*Cihannüma*
TARİH VE COĞRAFYA ARAŞTIRMALARI DERGİSİ
JOURNAL OF HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY STUDIES

CİLT / VOLUME VIII SAYI / ISSUE 1

Temmuz / July 2022

*İZMİR KÂTİP ÇELEBİ ÜNİVERSİTESİ*
*SOSYAL VE BEŞERİ BİLİMLER FAKÜLTESİ*

*Cihannüma*
TARİH VE COĞRAFYA ARAŞTIRMALARI DERGİSİ
JOURNAL OF HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY STUDIES
**P-ISSN:** 2149-0678 / **E-ISSN:** 2148-8843

**Sahibi/Owner**
İzmir Kâtip Çelebi Üniversitesi
Sosyal ve Beşeri Bilimler Fakültesi adına
Prof.Dr. Turan GÖKÇE

**Editör / Editor**
Prof.Dr. Cahit TELCİ, *İzmir Kâtip Çelebi Üniversitesi*

**Sorumlu Yazı İşleri Müdürü / Responsible Editor**
Doç. Dr. Beycan HOCAOĞLU, *İzmir Kâtip Çelebi Üniversitesi*
Arş. Gör. Arslan KILIÇ, *İzmir Kâtip Çelebi Üniversitesi*



**Yayın Türü / Publication Type**
Hakemli Süreli Yayın / Peer-reviewed Periodicals

**Yazışma Adresi / CorrespondingAddress**
İzmir Kâtip Çelebi Üniversitesi Sosyal ve Beşeri Bilimler Fakültesi, Balatçık-Çiğli/İzmir
Tel: +90(232) 329 35 35-8508
Faks: +90(232) 329 35 19
e-posta: ikccihannuma@gmail.com
Web: http://dergipark.gov.tr/cihannuma

**Basımevi / Publishing House**
Meta Basım Matbaacılık Hizmetleri 87 sk. No:4/A Bornova/İzmir

**Basım Tarihi / Publication Date**
Temmuz / July 2022

*Cihannüma* yılda iki sayı yayımlanan hakemli bir dergidir / *Cihannüma* is a peer-reviewed journal published twice a year


**Tarandığımız ve Dizinlendiğimiz İndeksler / Abstracted and Indexed in:**
Ulakbim TR Dizin, European Reference Index for the Humanities (ErihPlus), Central and Eastern European Online Library (CEEOL), Directory of Open Access Journal (DOAJ), Biefeld Academic Searh Engine (BASE), Open Academic Journal Index (OAJI)

# Insights into Janissary Networks, 1700-1826

## Edited by Yannis Spyropoulos



**This project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation program (grant agreement No 849911).**

*Cihannüma*
TARİH VE COĞRAFYA ARAŞTIRMALARI DERGİSİ
JOURNAL OF HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY STUDIES

*Danışma Kurulu / Advisory Board*

*Cihannüma*
TARİH VE COĞRAFYA ARAŞTIRMALARI DERGİSİ
JOURNAL OF HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY STUDIES

Cilt / Volume: VIII Sayı / Issue: 1 Temmuz / July 2022

## İÇİNDEKİLER / CONTENTS

### *MAKALELER / ARTICLES*

*Cihannüma*
Tarih ve Coğrafya Araştırmaları Dergisi
Sayı VIII/1 – Temmuz 2022, 1-8
*Doi: 10.30517/cihannüma*

# INTRODUCTION

**Yannis Spyropoulos***

This special issue is a small collection of essays devoted to the history of the Janissaries, intended to be the first of a series of publications investigating the processes which made the Janissary Corps a formidable political and socioeconomic power both at the Ottoman center and in the provinces. The papers included here were originally presented in a workshop which took place at İzmir Kâtip Çelebi University in September 2021, organized within the framework of the ERC-funded project "JANET: Janissaries in Ottoman Port-Cities: Muslim Financial and Political Networks in the Early Modern Mediterranean", a project dedicated to examining the functioning of Janissary networks in the Ottoman Empire, conceiving of them as inextricably connected to Muslim political and economic networks across a large part of the Mediterranean.[1]

The Janissary Corps, one of the most influential and fascinating – yet difficult to fathom – institutions of the Ottoman Empire, has attracted the attention of many historians throughout the years. Thanks to this interest, from the mid twentieth century onward a number of groundbreaking works have been produced which have started to move away from considering the corps exclusively as a military institution in a state of decline, whose performance on the battlefield was destined to drag the Ottoman state into a downward spiral.[2] Instead of

* Dr. Yannis Spyropoulos, Foundation for Research and Technology Hellas, Institute for Mediterranean Studies, Department of Ottoman History, Melissinou & Nik. Foka 130, Rethymno / Greece, spyropoulos@ims.forth.gr, Orcid ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3199-7347.

1 This project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation program (grant agreement No 849911).


2 The literature on the subject is vast. For a small sample of some of the most important contributions which helped change our view of the institution's history, see Mustafa Akdağ, "Yeniçeri Ocak Nizamının Bozuluşu", *Ankara Üniversitesi Dil ve Tarih-Coğrafya Fakültesi Dergisi*, 5/3, (1947), p. 291-312; Cemal Kafadar, "On the Purity and Corruption of the Janissaries", *The*

focusing on the corps's military effectiveness, this revisionist literature started to pay attention to the important contribution of its members in the gradual development of new economic practices and increased popular participation in Ottoman imperial politics. In this framework, Janissary protection and the benefits it provided were viewed as a crucial factor which helped the corps's affiliates challenge the structural hierarchies of the long-established state-controlled guilds and eventually shape a new economic reality, which until 1826 functioned to prevent an unchecked invasion by European industries into the Ottoman market.[3] At the same time, the new literature's examination of the increasing association of large segments of the empire's Muslim society with the Janissary Corps, and the latter's extended and active participation in mobilizations which challenged the dominance – especially in Istanbul – of the empire's leading power holders, gave rise to a fruitful debate over the emergence of processes which could have led to "limited government" or even the "proto-democratization" of the Ottoman political scene.[4] Along these lines, various historians have also started to underline the importance of cultural and social phenomena such as the spreading of coffeehouses, shadow theater, and itinerant storytelling, and the increase of lower-social-strata migration to Ottoman cities, for the diffusion of political ideas among the Ottoman Muslims related to the corps.[5]



*Turkish Studies Association Bulletin*, 15/2, (1991), p. 273-280; Idem, "Janissaries and Other Riffraff of Ottoman Istanbul: Rebels Without a Cause?", *International Journal of Turkish Studies*, 13/1-2, (2007), p. 113-134; Donald Quataert, "Janissaries, Artisans and the Question of Ottoman Decline, 1730-1826", *17th International Congress of Historical Sciences. I: Chronological Section, Madrid-1990*, (eds. E. B. Ruano and M. Espadas Burgos), Madrid 1992, p. 197-203.

3 See, for instance, Deniz T. Kılınçoğlu, *Economics and Capitalism in the Ottoman Empire*, London and New York 2015, p. 51-52; Mehmet Mert 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), p. 176, 185-192; Quataert, "Janissaries, Artisans and the Question of Ottoman Decline", p. 202-203.

4 For some of the works contributing to this ongoing debate, see Ali Yaycioğlu, "Guarding Traditions and Laws, Disciplining Bodies and Souls: Tradition, Science, and Religion in the Age of Ottoman Reform", *Modern Asian Studies*, 52/5, (2018), p. 1542-1603; Baki 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*, 45/3, (2009), p. 477-505; Idem, *The Second Ottoman Empire: Political and Social Transformation in the Early Modern World*, New York 2010; Hüseyin Yılmaz, "Osmanlı Devleti'nde Batılılaşma Öncesi Meşrutiyetçi Gelişmeler", *Dîvân*, 13/24, (2008), p. 1-30; Şerif Mardin, "Freedom in an Ottoman Perspective", *State, Democracy and the Military: Turkey in the 1980s*, (eds. M. Heper and A. Evin), Berlin 1988, p. 23-35.

5 Indicatively, see Cengiz Kırlı, "Coffeehouses: Leisure and Sociability in Ottoman Istanbul", *Leisure Cultures in Urban Europe, c. 1700-1870. A Transnational Perspective*, (eds. P. Borsay and J. H. Furnée), Manchester 2016, p. 161-181; Ali Çaksu, "Janissary Coffee Houses in Late Eighteenth-Century Istanbul", *Ottoman Tulips, Ottoman Coffee: Leisure and Lifestyle in the Eighteenth Century*, (ed. D. Sajdi), London and New York 2007, p. 117-132; Kafadar, "Janissaries and Other Riffraff"; Marinos Sariyannis, "'Mob,' 'Scamps' and Rebels in Seventeenth-Century Istanbul: Some Remarks on Ottoman Social Vocabulary", *International Journal of Turkish Studies*, 11/1-2, (2005), p. 1-15.

In spite of this significant progress made by the Janissary-related historiography, the economic and political functions of the Janissaries have yet to be studied in their collective and imperial dimensions, and for good reason. The sheer size of the Janissary Corps, the complexity of its organization, and from the seventeenth century onward its increasing decentralization make any attempts at understanding its history at a holistic level an extremely arduous task. In view of this difficulty, it is only natural that many of the studies which treat the corps as a coherent sociopolitical entity tend to build their analyses by focusing on the case of Istanbul. By the same token, the – few, given the Janissary organization's extensive proliferation in the provinces – analyses which are related to the political and economic history of the corps's peripheral units usually underestimate the latter's contact with the rest of the Janissary organization. As a result, Janissary provincial units are yet to be examined as interconnected and interacting components of a single large corporate imperial establishment. Another problem is related to the Janissaries' perception by scholars as a predominantly urban element, a view which does not account for the corps's increasingly decentralized recruitment procedures and manner of operation from the seventeenth century onward. This fact, in turn, has led to an unbalanced examination of the Janissaries' socio-economic role, which revolves mostly around their city-related economic activities – the guilds being at the center – and leaves their connection with the empire's rural hinterland largely outside of the literature's scope. Last but not least, the Janissaries' non-military activities are to this day still being examined outside of their institutional framework. They are, instead, being treated either as the by-products of private initiatives fueled by the interests of individuals, or as symptoms of the corps's straying from its single "true" path, i.e. being an effective war machine; yet such an approach fails to address its multifunctional role in the Ottoman administration and economy.



JANET opts for a different analysis; it underlines the institutional aspects of such processes, and – without excluding Istanbul from the picture – shifts the current research's center of attention from the Ottoman capital to the empire's provinces. According to our thesis, from the late seventeenth century onward, the Janissary Corps became a largely decentralized multifunctional organization with built-in institutional characteristics that facilitated its entanglement in the economic and political life of Ottoman provinces. This entanglement was destined to become for various Muslim social strata one of the main channels for the amelioration of their socioeconomic position by enabling their advantageous participation in the empire's credit market, commercial life, and agricultural economy, as well as a gateway for their involvement in local and imperial politics. Moreover, the Janissary Corps not only became an essential means of popular participation in and transformation of Ottoman state institutions, but also a platform for the exchange of people, goods, and ideas between different localities covering a vast geographical area. When examined from a Mediterranean perspective, this thesis allows us to look beyond the information provided by

Europe-centered sources and to drastically redefine the sociopolitical and financial role of Muslims in the region, an approach which historical analysis sorely lacks.

Although the project is still in its early stages, the tentative results published in this issue of *Cihannüma* demonstrate the potential of the research undertaken by the members of the JANET team. Our goal with this publication is not to address all the thematic axes and regions examined by the project, but to add a few new pieces to the puzzling history of the Janissary Corps, doing so by introducing new analytical concepts, bringing unexplored case-studies to light, revisiting old ones, and using archival material – old and recently discovered – in novel ways which can disclose hitherto uncharted aspects of the corps's history. In geographical terms, the cases studied here run through a vertical axis which starts from Crimea in the north, passes through Bulgaria, Istanbul, Anatolia, and Syria, and reaches Egypt and the Holy Cities in the south. Although the years covered are approximately 1600-1826, our emphasis is on the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, a period which coincided with the apogee of Janissary networking: the corps's opening up to popular participation in the provinces becomes noticeable in the first half of the seventeenth century, sky-rockets throughout the last two decades of that century, and continues to steadily grow from that point on, reaching its peak by the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

In order to analyze a factor which played an important role in the corps's increasing popularity, in a joint paper with Aysel Yıldız we investigate the phenomenon of "pseudo-Janissarism" or "*the claim of being a Janissary*" (*yeniçerilik iddiası*), as it is usually referred to in Ottoman sources. By introducing the concept of pseudo-Janissarism we intend to bring to light a crucial, yet almost completely unexplored, aspect of Janissary networking, namely the unofficial or semi-official affiliation of individuals with the corps, as opposed to the full Janissary identity attributed by the state to permanently enrolled/salaried Janissaries. Instead of interpreting this fluid and often illicit affiliation as a sign of the corps's institutional decline, as the Ottoman historiography has traditionally seen it, we explore its various features seen as direct results or by-products of the empire's military and socioeconomic transformation which "pushed" or "pulled" the Ottoman Muslim populations toward claiming a military identity. With an eye to explaining the rise and expansion of the phenomenon during its formative period (1600-1735) we follow its evolution through space and time. We do so by tracing the central Ottoman administration's references to it and analyze the particular historical circumstances, large-scale events, and institutional mechanisms which determined its course. Subsequently, we delve into a case-study of the Anatolian town of Adana in order to examine the socioeconomic factors which prompted certain parts of its population to participate in the corps's networks as pseudo-Janissaries. In this vein, we elaborate on the way factors such as war, taxation, migration, and local politics created incentives and imperatives which led Muslims to pursue shady Janissary affiliations, and try to trace the identity of some of these individuals through the use of sources produced both locally and at the imperial center.

Yahya Araz's article attempts to revisit the history of the Janissaries of Aleppo by using archival material which further illuminates the corps's relation with other power groups in the region, as well as its members' relation with the guilds and the ethnic and urban elements of the city. Aleppo was an area with a significant number of Janissaries but no Janissary regiments, where the political and economic clout of the larger Damascene unit was preeminent. Yet, as Araz explains, the Aleppine Janissaries would eventually manage to break away from the Damascene unit's sphere of influence and to impose themselves both as an interest group that set the pace for the functioning of the local market and as agents of socioeconomic advancement for the city's lower social strata and the immigrants coming from Aleppo's hinterland. This fact was, in turn, destined to lead to conflicts with the area's established elite, mainly represented by the local *eşraf*. Although the Janissaries were not involved in the city's international trade, by controlling Aleppo's linkages with its countryside, investing in large estates, and acting as *vakf* administrators or guild and community representatives, they managed to assert themselves as a political and economic force to be reckoned with. It is interesting to note that, in many ways, Araz's observations concerning the rural connections of Janissaries as a source of economic and political authority match the ones presented in the case of Adana, analyzed in the previous paper: in both cases, for the poorest rural inhabitants of various ethnic and tribal origins, affiliation to the Janissary Corps seems to have acted as one of the mechanisms connecting them with the region's urban centers, through protection and representation. By the same token, this mechanism seems to have facilitated the intervention of urban Janissary elements as investors in the economic life of the area's rural hinterland.



Abdulmennan Altıntaş's article deals with the Ciddavi Unit of Egypt, the military force in charge of securing the annual pilgrimage caravan which departed from Cairo each year for a one-month journey to Mecca. The Ciddavis comprised soldiers from various corps based in Egypt, but Janissaries held the most prominent position among them. Altıntaş reveals a complicated picture of the region's trading activities – the most significant being the lucrative Red Sea coffee trade – and the profitable economic niches they created for the soldiers of the above-mentioned unit. In the eighteenth century, the history of the Ciddavis became increasingly interlaced with that of the powerful Janissary household of the Kazdağlıs, who aimed at controlling Egypt's rural tax farms and pilgrimage route, using the title of *serdar-ı kitar* (military commander of the pilgrimage caravan) as a foothold for achieving their goal. Such alliances seem to have opened the way for the unit's soldiers and their local protégés to control the area's trade, by taking advantage of institutionalized privileges such as their jurisdictional autonomy and tax exemptions, and illegally extending them to facilitate a multitude of financial activities and networked connections. Altıntaş's paper demonstrates the similarities between the economic practices – legal or illegal – employed by the members of the autonomous Janissary unit of Egypt and those of their comrades in other units

around the empire. The Janissaries of Egypt, like those based in the North African Regencies of Tripoli, Tunis, and Algiers, were administratively detached from the rest of the imperial (*kapıkulu/dergah-ı ali*) Janissary Corps and had developed a localized and largely autonomous organization, which remained, however, symbolically associated with that of Istanbul, having similar privileges and a similar remit. By underlining the existence of some of these common features, Altıntaş's paper proves that the shared institutional characteristics of different Janissary units – regardless of the extent of their administrative interdependence – allowed the members of even the empire's most autonomous Janissary structures to follow networking patterns similar to those which were to be found all around the Ottoman imperial space in the eighteenth century.

The next article featured in this issue broaches the question of Janissary involvement in rural investments in the frontier area of Vidin, which represented one of the most important centers of Janissary activity in the Ottoman Empire, hosting over 6,000 officially recorded soldiers in the second half of the eighteenth century.[6] İrfan Kokdaş's contribution revisits the discussion over the nature of the *gospodarlık* regime and the role of Janissaries in the formation of large landed estates (*çiftlik*s) in the region. As Kokdaş explains, the development of Janissary rural estate ownership was supported by the adoption by the Ottoman government of specific land policies which, following the wars with the Holy League (1683-1699), prompted a great number of soldiers to claim the vacant/deserted lands in Vidin's hinterland. By studying the formation and evolution of these landed properties, Kokdaş proceeds to challenge two established views which see Janissary estates as having contributed to the demise of *miri* lands and as being the source of an intense Janissary-*reaya* rivalry over land possession in the region. According to Kokdaş, Janissary estates were controlled though a combination of freehold ownership and usufruct rights over state lands, which did not lead to the gradual illegal privatization of state demesnes. Instead, the Janissaries seem to have been largely abiding by the existent land regulations, which offered them more than enough opportunities to expand their rural investments, even without breaching the legal framework which defined the status of *miri* areas in the empire. Kokdaş also observes that the land claims of the Vidin Janissaries played an equally – if not more – important role in the emergence of intra-Janissary disputes than of conflicts between Janissaries and *reaya*. In this framework, he also reveals that many of the networks which supported the various Janissary claims over lands in Vidin were built on the basis of common regimental affiliations and solidarity displayed in the form of credit transactions involving both private individuals and regimental funds. This institutionalized role of regimental funds as pillars of the Janissaries' private entrepreneurial activity has been confirmed in the case of other



6 For the importance attributed by the Ottoman central administration to the Janissary unit of Vidin, see Ignace Mouradgea d'Ohsson, *Tableau général de l'empire othoman*, Volume 7, Paris 1824, p. 316.

Ottoman frontier regions as well,[7] and its study may hold the key to our better understanding of Janissary economic predominance in a number of Ottoman provinces.

Going further to the northern extremes of the Ottoman Empire, Anna Sydorenko's paper treats the unstudied subject of the establishment and function of Janissary economic networks in the northern Black Sea, with an emphasis on the relations that Janissaries developed with the inhabitants of the Christian states which neighbored this frontier region. She does so by employing two archival collections which have never been used before for writing Ottoman history, namely the archives of the Kosh of the Zaporozhian Sich and of the Office of the Gubernia of Kyiv, preserved at the Central State Historical Archive of Ukraine in Kyiv. Sydorenko's goal is to underline the potential for research on the subject offered by this untapped material, while presenting, at the same time, a number of cases which illustrate the type of interactions that Janissaries were involved in on the above-mentioned frontier zone. In doing so, she demonstrates how the Janissaries based in the fortresses of the northern Black Sea were in direct contact not only with the Tatars of the Crimean Khanate, but also with a number of other ethnic groups of the region, such as Cossacks, Ukrainians, Russians, Greeks, and Armenians. Sydorenko's article sheds light on the way in which the Janissaries used their inter-provincial imperial connections to further their trading activity, showing that they actively engaged in the economy of the Black Sea steppe as merchants and rural entrepreneurs, while constantly walking a fine line between collaboration and conflict with the other frontier communities.



Finally, Mehmet Mert Sunar's article deals with the after effects of the abolition of the Janissary Corps in 1826 and the efforts made by Janissaries and their followers in Istanbul and the provinces to take action against Sultan Mahmud II in order to reinstate the corps. In his analysis, Sunar underlines the profound impact that Mahmud's past negative experiences with the Janissaries seem to have had on him and the ways in which his fears led to a ferocious manhunt which aimed at annihilating any possible reaction – real or unfounded – against his regime. Based on summary accounts of the interrogations of former Janissaries, and other literary and archival sources, Sunar's paper traces the zealous efforts of Mahmud's men to unveil various Janissary conspiracies, by way of torture and intimidation, in an attempt to appease him and gain his favor. Through an in-depth examination of these conspiracies, the article illustrates the foundations on which the alleged networks of the plotters were formed, underscoring the relations that ex-Janissaries could develop with the newly founded Asakir-i Mansure Corps and broaching the question of the extent to which the old Janissary networks remained

---

7 Yannis 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], University of Crete, Department of History and Archaeology, Ph.D, Rethymno 2014, p. 198-221.

in place after 1826. In doing so, Sunar not only discloses various aspects of the identities of those whom the central government suspected as plotters, but also the political motives – and, sometimes, even supernatural beliefs – which guided the sultan and galvanized him and his administrators into action, as they did those who conspired against them.

Before letting the contributors' papers speak for themselves, I wish to thank all the JANET team members whose support made this special issue possible. I would also like to thank İzmir Kâtip Çelebi University for hosting our second JANET workshop and *Cihannüma*'s editorial board for their support. I especially owe a debt of gratitude to İrfan Kokdaş for his tremendous help during the editing process. I thank Abdulmennan Altıntaş for designing some of the maps included in the issue and Ben Young for copy-editing the texts with meticulousness and consistency. Finally, I am grateful to the anonymous referees who contributed greatly with their insightful comments and remarks and, of course, to the contributors themselves for their participation and for gladly responding to my challenging requests.

*Cihannüma*
Tarih ve Coğrafya Araştırmaları Dergisi
Sayı VIII/1 – Temmuz 2022, 9-54
*Doi: 10.30517/cihannuma.1131044*

# PSEUDO-JANISSARISM (*YENİÇERİLİK İDDİASI*) IN THE OTTOMAN PROVINCES (WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO ADANA): ITS EMERGENCE AND ITS GEOGRAPHIC AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC ASPECTS

**Yannis Spyropoulos & Aysel Yıldız** *

**Abstract**

The privileged status of the Janissaries and the economic/military conditions prevalent in the Ottoman Empire prompted thousands of Muslims to claim a position in the Janissary Corps, often through illegal means. In this article we investigate an important aspect of this process, which we call "pseudo-Janissarism", and the way it spread on the Ottoman periphery, and discuss the case of Adana, which offers us the opportunity to analyze the social and economic composition of pseudo-Janissaries in the above-mentioned region. We first present a general assessment of the phenomenon in the period from 1600 to 1735, addressing the issue of its rise and early geographical expansion in the empire, its perception by the Ottoman administration, and the reasons behind its development. We claim that the rising numbers of both officially registered Janissaries and pretenders could change the internal dynamics in provincial towns, shape their local politics, and create various struggles over their economic resources. Considering pseudo-Janissarism as a mechanism of tax evasion and provincial networking, we subsequently elaborate on the case study of Adana's pseudo-Janissaries, who became an important local political pressure group in the course of the eighteenth century, and discuss their socioeconomic profile, with the help of various archival sources.

**Keywords:** Pseudo-Janissaries, Janissaries, Adana, tax evasion, soldier recruitment

* Names of contributors in alphabetical order: Dr. Yannis Spyropoulos, *Foundation for Research and Technology Hellas*, *Institute for Mediterranean Studies*, *Department of Ottoman History*, Melissinou & Nik. Foka 130, Rethymno / Greece, spyropoulos@ims.forth.gr, Orcid ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3199-7347. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Aysel Yıldız, Post-Doctoral Researcher, *Koc University*, Rumeli Feneri Yolu, 34450, Sarıyer, İstanbul / Türkiye, ayyildiz@ku.edu.tr, Orcid ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0196-6064.

Makale Geliş Tarihi / Received Date: 29.10.2021 Makale Kabul Tarihi / Acceptance Date: 18.02.2022

## Osmanlı Taşrasında Yeniçerilik İddiası ve Adana Örneği: Ortaya Çıkışı, Coğrafi Dağılımı ve Sosyo-Ekonomik Yönleri

**Öz**

Yeniçerilerin imtiyazlı statüleri ile Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda hüküm süren iktisadi/askeri koşullar, binlerce Müslüman tebaayı genellikle kaidelere aykırı yollardan da olsa Yeniçeri Ocağı'na girmeye sevk etmiştir. Bu makalede, sözü geçen sürecin önemli bir unsuru olan yeniçerilik iddiasının on yedinci ve on sekizinci Osmanlı taşrasında yayılma süreci incelenecek ve Adana örneği üzerinden yeniçerilik iddiasında bulunan bazı şahısların sosyal ve ekonomik profili analiz edilecektir. Bu maksatla, öncelikle 1600-1735 yıllarını kapsayan mühimme defterlerindeki verilere dayanarak, yeniçerilik iddiasının ortaya çıkışı, söz konusu dönemdeki coğrafi dağılımı, Osmanlı idarecileri tarafından algılanışı ile yayılmasındaki muhtelif faktörler tartışılacaktır. Ocağa kayıtlı gerçek yeniçerilerle yeniçerilik iddiasında bulunanların gittikçe artan sayısı, özellikle taşradaki birçok şehrin iç dinamiklerini değiştirerek, taşra siyasetine yön vermiş, bu şehirlerdeki siyasi güç ve kısıtlı ekonomik kaynaklar için yeni mücadeler doğurmuştur. Bu süreci daha iyi anlamak üzere, vergi muafiyeti elde etme ve taşra ağlarına eklemlenme mekanizması olarak değerlendirdiğimiz yeniçerilik iddiasının on sekizinci yüzyıl Adanası'ndaki yansımalarına bakılacaktır. Söz konusu dönemde, yeniçerilik iddiasında bulunan ve kentin önemli bir parçası haline gelen kişilerin sosyal ve ekonomik kimlikleri üzerine bir sondaj çalışması yapılacaktır.



**Anahtar Kelimeler:** yeniçerilik iddiası, yeniçeriler, Adana, vergi muafiyeti, asker alımı

### Introduction

The term pseudo-Janissarism (*yeniçerilik iddiası*) refers to the act of claiming a full Janissary identity by people who were either only drafted Janissary conscripts (being unpaid in times of peace), or were non-Janissaries who had never been officially accepted by the Janissary Corps but pretended to be members of it. The first category is often referred to in the sources as *çalık* Janissaries and the second as *taslakç*s.[1]

The phenomenon of pseudo-Janissarism seems to have first appeared on the Ottoman periphery in the late sixteenth century[2] and was connected to two

[1] For the distinction between these two categories in the late eighteenth century, see Ignace Mouradgea d'Ohsson, *Tableau général de l'empire othoman*, Volume 7, Paris 1824, p. 332.

[2] For a reference to the phenomenon of pseudo-Janissarism in the provinces in the late sixteenth to the early seventeenth century, see *Kavanin-i Yeniçeriyan: Yeniçeri Kanunları*, (ed. Tayfun Toroser), Istanbul 2008, p. 82. For a few cases of pseudo-Janissarism from the second half of the sixteenth century, see Linda T. Darling, "Crime among the Janissaries in the Ottoman Golden Age", *Ottoman War and Peace. Studies in Honor of Virginia H. Aksan*, (eds. Frank Castiglione, Ethan L. Menchinger, and Veysel Şimşek), Leiden and Boston 2020, p. 20-22. Also, for a case from 1594,

major turning points in the history of the Janissary Corps: (a) its gradual opening toward Muslim society as the *devşirme* waned and new recruitment categories started taking its place, and (b) the increasing decentralization of the corps' administrative structure. In a nutshell, the first phenomenon refers to the increasing acceptance of Muslim-born Ottoman subjects in the corps, a practice that helped the numbers of officially registered Janissaries to sky-rocket from 10-13,000 between the late fifteenth and the early sixteenth centuries to around 50,000 in the second half of the seventeenth century, and to more than 100,000 in the beginning of the nineteenth century.[3] Additionally to these permanent enrollments, in times of war the Ottoman government also gave permission for the temporary recruitment as Janissaries of a great number of volunteers, sons of Janissaries (*kuloğlu*s), and formerly enrolled soldiers who had been ousted from the corps, augmenting the number of Janissary affiliates and boosting the connection of provincial societies with the Janissary organization even further. The second phenomenon (decentralization of the corps' structure), on the other hand, refers to the increasing diffusion of Janissary forces on the Ottoman periphery and – more importantly – to the consolidation of the presence of particular Janissary regiments in specific provinces by the mid eighteenth century.[4]

The development of pseudo-Janissarism was also a reflection of a wider process which was taking place all around the empire from at least the late sixteenth century onward, namely the expansion of the *askeri* class, which included various categories, such as timariots, *seyyid*s, and a number of other religious, administrative, and military functionaries.[5] This expansion was an expression of the desire of large segments of the Ottoman society to break away from their *reaya* status and gain access to financial privileges and social mobility, even if that meant cheating their way into one of the many categories which formed the colorful group of *askeri*s. Janissaries were only one of these categories, yet they arguably held the most prominent place in the above-mentioned process, which we will be referring to as "askeri*zation*".



*Askeriz*ation represents only one manifestation of the multiple changes that the Ottoman Empire underwent in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

---

see Devlet Arşivleri Başkanlığı Osmanlı Arşivi (BOA), Bab-ı Asafi Divan-ı Hümayun Sicilleri Mühimme Defterleri (A.DVNSMHM.d) 72:35, order no. 59 (24 Ca 1002/February 15, 1594).

3 Antonis Anastasopoulos and Yannis Spyropoulos, "Soldiers on an Ottoman Island: The Janissaries of Crete, Eighteenth-Early Nineteenth Centuries", *Turkish Historical Review*, 8/1, (2017), p. 2. The total number of officially registered Janissary pay-tickets in 1815/6 and 1818/9 were 114,497 and 109,706 respectively; Mehmet Mert Sunar, *Cauldron of Dissent: A Study of the Janissary Corps, 1807-1826*, SUNY-Binghamton, Ph.D, New York 2006, p. 57.

4 Yannis Spyropoulos, "Janissary Politics on the Ottoman Periphery (18th-Early 19th c.)", *Halcyon Days in Crete IX: Political Thought and Practice in the Ottoman Empire*, (ed. Marinos Sariyannis), Rethymno 2019, p. 449-458.

5 For this process and an analysis of who was considered to be an *askeri* by the Ottoman administration, see Hülya Canbakal, *Society and Politics in an Ottoman Town: Ayntab in the 17th Century*, Leiden and Boston 2007, p. 61-67.

These changes, which were once interpreted within the framework of an Ottoman institutional "decline", are now viewed by the relevant literature as having been part of a broad transformation, many elements of which had deep roots in the so-called classical period of the empire. As far as the Janissaries are concerned, for instance, the works of Mustafa Akdağ and Cemal Kafadar have shown that various elements which were seen as indicative examples of the corps' institutional decline, such as the participation of soldiers in entrepreneurial activities, had, in fact, already been present since the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.[6] By the same token, phenomena like venality and the outsourcing of tax-collection, which are going to be discussed in this article as factors that played a role in the development of pseudo-Janissarism, came to be understood as transformative processes crucial for the creation of the modern state and not as epiphenomena of an all-encompassing institutional downturn.[7]

The commercialization of *askeri* titles was a phenomenon which can be witnessed as early as the late sixteenth century.[8] However, it seems that it was the prevalence of new methods of recruitment and taxation in the second half of the seventeenth century that led an unprecedented number of Muslims to pursue an *askeri* affiliation, often through illegal means. The widespread application of *tashih be-dergah* enrollment calls and *malikane* tax-farming auctions acted respectively as pull and push factors leading in this direction by enhancing local agency and venality in the process of recruitment and prompting a great number of Ottoman subjects to escape the ever-increasing demands of tax-farmers.[9] As we will explain,



6 Mustafa Akdağ, "Yeniçeri Ocak Nizamının Bozuluşu", *Ankara Üniversitesi Dil ve Tarih-Coğrafya Fakültesi Dergisi*, 5/3, (1947), p. 291-312; Cemal Kafadar, "On the Purity and Corruption of the Janissaries", *The Turkish Studies Association Bulletin*, 15/2, (1991), p. 273-280.

7 Ariel Salzmann, "An Ancien Régime Revisited: 'Privatization' and Political Economy in the Eighteenth-Century Ottoman Empire," *Politics and Society*, 21/4, (1993), p. 393-423.

8 See, for instance, Gelibolulu Mustafa Âlî, *Füsûl-i hall ü akd ve usûl-i harc ü nakd (İslam devletleri tarihi, 622-1599)*, (ed. Mustafa Demir), Istanbul 2006, p. 142-143.

9 The literature on *tashih be-dergah* is very limited, partially owing to the disproportioned emphasis that scholars have assigned to other recruitment methods, such as the *nefir-i am*, which gained importance in the eighteenth century, and to the rise of military forces such as the *sarıca* and *sekban*, which were seen as actors of military and social transformation; for a general overview of Ottoman recruitment strategies, see Virginia H. Aksan, "Ottoman Military Recruitment Strategies in the Late Eighteenth Century", *Arming the State: Military Conscription in the Middle East and Central Asia, 1775-1925*, (ed. Eric J. Zürcher), London 1999, p. 21-39. For the role that the recruitment of irregular troops played in the empire's social transformation, see Halil İnalcık, "Military and Fiscal Transformation in the Ottoman Empire, 1600-1700," *Archivum Ottomanicum*, 6, (1980), p. 283-313; Rhoads Murphey, *Ottoman Warfare, 1500-1700*, London 1999, p. 190-191. For the most recent and comprehensive analysis on *tashih be-dergah* yet, see Abdulkasim Gül, *18. Yüzyılda Yeniçeri Teşkilatı*, Atatürk University, Türkiyat Araştırmaları Enstitüsü, Tarih Anabilim Dalı, Ph.D, Erzurum, 2020, p. 108-123. The tax reforms of the late seventeenth century, on the other hand, have been studied extensively. For a few indicative publications, see Ahmet Tabakoğlu, *Gerileme Dönemine Girerken Osmanlı Maliyesi*, Istanbul 1985, p.147-148 and *passim*; Yavuz Cezar, *Osmanlı Maliyesinde Bunalım ve Değişim Dönemi*, Istanbul 1986, *passim*; Avdo Sućeska, "Mālikāna: Lifelong Lease of Governmental Estates in the Ottoman State", *Prilozi za Orijentalnu Filologiju*, 36, (1987),

to these two crucial determinants for the expansion of the *askeriz*ation process, other factors, such as the circumstantial involvement of the empire in difficult and long wars[10] and the political initiatives of Janissaries in the empire's capital,[11] can also be added as elements which played an important role in boosting the numbers of both full-time enrolled Janissaries and pseudo-Janissaries in the period under examination.

Our purpose in this article is not to investigate the complicated phenomenon of pseudo-Janissarism as a whole or to explore its long-term repercussions on the economic/political activities of the Janissaries; our intention is rather, firstly, to focus on the way in which it spread on the Ottoman periphery during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, and, secondly, to discuss the case of the pseudo-Janissaries of Adana. The latter will offer us the opportunity to depict the profound connection between the emergence of pseudo-Janissaries and the wider socio-economic transformation of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as well as to analyze the social and economic composition of this group in the above-mentioned region.

In the first section of this paper we present an assessment of the phenomenon from 1600 to 1735, delving into the questions of the rise and early geographical expansion of pseudo-Janissarism on the Ottoman periphery, its perception by the Ottoman administration, and the reasons behind its development. In the Ottoman archives one can find several hundred references to the phenomenon, spread out between a variety of sources. However, for the purposes of the study of its expansion until 1735, we have decided to base our observations mainly on one type of source, namely the *mühimme defter*s (registers of important affairs), which were being produced by the Ottoman Imperial Council (Divan-ı Hümayun). Given the great volume of *mühimme*s available and for reasons related to the feasibility of our research, the first half of the 1730s was chosen as a



p. 197-230; Salzmann, "An Ancien Régime Revisited", p. 393-423; Halil Sahillioğlu, "1683-1740 Yıllarında Osmanlı İmparatorluğunun Hazine Gelir ve Gideri", *Osmanlı Maliyesi: Kurumlar ve Bütçeler*, (eds. Mehmet Genç and Erol Özvar), Istanbul 2006, p. 149-165; K. Kıvanç Karaman and Şevket Pamuk, "Ottoman State Finances in European Perspective, 1500-1914", *Journal of Economic History*, 70/3, (2010), p. 593-629. For the application of the *malikane* system in the case of Adana, the area of our focus here, see Mehtap Ergenoğlu and İhsan Erdem Sofracı, "Osmanlı Mâlî Sisteminde Bir Gelir Tahsilatı Yöntemi Olarak Mâlikâne Uygulaması: XVIII. Yüzyılın İlk Yıllarında Adana Sancağı Örneği" *Çukurova Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 3/2, (2017), p. 181-198.

10 For the wars of the second half of the seventeenth century and their impact, which, as will be explained, contributed to the rise of pseudo-Janissaries more than any other conflict in the period under examination, see Murphey, *Ottoman Warfare*, p. 1-11 and *passim*; Mesut Uyar and Edward J. Erickson, *A Military History of the Ottomans*, Santa Barbara, Denver, and Oxford 2009, 82 *ff*., and *passim*. For the latest and more comprehensive account of the second siege of Vienna (1683), which was followed by an overall restructuring of Janissary recruitment, see Kahraman Şakul, *II. Viyana Kuşatması: Yedi Başlı Ejderin Fendi*, Istanbul 2021.

11 For the 1703 Edirne Vakası, which, as we will explain, played an important role in the recognition of a large number of pseudo-Janissaries as actual members of the corps, see Rifa'at Ali Abou-El-Haj, *The 1703 Rebellion and the Structure of Ottoman Politics*, Istanbul 1984.

closing limit for their systematic examination, because of its proximity to a number of critical developments for the history of the Janissary Corps, namely the Patrona Halil Rebellion (1730), the outsourcing – sometime before 1736 – of the office of the paymaster of the Janissary organization to wealthy individuals from outside the corps, the subsequent legalization of the buying and selling of Janissary titles of payment in 1740, and the intensification of the decentralization of the corps' organization, a process which escalated around the same time.[12]

The main reason behind the choice of the *mühimme defter*s as our source of focus in the article's first part is that they were uninterruptedly produced throughout the entire period under examination, allowing us access to a long sequence of registers covering the years 1600-1735.[13] This fact gives us the opportunity to linearly track and compare any changes that occurred through time without worrying that a significant amount of data might be either misrepresented or lost due to reasons related to the inadequate preservation of the material and/or differences between the nature and typology of documents. That being noted, the *mühimme*s cannot and will not be used as censuses recording the actual size of pseudo-Janissarism, but rather as sources reflecting its subjective assessment by the authorities and those who petitioned them. Another feature of these sources that needs our attention is that they only record cases which could not be resolved locally and, thus, had to be adjudicated at the imperial court. These incidents represented only a fraction of the actual cases brought to provincial courts, as will also become obvious when we discuss the example of Adana, and their texts usually include far less detail than the cases mentioned in other types of locally produced administrative and judicial documents. All the same, despite the problems inherent in the study of *mühimme*s, the view they offer still constitutes an important index which can help us better understand the phenomenon's empire-wide sociopolitical impact during its formative years.



In order to provide a more focused and detailed analysis, based on a wider range of archival documents, in the second part of this paper we dwell on the example of Adana, a south Anatolian town in which pseudo-Janissarism made its appearance in the last decades of the seventeenth century and flourished in the century that followed. The court and *ahkam* registers of Adana provide rich supplementary material which can help us trace the complicated process of the diffusion and numerical rise of these pseudo-Janissaries. In the *mühimme defter*s (covering roughly the period 1600-1735), six records are related to the town's pseudo-Janissaries, reflecting only the most serious cases brought to the attention of the imperial authorities. These records are to be found for the period between 1695 and 1718 and demonstrate the gradual rise of the phenomenon in the region, which, however, did not become a source of intense local rivalries for the local population until 1718. At any rate, Ottoman sources inform us that the pseudo-

12 Spyropoulos, "Janissary Politics", p. 451-452.

13 The *mühimme* registers examined here are nos. 75-141.

Janissaries' actual numbers exceeded several hundreds by the end of the second decade of the eighteenth century.[14]

The case of Adana allows us to shed more light on the reasons behind the spread of the phenomenon in southern Anatolia and on its socio-economic importance, while providing us, at the same time, with the opportunity to collect more systematic data which can help us reveal the actual identity of a number of these individuals. Adana was a largely agricultural economy and one of the earliest regions incorporated into the *malikane* system (1695),[15] a tax-farming method the development of which seems to have gone hand in hand with the rise of pseudo-Janissarism in the Ottoman provinces. The Adana case thus offers a great opportunity to investigate the connection between the privatization of rural taxation and the claims of Janissary membership by people influenced by it. And last but not least, since Adana was also an area in which many people tried to infiltrate the *askeri* class by acquiring non-Janissary-related titles – most notably the title of *seyyid* – its examination gives us the chance to discuss pseudo-Janissarism as a part of the wider phenomenon of *askeriz*ation of Muslims in the Ottoman provinces.

## The rise of pseudo-Janissarism on the Ottoman periphery

### *a. Causes and development*

In our research with the *mühimme*s covering the period from 1600 to 1735 we were able to locate 261 references to the activity of pseudo-Janissaries. In the vast majority of these cases the term used for the phenomenon is "*yeniçerilik iddiası*" (claim of being a Janissary), although in two cases from 1665 the term used for these individuals is "*yeniçeri namında [olan]*" (being a Janissary by name), while in three cases from 1706 and 1727 both the terms "*yeniçerilik iddiası*" and "*taslakçı/lık*" are used. In terms of the phenomenon's expansion through time, the data is quite revealing: for the greatest part of the seventeenth century references to it are extremely scarce, with only two recorded cases in the first decade (1605, 1609), two cases in 1665, one case in 1678, and two cases in 1679. However, in the last two decades of the century, and especially from 1688 onward, this picture changes dramatically, with 105 cases in the years between 1688 and 1700. This general trend-line remains high for around two decades and then drops in the years 1720-1735, retaining, however, a part of its earlier dynamic. What, then, could have prompted this abrupt change in the number of occurrences in the *mühimme*s in the last decades of the seventeenth century? In order to answer this question one has to understand the way in which the Ottoman administration perceived the



14 BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d.127:270, order no. 1197 (evahir-i Z 1130/November 15-23, 1718).

15 More specifically, 95.29% of the revenues of the *sancak* of Adana (comprising 74 villages and *mezraa*s) initially came from the agricultural sector. For further details of the application of the *malikane* system in Adana, see Ergenoğlu and Sofracı, "Mâlikâne Uygulaması", p. 181-198.

phenomenon during those decades and its relation to the empire's pressuring military needs.

Until the late sixteenth century, the Janissaries formed a closed group of people – an elite guard of the sultan – the size and membership of which was strictly regulated by the central administration. However, from the 1580s onward, membership of the corps started opening to potential recruits through fast-track promotions of Muslims into its ranks.[16] This development was a result of both military and political processes,[17] but here we will mainly deal with the first, as they played a much more crucial role in the rise of pseudo-Janissarism in its early phase.

The military realities that the empire had been facing since its impressive growth during the sixteenth century created a pressing need for an increase in the military personnel employed on its advancing frontier, and new opportunities for those Muslims who wanted to participate in the empire's military apparatus. As mentioned earlier, *yeniçerilik iddiası* could refer not only to people who falsely claimed an official connection to the Janissaries, but also to unpaid draftees who were legally admitted into the corps. These recruits were being drafted from among volunteers, sons of Janissaries, and laid-off members of the corps, usually by commanders of Janissary provincial units (*serdar*s),[18] shock-troop-unit leaders (*serdengeçdi ağa*s), and regimental officers (*orta zabit*s), on account of the empire's need to increase its military manpower.[19] Their recruitment was taking place through mass enrollment calls called "*tashih be-dergah*" under the condition that during war-time they would be summoned by the above-mentioned Janissary officers as active Janissaries (*eşkinci*s).[20] Their recruitment was obligatory and its avoidance could be severely punished. As in the case of mercenary and irregular



16 Rhoads Murphey, "Yeñi Çeri", *The Encyclopaedia of Islam. New Edition*, Volume 11, (eds. P. J. Bearman et al.), Leiden 2002, p. 326.

17 On the political aspects of this phenomenon, see Baki Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire: Political and Social Transformation in the Early Modern World*, Cambridge 2010, p. 177-182.

18 The *serdar*s were commanders of Janissaries at the provincial level, commissioned to deal with issues that concerned the affairs of local troops and seize for the corps' treasury the properties of Janissaries who died heirless. Apart from policing the regions under their control, they were also responsible for the summoning and recruitment of soldiers for imperial campaigns, supplying the army with pack animals and grain, as well as protecting the pilgrims and the merchants passing through their region of jurisdiction. For further details, see Saim Yörük, *XVIII. Yüzyılın İlk Yarısında Adana Şehri*, Ankara 2015, p. 71-74.

19 *Kavanin-i Yeniçeriyan*, p. 82; Gül, *18. Yüzyılda Yeniçeri Teşkilatı*, p. 97-105.

20 For a case of such a voluntary recruitment described by Fındıklılı Şem'dânîzâde Süleyman Efendi, who in 1771 was put in charge of enrolling 1,500 Janissaries in the area of Tokat, see Şemdanizade Fındıklılı Süleyman Efendi, *Mür'i't-Tevârîh*, Volume 2/B, (ed. Münir Aktepe), Istanbul 1980, p. 61. This incident is also described in Virginia H. Aksan, "Whatever Happened to the Janissaries? Mobilization for the 1768-1774 Russo-Ottoman War", *War in History*, 5/1, (1998), p. 34-35. Uzunçarşılı and Aksan suggest that *levend* (local irregular bands) and *serdengeçdi* forces (shock troops and reserves) constituted two of the sources of Janissary recruitment in the second half of the eighteenth century; *ibid.*, p. 26, 35; İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devleti Teşkilâtından Kapıkulu Ocakları*, Volume 1, Ankara 1988, p. 618-619.

troops (*sekban*, *levend*), following each war a number of these recruits managed to become full-time Janissaries, but most of them would be left out of the payrolls as unpaid draftees upon the completion of campaigns, only to be summoned again for the next war.[21] The process of striking out the names of these part-time Janissaries from the payrolls when their services were no longer required was called "*esami/esame çalmak*" and the persons who were left out were tagged "*çalık yeniçerileri*".

Until 1703 the exact official status of such Janissary draftees in times of peace was not clearly determined. Upon the completion of each campaign, these pseudo-Janissaries were often reduced to the status of *reaya* and stripped of all tax exemptions associated with an *askeri* membership. It seems, though, that many of them continued to illegally claim a Janissary affiliation in peace time while exercising their old professions. This ambiguous status was eventually addressed following the Edirne Revolt (Edirne Vakası) of 1703 which exercised enough pressure on Sultan Ahmed III to finally recognize the non-permanently enrolled Janissary affiliates as having the same privileges as full-time Janissaries, despite maintaining a distinction between them. Following this development, *çalık* Janissaries were considered to be exempt from all *reaya* taxes (*raiyyet rüsumu*) at all times and regardless of their participation in campaigns, although they still had to prove, like all *askeri*s, that they were combatants (*sefer-eşer*, *seferli*, *sefer-ber*) in order to avoid paying the various extraordinary taxes imposed at the imperial or provincial level.[22]



Prior to the 1703 rebellion, however, the position of these pseudo-Janissaries was quite precarious. Although they were connected to the corps through its networks and their war-time commitment to it, the official acknowledgement of their affiliation was dependent on circumstantial political decisions and, as the *mühimme*s clearly demonstrate, their unwillingness to participate in campaigns was not easily tolerated by the central administration. A lot of this pressure, however, seems to have been alleviated following the years 1699 and 1700, which saw an end to the empire's war with the Holy League and the Russians, and the subsequent dethronement of Mustafa II by the Janissaries (1703), which, as mentioned earlier, led to a more favorable treatment of *çalık* Janissaries by his successor, Ahmed III. Given the central administration's acquiescence to not punishing the truant pseudo-Janissaries following these events, we can easily understand that persecutions are more likely to be found in *mühimme* entries preceding the eighteenth century. Indeed, if we examine the reasoning provided by the imperial orders for the persecution of pseudo-Janissaries in the

21 *Ibid*., p. 330-331, 618-619; D'Ohsson, *Tableau général*, p. 332.

22 Gül, *18. Yüzyılda Yeniçeri Teşkilatı*, p. 95, 123, 780. For a source explaining the obligation of non-combatant *askeri*s to pay "the *avarız*, the *bedel-i nüzül*, the *celeb-keşan-ı ağnam*, the *imdad-ı hazariyye* for the *vali*s, and the rest of the extraordinary taxes (*tekâlif-i örfiyye ve şakka*)", see BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d.130:196, order no. 587 (evail-i Za 1133/September 12-21, 1721).

years from 1688 to 1700, we can see that desertion and truancy problems constituted an often-repeated motif, with at least 25 cases referring to soldiers who refrained from marching to the front when called upon to do so by the government (Graph 1); this pattern subsequently drops off in the eighteenth century.

Needless to say, truancy and desertion are problems for all armies in all historical periods.[23] However, the almost complete lack of references to these phenomena in *mühimme*s prior to the late 1680s points to the fact that the intensifying implementation of the above-mentioned changes in Janissary recruitment were connected to an increase in the number of such cases. Indeed, the ongoing state of war following the second siege of Vienna (1683) led to the unprecedented enrollment of several thousand Janissaries every year through *tashih be-dergah* calls, increasing the number of *çalık* Janissaries to around 200,000 by the end of the seventeenth century,[24] and it seems no coincidence that it is exactly during that time that the *mühimme defter*s record most of the cases of pseudo-Janissary truancy and desertion.

The wrath of the Ottoman administration against those who claimed a Janissary status but refused to fulfill their service was totally justified given the circumstances: in 1685 the Morea was conquered by the Venetians, in 1688 Belgrade fell into the hands of the Habsburgs, and, following the siege of Vienna in 1683, the four major opponents of the empire on the western/northern front, namely Venice, Austria, Poland, and Russia, formed the Holy League (Sacra Ligua), an "*unprecedented quadripartite offensive alliance*".[25] The Holy League was threatening enough at the diplomatic level, but – most importantly – it forced the Ottomans to reorganize and remobilize their army four times over the course of the campaigns until the Treaty of Karlowitz was signed in 1699. Furthermore, it discouraged the active participation of Tatar forces – amounting to approximately 40-100,000 troops – in the Ottoman defense of Hungary, since from 1687 onward the Tatars were occupied defending the northern front against Russia's offensive.[26] Under these conditions it is only natural that the Ottoman government felt the need to deal harshly with any cases of desertion which arose among its soldiers.



In other words, the increased need for troops during the two last decades of the seventeenth century drove the Ottoman government to search hastily and *en masse* for Janissary recruits. Given the decline of the *devşirme*, the large-scale and quick-fire implementation of *tashih be-dergah* enrollment calls helped many Muslims

---

23 For a reference to Janissary deserters during the war for Kandiye, see Paul Ricaut, *The History of the Present State of the Ottoman Empire: Containing the Maxims of the Turkish Polity, the Most Material Points of the Mahometan Religion, Their Sects and Heresies, Their Convents and Religious Votaries. Their Military Discipline, with an Exact Computation of Their Forces Both by Sea and Land*, London 1686, p. 369-372.

24 Gül, *18. Yüzyılda Yeniçeri Teşkilatı*, p. 93, 112, 114.

25 Murphey, *Ottoman Warfare*, p. 10.

26 *Ibid.*, p. 9-10; Virginia H. Aksan, *Ottoman Wars, 1700-1870*, Harlow 2007, p. 18.

find their way into the corps. However, it also seems that a number of those people who aspired to be Janissaries found it difficult to cope with the hardships of life on the battlefield. Furthermore, the empire's worsening financial condition often resulted in supply issues and privation which, in turn, led to mobilization problems.[27] All of these facts seem to have been directly correlated with the rise in the figures of truants and deserters tagged as pseudo-Janissaries by the Ottoman central administration in the following years.

In any case, the orders about draftees deserting or avoiding recruitment still constitute only an approximate 24% of the overall cases referring to pseudo-Janissarism from 1688 to 1700, the majority being connected to phenomena of criminality, banditry, and other offences, including economic ones, such as avoiding taxation (see Graph 1). There is a possibility that the empire's pressing military needs forced the government to devote attention to the phenomenon, leading it to address all transgressive behaviors stemming from it. All the same, most of the imperial orders are presented as responses from the center to petitions sent by the populations of various areas who complained about the increasing illegal activity of pseudo-Janissaries in their regions, a fact that leads us to believe that the rise in the number of cases was not so much the result of a centrally organized plan to deal with mobilization issues, but mainly the reflection of an actual escalation of the phenomenon itself and of the socioeconomic developments it triggered within provincial societies.



Various data coming from centrally produced sources other than the *mühimme defter*s show that in the eighteenth century the cases of punishment of pseudo-Janissaries for avoiding recruitment diminished significantly, with an almost absolute majority of imperial orders targeting their criminal behavior. In fact, the connection between the phenomenon of pseudo-Janissarism and officially recruited Janissary draftees avoiding or fleeing the front continues to be weak even following the recommencement of war on the western front in 1768, after a hiatus of almost three decades.[28] It is only in 1790, during the course of the wars with Austria (1788-1791) and Russia (1787-1792), that the Ottoman government started once again to associate the phenomenon of pseudo-Janissarism with the problem of truancy, and called for "*those who claim to be Janissaries and* askeri*s*" to be brought

---

27 Murphey, *Ottoman Warfare*, p. 27. For a similar issue in 1771, see Aksan, "Whatever Happened to the Janissaries?", p. 34-35.

28 See, for instance, BOA, Cevdet Askeriye (C.AS) 1110/49123 (22 R 1183/August 25, 1769); Cevdet Zabtiye (C.ZB) 90/4490 (11 R 1193/April 28, 179); Cevdet Maliye (C.ML) 285/11708 (19 Ca 1194/May 23, 1780); Ali Emiri Abdülhamid I (AE.SABH.I) 153/10255 (20 R 1193/May 7, 1779); 342/23872 (25 Ş 1190/October 9, 1776); 35/2657 (20 B 1197/June 21, 1783). However, the lack of centrally produced sources referring to the phenomenon of truancy and desertion among Janissary draftees from that period should not be interpreted as an indication of suspension of Janissary enrollment for the war against Russia. In Aleppo, for instance, there was a significant increase in the number of Janissary recruits following 1768; Herbert L. Bodman, *Political Factions in Aleppo 1720-1826*, Chapel Hill 1963, p. 61-62.

**Graph 1:** Reasons for the persecution of pseudo-Janissaries (1600-1735)

to the front.[29] The reasons behind this revival are not clear, but the renewed correlation of pseudo-Janissarism and desertion might have been the result of a culmination of military, fiscal, and political concerns.[30] In any case, the general impression given by centrally produced sources is that for the entire eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries *yeniçerilik iddiası* was used by the central administration mostly to describe the actions of Janissary affiliates with non-military-related transgressive behavior.[31]

The picture we thus get is that warfare seems to have prompted a steep rise of the phenomenon of pseudo-Janissarism in the late seventeenth century and, as the case of Adana will also exemplify, that enrollment for campaigns continued to play a role in its development, most notably in the early and late eighteenth century. However, it also becomes evident that pseudo-Janissarism could be detached from any war-related determinants and still retain a great part of its vigor. One might ask, thus, which were the factors that contributed to the preservation of this dynamic even in times of peace? The answer to this question would be the various socio-economic advantages that an affiliation – even if nominal – to the corps brought with it.

Membership of the corps offered a number of advantages. As we explain when discussing the case of Adana, tax exemptions were perhaps the most important reason why various segments of the Ottoman society – especially those belonging to the poorest social strata – aspired to affiliate themselves with the corps. According to one's social position and occupation, however, other benefits, such as the access to local political and economic networks, inter-provincial connections, and the corps' status of jurisdictional autonomy, could also play an important role. Special jurisdiction, for instance, blocked any interference on the



29 "*bi-mennihi taala işbu evvel baharda sinin-i salifeye keyas olunmayub gerek Asitane-i Aliyye'de ve gerek taşrada sahib-i esami olub yeniçerilik ve askerilik iddia edenlerin biri gerü kalmamak üzere iktiza edenlere tenbih ve tekid*"; BOA, Hatt-ı Hümayun (HAT) 1388/55236 (29 Z 1204/July 9, 1790). Also see BOA, C.AS.42/1949 (29 C 1204/Mart 16, 1790).

30 At the military level, it is possible that the alarmingly low Janissary participation during the 1768-1774 Russian campaign prompted the Ottoman government to adopt a stricter policy toward truancy in the following wars. At the same time, Selim III's ascension to the throne led the reform agenda of the sultan's advisors to address the problem of certificates circulating in the hands of non-combatant pseudo-Janissaries. Finally, the unprecedented debasement of currency in 1788-1789, which had an impact on Janissary salaries, may have also played a role in the latter's unwillingness to march to the front. For the problem of low Janissary participation during the 1768-1774 Russo-Ottoman war and the reforms of Selim III, see Aksan, "Whatever Happened to the Janissaries?", p. 27 and *passim*. For the currency debasement of 1788-1789, see Şevket Pamuk, *A Monetary History of the Ottoman Empire*, Cambridge 2000, p. 163, 170-171.

31 The last time when the term *yeniçerilik iddiası* was used to characterize the actions of officially recruited Janissaries again was after the corps' abolition in 1826 and the vicious pursuit of its ex-members who resisted surrender to the authorities. See, for instance, BOA, C.AS.596/25109 (29 Za 1241/July 5, 1826); HAT.426/21862 D (29 Z 1242/July 24, 1827); 426/21862 G (30 M 1242/September 3, 1826); 426/21862 R (29 Z 1242/July 24, 1827); 739/35042 (7 L 1242/May 4, 1827).

part of Ottoman officials in the entrepreneurial activities of all sorts of professionals, be they tax-farmers, guild members, merchants, or large estate owners, making a connection to the Janissary Corps a useful way to support one's business.[32] As the popularity of Janissary patronage grew, an ever-increasing number of people tried to secure a position in the corps' networks, often bribing their way into them. This rising trend worked well for many Janissary officers, who were more than eager to increase their following, which not only secured them a good income but also augmented their socio-political leverage within local societies.

Janissary regiments, however, could not accept an infinite number of recruits into their payrolls, as the corps' overall budget and the number of its troops were limited by the central administration's efforts to keep state expenditures under control. Often, the illegal accumulation and selling of deceased soldiers' pay-tickets to Janissary wannabes managed to secure payroll positions for some followers of regiments,[33] but the number of Janissary aspirants seems to have been far greater than the available slots. The answer to this practical problem was, thus, found in the unofficial enrollment of those interested through the conclusion of shady arrangements with officers at the regimental level. Through these arrangements, the patron officers saw to the issuance of documents which certified the pretender's enrollment in the Janissary Corps. These certificates were called *sofa tezkire*s (anteroom certificates) and were used both by the genuine and the false members of the corps as proof of their Janissary identity.[34] The difference between the two was that the pretenders bore only a *sofa tezkiresi* but not an *esame*;[35] thus, they were not included in the payrolls of the central Janissary administration and were not entitled to any salary.[36] However, in practice, they enjoyed the same



[32] Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire*, p. 207. For a characteristic example from Kandiye, where in 1824 the shop owners of the island's three cities, all of whom, according to the local governor, were Janissaries, occupied the shops of Christians with the support and protection of their officers, see BOA, HAT.843/37888 G. A few years earlier, Austrian traveler Sieber was reporting that "each Janissary [in Kandiye], no matter which profession he is in, is obliged to be registered in one of the *orta*s in order to know which party he should resort to when conducting business or committing an offense"; Vasileios Psilakis, *Ιστορία της Κρήτης από της απωτάτης αρχαιότητος μέχρι των καθ' ημάς χρόνων* [History of Crete from the Furthest Antiquity to Our Time], Volume 3, Chania 1909, p. 84.

