Fertility Differences in Turkey: Persistent High Fertility in the Southeast', *Population, Space and Place*, 14/2 (2008), 135-158.

36 Johansson, 'Continuity and Change', 135-177.

demographics in each social group as about those norms in society overall. The same principles also apply to sex ratios among adults - they can tell us whether there was discrimination in the intrafamilial distribution of resources via excess mortality of one gender, i.e., the deviance between what is considered ‘normal’ for a given age group in each historical setting. The debate concerning ‘missing girls/women’ since the paradigm-changing work of Sen (1992) and the use of sex ratios today as a measure of gender inequality and patriarchy rest on this idea.<sup>37</sup>

In the three regions combined, the sex ratios of minor heirs were remarkably high throughout the period examined: 120 in 1626-1725, i.e., 120 boys per 100 girls, and 110 in 1725-1826 (Chart V). Even though it is normal to expect figures above parity in historical societies with a strong record of patriarchy, such as southern and southeastern Europe, these figures signal a very high level of excess female mortality, especially in 1626-1725.<sup>38</sup> One could argue that these figures may not necessarily result from mortality disparities, but from underregistration of the estates that had minor female heirs only. Even so, they still signal discrimination, as securing the share of minors and assigning custodians to them was one of the most common purposes of the formal registration of inheritance. Since the custodian was legally responsible for the just management of property and the personal wellbeing of a child, keeping minor girls out of this system meant lack of concern about both.<sup>39</sup>

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37 M. das Gupta, ‘Explaining Asia’s “Missing Women”: A New Look at the Data’, *Population and Development Review*, 31/3 (2005), 529-535; K. A. Lynch, ‘Why Weren’t (Many) European Women “Missing”’, *The History of the Family*, 16/3 (2011), 250-266; Szotłysek, Tapia, Ogórek and Gruber, ‘Family Patriarchy’, 702-735.

38 The expected ratio at birth in modern societies is slightly above parity (102-105). However, as high mortality environments increased males’ survival disadvantage, the expected sex ratio at birth and infancy in past societies was lower. F. J. B. Tapia and M. Szotłysek, ‘“Missing Girls” in Historical Europe: Reopening the Debate’, *The History of the Family*, 27/4 (2022), 619-657; F. J. B. Tapia and G. Cappelli, ‘Missing Girls in Liberal Italy, 1861-1921’, *The Economic History Review*, 77/1 (2023), 6-7. We expect infant mortality to be much higher than 200 throughout the period examined, and hence the expected infant sex ratio to be no higher than 100. C. Behar, Y. Courbage and A. Gürsoy, ‘Economic Growth or Survival? The Problematic Case of Child Mortality in Turkey’, *European Journal of Population*, 15 (1999), 241-278; M. N. Todorova, *Balkan Family Structure and the European Pattern: Demographic Developments in Ottoman Bulgaria* (Budapest 2006), 79-85. Due to girls’ biological advantage in every age cohort, the sex ratio was expected to decline as children grew older. Our findings suggest that, on the contrary, sex ratios may have increased during childhood, as was the case, for example, in Italy and Greece in the nineteenth century. F. J. B. Tapia and M. Raftakis, ‘Sex Ratios and Gender Discrimination in Modern Greece’, *Population Studies*, 76/1 (2021), 1-18; R. Echavarri, ‘Neonatal Discrimination and Excess Female Mortality in Childhood in Spain in the first half of the Twentieth Century’, *Cliometrica*, 16 (2022), 79-104.

39 Underreporting of girls and women in censuses and various bureaucratic records is a common phenomenon in patriarchal cultures, and often cannot be differentiated from the phenomenon

Whether from the perspective of physical survival or care for the children's wellbeing, reflected in the formal registration of the inheritance, the daughters of Janissaries were the most fortunate among all daughters in 1626-1725. The sex ratios of Janissary children were extremely low, with 62.5 boys for every 100 girls. Put differently, the sons of Janissaries had high excess mortality. Since boys were naturally more vulnerable when exposed to hardships, this might mean that not only the Janissaries themselves but also their families were subject to especially harsh circumstances in this period. Thus, these findings falsify our expectation of higher sex ratios among the military in this period. However, it should be recalled that the Janissary group is quite small in this period, and it might be safer to consider the Janissaries together with the Other Military at this time, in which case the sex ratio rises to 112.5. Among the Commoners, the sex ratio of minors was even higher: 137 boys for every 100 girls. This is among the highest sex ratios so far found in historical studies, placing the three regions combined among the least girl-friendly zones.<sup>40</sup>

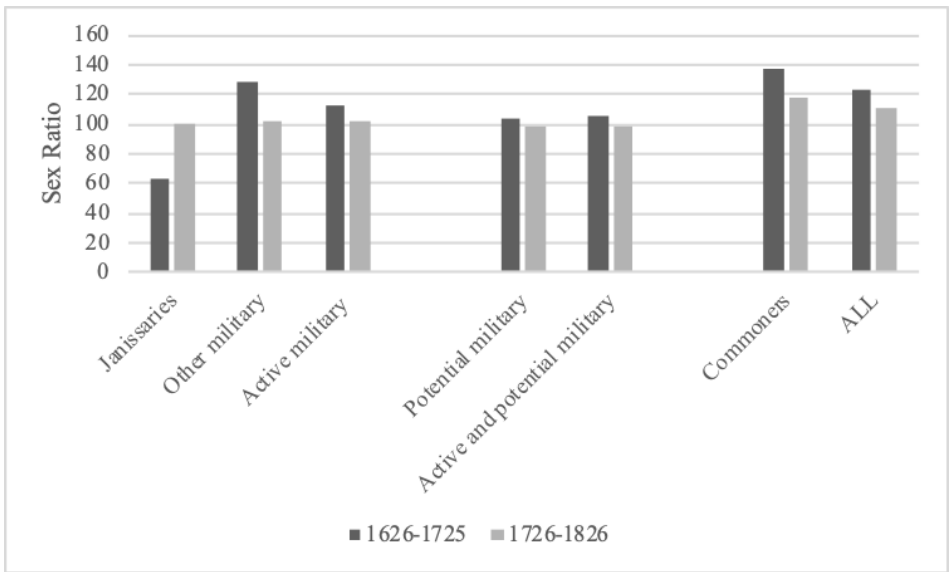
In 1726-1826, the gender composition of Janissary children rose to parity (100), which is closer to what one would expect in a historical setting with moderate discrimination against girls. By contrast, the situation for girls improved in all other groups in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, i.e., child sex ratios (as well as the sex ratios of adult children of the deceased, not treated here) declined either because male mortality increased, or female mortality declined. Yet boys still outnumbered girls except among the Potential Military. Notably, the gender distribution among the children of this group was close to parity in the earlier period too. While the Commoners remained the least girl-friendly group, the opposite was true of the Potential Military. This is remarkably similar to the situation in early modern Europe, where excess girl mortality due to gender discrimination had a class dimension. It was particularly visible in modest and poor families, since better off families could afford the risk of investing in daughters as well, whereas the poor did not have the extra resources to keep both a boy and a girl alive.<sup>41</sup> Similarly, in our case, the Potential Military were the wealthiest and the Commoners the poorest. Thus, even if a particularly strong masculine and patriarchal ethos prevailed in military families

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of 'missing girls'. S. Gruber and M. Szołtysek, 'The Patriarchy Index: A Comparative Study of Power Relations Across Historical Europe', *The History of the Family*, 21/2 (2016), 143.

40 For other observations of high sex ratios, see F. B. Tapia, M. Szołtysek, B. Ogórek and S. Gruber, 'Inferring "Missing Girls" from Child Sex Ratios in European Historical Census Data: A Conservative Approach', Discussion paper CEPR DP15818 (2021), 10.

41 Tapia and Cappelli, 'Missing Girls in Liberal Italy', 1-27.



**Chart V:** Child (*sagir*) sex ratios

of all kinds, the wealth factor may well have overridden its effect on sex ratios. We intend to study the relevance of wealth in this matter in a separate study.

### 3.b. Regions compared

Some of the findings presented so far would be highly misleading unless the regional variation they hide were revealed. For example, we have seen that the average number of surviving children declined slightly over time. But this was clearly the case only in Western Anatolia, where the number of children dropped from 1.87 in 1626-1725 to 1.69 in 1726-1826. In Southeastern Anatolia, too, we have found smaller families in the second period, but this appears to be due to a composition effect in the dataset.<sup>42</sup> In the Central Balkans, the opposite happened: the number of children increased from 1.54 to 1.83 regardless of a composition effect.<sup>43</sup> Thus, as far as fertility and mortality rates are concerned, we do not see a uniform development.

<sup>42</sup> In Diyarbekir, the number of surviving children per married decedent was lower than Ayntab in 1726-1826 (1.91 and 2.58 among the Commoners respectively). As this is when Diyarbekir records start, we cannot compare the earlier period. Since there is no change in Ayntab from the seventeenth century to the eighteenth century, the decline we see in the number of children must be due to the presence of Diyarbekir in the second period – assuming relative fertility/mortality rates remained the same.

<sup>43</sup> Manastr, which had a higher rate of surviving children than Sofia, had a rather small share in



Synchronic comparison of the regions also shows how misleading combined averages can be. We have seen above that the Janissaries had the highest incidence of polygyny in both periods, followed by the Other Military in 1626-1725 and the Potential Military in 1726-1826. That the military or, perhaps, the *askeri* in general stood out in this regard may not seem surprising, as they were the ones who were expected to emulate the sultan's household most closely and had the means to do so. Yet when we examine each region separately, it appears clear that it was the active military in Southeastern Anatolia who pulled the average so high up. Almost one in every four soldiers had multiple wives in this region, while only 5.3% in the Central Balkans did (Chart VI.b), and, among the latter, not a single Janissary was polygamous.<sup>44</sup> Western Anatolia stood roughly in the middle. Similarly, the rate of married Janissaries in Southeastern Anatolia was close to universal marriage (96%), showing either that Janissaries in this region were older, or that they just followed the local example, or both. Janissary nuptiality in the Central Balkans was only half as high (Chart VI.a), pointing to a young population.

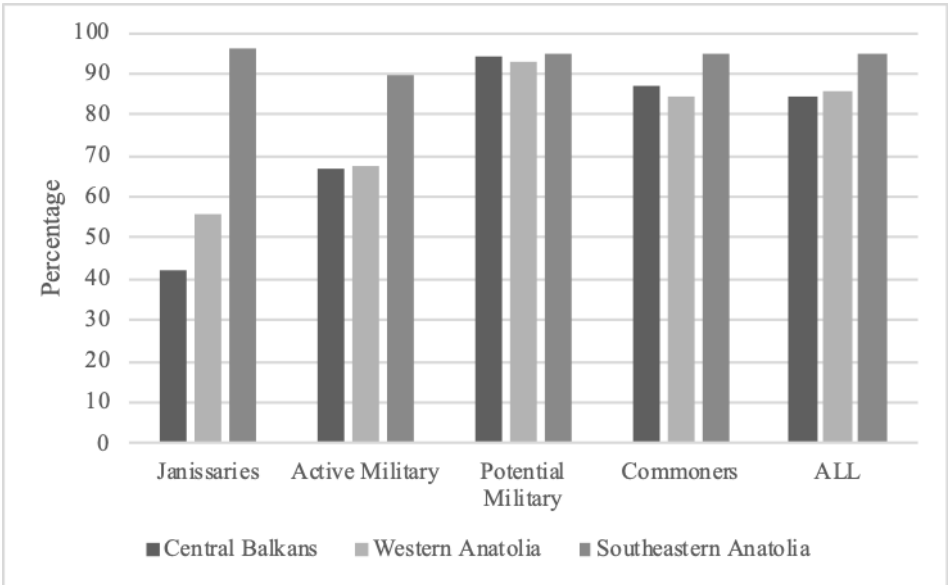
If one were to take the share of minors among children as indicative of the age of the deceased, the Janissaries in Southeastern Anatolia would indeed appear to be older, and those in the Central Balkans would appear to be the youngest group in the three regions (and among all groups). Put differently, the Janissaries in the Central Balkans died younger than their comrades elsewhere. This situation cannot have been related to the occupational hazards the Janissaries faced in this particular region, because the share of minors in all social groups here was higher than in the other two regions (80.8% and 51.5%-42.6%). The respective rates for the Other Military were 66.2% and 41%-59.5%. It should be noted, however, that young male deaths in probate data might not necessarily be related to high male mortality, but also legal culture. If, for example, it was less common in this region to go to the court for estate registration, the share of the minors among the heirs and hence the share of young deaths among the decedents would be higher, because the legal system was more attentive to minors' rights. Regardless of that fact, the Central Balkans also had the lowest average sex ratios among the three regions, which also corroborates the possibility that male mortality here was indeed higher.

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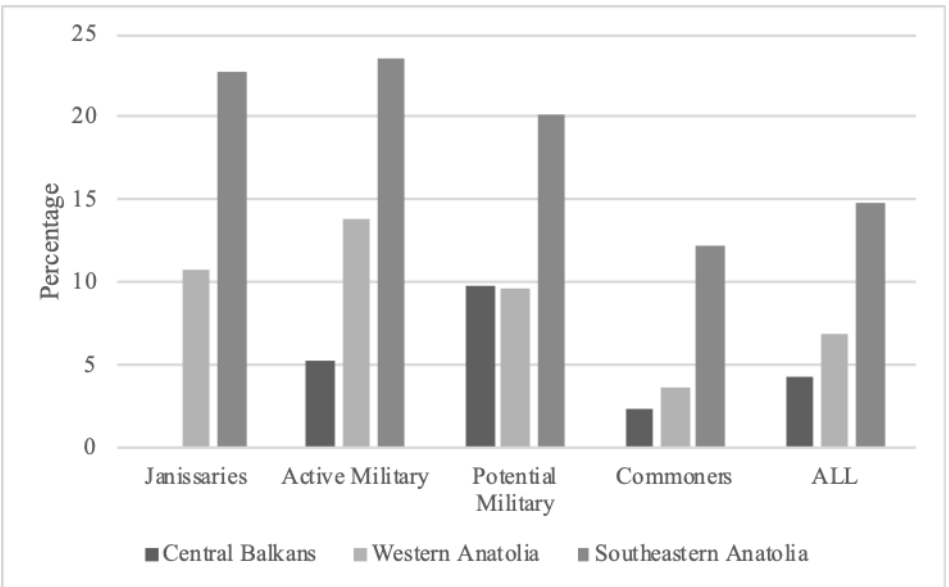
the dataset for 1626-1725. As its population share increased in the following period, the increase in the number of surviving children in the combined set could be related to the change in the composition. However, the number of children in Sofia also increased (from 1.33 to 1.52) from one period to the next. The latter observation contradicts Kokdaş 'Preliminary Observations on the Demographic Roots of Modern Childhood', and needs to be cross checked in further detail.

<sup>44</sup> Also see Kayaçağlayan, 'Yeniçerilerin Politik ve Sosyo-Ekonomik Roller', 84, where the author argues that Janissary polygyny in eighteenth-century Istanbul was rare.

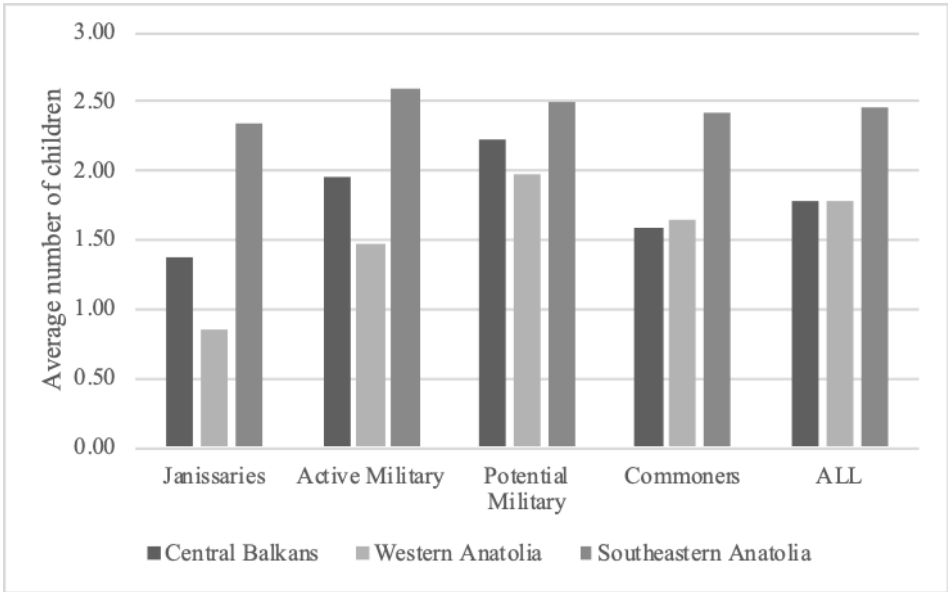
**Charts VI.a-VI.d:** Marriage patterns across regions



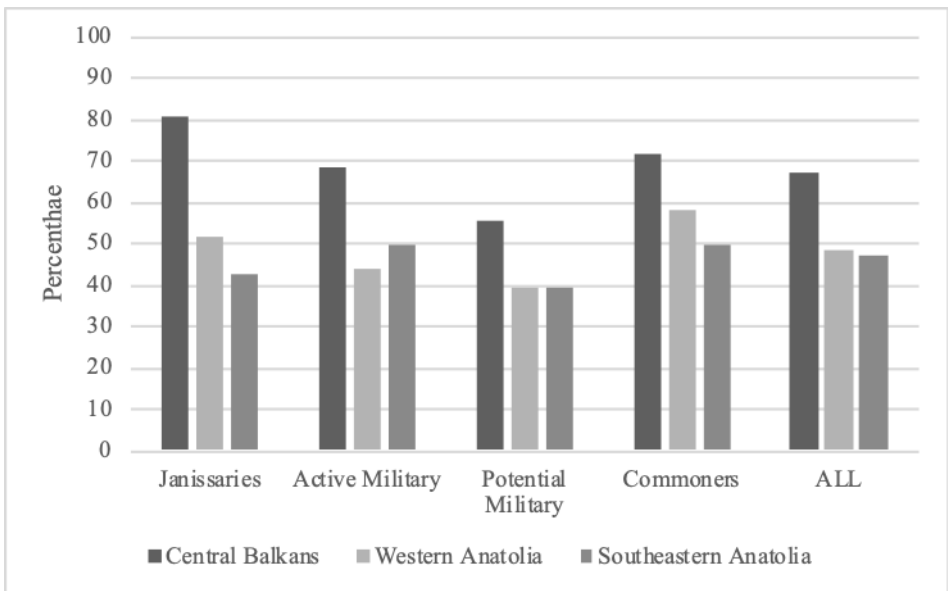
**VI.a:** Nuptial



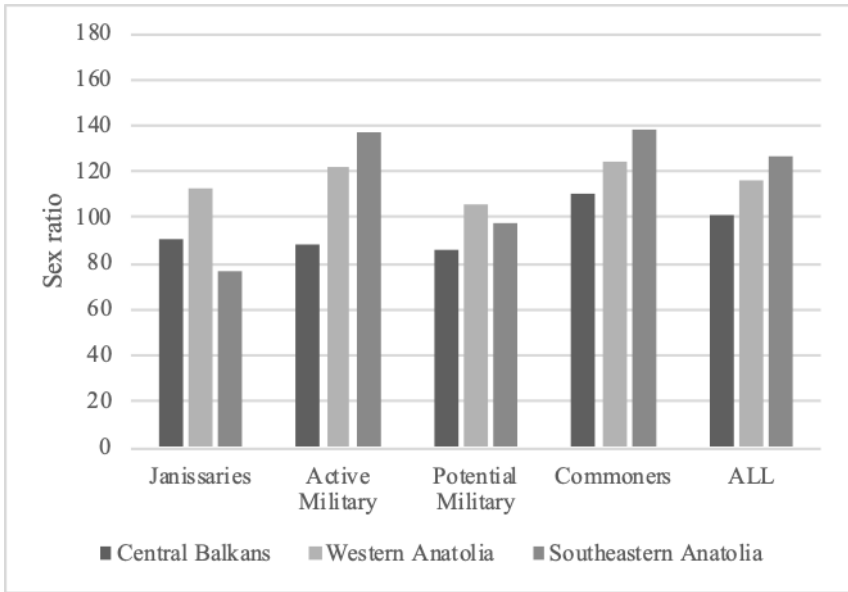
**VI.b:** Polygyny



VI.c: Surviving children



VI.d: Share of minors



VI.e: Sex ratios, minors

When we compare family patterns among the Commoners in the three regions, we observe similar differences. Marriage in Southeastern Anatolia was more common than in the other two regions (94.9%), matching the ‘eastern family’ pattern for the age group 45-49.<sup>45</sup> Also, the polygyny rate in Southeastern Anatolia was four times as high as in the Central Balkans: 12.2% and 2.3%, respectively. Western Anatolia again stood between the two, though closer to the Balkans. The largest conjugal families were in Southeastern Anatolia, with 2.43 children per married decedent, while the other two regions had nearly one child less. All the foregoing suggests a more male-dominated family environment in this region, with child sex ratios complementing the picture. The Commoners in Southeastern Anatolia had the highest child sex ratio (138), while the average for the four groups was 127. These figures appear even more extreme when we consider regional differences in mortality. Southeastern Anatolia had the highest rate of child mortality in the early decades of the Republic, and still has the highest mortality rate today.<sup>46</sup> If it was the

45 Hajnal, ‘Marriage Patterns’, 103.

46 P. Demeny and F. Shorter, *Türkiye’de Ölüm Seviyesi Doğurganlık ve Yaş Yapısı Tahminleri - Estimating Turkish Mortality, and Age Structure Application of Some New Techniques* (Istanbul 1968), 8-21; F. Bilge, ‘Infant Mortality in Turkey: Causes and Effects in a Regional Context’, *Papers in Regional Science*, 100 (2021), 429-453; O. Işık and M. M. Pınarcıoğlu, ‘Geographies

case in Ottoman times, too, then we would expect the sex ratios here to be lower than Western Anatolia, i.e., the opposite of what we have found.<sup>47</sup> That is because in a higher mortality environment, males would be more prone to catching diseases unless discrimination against girls tipped the ‘natural’ balance. The Central Balkans had the lowest sex ratio (110 among the Commoners and 101 among all), though still showing excess female mortality.<sup>48</sup>

In brief, even though there was also within-region diversity, features associated with ‘traditional’ or ‘eastern’ families in different taxonomies intensified in regional averages from west to east. Available studies on other regions of the empire suggest that intensification may have started in Central Anatolia and continued in Arabic-speaking parts of the empire in the Eastern Mediterranean. However, this observation remains tentative until dataset compatibility in these studies is confirmed.<sup>49</sup>

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of a Silent Transition: A Geographically Weighted Regression Approach to Regional Fertility Differences in Turkey’, *European Journal of Population*, 22/4 (2006), 399-421.

47 Tapia and Szoltysek, ‘Missing Girls’ in Historical Europe’, 626.

48 These figures are compatible with the sex ratios for the 5-9 age group in Greece in 1870 (106.6) and in Bulgaria around 1880 (106.2). Tapia and Raftakis, ‘Gender Discrimination in Modern Greece’, 6. Note, however, that child sex ratios in Bulgaria tended to increase further with age, and exceeded 108 at 9-10. F. J. B. Tapia, ‘Sex Ratios and Missing Girls in late-19th-Century Europe’, *EHES Working Paper*, 160 (June 2019).

49

Region	Period	Polygyny (%)	Average Number of Surviving Children
Ankara	18th c.	12	2.4
Konya	18th c.	12.4	2.9
Aleppo	18th c.	?	4.8
Damascus	17th c.	10.6	2.6
Nablus	early 19th c.	17.7	?

The Nablus observation is based on a small sample of 62 inventories. J. E. Tucker, ‘Marriage and Family in Nablus, 1720-1856: Toward a History of Arab Marriage’, *Journal of Family History Sources*, 13 (1988), 165-179; Demirel, ‘Ankara’da Ailenin Niceliksel Yapısı’, 950, 952; H. Erten, *Osmanlı Aile Yapısı: 18. Yüzyılda Konya Örneği* (Istanbul: 2017); Establet and Pascual, *Familles et Fortunes*, 52-57; A. Marcus, *The Middle East on the Eve of Modernity: Aleppo in the Eighteenth Century* (New York 1989), 201.

#### 4. Conclusion

The main findings of this study are the following:

- i. *Changes that can be interpreted as signs of a move towards the 'modern' family:* The two main changes seen in every region and social group were a decline in polygyny rates and sex ratios of minor children. Because fewer men had multiple wives, conjugal units in the eighteenth century were smaller than those in the seventeenth century. In other words, families appeared less 'eastern' or 'traditional' in the eighteenth century. In Western Anatolia, this trend was strengthened by an additional decline in the number of children, while in the Central Balkans, the opposite happened. The change in sex ratios of minors may signify a decline in female mortality, an increase in male mortality or both. Despite this improvement in their life chances, more girls still died than boys in the same age group.
- ii. *Janissary distinctiveness and the loss of it:* Janissary families stood apart from all other social groups with low nuptiality and small families in the seventeenth century, but came to resemble the others more in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In view of the socio-economic transformations that the corps and its members underwent in the eighteenth century, convergence of their domestic life with that of the rest does not seem surprising.
- iii. *Regional family formations:* We have examined three regions along the east-west axis in the northern part of the empire and found major differences in family composition. Families exhibited more 'eastern' features as we moved eastwards on the map, and this pattern applied to all social groups. This does not take us back to the presumed Hajnal line, or show that across Southeastern Europe, Anatolia and the Eastern Mediterranean families became ever more 'traditional' in one direction. In the Balkans further to the west of the area we have studied, families probably had characteristics resembling those observed in Southeastern Anatolia, as Todorova argues, due to similarities in ecology, modes of subsistence and kinship systems. Differences between Sofia and Manastir signal this transition westwards (see Fn. 43). There is also sporadic evidence from other regions that runs against the idea of an east-west continuum of 'traditionality' in family formations.<sup>50</sup> Therefore, new case studies are needed to fill the information gaps in the map.

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50 See also B. B. Doumani, *Family Life in the Ottoman Mediterranean: A Social History* (Cambridge 2017), for diversity in domestic cultures in settlements remarkably close to one another in the Eastern Mediterranean.

We have also seen that the observed patterns were not frozen in time in any region. Nevertheless, a significant degree of continuity between the geographical spread of the family formations in seventeenth-century Anatolia on the one hand and modern Turkey on the other cannot be overlooked. It is not as easy to say the same for the Ottoman Balkans without untangling the multiple regime changes and socio-political interventions that affected this multinational region from the nineteenth century.<sup>51</sup>

- iv. *Military and regional family formations*: Minor exceptions aside, the Janissaries and the Other Military, i.e., the active soldiery of the Ottoman Empire, mirrored the demographic characteristics of the places where they lived and died. This may not seem very surprising for the eighteenth century, when the fusion of the Janissaries, other soldiers and the locals reached a new high, but it is notable that the seventeenth century was similar. This means that at least from 1626 onwards, there was no singular ‘Janissary family’ or a ‘military family’, just as there was never an ‘Ottoman family’.

All our initial hypotheses on Janissary marriage and family patterns failed in Southeastern Anatolia but worked particularly well for the Central Balkans. This may be because our view of the Janissaries or more broadly, the Ottoman military, are shaped by a regional bias in the available literature on the topic. Regarding the only variable about which we had no a priori assumptions – the gender composition of minor children – the Janissaries of Southeastern Anatolia stood out with the lowest sex ratio. This was the only variable by which the Janissaries did not conform to the regional pattern. In view of all the other observations on the region, we surmise that this was as a sign of high male mortality among the Janissaries rather than a more girl-friendly environment.

Exploration of the reasons behind these interregional and intergroup differences in family formations, and the changes that occurred between 1626 and 1826 should constitute the topic of another study.

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51 For a detailed description of the regional distribution of simple and complex families in the Balkans, see Todorova, ‘Situating the Family of Ottoman Bulgaria’, 443-456, and K. Kaser, ‘Introduction: Household and Family Contexts in the Balkans’, *History of the Family*, 1/4 (1996), 375-386.

## APPENDIX

## Identifying the active military

We used seven criteria to identify the Janissaries, other active soldiers and the potential military: *i. socio-occupational and honorific titles, ii. profession, iii. regimental information, iv. rank information, v. court procedure, vi. court fees, and vii. active military service.*

## i. Socio-occupational and honorific titles

Titles are the very first criterion by which we separate Commoners from the rest. However, as Tülüveli also notes, the ways honorific titles were used are not yet fully understood,<sup>52</sup> and reliance on honorific titles alone to figure out status or occupational identity can be misleading even at this basic level. It is highly instructive, for example, that after close examination of each inventory, we found that 156 decedents without titles were not actually commoners. Forty-six of them were active/registered Janissaries, while 64 served in other military units, and some high-ranking military officers in one or the other group. The remaining 46 decedents seemed to be Potential Military (Tables A1, A2, A3).

Although the value of titles as indicators of socio-economic status and profession stays open to question, in the absence of better alternatives, some scholars consider them usable clues to the occupation and status of a given individual (Yi 2004;<sup>53</sup> Yılmaz 2011; Canbakal: 2007). Other historians, however, have reservations about their use as a reliable source of information due to the unsystematic nature of Ottoman record keeping practices and the possible role of personal preference in self-identification, as well as the ambiguous nature of some titles, which could refer to multiple ranks, occupations, or services (Tülüveli: 2005; Açık: 2015). Pointing to the random use of different titles with reference to the same person in different records or times, these scholars underline the need for further research on their usage as signs of personal status and profession. While we agree with this call for caution, one should note that the case studies on which these criticisms are based are also often unsystematic and draw on few examples from a limited number of places (Trabzon, Üsküdar, Amasya).<sup>54</sup> Therefore, their conclusions should also be considered tentative.

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52 Tülüveli, 'Honorific Titles', 17-27.

53 E. Yi, *Guild Dynamics in Seventeenth-Century Istanbul* (Leiden and Boston 2004).

54 G. Tülüveli, 'Honorific Titles in Ottoman Parlance: A Reevaluation', *IJTS*, 11/1-2 (2005), 17-27;



Clearly, it may not always be possible or practical to examine each titled individual in detail in a given study, particularly in a quantitative study using large datasets. Yet in this study we have tried to do just that. We studied each case thoroughly, without taking titles as absolute markers of social status or office holding. The results of the cross-check system we applied suggest that if studied carefully, honorific titles can provide valuable clues to socio-economic and occupational identity.

Three common and particularly challenging titles relevant for the study of the soldiery are *agha*, *beşe* and *bey*. Since these titles were widely used by various servants of the state, more sophisticated criteria are needed to differentiate their use as manifestations of prestige, power, and wealth from use as professional titles. The title ‘*agha*’, for instance, could refer to a senior member of the classical corps as a sign of seniority, but it could also refer to a local notable, palace servant, tax farmer, senior servant in the household of an Ottoman dignitary, or any prestigious figure as an expression of the social recognition of wealth and power. Therefore, if no further clues are provided, we classify *aghas* as Potential Military (Table A3). Out of 699 people in the latter category, 43% (299 individuals) are *aghas*.

The title of *beşe* has occupied a special place in academic debates due to its strong association with the Janissaries. Although all Ottomanists are aware of the methodological problems of considering all *beşes* as active/real Janissaries, some, whom we may call ‘risk-takers’, do so nonetheless, while ‘sceptics’ remain hesitant. The first group of historians take this title as an important criterion for identifying corps members and build on this assumption. Thus, they study the infiltration of commoners into the corps and integration of the Janissaries into the social and economic life of the cities via the wider and vague category of *beşes* rather than active/real Janissaries. Yi, for instance, considers people bearing the title *beşe*, *agha* or *bey* to be Janissaries, and analyses their incorporation into Istanbul guilds through cases that involve *beşes* in seventeenth-century court registers.<sup>55</sup> Contrary to Yi, Yılmaz excludes the titles *bey* and *agha*, and regards *beşe* as one of the basic identifiers of membership in the corps, arguing that it was ‘the title used for Janissaries’.<sup>56</sup> Finally,

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T. Açıık, ““Bey”likten “Ağa”lığa: 17. Yüzyılın İlk Yarısında Trabzon’da “Unvan Enflasyonu”, *Karadeniz İncelemeleri Dergisi*, 16 (2014), 9-38.

55 Yi, *Guild Dynamics*, 69, 139.

56 Yılmaz, ‘The Economic and Social Roles of Janissaries’, 18, and especially 121-122, 192-193 for a discussion of people with the title of *beşe* and more specific cases of Janissary status. See also, G. Yılmaz Diko, ‘Blurred Boundaries Between Soldiers and Civilians: Artisan Janissaries in Seventeenth-Century Istanbul’, in S. N. Faroqhi (ed.), *Bread from the Lion’s Mouth* (New York 2015), 176. Öztürk and Toprak, too, are aware of the problems of the *beşe* title but choose to consider them as Janissaries. T. Öztürk, ‘18. Yüzyıl Ortalarında İstanbul Yeniçerileri’, in A. Yıldız, Y. Spyropoulos and M. M. Sunar (eds), *Payitaht Yeniçerileri: Padişahın “Asi” Kulları*,

Nagata and Nagata point to the virtual disappearance of the title *beşe* (together with *serdengeçdi*) among the probate population of Sarajevo following the abolition of the army in 1826, and similarly argue that the *beşe* title was a marker of membership in the corps.<sup>57</sup> Although they are absolutely right, post-1826 purges and the anti-Janissary atmosphere may also have discouraged people from using the title.

