



In Loving Memory of My Sweet Mother

Birsen iekbilek



SOME ASPECTS OF THE ORGANIZATIONAL AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC  
ROLE OF THE JANISSARIES

(late 15<sup>th</sup> – early 17<sup>th</sup> c.)

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in

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## ABSTRACT

### SOME ASPECTS OF THE ORGANIZATIONAL AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC ROLE OF THE JANISSARIES (late 15<sup>th</sup> – early 17<sup>th</sup> c.)

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This study questions one of the main wheels of the Ottoman central authority, the kapıkulu institution, and its organizational features in terms of their human factors under the three main categories through three distinct case studies. For the first, it investigates the conscription methods of the devshirme system, by which the future military and administrative cadres of the Ottoman state were selected. Secondly, it examines the administrative and organizational structure of the kapıkulu institution. Thirdly, it scrutinizes the roles of the kapıkulus in the state's fiscal organizations.

This study has been shaped by the contents of archival documents from the Prime Ministry Ottoman Archive in Istanbul, the Saint Cyril and Methodius National Library of Sofia, and the Tapu Kadastro Genel Müdürlüğü Arşivi of Ankara. These are conscription registers from late fifteenth and early seventeenth centuries, a *mevâcib* (salary) register of the kapıkulu regiments from the first quarter of the sixteenth

century, a *muhalefât* (probate) register of the Janissaries from the early seventeenth century, and the fiscal registers of *nüzül*, *mukataa*, *iltizam*, and *tahrir* from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. These sources have been evaluated in three case studies in line with the three main categories questioned and examined in this thesis.

Keywords: Conscription Methods, Devshirme System, Kapıkulu institution, Ottoman Fiscal Organizations



## ÖZET

### BAZI YÖNLERİYLE YENİÇERİLERİN ORGANİZASYONEL VE SOSYO-EKONOMİK ROLLERİ (geç 15 – erken 17. yüzyıl)

Nazlar, Nergiz

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Bu çalışma, Osmanlı merkezî otoritesinin ana çarklarından biri olan kapıkulu enstitüsü ile enstitünün insan unsuru bakımından örgütsel niteliklerini, üç ayrı vaka incelemesi aracılığıyla üç ana başlık altında irdelemektedir. Çalışmada ilk olarak, Osmanlı Devleti'nin gelecekteki askerî ve idari kadrolarının içinden seçildiği devşirme sisteminin askere alma yöntemleri incelenmektedir. İkinci olarak, kapıkulu enstitüsünün idari ve örgütsel yapısı tetkik edilmektedir. Üçüncü olarak, kapıkullarının devletin mali teşekküllerinde üstlendikleri rol mercek altına alınmaktadır.

Bu çalışma, İstanbul Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi, Sofya Aziz Cyril ve Methodius Millî Kütüphanesi ile Ankara Tapu Kadastro Genel Müdürlüğü Arşivi'nde bulunan arşiv dokümanlarının içeriği doğrultusunda şekillenmiştir. Söz konusu dokümanlar on beşinci yüzyıl sonu ve on yedinci yüzyılın başlarına tarihlenen askere

alım kayıtları, kapıkulu alaylarının on altıncı yüzyılın ilk çeyreğine tarihlenen *mevâcib* (maaş) kayıtları, on yedinci yüzyılın başına tarihlenen bir Yeniçeri *muhalefât* (veraset) kaydı ile on altıncı ve on yedinci yüzyıla tarihlenen mali *nüzül*, *mukataa*, *iltizam* ve *tahrir* kayıtlarıdır. Kaynaklar, bu tezde sorgulanan ve incelenen üç ana kategori doğrultusunda üç vaka çalışması içinde değerlendirilmiştir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Askere Alım Yöntemleri, Devşirme Sistemi, Kapıkulu Enstitüsü, Osmanlı Mali Teşekkülleri





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I owe the most to my family, who have always believed in me (and my ability to complete this study). Without their support, trust, and encouragement I would never have finished it. I feel especially grateful to my dear husband Oğuzhan Yılmaz, whose patience, support, trust, compassion, and love are what enabled me to see this process through to the end.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>ABSTRACT</b> .....	iii
<b>ÖZET</b> .....	v
<b>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</b> .....	vii
<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS</b> .....	ix
<b>LIST OF TABLES</b> .....	xi
<b>LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS</b> .....	xiii
<b>CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION</b> .....	1
1.1. .... Scope and Questions .....	1
1.2. Sources and Methodology .....	6
<b>CHAPTER II: THE QUESTION OF DEVSHIRME IN TERMS OF SLAVERY</b> .....	9
2.1 “Unusual Burden .....	11
2.2 Slavery in the Pre-Industrial World.....	14
2.3 Slave or Servant.....	26
<b>CHAPTER III: QUESTION OF DEVSHIRME SYSTEM</b> .....	36
3.1 Conscription Process .....	39
3.2 Age Criteria .....	47
3.3 Physical Features .....	61
3.4 Number of the Youths .....	67
3.5 Collected origins .....	72