[33] In the late eighteenth century Janissary pay-tickets were being sold on the black market for prices that ranged between 12 and 20 *guruş* per *akçe* of daily wage; D'Ohsson, *Tableau général*, p. 337.

[34] Sunar, *Cauldron of Dissent*, p. 69; Uzunçarşılı, *Kapıkulu Ocakları*, p. 153-154.

[35] Every genuine Janissary ought to have in his possession not only a *sofa tezkiresi*, but also an *esame tezkiresi* bearing the seal of the commander (*ağa*) of the Janissary Corps. For such a document, see, for instance, BOA, AE.SMMD.IV.90/10673. For pictures of *sofa tezkire*s, see Zeynep Emel Ekim, "Üsküdar ve Yeniçeri Remizleri", *Uluslararası Üsküdar Sempozyumu VII, 2-4 Kasım 2012: 1352'den Bügüne Şehir*, (ed. Süleyman Faruk Göncüoğlu), Istanbul 2014, p. 698-699.

[36] The pseudo-Janissaries drafted through the *tashih be-dergah* calls did not hold an *esame* either. However, their names were recorded in separate *defter*s which were sent to Istanbul to be used in times of enrollment; Gül, *18. Yüzyılda Yeniçeri Teşkilatı*, p. 93, 99, 104, 112.

privileges as real Janissaries since, given the corps' jurisdictional autonomy, it became very difficult for outsiders to check if these imposters were true members of the corps or not.

As a result, by the third decade of the eighteenth century, the phenomenon of fake enrollment of Janissary pretenders through the issuance of the above certificates had become so widespread that the central government started taking measures to stop this practice, which in imperial edicts is referred to as "*orta sofaya oturtmak*" (to allow [outsiders] to sit in the regiment's anteroom).[37] For instance, in an order from 1727 which summarizes the issue we read:

> "*[A]lthough it is against the law [of the corps] to allow the entrance of outsider tax-paying subjects (*reaya*) in it… when some regiments are appointed from Istanbul to another place or from one frontier to another and they proceed there with their banner and cauldron, during their passage from settlements,* nahiye*s and villages, in places where they camp for provisions, due to the unchecked greed of the official [Janissary] agents (*mübaşir*) who are appointed to see to their transfer, of their colonels (*çorbacı*) and barrack officers (*odabaşı*), they allow some* reaya*, the vilest and scum – people who are oblivious to the Janissary customs and disrespectful of the approved order, laws, and ways of the corps – to sit in the regiment's anteroom. Later, when they depart and move on, the vilest and the brigands that they allowed into the anteroom of the regiment stay behind and say 'we became Janissaries', they change their outfit and conduct, and, claiming to be Janissaries, through villainy and mischief they indulge in various immoral behaviors and debaucheries, they pillage properties and violate the honor of the population, the* reaya*, and other men, with excessive oppression and hostility…*"[38]



These under-the-table agreements at the regimental level characterized the most distinctive type of pseudo-Janissarism until the abolition of the corps, and were able to bolster the figures of unofficial Janissary affiliates independently of any war-related, state-triggered military mobilizations.[39]

At this point, we should note that the fact that the above imperial edict was issued in 1727 is not a coincidence; this type of networked connections between regiments and provincial populations was supported by the process of decentralization of the corps' structure that was underway at that time, triggered, among other reasons, by the permanent establishment of particular regiments in

---

[37] This expression was probably related to the ceremony of initiation of Janissary novices (*karakollukçu*) by the older regiment members, a ceremony which was taking place in the regiment's barrack anteroom (*sofa*); *Kavanin-i Yeniçeriyan*, p. 62-63.

[38] BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d.134:189, order no. 656 (evasıt-ı M 1140/August 29-September 7, 1727).

[39] Yet, it should be noted that, at the official level, every war played an important role in the production of new Janissary pay-tickets which were often used as a means for the ratification of many pre-existing off-the-record agreements between *taslakçı*s and the corps; D'Ohsson, *Tableau général*, p. 337.

specific provinces.[40] This development gave various provincial societies the opportunity to gain easier access to the above patronage system, and to create deeper and more enduring bonds with the corps.

To sum up, pseudo-Janissaries can be classified into two distinct yet interconnected categories: (a) those who were drafted temporarily in times of war but remained unpaid in times of peace, and (b) those who had never been officially drafted but pretended to be members of the corps under the protection of Janissary officers. The first category was the one which the Ottoman administration associated with the phenomenon of truancy and desertion. As we saw, the peak of the government's confrontation with these pseudo-Janissaries was in the 1690s, but this conflict was largely resolved in the eighteenth century, and especially after the Edirne Vakası, which, on the one hand, forced the Ottoman sultan to attribute an uncontested *askeri* status to such draftees and, on the other, alleviated some of the state's pressure concerning their participation in military expeditions. This development seems to have contributed to a general drop in the numbers of *mühimme* cases of pseudo-Janissaries persecuted by the government in the first decades of the eighteenth century.

The second category of pseudo-Janissaries, on the other hand, was never included in the cases of truancy and desertion found in the *mühimme defter*s, as in the eyes of the government they had always been *reaya* and, thus, were not supposed to go to war in the first place. In the case of this category, the main offences reported were related to their illegal use of the Janissary privileges of tax-exemption and jurisdictional autonomy. The same benefits were also used by the pseudo-Janissaries of the first category when away from the battlefield, something that before 1703 was, however, often considered to be illegal. The combined illicit use of these privileges by both categories surely contributed to the high number of cases related to non-military-related offences which are to be found in the *mühimme defter*s in the late seventeenth century, as well as its gradual drop in the eighteenth century, when the Ottoman government acquiesced, under the fear of a Janissary rebellion, to reducing the pressure it previously exerted on *çalık* Janissaries.



These two categories, distinct as they may have been, were directly related and complementary to each other. First of all, their existence is an expression of the Janissary organization's decentralization, which offered the opportunity to Janissary officers at the provincial and regimental level to control a large part of the recruitment process required for manning the corps. Their localization gave them the opportunity to develop provincial networks, that defined who was to gain access to the Janissary privileges – legally or illegally – and who was not. All pseudo-Janissaries had to pass through the same networks to claim these privileges and, depending on a man's previous relation with the corps and his socioeconomic aspirations, he could be included in any of the two above-mentioned categories. Of

40 On this process, see Spyropoulos, "Janissary Politics", p. 453-454.

course, *çalık* Janissaries were recorded as such in the corps' ledgers and – at least before 1703 – had no other option but to become *tashih be-dergah* recruits and go to war when called on to do so. However, the thousands of other aspirants who wanted to gain access to the Janissary privileges had two options: they could either choose to bribe their way into becoming *tashih be-dergah* recruits, when this opportunity was given during war time, or they could opt for acquiring a *sofa tezkiresi*, which offered them protection and did not force them to go to war, but put them in a much more precarious position, since their status could not be easily upheld on the occasion of a centrally instigated inspection. What needs to be stressed, in any case, is that both these categories were part of the same networked environment, were protected by the same patrons, yearned for the same privileges, and largely came from the same pool of Janissary aspirants.

### *b. Geographical expansion of pseudo-Janissarism (1600-1735)*

As far as the early geographical expansion of pseudo-Janissarism is concerned, the following maps are indicative of both the rapid development of the phenomenon after 1688 and of the areas where it first came to be dominant:

**Map 1:** Pseudo-Janissarism cases in the years 1600-1687[41]



41 In Maps 1 and 2, the size of nodes represents the density of pseudo-Janissarism cases found in *mühimme* registers, the smallest circles representing one reference and the largest eleven references. The nodes have been arranged according to the capital of each *kaza* where the actions of pseudo-Janissaries took place. Also, whenever cases of itinerant/migrating pseudo-Janissaries were to be found, links were created connecting their places of origin to the locations where they were established when the imperial orders were issued

**Map 2:** Pseudo-Janissarism cases in the years 1688-1735

The first thing that one notices when examining the available data is that many of the pseudo-Janissaries came from the empire's Anatolian provinces. Indeed, according to the *mühimme* registers, Anatolia had the highest concentration of incidents, with the Pontus region and the wider area around Aydın, Muğla, İzmir, Denizli, Manisa, and Uşak "overflowing" with pseudo-Janissary activity, and those around Erzurum, Diyarbakır, Malatya, and Elaziğ, as well as those in the east and south of Istanbul, turning up in the documents with great frequency. This might be partially owing to the fact that Anatolia had a more compact Muslim population than the European provinces, but can also be witnessed in cases, like Muğla, where – at least in the early nineteenth century for which we have corresponding data – the Christian element represented a significant part of the local population.[42] However, the phenomenon was also widespread in the northern Balkans, especially in the regions of Western Thrace and the Principalities, while a relatively high concentration can be also witnessed in various areas around Macedonia and Bulgaria. Apparently, due to this rapid development of the phenomenon in the entire Anatolian part of the empire that in 1702 led the Ottoman government to send a *ferman* addressed to "*the* kadı*s, the* ağa*s, the* hatip*s, the Janissary* serdar*s, the* ayan*s of the provinces, and the notables of the* kaza*s situated to the right and left of the Middle Road (Orta Kolu) of Anatolia, all the way to its extremes*" and declaring that "*the majority of* reaya *in the* kaza*s, the villages, the* nahiye*s, and the* sancak*s of Anatolia have changed their clothing, they claim to be Janissaries and, as a result of the* serdar*s tolerating and turning a blind eye [to this phenomenon], the* reaya *are selected as* askeri*s*".[43]



Overall, the Black Sea coast seems to have attracted the largest group of pseudo-Janissaries during the first formative years of the phenomenon. The Pontus area not only had the largest concentration of pseudo-Janissaries, but also the most mobile among them seem to have originated from there. In various cases, pseudo-Janissaries of Laz origin are exclusively reported to have travelled to the western bank of the Black Sea – especially in Moldavia and Wallachia – starting in 1679, while a number of people coming from Trabzon, Of, Rize, Sürmene, etc. were active in areas like Köstence, İbrail, İsmail, Silistre, etc. Although in most cases the reasons behind the migration of these people are not clear, two documents issued with a 40-year difference explicitly mention that they had "*invaded*" (*müstevli*) those areas with the pretext of engaging in commercial activities (*kar ü kisb/ticaret bahanesiyle*).[44] These references lead us to assume that the long-

---

42 Kemal H. Karpat, *Ottoman Population, 1830-1914: Demographic and Social Characteristics*, Madison, Wis. 1985, p. 111.

43 "*Anadolu yakasında vaki kazalarda ve kura ve nevahi ve sancağda reaya taifesinin ekseri tebdil-i kiyafet ediib yeniçerilik iddia ve serdarların müsamaha ve taamisi sebebiyle reaya taife-i askeride mütemeyyiz olmakda*"; BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d.112:360, order no. 1298 (evasıt-ı Ca 1114/October 3-12, 1702).

44 BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d.97:6, order no. 36 (evasıt-ı C 1090/July 20-29, 1679); 122:141, order no. 408 (evahir-i S 1126/March 8-16, 1714); 129:198, order no. 728 (evail-i R 1132/February 11-20, 1720). Also, for the rise of the phenomenon of pseudo-Janissarism in the Danube and its

lasting presence of Pontic pseudo-Janissaries in the Principalities was related to the economic privileges they enjoyed by means of their Janissary affiliation.

As can be gleaned from the following graph (Graph 2), the Black Sea–related pseudo-Janissary networks were both local and trans-provincial in nature and involved people coming not only from the Pontus region but also from modern-day Bulgaria. Most of the local connections were established in the wider area between Ordu, Giresun, and Trabzon, while the vast majority of inter-provincial connections had the north-west part of the Black Sea as destination.

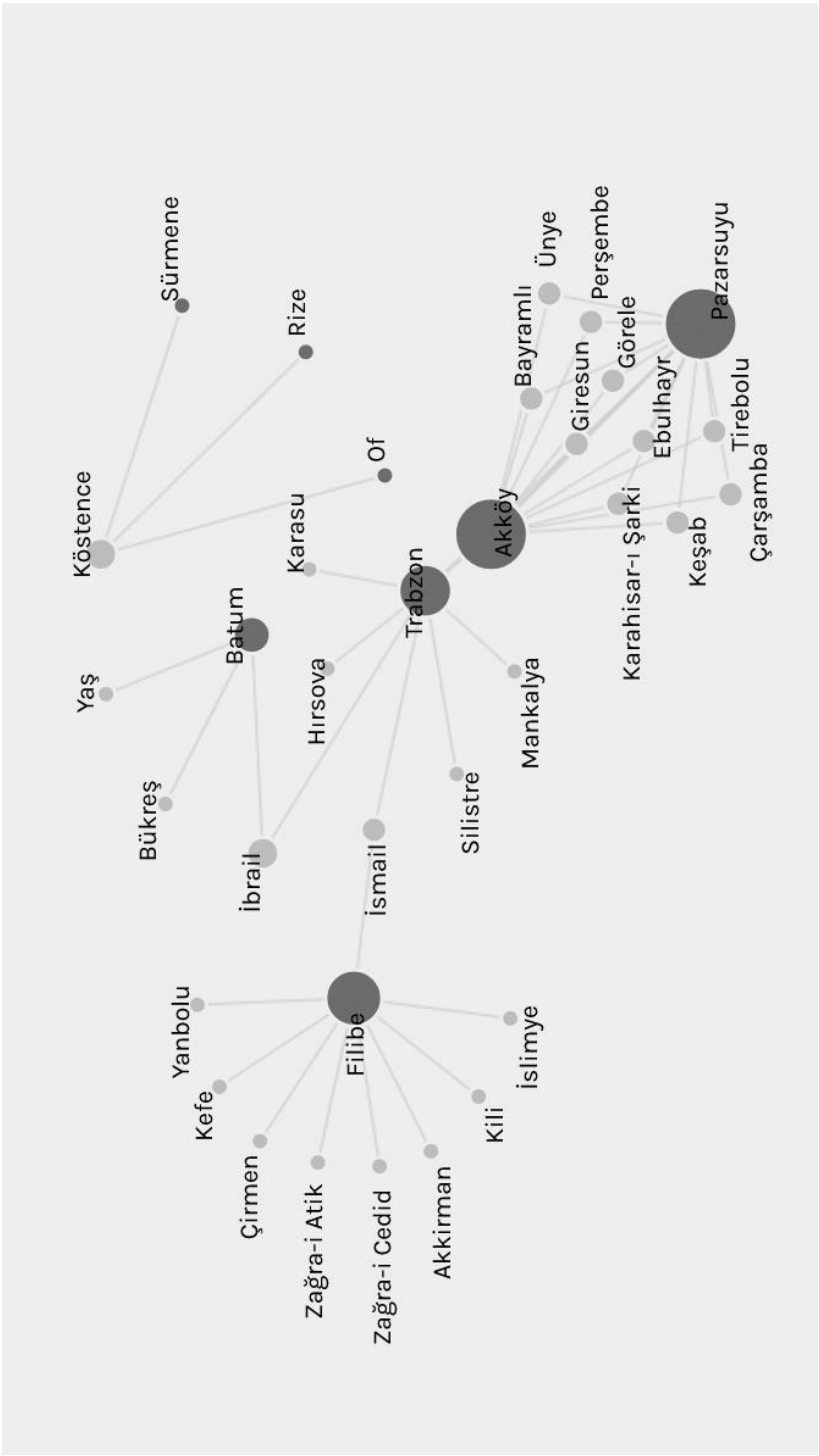
Interestingly, in the second densest area, Aydın and its surrounding regions, no extended trans-provincial mobility has been recorded, a fact that might be related to the Aegean's later incorporation into Janissary networks. This belated inclusion is obvious, for instance, in the case of Crete: until 1735, the *mühimme*s make no reference whatsoever to the existence of pseudo-Janissaries on the island, although during the second half of the eighteenth century Crete was to become one of the most vibrant points of [pseudo-]Janissary activity in the empire, facilitating the further expansion of Janissary economic and political networks in the Mediterranean.[45]

Another important element is the general lack of references to pseudo-Janissaries in the empire's Arabic-speaking provinces. Pseudo-Janissarism was virtually controlled by regimental/provincial officers and was an expression of their desire to connect – politically and economically – with the societies they were in contact with. As has been noted elsewhere, during the eighteenth century, in Anatolia, the Balkans, and the Aegean, the popularity of the corps became paramount, to the extent that Janissary affiliation allegedly characterized the entire



connection with the local commerce, see BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d.138:78, order no. 283 (evahir-i S 1144/August 25-September 2, 1731).

45 Yannis 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], University of Crete, Department of History and Archaeology, Ph.D, Rethymno 2014, p. 225-285.




**Graph 2:** Black Sea networks of pseudo-Janissaries (1679-1720)

male Muslim populations of many of their regions.[46] In most of the empire's empire's Arabic provinces, however, this was not the case: although some parts of their local societies managed to find their way into the corps, the latter stubbornly maintained a much more exclusive attitude toward Arabs, drawing, most of the times, its recruits mostly from Anatolia and other non-Arab-speaking areas. The reasons behind this treatment have not been systematically investigated yet, but assumptions have been made that the preference of the Janissaries to integrate the populations of particular areas into their networks may have been related to these regions' histories of extensive conversion and to the continuation of a *devşirme*-related tradition therein, and that the exclusion of others may have been due to the fear that a large-scale recruitment of Islamic populations in overwhelmingly Muslim lands could fundamentally disrupt the administrative and financial order imposed by the *askeri–reaya* nexus.[47] On the other hand, one could also claim that the bias that seems to have existed among the wider Ottoman elite against Arabs and the distrust of Arabs themselves towards their Ottoman masters may sufficiently explain why Arabs did not enter the non-Arab-speaking Janissary corps *en masse*.

At any rate, this treatment does not seem to have radically changed until the abolition of the Janissary complex in 1826. All the same, it is obvious that the Janissary officers' willingness to accept certain people in their networks was by far the most important determiner in such affairs and that exceptions were not uncommon. Especially in areas situated on the fringes of Anatolia and close to the empire's Arab lands, such as Adana, Ayntab, Aleppo, etc., the inclusion or exclusion of various categories of local populations was a subject of controversy between the government and the local Janissary patrons. In a case from a 1713



46 See, for instance, Fatma Sel Turhan, *The Ottoman Empire and the Bosnian Uprising: Janissaries, Modernisation and Rebellion in the Nineteenth Century*, London and New York 2014, p. 178; Ali Yaycıoğlu, *The Provincial Challenge: Regionalism, Crisis, and Integration in the Late Ottoman Empire (1792-1812)*, Harvard University, Ph.D, Cambridge Mass. 2008, p. 52-53; Sunar, *Cauldron of Dissent*, p. 49; Philippe De Bonneval and Mathieu Dumas, *Αναγνώριση της νήσου Κρήτης: μια μυστική έκθεση του 1783* [Description of the Island of Crete: A Secret Report from 1783], (trans. and eds. G. Nikolaou and M. Peponakis), Rethymno 2000, p. 213; Eric Cornell, "On Bektashism in Bosnia", *Alevi Identity: Cultural, Religious and Social Perspectives*, (eds. Tord Olson, Elisabeth Özclalga, and Catharina Raudvere), Istanbul 1998, p. 14; Bruce McGowan, "The Age of the *Ayans*", *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire*, Volume 2, (eds. Halil İnalcık with Donald Quataert), Cambridge 1997, p. 664-665; Mathieu Dumas, *Souvenirs du lieutenant général comte Mathieu Dumas de 1770 à 1838*, Volume 1, Paris 1839, p. 180; Guillaume Thomas Raynal and Jacques J. Peuchet, *Histoire philosophique et politique des établissements et du commerce des Européens dans l'Afrique septentrionale*, Volume 2, Paris 1826, p. 344; Franz W. Sieber, *Reise nach der Insel Kreta im griechischen Archipelagus im Jahre 1817*, Volume 2, Leipzig 1823, p. 186; J. M. Tancoigne, *Voyage à Smyrne, dans l'archipel et l'île de Candie*, Volume 1, Paris 1817, p. 102; Claude Etienne Savary, *Letters on Greece: Being a Sequel to Letters on Egypt, and Containing Travels through Rhodes, Crete, and Other Islands of the Archipelago; with Comparative Remarks on their Ancient and Present State, and Observations on the Government, Character, and Manner, of the Turks, and Modern Greeks*, London 1788, p. 186.

47 Spyropoulos, "Janissary Politics", p. 456-458.

*mühimme*, for instance, Istanbul condemns the recruitment of Janissaries coming from the Shia Nusayri (Fellah) sect in Adana, tagging them pseudo-Janissaries.[48] We will now proceed with an analysis related to the above-mentioned region, covering the eighteenth century.

**Janissaries and pseudo-Janissaries in eighteenth-century Adana**

The Anatolian provinces of the empire were important zones for what has been called the "*inflation of honors*", referring to the increased efforts of these provinces' inhabitants to seek social recognition and economic gains by obtaining prestigious state-recognized positions.[49] As mentioned earlier, in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, Anatolia's Black Sea, western, and south-eastern regions witnessed a great upsurge in the number of pseudo-Janissary cases addressed by the Ottoman administration. The zone stretching from the central and southern part of Anatolia also contained a considerable number of pseudo-Janissaries who had become an important component of urban and rural life in areas such as Adana, Maraş, Karaman, Ayntab (Antep), and Aleppo. The rising numbers of both officially registered Janissaries and pretenders changed the internal dynamics, shaped the local politics, and created various struggles for power over the limited economic resources of these cities, in particular leading the rank-and-file among the Janissaries to compete with the local elite.[50]



Even though Adana was not a frontier zone,[51] the pressing need for manpower, provisioning the army, and supplying the Balkan and Eastern frontiers with pack animals (especially camels), which were accompanied by war-related cash levies (*tekalif-i şakka*) and a series of conscription campaigns, created immense pressure on the local resources and population. The latter, in turn, tried to avoid such impositions by entering into the tax-exempted status of the *askeri* class (as timariots, Janissaries, or *seyyid*s). In this respect, claiming to be a member of the *askeri* class (military, administrative, and religious) can be considered as a form of individual or collective resistance to the socio-economic pressure created at the imperial and local level and as an effective mechanism of tax relief.

The town received migrants both from its own hinterland and from other towns and cities of Anatolia. The dense nomadic population of Adana, which sometimes outnumbered the peasant population, and the existent regional mobility provided a ready pool of Janissary volunteers of rural background. The newcomers either supplied the town with cheap labor and manpower for imperial campaigns

48 BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d.121:230, order no. 920 (evasıt-ı L 1125/October 31-November 9, 1713).

49 Canbakal, *Society and Politics*, p. 62-63.

50 Bruce Masters, "Power and Society in Aleppo in the 18th and 19th Centuries", *Revue de monde musulman et de la Méditerranée*, 62, (1991), p. 154.

51 For a historical geography of Adana, see Meltem Toksöz, *Nomads, Migrants and Cotton in the Eastern Mediterranean: The Making of the Adana-Mersin Region 1850-1908*, Leiden and Boston 2010, p. 21-29.

and the private armies of governors, or resorted to banditry which ravaged the countryside. The luckiest ones among them managed to become Janissaries, while others only pretended to be members of the corps. The extensive migration and nomadic mobility, combined with the presence of ethnic groups who were not officially allowed into the corps, such as Kurds, Fellahs,[52] and Turcomans, also make the case of Adana very interesting for the study of pseudo-Janissarism.

### *a. Warfare, mobility, and tax relief*

For the commoners of Adana, as elsewhere, becoming a *seyyid*[53] or a Janissary was also the most widespread practice of infiltrating into the *askeri* class. Relevant documents testify that from the end of the seventeenth to the end of the eighteenth century, a total of 207 individuals petitioned the judicial courts either collectively or individually to prove that they were registered and active Janissaries or *seyyid*s.

| *Period* | *Number of Janissaries* | *Number of seyyids* | *Reason* |
|---|---|---|---|
| *1688-1717* | 0 | 23 | Avoiding the payment of *raiyyet rüsumu* |
| *1717-1737* | 14 | 18 | Avoiding the payment of *raiyyet rüsumu* (*bennak*); accused of banditry and being of Fellah origin |
| *1737-1747* | 17 | 6 | Avoiding the payment of *raiyyet rüsumu* (*bennak*), *baş harcı* |
| *1747-1757* | 4 | 39 | Claiming jurisdictional autonomy from the *kadı*; avoiding the payment of *aded-i agnam*, *raiyyet rüsumu*, *avarız*, *bağ*, and *bağçe rüsumu* |
| *1757-1767* | 9 | 25 | Avoiding the payment of *raiyyet rüsumu*, *baş harcı*, |



[52] In early eighteenth century Adana, there were at least 150 Fellahs who claimed to be registered Janissaries; BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d.121:368, order no. 1444 (evail-i M 1125/January 28, 1713-6 February 1714); Adana *Sicil*s (AŞR) 38:220, order no. 339 (M 1126/January-February, 1714).

[53] For a general study on the *seyyid*s, see Hülya Canbakal, "The Ottoman State and Descendants of the Prophet in Anatolia and the Balkans (c. 1500-1700)", *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 52, (2009), p. 542-578; for the *seyyid*s of Adana, see Saim Yörük, "Adanalı Seyyidler Hakkında Sosyal ve Ekonomik Açıdan Bazı Değerlendirmeler (1701-1750)", *Sosyal Bilimler Araştırma Dergisi*, 18, (2011), p. 1-22.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | *tekalif-i şakka*, and *aded-i agnam* |
| *1767-1777* | 22 | 5 | Avoiding the payment of *raiyyet rüsumu*; accused of being of Fellah origin |
| *1777-1787* | 9 | 37 | Avoiding the payment of *raiyyet rüsumu* and *tekalif-i şakka* |
| ***Total*** | ***75*** | ***153*** | |

**Table 1:** Number of Janissaries and *seyyid*s petitioning the local courts of Adana or mentioned in decrees addressed to the latter[54]

As can be observed in Table 1, 75 Janissaries and 153 *seyyid*s petitioned or were brought to the court in the above-mentioned period. The cases of both categories mostly concerned violations against their *askeri* status through the imposition of the *rüsum-ı raiyyet* (taxation of the subjects), a term referring to all the taxes that only non-*askeri* groups were liable to pay.[55] It has to be noted, however, that these tax-exemptions notwithstanding, the *askeri*s were still expected to pay any levies related to their commercial activities. For instance, they were required to pay the sheep tax (*aded-i agnam*) when they owned more than 150 sheep. In a geography of transhumance and husbandry, tax relief for even a certain amount of livestock was a very attractive privilege.[56] Though sometimes open to negotiation, as mentioned in the article's first section, under specific conditions *askeri*s could also be exempted from various extraordinary levies collected by governors (*tekalif-i örfiyye ve şakka*) and the state (*bedel-i nüzül*, *avarız*).[57]



54 Sources: AŞR.105; 18; 130; 33; 50; 38; 127; BOA, Bab-ı Asafi Divan-ı Hümayun Sicilleri Adana Ahkam Defterleri (A.DVNS.AHK.ADN.d) 1-4. The relevant petitions in the Adana judicial courts and the cases found in Adana *ahkam* registers – submitted to Istanbul via the local court or directly by the petitioners, with a view to obtaining a decree from the sultan – amount to a total of 207 documents.

55 *Rüsum-ı raiyyet* was perceived as the main boundary between the tax-paying *reaya* and the military/administrative groups. The tax included three main categories: *çift resmi*, *öşr*, and *bad-ı hava*. For further details on the *rüsum-ı raiyyet*, see Halil İnalcık, "Osmanlılar'da Raiyyet Rüsûmu", *Belleten,* 23/92, (1959), p. 575-610. In the above table, both groups mostly complained about the illegal imposition of *resm-i bennak* (taxes on peasant holding equal to less than half a *çift*).

56 For an example from Adana, see A.DVNS.AHK.ADN.d.3:169 (evail-i S 1178/July 31-August 9, 1764); for an attempt of the pseudo-Janissaries of Ruscuk, Kule, and Yergöğü to pay their sheep taxes in the same ratios paid by active Janissaries, see BOA, C.ML.212/8704 (14 Z 1133/October 6, 1721). For a reference from Konya related to this practice, see Yücel Özkaya, "XVII. Yüzyılın İlk yarısında Yerli Ailelerin Ayanlıkları Ele Geçirişleri ve Büyük Hanedanlıkların Kuruluşu", *Belleten*, 42/168ö (1978), p. 697-698.

57 Charles L. Wilkins, *Forging Urban Solidarities: Ottoman Aleppo, 1640-1700*, Leiden and Boston 2020, p. 76, 83.

*Askeri* status also brought social prestige and enabled one's incorporation in patronage networks. If unnoticed by the local or imperial authorities, an *askeri* could claim tax-exemption for his relatives and affiliates as well, although normally only his son(s) and wife were supposed to be tax-exempt. There are numerous examples of registered soldiers or pretenders attempting to break these rules. According to a complaint made by tax-farmers, for instance, some commoners from the Dündarlı *mukataa* in Adana did not pay the required taxes, claiming that they were real Janissaries, *seyyid*s, or timariots, and encouraged their own relatives not to pay the required taxes either.[58] Another example is from Damascus: Mahmud Çorbacı, the military commander (*muhafız*) of the fortress of Damascus and *çorbacı* of the 18th Cemaat (regiment), had illegally recruited two Fellahs, Ahmed and Mansur, into the Janissary Corps. Even though the Janissary identity of these two people was questionable, fifteen relatives of the same Fellahs declined to pay any taxes, claiming "*now we became relatives of Janissaries*".[59] As the missing taxes of those fifteen people were imposed on the rest of the population, there were complaints to the imperial authorities.

In a letter to the imperial authorities, the *mutasarrıf* of Ayntab also complained about the immense increase in the number of pseudo-Janissaries and its repercussions on the economic life of the town. He claimed that, while before the Russian campaign of 1710-1711 there were around 150 registered soldiers with "*sahihü'l-esame*" (verified pay-tickets), following the expedition, more than 4,000 people – including those who never participated in the campaign or moved out of the town – began to claim that they were draftees enrolled into the corps in the course of the war. Under the guise of being Janissaries, not only did they not pay their own taxes, but they also prevented the payment of taxes owed by some of their relatives and followers. As the tax-paying residents of the town began to run away due to the extra tax burdens they had to pay on account of this practice, the *mutasarrıf* requested the appointment of a special investigator in order to clear the town from the imposters.[60] The outcome of this inspection is not mentioned in the relevant document, but in a previous investigation (February, 1703) only 122 people were identified as registered Janissaries while the rest were demoted to the status of a *reaya*.[61]



Actually, the controversy between tax-payers, many of whom attempted to evade levies, and tax-collectors or tax-farmers, who sought to maximize their profits, forms the socio-economic background of the cases we have presented in Table 1. The spread of the tax-farming system and the incorporation of larger regions into *hass* or *vakf* lands played a key role in this process. Seeking profit-maximization, tax-farmers and tax-collectors either demanded extra money even

58 AŞR.129: page no. unspecified, order no. 145 (26 Ca 1147/October 24, 1734).
59 BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d.116:175, order no. 699 (evasıt-ı Ca 1121/July 11-28, 1709).
60 BOA, Ali Emiri Ahmed III (AE.SAMD.III) 197/19071 (4 S 1126/February 19, 1714).
61 Canbakal, *Society and Politics*, p. 83-84.

from people claiming an *askeri* identity who had less than 150 sheep, or tried to actively increase the number of tax-payers. For that purpose, they brought tighter checks on the claims for tax-exemption in the regions under their control and did not tolerate any claim of exemption unless it was well substantiated. As a response, on the one hand, some commoners tried to challenge these taxation claims in any way possible, while, on the other, the remaining population displayed minimum tolerance for such allegations of tax relief in order to get rid of this extra burden.

Most of the pseudo-Janissaries – and other categories of pretenders – were exposed owing to this double check by tax-collectors and commoners. Consequently, many had to prove that they were registered Janissaries, while the pretenders had a hard time if they were not protected by a powerful local figure. Under the pressure of tax-collectors and tax-farmers, 38 out of 75 Janissaries in the above list petitioned the courts claiming that they were not imposters.[62] Şamizade Elhac Mustafa, for instance, had to prove that he was a soldier of the 17th Bölük (regiment) of the corps and thus not obliged to pay the *rüsum-ı raiyyet* demanded by the *voyvoda* of an unspecified *hass* in Adana.[63] Mehmed Habib and Mehmed from the 13th Cemaat, also petitioned the local court complaining of oppression by a *voyvoda* who claimed that they were commoners from among the Kurds of the Akbaş community in Adana.[64] Due to the complaint of two tax-farmers, on the other hand, 24 Janissaries were involved in a complicated judicial case that lasted more than ten years (1714-1727): Mustafa Ağa and Bayram Ağa, the *malikane* owners of the taxes related to the Fellahs of Adana, claimed that these people were Janissary imposters of Fellah origin with no official connection to the corps. Consequently, the Janissary officers in Adana (*serdar*) and Istanbul (*odabaşı*) were consulted and confirmed that they were real Janissaries from the 30th Bölük, 17th Bölük, and 62th Cemaat. The final decision came from the *ağa* of the Janissaries ordering the local authorities not to oppress/offend them by claiming that they were Fellahs or Janissary pretenders.[65] It seems that only in very serious cases were the officers or the *ağa* of the Janissaries in Istanbul consulted or a pay-ticket certificate demanded as confirmation. Less complicated cases were resolved locally.



The impact of warfare and the extraordinary demands due to strained imperial finances also increased the attempts of tax relief and other forms of resistance, while almost unchecked provincial conscriptions increased the number of Janissary claimants. The great majority of the commoners of Seydişehir who attended the Persian campaign under the leadership of the local Janissary *serdar*, for instance, declined to pay the required extraordinary taxes (*imdad-ı hazeriye* and

62 In the cases in which the tax-collectors are specified, eight *voyvoda*s, two *tımarlı sipahi*s, and two *malikane* owners are mentioned.

63 BOA, A.DVNS.AHK.ADN.d.1:240 (evahir-i S 1162/February 10-18, 1749).

64 BOA, A.DVNS.AHK.ADN.d.2:302 (evail-i L 1171/June 8-17, 1758).

65 BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d.121:368, order no. 1444 (evail-i M 1125/January 28, 1713-February 6, 1714); AŞR.127:15, order no. 288 (19 Ra 1140/November 4, 1727); 133: page no. unspecified, order no. 61 (15 L 1138/June 26, 1726); 38:220, order no. 339 (M 1126/January-February 1714).

*seferiyye*, *avarız*, *nüzül*, and the provisioning of camels), declaring that they had become Janissaries on account of the military services they had provided to the sultan. As one can guess, they also prevented their fathers, brothers and other relatives from paying these taxes.[66] In Adana too, around 100 nomads of the Dündarlı and Koyunlu *mukataa* who attended an imperial campaign refused to pay the required taxes by claiming that they had been recruited by the Janissary Corps while they were at the imperial capital.[67]

Forced settlement[68] and increased taxation made the nomads – the main camel suppliers of the region – particularly vulnerable, causing their massive flight to urban centers as many of them looked for employment and anonymity. Most of the tribal migrants tried to enter the Janissary ranks.[69] According to a report, more than 300 nomads living around Adana claimed to be members of the *askeri* class and declined to pay their taxes to the *voyvoda* of Yeniil Hass.[70] Charged with extraordinary taxes and the obligation to provision the imperial army with camels, the nomadic population of Yüreğir, a *nahiye* of Adana, fled to other regions to seek shelter in *çiftlik*s as share-croppers or moved to cities. Some of them became enrolled in the private armies of governors, while others pretended to be Janissaries or *seyyid*s; all refused to return and to pay their required taxes, despite the frequently issued imperial decrees.[71] Imperial and local authorities also struggled to bring back the dispersed nomadic population of the Akçakoyunlu tribe who had already settled around Adana and Maraş in the 1750s. Beşir Ağa, the supervisor (*nazır*) of the Haremeyn *vakf*, complained that deserters were refusing to pay their *raiyyet rüsumu* by pretending to be members of the *askeri* class, thus creating extra burden for the remaining tax-payers.[72]



66 For further details, see BOA, C.ML.185/7747 (evahir-i L 1149/March 22-February 2, 1737).

67 AŞR.39:50, order no. 70 (18 Ş 1125/September 9, 1713).

68 For a detailed study on the forced settlements of the nomadic tribes of Adana in the eighteenth century, see Özcan Tatar, *XVIII. Yüzyılın İlk Yarısında Çukurova'da Aşiretlerin Eşkiyalık Olayları ve Aşiret İskanı (1691-1750)*, Fırat University, Ph.D, Elazığ 2005. For the later periods, see Andrew Gordon Gould, *Pashas and Brigands: Ottoman Provincial Reform and Its Impact on the Nomadic Tribes of Southern Anatolia, 1840-1885*, University of California, Ph.D, Los Angeles 1973; Toksöz, *Nomads, Migrants and Cotton*.

69 Bruce Masters, "Patterns of Migration to Ottoman Aleppo in the 17th and 18th Centuries", *International Journal of Turkish Studies*, 4, (1987), p. 84-85.

70 AŞR.107:46, order no. 110 (1 C 1128/May 23, 1716). For a list of the nomadic tribes bound to the *hass*, see Tatar, *XVIII. Yüzyılın İlk Yarısında Çukurova,* p. 67-76.

71 Being dependent on the *vakf* of Atik Valide Sultan, these nomads were actually exempt from extraordinary taxes. Yet it seems that the local authorities tried to include them in the payment of extraordinary taxes and the provisioning of camels. For further details, see AŞR.32:24-26 (12 C 1171/February 21, 1758); see also AŞR.50:135-136 (28 L 1181/March 18, 1764); 135: page no. unspecified, order no. 73 (3 L 1152/January 3, 1740).

72 AŞR.30: page no. unspecified, order no. 289 (2 B 1139/February 23, 1727). For similar problems in Aleppo, see Masters, "Patterns of Migration", p. 85-87.

### *b.1. Socio-economic profile of the people accused of being pseudo-Janissaries in late eighteenth-century Adana*

So far we have discussed the history, geographical distribution, and socio-economic factors which contributed, in the course of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, to the rise in the number of claims over Janissary status. We tried to show that both the military/fiscal transformation and tax reforms of the seventeenth century were a turning point toward a process of *askerization*, as they initiated a period of increased taxation propelled by the intensification of tax-farming. In this framework, the attempts of Muslims to infiltrate the *askeri* cadres, particularly those of the Janissary Corps, increased during the late seventeenth century and continued well into the eighteenth century. All of the above, however, provide us mainly with information on wider historical processes which contributed to the rise of the phenomenon and not on the identities of the claimants themselves. Indeed, the most serious challenge in the study of Janissary pretenders is the lack of systematic data which could reveal their social and economic background. This section, therefore, will be devoted to an attempt at delineating the socio-economic profile of the pseudo-Janissaries of late-eighteenth-century Adana, based on a rare source which contains information on 166 people accused of being Janissary pretenders in the year 1774, and the probate estates of a sub-group of 41 people whose properties were confiscated by the governor of Adana on account of this accusation.



Through the examination of the residential distribution patterns, ethnic origins, and occupations of all 166 people included in the first list, we will try to enrich the information contained in the estate inventories of the 41 people, for whom more data is provided by the sources. In order to make our findings even more comprehensive we will also compare the latter's wealth with that of 250 Muslim adult males from the same town, and their residential patterns with the neighborhood distribution of 345 Janissary real-estate owners as recorded in 1750. Although the sample available is limited and not always consistent, it is worth examining as it represents a rare instance where sources allow us to peek into the lives of the group under investigation. The tentative results of our study suggest that at least some of them were migrants and newcomers to the town, residing mostly in suburban neighborhoods, and involved in the less prestigious and specialized-skill-requiring occupations of agricultural production and husbandry.

The list of 166 people accused of being Janissaries was submitted to Kuyucu Süleyman Paşa who was appointed as the governor of the town in 1774. He was a man of military background who had served in the Janissary Corps for many years and became the *ağa* of the Janissaries in 1770. In his subsequent provincial duties, his primary task was to resolve the endemic problem of banditry in Anatolia. Following his İçel governorship, he became the governor of Adana on September

14, 1774. He was later appointed as the governor of Karaman (June 17, 1775), where he died the same year.[73]

Süleyman Paşa was a tough man and infamous for the harsh measures he took to discipline his soldiers. While he was the *ağa* of the Janissaries he had strangled numerous undisciplined soldiers and fugitives and thrown them into wells at the imperial camp. Such practices not only led him to the rank of vizierate (November 29, 1771), but also earned him the nickname Kuyucu (Gravedigger).[74] His reputation of harsh treatment and sudden executions caused great panic in Adana as soon as his appointment as the new governor – with the special task of suppressing banditry in the region – was heard and, as a result, some people started fleeing the town.[75]

By the *paşa*'s order, those who hid in the town were captured and the properties of some runaways were seized. This was not, however, a random punishment: some time after his arrival, the leading local authorities (*ulema*, *ayan*) and craftsmen (*kaffe-i esnaf*) had submitted a list of 166 people whom they blamed as the main culprits for the disorder in the town. Employing a standard phrasing used for law breakers of all sorts and expounding their suffering, they accused the people on the list of disobedience to imperial orders and involvement in banditry, labeling them as "*bandits*", "*criminals*", and "*thieves*". More importantly for our present study, they were all accused of being pseudo-Janissaries.[76]

Hastily written by the townsmen to guide Süleyman Paşa in his persecutions, the list of 166 individuals accused of being pseudo-Janissaries unfortunately does not offer enough information for a comprehensive reconstruction of the identity of the town's alleged pseudo-Janissaries. Supplementary data prove that at least three of them, Deli Hüseyin,[77] Kademoğlu Osman,[78] and Çayıroğlu Elhac Ali,[79]



---

73 Ibid.; AŞR.48:33, order no. 76 (7 Ş 1188/October 13, 1774); 48:34, order no. 77 (19 Ş 1188/October 25, 1774).

74 Şemdanizade, *Mür'i't-Tevârîh*, p. 85; M. Saffet Çalışkan, *(Vekayinüvis) Enverî Sadullah Efendi ve Tarihinin I. Cildi'nin Metin ve Tahlili (1182-1188/1768-1774)*, Marmara University, Ph.D, Istanbul 2000, p. 303-304. Süleyman Paşa was the second person in Ottoman history to have been given this sobriquet. The first one was Kuyucu Murad Paşa (d. 1611), the Ottoman grand vizier (1606-1611) who got his nickname from the mass graves he ordered to be dug for burying the executed Celalis.

75 AŞR.48:69, order no. 117 (undated); 48:70, order no. 120 (21 N 1188/November 25, 1774).

76 In the original document preserved in Adana court registers, they are accused of disobeying imperial orders and being bandits. In a later document, however, they are also accused of being pseudo-Janissaries; AŞR.52:127-28 (21 N 1188/November 25, 1174); BOA, C.ZB.72/3569 (evail-i M 1190/February 21-March 1, 1776).

77 He served as the *serdar* several times between the years 1771 and 1773; AŞR.47:54, 56. He also served as *mütesellim* from 26 N 1187/December 11, 1773 to 13 L 1187/December 28, 1173; AŞR.48:13 (15 L 1187/December, 30 1173).

78 Kademoğlu served twice as the *serdar* of the city for 26 days in 1185/1771. He then served on several occasions from 1771 to 1773; A.DVNS.AHK.ADN.d.4:248 (evasıt-ı Za 1197/October, 8-17 1783); A.DVNSMHM.d.176:8, order no. 16 (evasıt-ı Z 1191/January, 10-19 1778); AŞR.47:54, 56 (15 S 1187/May 8, 1773).

were former Janissary officers of the town. For the socio-economic and professional background of the rest, however, only limited details, including the neighborhoods they resided in, are provided. Some of them are mentioned just by their nickname (Köse, Deli, Kör, Arab, Kürd, Pehlivanoğlu, Köroğlan), while their occupations or places of origin are noted only occasionally. Even though the data provided in the estate inventories of some of the people whose properties were seized by Süleyman Paşa in 1774 are invaluable, they are restricted only to a sub-group of 41 people from the list.

Still, however, the residential distribution of the individuals mentioned on the list of 1774 deserves our attention: all 166 persons recorded were urbanites and resided in 32 different neighborhoods of Adana – indicated by the orange circles in Map 3 below.[80] Even though their residences were scattered across different quarters, the neighborhoods with the most considerable pseudo-Janissary presence were those of Çınarlı (18 people), Bakırsındı (15 people), Sofubahçesi (13 people), Hankurbu (12 people), Kansafzâde (10 people), Eskihamam (9 people), and Yortan (9 people). Half of the 166 people on the list lived in the newly inhabited areas of the town and especially in neighborhoods which had been established during the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. A survey of house owners in 1750, on the other hand, created as an assessment of the *avarız* tax, reveals a total of 345 *askeri*-owned houses in the town (*askeri*: 292; Janissary: 53), mostly concentrated in the neighborhoods of Bab-ı Tarsus (31 people) and Hamamkurbu (22 people). In the quarters of Yortan, Kasabbekir, and Harabbağçe, the number of *askeri* house owners – indicated by the light blue circles on the same map – exceeded that of the non-*askeri* population.[81]



As may also be observed from the map, a spatial segregation pattern characterized the settlement of pseudo-Janissaries and some registered Janissaries. Even though a few quarters where Janissaries lived overlapped with those of the people accused of being pseudo-Janissaries, the latter were still spatially segregated at least from the more affluent Janissaries, while both groups were segregated from the inhabitants of the inner city. The pseudo-Janissaries clustered around the newly settled regions of the south and the north, almost creating an invisible circle

79 BOA, AE.SABH.I.307/20623 (22 M 1191/March 2, 1777).

80 Thirteen were from the neighborhood of Sofubahçesi, nine from Eskihamam, ten from Kansafzâde, one from Hocavezir, one from Bab-ı Tarsus, seven from Şabaniye, twelve from Hankurbu, two from Hanedan, five from Paşanebi, five from Kayalıbağ, eighteen from Çınarlı, two from Harmanlı (?), two from Yarbaşı, nine from Yortan, four from Harhar (?), two from Helhal, five from Saraçlar, six from Kasabbekir, one from Naccaran, three from Ağamescid, three from Kuruköprü, two from Çukurmescid, one from Sucuzade, four from Şeyhmustafa, six from Sarı Yakub, three from Mermerli, one Mestanzade, two from Taşçıkan, three from Hamamkurbu, two from Cami-i Cedid, one from Hızırilyas, fifteen from Bakırsındı, and six people were from the neighborhood of Sugediği; AŞR.52:127-128 (21 N 1188/November 25, 1174) and BOA, C.ZB.72/3569 (evail-i M 1190/February 21-March 1, 1776).

81 AŞR.29 (evasıt-ı L 1163/September 13, 1750).

around the inner city, the history of which goes back to the fifteenth century.[82] The genuine Janissaries, on the other hand, seem to have preserved their settlement patterns by mainly concentrating in the neighborhoods established during the seventeenth century and creating a closer circle around the older part of the town. At least the affluent Janissaries seem to have been more integrated into the life of the town than the pseudo-Janissaries who lived in its outskirts.

Although the sample available is not adequate for drawing any definite conclusions, the segregation pattern of the aforementioned 166 pseudo-Janissaries also suggests a possible connection between migration and the rise of pseudo-Janissarism in Adana. Among eleven people whose place of origin is mentioned, seven were from Harput, two from Ayntab, one from Mardin, and one from a town of Adana called Yüregir. Some other clues, including the nicknames and father's place of origin, prove that at least eight people were of Kurdish origin.[83] According to a text attributed to the era of Sultan Süleyman I, the conscription of Janissaries from Harput, Diyarbakır, and Malatya into the corps was actually forbidden.[84] As far as the eighteenth century is concerned, however, the Kurds from the town of Harput in Elazığ constituted an important group among these migrants to the town.[85]

The tradition of migration from Harput to Adana seems to have started at least as early as the eighteenth century and continued in the subsequent centuries.[86] In the first half of the eighteenth century, 12 from a total of 39 newcomers to the town were from Harput.[87] No fewer than 100 Kurds of Harput lived in Adana in the 1770s, including Kel Bekir, Kasab İsmail, his brother Ali, İt Hasan, Emin,



---

82 For a history of the neighborhoods of Adana, see Yörük, "Adana Şehrinin Tarihi Gelişimi", p. 287-308 and idem, *Adana*, p. 122-36. In Aleppo, too, the Janissaries were mainly residing in peripheral neighborhoods and some were Kurds or belonged to Turkish populations of tribal origin, as opposed to the *aşraf* or *seyyid*s from the inner part of the town; Masters, "Power and Society in Aleppo", p. 154. See also Bodman, *Political Factions*, p. 57, 63-64.

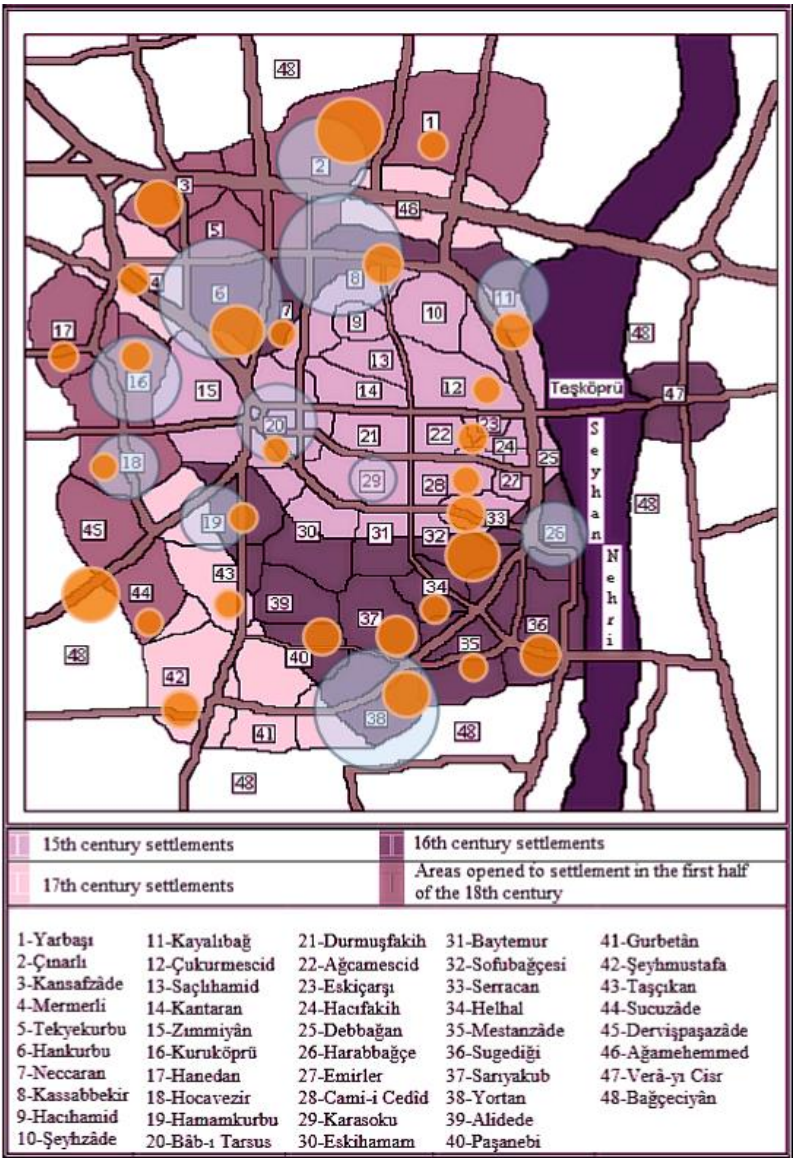
83 There were also two Zazas, three Arabs, two Persians (Acem), one Fellah, and one Laz.

84 "*El-iyazü-billah Urus, Acem, Çingene ve Türk reayasının evlâtlariyle vesair mahlûkun evlâtlarından Harputlu, Diyarbekirli ve Malatyalı olmaya*", as cited in Uzunçarşılı, *Kapıkulu Ocakları*, p. 20. See also Ayşe Pul, "Yeniçeri Teşkilatına Dair Bir Risale (Değerlendirme-Karşılaştırmalı Metin)", *Belleten*, 84/301, (2020), p. 1007.

85 BOA, Cevdet Dahiliye (C.DH) 230/11457 (21 Ş 1190/October 5, 1775); A.DVNS.AHK.ADN.d.4:88 (evahir-i Ş 1190/October 5-13, 1775).

86 Harput served as a center of migration not only to Ottoman cities but also overseas. The Armenian residents of the town migrated to North America especially during the late nineteenth century. For further details, see David E. Gutman, "Agents of Mobility: Migrant Smuggling Networks, Transhemispheric Migration, and Time-Space Compression in Ottoman Anatolia, 1888-1908", *InterDisciplines*, 1, (2012), p. 48-84; David E. Gutman, *The Politics of Armenian Migration to North America, 1885-1915: Sojourners, Smugglers and Dubious Citizens*, Edinburgh 2019, p. 10-12; also see his dissertation, *Sojourners, Smugglers, and the State: Transhemispheric Migration Flows and the Politics of Mobility in Eastern Anatolia, 1888-1980*, State University of New York, Ph.D, Binghamton 2012, p. 30-37.

87 Yörük, *Adana*, p. 152, 405-406.




**Map 3:** Neighborhood distribution of the pseudo-Janissaries and Janissaries of Adana[88]

[88] Source: Saim Yörük, "Adana Şehrinin Tarihi Gelişimi (XVI-XVIII. Yüzyıllar)", *Ç.Ü. Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, 21/3, (2012), p. 306. The circles in orange refer to the neighborhoods of 166 people in the list submitted to Süleyman Paşa in 1775; the circles in light blue refer to the neighborhoods of house owners belonging to the *askeri* class in the year 1750.

Kürd Mustafa, Kahveci Mustafa, and a Kurdish tribesman called İbrahim, all present on the list submitted to Süleyman Paşa. All were probably migrants as they were accused of causing disorder in Adana in the past eight years.[89] They had formed an armed group the members of which had developed a sense of group solidarity and lived in certain neighborhoods – a sign of chain migration.[90] They had contentious relations with other residents of the town, which sometimes resulted in open conflicts and, in one instance, they had even killed five people.[91]

It would be very reductionist to describe the 1774 conflict in Adana as a Kurdish–Turkish divide, especially if we take into consideration the overlap or the ambiguity of the lines drawn between ethnicity and tribal identity during that period. Still, however, the above details point to the fact that we should not underestimate these aspects when examining the tensions in the town. Indeed, ethnic or tribal tension was not something rare in the southern parts of Anatolia. As a result of eighteenth-century migration, for instance, an official source asserted that "*one side of Ayntab is Kurdish and one side is Turkoman*".[92] In the cases of both Aleppo and Ayntab, patterns of chain migration of tribesmen and peasants have not only played a role in the development of solidarity groups in certain neighborhoods, but also brought the latter closer to the local Janissary officers.[93] In Aleppo, for instance, the Kurds and Turcomans of the town sided with the Janissaries in their internal clash with the local *aşraf* in 1798.[94]

The sectoral distribution of 30 out of 166 people whose occupations are provided in the list of 1774, suggests that they were professionally heterogeneous. In the primary sector, one person was involved in agricultural production as a farmer, one was a logger (*ağaççı*), while two people dealt with stockbreeding/husbandry (one was a dealer in lamb meat and one a cattle breeder). In the secondary sector, four people dealt with food production (one cheese-maker, one miller, and two butchers), six people were tanners, one was a blacksmith, one a cap maker, one a silk maker, and one a sieve maker. In the tertiary sector, three people engaged in food services as coffee shop owners and four in transport and communication (one donkey driver [*hmarci*], one water-buffalo keeper [*camuşcu*], and two horse dealers [*canbaz*]); while two provided



89 BOA, C.DH. 230/11457 (21 Ş 1190/October 5, 1776).

90 For the importance of chain migration and the regional connections of Armenian immigrants in seventeenth-century Anatolia, see İrfan Kokdaş, "17. Yüzyılda İzmir'e Ermeni Göçü: Acem Tüccarları ve Hemşerilik Ağları", *Hacettepe Üniversitesi Türkiyat Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 34, (2021), p. 227-253.

91 BOA, C.DH.230/11457 (21 Ş 1190/October 5, 1776).

92 BOA, C.DH.265 (20 R 1213/October 1, 1798) as cited in Canbakal, "Political Unrest in Eighteenth-Century Ayntab", p. 43.

93 In Ayntab, for instance, such interaction was observed in the peripheral neighborhoods of Yahni, Şarkiyan, Şehreküstü, and Kurb-ı Zincirli; Canbakal, *Society and Politics*, p. 85-86. In Aleppo, too, three suburban quarters were inhabited almost exclusively by Janissaries; Bodman, *Political Factions*, p. 57.

94 *Ibid*., p. 118-119.

public/military services (one cavalry troop [*cündi*] and one prayer leader).[95] Furthermore, in the list we can also find four servants of the group's leading figures.[96] Apart from these, a certain Hüseyin is called a "*Kürd fakısı*", a term probably referring to his religious role among the Kurdish population of the town.

### *b.2. A review of the probate inventories of 41 people accused of being pseudo-Janissaries*

The geo-economic overlap between migrants and lower-income groups who lived on the outskirts of the town and were employed in agricultural production and husbandry is quite instructive. Like most of the early modern cities of Anatolia, Adana's economy was largely dependent on agricultural or husbandry-related activities. The town itself was immediately surrounded by huge gardens (the areas indicated with no. 48 in Map 3) in the south and north, as well as along the shores of the Seyhan River on the east. As elsewhere, these labor-intensive gardens seem to have provided employment for some immigrant gardeners and shepherds.[97] Moreover, most of the town's settlers were actually tribesmen with deep connections to the countryside and significant involvement in husbandry. This is the reason why Yusuf Ağa, the steward of Kuyucu Süleyman Paşa, described the town as the land of "*Turks and Turcomans*".[98] Therefore, it is not surprising to find a widespread engagement of the alleged pseudo-Janissaries in occupations related to agriculture, husbandry, animal breeding, and dairy production. Though the case of Adana requires further research, there appears to be a similarity with the Janissaries of Aleppo and Ayntab in this regard.[99] The Janissaries of Ayntab were also heavily involved in animal-related professions; while the butchers of Aleppo were mainly Janissaries.[100]



The concentration of the people accused of being pseudo-Janissaries in agricultural and animal-related sectors is further confirmed from the estate inventories of the 41 people – 3 executed and 38 deserters[101] – whose properties were seized by Süleyman Paşa in 1774.[102]

---

95 Since the professions of Kel Bekir as a butcher, Avaz Musa as the *bölükbaşı* of Kel Bekir, as well as the occupations of three ex-Janissary officers are not specified in the list of 1774, they have not been included in the above list.

96 Çayıroğlu had two servants, while Basatçı Ahmed and Gazi Mahmud had one each. Two others were connected to Kınaoğlu and Kademoğlu as dependent or followers(*etibba*). Finally, five people are referred to as the comrades/friends (*refik*) of certain figures.