The other group, the sceptic historians, object to equating all *beşes* with Janissaries of various background. Spyropoulos, for instance, criticises conclusions based on the assumption that the titles *beşe* and *agha* meant a division between low-ranking soldiers and senior officers, and underlines that the *beşe* title was not reserved exclusively for Janissaries.<sup>58</sup> He and Altıntaş point out that it was widely used, at least among eighteenth-century armorers and artillerymen.<sup>59</sup> Indeed, we did encounter such an example in our dataset (Table A2). Using several cases from the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century court registers of Üsküdar, Trabzon, and Amasya, Açıık makes a similar observation, and having found a considerable number of Janissaries without the title, and *beşes* without any ties to the Janissary army, he argues that this title lost its significance over time as a marker of military service. Indeed, he cites an interesting case from the seventeenth century in which five *beşes*, residents of Amasya, applied to the local court to deny any affiliation with the Janissary Corps:

Since people call us *beşe* it has been assumed that we are all Janissaries, yet by no means do we have any affiliation with or involvement in Janissary-hood. Further, until this moment we have contributed what we could to the regular and irregular taxes imposed on the aforementioned neighbourhood, and we will continue to pay our share in the future taxes as long as we are alive. We never refuse to pay them.<sup>60</sup>

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1700-1826 (İstanbul 2022), 103; M. B. Toprak, 'Osmanlı İstanbul'unda Demografi, Servet ve Eşitsizlik: 18. Yüzyıl Tereke Defterlerinden Bir Analiz', unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Marmara Üniversitesi, 2022, 154-155.

57 Y. Nagata and M. Nagata, 'Saraybosna Şerhiye Sicilleri Üzerine Bir İnceleme', in *XII. Türk Tarih Kongresi, Kongreye Sunulan Bildiriler*, Vol. III (Ankara 1999), 693. See also Tülüveli, 'Honoric Titles', 21.

58 Y. Spyropoulos, *Κοινωνική, διοικητική, οικονομική και πολιτική διάσταση του οθωμανικού στρατού: οι γενίταρροι της Κρήτης, 1750-1826*, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Crete, 2014, 69-70.

59 Ibid., 69-70; A. Altıntaş, 'İstanbul Loncaları ve Yeniçeriler: Kayıkçı Esnafı Üzerine Bir Deneme, 1677-1752', in A. Yıldız, Y. Spyropoulos and M. M. Sunar (eds), *Payitaht Yeniçerileri: Padişahın "Asi" Kulları, 1700-1826* (İstanbul 2022), 143.

60 "*Beşne'n-nâs herbirlerimize beşe ta'bir olunmağla zümre-i yeniçeriyândan olmamız tevehhüm ve zu'm olunmuşdur ve lâkin vechen mine'l-vücüh yeniçerilikde alaka ve medhalimiz olmaduğundan mâ'ada bu ana gelinceye dek mahalle-i mezbûrede vâki olan tekâlif-i örfiyye ve şakkayı mezbûrlar ile ma'ân tahmilimiz mikdârı edâ itdik ve ba'de'l-yevm yine hayy oldukça tahmilimiz mikdârı vâki olan örfiyye ve şakkayı edâ ideriz aslâ ve kat'â edâdan imtinâ'mız yokdur"*

In view of the limited and unsystematic nature of the information available on the social, military, economic and political roles of the Janissaries in any period and their strong ties with people bearing the *beşe* title, study of the Janissaries through *beşes* appears to be a legitimate research strategy. However, methodological pitfalls in this approach need to be recognised. We agree with the second group of historians that there is no definite connection between bearing the title of *beşe* (or agha) and being a registered or active Janissary, and that by itself, the title denotes a possibility only. That said, ‘a possibility’ means that the bearers of the title may still be Janissaries even when there is no sure marker of affiliation with a specific unit. In other words, scepticism needs to work both ways, hence our Potential Military category.

In the four-fold classification in our study, it is in the group of Janissaries that we have the largest number of *beşes* (73 individuals); if we include those *beşes* among the ‘Other Military’ who are active soldiers of uncertain corps affiliation, this figure reaches 100 (Table A1 and A2). There remain 266 *beşes* in the dataset (Table A3) with more or less equal chances of being active soldiers or Janissaries. We have designated this group as ‘Potential Military’ because they do not meet any of the following criteria by which we have been able to identify active Janissaries and other soldiers. These criteria emerged through a close reading of the probate text.

	<i>Beşe</i>	Agha	No Title
<b>Profession</b>	21		3
<b>Regiment</b>	2	5	7
<b>Rank</b>			
<i>Karakollukçu</i>			2
<i>Alemdar</i>	4	3	15
<i>Odabaşı</i>	1	1	4
<i>Serdengeçdi ağa</i>		5	
<i>Yeniçeri ağa</i>		2	
<i>Haseki ağa</i>		1	
<b>Court Procedure</b>	32	1	12
<b>Court Fees</b>	13	2	3
<b>Total</b>	73	20	46

**Table A1:** Identification criteria for Janissaries

Profession	Titles						No Title
	<i>Beşe</i>	<i>Agha</i>	<i>Bey</i>	<i>Molla</i>	<i>Seyyid</i>	<i>El-bac</i>	
<i>Subaşı</i>		2		2	1		4
<i>Sipahi</i>		1				1	34
<i>Sancakbeyi</i>			1				
<i>Dizdar</i>		1					
<i>Cümdi</i>		1	4			1	1
<i>Gulam-ı Acemi</i>	2						
<i>Cebeci</i>	1						
<i>Topçu</i>							5
<i>Top Arabacı</i>							1
<i>Burç ağası</i>						1	
<i>Bölükbaşı</i>							10
<i>Kalyoncu</i>							1
<i>Alaybeyi</i>			1				
<i>Humbaracı</i>		2					
<i>Delilbaşı</i>		1				1	1
<i>Tüfengçibaşı</i>		1					
<i>Zabit (kural/puyane zabiti)</i>		2					
<i>Lağımçı</i>			1				
<i>Bostancı</i>					1		3
<i>Çeribaşı</i>		1	1				
<i>Tuçcubaşı</i>							1
<i>Alayçavuşu</i>		1					1
<i>Kavas</i>							1
<b>Court Procedure</b>	15	3	5				
<b>Military Service</b>							
Death during a campaign	8	7					1
Death during service	1	2					
<b>Total</b>	27	25	13	2	2	4	64

**Table A2:** Identification criteria for Other Military Personnel

	Titles				No Title
	<i>Beşe</i>	<i>Agha</i>	<i>Bey</i>	<i>Mir</i>	
<b>Profession</b>					
<i>Paşpa</i>					1
<i>Yamak</i>					1
<i>Menzilci</i>					1
<i>Mubzar/başı</i>					2
<i>Tatar</i>					1
<b>Rank</b>					
<i>Çavuş</i>					17
<i>Halife</i>					10
<i>Yazıcı</i>					8
<i>Ketbûda</i>					6
<b>Title</b>	266	299	86	1	
<b>Total</b>	266	299	86	1	47

**Table A3:** Identification criteria for Potential Military Personnel

## ii. Profession

If the probate record identifies the decedent by profession as a member of a military corps, we have classified him as a Janissary or an active soldier (Table A1-A2). It should be noted, however, that the probate inventory provides a snapshot of a person's identity at the time of his death. Transfers from one military corps to another due to seniority, personal choice, or governmental strategy were quite common during the period under study. Some retired Janissaries, for instance, became *sipahis*,<sup>61</sup> or others switched to a bureaucratic career or began to serve in another military corps. They could even resign to become an ordinary subject (*reaya*), as in the case of Mustafa b. Hasan from Ayntab, who applied the court to verify his new status:

I had served the sultan for a couple of years claiming Janissary-ship. But due to physical weakness, in addition to being poor and having a large family, I gave up that claim more than fifteen years ago, and I have been paying my taxes.<sup>62</sup>

The title, profession, and place of residence of the deceased is normally mentioned at the beginning of a standard probate record. For instance, the entry for Janissary Hasan, who died in Manisa in 1642 reads "*El-merhum Hasan Beşe er-râcil*

<sup>61</sup> Sanz, *Türkiye'nin Dört Yılı*, 106.

<sup>62</sup> Ayntab Şeriyeye Sicilleri 39, 148/3 (C 1101/March-April 1690), as cited in H. Canbakal, *Society and Politics in an Ottoman Town: Ayntab in the 17th Century* (Leiden and Boston 2007), 87.

*mate sakinân an mahalle-i Kôrhane min mahallât-ı el-Mahmiye-i Manisa*”,<sup>63</sup> which means that he was a *racil* from Manisa. The term *racil* literally means ‘infantry soldier’ and seems to have been used as a synonym for ‘Janissary’ especially in the court registers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In later periods it was replaced by the word ‘*yeniçeri*’ (Janissary) and its derivatives such as ‘*yeniçeri taifesinden*’ (of the Janissaries) or ‘*dergah-ı ali yeniçerilerinden*’ (of the Janissaries of the Sultan’s court). In our dataset, 24 of the active Janissaries are identified as *racil* rather than as *yeniçeri*. While we have not been able to find any discussion or explanation of the term *racil* in current scholarship, clues about the court procedure in records involving *racils* have shown that they were Janissaries. As will be explained below, estates of the Janissaries were seized by the *Yeniçeri beytûmal* (treasury of the corps) under certain circumstances. This applied to the *racils* as well.

The rest of the soldiery whose profession is explicitly specified in the dataset belong to various branches of the Ottoman central army (*cebeci, topçu, humbaracı, top arabacı, lağımçı, acemi oğlanları*) and the local corps (*yerlü*) as well as the provincial forces (*subaşı, sipahi, dizdar, burç ağası, kalyoncu, kura zabiti*), the police/guard forces (*bostancı, kavas*) as well as an indeterminate group of *cündis* (Table A2). Literally, the term *cümdi* means cavalry or expert horseman, and in this sense, it is the opposite of the term *racil*. Yet the military corps it refers to is not always clear. In the Ottoman royal court, there was a unit under the command of *cündibaşı* composed of gifted and talented horsemen who usually performed in traditional sports (*cirit, tokmak*) for amusement and training.<sup>64</sup> It seems that the term *cümdi* could also refer to a *sipahi*, especially during the sixteenth and seventeenth century,<sup>65</sup> but the topic calls for further research. In our dataset there are seven *cündis*, all from seventeenth-century Bursa. Except for one who served as *iç mehter* of a governor, there are no clues about the functions of the rest. For that reason, we have preferred to keep them separate from the *sipahis*.

### iii. Regimental information

Regimental information is important for differentiating the active military personnel from the rest, especially when a record involves ranks or nicknames with multiple meanings, or when no other information is provided about the professional identity

63 Manisa Şerhiye Sicilleri 146, fl. 17 (1 Ra 1052/8 June 1642).

64 For their training, functions, and history, see M. Z. Pakalın, *Osmanlı Tarih Deyimleri ve Sözlüğü*, Vol. I (Istanbul 2004), 317.

65 Yılmaz, ‘The Economic and Social Roles of Janissaries’, 202, ft. 76 and R. C. Jennings, *Christians and Muslims in Ottoman Cyprus and the Mediterranean World, 1571-1640* (New York and London 1993), 289 consider *cümdi* to be an honorific title used by *sipahis*.

of the deceased. Although regimental detail alone does not necessarily imply Janissary identity, we consider it as such when accompanied by another qualifier such as ‘*racil*’ (as opposed to ‘*topçu*’, for example). Availability of regimental information has enabled us to identify five decedents without any military title as Janissaries.<sup>66</sup> We have also identified a certain Mehmed Çavuş as an active Janissary from the 21st *bölük*, and Ebubekir Halife as a professional *top arabacı* (a cannon-wagon carrier) from the 16th *bölük* thanks to this additional information. Similarly, we have moved three untitled people to the category of Other Military, as they turned out to be artillerymen.<sup>67</sup>

#### iv. Rank

In the absence of any reference to military profession or a specific unit, references to ranks or services peculiar to a particular military corps become an important identification criterion. In the registers we used for the dataset, there are ranks that refer to the internal hierarchy of three armed units: the Janissary army, the *sipahis*, and the personal armies of provincial authorities (governors and *mütesellims*). Although the ranks of *serdengeçdi*, *alemdar*, *karakollukçu*, *haseki*, or *odabaşı* were also present in corps other than the Janissaries, whenever this was the case, the record gives the corps name. Therefore, we have classified as Janissaries those decedents who held one of these ranks but whose corps was not specified in the *tereke*. We have thus included 38 individuals in the Janissary category (Table A1).<sup>68</sup> If, however, both rank and regimental information is provided, we have considered the latter as more important, as in the case of two *serdengeçdi ağas*, one from the 1st *bölük* and the other from the 51st *bölük*. The dataset also has two senior officer ranks in the provincial forces, the *alaybeyi*<sup>69</sup> and the *çeribaşı*.<sup>70</sup> In the same man-

66 The *usta* of the 27th *bölük*, one soldier with the title of *şerif* from the 50th *bölük*, and three soldiers from the 30th *cemaat*, the 23rd *bölük*, and the 1st *bölük*.

67 One *topçu halife* from the 8th regiment, one *halife* from the 49th regiment, and one soldier from the 9th regiment.

68 For the internal hierarchy of the Janissary army and the functions of these military officers, see İ. H. Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devleti Teşkilâtından Kapukulu Ocakları*. Vol I: *Acemi Ocağı ve Yeniçeri Ocağı* (Ankara 1988), 173-237.

69 Aziz b. Halil b. Abdullah Bey was the *alaybeyi* of Mardin at the time of his death.

70 Es-seyyid Ahmed Agha and Seyyid Abdullah b. Rüstem Bey. For the functions of *sipahi çeribaşı*, see TDVİA, s.v., ‘Çeribaşı’ (A. Özcan), 270-272; Idem, ‘Çeribaşılık Müessesesi’, *Mimar Sinan Üniversitesi Fen-Edebiyat Fakültesi Dergisi*, 1 (1991), 196-203.

ner, *delilbaşı*,<sup>71</sup> *tüfengçibaşı*,<sup>72</sup> *tuğcubaşı*,<sup>73</sup> *alay çavuşu*<sup>74</sup> are ranks of armed units attached to households of the provincial authorities.

Some terms denote more than one position, rank or service, and they are very frequently used by the military: for example, *çavuş* (17 people), *halife* (10 people), *kethüda* (six people), *tatar* (one person), *paspan* (one person), *yamak* (one person) and *yazıcı* (eight people). We have considered them as Potential Military. In a similar way, *bölükbaşı* is a rank in the Janissary Corps equivalent to that of captain, but it may also refer to the regimental commander of mercenary (*sekban*) troops.<sup>75</sup> In the absence of additional information concerning their affiliation with a specific troop, we have included *bölükbaşıs* in the safe category of Other Military rather than the Janissaries. One exception to this is Bölükbaşı Ali b. Mehmed, who died during the Morea campaign (Table A2).

## v. Military service

Some probate entries are devoid of any identity details except the title and cause of death. Some of these indicate death during a campaign or while on guard duty at a fortress. We have placed such decedents in the category of Other Military, as they clearly had an active military position. There are 19 such people in the dataset. Of these, 16 died during a campaign and three while serving at a fortress. Nine of them were *beşes*, nine were aghas and one was untitled. Even though it is highly likely that some of them were Janissaries, we have categorised them as active military to be on the safe side (Table A2).

## vi. Court procedure

After all the identity markers above are exhausted, there remains a large pool of people who were either Commoners or belonged to the Potential Military. This is when we turn to some specifics of the probate process. A general rule that applied to all estates brought to court was that when a person died heirless or left a widow

71 There are three decedents from this group in the dataset. Ahmed b. Mehmed Agha died in Sofia while he was serving as the *başdelilbaşı* of Hüseyin Pasha. El-hac Ebubekir b. Abdullah was a *delilbölükbaşı*, and Abdullah was a *delilbaşı*.

72 El-hac Halil b. Veliyüddin Agha, who was the *tüfengçibaşı* of the *mütesellim* of Saruhan.

73 Süleyman, who died in Sofia while serving as the *tuğcubaşı* of Ahmed Pasha.

74 There are two in the dataset: Süleyman b. Abdullah Çavuş Agha, the *alay çavuş* of Silahdar Mehmed Pasha, and Ebubekir Çavuş, the *alay çavuş* of Hasan Pasha.

75 For the functions of the Janissary *bölükbaşıs*, see Uzunçarşılı, *Kapukulu Ocakları*, I: 217-218; and for *sekban-sarıca bölükbaşıs*, see M. Akdağ, 'Tımar Rejiminin Bozuluşu', *Ankara Üniversitesi Dil ve Tarih-Coğrafya Fakültesi Dergisi*, 3/4 (1945), 429-430.



without progeny, all of the estate was seized by the public treasury (*beytülmal*) in the first case, and three fourths of it in the second case.<sup>76</sup> We have a total of 127 estates in our dataset that belonged to commoners and were taken over by a representative of the *beytülmal* (generally *mütesellim* or *voyvoda*).

If a Janissary was survived by legal heirs, the latter were entitled to their share, just like the heirs of other subjects. The only exception was that non-Muslim relatives of those Janissaries of *devşirme* origin were not considered legal heirs and their estates were seized by the *yeniçeri beytülmal*.<sup>77</sup> Similarly, if a Janissary died heirless or was survived by a widow only, the entire property or what was left after the widow's share had been set aside was seized by the *yeniçeri beytülmal*. The same mechanism was at work in other corps, for example, the armorers, artillerymen, and cannon-wagon carriers as well *gilman-ı acemi*.<sup>78</sup> In our dataset, the estates of four artillerymen, one cannon-wagon carrier, one *delil*, and one *alay çavuşu* were seized by their highest local commander, while that of a governor's servant was seized by one of the governor's men (*etibba*).

Thus, each military corps acted like a corporate body regarding the *tereke*s of their soldiers and officers; generally speaking, the highest or authorised representative of the relevant body seized the estate on behalf of his institution. This is particularly clear in the case of the Janissary Corps, in which *serdars* in the cities and *yeniçeri beytülmal emini* in the fortresses took over the estate after the deduction of debts and court fees. The property was then sold and transferred to the capital by local officers or kept by the regiment. Regimental officers were responsible for seizing the property of their soldiers when it did not exceed a certain sum. According to Mouradgèa d'Ohsson, for instance, provincial officials were entitled to seize the property of a Janissary deceased in the region under their authority unless the value of the property exceeded 1,500 *guruş*, in which case it was sent to the central treasury of the corps in Istanbul.<sup>79</sup> Unfortunately, the *tereke* registers do not provide any detail about what happened after the *serdar* or *yeniçeri beytülmal emini* seized it. As the *yeniçeri beytülmal* was under the control of the Janissary agha, he would

76 For an important recent study on private property, inheritance rights and the *beytülmal*, see A. Çimen, 'Public and Private Property Claims in the Ottoman Empire: The *Beytülmal* and its Institutionalization in the Early Modern Period', unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Marmara Üniversitesi, 2023. For more details concerning the seizure, sale and collection of the revenues from the properties of heirless people, see A. Bilgin and F. Bozkurt, 'Bir Malî Gelir Kaynağı Olarak Vârissiz Ölenlerin Terekeleri ve *Beytülmal* Mukataaları', *Kocaeli Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Fakültesi Dergisi*, 2/20 (2020), 1-31.

77 Gül, 'Yeniçeri Teşkilatı', 752.

78 BOA, C.AS.52/2409 (3 Z 1228/27 November 1813).

79 I. Mouradgèa d'Ohsson, *Tableau général de l'Empire othoman*, Vol. VII (Paris 1824), 335-336.

normally allocate some of the money sent to the capital to the expenses of the Janissary army and would annually transfer the remaining amount to the inner treasury (*ceyb-i hümayun*). Therefore, except for a certain portion, the reigning sultan eventually seized the bulk of the estates.<sup>80</sup>

The Janissary regiments of the 1st *bölük*, 5th *bölük*, 64th *cemaat* and the 71st *cemaat* enjoyed privileged status in this regard, as they were allowed to collect and benefit from the probates of their comrades autonomously. By sultanic decree in the early decades of the eighteenth century, the right to seize the estates of the deceased members of these two *böyük*s and two *cemaats* who died without known heirs was granted to their own regiments.<sup>81</sup> We identified one heirless officer and an heirless ordinary soldier from the 1st *bölük* through the recipient of the seized property.<sup>82</sup> Overall, 45 Janissaries in the dataset were identified by examining the authority that handled the heirless estates.<sup>83</sup>

There seems to have been fierce competition in the ‘*tereke* market’ among different claimants over heirless estates. As such estates provided extra revenues for the relevant institutions/authorities/individuals, figuring out the social status of the deceased as well as the place of his death was of vital importance for the parties involved. Each group jealously traced the death of their members and tried to prevent intervention by third parties, sometimes leading to disputes over claims of right.<sup>84</sup> As the legal status of the land where the person died (*tumar* or waqf land) was another factor that determined the rights to heirless property, waqfs were another player in the competition. The death of a Janissary called Mehmed from the 71st *cemaat*, for instance, in his coffeehouse attached to the waqf of Sultan Bayezid, caused a fierce dispute between the trustee of the waqf and that of the regiment. After the deduction of his wife’s share and debts, Mehmed’s total wealth came to 2,000 *guruş*, which

80 For more details on the *yeniçeri beytülmal* and seizure of the probate estates of the Janissaries, see Uzunçarşılı, *Kapukulu Ocakları*, I: 307-310; Gül, ‘Yeniçeri Teşkilatı’, 752-761; Öztürk, *Askeri Kassam*, 92-94; Kayaçağlayan, ‘Yeniçerilerin Politik ve Sosyo-Ekonomik Rollerini’, 95-102.

81 The reason for this right is obscure. Yet it was first granted in the year 1145/1732-1733, and then renewed by each sultan in the years 1171/1758, 1188/1775, 1204/1789, 1222/1807, and 1223/1808. It was still valid in the 1820s. For further details, see BOA, C.AS.407/16807 (2 C 1237/24 February 1822); 254/10603 (27 M 1219/8 May 1804); HAT.1354/52911 (undated); 35/1765 (undated).

82 El-hac Hasan Agha, a *serdengeçdi* agha in the same regiment, had 1,368 *guruş*, while a soldier called Mehmed had a total wealth of 42 *guruş*. Sofya Şeriyeye Sicilleri 29, fls. 109-110 (11 Za 1223/29 December 1808).

83 Seventeen of them were seized by the *yeniçeri beytülmal emini*, 12 by the local *serdar*, 8 by the local Janissary commander (*yeniçeri zabiti*), 4 by the *turnacıbaşı*, 6 by a certain Süleyman Agha from the 56th *bölük*, and finally 2 by the *orta zabiti*.

84 For more details, see Bilgin and Bozkurt, ‘Vârissiz Ölenlerin Terekeleri’, 13-15.

was claimed by the waqf trustee. The waqf authorities only suspended their claims once the trustee of the 71st *cemaat* had proved that the deceased was an active and real Janissary from his own regiment, and the Sultan had decided in favour of the Janissaries.<sup>85</sup>

Symmetrically, the absence of military claims on the property of heirless *beşes*, aghas or *beys* can be taken as a sign that the decedent is not an active soldier. We have two such examples, an agha and a *bey*, one of whom died heirless in a khan. In both cases, the estates were seized by waqf custodians, not by military officers.<sup>86</sup> As these examples illustrate, the court procedure and the institution/authority seizing the estate of a decedent provide reliable information about that person's identity. Thus, by reference to the *beytülmal* details and involvement of the waqf authorities, we have found out that a total of eight aghas and five *beşes* were not Janissaries. For the same reason, we have placed two *beys* in the Potential Military rather than the active Other Military category.

## vii. Court fees

Another important but neglected criterion we employed to determine the decedents' identity were the court fees charged. In principle, the partitioning of commoners' inheritance was handled by local judges in return for a court fee called *resm-i adi* (ordinary tax), whereas inheritance of the *askeris* was under the authority of the *kazaskers*. An inheritance judge (*kassam-ı askeri*) presided over the court process when an *askeri* estate was inventoried, and he charged a special fee called *kısmet-i askeriye/resm-i kazaskeri* on behalf of the *kazasker*. The amount of the fee for inventorying and dividing the estate varied between 15% and 25% for each case.

As the *kazasker* fee was charged on probate inventories of the entire *askeri* class, in this study it has enabled us to differentiate between active military staff and aghas, *beşes* or *beys* who may have assumed their title by other means. Since the *kazasker* fee was not specific to the Janissaries, however, it is of no help in identifying members of the corps. Therefore, if no further information other than the *kazasker* fee is provided for a *beşe* or an agha, we considered them to be active soldiers in the Other Military category – even though most of them may have been Janissaries. We have thus transferred 15 *beşes*, 3 aghas and 5 *beys* from Potential Military to the active military category with the help of the *kazasker* fee (Table A2).

85 BOA, HAT.35/1765 (undated): “*Kaimmakam paşa, ocaklı terekesini vakıf subaşıtı zabt edemez. Evkaflın beytülmalı sahib-i dirlik yoldaş olmaz ise demektir. Hak Ocağıdır*”.

86 Seyyid İbrahim b. Abdullah and Süleyman b. Abdullah Bey. For further details, see Bursa Şeriyve Sicilleri B-309, fl. 104 (19 L 1240/6 June 1825); B-165, fl. 62 (4 S 1154/21 April 1741).

As for the Janissaries, we have discovered that some special fees were charged on their estates. Unfortunately, these were not charged systematically, so the logic behind them escapes us. But when all the above criteria failed, we resorted to these specific fees in identifying Janissaries. One of them was collected/charged by the local military officer (*serdar*), under various names (*serdar ağa resmi* /*[resm]* for the *serdar*/for the agha/for *serdar çavuşu*/for *serdarlar çavuşu*/for *serdar adamı*). Using this criterion, we identified three commoners as Janissaries,<sup>87</sup> and moved 13 *beşes* and two aghas from the Potential Military to the Janissaries.<sup>88</sup> A similar fee we associated with the Janissaries was the *odabaşı* fee (*ücret-i odabaşı*), by reference to which we have categorised a certain Mustafa b. Abdullah Beşe as a Janissary. He died in a khan without any known heirs, and 80 *akçes* were added to the court expenses for the *odabaşı*.<sup>89</sup> Two other specific fees called *yeniçeri ağa resmi* or *yeniçeri zabiti resmi* also appear in 14 probate records, but these applied to individuals already identified as Janissaries with the help of other criteria and so are not included in the table.<sup>90</sup>

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87 Ahmed b. Süleyman: 0.75 *guruş* fee for the *serdar çavuşu*; Mehmed b. Ahmed: 1 *guruş* fee for the *serdar çavuşu* and Hacı Mustafa: 0.5 *guruş* fee for the *serdar çavuşu*.

88 The fees varied between 13 *guruş* and 0.5 *guruş*, making up 0.83% to 2.19% of gross wealth.

89 Bursa Şerhiye Sicilleri B-56, fl. 54 (evail-i S 1046/5-14 July 1636). Among the costs, there is also a fee for the *kazasker* (100 *akçes*). His total wealth is 3,745 *akçes*.

90 The fees for the servant of the agha and the *çukadar* of the agha varied between 60 *akçes* and 280 *akçes*, and 30 *akçes* and 300 *akçes* respectively. The fee of the agha himself ranged from 170 *akçes* to 16 *guruş*, amounting to 8% to 9.66% of gross wealth.

# JANISSARIES AND THEIR FATHERS

## A STUDY OF JANISSARY ORIGINS

Linda T. DARLING\*

THE JANISSARIES' ROLE IN LATE OTTOMAN SOCIETY AND ECONOMY is the topic of investigation for the JANET project. These late Janissaries were not the traditional children of non-Muslim subjects collected in the *devşirme*, but the sons of Muslims who filled the Janissary Corps in the later empire. The stereotype drawn from the literature of advice (*nasihatnameler*) maintains that the Janissary Corps was invaded by recruits from outside the *devşirme* around 1580, and that they corrupted the imperial system, becoming involved in the provincial economy and society, causing the loss of wars with European powers, and contributing heavily to the empire's decline. Interrogating this stereotype demands not just the investigation of their actual role and effect on society, but also the study of Janissary origins outside the *devşirme*, which requires different sources.

The narrative and advice works of the seventeenth century only tell part of the history, insisting on the corrupting effects of the non-*devşirme* recruits. Ottoman government documents, however, permit a new approach to the study of Janissary origins. The result is surprising: throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the documents list large numbers of Janissaries of Muslim origin. They were not minor exceptions to the general rule or the result of a sudden change in recruitment, as they are usually represented, but were there in large numbers throughout the period and increased gradually over time. Neither Ottoman nor modern texts discuss these Janissaries except to disparage them, but they can be studied in the Janissary salary registers in the Ottoman archives.<sup>1</sup> As a preliminary investigation, this chapter considers the members of the Janissary Corps enlisted outside the *devşirme* before

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\* University of Arizona.

1 Here there should be a discussion of the scholarly literature on Janissaries from Muslim families prior to 1700, but there is almost none, and what there is consists of preliminary remarks on the early Janissaries on the way to studying their later manifestations. For a fuller discussion and bibliography, see Y. Spyropoulos, 'Janissaries: A Key Institution for Writing the Economic

1700, discusses their origins and numbers, and introduces the data these registers can provide.

### *Janissaries in the classical age*

The usual descriptions of the Janissaries, both Ottoman and modern, tell how until the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century they were the sultan's slave (*kul*) troops, rounded up from non-Muslim families in the *devşirme*. The sensationalism surrounding the *devşirme* is probably responsible for the detailed descriptions of it that dominate the literature, namely, the fact that in its classical period the Ottoman Empire essentially enlisted its own Christian subjects as slave troops and labeled them as foreign (*acemi*).<sup>2</sup> The anonymous treatise *Laws of the Janissaries* (*Kavanin-i Yeniçeriyân*), written in 1606 to compile Janissary regulations and customs, gives a meticulous description of the *devşirme* process as understood at that time, as well as the organization and training of the new troops.<sup>3</sup> That, however, was not the whole story; the corps held people of other origins. In the first two centuries of its history those others were mainly prisoners and captives from enemy states, known from chronicles and memoirs. Later in the empire's history they were sons of Muslim families, known from the literature of complaint as contributors to the decline of the empire.

From the mid-fourteenth century through the fifteenth, the Janissaries were made up mainly of prisoners of war and captive youths culled from newly conquered areas. According to chroniclers such as Oruç and Aşıkpaşazade, during the second half of the fourteenth century Çandarlı Halil and Molla Rüstem, Ottoman officials from older Anatolian polities, brought to the Ottoman dynasty's notice the Islamic rule on *gaza* that gave the ruler the right to one-fifth of the booty of conquest, which for the Ottomans consisted largely of enslaved prisoners. The sultans took their fifth in young, able-bodied soldiers (or the equivalent of 125 *akçes* in cash for other

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and Political History of Ottoman Muslims in the Early Modern Period', *Historical Reporter*, 29 (2019), 106-133.

- 2 Konstantin Mihailović, however, called them "adopted" – into the sultan's household; K. Mihailović, *Memoirs of a Janissary*, trans. B. Stolz (Ann Arbor 1975), 37.
- 3 Anonymous, 'Kavânin-i Yeniçeriyân-ı Dergâh-ı Âli', in A. Akgündüz (ed.), *Osmanlı Kanunnameleri ve Hukukî Tahlilleri*, Vol. IX (Istanbul 1996), 127-367. For the date see page 127. See also L. T. Darling, 'Ottoman Political Thought and the Critique of the Janissaries', in M. Sariyannis (ed.), *Political Thought and Practice in the Ottoman Empire. Halcyon Days in Crete IX: A Symposium Held in Rethymno, 9-11 January 2015* (Rethymnon 2019), 127-136.

prisoners) and formed them into the new troop (*yeni çeri*), the Janissaries.<sup>4</sup> They were called *pençik oğlanları*, One-Fifth Boys. Additional Janissary candidates were obtained from among enslaved youths from conquered areas that had resisted (populations of unresisting places were supposed to be left unmolested), supplemented by captives taken on the road or on the sea.<sup>5</sup> It was probably the non-Ottoman origins of these groups that gave the novice Janissaries the name of *acemi* (usually translated as Persian, but also meaning non-Ottoman in general). The examples of some famous men and women such as Çiğalazade Sinan Paşa and Gülnüş Sultan show that the practice of absorbing captives into the *kul* system continued for centuries. According to Halil İnalçık, “slave markets were another source”.<sup>6</sup>

Despite the fact that some of these captives produced the best written sources on life in the sultan’s palace, these types of recruitment are completely overshadowed in the literature by the *devşirme* and are not even mentioned in the *Laws of the Janissaries*, which describes the main institutions of the Janissaries and what was known of their history in the early seventeenth century. Somehow, a myth was established that all or almost all Janissaries came from the *devşirme*. In one chapter devoted to the *acemioğlans*, the anonymous author covered issues such as the officers of the *acemis* and their wages, who should be sent on *devşirme*, who should be recruited and who should not, and how the recruits should be treated. In the same chapter he described the limited role of the sons of Janissaries, expressed alarm at the entry of a new set of candidates from outside the *devşirme*, and explained how the *ağa çırağı*, the agha’s apprentices unit, was established for them. Little did he know that only a short time later the *devşirme* would begin to fall into disuse, and that the new non-*devşirme* recruits would come to dominate the Janissary Corps. These new recruits became a bone of contention.