<b>CHAPTER IV: SIZE MATTERS .....</b>	<b>80</b>
4.1 Standing Army Wanted .....	81
4.2 Becoming a Kapıkulu .....	88
4.3 The Expression of Kapıkulu Regiments in Numbers .....	94
4.4 The Social Mobility Within the Kapıkulu Regiments .....	105
4.5 The Evaluation of the Register .....	110
<b>CHAPTER V: WHEN THE COIN IS MIGHTIER THAN THE SWORD ....</b>	<b>115</b>
5.1 A Probate Register of the Janissaries from the Early Seventeenth Century .....	115
5.2 Janissaries in the Mîrî Lands .....	122
5.3 Kapıkulu Members in the Valuable Revenue Sources .....	133
<b>CHAPTER VI: CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>145</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY .....</b>	<b>149</b>
<b>APPENDIX .....</b>	<b>166</b>

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: 1493–1495 and 1497–1499 Conscriptions.....	45
Table 2: 1603–1604 Conscription.....	46
Table 3: Age Distribution in the Earlier Conscriptions.....	49
Table 4: Age Range in the Seventeenth Century Conscription.....	49
Table 5: <i>Gayr-i Gilmân-i Acemiyân</i> Age Distribution.....	52
Table 6: <i>Berây-i Gilmân-i Acemiyân</i> Age Distribution.....	53
Table 7: Age Distribution in Whole Conscription.....	53
Table 8: Height Range in the Late-Fifteenth-Century Conscriptions.....	62
Table 9: Height Range in the Conscription of 1603–1604.....	62
Table 10: Height Range of <i>Gayr-i Gilmân-i Acemiyân</i> .....	64
Table 11: Height Range of <i>Berây-i Gilmân-i Acemiyân</i> Groups.....	64
Table 12: <i>Berây-i Gilman-i Acemiyân</i> .....	78
Table 13: <i>Gayr-i Gilmân-i Acemiyân</i> .....	79
Table 14: Kapıkulu Population I.....	98
Table 15: Kapıkulu Population II.....	99
Table 16: Kapıkulu Population III.....	100
Table 17: Social Organization Within the Regiments.....	108
Table 18: Janissary Population from 1567 to 1652.....	110
Table 19: Annual Salaries Amount of Kapıkulu Regiments.....	112
Table 20: Distribution of Wealth Among Soldiers.....	118

Table 21: Distribution of Wealth Below 1000 <i>Akçe</i> .....	119
Table 22: Distribution of Wealth Below/Above 200 <i>Akçe</i> .....	119
Table 23: Distribution of Wealth.....	120
Table 24: Kapıkulus as <i>Nüzül Tax Collectors</i> , 1542/43.....	140



## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- BOA .....Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi
- MAD .....Maliyeden Müdevver Collection in BOA
- MDM .....Bâb-i Defter-i Müteferrik Collection in BOA
- TKGM .....Tapu Kadastro Genel Müdürlüğü
- CM NL, Or. Dept.....“Saint Saint Cyril and Methodius” National  
Library (Sofia)
- Kanun-i Yeniçeriyân .....“Kavanin-i Yeniçeriyân-ı Dergah-ı Ali” in Ahmet  
Akgündüz ed., *Osmanlı Kanunnameleri ve Hukuki Tahlilleri*, vol. 9 (Istanbul, 1996),  
127-268, facsimile, ibid., 269-366
- EI .....Encyclopedia of Islam (Leiden: BRILL, 1986)
- DIA ..... Diyanet İslam Ansiklopedisi

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

*“İmdi zıkr olunan taife Âl-i Osmana kol ve kanad vâki olmuştur”*<sup>1</sup>

#### 1.1. Scope and Questions

The Ottoman Ruling Institution included the sultan and his family, the officers of his household, the executive officers of the government, the standing army composed of cavalry and infantry, and a large body of young men who were being educated for service in the standing army, the court, and the government. These men wielded the sword, the pen, and the scepter. They conducted the whole of the government except the mere rendering of justice in matters that were controlled by the Sacred Law, and those limited functions that were left in the hands of subject and foreign groups of non-Moslems. The most vital and characteristic features of this institution were, first, that its personnel consisted, with few exceptions, of men born of Christian parents or of the sons of such; and, second, that almost every member of the Institution came into it as the sultan’s slave, and remained the sultan’s slave throughout life no matter to what height of wealth, power, and greatness he might attain.<sup>2</sup>

In the quotation above, Albert Howe Lybyer well defines the structure of Ottoman rule and how the military organization, more specifically the *kapıkulu* (the servants of the Porte) institution, conducted the business of government, excepting the judicial

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<sup>1</sup> Semantically it means that “the aforementioned group has been the State’s arms and wings without which it would be perished. I. Petrosyan, *Mebde-i Kanun-i Yeniçeri Ocağı Tarihi* (Moskova, 1987), 209.

<sup>2</sup> A. H. Lybyer, *The Government of the Ottoman Empire in the Time of Suleiman the Magnificent*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1913), 36.



branch. His emphasis on the devshirme system—in mentioning the young men who were educated for governmental service and eventually had the power of the sword, the pen, and the scepter—successfully reflects the source of the governmental cadres.