97 Suraiya Faroqhi, "Migration into Eighteenth-Century 'Greater Istanbul' as Reflected in the *Kadı* Registers of Eyüb", *Turcica*, 30, (1998), p. 162-183; Kokdaş, "Acem Tüccarları", p. 243.

98 BOA, TSMA.E.657/13 (11 S 1222/April 20, 1807).

99 Masters, "Patterns of Migration", p. 85; Canbakal, *Politics and Society*, p. 87; Bodman, *Political Factions*, p. 64-65; Çınar, "Bir Güç Unsuru Olarak Yeniçeriler", p. 100-101. Also, see Yahya Araz's article in the present issue.

100 Bodman, *Political Factions*, p. 64-65; Wilkins, *Forging Urban Solidarities*, p. 162-164.

101 Even though in the relevant *mühimme* entry a total of 30 people is noted as having been executed by the *paşa*, the probate inventories list only three of these figures among the executed, the rest

| ***Type of Assets*** | ***Total*** | ***Average*** | ***Percentage*** |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Gross wealth* | 21197 | 517 | 100 |
| *Agricultural products* | 13595 | 332 | 64.1 |
| *Livestock* | 4936 | 120 | 23.3 |
| *Financial assets* | 1249 | 30 | 5.9 |
| *Unclear* | 572 | 14 | 2.7 |
| *Real estate* | 400 | 10 | 1.9 |
| *Consumer or household durables* | 266 | 6 | 1.3 |
| *Personal movables* | 128 | 3 | 0.6 |
| *Weaponry* | 40 | 1 | 0.2 |
| *Agricultural tools* | 12 | 0 | 0.1 |

**Table 2:** Distribution of the assets of people accused of being pseudo-Janissaries confiscated in 1774

It is reasonable to assume that most of the deserters had taken their precious items with them while fleeing the town. Therefore, their total wealth should be considered as reflecting a minimum value. It is probably due to this reason that the total wealth of the executed people exceeds that of all the rest: Gülekoğlu Hüseyin b. Abdullah had a property worth 8,480 *guruş*, Berber Mehmed Beşe 1,839 *guruş*, and Gayroğlu Elhac Halil 1,260 *guruş*. This means that, although the average of the total wealth of the people on the list is 517 *guruş*, if we exclude the three executed people, the average decreases to 242 *guruş*.



The wealth distribution of even this limited number of people reflects the hierarchical structure and inequalities which existed between the people accused of being pseudo-Janissaries in Adana. While the confiscated properties of more powerful figures, including two ex-Janissary officers called Çayıroğlu Elhac Ali (2,805.5 *guruş*) and Kademoğlu Osman (536 *guruş*), were above the average, 78

being listed as deserters; BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d.166:244, order no. 559 (evasıt-ı L 1188/December 15-24, 1774).

102 Even though the accusation of pseudo-Janissarism – especially with relation to the wars which took place in the seven years preceding the event – is more pronounced in the confiscation orders of the 41 people, the legal justification for the confiscation was rather that the accused had been involved in a rebellion (*huruc*), as rebels (*asi* and *bagi*). In the beginning of each probate estate, the following formula is repeated: "*The following is the record of the possessions of ... [name], a mutineer and deserter who fled after his persecution for being among those individuals and groups who claimed to be Janissaries in the past seven years, as recorded by the Sharia court and through the mediation of el-Hac İbrahim Efendi, the officer of the imperial treasury (*beytülmal*) who received the record in question, at the time when Süleyman Paşa, the current governor of Adana and the General Inspector of Anatolia, honored Adana with his presence*". For other examples, see AŞR.52:97-98, 103, 103-107.

percent of the group members fell below this average. The wealth of the poorest ones was around 10 *guruş* (four people), less than the price of a horse (25.5 *guruş*) or an ox (13-14 *guruş*), but above the price of a cow (6.5 *guruş*).

In general, agricultural products and animals constituted the overwhelming majority of the 41 people's properties. Unfortunately, the occupations of only four of them are specified in the confiscation list: a barber, a water-buffalo keeper, a blacksmith, and a servant. However, agricultural products of cotton seed and cereal constituted the entire wealth of six people and more than half of the total wealth of six others. Most of them owned considerable numbers of livestock, especially oxen. The average number of cattle in their possession is 7 with an average value of 85 *guruş*. Cattle constituted the total wealth of nine and counted for more than half of the assets of eight people in the list, while 3,210 oxen were owned by these 41 people alone.[103] As can be recalled, in the longer list of 166 pseudo-Janissaries a number of tanners and other husbandry-related occupations were mentioned: professions which required a continuous supply of animals and hides. Indeed, according to a report on Adana written in the 1870s, the need for such products was met by the nomadic Turcomans who herded their oxen on the southern slopes of the Taurus Mountains.[104]

A comparison of the properties of the above-mentioned pseudo-Janissaries with those of 250 Muslim adult males from Adana further confirms our observation,[105] as can be seen in Table 3:



| ***Group*** | ***Pseudo-Janissaries (1774)*** | ***Janissaries (1719-1786)*** | ***Other Muslims (1719-1786)*** |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Total number of people per category* | 41 | 27 | 250 |
| *Gross wealth* | 21197 | 49349.5 | 366075.9 |
| *Gross wealth (average)* | 517 | 1827.8 | 1464.3 |
| *Financial assets* | 1248.5 | 25535 | 132311.5 |
| *Financial assets (average)* | 30.5 | 945.7 | 529.2 |

103 Apart from oxen, the total number of cows owned by these 41 people is 31 (508 *guruş*), that of calves is 53 (106 *guruş*), and that of water buffalos is three (90 *guruş*).

104 James Henry Skene, "Aleppo", *Accounts and Papers of the House of Commons: Commercial Reports*, (1876), Volume 75, p. 997.

105 As the pseudo-Janissaries were Muslim adult males, we have included the probate estates only of people of the latter category, as well as people of Janissary background and *beşe*s who, albeit described as "*visitors*" (*misafir*) in the sources, seemed to have had some stable presence in the town, as workers or inhabitants. These probate inventories are roughly covering the period 1719-1786.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Financial assets (%)* | 5.9 | 51.7 | 36.1 |
| *Real estate* | 400 | 4455 | 66477.5 |
| *Real estate (average)* | 9.8 | 165 | 265.9 |
| *Real estate (%)* | 1.9 | 9 | 18.2 |
| *Agricultural products* | 13595 | 10796 | 54506 |
| *Agricultural products (average)* | 331.6 | 399.9 | 218 |
| *Agricultural products (%)* | 64.1 | 21.9 | 14.9 |
| *Livestock* | 4936 | 1802 | 33200.4 |
| *Livestock (average)* | 120.4 | 66.7 | 132.8 |
| *Livestock (%)* | 23.3 | 3.7 | 9.1 |
| *Slaves* | 0 | 440 | 2756 |
| *Slaves (average)* | 0 | 16.3 | 11 |
| *Slaves (%)* | 0 | 0.9 | 0.8 |
| *Agricultural tools* | 12.3 | 51.5 | 407.8 |
| *Agricultural tools (average)* | 0.3 | 1.9 | 1.6 |
| *Agricultural tools (%)* | 0.1 | 0.1 | 0.1 |
| *Weaponry* | 39.5 | 489.1 | 3029.1 |
| *Weaponry (average)* | 1 | 18.1 | 12.1 |
| *Weaponry (%)* | 0.2 | 1 | 0.8 |
| *Books and luxury goods* | 0 | 31 | 2068.5 |
| *Books and luxury goods (average)* | 0 | 1.1 | 8.3 |
| *Books and luxury goods (%)* | 0 | 0.1 | 0.6 |

**Table 3:** Comparison between the properties of 41 people accused of being pseudo-Janissaries in 1774 and those of various Muslim adult males from Adana in 1719-1786[106]

The average of real estate and financial assets of the 41 pseudo-Janissaries is still below the average of those of the adult Muslim males from Adana, including the sub-category of registered Janissaries. The average of their agricultural products (331.58 *guruş*; 64%), on the other hand, is above that of the adult Muslim males



[106] Sources: AŞR.1; 4-6; 104; 12-14; 16-18; 23; 26-28; 30-36; 38; 44-45; 50; 52; 65; 125; 129-136.

(218 *guruş*; 14.5%), while the percentage of their livestock (120.39 *guruş*; 23.3%) is higher than the percentage of the whole town (132.80 *guruş*; 9.1%).

The most striking peculiarity of the wealth of the 41 people on the list of 1774 as given in Tables 2 and 3 is the virtual absence of real estate assets. Drawing hasty conclusions from the absence of agricultural lands, however, may be misleading, given the considerable amount of cotton seeds (*koza*) and cereals (wheat and barley) among their possessions. This lack may signify the absence of any agricultural real estate held as a freehold property which could be seized, and that they may have been renting fields for cultivation or just cultivating *miri* lands.

As far as residential estates are concerned, none of the above people owned houses in Adana, except for the two houses (200 *guruş* each) of two of the executed people. The aforementioned 1750 survey of house owners presents a completely different picture, at least for the registered Janissaries of the town, and provides an interesting insight concerning the latter's socio-economic profiles. As the *askeri* groups were also included in this survey, it is possible not only to follow the proprietorship of those people who were considered by the local administration to be registered Janissaries, and their spatial distribution in the town, but also to reach more definite conclusions regarding the socio-economic differences between them and the people accused of being Janissary pretenders. The most striking result of the survey's examination is the overwhelming dominance of people bearing the titles of *beşe* (785 out of 1,297) and *ağa* (124 out of 1,297) as proprietors of houses situated mainly in the neighborhoods of Kasabbekir, Eskihamam, and Çınarlı, but also having a presence in almost every quarter of the town.[107] Titles may sometimes be misleading and the register itself was created for recording the number of townsmen eligible to pay the *avarız* tax, but, if we can trust the distinction made between the *askeri* and non-*askeri* groups listed separately in the same survey of 1750, the registered Janissaries mentioned under the sub-categories of "*askeri*" (292) and "*yeniçeriyan*" (53) make up a total of 345 individuals, all owning houses in different parts of the town (see Map 3).[108] This survey reveals that the registered Janissaries owned a considerable number of residences in the town. The availability of a very limited number of houses in the probate inventories of the 41 accused of being Janissary pretenders, therefore, suggests that at least some of the pseudo-Janissaries probably settled in neighborhoods with a great number of cheap inns and rented shops, barracks, and houses.[109] Indeed, we know that the laborers from Harput "*worked in cities, sometimes for many years, living the lives of bachelors in the corners of inns*".[110]



107 Our observation is based on the list provided in Yörük, *Adana*, p. 227-228. For the residential distribution of the *askeri* class in Adana, see the list in *ibid*., p. 419-220 and the map on p. 421.

108 AŞR.29 (evasıt-ı L 1163/September 13, 1750).

109 Adana was home to a considerable number of inns inhabited by pilgrims, merchants, as well as migrants to the town. For the inns of Adana, see Yörük, *Adana*, p. 202-203, 410-412.

110 Manoog B. Dzeron, *Village of Parhanj: General History 1600-1937*, Boston 1938, p. 203, as cited in Gutman, *Sojourners, Smugglers, and the State*, p. 34.

## Conclusion

Pseudo-Janissarism can be viewed as an important element of networking and as a springboard for socioeconomic mobility which was used extensively by Ottoman Muslims in the late seventeenth century and throughout the eighteenth. As we tried to show in this article, its development was mainly fueled by two inter-related phenomena: the change in the soldier recruitment methods employed by the Ottoman government, and the wider trend of *askeriz*ation of Muslims in the provinces who sought to acquire socioeconomic privileges and ameliorate their financial condition as the empire's evolving taxation system created challenges for many of them. Ever since the practice of *devşirme* had begun to wane, these two phenomena had become increasingly interdependent, as the turning of *reaya* into *askeri* was stimulated in times of war through the – usually temporary – *en masse* enrollment of soldiers, promoting, in the process, the acquisition of tax-privileges, and the expansion of status claims and social mobility among the Ottoman population.

However, despite its importance as a "push factor", enrollment for campaigns was not the only path through which the claims of the people who wanted to enter the *askeri* class could be materialized. Even in times of peace, the increasing decentralization of the Janissary Corps' administration offered the opportunity for officers at the regimental and provincial level to develop networks by accepting commoners into the corps through both legal and illicit means. Such methods included the selling of vacant Janissary pay-tickets, the illegal procurement of Janissary garments for commoners, and the issuing of unofficial certificates to all sorts of Janissary wannabes. Backed up by the protection of regiments and provincial officers, these practices flourished and preserved the dynamic of the phenomenon of pseudo-Janissarism both in times of war and peace. The privileged status offered by these networks "pulled" people into this system of relations, to the extent that by the second half of the eighteenth century the Muslim populations of entire cities were characterized by their affiliation to the Janissary Corps. These people were recruited locally and represented an integral part of the Ottoman provinces' social fabric. Given the reach and sheer size of the Janissary organization, it would be no exaggeration to say that pseudo-Janissarism represented the single most important manifestation of *askeriz*ation in the Ottoman Empire.



Pseudo-Janissarism started developing rapidly in the last two decades of the seventeenth century and, in terms of its early geographic expansion, our data shows that Anatolia – especially the areas close to the Black Sea and the Aegean – was the region with the greatest pseudo-Janissary activity. However, even at this early stage, the phenomenon was widespread in a number of Anatolian and European Ottoman provinces, and would expand even further in the course of the eighteenth century.

The study of eighteenth-century Adana supports the above observations, strongly suggesting that the rise of draftees and pretenders tagged in the sources as pseudo-Janissaries was directly related, on the one hand, to the long wars and their socio-economic repercussions in the provinces of the empire and, on the other, to the efforts of underprivileged *reaya* to better their economic and social position by claiming an *askeri* status. Provisioning of manpower, pack animals (especially camels), and war financing through the imposition of extraordinary taxes drove the non-*askeri* inhabitants of the town to various forms of resistance (flight, tax-evasion). In particular, the urgent need for manpower and the arbitrary measures taken by the central government in order to cope with the necessities of warfare led to the arising of an attitude of opposition to the encroachments of the state and its representatives among the people involved in the process. Accompanied by the efforts of tax-farmers and tax-collectors to maximize their profit, the forced settlement and migration of some nomadic communities to urban centers increased the pressure on the available resources, creating new factions, prompting new coalitions, and causing new power struggles. The list of individuals accused of being pseudo-Janissaries in Adana (1774) suggests that at least some of them were among the poorest social strata, often newcomers to the town, and mainly involved in animal-related agricultural professions. Our sources point to the fact that they were either migrants from the empire's eastern provinces or people with deep connections to the countryside who, upon their arrival in Adana, found a niche in humble occupations related to agricultural production, animal breeding, or urban professions associated with these sectors.



## References

**Archival Sources**

**Devlet Arşivleri Başkanlığı Osmanlı Arşivi/Directorate of State Archives-Ottoman Archives (BOA)**

Bab-ı Asafi Divan-ı Hümayun Sicilleri Adana Ahkam Defterleri (A.DVNS.AHK.ADN.d) 1-4.

Bab-ı Asafi Divan-ı Hümayun Sicilleri Mühimme Defterleri (A.DVNSMHM.d.) 75-141; 166; 176.

Bab-ı Asafi Divan-ı Hümayun Sicilleri Özi ve Silistre Ahkam Defterleri (A.DVNS.AHK.ÖZSİ.d) 4.

Bab-ı Asafi Divan-ı Hümayun Sicilleri Tahvil (Nişan) Kalemi Defterleri (A.DVNS.NŞT.d) 16.

Ali Emiri Abdülhamid I (AE.SABH.I) 35/2657; 95/6516; 153/10255; 307/20623; 342/23872.

Ali Emiri Ahmed III (AE.SAMD.III) 197/19071.

Cevdet Askeriye (C.AS) 42/1949; 334/13854; 596/25109; 1110/49123.

Cevdet Dahiliye (C.DH) 230/11457; 230/11457.

Cevdet Maliye (C.ML) 185/7747; 212/8704; 285/11708.

Cevdet Zabtiye (C.ZB) 32/1585; 72/3569; 90/4490; 91/4515.

Hatt-ı Hümayun (HAT) 426/21862 D; 426/21862 G; 426/21862 R; 739/35042; 1388/55236.

Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Arşivi Evrakı (TSMA.E) 657/13; 806/19.

**İslam Araştırmaları Merkezi/Center for Islamic Studies (İSAM)**

Adana *Sicil*s (AŞR) 1; 4-6; 12-14; 16-18; 20; 22-23; 26-36; 38-39; 44-48; 50; 52; 65; 105; 107; 125; 127; 129-136.

**Published Sources**

Rifa'at Ali Abou-El-Haj, *The 1703 Rebellion and the Structure of Ottoman Politics*, Istanbul 1984.

Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, *Tezâkir, (21-39)*, 3rd edition, (ed. Cavid Baysun), Ankara 1991.

Akdağ, Mustafa, "Yeniçeri Ocak Nizamının Bozuluşu", *Ankara Üniversitesi Dil ve Tarih-Coğrafya Fakültesi Dergisi*, 5/3, (1947), p. 291-312.

Aksan, Virginia H., "Whatever Happened to the Janissaries? Mobilization for the 1768-1774 Russo-Ottoman War", *War in History*, 5/1, (1998), p. 23-36.

_____, *Ottoman Wars, 1700-1870*, Harlow 2007.

_____, "Ottoman Military Recruitment Strategies in the Late Eighteenth Century", *Arming the State: Military Conscription in the Middle East and Central Asia, 1775-1925*, (ed. Eric J. Zürcher), London 1999, p. 21-39.

Anastasopoulos, Antonis and Yannis Spyropoulos, "Soldiers on an Ottoman Island: The Janissaries of Crete, Eighteenth-Early Nineteenth Centuries", *Turkish Historical Review*, 8/1, (2017), p. 1-33.

Bodman, Herbert L., *Political Factions in Aleppo 1720-1826*, Chapel Hill 1963.

Canbakal, Hülya, *Society and Politics in an Ottoman Town: Ayntab in the 17th Century*, Leiden and Boston 2007.

_____, "The Ottoman State and Descendants of the Prophet in Anatolia and the Balkans (c. 1500-1700)", *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 52, (2009), p. 542-578.

_____, "Preliminary Observations on Political Unrest in Eighteenth-Century Ayntab: Popular Protest and Faction", *Political Initiatives 'From the Bottom Up' In The Ottoman Empire: Halcyon Days in Crete VII: A Symposium Held in Rethymno 9-11 January 2009*, (ed. Antonis Anastasopoulos), Rethymno 2012, p. 33-59.

Cezar, Yavuz, *Osmanlı Maliyesinde Bunalım ve Değişim Dönemi*, Istanbul 1986.

Cornell, Eric, "On Bektashism in Bosnia", *Alevi Identity: Cultural, Religious and Social Perspectives*, (eds. Tord Olson, Elisabeth Özclalga, and Catharina Raudvere), Istanbul 1998, p. 11-18.

Çalışkan, M. Saffet, *(Vekayinüvis) Enverî Sadullah Efendi ve Tarihinin I. Cildi'nin Metin ve Tahlili (1182-1188/1768-1774)*, Marmara University, Ph.D, Istanbul 2000.

Çınar, Hüseyin, "XVIII. Yüzyılın İlk Yarısında Ayıntâb (Antep) Şehrinde Bir Güç Unsuru Olarak Yeniçeriler", *Osmanlı Döneminde Gaziantep Sempozyumu (22 Ekim 1999)*, (ed. Yusuf Küçükdağ), Gaziantep 2000, p. 97-110.

Darling, Linda T., "Crime among the Janissaries in the Ottoman Golden Age", *Ottoman War and Peace. Studies in Honor of Virginia H. Aksan*, (eds. Frank Castiglione, Ethan L. Menchinger, and Veysel Şimşek), Leiden and Boston 2020, p. 13-34.

De Bonneval, Philippe and Mathieu Dumas, *Αναγνώριση της νήσου Κρήτης: μια μυστική έκθεση του 1783* [Description of the Island of Crete: A Secret Report from 1783], (trans. and eds. G. Nikolaou and M. Peponakis), Rethymno 2000.

D'Ohsson, Ignace Mouradgea, *Tableau général de l'empire othoman*, Volume 7, Paris 1824.

Dumas, Mathieu, *Souvenirs du lieutenant général comte Mathieu Dumas de 1770 à 1838*, Volume 1, Paris 1839.

Dzeron, Manoog B., *Village of Parhanj: General History 1600-1937*, Boston 1938.

Ekim, Zeynep Emel, "Üsküdar ve Yeniçeri Remizleri", *Uluslararası Üsküdar Sempozyumu VII, 2-4 Kasım 2012: 1352'den Bügüne Şehir*, (ed. Süleyman Faruk Göncüoğlu), Istanbul 2014, p. 693-713.

Ergenoğlu, Mehtap and İhsan Erdem Sofracı, "Osmanlı Mâlî Sisteminde Bir Gelir Tahsilatı Yöntemi Olarak Mâlikâne Uygulaması: XVIII. Yüzyılın İlk Yıllarında Adana Sancağı Örneği", *Çukurova Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 3/2, (2017), p. 181-198.

Faroqhi, Suraiya, "Migration into Eighteenth-Century 'Greater Istanbul' as Reflected in the *Kadı* Registers of Eyüb", *Turcica*, 30, (1998), p. 162-183.

Gelibolulu Mustafa Âlî, *Füsûl-i hall ü akd ve usûl-i harc ü nakd (İslam devletleri tarihi, 622-1599)*, (ed. Mustafa Demir), Istanbul 2006.

Gould, Andrew Gordon, *Pashas and Brigands: Ottoman Provincial Reform and Its Impact on the Nomadic Tribes of Southern Anatolia, 1840-1885*, University of California, Ph.D, Los Angeles 1973.



Gutman, David E., *Sojourners, Smugglers, and the State: Transhemispheric Migration Flows and the Politics of Mobility in Eastern Anatolia, 1888-1980*, State University of New York, Ph.D, Binghamton 2012.

_____, "Agents of Mobility: Migrant Smuggling Networks, Transhemispheric Migration, and Time-Space Compression in Ottoman Anatolia, 1888-1908", *InterDisciplines*, 1, (2012), p. 48-84.

_____, *The Politics of Armenian Migration to North America, 1885-1915: Sojourners, Smugglers and Dubious Citizens*, Edinburgh 2019.

Gül, Abdulkasim, *18. Yüzyılda Yeniçeri Teşkilatı*, Atatürk University, Türkiyat Araştırmaları Enstitüsü, Tarih Anabilim Dalı, Ph.D, Erzurum, 2020.

İnalcık, Halil, "Osmanlılar'da Raiyyet Rüsûmu", *Belleten*, 23/92, (1959), p. 575-610.

_____, "Military and Fiscal Transformation in the Ottoman Empire, 1600-1700," *Archivum Ottomanicum*, 6, (1980), p. 283-337.

Kafadar, Cemal, "On the Purity and Corruption of the Janissaries", *The Turkish Studies Association Bulletin*, 15/2, (1991), p. 273-280.

Karaman, K. Kıvanç and Şevket Pamuk, "Ottoman State Finances in European Perspective, 1500-1914", *Journal of Economic History*, 70/3, (2010), p. 593-629.

Karpat, Kemal H., *Ottoman Population, 1830-1914: Demographic and Social Characteristics*, Madison, Wis. 1985.

Kokdaş, İrfan, "17. Yüzyılda İzmir'e Ermeni Göçü: Acem Tüccarları ve Hemşerilik Ağları", *Hacettepe Üniversitesi Türkiyat Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 34, (2021), p. 227-253.

Kurt, Yılmaz, "Hasanpaşazâdeler", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, (2016), p. 539.

Masters, Bruce, "Patterns of Migration to Ottoman Aleppo in the 17th and 18th Centuries", *International Journal of Turkish Studies*, 4, (1987), p. 75-89.

_____, "Power and Society in Aleppo in the 18th and 19th Centuries", *Revue de monde musulman et de la Méditerranée*, 62, (1991), p. 151-158.

McGowan, Bruce, "The Age of the *Ayans*", *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire*, Volume 2, (eds. Halil İnalcık with Donald Quataert), Cambridge 1997, p. 639-758.

Murphey, Rhoads, *Ottoman Warfare, 1500-1700*, London 1999.

_____, "Yeñi Čeri", *The Encyclopaedia of Islam. New Edition*, Volume 11, (eds. P. J. Bearman et al.), Leiden 2002, p. 322-331.

Özkaya, Yücel, "XVII. Yüzyılın İlk yarısında Yerli Ailelerin Ayanlıkları Ele Geçirişleri ve Büyük Hanedanlıkların Kuruluşu", *Belleten*, 42/168, (1978), p. 667-723.

Pamuk, Şevket, *A Monetary History of the Ottoman Empire*, Cambridge 2000.

Psilakis, Vasileios, *Ιστορία της Κρήτης από της απωτάτης αρχαιότητος μέχρι των καθ' ημάς χρόνων* [History of Crete from the Furthest Antiquity to Our Time], Volume 3, Chania 1909.

Pul, Ayşe, "Yeniçeri Teşkilatına Dair Bir Risale (Değerlendirme-Karşılaştırmalı Metin)", *Belleten*, 84/301, (2020), p. 983-1044.

Quataert, Donald, "Clothing Laws, State and Society in the Ottoman Empire, 1720-1829", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 29/3, (1997), p. 403-425.

Raynal, Guillaume Thomas and Jacques J. Peuchet, *Histoire philosophique et politique des établissements et du commerce des Européens dans l'Afrique septentrionale*, Volume 2, Paris 1826.

Ricaut, Paul, *The History of the Present State of the Ottoman Empire: Containing the Maxims of the Turkish Polity, the Most Material Points of the Mahometan Religion, Their Sects and Heresies, Their Convents and Religious Votaries. Their Military Discipline, with an Exact Computation of Their Forces Both by Sea and Land*, London 1686.

Sahillioğlu, Halil, "1683-1740 Yıllarında Osmanlı İmparatorluğunun Hazine Gelir ve Gideri", *Osmanlı Maliyesi: Kurumlar ve Bütçeler*, (eds. Mehmet Genç and Erol Özvar), Istanbul 2006, p. 149-165.

Salzmann, Ariel, "An Ancien Régime Revisited: 'Privatization' and Political Economy in the Eighteenth-Century Ottoman Empire," *Politics and Society*, 21/4, (1993), p. 393-423.

Savary, Claude Etienne, *Letters on Greece: Being a Sequel to Letters on Egypt, and Containing Travels through Rhodes, Crete, and Other Islands of the Archipelago; with Comparative Remarks on their Ancient and Present State, and Observations on the Government, Character, and Manner, of the Turks, and Modern Greeks*, London 1788.

Sel Turhan, Fatma, *The Ottoman Empire and the Bosnian Uprising: Janissaries, Modernisation and Rebellion in the Nineteenth Century*, London and New York 2014.

Sieber, Franz W., *Reise nach der Insel Kreta im griechischen Archipelagus im Jahre 1817*, Volume 2, Leipzig 1823.

Skene, James Henry, "Aleppo", *Accounts and Papers of the House of Commons: Commercial Reports*, (1876), Volume 75, p. 964-998.

Spyropoulos, Yannis, *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], University of Crete, Department of History and Archaeology, Ph.D, Rethymno 2014.

_____, "Janissary Politics on the Ottoman Periphery (18th-Early 19th c.)", *Halcyon Days in Crete IX: Political Thought and Practice in the Ottoman Empire*, (ed. Marinos Sariyannis), Rethymno 2019, p. 449-481.

Sućeska, Avdo, "Mālikāna: Lifelong Lease of Governmental Estates in the Ottoman State", *Prilozi za Orijentalnu Filologiju*, 36, (1987), p. 197-230.

Sunar, Mehmet Mert, *Cauldron of Dissent: A Study of the Janissary Corps, 1807-1826*, SUNY-Binghamton, Ph.D, New York 2006.

Şakul, Kahraman, *II. Viyana Kuşatması: Yedi Başlı Ejderin Fendi*, Istanbul 2021.

Şemdanizade Fındıklılı Süleyman Efendi, *Mür'i't-Tevârîh*, Volume 2/B, (ed. Münir Aktepe), Istanbul 1980.

Tabakoğlu, Ahmet, *Gerileme Dönemine Girerken Osmanlı Maliyesi*, Istanbul 1985.

Tamdoğan, Işık, "'Büyükleri Saymak, Küçükleri Sevmek': 18. Yüzyıl Adanası'nda Ayanların İlişki Ağları ve İki Farklı Yürütme Üslubu", *Tarih ve Toplum Yeni Yaklaşımlar*, 1, (2005), p. 77-96.

_____, "Nezir ya da XVIII. Yüzyıl Çukurova'sında Eşkıya, Göçebe ve Devlet Arasındaki İlişkiler", *Kebikeç*, 21, (2006), p. 135-146.

Tancoigne, J. M., *Voyage à Smyrne, dans l'archipel et l'île de Candie*, Volume 1, Paris 1817.

Tatar, Özcan, *XVIII. Yüzyılın İlk Yarısında Çukurova'da Aşiretlerin Eşkiyalık Olayları ve Aşiret İskanı (1691-1750)*, Fırat University, Ph.D, Elazığ 2005.

Tezcan, Baki, *The Second Ottoman Empire: Political and Social Transformation in the Early Modern World*, Cambridge 2010.

Toksöz Meltem, *Nomads, Migrants and Cotton in the Eastern Mediterranean: The Making of the Adana-Mersin Region 1850-1908*, Leiden and Boston 2010.

Toroser, Tayfun (ed.), *Kavanin-i Yeniçeriyan: Yeniçeri Kanunları*, Istanbul 2008.

Uyar, Mesut and Edward J. Erickson, *A Military History of the Ottomans*, Santa Barbara, Denver, and Oxford 2009.

Uzunçarşılı, İsmail Hakkı, *Osmanlı Devleti Teşkilâtından Kapıkulu Ocakları*, Volume 1, Ankara 1988.

Ünlü, Ertan and Yılmaz Kurt, "Çukurova Âyânları I: Hasanpaşazâdeler ile İlgili Arşiv Belgeleri I", *Türk Tarih Kurumu Belgeler*, 33/37, (2012), p. 57-115.

Wilkins, Charles L., *Forging Urban Solidarities: Ottoman Aleppo, 1640-1700*, Leiden and Boston 2020.

Yaycıoğlu, Ali, *The Provincial Challenge: Regionalism, Crisis, and Integration in the Late Ottoman Empire (1792-1812)*, Harvard University, Ph.D, Cambridge Mass. 2008.

Yörük, Saim, "Adanalı Seyyidler Hakkında Sosyal ve Ekonomik Açıdan Bazı Değerlendirmeler (1701-1750)", *Sosyal Bilimler Araştırma Dergisi*, 18, (2011), p. 1-22.

_____, "Adana Şehrinin Tarihi Gelişimi (XVI-XVIII. Yüzyıllar)", *Ç.Ü. Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, 21/3, (2012), p. 287-308.

_____, *XVIII. Yüzyılın İlk Yarısında Adana Şehri*, Ankara 2015.

*Cihannüma*
Tarih ve Coğrafya Araştırmaları Dergisi
Sayı VIII/1 – Temmuz 2022, 55-77
*Doi: 10.30517/cihannuma.1131049*

# A GENERAL OVERVIEW OF JANISSARY SOCIO-ECONOMIC PRESENCE IN ALEPPO (1700-1760S)

**Yahya Araz***

**Abstract**

Focusing on the Janissaries, and covering a period between the early eighteenth century and the 1760s, this study draws on preliminary findings from the Aleppo court records in order to highlight their roles in that city's socio-economic life. Most of the Janissaries of Aleppo and their families came to the city from the surrounding countryside; they tried to survive and earned their livelihood as ordinary townsmen, a process that signaled their integration into the urban fabric. This process manifested itself in their relations with other social groups, their conglomeration in specific quarters, and their increasing capacity to diffuse into other areas and expand their economic activities. This expansion, however, resulted in a conflict between their interests and those of the *eşraf/ashraf*, who consisted of members of established merchant families, religious dignitaries, and other people who claimed to be descendants of the Prophet. The competing interests of the two groups, especially after the 1760s, were destined to reshape the role of the Janissaries in Aleppo as well as their interactions with other social groups. These confrontations also strengthened the solidarity and *esprit de corps* among the Janissaries, who had until then preferred to distinguish themselves by their ethnic, tribal, and country-based affiliations.

**Keywords:** *eşraf/ashraf*, credit relations, guilds, investments, Janissaries, *yerliyye*.

* Associate Professor, *Dokuz Eylül University, Buca Education Faculty*, Izmir / Türkiye, yahya.araz@deu.edu.tr, ORCID: 0000-0003-1051-8391.
I would like to thank Alp Yücel Kaya, Aysel Yıldız, İrfan Kokdaş, Recep Ölmez, Yannis Spyropoulos, and the anonymous reviewers for their contributions.

Makale Geliş Tarihi / Received Date: 02.12.2021 Makale Kabul Tarihi / Acceptance Date: 18.01.2022

# Yeniçerilerin Halep'teki Sosyal ve Ekonomik Varlığına Dair Genel Bir Değerlendirme (1700'den 1760'lara)

**Öz**

Konu üzerinde devam etmekte olan araştırmaların ilk sonuçlarına dayanan bu makale temel olarak mahkeme kayıtlarını kullanarak 18. yüzyılın başlarından 1760'lara değin Halep yeniçerilerine odaklanmakta, onların ana hatlarıyla kentin sosyal ve iktisadi yaşamındaki rollerine değinmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Büyük bir kısmı kırsal kökenlere sahip Halep yeniçerilerinin ve ailelerinin ifade edilen dönemde çoğunlukla sessiz sedasız bir şekilde çalışarak ve uyum göstererek kente tutunmaya ve burada bir yaşam kurmaya çalışmaları kentlileşme sürecinin bir örneği olarak görülebilir. Bu süreci onların farklı toplumsal kesimlerle kurdukları ilişkiler, kentin belli mahallelerine yoğunlaşmakla birlikte her yerinde var olma kapasiteleri ve iktisadi faaliyetleri üzerinden somut olarak gözlemlemek mümkündür. Ancak etkilerinin genişlemesine paralel olarak kentin yerleşik ticari ve dini kesimlerini temsil eden ve Peygamber Muhammed'in soyundan geldikleri iddiasında olan *eşraf/ashraf* ile yaşadıkları gerginlikler 1760'lardan itibaren hem kentteki varlıklarının hem de farklı toplumsal kesimlerle ilişkilerinin yeniden tanımlanması sonucunu doğuracaktır. Bu gerginlik kendilerini etnik, aşiret ve coğrafi bağlar üzerinden tanımlamakta ısrar eden yeniçerilerin yeniçerilik kimliği etrafında birleşmelerini ve birbirlerine daha fazla yakınlaşmalarını sağlayacaktır.



**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *eşraf/ashraf*, kredi ilişkileri, loncalar, yatırımlar, yeniçeriler, *yerliyye*

## Introduction

Aleppo, which together with Damascus is one of the two most important cities in Syria, stands at the crossroads linking Iran and Iraq in the east to the Mediterranean, and Anatolia in the north to the Arab world. As one of the most vibrant cultural centers of the region during the Mamluk period, the city kept its importance after the Ottoman conquest in 1517. Like other Arab cities such as Mosul, Baghdad, Damascus, and Cairo, the city continued to grow and prosper from the sixteenth to the second half of the eighteenth century, thanks in particular to the caravan trade carrying Iranian silk to the west. With a trade boom in the sixteenth century, Europeans, including English, French, and Venetian wholesalers, contributed to this growth and to the socio-cultural richness of the city by transferring their consuls from Damascus to Aleppo. By the seventeenth century, with its population of around 100,000, Aleppo was the third most populous city of the Ottoman Empire, after Istanbul and Cairo.[1]

[1] See André Raymond, "The Population of Aleppo in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries According to Ottoman Census Documents", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 16/4,

The Ottomans did not change the administrative system in Syria that they inherited from the Mamluk regime, so, after its conquest, Aleppo continued to be ruled by a governor residing in Damascus. However, they had to alter this system after the uprising led by the governor Canberdi Gazali, an old Mamluk notable who claimed to be the sovereign after the death of Sultan Selim I.[2] In the years following the rebellion, Aleppo was turned into an administrative center of the province within the framework of an imperial strategy to create "*an alternative power center*"[3] to act as a check on Damascus. This strategy involved the appointment of a governor directly by the imperial center. This reorganization enriched the political and economic structures in northern Syria, and also cemented the region's ties with the Ottoman capital.[4]

Despite this administrative reshuffling, however, Aleppo remained tied to the Damascene fiscal sphere in the following decades. Even after the official separation of the two cities' treasuries in the 1560s, the Damascene authorities continued to draw upon Aleppo's tax revenues. A part of the Damascene Janissaries' payments came from taxes collected in Aleppo; in the ledgers of Aleppo's treasury in the years 1582-1583, for instance, payment installments for the Damascene Janissaries were registered among the expenses.[5] Moreover, some of the Damascene Janissaries dispatched to Aleppo resided in the castle, while others were engaged in tax collection under the authority of the local treasurer.[6] Some of these Janissaries expanded their ties with Aleppo and its environs, acquired properties and utilized them for their *vakf*s as more and more of them became permanently based in the city.[7]



Although settled in Damascus, rather than in the politically more quiet northern zones, the Janissaries kept intervening in the affairs of Aleppo so as to extract more fiscal resources and reap benefits from the city's caravan trade.[8] In

(1984), p. 447-460; Bruce Masters, "Aleppo: The Ottoman Empire's Caravan City", *The Ottoman City between East and West: Aleppo, Izmir, and Istanbul*, (eds. Edhem Eldem, Daniel Goffman, and Bruce Masters), Cambridge 1999, p. 17-78; Michele Lamprakos, "Life in the Khans: The Venetians in Early Ottoman Aleppo", *Muqarnas*, 34, (2017), p. 125-155; Mary Momdjian, "Halabis and Foreigners in Aleppo's Mediterranean Trade: The Role of Levantine Merchants in Eighteenth-Century Commercial Networks", *Aleppo and Its Hinterland in the Ottoman Period*, (eds. Stefan Winter and Mafalda Ade), Leiden 2019, p. 109-129.

2 For the riot see İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, Volume 2, Ankara 1983, p. 307-309.

3 Masters, "Aleppo", p. 22.

4 Ibid, p. 21-22; Margaret L. Meriwether, *The Kin Who Count: Family and Society in Aleppo, 1770-1840*, Austin 1989, p. 20; Yasuhisa Shimizu, "16. Yüzyılın İkinci Yarısında Halep Defterdarlığı", *Osmanlı Araştırmaları*, 51, (2018), p. 31-32.

5 Shimizu, "16. Yüzyılın İkinci Yarısında Halep Defterdarlığı", p. 34-35, 55.

6 Linda T. Darling, *The Janissaries of Damascus in the Sixteenth Century, Or, How Conquering a Province Changed the Ottoman Empire*, Berlin 2019, p. 9-14.

7 Herbert L. Bodman, *Political Factions in Aleppo, 1760-1826*, Durham 1963, p. 74-75; Charles L. Wilkins, *Forging Urban Solidarities: Ottoman Aleppo, 1640-1700*, Leiden 2010, p. 121-122.

8 Jane Hathaway, *The Arab Lands Under Ottoman Rule, 1516-1800*, London and New York 2008, p. 67-68.

the early seventeenth century, however, Aleppo's governor, Nasuh Paşa, with the help of Canbolatoğlu Hüseyin Paşa, a district governor of Kilis (*sancakbeyi*), was able to expel the Damascene Janissaries from the city. Despite their repeated interventions in the following period, the influence of the Damascene Janissaries in Aleppo gradually declined or was even replaced by that of local Janissary regiments called *yerliyye* or *al-inkişariyye al-yerliyye*.[9] In this vein, descriptions like *ağa bölüğü* and *ağa cemaati*, often affiliated with the imperial (*dergah-ı ali/dergah-ı mualla*) Janissaries/*kapıkulu*s, are to be found mainly in the seventeenth century,[10] with such references in official documents becoming more rare later on, as the *yerliyye*s rose to prominence.[11] Unfortunately, the eighteenth century sources do not generally allow us to make a clear distinction between the *kapıkulu*s and *yerliyye*s. For this reason, this study uses the term "Janissaries" to denote both of these groups, which, as will be discussed below, came to represent the social, ethnic, and economic components of the massive rural migration into Aleppo.

Although we do not know the exact scope of the interactions between the *kapıkulu*s and the *yerliyye*s, both sides seem to have sought to avoid conflict, which indeed made Aleppo's socio-political life quite different from that of Damascus and Cairo, where there were bitter clashes between them.[12] In Aleppo in the second half of the eighteenth century, the power group which acted as an alternative to the Janissaries was the *eşraf* (the plural of the Arabic *şerif*), composed mainly of local Arabs who not only constituted the bulk of the city's powerful economic and religious actors, but also claimed to be descendants of the Prophet Muhammed.[13] The number of Janissaries in the city is not known exactly; sources make various estimations, especially for the second half of the eighteenth and the



9 Abdul-Karim Rafeq, "The Local Forces in Syria in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries", *War, Technology and Society in the Middle East*, London 1975, (eds. V. J. Parry and M. E. Yapp), p. 278; Wilkins, *Forging Urban Solidarities*, p. 120-121.

10 For several examples from the court registers of the mid seventeenth century see İslam Araştırmaları Merkezi/Center for Islamic Studies (İSAM), Halep Şeriyye Sicilleri/Aleppo Court Registers (HS) 21:5, document no. 9 (13 C 1049/October 11, 1639); 21:135, document no. 318 (10 Ş 1049/December 6, 1639); 21:157, document no. 276 (22 Ş 1049/December 18, 1639).

11 Bodman, *Political Factions in Aleppo*, p. 74-76; Devlet Arşivleri Başkanlığı Osmanlı Arşivi/Directorate of State Archives-Ottoman Archives (BOA), Babı Asafi Divan-ı Hümayun Sicilleri Mühimme Defterleri (A.DVNSMHM.d) 108:73, document no. 621 (Evail-i Ş 1107/March 6-16, 1696); 125:73, document no. 294 (Evasıt-ı Za 1128/October 26-December 4, 1718).

12 Rafeq, "The Local Forces in Syria", p. 280; Hathaway, *The Arab Lands*, p. 91; Bodman, *Political Factions in Aleppo*, p. 55-56; A. Hourani, "The Changing Face of the Fertile Crescent in the XVIIIth Century", *Studia Islamica*, 8, (1957), p. 97-99.

13 Abdul-Karim Rafeq, "Changes in the Relationship between the Ottoman Central Administration and the Syrian Provinces from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Centuries", *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Islamic History*, (eds. Thomas Naff and Roger Owen), Carbondale and Edwardsville 1977, p. 53.

early nineteenth centuries, according to which their population seems to have been around 5,000.[14]

Focusing on the Janissaries, and covering a period between the early eighteenth century and the 1760s, this study draws on preliminary findings from the Aleppo court records[15] in order to shed light upon their various roles in the city's socio-economic life. The study suggests that until the 1760s, when tensions between the Janissaries and the *eşraf* began to escalate, the former groups mainly consisted of locals of rural origins who were, as in other parts of the empire, "*well integrated with the guilds*"[16] and the overall socio-economic life of the city, and struggling, like any other city dweller, to survive and make ends meet. Before delving into the details of the daily socio-economic life of the Janissaries, this study will attempt to explain the terminological complexities and difficulties one faces when trying to define who the Janissaries of Aleppo were, an attempt which will also enable us to compare their identities with those of their comrades-in-arms in other parts of the empire.

**Janissaries at the Aleppo court: terminological limitations**

The provincial nature of the Aleppo Janissaries, who mainly consisted of persons of local origin, is reflected in the relevant terminology. Most of the military terminology employed in the Arab regions was imported by the Ottomans.[17] Despite the rich repertoire, however, only a small portion of this vocabulary was reserved for the Aleppo Janissaries. The vast variety of titles used to define the *kapıkulu*s in other parts of the empire was nearly absent for the Janissaries in eighteenth-century Aleppo. Numerous inhabitants with the title *ağa* came to the Aleppo court, for numerous different reasons, and one may only surmise their Janissary origins by this title.[18] In other cities where large groups comprising different military units were settled, the *kapıkulu*s were generally characterized and distinguished from the soldiers of other corps by means of their affiliations to the 196 imperial Janissary regiments (*cemaat*, *bölük*, or *sekban*). In Aleppo, although



14 BOA, Cevdet Askeriye (C.AS); 505/21090 (29 M 1217/June 1, 1802); Bodman, *Political Factions in Aleppo*, p. 61-62; John Lewis Burckhardt, *Travels in Syria and the Holy Land*, London 1822, p. 653.

15 In Aleppo, along with the *Mahkemetü'l-Kübra*, headed by the chief judge, there were several courts administered by *naib*s. See Wilkins, *Forging Urban Solidarities*, p. 14; Stefan Knost, "The *Waqf* in Court: Lawsuits over Religious Endowments in Ottoman Aleppo", *Dispensing Justice in Islam:* Qadi*s and their Judgments*, (eds. Muhammad Khalid Masud, Rudolph Peters, and David Powers), Leiden 2006, p. 428-434.

16 Ali Yaycıoğlu, *Partners of the Empire: The Crisis of the Ottoman Order in the Age of Revolutions*, Stanford 2016, p. 30.

17 Hâlid Ziyâde, *Sicillâtü'l-Mahkemeti'ş-Şer'iyye "el-Hikbetü'l-Osmâniyye" el-Menhec ve'l-Mustalah*, Beirut 2017, p. 256-257, 271-314.

18 İSAM, HS. 93:261, document no. 954 (28 Ca 1175/December 25, 1761).

references to regiments were already uncommon in the seventeenth century,[19] they almost disappeared in the parlance of the following century. It is mostly the Western accounts that kept these divisions in their references to the Aleppo Janissaries,[20] but they are almost absent in court records. This lack of reference possibly indicates that in a non-frontier (*serhad*) region like Aleppo, with no permanently established imperial regiments,[21] the importance attributed to a regimental affiliation/identity among *kapıkulu* Janissaries could have been smaller than in other regions. Another factor which might have played a role in the locals' lack of effort to create a rigid distinction between the soldiers of the two Janissary corps of the city, the imperial and the local, is the fact that they acted as communicating vessels, with the *yerliyye*s often using the mass recruitment calls known as *tashih be-dergah* as an opportunity to enter the *kapıkulu* ranks.[22] This practice could have blurred the boundaries between the two corps, making the distinction between them less obvious and less worth noting by contemporaries.

In eighteenth-century Aleppo, Janissaries often bore the title *beşe*. The extent to which this title defined one's military membership remains one of the perennial questions in Ottoman historiography.[23] Generally, however, we can assert that *beşe* could characterize any soldier, Janissary or not, imperial or local, who did not bear the title of *ağa*, and that it was one of the most commonly found titles – if not the most common – used by Janissaries and Janissary affiliates all around the empire.[24] In Aleppo, as in other parts of the empire, shopkeepers, artisans, and traders often bore the title *beşe*, which implied that they might have had some kind of vague affiliation with the Janissaries which offered them – legally or illegally – access to divers economic privileges. This process was not one-directional, however: while



19 Wilkins, *Forging Urban Solidarities*, p. 119-121. Also see İSAM, HS. 21:5, document no. 9 (13 C 1049/October 11, 1639); 21:135, document no. 318 (10 Ş 1049/December 6, 1639); 21:157, document no. 276 (22 Ş 1049/December 18, 1639).

20 John Lewis Burckhardt, *Travels*, p. 653; Bodman, *Political Factions in Aleppo*, p. 76.

21 Aleppo, unlike Damascus which in 1763/1764 had two *kapıkulu* regiments established in its garrison, was not considered to be a frontier region. As a result, no imperial regiments were dispatched to it, and, in turn, its *kapıkulu* soldiers were probably affiliated to various regiments whose leading officers were based in other provinces. As was the case in other non-frontier regions of the Ottoman Empire, the imperial Janissaries of Aleppo were not organized as a unit under the leadership of a Janissary *ağa*, but under the command of a *serdar*. For the office of the *serdar* of Aleppo, see, for instance, BOA, Cevdet Maliye (C.ML) 70/3211 (12 Z 1215/April 26, 1801). For the organization of the Janissary unit of Damascus, see BOA, Maliyeden Müdevver Defter (MAD.d) 6536:692-708.

22 Bodman, *Political Factions in Aleppo*, p. 76.

23 See Hülya Canbakal, *Society and Politics in an Ottoman Town: 'Ayntab in the 17th Century*, Leiden 2007, p. 61-89; Molly Greene, *A Shared World: Christians and Muslims in the Early Modern Mediterranean*, Princeton 2000, p. 90-91.

24 In the case of imperial Janissaries, this usually meant troops under the rank of an *odabaşı*, at least in the eighteenth century; Yannis 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], University of Crete, Department of History and Archaeology, Ph.D, Rethymno 2014, p. 69-70.

local economic actors tried to gain military titles, the Janissaries gradually entered various professions as well.[25] Combined with the absence of regimental organizational markers, this process further complicates the question of Janissary identity in Aleppo, which was marked by the popularity of the *beşe* title among the lower social strata. Since most of them were migrants from the countryside, they may have used this title as a first and easy sign of their localization. Of course, the linkage between the *beşe* title and a lower social status was not unique to Aleppo.[26] In contrast to these low-ranking Janissaries with *beşe* titles, almost all the Janissary officers, who formed a small minority among the Aleppo Janissaries, bore the title *ağa*.[27]

In exceptional cases the titles *bayrakdar*, *bölükbaşı*, *odabaşı*, and *tüfenkçi* were used to identify Aleppo Janissaries.[28] Another title, "*çorbacı*", which could characterize the heads of Janissary regiments, was as common as the title "*beşe*".[29] In early eighteenth-century Cairo this marker was common among rich merchants affiliated with the Janissary Corps,[30] whereas in Aleppo it could refer both to non-*askeri* affluent persons[31] and to actual members of the military. In an order, unusually written in Turkish, sent to the deputy judge of Cebel Sam'an of Aleppo on July 9, 1744, the service of *serbölüklük* for the court, a kind of executive office, was granted to Seyyid Ahmed Çorbacı.[32] In another appointment record dated May 12, 1745, a *serbölük* who was a *çorbacı* was assigned to the soldiers of the Aleppo castle (*enfar el-asker*).[33] These *çorbacı*s generally came from the same social strata as



25 Wilkins, *Forging Urban Solidarities*, p. 9.

26 Greene, *A Shared World*, p. 91; İrfan Kokdaş, "Land Ownership, Tax Farming and the Social Structure of Local Credit Markets in the Ottoman Balkans, 1685-1855", *Financial History Review*, 24/1, (2017), p. 61.

27 For examples see İSAM, HS. 67:31, document no. 66 (22 M 1156/March 18, 1743); 67:48 document no. 4 (8 Ra 1156/May 2, 1743); 93:36, document no. 135 (9 Ca 1174/December 17, 1760).

28 İSAM, HS. 42:17, document no. 3 (2 Za 1123/December 12, 1711); 66:142, document no. 1846 (3 S 1158/March 7, 1745); 67:408, document no. 2 (13 S 1159/March 7, 1746); 93:89, document no. 417 (25 Ş 1174/April 1, 1761); 93:216, document no. 828 (8 R 1175/November 6, 1761).

29 For the *çorbacı*s see Mehmet Zeki Pakalın, *Osmanlı Tarih Deyimleri ve Terimleri Sözlüğü*, Volume 1, Istanbul 1983, p. 380; İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devleti Teşkilâtından Kapukulu Ocakları*, Volume 1, Ankara 1988, p. 234-235.

30 Quoted from André Raymond, *Artisans et commerçants au Caire au XVIIIe siècle*, Damascus 1973-1974, p. 727-728 in Charles L. Wilkins, "Patterns of Leadership in the Guilds of 17th-Century Aleppo", *Aleppo and Its Hinterland in the Ottoman Period*, (eds. Stefan Winter and Mafalda Ade), Leiden 2019, p. 81.

31 See İSAM, HS. 87:248, document no. 588 (28 L 1170/July 16, 1757); 93:261, document no. 954 (28 Ca 1175/December 25, 1761).

32 İSAM, HS. 66:95, document no. 1556 (28 Ca 1157/July 9, 1744): "*Cebel Sam'an mahkemesinin naibi efendi … bade's-selam inha olunur ki mahkeme-i merkumede vaki ser-bölüklük hıdmeti taraf-ı devlet-i aliyeden Abdülmelek nam kimesnenin firağ ve kasr-ı yedinden berat-ı şerif-i alişan … ile Es-Seyyid Ahmed Çorbacı'ya tevcih ve tasarrufunda olmağla … gerekdir ki vusulünde mezbur Es-Seyyid Ahmed Çorbacı'yı ser-bölüklük hıdmetinde … istihdam eyleyesin …*".

33 İSAM, HS. 67:328, document no. 7 (10 R 1158/May 12, 1745).

the *ağa* and *beşe* title holders, and in some cases their sons and fathers also bore the *ağa* or *beşe* titles. For instance, when Beşir Çorbacı was registered in the court records on April 7, 1747, his father and grandfather were singled out as a *beşe* and *çorbacı*, respectively.[34] In the 1760s, Seyyid Osman was an *ağa*, while his son Mustafa was a *çorbacı*.[35] Although, as mentioned earlier, the title "*çorbacı*" was often used by leading regimental officers of the imperial Janissaries, given that in Aleppo there were no established *kapıkulu* regiments, we can assume that in this case the title was most probably attributed to officers of the city's local corps, such as the *yerliyye* Janissaries or the local *gönüllüyan* (volunteers).[36]

What makes the connection between Janissary identities and status titles in Aleppo even more complicated is the fact that Janissaries did not always use their titles. Needless to say, being a military member of a corps or claiming to be a Janissary was an important status symbol in Aleppo, as elsewhere. This Janissary background provided newcomers to the city with a series of advantages, ranging from protection to representation.[37] The Janissaries who were active in many businesses in the city developed patron–client relationships with different segments of the society.[38] Burckhardt observes that Aleppo civilians quite frequently resorted to the help of Janissaries who acted as intermediaries in their disputes, collecting their debts and representing their interests.[39] It must be noted, however, that his observations reflect the realities of the early nineteenth century, when the competition between different social groups as well as the necessity to seek patronage became more acute. Nevertheless, one must also underline the existence of alternative status systems for Aleppo Janissaries, who were well entrenched in the web of local societal relations. As they always had an opportunity to bind themselves to ethnic and tribal linkages, they could survive without their Janissary status or titles. In the second half of the eighteenth century the socioeconomic differences between the *eşraf* and the Janissaries became more visible and developed into an open conflict, which, in turn, built up the Janissary identities and *esprit de corps*. Yet the strengthening of Janissary identity does not necessarily mean the decline of ethnic and tribal affiliations. Quite on the contrary, in their struggles for power the Janissaries frequently sought help from their kin networks among the Kurdish and Bedouin tribes.[40]



34 İSAM, HS. 40:310, document no. 2 (26 Ra 1160/April 7, 1747).
35 İSAM, HS. 93:261, document no. 954 (28 Ca 1175/ December 25, 1761).
36 Wilkins, *Forging Urban Solidarities*, p. 120-121; BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d.110:543, document no. 2524 (evahir-i B 1110/January 22-February 1, 1699).
37 Bruce Masters, *The Origins of Western Economic Dominance in the Middle East: Mercantilism and the Islamic Economy in Aleppo, 1600-1750*, New York and London 1988, p. 47.
38 Bruce Masters, "Aleppo's Janissaries: Crime Syndicate or *Vox Populi?*", *Popular Protest and Political Participation in the Ottoman Empire: Studies in Honor of Suraiya Faroqhi*, (eds. Eleni Gara, M. Erdem Kabadayı and Christoph K. Neumann), Istanbul 2011, p. 160.
39 Burckhardt, *Travels*, p. 654.
40 Masters, "Aleppo's Janissaries", p. 161.

In the pre-eighteenth century period the term *el-kali* (of the citadel) referring to all military units, including Janissaries, had been a very popular title, but during the period under study it gradually disappeared from the local vernacular.[41] Likewise, the terms *cündi's-sultan* (soldier of the sultan), *el-askeri* (soldier), *ricali'l-bab* (men of the gate), *ricali's-sultan* (men of the sultan), and *el-cünd es-sultani* (soldiers of the sultan), which were used to define military men, were common in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries,[42] but gradually lost their importance. All these dynamics emerged in parallel with the creation of a blurry divide between the imperial center and Aleppo's wider region, which, indeed, points to the functioning of a double mechanism: the "Ottomanization" of locals and the "localization/naturalization" of the imperial structures.[43] These processes surely made the identification of Janissaries more difficult, as the line between them and the ordinary Aleppines became more blurred.

**Janissaries as social actors: survival and urbanization**

Rural origins and tribal bonds were the distinctive features of Aleppo's Janissaries, which mirrored the large-scale migration to Aleppo from Syrian districts and southeastern Anatolia.[44] The repeated use of family names and epithets like El-Antaki, El-Haritani, El-Babi, El-Kürdi, Et-Türkmeni, El-Bedevi, El-Kattan, Er-Rüdeyni, El-Hariri, and El-Ayyat, designating the hometowns of fellow countrymen and tribal and family linkages,[45] shows how migrants carried these old tribal affiliations into the urban environment and attached importance to these markers, aiding their survival in the city. Family names and epithets were not the only indicators of their rural origins in local parlance. Low-ranking Janissaries were repeatedly cited by the neighborhoods where they settled as migrants after their arrival into the city. The quarters along the eastern axis of the city were known not only for their Janissary population, but also for their tribal networks, which constantly supplied the caravan traders with animals such as camels.[46] The Bankusa neighborhood, just outside the city wall, was a popular place for migrants who came to the city seeking their fortune. Once a small urban settlement, it turned over time into a large quarter and came to encompass several small districts. Kahvetü'l-Ağa, the popular meeting place for Janissaries, and the grain market



41 İSAM, HS. 67:363, document no. 7 (7 L 1158/November 2, 1745).

42 See Wilkins, *Forging Urban Solidarities*, p. 121, 166, 173-179.

43 For a discussion on "Ottomanization" and "localization/naturalization", see Canbakal, *Society and Politics in an Ottoman Town: 'Ayntab in the 17th Century*, p. 61-62; Hathaway, *The Arab Lands*, p. 15, 81; Karl Barbir, "From Pasha to Efendi: The Assimilation of Ottomans into Damascene Society, 1516-1783", *International Journal of Turkish Studies*, 1, (1979-1980), p. 68-82.

44 Bruce Masters, "Patterns of Migration to Ottoman Aleppo in the 17th and 18th Centuries", *International Journal of Turkish Studies*, 4, (1987), p. 76-77.

45 Mustafa Öztürk, "1616 Tarihli Halep Avarız-Hane Defteri", *Ankara Üniversitesi Osmanlı Tarihi Araştırma ve Uygulama Merkezi Dergisi*, 8/8, (1997), p. 264.

46 Masters, *The Origins of Western Economic Dominance in the Middle East*, p. 42, 46.

Hanü'd-Dakik, for instance, were located here. Not surprisingly, nearly all the porters working in this market bore the title *beşe*.[47] In other eastern quarters of the city adjacent to Bankusa, such as Babü'n-Nayrab, Karlık, and Babü'l-Malik, one may observe a large migrant and Janissary population too.[48]

Having said this, however, the Janissary houses were by no means confined to a few neighborhoods. As the migration helped them keep their rural origins alive, they continued to diffuse to and settle in different parts of the city. Even before the eighteenth century, it seems that the eastern neighborhoods acted as the springboard for migrant Janissaries to enter into daily city life before scattering into different urban spaces.[49] The recurrent real estate transactions between Janissaries and other segments of society, including non-Muslims and the *eşraf*, played a vital role in easing tensions between these groups and transforming the migrant Janissaries into city dwellers, by prompting the cooperation between different groups and altering their members' identities in the process.