At about the same time that the *Laws of the Janissaries* were compiled, a series of political advice works appeared that decried the new members of the Janissary Corps and suggested solutions for problems these new Janissaries were accused of causing. These problematic soldiers were not the traditional *acemi*/foreign groups but those same non-*devşirme* recruits, referred to as *ecnebler*, i.e. intruders or

4 İ. H. Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devleti Teşkilatından Kapukulu Ocakları*. Vol. I: *Acemi Ocağı ve Yeniçeri Ocağı* (Ankara 1942), 5-7.

5 Mihailović, *Memoirs*, 99, 157.

6 H. İnalçık, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age*, trans. N. Itzkowitz and C. Imber (London 1973), 78. Mihailović states that fifteenth-century Janissaries coming from Ottoman villages could bequeath their possessions, indicating that in some sense they were free, while those from enemy lands could not, since as his slaves, their possessions belonged to the sultan; Mihailović, *Memoirs*, 159. Thus, the Janissary Corps always included members with different degrees of freedom.

outsiders. The judgment of them as ignorant and illegitimate may have come from the reaction to the Anatolian peasants of Selim II's army that he brought into the Janissary Corps at his accession in 1566.<sup>7</sup> The *devşirme* was largely abandoned from the 1630s onward, and Janissaries from outside became the majority, but the descriptions of them remained negative. In later centuries the corps consisted of Muslim volunteers, but in the early seventeenth century, the *Laws of the Janissaries* and the authors of advice works still considered those Muslims as interlopers, exceptions to the rule. This raises the question of just when the change occurred and what it consisted of. What was behind the myth, and who were the Janissaries after the mid-sixteenth century?

Unlike most of the articles in this book, which examine single individuals or small groups, this study surveys large numbers of Janissaries in several groups over roughly two centuries, from *acemioglans* (novices, in the learning stage) to mature Janissaries serving in the palace, kitchen, or gardens, campaign troops, and garrisons of provincial fortresses (*kale*). The purpose is to observe long-term trends in Janissary origins, so this paper will discuss both the Janissaries as a whole and the main subgroups separately. This process operationalizes a very important observation made in different ways by a number of contributors to this volume at various times, namely, that the Janissaries were not just one thing. This valuable insight needs to be made explicit. The Janissaries must be disaggregated according to their different identities and functions and analyzed accordingly. Members of the corps were generally assigned to different occupations depending on their talents and the assessments of their officers, although it would be interesting to know how much individual choice played a role in Janissary careers. At least in part, their poor reputation arose because they did not all fit the stereotype of the traditional Janissary, enlisted through the *devşirme*, divorced from social ties, and functioning as the sultan's bodyguard and the central core of the Ottoman army. Even in the early years, they were not all Christian boys detached from their backgrounds and reshaped into zealous defenders of Islam and the empire, interchangeable parts of the Ottoman military machine. There were, of course, Janissaries who fulfilled that role, but corps members had a number of other origins and other roles as well. They served as tax collectors, tax farmers, moneylenders, craftsmen, guildsmen, real estate owners, extortioners running protection rackets, provisioners of Istanbul, and so on. Some of them were Janissary troops with economic interests, and others (at least in later years) were people in society who bought Janissary titles; these two groups should be differentiated.

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7 Darling, *Janissaries of Damascus*, 22.



On the military side as well, the Janissaries had a multitude of roles besides that of the traditional bodyguards already mentioned. As the corps grew from 7,883 in 1527 to 53,849 in 1660, it developed from the core of the army to its largest contingent.<sup>8</sup> Its men were the primary firearms users, first with cannon and later with hand-held gunpowder weapons. They also made up part of the fortress garrisons, both on the frontiers of the empire and then in its major cities.<sup>9</sup> In newly conquered provinces, Janissaries were important to Ottoman control, not only as garrison troops but as contingents assigned to the *beylerbeys* to carry out governing functions and pursue criminals, especially in provinces without *timar*-holders, who performed similar functions. They did messenger work and were dispatched to guard treasury receipts and foreign envoys, both on the roads and in the cities.<sup>10</sup> They also served in the navy as part of the fighting force on board ships, ferried horses across the Bosphorus, ran the palace, supplied Istanbul with wood, meat, and leather goods, and performed many other functions, including those that supplied the Janissary Corps itself. In these roles they were not interchangeable. Individual Janissaries specialized in different occupations; consequently, their skills and career prospects differed, and possibly their recruitment and identities as well.<sup>11</sup> Then there were the provincial Janissaries, recruited and paid locally; there is very little information on who they were, when they began, and what they did. Not all Janissaries fit the textbook model, and we should not evaluate them all by the same standards.

### *Non-devşirme Janissaries in the post-classical age*

One of the main problems with the way Janissaries were assessed in the advice works of the seventeenth century, the *nasihatnameler*, was that the authors did lump them all together and evaluate them by the same standard. They often noted that the Janissaries did not all match the original model but considered their deviation one

8 R. Murphey, *Ottoman Warfare, 1500-1700* (New Brunswick, NJ 1999), 16, Table 2.1. These numbers include the *acemioglans*, but according to Mihailović, Mehmed II wished for 10,000 of them; Mihailović, *Memoirs*, 127.

9 For their various weapons and roles, see Mihailović, *Memoirs*, 159, 161.

10 Examples in L. T. Darling, 'Crime among the Janissaries in the Ottoman Golden Age', in F. Castiglione and V. Şimşek (eds), *A Historian of Ottoman War, Peace, and Empire: A Festschrift in Honor of Virginia Aksan* (Leiden 2019), 13-34.

11 G. Yılmaz Diko, 'Blurred Boundaries between Soldiers and Civilians: Artisan Janissaries in Seventeenth-Century Istanbul', in S. Faroqhi (ed.), *Bread from the Lion's Mouth: Artisans Struggling for a Livelihood in Ottoman Cities* (Oxford and New York 2015), 175-193.

aspect of imperial decline.<sup>12</sup> They labeled Janissaries not enslaved in the *devşirme* as outsiders, *ecnebiler*. They complained that these outsiders failed to exhibit the devotion and zeal of regular Janissaries, that they lacked training and discipline, and that they were to blame for the corps' military losses and the corruption of the army and society. Modern writers have followed their lead and made 'the corruption of the Janissaries' one of the main causes of Ottoman decline.<sup>13</sup> There were three main aspects to this corruption: outsiders (non-slaves, Muslims) invaded the Janissary Corps, the Janissaries became involved in the civilian economy, and they began to exert political pressure on the state.

The latter two of these aspects – involvement in the economy and political activity – only became visible at the end of the sixteenth century, and, in fact, advice writers before that time did not complain about Janissary corruption.<sup>14</sup> Criticism of Janissaries and their origins in the mid-sixteenth century was expressed in imperial edicts rather than advice works. In the 1560s and 1570s, while European prisoners of war were still being enrolled in the Janissary Corps, several edicts banned other foreigners: Russians, Persians, Gypsies, and Turks in Süleyman's reign, and Persians and Arabs in Selim II's time.<sup>15</sup> When the advice writers finally turned their attention to the Janissary Corps, however, it was not foreigners of other nationalities but Muslim Turks that gave them concern. This criticism was expressed most stridently in another anonymous work, the *Kitab-ı Müsteṭab* (The Agreeable Book), which complained, "The first distortion to appear was outsiders mixing in the *kul taifesi*".<sup>16</sup> This attitude treated non-*devşirme*, non-*kul* troops as illegitimate, a distortion of an original picture, despite the fact that at least some of them had been brought into the Janissaries by sultanic edicts of Selim II (1566-1574). Orders to the governors of Damascus and Basra banning the enrollment of Persians and Arabs ordered the recruitment of brothers and sons of *kuls*, along with Rumis, Kurds, the descendants of men from Rumeli and Anadolu, plus locally recruited archers. The

12 Anonymous, 'Kavânî-i Yeniçeriyân', 145 #84-85, 151-152 #104, 152 #105, 156 #114, 157 #121, 173 #217, 211 #437, 240 #590, 252 #643, 253 #649; Koçi Bey, *Koçi Bey Risalesi*, ed. Y. Kurt (Ankara 1994), 29-33, 51-59.

13 See C. Kafadar, 'On the Purity and Corruption of the Janissaries', *TŞAB*, 15/2 (September 1001), 273-279.

14 Darling, 'Ottoman Political Thought and the Critique of the Janissaries', 118.

15 Uzunçarşılı, *Kapukulu Ocakları*, I: 20-21; H. O. Yıldırım et al., *7 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri (975-976/1567-1569)*, *Özet – Transkripsiyon – İndeks* (Ankara 1998), #789; H. O. Yıldırım et al., *12 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri (978-979/1570-1572)*, *Özet – Transkripsiyon ve İndeks* (Ankara 1998), #1008.

16 Anonymous, 'Kitâb-i Müsteṭab', in Y. Yücel (ed.), *Osmanlı Devlet Teşkilâtına Dair Kaynaklar* (Ankara 1988), 2.

problem seems to have been that such men were given positions in the corps without the long period of training and indoctrination that the *devşirme* boys experienced, so they did not share the Janissary culture.<sup>17</sup> In 1621, when the *Kitab-ı Müsteṭab* was written, however, the author was attempting to exonerate the *devşirme* recruits for the Janissaries' recent failures (undoubtedly their loss at the Battle of Hotin earlier in the year) by blaming the non-*devşirme* troops, who had apparently become a significant portion of the entire corps since 1606.<sup>18</sup> The question then becomes, how significant?

The issue of when the problem of *ecnebler* first arose was discussed in 1630 in the *Risale* of Koçi Bey, a palace servant from a *devşirme* background himself. He was doubtless interested in defending *devşirme* recruitment, but he provided several conflicting origin stories for the rise of outsiders. First he attributed it to Özdemiroğlu Osman Paşa in 1584, when he brought non-*devşirme* recruits into the regular units; in the next passage he accused Osman Paşa's rival Koca Sinan Paşa, who put sons of Janissaries into Yanık Kalesi in 1594, and then let them join the Janissaries three years later.<sup>19</sup> On the following page Koçi Bey blamed the entry of outsiders on the actors and entertainers at the 1582 circumcision ceremony for the sultan's sons, since these actors were allowed into the Janissary Corps via the agha's apprentices, the *ağa çırağı*. In yet another version, he attributed the beginning of the outsider problem to firefighters, who were all granted the status of Janissaries under Ferhad Agha in 1582.<sup>20</sup> After that, he complained, courtiers and boon companions (*nedims* and *mukarrebs*) entered under Ferhad Agha's auspices and were placed in a separate troop, later named the agha's apprentices, *ağa çırağı*. Subsequently the *ferzend-i sipahi* and other units were created for the protégés of the elite, and then the innovation of *becayiş*, place-switching, allowed people from other government agencies to transfer into the Janissaries, until finally "city boys, Turks, gypsies, Persians, Kurds, foreigners, Laz, Yürüks, muleteers, cameleers, porters, syrup-sellers, brigands, pickpockets, and other sorts of people" could purportedly

17 H. O. Yıldırım et al., *5 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri (973/1565-1566), Özet ve İndeks* (Ankara 1994), #65; Yıldırım et al., *7 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri*, #789, dated 3 Ş 975/2 February 1568. See L. T. Darling, *The Janissaries of Damascus in the Sixteenth Century, or, How Conquering a Province Changed the Ottoman Empire*, Otto Spies Memorial Series, Vol. VI (Berlin 2019). Some of those Janissary recruits were made *timar*-holders when the war was over, or put into units attached to the Janissaries, or even made *acemiöğlans*; *ibid.*, 9-10.

18 Darling, 'Ottoman Political Thought and the Critique of the Janissaries', 127.

19 Koçi Bey, *Koçi Bey Risalesi*, 52-53.

20 *Ibid.*, 56. The usual story tells it the other way around, that the Janissaries were employed to fight fires; see, e.g., Yıldırım et al., *12 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri*, 105 #125.

hold office or become Janissaries.<sup>21</sup> This jumble of tales and exaggerations is most likely the source of the stereotype that the inclusion of outsiders in the Janissary Corps began in or around 1580. The fact that Koçi Bey retailed all these stories without commenting on the contradictions among them or seeking to reconcile them suggests that he was not interested in finding any one of them to be true. Rather, he apparently wanted to malign different individuals and groups by holding them responsible for ‘the corruption of the Janissaries’. Yet he himself provided evidence that the practices he condemned resulted largely from official decisions, or were at least officially sanctioned through the creation of military units to house the incomers. Moreover, it seems that the state was not interested in following his advice, as its policies headed in opposite directions, but later writers duplicated his complaints nonetheless.

Authors from non-*devşirme* backgrounds had a different take on the problem with the Janissaries. ‘Aziz Efendi, writing in 1632-1633, when the number of Janissaries had passed 40,000, found the *ağa çırağı* and *ferzend-i sipahi* acceptable, but he wished to eliminate them for other reasons.<sup>22</sup> Katib Çelebi, in his 1653 treatise, complained only about the financial difficulty of paying their salaries.<sup>23</sup> The main problem these two authors saw was the size and expense of the corps by this time, not the origins of its members. By the time they were writing, the *devşirme* had in any case begun to be abandoned. Considering the lists of ploys enumerated by the advice writers, especially Koçi Bey, for getting people into the corps from outside the *devşirme* (including Muslims giving their children Christian names and delaying their circumcision), and the rise of the crime called *saplamak*, pretending to be a Janissary, it appears that large numbers of people were striving to join the Janissary Corps from the late sixteenth century onward, and the state had less need to draft unwilling children who needed long training periods to be assimilated into the governing elite.

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21 Koçi Bey, *Koçi Bey Risalesi*, 56-57. This sounds like rank exaggeration, but it was also said that the Bektashiş’ affiliation with the Janissaries allowed their varied followers to enter the corps; G. Goodwin, *The Janissaries* (London 1994), 150. I hesitate to cite this sensationalist work, but although Goodwin does not always name his sources, he seems to be getting his information from somewhere.

22 ‘Aziz Efendi, *Kanûn-Nâme-i Sultânî li ‘Azîz Efendi, Aziz Efendi’s Book of Sultanic Laws and Regulations: An Agenda for Reform by a Seventeenth-Century Ottoman Statesman*, ed. R. Murphey, *Sources of Oriental Languages and Literatures*, Vol. IX (Cambridge, MA 1985), 6, 10. Kafadar does not seem to notice this divergence and lumps all the critics together; C. Kafadar, ‘Janissaries and Other Riffraff of Ottoman Istanbul: Rebels without a Cause?’, *IJTS*, 13/1-2 (2007), 117.

23 Katib Çelebi, [*Düstûru’l-amel li-ıslahi’l-halel*] *Bozuklukların Düzeltilmesinde Tutulacak Yollar*, ed. A. Can (Istanbul 1982), 26-27.

### *Sources for a new look at Janissary origins*

In light of the untrustworthy evidence in the advice literature, it is necessary to find other sources to study the identities of non-*devşirme* Janissaries and discover just when new groups of people began to enter the corps. One such source is formed by the hundreds of salary registers for the Janissary Corps and other groups found in the Ottoman archives, listing all the men and women in receipt of government salaries.<sup>24</sup> The earliest extant salary registers that reliably contain Janissaries come from the 1520s; they characterize their subjects as *yeniçeriyan* or *gilman-ı acemiyan*.<sup>25</sup> From the 1550s on there are volumes for almost every year, although some are obviously missing. The different types of Janissaries are most often listed in different registers, which would facilitate comparative work on them. This paper used a sample of registers listing Janissaries with different functions and covering roughly every ten years between 1527 and 1687, as shown in the Appendix. The sampling is not random; registers were chosen depending on preservation, legibility, and distribution, so a different choice might alter the results, though probably not to a large degree.

The Janissary salary registers list the names, units served in, and wages of Janissaries and novices. Most entries include a first name, followed by a second name that is usually the father's name or, in its absence, a pseudo-patronym. It could also be a place name or an occupation, while a few men had no second name. This meager information does not yield rich biographies of Janissaries or details of their origins, but it does enable us to differentiate between those from Muslim and non-Muslim families. Typical Janissaries, enrolled in the *devşirme* from non-Muslim families, were given pseudo-patronymics such as *ibn Abdullah* (son of an unnamed "servant of God"), as the Ottomans avoided entering the names of non-Muslim fathers in their registers. Much more often, Janissaries were called by their place of conscription (not the village, but the nearest provincial capital, as they would be listed in the *devşirme* register for that province).<sup>26</sup> For this study, all men whose father's name was *Abdullah* were counted as sons of non-Muslims (even though

24 Harem ladies had salary registers of their own; L. P. Peirce, *The Imperial Harem: Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire* (New York 1993).

25 A few garrison registers exist from the fifteenth century, but the men listed may not be Janissaries. They are labeled *mustahfızan* (fortress guardians); they were paid centrally, and in some provinces that label included Janissaries. On the distinction between imperial and local Janissaries, see A. Anastasopoulos and Y. Spyropoulos, 'Soldiers on an Ottoman Island: The Janissaries of Crete, Eighteenth-Early Nineteenth Centuries', *Turkish Historical Review*, 8 (2017), 8-12.

26 For a discussion of *devşirme* registers, see G. Yilmaz, 'The Devşirme System and the Levied Children of Bursa in 1603-4 A.D.', *Bellefen*, 79 (2015), 901-930.

some Muslim fathers might really have been named Abdullah). Any overcounting in this category was balanced by counting all men whose father's name was another combination with *Abd* as coming from Muslim families (even though such names may have been attributed to non-Muslim men). A few men were designated by their occupation or had no second name, and these were counted as of non-Muslim origin; they may have been captives or *devşirme* recruits. Janissaries from Muslim families, on the other hand, had second names that were typical Muslim or Turkish names, such as Mehmed, Mustafa, Ali, or Bali. Since there were numerous Janissaries whose second name was Bosna, the fathers with Muslim names were assumed not to be Bosnians. Further research in other sources should show whether these assumptions are correct. If they are, the salary registers allow us to track the entry of non-*devşirme* children into the corps within a relatively small margin of error.

This project began with the inspection of registers shortly before and after 1580, in order to find the jump in non-*devşirme* Janissaries posited to have begun around that year. No such jump could be detected, indicating that all the narrative sources and advice works, all the textbooks based on them, and all the assumptions described above were incorrect. There was no sudden increase of Muslim Janissaries in the two decades around 1580. That discovery necessitated an expansion of the research to find the point of increase (still assuming that there was one). In the end, the registers examined encompassed the entire period from the first surviving volumes in the early sixteenth century until the late seventeenth century. In all that time there was no point of origin for any major change and no sudden increase in Janissaries with Muslim fathers. Instead, from the earliest registers on, astoundingly large numbers of Janissaries whose fathers had Muslim names were listed, in total contradiction to the stereotype, the textbooks, and the prescriptive literature, both law codes and advice works.

The entry of Muslim children into the corps should have been illegitimate since, as Muslims, they could not be enslaved, but in these registers there appears to have been no attempt to hide or disguise the origin of Janissaries with Muslim fathers' names.<sup>27</sup> If the Janissary was an officer, the word *bin* (son of) was often inserted for Muslims, but it was not usually used for the rank and file. An undefined number of sons of Muslims can also be assumed to be the sons of Janissaries, yet there is no way to tell which ones or how many from these registers, since the fathers' occupations or titles are not noted.<sup>28</sup> Unlike the brothers of Janissaries, sons seem to have

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27 In Register BOA, D.YNÇ.d.33621 dated 1563, the military regiments (*bölüks*) are segregated by origin, Muslim or non-Muslim. This is the only register in the study to exhibit this segregation; usually men with Muslim fathers are intermixed with men having non-Muslim fathers.

28 Yannis Spyropoulos (personal communication) argued that most or all of the sons of Muslims

been acceptable as *acemioğlans* in this period, marking a change from the past. Mihailović testified that in the fifteenth century the sons of Janissaries received a wage, but without saying what it was for.<sup>29</sup> The *Laws of the Janissaries* revealed that initially the sons of Janissaries were only permitted to work on the boats that carried wood to Istanbul (*odun gemileri*), but that later (date unspecified) they were allowed to enter the palace school and become *acemioğlans*, which had previously been forbidden, because in those days Janissaries were not allowed to marry until they retired from service.<sup>30</sup> As early as the beginning of the fifteenth century, however, Janissaries living in villages and having families appear in the judicial records, so sons of Janissaries could have increased beyond the sons of retirees.<sup>31</sup> Unable to inherit access to land, few of them could have become ordinary villagers, and their Janissary fathers continually tried to get their sons into the corps, so at some point an entry route for them was legalized.

Some registers prior to 1590 record brothers of individuals with Muslim names, and those individuals may be assumed to be Janissaries or other state servants, as presumably their names were listed because they were known to the state. After 1590, however, no brothers of Janissaries were marked as such.<sup>32</sup> After the mid-sixteenth

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recorded in the registers analyzed here were probably the sons of Janissaries. His argument is based on the fact that that the *kuloğlu* institution, which supposedly started under Selim I, may actually have earlier origins, as implied by Mihailović (see next footnote). Additionally, based on a reference in *Kavanîn-i Yeniçeriyân* where the anonymous author claims to have been a third-generation *kuloğlu* himself (Anonymous, 'Kavânîn-i Yeniçeriyân', 149), Spyropoulos argues that *kuloğlus* were treated by Janissaries and society at large as being of *devşirme* origin and were considered equal to first-generation *devşirme* recruits, indicating that any criticism of non-*devşirme* recruits was directed at those without *devşirme* ancestry, not at *kuloğlus*. This argument would also explain why sons of Janissaries are not specifically criticized in the Ottoman advice literature, despite not being recruited through the *devşirme*, as well as the high percentages of Muslim patronymics among *acemioğlans* which, as will be explained later, are to be found in the registers studied in this paper. In my view, this is probably not the case for the earliest registers, because there would not have been enough sons of Janissaries to make up nearly half the corps, nor for the later registers, when many other outsiders were winning access to membership in the corps in a period when Janissaries were not allowed to marry without specific permission. However, they were clearly present in much larger numbers than has previously been realized.

29 Mihailović, *Memoirs*, 159.

30 Anonymous, 'Kavânîn-i Yeniçeriyân', 146, 151, 157, 172, 199.

31 Darling, *Janissaries of Damascus*, 20-21; C. Georgieva, 'Organisation et fonctions du corps des janissaires dans les terres bulgares du XVIe jusqu'au milieu du XVIIIe siècles', *Études Historiques*, 5 (1970), 319-336; Ö. L. Barkan, 'Edirne Askerî Kassamı'na âit Tereke Defterleri (1545-1659)', *Belgeler*, 3/5-6 (1966), 15, 17; Darling, 'Ottoman Political Thought and the Critique of the Janissaries', 120.

32 In the 1560s, the brothers of Janissaries were actively recruited into the Janissary Corps in Syria; Darling, *Janissaries of Damascus*, 23.

century the registers that designated brothers of Muslims were all for garrisons (*kale*), which suggests two things: that the need for garrison Janissaries grew faster than the supply of Janissaries from the *devşirme*, forcing the Ottomans to resort to other recruitment; and/or that the state at that time did not want the brothers of Janissaries to serve in the palace or in the sultan's bodyguard on campaign, so it relegated them to fortress garrisons. The disappearance of the brothers of Janissaries from the records after 1590 does not suggest that they were no longer enrolled, but that they were so well accepted by that time that they did not need to be specially marked. Janissary orphans were supported by the corps and were listed separately in the salary registers (like the retirees); their numbers increased from 470 to 1,000 between 1543 and 1589.<sup>33</sup> Although they may have become Janissaries as adults they could not have made up 40 percent of the corps, which numbered between 21,000 and 45,000 by that time.<sup>34</sup> More research should be done on the issue of the numbers in the different categories of Janissaries in this period.<sup>35</sup>

This study encompasses 61 registers dating from 1526 to 1687, all of which are listed in the Appendix, with the date, type of Janissaries in the register, percentage of sons of Muslims, and where they were noted, percentage of brothers of Muslims. All sorts of Janissaries are included, but they can be divided into three main categories: novices or *acemioğlanlar*, traditionally recruited through the *devşirme*; mature Janissaries in the government forces, such as palace slaves, garden and kitchen workers, campaign troops, and naval Janissaries, all of whom were paid from the central treasury; and garrison (*kale*) troops, stationed on the frontiers and in the provinces and paid by the central treasury, who might differ from other mature Janissaries due to the appointment of local men from Muslim families.<sup>36</sup> Not included are provincial Janissaries recruited locally and paid out of the provincial treasury. Some registers include only one kind of Janissaries, and others include a variety of groups, but these three categories adequately divide them for preliminary comparative purposes. Also for comparative purposes, the period between 1526 and 1687 may be assessed in three parts based on the historical changes in the corps: from the earliest register to sometime around 1580, when the system of recruitment was supposed to have changed; from then to some date in the 1630s, when the *devşirme*

33 G. Agoston, *The Last Muslim Conquest: The Ottoman Empire and Its Wars in Europe* (Princeton 2021), 322.

34 Murphey, *Ottoman Warfare*, 45; 'Aziz Efendi, *Kanûn-Nâme-i Sultânî li 'Aziz Efendi*, 46, note 14.

35 For some discussion of numbers see B. Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire: Political and Social Transformation in the Early Modern World* (Cambridge 2010), 178-179; Spyropoulos, 'Janissaries: A Key Institution', 108-110, and Murphey, *Ottoman Warfare*, 16

36 On military recruitment in Syria for the war in Yemen and other duties, see Darling, *Janissaries of Damascus*, 9-15.



was first abandoned; and from then to the last register examined. The percentage of Janissaries having Muslim second names is discussed first for the whole group of Janissaries, then for different time periods and for the three major categories: novices, mature Janissaries, and garrison troops.

### *Sons of Muslims in the Janissary Corps*

Here is the surprising finding. Of the 61 registers examined, stretching from the 1520s to the 1680s, sons of Muslims appear in *all* of them. Contrary to the stereotypes and to the testimony of Koçi Bey, the advent of non-*kuls* into the corps did not happen suddenly at some particular point, but dated from the early years of the corps. From at least the early sixteenth century, if not earlier when Janissary salary registers are lacking, there were sons of Muslims in the corps, and quite a lot of them, too. Prior to 1580 they averaged 40 percent of names in the registers, and across the entire period studied from 1526 to 1687 the average percentage of Janissaries with Muslim patronymics was 55 percent. In other words, more than half of all Janissaries paid by the central treasury in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had Muslim fathers! While it is known that there were sons of Muslims in the Janissary Corps, one could anticipate that they would account for a relatively insignificant percentage, perhaps under 10 percent, certainly not over half. It is highly unlikely that the compilers of the registers invented new names for all these fathers, as they did for the recruits' fathers; Muslim second names must indicate actual Muslim fathers. The proportion of men with Muslim fathers was below 40 percent of the total in only seven registers out of the 61 studied, and they were insufficient to pull the average down below 40 percent. Those seven registers were not clustered at the beginning of the period. Four came from the mid-sixteenth century (1549-1564), two were from the 1580s, and one was from the early seventeenth century. The figures do creep upward over time, and the dividing points are somewhat different from those dictated by historical changes. In the first decades the average was 40 percent overall, after 1590 (not 1580 or 1582), it rose to over 50 percent; after 1626 to over 60 percent; after 1638 to over 70 percent; and after 1661 to over 80 percent.<sup>37</sup> The increase was apparent but very gradual. The fact that the proportion

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<sup>37</sup> Retirees were not included; therefore, the less than 20 percent of men lacking Muslim fathers' names after 1661 must include men from the last of the *devşirmes*. There was at least one *devşirme* later in the century, so there was probably no single year in the seventeenth century when men with Muslim fathers numbered 100 percent.

of Janissaries with Muslim fathers was 40 percent or higher from the early sixteenth century throughout the seventeenth is completely unexpected.<sup>38</sup>

The percentage of Janissaries from Muslim families differed from one type of soldier to another, but contrary to expectations, not by very much. Garrison (*kale*) Janissaries, from which the highest percentage of men with Muslim fathers might be expected, instead exhibited an average of 55 percent with Muslim patronymics, the same proportion as the Janissaries overall. For the *acemioğlans* a much lower percentage might be expected, as they were supposedly the *devşirme* recruits, but in fact Muslim patronymics among them averaged 51 percent over the whole span, while the figure stood at 61 percent for mature Janissaries. Their higher average is possibly a result of having used more salary registers for mature Janissaries from the later seventeenth century. It may also have to do with the occupations that group engaged in.

In the earlier years, all the heads of military regiments (*bölüks* and *cemaats*) had non-Muslim fathers, but gradually men with Muslim fathers attained leadership positions. In the second half of the sixteenth century, the garrison registers listed more Janissaries with Muslim fathers than the palace registers, but that was not the case at all times. Although one might have expected there to be a noticeable difference in non-Muslim origin between garrison Janissaries and *acemioğlans*, the gap was never very wide, and over time it disappeared completely. In the mid-sixteenth century the difference was 56 percent versus 45, then in 1594 it was 48 percent versus 44, and it reached parity in the 1630s at 67 percent. In all groups, the percentage of men with Muslim patronymics gradually increased over time, paralleling the rates for the Janissaries as a whole given above.

A significant number of garrison Janissaries were brothers of Janissaries, as shown in the Appendix. While few sons of Janissaries are distinguished from the sons of other Muslims in the registers, brothers of Janissaries were often marked until the end of the sixteenth century. Most of the time they made up a small but significant portion of the total, from 9 to 12 percent. The exception is the period covering the suppression of the Yemeni revolt and the conquest of Cyprus in the 1560s and 1570s, when at least in the Arab lands, from which many of the troops for those campaigns were drawn, there was a marked increase in the enlistment of brothers of Janissaries.

At certain points in the early sixteenth century, and consistently after 1590, the sons of Muslims constituted over half the Janissaries being paid by the treasury. Who were these large numbers of men from Muslim families who were enlisted

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38 It is doubtful, however, that these numbers were sufficient to account for the whole increase in the total number of Janissaries during the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

in the Janissary Corps? Obviously, the complaint that men of both non-*devşirme* and non-Janissary origins were entering the corps was not without foundation, but if we omit the garrison of Budin from consideration, the increase does not appear to have begun before the 1590s and amounted to only a few percentage points, so where was the problem? Were the Muslim fathers recent converts? New Muslims are not marked in the salary registers, and anyway it is doubtful that all these Muslim fathers converted to Islam immediately before their sons were enlisted in the Janissary Corps, so most must have been already Muslim, if not Turk. Were they Bosnians? Probably not; the sons of Bosnian Muslims were indeed allowed in, but there were not likely enough of them to average 40 percent of the total. The sons of Muslims, however, were a constant and significant presence in the corps. This was true not only in the provinces and the garrisons, but also in the capital, and in the palace. Their fathers must have been Muslims from all over the empire, and a growing number must have been Janissaries or other state servants. In the sixteenth century, as we have seen, several hundred orphaned sons of Janissaries were being supported by the corps. Without knowing the death rate among serving men, which increased greatly starting in 1565, one can guess that at that time there might have been only a few thousand sons of living Janissaries, the majority of whom probably wanted to follow their fathers into the corps. Were they enough to equal or almost equal the number collected via the *devşirme*? Many of them were employed in the provinces or on the frontiers, where a sudden need for more Janissaries was likely to occur, allowing no time to train *devşirme* recruits. At that point the first group to be enlisted would have been the sons of Janissaries, who had grown up immersed in the Janissary culture, followed by the brothers of Janissaries, a number of whom doubtless had Muslim fathers as well.<sup>39</sup>

### *Conclusion*

The move in Janissary recruitment away from the *devşirme* in the 1630s did not institute a major break, except symbolically. It did not suddenly change the makeup of the Janissary Corps, which altered gradually over many decades. It did not even cut off the entry of men from non-Muslim families into the elite, although they usually had to convert to Islam before their recruitment rather than after. The change did mean that the state no longer had to dragoon recruits into the Janissary Corps; there were plenty of men who wanted to become Janissaries and enlisted of their own free will, even begging and using trickery to join, according to the advice writers. This

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39 See Darling, *Janissaries of Damascus*.

suggests not only that the corps had become the route to wealth and power, which it had, but also that it was no longer as dangerous as it had been when the Janissaries were used as cannon fodder. These findings also suggest that the thesis proposed by Yannis Spyropoulos – that the Janissaries of the eighteenth century operated within vast economic, social, and cultural networks spread throughout the empire – had a long prehistory in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, which was previously unconceptualized and still remains unexplored.<sup>40</sup> The complaints in the sources indicate that there were still grueling and unpleasant jobs in the Janissary Corps,<sup>41</sup> but that there were also sufficient rewards to entice many volunteers. The problem, starting just before the seventeenth century, was not recruiting but turning people away, reducing the number of Janissaries, not increasing it.