Becoming a city dweller in Aleppo was a complex process for Janissaries, who were regularly engaged in the processes of collective decision-making with regards to the management of life in the streets, neighborhoods, and the city itself. Their involvement in communal affairs through consensus and cooperation, such as the collection and allocation of extraordinary taxes for military expenditures (*avarız*), signaled their desire to be part of the mundane politics of daily life. On April 20, 1712, the residents of the El-Ekrad street, just outside the Babü'n-Nasr quarter, who consisted of Janissaries, non-Muslims, and *eşraf*, came to court and by consensus nominated two non-Muslims for the collection of their extraordinary and regular taxes.[50] Furthermore, Janissaries eagerly participated in collective decision-making processes related to issues such as the cleaning of streets and water-supply channels. On May 7, 1712, the representatives of the El-Farafira and Babü'n-Nasr quarters, including several members of the *eşraf* and one *çorbacı*, Ali Çorbacı bin Kasım, chose Elhac Ahmed and Mahfuz as two expert technicians to repair the quarters' water-supply system.[51]



The Janissaries were also woven into the social fabric of Aleppo through the management of *vakf*s (endowments), which produced modest-scale revenues and were transferred through generations among Janissary families. Following the Ottomans' arrival into the region, the number of *vakf*s multiplied dramatically and touched upon various aspects of everyday life.[52] Despite the well-entrenched *vakf*

47 İSAM, HS. 93:127, document no. 531 (9 Za 1174/June 12, 1761); 93:139, document no. 574 (15 Z 1174/July 18, 1761).

48 Bodman, *Political Factions in Aleppo*, p. 55-78 (for the city's neighborhoods, see the map on p. 58).

49 See the maps in Wilkins, *Forging Urban Solidarities*, p. 132-133.

50 İSAM, HS. 42:109 document no. 5 (13 Ra 1124/April 20, 1712). Also see İSAM, HS.42:195 document no. 4 (22 Z 1126/December 29, 1714).

51 İSAM, HS. 42:153 document no. 2 (30 Ra 1124/May 7, 1712).

52 Ruth Roded, "Great Mosques, *Zâwiya*s and Neighborhood Mosques: Popular Beneficiaries of *Waqf* Endowments in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Aleppo", *Journal of the American*

system among other notable groups of the city, the Janissaries seem to have not formed large regimental endowments (*orta sandığ*).[53] This small scale, and even the absence of large collective Janissary endowments, may be related to the great ethnic, cultural, tribal, and geographical diversity which defined their group, and the notable absence of regimental structures in the city. In some imperial provinces with large military populations – usually frontier (*serhad*) regions – the *vakf*s of Janissary regiments functioned as common funds which provided for the well-being of soldiers and their families, also acting as an investment tool and a money pool for provisions.[54] Yet the Janissary *vakf*s in Aleppo were typically family *vakf*s, small in scale, which served the needs of groups of poor and deserving people. A fertile land plot at the outskirts of the city, a commercial building at the center, or a house, usually constituted the assets of these institutions. In 1744, Muhammed İbrahim Beşe bin Muhammed Beşe established a *vakf* to help the poor in the El-Kalase neighborhood and to repair and maintain its water-supply system, for which he endowed a garden in the northern parts of Aleppo, enclosing fruit trees, a water pool, and a waterwheel.[55] Like his other comrades, he appointed family members as the *vakf* administrators (*mütevelli*), guaranteeing the flow of revenues into his family. These *vakf*s, together with projecting an image of generosity and benevolence, could be read as a means for establishing patronage networks and boosting the benefactors' popularity with the public.[56] These family *vakf*s, albeit small in size, raise an intriguing question of how the Janissaries were able to accumulate wealth, despite their rural origins. The next section tries to deal with this question.



**Janissaries in Aleppo's economic life: trade, crafts, and investments**

Although Aleppo was still famous worldwide for its position in international trade, linking Anatolia, Iran, the European countries, and India in the first half of

*Oriental Society*, 110/1, (1990), p. 32-38; Heghnar Zeitlian Watenpaugh, *The Image of an Ottoman City: Imperial Architecture and Urban Experience in Aleppo in the 16th and 17th Centuries*, Leiden 2004; Margaret L. Meriwether, "Women and *Waqf* Revisited: The Case of Aleppo, 1770-1840", *Women in the Ottoman Empire: Middle Eastern Women in the Early Modern Era*, Leiden 1997, p. 128-152.

53 Wilkins, *Forging Urban Solidarities*, p. 94.

54 See Uzunçarşılı, *Kapukulu Ocakları*, p. 311-320; Gülay Yılmaz, *The Economic and Social Roles of Janissaries in a 17th-Century Ottoman City: The Case of Istanbul*, McGill University, Institute of Islamic Studies, Ph.D, Montreal 2011, p. 223-243; Ali Şenyurt, "Yeniçeri Ortaları Yardımlaşma Sandıkları", *Kocaeli Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, 33, (2017), p. 155-170; Yannis Spyropoulos, "Janissary Politics on the Ottoman Periphery (18th-Early 19th c.)", *Halcyon Days in Crete IX: Political Thought and Practice in the Ottoman Empire*, (ed. Marinos Sariyannis), Rethymno 2019, p. 472, 478.

55 İSAM, HS. 67:266 document no. 5 (6 L 1157/November 12, 1744).

56 Beshara Doumani, "Endowing Family: *Waqf*, Property Devolution, and Gender in Greater Syria, 1800 to 1860", *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 40/1, (1998), p. 3-41.

the eighteenth century,[57] Janissary investments were confined mainly to the retail market in and around the city. International trade shaped the economic pace of nearly all sectors, but Janissaries do not appear as major merchants[58] participating in the international commercial networks of Aleppo, which were controlled by Armenians, Arab Christians, Jews, Muslims, and Europeans. On the other hand, through actively interacting with these commercial groups in daily life, the Janissaries cooperated with them in dealing with collective matters regarding the administration of quarters and streets. Europeans seem to have benefited from the city-wide networks and power of Janissaries. On many occasions, Janissaries acted as small-scale local agents for Europeans and were engaged in real estate transactions with them.[59]

Speaking of the trade between Mosul and Aleppo in the eighteenth century, Dina Rizk Khoury, for instance, noted that Christian Mosulis kept their monopoly in this trade for a long period. This, however, does not mean that Muslim traders were absent from this commercial route.[60] For Muslim and Christian Mosuli dealers, sustainable long-distance trade always required trustworthy and rich partners in Aleppo. They were definitely not Janissaries. Only on rare occasions were the Janissaries able to broaden their mercantile activities beyond the local. In the 1740s, Elhac Nasri Beşe el-Kattan, possibly a Janissary merchant of perfumes (*ıtr*), had a partner, Elhac Ali, known as El-Bağdadi, seemingly from Baghdad. This partnership ended with a serious legal dispute.[61] In another case, İbrahim Beşe el-Hariri, again probably a Janissary, had business contacts in Egypt. He gave a significant loan of 300 *zincirli altın* and 300 *riyali guruş* to Elhac Süleyman Odabaşı el-Azb, who died in Cairo. After the death of Elhac Süleyman, İbrahim Beşe nominated Said el-Pehlivan as a deputy to collect this debt from his heirs.[62]



Despite scanty evidence on the role of the Aleppo Janissaries in international trade, they appear quite frequently in court records as active agents of regional markets dominated by guilds and artisans. For the 1640-1700 period, Charles L. Wilkins noted that seventeen out of thirty-two registered guilds had members with the title *beşe*, the holders of this title being very active in the guild of butchers, but almost absent from that of the tanners, which was dominated by the *eşraf*. He also added that the Janissaries' influence within the guilds came to increase in the following century, an observation which corroborates our

57 For the rise and decline of Aleppo's role and position in international trade see Masters, "Aleppo", p. 17-78.

58 Bodman, *Political Factions in Aleppo*, p. 55-78. Also see İSAM, HS. 87:81, document no. 194 (17 Ca 1170/February 7, 1757).

59 See İSAM, HS. 85:53, document no. 237 (20 Za 1167/September 8, 1754); 67:71, document no. 1 (18 R 1156/June 11, 1743).

60 Dina Rizk Khoury, *State and Provincial Society in the Ottoman Empire Mosul, 1540-1834*, Cambridge 1997, p. 147-148.

61 İSAM, HS. 66:34, document no. 1145 (29 C 1156/August 20, 1743).

62 İSAM, HS. 67:40, document no. 3 (4 S 1156/March 30, 1743).

findings.[63] In 1712, for instance, after the head of the tanners' guild, whose father bore the title *beşe*, resigned from office at his own request, Halife Beşe was chosen to replace him.[64] It seems that in later years Halife Beşe's son continued to conduct his father's business.[65] We do not know the extent to which these examples reflected the quantitative changes of the Janissary presence in the guild itself. It is probable that they did not, because in 1754 when the tanners came to the court to defrock Seyyid Taha from the guild, only two out of a few dozen of them had the *beşe* title.[66]

Reflecting on the socio-ethnic composition of the industrial and artisanal sectors in Aleppo, Bruce Masters points to the existence of a distinct division of labor between the *eşraf* and Janissaries in guild membership, which resulted in a factional strife between the two. He notes that the Janissaries, with their local and tribal bonds, were engaged mainly in sectors related to animal husbandry, like butchery, tent making, and wool clipping, whereas the *eşraf* specialized in relatively more "respected" and lucrative areas, like silk weaving.[67] Indeed, in some sectors, there was a concentration of either *eşraf* or Janissaries. For instance, porters in the grain market Hanü'd-Dakik were largely connected with the Janissary groups who were chiefly settled in the neighborhood around this market.[68] Sometimes incoming migrants of the same rural origins and ethno-religious identities formed guilds.[69] However, it is difficult to reduce the disputes or specialization in one sector to the factional politics between the *eşraf* and Janissaries. In the conflicts between butchers and tanners over the supply of leather and its price, for instance, there were Janissaries and *eşraf* on both sides.[70]



Janissaries appeared as important actors in many inter- and intra-guild matters by being elected as their leaders, cooperating with their fellow guildsmen, and intermediating in conflict resolution. Some of them, like Bezzazistani Emin Beşe, an expert witness and mediator in the conflict between the court auctioneers and jewelers in 1760, were held in high regard by the public.[71] There was a balance within the guilds, and sensitivity in reflecting their ethno-religious diversity, especially in collective matters. In some cases, just one *beşe* in a specific profession came to court as one of the guild representatives. In the collective decision-making processes of some occupational guilds, like those of the sesame and olive oil sellers

63 Wilkins, *Forging Urban Solidarities*, p. 161-164.
64 İSAM, HS. 42:41, document no. 5 (17 Z 1123/January 26, 1712).
65 İSAM, HS. 85:61, document no. 283 (7 Z 1167/September 25, 1754).
66 Ibid.
67 Masters, *The Origins of Western Economic Dominance in the Middle East*, p. 47.
68 İSAM, HS. 93:127, document no. 531 (9 Za 1174/June 12, 1761); 93:139, document no. 574 (15 Z 1174/July 18, 1761).
69 Masters, "Patterns of Migration to Ottoman Aleppo in the 17th and 18th Centuries", p. 82.
70 İSAM, HS. 42:106, document no. 1 (3 Ra 1124/April 10, 1712).
71 İSAM, HS. 93:25, document no. 94 (22 Ra 1174/November 1, 1760).

(*taifetü'l-masaraniyye*),[72] manufacturers of woolen cloths (*taifetü'l-abaciyye*),[73] and coal porters around Bab Antakya, Babü'l-Makam, and Bab Kınnasrin (*taifetü hammalinü'l-fahm*),[74] a *beşe* usually appeared as one of the representatives of the guilds. It seems that the *beşe*s in these guilds were a minority group.[75] Although at this stage of research it is difficult to give quantitative data for the *beşe*s' presence in the guilds, it must be noted that they acted as guild representatives in many cases.[76] By the eighteenth century the appearance of *beşe*s as guild members in the courtroom became routinized, which may point to the expansion of their influence and networks in the city.

The appointment of leading guild officers, tax disputes, and conflicts between artisans and traders were oft-cited reasons for the guilds' resorting to the courts, which arose principally from a complex credit system. Butchers were the most active group in the credit market, especially in collective loans. Though the present state of research does not allow any definite conclusions on the full scale of credit structures, one might still tentatively claim that butchers in Aleppo customarily took loans from state-affiliated people. Their close relationship with Janissaries enabled butchers to borrow from title-holders, and we could mention here that a kind of patronage relationship seems to have existed between butchers as debtors and state/military officials as creditors. In the autumn of 1756, for example, Salyaneci Hasan Çavuş issued a loan of 9,000 *guruş* to the butchers' guild. In order to pay off this debt, they later borrowed a sizeable amount of money from Kasabbaşı (head of the butchers) Muhammed Ali Beşe bin İsmail Beşe.[77]



Credit provided by Janissaries was also linked to rural production, as the loans they gave allowed them to expand their investments into Aleppo's hinterland and acquire land. There was a growing trend in the credit operations between peasants and urban entrepreneurs throughout the eighteenth century, which indeed dated back to the previous century and involved members of the military, including Janissaries. In the seventeenth century the loans given to peasants by military groups constituted approximately 30% of all credit transactions in the region,

72 İSAM, HS. 93:106, document no. 455 (7 N 1174/April 12, 1761).

73 İSAM, HS. 93:95, document no. 428 (29 Ş 1174/April 5, 1761); 93:97, document no. 437 (29 Ş 1174/April 5, 1761).

74 İSAM, HS. 93:108, document no. 462 (12 N 1174/April 17, 1761).

75 For information on the guilds' names and their activities, see Ahmed Hüseyin Abd el-Cubûrî, *El-Kuds fi el-'Abd el-Osmânî (m. 1640-1799): Dirâse Siyâsiyye-'Askeriyye-İdâriyye-İktisâdiyye-İctimâiyye-Sekâfiyye*, Volume 2, Amman 2011, p. 164-186.

76 İSAM, HS. 42:106, document no. 1 (3 Ra 1124/April 10, 1712); 85:61, document no. 283 (7 Z 1167/September 25, 1754); 87:81, document no. 159 (17 Ca 1170/February 7, 1757); 93:97, document no. 437 (29 Ş 1174/April 5, 1761); 93:108, document no. 462 (12 N 1174/April 17, 1761); 93:144, document no. 594 (26 Z 1174/July 29, 1761); 93:186, document no. 736 (1 Ra 1175/September 30, 1761).

77 İSAM, HS. 87:25, document no. 59 (23 S 1170/November 17, 1756); 87:235, document no. 562 (21 L 1170/July 9, 1757); 93:116, document no. 488 (5 L 1174/May 10, 1761).

whereas this figure climbed to 60% in the following century.[78] In the second half of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries the credit transactions between these two groups became deeper, owing to the declining caravan trade and the rising exports of agricultural products like cotton and silk.[79] The accelerated tempo of commercialization and commodification further augmented the demand for land among urban entrepreneurs.

The credit arrangements between the Janissaries and peasants were indeed two-layered. On one layer, there were Janissary commanders who were eager to extend credit to peasants but generally abstained from acquiring land. On the other layer, however, there were *beşe* Janissaries who were able and preferred to possess land rather than to give credit. Janissaries with rich financial resources, mostly bearing the title of *ağa*, were able to create their own credit networks and establish patronage ties with debtor villagers. For instance, Muhammed Ağa bin Muharrem Ağa, a Janissary commander in the 1740s, owned a *çiftlik* (large estate) in the Minak village of the Azez district in the north of the city. In return for working in his *çiftlik* lands, peasants took a loan from him, which they used for tax payments.[80]

The boundaries of Janissary interests in the hinterland were restricted to a narrow region around Aleppo, surrounded by Afrin, Azez, Kilis, and El-Bab in the north, northwest, and northeast; Maarrat Mısrin, Idlib, and Maarratü'l-Numan in the south and southwest; the Antioch corridor in the west; and a wide desert in the east.[81] Overlapping with the local credit chains, this area was also a provisioning zone for the city. There are two reasons behind the geographical distribution of Janissary rural properties. First, their interest in the countryside went hand in hand with their kinship networks. Epithets like El-Babi, El-Kilisi, and El-Nayrabi used by a sizeable number of Janissaries reflected their home villages and towns in the vicinity of Aleppo. Some of them even settled in or inherited arable fields in these villages and towns.[82] Several Janissaries, for example, settled in the village of Haritan, belonging to Cebel Sam'an, and occupied themselves with the village's affairs.[83] Together with rural immovables, they also acquired houses.[84] Second, like other capital owners, the well-off Janissaries saw rural properties on the fertile



78 Masters, *The Origins of Western Economic Dominance in the Middle East*, p. 153-164; Wilkins, *Forging Urban Solidarities*, p. 171.

79 Meriwether, *The Kin Who Count*, p. 26.

80 İSAM, HS. 67:48, document no. 4 (8 Ra 1156/May 2, 1743). Also see İSAM, HS. 66:13, document no. 914 (11 Ra 1156/May 5, 1743); 66:16, document no. 922 (30 Ra 1156/May 24, 1743); 87:208, document no. 495 (23 N 1170/June 11, 1757).

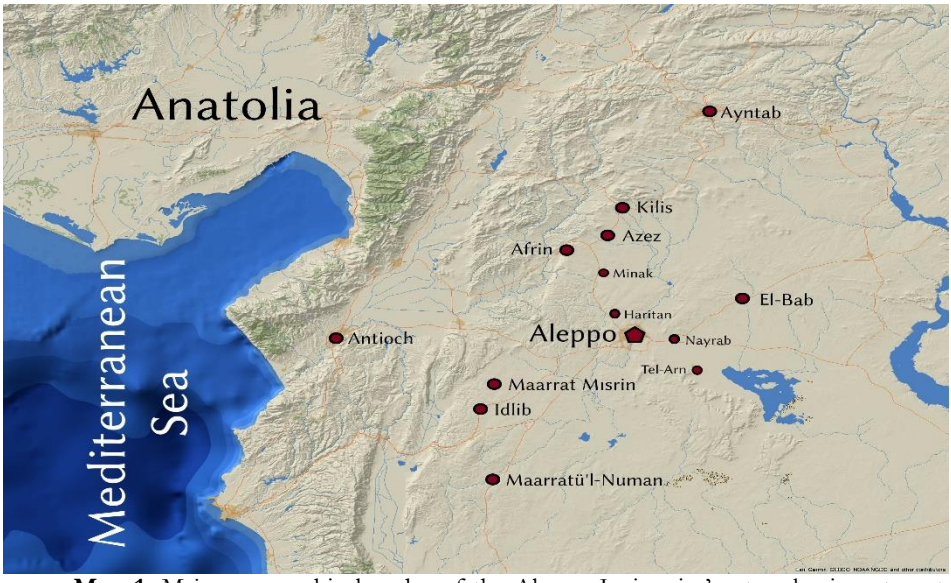
81 Masters, *The Origins of Western Economic Dominance in the Middle East*, p. 156.

82 İSAM, HS. 93:28, document no. 104 (29 Ra1174/November 8, 1760); 42:46, document no. 4 (8 M 1124/February 16, 1712); İSAM, Halep Evamir-i Sultaniye Sicilleri/Aleppo Evamir-i Sultaniye Registers (HES) 2:111, document no. 191 (12 L 1136/July 4, 1724).

83 İSAM, HS. 67:116, document no. 1 (23 L 1156/December 10 1743); 67:117, document no. 1 (23 L 1156/December 10, 1743); 67:138, document no. 2 (14 M 1157/February 28, 1744). For a contribution to the topic see Canbakal, *Society and Politics*, p. 86-88.

84 İSAM, HS. 66:24, document no. 983 (24 Ca 1156/July 16, 1743).

plain around the city as a secure and profitable venture. Again and again, real estate transactions brought the Janissaries to the court. Ranging from vineyards and gardens to mansions, rural estates constituted the lion's share of Janissary portfolios.[85] Peasant indebtedness was not unique to Aleppo, nor did rural credit instruments emerge out of a vacuum in the eighteenth century. Speaking of the transformation of land tenure in eighteenth-century Damascus, Abdul-Karim Rafeq pinpoints the repeated transfers of usufruct rights from peasants to city dwellers. He notes that city inhabitants accumulating capital through commerce and moneylending penetrated into the countryside and advanced loans, a process which resulted in the seizure of the debtor peasants' lands by the moneylenders.[86]




**Map 1:** Major geographical nodes of the Aleppo Janissaries' networks, investment outlets, and credit relations

Despite the repeated orders prohibiting moneylenders from expropriating the lands of debtor peasants,[87] it seems that the ecosystem of rural credits and peasant indebtedness dramatically expanded from the eighteenth century onwards.[88] Nevertheless, the asymmetrical relations between peasants and city dwellers in the eighteenth century that were created through moneylending do not



85 For the real estate market in the same period see Abraham Marcus, "Men, Women and Property: Dealers in Real Estate in 18th-Century Aleppo", *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 26/2, (1983), p. 137-163.

86 Abdul-Karim Rafeq, "Economic Relations between Damascus and the Dependent Countryside, 1743-71", *The Islamic Middle East, 700-1900: Studies in Economic and Social History*, (ed. A. L. Udovitch), Princeton 1981, p. 664.

87 Halil İnalcık, "Adâletnâmeler", *Belgeler*, 2/3-4, (1965), p. 49-145.

88 For this phenomenon, see İrfan Kokdaş's article in the present issue.

explain the rural investment patterns among Janissaries. For instance, in the late sixteenth century, Damascene Janissaries had already begun to acquire lands around the city abounding in water. They were followed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries by merchants and religious dignitaries.[89] Compared to their Damascene comrades, Aleppo Janissaries indeed controlled limited economic resources, even in the seventeenth century when they tried to consolidate their power. The Janissaries' presence in the Aleppo countryside dated back to the sixteenth century through the enterprises of Damascene Janissaries. One may detect their *vakf*s even as late as the eighteenth century.[90] In the eighteenth century, Aleppo Janissaries did the same thing; they established *vakf*s endowed with rural properties such as vineyards, gardens, and arable fields.[91] In this period they seem to have been net purchasers in the rural market, the value of their land acquisition exceeding that of their sales.

As the Aleppo Janissaries intensified their expansion toward the countryside, they emerged as very active agents in the urban estate market as well.[92] Janissaries generally bought or sold modest Aleppo houses[93] consisting of a kitchen, water well, two or three rooms, and a small courtyard, although they sometimes put their money into buying extravagant mansions with their own water resources.[94] Their voluminous transactions in the urban estate market, in fact, show how deeply they became integrated into the city over the eighteenth century.

Not surprisingly, the overwhelming majority of records on the transfers of urban estates in which Janissaries appear as buyers refer to houses in the Bankusa neighborhood. However, Janissaries bought houses in other quarters too, such as Babü'n-Nasr in the north, a popular place among the *eşraf*.[95] While the leasing, purchase, or sale of house shares were also very popular among the Aleppo Janissaries, they also appeared regularly among the sellers or hagglers for various urban properties, especially in the inheritance division. One interesting aspect of



89 James A. Reilly, "Status Groups and Propertyholding in the Damascus Hinterland, 1828-1880", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 21/4, (1989), p. 517-539; Jean-Paul Pascual, "The Janissaries and the Damascus Countryside at the Beginning of the Seventeenth Century According to Archives of the City's Military Tribunal", *Land Tenure and Social Transformation in the Middle East*, (ed. Tarif Khalidi), Beirut 1984, pp. 357-369; Kenneth M. Cuno, "Was the Land of Ottoman Syria *Miri* or *Milk*? An Examination of Juridical Differences within the Hanafi School", *Studia Islamica*, 81, (1995), p. 150.

90 İSAM, HS. 67:135, document no. 2 (3 M 1157/February 17, 1744); 67:225, document no. 4 (21 Ca 1157/July 2, 1744).

91 İSAM, HS. 67:266, document no. 5 (6 L 1157/December 12, 1744); 93:323, document no. 1161 (18 L 1175/May 12, 1762).

92 Wilkins, *Forging Urban Solidarities*, p. 130-141.

93 For the housing in Aleppo, see André Raymond, *Osmanlı Döneminde Arap Kentleri*, (trans. Ali Berktay), Istanbul 1995, p. 206-208.

94 İSAM, HS. 66:33, document no. 1135 (6 C 1156/July 28, 1743); 88:28, document no. 148 (27 C 1171/March 8, 1758).

95 İSAM, HS. 41:23, document no. 101 (10 M 1111/July 8, 1699); 42:103, document no. 3 (14 Ra 1124/April 21, 1712); 42:160 document no. 1 (15 C 1124/July 20, 1712).

the real estate market in the city of Aleppo is the very limited presence of Janissaries in the exchanges related to selling properties such as *gedik*s, shops, and workshops, despite their concentration in some sectors. This issue would require further research, but, at this stage, we may offer two tentative explanations. The well-developed *vakf* mechanisms along the commercial axis[96] may have prevented others from possessing workshops, cellars, and shops. It is also possible that Janissaries preferred to pour their hard-earned cash into more lucrative assets, like land and houses.

**The post-1760s or a new era?**

On August 11, 1762, several town criers (*dellak*s), headed by their *dellalbaşı* (head of the town criers) Seyyid Muhammed bin Seyyid Abdüllatif, came to the court to accuse several people from the same guild of opposing the equal allocation of tax burdens among guild members. The plaintiffs were all well prepared; their claims were based on the old market custom which was still in effect (*el-adetü'l-kadime beyne sair ahali'l-belde*) and a *fetva* (legal opinion) issued by the provincial *müfti* (supreme religious authority). The *fetva* explicitly stated that the taxes and other responsibilities should be shared equally among the guild members. Based on this legal opinion, the court decided the case in favor of the *dellalbaşı* and the guildsmen, against whom the defendants raised their voices immediately. They claimed to be Janissaries, hence exempt from taxation. It was probably the only legal maneuver for escaping the tax burden. As a response, Seyyid Muhammed, citing the equal distribution of the tax burden in the guilds of butchers and coffeemakers, rejected their claim by adding that "*an* askeri *has no privilege over others* (*la tafdil li-askeri ala gayrih*)".[97] What Seyyid Mustafa emphasizes here is not that *askeri*s should have the same tax obligations as the *reaya*, but that they should not expect privileged treatment over civilians when engaging in trade.



Seyyid Muhammed's reference to the guilds of butchers and coffeemakers, which contained many military men, is indeed a clear message to the Janissaries in the guild of criers, reminding them of their responsibilities despite their military status. The engagement of Janissaries in artisanal and commercial activities and the consequent disputes over their tax responsibilities constituted an old source of debate in the empire.[98] But in this dispute one should also take the special conditions of Aleppo into consideration. It is possible that even the defendant Janissaries knew the tax allocation policies of other guilds, so their strategy may reflect the wider changes in Aleppo's local political environment after the 1750s.

96 Raymond, *Osmanlı Döneminde Arap Kentleri*, p. 168-172; Masters, *The Origins of Western Economic Dominance in the Middle East*, p. 127.

97 İSAM, HS. 93: 399, document no. 1440 (20 M 1176/August 11, 1762).

98 Eunjeong Yi, *Guild Dynamics in Seventeenth-Century Istanbul: Fluidity and Leverage*, Leiden 2004, p. 133; Mehmet Mert Sunar, *Cauldron of Dissent: A Study of the Janissary Corps, 1807-1826*, SUNY-Binghamton, Ph.D, New York 2006, p. 88-95.

Among the petitioners who criticized the Janissary claims one can find criers (*dellal*s) who came from different segments of Aleppo society. Their voices were, however, carried to the courtroom by a *şerif*, Seyyid Mustafa. This later period in the eighteenth century witnessed deepening strife between the Janissaries and the *eşraf*,[99] which not only strengthened group loyalties[100] but also influenced everyday politics in the city. It is, thus, not coincidental that in highlighting their Janissary identities the defendants saw a chance to fortify their "special" position in the guild.

The *eşraf* were very active in Aleppo's quotidian social and political life in this period. One may, of course, encounter this group of privileged men in other parts of the empire,[101] but their high social status and privileges turned into a non-negligible economic power in Aleppo, Ayntab, and Maraş. Focusing on the role of regional dynamics in shaping the political balance in the region, Jane Hathaway argues that the small number of *kapıkulu*s may have been a factor for their rise as a political power.[102] Although the *eşraf* did not have political aspirations or powerful group solidarity in earlier periods, their rising socio-economic claims both in the market and local politics throughout the eighteenth century seem to have been a strong response to those of the Janissaries.[103] By the 1760s, together with the Janissaries, they turned into a power group in the city. As noted earlier, in the following period this changing political balance tended to generate bloody conflicts between the two groups, which further promoted their internal homogenization and triggered the intervention of the imperial center in local politics.[104]



These dynamics had their own effect on the Janissaries, whose ranks in the first sixty years of the century continued to be swelled by migration from the countryside, with the newcomers trying to survive in the city. Their competition with the *eşraf* led them to stick more to their Janissary identity, despite having been distinguishing themselves through their ethnic, tribal, and country-based affiliations for a long period prior to this development. A part of this conflict was possibly rooted in the rural origins of the Janissaries, which challenged the *eşraf*'s established position. Presenting themselves as the real masters of the city, the *eşraf* seem to have felt the pressure created by the affiliation of incoming migrants with the Janissaries and their support for the Janissaries' claims in a period of rising strife over the existing economic resources.[105] As a result of the long-lasting

99 See Bodman, *Political Factions in Aleppo*, p. 103-139.

100 Abdul-Karim Rafeq, "Changes in the Relationship", p. 66.

101 Hülya Canbakal, "The Ottoman State and Descendants of the Prophet in Anatolia and the Balkans (c. 1500-1700)", *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 52, (2009), p. 542-578.

102 Hathaway, *The Arab Lands*, p. 91-92.

103 Bruce Masters, "Power and Society in Aleppo in the 18th and 19th Centuries", *Revue du monde musulman et de la Méditerranée*, 62, (1991), p. 154.

104 As an example see BOA, Hatt-ı Hümâyûn (HAT) 261/15056 (29 Z 1207/August 7, 1793); Cevdet Dahiliye (C.DH) 51/2539 (5 Ca 1212/October 26, 1797).

105 Meriwether, *The Kin Who Count*, p. 26.

military campaigns in the second half of the eighteenth century, the *eşraf* thus tried to fill the vacuum left by the Janissaries. Yet their policies and strategies only brought short-term benefits and did not decisively undermine the Janissaries' power base. As mentioned above, their politics deepened the strife between the Janissaries and the *eşraf* and increased the power, voice, and representative capacity of the former.[106]

As the power of the Janissaries rose, the established families led by the *eşraf* could not easily compete with them and thus continued to disdain the Janissaries as outsiders, an attitude that went hand in hand with a feeling of anxiety and fear.[107] Just after the murder in 1833 of the leading Janissary Ahmed Ağa bin Haşim by İbrahim Paşa, in front of Kahvetü'l-Ağa, a place symbolizing the Janissary power in the city, the anger against the Janissaries found its echo in the first verses of a poem penned by the contemporary scholar and poet Şeyh Abdurrahman el-Muvakkit, who welcomed the destruction of the Janissaries with great euphoria: "*they are the men of evil, their permanent wickedness is felt in the splendid city of Aleppo; they are malicious, one could not find a peaceful person among them; they don't respect the leading and ruling group of any origin; they killed many, shed innocent blood, and profaned the sacred…*".[108] This anti-Janissary rhetoric continued to be utilized by the literati among the *eşraf* and upper classes of the city even decades after the abolition of the corps.[109]



## References

**Archival Sources**

**Devlet Arşivleri Başkanlığı Osmanlı Arşivi/Directorate of State Archives-Ottoman Archives (BOA)**

Bab-ı Asafi Divan-ı Hümayun Sicilleri Mühimme Defterleri (A.DVNSMHM.d) 108: 110; 125.

Cevdet Askeriye (C.AS) 505/21090.

Cevdet Dahiliye (C.DH) 51/2539.

Cevdet Maliye (C.ML) 70/3211.

Hatt-ı Hümâyûn (HAT) 261/15056.

Maliyeden Müdevver Defter (MAD.d) 6536.

**İslam Araştırmaları Merkezi/Center for Islamic Studies (İSAM)**

Halep Evamir-i Sultaniye Sicilleri/Aleppo Evamir-i Sultaniye Registers (HES) 2.

106 Bodman, *Political Factions in Aleppo*, p. 103-139.

107 Masters, "Aleppo's Janissaries", p. 160.

108 "*Ehlü'l-fesâdi şerruhum fî Halebü'ş-Şehbâi dâimü*
*Tâifetün habîsetün felâ terâ minhüm müsâlimü*
*Ve yebğadûne zümrete'l-eşrâfi min külli'l-'avâlim*
*Kem ketelû kem sefekû kem hetekû sitre'l-mehârim*": Muhammed Râgıb et-Tabbâh el-Halebî, *İ'lâmu'n-Nubalâ bi-Târîh Halebi'ş-Şehbâ*, Volume 3, second edition, Aleppo 1988, p. 341.

109 Masters, "Aleppo's Janissaries", p. 159-160.

Halep Şeriyye Sicilleri/Aleppo Court Registers (HS) 21; 40; 41; 42; 66; 67; 85; 87; 93.

**Published Sources**

Abd el-Cubûrî, Ahmed Hüseyin, *El-Kuds fi el-'Ahd el-Osmânî (m. 1640-1799): Dirâse Siyâsiyye-'Askeriyye-İdâriyye-İktisâdiyye-İctimâiyye-Sekâfiyye*, Volume 2, Amman 2011.

Barbir, Karl, "From Pasha to Efendi: The Assimilation of Ottomans into Damascene Society, 1516-1783", *International Journal of Turkish Studies*, 1, (1979-1980), p. 68-82.

Bodman, Herbert L., *Political Factions in Aleppo*, *1760-1826*, Durham 1963.

Burckhardt, John Lewis, *Travels in Syria and the Holy Land*, London 1822.

Canbakal, Hülya, *Society and Politics in an Ottoman Town: 'Ayntab in the 17th Century*, Leiden 2007.

_____, "The Ottoman State and Descendants of the Prophet in Anatolia and the Balkans (c. 1500-1700)", *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 52, (2009), p. 542-578.

Cuno, Kenneth M., "Was the Land of Ottoman Syria *Miri* or *Milk*? An Examination of Juridical Differences within the Hanafi School", *Studia Islamica*, 81, (1995), p. 121-152.

Darling, Linda T., *The Janissaries of Damascus in the Sixteenth Century, Or, How Conquering a Province Changed the Ottoman Empire*, Berlin 2019.

Doumani, Beshara, "Endowing Family: *Waqf*, Property Devolution, and Gender in Greater Syria, 1800 to 1860", *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 40/1, (1998), p. 3-41.

Et-Tabbâh el-Halebî, Muhammed Râgıb, *İ'lâmu'n-Nubalâ bi-Târîh Halebi'ş-Şehbâ*, Volume 3, second edition, Aleppo 1988.

Greene, Molly, *A Shared World: Christians and Muslims in the Early Modern Mediterranean*, Princeton 2000.

Hathaway, Jane, *The Arab Lands Under Ottoman Rule, 1516-1800*, London and New York 2008.

Hourani, A., "The Changing Face of the Fertile Crescent in the XVIIIth Century", *Studia Islamica*, 8, (1957), p. 89-122.

İnalcık, Halil, "Adâletnâmeler", *Belgeler*, 2/3-4, (1965), p. 49-145.

Khoury, Dina Rizk, *State and Provincial Society in the Ottoman Empire Mosul, 1540-1834*, Cambridge 1997.

Knost, Stefan, "The *Waqf* in Court: Lawsuits over Religious Endowments in Ottoman Aleppo", *Dispensing Justice in Islam:* Qadi*s and their Judgments*, (eds. Muhammad Khalid Masud, Rudolph Peters, and David Powers), Leiden 2006, p. 427-450.

Kokdaş, İrfan, "Land Ownership, Tax Farming and the Social Structure of Local Credit Markets in the Ottoman Balkans, 1685-1855", *Financial History Review*, 24/1, (2017), p. 53-81.

Lamprakos, Michele, "Life in the Khans: The Venetians in Early Ottoman Aleppo", *Muqarnas*, 34, (2017), p. 125-155.

Marcus, Abraham, "Men, Women and Property: Dealers in Real Estate in 18th-Century Aleppo", *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 26/2, (1983), p. 137-163.

Masters, Bruce, "Patterns of Migration to Ottoman Aleppo in the 17th and 18th Centuries", *International Journal of Turkish Studies*, 4, (1987), p. 75-89.

_____, *The Origins of Western Economic Dominance in the Middle East: Mercantilism and the Islamic Economy in Aleppo, 1600-1750*, New York and London 1988.

_____, "Power and Society in Aleppo in the 18th and 19th Centuries", *Revue du monde musulman et de la Méditerranée*, 62, (1991), p. 151-158.

_____, "Aleppo: The Ottoman Empire's Caravan City", *The Ottoman City between East and West: Aleppo, Izmir, and Istanbul*, (eds. Edhem Eldem, Daniel Goffman, and Bruce Masters), Cambridge 1999, p. 17-78.

_____, "Aleppo's Janissaries: Crime Syndicate or *Vox Populi?*", *Popular Protest and Political Participation in the Ottoman Empire: Studies in Honor of Suraiya Faroqhi*, (eds. Eleni Gara, M. Erdem Kabadayı, and Christoph K. Neumann), Istanbul 2011, p. 159-175.

Meriwether, Margaret L., *The Kin Who Count Family and Society in Aleppo, 1770-1840*, Austin 1989.

_____, "Women and *Waqf* Revisited: The Case of Aleppo, 1770-1840", *Women in the Ottoman Empire: Middle Eastern Women in the Early Modern Era*, Leiden 1997, p. 128-152.

Momdjian, Mary, "Halabis and Foreigners in Aleppo's Mediterranean Trade: The Role of Levantine Merchants in Eighteenth-Century Commercial Networks", *Aleppo and Its Hinterland in the Ottoman Period*, (eds. Stefan Winter and Mafalda Ade), Leiden 2019, p. 109-129.

Öztürk, Mustafa, "1616 Tarihli Halep Avarız-Hane Defteri", *Ankara Üniversitesi Osmanlı Tarihi Araştırma ve Uygulama Merkezi Dergisi*, 8/8, (1997), p. 249-293.



Pakalın, Mehmet Zeki, *Osmanlı Tarih Deyimleri ve Terimleri Sözlüğü*, Volume 1, Istanbul 1983.

Pascual, Jean-Paul, "The Janissaries and the Damascus Countryside at the Beginning of the Seventeenth Century According to Archives of the City's Military Tribunal", *Land Tenure and Social Transformation in the Middle East*, (ed. Tarif Khalidi), Beirut 1984, p. 357-369.

Rafeq, Abdul-Karim, "The Local Forces in Syria in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries", *War, Technology and Society in the Middle East*, (eds. V. J. Parry and M. E. Yapp), London 1975, p. 277-307.

_____, "Changes in the Relationship between the Ottoman Central Administration and the Syrian Provinces from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Centuries", *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Islamic History*, (eds. Thomas Naff and Roger Owen), Carbondale and Edwardsville 1977, p. 53-73.

_____, "Economic Relations between Damascus and the Dependent Countryside, 1743-71", *The Islamic Middle East, 700-1900: Studies in Economic and Social History*, (ed. A. L. Udovitch), Princeton 1981, p. 653-685.

Raymond, André, *Artisans et commerçants au Caire au XVIIIe siècle*, Damascus 1973-1974.

_____, "The Population of Aleppo in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries According to Ottoman Census Documents", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 16/4, (1984), p. 447-460.

_____, *Osmanlı Döneminde Arap Kentleri*, (trans. Ali Berktay), Istanbul 1995.

Reilly, James A., "Status Groups and Propertyholding in the Damascus Hinterland, 1828-1880", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 21/4, (1989), p. 517-539.

Roded, Ruth, "Great Mosques, *Zâwiya*s and Neighborhood Mosques: Popular Beneficiaries of *Waqf* Endowments in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Aleppo", *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 110/1, (1990), pp. 32-38.

Shimizu, Yasuhisa, "16. Yüzyılın İkinci Yarısında Halep Defterdarlığı", *Osmanlı Araştırmaları*, 51, (2018), p. 29-61.

Spyropoulos, Yannis, *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], University of Crete, Department of History and Archaeology, Ph.D, Rethymno 2014.

_____, "Janissary Politics on the Ottoman Periphery (18th-Early 19th c.)", *Halcyon Days in Crete IX: Political Thought and Practice in the Ottoman Empire*, (ed. Marinos Sariyannis), Rethymno 2019, p. 449-481.

Sunar, Mehmet Mert, *Cauldron of Dissent: A Study of the Janissary Corps, 1807-1826*, SUNY-Binghamton, Ph.D, New York 2006.

Şenyurt, Ali, "Yeniçeri Ortaları Yardımlaşma Sandıkları", *Kocaeli Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, 33, (2017), p. 155-170.

Uzunçarşılı, İsmail Hakkı, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, Volume 2, Ankara 1983.

_____, *Osmanlı Devleti Teşkilâtından Kapukulu Ocakları*, Volume 1, Ankara 1988.

Watenpaugh, Heghnar Zeitlian, *The Image of an Ottoman City: Imperial Architecture and Urban Experience in Aleppo in the 16th and 17th Centuries*, Leiden 2004.

Wilkins, Charles L., "Patterns of Leadership in the Guilds of 17th-Century Aleppo", *Aleppo and Its Hinterland in the Ottoman Period*, (eds. Stefan Winter and Mafalda Ade), Leiden 2019, p. 62-85.

_____, *Forging Urban Solidarities Ottoman Aleppo 1640-1700*, Leiden 2010.

Yaycıoğlu, Ali, *Partners of the Empire: The Crisis of the Ottoman Order in the Age of Revolutions*, Stanford 2016.

Yılmaz, Gülay, *The Economic and Social Roles of Janissaries in a 17th-Century Ottoman City: The Case of Istanbul*, McGill University, Institute of Islamic Studies, Ph.D, Montreal 2011.

Yi, Eunjeong, *Guild Dynamics in Seventeenth-Century Istanbul: Fluidity and Leverage*, Leiden 2004.

Ziyâde, Hâlid, *Sicillâtü'l-Mahkemeti'ş-Şer'iyye "el-Hikbetü'l-Osmâniyye" el-Menhec ve'l-Mustalah*, Beirut 2017.

.

*Cihannüma*
Tarih ve Coğrafya Araştırmaları Dergisi
Sayı VIII/1 – Temmuz 2022, 79-100
*Doi: 10.30517/cihannuma.1131051*

# BEING A COMRADE OF THE CIDDAVIS: THE SECURITY OF THE CAIRO PILGRIMAGE CARAVAN AND ITS ECONOMIC DIMENSIONS IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

**Abdulmennan M. Altıntaş***

**Abstract**

The Ottoman sultans, who bore the title "Servant of the Two Holy Sanctuaries", assumed many responsibilities related to Mecca and Medina and their pilgrimage affairs, including the security of pilgrims, pilgrimage routes, and of the Holy Cities themselves. During the Ottoman period, these security services were mainly provided both by soldiers located in Mecca and Medina, and by troops who were sent from the provinces of Damascus and Egypt. This study evaluates the role of the Ciddavi (Ar. Jiddawi) soldiers recruited from the seven corps of Egypt to escort the pilgrimage caravans under the command of the *serdar-ı kitar* (commander of the military force escorting pilgrims) of Egypt, returning to Cairo at the end of the pilgrimage season. In this context, the military structure and remit of the Ciddavi Unit will be examined by focusing on the imperial edicts in the *mühimme-i Mısır* registers. This study reveals that the Janissaries were the most powerful and influential military corps within the Ciddavi Unit and they used this power to benefit their commercial interests. The soldiers who went to Mecca and Jeddah from Cairo for pilgrimage services created commercial opportunities for the Janissary Corps, which had a great interest in the Red Sea trade. Janissary commanders and soldiers of the Ciddavi Unit, together with the Egyptian merchants and artisans under their protection, became inconspicuous, yet important, parts of the international trade conducted between the Red Sea and the Mediterranean.

**Keywords:** Egypt, Red Sea, pilgrimage caravan, Ciddavi Unit, Janissaries

* Dr., *Foundation for Research and Technology Hellas*, *Institute for Mediterranean Studies*, *Department of Ottoman History*, Melissinou & Nik. Foka 130, Rethymno / Greece, mennanm@gmail.com, Orcid ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0685-2293.

Makale Geliş Tarihi / Received Date: 01.12.2021 Makale Kabul Tarihi / Acceptance Date: 05.01.2022

## Ciddavilerin Yoldaşı Olmak: On Sekizinci Yüzyılda Kahire Hac Kervanının Güvenliği ve Bunun Ekonomik Yönleri

**Öz**

Hadimü'l-Haremeyn unvanına sahip olan Osmanlı sultanları bu unvanla kutsal şehirler ve hac işleriyle ilgili birçok sorumluğu üzerlerine almışlardır. Bu sorumluklar arasında hacıların, hac yollarının ve kutsal şehirlerin güvenliği de yer almaktadır. Osmanlı İmparatorluğu devrinde bu güvenlik hizmetleri ağırlıklı olarak Mekke ve Medine'de yerleşik halde bulunan askerler ile Şam ve Mısır eyaletlerinden gönderilen askerler üzerinden sağlanmaktaydı. Bu çalışma, Mısır'ın yedi askeri bölüğünden toplanan ve Mısır *serdar-ı kitarı* emri altında hac kervanlarıyla birlikte seyahat eden ve hac mevsiminin sonunda yeniden Kahire'ye dönen "Ciddavi" birliği hakkında bir değerlendirmedir. Bu kapsamda *mühimme-i Mısır* defterlerinde yer alan fermanlar değerlendirilerek Ciddavi birliğinin askeri yapısı ve görev tanımı açığa kavuşturulacaktır. Bu çalışma, yeniçerilerin Ciddavi birliği içindeki en güçlü ve etkili bölük olduğunu ve bu güçten ticari olarak faydalandıklarını ortaya koymaktadır. Hac hizmetleri için Kahire'den Mekke ve Cidde'ye giden askerler, Kızıldeniz ticaretine büyük bir ilgisi olduğu bilinen yeniçeri bölüğü için ticari fırsatlar yaratmıştır. Ciddavi birliğindeki yeniçeri komutanlar ve askerler ile onların himayesinde ticaret yapan Mısırlı tüccar ve esnaf, Kızıldeniz ve Akdeniz arasındaki uluslararası ticari organizasyonun dikkat çekici olmayan parçaları haline geldiler.



**Anahtar Kelimeler**: Mısır, Kızıldeniz, hac kervanı, Ciddavi birliği, yeniçeriler

After the conquest of Egypt in 1517, Sultan Selim declared himself "Servant of the Two Holy Sanctuaries" (*Hadimü'l-Haremeyn*) and pilgrimage (*hac*) affairs were defined as the single most important of all state affairs, as Ottoman archival sources often repeat.[1] This responsibility required that two essential tasks regarding the pilgrimage be carried out without interruption and on time, the first task being the supply of foodstuffs and other provisions to the Holy Cities. Because Mecca and Medina were surrounded by deserts, foodstuffs for their inhabitants had to be procured from distant lands. Transferring large quantities of agricultural products over desert roads was an expensive operation and its continuity required serious and very organized management.[2] The second essential task was the security of

---

1 "*Umur-ı hac ehemm-i mehamm-ı devlet-i aliyyeden olduğuna binaen*…". Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi (BOA), Mühimme-i Mısır Defterleri (A.DVNS.MSR.MHM.D) 6:531 (evail-i C 1162/May 19-28, 1749).

2 For centuries, the Ottoman Empire had regularly supplied the Holy Cities with grain harvested from the fertile lands around the Nile Valley. Inconveniences or severe famines in the food supply chain could prevent the pilgrimage from taking place, as happened in 1047 and 1048; Suraiya Faroqhi, *Pilgrims and Sultans: The Hajj under the Ottomans 1517-1683*, London 1994, p. 7.

pilgrims, pilgrimage routes, and the Holy Cities. Muslim pilgrims departing from various parts of the world joined the main pilgrimage caravans to reach the heart of Islam. During the Ottoman period, there were two main state-sponsored pilgrimage routes, bearing the names of the Damascus and Cairo Roads.

Each year in the month of Zilhicce in the Islamic calendar, thousands of pilgrims gathered in Cairo for the pilgrimage in order to travel for a total of four months on their outbound and return journeys. It was important for the legitimacy of the sultan that the Cairo pilgrimage caravan, which travelled in tough desert conditions and under the threat of Bedouin attacks, should reach Mecca on time and safely.[3] Therefore, a large number of civil and military officials were charged with various responsibilities related to its organization and security. Among them, the pilgrimage commander (*emirü'l-hac* or *mir-i hac*), who was the head of the caravan, and the *serdar-ı kitar*, who was the commander of the military force escorting it, were the leading officers, chosen from among the prominent grandees and military commanders of Egypt. The eighteenth century was a period during which the power of Egyptian military households and notables grew significantly and, as the struggles between these actors played an increasing role in shaping the political life of Egypt, the authority of governors and the imperial center in the province was becoming weaker. In this context, the senior positions in command of the pilgrimage caravan provided opportunities for their holders to gain control over the regions of the Red Sea and Arabia, two areas through which Yemeni coffee and Indian goods flowed into the Mediterranean. The control of these posts was, therefore, to become the target of powerful Egyptian households,[4] and the commanders and soldiers of the Ciddavi Unit sent from Cairo for the protection of the pilgrims and of Mecca were to find themselves involved in this complicated nexus of administrative and economic relations. This study is an evaluation of the organization of the military unit in charge of securing the annual Cairo pilgrimage caravan and the participation of its soldiers in the trade of the Red Sea ports. By focusing on the imperial edicts addressed to the governors of Egypt and Jeddah, it aims to describe how the Janissaries of Cairo, the dominant element of this military



3 In fact, as long as the Bedouins obeyed the state, they performed vital services for pilgrimage caravans, such as supplying riding animals and water. However, when they rebelled and targeted the pilgrims, they could also create huge problems. Benjamin Claude Brower, "The Hajj by Land", *The Hajj: Pilgrimage in Islam*, (eds. Eric Tagliacozzo and Shawkat M. Toorawa), New York 2016, p. 87-113. For the increased Bedouin attacks when the Şerif of Mecca and the pilgrimage commander did not give the Bedouins the promised payment for their services, see İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, *Mekke-i Mükerreme Emirleri*, Ankara 2013, p. 59-60; BOA, A.DVNS.MSR.MHM.D. 8:180 (evail-i B 1177/January 5-14, 1764).

4 On Egypt in the eighteenth century, see P. M. Holt, *Egypt and the Fertile Crescent 1516-1922*, New York 1966, p. 85-101; Jane Hathaway, *The Politics of Households in Ottoman Egypt: The Rise of Qazdağlıs*, Cambridge 1997; Daniel Crecelius, "Egypt in the Eighteenth Century", *The Cambridge History of Egypt*, Volume 2, (ed. M. W. Daly), Cambridge 1998, p. 59-86.

unit, expanded their local commercial connections, giving them an interregional dimension.

**Organization of the Ciddavi Unit**

In the early years of their rule in Egypt, instead of removing the old Mamluk administrative system altogether, the Ottomans established a hybrid system of administration.[5] They formed a new military organization for which, in addition to the soldiers sent from Istanbul, they recruited troops from local groups, especially the Circassians. According to the Ottoman law code (*Kanunname*) promulgated in 1525, there were six military corps in Egypt, called the Çerakise (Circassians), Gönüllüyan (Volunteers), Tüfenkciyan (Riflemen), Çavuşan, Mustahfizan (Janissaries), and Azeban,[6] and in 1554 one more corps called the Müteferrika was established in Egypt in order to curb the increasing influence of former Mamluk *emir*s and the Caucasian *bey*s.[7] The Çerakise was a cavalry corps which consisted of the Mamluks of Hayri Bey, the first Ottoman governor of Egypt. The Gönüllüyan and Tüfenkciyan were also cavalry regiments which initially included only soldiers sent from Istanbul, but later started accepting sons or followers of local notables into their ranks. Two corps, the Çavuşan and Müteferrika, consisted of a combination of cavalry and infantry soldiers and were directly connected to the *divan* of the Egyptian governor.[8]



The Janissary and Azeban Corps were the two infantry regiments of Ottoman Egypt. As the Janissaries were the principal military force protecting Cairo, they were locally called *Mustahfizan* (guardians).[9] They were positioned in Cairo's citadel and constituted the most numerous and powerful military corps of Egypt. Vacant positions in the corps were filled either by soldiers sent from Istanbul or by sons of Janissaries. While the Janissaries were the Egyptian corps that sent the largest number of soldiers to imperial campaigns,[10] they also constituted the primary military force guarding the annual pilgrimage caravan which travelled between Cairo and Mecca, and were responsible for policing Cairo and its marketplaces. Thanks to this powerful and prestigious place they enjoyed in the Egyptian military system, the Janissaries were also granted important positions

---

5 Hathaway, *The Politics of Households*, p. 11.

6 Ömer Lütfi Barkan, *XV ve XVI inci Asırlarda Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Ziraî Ekonominin Hukukî ve Malî Esasları, Birinci Cilt Kanunlar*, Istanbul 1943, p. 355-359.

7 Hathaway, *The Politics of Households*, p. 11.

8 *Ibid*., p. 38.

9 Stanford J. Shaw, *The Financial and Administrative Organization and Development of Ottoman Egypt 1517-1798*, Princeton 1962, p. 189.

10 In the eighteenth century the average number of the soldiers sent by the governor of Egypt to the imperial campaigns was 3,000. For example, of the 3,000 soldiers sent from the seven corps of Egypt for the Moscow campaign in 1713, 1,263 were Janissaries; BOA, Maliyeden Müdevver Defterler (MAD.d) 4258 (1 M 1125/ January 28, 1713).

in the administration of customs, the imperial mint of Egypt (*Darbhane*), and the local *mukataa* system.[11] The Azeban, the other infantry corps, on the other hand, was located both in Cairo's citadel and in frontier fortresses. These two infantry military units were the most powerful and politically influential corps of Egypt in the eighteenth century, a fact that could create serious political tensions between them.[12]

| ***Corps*** | ***1672*** | ***1709*** | ***1717*** |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Mustahfizan* | 6821 | 5263 | 5106 |
| *Azeban* | 3007 | 3285 | 3810 |
| *Müteferrika* | 2871 | 1485 | 1680 |
| *Çavuşan* | 1471 | 1641 | 2293 |
| *Gönüllüyan* | 1278 | 1236 | 1321 |
| *Tüfenkciyan* | 1066 | 1030 | 945 |
| *Çerakise* | 1074 | 981 | 900 |
| ***Total*** | ***17588*** | ***14921*** | ***16582*** |

**Table:** Number of soldiers in the seven corps of Egypt between 1672 and 1717.[13]

During the pilgrimage season, an officer bearing the title "*serdar-ı kitar*" and the soldiers under his command, called "*Ciddavi*" (جداوی) and "*Ciddelüyan*" (جدەلویان) in Ottoman sources, were responsible for the security of the caravan. Since the beginning of the eighteenth century, the post of the *serdar-ı kitar* had been monopolized by the Janissaries who were associated with the Kazdağlı household.[14] In the course of the eighteenth century, almost every year 500 soldiers from the seven corps were called on to join the Ciddavi Unit,[15] while on extraordinary occasions, such as when Bedouin attacks increased or revolts broke



11 Shaw, *The Financial and Administrative Organization and Development of Ottoman Egypt*, p. 190.

12 In 1711, a disorder started within the Janissary Corps which subsequently extended to the other six corps, especially the *Azeban*, and turned into a civil war called *Muareke*. For the 1711 civil war, see Holt, *Egypt and the Fertile Crescent*, p. 88-90; Abdülkerim b. Abdurrahman, *Tarih-i Mısr*, Süleymaniye Library (Istanbul), Hekimoğlu Ali Paşa Collection 705, fol. 127b-146b.

13 Shaw, *The Financial and Administrative Organization and Development of Ottoman Egypt*, p. 392-393.

14 Hathaway, *The Politics of Households*, p. 134-135.

15 Toward the end of the eighteenth century, the number of soldiers was increased to 525; BOA, A.DVNS.MSR.MHM.D.9:184 (evail-i L 1190/November 13-22, 1776).

out in the Haremeyn, additional Ciddavi soldiers from Egypt were sent to join the abovementioned troops.[16]

The Ciddavi soldiers, who were in charge of guarding Mecca and the pilgrimage caravan, were recruited from among the members of the seven corps of Egypt. Although there are many imperial edicts concerning the Ciddavi Unit in the *mühimme-i Mısır* registers, there is no specific information concerning the number of soldiers appointed as Ciddavis from each corps. However, an imperial edict dated 1723 reveals some details on this issue; specifically the decree states that, in accordance with an old custom, of the 500 soldiers sent to Mecca, 300 had to come from Egypt's cavalry and 200 from its infantry corps.[17] Moreover, Cezzar Ahmed Paşa, a governor of Damascus who in 1785 wrote a report (*Nizamname*) on the conditions in Egypt at the request of the Ottoman council, offers additional information about the military unit guarding the annual pilgrimage caravan. According to his report, the caravan was protected by 40-50 large and 15 small cannons. As well as the soldiers of the Ciddavi Unit, 200 young people who came to Egypt from Anatolia and Rumelia to perform the pilgrimage were additionally recruited as riflemen to reinforce the defense of the caravan.[18]

The pilgrimage caravan was a large organization, consisting of thousands of pilgrims, merchants, and their riding animals. The caravans usually proceeded under the guidance of a Bedouin who acted as a desert pilot. Along with the caravan, an offering called *surre*, sent by the sultan, as well as large amounts of food and the personal belongings of pilgrims, were carried. In order for the caravan to travel safely and reach its destination at the scheduled time, its march formation and discipline were important. The merchants carrying valuable goods and those rich enough to buy fast riding animals traveled in the front and middle rows of the caravan, while poor pilgrims were located in the rear which was considered to be the most dangerous part of the caravan.[19] Attention was paid to ensuring that civil servants and soldiers walked in their designated places, a rule emphasized in the imperial orders addressed to the pilgrimage commander.[20] So, how were the soldiers positioned in the pilgrimage caravan? Evliya Çelebi, who traveled from Mecca to Cairo with the Egyptian pilgrimage caravan in 1672, maintains that the pilgrimage caravan traveling towards Cairo was surrounded by the soldiers of the



16 For example, due to a rebellion in the Haremeyn in 1722, an additional 500 soldiers were ordered to be sent from Egypt; BOA, A.DVNS.MSR.MHM.D.3:289 (evahir-i Ca 1134/March 8-17, 1722); 3:290 (evasıt-ı Ca 1134/February 26- March 8, 1722).

17 BOA, A.DVNS.MSR.MHM.D.3:386 (evahir-i N 1135/June 24-July 4, 1723).

18 Cezzâr Ahmed Pasha, *Ottoman Egypt in the Eighteenth Century: The Nizâmnâme-i Mısır of Cezzâr Ahmed Pasha*, (ed. and trans. Stanford J. Shaw), Cambridge 1964, p. 41.

19 Faroqhi, *Pilgrims and Sultans*, p. 34.

20 For the imperial edict sent to the pilgrimage commander of Cairo, see BOA, A.DVNS.MSR.MHM.D.7:54 (evasıt-ı R 1166/February 14-24, 1753). For a similar edict sent to the pilgrimage commander of Damascus, see Uzunçarşılı, *Mekke-i Mükerreme Emirleri*, p. 41.

seven corps. While the soldiers of the pilgrimage commander's *kethüda* and the Çerakise Corps were positioned on the right of the caravan, the Gönüllüyan Corps and the soldiers of the pilgrimage commander himself were positioned on the left. The artillery gunners and the soldiers of the Janissary and Azeban Corps, on the other hand, were positioned next to the *surre*.[21] It was probably no coincidence that the Janissaries, who were a centrally created imperial corps, escorted the sultanic *surre*. It would not be far-fetched to assume that there might have been an implied role of the corps – even if symbolic – as imperial agents directly representing the sultan's authority during the pilgrimage, although no such information is to be found in the sources.

The imperial center regularly sent out edicts which were similar in content and called the attention of the governor of Egypt to the organization and functioning of the Ciddavi Unit, revealing, in the process, some of the unit's chronic problems. In an imperial edict dated 1729, for example, it is mentioned that the soldiers of the Ciddavi Unit must be enrolled in the corps, must go to Mecca in person, and should not be mixed with Arabs and merchants.[22] It was a common problem that some of the soldiers selected for the Ciddavi Unit did not go to Mecca or sent someone else in their place; individual soldiers could avoid duty by directly disobeying orders, or, in some cases, the corps in Egypt could send unenrolled men to replace their registered soldiers in their service. As was a widespread practice all around the Empire, when a soldier who was enrolled in one of the seven corps died, his death was not reported to the Porte by his officers, in order for their corps to hold on to the wages of the deceased. Subsequently, when the governor requested soldiers from the corps, an unregistered *mamluk* or peasant was hired to illegally replace the dead soldier.[23]



As emphasized in the aforementioned imperial edict, it was requested that the Ciddavi soldiers "*should not be mixed with Arabs*" (*Arab ile mahlut olmaya*). Despite being illegal, it was a known problem that people called "*sons of Arabs*" (*evlad-ı Arab*) were enrolled in the seven corps of Egypt. As a response to this phenomenon, on various occasions the government issued orders which expelled the "*sons of Arabs*" from the corps and cut off their stipends. It has to be noted,

---

21 "*Mısır huccâcın yedi bölük askeri kuşadup emîr-i hac kethudâsı ve Çerâkise askeri sağda ve emîr-i hac askeri ile dündâr ve sipâh ve gönüllü solda ve müstahfızân ve azebân ve topçıyân hazîne ve toplar ile cümle pür-silâh mûrî heccân ve kısrak develer üzre giderler*"; Evliyâ Çelebi b. Derviş Mehemmed Zıllî, *Evliyâ Çelebi Seyahatnâmesi*, Volume 9, (eds. Seyit Ali Kahraman, Yücel Dağlı, and Robert Dankoff), Istanbul 2011, p. 419.

22 "*Mahruse-i Mısr-ı Kahire'den mutad-ı kadim üzere Mekke-i Mükerreme muhafazasına memur olan Mısır askeri bi'n-nefs kendüleri gidüb bedel göndermeyüb Arab ile mahlut olmayub tüccardan yazılmayub sahibü'l-esami olmayan gitmeyüb cümlesi sahibü'l-esami olub bir takrib noksan olmamak üzere güzide Mısır askeri irsal eyleyüb bu hususda zerre kadar müsahele ve müsamahadan tevakki eyleyesüz…*"; BOA, A.DVNS.MSR.MHM.D.4:275 (evahir-i Ca 1142/December 11-20, 1729).

23 Shaw, *The Financial and Administrative Organization and Development of Ottoman Egypt*, p. 210.

however, that the term "*sons of Arabs*" is ethnically ambiguous and did not refer only to people of Arab descent, but might have also been used as the opposite of the term *Rum oğlanı*, which referred to the soldiers recruited from the eastern and southern provinces of the empire.[24] Another group that illegally joined the Ciddavi Unit, causing aggravation to Istanbul, was the merchants (*tüccar*). The term "merchant" was used to signify those traders who enrolled in one of the corps in order to acquire protection (*himaye*) and gain commercial privileges. This issue, which was especially common in the case of the Janissary Corps, will be evaluated in detail below.

Istanbul cared about the participation of professional soldiers registered in one of the seven corps in the Ciddavi Unit. The Ciddavi soldiers who did not go to Mecca, or sent a replacement instead, were identified and punished by the officers of the governors of Egypt and Jeddah, and in some cases by an agent (*mübaşir*) sent from Istanbul. In 1722, 500 extra Ciddavi soldiers were added to the 500 men sent from Egypt in order to restore the subverted order in the Haremeyn. However, it was understood that the troops sent from Cairo deserted before reaching Birketü'l-hac, the first encampment place of the pilgrimage caravan in Egypt, located in north Cairo. When the officers responsible for the inspection of the soldiers decided to initiate a roll-call to identify the fugitives, the rest of the soldiers, in an act of solidarity toward their deserter comrades-in-arms, opposed them by saying "*you cannot count us here, but in the Haremeyn*". The desertion of half of the soldiers in the Ciddavi Unit was an incident that seriously endangered the safety of the pilgrims, and this situation did not go unnoticed by the imperial center. As a matter of fact, Istanbul, which was aware of the situation, ordered the Egyptian governor to cut off the salary-increase (*terakki*) of the fugitives and collect the expenses made by the Egyptian treasury to equip these soldiers from their corps. In addition, in order to detect any desertions that might occur during the one-month journey, it was requested that the Ciddavi Unit be inspected by the governor of Jeddah and a *mübaşir* upon its arrival at its place of duty, and a list of the deserters sent to Istanbul.[25]



**The pilgrimage caravan's administrators, Red Sea trade, and the Janissaries**

Pilgrimage affairs and supplying grain for the inhabitants of the Holy Cities were among the essential issues that occupied the Ottoman governors in the province of Egypt. Although there were many *vakf*s in Egypt that provided in-kind and in-cash aid to the Haremeyn, expenditures for Mecca and Medina and

---

24 For a comprehensive analysis on the "sons of the Arabs", see Jane Hathaway, "The *Evlâd-ı 'Arab* (Sons of the Arabs) in Ottoman Egypt: A Rereading", *Frontiers of Ottoman Studies: State, Province and the West*, (eds. Colin Imber and Keiko Kiyotaki), London 2005, p. 203-216.

25 BOA, A.DVNS.MSR.MHM.D.3:338 (evahir-i Z 1134/October 1-10, 1722).

pilgrimage services constituted the second-largest costs of the imperial treasury of Egypt.[26] The pilgrimage commander and the *serdar-ı kitar* needed large financial resources for their services during the pilgrimage season. Pilgrimage commanders, in particular, fell into financial difficulties at various times and had to demand additional economic assistance from the treasury of Egypt. In some periods, the *bey*s ran into large amounts of personal debt due to the administration of the pilgrimage and refused to undertake this task the following year.[27] In fact, the Ottoman center generally responded positively to persistent requests from the Egyptian court to increase the allowance of pilgrimage commanders. Bearing this practice in mind, it can be argued that the strategy of securing a greater income in the form of allowances was behind the refusal of this post under the pretext of financial difficulties. Nevertheless, it is known that some pilgrimage commanders and *serdar-ı kitar*s spent a considerable amount of money from their personal wealth while serving in these posts. At this point, the question of why the *bey*s and commanders in the province of Egypt volunteered for these temporary positions comes to mind. Prestigious posts in the provincial hierarchy brought their holders certain political and economic advantages. The *bey* who held the post of the pilgrimage commander was guaranteed a place in the *divan* of the governor and those who took on these tasks used this temporary service as an investment tool for their political careers or business ventures.[28] Janissary commanding officers who were interested in trade, on the other hand, had the opportunity to connect with the port of Jeddah, an important hub of the Red Sea trade, thanks to these posts.



From the beginning of the eighteenth century, a complex relationship developed between pilgrimage services and the Red Sea trade. The reason for this was the interest of the Kazdağlı household – founded by a Janissary and rooted in the Janissary Corps – in the lucrative Red Sea coffee trade, which represented one of its main sources of income. The heads of the Kazdağlı household shaped their commercial investments according to the maritime trade cycle running in the northern half of the Red Sea. In this framework, the grain harvested from the

---

26 Shaw, *The Financial and Administrative Organization and Development of Ottoman Egypt*, p. 229.

27 The pilgrimage commander of Egypt, Salih Bey, fell into significant debt due to his duty as the pilgrimage commander and did not accept this duty the following year. Consequently, Istanbul ordered Salih Bey to be given a one-off additional allowance of 2,500,000 *para*s in 1163; BOA, A.DVNS.MSR.MHM.D.7:649 (evahir-i Ş 1173/April 7-16, 1760).

28 In earlier periods too, the sources testify to the pilgrimage commander's trading activities during the pilgrimage season. It is known, for instance, that in 1571 the people of the pilgrimage caravan were deprived of ship's biscuit, as pilgrimage commanders and ship captains loaded trade goods on the ships allocated to carry ship's biscuit from Suez to the pilgrimage caravan; Suraiya Faroqhi, *Osmanlı'da Kentler ve Kentliler: Kent Mekânında Ticaret Zanaat ve Gıda Üretimi 1550-1650*, (trans. Neyyir Berktay), Istanbul 2011, p. 67; BOA, Bab-ı Asafi Divan-ı Hümayun Sicilleri Mühimme Defterleri (A.DVNSMHM.d) 12:710 (15 S 979/July 9, 1571).

lands of Upper Egypt was transported from Suez to the ports of Jeddah and Yanbu through either state-owned ships or vessels chartered from merchants for the provision of the Holy Cities. Ships unloading their cargo in Jeddah had returned with various Indian commodities and especially Yemeni coffee. Following a long-standing strategy, the Kazdağlıs aimed to take control of the rural tax farms in Egypt and the pilgrimage route in order to increase their share in the coffee trade. To achieve this, from the beginning of the eighteenth century, they used the position of *serdar-ı kitar*, a Janissary post, as a tool.[29]

The most important commercial strategy of the Kazdağlı–Janissary alliance was to establish their influence on the Nile and Red Sea customs which facilitated their ship-management business, an expensive and risky investment. Many Janissaries were trading in the Red Sea using their own ships,[30] with the state as their most important client. Egyptian grain was largely transported to the Haremeyn by ships belonging to the state and various Haremeyn-related endowments (*evkafü'l-Haremeyn*), but the capacity of these ships was often not sufficient to handle such high-volume transports and the state had to hire or purchase merchant ships.[31] Since it was forbidden for the soldiers in the pilgrimage caravan to be involved in trade, it is not possible to follow in detail their business ventures through the official documents of the period. Fortunately, the documentation available on the *bey*s and commanders of the pilgrimage caravan, whose personal stories are easier to follow, can shed some light on some of the main aspects of the topic.



The detailed probate record of Kazdağlı Süleyman Çavuş, who was appointed as the *serdar-ı kitar* of the annual Egyptian pilgrimage caravan in 1739, but died in the first days of the journey, is an important example which allows us to see the wealth and commercial connections of this officer. Before being promoted to this position, Süleyman Çavuş was already a member of the Janissary Corps and one of the leading figures of the Kazdağlı household. He had remarkable wealth, as almost all of the inheritance of his patron Osman Çavuş,

---

29 For the activities of the Kazdağlı Janissaries in the Red Sea trade, see Hathaway, *The Politics of Households*, p. 134-135; Daniel Crecelius, "Egypt in the Eighteenth Century", p. 73; André Raymond, *Yeniçerilerin Kahiresi: Abdurrahman Kethüda Zamanında Bir Osmanlı Kentinin Yükselişi*, (trans. Alp Tümertekin), Istanbul 2015, p. 88-91.

30 For details of the boats of the *serdar-ı kitar* Süleyman Çavuş on the Nile, and a Red Sea ship of which he was a shareholder, see Michel Tuchscherer, "Le Pèlerinage de l'émir Suleymân Gawis al-Qâzdughlî, Sirdâr de la Caravane de La Mekke en 1739", *Annales Islamologiques*, 24, (1988), p. 162.

31 Some records dated 1747 show that the state, which had a shortage of ships for the transportation of the Haremeyn grain, bought two ships belonging to the Janissary Mehmed Kethüda. The purchased ships were still under construction in Suez. Of these two ships, 3,050,000 *para*s were paid for a ship called Ezheri and 2,700,000 *para*s were paid for a ship called Aşur; BOA, A.DVNS.MSR.MHM.D.6:367 (evahir-i M 1160/February 1-11, 1747).

who was killed in 1736 in the *Vaka-i Şur-engiz* incident, was left to him.[32] In order to show his economic power and strengthen his presence in the political competition, he left Cairo with a very flamboyant procession and went to Birketü'l-hac, the starting point of the annual pilgrimage caravan. Süleyman died there and his personal assets were recorded in the Cairo court registers. According to the probate record, Süleyman owned fifteen boats running on the Nile and a share of a Red Sea ship. On his journey to Mecca, he carried 679,105 *para*s in cash with which he probably wanted to buy coffee and Indian commodities in Jeddah. In addition, Süleyman carried textile products worth 32,450 *para*s; in this period, textile products imported from France were among the important commodities of the Cairo–Arabia trade.[33]

On the other hand, Süleyman Çavuş took on a great financial burden as a *serdar-ı kitar*. For the pilgrimage caravan and his cortege of around a hundred people, he had to spend about a third of his personal wealth.[34] Presumably, he would compensate at least some of the money he had spent by selling the commodities he had taken with him to Mecca, as well as the coffee and Indian goods he would purchase during the trip. Moreover, as a commander who had ships on the Red Sea and the Nile, Süleyman possibly aimed to use the prestigious post of *serdar-ı kitar* as a means to achieve greater commercial privileges.

The career of İbrahim Kethüda, another Janissary from the Kazdağlı household who was an important political and military figure in Egypt in the 1650s, explicitly reveals the connection between the Janissaries, the post of pilgrimage commander, and the coffee trade. In the petition he sent to Istanbul in 1749, İbrahim Kethüda complained about the Egyptian *bey*s who provided protection services to the caravans carrying coffee from Suez to Cairo. According to his allegation, this duty of protection actually belonged to the pilgrimage



32 Tuchscherer, "Le Pèlerinage de l'émir Suleymân Gawis al-Qâzdughlî", p. 159-160. The *Vaka-i Şur-engiz* (tumultuous incident) was a massacre which occurred as a result of the power struggle between the *bey*s and the governor of Egypt on November 15, 1736. Salih Kaşif, the governor (*kaşif*) of Mansura sub-province, planned the massacre, with the support of the governor Ebubekir Paşa, against some emirs of Egypt with whom he had in a conflict of interests. To achieve his goal, Salih organized an assembly to be held in the *defterdar*'s house and invited the *bey*s and senior officers of the seven corps. During the meeting, an armed assault took place and ten of the *bey*s and corps officers, including the Janissary commander Kazdağlı Osman Kethüda, were killed. For this incident, see Al-Damurdashi Ahmad Kethuda 'Azaban, *Al-Damurdashi's Chronicle of Egypt 1688-1737: Al-durra al-musana fi akhbar al-kinana*, (eds. and trans. Daniel Crecelius and 'Abd al-Wahhab Bakr), Leiden 1991, p. 309-316.

33 Tuchscherer, "Le Pèlerinage de l'émir Suleymân Gawis al-Qâzdughlî", p. 181.

34 The amount of money Süleyman Çavuş spent was determined as 2,128,332 *para*s. Ibid., p. 187. This sum of money was more than enough to buy a new high-capacity cargo ship running on the Red Sea.

commander of Egypt and, by demanding five to six gold pieces[35] for the protection service, the Egyptian *bey*s increased the tax burden of coffee merchants. Thereupon, Istanbul gave the protection service of the coffee caravans to the pilgrimage commanders and allowed them to receive one *fındık altın* (approx. three *guruş*es) for each coffee *ferde* (coffer). In this way, an additional income of approximately 2,500,000 *para*s was allocated to the Egyptian pilgrimage commanders per year.[36] About a year after this decision, İbrahim Kethüda was given a reward for his effort and loyalty, and was appointed *şeyhü'l-beled*[37] (head of Cairo) and pilgrimage commander. In addition, it was decided that Istanbul would donate, just once, 2,500,000 *para*s from the Egyptian treasury to Ibrahim Kethüda for his pilgrimage services.[38] İbrahim used a clever method in his petition by emphasizing that the current situation went against the interests of coffee merchants. Thus, he attracted the attention of the Ottoman imperial council and, in turn, gained political and economic benefits from it.[39]

**Ciddavi trade in the Jeddah and Suez ports**

The fact that the commanders of the Ciddavi Unit held *ex officio* an important place in the trade between Egypt and the Haremeyn created favorable conditions for its soldiers to participate in this trade also. Some soldiers were involved in the trade of Suez, Jeddah, and Mecca as commercial agents of their corps, while others were personally seeking income from this journey by selling



35 The type of currency is not explicitly stated in the document. In the eighteenth century, however, gold coins called *zer-i mahbub* and *fındık* were in circulation in Egypt. Şevket Pamuk, *A Monetary History of the Ottoman Empire*, Cambridge 2000, p. 174.

36 BOA, A.DVNS.MSR.MHM.D.6:531 (evail-i C 1162/May 19-28, 1749).

37 The *Şeyhü'l-beled* was an office created in the mid eighteenth century held by the prominent grandees of Cairo; Jane Hathaway, "Çerkes Mehmed Bey: Rebel, Traitor, Hero?", *The Turkish Studies Association Bulletin*, 21/1 (1998), p. 110-111.

38 BOA, A.DVNS.MSR.MHM.D.6:591 (evasıt-ı Ca 1163/April 17-27, 1750). When İbrahim Kethüda passed away, his personal assets, worth 57,500,000 *para*s, were confiscated by the state; BOA, A.DVNS.MSR.MHM.D.7:214 (evasıt-ı B 1168/April 22-May 2, 1755). On Kazdağlı İbrahim Kethüda and his partner Rıdvan Kethüda, see Abd ar-Rahman al-Jabarti, *Al-Jabarti's History of Egypt*, (ed. Jane Hathaway), Princeton 2009, p. 75-83; Al-Damurdashi, Ahmad Kethuda 'Azaban, *Al-Damurdashi's Chronicle of Egypt*, p. 363-387.

39 Since the beginning of the seventeenth century, coffee had become an indispensable beverage for Ottoman society. During this period the Ottoman Empire was Europe's largest supplier of coffee. Due to the huge increase in the demand for coffee at the end of the seventeenth century, the Ottomans tried to meet the domestic demand by banning the export of coffee. For coffee consumption and exports in the Ottoman Empire, see Mehmet Genç, "Contrôle et taxation du commerce du café dans l'Empire ottoman fin XVII$^{e}$-première moitié du XVIII$^{e}$ siècle", *Le commerce du café avant l'ère des plantations coloniales : espaces, réseaux, sociétés (XV$^{e}$-XIX$^{e}$ siècle)*, (ed. Michel Tuchscherer), Cairo 2001, p. 161-179.

small amounts of trade goods in Mecca.[40] In the imperial edicts sent from Istanbul about the Ciddavi soldiers, the name of the Egyptian corps to which the soldiers were attached is generally not mentioned, but the names of the Janissary and Azeban Corps are clearly emphasized in the edicts that address the problems arising from commercial issues. These two corps were, as previously noted, the most dominant military actors in Cairo and had a close relationship with the Cairo guilds and artisans. Moreover, Janissary and Azeban soldiers received significant support from these Cairene artisans in the Red Sea trade. The merchandise brought by the troops from Jeddah was unloaded to the port of Suez with the help of these artisans and transported to Cairo.

When the pilgrimage caravan reached the fort of Ajroud, near Suez, some soldiers left the caravan to conduct trade.[41] Instead of going to Mecca by land with the pilgrims, some Ciddavi soldiers went to Jeddah by boarding ships in Suez and reaching Mecca from there. The soldiers brought trading goods with them, thus making their journey not only faster, but also profitable.[42] However, their departure from the caravan weakened the security of the pilgrimage routes and left the pilgrims open to attacks. Therefore, the governors of Egypt were warned that the Ciddavi soldiers should travel by land under the authority of their commanders and together with the pilgrims.

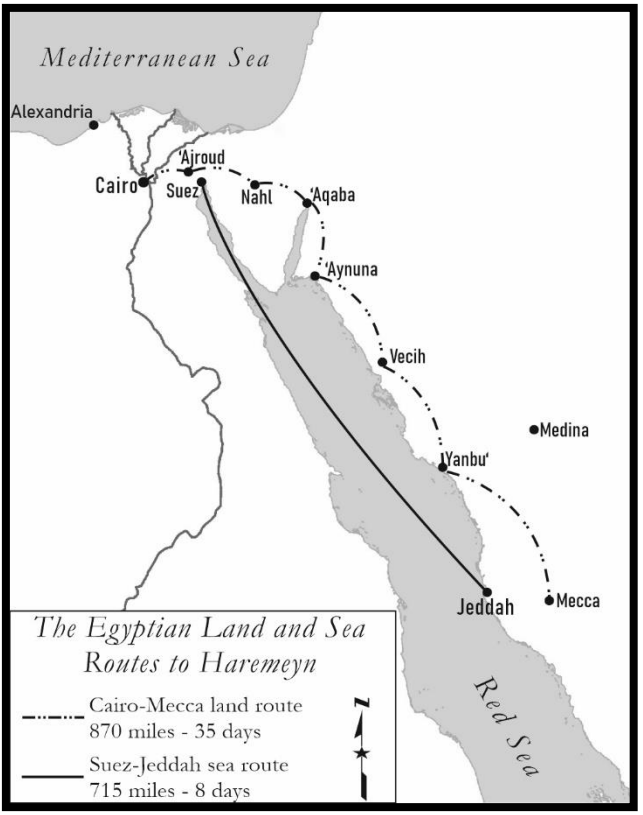
The petitions sent to Istanbul by the governor of Jeddah and the Şerif of Mecca help us understand the trade methods used by these soldiers. The Janissary and Azeban troops who boarded the ships from Suez took with them trading goods worth twenty to thirty gold pieces, in addition to their personal belongings. When the soldiers came to the port of Jeddah, they unloaded these goods, which were normally subject to customs duties, together with their personal belongings. Since this problem caused considerable damage to the customs revenues of Jeddah, the governor of Jeddah and the Şerif of Mecca demanded that the soldiers pay taxes. However, the soldiers refused to pay the customs tax and even made



40 Even though pilgrimage is a religious practice, it was also a big event that brought together thousands of people in Mecca from various parts of the world, and many pilgrims covered a part of their travel expenses by bartering small amounts of merchandise at the fair in Mina; Faroqhi, *Pilgrims and Sultans*, p. 45, 168-170; for the coffee and Indian textile products found in the estates of the Janissaries who accompanied the pilgrimage caravan but died on the way, see André Raymond, "Soldiers in Trade: The Case of Ottoman Cairo", *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 18/1, (1991), p. 20.

41 For the forts built on the Cairo–Mecca route for the security of pilgrims and pilgrimage routes, see Sami Saleh 'Abd al-Malik, "The *Khans* of the Egyptian Hajj Route in the Mamluk and Ottoman Periods", *The Hajj: Collected Essays*, (eds. Venetia Porter and Liana Saif), London 2013, p. 52-64.

42 According to the records of this period, ships could reach Jeddah from Suez in eight days with a fair wind: BOA, A.DVNS.MSR.MHM.D.3:689 (evasıt-ı S 1139/October 7-17, 1726).




**Map.** The Egyptian land and sea routes to the Haremeyn.



matters worse by engaging in combat with the local forces.[43] The customs revenues of Jeddah were the most important source of income for the governor of Jeddah and the Şerif of Mecca. In addition, the wages of Haremeyn officers, like those of the judges of Mecca and Medina, were paid by the income obtained from these revenues. To give an example of the impact that this loss of revenues could have on the local economy, let us note that, during this period, a small number of Indian ships and coffee-carrying Yemeni boats called *celbe* were transporting goods to the port of Jeddah. In some cases, the Indian ships were delayed and subsequently missed the winds that could carry them to the north to Jeddah. Whenever this happened, the Jeddah customs was deprived of an important income source and the governor of Jeddah and the Şerif of Mecca had to seek financial aid from the

[43] BOA, A.DVNS.MSR.MHM.D.1:85 (evahir-i Ca 1121/July 28-August 7, 1709); 1:438 (evahir-i R 1128/April 13-22, 1716); 1:450 (evahir-i Ca 1128/June 11-20, 1716).

imperial center or the province of Egypt.[44] In a similar fashion, the intervention of soldiers in trade damaged the delicate balance between the Jeddah customs revenues and the Haremeyn expenditures, causing problems for the local administrators.

In accordance with their remit, the Ciddavi soldiers traveled with the pilgrims and usually resided in Mecca during the pilgrimage season. Nevertheless, the commercial charm of Jeddah, which was the center of trading activities in the Haremeyn region, continued to attract them. Ciddavi soldiers were only allowed to come to Jeddah to ensure the security of caravans carrying grain to Mecca. However, as is understood from the complaints reflected in the archival documents, they instead arrived in Jeddah using various excuses and resided in the city for the purpose of doing business. Soldiers participating in trade harmed the merchants' businesses, reduced the customs revenues of the province, and disrupted its public peace and order. For this reason, the governors of Jeddah and Egypt were asked not to allow the soldiers who left Mecca to provide security to the transport of grain to reside in Jeddah.[45]

The volume of trade conducted by the soldiers in Suez, Egypt's gateway to the Red Sea and one of the important hubs of international trade, was much larger than that of Jeddah. In the eighteenth century Suez was the only port in the north of the Red Sea where international trade took place, and almost all of the supplies shipped from Egypt to the Haremeyn were transported from there.[46] Coffee from Yemen and other commodities from the Indian Ocean were distributed through Suez to Egypt and the Mediterranean world. This commercial value of Suez made it an important source of income for the province of Egypt. According to a record dated 1756, the governors of Egypt, until a few years prior to that date, were earning about 6,250,000-8,750,000 *para*s just from the Suez customs. However, during that period, the administration of Suez customs became corrupted, a fact that led to a dramatic decrease in the customs revenues collected by the governors.[47] This was not due to the decrease in the trade activity at the port; on the contrary, it was owing to the fact that no tax could be collected for the commodities arriving at the port. At the heart of the problem lay the Janissaries and Azeban soldiers of the Ciddavi Unit who were trading without paying customs duties, abusing their military power and political influence, as they were doing in the case of the Jeddah customs.



---

44 See, for example, BOA, A.DVNS.MSR.MHM.D.8:611 (evahir-i B 1182/November 30-December 10, 1768).

45 BOA, A.DVNS.MSR.MHM.D.4:67 (evahir-i S 1140/October 7-16, 1727).

46 On the position of Qusayr, another Egyptian port located about 290 miles south of Suez, as an alternative in the Red Sea trade, see Daniel Crecelius, "The Importance of Qusayr in the Late Eighteenth Century", *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt*, 24, (1987), p. 55-56.

47 BOA, A.DVNS.MSR.MHM.D.7:568 (evasıt-ı Ş 1172/April 8-18, 1759).

Coffee and spices were brought to Suez in coffers called *ferde*.[48] *Ferde* was also a standard measuring unit, and in Egypt coffee and spices were taxed according to the number of *ferde*s.[49] Returning from Jeddah to Suez by ship, the Ciddavis would open the coffee and spice *ferde*s on board and transfer them to smaller bags called *zenbil* and *katma*, a trick they invented to avoid taxes. When they arrived at the port, they refused to pay their duties, claiming that these small bags were their personal property.[50] The Cairene artisans who were in contact with the soldiers also played a part in the commercial order in the Suez port. According to a document dated 1759, when the news of the spice ships approaching the port of Suez reached Cairo, more than a thousand saddle makers (*sarrac*)[51] and peddlers (*koltukçu*) went to Suez.[52] They arrived before the *şehir havalesi*, the official who collected the tax rights of the governor at customs, and took the goods by saying "*we are Ciddavis and this item is comrade property*". This way, the coffee, spices, fabric, and porcelain goods coming to the port of Suez were transported to Cairo without customs duties being paid.[53] Thanks to this cooperation between soldiers and artisans, the merchandise was procured at a much more affordable cost and thus their trade became more lucrative.

In 1672, Captain M. Niebuhr, who visited the ports of the Red Sea on an expedition of discovery in the service of the Danish king, recorded some remarkable information about the commercial life in the Red Sea region. The information he gave is important because he had the opportunity to talk to the



48 The average value of the *ferde* was between 3 and 3.5 *kantar*; André Raymond, *Artisans et commerçants au Caire au XVIII*e *siècle*, Volume 1, Damascus 1973, p. lvii.

49 Customs duty in Suez in the seventeenth century was 100 *para*s per *ferde*. While 20-30,000 *ferde*s of coffee and spices came to the port per year, in the mid eighteenth century this number decreased to the level of 18,000 *ferde*s due to additional taxes and illegal charges; Shaw, *The Financial and Administrative Organization and Development of Ottoman Egypt*, p. 106.

50 BOA, A.DVNS.MSR.MHM.D.7:245 (evasıt-ı S 1169/November 15-25, 1755).

51 *Sarrac* was also the name of the soldiers who were levied from Anatolia, Rumelia, and the Aegean islands, and served the *emir*s and the military officers in Egypt. After several years of service in this manner, the *sarrac* soldiers were enrolled in the seven corps and made partners of wealthy Jeddah merchants by their patrons. They were, therefore, also called *yoldaş* (comrade). On the *sarrac* soldiers, see Cezzâr Ahmed Pasha, *Ottoman Egypt in the Eighteenth Century*, p. 24-26.

52 It is quite possible that the artisans who came to the Suez port to receive the trade goods sent by the Ciddavi soldiers were those who were under the protection of the seven corps in Cairo or had commercial partnerships with them; Raymond, "Soldiers in Trade", p. 16-37.

53 "*Canib-i Hicaz'dan bahren Mısr-ı Kahire'ye beher sene tevarüd iden kahve ve ecnas-ı bahar mukataasının iki-üç seneden berü ukde-i nizamı muhtel olub bahar sefineleri Süveyş'e karib mahalle geldiği haberi Mısır'da şayi olduğu gibi Mısır valileri tarafından şehr havalesi Süveyş'e gitmezden evvelce Mısr-ı Kahire'den ecnas-ı muhtelifeden sarrac ve kapusuz ve koltukçu misillü bin neferden ziyade eşhas Süveyş'e gidüb biz Ciddavileriz ve gelen eşya yoldaş malıdır deyü kudretleri mertebe zenbil ve sehhare ve fağfur ve akmişe ile memlu sandıkları zabt ve gümrüğünü kendüleri ashab-ı erzakdan olub bu bahane ile mal-ı baharı telef ve izaat iderek mukataa-i mezbureden Mısır valilerine senede 350 kise-i mısri ve dahi ziyade hasıl olur iken el-yevm mal-ı bahar 200 kise akçeye tenezzül bulub…*"; BOA, A.DVNS.MSR.MHM.D.7:569 (evasıt-ı Ş 1172/April 8-18, 1759).

Janissaries trading in the Red Sea. According to him, people whose professions were actually in trade were registered in the Janissary Corps and thus were assured of Janissary protection. These people did not perform any military duties and did not receive a salary from the corps, but enjoyed some privileges that would provide them an advantage in trade.[54] Niebuhr's narrative agrees with the information given in the *mühimme* records and describes the advantages of a merchant Janissary as follows:

> "*He enjoys also an exemption from the payment of custom-house dues, for a trunk and two baskets, which are allowed them for the conveyance of their baggage and provisions. But, instead of baggage or provisions, the trading janissaries take care to fill the trunk baskets with their most precious goods. I have seen, likewise, some ship-captains and pilots who had inrolled themselves among the janissaries, solely to acquire importance, and to secure the protection of this powerful body, who are always ready to support and defend a brother janissary; for such janissaries did not share the privileges of their Turkish brethren.*"[55]

It was not only the Cairo artisans who smuggled goods through the Suez customs using the name of the Ciddavi Unit. In 1760, 80-100 soldiers from the Janissary and Azeban Corps, whose main purpose was to trade, went to Jeddah, claiming that they were Ciddavis, and from there they sailed to Suez with merchant ships. When they returned, hundreds of people from Cairo were already at the port to meet them. Some Cairenes received bribes from merchants and became intermediaries charged with unloading the goods from the ships to the port without paying customs duty by using the well-known trick and claiming that the merchants were "*comrades of the Ciddavis*".[56]



Being a comrade of Ciddavis was a status similar to the Janissary comradeship we encounter in other cities of the empire, and, when referring to merchants or artisans, it indicates that they were under the protection of soldiers. While the soldier received a share of the income of the artisan under his protection, the artisan would gain some commercial privileges thanks to the protection and would prevent foreigners from interfering in their business. André Raymond states that the merchants and artisans of Cairo, especially the richest class trading in coffee, spices, and fabrics, benefited from this protection. According to his findings, of the forty-one coffee merchants whose assets could be examined, twenty-four were enrolled in the Janissaries and nine in the Azeban

54 M. Niebuhr, *Travels through Arabia and Other Countries in the East*, (trans. Robert Heron), Volume 1, Edinburgh 1792, p. 237-238.

55 *Ibid.*, p. 238.

56 BOA, A.DVNS.MSR.MHM.D.7:724 (evahir-i C 1174/January 27-February 5, 1761).

Corps.[57] Therefore, it would not be wrong to guess that hundreds of the Cairenes who flocked to the port of Suez to meet the soldiers were artisans and merchants under the protection of the Janissary and Azeban Corps. On the other hand, as in other cities of the empire, some Janissaries were also integrated into the Cairo guilds and, due to the two-way mobility between artisans and soldiers, in such cases it is difficult to distinguish who was primarily a soldier engaged in trade and who an artisan affiliated with the military.[58]

From the correspondence between Istanbul and Egypt, we can understand in which cases the soldiers were chastised, and how. For instance, the soldiers who did not join the unit or deserted while on duty were punished and sanctions were imposed on their corps. It was also a major problem for the security of the pilgrims and the authority of the state that the soldiers left the pilgrimage caravan on their journeys to Mecca, traveled by ship, and traded in the ports of the Red Sea. According to the old and established (*kadim*) regulations of the Ciddavi Unit, soldiers who did not join the unit or went to Mecca by sea had to be dismissed from their corps by their commanders, but the frequent violations of these rules show that this regulation was not strictly implemented and that the corps's officers responsible for disciplining the transgressors could also be involved in the same illegal activities. The governors of Egypt and Jeddah, whose incomes decreased due to the commercial ventures of the soldiers, complained about this to Istanbul. No governor was powerful enough to persuade the unit's members to stay within the confines of their military remit. An edict dated 1754 sent from Istanbul to the Egyptian governor, Mustafa Paşa, offers us an interesting view of the way the Ottoman court approached the problem. The document emphasized that it was generally forbidden for the soldiers of the Ciddavi Unit to participate in trade. Nonetheless, no sanction was proposed for punishing the soldiers involved in it. Instead, they were allowed to participate in trade, provided that they obeyed the same rules that merchants and artisans had to follow.[59] Thus, the imperial center effectively acquiesced to the soldiers' involvement in trade, despite defining it is as an illegal endeavor.



---

57 Raymond, *Yeniçerilerin Kahiresi*, p. 85. Merchants were enrolled in the corps for protection and paid an entrance fee. In addition, when one of these merchants died, one-tenth of his inheritance was given to the corps; ibid., p. 88.

58 For a study on the two-way movement between Janissaries and artisans in seventeenth-century Istanbul, see Gülay Y. Diko, "Blurred Boundaries between Soldiers and Civilians: Artisan Janissaries in Seventeenth-Century Istanbul", *Bread from the Lion's Mouth: Artisans Struggling for a Livelihood in Ottoman Cities*, (ed. Suraiya Faroqhi), New York 2015, p. 175-193.

59 BOA, A.DVNS.MSR.MHM.D.7:170 (evahir-i N 1167/July 11-21, 1754).

**Actions of the Ciddavi soldiers that disturbed the public peace and order in the Haremeyn**

The problems caused by the Ciddavi soldiers were not limited to the port-city customs duties. Some adverse events also occurred due to the soldiers' contacts with Bedouins and some of the local power-holders in Mecca and Medina. Although these incidents were rare, they were important because they could damage the public peace and order in the Haremeyn. Among these, the issue of arming the Bedouins was the most significant. The superiority of the Ciddavi soldiers when protecting the Cairo pilgrimage caravans against Bedouin attacks came from the fact that they were professional soldiers and bore firearms such as cannons and rifles. However, according to the imperial edicts sent to the governor of Jeddah in 1711 and 1712, although such procurements were banned, Bedouins were reported to have been buying handguns from soldiers of the Janissary and Azeban Corps. Bedouins, who paid ten to fifteen gold pieces for each handgun, were thus gaining access to several thousand rifles a year. The widespread use of firearms among the Bedouins was a serious threat to the Holy Cities and the pilgrims who constituted the natural targets of Bedouin raids. For this reason, the governor of Jeddah was strictly warned by the imperial center and ordered to confiscate firearms from people who did not belong to the military class.[60]

It was inevitable that the Ciddavi Unit would develop conflicts of interest with local groups as a result of their involvement in affairs beyond their job definition. In 1734, the escalation of the tension between the followers of the Şerif of Mecca and the soldiers of the Ciddavi Unit turned into a battle. Concerned about the further growth of the crises, Istanbul tried to bring the hostility between the two sides to an end through the governors of Egypt, Jeddah, and Damascus, and the Şerif of Mecca. The reason for the hostility was the credit relations between the Ciddavi soldiers and certain members of the Şerif's family, which presented the Ciddavi soldiers – "*most of whom are wealthy*", as noted in the imperial edict – with the opportunity to put forward some inappropriate requests.[61] During the ensuing battle, Hüseyin Efendi, a Janissary commander from the Ciddavi Unit, died, which led the Şerif of Mecca to punish his followers who caused this event. However, some Ciddavi soldiers, who were characterized as "*ignorant*", demanded retaliation and called for one of the Şerif's commanders to be killed in return for the deceased Hüseyin Efendi. According to the edict sent to the Şerif of Mecca, if this demand was deemed to be legally sound, the murderers of Hüseyin Efendi had to be executed for their crimes; if not, the "*ignorant*" people who came up with this demand would have to be the ones to be punished.[62] In addition, in order to stop



60 BOA, A.DVNS.MSR.MHM.D.1:173 (evail-i R 1123/May 19-28, 1711); 1:210 (evail-i R 1124/May 8-17, 1712).

61 BOA, A.DVNS.MSR.MHM.D. 5:62 (evail-i N 1146/February 5-15, 1734).

62 BOA, A.DVNS.MSR.MHM.D. 5:82 (evasıt-ı L 1146/March 16-26, 1734).

this enmity between the Ciddavi soldiers and the followers of the Şerif of Mecca from continuing into the following years, it was ordered that different soldiers be appointed to the Ciddavi Unit.[63] The information in the edict does not allow us to fully understand the roots of this crisis which took place in Mecca. However, the fact that the central administration sent the same edict to the governors of Egypt, Jeddah, and Damascus proves that Istanbul approached the issue with concern. It is known that all across the empire, the Janissaries who left their headquarters for temporary missions had a bad track record in obeying the local administrators in the places they went and were often involved in various conflicts with them.[64] The Janissaries of Egypt were already systematically disobeying the authority of the governor and the Şerif by encroaching on the income of the Jeddah customs and responding to warnings with aggression. In this framework, it would not be unreasonable to assume that the requests mentioned in the aforementioned edict as "*inappropriate requests of Janissaries*" were perceived as yet another manifestation of their challenge to the power of local authority.

## Conclusion

In the eighteenth century, as a result of the enlargement of the sphere of influence of local actors in Egypt vis-à-vis the authority of the central state, a new order regarding pilgrimage affairs was formed. While the imperial center focused on the security of the pilgrims and the supplies of the Holy Cities, the military corps which supported the political control of Egyptian households increased their power in the ports and their share in trade. During this period, although there was no change in the old and established regulations of the Ciddavi Unit, a number of problems arose concerning their implementation. In particular, the Ciddavis who belonged to the Janissary and the Azeban Corps pursued active involvement in trade by taking advantage of their privileged and dominant position in the trading routes of the region. It is not possible to determine the exact scope of these privileges, but the cases examined in this study show that the Janissaries especially took advantage of their commanders' political influence to establish their commercial presence in the ports of Suez and Jeddah. The Janissary and Azeban Corps, which had already for many years been integrated with the commercial life of Cairo, expanded on these connections offered by their Ciddavi affiliation and extended their trade well into the Red Sea and Haremeyn regions. In addition, the Egyptian artisans and merchants under the protection of the corps, who supported the soldiers in transporting their merchandise from Suez to Cairo and selling it there, played an important role in this interregional trade. Eventually, the Ottoman



63 BOA, A.DVNS.MSR.MHM.D. 5:62 (evail-i N 1146/February 5-15, 1734).

64 On the disobedience of the Janissaries and their tendency to rise against their commanders, state officials, and even the central authority, see Mehmet Mert Sunar, *Cauldron of Dissent: A Study of the Janissary Corps, 1807-1826*, SUNY-Binghamton, Ph.D, New York 2006, p. 148-157.

court, unable to keep the Ciddavi soldiers away from such entrepreneurial activities, would acquiesce to accepting their involvement in trade as an ineluctable result of their military presence in the region, as was the case with Ottoman soldiers all around the Empire.

## References

**Archival Sources**

**Devlet Arşivleri Başkanlığı Osmanlı Arşivi/Directorate of State Archives-Ottoman Archives (BOA)**

Bab-ı Asafi Divan-ı Hümayun Defterleri-Mühimme-i Mısır Defterleri (A.DVNS.MSR.MHM.d) 1; 2; 3; 4; 5; 6; 7; 8; 9.

Bab-ı Asafi Divan-ı Hümayun Defterleri-Mühimme Defterleri (A.DVNS.MHM.d) 12.

Maliyeden Müdevver Defterler (MAD.d) 4258.

**Manuscripts**

Abdülkerim b. Abdurrahman, *Tarih-i Mısır*, Süleymaniye Library (Istanbul), Hekimoğlu Ali Paşa Collection 705.

**Published Sources**



Al-Damurdashi Ahmad Kethuda 'Azaban, *Al-Damurdashi's Chronicle of Egypt 1688-1737: Al-durra al-musana fi akhbar al-kinana*, (eds. and trans. Daniel Crecelius and 'Abd al-Wahhab Bakr), Leiden 1991.

'Abd al-Malik, Sami Saleh, "The *Khans* of the Egyptian Hajj Route in the Mamluk and Ottoman Periods", *The Hajj: Collected Essays*, (eds. Venetia Porter and Liana Saif), London 2013, p. 52-64.

Abd ar-Rahman al-Jabarti, *Al-Jabarti's History of Egypt*, (ed. Jane Hathaway), Princeton 2009.

Barkan, Ömer Lütfi, *XV ve XVI inci Asırlarda Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Ziraî Ekonominin Hukukî ve Malî Esasları, Birinci Cilt: Kanunlar*, Istanbul 1943.

Brower, Benjamin Claude, "The Hajj by Land", *The Hajj: Pilgrimage in Islam*, (eds. Eric Tagliacozzo and Shawkat M. Toorawa), New York 2016, p. 87-113.

Cezzâr Ahmed Pasha, *Ottoman Egypt in the Eighteenth Century: The Nizâmnâme-i Mısır of Cezzâr Ahmed Pasha*, (ed. and trans. Stanford J. Shaw), Cambridge 1964.

Crecelius, Daniel, "The Importance of Qusayr in the Late Eighteenth Century", *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt*, 24, (1987), p. 53-60.

_____, "Egypt in the Eighteenth Century", *The Cambridge History of Egypt*, Volume 2, (ed. M. W. Daly), Cambridge 1998, p. 59-86.

Diko, Gülay Y., "Blurred Boundaries between Soldiers and Civilians: Artisan Janissaries in Seventeenth-Century Istanbul", *Bread from the Lion's Mouth: Artisans Struggling for a Livelihood in Ottoman Cities*, (ed. Suraiya Faroqhi), New York 2015, p. 175-193.

Evliyâ Çelebi b. Derviş Mehemmed Zıllî, *Evliyâ Çelebi Seyahatnâmesi*, Volume 9, (eds. Seyit Ali Kahraman, Yücel Dağlı, and Robert Dankoff), Istanbul 2011.

Faroqhi, Suraiya, *Pilgrims and Sultans: The Hajj under the Ottomans 1517-1683*, London 1994.

_____, *Osmanlı'da Kentler ve Kentliler: Kent Mekânında Ticaret Zanaat ve Gıda Üretimi 1550-1650*, (trans. Neyyir Berktay), Istanbul 2011.

Genç, Mehmet, "Contrôle et taxation du commerce du café dans l'Empire ottoman fin XVII[e]-première moitié du XVIII[e] siècle", *Le commerce du café avant l'ère des plantations coloniales : espaces, réseaux, sociétés (XV[e]-XIX[e] siècle)*, (ed. Michel Tuchscherer), Cairo 2001, p. 161-179.

Hathaway, Jane, *The Politics of Households in Ottoman Egypt: The Rise of Qazdağlıs*, Cambridge 1997.

_____, "The *Evlâd-ı 'Arab* (Sons of the Arabs) in Ottoman Egypt: A Rereading", *Frontiers of Ottoman Studies: State, Province and the West*, (eds. Colin Imber and Keiko Kiyotaki), London 2005, p. 203- 216.

_____, "Çerkes Mehmed Bey: Rebel, Traitor, Hero?", *The Turkish Studies Association Bulletin*, 21/1 (1998), p. 110-111.

Holt, P. M., *Egypt and the Fertile Crescent 1516-1922*, New York 1966.

Niebuhr, M., *Travels through Arabia and Other Countries in the East*, (trans. Robert Heron), Volume 1, Edinburgh 1792.

Pamuk, Şevket, *A Monetary History of the Ottoman Empire*, Cambridge 2000.

Raymond, André, *Artisans et commerçants au Caire au XVIII[e] siècle*, Volume 1, Damascus 1973.

_____, "Soldiers in Trade: The Case of Ottoman Cairo", *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 18/1, (1991), p. 16-37.

_____, *Yeniçerilerin Kahiresi: Abdurrahman Kethüda Zamanında Bir Osmanlı Kentinin Yükselişi*, (trans. Alp Tümertekin), Istanbul 2015.

Shaw, Stanford J., *The Financial and Administrative Organization and Development of Ottoman Egypt 1517-1798*, Princeton 1962.

Sunar, Mehmet Mert, *Cauldron of Dissent: A Study of the Janissary Corps, 1807-1826*, SUNY-Binghamton, Ph.D, New York 2006.

Tuchscherer, Michel, "Le Pèlerinage de l'émir Suleymân Gawis al-Qâzdughlî, Sirdâr de la Caravane de La Mekke en 1739", *Annales Islamologiques*, 24 (1988), p. 155-206.

Uzunçarşılı, İsmail Hakkı, *Mekke-i Mükerreme Emirleri*, Ankara 2013.

*Cihannüma*
Tarih ve Coğrafya Araştırmaları Dergisi
Sayı VIII/1 – Temmuz 2022, 101-127
*Doi: 10.30517/cihannuma.1131055*

# JANISSARIES AND CONFLICTS OVER RURAL LANDS IN THE VIDIN REGION (1730-1810)

**İrfan Kokdaş***

**Abstract**

The Vidin region has attracted much scholarly attention, particularly due to the bloody uprisings in the area around the middle of the nineteenth century. For a long period, Balkan historians have understood this mid-nineteenth-century crisis as an inevitable consequence of a Bulgarian national awakening. Although the recent scholarship challenges the nationalist narrative, it continues to ignore the complexities of the socio-legal structures in the Vidinese hinterland, which had developed in the course of the eighteenth century, and reduces all conflict lines to the duality of interests between peasants and proprietors. Going beyond the dualistic narratives of exploitation, this study aims to historicize the land question in the Balkans by presenting the Janissaries both as actors of the Ottoman military establishment in the Vidin region and as rural investors who enjoyed benefits from and shaped the workings of the area's land regime thanks to their own networks and the state's policies. By doing so, it contextualizes the ruptures and continuities in landholding patterns, and also highlights the rural entrepreneurship of the Janissaries, who in Ottoman/Middle Eastern scholarship have generally been portrayed as active historical agents of city-based riots and urban-centered commercial activities.

**Keywords:** Janissaries, land disputes, rural networks, Ottoman land law, rural investments

* Assistant Professor, *İzmir Kâtip Çelebi Üniversitesi, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, History Department*, Izmir, Turkey, irfan.kokdas@ikc.edu.tr, ORCID: 0000-0002-4858-6018.
Presented at the Second JANET Workshop, in Izmir September 10-12, 2021, this paper is based on the database of the project "JANET: Janissaries in Ottoman Port-Cities: Muslim Financial and Political Networks in the Early Modern Mediterranean (2020-2025)", European Research Council Starting Grant StGr2019 no. 849911

Makale Geliş Tarihi / Received Date: 02.11.2021 Makale Kabul Tarihi / Acceptance Date: 24.12.2021

## Vidin'de Yeniçeriler ve Toprak Kavgaları (1730-1810)

**Öz**

Vidin bölgesi özellikle 19. yüzyılın ortasındaki kanlı isyanlardan dolayı birçok araştırmacının dikkatini çekmiştir. Balkan tarihçileri uzun bir süre boyunca 19. yüzyılın ortasındaki bu krizi Bulgar milliyetçiliğinin kaçınılmaz bir sonucu olarak yorumladı. Son dönemde tarih yazımı bu milliyetçi anlatıyı eleştirirken Vidin kırsalında 18. yüzyıl boyunca oluşan karmaşık sosyo-hukuki yapıları ise görmezden gelmeye ve tüm çatışma hatlarını köylü-toprak sahibi ikilemine indirgemeye devam etti. İkiliğin ve sömürü anlatısının ötesine geçen bu çalışma, Balkan coğrafyasında toprak meselesini tarihsel bağlama oturtmayı amaç ediniyor. Bunu yaparken de yeniçerileri hem bölgenin askeri unsuru hem de toprak rejiminin işleyişini belirleyen ve ondan faydalanan kırsal yatırımcılar olarak tanımlıyor. Bu sayede çalışma toprak sistemindeki devamlılıkları ve kırılmaları ortaya koyarken aynı zamanda Osmanlı ve Ortadoğu çalışmalarında kent ayaklanmalarının ve ticari faaliyetlerin aktörleri olarak resmedilen yeniçerilerin kırsal yatırımcı rollerinin altını çiziyor.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** yeniçeriler, arazi kavgaları, kırsal ağlar, Osmanlı arazi hukuku, kırsal yatırımlar



### Introduction

The Vidin region has already attracted much scholarly attention, particularly due to the bloody uprisings in the area around the middle of the nineteenth century. Attempts were made to ease the protracted struggles in Niş, Lom, Belgradçık, and Vidin through the unceasing efforts of the Ottoman state – up until the end of its rule in the region – to reach a compromise between the disputing groups, namely Christian sharecroppers[1] and the powerful landholding military. The latter had only begun to consolidate its presence during and after the war with the Holy League in the 1683-1699 period.[2]

For a long period, Balkan historians have understood this mid-nineteenth-century crisis as an inevitable consequence of a Bulgarian national awakening, since the ethno-religious demarcation between landless Christian cultivators and Muslim landholders was a profound factor in contributing to the peasant discontent.[3]

---

1 In fact, there were also several landless Muslim peasants in the Vidin-Niş-Lom area who appear as tenants in records. See, for instance, Devlet Arşivleri Başkanlığı Osmanlı Arşivi (BOA), Maliye Nezareti Temettuat Defterleri (ML.VRD.TMT.d) 814:6-25 (29 Z 1261/December 29, 1845).

2 Rossitsa Gradeva, "War and Peace along the Danube: Vidin at the End of the Seventeenth Century", *Oriente Moderno*, Nuova serie 20 (81)/1, (2001), p. 153-156.

3 For a survey of these points on the Vidin Uprising, see Attila Aytekin, "Peasant Protest in the Late Ottoman Empire: Moral Economy, Revolt, and the Tanzimat Reforms", *International Review of Social History*, 57/2, (2012), p. 197-201.

Studies by İnalcık and Gandev, however, have revisited this nationalist thesis from different perspectives, both sharing the assumption that the functioning of the *gospodarlık* regime[4] in rural Vidin, which dated back to the eighteenth century, was the root cause of the uprisings, as the system involved heavy peasant exploitation and corvée labor.[5] Gandev acknowledges that the Vidinese entrepreneurs, drawn mainly from Janissary rank-and-file and officers, acquired land with title deeds, but emphasizes that the key element for the development of the Vidinese land tenure system was the unauthorized appropriation of common lands by investors as they established large "freehold" estates (*çiftlik*s) in these areas.[6] Though İnalcık also depicts the exploitative character of the land-tenure system in the region, particularly underlining the personal abuses by large military Muslim landlords, he does not push his analysis further.[7]

However, their analyses ignore the complexities of the socio-legal structures in the Vidinese hinterland, which came into being during the eighteenth century, and reduce all conflict lines to the duality of interests between peasants and proprietors. In this interpretation, the competition over rural resources is seen as a sign of land privatization and a deterioration in the Ottoman land regime, or somehow as a deviation from a well-working *miri* regime hinging on the "*protection of small peasantry*".

This study, however, maintains that land possession or land holding in eighteenth-century Vidin was a result neither of privatization nor of the loss and corruption of state control; quite contrary to this, it was a new modality of land regime dependent upon the tangled rights on *miri* land and freehold properties.



4 Under the *gospodarlık* regime, large estates (*çiftlik*) were owned by the "landlords" ("*gospodar*", Bulgarian for "master") consisting of Janissaries and local notables, while peasants on the *gospodar* lands had to pay double dues: taxes to the state and rents to the masters. For the details on the system, see Mehmet Safa Saraçoğlu, *Letters from Vidin: A study of Ottoman Governmentality and Politics of Local Administration, 1864-1877*, The Ohio State University, Ph.D, Ohio 2007, p. 10-14.

5 At the heart of the Vidin and Niş uprisings lies the *çiftlik* question, whose origins dated back to the early eighteenth century. The evolution of large *çiftlik*s, their capitalistic and feudal natures, and the transition from state to private property prior to the nineteenth century are the key themes in historiography that link the nineteenth-century land problems to the dynamics of the earlier period. For a snapshot of these debates, see Attila Aytekin, "Historiography of Land Tenure and Agriculture in the Nineteenth Century Ottoman Empire", *Asian Research Trends New Series*, 4, (2009), p. 6-10. See also Halil İnalcık, *Tanzimat ve Bulgar Meselesi*, Istanbul 1992, p. 75-107; Christo Gandev, "L'apparition des rapports capitalistes dans l'économie rurale de la Bulgarie du nord-ouest au cours du XVIIIe siècle", *Etudes Historiques*, (1960), p. 211-212.

6 Gandev's observations are discussed within a broader geographical concept by McGowan in his study on the *çiftlik* formations along the Danube; Bruce McGowan, *Economic Life in Ottoman Europe: Taxation, Trade and the Struggle for Land, 1600-1800*, Cambridge 1981, p. 57-73.

7 For a similar analysis, see Aytekin, "Peasant Protest", p. 198. Although small peasants enjoyed the protection offered by the Ottoman *miri* land regime, the spread of tax-farming practices, wrote İnalcık, deteriorated their position and state–peasant relations, since the tax-farmers, usually prominent local men, sought to satisfy their own interest. İnalcık, *Bulgar Meselesi*, p. 85-94.

The legal status of *çiftlik*s, farms, hayfields, gardens, mills, and apiaries was formalized with a *miri–mülk* distinction, but in a way that was very permeable in market transactions, and which left a discernible imprint on the nineteenth-century property disputes in the centralizing Ottoman state. Going beyond the narratives of exploitation and dualities, the study aims to historicize the land question in the Balkans by presenting the Janissaries as both actors in the Ottoman military establishment in the Vidin area and rural investors[8] who enjoyed benefits from and shaped the workings of Vidin's land regime thanks to their own networks and the Ottoman state's policies in the region. In doing so, this study not only contextualizes the ruptures and continuities in landholding patterns, but also highlights the rural entrepreneurship of the Janissaries, who in Ottoman/Middle Eastern scholarship have generally been portrayed as active historical agents of city-based riots and urban-centered commercial activities.

By focusing on the conflicts over land and rural properties, this study investigates the Janissaries' investments in the eighteenth-century Vidinese hinterland, specifically in the 1730-1810 period, and their pivotal role in shaping the land tenure system in the area where they acted as litigants. With their wide range of investments in rural immovables, the Janissaries were influential actors in the system and shaped the contours of the land regime in Vidin. The study sheds light on the alleged enmeshment of legal statuses in the area, primarily stemming from the general nature of Janissary investments, as the blurry physical boundaries between freehold properties and state lands strengthened the emergence of hybrid property and usufruct rights. It also maintains that bundling different property rights to different immovables into a single unit and the frequent transfers of *miri* lands triggered contention, though not so much between peasants and Janissaries but mainly between Janissaries themselves, as the interweaving of ownership and usufruct became more and more subject to inheritance, transfer, and sale.



## General overview: Janissary properties in the Vidinese countryside

As early as the 1700s an imperial order sent to Vidin demanded the destruction of around 200 animal *çiftlik*s (*kışlak*s) established by Muslim entrepreneurs, including Vidinese Janissaries, along the southern side of the

[8] It should be noted, however, that on the southern side of the Danube there were also several Janissaries residing in the villages and holding small lands. See, for instance, Bab-ı Asafi Divan-ı Hümayun Sicilleri Özi ve Silistre Ahkam Defterleri (A.DVNS.AHK.ÖZSİ.d) 4:133, order no. 519 (evasıt-ı Ra 1160/March 22-April 1, 1747); 5:112, order no: 461 (evasıt-ı Ra 1162/February 28-March 10, 1749). See also Evgeni Radushev, "'Peasant' Janissaries?", *Journal of Social History*, 42/2, (2008), p. 453-461. Interestingly, Vidinese court records are silent on the Janissaries' settlement in the villages, and thus the overwhelming majority of entrepreneur Janissaries in this study were city-dwellers.

Danube.[9] Up until the 1760s, these Janissaries had been able to establish an exceptionally high number of large estates and always had a keen interest in expanding their investments in Wallachia. This early decree in itself is revealing of the fact that, just fifteen years after the Ottoman war with the Holy League and the subsequent penetration of the Janissaries into Vidin, they had attained extraordinary economic capacity as rural entrepreneurs on the other side of the Danube. The rapid political-military changes in the late seventeenth century turned Vidin into an "El Dorado" for Janissaries, as many of them came to settle and find lucrative investment opportunities in its hinterland.

The region was devastated during the wars against the Holy League, the havoc culminating in the occupation of Vidin, which inevitably caused massive peasant flight. When the imperial center reorganized the frontier defenses along the Danube and facilitated the establishment of Janissaries in fortresses and *palanka*s, the Janissaries found vacant fertile lands in Vidin. Fatma Gül Karagöz cited two important imperial orders that perfectly illustrate the dynamics behind the rise of the Vidinese Janissaries as rural entrepreneurs.[10] For instance, the first order, dated 1707, cites the presence of abundant vacant lands around the Vidin fortress after the Habsburg occupation in 1689. Referring to the fact that the inhabitants had fled into neighboring districts due to the occupation, it states that following the reconquest of the city by the Ottoman forces, these areas and their title deeds (*tapu temessüki*) were given to new claimants. Some Janissaries were among those who eagerly sought and took these lands. Undoubtedly, this might reflect not only a process of sending Janissary units from other areas, but also enrolling locals into the Janissary Corps. In any case, with this order the center recognized the Janissaries' integration into the countryside by issuing official certificates. In 1714 the imperial center sent another order for the management of vacant *vakıf* lands, entitling all fugitive villagers or deed holders to return and retake their own properties. This order, however, stipulates that they could claim their lands only within four years of its issuance. By authorizing the local judges not to hear cases against new property holders, including Janissaries, the first order closed the doors to the old landholders' claims and fully secured the new economic position of Janissaries on state lands. Although the second decree granted rights to the old titleholders, by setting a prescription period it did not entirely block the Janissaries' and other entrepreneurs' access to extensive *vakıf* lands. These imperial policies thus created a dazzling diversity of Janissary rural investments around



9 Mahir Aydın, "On the Shores of Danube: Neighbourhood between Wallachia and Vidin", *Turkey & Romania: A History of Partnership and Collaboration in the Balkans*, (eds. Florentina Nitu et al.), Istanbul 2016, p. 155-156.