As far back as we have records, the sons of Muslims were joining the Janissary Corps in large numbers, and officials were allowing it. They averaged over half of the corps from the early sixteenth century to the late seventeenth. How many of those sons of Muslims were also sons of Janissaries is impossible to tell, since the Ottomans stopped recording sons of Janissaries after the 1520s. In the 1560s Sultan Selim II issued an order commanding the recruitment of sons and brothers of Janissaries in Syria for the army going to Yemen, which resulted in a register showing the sons of Muslims at 38 percent and the brothers of Muslims at 36 percent.<sup>42</sup> When the governor of Budin heard about this, he begged for a similar order for his province, and as the figures in the Appendix show, he enlisted many sons of Muslims.<sup>43</sup> After that there could be no turning them away. They were recruited especially, but by no means exclusively, for garrison duty in the provinces. That might be expected, but how did so many of them – 40 percent or more even in 1526 – get to become *acemioglans*? That is unexpected and needs to be accounted for. The study of Ottomans below the uppermost echelons, which began with *timar*-holders and peasants and continued with women, should be extended to Janissaries. The salary registers contain data on promotions and service, while chronicles convey the activities of Janissaries as a group, and *mühimmes* and court registers give information about individuals.<sup>44</sup>

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40 Spyropoulos, 'Janissaries: A Key Institution', 104-133. The main exception is the articles of Cemal Kafadar: 'On the Purity and Corruption of the Janissaries', *TSAB*, 15/2 (September 1991), 273-280; Idem, 'The Question of Ottoman Decline', *Harvard Middle Eastern and Islamic Review*, 4 (1997-1998), 30-75; Idem, 'Janissaries and Other Riffraff'.

41 Anonymous, 'Kitâb-i Müsteṭâb', 7-8.

42 BOA, MAD.d.3723.

43 Yıldırım et al., *7 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri*, 322 #1846; Darling, *Janissaries of Damascus*, 29.

44 For *mühimmes* see Darling, 'Crime among the Janissaries'.

Knowing all this should change the narrative about the Janissaries' entry into Ottoman economy and society. It has been known for some time that they were not completely cut off from their origins, but if over half the corps was made up of the sons of Muslims, who were not actually slaves to begin with, the links that the Janissaries forged with society and the economy must have been much stronger far earlier than was previously thought. Janissaries living in villages, far from barracks or fortresses, had obviously been involved in the local society and economy since the fifteenth century. Thus, it was not just their economic involvement that caused the advice writers to worry, but the fact that by the seventeenth century they had come to hold an increasingly dominant position in society, not merely in villages but in cities, and were beginning to make their mark in Ottoman officialdom. Who were they displacing? Who was losing dominance while these Janissaries were gaining it? This was, after all, the time of the marginalization of the *timar*-holders. Were there ties between the displaced people and the advice writers? Was their criticism not a complaint about the corruption of the Janissaries or the decline of the empire, but a commentary on factional divisions within the Ottoman elite?

The final question is, why did we not know this before? Why did Ottoman sources disguise or never mention the large number of sons of Muslims in the Janissary Corps? How many of them were sons of Janissaries or other state officials? Did they belong to factions within the palace or the city? There were no regulations covering them in the known sources, but by the seventeenth century or even earlier they were being promoted to leadership positions within the corps. Why did the advice writers claim that their presence was such an innovation? Why was the stereotype of non-Muslim origin so thoroughly ingrained in the literature? Its dominance in early modern Western writing can be explained by the European fascination for the Ottoman slave system and 'white slavery', and modern scholars have followed that path unquestioningly until recently. But why did Ottoman writers themselves, who must have known otherwise, not discuss the Janissaries who were sons of Muslims until the advice works, and then in such negative terms? A question for further research.

## APPENDIX

Registers consulted, with percentages of men with Muslim fathers' or brothers' names:

Key: *acemi*=novices

*dergah-ı ali* or d.a.=of the palace (whether in the palace or not)

*donanma*=fleet

*kale*=garrison

mature=not novices or garrison (various or unknown service)

palace=in the palace

Register	Date (hicri/miladi)	Type of Register	Percent sons of Muslims	Percent brothers of Muslims
TSMA.d.9707	932/1526	<i>acemi</i> -Istanbul	48	
TSMA.d.736	932/1526	mature-d.a.	62	4
MAD.d.12872	956/1549	<i>dergah-ı ali</i>	18	
KK.d.4727	959/1551-2	<i>donanma/kale</i>	49	
D.YNÇ.d.33612	961/1553-4	palace	28	1
MAD.d.3723	961/1553, 974/1566	<i>kale</i> -Şam	38	36
MAD.d.6425	971/1563-4	<i>acemi</i> -Istanbul	1	
MAD.d.17256	971/1563-4	<i>acemi</i> -kitchen	42	
D.YNÇ.d.33621	971/1563-4	<i>acemi</i>	55	
D.YNÇ.d.33625	980/1572-3	<i>acemi</i> -Istanbul	62	
TSMA.d.671	980-82/1572-4	palace	36	15
MAD.d.6381	985/1577	<i>acemi-ağa bölük</i>	45	
MAD.d.6365	985/1577	<i>acemi-ağa bölük</i>	47	
MAD.d.6411	985/1577-8	<i>kale</i> -Budın	56	9
MAD.d.6153	988/1580	<i>acemi</i>	42	
MAD.d.6441	994/1586	<i>kale</i> -Budın	60	14
MAD.d.156	995/1586-7	<i>kale</i> -Budın	56	9
MAD.d.17871	996/1588	<i>acemi</i>	33	
MAD.d.16269	996/1588	mature-d.a.	40	
MAD.d.7431	997/1588	<i>kale</i> -Budın	57	12
MAD.d.7190	999/1590	<i>kale</i> -Budın	52	9
MAD.d.15080	1003/1594	<i>kale</i> -Bahr-i Siyah	44	
MAD.d.5313	1003/1594	palace-d.a.	40	
MAD.d.6564	1003/1594-5	<i>acemi</i> -Istanbul	48	
MAD.d.6151	1003/1595	mature- <i>cebeciyan</i>	55	
MAD.d.7363	1009/1600	<i>dergah-ı ali</i>	45	
MAD.d.6723	1012/1603-4	<i>acemi</i> - <i>babçe</i>	18	
MAD.d.3731	1014/1605-6	<i>kale</i> -d.a.	53	
MAD.d.4377	1020/1611	<i>acemi</i> - <i>bostan</i>	57	

Register	Date (hicri/miladi)	Type of Register	Percent sons of Muslims	Percent brothers of Muslims
MAD.d.6948	1020/1611	<i>dergab-ı ali</i>	49	
MAD.d.7494	1021/1612	<i>kale, donanma- d.a.</i>	50	
MAD.d.4968	1027/1617	<i>kale-Budin</i>	55	
MAD.d.6828	1030/1620-21	<i>acemi-Istanbul</i>	54	
MAD.d.6834	1031/1621-2	<i>palace-Istanbul</i>	57	
MAD.d.6810	1032/1623	<i>kale-d.a.</i>	56	
MAD.d.6602	1036/1626	<i>acemi-Istanbul</i>	67	
MAD.d.18136	1039/1629-30	<i>mature-solak</i>	61	
MAD.d.7244	1044/1634	<i>kale-Trablusşam</i>	67	
KK.d.7160	1045/1636	<i>garden-ağa bölük</i>	66	
MAD.d.5583	1046/1636	<i>acemi-Istanbul</i>	67	
KK.d.3216	1048/1638-9	<i>dergab-ı ali</i>	78	
MAD.d.7364	1051/1641	<i>kale-Rumeli</i>	73	
MAD.d.6995	1053/1643	<i>dergab-ı ali</i>	58	
MAD.d.1056	1056/1646	<i>kale-ağa bölük</i>	70	
MAD.d.6737	1058/1648	<i>acemi-Istanbul</i>	75	
MAD.d.7003	1063/1653	<i>donanma</i>	76	
MAD.d.6945	1064/1654	<i>kale-ağa bölük</i>	70	
MAD.d.4981	1067/1656	<i>acemi-Istanbul</i>	76	
MAD.d.4908	1072/1661-2	<i>acemi-Istanbul</i>	83	
MAD.d.6599	1074/1663-4	<i>dergab-ı ali</i>	78	
MAD.d.6596	1074/1664	<i>kale-Şam</i>	82	
MAD.d.6321	1080/1669	<i>dergab-ı ali</i>	82	
MAD.d.2122	1083/1670	<i>acemi-Istanbul</i>	80	
MAD.d.5979	1086/1675	<i>kale-Van</i>	82	
MAD.d.3943	1087/1676	<i>mature-ağa bölük</i>	83	
MAD.d.7019	1092/1681	<i>mature-d.a.</i>	81	
MAD.d.5977	1098/1687	<i>dergab-ı ali</i>	84	





# MALE SAME-SEX RELATIONS AND GENDERED PATRONAGE PRACTICES IN A SLAVE SOCIETY

## UNDERSTANDING THE SOCIAL CONTEXT OF HOMOEROTIC RELATIONS BETWEEN JANISSARIES

Baki TEZCAN\*

IN HIS OFTEN-CITED ARTICLE ON OTTOMAN EROTIC LITERATURE, İrvin Cemil Schick observes that Ottoman folk poetry “tends to be more focused on women than *divan* poetry”, in which young boys often appear as objects of love.<sup>1</sup> *Divan* poetry was the poetical tradition pursued by well-educated urban poets whose poetic idiom was much more heavily Persianised than the average Turkish speaker, and who followed the complicated prosodical structures and rhetorical devices borrowed from Arabic poetry by way of Persian. Even though folk literature is often contrasted with *divan* literature, it is important to differentiate folk literature at large from the poetry produced by *âşîks* (lovers), or troubadours, whose poetic idiom was much closer to vernacular Turkish and who often composed poetry in a simpler syllabic meter than the *dîvân* poets,<sup>2</sup> and to consider the question of homoeroticism among

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\* University of California, Davis.

First and foremost, I would like to thank Yannis Spyropoulos for his patience with me as I transformed my conference presentation, which was going to be on a topic very different from the present study, into this chapter. My colleagues Abdulhamit Arvas, Howard Chiang, Selim Kuru, and Yannis Spyropoulos, as well as the anonymous reviewer kindly read the first complete draft of this chapter and made numerous suggestions for revisions. I am grateful to them all and hope that they will forgive me for not being able to follow through with all of them. I owe special thanks to the anonymous reviewer for rendering my translation of the first poem by Şahinoğlu much more readable in English.

- 1 İ. C. Schick, ‘Representation of Gender and Sexuality in Ottoman and Turkish Erotic Literature’, *TSAJ*, 28 (2004), 90.
- 2 M. F. Köprülüzâde, ‘Türk Edebiyatı’nda ‘Âşık Tarzı’nın Menşe’ ve Tekâmülü Hakkında bir Tecrübe’, *Millî Tetebbu’lar Mecmû’ası*, 1/1 (March-April 1915), 5-46; republished in F. Köprülü, *Edebiyat Araştırmaları* (Ankara 1966), 195-238.

the troubadours. Two poems produced by a Janissary troubadour of the seventeenth century, which I share in this study, led me to consider the possibility that the beloved of a troubadour could sometimes be a young boy. These two examples, where – I must admit – the gender of the beloved is ambiguous, made me think about the social context surrounding the production of homoerotic poetry, with a view to assessing whether it would be possible to imagine Janissary troubadours singing about their male beloveds in the seventeenth century.

Unlike some examples of folk poetry produced in rural society, which was, as Schick reminds us, “much less gender-segregated and hence less homosocial than urban society”,<sup>3</sup> Janissary troubadours composed their poetry in an urban setting. While the stark contrast between rural and urban settings in terms of the preponderance of homosocial environments in the latter may well be a very important factor to account for the uniqueness of apparently homoerotic Janissary poetry within folk poetry, I argue that there were two important facts contributing to the likely production of such poetry and, more importantly, the relatively higher frequency of homoerotic relations within urban homosocial environments. In the first place, upper class Ottoman urban society was a slave-holding one; secondly, the socialisation of young boys into adulthood, as well as their professionalisation into their eventual crafts or professions, took place within a social context defined by gendered and, mostly, informal patronage practices that made younger boys personally dependent on and subservient to older males.<sup>4</sup> As Ezgi Sarıtaş asserts, boys were at the bottom of the hierarchical relations among men, or what she calls the eroto-political hierarchy.<sup>5</sup>

I further suggest that these two factors, i.e. the slave-holding nature of Ottoman upper class society and the socio-political structures of patronage which rendered boys dependent on older men, might also help us understand how homoerotic relations, not to mention their depiction in homoerotic poetry, gradually came to be socially unacceptable in the nineteenth century; slavery became less common before it was legally abolished, and the socialisation of young boys into adulthood and their professions came under the scrutiny of the state through the unprecedented expansion of education in public schools in urban environments. As a disclaimer, I should emphasise that my aim is not to historicise homoerotic relations themselves, which

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3 Ibid.

4 For the abundance of young single men in early modern Istanbul, see S. S. Kuru, ‘Istanbul: A City of Men’, in Sh. Hamadeh and Ç. Kafescioğlu (eds), *A Companion to Early Modern Istanbul* (Leiden 2021), 63-85.

5 E. Sarıtaş, *Cinsel Normalliğin Kuruluşu: Osmanlı'dan Cumhuriyet'e Heteronormatiflik ve İstikrarsızlıkları* (Istanbul 2020), 71.

I believe are simply a byproduct of being human, but rather to historically contextualise how they became widely acceptable in some segments of Ottoman society – including the Janissaries – at a particular point in time, and how these relations became socially unacceptable in the nineteenth century.

This chapter consists of four short parts, starting with a very brief overview of the literature on male same-sex relations in pre-Ottoman times, with a view to underlining the fact that the literature on these relations was produced in predominantly urban environments in slave-holding societies. In the second part of the chapter, I analyse the depiction of such relations in Ottoman society up until the sixteenth century, emphasising both the slave-holding society centred at the Ottoman imperial court and the gendered relations of patronage within which such relations were established, fostered, and deemed acceptable. The third part focuses on some examples of Janissary troubadour poetry and contextualises them within the framework of the changes that took place in the Janissary Corps during the seventeenth century. Within the context of that effort, I also focus on the terms *köçek* and *civelek*, with a view to supporting my argument that informal relations of gendered patronage had a role to play in the social acceptability of homoerotic relations. Finally, I very briefly touch upon nineteenth century developments in order to emphasise the changing social context of homosocial relations that rendered homoerotic relations unacceptable.

### *Leaving the camp in the desert for the city*

One of the many treatises by the prolific author al-Jāhiz (d. 869) represents a fictional debate between two men who disagree in their sexual taste, one of them preferring slave girls while the other likes slave boys. *Mufākharat al-jawārī wa'l-ghilmān*, or the “Boasting match over slave girls and slave boys”,<sup>6</sup> is reminiscent of earlier examples produced in the Roman Empire, such as the *Erotes* attributed to Lucian of Samosata, who lived in the second century and wrote mainly in Greek.<sup>7</sup>

6 The Arabic text is to be found in ‘Abd al-Salām Muḥammad Hārūn (ed.), *Rasā'il al-Jāhiz* [The Letters of al-Jāhiz], Vol. II (Cairo 1384), 87-137; there are two English translations of this treatise: W. M. Hutchins, ‘Boasting Match over Maids and Youth’, in Idem, *Nine Essays of al-Jāhiz* (New York 1989), 139-66; and J. Colville ‘The Pleasure of Girls & Boys Compared’, in Idem, *Sobriety and Mirth: A Selection of the Shorter Writings of al-Jāhiz* (London 2002), 202-230; for similar works among later examples of Arabic literature, see F. Rosenthal, ‘Male and Female: Described and Compared’, in J. W. Wright Jr. and E. K. Rowson (eds), *Homoeroticism in Classical Arabic Literature* (New York 1997), 24-54.

7 See J. Jope, ‘Interpretation and Authenticity of the Lucianic *Erotes*’, *Helios*, 38 (2011), 103-120.

When the “patron of slave girls” in al-Jahiz’ work evokes the “ancient” poets of the pre- and early Islamic period who wrote about their love for girls and/or women and never wrote homoerotic poetry, the “patron of slave boys” responds thus, in Aurora Magliozzi’s translation:

You are basing your argument on those rough and uncouth Bedouins, who fed on misery and indigence, and were born and raised in them. They knew nothing of wealthy life and earthly pleasures, they inhabited deserts, disliked people as they were wild beasts, fed on hedgehogs and lizards, and cut open colocynth berries. The most they managed to do was cry on the ruins and describe the woman comparing her to a cow or a gazelle, when the woman is more beautiful than either. Yes, they would even compare her to a snake, calling her ugly and mangy for fear that the evil eye would be thrown at her. The scholars and the refined people, on the other hand, have composed poetry on boys and they have done it well, described them and they excelled in that. They preferred them to girls, both in earnest and jest.<sup>8</sup>

In short, homoerotic love poetry was regarded as relatively new in the Arabic literary tradition in the ninth century. Thomas Bauer suggests that the tradition started with Waliba ibn Hubab (d. ca. 786), whose pupil and presumed beloved Abu Nuwas (d. ca. 813) enabled its breakthrough by writing the larger part of his love poems in praise of male youths.<sup>9</sup> As Abu Nuwas came to be the leading representative of the ‘modern’ (*muḥdath*) Arabic poetry that flourished during the Abbasid Caliphate, homoerotic love became a widely accepted and written about theme in Arabic poetry and, later, prose.<sup>10</sup>

Thus, there are some parallels between the relative absence of homoerotic love in Turkish folk literature produced in non-urban settings and the classical Arabic poetry that had taken root in the environment of the desert, on the one hand, and the emergence of homoerotic poetry in the urban centres of the Abbasid Caliphate and the development of the same in the Ottoman capitals of the fifteenth century, on the other. There are further parallels: just as the ‘modern’ poets of Arabic saw themselves as much more cultured than the ‘rough and uncouth Bedouins’, well-educated poets of Ottoman *divan* literature looked down upon the common Turk.<sup>11</sup> Perhaps more

8 Translated and cited by Aurora Magliozzi; A. Magliozzi, ‘The Theme and the Form: Three *Querelles* in al-Ġāḥiẓ’s Dispute over Girls and Boys’, *Studi Magrebini*, 22 (2024), 73-74.

9 Th. Bauer, ‘Male-Male Love in Classical Arabic Poetry’, in E. L. McCallum and M. Tuhkanen (eds), *The Cambridge History of Gay and Lesbian Literature* (New York 2014), 109.

10 E. K. Rowson, ‘The Categorization of Gender and Sexual Irregularity in Medieval Arabic Vice Lists’, in J. Epstein and K. Straub (eds), *Body Guards: The Cultural Politics of Gender Ambiguity* (New York and London: Routledge, 1991), 50-79; Idem, ‘Two Homoerotic Narratives from Mamluk Literature: al-Safadi’s *Law’ at al-shāḳī* and Ibn Daniyal’s *al-Mutayyam*’, in Wright and Rowson, *Homoeroticism in Classical Arabic Literature*, 158-191.

11 Köprülü, *Edebiyat Araştırmaları*, 197; see also A. Gölpınarlı, *Divan Edebiyatı Beyanındadır*

significantly, both the Abbasids and the Ottomans utilised slave armies; moreover, their upper classes owned slaves in their households. In short, in both societies there was an ample supply of young boys and young girls from slave markets.

Sex with girls and women who were purchased as slaves was seen as such a 'natural' right for adult men that a minority of Muslim legal scholars even exempted a male master sodomising (*liwāt*) his male slave from punishment,<sup>12</sup> while most legal scholars did not see such an offense as one that would require severe punishment.<sup>13</sup> The adult male's right to sexually penetrate his legal wives and slaves was paramount. It was particularly such relationships between male masters and their male slaves that emerged as the dominant (but far from exclusive) type of homoerotic relations during the early Abbasid era.<sup>14</sup>

Moreover, in the absence of formal institutions of learning for many crafts, including the very craft of literature, young boys often apprenticed with older men in both Abbasid and later urban Islamic social contexts, including the Ottoman one. While being the master of an apprentice did not grant a man the same legal rights as a master might have over his slave, it did create a certain paternalistic relationship that might easily move in other directions.<sup>15</sup> As Khaled El-Rouayheb notes, for instance, Mulla Sadra (d. 1641) argued that the divine purpose behind the existence of refined pederastic attraction was precisely to induce men to associate with boys and care for them, thereby ensuring that the arts and sciences of civilisation would be transmitted from generation to generation.<sup>16</sup>

Abu Nuwas' introduction to homoerotic love seems to have occurred in this kind of a relationship with his teacher, Waliba ibn Hubab:

By all accounts Waliba intuitively recognised in Abu Nuwas his talent as a poet and encouraged him toward this vocation. But it is also clear that Waliba was attracted sexually to the young Hakamite [Abu Nuwas] and may have had erotic relations with him. Whether or not this predisposed Abu Nuwas to visit this behaviour upon others when he was older can only be mooted, but certainly Abu Nuwas's relationships with

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(Istanbul 1945), 60.

12 Rowson, 'The Categorization of Gender', 76 n.23.

13 S. Omar, 'From Semantics to Normative Law: Perceptions of *Liwāt* (Sodomy) and *Sihāq* (Tribadism) in Islamic Jurisprudence (8th-15th Century CE)', *Islamic Law and Society*, 19 (2012), 246, 251-252.

14 E. K. Rowson, 'The Traffic in Boys: Slavery and Homoerotic Liaisons in Elite 'Abbāsīd Society', *Middle Eastern Literatures*, 11 (2008), 195-196.

15 For a fine example, see the verses describing a caliph's feelings for his slave boy in Rowson, 'The Traffic in Boys', 201.

16 Kh. El-Rouayheb, *Before Homosexuality in the Arab-Islamic World, 1500-1800* (Chicago 2005), 35.

adolescent boys when he had matured as a man seem to mirror his own experience with Waliba.<sup>17</sup>

In short, both the institution of slavery and the very personal nature of master-pupil relationships in crafts and professions seem to have had a certain degree of impact on the general acceptance of homoerotic relations in urban upper class Islamic society from the ninth century on. Ottoman society took on this socio-cultural legacy, which survived the Abbasids in later Islamic polities and was also experienced, as I underline below, in Seljuq Anatolia, both in the degree of acceptance of such relationships and the depiction of them in literature.

*The Ottoman court as a male harem, a training ground,  
and an example to modulate*

Leslie Peirce has likened the Ottoman court's internal part (*enderun*) to a male harem:

With the exception of the sultan, only those who were not considered to be fully adult males were routinely permitted in the inner worlds of the palace: in the male harem household, boys and young men, eunuchs, dwarves, and mutes; and in the family harem, household, women and children. Even men in the palace who were fully adult under Islamic law – the most advanced pages in training and some princes of the dynasty – were kept in a state symbolic of adolescent dependence, for they were forbidden to grow beards or to father children.<sup>18</sup>

If one were to remember that until Süleyman the Magnificent married Hurrem, the sultan's concubines and favourites all stayed in the Old Palace in Constantinople, the emphasis on the male aura of the Ottoman court in the second half of the fifteenth and the first half of the sixteenth centuries might be better appreciated. It might be difficult for a modern reader to comprehend why the pages (*iç oğlanlar*) or *devşirme* boys collected from mainly Christian villages in the Balkans were not allowed to grow a beard. But if one is reminded of the fact that the appearance of a beard marked the transition from boyhood to manhood, the significance of this symbol becomes clear.

Schick sees boys as constituting a third gender in Ottoman society, and adds that "since boys grow up to be men, ... every adult man [was] 'transgender', having

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17 Ph. F. Kennedy, *Abu Nuwas: A Genius of Poetry* (Oxford 2005), 4.

18 L. Peirce, *The Imperial Harem: Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire* (New York 1993), 11.

once been a boy".<sup>19</sup> While as a (beardless) boy, a young man might become the beloved of an adult male, having grown a beard he himself might become the lover of a boy, reminding one of Abu Nuwas' experience mentioned above. As discussed in detail by several scholars, pre-modern Islamic sexuality mainly differentiated between those who played the 'active' role in sexual intercourse and, thus, penetrated, and those who played the passive role and, thus, were penetrated. While both boys and women could be penetrated, only adult males were to penetrate.<sup>20</sup> Abdulhamit Arvas' borrowing of David Halperin's assertion about the ancient Greeks is quite apt in underlining the hierarchical nature of the Ottoman ideal of sex: "This is sex as hierarchy, not mutuality, sex as something done to someone by someone else".<sup>21</sup> Young boys had to transition to men to ascend the eroto-political hierarchy.

From this perspective, it becomes apparent why pages were not allowed to grow beards: in the idealised world of the Ottoman court, there was to be only one sexually active male, the sultan himself. While pages were not supposed to have sexual relations among themselves and were, therefore, guarded closely by eunuchs in their living quarters, they could become an object of love (or lust) for the sultan. Bertrandon de la Broquière, for instance, noted the following about Murad II (r. 1421-44, 1446-51), whom he met in person:

He unites, to his love for women, a taste for boys, and has three hundred of the former and about thirty of the latter, which he prefers, and when they are grown up he recompenses them with rich presents and lordships. One of them he married to a sister of his, with an annual income of 25,000 ducats.<sup>22</sup>

The French courtier might well have made unfounded assumptions on Murad II's relations with his pages, as he was just a bypasser in Ottoman lands at the time. Laonikos Chalkokondyles, however, lived closer to Ottoman lands (if not in

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19 Í. C. Schick, 'Three Genders, Two Sexualities: The Evidence of Ottoman Erotic Terminology', in A. Kreil, L. Sorbera and S. Tolino (eds), *Sex and Desire in Muslim Cultures: Beyond Norms and Transgression from the Abbasids to the Present Day* (London 2021), 89, see also 91.

20 See, for instance, Rowson, 'The Categorization of Gender', 54-55. For an Ottoman work where the same general picture is to be found, see S. S. Kuru, 'Sex in the Text: Deli Birader's *Dâfi 'ü'l-gumûm ve Râfi 'ü'l-humûm* and the Ottoman Literary Canon', *Middle Eastern Literatures*, 10 (2007), 157-174.

21 A. Arvas, 'From the Pervert, Back to the Beloved: Homosexuality and Ottoman Literary History, 1453-1923', in McCallum and Tuhkanen (eds), *The Cambridge History of Gay and Lesbian Literature*, 156, citing D. M. Halperin, *How to Do the History of Homosexuality* (Chicago 2002), 115.

22 B. de la Broquière, *The Travels of Bertrandon de la Brocquiere, Counsellor & First Esquire-Carver to Philippe Le Bon, Duke of Burgundy, to Palestine, and his Return from Jerusalem overland to France during the years 1432 & 1433*, trans. Th. Johnes (Wales 1807), 248.

Ottoman lands) and had better access to Ottoman sources.<sup>23</sup> In his *Histories*, he conveys very similar assumptions about both Murad II, whom his father had met in person as a diplomat,<sup>24</sup> and Mehmed II, portraying the latter as a classical tyrant. While there is no doubt that Chalkokondyles is biased, the details of the story he narrates are too lively to be ignored as fabrication:

[Murad II] marched against Skanderbeg, the son of Gjon, who, as a child, had attended the sultan's Porte, had been the sultan's young lover, and fled back to his native land...<sup>25</sup>

[Mehmed II] spent that winter in his palace and summoned Vlad [III], the son of [Vlad II] Dracul and ruler of Wallachia, as he already had his younger brother [Radu III] at the court, keeping him as his lover and maintaining him. It happened that the sultan was almost killed by the boy when he had wanted to have sex with him. This was when he had first gained the throne and was preparing to campaign against Karaman. He was in love with the boy and invited him for conversation, and then as a sign of his respect he invited him for drinks to his bedchamber. The boy did not expect to suffer such a thing from the sultan, and when he saw the sultan approaching him with that intention, he fought him off and refused to consent to intercourse with him. The sultan kissed the unwilling boy, who drew a dagger and struck the sultan on his thigh. He then fled in whatever direction he could find. The doctors were able to treat the sultan's wound. The boy had climbed up a tree there and was hiding. When the sultan packed up and left, the boy came down from the tree, began his journey, and, shortly afterward, arrived at the Porte and became the sultan's lover. The sultan was used to having relations no less with men who shared his own inclinations. For he was always spending his time in the close company of such people, both day and night, but he did not usually have relations with men who were not of his own race, except for brief periods of time.<sup>26</sup>

Whether or not particular Ottoman sultans actually sought young boys for sexual pleasure, feminine features and beauty were favoured both by the way in which the court was organised – with the sultan's theoretical monopoly over 'active' sex – and by how recruitment for pages was implemented. Not only were pages in the Palace School forbidden from growing a beard once their facial hair had started to grow, and many grew lovelocks,<sup>27</sup> but the Janissary officers who recruited the *devşirme*

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23 A. Kaldellis, *A New Herodotus: Laonikos Chalkokondyles on the Ottoman Empire, the Fall of Byzantium, and the Emergence of the West* (Washington 2014), 15.

24 *Ibid.*, 3-5.

25 Laonikos Chalkokondyles, *The Histories*, trans. A. Kaldellis, Vol. II (Cambridge 2014), 117.

26 *Ibid.*, 367, 369.

27 While the average age for the boys who were collected was about 13.5 in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, they remained in the palace for some years; their beard would have started growing while they were still in the Palace School. Moreover, in the seventeenth century,



boys also paid attention to physiological features during the recruitment process. When some of the boys were separated for the Palace School, being handsome was, once again, an important criterion.<sup>28</sup>

Despite the fact that, in theory, a Muslim ruler could not enslave his non-Muslim subjects, it is also important to add that all the pages at the Palace School were slaves of the sultan under Ottoman law,<sup>29</sup> and that their use was thus at his absolute discretion. While the sultan did not necessarily get involved in the decisions about ‘graduation’ from the Palace School and the pages’ appointments to office, those closest to him in the Privy Chamber usually got the best appointments.

Particularly during the ‘classical’ period, which I prefer to call the era of the First Empire (ca. 1451-1580),<sup>30</sup> the Ottoman education and training system for the upper levels of the administrative-military and scholarly-judicial strata relied heavily on patronage networks. The significance of patronage within the scholarly-judicial hierarchy or *ulema* has been well established by several studies. The license to teach, or *mülazemet*, was not granted by an institution, but by senior officials in the hierarchy.<sup>31</sup> As for upper-level administrators, the grand vizier was often responsible for major appointments and relied on his own network to pick the right candidates. These networks were ultimately rooted in the relationships that higher-ranking administrators had established while they were pages at the imperial palace. Since a Palace School education could take many years, there were always some pages more senior than others. Thus, a junior page could receive protection and patronage from a more senior one when the latter reached a point in his career where he had authority for appointments, or was working closely with such a figure of authority who might seek his recommendation. Other channels of administrative patronage developed entirely outside the Palace School. During the second half of

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the average age of *devşirme* boys increased to 16.5; see G. Yılmaz, ‘The Devşirme System and the Levied Children of Bursa in 1603-4’, *Bellekten*, 79 (2015), 901.

28 Anonymous (fl. 1600s), ‘Kavânîn-i Yeniçeriyân-ı Dergâh-ı Âli’, in A. Akgündüz (ed.), *Osmanlı Kanunnâmeleri ve Hukukî Tahlilleri*, Vol. IX (Istanbul 1996), 138, 143.

29 For a brief summary of the discussion on how the Ottomans might have legitimised their Islamically illegal practice, see V. L. Ménage, ‘Some Notes on the *Devşirme*’, *BSOAS*, 29 (1966), 70.

30 B. Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire: Political and Social Transformation in the Early Modern World* (New York 2010), 89-93.