10 Fatma Gül Karagöz, *1700-1750 Yılları Arasında Osmanlı Devleti'nde Arazi Hukuku Uygulamaları: Vidin ve Antakya Örneği*, Istanbul University, Ph.D, Istanbul 2018, p. 125-132.

Vidin, and they acquired land, gardens, and vineyards, and erected rooms, underground cellars (*zir-i zemin*), animal barns, and storehouses.

Janissary investments in the Vidinese countryside evince a high degree of continuity in terms of their diversification throughout the eighteenth century; by the 1730s they typically owned a mixed portfolio, particularly consisting of cultivable land, gardens, vineyards, pastures, and mills. An inquiry into court records, for instance, indicates that out of 147 identified cases of property sales, the granting or ceding of usufruct rights, and conflicts that involved Janissaries as litigants, 56 cases contain transfers or disputes over vineyards and gardens, 39 over mills, 30 over *çiftlik*s, 44 over arable fields (*tarla*), 61 over pastures (*çayır*), and 43 over rural buildings.[11] Such a hybrid outlook regarding their investments is more visible in the recorded sales and renouncing of rights. For instance, among 25 of all 43 cases of sales of vineyards or gardens, the Janissaries were at the same time engaged in transactions for other properties, such as cultivable fields, *çiftlik*s, or grasslands.[12] This was also true for the handing over of mills: in 12 out of 19 cases referring to the sale of mills the Janissaries also sold other properties at the same time. Moreover, in 8 of all 25 transfers of pastures, the Janissaries sold a mill. Similarly, almost one third of all transactions of arable fields and lands (10 out of 30) also contain the sale of a mill. This means that in most of these legal cases the litigation or property registration revolved around the transfer of or a dispute over at least two rural properties. The figures, thus, attest to the fact that the Janissaries usually held more than two rural properties in the same area, quite often attached to each other.



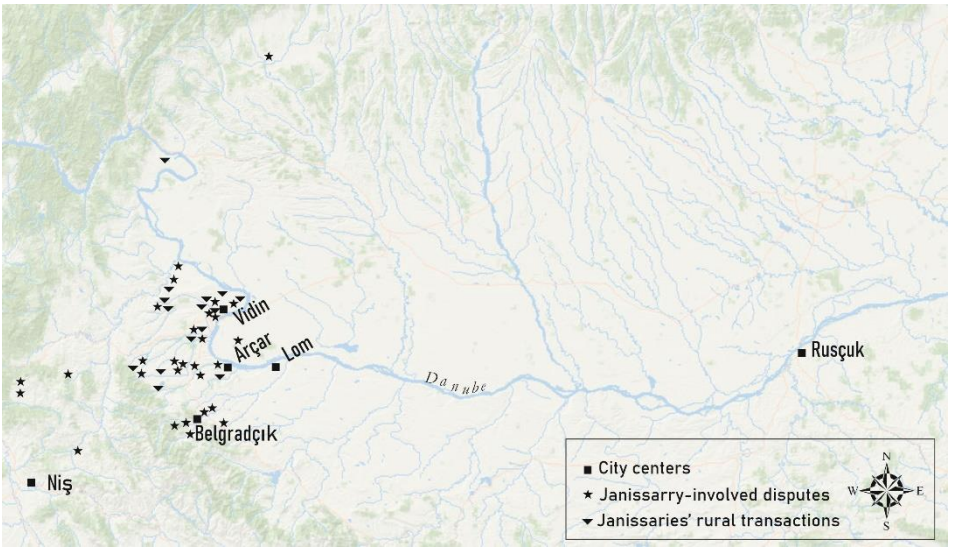
This wide range of Janissary investments in Vidin was influenced by many factors, one of which was the geoclimatic patterns that had the most enduring and long-lasting impact on the mode of rural property holding. With rich water reserves and large grasslands, the deep hinterland of Vidin offered the Janissaries the opportunity to possess pasturelands and arable fields together with watermills, gardens, or vineyards. The travelers and Ottoman inspectors often admired this agricultural richness in the Danube area and underlined the potential of animal husbandry and apiculture, while the Janissaries made very rich and diverse investments in both Wallachia and the Vidinese countryside.[13]

---

11 Nacionalna Biblioteka "Sv. Sv. Kiril i Metodij" (NBSKM), Vidin *Sicil*s (VS) 6; 9; 11; 39; 41; 44; 46; 47; 48; 53; 61; 62; 63; 64; 65; 68; 69; 70; 71; 74; 77; 78; 79; 80; 82; 160; 163; 167; 169; 307; 310; 346; 159A; 25A.

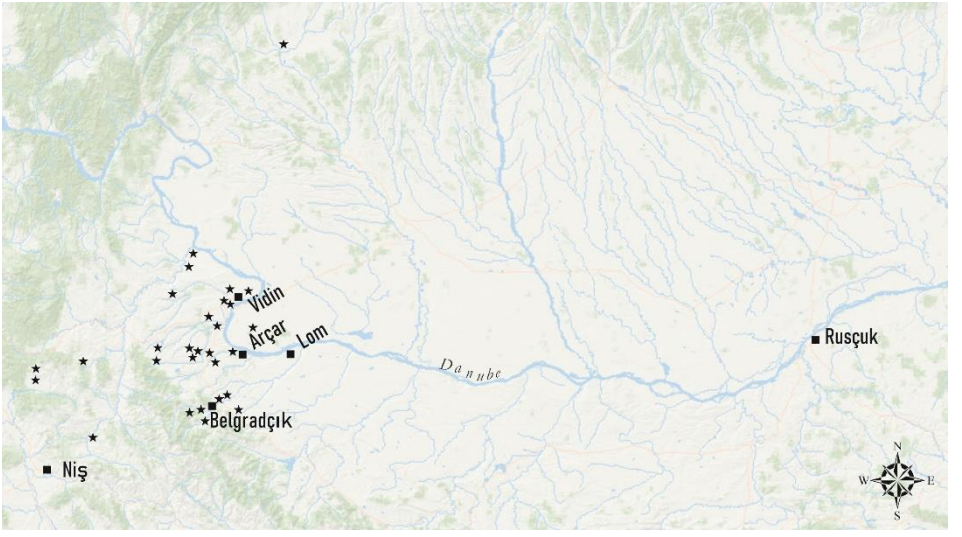
12 The author is in the process of preparing a paper on the extent to which other segments of Vidinese society developed a similar investment portfolio in the eighteenth century. Preliminary findings suggest that the military, administrative, and fiscal roles of the Janissaries and their credit capacity gave them an edge in the rural market vis-à-vis other groups such as merchants and religious dignitaries.

13 İrfan Kokdaş, "Habsburglar Kara Eflak'a Gelirse: Vidin'de Hayvancılık Sektörünün Dönüşümü (1695-1740)", *Cihannüma: Tarih ve Coğrafya Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 5/2, (2019), p. 92-93.

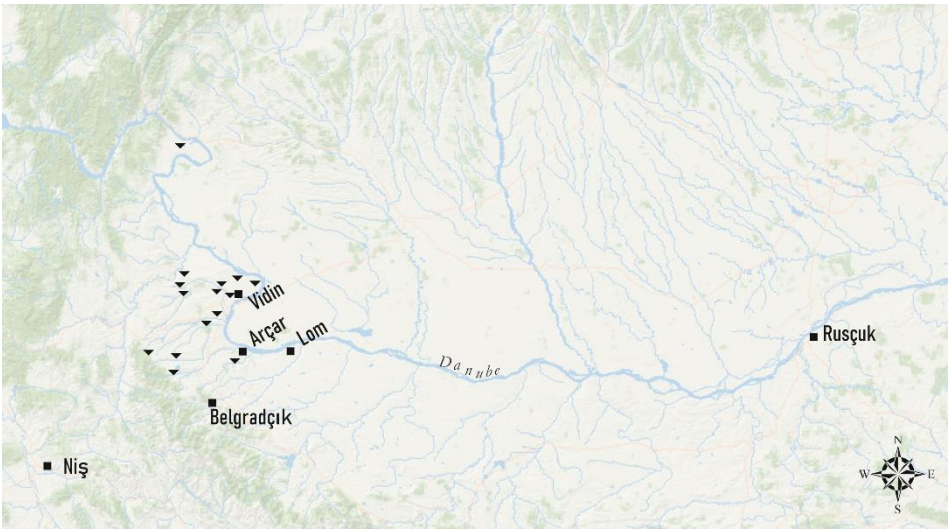



**Map 1-A:** Geographical Distribution of Janissaries' Rural Properties around Vidin






**Map 1-B:** Geographical Distribution of Janissary-Involved Disputes over Rural Properties




**Map 1-C:** Geographical Distribution of Janissaries' Rural Transactions

Two reports prepared in 1753 and 1760 on the investments of Janissaries and military men in Wallachia reveal that they held pasturelands, storehouses, apiaries, and mills.[14] Unlike Fethülislam (Kladovo), which was devoid of large arable lands, a fact that from the very beginning led its residents to establish their agricultural investments in Wallachia, Vidin had a very rich hinterland.[15] As Map 1 also illustrates, the hybrid character of these investments went hand in hand with their very dense geographical distribution. The rural properties of Janissaries were scattered in a roughly triangular area with a base along the northern drainage zones of the Timok and Lom Rivers and with a southern vertex around Belgradçık. It is very instructive to underline that this triangular area almost overlapped with the conflict zone that witnessed a series of uprisings, land disputes, and reform projects from the 1840s onwards. The concentration of Janissary investments in this triangular zone is neither exceptional nor surprising given the fact that in the Ottoman world urban entrepreneurs often made investments in the water-abundant areas in the vicinity of towns and bought mills, orchards, and vineyards. Together with these rural estates, they held arable fields and pastures.[16]



14 For the details of these reports, see Aysel Yıldız and İrfan Kokdaş, "Peasantry in a Well-protected Domain: Wallachian Peasantry and Muslim *Çiftlik/Kışlak*s under the Ottoman Rule", *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, 22/1, (2020), p. 175-190.

15 BOA, Cevdet Hariciye (C.HR) 35/1733 (evasıt-ı Ş 1173/May 26-June 4, 1760).

16 James A. Reilly, "Status Groups and Propertyholding in the Damascus Hinterland, 1828-1880", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 21/4, (1989), p. 517-518; idem, "The End of an Era: Pre-Reform Damascus in the 1820s", *Bulletin Détudes Orientales*, 61, (2012), p. 213-214; Hülya Canbakal, *Society and Politics in an Ottoman Town: 'Ayntāb in the 17th Century*, Leiden 2007, p. 38-39; Suraiya Faroqhi, *Men of Modest Substance: House Owners and House Property in Seventeenth-Century*

The banks along the Topolovetz, Vidbol, and Musumane rivers, for instance, were popular investment outlets for water-mill construction among the Janissaries. Even a cursory look into the boundaries of rural properties specified in court records indicates that valuable rural real estate such as mills and vineyards were located in the midst of vast rangelands that often bore the name of their current or past holders.[17] The Topolovetz, Arçar, Vidbol, and Voynishka rivers and their tributaries provided extensive water reservoirs, and this turned the area into an ideal space for rich agricultural investments, especially for animal husbandry.[18] The pastures thus appear as the most cited property in the dealings and struggles that involved Janissaries. For instance, among 66 cases of Janissary-involved property sales or cessions, 25 contain deals for pastures, while almost half of the identified conflicts (37 out of 81) contain a dispute over grazing areas. In most of these cases, the litigation or transfer involves not only grazing areas, but also other lucrative rural properties. The concurrent contracts for land and immovables in the same location and the conflicts over them indeed created a multiplicity of legal status and demands over rural properties. For example, in one record on the transfer of land and *çiftlik* buildings (*çiftlik ebniyesi*), among them a watermill, between the relatives of Süleyman Ağa and the guardian of Janissary İslam Beşe's minor son, the *çiftlik* buildings, having a legal status of freehold property, changed hands with the consent of the timariot (literally: official master or overseer of the land, *sahib-i arz*) through granting and cession (*tefviz* and *ferağ*).[19] These wordings are of crucial importance, because the terms *tefviz* and *ferağ* were employed for the dealings on state lands whose transfer was approved only with the consent of the master of the land. Such a formulation in this case suggests that the legal status of fields as state lands encapsulated the status of the buildings of the large estate. However, there are also cases in which fields and grasslands attached to the *çiftlik*s were legalized altogether as freehold property. Following the death of *yamak* Osman Beşe from the 5th Bölük of the Janissary Corps, who died indebted around 1764, his heirs vehemently defended the inherited *çiftlik* against the deceased's Janissary creditors, who intended to sell the grange and its



*Ankara and Kayseri*, Cambridge 1987, p. 54-97; Beshara B. Doumani, *Family Life in the Ottoman Mediterranean: A Social History*, Cambridge 2017, p. 224-51.

17 For examples, see NBSKM, VS.11:75-77 (13 Ş 1188/October 19, 1774); 160:108 (15 R 1207/November 30, 1792); 6:164 (7 B 1208/February 8, 1794); 46:143 (17 R 1189/June 17, 1775); 78:233-234 (5 Ş 1179/January 17, 1766).

18 In other parts of the empire, geography and peasant flight (mobility) were decisive factors behind the rise of military investments in animal husbandry; and the Vidin region witnessed widespread peasant mobility in the eighteenth century. Zafer Karademir, *İmparatorluk Ekonomisinin Can Damarları: Osmanlı Ülkesinde Hayvancılık İşletmeleri (1500-1800)*, Istanbul 2016, p. 73-79, p. 115-132. See also Kokdaş, "Habsburglar", p. 83-103.

19 NBSKM, VS.63:221 (9 Za 1186/February 1, 1773).

surrounding lands to them in order to clear his debts.[20] The representatives of the heirs insisted that the *çiftlik* could not be sold to pay the debts. Although they did not present any documented proof, their allegations drew upon the *miri* status of the *çiftlik* secured with a title deed (*tapu temessükü*), which forbade the sale of an estate for debt payment. The *çiftlik*, consisting of several structures, including a house, storehouse, animal barn, mill, garden, and vineyard, had the fields and pasture coterminous with them. The creditors now demanded the sale of half the share of both the buildings and the encompassing area of the *çiftlik*, suggesting that fields and pasture were held as freehold property. None of the parties at the courtroom proved their claim with any sultanic grant of ownership of public estates (*mülkname*), court warrant, or title deed. The creditors instead buttressed their position with witnesses, who testified that the conflicted land was a freehold *çiftlik* with its buildings.

Essentially, the naming of the land as garden, vineyard, or *çiftlik* did not fully determine the characteristics of a property. In an example of a gift contract between the Janissary Elhac Mustafa from the 41st Bölük and the children of another Janissary, Seyyid Ahmed Ağa, from the 15th Cemaat, the property was termed a garden (*bahçe*), but had quite a resemblance to a *çiftlik*, as it had rooms, a mansion, an animal barn, and peasant rooms (*reaya odaları*).[21] In the case of the property inherited from *yamak* Osman Beşe, the creditors probably used the witnesses to prove the cultivable lands belonged to the *çiftlik*. Their claim was primarily built on a legal opinion (*fetva*), which for debt payments sanctioned the selling of *çiftlik* held as freehold property and all the appurtenant lands "*belonging to it since the former times*" (*ona kadimden beri tabi olan*).



**Not blurred but interwoven: private property and usufruct rights**

The term "*appurtenant land*" is a key concept that appears repeatedly in the Janissary-involving rural transactions that recur among the many property disputes in Vidin. In not a few instances, the appurtenant lands were certainly designated as an extension of freehold properties. In most cases, however, the appurtenant land and hayfields belonging to the rural properties were classified as state land, in line with the Ottoman land law. For instance, in a dispute among heirs over the control of the *çiftlik* of a deceased woman, Fatma, the estate and lands attached to it were described simply as *çiftlik* and appurtenant lands (*çiftlik ve ona tabi*). Both were transferred to Süleyman Ağa from the 31st Bölük with the approval of the *voyvoda*

20 Some of the creditor Janissaries in this case were again identified with their *bölük* affiliations. A half share of the *çiftlik* was ultimately sold to Halil Ağa for 1,211 *guruş*; NBSKM, VS.61:256 (25 Ra 1178/September 22, 1764).

21 The legal dispute emerged after the heirs of Elhac Mustafa denied the gift deal and seized the property. NBSKM, VS.74:180 (gurre-i B 1181/November 23, 1767).

of Sahra *mukataası*, the *sahib-i arz* in that case.[22] In another case, the representative of Fatma, the daughter of the deceased Elhac Ahmed Ağa, the *serdengeçdi ağa* of the 41st Bölük, transferred her share in the mill around Musumane to Mustafa Alemdar from the same *bölük*. This transfer also included the appurtenant pasture (*asiyab ve ona tabi çayır*) attached to it, the transaction again being subject to the permission of the *sahib-i arz*.[23]

Ebubekir Ağa, again one of the Janissary *serdengeçdi*s serving at Vidin, came to court to validate his land acquisition from Hace Kadın who inherited the rural properties from her brother Mehmed Ağa. He claimed that the area, including a mill, vineyard, buildings, and pasture, had been transferred to him through a legal cession (*ferağ*) with the permission of the *sahib-i arz* and Hace Kadın's consent.[24] The crucial point in these transactions is the fact that the cession implemented for the *miri* lands with the approval of the master of the state lands does not actually mention any value for the transfer of the freeholding vineyard and mill although they were certainly transferred to the new owner. This means that the legally binding and critical part of this transfer was the pasture, whose transmission required the overseer's approval, and when the parties got it, the consent of the holders of the *miri* pasture or fields involved the sale of freehold real estates as well. One might indeed hypothesize that this vineyard and mill could be *miri*, but in Vidinese court records I have not seen any mills or vineyards described as *miri*. Moreover, in other examples, scribes, implicitly or explicitly, made a distinction between the *miri* status of lands and other rural freeholding properties attached to them. In 1810, when *serdengeçti* Salih Ağa came to the court to sell his *çiftlik*, including arable fields, grasslands, gardens, and other buildings, the scribe recorded two kinds of transfers, namely *ferağ* for the *miri* properties and *bey-i bat* for the freeholding properties, but did not explicitly distinguish between the properties of different statutes.[25] He, however, highlighted these different statutes by inserting a formula stating that although there was only one transaction fee in this case, this fee included both the transfer value and purchase price. This implies that the former was set for the *miri* properties and the latter for the freehold. In another case, in which Zeyneb Hatun proceeded against Elhac İbrahim Beşe from the 43rd Cemaat, the latter proved his possession rights to *çiftliks* with honorable witnesses who stated that she had earlier sold the *çiftlik* and its land to him.[26] To show the different status of the *çiftlik* buildings and appurtenant lands, in this example the testimony of the witnesses was carefully inserted into the court record. As the *çiftlik* buildings and lands had different legal statuses, the sale of the *çiftlik* with its land



22 NBSKM, VS.74:56 (11 B 1180/December 13, 1766).
23 NBSKM, VS.68:8 (15 Z 1204/August 26, 1790).
24 NBSKM, VS.68:167 (11 S 1206/October 10, 1791).
25 NBSKM, VS.47:96 (gurre-i R 1225/May 6, 1810).
26 NBSKM, VS.46:170-171 (20 B 1189/September 16, 1775).

did not validate the transfer of the land, so they added that for *çiftlik* lands of *miri* status – certainly not for the buildings – İbrahim Beşe had also got permission from the master of the land. In another case, dated 1775, when Molla Hasan Beşe from the 82nd Cemaat bought a *çiftlik* and the appurtenant lands attached to it, the scribes first listed real estate in the *çiftlik*, such as an underground cellar, a storeroom, vineyards, and a garden, and explicitly formulated their transfer as an irrevocable sale (*bey-i bat-ı sahih*). Then, they categorized the transaction of grasslands and arable fields as *ferağ* and inserted the permission of the *sahib-i arz* for these appurtenant lands.[27]

In all these transactions, another key point is the continuation of the legal status of appurtenant zones. All seem to have been conducted in accordance with the legal requirement of the *miri* regime, but all buildings and land surrounding them were treated as a single and inseparable commodity in the market. The *de jure* usufruct and property rights were so well embedded into the eighteenth-century practices in Vidin that the distinction between *miri* and *mülk* properties were often, if not always, recorded at the times of granting or renouncing of usufruct rights. Despite this legal formulation, in all cases of land transaction under study which explicitly mention any value, all buildings and land changed hands with a lump sum value without setting different prices for the buildings and appurtenant lands.

This is true particularly for the *çiftlik*s not only in Vidin but also in the whole of Rumelia and Anatolia. As portrayed by the studies of Aysel Yıldız and Sophia Laiou on the land tenure system in Thessaly, the legal status of buildings and other cash-producing structures in the *çiftlik* zones was considered separately from that of the arable fields attached to them.[28] These authors rightly highlighted the coexistence of state lands and private property with different legal status in the *çiftlik*s. Drawing upon the probate inventories listing only the private property as a rule of inheritance law, Papastamatiou noted that in eighteenth-century Salonika the so-called core of a *çiftlik* in the dominant inventory methodology consisted of peasant huts and the land itself.[29] He added, however, that the latter is not explicitly stated in inventories and that the *çiftlik*'s periphery comprised accessories, vineyards, gardens, animals, tools, and other buildings. All these observations allude to a hybrid semantic meaning of rural properties and their legal statutes, especially in large estates, a phenomenon parallel to the situation in Vidin. In the



27 NBSKM, VS.46:201-202 (3 Ş 1189/September 29, 1775).

28 Sophia Laiou, "Some Considerations Regarding *Çiftlik* Formation in the Western Thessaly, Sixteenth-Nineteenth Centuries", *The Ottoman Empire, the Balkans, the Greek Lands: Toward a Social and Economic History. Studies in Honor of John C. Alexander*, (eds. Elias Kolovos et al.), Istanbul 2007, p. 269-270; Aysel Yıldız, "Politics, Economy, and *Çiftlik*s: The History of Four *Çiftlik*s in Larissa (Yenişehir-i Fener)", *Turkish Historical Review*, 11, (2020), p. 45-52.

29 Demetrios Papastamatiou, "The Structure, Content and Development of Large Estates in the Environs of Salonica during the Period 1697-1770", *Festschrift in Honor of Ioannis P. Theocharides. II. Studies on the Ottoman Empire and Turkey*, (eds. Evangelia Balta et al.), Istanbul 2014, p. 385-386.

probate of Janissary Ahmed Alemdar from the 82nd Cemaat, the court scribes, for instance, recorded only *çiftlik* buildings (*çiftlik ebniyesi*) together with beehives, but in the probate of Elhac Mustafa Alemdar from the 41st Bölük the estate is articulated simply as *çiftlik* without providing any further detail.[30] In the inventory of another Janissary, Ahmed Beşe from the 19th Cemaat, scribes listed the *çiftlik* together with buildings (*çiftlik maa ebniye*).[31]

All these convoluted uses, at first glance, show the ambiguity of the Ottoman land regime and a transformation of *miri* property to quasi-*mülk* property, i.e., privatization of land. This argument is systematically put forward in an oft-cited study by Özer Ergenç, who advocated that the frequent land transactions with title deeds and the permission of the master of land overseer, the ability of city dwellers to acquire land and keep it for a long period under their usufruct, and the use of terms like *mülk* or *mülk-i müştera*, turned state demesnes into quasi-private property.[32]

However, in Vidin the various terms used interchangeably for the *çiftlik* properties mirrored the existence of multiple property and usufruct claims over landed properties. Indeed, in Vidin the court scribes were generally, if not always, cautious and took the separation between the *mülk* and *miri* properties quite seriously; and this practice was not only limited to the *çiftlik* areas. In 1775 a woman named Meryem delivered her shares in a water mill, vineyard, and hayfield to the Janissary Ahmed Beşe from the 12th Bölük.[33] In this particular transaction, lands including a hayfield (*çayır*), categorized as the appurtenant lands of the mill and vineyard, were treated separately in a legal manner as *mülk-i müfevvez*, namely state land subject to transaction.[34] While the mill and vineyard were sold as private property with an irrevocable sale (*bey-i bat-ı sahih*), her land was delivered to the Janissary with a standard protocol through the permission of the *sahib-i arz*. Together with this distinction, this deal also underscores the bundling of different rural properties subject to different legal statuses into a single alienable commodity in the land market.[35] Around the same time, when the Janissary Ahmed Alemdar



30 NBSKM, VS.81:12-13 (25 C 1159/July 15, 1746); 53:26 (gurre-i Za 1220/January 21, 1806).

31 NBSKM, VS.77:16-17 (17 B 1190/September 1, 1776).

32 Özer Ergenç, "XVII. ve XVIII. Yüzyıl Anadolusu'nda Toprak Tasarrufu ve Mülkiyeti Üzerine Değerlendirmeler", *Şehir, Toplum, Devlet: Osmanlı Tarihi Yazıları*, Istanbul 2012, p. 215-45.

33 NBSKM, VS.46:142-143 (17 R 1189/June 17, 1775).

34 For the use of *mülk-i müfevvez* in defining property rights and status of transactions, see Fatma Gül Karagöz, "18. Yüzyıl Şeriye Sicili Örneklerine Arazi Üzerinde Mülkiyet ve Tasarruf Haklarını Tanımlayan Terimler", *Türk Hukuk Tarihi Araştırmaları*, 16, (2013), p. 45-51.

35 The *fetva* collections emphasize the different legal status of land and trees planted on it. Although they categorically banned the sale of the two as a single alienable commodity in the market, it seems that the bundling of land and trees in the market by the master of land was a quite common practice, which found its echo in the *fetva* texts. See, for instance, H. Necati Demirtaş, *Açıklamalı Osmanlı Fetvâları: Fetâvâ-yı Ali Efendi-Cild-i Sâni Çatalcalı Ali Efendi*, Istanbul, 2014, p. 560.

from the 37th Bölük delegated the rural buildings in the *çiftlik*, such as a storehouse, vineyard, garden, and cellar, and the appurtenant lands to his fellow Molla, Hasan Beşe from the 82nd Cemaat, the court scribe followed the same procedure in distinguishing between the private estates and *miri* property.[36] All parties, including the court officials, however, regarded these properties as an inseparable tradable bundle in the land market.

This utmost care in recording is surely not groundless. As elsewhere, the legal status of rural buildings, gardens, and planted trees often brought contested parties into the Vidinese courtroom. One case, involving the Janissary officer *serdengeçdi ağası* İbrahim Ağa from the 48th Bölük and the heirs of the deceased Janissary İbrahim Beşe from the 31st Cemaat, is revealing on this point.[37] Around 1774, the *serdengeçdi* accompanied the heirs to court, asserting that after İbrahim Beşe passed away without children he had acquired the *çiftlik* from the official overseer of land after it became vacant. The *serdengeçdi* first argued that there were planted trees within the *çiftlik* but not on the appurtenant fields and pastures. He indicted the heirs for usurping his usufruct rights over the *çiftlik*, which, according to his statement, had passed to him categorically with a title deed. Despite the title deed, the heirs opposed his rights to the *çiftlik* by stating that, alongside rural buildings such as a water buffalo barn, stove rooms, and an underground cellar, as well as a garden, there were more than 300 plants on the ranch and pasturelands around them.



In legal history, too, the issue of the status of trees and inheritance law were always popular themes in legal opinions (*fetva*s) on land.[38] In inheritance division, the heirs to demesne land were not identical to the legal heirs designated in the Islamic law applied to private holdings. According to Ottoman land regulations formalized in the early sixteenth century, only the son of the deceased could inherit the usufruct rights without paying *resm-i tapu*. Although the son continued to be favored in the transfer of *miri* land, regulations after the early seventeenth century broadened the number and rights of heirs in these transfers. These new regulations were indeed not a rearticulation of the old Ottoman *miri* regime through *fetva*s, legal codes (*kanunname*s), and imperial orders, and they culminated in the promulgation of a new land code (*Kanunname-i Cedid*), which was gradually formulated throughout the century, probably until 1674.[39] In addition to the

---

36 NBSKM, VS.46:201-202 (1 N 1189/October 26, 1775). The date is given as 30 Şaban, but it indeed refers to the first day of the next month, Ramazan, due to the functioning of the Hijri lunar calendar.

37 NBSKM, VS.71:164-165 (gurre-i Z 1187/February 13, 1774).

38 See, for instance, H. Necati Demirtaş, *Açıklamalı Osmanlı Fetvâları*, p. 559-561; Süleyman Kaya et al. (eds.), *Neticetü'l-Fetâvâ Şeyhülislam Fetvaları*, Istanbul, 2014, p. 448-449.

39 Fatma Gül Karagöz, *The Evolution of Kânûnnâme Writing in the 16th and 17th Century-Ottoman Empire: a Comparison of Kânûn-i 'Osmânî of Bayezid II and of Kânûnnâme-i Cedîd*, Bilkent University, MA Thesis, Ankara 2010, p. 90-149; Bünyamin Punar, *Kanun and Sharia: Ottoman Land Law in*

expanding number of legal heirs to the *miri* land, one provision of the law code (*kanunname*) of Ahmed III also recognized and approved the rights of legal heirs to occupy planted lands, according to the Sharia.[40] The provision in the *kanunname* is an old imperial order dated 1628, which was dispatched to the judge of Skopje.[41] After listing the persons who could inherit the *miri* land in sequence, including sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, fathers, and mothers, it states that: if the deceased has no partner in the possession of land and there are trees planted on arable fields and pastures, the land is transferred to the legal heirs, who inherit privatively owned trees according to the Islamic law. In the aforementioned dispute, the heirs' legal narrative was, thus, very strategically worded: it directly referred to the revised Ottoman land regulations that enabled the heirs to take the planted lands with the payment of *tapu* so the land in question could not be deemed vacant and should not be leased to someone else.[42] In this example, once again one may get the impression that the *miri* regime and its regulatory codes were strong reference points in eighteenth-century Vidin.

It should still be noted that a rich matrix of agrarian interactions in the countryside was transplanted into the legal norms on property and usufruct rights through the complex interplay of social relations. An imperial order sent to the local authorities in 1718, for instance, mentions that the vacant farms, hayfields, shops, and houses had passed into other hands among the Vidinese inhabitants without a title deed, which had damaged the fiscal revenues of the Vidinese administration (*Vidin nezareti*).[43] In this decree, the imperial administrators themselves emphasize that land transactions were not fully recorded within the purview of the court system. Nor did all land struggles spill over into the official or legal domain. For instance, in a series of orders issued throughout the eighteenth century, the Ottoman government reminded the military Muslim entrepreneurs on the southern side of the Danube that they were to settle all legal disputes originating in Wallachia, including those over land, at the Yergöğü court.[44] These



*Şeyhülislam Fatwas from Kanunname of Budin to the Kanunname-i Cedid*, Istanbul Şehir University, MA Thesis, Istanbul 2015, p. 53-113.

40 Karagöz, *Arazi Hukuku Uygulamaları*, p. 46.

41 Oğuz Ergene, *III. Ahmet Dönemi Osmanlı Kanunnamesi (İnceleme-Metin-Dizin)*, Mersin University, MA Thesis, Mersin 1997, p. 109-111; Karagöz, *Arazi Hukuku Uygulamaları*, p. 46.

42 In the *fetva* collections, it is clearly stated that the heirs to the trees had the privilege to take the appurtenant land by paying a title deed. See, for instance, Süleyman Kaya et al. (eds.), *Neticetü'l-Fetâvâ*, p. 447.

43 NBSKM, VS.67:150 (25 Ş 1130/July 24, 1718). Karagöz also analyzes this important imperial order; Karagöz, *Arazi Hukuku Uygulamaları*, p. 129-130.

44 See, for instance, BOA, Bab-ı Asafi Divan-ı Hümayun Düvel-i Ecnebiyye Defterleri-Romanya Eflak Defteri (A.DVNS.DVE) 77:44, order no. 133 (evahir-i Za 1157/December 25, 1744-January 3, 1745); 77:52, order no. 150 (undated), 77:120, order no. 284 (evasıt-ı N 1169/June 9-19, 1756); 77:121-122, order no. 287 (evasıt-ı Za 1169/August 7-17, 1756); 77:147-148, order no. 336 (evahir-i Muharrem 1172/September 23-October 3, 1758).

repeated decrees suggest that the Muslim entrepreneurs from the southern Danube, including Janissary commanders and *yamak*s, frequently found ways to skip court procedures and registration in land transactions and disputes. In this way, the Janissaries, like others, could avoid paying the *tapu* fee; and as shown below, in many cases they could prove their possession rights through the oral testimony of their fellows.

Despite this shortcoming, however, court records on property transactions and confrontations enable us to bridge the gap between the eighteenth-century rural realities and the nineteenth-century *Agrarproblem* in the Ottoman Balkans. Referring to several rural buildings on state lands, several articles in the Ottoman Land Code of 1858, for instance, recognized that the land and buildings could be subject to different usufruct and property rights.[45] However, this law at the same time stipulates that the overseer of the state land should give priority to the holder of private structures when planning to lease land in the same location. By bundling enmeshed usufruct and property rights into the buildings and land, the code itself represents a continuation of the eighteenth-century *miri* regime in this regard.

As early as the eighteenth century, there was a strong tendency, at least in local practice, to perceive the buildings and appurtenant lands together as a single and inseparable unit. This is why in the nineteenth century, not only in Vidin but also in other parts of the empire, the status of buildings and appurtenant lands in the same location became a serious headache for the Ottoman authorities, who strove to solve rural discontent by auctioning or selling lands to lessees or sharecroppers, respecting, at the same time, the legal status of property and usufruct rights.



Yıldız, for instance, in her study on several *çiftlik*s in Thessaly, noted that one of the main questions that concerned the state authorities of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was whether *çiftlik* buildings belonged to the fields or vice versa.[46] When the state put the *çiftlik*s up for auction, they were first offered to sharecroppers, whose desire to buy only cultivable fields, not buildings, was rejected, in keeping with the cadastral regulation. This problem was not solved until as late as the early twentieth century, when the buildings were bound to the land, making them an inseparable unit in legal terms. The Land Code of 1858 ordered the collection of *icare-i zemin*, an annual fee for the places occupied by the rural buildings; it formulated it as an annual fixed payment, like a rent equivalent of tithe. In the 1870s, however, the Ottoman administration, aware of the difficulties in collecting fixed annual fees, attempted to assess the payment in accordance with the tithe collected from the appurtenant lands. Thus, almost fifteen years after the promulgation of the Land Code, the imperial center tried to

45 Abdullah Sivridağ et al. (eds.), *Tanzimat Sonrası Arazi ve Tapu*, Istanbul 2014, p. 108-111.

46 Yıldız, "Politics", p. 49-50.

solve the ambiguity by giving priority to the agricultural potential of arable lands surrounding the buildings.[47]

When the central authorities invited the representatives of *çiftlik* holders and sharecroppers to Istanbul to prepare a charter for a solution of the land question in Bosnia in 1858-1859, one of the contested issues was the seizure of buildings such as storehouses and animal barns constructed by sharecroppers of the *çiftlik* holders, which actually belonged to the former.[48] In a long-lasting dispute over the possession of *çiftlik* buildings in Parga in the 1850s, one may also observe similar conflicting claims made by villagers and *çiftlik* owners to the shops, mills, and houses in these estates.[49] As in Bosnia, ownership and usufruct in Parga were not simply limited to the buildings because these immovables were directly intertwined with olive trees and were seen as constituent parts of agricultural production and the peasants' moral economy.

The brutality of the peasant revolt, the tactical use of violence, and the circulated codes of rural moral economy differentiated the Vidin uprising in 1849-50 from the discontent in Thessaly and Parga.[50] During and after the uprising, lessees and sharecroppers disapproved not only of extra-legal corvée obligations, but also, and perhaps most significantly, the landholders' claims to land, by rejecting the validity of title deeds. One of the major actions conducted by the peasants in this chaotic period was the burning of court warrants testifying to the proprietors' usufruct and ownership. As documented by Halil İnalcık and Attila Aytekin, villagers' demands to obtain the possession of their cultivated land from landholders were predicated on the peasant morality rather than on legal formulas.[51] By doing so, Aytekin observed, they challenged the whole legitimacy of the existing land tenure system and the legal structures of which had been set down in the pre-Tanzimat period.



**Janissaries and disputes over rural properties**

Viewing the situation through the nineteenth-century lens and zooming in on the brutal land conflicts, the court records of the previous century thus offer an

47 BOA, Şûrâ-yı Devlet (ŞD) 2399/8 (14 Za 1290/January 3, 1874). However, the preparations for the new assessments of *icare-i zemin* started earlier, at the Ministry of Finance.

48 Tevfik Güran and Ahmet Uzun, "Bosna-Hersek'te Toprak Rejimi: Eshâb-ı Alâka ve Çiftçiler Arasındaki İlişkiler (1840-1875)", *TTK Belleten*, 70/259, (2006), p. 889; Yonca Köksal, "19. Yüzyılda Kuzeybatı Bulgaristan Sessiz Toprak Reformu", *Toplumsal Tarih*, 29/170, (2008), p. 26-27.

49 Ali Onur Peker, *19. Yüzyıl Osmanlı İmparatorluğu Çiftliklerinde Üretim İlişkileri ve Hukuki Dönüşüm: Parga Çiftliği Kararnâmesi*, Ege University, MA Thesis, Izmir 2019, p. 86-91, 97-103.

50 Alp Yücel Kaya, "On the Çiftlik Regulation in Tırhala in the Mid-Nineteenth Century: Economists, Pashas, Governors, Çiftlik-holders, Subaşıs, and Sharecroppers", *Ottoman Rural Societies and Economies*, (ed. Elias Kolovos), Rethymnon 2015, p. 333-379.

51 İnalcık, *Tanzimat*, p. 105; Aytekin, "Peasant Protest", p. 213.

unexpected picture: the Janissaries, as the main carriers of the land regime in Vidin, disputed predominantly not with villagers but among themselves. I was able to identify 81 court cases in which one Janissary or a group of them appeared as an interested party in a legal dispute over rural property and land. In only 18 of these cases had villagers and their representatives filed charges against Janissaries, while in another 16 cases both the plaintiffs and defendants were Janissaries. In the majority of cases, 38 out of 81, the disputes over rural properties involved the relatives or heirs of Janissaries, which means that litigations over the Janissary-involved land conflicts arose mainly from inheritance disputes after the death of Janissaries. In 31 of these 38 cases one of the interested parties was a Janissary acting as defendant, plaintiff, or guardians at the courtroom.

Lawsuits between Janissaries and villagers mainly concerned two types of allegations as made against the former: the seizure of villagers' land with or without a title deed and the encroachment on common meadows (*mera*s). Nevertheless, even in these conflicts the Janissary–*reaya* relations could not be classified simply as a unilateral attack on peasant lands; rather they contain a tangled web of interactions ranging from coercion and control to patronage and consensus. For instance, when Hüseyin Beşe and his partner Selim Ağa intervened in village lands around Belgradçık, several non-Muslim cultivators, together with the Janissary Mehmed Beşe from the 28th Bölük, proceeded against them.[52] Mehmed Beşe seems to have acted as a patron of peasants from the Beloptiçene (?) village where he also held a garden and a *çiftlik*. In 1762, villagers from Gramada complained that Ali and Hüseyin Beşe assumed usufruct over village lands, particularly meadows, with no legal justification.[53] In this litigation, the villagers' representative, Halil Ağa, brought several Janissaries into the trial as witnesses to justify the villagers' position on land possession. A similar strategy was deployed by the villagers of Borovitsa against three Janissaries from the 2nd Cemaat, Ali Beşe, Memiş Beşe, and Ömer Beşe, who occupied some village lands and a communal meadow. Two other Janissaries, Mustafa Beşe and Ömer Beşe, acted as witnesses to prove the lands belonged to the village.[54]



From a legal perspective, defending the common lands was a relatively easy task, because the Ottoman codes prohibited the sale or exchange of these lands with a title deed.[55] However, in their disputes against Janissaries, the villagers possibly had a strategy to use the legal power of prestigious Janissary witnesses at

52 NBSKM, VS.63:260-261 (5 S 1187/April 28, 1773).

53 NBSKM, VS.63:97-98 (20 Ca 1176/December 7, 1762).

54 NBSKM, VS.74:174-175 (3 B 1181/November 25, 1767).

55 In the *fetva* collections, there are numerous references to the villagers' rights on the common meadows. See, for instance, H. Necati Demirtaş, *Açıklamalı Osmanlı Fetvaları*, p. 553-555; Süleyman Kaya et al. (eds.), *Neticetü'l-Fetâvâ*, Istanbul 2014, p. 446-447; Süleyman Kaya, *Fetâvâ-yı Feyziye*, Istanbul, 2009, p. 484-485; Süleyman Kaya et al. (eds.), *Behcetü'l Fetâvâ Şeyhülislam Yenişehirli Abdullah Efendi*, Istanbul 2011, p. 662.

the courtroom. This strategy was also tied to the legal procedure in the struggle over common lands, which fundamentally entailed a testimony or a court certificate rather than a title deed to set physical boundaries in the on-the-spot investigation.[56] Amid the manifold claims over properties subject to different legal statuses, the confrontations involving Janissaries or the heirs of Janissaries generated a forum of witnesses, title deeds, *fetva*s, and on-the-spot investigations. In the strife over the land, arable fields, and pasture around the Timok River between Elhac Mehmed Ağa from the 38th Bölük and Ömer Ağa from the 31st Cemaat, the former accused the latter of occupying the lands bequeathed by Abdullah Ağa to his son.[57] Mehmed Ağa advocated that Abdullah had enjoyed possession rights on these lands with a title deed for a period of fourteen to nineteen years until his death and thereafter these lands were transmitted with the consent of the *sahib-i arz* to his son, Mehmed Ağa, who controlled them for the next fifteen years. Despite Mehmed Ağa's legitimate land possession, however, Ömer Ağa's father İbrahim Alemdar infringed upon Mehmed's usufruct rights until his death and thereafter his son continued to commit this act of injustice. Mehmed Ağa submitted two title deeds to the court attesting his own and his father's usufruct. Together with these title deeds, he presented a *fetva* at his disposal dictating that the hold over land without any legal excuse could not create inheritance rights; besides this, he mobilized the support of two groups of witnesses, to testify to the usufruct of Mehmed Ağa and Abdullah Ağa, respectively. Mehmed Ağa seems to have been well prepared for the court investigation, and this was not coincidental.



The Janissaries recurrently competed with each other over rural properties; and not in a few cases even their family members found themselves at the court, which implies that they utilized as many legal tools as possible within the framework of the Ottoman land regime. In the absence of written evidence, a Janissary's testimony was crucial to the conclusion of a trial. As discussed earlier, Janissary entrepreneurs often skipped registration of transactions and brought their fellows to the courtroom to prove their property claims. For instance, Ümmügülsüm, the wife of a deceased man, Halil Beşe, from the 83rd Cemaat, filed a suit against the guardian of Halil Beşe's minor son who had taken control of his father's inherited *çiftlik* properties.[58] The guardian was Halil's brother, Ahmed

---

56 The appointment of an inspector for registering goods, demarcating the boundaries on the spot and resolving land disputes, was already a common practice in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but it became more formalized and institutionalized in the Tanzimat period. Abdurrahman Atçıl, *Procedure in the Ottoman Court and the Duties of Kadis*, Bilkent University, MA Thesis, Ankara 2002, p. 61-62; Alp Yücel Kaya, "The *Müvella* and the Adjudication of Property Conflicts in the Ottoman Empire (1874-1914)", in *Forms and Institutions of Justice: Legal Actions in Ottoman Contexts*, (eds. Işık Tamdoğan and Yavuz Aykan), Istanbul 2018, p. 76-92.

57 NBSKM, VS.62:88-89 (20 Za 1172/July 15, 1759).

58 NBSKM, VS.78:168 (10 Ra 1179/August 27, 1765).

Beşe, from the same *cemaat*. Against her claims, Ahmed stated that Halil Beşe had already given the *çiftlik* properties, animals, and grasslands to the minor four months before his death, due to his debt, and the *çiftlik* was thus in no way subject to inheritance division. Without presenting any written evidence, Ahmed Beşe was able to win the case with the testimony of witnesses, at least one of them being a Janissary from the same 83rd Cemaat.

The use of witnesses and legal representatives from the same *cemaat* or *bölük* was a very common practice among Janissaries. In the early nineteenth century, Janissaries from the same profession tended to be concentrated in the same *cemaat* or *bölük*.[59] In her study on the seventeenth-century economic world of the Janissaries, Gülay Yılmaz shows that Janissary lenders and borrowers in credit transactions were quite frequently affiliated with the same *cemaat* and *bölük*.[60] Besides this, the regimental funds and cash *vakf*s appeared as significant institutions in the credit market, which not only collected capital from the Janissaries but also extended credits to them. This was exactly the case in Vidin. For instance, the *çorbacı* Hasan's probate shows that he gave credit to the fund of the 50th *Oda*, although the record does not specify the *cemaat* or *bölük* to which this fund belonged.[61] Similarly, the Janissary Elhac Mustafa Usta from the 49th Bölük extended a loan to the fund of the same *bölük*.[62] Another Janissary, İbrahim Ağa from the 73rd Cemaat, took credit from the collective fund of his own *cemaat*.[63] An examination of Vidinese court records also shows that the rural market was indeed not under the monopoly of one *cemaat* or *bölük*, although the members of some regiments, especially the 12th Bölük, 12th Cemaat, 31st Bölük, 31st Cemaat, 41st Bölük, 42nd Bölük, and 49th Bölük, more frequently appeared as interested parties in rural transactions and disputes.[64] In Wallachia, most of the Janissary entrepreneurs from the Vidin fortress were also affiliated with the 5th Bölük, 12th Bölük, 42nd Bölük, 31st Cemaat, and 64th Cemaat.[65] This means that some regiments who were less visible in the Vidinese countryside, such as the 64th Cemaat and 5th Bölük, carved out a strong niche in Wallachia, while others, including the 12th Cemaat, 31st Bölük, 41st Bölük, and 49th Bölük, were very active in the Vidinese hinterlands, but not so much in Wallachia. The 12th Bölük, 31st Cemaat, and 42nd Bölük were very active in both areas. One might hypothesize that



59 Mehmet Mert Sunar, *Cauldron of Dissent: A Study of the Janissary Corps, 1807-1826*, SUNY-Binghamton, Ph.D, New York 2006, p. 54-77.

60 Gülay Yılmaz, *The Economic and Social Roles of Janissaries in a 17th. Century Ottoman City: The Case of Istanbul*, McGill University, Ph.D, Montreal 2011, p. 223-312.

61 NBSKM, VS.37:59 (29 Z 1182/May 6, 1769).

62 NBSKM, VS.39:121-122 (9 Ca 1182/September 21, 1768).

63 NBSKM, VS.37:162 (6 L 1183/February 2, 1770).

64 For the source of the database, see footnote 8.

65 BOA, Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Arşivi Defterleri (TSMA.d) 4222 (19 Z 1166/17 October 1753). See also Yıldız and Kokdaş, "Peasantry", p. 188.

the size of the Janissary population of these regiments determined their influence in the rural areas. In a Janissary payroll register prepared for three-month payments (January 15-April 15) in 1763, the 12th Bölük with its 349 members, the 31st Cemaat with 122 members, and the 42nd Bölük with 184 members were among the most populous regiments in Vidin.[66] However, the size of the Janissary regiments did not automatically determine their activities in the rural zones. The 97th Cemaat with its 166 members, 83rd Cemaat with 148 members, and 23rd Cemaat with 130 members were relatively less visible in the Vidinese and Wallachian hinterland. Thus it appears that these rural networks were set by an interaction of various factors, such as the date of the permanent settlement, the rural origins, and administrative and fiscal duties, as well as the credit capacities of the members of the Janissary regiments.

There is no doubt that the Janissary affiliations and networks played a significant role in economic transactions and legal disputes across Vidin. For instance, in another case, Hadice, the daughter of Elhac İbrahim Beşe from the 31st Cemaat, took a complicated dispute over the *çiftlik* lands to court and blamed the minor Ahmed's guardian, İbrahim Beşe from the 16th Cemaat, for his unjust occupation of half of the *çiftlik* lands without any certificate.[67] Hadice and Ahmed's fathers were both from the same *cemaat* and controlled the *çiftlik* around the Rayanovtsi Village in partnership. Hadice's representative *serdengeçdi*, Osman Ağa, was also affiliated with the 31st Cemaat and claimed in court that the partnership was in reality limited to the *çiftlik* properties, including storehouses, a storeroom, a cellar, animals, and a mill, but not the appurtenant land, which belonged fully to Hadice's father with a title deed. Hadice's claim was certainly based on a written proof, namely a title deed, not only elucidating the aforementioned differing status of the *çiftlik* and the land, but also confirming her usufruct rights. In 1775, Seyyid Ali Beşe from the 8th Bölük stood as a legal representative of Emetullah, the daughter of Elhac Mehmed, to nullify the deal for a one-*dönüm* hayfield on a demesne between her husband Ömer Beşe and another Janissary, Mehmed Beşe.[68] The hayfield had been in the hands of Emetullah for almost 41 years, following the death of her father and its subsequent transmission to her with the permission of the *sahib-i arz*. Nevertheless, the representative protested that her husband had ceded her usufruct rights to Mehmed Beşe almost six years previously for 120 *guruş*, but without the permission of the *sahib-i arz*. The witnesses upheld her claims by testifying that she had held the land with a title deed for a long period without objection. This testimony surely played a decisive role in the proceedings, but the



66 Fortress names on some pages of the register are illegible. This register was prepared by Mert Sunar for the JANET Database. BOA, Maliyeden Müdevver Defter (MAD.d) 3946 (29 Z 1177/June 29, 1764).

67 NBSKM, VS.11:30 (10 Ca 1188/July 19, 1774).

68 NBSKM, VS.46:98 (20 Ra 1189/May 21, 1775).

key legal element was the lack of permission from the *sahib-i arz* required for the authentication of the transactions on state lands.

To sum up, all these confrontations and transactions point to two interconnected trends in the eighteenth-century Vidinese land regime. The first one is the institutionalization of the possession rights of the Janissaries. This process was fueled by dynamics created by the fact that land and rural structures remained in the hands of Janissary families for generations, and were subject to multiple transactions of exchange over a long period. The second is the deepening of both cooperation and competition between Janissaries and members of Janissary families in the local land markets. The Ottoman laws regulating the transmission of usufruct rights differed from the inheritance laws for the transmission of freehold property. With the introduction of new rules to increase the number of heirs to usufruct in the early seventeenth century, the Ottoman *miri* regime became more and more open to family disputes, which gained a strong momentum in eighteenth-century Vidin. Janissaries erected several structures on the land, planted trees, and established vineyards, as well as gardens categorized as private property. The ownership of these freehold structures not only linked two sets of transmission laws together, but also integrated many family members into the games of alliance and conflict for holding both freehold family investments and appurtenant lands. Therefore, the death of a patriarch in a Vidinese Janissary family, or in the household of a religious dignitary or someone belonging to an administrative elite, was a critical moment in Vidin that whetted the appetite of other Janissaries for rural properties, especially for land. Such a view of the multilayered property relations offers a more complicated picture of the Vidinese land market than the binary conceptualization of the peasant–landlord antagonism suggests.



## Conclusion

This study is not an attempt to ignore the transgressions by the Janissaries in Vidin, which frequently limited the cultivators' usufruct rights and their access to land. Nor does it praise the functioning of the legal framework of the *miri* land regime. In reality, from the very beginning of their penetration into the countryside, the Janissaries occupied vacant lands left by fugitive peasants and occasionally encroached upon common meadows. Moreover, the litigations over property disputes reflected the asymmetrical power relations in the local social fabric, as all parties sought to bring Janissaries as honorable witnesses in order to win a case. By focusing on the Janissaries' activities in the Vidinese countryside, it rather seeks to complicate our understanding of the relationship between socio-economic realities and the legal system of landholding, on the one hand, and the pattern of rural investments among Janissaries in the early modern period, on the other. In Ottoman scholarship, the debates on the nineteenth-century land question or the well-known 1858 Land Code have been so embedded into the

duality between freehold property and demesnes that the land struggles and different usufruct claims have been understood in quasi-magical terms: the deteriorated legal system of the *miri* land regime. Such an alleged idealization of the *miri* regime involves the romanticization of small peasant farming and the egalitarian landholding patterns marked by the perfect balance between the interests of cultivators and state in the early modern era.

This study, however, highlights that the eighteenth-century Vidinese *miri* regime itself gave birth to the consolidation of rural properties in the hands of Janissaries and their circulation among Janissary families for generations. Moreover, in almost all cases investigated in this study, the conflicting parties, court officials, and buyers and sellers of usufruct rights, as well as holders of freehold rural properties, respected the legal formulas, procedures, and protocols of the *miri* land regime. They solidified possession rights over land by turning them into dependency rights and trying to link the status of landed estates and freehold structures with each other without eradicating the distinction between *miri* and *mülk* status. This problem was not fully solved until the early twentieth century, but these hybrid legal practices mark the integration of eighteenth-century realities in Vidin into the legal system of landholding, rather than the shrinking of land laws and privatization of state lands.

In her study on the evolution of usufruct rights in eighteenth-century Ottoman Syria, Sabrina Joseph shows that the deepening of possession rights in legal practice supported by local jurists went hand in hand with the merging of usufruct rights and ownership of trees, as well as buildings erected on the land.[69] She notes that one key dimension of this process was the establishment of *kirdar* – trees and buildings erected on the land by the cultivator, which created strong usufruct claims to state lands. She thus wrote that continuity and evolution, rather than displacement and decline, characterize the development of the land regime in this period. In Syria, Cuno saw the rising of rural investments as the main engine of change in land possession, orchestrated successively by Janissaries and, then, merchants and *ulema*.[70] What Joseph and Cuno observed for Ottoman Syria is very similar to the developments in eighteenth-century Vidin. Here the Janissaries acted as the dominant rural investors and were the avant-garde of the changes in property law, who not only triggered the interlinkages between freehold investments and state lands, but also, ironically, sustained the continuity in the legal system of the *miri* land regime. However, these interesting parallels between Vidin and Damascus hint at the existence of broader socio-economic dynamics in the eighteenth century, which stretch beyond the actions of the Janissaries and require



69 Sabrina Joseph, *Islamic Law on Peasant Usufruct in Ottoman Syria: 17th to Early 19th Century*, Leiden 2012, p. 106-142.

70 Kenneth M. Cuno, "Was the Land of Ottoman Syria *Miri* or *Milk*? An Examination of Juridical Differences within the Hanafi School", *Studia Islamica*, 81, (1995), p. 146-151.

further research. What makes the Janissary presence in the Vidinese countryside more interesting for future research is the fact that it took place through the institutionalized networks of regiments in the eighteenth century. The military and administrative duties and tax-farming practices of the members of Janissary regiments together with the workings of regimental funds might have had a certain impact on the Janissaries' involvement in the countryside. As discussed in this paper, they were deeply involved in litigation processes over property disputes, which could also possibly be related to the role of regiments and their members as creditors or tax-farmers. It should also be noted that very little research has been conducted on the registration of locals in the corps through the *tashih be-dergah* method in the war with the Holy League, and its impact on the localization of Janissaries. Throughout the eighteenth century, the rural origins of the local Janissaries might have determined the geographical boundaries of their fellows' investments in the countryside. By not dealing with these issues, this study remains unfinished.

## References



**Archival Sources**

**Devlet Arşivleri Başkanlığı Osmanlı Arşivi/Directorate of State Archives-Ottoman Archives (BOA)**

Bab-ı Asafi Divan-ı Hümayun Düvel-i Ecnebiyye Defterleri-Romanya Eflak Defteri Kalemi (A.DVNS.DVE) 77.

Bab-ı Asafi Divan-ı Hümayun Sicilleri Özi ve Silistre Ahkam Defterleri (A.DVNS.AHK.ÖZSİ.d) 4; 5.

Cevdet Hariciye (C.HR) 35/1733.

Maliyeden Müdevver Defter (MAD.d) 3946.

Maliye Nezareti Temettuat Defterleri (ML.VRD.TMT.d) 814.

Şûrâ-yı Devlet (ŞD) 2399/8.

Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Arşivi Defterleri (TSMA.d) 4222.

**Nacionalna Biblioteka "Sv. Sv. Kiril i Metodij"/SS. Cyril and Methodius National Library (NBSKM)**

Vidin *Sicil*s (VS) 6; 9; 11; 39; 41; 44; 46; 47; 48; 53; 61; 62; 63; 64; 65; 68; 69; 70; 71; 74; 77; 78; 79; 80; 82; 160; 163; 167; 169; 307; 310; 346; 159A; 25A.

**Published Sources**

Atçıl, Abdurrahman, *Procedure in the Ottoman Court and the Duties of Kadis*, Bilkent University, MA Thesis, Ankara 2002.

Aydın, Mahir, "On the Shores of Danube: Neighbourhood between Wallachia and Vidin", *Turkey & Romania: A History of Partnership and Collaboration in the Balkans*, (eds.

Florentina Nitu, Florentina Niţu, Cosmin Ioniţă, Metin Ünver, Özgür Kolçak, Hacer Topaktaş ), Istanbul 2016, p. 145-163.

Aytekin, Attila, "Historiography of Land Tenure and Agriculture in the Nineteenth Century Ottoman Empire", *Asian Research Trends New Series*, 4, (2009), p. 1-24.

_____, "Peasant Protest in the Late Ottoman Empire: Moral Economy, Revolt, and the Tanzimat Reforms", *International Review of Social History*, 57/2, (2012), p. 191-227.

Canbakal, Hülya, *Society and Politics in an Ottoman Town: 'Ayntab in the 17th Century*, Leiden 2007.

Cuno, Kenneth M., "Was the Land of Ottoman Syria *Miri* or *Milk*? An Examination of Juridical Differences within the Hanafi School", *Studia Islamica*, 81, (1995), p. 121-152.

Demirtaş, H. Necati, *Açıklamalı Osmanlı Fetvâları: Fetâvâ-yı Ali Efendi-Cild-i Sâni Çatalcalı Ali Efendi*, Istanbul 2014.

Doumani, Beshara B., *Family Life in the Ottoman Mediterranean: A Social History*, Cambridge 2017.

Ergene, Oğuz, *III. Ahmet Dönemi Osmanlı Kanunnamesi (İnceleme-Metin-Dizin)*, Mersin University, MA Thesis, Mersin 1997.

Ergenç, Özer, "XVII. ve XVIII. Yüzyıl Anadolusu'nda Toprak Tasarrufu ve Mülkiyeti Üzerine Değerlendirmeler", *Osmanlı Tarih Yazıları: Şehir, Toplum ve Devlet*, (ed. Özer Ergenç), Istanbul 2012, p. 215-45.

Faroqhi, Suraiya, *Men of Modest Substance: House Owners and House Property in Seventeenth-Century Ankara and Kayseri*, Cambridge 1987.

Gandev, Christo, "L'apparition des rapports capitalistes dans l'économie rurale de la Bulgarie du nord-ouest au cours du XVIIIe siècle", *Etudes Historiques*, (1960), p. 207-217.