31 See, for instance, M. C. Zilfi, ‘Elite Circulation in the Ottoman Empire: Great Mollas of the Eighteenth Century’, *JESHO*, 26 (1983), 318-364; B. Tezcan, ‘The Ottoman *Mevali* as “Lords of the Law”’, *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 20 (2009), 383-407; A. Atçıl, *Scholars and Sultans in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge 2017); Y. Beyazıt, *Osmanlı İlimiyye Mesleğinde İstihdam (XVI. Yüzyıl)* (Ankara 2014).

the sixteenth century, as higher-ranking administrators came to develop their own households they also started to recruit their own pages.<sup>32</sup>

Would it be possible to have such a large system of patronage, in which hundreds of younger men competed for the attention of much fewer older men, without homoerotic relations between some of them? Mustafa Âli (d. 1600) talks of beardless boys kept by the members of the Ottoman upper class, praising the ones from Bosnia most:

Truly the beardless lads of no other country stay beautiful and comely as long as do they. Some of them do not sprout a hair on the face even at the age of thirty, still causing distraction of the mind to whoever sees them in the mirror of beauty. Yet the sweet-faced comeliness of Turkish youths and the agile lads of Arabia is shorter-lived than that of all the others. By the time they are twenty, they are no longer an object of desire by lovers.<sup>33</sup>

It is no wonder that Ottoman *divan* poetry, produced by the well-educated Turkish-speaking elite for the consumption of the Turkish-speaking Ottoman upper classes – including themselves – is imbued with homoerotic imagery. Walter Andrews and Mehmet Kalpaklı wrote a whole book about the topic, and Khaled El-Rouayheb has demonstrated that the Arabic-speaking educated elite in southern lands of the empire were producing the same homoerotic imagery in Arabic.<sup>34</sup> As Selim Kuru underlines, however, homoeroticism in literature did not always refer to homosexual relations in lived experience.<sup>35</sup>

While patronage was not necessarily connected to sexual favours and not every senior upper-class male fell in love with a young boy whom they were educating or training, it is important to note that master-pupil relationships offered more opportunities for affection to develop and, sometimes, turn to love that might involve sexual relations as well. Such a love story, which does not involve sex, is depicted in the *Dirge of Lovers* (*Nevhatü'l-‘uşşâk*) by Mehmed Dâ‘î (d. 1659/1660), an imam and elementary school (*sıbyân mektebi*) teacher in Beykoz near Istanbul, who wrote

32 B. Miller, *The Palace School of Muhammad the Conqueror* (Cambridge 1941), 78-79.

33 Mustafa Âli, *The Ottoman Gentleman of the Sixteenth Century: Mustafa Âli’s Mevâ’idü’n-nefâ’is fi kavâ’idi’l-mecâlis – Tables of Delicacies concerning the Rules of Social Gatherings*, trans. D. S. Brookes (Cambridge 2003), 29.

34 W. G. Andrews and M. Kalpaklı, *The Age of Beloveds: Love and the Beloved in Early-Modern Ottoman and European Culture and Society* (Durham 2005); El-Rouayheb, *Before Homosexuality*.

35 S. S. Kuru, ‘Generic Desires: Homoerotic Love in Ottoman Turkish Poetry’, in U. Grassi (ed.), *Mediterranean Crossings: Sexual Transgressions in Islam and Christianity (10-18th Centuries)* (Rome 2020), 47.

what seems to be an autobiographical narrative in verse about his love for one of his students who died prematurely.<sup>36</sup>

A relationship with a senior man might facilitate a boy's access to a career, especially if he was from a lower social class. The sixteenth-century poet Hayali's biography offers a fine example of how a young beloved could build a career through his relationships with powerful statesmen.<sup>37</sup> Another example is to be found in a romance written about a homoerotic relationship, the *Ebkâr-ı Efkâr*, or the *Virgins of Ideas* by Maşîzade Fikri Çelebi (d. ca. 1580), a small-town judge who also wrote poetry. In this *mesnevî*, running to over 1,500 couplets, Fikri Çelebi narrates a love story he claims to have experienced himself. When he and his younger beloved finally manage to persuade the beloved's parents to bless their union, Fikri and his beloved get together in a cell. According to Ali Emre Özyıldırım, who studied this romance closely, Fikri represents himself at this point as both a lover who is finally united with his beloved and a professor of (Islamic) law who is teaching his student. Soon after, the reader learns that at the time Fikri was writing, when the couple were no longer together, his former beloved had grown a beard and become a professor.<sup>38</sup> Thus, Fikri's relationship with his beloved served as a training and education ground for the latter on his way to a professorship.

There is a Janissary poet of the sixteenth century, Ferdi (d. 1555), whose life experiences became the subject of some homoerotic stories that entered one of Nergisi's (d. 1635) collections of prose stories in the seventeenth century.<sup>39</sup> Both some of these stories and Ferdi's life trajectory provide another example of how the relationship between the lover and the beloved might run in parallel to a master-pupil relationship. Âşik Çelebi (d. 1572), a scholar-bureaucrat who served in several judgeships in Ottoman Europe and authored several works, has an entry for Ferdi in his biographical dictionary of poets. The entry includes a long report about how Mustafa Agha, who was the Commander of the Janissaries in the 1520s,<sup>40</sup> was enamoured by Ferdi when the latter was a young boy.

36 Mehmet Dâî, *Nevhatü'l-uşşâk: İnceleme - Tenkitli Metin* (Istanbul 2016).

37 Andrews and Kalpaklı, *The Age of Beloveds*, 138-140.

38 A. E. Özyıldırım, 'Ebkâr-ı Efkâr: Fikri Çelebi'nin Aşk Konulu Hasbihali', *Turkish Studies: International Periodical For the Languages, Literature and History of Turkish or Turkic*, 2/4 (Fall 2007), 701; for the full text of the romance, see Idem., *Mâşî-zâde Fikrî Çelebi ve Ebkâr-ı Efkâr'ı: On Altıncı Yüzyıldan Sıradışı Bir Aşk Hikâyesi* (Istanbul 2017).

39 Nergisî, *Meşâkku'l-uşşâk (İnceleme-Metin)*, ed. B. Selçuk (Erzurum 2009), 232-249; I am indebted to my dear colleague and friend Marinos Sariyannis for bringing these stories to my attention.

40 A. Yıldız, 'Commanders of the Janissary Army: The Janissary Ağas, Their Career and Promotion Patterns', in G. Theotokis and A. Yıldız (eds), *A Military History of the Mediterranean Sea: Aspects of War, Diplomacy, and Military Elites* (Leiden, 2018), 400.

On the authority of Çıkırıkçızade Mustafa Çelebi, a professor of (Islamic) law who was Mustafa Agha's tutor, Âşık Çelebi relates that the Agha was so madly in love with Ferdi that he gifted him a very valuable dagger and its well decorated belt – a gift from Selim I (r. 1512-1520), who had acquired it during his military campaign against the Safavids in 1514. Clearly, Mustafa Agha was expecting some sexual favours for his gift and, thanks to his tutor's persuasion, managed to secure Ferdi from his father, who was also a *kul* of the sultan. During one of their extended outings in a garden outside the walled city, as Mustafa Agha and Ferdi were drinking and enjoying each other's company, a rebellion broke out in the city. The *kuls* were looting residences, including some belonging to viziers. When Janissary officers finally reached Mustafa Agha in the garden to get him to suppress the rebellion, he was so drunk that he could not respond to the emergency. By the time his officers got him back to the walled city on a boat, it was too late; Süleyman (r. 1520-66) had ordered his execution.<sup>41</sup>

Ferdi later became the beloved of Şehabüddin Bey, who was chief secretary of the Janissary Corps (*yenîçeri kâtibi*). After the latter's death, Ferdi continued to have a career in the Janissary Corps, eventually being promoted to the central cavalry troops. Âşık Çelebi knew Ferdi personally, as he narrates another anecdote about him, citing Ferdi himself as his source. Again on the authority of Mustafa Agha's tutor Çıkırıkçızade Mustafa Çelebi, we learn that while Ferdi and Mustafa Agha were together, Ferdi was able to use his special relationship with the Agha to get almost anything he wanted done in the Janissary Corps, thus securing posts for some 'outsiders' or promoting others to officer positions.<sup>42</sup>

In short, while the master-slave relationships in the male harem of the sultan could be seen as a model for education and training in the households of upper-class Ottoman men, the very personal master-pupil relationships among the scholarly hierarchy and the Janissary Corps could reach further down in Ottoman society, to the middle and lower-middle classes. Even though such relationships do not necessarily generate homoerotic relations between younger boys – whether slaves or pupils – and their masters, they nevertheless facilitate the growth of such relationships. Perhaps more importantly, they contribute to the perception of male youth as a transitional period in one's life, when one is trained in a craft or profession as well as in the performance of manhood itself.

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41 Âşık Çelebi, *Meşâ'irü'ş-Şu'arâ: İnceleme – Metin*, ed. F. Kılıç, Vol. III (Istanbul 2010), 1159-1169.

42 *Ibid.*, 1159, 1169, 1173-1174.

### *Janissary troubadours and homoerotic folk poetry?*

As stated in the introduction to the present chapter, the beloved in Turkish folk literature is generally a woman. While the Turkish language does not have gender, the beloved in folk literature is often identified as either a young girl or a married woman, whereas the gender of the beloved in *divan* poetry is mostly left ambiguous,<sup>43</sup> though there are many examples in which one can tell that he is a young boy.

While many a folk poet might have lived in rural areas and produced anonymous poetry that survived in the oral tradition, the ‘*âşık* or troubadour literature has identifiable poets, many of whom lived in urban environments. The seventeenth century also witnessed the development of this type of poetry around the coffeehouses in Istanbul. Some scholars argue that the Janissaries played an important role in the development of troubadour poetry.<sup>44</sup> The examples of homoerotic love I have found in the seventeenth century collection of songs and poems by Ali Ufki (d. 1672) are also the products of a Janissary poet.

The poet who composed the two pieces I am sharing, Şahin, or alternatively Şahinoğlu, is a Janissary from the seventeenth century.<sup>45</sup> Cahit Öztelli identified this poet, who seems to have taken part in the early stages of the Cretan War (1645-69), with a certain Şahin Agha. The latter name is mentioned by Na‘ima, who had access to the Crete campaign chronicler Pirizade Fahri Bey’s notes.<sup>46</sup> Whether or not the two are one and the same person, Şahin/oğlu is unanimously identified as a Janissary poet by folk literature scholars, who have identified a total of 34 poems by him in various collections.<sup>47</sup>

Although he has some poems about battles, such as the one on the conquest of Rethymno,<sup>48</sup> as is the case with many folk poets, most of Şahin/oğlu’s poems are

43 S. Bulut, ‘Türk Halk Şiirinde ve Klasik Türk Şiirinde Sevgili’, unpublished M.A. thesis, Muğla Sıtkı Koçman Üniversitesi, 2023, 157.

44 Ö. Çobanoğlu, *Âşık Tarzı Edebiyat Geleneği ve İstanbul* (Istanbul 2007), especially, 18-34.

45 M. Savan and S. Uzun Pekşen, ‘Yeniçeri Şair Evreni ve Son Yeniçeri Şairlerinden Galatalı Hüseyin Ağa’nın Dünyası’, in A. Yıldız, Y. Spyropoulos and M. M. Sunar (eds), *Payitaht Yeniçerileri: Padişahın “Asi” Kulları, 1700-1826* (Istanbul 2022), 370; it is worth noting that this study was published in a volume that was an outcome of JaNet, the ERC funded project also responsible for the present volume.

46 C. Öztelli, ‘XVII. Yüzyıl Âşıklarından Şahinoğlu’, *Türk Folklor Araştırmaları*, 237 (April 1969), 5256-5257.

47 In addition to the article mentioned in the last footnote, see also, S. Sakaoğlu, ‘17. Yüzyıl Âşık Edebiyatı Üzerine Notlar – 14: Şahinoğlu – Tasbaz Ali – Sun‘i’, *Türk Dili: Dil ve Edebiyat Dergisi*, 522 (June 1995), 678-682, and the sources cited there.

48 The following couple of quatrains are from his ballad on the conquest that was included in

about love. What drew my attention were two in which the beloved seems to be another man – in one of them a very young one. Here is the first one, which is a piece apparently sung as a ballad, or *türki*:<sup>49</sup>

Kâdir Mevlâm bana bir yâr virmişdir	* The Almighty gave me a beloved one
Rûz u şeb virdimdir şükür iderim	* It is my prayer day and night, I give thanks
Böyle lutfâ dahî kimler ermişdir	* Who has ever attained such grace?
Divânında dâyim nazar iderim.	* In his/her presence, I contemplate always
Benim sevdiceğim bir gonca güldür	* My main squeeze is a bud of rose
Gözleri karadır ruhları aldır	* Dark eyes and red cheeks s/he has
Şirin-zeban, hem kaşları hilâldir	* S/he is a sweet talker, with crescent eyebrows
Bülbülüyüm, dâim efgân iderim.	* I am her/his nightingale, in constant wails.
Tigini destine alub gelürse	* Even if s/he comes with her/his sword in the hand,
Katleyleyüb benim kanım alursa	* Even if s/he killed me and took my blood,
Her ne denlü bana cevîr kılursa	* However much suffering on me s/he brought
Bendesiyim ben tahammül iderim.	* I am her/his slave, and I would withstand.

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Ali Ufki's seventeenth-century collection of songs; see M. H. Cevher, 'Ali Ufki Bey ve Hâzâ Mecmû'a-i Sâz ü Söz (Transkripsiyon, İnceleme)', unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Ege Üniversitesi, 1995, 363; for a facsimile of the original manuscript, see Ş. Elçin, *Ali Ufki: Hayatı, Eserleri ve Mecmû'a-i Sâz u Söz (Tıpkıbasım)* (Istanbul 1976), 91; a slightly different version of this poem (based on a different manuscript) was published by Ş. Elçin, 'Şahinoğlu ve Bilinmeyen Şiirleri', *Türk Kültürü*, 10/12 (October 1972), 33-34. Since the ballad celebrates the conquest of Rethymno, where the conference out of which this volume grew took place, below I provide an English translation for the benefit of Rethymniots, one of whom approached me during the conference for a copy.

<i>Türki berâ-yı feth-i Retime</i>	* <i>Ballad on the conquest of Rethymno</i>
Şükür hey Allahım güler canımız	* Thank God, our souls smile
Demi geldi müjde ile Retme'nin	* The time of Rethymno came with good news
Şen olsun Sultan İbrahim Han'ımız	* May our Ibrahim Khan be happy
Fetih haberleri geldi Retme'nin	* The news of the conquest of Rethymno has arrived.
Deli Hüseyin'in anılır cengi	* The combat of Hüseyin the Mad is remembered:
Islah için kırdı hayli Freng'i	* He killed many a Frank for chastening [them]
Arslan kaplanı, beبری, pelengi	* [He killed] lion-, tiger-, leopard [-like Franks]
Bilür kolayımı şikâr basmanın	* He knows how to easily crush [his] prey.

49 Cevher, 'Ali Ufki Bey', 274; Elçin, *Ali Ufki*, 64; compare Elçin, 'Şahinoğlu', 30.

Hak saklasun ayrılığın şerrinden	* From the evil of separation may God spare
Nice âşık ayrılmışdır yârinden	* Many lovers parted from their beloved
Cânım alsun, ayırmason yanımdan	* May He take my life but not separate
Ya ben yârsız bu cihâni neyerim	* What would I do in this world without the beloved?
Gül derdinden gör bülbülün zârını	* See the nightingale wail for how it longs for the rose
Âşık olan terk ider mi yârini	* Would anyone in love leave their beloved ones?
Şahinoğlu bir dem ömrüm varımı	* Şahinoğlu, if I cannot see my all in all
Görmez isem hemân ölür giderim	* I would perish once and for all. <sup>50</sup>

While a lot of the imagery here could be associated with women, the sword (or lancet) gives one pause. If it were a Dede Korkut story, one could imagine a warrior woman, as in the love story of Kan Turalı and Salcan.<sup>51</sup> But in mid-seventeenth century urban environments, did folk poems feature sword-carrying women as beloveds? While this is quite unlikely, I am not ruling the possibility of a female beloved out.

Another poem by Şahinoğlu leaves less doubt about the gender identity of his beloved, as the beloved is described as both a king and Joseph the Prophet.<sup>52</sup> This composition has been identified by Judith Haug in one of Ali Ufki's private notebooks. It is noted as a ballad (*türki*), though there is no notation beyond the instruction that it is to be sung in the Dobruja style:<sup>53</sup>

Katarlanmış mahbûbların sürüsü	* The herd of the beloved's family is lined up.
[...] gider vatanına eline	* It is [...] going to its homeland, its country.
İçlerinde yavru şâhdır birisi	* Among them, one is a little king;

50 As the anonymous reviewer noted, the third verse of the final quatrain is complemented by the fourth one. The Turkish interpretation of the last couple of lines should be as follows: “Ömrümün varımı (ömrümün varı olan sevgilimi) bir an dahi görmezsem hemen ölürüm”.

51 G. Lewis, *The Book of Dede Korkut* (Harmondsworth 1974), 117-132.

52 While there are folk poems in which a female beloved could be described as a king or Joseph, the combination of the two in the same poem, and the ambiguity of the beloved's identity, as in *divan* poetry, leads me to identify the beloved as a young boy here.

53 J. I. Haug, *Ottoman and European Music in 'Ali Ufki's Compendium, MS Turc 292: Analysis, Interpretation, Cultural Context – Volume 1: Edition* [Schriften zur Musikwissenschaft aus Münster, Band 26.1] (Münster 2020), 248.

Gönül bend oldı zülfünün teline	* The heart fell for the hair of his earlock.
Ol yavrıdır güzellerin sultânı	* That little one is the sultan of the beauties
Aklım aldı anın rû-yı handânı	* His smiling face took my mind away
Kudret yakından bitmişken kalanı(?)	* [Reading uncertain]
Gönül kondı anın hüsnî dalına.	* The heart perched on the branch of his beauty.
Ol fedânın kırmızıdır gülleri	* The roses of that sacrifice are red
İnmiş üstüne siyâh kâkülleri	* His black lovelocks falling on him
Her gördükçe akar çeşmim selleri	* Every time I see him, my tears turn into a flood
Her [...] yokdur anın kuluna	* [Reading uncertain]
Gönül sevdi ol Yüsuf[-]ı zamânı	* The heart loved this Joseph of [our] time
Amân desem aslâ bilmez amânı	* If I asked for mercy, he would not know it
Serteser eylesem cümle cihânı	* If I were [to search] the whole world
Böyle yavrı dahî kanda buluna.	* Where could one find such a little one?
Şu âlemd e garîmimde kalmazam	* In this world, I will not remain to my enemy
Vîrâne oldum ben kendimi bilmezem	* I am a wreck, I don't know myself
Öldürürler mi anda vazgelmezem	* Would they kill me there? I would not give up
Komuşum ben serim anın yoluna	* I put my head on his path
Gerçek âşık Mevlâsını zikr eder	* The real lover remembers his God
Ölüb türâb olacagın fikr eder	* He thinks about how he'll die and turn to soil
Şâhinoğlı yüz bin kerre şükr eder	* Şahinoğlu is thankful hundred thousand times
Bir kez yavrın adı gelse diline	* If he were to mention the name of that little one.

Could we imagine the beloved, who is referred to as a *mahbub* (beloved boy) rather than a *mahbube* (beloved woman), likened to a king and Joseph the Prophet, as a very young boy? I do not see why not. The name of the beloved is not mentioned in either poem, thus leaving the gender identity ambiguous, as in *divan* poetry.<sup>54</sup> The

54 In a *murabba'*, written or composed to music by Ali Ufki himself, his beloved's name is mentioned:



references to God in both poems remind one of the Sufi practice of *shāhidbāzī*, literally “playing the witness”, which refers to witnessing (the creative work of) the divine by gazing at young beardless boys, a tradition that developed in the Middle Ages and had a long history in Anatolia by the seventeenth century, going all the way back to the thirteenth century, if not before.<sup>55</sup>

This medieval Sufi tradition might have been supported by or have influenced the poetic tradition of writing descriptive poetry about beautiful boys in the social environment of urban crafts and professions. The beautiful boys who are described in “city-thrillers” (*şehirengiz* in Turkish), a genre that has a long pre-history in Arabic and Persian, do not necessarily belong to a particular profession, but are all young men in a craft or profession for which they receive training from other men older than them. In an Arabic collection from the first half of the fifteenth century that includes “about two thousand epigrams by different poets mainly from the Ayyubid and Mamluk periods”, one finds the depictions of “young men holding positions in the administration, the military, scholarship and education, or a religious office. A large section on beautiful craftsmen follows, in which more than two hundred trades and crafts are represented”.<sup>56</sup> Such poetic depictions had been produced in Persian as well, as attested by manuscripts from medieval (Seljuq) Anatolia that include

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<p>Ey letâfet gülşeninî tâze açılmış güli sen bu hüsnile nice ‘âkılları kıldın deli tîr-i müjgânın helâk etdi nice sâhib(-i) dilî bir kemân-ebriû civânsın şîr-i Yezdânım ‘Alî</p>	<p>* Hey, the freshly bloomed rose of the rose garden of grace, * you turned many a wise man mad with this beauty, * your arrow-like eyelashes destroyed many masters of the heart, * you are a lad with bow-like eyebrows, my lion-of-God, Ali.</p>
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As pointed out by Haug, a version of these lyrics (without musical notation) is to be found in Ali Ufki’s private notebook, see J. I. Haug, *Ottoman and European Music in ‘Alî Ufukî’s Compendium, MS Turc 292: Analysis, Interpretation, Cultural Context – Monograph* [Schriften zur Musikwissenschaft aus Münster, Band 25] (Münster 2019), 59; for the lyrics of this version without musical notation, see Haug, *Ottoman and European Music in ‘Alî Ufukî’s Compendium, MS Turc 292: Analysis, Interpretation, Cultural Context – Volume 1: Edition*, 216. Ufki might have heard it somewhere and jotted it down or come up with it himself. In his music collection, the lyrics appear with slight changes and a description that identifies Ufki as the composer, and Mehmed IV’s page Ali the Georgian as his beloved and the dedicatee of the song; see Elçin, *Ali Ufki*, 234; Cevher, ‘Ali Ufki Bey’, 739. I followed the lyrics in the latter. An interpretation of this song is one of the tracks on the Golden Horn Ensemble album *Ali Ufki* (Sony BMG Music Entertainment, 2009).

55 L. V. J. Ridgeon, *Awhad al-Din Kirmani and the Controversy of the Sufi Gaze* (London 2017).

56 Bauer, ‘Male-Male Love’. 116.

many examples.<sup>57</sup> In the fifteenth century, Turkish speaking poets started producing collections of short depictions of beautiful boys in a particular city; hence, the name of the genre, *şehrengiz*, or “city-thriller”.<sup>58</sup>

Two of the well-known examples of the genre were produced by a poet of Janissary origin, Yahya Bey (d. 1582), who wrote a *şehrengiz* on fourteen young men in Edirne and another one on fifty-nine of those in Istanbul.<sup>59</sup> In the concluding section of the latter, Yahya Bey compares himself to the great Persian poet, scholar, and Sufi Jami (d. 1492),<sup>60</sup> who was also known for his interest in *shāhidbāzī* and had written a romance in Persian inspired by the Qur’anic version of the story of Joseph, which “has largely been read in the context of Sufism and the Sufi philosophy of *Shahidbazi*”,<sup>61</sup> as Joseph’s beauty becomes a vehicle leading Zulaikha and other Egyptian women to contemplate the divine. Yahya Bey also wrote a romance based on the story of Joseph and Zulaikha,<sup>62</sup> and another one on a homoerotic relationship, entitled “King and Beggar”, or *Şah u Geda*, available in English translation,<sup>63</sup> in both of which human love is a vehicle for reaching the divine.

In short, there is really no justifiable reason to assume that the beloved in Janissary poetry has to be a young girl or a woman even when the gender identity of the beloved is left ambiguous, as in the two examples shared above. The Janissary troubadours who composed ballads in the seventeenth century did not produce *divan* poetry like Yahya Bey, who himself had been a Janissary earlier in his life. Most interestingly, Yahya Bey had been an assistant to the secretary of the Janissaries, Şehabüddin Bey,<sup>64</sup> whose name appeared in the previous section as a later lover

57 See, for instance, A. Kartal, ‘Anadolu’da Farsça Oluşturulmuş En Eski Rubailer Mecmuası: *Mecma’u’r-Rubâ’iyyât*’, *Kültürk: Türk Dili ve Edebiyatı Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 8 (Winter 2023), 57, 59, 68, 78-79.

58 For a brief introduction in English, see J. Stewart-Robinson, ‘A Neglected Ottoman Poem: The *Şehrengiz*’, in J. A. Bellamy (ed.), *Studies in Near Eastern Culture and History: In Memory of Ernest T. Abdel-Massih* (Ann Arbor 2011), 201-211; for a recent dissertation in Turkish, see F. Tıgılı, ‘Türk Edebiyatında Şehrengizler’, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, İstanbul Üniversitesi, 2020.

59 Yahyâ Bey, *Dîvan: Tenkidli Basım*, ed. M. Çavuşoğlu (Istanbul 1977), 225-275.

60 Ibid., 274.

61 C. Yaghoobi, ‘Yusuf’s “Queer” Beauty in Persian Cultural Productions’, *The Comparatist*, 40 (2016), 247.

62 Yahyâ Bey, *Yûsuf ve Zeliha: Tenkidli Basım*, ed. M. Çavuşoğlu (Istanbul 1979).

63 R. Jaecel, (ed. and trans.), ‘Dukaginzade Taşlıcalı Yahya Bey’s King and Beggar: A Sixteenth-Century Ottoman Allegorical-Mystical Love Poem (Mesnevi) – Introduction, Text in Transcription, and Translation’, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 1980.

64 Âşık Çelebi, *Meşâ’irü’ş-Şu’arâ*, Vol. II, 673.

of Ferdi. Whether or not the younger Yahya might have been another beloved of Şehabüddin Bey, he was clearly a product of the Janissary Corps, where older men trained younger ones in the context of master-pupil relationships, some of which evolved in emotional and passionate ways as well. The Janissary troubadours of the seventeenth century similarly represented the larger Janissary Corps, whose members were very much engaged in urban social environments, including crafts and professions, as well as Sufi orders – most prominently the Bektashi order – where older men trained younger ones.

Konstantin Mihailović, who lived in the fifteenth century and wrote one of our earliest sources on the training of Janissaries, states very clearly that “[t]he younger must serve the older”.<sup>65</sup> Many a Janissary who had first been part of the corps of “Novice Boys”, or *Acemi Oğlanları*, which was the transitional training ground for recently drafted and converted Christian boys, worked for an urban craftsman in Istanbul in the sixteenth century.<sup>66</sup> In the seventeenth century, as the collection of young boys became gradually less common (and eventually came to a halt in the early eighteenth century), urban youth and craftsmen found their ways into the Janissary Corps more directly, while the Janissaries themselves became involved in guilds.<sup>67</sup>

Eventually, individual Janissaries developed patronage relationships with their *civeleks*, that is, candidates for the Janissary Corps. While the institution of *civelek* has not been the subject of a formal study,<sup>68</sup> a Janissary’s relationship with a *civelek* under his protection could easily evolve into a homoerotic relationship, as exemplified by the life of Galatalı Hüseyin Agha, an early nineteenth century *civelek*-turned-Janissary, whose homoerotic work has recently been closely studied by Mehmet Savan and Süreyya Uzun Pekşen.<sup>69</sup>

Last, but not least, the Bektashi order, which had a close relationship with the Janissary corps in the seventeenth century, also seems to have developed a

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65 Konstantin Mihailović, *Memoirs of a Janissary*, ed., S. Soucek, trans., B. Stolz (Ann Arbor 1975), 159.

66 H. Dernschwam, *Tagebuch einer Reise nach Konstantinopel und Kleinasien (1553/55)*, ed. F. Babinger, trans. (into modern German) J. Riecke (Berlin 2014), 67.

67 See Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire*, 198-212, and the sources cited there.

68 Reşad Ekrem Koçu’s treatment of the term remains the only available one, see *İstanbul Ansiklopedisi*, s.v. ‘Civelek, Yeniçeri Civeleği’ (R. E. Koçu), 3594-3597.

69 Savan and Uzun Pekşen, ‘Yeniçeri Şair Evreni’.

*civelek*-like institution to educate new dervishes, at least in Istanbul, as attested by Dimitrie Cantemir (1673-1723), who spent about twenty years in the Ottoman capital:

Every dervish has a boy of twelve years or older, and calls him *kioček*. He shares with him the sleeping place, goes everywhere with him, eats with him from the same piece of bread, teaches him literature, poetry, and other sciences and arts he knows. He loves him like his own son (maybe also otherwise, who might know?), he protects him, and feeds him and counsels him. Many Abdals of this kind have come from the garrisons of Janissaries, whose founder has been Hadji Bektash.<sup>70</sup>

The term Cantemir is using appears to be *köçek*, which is better known in its meaning of male dancer today. Yet this meaning seems to have been a later development, or was used sparingly in the earlier Ottoman centuries,<sup>71</sup> for it is not attested to by Meniński (1623–1698) in his monumental dictionary. Most interestingly, Meniński notes two other usages for *göçek*, which is spelled in Arabic letters the same way as *köçek*, as well as *küçük*, which means small, young. The first one is “soldier boy” (the Italian translation reads “[b]agaglione, ragazzo di soldati”).<sup>72</sup> This must refer to “[n]oncombatant boys, who often graced Ottoman campaign tents” in military expeditions.<sup>73</sup> The source of the second meaning is Bernard de Paris (d. 1669), a French Capuchin friar who spent many years in the Ottoman Empire as a Catholic missionary and compiled a French-Turkish dictionary (1649), which became better known in its Italian translation by another Capuchin missionary, Pietro

70 E. Popescu-Judet, ‘Köçek and Çengi in Turkish Culture’, *Dance Studies*, 6 (1982), 48. Cantemir planned to write a longer work, “De muhammedana religione, deque politico musulmanae gentis regimine”, of which he completed the first part that was published in Russian translation in 1722. Cantemir’s *Opere Complete*, includes a Russian-Romanian edition of this work (Vol. VIII, Part II [Bucharest 1987]); the original of the text translated by Popescu-Judet, is on pp. 482 (Russian)-483 (Romanian).

71 The term *köçek* in its sense of male dancer is absent in the poem studied by İ. H. Aksoyak, ‘17. Yüzyıldan Tescilli Bir Köçek: Behzat’, *Milli Folklor*, 21/84 (Winter 2009), 127-129; the way the term is used by Mustafa Âli in the late sixteenth century appears more closely related to simply being young, as in *küçük*, or *köşek*, the latter of which refers to the young of a camel rather than a male dancer; see Mustafa ‘Âli, *Gelibolulu Mustafa ‘Âli ve Mevâ ‘idi’ n-Nefâis fi-‘Kavâ ‘idi’ l-Mecâlis*, ed. M. Şeker (Ankara 1997), 283-284; compare Ö. A. Aksoy and D. Dilçin (eds), *XIII. Yüzyıldan beri Türkiye Türkçesiyle Yazılmış Kitaplardan Toplanan Tanıklarıyla Tarama Sözlüğü*, Vol. IV (1963-1977), 2690, 2703-2705.

72 F. Meniński, *Thesaurus linguarum orientalium turicae, arabicae, persicae*, Vol. II (Vienna 1680), 4056.

73 M. C. Zilfi, ‘The Kadızadeli: Discordant Revivalism in Seventeenth-Century Istanbul’, *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 45 (1986), 264; see also Y. Ben-Naeh, ‘Moshko the Jew and His Gay Friends: Same-Sex Sexual Relations in Ottoman Jewish Society’, *Journal of Early Modern History*, 9 (2005), 84.

d'Abbavilla. In the latter, layman, or “laico”, is translated as *ehl-i dūnyâ*, while *küçük* stands for a “layman among the Turkish religious”, or “laico tra i religiosi Turchi”.<sup>74</sup> Evliya Çelebi has several examples of the use of *köçek* in the sense of an apprentice or follower in the first volume of his *Seyahatnâme*, mostly associated with guilds; but he refers to male dancers using the Arabic word *rakkâs*.<sup>75</sup> The ‘apprentice; follower’ meaning is recorded among the followers of Sufi orders, such as the Mevlevîs, in the early seventeenth century as well;<sup>76</sup> and it might have been in use in earlier centuries, too.<sup>77</sup> Clearly, when the Janissaries started identifying themselves as *köçeks* of the Bektashi order in the 1620s,<sup>78</sup> the term primarily meant a follower, not a male dancer. It is quite likely that the term’s use with reference to male dancers only became more frequent in the eighteenth century.<sup>79</sup> One wonders whether the Janissaries’ relationships with some of their young apprentices, who had such beautiful faces that they were covered with a veil in public,<sup>80</sup> might have played a role in the expansion of the usage of the term *köçek* in the sense of a young male dancer, as some of these dancers probably ended up becoming Janissaries; hence, *köçeks* (of the Bektashi order).

Leaving etymological discussions aside, clearly, by the seventeenth century both the Bektashi dervishes and the Janissaries had developed institutions of training that depended on individual relationships between elder men and younger boys. As I argue in this study, such relationships of patronage had the potential to evolve into homoerotic relations, as attested by the biographies of Ferdi from the sixteenth century, or Galatalı Hüseyin Agha from the nineteenth century, or the story narrated in the “Virgins of Ideas” by Maşîzade Fikri Çelebi. What is perhaps new is the fact that as the practice of *devşirme* gradually disappeared in the seventeenth century, a larger segment of young urban males became potential candidates for recruitment,

74 B. da Parigi, *Söz Kitabı: Vocabolario Italiano-Turchesco*, trans. Pietro d'Abbavilla, Vol. II (Rome 1665), 1214.

75 For instance, Evliya Çelebi refers to the members of the chief architect’s guild as the “*köçeks* of Habib al-Najjâr”; see Evliya Çelebi, *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnâmesi: I. Kitap – İstanbul*, ed. O. Ş. Gökay (Istanbul 1996), 296; for examples of the usage of *rakkâs*, see the index, 454.

76 A. Gölpinarlı, *Mevlânâ’dan Sonra Mevlevîlik*, (Istanbul 2006 [2<sup>nd</sup> ed.]), 460.

77 See the reference to M. Fuad Köprülü’s use of the term in his article ‘Abdalan-ı Rûm’; S. Erkan, ‘Köçek tipinin uluslararası kökeni üzerine bir deneme’, *Ankara Üniversitesi Dil ve Tarih-Coğrafya Fakültesi Türkoloji Dergisi*, 18/1 (2011), 226.

78 A. Gül, ‘Bir Efsanenin Gücü: Yeniçeri-Bektaşılık Münasebetinin Tarihî Gelişiminin İncelenmesi’, *Tarih Dergisi*, 77 (2022), 117, n. 37.

79 D. Klebe, ‘Effeminate Professional Musicians in Sources of Ottoman-Turkish Court Poetry and Music of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries’, *Music in Art*, 30/1-2 (Spring-Fall 2005), 97.

80 Koçu, ‘Civelek’, 3595-3596.

opening up patronage opportunities to many a Janissary, which led to such relationships permeating further down to the middle and lower-middle classes in Ottoman society.

In a social context that provided a framework in which master-pupil relations could evolve into relationships between a lover and a beloved, a Janissary troubadour could well have sung love ballads about his male beloved, thus opening folk poetry up to homoerotic love. Lower brow expressions of such relationships abound in more sexually explicit literature.<sup>81</sup> Why should we assume that the chaste love ballads of Janissary troubadours were always sung for women or young girls? In the traditional understanding of Turkish literature, which divides the literary tradition into *divan* and folk literature, same-sex romantic love poetry always fell into the domain of *divan* literature. If homoerotic relationships permeated further down in the Ottoman social ladder, why should their literary expression have been the monopoly of the educated elite? Why could vernacular Turkish versified in syllabic meter not express a man's love for a young boy?

Let me now circle back to Ali Ufki, in whose poetry and song collection scholars have located Şahinoğlu's poetry. He did not become a Janissary; he graduated from the palace school as a cavalier, or *sipahi* – in title, at least. However, he did share the same cultural milieu as the Janissary troubadours. His collection includes a relatively wide representation of such poets, and he collected more *türkîs* sung by them and other 'folk' singers than songs in the classical style of the high Islamic musical tradition, despite the fact that his musical education in the Ottoman Empire took place in the palace.

One section in his *Saray-ı Enderun*, a treatise he originally wrote in Italian for the consumption of Europeans visiting Istanbul, is devoted to same-sex relations between the pages in the palace:

Those who hold high offices are good at disguising themselves. It happens that they wait at the window of the room to see when the chosen one goes to the mosque or another place; then they send him a gift and offer their patronage and protection. Over time they share their property and position at court. This is one of the main reasons why so few renegades who have abandoned Christianity return to their native countries (even though they often have good opportunities to do so). Instead, many

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81 In addition to Savan and Uzun Pekşen's study cited above, see Derviş İsmail, 'Dellâknâme-i Dilküşâ', in Murat Bardakçı (ed.), *Osmanlı'da Seks* (Istanbul 2005), 96-115. Even though it is not written by a Janissary, this includes the story of a *civelek* who ended up becoming a masseur/sex worker in the public bath houses of Istanbul; for an analysis of this piece in English, see S. Delice, 'The Janissaries and Their Bedfellows: Masculinity and Male Friendship in Eighteenth-Century Ottoman Istanbul', in G. Özyeğin (ed.), *Gender and Sexuality in Muslim Cultures* (Surrey 2015), 124-134.

of them stay with their *ahiret babası* (adoptive father), who is connected to them with love, rather than going back to their real fathers.<sup>82</sup>

Dimitrie Cantemir, too, referred to the relationship between a Bektashi dervish and his *köçek* as a paternal relationship. It is quite likely that most such relationships of patronage did not actually evolve into homoerotic relations. However, since they had the potential to do so,<sup>83</sup> and were so widespread in all corners of social life whether in religious brotherhoods, the scholarly hierarchy, the Janissary Corps, the imperial court, or the households of *grandees*, not to mention the craft guilds, the number of such relationships that evolved in that direction was probably far from meagre.

Matters of the heart are difficult to interpret. Yet if one must, it appears that bonds between older men and younger boys were mapped on a continuum that stretched from pure chaste love to sexual lust toward each other. The chances are that different men experienced different shades of it, most of them probably remaining chaste, yet many going further. However, the kind of male bonding Ali Ufki talks about in the context of the palace school very much moulded young boys and men, some of whom eventually graduated as Janissaries and joined the corps. To a certain extent, this kind of bonding probably continued in the barracks, even when the main line of recruitment for the corps shifted to urban trade connections. Whether they were a formidable military force on the battlefield as they had been in their earlier years, or the tradesmen, merchants, and rebels they later became, what made the Janissaries a significant force in Ottoman history, their *'asabiyya*, or the source of the solidarity of their social network, if you will, was built upon love across the entire spectrum of its articulations.

### *The end of an era: is it all about Europe?*

Dror Ze'evi is correct in noting that a great change took place in Ottoman sexual discourses in the nineteenth century. He finds the source of this shift in the

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82 Here I am mostly following the German translation of Ali Ufki by Nicolaum Brenner, *Serai Enderum. Das ist: Inwendige Beschaffenheit der Turckischen Kayserl Residentz zu Constanti-nopoli, die Neue Burgk genant, sampt dero Ordnung und Gebrauchen so von Alberto Bobovio Leopolitano...* (Vienna 1667), 70-71; the phrases in parentheses might be Brenner's addition to the text; for a discussion of the different versions of this section, see my *'The Golden Gate of Languages Is Unlocked, or Is It Not? Ali Bey/Albertus Bobovius and the Limits of Universality in the Seventeenth Century'*, in G. Casale and A. Thomson (eds), *Translation and Mobility in the Early Modern Mediterranean*, forthcoming.

83 For a very good example, see n. 15 above.

embarrassment the Ottomans felt toward Europe about the widespread nature of pederasty among their midst. Mustafa Avcı similarly asserts that “the sense of shame that began to surround *köçek* culture is related to increased interaction with Europe and its aggressively heteronormative ethos”.<sup>84</sup> But could one really take this argument further and assert the following?

These changes in sexual discourse ... came about in Europe only as a result of sweeping social and political changes... In the Ottoman world, the process was reversed. Changes in sexual discourse preceded changes in society and politics.<sup>85</sup>

Sarıtaş concedes that the Ottoman statesmen’s shame about the widespread nature of homoeroticism in Ottoman society played a role in changing discourses; but she also asks whether a feeling of shame could be powerful enough to explain historical processes.<sup>86</sup> As is well known, the Janissary Corps was abolished in 1826. The Bektashi order was suppressed in the aftermath of the destruction of the Janissaries. The new central army of the Ottoman Empire was organised along very different lines than the Janissaries. The first modern Islamic primer, or *ilmihal*, in Turkish was printed at the army printing house for the edification of Ottoman soldiers, aiming to instil a different kind of discipline along institutional rather than individual lines.<sup>87</sup> The nineteenth century witnessed the opening of public schools, the publication of textbooks by the government, the introduction of non-Islamic legal institutions that weakened the Ottoman *ulema* hierarchy, and the abolition of slavery, which had already been in decline for some time before it was formally outlawed.<sup>88</sup> The link between the Janissaries and the urban guilds was broken, and the latter came under closer state control. Slowly but surely, the state and its centrally controlled institutions took over most of the responsibility for educating and training all craftsmen and professionals. Rather than referring to an *ahiret babası*, or an adoptive father who guided a novice in his professional path as well as his socialisation to manhood, people eventually began talking of *devlet baba*, or the “paternal

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84 M. Avcı, ‘Shifts in Sexual Desire: Bans on Dancing Boys (*Köçeks*) throughout Ottoman Modernity (1800s-1920s)’, *Middle Eastern Studies*, 53 (2017), 771.

85 D. Ze’evi, *Producing Desire: Changing Sexual Discourse in the Ottoman Middle East, 1500-1900* (Berkeley 2006), 165.

86 Sarıtaş, *Cinsel Normalliğin Kuruluşu*, 55.

87 See B. Tezcan, ‘Esrarını Yitiren İslâm, ya da Erken Modern bir Sıyrıtimi: Modern İlmihalin Birgili, Akhisarlı ve Kadızade İzleğinde Gelişen Erken Modern Tarihi’, *Tarih ve Toplum - Yeni Yaklaşımlar*, 19 (Spring 2022), 9-74.

88 For the long-term decline in Ottoman society’s record of slave holding, see H. Canbakal and A. Filiztekin, ‘Slaveholding in the Ottoman Central Lands (1460-1880)’, *THR*, 13 (2022), 307-342.



state”, whose love could never be felt the way one could feel the paternal chaste love (or lustful passion) of an adoptive father in one’s life and professional career.

While historical developments in Europe certainly had a role in this multi-faceted and sweeping socio-political transformation in the Ottoman Empire, it would be wrong to try to explain it simply as a matter of European influence. Similarly, the great shift in sexual discourses was not simply a matter of embarrassment in front of Europeans, but rather the cultural product of the great socio-political transformation that was Ottoman (and, gradually, Arab, Greek, Turkish, etc.) modernity.



PART FIVE

THE JANISSARIES OF EGYPT



# JANISSARIES IN THE CAIRO GENIZA

## A CASE FROM DAMIETTA IN 1708

Jane HATHAWAY\*

FOR THE PAST SEVERAL YEARS, I have been working on a selection of Ottoman-era documents from the Cairo Geniza. I hope soon to publish transcriptions and translations, with analysis, of twenty-six of these documents, all in Arabic script. Of these twenty-six documents, ten, or roughly thirty-eight percent, mention or allude to officers of Egypt's localised Janissary (Mustahfizan) Corps, which was based in Cairo. This high percentage suggests that Cairo's Janissaries maintained close ties to Egypt's Jewish community during the Ottoman period. These ties were in turn linked to the Janissaries' interest in large-scale commerce, in which Jewish merchants played a key role, and, in that context, in the revenues from the customs of Egypt's ports, which some of these same merchants helped to administer.

Here, I focus on one particular Geniza document from 1708 that highlights these Janissary priorities with respect to the Mediterranean port of Damietta on the eastern arm of the Nile. Before I turn to the document, however, I find it useful to provide a brief introduction to the Cairo Geniza and to the nature of the documents it contains from the Ottoman era.

### *Background on the Cairo Geniza*

The Cairo Geniza is a collection of documents accumulated by the Jewish community of Egypt from roughly the tenth century C.E. through the 1890s. The word 'geniza' is related to Arabic *jinaza* and Turkish *cenaze*, meaning a funeral. Ultimately, however, as S. D. Goitein points out in his magnum opus, *A Mediterranean Society*, it goes back to the ancient Persian word for 'treasure'.<sup>1</sup> In Hebrew, it first

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\* Ohio State University.

1 S. D. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society: The Jewish Communities of the Arab World as Portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Geniza*. Vol. 1: *Economic Foundations* (Berkeley 1967), 1.

appears in the Mishna, where it carries its current meaning: a burial site for sacred texts.<sup>2</sup> Jewish communities have historically been reluctant to destroy religious objects, prayer books, and even pieces of paper that contain the name of or allusions to God. Hence, even today, many synagogues collect worn-out prayer books, Torah scrolls, phylacteries, and the like and bury them in ‘paper graves’ in nearby cemeteries.<sup>3</sup>

The Cairo Geniza consists of written material that was, in the first instance, deposited in a purpose-built storeroom on the second floor of the Ben Ezra Synagogue in Fustat, in what is today southern Cairo, between the tenth and the early sixteenth centuries. Thanks to the important work of Rebecca Jefferson, we now know that what we call the Cairo Geniza is actually a combination of the Ben Ezra Synagogue material with additional material from other synagogues and from an array of paper graves, above all paper graves located in the Basatin Cemetery in southern Cairo, which is one of the oldest Jewish cemeteries in the world.<sup>4</sup> Following the complete restoration of the Ben Ezra Synagogue in 1889-1892, during which time the second-storey storeroom was opened, this mass of material was removed from Cairo and relocated to various library collections in Europe and North America.<sup>5</sup>

Even those familiar with the Cairo Geniza tend to think of it as a collection of medieval documents, and in fact, the majority of the material does date from the tenth through the thirteenth centuries C.E., a timespan that is often labelled the ‘classical’ Geniza period. Of a total of some 400,000 Geniza documents, at an extremely rough estimate, some 360,000, or ninety percent, come from this period. In contrast, only some 40,000 date from the period of Ottoman rule in Egypt, more specifically 1517 through the removal of the Geniza documents in 1896-1897.<sup>6</sup> In addition to being much smaller, the Ottoman-era corpus differs in several fundamental ways from the medieval corpus. It contains far fewer items of profound literary and theological significance. As is well-known, the medieval Geniza corpus

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2 Mishna Shabbat 16, 1. I am grateful to the anonymous external reviewer of this article for pointing this out.

3 For two modern-day examples, see <https://templebethel.org/genizah-a-proper-burial> (Temple Beth-El, Charlotte, NC, USA); <https://www.worldjewishtravel.org/listing/jewish-cemetery-of-kolkata> (Jewish cemetery, Kolkata [Calcutta], India).

4 R. J. W. Jefferson, *The Cairo Genizah and the Age of Discovery in Egypt: The History and Provenance of a Jewish Archive* (London 2022); Eadem, ‘Deconstructing “The Cairo Genizah”: A Fresh Look at Genizah Manuscript Discoveries in Cairo Before 1897’, *Jewish Quarterly Review*, 108/4 (2018), 422-448.

5 Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, I: 3-6; Jefferson, *The Cairo Genizah*, chapters 6-11.

6 These extremely rough estimates come from Professor Marina Rustow, Dept. of Near Eastern Studies, Princeton University, who directs the Princeton Geniza Lab.

includes writings of intellectual luminaries such as the rabbi and philosopher Moses Maimonides (1138-1204), as well as such rarities as variant books of the Hebrew Bible. While most medieval Geniza documents, apart from biblical material and some liturgical and exegetical works, are written in Judeo-Arabic – that is, Arabic in Hebrew script – Ottoman-era documents are composed in a wider variety of languages, including Ladino, or Judeo-Spanish, and even, in a few cases, Ottoman Turkish, in addition to Arabic and Judeo-Arabic. Since much of the Ottoman material comes not from the Ben Ezra Synagogue’s storage chamber but from paper graves in cemeteries, it has a far more archival character, for the papers of important community members were often buried shortly after these members died.<sup>7</sup> For this reason, in addition, we find almost no reuse of paper for unrelated purposes in the Ottoman corpus, whereas among the medieval Geniza corpus, it is quite common to find the margins and versos of documents reused years, sometimes centuries, later for wholly different purposes.

Similarly, the vast majority of secondary scholarship on the Geniza, from the late nineteenth century until the present day, has focused on the ‘classical’-era corpus. In the past fifteen years or so, however, the Ottoman-era material has attracted more and more interest, resulting in revelatory publications on the part of a small but growing number of scholars.<sup>8</sup> Their work is helping to establish the Geniza as an important primary source for Ottoman Egyptian society. As such, it can supplement archival and narrative sources emanating from both Egypt and the Ottoman imperial centre, as well as sources produced within non-Muslim communities, notably rabbinical responsa.<sup>9</sup> This is the backdrop against which I introduce the document under study here.

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7 Jefferson, ‘Deconstructing “The Cairo Genizah”’, 428-429.

8 E.g., D. Arad, ‘Welfare and Charity in a Sixteenth-Century Jewish Community in Egypt: A Study of Geniza Documents’, *Al-Masāq: Journal of the Medieval Mediterranean*, 29, 3 (2017), 258-272; Idem, ‘The Community as an Economic Body: The [waqf] Property of the Musta’rabs of Cairo in the Light of Documents from the Geniza’ (in Hebrew), *Ginzei Kedom*, 7 (2011), 25-69; A. David, *A Jewish Mediterranean Society at the End of the Middle Ages in the Light of the Cairo Geniza* (collected articles in Hebrew) (New York and Jerusalem 2016); G. Khan, ‘A Judeo-Arabic Document from Ottoman Egypt in the Rylands Genizah Collection’, in R. Smithuis and P. S. Alexander (eds), *From Cairo to Manchester: Studies in the Rylands Genizah Fragments*, *Journal of Semitic Studies Supplement 31* (Oxford 2013), 233-248; E. M. Wagner (ed.), *A Handbook and Reader of Ottoman Arabic* (Cambridge 2021); M. Dudley, ‘Into the Anti-Archives: Jewish Law, Ottoman Imperial Administration, and the Early Modern Cairo Geniza’, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 2024.

9 Two highly effective studies based on responsa are A. Shmuelovitz, *The Jews of the Ottoman Empire in the Late Fifteenth and the Sixteenth Centuries: Administrative, Economic, Legal, and Social Relations as Reflected in the Responsa* (Leiden 1984); and M. Goldish, *Jewish Questions: Responsa on Sephardic Life in the Early Modern Period* (Princeton 2008). Studies of Jews in

### *The document*

The document that draws my attention here belongs to the Halper collection of the Herbert D. Katz Center for Advanced Judaic Studies at the University of Pennsylvania (CAJS Halper 222), although I accessed digital images of it through the Friedberg Genizah Project website and the University of Pennsylvania Libraries website. As the Friedberg Project's catalogue scan points out, the original document consisted of a long sheet of paper (15.5 x 10.3 cm), on one side of which a letter was written in Arabic. It was then folded in half along its shorter edge, presumably in preparation for mailing. At some later point, the Hebrew burial prayer known as Tsidduk ha-Din (literally 'affirmation of the [divine] judgement') was written on the reverse of the letter.<sup>10</sup>

This letter is dated Zilkade 1119, which corresponds to late January-early February 1708. Thus it comes toward the end of an experiment in reform launched by Egypt's Ottoman governors in an attempt to curb the economic power of Egypt's Janissary Corps. In 1705, the governor, no doubt acting on orders from the palace of Ahmed III, had appointed one of Egypt's *sancak beyis* to direct Damietta's port customs in the hope of keeping the customs revenues out of the hands of Cairo's localised Janissary regiment.<sup>11</sup>

The writer of the letter is one Ali Efendi, who signs himself *serdar*, or commander, of Damietta's Mustahfizan, or Janissary, unit. Damietta had a small contingent of slightly over 100 Janissaries, apparently drawn from the Cairo corps, to patrol its modest citadel.<sup>12</sup> It might seem odd that their commander would have the

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Egypt based on a broader range of sources include M. Winter, 'The Jews of Egypt in the Ottoman Period according to Turkish and Arabic Sources' (in Hebrew), *Pe'amim: Studies in Oriental Jewry*, 16 (1983), 4-21; Idem, 'Relations of the Jews with the Authorities and with Non-Jewish Society' (in Hebrew), in J. M. Landau (ed.), *The History of the Jews of Egypt in the Ottoman Period (1517-1914)* (in Hebrew) (Jerusalem 1988), 371-420.

- 10 Friedberg Genizah Project website, <https://fjp.genizah.org>, under Cairo Genizah/Philadelphia/Penn CAJS/Halper 222, 'Catalog Scans' and 'Catalog Records'. 'Catalog Scans' reproduces text from Benzion Halper, 'Descriptive Catalogue of Genizah Fragments in Philadelphia', *Jewish Quarterly Review*, 14 (1923), 206. 'Catalog Records' reproduces information from the University of Pennsylvania Libraries catalogue; see also <https://colenda.library.upenn.edu/catalog/81431-p3sx64v12>. The Friedberg Genizah Project categorises the document as consisting of two leaves of two folios each: the Tsidduk ha-Din comprises folio 1a, the Arabic letter 1b, the blank half of the letter page 2a, and the blank half of the Tsidduk ha-Din page 2b. The University of Pennsylvania Libraries, in contrast, categorise the entire Tsidduk ha-Din page as folio 1r and the entire Arabic letter page as folio 1v.
- 11 A. Raymond, *Artisans et commerçants au Caire au XVIIIe siècle*, Vol. II (Damascus 1973-1974; reprint Cairo 1999), 624, 749-751.
- 12 S. J. Shaw, *The Financial and Administrative Organization and Development of Ottoman Egypt*,



title *efendi*, which ordinarily indicates a civilian bureaucrat. However, numerous Janissary officers, at various ranks, received training in the religious sciences or in chancery practices, either of which would qualify them for this title. Furthermore, both the imperial Janissary Corps and its provincial counterpart contained a number of scribes and related officials who likewise bore the title.<sup>13</sup> While the *serdar* would presumably have been in charge of Damietta's defence in case of attack, he, and the unit he commanded, were in actual fact subordinate to the official who held the tax farm of Damietta's port and, with it, oversight of the port's customs.<sup>14</sup> Our letter identifies this tax farmer, or *mültezim*, as Mehmed Agha, almost certainly an officer in Egypt's localised Janissary Corps, based in Cairo. More generally, the letter demonstrates the sway that officers of the Cairo-based regiment had over Damietta and its customs.<sup>15</sup>

What appears to be Ali Efendi's seal is visible on the document's verso, presumably signifying that he sealed the folded letter before mailing it. Unfortunately, the address to which he sent the letter, along with the top lines of the letter itself, was cut off at some point, so that we cannot know to whom Ali Efendi was writing. This correspondent does, however, seem to be a figure of some authority since Ali addresses him in the second person plural and expects him to collect letters from the influential figures discussed below. He is not the provincial governor, to whom correspondence would have been composed in Ottoman Turkish and in a far more obsequious idiom. He may be an Arabophone aide to the governor, perhaps even a highly-placed Jewish aide, such as the governor's *sarrafa başı*, a banker-cum-money lender.<sup>16</sup>

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1517-1798 (Princeton 1962), 197-198; D. Crecelius, 'Damiette in the Late Eighteenth Century', *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt*, 27 (1990), 186; Evliya Çelebi, *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi*, Vol. X, eds S. A. Kahraman, Y. Dağlı, and R. Dankoff (Istanbul 2003), 386. Evliya, however, describes both a *kapukulu serdarı* and a *Mısır yeniçerisi serdarı* in the late seventeenth century.

13 İ. H. Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devleti Teşkilatından Kapukulu Ocakları*, Vol. I (Ankara 1945), 361, 384-389, 408, 413, 444, 550-551; J. Hathaway, *The Politics of Households in Ottoman Egypt: The Rise of the Qazdağlıs* (Cambridge 1997), 66 (n. 56), 67; A. M. Altıntaş, 'Being a Comrade of the Ciddavis: The Security of the Cairo Pilgrimage Caravan and Its Economic Dimensions in the Eighteenth Century', in Y. Spyropoulos (ed.), *Insights into Janissary Networks, 1700-1826* [special issue of *Cihannüma: Tarih ve Coğrafya Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 8/1 (2022)], 97.

14 Shaw, *Financial and Administrative Organization*, 127, 139.

15 Crecelius, 'Damiette in the Late Eighteenth Century', 186. A similar situation unfolded in Ottoman Syria in the late sixteenth century, when the Janissaries of Damascus infiltrated Aleppo and became entrenched there. See J. Hathaway, *The Arab Lands under Ottoman Rule, 1516-1800* (Abingdon, Oxon [2<sup>nd</sup> ed] 2020), 67, 93.

16 Mehmed ibn Yusuf al-Hallaq, *Tarih-i Mısır-ı Kahire*, İÜK, T. Y. 628, fols. 234b-236a (on the *sarrafa başı* Yasif); Hathaway, *Arab Lands*, 192-193.

Ali's letter describes nets (*shababik*) owed to a Jewish merchant, Muallim Musa, by a Christian, identified only as *al-Nasrani* ('the Christian'), and 'the people' (*al-nas*). We can probably assume that the nets in question are fishing nets and hazard the guess that the Christian is a fisherman in Lake Manzala, which borders Damietta to the east; he may also be a weaver of fishing nets. Since Damietta's hinterland during the Ottoman era contained a large population of Coptic Christians, some of whom also fished in Lake Manzala, it is quite possible that the Christian was Coptic. Lake Manzala was the centre of a veritable fishing industry during the Ottoman era, with thousands of fishermen exploiting the lake's bounty annually. Pickled roe, or bottarga, from mullet caught in the lake was exported to other Ottoman provinces and to Europe.<sup>17</sup>

Taxes on fishing in Lake Manzala comprised an imperial tax farm (*muqāṭaa*) administered by the *mültezim* of Damietta's port – in this case, the same Mehmed Agha who is mentioned above.<sup>18</sup> Beginning in the 1670s, as Stanford Shaw explains, Janissary officers based in Cairo held the tax farms of Egypt's Mediterranean port customs but enlisted Jewish merchants to administer the customs on a daily basis.<sup>19</sup> This was the role that Muallim Musa presumably fulfilled for Mehmed Agha. He may have had an agreement with 'the Christian' to supply him with nets that he sold or otherwise distributed to other fishermen. Unfortunately for Muallim Musa, in any case, this Christian was a servant of Mehmed Agha; the letter describes him as "*khaddam 'ind al-amir Mehmed Agha*", indicating that he is a member of Mehmed's household. For this reason, Muallim Musa has appealed to the recipient of the letter. Ali Efendi, for his part, instructs the same recipient to obtain letters in support of Muallim Musa from four highly-placed officials.

### *Janissary officers in this document*

The prospective authors of these letters of support are three officers in Egypt's Janissary Corps, based in Cairo – the *vakit kethüdası* (*katkhuda al-waqt* in Arabic), Süleyman Odabaşı, and Abdullah Odabaşı – and Yusuf Bey, the *sancak beyi* who, as a result of a reforming initiative on the part of Egypt's governor, now supervised Damietta's customs. Egypt's Janissary Corps contained a number of officers with the rank of *kethüda*, pronounced *kâhya* or *kihya* in Egypt. The rank was technically

17 Evliya Çelebi, *Seyahatname*, X: 389; J. P. Hughes and R. G. Wasson, 'The Etymology of Botar-go', *American Journal of Philology*, 68/4 (1947), 414-418.

18 Shaw, *Financial and Administrative Organization*, 127, 139.

19 *Ibid.*, 103.

subordinate to that of Janissary agha, but in actual fact the *kethüda* wielded far more influence than the agha, so that *kethüdas* effectively dominated the regiment. The *vakit kethüdası* was the *kethüda* who commanded the corps at the time, as the title implies; it was a year-long appointment that could rotate among various *kethüdas*. In 1708, the *vakit kethüdası* was apparently Parmaksız (Fingerless) Mehmed Kethüda,<sup>20</sup> whose sobriquet probably referred to the loss of one or more fingers in an accident involving firearms or cannon. Like virtually all Janissary officers of that time, he belonged to Egypt's Faqari faction, one of two factions that, between roughly 1640 and 1730, divided the entire military and administrative population between them; the rival faction were the Qasimis.<sup>21</sup> In the early years of the eighteenth century, Cairo's Janissary officers were dominated by members of one or another household that belonged to the Faqari faction. The Gedik household was perhaps the most prominent during these years,<sup>22</sup> although Parmaksız Mehmed Kethüda does not appear to have been a member of that household.

Süleyman Odabaşı and Abdullah Odabaşı, however, are almost certainly up-and-coming members of the Kazdağlı household, which in 1708 was just becoming a force to be reckoned with in Egypt's Janissary Corps. The household formed within the corps and used the corps' rank hierarchy as a sort of structuring principle, with higher officers cultivating ties of clientage with subordinates as they gradually worked their way up the chain of command. Within this scheme, the rank of *odabaşı*, or barracks commander, played a key role in the Kazdağlı household's development since it was apparently the rank at which a Janissary officer could begin to acquire followers and build up wealth. His nascent household would be based in the barracks.<sup>23</sup>

Kazdağlı Mustafa Kethüda, the household's founder, was apparently a Greek from the region of the Kazdağ (a.k.a. Mount Ida) in western Anatolia. He had come to Egypt perhaps in the 1640s with the help of his patron, Hasan Agha Bilifya, the long-time agha of Egypt's Gönüllüyan regiment, who was, like him, an Anatolian Greek (The Cairene chronicler al-Jabarti describes both of them as "*Rumi al-jins*").<sup>24</sup>

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20 Ahmed Çelebi ibn Abd al-Ghani, *Awdah al-isharat fi man tawalla Misr al-Qahira min al-wuzara' wa'l-bashat* [The Clearest Signs: The Viziers and Pashas Who Governed Egypt], ed. A. A. Abd al-Rahim (Cairo 1978), 217. On the office of *vakit kethüdası* in Egypt's Janissary Corps, see Hathaway, *Politics of Households*, 81, 84, 85, 87, 176.

21 On the factions' origins and roles, see J. Hathaway, *A Tale of Two Factions: Myth, Memory, and Identity in Ottoman Egypt and Yemen* (Albany, NY 2003).

22 Hathaway, *Politics of Households*, 73, 74.

23 *Ibid.*, 20-21, 26-27.

24 'Abd al-Rahman al-Jabarti, *'Aja'ib al-athar fi'l-tarajim wa'l-akhbar* [The Marvellous Chronicles: Biographies and Events], ed. S. Moreh, Vol. I (Jerusalem 2013), 107, 108. See also J. Ha-

He initially served as Hasan Agha's *sarraj*, a term that is usually rendered in Arabic as if it should mean 'saddler' but, given the services typically performed by men with this title, may actually have been the equivalent of *siraji*, a lamp-lighter.<sup>25</sup> A *sarraj*'s duties resembled those of a personal bodyguard or head of security for a regimental officer, and the position seems to have offered Anatolian mercenaries a path into Egypt's regiments: if the regimental officer whom the *sarraj* served were pleased with his performance, he might enrol him in one of the regiments. Hasan Agha apparently enrolled Mustafa in the Janissary Corps, possibly at the rank of *odabaşı*, and from there, as al-Jabarti notes, promoted him until he attained the rank of *kethüda*.<sup>26</sup>

At some point in his career, however, Mustafa began purchasing elite slaves, or mamluks, from Georgia and enlisting them in the Janissary regiment. Western Georgia, and the western Caucasus more generally, had become a popular source of military and administrative personnel for the Ottoman palace, provincial governors, and provincial grandees during the seventeenth century; Caucasian mamluks offered an alternative to the rebellious *kullar* of Balkan and Anatolian *devşirme* origin who had deposed and murdered Sultan Osman II in 1622.<sup>27</sup> Mustafa Kethüda's successors as chief of the Kazdağlı household, down to the French occupation of Egypt in 1798, were all Georgian mamluks.

Research for my first book suggested that such patrons enlisted their clients in the Janissary unit at the rank of either *odabaşı* or *çorbacı*. *Çorbacı* is a rather confusing rank where Egypt's soldiery is concerned. Among the imperial Janissaries, the rank appears to have been synonymous with that of *bölükbaşı*, roughly equivalent to a regiment commander, and thus superior to that of *odabaşı*, a barracks commander.<sup>28</sup> In Egypt's Azeban Corps, an infantry body that, during the early eighteenth century, often competed with the Janissaries for influence, the officer hierarchy contained fewer ranks, and *çorbacı* was the rank directly subordinate to *kethüda*.<sup>29</sup> Among Egypt's Janissaries, however, *çorbacı* appears to have desig-

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thaway, 'The Household of Hasan Ağa Bilifya: An Assessment of Elite Politics in Seventeenth-Century Egypt', *Turcica*, 27 (1995), 135-151.

25 Hathaway, *Politics of Households*, 55, 57-58, 63-64, 178.

26 Al-Jabarti, *Aja'ib al-athar*, I: 108.

27 J. Hathaway, 'Circassian Mamluks in Ottoman Egypt and Istanbul, ca. 1500-1730: The Eastern Alternative', in H. T. Karateke, H. E. Çıpa and H. Anetshofer (eds), *Disliking Others: Loathing, Hostility, and Distrust in Premodern Ottoman Lands* (Boston 2018), 27-30; Hathaway, *Politics of Households*, 101-103.

28 Uzunçarşılı, *Kapukulu Ocakları*, I: 25, 35, 38, 45, 48, 153, 154, 163, 165, 168, 234, 235, 437; *TDVİA*, s.v. 'Yeniçeri' (K. Beydilli), 457-458.