Gradeva, Rossitsa, "War and Peace along the Danube: Vidin at the End of the Seventeenth Century", *Oriente Moderno*, Nuova serie 20 (81)/1, (2001), p. 149-175.

Güran, Tevfik and Uzun, Ahmet, "Bosna-Hersek'te Toprak Rejimi: Eshâb-ı Alâka ve Çiftçiler Arasındaki İlişkiler (1840-1875)", *TTK Belleten*, 70/259, (2006), p. 867-902.

İnalcık, Halil, *Tanzimat ve Bulgar Meselesi*, Istanbul 1992.

Joseph, Sabrina, *Islamic Law on Peasant Usufruct in Ottoman Syria: 17th to Early 19th Century*, Leiden 2012.

Karademir, Zafer, *İmparatorluk Ekonomisinin Can Damarları: Osmanlı Ülkesinde Hayvancılık İşletmeleri (1500-1800)*, Istanbul 2016.

Karagöz, Fatma Gül, *The Evolution of Kânûnnâme Writing in the 16th and 17th Century-Ottoman Empire: a Comparison of Kânûn-i 'Osmânî of Bayezid II and of Kânûnnâme-i Cedîd*, Bilkent University, MA Thesis, Ankara 2010.

_____, "18. Yüzyıl Şeriye Sicili Örneklerine Arazi Üzerinde Mülkiyet ve Tasarruf Haklarını Tanımlayan Terimler", *Türk Hukuk Tarihi Araştırmaları*, 16, (2013), p. 22-62.

_____, *1700-1750 Yılları Arasında Osmanlı Devleti'nde Arazi Hukuku Uygulamaları: Vidin ve Antakya Örneği*, Istanbul University, Ph.D, Istanbul 2018.

Kaya, Alp Yücel, "On the Çiftlik Regulation in Tırhala in the Mid-Nineteenth Century: Economists, Pashas, Governors, Çiftlik-holders, Subaşıs, and Sharecroppers",

*Ottoman Rural Societies and Economies*, (ed. Elias Kolovos), Rethymnon 2015, p. 333-379.

_____, "The *Müvella* and the Adjudication of Property Conflicts in the Ottoman Empire (1874-1914)", *Forms and Institutions of Justice: Legal Actions in Ottoman Contexts*, (eds. Işık Tamdogan and Yavuz Aykan), Istanbul 2018, p. 76-92.

Kaya, Süleyman, *Fetâvâ-yı Feyziye Şeyhülislam Feyzullah Efendi*, Istanbul 2009.

_____ and Demiray, Mustafa (eds.), *Behcetü'l Fetâvâ Şeyhülislam Yenişehirli Abdullah Efendi*, Istanbul 2011.

_____, Nagehan Çelikçi, Ayşe, Algın, Betül, Kaval, Emine (eds.), *Neticetü'l-Fetâvâ Şeyhülislam Fetvaları*, Istanbul 2014.

Kokdaş, İrfan, "Habsburglar Kara Eflak'a Gelirse: Vidin'de Hayvancılık Sektörünün Dönüşümü (1695-1740)", *Cihannüma: Tarih ve Coğrafya Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 5/2, (2019), p. 77-110.

Köksal, Yonca, "19. Yüzyılda Kuzeybatı Bulgaristan Sessiz Toprak Reformu", *Toplumsal Tarih*, 29/170, (2008), p. 24-30.

Laiou, Sophia, "Some Considerations Regarding *Çiftlik* Formation in the Western Thessaly, Sixteenth-Nineteenth Centuries", *The Ottoman Empire, the Balkans, the Greek Lands: Toward a Social and Economic History. Studies in Honor of John C. Alexander*, (eds. Elias Kolovos, Phokion Kotzageorgis, Sophia Laiou and Marinos Sariyannis), Istanbul 2007, p. 255-277.

McGowan, Bruce, *Economic Life in Ottoman Europe: Taxation, Trade and the Struggle for Land, 1600-1800*, Cambridge 1981.



Papastamatiou, Demetrios, "The Structure, Content and Development of Large Estates in the Environs of Salonica during the Period 1697-1770", *Festschrift in Honor of Ioannis P. Theocharides. II. Studies on the Ottoman Empire and Turkey*, (eds. Evangelia Balta, Georgios Salakidis, Theoharis Stavrides), Istanbul 2014, p. 375-402.

Peker, Ali Onur, *19. Yüzyıl Osmanlı İmparatorluğu Çiftliklerinde Üretim İlişkileri ve Hukuki Dönüşüm: Parga Çiftliği Kararnâmesi*, Ege University, MA Thesis, Izmir 2019.

Punar, Bünyamin, *Kanun and Sharia: Ottoman Land Law in Şeyhülislam Fatwas from Kanunname of Budin to the Kanunname-i Cedid*, Istanbul Şehir University, MA Thesis, Istanbul 2015.

Radushev, Evgeni, "'Peasant' Janissaries?", *Journal of Social History*, 42/2, (2008), p. 447-467.

Reilly, James A., "Status Groups and Propertyholding in the Damascus Hinterland, 1828-1880", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 21/4, (1989), p. 517-539.

_____, "The End of an Era: Pre-Reform Damascus in the 1820s", *Bulletin D'études Orientales*, 61, (2012), p. 209-222.

Saraçoğlu, Safa, *Letters from Vidin: A Study of Ottoman Governmentality and Politics of Local Administration, 1864-1877*, The Ohio State University, Ph.D, Ohio 2007.

Sivridağ, Abdullah, Yekeler, Numan, Kırca, Ersin, Köse, Result, Atik, Vahdettin, Karaca, Yılmaz (eds.), *Tanzimat Sonrası Arazi ve Tapu*, Istanbul 2014.

Sunar, Mehmet Mert, *Cauldron of Dissent: A Study of the Janissary Corps, 1807-1826*, SUNY-Binghamton, Ph.D, New York 2006.

Tamdoğan, Işık and Aykan, Yavuz (eds.), *Forms and Institutions of Justice: Legal Actions in Ottoman Contexts*, Istanbul 2018.

Yıldız, Aysel, "Politics, Economy, and *Çiftlik*s: The History of Four *Çiftlik*s in Larissa (Yenişehir-i Fener)", *Turkish Historical Review*, 11, (2020), p. 28-65.

Yıldız, Aysel and Kokdaş, İrfan, "Peasantry in a Well-protected Domain: Wallachian Peasantry and Muslim *Çiftlik/Kışlak*s under the Ottoman Rule", *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, 22/1, (2020), p. 175-90.

Yılmaz, Gülay, *The Economic and Social Roles of Janissaries in a 17th. Century Ottoman City: The Case of Istanbul*, McGill University, Ph.D, Montreal 2011.

*Cihannüma*
Tarih ve Coğrafya Araştırmaları Dergisi
Sayı VIII/1 – Temmuz 2022, 129-144
*Doi: 10.30517/cihannuma.1131057*

# USING THE UKRAINIAN ARCHIVES FOR THE STUDY OF JANISSARY NETWORKS IN THE NORTHERN BLACK SEA: RESEARCH PERSPECTIVES AND CHALLENGES

**Anna Sydorenko***

**Abstract**

This article deals with the primary sources in the Ukrainian archives which pertain to the establishment and function of the networks of the Janissaries of the Crimean Khanate with their neighbors in the northern Black Sea frontier region. It demonstrates the extent to which it is possible to use this archival material in order to study the history of relations between the Janissaries of the Black Sea port-cities and the main powers of the steppeland, namely the Zaporozhian Cossacks and the Ukrainians of the Left Bank Hetmanate. The paper raises questions about the ways in which these groups were interacting with each other and at what levels, also focusing on how these established networks of the great steppe region were affected and transformed by the Ottoman-Russian struggle and the gradual expansion of the Russians to the south.

**Keywords:** Black Sea frontier, Janissaries, Zaporozhian Sich, Hetmanate, Russian Empire, Ottoman Empire, Ukrainian archives

* Dr., *Foundation for Research and Technology Hellas*, *Institute for Mediterranean Studies*, *Department of Ottoman History*, Melissinou & Nik. Foka 130, Rethymno / Greece, sydann12@gmail.com, Orcid ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7681-7816.

Makale Geliş Tarihi / Received Date: 20.12.2021 Makale Kabul Tarihi / Acceptance Date: 09.05.2022

## Kuzey Karadeniz'deki Yeniçeri Ağlarını Çalışırken Ukrayna Arşivlerini Kullanmak: Araştırma Perspektifleri ve Zorlukları

**Öz**

Bu makale, Kırım Hanedanlığı'ndaki yeniçeri ağlarının Kuzey Karadeniz sınır bölgesindeki komşularını kapsayacak şekilde tesisine ve işlevine dair Ukrayna arşivlerinde karşımıza çıkan birincil kaynaklara odaklanmaktadır. Bu materyaller eşliğinde, Zaporojya Kazakları ve Sol Kıyı Hetmanlığı'ndaki Ukraynalılar olarak sayabileceğimiz, bozkır diyarının başlıca güçleri ile Karadeniz liman şehirlerindeki yeniçeriler arasındaki ilişkilerin tarihi çalışılırken elimizdeki arşiv materyallerinin ne ölçüde kullanışlı olabileceği gösterilmiştir. Bu çalışmanın gündeme getirdiği sorular ise bahsi geçen grupların hangi yollarla ve ne düzeyde birbirleri ile etkileşime girdiği ve aynı zamanda, Avrasya'nın muazzam stepleri boyunca yayılmış kurulu ağların Osmanlı-Rus çatışması ve Rusya'nın güneye doğru tedrici genişlemesi bağlamında nasıl etkilendiği ve dönüştüğüdür.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Karadeniz sınırı, yeniçeriler, Zaporojya Siçi, Hetmanlık, Rus İmparatorluğu, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu, Ukrayna arşivleri



The major port-cities of the northern coast of the Black Sea, such as Ochakov (Ott. Özü/Özi), Perekop (Ott. Or), Yevpatoria (Ott. Gözleve), Caffa (Ott. Kefe), Kerch (Ott. Kerç/Kerş), and Azov (Ott. Azak), had a strong concentration of Janissary forces and constituted a chain of fortresses which played an important socio-economic and geopolitical role on the Ottoman-Slavic frontier. These areas, for most of their early modern history, constituted hubs of significant commercial activity, communication, and interaction between different ethnic and religious groups. However, all of these traits could be subject to drastic changes according to historical circumstance; the warfare of the seventeenth century in the region, for instance, led to the transformation of the northern Black Sea steppeland and had a profound effect on the interface between the Janissaries of the abovementioned port-cities and their neighbors.

The aim of my study in the context of the research project JANET is to examine the social, cultural, and economic interaction of the Janissaries with the Ottoman Empire's neighboring powers in the abovementioned frontier during this age of change. To date, the role of networks established between the Janissaries, Cossacks, and Ukrainians, as well as their transformation during the eighteenth century due to the Russian penetration, has been completely neglected by researchers. The English, Russian, and Ukrainian historiographies mainly focus on

the military and political history of the steppe–borderland relations,[1] with only a handful of works referring to trade collaborations and activities among different actors in the wider region.[2] Furthermore, none of the works identifies or underlines the important presence and role of the Janissaries in the steppeland. All the same, sources in Ukrainian archives can cast new light on the multiple connections of the Janissary population inhabiting the Ottoman northern frontier with the three main powers of the region, namely the Cossacks, the Ukrainians, and the Russians.

Three research axes can be explored through the use of primary documents from the Ukrainian archives. The first axis is the examination of the political dimension of the effects that the domination of the steppe by the Russians had on the relationship between the Janissaries, the Crimean Tatars, the Ukrainians, and the Cossacks; the second is the exploration of the processes that led to the transformation of the existing internal and external commercial networks and to the creation of new trading conditions and entrepreneurial practices within the framework of a gradual alteration of the old cross-border land and sea trade routes in the region; the third is the analysis of the social and cultural interaction among the Janissaries, Crimean Tatars, and Zaporozhian Cossacks, as their geographical proximity led to the formation of closer interrelations and exchanges between them. With a view to addressing these three axes, the paper will present an overview of Ukrainian sources and will discuss the possibilities and challenges they present for the study of the interaction between the Janissaries and their neighboring non-Muslim actors on the steppe frontier. Studying these relations



1 Brian Davies, *Warfare, State and Society on the Black Sea Steppe, 1500-1700,* London and New York 2007; Ferhad Turanly, "The Military Cooperation between the Crimean Khanate and the Zaporozhian Host in the Second Quarter of the XVII$^{th}$ Century", *Shidnoyevropeiskyi Istorychnyi Visnyk*, 11, (2019), p. 39-55; Victor 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), p. 23-95; Kirill Kočegarov, "The Moscow Uprising of 1682: Relations between Russia, the Crimean Khanate, and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth", *The Crimean Khanate between East and West (15$^{th}$-18$^{th}$ Century)*, (ed. Denise Klein), Harrassowitz 2012, p. 59-75; Taras Chukhlib, *Cozaki ta Ianychary. Ukraina y Chrystians'ko-mousoul'man'skich viinakh 1500-1700 rr,* [Cossacks and Janissaries. Ukraine in the Christian-Muslim wars, 1500-1700], Kyiv 2010; Ravil Deinkov, *Rossia, Tourtsia i Krimskoe Chanstvo: geopoliticheskaia sitouatsia v Severnom Prichernomir'e v period c 30-x. gg XVIII v. po 1873 g.*, [Russia, Turkey and the Crimean Khanate: the Geopolitical Situation in the Northern Black Sea region, 1730s to 1783], Moscow Region State University, Ph.D., Moscow 2012; Dariusz Kołodziejczyk, *The Crimean Khanate and Poland-Lithuania International Diplomacy on the European Periphery (15$^{th}$-18$^{th}$ Century). A Study of Peace Treaties Followed by Annotated Documents*, Leiden 2011.

2 Iannis Carras, "Το δια θαλάσσης εμπόριο από την Καζακία και τη Ρωσία, 1696-1774", [Maritime trade from Kazakia and Russia, 1696-1774], *Οι Έλληνες της Αζοφικής, 18ος – αρχές 20ου αιώνα*, [Greeks in the Azov, 18$^{th}$-Beginning of the 20$^{th}$ Century], (eds. Evridiki Sifneos, Gelina Harlaflis), Athens 2015, p. 329-345; Aleksander 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 Empire in the Eighteenth Century*), 18/79, (1999), p. 101-112; Alan W. Fisher, *A Precarious Balance: Conflict, Trade, and Diplomacy on the Russian-Ottoman Frontier*, Istanbul 1999.

and interactions only through the lens of Ukrainian archives can certainly generate distortions and methodological lacunae, and I am well aware that the view presented through the combined study of the abovementioned sources with the multitude of relevant documents preserved in the Russian[3] and Ottoman/Crimean archives[4] can offer a much more comprehensive picture. However, because of limitations in the length of the paper, I will restrict myself to analyzing only the Ukrainian archives.

Since this article seeks to present primary sources for the study of the multileveled interactions and connections in the region within a complex historical period, it is important to provide a brief outline of events. The second half of the seventeenth century witnessed a vital transformation of the political chessboard in Eastern Europe. By the end of the century, the existing balance between the leading powers in the vast Black Sea steppe, which stretched from the Prut river in the west to the Kuban river in the east, had dramatically changed. The rule of the Polish Kingdom over the territories of the Ukrainian steppe and the Cossacks eventually led to a series of social and religious tensions and revolts, which culminated with the great uprising of 1648. The great revolt under the leadership of Bohdan Khmelnytsky, hetman of the Zaporozhian Cossacks, gradually came to engulf the region in a period of wars and social uprisings that lasted decades. To succeed in his goals, Khmelnytsky turned to alliances, first with the Crimean Tatars and, after a short period, with the tsar of Moscow, a development which acted as the turning point for the Russian expansion into the Ukrainian territories of Poland. Although Khmelnytsky succeeded in controlling the biggest part of Ukraine, which became a domain ruled by the Zaporozhian Host, the opportunity for political self-determination that arose from the great revolt was finally lost on



[3] The main core of documents relating to the impact of the Russian expansion to the south on the course of the development of the relations in the Black Sea Steppe are located in: Archive of Foreign Policy of the Russian Empire (Moscow) (AFPRE), Archival series no. 89 – Russian-Ottoman Relations 1720-1819; Archival series no. 90 – Diplomatic Mission in Constantinople, 1502-1801; Archival series no. 123 – Russian-Crimean Relations 1722-1803, and in the Russian State Archive of Ancient Acts (Moscow) (RSAAA), Archival series no. 123 – Collection of documents on Russian-Crimean Relations.

[4] Most of the Crimean Khanate archives have not been preserved, creating serious obstacles for researchers. In the early 1990s, copies of the Crimean *Şeriyye* Registers (61 volumes) were discovered by Halil İnalcık in the I. Gasprinskii Crimean Tatar Library; the originals are kept in the Russian National Library (St. Petersburg). These copies were brought to the Ottoman archives of Istanbul in 1995. The Crimean *Şeriyye* Registers can be used for studying the function of Janissary networks in the port-cities of the Crimean Khanate, and as unique and complementary sources for the study of the complex Black Sea frontier relations; Halil İnalcık, "Kırım Kadı Sicilleri Bulundu", *Belleten*, 60/227, (1996), p. 165-190. Regarding other sources on the Crimean Khanate, see, for example: Victor Ostapchuk, "The Publication of Documents on the Crimean Khanate in the Topkapı Sarayı: New Sources for the History of the Black Sea Basin", *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, 6/4, (December 1982), p. 500-528; Refat Roustem Abduzhemilev (ed.), *Documents of The Crimean Khanate from Huseyn Feyzkhanov's Collection*, Simferopol 2017.

account of exhausting civil strife and the foreign invasion which followed. The period which started with the great revolt ended in 1686, when Cossack Ukraine was portioned between its neighboring powers. As the position of both the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and the Cossacks was weakened, Russia increasingly consolidated its control over the region vis-à-vis the other regional contenders, while the Ottomans and the Crimean Khanate tried to maintain the established political order by keeping the Russians away from the Black Sea littoral. Cossack Ukraine was eventually divided into three parts: the Right Bank returned to the hands of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, who nevertheless maintained only weak control over the area and recognized the Russians' sovereignty over the Left Bank Hetmanate and the Zaporozhian Sich.[5] The political and geographical borders had shifted, generating a new reality and different social, cultural, and economic ways of interaction in the frontier zone. Under these new conditions, the port-cities of the northern Black Sea coast played an important role in the eighteenth-century Russian-Ottoman struggle for predominance in the region. After four Ottoman-Russian wars (1686-1700, 1710-1711, 1735-1739, 1768-1774), the Russians would finally manage to conquer all the fortresses which acted as bases for significant Janissary activity.

During these developments, the Zaporozhian Sich[6] experienced what were probably the most radical geopolitical changes in its history. As a result of the turmoil of the seventeenth century, the Zaporozhian Sich lost its prominence as the center of Cossack Ukraine. Its main sources of revenue, namely military services and looting, were largely replaced by other economic activities such as fishing, grazing, and beekeeping, while trade activities with the North and South became a profitable venture for the local economy. In fact, although looting continued to take place occasionally, it no longer constituted an organized, officially sanctioned military activity.[7] At the beginning of the eighteenth century, the Zaporozhian lands found themselves in the midst of the Great Northern War



5 For more information about the history of the Black Sea steppeland, see, for example, Brian Davies, *Warfare, State and Society*; Paul Robert Magocsi, *A History of Ukraine: the Land and its Peoples*, Toronto, Buffalo, and London 2010; Charles King, *The Black Sea: A History*, Oxford 2004; Robert E. Jones, "Opening a Window on the South: Russia and the Black Sea 1695-1792", *A Window on Russia, Papers from the V International Conference of the Study Group on Eighteenth-Century Russia*, (eds. Maria Di Salvo and Lindsey Hughes), Rome 1996, p. 123-130; Victor Ostapchuk, "Cossack Ukraine In and Out of Ottoman Orbit, 1648-1681", *The European Tributary States of the Ottoman Empire in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, (eds. Gábor Kármán and Lovro Kunčević), Leiden and Boston 2013, p. 123-152.

6 The term "*sich*" refers to permanently fortified camps that were built by Cossacks beyond the Dnieper rapids (in Ukrainian: *za porohamy*). The Cossacks living there became known as Zaporozhian Cossacks. The first *sich* was built in 1552 on the island of Mala Khortytsia in the Dnieper river. Therefore, the land on both sides of Dnieper river where the Zaporozhian Cossacks built military fortresses (*sich*) was called Zaporozhia. The term Zaporozhian Sich can also refer to the military and administrative organization of the Zaporozhian Host: see Orest Subtelny, *Ukraine: a History,* Toronto, Buffalo, and London 1994, p. 109.

7 Ibid., p. 153, 175.

(1700-1721), experiencing, as a result, the stage of resolution of two century-long struggles: on the one hand, that between Muscovy and Sweden for domination of the waters of the Baltic Sea and, on the other, that between the Russians and the Ottomans over the former's access to the Black Sea. The Cossack armies, under the hetman Ivan Mazepa, were requested to take part in both the Russian-Swedish and Russian-Ottoman wars. Eventually, however, the Zaporozhians switched from an alliance with the Russians to one with the Swedish King, Charles XII, in exchange for a status of autonomy under Swedish protection, a move which resulted in the destruction of the Zaporozhian Sich by Peter I. Subsequently, from 1711 until 1734, the Zaporozhians established their new headquarters in Oleshky, a Crimean territory, ruling their lands under the protection of the Crimean Khanate. During these years the Zaporozhians managed to form trade partnerships and social bonds with the inhabitants of the northern Ottoman frontier, an unexplored yet crucial issue which needs to be addressed when studying this important transitional period. Nevertheless, from almost the very beginning of this coexistence, a number of Zaporozhian leaders started to ask for their peoples' return to the tsar's protection, something which happened only in 1734. Within the framework of this new development, they regained their former lands and built a new *sich* close to their previous location.

The period of the New Zaporozhian Sich, from 1734 until its final destruction and absorption by the Russian Empire in 1775, is covered by the documents of the Archive of the Kosh (Head) of the Zaporozhian Sich from 1713 to 1776 (hereafter AKZS), located in Kyiv in the Central State Historical Archive of Ukraine. The poor condition of the AKZS, which causes great difficulties for researchers working on its collections, has its roots in the complex history of the archival series itself. After the destruction of the Zaporozhian Sich, the AKZS changed hands and location many times; for decades the archive was owned by the historian Apollon Skalkowski who collected its contents from different institutions and individuals. At the end of the nineteenth century, the AKZS was given to the Odessa Historical Archive and, at the beginning of the 1930s, to the Kharkiv Archive. After the transfer of the archive to the East during WWII, it was returned to Kyiv. Under these conditions, the collection of documents was rearranged and restructured many times; some of them were lost, and, most importantly, they suffered considerable damage.[8] In the 1950s, in order to save the archival series, archivists made a copy of the archive on microfilm and published 33 transcribed files from a total number of 365.[9] The largest section of the AKZS, 296 files, is



[8] For the history of the AKZS, see Lubov Gistsova and Lioudmila Demchenko (eds.), *Arkhiv Kocha Novoi Zaporozhskoi Sichi, opis sprav 1713-1776* [Archive of the Kosh of the New Zaporozhian Sich, Catalog, 1713-1776], Kyiv 1994, p. 5-18; Olena Apanovich, "Arkhiv Kocha Zaporozhskoi Sichi" [Archive of the Kosh of the Zaporozhian Sich], *Archives of Ukraine*, 6, (1989), p. 13-27.

[9] Lubov Gistsova (ed.), *Arkhiv Kocha Novoi Zaporozhskoi Sichi, korpus documentiv, 1734-1775* [Archive of the Kosh of the New Zaporozhian Sich, Corpus of Documents, 1734-1775], Volume 1, Kyiv, 1998; Lubov Gistsova (ed.), *Arkhiv Kocha Novoi Zaporozhskoi Sichi, korpus documentiv, 1734-1775*

located in archival series no. 200 of the Saint Petersburg Institute of History of the Russian Academy of Sciences. The majority of the documents of the AKZS are written in Ukrainian, Russian, and a mix of the Ukrainian and Russian languages, with a specific stylistic character inherent to the historical period. In addition, the AKZS contains documents in the Ottoman, Greek, Armenian, and Polish languages. Here, as mentioned earlier, I will be dealing only with the part of the AKZS preserved today in Kyiv.

This unique archival material demonstrates the political, social, cultural, and commercial relations of the Zaporozhian Sich with the Ottomans, the Crimean Khanate, the Left Bank Hetmanate, and the Russian authorities through a significant number of documents. The first and most valuable section of the AKZS refers to the formation and function of the Commissions of Inquiry with the participation of the authorities of the Crimean Khanate, the Janissaries, and the Cossacks, under the control of the Russians. The organization and function of the Commissions were under Russian jurisdiction, and under the direct control of the governor-general of Kyiv,[10] whose important role in the development of steppeland relations will be discussed later. One of the Russian goals behind the establishment of the Commissions was to maintain stability in the region, but at the same time it was a direct way to control the relations of the Cossacks with the Crimeans, disrupting their natural development. Nevertheless, the records of these Commissions constitute an important archival source which reflects the whole spectrum of relations of the borderland steppe.[11]



[Archive of the Kosh of the New Zaporozhian Sich, Corpus of Documents, 1734-1775], Volume 2, Kyiv 2000; Lubov Gistsova and Lioudmila Demchenko (eds.), *Arkhiv Kocha Novoi Zaporozhskoi Sichi, korpus documentiv, 1734-1775* [Archive of the Kosh of the New Zaporozhian Sich, Corpus of Documents, 1734-1775], Volume 3, Kyiv 2003; Lubov Gistsova and Lioudmila Demchenko (eds.), *Arkhiv Kocha Novoi Zaporozhskoi Sichi, korpus documentiv, 1734-1775* [Archive of the Kosh of the New Zaporozhian Sich, Corpus of Documents, 1734-1775], Volume 4, Kyiv 2006; Lubov Gistsova and Lioudmila Demchenko (eds.), *Arkhiv Kocha Novoi Zaporozhskoi Sichi, korpus documentiv, 1734-1775* [Archive of the Kosh of the New Zaporozhian Sich, corpus of documents 1734-1775], Volume 5, Kyiv 2008.

10 The institution of the Office of the Gubernia of Kiev was established in 1708 by Peter I as the highest administrative and military institution of the tsarist regime on the territory of the Gubernia of Kiev: Alexandr Bondarevskii, Leonid Otlivanov, Sergey Pil'kevich, and Vladimir Sheludchenko (eds.), *Tsentral'nyi gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii arkhiv USSR v Kieve: Putevoditel'* [Central State Historical Archive of the Ukrainian SSR in Kiev: Guide], Kiev 1958, p. 26.

11 Alan Fisher, in his work focusing on the Russian annexation of the Crimea, maintains that the governor-general of Kyiv was appointed to deal with commercial disputes between Tatars and Cossacks. However the documents of the AKZS point to the existence of a much wider range of issues, including political, economic, and cultural matters, that were being examined, also pertinent to other populations of the region: Alan W. Fisher, *The Russian Annexation of the Crimea, 1772-1783*, Cambridge 1970, p. 25.

The Commission's members came together in the Zaporozhian Sich (in 1749, 1752, 1753-1754, 1763, 1764-65, and 1768)[12] to discuss and resolve conflicts between the three parties. Each committee reviewed the complaints that had been collected during the previous years. For instance, although the first Commission was held in 1749, it examined cases that had been recorded since 1740. Certainly, a resolution of all disputes was not always possible, due to disagreements between the parties or to the litigants' inability to gather evidence and document their claims. As a result, the Committees often had to interrupt their work, finding themselves in deadlock. The adjudication of each case was certified through the issuance of documents – often in two languages (Ukrainian and Ottoman) – bearing the final decision of the Committee. In other words, the abovementioned sources contain detailed descriptions of the conflicts, recording the time, place, and subject of the disputes and the names of the litigants, as well as the final judgements of the Commissions. The records were created based on petitions that were sent by the authorities of each involved party and the archive usually contains these petitions, the Commissions' direct answers, and records summarizing each case. Another kind of document that was produced by the Commissions is acquittal records, certifying that the person who had received a compensation made no additional claims against the payer. An indicative example of such an acquittal record, dated March 15, 1750, informs us, for instance, that a certain Janissary, Bekir Beşe (Bashe) of the 17th Cemaat (regiment)[13] of Ochakov, certifies that he received compensation from the Zaporozhian Kosh for 43 stolen cattle and, thus, does not have any further claims. As case witnesses, the following Crimean inhabitants – among whom two were Janissary regimental officers – are recorded: Halil Ağa Gazi (? Gadzhi), Şakir (? Shagirey) Odabaşı (Odabasha), Ahmed (? Evmet) from Perekop, and Bölükbaşı (Buluk-Basha) Mehmed (Magmet).[14]



The main categories of cases found in such documents can be grouped as follows: a. theft of horses, cattle, sheep, trading goods, and personal belongings; b. murders, injuries; c. captivity-related events. Through the study of the registers of conflicts we can find instances of trade conducted between Crimean Tatars, Janissaries, Cossacks, Ukrainians, Russians, Greeks, and Armenians, as well as references to their political and social relations. A representative case is to be found in a petition brought by Mahmud Beşe (Mahmout Pasha) 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 (Osman Pasha) hired a Cossack named Shpilka as a guard during his journey to the Zaporozhian Sich with his own

---

12 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.

13 Ottoman sources record the appointment of the 17th Cemaat to Özi in 1736: Devlet Arşivleri Başkanlığı Osmanlı Arşivi (BOA), Cevdet Askeriye (C.AS) 886/38074.

14 TSDIAK of Ukraine, fond 229/opis 1/sprava 14.

ship, which was loaded with goods. During *namaz*, Shpilka attacked Osman in order to kill him, but, after the ensuing fight, the Cossack escaped without succeeding. Later, Osman hired another Cossack as a guard, but during the night, Shpilka returned to the ship with forty-seven more Cossacks, stealing all the goods and injuring Osman. The record of the stolen goods, which also contains their value, is written in Greek. The Kosh replied that, after thorough investigation, it was impossible to find Shpilka and suggested that the Janissary next time hired only Cossacks who had a passport.[15]

Such documents can reveal the various types of interactions which were taking place during the period in question. This particular case presents us with a commercial aspect – that the Janissaries were involved in the import maritime trade to the Zaporozhian Sich – offering us, at the same time, a rare detailed presentation of the type and value of the imported merchandise, which consisted of a variety of goods. Furthermore, if we leave Osman's misfortune of choosing the wrong guard to one side, we understand that the cooperation of Muslim merchants with the local non-Muslim population was probably not a rare occurrence. Some other illustrative cases of collaboration and interaction between Janissaries and Cossacks are to be found in a petition from 1742 that was examined by the Commission of Inquiry in 1749. The Janissary İmamoğlu (Imamoulou) from Perekop was robbed by his Cossack servant, Argat, who stole a significant amount of money – 400 Crimean thalers – and two sabers. One year later, two Perekopian Janissaries, Mehmed Beşe (Bashe) and Deli Beşe (Bashe), traveled to the Sich for trade, but when they reached the customs point, Zaporozhian Cossacks from the Nikitino district stole their horses.[16] Of course, the nature of such collaborations was determined by the specific circumstances that prevailed in the frontier zone. The interaction of these actors depended on a fragile balance: neither side was safe and any relationship of cooperation could be well replaced by hostile attitudes. Furthermore, trading and travelling on the frontier posed many dangers, such as robberies and transgressive behaviors, which were often impossible to contain within one region owing to the movement of diverse populations and the changing political aspirations of the nearby states.



In addition to all this, the Commissions of Inquiry had to deal with various issues related to the geographical borders drawn between the Zaporozhians and the Crimean Khanate by the Russians. The lands situated close to the borderline were seen as a space of vital economic importance and were, thus, continually claimed by the people inhabiting both sides, through cultivation, fishing, herding, and looting, all of which constituted crucial sources of income for frontier societies with large semi-nomadic populations. As borderlines shifted and their control passed to the Russians, the Zaporozhians, Janissaries, and Tatars had to find new ways of coexisting and interacting. The documents shed light on a process of

15 TSDIAK of Ukraine, fond 229/opis 1/sprava 12/folio 9.

16 TSDIAK of Ukraine, fond 229/opis 1/sprava 11.

destruction or readjustment of the previous precarious balance of steppe-frontier life which lay between cooperation and confrontation, a process that often gave rise to conflicts. It is evident from the cases found in the Ukrainian AKZS that a considerable number of disputes were related to the transgressions of Janissary shepherds, mainly from the fortress of Perekop, who crossed the borders in order to graze their herds in the lands of the Zaporozhian Cossacks, a widespread practice in a region where husbandry was an integral part of both Janissary and Cossack economic activity.[17] In the sources, one can find several characteristic examples of collaboration and movement of shepherds through the frontier region, such as a petition brought by the Crimean Tatars to the Zaporozhian Kosh in 1744-1745 which informs us that in August 1745 a certain Janissary, Karakule (Karakoulle), hired a certain Cossack, Jacob, to graze his sheep in Perekop.[18] In a similar fashion, in the Register of the Russian customs officer, Captain Krivtsov, we can trace a significant number of animals that were transported from the Hetmanate through the Sich to Crimea: on October 19, 1747, a Perekopian Janissary named Mehmed Beşe (Bashe) and his six companions crossed the customs point on horses with 250 sheep and 100 cattle; a few days later, on October 29, another Perekopian Janissary named Mehmed Beşe and his three servants followed the same route on horses with 50 cattle, while the Janissary Ahmed Beşe, together with his 13 companions, headed to Perekop riding a carriage loaded with provisions, and bringing with them 64 cattle and 900 sheep.[19]



The so-called *diary* (proceedings) of the Commission of 1749 provides a valuable insight into the function of the Commissions, their institutional and practical role in conflict resolution, and the political significance of this practice. The most important aspect of this multipage document is the unique view it offers concerning the ways in which the various members of the Commission understood and perceived the geopolitical fluctuations that the frontier region was experiencing and the extent to which the involved parties accepted or contested the changes enforced by the Russians.[20]

A second category of documents which is to be found in the Ukrainian AKZS provides information on the external trade of the region. This category includes official letters exchanged between the Kosh and the heads of the fortresses of the Crimean Khanate, as well as other official correspondence and sources such as customs registers and regulations. These documents reveal the commercial ties which existed among the Russian Empire, the Hetmanate, the

17 TSDIAK of Ukraine, fond 229/opis 1/sprava 11; 12; 14; 17; 90; 97; 101; 139; 140; 144; 162; 163; 189; 191; 216.

18 TSDIAK of Ukraine, fond 229/opis 1/sprava 11.

19 Arkadiy Andreevskiy, "Materialy kasayushchiesia zaporozhtsev, s 1715-1774 g", [Documents concerning the Zaporozhians, 1715-1774], *Zapiski Imperatorskogo Odesskogo obshchestva istorii i drevnostei*, [Notes of the Imperial Odesa Society of History and Antiquities], Volume 14, Odessa 1886, p. 444.

20 TSDIAK of Ukraine, fond 229/opis 1/sprava 11.

Zaporozhian Sich, the Janissaries, the Crimean Khanate, and the Ottoman Empire in general. The Zaporozhian Sich became a transit center for the trade between north and south, acting as a hub of local, intra-regional, and intra-imperial land- and sea-trade connections. The traditional Istanbul-Ochakov-Sich trade route continued, although new routes were also formed. Now, Ukrainian, Ottoman, Greek, and Armenian merchants were travelling to and from Poltava, the commercial center of the Hetmanate, which became an enduring point of trade on the route which extended from Gözleve and passed through Ochakov or Perekop. Certainly, the port-city of Gözleve, the customs of which were farmed out to a Janissary *ağa* – the fortress he was appointed to is unfortunately not specified – in the 1760s by Giray Han (Krim-Girey),[21] was not the end of the trade route; it continued to Istanbul. The documents also record the type of goods and commercial practices employed, prominently reflecting the existing commercial collaboration between the region's Muslim and non-Muslim population. The Cossacks of Zaporozhia had established their own merchant routes and networks: as the Cossack archives show us, every spring, six to seven ships arrived from Istanbul via the Dnieper in the Cossack Sich, loaded with olive oil, wine, and fruit, with this traffic continuing throughout the summer. Although the steppe was a scene of rivalry and antagonism between the Russian and Ottoman Empires, the Ukrainians, Cossacks, Janissaries, Tatars, and other non-Muslim merchants managed to find a balance between the two major powers and continued to maintain commercial ties that had been established in previous periods.



The abovementioned document category, as well as providing evidence on the economic and political life of the political entities in the region, also offers the opportunity to monitor the complex social and cultural behavior of its inhabitants and the exchanges between them. Because of their nature and scope, these documents usually provide very little direct information on the social and cultural life of the frontier zone; however, such aspects are still perceptible when we try to read between the lines. When we examine the bigger picture of overlapping and alternating relations of confrontation and collaboration, especially between Janissaries and Cossacks, an image of intense cultural exchange and interaction emerges. For instance, the strong impact that the Janissary way of life and military practices had on the Cossacks, which is evident in the sources, is yet to be studied and presents us with the opportunity to engage in the exploration of a completely new field of research.

The Left Bank Hetmanate played an important role in the relations between the main powers of the Turkic-Slavic frontier. After the upheavals of the second half of the seventeenth century, the Hetmanate emerged as an autonomous political entity under Russian rule. In the beginning, it enjoyed self-governance when it came to its internal affairs, but its foreign policy and military sector were controlled by Muscovy. During the eighteenth century, the Russian policy in the

21 TSDIAK of Ukraine, fond 229/opis 1/sprava 157.

region leaned toward the extension of centralized rule and the restriction of the Hetmanate's autonomy, while continuing its active intervention in the political affairs of the Crimean Khanate and the Ottomans on the northern shore of the Black Sea. Despite all this, during this period the Hetmanate became the center of Ukrainian political, social, and economic life.

One of the principal instruments of Russian policy in the Hetmanate was the governor-general of Kyiv. The Russians favored a strong concentration of power in his hands due to the frontier status of the Kyiv Province, and a Russian law of 1737 gave him the right to intervene in the internal issues of the Zaporozhian Kosh, allowing him to control its foreign policy. The relationship between the main powers of the region is reflected in the archival series of the Office of the Gubernia of Kyiv (hereafter OGK), which is kept in the Central State Historical Archive of Ukraine (archival series no. 59) and includes 9,996 folders. The governor-general of Kyiv acted as an intermediary in the document flow between the Sich administration and the imperial court, while the Zaporozhian Kosh handled the document flow between the Hetmanate and the Crimean Khan. In addition, the Cossack authorities acted as an intermediary link in the correspondence between both the Hetmanate and the Russian government with the Crimean Khan. By integrating the Zaporozhian Cossacks into this imperial framework through the Hetmanate, the Russian control of the Zaporozhian region increased.



Although a return of the Zaporozhians to the protection of the Khanate was initially considered to be a potential threat, Russian intervention in the relations of the Zaporozhian Sich with the Crimean Khanate began to relax from the late 1750s onward. During this period, the OGK shows an increase in the direct correspondence between the Khanate and the Sich, providing us with a valuable insight into the ways in which and the extent to which the Russian authorities interfered in the relations of the Zaporozhian Sich with the Ottomans and the Tatars of the Crimean Khanate, as well as the types of relations which developed between the two sides. The archive of the OGK can be used as a complement to the sources of the AKZS, not only owing to the fact that it illuminates unknown instances of the diplomatic relations of the abovementioned states, but also because of its references to the function of the Commissions of Inquiry which, as explained above, mainly refer to interactions at the level of individuals. The files contain information on the procedure for the selection and appointment of the members of the Commissions, as well as detailed descriptions of the nature of the conflicts, giving us the opportunity to better understand the stakes involved and the institutional aspects which defined each case.[22]

In terms of the trade conducted in the steppeland and the Black Sea littoral, the OGK reveals valuable evidence which allows us to trace the commercial ties

[22] TSDIAK of Ukraine, fond 59/opis 2/sprava 789; 1285; 1514; 1707.

between the Muslim population of the Crimean Khanate and non-Muslim entrepreneurs such as Cossacks, Ukrainians, Russians, Greeks, and Armenians. Passports given to merchants in order to cross the borders, reports of the heads of the customs on the merchants passing through checkpoints and on the duties collected, and reviews of trade relations with the Crimean Khanate can provide valuable statistical data concerning the numbers of people and goods traveling in the region. Moreover, these documents disclose important information on the types of commerce, trade routes, and trade companies involved in this activity.[23] The salt trade was one of the most important sources of income for the Crimean authorities and Ukrainian merchants (*chumak*s). Salt caravans from the Crimean salt lakes of the fortress of Perekop and other places stretched from Crimea through the Zaporozhian Sich posts to the markets of the Hetmanate and beyond.

The Crimean authorities earned significant income from the export of salt; in 1748 at Perekop, for instance, the *chumak*s paid a customs duty of 35 *kopeck* per empty carriage, also paying 1 *carbovents* and 5 *kopeck* per loaded carriage on their way back, the cost of one carriage of salt being 4 *carbovents* and 11 *kopeck*.[24] The traffic of *chumak* caravans was quite impressive. It is indicative that in 1746 – in the course of only one month, in November – twenty-eight merchants with seventy-eight journeymen crossed the Charichan outpost, close to the city Poltava in the Hetmanate, all of them loaded with salt and fish. Of course, robberies and attacks were a constant reality for the various parties that traded in the area. In 1744, for example, Cossacks returning from Crimea with a load of salt stole a horse from a Perekopian Janissary called Mehmed and six horses from a resident of Perekop called Esoubeps. A few years later, in 1748, three oxen and two horses were stolen by Tatars from a certain Cossack, Grigoriy Tutunnik, who was carrying a load of salt from the Perekop salt lake.



In both the AKZS and the OGK the export of cattle and horses from the Hetmanate and the Zaporozhian Sich to the Crimean Khanate occupies a special place. The Ukrainian merchants, apart from their exported goods, were often carrying with them a significant number of cattle and horses which they used as a kind of currency. Since, according to Russian law, it was forbidden to export gold and silver – in the form of coins or otherwise – from Ukraine, and the Crimean merchants and authorities refused to accept Russian copper coins, the Ukrainian merchants were selling their animals in order to have currency to buy salt and other goods. Needless to say, under such conditions the smuggling of gold and silver evolved into a very profitable business in the region.[25]

---

23 Indicatively, see TSDIAK of Ukraine, fond 59/opis 1/sprava 105-107; 112; 186; 281; 324; 654; 742; 807.

24 Mykola Tyshchenko, *Narisi z istorii zovnisn'oi torgivli Ukrainy v XVIII st.*, [Essays on the History of Ukraine's Foreign Trade in the 18th Century], Bila Tserkva 2010, p. 100.

25 Ibid., p. 90-125.

Ukraine was an important market for the Crimean Khans, who paid great attention to the proper organization of its commerce. In this framework, maintaining good relations with the Cossacks was a prerequisite for the smooth conduct of trade, as the Zaporozhian Sich, with its customs, acted as a transit-trade center for the entire region. As well as salt, other goods, such as soap, dry fruit, and pottery, were imported to the Ukrainian and Russian markets. Among these, Crimean wine was the most well known in Ukrainian and Zaporozhian fairs. The sources in the OGK also reveal the export trade from Ukraine and the Zaporozhian area to the Crimean port-cities of Özü, Gözleve, Kefe, and the Ottoman capital, with the famous Ukrainian cow butter, cereals, lard, cattle, horses, and sheep constituting the main goods which were exported to all of these areas via the sea.

The unique and largely unexplored archival documents of the Central State Historical Archive of Ukraine thus present us with direct proof of the great potential for the study of different aspects of the intertwined relations which existed between the main powers of the northern Black Sea frontier zone. The types of documents presented here can provide valuable insight into the political, economic, social, and cultural interaction between the Janissaries of the Crimean Khanate, the Zaporozhian Cossacks, the Ukrainians of the Hetmanate, and the Russians, allowing a comparative frame of study. These documents deserve significant attention from scholars of diverse historical fields, as they can offer a fresh outlook on the history of the region.



## References

**Archival Sources**

**Devlet Arşivleri Başkanlığı Osmanlı Arşivi/Directorate of State Archives-Ottoman Archives (BOA)**

Cevdet Askeriye (C.AS) 886/38074.

**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; 157; 162; 163; 189; 191; 216.

Fond 59/opis 1/sprava 105-107; 112; 186; 281; 324; 654; 742; 807

Fond 59/opis 2/sprava 789; 1285; 1514; 1707.

**Published Sources**

Abduzhemilev, Refat Roustem (ed.), *Documents of the Crimean Khanate from Huseyn Feyzkhanov's Collection*, Simferopol 2017.

Andreevskiy, Arkadiy, "Materialy kasayushchiesia zaporozhtsev, s 1715-1774 g.", [Documents concerning the Zaporozhians, 1715-1774], *Zapiski Imperatorskogo*

*Odesskogo obshchestva istorii i drevnostei*, [Notes of the Imperial Odesa Society of History and Antiquities], Volume 14, Odessa 1886, p. 444.

Apanovich, Olena, "Arkhiv Kocha Zaporozhskoi Sichi", [Archive of the Kosh of the Zaporozhian Sich], *Archives of Ukraine*, 6, (1989), p. 13-27.

Bondarevskii, Alexandr, Otlivanov, Leonid, Pil'kevich, Sergey, and Sheludchenko, Vladimir (eds.), *Tsentral'nyi gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii arkhiv USSR v Kieve: Putevoditel'*, [Central State Historical Archive of the Ukrainian SSR in Kiev: Guide], Kiev 1958.

Carras, Iannis, "Το δια θαλάσσης εμπόριο από την Καζακία και τη Ρωσία, 1696-1774", [Maritime trade from Kazakia and Russia, 1696-1774], *Οι Έλληνες της Αζοφικής, 18ος – αρχές 20ου αιώνα* [Greeks in the Azov, 18th-Beginning of the 20th Century], (eds. Evridiki Sifneos, Gelina Harlaflis), Athens 2015, p. 329-345;

Chukhlib, Taras, *Cozaki ta Ianychary. Ukraina y Chrystians'ko-mousoul'man'skich viinakh 1500-1700 rr*, [Cossacks and Janissaries. Ukraine in the Christian-Muslim Wars, 1500-1700], Kyiv 2010.

Davies, Brian, *Warfare, State and Society on the Black Sea Steppe, 1500-1700,* London and New York 2007.

Deinkov, Ravil, *Rossia, Tourtsia i Krimskoe Chanstvo: geopoliticheskaia sitouatsia v Severnom Prichernomir'e v period c 30-x. gg XVIII v. po 1873 g.*, [Russia, Turkey and the Crimean Khanate: the Geopolitical Situation in the Northern Black Sea Region, 1730s to 1783], Moscow Region State University, Ph.D., Moscow 2012.

Gistsova, Lubov (ed.), *Arkhiv Kocha Novoi Zaporozhskoi Sichi, korpus documentiv, 1734-1775*, [Archive of the Kosh of the New Zaporozhian Sich, Corpus of Documents, 1734-1775], Volume 1, Kyiv 1998.

_____ , *Arkhiv Kocha Novoi Zaporozhskoi Sichi, korpus documentiv, 1734-1775*, [Archive of the Kosh of the New Zaporozhian Sich, Corpus of Documents, 1734-1775], Volume 2, Kyiv 2000.

Gistsova, Lubov and Demchenko, Lioudmila (eds.), *Arkhiv Kocha Novoi Zaporozhskoi Sichi, opis sprav 1713-1776*, [Archive of the Kosh of the New Zaporozhian Sich, Catalog 1713-1776], Kyiv 1994.

_____, *Arkhiv Kocha Novoi Zaporozhskoi Sichi, korpus documentiv, 1734-1775*, [Archive of the Kosh of the New Zaporozhian Sich, Corpus of Documents, 1734-1775], Volume 3, Kyiv 2003.

_____ , *Arkhiv Kocha Novoi Zaporozhskoi Sichi, korpus documentiv, 1734-1775*, [Archive of the Kosh of the New Zaporozhian Sich, Corpus of Documents, 1734-1775], Volume 4, Kyiv 2006.

_____ , *Arkhiv Kocha Novoi Zaporozhskoi Sichi, korpus documentiv, 1734-1775*, [Archive of the Kosh of the New Zaporozhian Sich, Corpus of Documents, 1734-1775], Volume 5, Kyiv 2008.

Fisher, Alan W., *The Russian Annexation of the Crimea, 1772-1783*, Cambridge 1970.

_____ , *A Precarious Balance: Conflict, Trade, and Diplomacy on the Russian-Ottoman Frontier*, Istanbul 1999.

Halenko, Aleksander, "Towards the Character of Ottoman Policy in the Northern Black Sea Region after the Treaty of Belgrade (1783)", *Oriente Moderno* (Nuova serie, *The Ottoman Empire in the Eighteenth Century*), 18/79, (1999), p. 101-112.

İnalcık, Halil, "Kırım Kadı Sicilleri Bulundu", *Belleten*, 60/227, (1996), p. 165-190.

Jones, Robert E., "Opening a Window on the South: Russia and the Black Sea 1695-1792", *A Window on Russia, Papers from the V International Conference of the Study Group on Eighteenth-Century Russia*, (eds. Maria Di Salvo and Lindsey Hughes), Rome 1996, p. 123-130.

King, Charles, *The Black Sea: A History*, Oxford 2004.

Kočegarov, Kirill, "The Moscow Uprising of 1682: Relations between Russia, the Crimean Khanate, and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth", *The Crimean Khanate between East and West (15th-18th Century)*, (ed. Denise Klein) Harrassowitz 2012, p. 59-75.

Kołodziejczyk, Dariusz, *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.

Magocsi, Paul Robert, *A history of Ukraine: the Land and its Peoples*, Toronto, Buffalo, and London 2010.

Ostapchuk, Victor, "The Publication of Documents on the Crimean Khanate in the Topkapı Sarayı: New Sources for the History of the Black Sea Basin", *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, 6/4, (December 1982), p. 500-528.

_____, "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), p. 23-95.

_____, "Cossack Ukraine in and Out of Ottoman Orbit, 1648-1681", *The European Tributary States of the Ottoman Empire in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, (eds. Gábor Kármán and Lovro Kunčević), Leiden and Boston 2013, p. 123-152.



Subtelny, Orest, *Ukraine: a history,* Toronto, Buffalo, and London 1994.

Turanly, Ferhad, "The Military Cooperation between the Crimean Khanate and the Zaporozhian Host in the Second Quarter of the XVIIth century", *Shidnoyevropeiskyi Istorychnyi Visnyk*, 11, (2019), p. 39-55.

Tyshchenko, Mykola, *Narisi z istorii zovnisn'oi torgivli Ukrainy v XVIII st.* [Essays on the History of Ukraine's Foreign Trade in the 18th Century], Bila Tserkva 2010.

*Cihannüma*
Tarih ve Coğrafya Araştırmaları Dergisi
Sayı VIII/1 – Temmuz 2022, 145-168
*Doi: 10.30517/cihannüma.1131060*

# CHASING JANISSARY GHOSTS: SULTAN MAHMUD II'S PARANOIA ABOUT A JANISSARY UPRISING AFTER THE ABOLITION OF THE JANISSARY CORPS

**Mehmet Mert Sunar***

**Abstract**

During his first years as sultan, Mahmud II faced direct threats to his life from the Janissaries and their allies in Istanbul. Although he was able to keep his life and throne during the Alemdar Incident of 1808, he endured continuous political harassment and humiliation at the hands of the Janissaries in the following years. Such bitter experiences left deep scars in Mahmud II's psyche and he developed a deep hatred for his tormentors. Even his well-planned victory in 1826 and the destruction of the Janissaries could not convince the sultan that the Janissary threat was over. As a result, Mahmud II urged his ministers and officials to be vigilant for any signs of Janissary conspiracy following the so-called Auspicious Event in 1826. As his hypersensitivity on the subject led him to believe any allegation of potential Janissary plots and reprimand his ministers for their negligence, government officials quickly realized that they had to appear more vigilant than the sultan if they were to protect their careers. Some even exploited the sultan's weakness by exaggerating rumors or feeble attempts at rebellion as empire-wide Janissary conspiracies, seeking to get into the sultan's good graces. This atmosphere of paranoia had serious consequences for ordinary people, as anyone accused of criticizing or voicing an opinion against the sultan's new regime risked being exiled or executed. Thus, the period between 1826 and 1830 witnessed the uncovering of alleged Janissary plots against Mahmud II's administration and the subsequent executions and exiles of former Janissaries and civilians.

**Keywords:** Sultan Mahmud II, Janissaries, conspiracy, abolition of the Janissary Corps, paranoia

* Assoc. Prof, *İstanbul Medeniyet University, Department of History*, Istanbul / Türkiye, mehmetmert.sunar@medeniyet.edu.tr, Orcid ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0971-9612

Makale Geliş Tarihi / Received Date: 08.12.2021 Makale Kabul Tarihi / Acceptance Date: 07.01.2022

# Yeniçeri Hayaletlerini Kovalamak: Yeniçeri Ocağı'nın Kaldırılmasından Ardından Sultan II. Mahmud'un Yeniçeri İsyanı Paranoyası

**Öz**

Sultan II. Mahmud saltanatının ilk yıllarında yeniçeriler ve müttefiklerinin hayatına yönelik ciddi tehditlerine maruz kaldı. Sultan 1808'deki Alemdar Vakası sırasında hayatını ve tahtını korumayı başardıysa da, yeniçeriler belli bir süre daha sultanın şahsına yönelik siyasi aşağılama ve tacizlere devam ettiler. Bu acı tecrübeler II. Mahmud'un halet-i ruhiyesinde sadece derin yaralar bırakmakla kalmadı aynı zamanda yeniçerilere karşı büyük bir nefret duygusunu da beraberinde getirdi. 1826'da iyi ve sabırla uygulanmış bir plan doğrultusunda Yeniçeri Ocağı'nın ortadan kaldırması bile sultanı iktidarına yönelik yeniçeri tehdidinin geçtiği konusunda ikna edemedi. Sultan bu yüzden vezirlerini ve diğer devlet görevlilerini potansiyel bir yeniçeri komplosuna karşı her daim uyanık olmaları konusunda uyarmaya devam etti. Yeniçeriler konusundaki bu aşırı hassasiyeti sultanı en ufak komplo ihbar ve ithamlarına dahi inanmaya ve vezirlerini ihmalkârlıkla suçlamaya kadar götürdüğünden, vezirler ve paşalar bu dönemde kendi kariyerlerini korumanın yeniçerilik konusunda sultandan daha hassas görünmekte yattığını anlamakta gecikmediler. İçlerinde bazıları sultanın bu zafiyetini istismar ederek önemsiz dedikodu ve olayları imparatorluk geneline yayılmış yeniçeri komploları olarak lanse ederek sultanın gözüne girmeye çabaladılar. Bu hâkim atmosfer sıradan halk ve sabık yeniçeriler için ciddi sonuçlar doğurdu; sultanın yeni rejimini ve reformlarını eleştiren ya da en ufak muhalif görüş belirten herkes sürgün ya da idam cezası riski ile karşı karşıyaydı. Bu sebeple, 1826 ile 1830 arası dönem II. Mahmud yönetimine karşı çeşitli yeniçeri komplolarının birbiri ardına ortaya çıkarıldığı ve sabık yeniçeriler ile sivillerin sürgün ve idam cezasına çarptırıldığı bir dönem oldu.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Sultan II. Mahmud, yeniçeriler, komplo, Vaka-i Hayriye, paranoya



> *"On the 17th day of Safer, twelve thousand Bektaşis with halberds in their hands will arrive at Üsküdar from Mecca. From there they will get across to Istanbul and gather at the Meat Square, then they will march to the Palace and among them a man named Muhammed Ali will rule in Istanbul."*[1]

On June 15, 1826, Sultan Mahmud II oversaw the destruction and the abolition of the Janissary Corps, an achievement which his late predecessors had only dreamed of. The last Janissary rebellion did not last even a day, and the final

[1] For the interrogations concerning the October 1826 plot, see Devlet Arşivleri Başkanlığı Osmanlı Arşivi (BOA), Hatt-ı Hümayun (HAT), 294/17506, n.d.

stand of Istanbul's Janissaries was even less impressive, lasting no more than an hour.[2] This quick success was very surprising even for Sultan Mahmud II and his advisors, who had been preparing for this event for years, as they worried not only about the number of Istanbul Janissaries but also their supposedly large support base among Istanbul's residents.

Having survived the traumatic events of the deposition of Sultan Mustafa IV and the Alemdar Incident, during which his life had been in immediate danger from the Janissaries and their allies, Sultan Mahmud II seemed unconvinced that the Janissary threat was over even after news of the burning of the Janissary barracks and summary executions of Janissary ringleaders was reported by many of his officials on June 15, 1826. Thus, he ordered his ministers and high-ranking officials not to stay at their homes but rather in tents erected in the third courtyard of the Topkapı Palace until further notice.[3] The soldiers from the Artillery, Mortar, and Sapper Corps were charged to protect the gates of the palace and two artillery pieces placed at the main palace gate were kept ready for any sign of trouble.[4] Sultan Mahmud II's first Friday Ceremony after the abolition was also held at the Zeynep Sultan Mosque due to security concerns, as its small size and closeness to the palace gate made the sultan's security more manageable.[5] Mahmud II's main concern was security, as he was afraid that there would be attacks and assassination attempts by the Janissaries and their allies against himself and the members of his government.



Immediately after the abolition, Sultan Mahmud II's government also ordered the Istanbul residents to set up a night watch in their neighborhoods. On the one hand, this aimed at providing a temporary solution to the problem of security, as the abolition of the Janissaries had also meant the removal of the police force from the city. On the other hand, the government also sought to curb the nocturnal mobility of unwanted elements during this period. Although the public would be relieved from this duty after two weeks, when the newly recruited troops of the Asakir-i Mansure assumed policing functions, Istanbul was placed under a state of martial law which would last much longer than the neighborhood watch. In fact, the state of alertness and vigilance would continue in the sultan's mind for

---

2 Sahhâflar Şeyhizâde Seyyid Mehmed Es'ad Efendi, *Vak'a-nüvîs Es'ad Efendi Tarihi (Bâhir Efendi'nin Zeyl ve İlâveleriyle) 1237-1241/1821-1826*, (ed. Ziya Yılmazer), Istanbul 2000, p. 608-617; Ahmed Lutfi, *Tarih-i Lutfi*, Volume 1, Istanbul 1290/1873-1874, p. 136-143.

3 Sahhâflar Şeyhizâde Seyyid Mehmed Es'ad Efendi, *Vak'a-nüvîs Es'ad Efendi Tarihi*, p. 618; Ahmed Lutfi, *Tarih-i Lutfi*, Volume 1, p. 145. The high-ranking state officials continued to serve and stay in their tent bureaus in the third courtyard of the palace for more than two months, in accordance with the sultan's written order. İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devleti Teşkilatından Kapıkulu Ocakları*, Volume 1, Ankara 1943, p. 606-607.

4 Esad Efendi, *Üss-i Zafer*, 2nd Edition, Istanbul 1293/1876, p. 130.

5 *Ibid*., p. 101. During the Alemdar Incident (1808) the Friday Ceremony was also held at the Zeynep Sultan Mosque, as there were similar concerns for Sultan Mahmud II's security; see Cabi Ömer Efendi, *Cabi Tarihi: Tarih-i Sultan Selim-i Salis ve Mahmud-ı Sani*, (ed. Mehmet Ali Beyhan), Volume 1, Ankara 2003, p. 303.

years to come. The present paper aims to examine Sultan Mahmud II's oversensitivity to a potential Janissary threat and the price of this mood for the populace during the period between 1826 and 1830. Even though all of the so-called Janissary plots were proved to be without any substantial base during this time, Sultan Mahmud II's government prosecuted those accused to such an extent that even the official historians of the state had to admit the harshness of such policies.[6] Realizing the sultan's vigilance on the subject, many high officials and provincial governors also resorted to similar measures so as to be on the safe side, further increasing butcher's bill associated with the Auspicious Event.