29 Hathaway, *Politics of Households*, 55-56, 86. However, one of the first leaders of the Azeban-

nated an affiliate or ‘honorary’ member of the corps, perhaps a wealthy merchant or otherwise distinguished figure, with no evident command responsibilities.<sup>30</sup> In the early eighteenth century, when the Kazdağlıs were still one of several households jockeying for influence within the Janissary Corps, the post of *çorbacı* may have provided entrée into the corps for mamluks in the same way that the post of *sarraj* provided entrée for mercenaries. By roughly 1715, however, the rank of *çorbacı* seems to disappear from Egypt’s Janissary Corps entirely.<sup>31</sup>

One of Mustafa Kethüda’s mamluks, Süleyman, and Süleyman’s own mamluk, İbrahim, first appear in chronicles of Egypt as *çorbacı*s. At that rank, in Safer 1123/April 1711, they joined Mustafa’s senior mamluk and successor as household head, Hasan Çavuş, as members of the Janissary contingent that guided Egypt’s pilgrimage caravan along the *hajj* route. While Hasan, as *serdar-ı kitar*, had overall command of the caravan, İbrahim served as *serdar-ı Ciddavi*, commanding the force, drawn from all seven of Egypt’s soldiery regiments, that protected the pilgrims as they moved between Mecca and its Red Sea port of Jidda. These positions enabled them to take advantage of the opportunities for commerce, particularly in coffee, that the pilgrimage offered.<sup>32</sup> After several years as *çorbaçıs*, İbrahim and Süleyman were promoted to *odabaşı*, a rank that enabled them to begin to attract clients and amass resources of their own; since they were barracks commanders, the men under their command made natural clients.

In 1708, Mustafa Kethüda had been dead for four years. On his death, his successor, the Georgian mamluk Hasan, had been promoted from *odabaşı* to *çavuş*. Whereas, in the imperial Janissary Corps, *çavuş* was a rank inferior to that of *odabaşı*, Egyptian sources are unequivocal as to its superiority in the localised corps.<sup>33</sup> The rise in status associated with the rank of *çavuş* was signified by the donning of

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based Jalfi household had a client (*tabi*‘) who was an *odabaşı*. See *ibid.*, 54.

30 Raymond, *Artisans et commerçants*, II: 727-728. A similar fluidity characterised the rank in eighteenth-century Aleppo with, however, occasional overtones of the sort of regimental command associated with *çorbacı*s of the imperial Janissary Corps. See Y. Araz, ‘A General Overview of Janissary Socio-Economic Presence in Aleppo, 1700-1760s’, in Y. Spyropoulos (ed.), *Insights into Janissary Networks, 1700-1826* [special issue of *Cihannüma: Tarih ve Coğrafya Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 8/1 (2022)], 61-62.

31 Hathaway, *Politics of Households*, 73.

32 Anonymous, *Akhbar al-nuwwab min dawlat Al ‘Uthman min hin istawla ‘alayha al-sultan Salim Khan* [Annals of the Representatives of the Ottoman State from the Reign of Sultan Selim Han], TSK, Hazine 1623, fol. 70a; al-Jabarti, ‘*Aja’ib al-athar*, I: 45; Hathaway, *Politics of Households*, 73-74, 134-137; Altıntaş, ‘Being a Comrade of the Ciddavis’, *passim*.

33 Uzunçarşılı, *Kapukulu Ocakları*, I: 173-175, 205-208. Among the Acemi Oğlans, however, the *çavuş* was directly subordinate to the *kethüda*: *ibid.*, 45. Possibly, *çavuş* in Egypt was equivalent to *başçavuş* among the imperial Janissaries. Egyptian sources distinguish between *çavuş* and

the floor-length gown known as the *dolama*.<sup>34</sup> Janissaries at the rank of *odabaşı* and below wore the baggy trousers known as *şalvar* (*sirwal* in Arabic). The rank of *çavuş* apparently commanded sufficient resources to enable Hasan to acquire a critical mass of mamluks and other clients, and to move to a palatial residence from the Janissary barracks, where his household would have been based before his promotion.<sup>35</sup>

Narrative accounts of the actions of the Kazdağlı household under the leadership of Hasan Çavuş provide a few clues to the identities of the Süleyman and Abdullah Odabaşıs who were asked to write a letter supporting Muallim Musa. Süleyman was probably the mamluk of household founder Kazdağlı Mustafa Kethüda, mentioned above, even though available narrative sources indicate that he remained a *çorbacı* until at least 1711.<sup>36</sup> Even at this very early stage of his career, Süleyman had acquired a client, İbrahim Çorbacı, also mentioned above, who would assume hegemonic control of the Janissary regiment in the 1740s, when he held the rank of *çavuş*, and propel the Kazdağlı household into domination of Egypt as a whole.<sup>37</sup> As for Abdullah Odabaşı, he may have been another mamluk of Mustafa Kethüda. The Turcophone chronicler Mehmed ibn Yusuf al-Hallaq notes that the Janissary *başodabaşı* Kazdağlı Hacı Abdullah was promoted to *çavuş* in Receb 1126/July 1714; this is surely the same Abdullah mentioned in our letter.<sup>38</sup> There were two clients of the later Kazdağlı household head Osman Çavuş named Süleyman and Abdullah, both of whom became influential grandees during the 1730s, but they were probably not yet *odabaşıs* in 1708, and may not yet have been recruited to the household.<sup>39</sup>

A decisive factor in identifying Süleyman and Abdullah as Kazdağlıs, however, is that Mustafa Kethüda, the founder of the Kazdağlı household, had himself been the tax farmer (*mültezim*) of Damietta; Alexandria; Lake Burullus, the lake to the east of Alexandria; and Cairo's Nile port of Bulaq during the 1690s.<sup>40</sup> In

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*başçavuş* but give the impression that both were superior to *odabaşı*. See Hathaway, *Politics of Households*, 64, 72, 76.

34 Ahmed Kethüda Azeban al-Damurdashi, *Al-Durra al-musana fi akhbar al-Kinana* [The Protected Pearl: Annals of Egypt (Land of the Kinana Tribe)], BL, Or. 1073-1074, 120; Hathaway, *Politics of Households*, 39, 72, 83, 87.

35 Hathaway, *Politics of Households*, 72, 76-78. On the issue of households in the barracks, see n. 23 above.

36 Anonymous, *Akhbar al-muwwab*, fol. 70a; al-Jabarti, '*Aja'ib al-athar*, I: 63, 135.

37 Hathaway, *Politics of Households*, 73, 88-101.

38 Al-Hallaq, *Tarih-i Mısır-ı Kahire*, fol. 307b.

39 Hathaway, *Politics of Households*, 79-83, 84-85.

40 Raymond, *Artisans et commerçants*, II: 743, 745.

other words, the Kazdağlı household's efforts to monopolise the customs revenues of these ports and their hinterlands dated to the career of the household's founder. It seems only natural that his own clients and their clients would pursue control of port customs, as well. This strategy was a natural adjunct to the Kazdağlıs' growing stake in the Red Sea and Mediterranean trade in Yemeni coffee, which by the 1720s formed the main pillar of the household's wealth and would continue to do so through the mid-1750s.<sup>41</sup>

### *Yusuf Bey*

Meanwhile, the fourth prospective writer of a support letter for Muallim Musa, Yusuf Bey, was not a Janissary at all. In the chronicles, he appears as Yusuf Bey al-Musulmani, a *nisba* that typically indicates conversion to Islam from Judaism. Indeed, the chronicler al-Jabarti's necrology of Yusuf Bey notes that "his roots were Jewish" (*kana asluhu Isra'iliyyan*),<sup>42</sup> although whether he was a native of Egypt or from some other background – for example, a Caucasian mamluk who happened to be Jewish – is unknown. He seems to have been a member of the Faqari faction, to which the Janissary officers named in our letter also belonged, although his affiliation is not entirely clear from the available chronicles. He is identified as the *çirak*, or protégé, of the Qasimi chieftain İbrahim Bey Abu Shanab, yet he is listed among the Faqari emirs in the late seventeenth century and appears to have regarded the Faqari leader Hasan Agha Bilifya, the patron of Kazdağlı Mustafa Kethüda, as a mentor.<sup>43</sup> His career was fairly distinguished. Before his promotion to *sancak beyi*, he served as agha, or commander, of Egypt's Çerakise (Circassian) regiment, which, despite its name, comprised soldiers from an array of ethno-regional backgrounds, then *kethüda*, technically deputy commander, of the Çavuşan regiment, a position that was particularly close to the Ottoman governor of Egypt. Promoted to *sancak beyi* by the governor İsmail Pasha (term 1695-1697) in 1695 or 1696, he served as governor of the Nile Delta subprovince of Minufiyya, then as governor of Jidda, the

41 Hathaway, *Politics of Households*, 77, 80, 134-137.

42 Al-Jabarti, *'Aja'ib al-athar*, I: 131.

43 Al-Damurdashi, *Al-Durra al-musana*, 46, 49; al-Jabarti, *'Aja'ib al-athar*, I: 117, 118. Since Abu Shanab was a Bosnian, it is conceivable that Yusuf Bey and his fellow *çirak*, Abdurrahman Bey, were also Bosnians, and that they became Abu Shanab's *çiraks* when he brought them to Egypt from Bosnia, even if they did not join the Qasimi faction. However, there is no evidence to confirm this theory.

port of Mecca, then finally of Mecca itself. In 1698, he commanded the Egyptian force on an imperial campaign against the Safavids.<sup>44</sup>

In 1705, however, the Ottoman governor of Egypt appointed Yusuf Bey to direct Damietta's customs, which since 1672 had been under the control of Janissary officers from Cairo's garrison. This governor, Rami Mehmed Pasha (term 1704-1706), was a former *reisülkuttab* and grand vizier who is most famous (or infamous) in Ottoman history for losing the grand vizierate during the 1703 Edirne Vaqası.<sup>45</sup> Rami's appointment of Yusuf represented the continuation of efforts launched by two previous governors, Hazinedar Moralı Ali Pasha (term 1691-1695) and Hacı Kara Mehmed Pasha (term 1699-1704), to curb the Cairo Janissary Corps' monopoly over Mediterranean and Nile port customs and to eliminate the form of Janissary extortion known as *himayet* (protection), whereby Janissary officers forcibly assumed control of civilian economic enterprises, collecting a share of all profits.<sup>46</sup> As to why Rami chose Yusuf as the latest exponent of this reformist policy, he may have sought a figure who was firmly established in Egypt's provincial administration and respected by his fellow grandees, yet whose factional identity was not pronounced and who had a history of collaboration with the governor. A convert to Islam from Judaism arguably had the additional attraction of lacking deep-rooted ties to Egypt's Muslim community and, perhaps more tellingly, to Egypt's most powerful military-administrative households.<sup>47</sup> Similar considerations came to bear on other administrative positions that represented the imperial government's interests in Egypt, notably that of *vekil-i Dariissaade*, the Ottoman Chief Harem Eunuch's permanent agent in the province beginning in the late seventeenth century.<sup>48</sup> The governor may also have calculated that, as a convert, Yusuf was likely to form a bond with Muallim Musa and other Jewish customs administrators.

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44 J. Hathaway, 'Jews among the Grandees of Ottoman Egypt', in A. Franklin, R. E. Margariti, M. Rustow and U. Simonsohn (eds), *Jews, Christians and Muslims in Medieval and Early Modern Times: A Festschrift in Honor of Mark R. Cohen* (Leiden 2014), 156-157; al-Jabarti, '*Aja'ib al-athar*', I: 117-118, 131; Anonymous, *Zubdat ikhtisar tarikh muluk Misr al-mahrusa* [The Essence of the Abridged History of the Kings of Well-Protected Egypt], BL, Add. 9972, transcribed by K. Youssef (Universiti Malaya), fols. 34a, 36b-37a; al-Damurdashi, *Al-Durra al-musana*, 12, 46, 91; Ahmed Çelebi, *Awdah al-isharat*, 216; Abdülkerim ibn Abdurrahman, *Tarih-i Mısır*, SK, Hekimoğlu Ali Paşa 705, fols. 107b-108a; al-Hallaq, *Tarih-i Mısır-ı Kahire*, fol. 238a. It is difficult to tell from the narrative sources precisely which military campaign he joined.

45 *TDVİA*, s.v. 'Rami Mehmed Paşa' (Recep Ahısali), 450.

46 Raymond, *Artisans et commerçants*, II: 627, 745, 749-751.

47 On this point see Hathaway, 'Jews Among the Grandees of Ottoman Egypt', 158-159.

48 J. Hathaway, *The Chief Eunuch of the Ottoman Harem: From African Slave to Power-Broker* (Cambridge 2018), 170-173.



Yusuf Bey remained director of Damietta's customs until his death, presumably of illness or other natural causes, on 10 Receb 1120/25 September 1708. Rami Mehmed Pasha, meanwhile, had been deposed in 1706, and his successors apparently did not attempt to sustain the reforms. Thus on Yusuf Bey's death, control of Damietta's customs reverted to Cairo's Janissaries, who would retain it until the late eighteenth century.<sup>49</sup>

### *The Tsidduk ha-Din*

Yusuf's death, only seven to eight months after the composition of the letter on the verso of our document, inevitably returns our attention to the Tsidduk ha-Din, the Hebrew funerary prayer inscribed on the document's recto. During a Jewish burial, this prayer is usually recited either just before the body is lowered into the grave or just after the grave has been filled in. It consists mainly of biblical verses, particularly from the books of Deuteronomy, Isaiah, Job, and Psalms, along with two short passages from later rabbinical material. Ashkenazi and Sephardic versions differ in the order in which the verses are arranged.<sup>50</sup> Our document features a modified Sephardic version, with a few deletions from the standard Psalms and additional verses from the book of Isaiah.

If this were a document from the 'classical' Geniza period, we could justifiably assert that the letter on the verso was simply used as scrap paper, perhaps years later, by someone who needed to write down the Tsidduk ha-Din to read at a Jewish burial. But in Ottoman-era Geniza documents, the recto is almost always connected to the verso. Could this Tsidduk ha-Din, therefore, be connected to Yusuf Bey's death? After all, Yusuf was a convert to Islam from Judaism. Tempting as such an idea might be, it seems unlikely. By the time of his death, Yusuf had been a Muslim for many years. He would certainly have had a Muslim funeral in Damietta, where he was buried. The Tsidduk ha-Din would have been recited for him only if he had had a Jewish burial. A hypothetical Jewish friend or associate wishing to commemorate his passing by reciting a prayer would probably have recited the Mourner's Kaddish instead, and would probably not have written it down.

An alternative, and arguably more convincing, suggestion is that the Tsidduk ha-Din is connected to the unknown recipient of the letter, who, as noted above, may

49 Raymond, *Artisans et commerçants*, II: 774-775, 789, 798.

50 The Ashkenazi version can be accessed at [https://www.chabad.org/library/article\\_cdo/aid/368092/jewish/The-Burial.htm#Tziduk](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/368092/jewish/The-Burial.htm#Tziduk). Audio of the Sephardic version can be accessed at [https://www.spmusic.org/files/Funeral/17\\_p200d\\_Tsadik\\_Atah.mp3](https://www.spmusic.org/files/Funeral/17_p200d_Tsadik_Atah.mp3).

well have been a Jewish official in the administration of the governor of Egypt – perhaps his *sarraḥ*, or banker. Perhaps when this official died, a relative or associate wrote the Tsidduk ha-Din on one of his surviving papers in preparation for reciting it at the official’s burial. These papers, in turn, may well have been buried in a paper grave in the Basatin Cemetery, whence they made their way into the larger Cairo Geniza collection.

### Conclusions

Our document attests to the close alliance of Jewish merchants and localised Janissary officers in the customs administration of Ottoman Egypt. Their collaboration enabled both parties to derive maximum profit from commerce, whether intraprovincial, interprovincial, or international. Apparently, reforming Ottoman governors of Egypt found this alliance difficult to break. Even during the three years when Yusuf Bey al-Musulmani was directing Damietta’s customs, Janissary officers based in Cairo were never far from the action. They had leverage over Damietta’s small Janissary unit, and thus when Ali Efendi, the unit’s commander, learned that Muallim Musa needed support, he turned to Cairo-based Janissary officers as well as to Yusuf Bey.

The Janissary officers to whom Ali Efendi turned represented quite different ranks in the corps’ hierarchy: the *vakit kethüdası*, acting head of the entire Egyptian corps, and two *odabaşıs*, barracks commanders and thus apparently the lowest-ranking of the Egyptian corps’ officers. Their role in resolving this dispute affirms that even comparatively low-ranking officers could exert influence in the customs administration, as they could in other administrative functions, such as the conduct of the Egyptian *hajj* caravan. (Officers with the rank of *başodabaşı*, meanwhile, exercised a formidable degree of authority in the Janissary Corps and in Egypt at large from the late seventeenth through the early eighteenth century.)<sup>51</sup> The overarching goal of their ventures was enrichment through commerce and the fees and taxes that accompanied it.

Apart from Ali Efendi, the *serdar*, whose factional allegiance, if any, is unknown, all the officers of Cairo’s Janissary Corps mentioned in our letter belonged to Egypt’s Faqari faction. At this juncture, in other words, the Faqari faction seems

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51 Hathaway, *Politics of Households*, 66-68, 71-73. However, such Janissary *başodabaşıs* are usually portrayed in narrative sources as ‘outsiders’ who did not belong to prominent households and sought to disrupt the rank hierarchy followed by the Kazdağlıs and other such households while undermining the authority of the higher Janissary officers.

to have had the upper hand over the rival Qasimi faction in the administration of Egypt's port customs, and in control of urban revenues generally. Yet the preponderance of Janissary officers from the Cairo regiment in customs administration was arguably more important than their factional allegiance or that of Yusuf Bey. Yusuf's rather tenuous Faqari identity and the fact that the two factions are never mentioned in the letter support this point. Just three years later, most of the Kazdağlı household, numbering over 600 men, would defect to the rival Azeban Corps, which at the time was dominated by Qasimis, to protest the takeover of the Janissary Corps by an upstart *başodabaşı* of the sort mentioned above.<sup>52</sup> In the early eighteenth century, the integrity of the Janissary rank hierarchy was more important to the Kazdağlıs and other powerful Janissary households, such as the Gediks, than factional allegiance.

This letter, furthermore, provides a glimpse of the Kazdağlı household at a relatively early stage of its development, in the years following the death of its founder, Mustafa Kethüda, and his patron, Hasan Agha Bilifya. The household no longer held hegemonic control over Egypt's Janissary Corps, as Mustafa had done during the last several decades of his life. Instead, its leader and most influential members clustered at the ranks of *çavuş* and *odabaşı* while, apparently, using a localised version of the rank of *çorbacı* as a springboard to higher office. At the same time, they parlayed these ranks into loci of considerable economic influence, using them to pursue supervision of port customs and of the *hajj* caravan, with all the commercial opportunities that these operations provided. Yet they never attempted to bypass or ignore any ranks in order to win control of Egypt's Janissary Corps. On the contrary, the corps' hierarchy supplied the Kazdağlıs and other Janissary households with an organisational structure; its integrity was integral to the households' development.

As for Yusuf Bey al-Musulmani, his career demonstrates the sorts of niches that a convert without a huge stake in factional allegiance could fill in Egypt's administration at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Among these niches were positions close to Egypt's governor and those that involved representing the interests of the imperial government, such as mediating among the fractious sharifian families of Mecca and commanding the Egyptian forces sent to join an imperial campaign. The directorship of Damietta's customs fell under both these categories. This post was Yusuf's last, coming at the end of an impressive career, and perhaps that fact, in combination with his somewhat weak connection to the Faqaris, likewise played a role in his appointment: he was presumably getting on in years and had little stake in the factional conflicts that loomed in Cairo. A lengthy sojourn in Damietta, far

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52 Abdülkerim, *Tarih-i Mısır*, fol. 127a; anonymous, *Akhbar al-nuwwab*, fols. 69b, 74b; Ahmed Çelebi, *Awdah*, 239; al-Jabarti, *'Aja'ib al-athar*, I: 45-46; Hathaway, *Politics of Households*, 72-73.

from the centre of political action in Cairo, would have been more palatable to him than it would have been to a factional mover and shaker such as İbrahim Bey Abu Shanab. Yet his relative lack of clout in Egypt's halls of power meant that he lacked the authority to intimidate the very Cairo-based Janissary officers who joined him in supporting Muallim Musa. His death handed Damietta's customs back to them and their allies.

Finally, the intense interest that this document reveals in Damietta's customs revenues and in commercial activities in and around the port reflects long-term Ottoman attempts to resuscitate the port as a locus of trade, particularly trade between Egypt and other provinces, and trade with Istanbul.<sup>53</sup> The early Mamluk sultans had razed Damietta and rebuilt it farther inland following repeated Crusader attacks, yet it never regained its commercial prominence until after the Ottoman conquest, instead serving as a place of banishment for disgraced Mamluk emirs.<sup>54</sup> In contrast, charitable foundations by Ottoman governors and exiled Chief Harem Eunuchs in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries incorporate urban caravanserais (Arabic singular, *wakala*) and storage facilities in Cairo, the Nile port of Bulaq, and Egypt's Mediterranean ports, indicating a desire to promote commerce all along the route from Cairo up to the Mediterranean.<sup>55</sup> It is no coincidence that Damietta and Alexandria loom disproportionately large in the Geniza documents that I have been reading. Muallim Musa's dispute with 'the Christian', as well as the competition for commercial and administrative pre-eminence by early Kazdağlı household members and Yusuf Bey al-Musulmani, reflects, above all, a broad Ottoman policy of commercialisation in which Egypt's Janissaries were heavily involved.

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53 D. Panzac, *La caravane maritime : marins européens et marchands ottomans en Méditerranée (1680-1830)* (Paris 2004), 189, 211-212.

54 D. Ayalon, 'Discharges from Service, Banishments, and Imprisonments in Mamluk Society', *Israel Oriental Studies*, 2 (1972), 28, 35, 37, 45. In the late eighteenth century, it was sometimes regarded as a site of rustication; see Crecelius, 'Damiette in the Late Eighteenth Century', 186.

55 Muhammad Abd al-Mu'ti al-Ishaqi, *Akhbar al-uwal fi man tasarrafa fi Misr al-Qahira min arb-ab al-duwal* [The Most Important Events: The Heads of State Who Administered Egypt] (Cairo 1887), 160, 170; Hathaway, *The Chief Harem Eunuch*, 184-188.

## APPENDIX

Transcription of CAJS Halper 222, verso<sup>56</sup>

[line(s) missing]

- 1- بعد وان سالتم عنا فاننا بخير وخاطرنا عندكم والذي نعرفكم به ان وصل الى عندنا
- 2- مكتوبكم صحبة المعلم موسى و عرفتونا من قضية الشبابك الذي له عند النصراني والناس وان النصراني
- 3- خدام عند الامير محمد اغا ملتزم بندر دميط والواصل الى عندكم المعلم موسى والحال اناكم عند وصول
- 4- المكتوب اليكم تاخذوا مكتوب من حضرة كتخدا الوقت ومكتوب من الامير يوسف بيك ومكتوب
- 5- من الامير سليمان اودة باشه وعبدالله اودة باشه خطابا لنا ويذكرون فيهم ان عند وصول المكاتب
- 6- تنتظروا حساب النصراني في منزلكم وترسلوهم الينا ومثل المكاتب الذي لنا ايضا مكتوب
- 7- من الامير يوسف بيك ومكتوب من كتخدا الوقت ومكتوب من سليمان اودة باشه وعبدالله اودة باشه
- 8- خطابا الى محمد اغا (ال)ملتزم حالا ويذكرون فيهم (ان) يعملوا الحساب في بيت الامير علي افندي وتدعوهم (ان)
- 9- يوكدوا في المكاتب ويرسلوهم الينا على العجلة ونحن نخلصه من النصراني ومن خلفه
- 10- على اخر حال واحمد افندي ومحمد افندي يسلمنا عليكم....في ذي القعدة سنة 1119(1).

من الفقير

علي افندي

سردار

مستحفظان

دميط

56 I am grateful to Dr. Alan Elbaum of the Princeton Geniza Project for checking over my transcription and translation. Ali Efendi's Arabic contains a few eccentricities in the use of prepositions and tends to omit the relative pronoun in imperative clauses. It also features several colloquialisms, such as the use of the plural pronoun in place of the feminine singular to refer to a non-human antecedent. On such colloquialisms, see B. Liebreuz, *Arab Traders in Their Own Words: Merchant Letters from the Eastern Mediterranean around 1800* (Leiden 2022), 87-89, 92.

## Translation

...Now then: If you were to ask about us, we are well. Our thoughts are with you. What we inform you of is that your letter has arrived in the company of Muallim Musa, and you have informed us about the matter of the nets that are owed to him by the Christian and the people, and that this Christian is a servant of Mehmed Agha, the tax farmer of the port of Damietta, and that Muallim Musa has come to you. And now, as for you, when [this] letter reaches you, obtain a letter from his excellency the *vakit kethüdası* and a letter from the emir Yusuf Bey and a letter from the emir Süleyman Odabaşı and Abdullah Odabaşı, addressed to us, stating in them, ‘On the arrival of the letters, you should look into the Christian’s account in your residence and send them [the accounts] to us’. In addition to the letters to us, [there should be] a letter from the emir Yusuf Bey and a letter from the *vakit kethüdası* and a letter from Süleyman Odabaşı and Abdullah Odabaşı, addressed to Mehmed Agha, [the] current tax farmer, telling them<sup>57</sup> to draw up the account in the house of the emir Ali Efendi [i.e., the writer of the present letter]. Appeal to them to be emphatic in the letters and send them to us speedily, and we will free him [i.e., Muallim Musa] from the Christian and the others entirely. Ahmed Efendi and Mehmed Efendi greet you [illegible]...in Zilkade of the year [1]119.

From the poor one Ali Efendi, commander of the Janissaries (Mustahfizan) of Damietta

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<sup>57</sup> Presumably Mehmed Agha and his underlings are meant.

# THE FELLAH SALİH CASE

## AN INHERITANCE DISPUTE BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT AND EGYPTIAN JANISSARIES

Abdulgennan M. ALTINTAŞ\*

THE DEATH OF FELLAH SALİH triggered a series of disputes over the rights to his probate inventory among local Janissaries, Egyptian administrators, and the imperial authorities, despite the fact that he was neither a Janissary nor a statesman. It was Salih's substantial wealth that attracted their interest. When he passed away in 1754, as a wealthy but childless merchant, he allegedly possessed five to six thousand Egyptian purses<sup>1</sup> of cash, numerous estates, and the tax farming rights to large and prosperous villages in Egypt.<sup>2</sup> While the Janissaries and their Egyptian allies sought to seize and share his properties, the Sultan's intervention changed the dynamics and further complicated the situation. The Sultan ordered the immediate seizure and transfer of Salih's properties to the capital, and sent an inspector (*mübaşir*) to Cairo for the purpose, only to face disobedience and resistance. The Egyptians argued that FellaH Salih's wealth was not as great as claimed and that, according to local administrative custom, the deceased's estate belonged to them. Consequently, the dispute turned into a problem that occupied the local power holders and the Ottoman imperial council for almost a decade. This case, however, can provide the researchers with valuable insights into the contention for power between local groups and the imperial centre.

Salih's death coincided with a period of deep empire-wide financial crisis, which resulted in the Ottoman government implementing an unprecedentedly aggressive confiscation policy.<sup>3</sup> Driven by the need to replenish the state treasury, the policy

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\* Foundation for Research and Technology-Hellas, Institute for Mediterranean Studies.

1 The *kise-i Mısri* (Egyptian purse) equaled twenty-five thousand *paras*.

2 BOA, A.DVNS.MSR.MHM.D.7: 158 (*evasıt-ı B* 1167/3-13 May 1754).

3 Y. Arslantaş, A. Pietri and M. Vahabi, 'State Predation in Historical Perspective: The Case of Ottoman *Müşadere* Practice During 1695–1839', *Public Choice*, 182 (2020), 417-442; A. Yıldız,

saw the government pushing the limits of the law and administrative practices. Correspondence between Istanbul and Cairo over the confiscation of Salih's properties reveals the conflict between imperial inheritance laws and local customs in Egypt. The practices in force in Egypt regarding the sale of vacant village tax farms were another factor that escalated the conflict.<sup>4</sup>

In this case, the Ottoman government clashed with centrally appointed officials and Egypt's local military and political elite. The Egyptian governor of the time and his deputy (*kethüda*) were involved in the case because they received a portion of the proceeds from the sale of Salih's village tax farms, just as their predecessors had received a share from the sale of other vacant tax farms, in accordance with local customs. The party which strongly opposed the confiscation decision included the Janissaries, the head of Cairo (*Şeyhü'l-beled*), the Seven Corps (*yedi ocak*)<sup>5</sup> commanders, and the Egyptian treasurer. In their correspondence, the Ottoman council frequently referred to this party using the inclusive term 'Egyptian' (*Mısırlı*).<sup>6</sup> The Janissaries were directly involved in the case due to their close relationship with Fellaḥ Salih. Confiscation of inheritance in violation of local customs in Egypt was seen as potentially paving the way for similar practices in the future. Therefore, other actors in the Egyptian party supported the Janissaries in this case, in order not to compromise the privileges of the local power holders, and to get a share of Salih's inheritance.

Information about this case derives from the imperial orders issued on the confiscation of the inheritance, reports written by inspector Ahmed Efendi, and a petition from the Egyptians to the Sultan. The initial imperial order, which was dispatched to Cairo on 8 May 1754, instructed that all Salih's belongings be confiscated, comprising his cash and other private properties. Since he had donated some of his property to his own household members during his lifetime, it was impossible to prove that the donated property belonged to him. For this reason, the state, which initially intended to confiscate all of Salih's inheritance, later shifted its interest only to the income obtained from the sale of the deceased's village tax farms. Fellaḥ Salih was the head of a household, and those who reported the economic value of his

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*Crisis and Rebellion in the Ottoman Empire: The Downfall of a Sultan in the Age of Revolution* (London and New York 2017), 68-69.

4 S. J. Shaw, *The Financial and Administrative Organization and Development of Ottoman Egypt 1517-1798* (Princeton 1962), 26-41.

5 *Mustahfızan* (Janissaries), *azaban*, *müteferrika*, *çavuşan*, *gönüllüyan*, *tüfengciyan*, and *çerakise* were the Seven Corps of Egypt.

6 For *Mısırlı*s, see G. Piterberg, 'The Formation of an Ottoman Egyptian Elite in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century', *IJMES*, 22/3 (1990), 275-289; J. Hathaway, *The Politics of Households in Ottoman Egypt: The Rise of the Qazdağlıs* (Cambridge 1997), 48.



inheritance to Istanbul may have mistakenly claimed that the household's property belonged to Salih. For example, the five to six thousand purses of cash that the imperial orders assert he owned is an exaggerated figure. To put it into perspective, the remittance treasure (*irsaliyye-i hazine*) delivered from Egypt to the central treasury in 1744 actually consisted of only 750 Egyptian purses.<sup>7</sup>

Another controversial issue related to Salih's heirs also emerges from the archival documents. The Ottoman government insisted that Salih had died heirless. Conversely, the Egyptians argued that Salih's wife and two cousins were his rightful inheritors. However, the inspector found that the allegations of Egyptians regarding the deceased's heirs were unfounded.<sup>8</sup> Since Salih had donated a significant portion of his property while alive to his followers (*ittibâ'*), who were members of the Janissary Corps, the Egyptian Janissaries became involved in the inheritance dispute.

The case of Fellah Salih is a remarkable example of Egyptian Janissaries resisting the commands of the central government in collaboration with the political and military elites in Egypt. This article will initially outline Salih's life story and ties to the Janissaries, before moving on to an assessment of how local power holders in Egypt established alliances and which problems arose from the conflict between Ottoman legal tradition and Egyptian local customs.

### *Fellah Salih and the Janissary Corps of Egypt*

Fellah Salih was a wealthy merchant with close connections to the Janissary Corps. Born in the El-Raheb village of Minufiyya, he had a challenging childhood. He was orphaned at a young age and started working as a servant for the son of the village sheikh. When he couldn't pay his taxes on time, Salih's master left him as a hostage to Emir Ali Kethüda al-Jalfi, the village's tax farmer. Even after his master cleared his debt, the young boy refused to return to his village and chose to serve in the Emir's household, where he began to advance in his career.<sup>9</sup>

Salih initially worked in the harem services of the Jalfi Household, but his quick wit and exceptional communication skills helped him rise quickly and build a considerable fortune over the years.<sup>10</sup> Although many details of his life remain

7 Shaw, *The Financial and Administrative Organization and Development of Ottoman Egypt*, 401.

8 BOA, C.ML.694/28423.2.1 (undated).

9 T. Philipp and M. Perlmann (eds), *'Abd al-Rahmân al-Jabarti's History of Egypt: 'Ajâ'ib al-Âthâr fi'l-Tarâjim wa'l-Akhhâr*, Vol. I (Stuttgart 1994), 311.

10 D. Ayalon 'Studies in al-Jabarti I. Notes on the Transformation of Mamluk Society in Egypt under the Ottomans (Continued)', *JESHO*, 3/3 (1960), 313.

unknown, it seems he not only invested in entrepreneurial activities but also allocated resources and effort to establishing his own social and political network. For instance, Salih purchased male and female slaves and established a mamluk group known as Jamâ‘at al-Fallâh, which later became one of the most prominent Mamluk households<sup>11</sup>. He married his mamluks to his female slaves and provided them with houses and a livelihood, thus enlarging his own household. Not surprisingly, he attempted to establish connections with the Janissary Corps by enrolling his slaves in the corps, mostly through bribing and flattering the administrators of Cairo.<sup>12</sup>

Salih’s money bolstered his political power and prestige. He was engaged in money lending and credit dealings with the prominent families of Egypt. For instance, he loaned over 100 Egyptian purses to İbrahim Kethüda, a key figure in the Egyptian Janissaries and the Kazdağlı Household. According to Al-Jabarti, he himself continued to travel on a donkey, accompanied by a single servant, until his death at seventy.<sup>13</sup>

At the time Falah Salih’s household was expanding, the Janissaries and the Azeban Corps were the pre-eminent military groups among the Seven Corps in Egypt. Despite previous animosity between them, the two corps allied during the rise of Fellaḥ Salih, becoming a very strong pressure group in local politics. They were also involved in Red Sea trade. The Janissaries and *azebans* increased their share in the coffee, spice, and grain trade by taking advantage of their political influence in Egypt and their control over customs houses.<sup>14</sup> Fellaḥ Salih’s master, Emir Ali Kethüda, was a follower of Hasan Kahya (d. 1712), the founder of the Jalfi household. Emir Ali Kethüda built up an entourage of *sarraces*<sup>15</sup>, generally recruited from the youths of Anatolia for household services rather than from among mamluks. The influence of the Jalfis in the Azeban Corps increased when Ali became the *kahya al-waqt* of the *azebans* in 1729. He allied with the Kazdağlı Household, which was already affiliated with the Egyptian Janissaries,<sup>16</sup> and thus the two political houses and military groups enjoyed considerable power in Egyptian politics in the mid-eighteenth century. This association between households and corps continued over

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11 Ibid.

12 Ibid., 313-314.

13 Philipp and Perlmann (eds), *‘Abd al-Rahmân al-Jabartî’s History of Egypt*, 312.

14 A. M. Altıntaş, ‘Being a Comrade of the Ciddavis: The Security of the Cairo Pilgrimage Caravan and Its Economic Dimensions in the Eighteenth Century’, in Y. Spyropoulos (ed.), *Insights into Janissary Networks, 1700–1826* [special issue of *Cihannüma: Journal of History and Geography Studies*, 8/1 (2022)], 90-96.

15 On the *sarraces*, see Huseyn Efendi, *Ottoman Egypt in the Age of the French Revolution*, trans. and ed. S. J. Shaw (Cambridge 1964), 8-9.

16 Hathaway, *The Politics of Households*, 55-56.

subsequent years. Under the leadership of Janissary İbrahim Kethüda and Azeban Rıdvan Kahya, the alliance gained considerable influence in governing the province of Egypt. Their two names frequently appear next to the name of the Egyptian governor in the address section of imperial orders dispatched to Cairo, especially in the years 1749-1753.<sup>17</sup>

Salih was raised in the Jalfi Household, and later developed strong ties with the Janissary Corps rather than the Azeban Corps. Although he was not a Janissary, he is usually mentioned as a merchant affiliated with them.<sup>18</sup> He was actually economically affiliated to the Janissaries of Egypt via local merchants and *beys*. Salih is known to have promoted many of his followers to high positions in the corps in Egypt, and so also had followers in the Janissary Corps.<sup>19</sup> Given the circumstances at that time, it is only reasonable that he desired to maximise his trade profits by taking advantage of Janissary protection. The practice of protection in Egypt, as in other Ottoman imperial cities, allowed Janissaries and merchants to enjoy mutual economic benefits.

As to the question of what the Janissaries expected from the merchants in return for the protection offered to them, we know that the Janissaries became partners in the business of merchants under their protection and received a share of their profits. This also meant that there was a division of labour between the two parties: the Janissaries reduced costs for the merchants they patronised, and the merchants provided the soldiers with extra sources of income. For our concerns, of course, the crucial point is the fact that the Janissaries somehow gained the right to obtain a portion of the merchants' inheritance. Drawing on his research on Egyptian court registers, André Raymond proves that Janissaries generally received a one-tenth share of the inheritance of merchants and artisans associated with their corps.<sup>20</sup> Fellaḥ Salih was one of these protected merchants.

Unfortunately, the specifics of Salih's commercial activities are not fully known. While it has been established that he dealt in the local agricultural products of Egypt, he may also have been involved in the lucrative coffee trade, which was then monopolised by the Janissaries. Egyptian merchants, particularly those dealing in coffee and spices, would import their goods into Egypt via the port of Suez.

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17 For various imperial orders in Mühimme-i Mısır Defterleri, see BOA, A.DVNS.MSR.MHM.d.6; 7.

18 BOA, C.ML.694/28423.2.1 (undated); 694/28423.3.1 (undated); 694/28423.4.1 (undated); 694/28423.5 (23 Za 1177/24 May 1764).

19 BOA, C.ML.694/28423.2.1 (undated).

20 A. Raymond, 'Soldiers in Trade: The Case of Ottoman Cairo', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 18/1 (1991), 22.

The goods would then pass through customs at Cairo and Alexandria before being shipped to the Mediterranean. Interestingly, many of the merchants, often referred to as ‘protected merchants’, managed to evade the required fees. This was facilitated by the Janissaries’ control over Egyptian customs houses, which often turned a blind eye to such practices. Indeed, the imperial authorities complained that Suez customs revenue had fallen from 350 Egyptian purses a year to 200 purses in 1759 due to commercial corruption committed by soldiers at customs.<sup>21</sup>

The new developments in world trade at the beginning of the eighteenth century had a negative impact on the Egyptian Janissaries. Coffee, once exclusive to Yemeni lands, began to be cultivated in other countries. The introduction of Caribbean beans into the Mediterranean market caused the price of Yemeni coffee to decrease. This change in the coffee trade directly affected the Janissary officers, as their profits declined. Consequently, they had to look for additional sources of income, which led them to focus on hereditary rural tax farms.<sup>22</sup> The Janissary officers in Egypt reinforced their political influence through their household connections and economic resources. With the decline of their revenue from the coffee trade, the looming threat of state confiscation of village tax farms heightened their vigilance. The changing economic patterns played a significant role in the ongoing opposition of the Egyptian alliance, led by the Janissaries, against the central administration over the inheritance of Fellah Salih.

## Örf-i belde *versus* kanun-ı kadim

The initial imperial order issued sometime after the death of Fellah Salih gives the basic contours of the Sultan’s justification for ordering the seizure of Salih’s estates for the imperial treasury. According to the Sultan, the entire inheritance belonged to the imperial treasury because “the inheritance of those who died heirless in the Islamic domains under my rule has been confiscated by the state for the treasury... without a doubt, the state is the legal owner of this kind of property”.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, according to Ottoman inheritance practice, based on Sunni Islamic law, the inheritance of any person who died without a surviving heir was considered vacant and,

21 For further details, see BOA, A.DVNS.MSR.MHM.d.7: 569 (*evasıt-ı* § 1172/8-18 April 1759). See also Altıntaş, ‘Being a Comrade of the Ciddavis’, 93-96.

22 Hathaway, *The Politics of Households*, 55-46.

23 “*hükümet-i mülukanem olan bilad-ı İslamiyenin cemi ‘sinde bu makule bila varis fevt olanların terekeleri canib-i miriden beytü’l-mal için zabt oluna gelmekden naşi... bu makule vuku ‘bulan beytü’l-mal şer’an ve kanunen canib-i miriye ‘aid olmasında kat’an reyb ve iştibah olmamağın...*” BOA, A.DVNS.MSR.MHM.d.7: 158 (*evasıt-ı* B 1167/3-13 May 1754).

therefore, belonged to the imperial treasury.<sup>24</sup> In addition, if there was no heir qualified to receive the entire inheritance, for example, if the only heir was the spouse of the deceased, then the state intervened in the inheritance through the *beytülmal* trustees and transferred a part of the inheritance to the treasury.<sup>25</sup> A different inheritance practice was followed when a Janissary died without an heir. In Istanbul, if the inheritance of a Janissary who died without an heir was less than 10,000 *guruş* it was transferred to the Janissary Corps, or to the central treasury if the value exceeded that amount.<sup>26</sup>

Salih's death without an heir must have provided the Sultan with solid ground to confiscate his inventory. In response, however, the Egyptians objected to the decision by noting that the deceased did have heirs and had died of natural causes. Therefore, they believed that the imperial treasury could not confiscate his fortune and that it should remain in Egypt. Their legal basis was the local custom called *örf-i belde*, which had been in use in the province since the time of the Ottoman conquest. According to local practice, the state would seize the village tax farms, property, and money of those who had been executed or had fled Egypt following accusations of treason.<sup>27</sup> Otherwise, the imperial authorities had no right to claim the inventories of those who died due to natural causes. In accordance with the local inheritance practice in Egypt, the tax farms of deceased individuals passed to the control of the Egyptian governor and were sold through the method called *musalehe*, meaning that revenue from the sale of such tax farms belonged to the governor of Egypt.<sup>28</sup>

Agricultural production in the rural areas of Egypt was vital to the Ottoman Empire, especially in supplying Istanbul and the Holy Cities of Mecca and Medina. The revenue generated from customs and agricultural villages through the tax farming system provided an indispensable economic base for influential local power holders in Egyptian domestic politics. In order to preserve their wealth after their death,

24 H. Canbakal and A. Filiztekin, 'Wealth and Demography in Ottoman Probate Inventories: A Database in Very Long-term Perspective', *Historical Methods: A Journal of Quantitative and Interdisciplinary History*, 54/2 (2021), 96.

25 The husband received half of his wife's inheritance, while the wife received one fourth; A. Bilgin and F. Bozkurt, 'Bir Malî Gelir Kaynağı Olarak Vârissiz Ölenlerin Terekeleri ve Beytülmal Mukataaları', *Kocaeli Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, 20/2 (2010), 3.

26 Said Öztürk, *Askeri Kassama Ait Onyedinci Asır İstanbul Tereke Defterleri (Sosyo-Ekonomik Tahlil)* (Istanbul 1995), 92-94. Also, see the article by Hülya Canbakal and Aysel Yıldız in this volume.

27 BOA, A.DVNS.MSR.MHM.d.5: 347 (*evahir-i N* 1167/22-31 January 1737); 6: 168 (*evail-i B* 1157/10-20 August 1744).

28 Shaw, *The Financial and Administrative Organization and Development of Ottoman Egypt*, 37-38.

these Egyptians, like Salih, sought a formula to protect their power by transferring their tax farms to their relatives or followers while they were still alive. In this way, the village tax farms would be prevented from being sold at auction to anyone outside the household after the death of a tax farmer. Thus, in cases where the tax farmer died of natural causes without transferring his tax farms to his heirs, they would claim the tax farm by *musalehe* and pay the governor for it.<sup>29</sup>

The governor and the *beys* profited from the sale of tax farms by the *musalehe* method; however, this also caused a considerable decrease in the imperial treasury's revenue.<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, since governors sought additional income and the leaders of political households wished to maintain their economic power, they tended to agree to extend the boundaries of the *musalehe* to include the inheritances of rebels. They would thus secretly transfer the property of those executed or banished from Egypt after rebelling against imperial authority via the *musalehe* method.<sup>31</sup>

Eventually, after a brutal attack during a high-level meeting in Egypt on 15 November 1736, the central authority established a guideline for the inheritance system in the region. The attack, planned by governor Ebubekir Pasha, resulted in the deaths of several senior administrators and military elites, including the Janissary commander Kazdağlı Osman Kethüda, significantly impacting the power structure in Egypt.<sup>32</sup> The followers of the murdered *beys* and commanders sent frequent petitions to Istanbul, asking for the village tax farms of the deceased to be given to them through *musalehe*. In response, the Sultan issued an order which actually defined the limits of *musalehe*: the method could only be used to sell the property of tax farmers who had died of natural causes. If the tax farmer had donated his *iltizam* to one of his followers during his lifetime, the *iltizam* was to be put up for auction along with his other property. In accordance with long-standing law and local tradition, the estates of those who had been executed and fled from Egypt were not included in the *musalehe*, but belonged to the imperial treasury.<sup>33</sup>

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29 Ibid; M. N. Engel, 'Ottoman Egypt in the Mid Eighteenth Century- Local Interest Groups and their Connection with and Rebellions Against the Sublime Porte and Resistance to State Authority', unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Birmingham, 2017, 186.

30 Ş. Pamuk, 'The evolution of financial institutions in the Ottoman Empire, 1600-1914', *Financial History Review*, 11/1 (2004), 17.

31 For examples, see Engel, 'Ottoman Egypt in the Mid Eighteenth Century', 176-184.

32 Al-Damurdashi Ahmad Kethuda 'Azaban, *Al-Damurdashi's Chronicle of Egypt 1688-1737: Al-durra al-musana fi akhbar al-kinana*, ed. and trans. D. Crecelius and A. Bakr (Leiden 1991), 310-311.

33 BOA, A.DVNS.MSR.MHM.d.5: 347 (*evahir-i N* 1167/22-31 January 1737).

### *Opposition to the Sultan's order*

As far as the Ottoman imperial authorities were concerned, Fellaḥ Salih was a rich and heirless *mültezim*. For the Egyptians, on the other hand, he was a merchant associated with the Janissary Corps. Both parties argued that they were the rightful owners of the inheritance, justifying their claims on legal and customary grounds. Therefore, the Fellaḥ Salih case became a long-running debate because of the contradiction between the Ottoman legal tradition and local custom in Egypt.

Despite Fellaḥ Salih's death in 1754, no progress was recorded in the official documents regarding the confiscation of the inheritance for a long period. In 1764, with the appointment of Chief Gate Keeper (*serbevâb*) Seyyid Ahmed as an inspector to Cairo, the case once again became the most important issue on the agenda of the Egyptian council. However, over the previous ten years Salih's property had already been shared among his followers. The governor of Egypt received 150 purses by selling the deceased's village tax farms through the *musalehe* method. Additionally, in accordance with local customs, the deputy governor was paid 150,000 *paras* for this sale. After giving these details, Seyyid Ahmed reported that the Egyptians refused to give any share to the imperial treasury, still insisting that: "According to the law and custom, the state has not received any share from the inheritance of people who were members of the military corps and died of natural causes. In this case, all the *beys* and corps commanders unanimously refuse to give a share to the treasury".<sup>34</sup> It was also noted in the inspector's report that the military grandees and *beys* threatened to overthrow the governor of Egypt, Kethüda Mehmed Pasha, who insisted on carrying out the Sultan's order.<sup>35</sup>

Seyyid Ahmed organised a meeting at the Egyptian Council to defuse the tension between the governor and the Egyptians and listen to the arguments of both sides. The Egyptian governor, *beys*, *ulema*, and military elites were present at the meeting. Mehmed Pasha, the governor, announced his intention to give back the revenue he had earned from the sale of the tax farms to the imperial treasury and tried to convince participants to return the properties they had received from the inheritance. He suggested that the seized property should be re-auctioned in the presence of the Ottoman inspector, and the sales proceeds sent to Istanbul.<sup>36</sup>

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34 BOA, C.ML.694/28423.2.1 (undated).

35 BOA, C.ML.694/28423.2.1 (undated); Egyptian *beys* and commanders had the power to force the governor to resign from office during the periods when they allied. For example, see Al-Damurdashi Ahmad Kethuda 'Azaban, *Al-Damurdashi's Chronicle of Egypt*, 314.

36 BOA, C.ML.694/28423.3.1 (undated).

Following the meeting, the Egyptians met privately with the inspector to discuss their disagreement with the central authority's confiscation decision. According to their allegation, Fellaḥ Salih was not a *bey* or a *kaşif* (sub-provincial governor); he had granted the village tax farms in question to his followers, most of whom were Janissaries, 20 years before his death. In support of this claim, they presented *hüccets* from the *kadı* of Cairo.<sup>37</sup> There was no valid reason for the Sultan to seize their estates, and the inheritance had been shared in accordance with established local customs in Egypt. Consequently, they believed that the Sultan would disapprove of a practice that contravened both the law and local customs. The inspector's response, however, indicated that contrary to the expectations of the Egyptians, the confiscation order would not be revoked: "The claim that Fellaḥ Salih has heirs is nonsense. If you want the Sultan's consent, obey the governor's order".<sup>38</sup> Despite his numerous attempts to counsel them, the inspector stated in his report that the Egyptians were determined to stick to their decision.<sup>39</sup>

Another of inspector Seyyid Ahmed's tasks was to investigate the hush money (*hakkısükut*), allegedly given as bribes to senior Egyptian officials to cover up abuses or illegal practices in sharing Fellaḥ Salih's probate inventory. The Ottoman Imperial Council was informed that a significant amount of hush money had been paid to several high-ranking officials in the province. It was reported that the Egyptian governor, the deputy governor, the head of Cairo, the *kadı*, and the former inspector had all received hush money totalling 309 Egyptian purses (7,725,000 *paras*).<sup>40</sup> During the interrogation by Seyyid Ahmed, however, none admitted to receiving such an amount as hush money. The Ottoman records do not specify who paid, but it is highly probable that the Janissaries provided a small portion of the sum to senior officials in order to secure a larger share of the inheritance.

Governor of Egypt	150 Egyptian purses
Deputy governor ( <i>kethüda</i> )	30 Egyptian purses
Şeyhü'l-beled Ali Bey	120 Egyptian purses
The former inspector	5 Egyptian purses
<i>Kadı</i> of Cairo	4 Egyptian purses

**Table I:** The alleged hush money amounts received by officials from the inheritance<sup>41</sup>

37 BOA, C.ML.694/28423.5.1. (23 Za 1177/24 May 1764).

38 BOA, C.ML.694/28423.3.1 (undated).

39 BOA, C.ML.694.28423.3.1 (undated).

40 BOA, A.DVNS.MSR.MHM.d.8: 147 (*evahir-i C* 1177/26 January 1763-4 January 1764).

41 BOA, A.DVNS.MSR.MHM.D.8:147 (*evahir-i C* 1177/26 December 1763-4 January 1764).



The inspector's decision to include the governor on the list of recipients of hush money is puzzling. Through the *musalehe* system, the governor earned 150 purses from selling the deceased's vacant village tax farms. This income was not a bribe or hush money, but rather a legitimate payment. It is impossible to justify the money allegedly received by *Şeyhü'l-beled* Ali Bey and other officials on the list based on local custom. If they received any money from the inheritance, it was likely due to embezzlement or corruption.

Failing to convince the agent, the Egyptians sent a collective petition, this time directly to the Sultan, signed by the commanders of the Seven Corps, the *emirülhac*, and the former treasurers (see Appendix 1). In the petition, they first emphasised that the inheritance had been shared in accordance with local customs, but that some malicious people in Egypt had deliberately spread false information to Istanbul to provoke the Sultan against the Egyptians. From their perspective, the source of the deceased Salih's wealth was not village tax farms, but rather agricultural production and trade. As a man who deeply valued his protégés, he had generously used his fortune to liberate his followers and promote them to higher ranks in the Janissary Corps. As a matter of fact, a significant number of his followers advanced their careers in the Janissary Corps and reached the ranks of *kul kethüdası* and *çavuş*. Consequently, his wealth had declined day after day.<sup>42</sup> The Egyptians acknowledged Salih's well-known wealth; however, they argued that it stemmed from his personal trade ventures rather than from his tax farming duty as a state official. By the same token, they claimed the wealth had been distributed among members of his household over time, implying that it was not solely his personal property but belonged to the household. This defense was presented in an attempt to challenge the legal grounds for the decision to confiscate the inheritance.

The Egyptians' long-term resistance did not persuade the Sultan to reverse his decision regarding the confiscation. Following "decisive and forceful" sultanic orders, the Egyptian governor and his deputy first announced that they would deliver a total of 156 purses of money they earned from the *musalehe* sale.<sup>43</sup> Then, surprisingly, the Janissaries admitted that they had transferred 44 purses of money from Salih's inheritance to the Janissary fund in Egypt. They agreed to send this money

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42 BOA, C.ML.694.28423.4.1 (undated).

43 BOA, A.DVNS.MSR.MHM.d.8: 268 (*evasıt-ı* Ca 1178/5-15 November 1764); Former Egyptian governor Mehmed Pasha, who was the governor of Sidon at that time, wrote a petition to the Sultan explaining the Fellaah Salih case from his own perspective. Rejecting the hush money claims, the governor stated that he earned the 150 purses of money from village tax farm sales made through the *musalehe* method. Although the governor was prepared to transfer this money to the central treasury, he requested that the money be donated to him because he had debts. However, this request was not accepted; BOA, C.ML.694.28423.5.1 (23 Za 1177/24 May 1764).

to the central treasury.<sup>44</sup> In the most recent order dispatched to Cairo regarding the inheritance of Fellaḥ Salih, the Sultan did not consider the 200 purses of money collected to be sufficient. He accused the Egyptians of lying, shamelessness, and tyranny, claiming that they had formed an alliance to share the inheritance among themselves. He attempted to persuade them by giving advice and referencing verses of the Quran.<sup>45</sup> However, the Egyptians, who were said to have received hush money, did not accept these allegations, and the issue of hush money was closed.

We do not know the exact value of Fellaḥ Salih's inheritance and the property he donated to his men during his lifetime. It could be argued that the 44 Egyptian purses of money paid into the Janissary regimental fund was the 10% share the Janissaries had received from the inheritance of the merchants under their protection. Considering this estimate, the fortune bequeathed by Fellaḥ Salih is reckoned to have been around 440 purses. In 1765, 11 years after Salih's passing, the central authority managed to transfer 200 purses (5,000,000 *paras*) from Fellaḥ Salih's estate to the central treasury.<sup>46</sup> The remaining 240 purses of money, assumed to have derived from the inheritance, were taken by the Egyptians.

### *Conclusion*

The contradiction between laws valid throughout the empire and local customs brought the Ottoman central administration and the Egyptians into conflict. The Sultan aimed to settle this matter in favour of the central treasury by using his authority. However, the Janissaries and their Egyptian allies considered this attitude contrary to the local customs that had been in force in Egypt since the conquest. During a period of declining commercial revenues, the Janissaries sought alternative economic sources through their connections with household leaders such as Fellaḥ Salih. The edicts ordering the confiscation of Salih's inheritance also required the resale by public auction of the village tax farms he had donated to his Janissary followers during his lifetime. This decision posed a significant threat not only to the Janissaries but also to other local Egyptian actors who maintained their economic and political power by keeping village tax farms in their possession through *musalehes*. As a

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44 BOA, A.DVNS.MSR.MHM.d.8: 246 (*evasiṭ-ı* Ca 1178/5-15 November 1764); BOA, A.DVNS.MSR.MHM.d. 8: 321 (*evasiṭ-ı* N 1178/3-13 March 1764).

45 BOA, A.DVNS.MSR.MHM.d.8: 321 (*evasiṭ-ı* N 1178/3-13 March 1764).

46 BOA, A.DVNS.MSR.MHM.d.8: 321 (*evasiṭ-ı* N 1178/3-13 March 1764).

result, the Fellaḥ Salih case, which was initially related to the Egyptian Janissaries, pushed other actors in the Egyptian party into forming an alliance with the Janissaries against the central authority.

## APPENDIX

Petition submitted to the Sultan and signed by the Janissaries Başihtiyar Mustafa and Süleyman Kethüda, the commanders of the Seven Corps, and the Egyptian *bey*s (BOA, C.ML.694/28423.4.1).

Dergâh-ı felek-medâr ve bârgâh-ı gerdûn-iktidâr türâbına mahrûse-i Mısır'da olan ümera, a'yan ve yedi bölük zâbitân ve ihtiyârânı kullarının 'arzu-hâl-i sıdk-iştîmâl ve mahzar-darâ'at mealleri budur ki bu def'a dergâh-ı mu'allâ kapucu başlarından Seyyid Ahmed Ağa kulları yediyle şeref-rîz-i sudûr iden emr-i şerîf-i 'âlişân dîvân-ı Mısır'da cümle kulları muvâcchelerinde kırâat olunub mazmûn-ı devlet makrûnun beyne-l'inâm kesret-i servet ve yesâr ile meşhûr olan Fellâh Sâlih bilâ vâris fevt olmak takrîbiyle beytülmâle 'âid olan nukûdu ve eşyâ ve emlâk ve kurası min gayr ketm ve ihfâ zâhire ihrâc olunub hâlâ muhâfız-ı Mısır düstûr-ı 'âli-câh kulları ma'rifet-i şer'-i kavim ile ba'de'l-bey hâsıl olan bahâları ve kezâlik kurâ-yı mahlûlesinin hulvânı her neye bâliğ olursa teslîm-i hazîne-i 'âmire olmağîçün defterleriyle ma'an Asitâne-i devlet-medâra irsâl olunmak üzere hatt-ı hümâyûn-ı celâlet-makrûn ile ma'nûn bundan akdem emr-i şerîf-i mülûkâneleri irsâl buyuruldukda düstûr-ı müşârinileyh kulları tarafından ve cânib-i şer'-i enverden ma'rûz-ı 'itâb-ı şâhâneleri kılınan kâ'ime ve i'lâm-ı şer'-inin mezâmin sıdk-ı meşhûnu kizb ve hilâfdan mürekkeb ve i'zar-ı vâhibeden müretteb olduğuna haml buyurulmağla bu def'a şeref-sudûr eden emr-i şerîf-i 'âlişânda tekrar tesdîd ile bu gûne tehdîd buyurulmuş ki müteveffâ-yı merkumun emvâl-i mevâdd-ı 'azîme-i cesîmeden iken emr-i şerîf-i vâcibü'l-iz'âi mülûkâne irsâline mevkûf etmeyüb mütekellimîn-i Mısır kullarının 'âdetleri üzere ketm ile müdâfa'a kaydında olacakların tahayyül etmek hasebiyle hafiyeten ve sırren merkûm Sâlih'in muhallefâtı ve kurâsı maddesinden beytülmâl-i Müslimîne bir akçe verilmemek kasdıyla hâlâ Mısır vâlisi kullarına 150 mısırî kîse ve kethüdâsına 30 mısırî kîse mübâşire 5 mısırî kîse ve Mısır kâdısına 4 mısırî kîse ve şeyhü'l-beled olan 'Ali Bey kullarına 120 mısırî kîse verilib bu hakk-ı sükût mukâbelesinde müteveffâ-yı merkûmun mecmû'-ı emvâl ve eşyâsı ve 'ulûfe ve kurâsı mu'tâd üzere itbâ'ı üzerine tevzî' ve taksîm olunduğu mevsûk be ricâl-i sahîhü'l-keâm ihbârlarıyla nezd-i hümâyûnlarına ilkâ olunduğu işâret-i 'aliyye-i mülûkâne buyurulub hafiyeten ahz ve ihtilâs olunan 309 kîse akçenin minvâl-i muharrer üzere mûmâileyhime tevzî' olunduğu mukaddemâ i'tâb-ı mülûkâneye olan tahrîrâtı tekzîb ve tezyîf etdirdiğini tebyîn buyurulmak hasebiyle bu gûne nezd-i mülûkânelerinde bu kulları hakkında vukû' bulan iftirâ-yı mahz ve anın sarîhden zehrelerimiz çâk olmağla karîb olmuşdur lâ vallahu'l-'azîm hilâf-ı inhâ ve mahz-ı iftirâ olduğu ma'lûm-ı hüdâ-yı müte'âldir müteveffâ-yı merkûmun ahvâli ise sûreten esnâf-ı zeyyinde tüccârdan bir servetlice âdem olub mebde-i hâlinde müntehâ-yı vefâtına gelince çerâğ-perverliğe mâil olub sâl-be-sâl gerek ticâretten ve gerek fâiz-i mahsûl-i zirâ'atten kesb-i yedi olan meblâğ ile ittibâ'ından gâh birisini ve çerâğ ve efruchte idüb muktezâ-yı tarik-i ocağ-ı mustahfızân üzere sinîn-i sâbıkada ittibâ'ından nicesi ocağ-ı mezbûrda kul kethüdâlığı rûtbesine vâsıl olub nicesi dahi tarik-i ocağ üzere kul kethüdâlığına musta'idd ittibâ'ından müte'addid çavuşlar olmağla her birine kefâfları mertebesinden dahi aşâğı

şey veren adamın keyfiyyet-i servet ve yesârî gün-be-gün tenezzülde olacağı bir emr-i mukarrerdir ‘Ali Bey kulları ise 120 kise değil bir para dahi almadığı ma‘lûm-ı hüdayı müte‘aldir şöyle ki cümle kulları muvâcehelerinde i‘tâ ve ahz ile müfteren ‘aleyhim olan kulları muâheze olunduklarında bir vechile aslı olmayub iftirâ-yı mahz ve kizb-i sarîh olduğuna tarafeyn imân-ı gulâz ile teberrî eylemişlerdir ve fevtinden sonra cümle ümerâ ve a’yân ve yedi bölük zabitan ve ihtiyârânı kulları ittılâ‘ıyla ‘âdet-i dirîne-i Mısıriyye üzere henüz bir şeye nâil olmayan hânesinde mevcûd olan ittibâ‘ı üzerine vâli-i memleket hazretlerinden musâlaha olunub muhallefât-ı mevcûdesi dahi ma‘rifet-i şer‘-i kadîm-i ulemâ-ı Mısır dâ‘ileri ittılâ‘larıyla vereseşi olan zevce-i menkûhesi ve li-ebeveyn iki nefer ammi oğullarına ‘ala mâ farzullah-ı ta‘ala tevzî‘ olunub rızâ-yı hümâyûnlarına muhâlîf bir dürlü hareketde bulunmadığımız ma‘lûm-ı ized-i müte‘âldir pâdişâha mazlûm nüvaz-ı şehriyâr bende-perver bu def‘a sâmi‘-i ‘aleyh-i mulûkânelerine ilk olunan akâvil-i kâzibe-i marretü‘z-zikr müteveffâ-yı merkûmun 67 senesi târîhinde on sene mukaddem hilâf-ı inhâ ile fevti ihbârını irtikâb eden eşhâs misillü kimesneler gibi bu def‘a dahi ba‘zı nâ hüdayı ters kimesneler bu güne efk ve iftirâya cesâretleri ancak bu sadakât-kâr kulların nezd-i mulûkâneleride hiyânete mensûb icüb buğz ve hasetlerin kuvvetden fi‘le getürmek için olduğu azhar-ı mine‘ş-şemsdir yohsa lâ tectemi‘ ümmeti ale‘d-dalâl masaddâk-ı şerîfi üzere gayrların intifâ‘ı için şevketlü ‘adaletlü pâdişâh-ı İslâm ve halife resûl-i enâm efendimiz hazretlerine hilâf-ı vâki‘ bir şey tahrîrine cür‘et ve cesâretimiz ola ... feth-i hakaniden beri müsâdere ahvâli hatfe enfîhi ‘an veresetin fevt iden kulları haklarında bir tarikle vâki‘ olmayub ancak ni‘met-i şâhânelerine bazılarının eyledikleri nânkörlük mücâzâtıyla kimi maktûl ve kimi dahi firâr ettiğinden bi‘l-cümle emvâl ve eşyâ ve kurâ ve ‘akârları cânib-i mîriye zabt oluna geldiği şöret-şi‘âr-ı ‘âli meyândır öyle olsa merâhim ‘aliye-i şâhâne ve ‘avâtıf-ı seniyye-i pâdişâhânelerinden mercûdur ki bu güne efk ve iftirâ ile bu sadakât-kâr kulların hiyânete mensûb iden ashâb-ı i‘râzın kelâm-ı had-âmiz akvâl-i garaz-engîzlerini ısga buyurmayub mevâd-ı muharrere-i merkûmenin ‘afvı bâbında sudûr-ı emr-i şerîfleri ricâsıyla cümlemiz ... niyazız ol bâbda kerem ve lütf ve ihsân şevketlü ‘adâletlü pâdişâh-ı İslâm efendimiz hazretlerindir.

Ömer başihtiyâr-ı çavuşân – İbrahim ihtiyâr-ı müteferrika – Mehmed başihtiyâr-ı müteferrika – Ahmed ser müteferrika – Süleyman kethüdâ-yı çavuşân – Halil Bey defterdâr-ı sâbık – Osman Bey Mîrlivâ Kazdağlı – Salih Bey mirü‘l-hâc-ı sâbık – Hüseyin Bey mirü‘l-hâc-ı sâbık – Halil Bey defterdâr-ı Mısır – Hasan Kethüdâ başihtiyâr-ı ‘azebân – Ali kethüdâ-yı ‘azebân – Mustafa başihtiyâr-ı mustahfizân – Süleyman kethüdâ-yı mustahfizân – Mustafa ihtiyâr-ı çerâkise – Hüseyin başçavuş-ı çerâkise – Mehmed başihtiyâr-ı sekban – Mehmed başçavuş-ı sekban – ‘Ali başihtiyâr-ı gönüllüyân – İsmâ‘il başçavuş-ı gönüllüyân – İsmâ‘il ihtiyâr-ı gönüllüyân.