Although described in modern historiography as a reform-minded prince who was educated and informed by Sultan Selim III, Mahmud seemed to have had little choice in his political views from the very beginning. The *coup d'état* of Alemdar Mustafa Paşa was a political *fait accompli* that put Prince Mahmud's life in direct danger, as Sultan Mustafa IV's palace servants attempted to murder all remaining male members of the Ottoman dynasty so as to deprive Alemdar of any other alternatives for the throne. Mahmud survived the attempt and became the new sultan, finding himself at the head of the reformist faction. When the new attempt at military reform during the Grand Vizierate of Alemdar Paşa ended with a bloody uprising in 1808, Sultan Mahmud II once again found himself facing death threats, surviving – barely – the anger of the Janissaries by achieving what his brother, Mustafa IV, had failed to do in 1807: having his brother strangled and becoming the only surviving male member of the dynasty. Even though the rebels chose to keep Mahmud on the throne, they never fully recognized him as the legitimate sultan. They tried to put political pressure on the young ruler, often humiliating him publicly with street posters and simple couplets, calling him a coward, a liar, and unfit for rule.[7] The Janissaries also pressured Mahmud II to produce a male heir to the throne, not hiding their intention of replacing the sultan when the time came. Nevertheless, Sultan Mahmud II proved to be resilient, weathering all these storms, and succeeded in strengthening his authority by first eliminating the most powerful local notables and then the majority of the mid-ranking Janissary officers who had had any kind of involvement in previous uprisings.[8] Though the Greek Revolution postponed the sultan's long-planned



6 The official historian Ahmed Lutfi claims that his predecessor, Esad Efendi, wrote that prosecuting and executing so many people based on suspicions was very excessive and unnecessary. Even though no such statement can be found in Esad's published works, it is possible that Ahmed Lutfi saw this remark among the documents passed to him by Esad Efendi. Ahmed Lutfi's decision to include it in his official chronicle also shows that he agreed with Esad Efendi's argument and, of course, it was safe for him to do so nearly 50 years after the abolition of the Janissary Corps; Ahmed Lutfi, *Tarih-i Lutfi*, Volume 1, p. 159.

7 See Mehmet Mert Sunar, *Cauldron of Dissent: A Study of the Janissary Corps, 1807-1826*, SUNY-Binghamton, Ph.D, New York 2006, p. 147-169.

8 Şanizade Mehmed Ataullah Efendi, *Tarih-i Şanizade*, Volume 2, Istanbul 1284/1867-1868, 235-237. See also Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, *Tarih-i Cevdet*, Volume 10 (Tertib-i Cedid; İkinci Tab), Istanbul 1309/1892, p. 205-206.

military reforms, Mahmud II moved against the Janissaries in 1826 when he thought the Egyptian troops under the command of İbrahim Paşa had suppressed the rebellion in the Morea.

As Mahmud II and his inner circle had been preparing for a move against the Janissaries for a while, the announcement of a new military reform in the last days of May in 1826 was a very calculated political move. The Janissaries realized too late that they were politically and legally surrounded, and their last desperate attempt to resist Mahmud II's reforms would fail miserably. The government's victory was so smooth and quick that the sultan could not quite believe that the Janissary threat in Istanbul was over. Thus, Mahmud II not only ordered a state of martial law, which continued for months in the Ottoman capital, but also urged his ministers and officials to be over-vigilant for any signs of Janissary revival. The sultan's hypersensitivity regarding a potential Janissary threat defined the political atmosphere for years to come and affected the attitudes of his ministers and *paşa*s, who did not want to put their careers in danger by appearing insensitive on this issue, even though there was no real threat of a Janissary uprising in Istanbul.

According to the supplement and postscripts written by Abdürrezzak Bahir Efendi for Esad's official chronicle, it was not long after the abolition of the Janissary Corps that Mahmud II's government discovered a Janissary plot to overthrow the new regime. According to Bahir Efendi, some Janissary elements, who had been able to enroll in the new Asakir-i Mansure units, planned to set the newly built watchtower at Bayezid on fire and in the ensuring chaos to assassinate the new commander-in-chief, Ağa Hüseyin Paşa, and some senior commanders.[9] Even though the whole event seems to have depended on a rumor reported by one of Ağa Hüseyin Paşa's men, Bahir Efendi claimed that the government responded with the transfer of a certain Mansure battalion to the Dardanelles and the execution of several ringleaders.



After the abolition of the Janissary Corps, Sultan Mahmud II's government was eager to form the new troops as quickly as possible, and thus it initially allowed the enrollment of former Janissaries to the new Asakir-i Mansure army, both in the provinces and in Istanbul.[10] This move also aimed at pacifying some of

---

9 The supervising of fire-fighting efforts during Istanbul fires was one of the duties of the Janissary Ağas. Since this duty was transferred to the commander-in-chief of the Asakir-i Mansure army in the new system, the plotters would supposedly draw Ağa Hüseyin Paşa into the trap and assassinate him; Sahhâflar Şeyhizâde Seyyid Mehmed Es'ad Efendi, *Vak'a-nüvîs Es'ad Efendi Tarihi*, p. 774-775.

10 Even though Ottoman official sources portray this process as a development outside the control of the central state, this in fact was happening in full knowledge of the government. In many provinces, former Janissary elements were used by local authorities for manning the new army. The authorities not only allowed but also encouraged this process, even mentioning it in the imperial order declaring the abolition of the Janissary Corps. For example, for the case of Crete, see Yannis 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], University of Crete, Ph.D, Rethymno

the former Janissaries by ensuring their place in the new system. However, the sultan and his ministers remained suspicious of these remnants of the old regime in their capital. In this case, the rumors of a plot and the burning of the watchtower gave Sultan Mahmud II's government the necessary pretext to get rid of some of these elements. Since government agents reported that the former Janissaries were concentrated in a particular battalion, the battalion was transferred to the Dardanelles from where its members were dispersed to several navy ships. The remaining battalions at the army headquarters in Istanbul also could not escape the scrutiny of Commander-in-chief Ağa Hüseyin Paşa, who mimicked his master's over-sensitivity on the subject and had them transferred to Eğriboz.[11]

It is striking how much this rumor resembles a similar one that circulated during the Grand Vizierate of Alemdar Mustafa Paşa.[12] Although this fact alone casts some doubt on the reliability of Bahir Efendi's account, there are indeed some references to the burned watchtower and the plot in official documents. In an imperial order related to the discovery of a second Janissary plot in Istanbul, Sultan Mahmud II expressed his strong suspicions about the involvement of former Janissaries in the burning of the watchtower at Bayezid and urged his grand vizier, Mehmed Selim (Sırrı) Paşa, to interrogate the suspects also on this subject.[13] Obeying his master's will, the grand vizier seems to have succeeded in extracting a vague reference to an earlier plot from an accused Mansure soldier during the interrogations. According to the statement of the Mansure soldier, there was indeed a plan to assassinate Commander-in-chief Ağa Hüseyin Paşa among the Mansure soldiers deployed in the Corps' headquarters during the great fire of Hocapaşa (August 2, 1826). However, the plan failed when the Mansure battalion, including the plotters, was transferred first to Üsküdar and then to the Dardanelles.[14] Even though we have every right to be suspicious about confessions extracted by Grand Vizier Mehmed Selim Paşa through torture, the Mansure soldier's statement seems to partly corroborate Bahir Efendi's account. However, as it will be argued in the following pages, Grand Vizier Mehmed Selim Paşa and other high officials had a tendency not to directly contradict the hypersensitivity



2014, p. 361-363. The official recognition of Janissary enrollment in the new army units can be best summarized by the fact that Hüseyin Paşa, the new commander-in-chief and former Janissary *ağa*, was in charge of checking the validity of Janissary pay-tickets when their owners applied for enrollment in the Asakir-i Mansure Army. See Howard A. Reed, *The Destruction of the Janissaries by Mahmud II in June, 1826*, Princeton University, Department of Oriental Languages and Literatures, Ph.D, Princeton 1951, p. 336.

11 The information about the plot comes from Abdurrezzak Bahir Efendi's supplement to Esad Efendi's history. Later historians, namely Ahmed Cevdet and Ahmed Lutfi, repeated Bahir Efendi's account. However, Ahmed Lutfi stated that he could not find any official documents relating to the event; Ahmed Lutfi, *Tarih-i Lutfi*, Volume 1, p. 159. For Ahmed Cevdet's reference to the event, see Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, *Tarih-i Cevdet*, Volume 12, p. 188.

12 Cabi Ömer Efendi, *Cabi Tarihi*, Volume 1, p. 269-270.

13 BOA, HAT.289/17327, n.d. "…*bu mahbesde olanlara muhterik kulenin sebebi sual olundu mu hala bunda benim şübhem vardır*".

14 BOA, HAT.294/17506, n.d.

and paranoia of Mahmud II on the issue of the Janissaries. It was highly probable that the whole statement might be related to the fact that the grand vizier and his men were just putting words into the mouths of the suspects in order to not contradict Sultan Mahmud II.

The abovementioned second Janissary plot was discovered just four months after the abolition of the Janissary Corps by the government in October 1826. A number of the new Asakir-i Mansure Army soldiers and the marines (*kalyoncu*s), alongside former Janissaries, were accused of conspiring to revive the Janissary Corps. Although there was no indication that the accused Asakir-i Mansure soldiers were former Janissaries, they were in close contact with former Janissaries and several Bektaşis. For that reason, the government also charged a Bektaşi *şeyh* and his dervishes for their involvement in the plot.[15] Despite the initial panic and fussiness of Sultan Mahmud II and his ministers, only twenty-nine persons were arrested and accused of plotting against the government. Of these, there were eight Asakir-i Mansure soldiers, six *kalyoncu*s, nine former Janissaries, and six civilians. All of the accused were taken to the new headquarters of the Asakir-i Mansure army and harshly interrogated. The grand vizier, Selim Mehmed Paşa, who was afraid of his master's wrath on the issue, hastily divided and transferred the soldiers of an Asakir-i Mansure regiment in Üsküdar to various Aegean Islands and the Dardanelles, since several of its soldiers were implicated in the Janissary plot.[16] The discovery of the plot also triggered another Istanbul-wide manhunt for former Janissaries and Bektaşis, resulting in the expulsion of some 800 individuals from Istanbul.[17]



The interrogations of the accused individuals at the Asakir-i Mansure headquarters in Bayezid revealed a half-cooked plan and rumors of a coming uprising among the Janissary elements who had slipped into the new army's ranks. Even though we are lucky as historians to have the summary accounts of the interrogations telling us about the beliefs and thoughts of former Janissaries and Bektaşis after the abolitions of the Janissary Corps and the Bektaşi Order, the same cannot be said about the accused, who had to endure the process of interrogation.[18]

---

15 Ibid. This document includes not only the list of accused individuals, but also the summaries of their interrogations. This interesting document was first discovered and published by İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı in his famous *Kapıkulu Ocakları*. Uzunçarşılı, *Kapıkulu Ocakları*, Volume 1, p. 582-593.

16 BOA, HAT.290/17357, n.d.

17 BOA, HAT.340/18438, n.d. Although there is no date on the document, there is a section concerning the issues related to the conclusion of the Akkerman Treaty (October 7, 1826) which probably puts the date of this document around mid October 1826.

18 In fact, one of the accused Asakir-i Mansure soldiers died as a result of the beatings he took during the interrogations, while the Bektaşi *şeyh*, who was accused of being one of the ringleaders, committed suicide by drinking poison; BOA, HAT.294/17506.

The whole event and the rumors seemed to have been initiated by a former Janissary and Bektaşi *derviş* named Ahmed, who owned a pipe-bowl shop in Tahtakale. When his apprentice, who was an Asakir-i Mansure soldier in one of the Bosphorus fortifications, complained about the harsh discipline and beatings in the new army, Derviş Ahmed responded that his *şeyh* had previously revealed to him a prognostication on the revival of the Janissary Corps, using geomancy. He also said that there were many Bektaşis performing *zikr*s by uttering the ninety-nine names of Allah and making similar divinations through geomancy. It seems that Derviş Ahmed convinced his apprentice of the good things to come; he, in turn, contacted several of his fellow Asakir-i Mansure soldiers, telling them the good tidings.

Derviş Ahmed was a follower of a Bektaşi *şeyh*, Mehmed Efendi, living in the Fatih district of Istanbul, an area close to the former Janissary barracks. After the abolition of the Bektaşi Order, Mehmed Efendi was able to remain in Istanbul and secretly continued practicing his duties as a Bektaşi *şeyh* in Laleli and Üsküdar. He seems to have revealed several prognostications to his followers by predicting the coming of a big event, namely the revival of the Janissary Corps and the Bektaşi Order. Mehmed Efendi first pointed to a specific date (Muharrem 7, 1242/August 11, 1826) by claiming that a major event would take place on that date. When the great fire of Hoca Paşa took place on August 2, 1826, Derviş Ahmed interpreted that his *şeyh* referred to this event. When he revealed his interpretation to his *şeyh*, Mehmed Efendi responded that he should look forward to another date (Safer 17, 1242/September 20, 1826) claiming that "*twelve thousand Bektaşis with halberds in their hands will arrive at Üsküdar from Mecca. Then they will get across to Istanbul and gather in the Meat Square, from there they will march to the Palace and among them there will be a man named Muhammed Ali who will rule in Istanbul*".[19] As this prognostication also failed, Şeyh Mehmed Efendi told Derviş Ahmed that the big event would happen either on Rebiülevvel 17 or 25 / October 19 or 27, 1826, resulting in the destruction of the new army, and gave him a piece of paper (*remil kağıdı*) with geomantic dots as evidence.[20]



It is quite interesting to observe how his followers kept their faith in Şeyh Mehmed Efendi despite the failure of his prognostications, and in this respect we might make reference to one of the masters of the historian's craft, Marc Bloch,

19 Ibid.

20 For Islamic and Ottoman geomancy and the occult sciences, see Marinos Sariyannis, "Knowledge and the Control of the Future in Ottoman Thought", *Aca'ib: Occasional Papers on the Ottoman Perceptions of the Supernatural*, 1, (2020), p. 49-87; Jan Schmidt, "The Occult Sciences and their Importance in Ottoman Culture; Evidence from Turkish Manuscripts in Dutch Public Collections", *Osmanlı Araştırmaları*, 23, (2003), p. 219-254; Matthew Melvin-Koushki, "Astrology, Lettrism, Geomancy: The Occult-Scientific Methods of Post-Mongol Islamicate Imperialism", *The Medieval History Journal*, 19/1, (2016), p. 1-9.

and his findings in his study *The Royal Touch*.[21] Their convictions had much to do with their expectations and their need to believe in miracles rather than the harsh reality that the Janissary Corps and the Bektaşi Order did not exist anymore. According to the interrogation records, Derviş Ahmed was able to convince not only himself but also his apprentice and his contacts in the Asakir-i Mansure army to plan an uprising among the Asakir-i Mansure regiments despite his *şeyh*'s failed prognostications.

The interrogation report offers invaluable insights into how such a movement spread by way of word of mouth and how social networks worked to organize such a plan. The confessions of the accused also show what measures the government took against a potential Janissary uprising and how the alleged conspirators planned to circumvent them. Even though the plan itself was far from being put into action and existed only in words and promises without much substance, it is still worth tracing how the original prognostication of the Bektaşi *şeyh* Mehmed Efendi spread to people who were apparently unhappy about Sultan Mahmud II's policies.

Several networks seem to have been at work in spreading the word of Şeyh Mehmed Efendi. The most important network seems to have been the professional one, as in the case of Derviş Ahmed, who convinced his apprentice who, in turn, influenced his fellow soldiers in the Asakir-i Mansure army, some of whom also spread the word to marines in the navy. Being from the same town and neighborhood also played a major role, as most of the Mansure soldiers, marines, and civilians involved in the plot were from Üsküdar. There was also a provincial connection, as several soldiers from Ahıska and Erzurum were originally *yamak*s (auxiliary forces deployed in forts) enrolled into the Mansure army. Another important network involved members of Janissary regimental structures, as many of the accused were former Janissaries, the majority of whom belonged to a single regiment, namely the 75th Cemaat. Nearly all the Janissaries had some kind of familiarity with Derviş Ahmed who also happened to be from the 75th Cemaat. As the original idea came from the Bektaşi *şeyh* Mehmed Efendi, it is not surprising to observe that the Bektaşi networks were also dominant in recruiting individuals for the planned uprising.



In spreading the plan, coffeehouses played a crucial role; a coffeehouse run by Mehmed Bayrakdar, a former Janissary from the 75th Cemaat, and a coffeehouse in Toptaşı, Üsküdar, frequented by Asakir-i Mansure soldiers and marines, provided not only safe locations for the plotters but also were effective in spreading the rumor of the uprising. Despite Sultan Mahmud II's initial ban on

21 Marc Bloch, *The Royal Touch: Sacred Monarchy and Scrofula in England and France*, London 1973, p. 238-243. According to Bloch, the idea that the kings of France and England had miraculous healing powers and they could cure the disease of scrofula by touching the diseased stemmed from the need to believe in miracles rather than real-life experiences and had much to do with the strength of collective illusions.

coffeehouses, many of them, even ones run by former Janissaries, were apparently up and running four months after the abolition. Even though Esad Efendi claimed in his official history that following the abolition of the Janissary Corps the majority of the coffeehouses in Istanbul were closed down and their buildings transformed into other businesses due to their connections with Janissaries, Abdürrezzak Bahir Efendi pointed out that this was an exaggeration and that many were reopened after some time. This ban even became a new source of bribery for government officials who turned a blind eye to the reopening of coffeehouses in return for money from the owners.[22]

Despite the fact that Sultan Mahmud II's government had expended considerable efforts on eliminating politically active mid-ranking- and sub-officers of the Janissary Corps, the socio-economic networks which had supported the Janissary establishment were more or less still in place. Many of the former Janissaries, who were not involved in the 1826 uprising, were continuing their businesses in crafts and trades. It is also interesting to observe that some of the old practices continued to exist in the new system. Although one should avoid making generalizations, the case involving the apprentice of Derviş Ahmed shows that an Asakir-i Mansure soldier could still work in the workshop of a small craftsman as an apprentice. Whether this was an exception or there were other similar cases is open to question. It was not a coincidence that many of the former Janissaries accused of involvement in the plot were engaged in small trades and crafts; they included a pipe-bowl maker/seller, a confectioner, a coffeehouse owner, the warden of sailmakers, a porter, and a butter/olive oil seller. A similar trend can also be observed among their supposed civilian accomplices: a chintz maker/seller, a maker/seller of pipe mouthpieces, and a *helva* maker/seller.



It may be stating the obvious, but people from the same provincial town or the same neighborhood also played a crucial role in these networks, especially where these towns and neighborhoods were important centers of Janissary activity. As mentioned earlier, nearly all of the Mansure soldiers accused and executed in the plot were migrants from the east Anatolian towns of Erzurum and Ahıska, two frontier regions where considerable Janissary forces were stationed. Similarly, all of the marines (*kalyoncu*s) who agreed to join their cause were from the same Istanbul district, Üsküdar, the wharves of which had been largely under Janissary control prior to the Auspicious Incident.[23] To these connections, the role of regimental affiliations can be added: in the second half of the eighteenth century the 75th Cemaat was a regiment with soldiers in various fortresses, especially around the Black Sea, and a considerable number of men in Istanbul.[24] Although it is difficult to establish causation between the two events, it is worth noting that a few years

22 Sahhâflar Şeyhizâde Seyyid Mehmed Es'ad Efendi, *Vak'a-nüvîs Es'ad Efendi Tarihi*, p. 640.

23 Sunar, *Cauldron of Dissent*, p. 46, 65-67, and *passim*.

24 Maliyeden Müdevver Defter (MAD.d) 3946; 6536; Cevdet Askeriye (C.AS) 1022/44832 (29 Za 1197/October 26, 1783).

before the abolition of the Janissary Corps the abovementioned regiment had made its presence in the capital visible by participating in a number of bloody intra-Janissary rivalries, which had elicited an angry reaction from Mahmud II and caused the persecution of its soldiers.[25] A confessional network can also be added to all of these, with the Bektaşi *şeyh* and his followers. This is also not very surprising when one considers the close relationship between the Bektaşi order and some of the Janissaries. It can be argued that these Janissary networks in Istanbul present a model which was repeated with certain local differences in many of the provinces in the Ottoman Empire.

As word of the uprising spread through the abovementioned networks, reactions usually varied from passive acknowledgement to ardent support. Among those who offered their support, some also promised to bring a certain number of men to join the uprising. While Basmacı Mehmed said he could find a few men, Mehmed Usta, a former mid-ranking officer in the 64th Cemaat, promised to bring 50-60 men. Similarly, the coffeehouse owner Mehmed Bayrakdar of the 75th Cemaat, and a certain Zobi Topal İbrahim, a Mansure soldier deployed at the army headquarters, both pledged to find 200-300 men for the cause. Kalyoncu Hasan, a marine in the navy, also promised to find 30-40 men willing to support the uprising. Even though these promises seem to have been without much substance and were probably used by people to boast to their counterparts about how connected they were, such commitments had been the usual way to find men for earlier Janissary uprisings. In the Kabakçı Rebellion of 1807, for example, Janissaries in groups of 20-30, led by their mid-ranking- or sub-officers, kept pouring into the Meat Square from different parts of Istanbul to join the rebels.[26] It is highly probable that a similar method of spreading the rumor of an uprising by using different social networks and coffeehouses was also used in all other rebellions. However, it is very doubtful whether the alleged plotters could find enough men to support the October 1826 conspiracy.



From the interrogation records, it is also possible to learn the countermeasures that the plotters planned to take against the government restrictions which were put in place to prevent a potential Janissary uprising in Istanbul. One of the most striking points that the alleged conspirators made about the government's measures was the presence of ten artillery pieces kept in the army headquarters at Bayezid. When the Mansure soldiers involved in the plot referred to the threat that these artillery pieces posed against the rebels, Derviş Ahmed assured them that he was going to find an ally inside the army headquarters and that he had already prepared nails to spike the cannons and render them useless. This fear, of course, was a direct reference to the effective use of cannons against the Janissaries and the Janissary barracks by the government forces during the 1826 uprising. The 1826 uprising was not the first event in which mobile cannons and

25 BOA, HAT.337/19314 (29 Z 1234/October 19, 1819).

26 Cabi Ömer Efendi, *Cabi Tarihi*, Volume 1, p. 130.

grapeshot had been used against rebellious Janissaries in the Ottoman Empire; artillery pieces were also employed by the *sekban* troops against the rebels during the Alemdar Incident in 1808 with some success.[27] The use of mobile artillery pieces and grapeshot against rebellious crowds had been seen in Europe since the late eighteenth century with the famous example of the 13 Vendémiaire event in 1795.[28]

Another measure that the plotters had to deal with was the control of the gates of intramural Istanbul by the Mansure troops. As the plotters constantly referred in the interrogation records to breaking down or opening the gates of Istanbul, it seems that Sultan Mahmud II's government still kept the city gates closed while pedestrian traffic was probably conducted through wicket gates even four months after the abolition of the Janissary Corps.[29] This was, apparently, a measure against a potential Janissary uprising that was still alive in the minds of Sultan Mahmud II and his ministers.

The conspirators also hoped to attract the artillery troops and marines to their side, yet they had no illusions on the matter. According to the statement of Kasım, a Mansure soldier involved in the plot, the plan was to start the uprising among the Mansure regiments in Üsküdar on Thursday, October 18, 1826. The rebels were then to get across the Bosphorus to the Imperial Arsenal at Tophane to incite the artillery troops to join the uprising. However, they calculated that the artillery troops would resist such an attempt and prevent them from disembarking at Tophane, so they also formed an alternative plan. When one of the plotters mentioned the possibility of an uprising to his neighbor, a soldier in the Cannon Wagoner Corps, he received a very negative response, the wagoner replying that they would direct their cannons at the rebels. Nevertheless, there are some vague references in the interrogation records to alleged insiders and fellow townsmen in the Artillery Corps. This might not be very far-fetched, since an artillery officer and an artilleryman played a role in another alleged Janissary plot, which will be discussed below.



Another expectation on the part of the plotters was to incite the artisans and shopkeepers of the Grand Bazaar to join the uprising, for they had long-established connections with the Janissary Corps, by sending messengers and criers during its early phases. This was also in accordance with the well-established practices of the previous Janissary uprisings.[30] One should note that this was not

---

27 Mehmet Ali Beyhan, *Saray Günlüğü (1802-1809)*, Istanbul 2007, p. 255-256, 258. See also Şanizade Mehmed Ataullah Efendi, *Tarih-i Şanizade*, Volume 1, p. 126-127.

28 Napoleon's commanders also employed the same tactic against Spanish rebels in the streets of Madrid in May 1808 during the famous Dos de Mayo uprising; Owen Connelly, *The Wars of the French Revolution and Napoleon, 1795-1812*, London 2005, p. 146.

29 For the placing of the soldiers of the Mortar Corps at the Gates of intramural Istanbul following the abolition of the Janissary Corps, also see Esad Efendi, *Üss-i Zafer*, p. 93.

30 For a detailed discussion of the Janissary methods and tactics employed in Istanbul rebellions, see Sunar, *Cauldron of Dissent*, p. 96-148.

an unrealistic objective considering the discontent of Istanbul's artisans, which continued throughout the reign of Sultan Mahmud II. The sultan's financial policies, which usually worked against the interests of artisans, were the main reason for this discontent. As the artisans and guilds did not shy away from showing their resistance from time to time, the sultan retaliated with harsh punishments ranging from banishments to executions.[31]

The first target of the plotters seems to have been the Mansure headquarters at Bayezid, which they planned to burn down to declare the revival of the Janissary Corps. Even though his name was never mentioned in the interrogation records, Commander-in-chief Ağa Hüseyin Paşa, a former Janissary whose treachery had long been hated by his former comrades, was probably at the top of their list.

The plot was initially revealed to the government by an artillery soldier and a corporal from the Mansure regiments deployed in Üsküdar.[32] The artillery soldier was from the same home town as the plotters, and when he told the rumor to a corporal, the issue was revealed to the chain of command. Nevertheless, both the artillery soldier and the corporal were exposed to rigorous interrogation about their connections and could not escape from being exiled to Ada Kale.

Even though the plan was far from posing any serious threat to the government, its discovery sent tremors through the government circles. The sultan was especially furious, threatening and warning everyone from the grand vizier to the high command of the Mansure army with his imperial orders. Government ministers and officials had no choice but to share their master's exaggerated alertness by promising to relentlessly prosecute anyone related to the Janissary cause. The investigation and interrogations should have revealed that there was no real danger, yet the grand vizier and his officials not only pronounced harsh punishments for the alleged plotters but also looked for other potential threats. In an extraordinary government council (*Meclis-i Meşveret*) convened at the mansion of the Şeyhülislam after the discovery of the conspiracy, government ministers drew attention to the fact that even the Janissary officers (*çorbacı*s) who were rewarded with honorary titles for their compliance in the abolition of the Janissary Corps were not trustable and their existence in Istanbul was a constant source of



31 For example, during the campaign season of 1828, when Grand Vizier Benderli Selim Sırrı Paşa asked the Istanbul artisans to join the imperial army as *ordu esnafı*, they questioned his logic by asking why they should continue this old practice in the new system. They claimed that they should be exempted from military service as they were now required to pay more taxes to support the new army; Charles MacFarlane, *Constantinople in 1828: A Residence of Sixteen Months in the Turkish Capital and Provinces*, Volume 2, 2nd Edition, London 1829, p. 217-218. Similarly, Sultan Mahmud II's order to recruit Istanbul's residents for a relief force which was to be sent against the invading Russian army in 1829 fell on deaf ears; Ahmed Lutfi, *Tarih-i Lutfi*, Volume 2, 93. The sultan and his ministers retaliated with a series of executions which also included members of Istanbul artisans in the summer of 1829. *Ibid*., p. 88. For the punishments against artisans and guild hierarchies, see also Nalan Turna, "Pandemonium and Order: Suretyship, Surveillance, and Taxation in Early Nineteenth-Century Istanbul", *New Perspectives on Turkey*, 39, (Fall 2008), p. 177.

32 BOA, HAT.290/17357.

trouble.[33] The council advised their exile from Istanbul and the advice was duly followed by the sultan and the grand vizier. Although these Janissary officers collaborated with Sultan Mahmud II during the abolition of the Janissary Corps, they could not escape his suspicion, and even with their exile their punishment was not over, as the following pages will reveal.

In the end, the majority of the plotters were given harsh punishments: out of twenty-nine accused, seven Mansure soldiers and eleven others were sentenced to death, while the Bektaşi *şeyh* Mehmed Efendi committed suicide in prison and one of the Mansure soldiers died from torture. While five of the accused were found not guilty, the remaining four plotters were exiled to the provinces. There was some discussion regarding whether or not to execute the seven guilty Mansure soldiers in the European military way, by putting them in front of a firing squad; the decision was finally taken to execute them by hanging them from the neck in front of the Mansure regiments as an exemplary punishment.[34] The other eleven culprits – five former Janissaries, four marines, a Bektaşi *dervîş*, and a civilian – were executed in public places in Üsküdar and intramural Istanbul.[35]

While the atmosphere in the capital was thick with alleged plots and punishments, some of the provincial governors were also quick to realize that over-scrutiny and hunting down ex-Janissaries could put them in the good graces of Sultan Mahmud II and bring some career advancement. One such person was the district governor of Çirmen, Esad Paşa, who had distinguished himself through his harsh punishment of the Janissaries in Edirne during the abolition of the Corps.[36] It was not a coincidence that just one month after the October 1826 plot, Esad was the one who revealed another Janissary plot, supposedly designed to reinstitute the Janissary Corps in the Balkans. According to a report sent by Esad Paşa on December 3, 1826, government agents in the town of Zağra-i Atik (Stara Zagora in modern Bulgaria) discovered a member of the Artillery Corps voicing criticisms of Sultan Mahmud II's reforms and the abolition of the Janissary Corps.[37] Even though the local notable decided to apprehend the artillery soldier, he was able to flee the town and his pursuers. However, he was then arrested in Gabrovo and sent to Tırnova for interrogation. According to Esad Paşa, his interrogation revealed a ring of conspirators and alleged correspondence among some former Janissary officers, an artillery officer in Istanbul, and several former Janissaries and Janissary sympathizers in the Balkans, aimed at reviving the Corps. The alleged plot included some twenty people including former Janissaries, the son of the head clerk of Edirne Courthouse, a merchant, and an Artillery Corps officer, alongside the courier Ahmed, the abovementioned artillery soldier. As the second



33 BOA, HAT.340/19438, n.d.
34 BOA, HAT.290/17357.
35 BOA, HAT.289/17327.
36 Ahmed Lutfi, *Tarih-i Lutfi*, Ahmed Lutfi, Volume 1, p. 171.
37 BOA, HAT.402/21083 (3 CA 1242/December 3, 1826).

interrogation of Ahmed, conducted in Istanbul, seemed to confirm the suspicions, the initial response of the government was to exile all the culprits, including the head clerk of the Edirne Courthouse and his son.

The revealing of a new plot by Esad Paşa also gave an opportunity to Grand Vizier Mehmed Selim Paşa, who had been reprimanded by the sultan for his negligence in spotting the previous plot. The grand vizier tried to redeem himself in the eyes of his master by resorting to the malicious prosecution of the accused. The reports prepared by the grand vizier on the plot betray his enthusiasm to turn a simple investigation into a serious Janissary plot. Thanks to his efforts and the sultan's suspicions, the plot revealed by Esad Paşa suddenly became an empire-wide Janissary plot.

In a report written by Mehmed Selim Paşa to Sultan Mahmud II, the grand vizier pointed out that he had long suspected that the plot was a part of a larger conspiracy alongside the October 1826 Janissary-Bektaşi plot.[38] Since such a large conspiracy would not be possible without the involvement of former senior Janissary officers, the grand vizier claimed, he made every effort to investigate the matter thoroughly. It is quite clear that Mehmed Selim Paşa turned to his usual tricks of pressuring the accused individuals through torture, which he had over-scrupulously employed in the previous plot. First he put a former junior officer of the 23rd Cemaat under such pressure, and personally oversaw his interrogation. Ultimately, the grand vizier and his men were able to extract the name of another alleged plotter from the junior officer, who eventually committed suicide in prison. Since the junior officer had given the name of another former Janissary officer, who was also the warden of the pastry-makers' guild (*çörekçiler kethüdası*), this man was brought to the capital from his exile in Bolu. A different method was used on the former warden: first threatening him and then promising his release if he cooperated by revealing his accomplices. Finally, the grand vizier got what he wanted: the name of the chief plotter, who was the former head of the Istanbul firefighters. The grand vizier's methods raise serious doubts about the validity of the confessions, as under such conditions the interrogated individuals were more likely to name someone randomly in order to save themselves from bodily harm.



As the former head of the Istanbul firefighters was not a layman and probably had still some connections with the higher circles of the government, the grand vizier seemed to proceed more carefully and was unable to apply the same methods of pressure used on the others. Mehmed Selim Paşa accused the former head of the Istanbul firefighters of conspiring with former senior Janissary officers about a Janissary uprising through secret meetings in his mansion. The accused staunchly denied this, saying that he never had any meetings with former Janissary officers, and the grand vizier was unable to obtain a confession from him. However, Mehmed Selim Paşa found another way of establishing evidence, by

38 BOA, HAT.294/17509, n.d.

getting a confession from a servant employed in the mansion of the former head of the Istanbul firefighters. The servant claimed that he had witnessed meetings between the accused and several former senior Janissary officers in the mansion. As a single eyewitness was enough for the grand vizier to prove his theory, he claimed in his report that he had solved the whole case.

Interestingly, the grand vizier resorted to a clever way of addressing Sultan Mahmud II's psychology by referring to a dream that the sultan had had. Evidently, the sultan had previously shared details of the dream and its interpretation with his grand vizier. Although there is no information about the particulars of the dream, it is clear from Mehmed Selim Paşa's report that it was regarded as a warning about a potential danger. In his report, Mehmed Selim Paşa pointed out that the interpretation of the sultan's dream had proven to be correct, and he again cleverly resorted to some flattery, claiming that it was, in fact, Sultan Mahmud II himself who had uncovered this large plot through his dream. The grand vizier concluded his report by advising the executions of some former senior Janissary officers who had been previously exiled to their hometowns after the October 1826 plot. He also argued that even though there was no proof that those among the higher echelons of the Janissary Command had any involvement in the plot, it was not proper for them to stay in Istanbul and they should all be exiled to Bursa.



Though the evidence was very weak in terms of proving a large Janissary plot, the written imperial order on top of the grand vizier's report shows that the sultan was of the same opinion as his grand vizier. Sultan Mahmud II wrote that it was even dubious whether or not these former senior Janissary officers were Muslims and it was not possible to trust them anymore.[39]

The discovery of two alleged Janissary plots within three months seems to have convinced Sultan Mahmud II that although these former Janissary officers had collaborated with the government in the abolition of the Janissary Corps, they still posed a threat to his new regime. Thus, he ordered their execution alongside the conspirators of the original plot.[40] According to historian Ahmed Lutfi, the number of former Janissary officers who were executed in different provinces of the empire was seventy-six. The government agents did not even spare two former Janissary officers who were on their way to Mecca for pilgrimage.[41]

---

39 Ibid.

40 Among the culprits of the alleged plot, Ahmed, the artillery soldier, was executed in Istanbul; Çividoğlu Süleyman, who lodged and helped Ahmed in Edirne, was executed in front of his rental rooms at Edirne; and ex-Janissary officer Canbaz Mustafa of Edirne was executed in his exile in Tulca; BOA, HAT.290/17381 (9 C 1242/January 8, 1827); Bab-ı Asafi Kalebendlik Kalemi Defterler (A.DVN.KLB.d) 929/01:3.

41 Ahmed Lutfi, *Tarih-i Lutfi*, Volume 1, p. 172-173. Ahmed Lutfi, with his usual circumspection, did not fail to imply that this was unnecessary bloodshed by putting the blame not on Sultan Mahmud II, but his ministers and governors.

After these waves of alleged conspiracies and punishments, Sultan Mahmud II's government did not discover any more Janissary plots in the following year. Nevertheless, the sultan and his servants retained their alertness on the subject throughout 1827 in the capital and provinces. While some undercover agents of the government frequented the public places in the capital, some also toured the provinces keeping their eyes and ears open for any signs of "Janissary propaganda".[42] The paranoia of the sultan and his officials had life-and-death consequences for ordinary people who risked being punished for even small transgressions. A coffeehouse owner was executed in front of his coffeehouse for not fully removing a Janissary insignia from the walls of his shop in İzmid, and another coffeehouse owner in Edirne met with the same fate for openly criticizing the abolition of the Janissary Corps during this period.[43] According to a *kalebend* (imprisonment) register covering the period between April and August 1827, 209 former Janissaries from various provinces were sentenced to exile or capital punishment by Sultan Mahmud II's government.[44]

Throughout the rest of 1827 the prosecution of Janissary elements seemed to ease, as Sultan Mahmud II was busy in his military pursuits, forming a new army. The increase in the number of Mansure soldiers also built the sultan's confidence in his success. He was now more often observed in his uniform-like clothes at the head of the Mansure battalion formed from the palace pages.[45] As Mahmud II became the Ottoman version of the "*soldatenkönig*", Frederick the Great, the sultan's paranoia about the Janissaries would have been on the verge of fading were it not for the Russian declaration of war in April 1828.



Following the abolition of the Janissary Corps, the vulnerable military, political, and social position of the Ottoman Empire presented too good an opportunity to pass up for the empire's sworn enemy, which pressured the Sublime Porte for new concessions on several issues. In accordance with the traditional Russian strategy, its diplomats would push the present issues to their limits, to force the Ottoman state to accept the Russian demands on the table. If the Ottoman state agreed to accept Russian demands, this would also constitute new grounds for future political concessions. If not, there was always the military option, which Russia would not hesitate to use at the first suitable opportunity. Since Sultan Mahmud II's government was quite aware of this strategy, it had no wish to accept the Russian demands. When Russia opted for military action by

---

42 For some examples, see BOA, HAT, 290/17394, n.d.; 293/17460 (3 Muharrem 1243/July 27, 1827).

43 BOA, HAT.289/17335 (3 Zilhicce 1242/June 28, 1827); 290/17381 (11 Cemaziyelahir 1242/January 10, 1827).

44 While 60 former Janissaries received capital punishment, 149 were exiled to different parts of the empire; BOA, A.DVN.KLB.d.929/01.

45 Gültekin Yıldız, "Üniformalı Padişah II. Mahmud", *II. Mahmud: Yeniden Yapılanma Sürecinde İstanbul*, (ed. Coşkun Yılmaz), Istanbul 2010, p. 103-129.

launching its invasion of the Danubian Principalities with a war manifesto, the Ottoman Empire reciprocated by declaring war on Russia in May 1828.

Once again, Sultan Mahmud II found himself in a difficult position; the formation of the new army was far from complete and the destruction of the old order had resulted in widespread discontent among the Muslim population – albeit silent – regarding the sultan's government.[46] Even though the only open Janissary rebellion was in Bosnia, the loss of old privileges and the new tax burdens introduced by Sultan Mahmud II immensely contributed to the widespread atmosphere of discontent in the provinces and the capital. War with Russia meant not only new demands by the Ottoman government from its subjects, but also increasing economic difficulties for the lower and middle strata of the Ottoman society. To complicate the matter further, the inexperienced units of the new Ottoman army fighting alongside the traditional provincial forces proved to be no match for the Russians, and news of military failures and the surrender of strategic fortresses on the Danube Basin poured into Istanbul during the summer of 1828. These developments seemed to revive Sultan Mahmud II's paranoia about an uprising in Istanbul as he suddenly decided to move further away from the capital to the newly completed military barracks in Rami. He also chose to keep his Hassa Army, the best-trained and equipped units in the Ottoman army, in Istanbul. It may not be fair to relate the moving of Mahmud II to the Rami Barracks only to his security concerns as his advisors probably aimed to maintain the military image of the sultan with this move. Since Sultan Mahmud II could not risk going on the campaign at the head of his army like the Russian Tsar did, this was seemingly the next-best move.[47]



Since the Russians were not able to fully achieve their military objectives until the winter of 1828, there was still an environment of optimism dominant in Sultan Mahmud II's government. Mahmud II and his ministers believed that the next campaign season would completely turn the tide and the Ottoman forces would push the Russians beyond the Danube. The sultan's attitude towards his ministers and Ottoman society in general was positive, often encouraging and calling for sacrifices for the cause of the state and religion. While Mahmud II and his ministers were optimistic about the public support for the campaign, some foreign observers were more perceptive about the negative mood of Istanbul's

46 Although official Ottoman sources were understandably silent on this issue, both Adolphus Slade and Charles MacFarlane, who were present in the Ottoman Empire at that time, agree that public opinion was negative on both the Russian war and Sultan Mahmud II's government; Adolphus Slade, *Records of Travels in Turkey, Greece, &c. and a Cruise in the Black Sea with the Capitan Pasha in the Years 1829, 1830 and 1831*, Volume 1, 2nd Edition, London 1833, p. 369-380, 438-457; Charles MacFarlane, *Constantinople in 1828*, Volume 2, p. 36-43.

47 During the Ottoman–Russian War of 1806-1812, Sultan Mahmud II publicly announced his intention to go on the campaign at the head of the Ottoman army. When he failed to do so, he was ridiculed by the Janissaries with street posters; Cabi Ömer Efendi, *Cabi Tarihi*, Volume 1, p. 701.

population even at the very beginning of the Ottoman–Russian War. While the Ottoman sources were usually silent about the opposition to the Russian War, Charles MacFarlane, who was in Istanbul at the time, claimed that the public spirit in the Ottoman capital was decidedly low and gloomy.[48] MacFarlane pointed out that while Sultan Mahmud II's government was trying to assure the Ottoman public of its military success against the Russians, it did not let anyone voice any opposing views.[49]

When the campaign season of 1829 proved to be even more disastrous for the Ottoman army, and the Russian forces easily occupied Edirne without facing any resistance, the mood of the government drastically changed, as the Ottoman capital was now under the direct threat of a Russian invasion. Although the Ottoman sources with the exception of Ahmed Lutfi provide very limited information on the sultan's mood, foreign sources were more open in portraying the despair and panic dominating the government and Istanbul's residents. Alongside the rumors of the Russian army marching on Istanbul and the Cossacks already being outside the capital's walls, there were rumors about secret meetings of former Janissaries and a conspiracy by Greeks who were in contact with the enemy. Although these alleged conspiracies were no more real than the Russians marching on Istanbul or the Cossack menace, it was enough to cause Sultan Mahmud II's government to panic and to declare night curfews for Istanbul residents, who were prohibited from going out of their homes after 8 p.m.[50] As rumors are often the weapon of the weak, there was probably very little possibility of a Janissary uprising or the reinstitution of the Janissary Corps in the capital during that time. Nevertheless, this did not mean that such rumors were ineffective; for example, a former Janissary, who was probably encouraged by the news of a possible Janissary revival and so dressed up in Janissary style, was unlucky enough to come across the sultan's convoy returning from a visit to the tomb of Mehmed the Conqueror, and most likely met with unfortunate consequences.[51]



In order to convince Mahmud II to sign a peace treaty with Russia, the European ambassadors also preyed on his fears by pointing out that if the Russian

---

48 Charles MacFarlane, *Constantinople in 1828*, Volume 2, p. 36-43. Also, for his vivid description of the silence and emptiness of the streets in Sultan Mahmud II's *selamlık* ceremony during the Eid al-Adha of 1828 in June, see MacFarlane, *Constantinople*, Volume 2, p. 216.

49 For example, a sweet drink vendor (*şerbetçi*), who had been a prisoner in Russia during the previous war, was executed and hanged in front of his shop for openly criticizing Sultan Mahmud II's decision to declare war; MacFarlane, *Constantinople*, Volume 2, p. 37. Sultan Mahmud II did not hesitate to exile even one of his favorites, İzzet Molla, who dared to present a report prepared by the doves in the government to propagate peace with Russia; Abdülhak Molla, *Tarih-i Liva*, (ed. Mehmet Yıldız), Ankara 2013, p. 22-23.

50 Adolphus Slade, *Records of Travels in Turkey*, Volume 1, p. 370.

51 Slade, *Records of Travels*, Volume 1, p. 378. For the same event, see Abdülhak Molla, *Tarih-i Liva*, p. 97. Although the author was vague about what happened to the person in Janissary dress, only writing "*he was removed*", this was probably a reference to his arrest and execution.

army advanced to the Ottoman capital, there would be a popular uprising against his rule in Istanbul.[52] Although such claims were far-fetched, they probably inflamed the sultan's suspicions and anger toward his own subjects. In the face of a direct Russian threat to Istanbul, the faltering of Mahmud II and his ministers also worsened the situation. After issuing an imperial order for Istanbul's Muslim populace to arm themselves against a possible Russian attack on the city, Sultan Mahmud II and his ministers changed their minds, possibly remembering the connection between the artisans of Istanbul and the Janissaries, and issued an exception for artisans and shopkeepers, ordering them to disarm.[53]

According to Ahmed Lutfi, such inconsistencies caused further rumors against Sultan Mahmud II's government. Some rumors probably even included elements of Russian propaganda, as they claimed "*there were 20,000 Janissaries marching with the Russian army*" or "*the Russian army was coming to Istanbul for reinstituting the Janissary Corps*".[54] Against such rumors and the growing opposition to his rule, Sultan Mahmud II's reaction was ruthless and harsh. Once again, he reverted to his usual disregard for human life, and public executions became common scenes on the streets of Istanbul, reminding his opponents of the atmosphere of fear during the abolition of the Janissary Corps. An imperial order was also issued, threatening anyone criticizing the government or the army with the death penalty. Ahmed Lutfi wrote that twenty or more public executions took place in different parts of Istanbul within a matter of days. Artisans and the guild hierarchies especially constituted a target, there being several guild wardens and a number of artisans among the executed. It is interesting to observe that both the official historian Ahmed Lutfi and the British Admiral Adolphus Slade used a similar image to describe Sultan Mahmud II's harsh measures, likening it to the contemporary medical practice of bloodletting. The body-politic metaphor served well for their different purposes; while Ahmed Lutfi used it to normalize the sultan's ruthless policies, Slade employed it for a more critical approach.[55]



While Hüsrev Paşa, the commander-in-chief of the Mansure Army and head of Sultan Mahmud II's secret police, busied himself with finding and executing conspirators, not even women who dared to criticize the government could escape from the government's wrath.[56] Such drastic measures were effective in terrorizing

52 Slade, *Records of Travels*, Volume 1, p. 379.

53 Ahmed Lutfi, *Tarih-i Lutfi*, Volume 2, p. 87.

54 Ahmed Lutfi, *Tarih-i Lutfi*, Volume 2, p. 88. Even though there is no direct evidence that these rumors included elements of Russian propaganda, it was very logical for the Russians to utilize such divisions within the Ottoman polity.

55 Ahmed Lutfi, *Tarih-i Lutfi*, Volume 2, p. 88; "*Bunun üzerine yine kan almak tedbirinin tekririyle bir takım kesanın vücudları izale…*". Slade, *Records of Travels*, Volume 1, p. 438; "*Mahmoud, by nature and by long practice, well adapted to appease a revolt; he had often tried the most approved recipe, bloodletting, and always found it efficacious; and on this occasion though unable to shed the blood of the Russians, he determined not to spare that of his more dangerous foes, his disaffected people*".

56 Slade, *Records of Travels*, Volume 1, p. 447. Slade provided a vivid picture of the terror and the panic dominating the daily life of Istanbul during that time. For details see *ibid.*, p. 438-457.

Istanbul's residents, who were too scared to go out and, in Slade's words, Istanbul looked like "*a city of the dead*" for several days.[57] As the Janissary identity once again became grounds for punishment, scenes familiar from the Auspicious Event were repeated, with former Janissaries, regardless of their social status and position, risking bodily harm to remove the regimental tattoos from their arms.[58]

The signing of a peace treaty with Russia in September 1829 calmed the chaotic atmosphere, and daily life in Istanbul slowly resumed its usual pace. However, Sultan Mahmud II kept his bitterness towards his ministers and Istanbul's residents. In his written imperial orders, he portrayed himself as a lonely man striving to save the empire. He legitimized his approval of the peace by claiming that he was forced to sign the treaty because there was no support from his subjects and state officials for his endeavors. He was specifically furious about the behavior of Istanbul's populace: he wrote that "*I learnt and understood by experience what kind of evil the residents of Istanbul could dare to commit*".[59] During this time the sultan's anger could even be turned on his inner circle; upon his return from the Rami Barracks in May 1830, Sultan Mahmud II decided to disband the special cavalry unit he had previously formed from the palace pages and some of its members were dispersed to the Hassa Army regiments with lower ranks.[60] It was claimed that the sultan's furious mood was followed by a period of seclusion in his palace-like mansion at Tarabya, where he shut himself up for weeks.[61] Mahmud II did not even go to the Topkapı Palace and intramural Istanbul for the Eid al-Adha ceremony of 1830 as usual. The ceremony had to take place in the Göksu (Küçüksu) Pavilion with a limited number of attendees.[62]



57 *Ibid*., p. 455.

58 For example, when Adolphus Slade realized that the captain of the Ottoman warship *Selimiyye* had out of fear resorted to some unhealthy methods to remove his Janissary tattoos, he referred him to a European doctor, who erased the tattoos via a small medical procedure. Slade, *Records of Travels*, Volume 1, p. 455-456.

59 "*Moskovlu Dersaadetimize takarrub ettiği gibi cümlenizin ne hale girüb şaşırdığınızı gördüm İstanbul halkı denilen heriflerin ne suretde fesadata mütecasir olacaklarını bildim ve anladım bu fenalıklar meydanda durur iken kiminle sebat etmeli ve redd ile cevab verildiği suretde ne vechle muharebeye duruşmalı deyü muztar kalarak ileride zuhura gelecek fenalıkları ilme'l-yakin bilerek musalahayı kabul etmekliğimiz lazım geldi*"; Ahmed Lutfi, *Tarih-i Lutfi*, Volume 2, p. 122-123.

60 Tayyâr-zâde Atâ, *Târîh-i Enderûn*, (ed. Mehmet Arslan), Volume 3, Istanbul 2010, p. 158-159. See also Hâfız Hızır İlyas Ağa, *Letâif-i Vekâyi'-i Enderûniyye: Osmanlı Sarayında Gündelik Hayat*, (ed. Ali Şükrü Çoruk), Istanbul 2011, p. 541-544. In fact, the sultan had already expressed his anger and displeasure about the unserious attitudes of palace pages during the war, when he was staying at Tarabya. Tayyâr-zâde Atâ, *Tarih-i Enderun*, Volume 3, p. 154.

61 Lord Eversley, *The Turkish Empire: Its Growth and Decay*, London 1917, p. 280. I could not locate any primary sources to support Lord Eversley's claim, even though it is not very far-fetched considering the tone in the written imperial orders.

62 *Tarih-i Lutfi*, v. II, 192-193. Since Ahmed Lutfi, as the official historian, needed to find an excuse for such behavior, he claimed that the winter conditions prevented the ceremony from taking place as usual. However, the same winter conditions did not prevent the sultan from crossing the Bosphorus with a steamboat from Tarabya to Küçüksu for the ceremony.

Mahmud II's disillusionment was nevertheless auspicious for the populace of Istanbul, as the frequency of punishments and executions in Istanbul decreased, even though Hüsrev Paşa continued now and then to take his master's revenge on Istanbul's residents. Hüsrev's punishments sometimes took weird forms, such as imprisoning people for holding a *helva* soiree and bastinadoing the elders of that neighborhood for letting it happen.[63] Nevertheless, the indiscriminate punishments of 1826-1829 slowly disappeared, along with any further discoveries of alleged anti-government Janissary plots after 1830.

**Conclusion**

Following the abolition of the Janissary Corps, Sultan Mahmud II was highly concerned about a potential Janissary threat against his regime. As a young sultan his experience with the Janissaries had been marked by direct life threats and humiliation which had left deep scars on his psyche. Even the easy victory against the Janissary Corps in 1826 was not enough to convince him that the power of the Janissaries was broken in the empire. This resulted in Mahmud II developing a state of hypersensitivity, in which he constantly warned his ministers and officials to be vigilant on the issue of the Janissaries. Sultan Mahmud II's paranoia sometimes manifested itself in the form of a dream or often as an overreaction to accusations of alleged government "plots". His viziers and officers were quick to realize that if they did not play along, their careers would be in jeopardy. They soon learned to appear to be more vigilant and ruthless than the sultan himself on the issue of the Janissary threat. Some even exploited Mahmud II's weakness by exaggerating puny attempts at rebellion as regime-threatening empire-wide conspiracies. The consequences of this state of hypersensitivity were dire for former Janissaries or anyone who dared to speak against Mahmud II's regime. Even those from the higher echelons of the Janissary Corps, who had collaborated with the sultan during the abolition, could not escape from Mahmud II's suspicions and between 1826 and 1829 ended up being exiled and executed. The increased butcher's bill did not really concern the sultan, who seemed to develop a disregard for human life. Mahmud II's tone in his handwritten orders commanding his officials to torture or execute the accused is very indifferent. Although the sultan's handwritten orders and comments on the margins of official reports betray his state of mind on the issue of the Janissaries, one should also note that Sultan Mahmud II tried to use the atmosphere of paranoia to discipline his ministers and his Muslim subjects. His calls for vigilance and a state of emergency were also means for social control and for forming a disciplined bureaucracy. Although his success is debatable in the case of social control, Mahmud II was successful in forming an autocratic regime supported by a subservient bureaucracy.



63 *Tarih-i Lutfi*, v. II, 172. For several executions and exiles during that time see *Tarih-i Lutfi*, v. II, p. 143, 150, 163.

The sultan was also aware of his unpopularity in the eyes of the public and he expressed his anger towards the residents of Istanbul in particular in times of crisis, such as the Ottoman–Russian War of 1828-29. Mahmud II's paranoia about a Janissary uprising also had important effects on Istanbul's urban topography, as he chose not to stay in intramural Istanbul after the abolition of the Janissary Corps. Whether this choice purely arose from his security concerns or from his contempt for old Istanbul is uncertain. However, as he preferred to stay in the palaces on the bank of the Bosphorus, construction of the imperial buildings shifted to this new area. During the Ottoman–Russian War of 1828-1829 Mahmud II decided to move even further, to the upper Bosphorus, shifting his residence between the Rami Barracks and Tarabya. The Russian occupation of Edirne in 1829 and the direct threat it posed to Istanbul inflamed Mahmud II's suspicions of a popular uprising against his rule, once again triggering a wave of executions which targeted former Janissaries and anyone who dared to utter a word against the sultan's administration in Istanbul. Overall, Sultan Mahmud II's psychological mood and his fear of the Janissaries poisoned the political atmosphere, resulting in unnecessary bloodshed against his subjects between 1826 and 1830.

## References



**Archival Sources**

**Devlet Arşivleri Başkanlığı Osmanlı Arşivi/Directorate of State Archives-Ottoman Archives (BOA)**

Bab-ı Asafi Kalebendlik Kalemi Defterler (A.DVN.KLB.d) 929/01.

Cevdet Askeriye (C.AS) 1022/44832.

Hatt-ı Hümayun (HAT) 289/17327; 289/17335; 290/17357; 290/17381; 290/17394; 293/17460; 294/17506; 294/17509; 337/19314; 340/18438; 402/21083.

Maliyeden Müdevver Defter (MAD.d) 3946; 6536.

**Published Sources**

Abdülhak Molla, *Tarih-i Liva*, (ed. Mehmet Yıldız), Ankara 2013.

Ahmed Lutfi, *Tarih-i Lûtfî*, 8 volumes, Istanbul 1290-1328/1873-1910.

Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, *Tarih-i Cevdet*, 12 volumes (Tertib-i Cedid; İkinci Tab), Istanbul 1309/1892.

Beyhan, Mehmet Ali, *Saray Günlüğü (1802-1809)*, Istanbul 2007.

Bloch, Marc, *The Royal Touch: Sacred Monarchy and Scrofula in England and France*, London 1973.

Cabi Ömer Efendi, *Cabi Tarihi: Tarih-i Sultan Selim-i Salis ve Mahmud-ı Sani*, (ed. Mehmet Ali Beyhan), 2 volumes, Ankara 2003.

Connelly, Owen, *The Wars of the French Revolution and Napoleon, 1795-1812*, London 2005.

Esad Efendi, *Üss-i Zafer*, 2nd Edition, Istanbul 1293/1876.

_____, *Vak'a-nüvîs Es'ad Efendi Tarihi (Bâhir Efendi'nin Zeyl ve İlâveleriyle) 1237-1241/1821-1826*, (ed. Ziya Yılmazer), Istanbul 2000.

Hâfız Hızır İlyas Ağa, *Letâif-i Vekâyiʿ-i Enderûniyye: Osmanlı Sarayında Gündelik Hayat*, (ed. Ali Şükrü Çoruk), Istanbul 2011.

Lord Eversley, *The Turkish Empire: Its Growth and Decay*, London 1917.

MacFarlane, Charles, *Constantinople in 1828: A Residence of Sixteen Months in the Turkish Capital and Provinces*, 2 volumes, 2nd Edition, London 1829.

Melvin-Koushki, Matthew, "Astrology, Lettrism, Geomancy: The Occult-Scientific Methods of Post-Mongol Islamicate Imperialism", *The Medieval History Journal*, 19/1, (2016), p. 1-9.

Reed, Howard A., *The Destruction of the Janissaries by Mahmud II in June, 1826*, Princeton University, Department of Oriental Languages and Literatures, Ph.D, Princeton 1951.

Sariyannis, Marinos, "Knowledge and the Control of the Future in Ottoman Thought", *Aca'ib: Occasional papers on the Ottoman perceptions of the supernatural*, 1, (2020), p. 49-87.

Schmidt, Jan, "The Occult Sciences and their Importance in Ottoman Culture; Evidence from Turkish Manuscripts in Dutch Public Collections", *Osmanlı Araştırmaları*, 23, (2003), p. 219-254.

Spyropoulos, Yannis, *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], University of Crete, Ph.D, Rethymno 2014.



Slade, Adolphus, *Records of Travels in Turkey, Greece, &c. and a Cruise in the Black Sea with the Capitan Pasha in the Years 1829, 1830 and 1831*, 2 volumes, 2nd Edition, London 1833.

Sunar, Mehmet Mert, *Cauldron of Dissent: A Study of the Janissary Corps, 1807-1826*, SUNY-Binghamton, Ph.D, New York 2006.

Şanizade Mehmed Ataullah Efendi, *Tarih-i Şanizade*, 4 volumes, Istanbul, 1284-1291/1867-1875.

Tayyâr-zâde Atâ, *Târîh-i Enderûn*, (ed. Mehmet Arslan), 5 volumes, Istanbul 2010.

Turna, Nalan, "Pandemonium and Order: Suretyship, Surveillance, and Taxation in Early Nineteenth-Century Istanbul", *New Perspectives on Turkey*, 39, (Fall 2008), p. 167-189.

Uzunçarşılı, İsmail Hakkı, *Osmanlı Devleti Teşkilatından Kapıkulu Ocakları*, 2 volumes, Ankara 1943.

Yıldız, Gültekin, "Üniformalı Padişah II. Mahmud", *II. Mahmud: Yeniden Yapılanma Sürecinde İstanbul*, (ed. Coşkun Yılmaz), Istanbul 2010, p. 103-129.