The Ottoman kapıkulu institution and the devshirme system constituted the backbone of the Ottoman government for more than three centuries. They thus have a significant place in the study of Ottoman history, and have been one of the most popular subjects of discussion for both contemporary writers and modern-day Ottoman history researchers. The literature on this subject matter is a veritable ocean: it is vast, and not always easy to find one's bearings.

When we examine the accounts of early European observers, for instance, we come across a great number of works that devote one section or more to observations on the kapıkulus and their organization. These observers were generally ambassadors, diplomats, clergymen, travelers, or people who were enslaved by the Ottomans. It is noteworthy that the majority of these authors expressed their admiration for the well-disciplined character of the kapıkulus and their unwavering loyalty to their sultan.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> For the accounts of these ambassadors and the diplomats, see: Salomon Schweigger, *Sultanlar Kentine Yolculuk: 1578-1581*, trans. S. Türkis Noyan. (Istanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2004); Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq, *Türk Mektupları: Kanuni Döneminde Avrupalı Bir Elçinin Gözlemleri (1555-1560)*, trans. Derin Türkömer. (Istanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2011); Paul Ricaut, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun Hâlihazırının Tarihi (XVII. Yüzyıl)*, trans. Halil İnalçık & Nihan Özyıldırım. (Ankara: TTK Basımevi, 2012); Richard Knolles, *The Generall Historie of the Turkes, from the first beginning of that Nation to the rising of the Othoman Familie: with all the notable expedition of the Christian Princes against them. Together with the Lives and Conquests of the Othoman Kings and Emperours*. (London: Printed by Adam Islip, 1603); Jean Chesneau, *D'Aramon Seyahatnamesi: Kanuni Devrinde İstanbul-Anadolu-Mezopotamya*, trans. Işıl Erverdi. (Istanbul: Dergâh Yayınları, 2014); Francesco Novati, *Epistolario di Coluccio Salutati*, vol. 3 (Rome, 1896). For the works of the travelers, see: George Sandys. *Sandys Travels Containing an History of the Original and Present State of the Turkish Empire* (London: Printed for John Williams, Junior, The Seventh Edition, 1673); Henry Blunt, *A Voyage into the Levant* (London: Printed by I. L. for Andrew Crooke, The Third Edition, 1638); Aaron Hill, *A Full and Just Account of the Present State of the Ottoman Empire* (London: Printed by John Mayo, 1709). For the anecdotes of the clergymen, see: Angela C. Hero, "The First Byzantine Eyewitness Account of the Ottoman Institution of Devşirme: The Homily of Isidore of Thessalonike Concerning the 'Seizure of the Children'," in *To Hellenikon Studies in Honor of Speros Vryonis, Jr.*, vol. 1, ed. John S. Langdon et al. (New Rochelle: Artistide D. Caratzas, 1993); Louis F. Bellaguet, *Chronique du Religieux de Saint-Denys*, vol. 2 (Paris, 1840). For the accounts of enslaved Europeans, see: Giovan Antonio Menavino, *Türklerin Hayatı ve Âdetleri Üzerine Bir İnceleme*, trans. Harun

Among contemporary Ottoman works, in contrast, the most frequently used references sources are the chronicles. The sixteenth-century chroniclers, like Âşıkpaşazade, Oruç, and İdris-i Bitlisi, are especially prominent in discussions on the origin of the devshirme system.<sup>4</sup> The most distinguished works for information about the regulations and the structural organization of the kapıkulu institution, in turn, are the seventeenth-century *Kavânî-i Yeniçeriyân-i Dergâh-i Âli*, *Kitâb-i Müstetâb*, *Kanûnnâme-i Sultân-i Li 'Azîz Efendi*, and *Koçi Bey Risaleleri*.<sup>5</sup>

In the modern-day literature on the Ottoman history, innumerable studies have discussed and evaluated almost every aspect of the kapıkulu institution and its source of recruitment, the devshirme system. Thus, any attempt to examine all of these studies would likely produce a work of several volumes. Such an effort exceeds the scope of this work, but it will nevertheless be helpful to consider some of these studies to understand the nature of the scholarly discussions in the literature to date on the subject of the kapıkulu institution and the devshirme system.

The question on the origin of the devshirme system and the legal status of the devshirmes, for instance, is one of the most controversial matters of discussion in the literature. J. A. B. Palmer, Paul Wittek, Speros Vryonis, Victor L. Ménage, Basile D. Papoulia, and Gümeç Karamuk are some of the pioneer scholars who have

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Mutluay. (Istanbul: Dergâh Yayınları, 2011); Konstantin Mihailoviç, *Bir Yeniçerinin Hatıraları*, trans. by Nuri Fudayi Kıcıroğlu & Behiç Anıl Ekin. (Istanbul: Ayrıntı Yayınları, 2012).

<sup>4</sup> Âşıkpaşazade, *Aşıkpaşaoğlu Tarihi*, ed. Nihal Atsız (Ankara: Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı, 1970); Oruç, *Oruç Bey Tarihi*, ed. Necdet Öztürk (Istanbul: Çamlıca Basım, 2008); İdris-i Bitlisi, *Heşt Bihişt*. vol. I-II, eds. Mehmet Karataş, Selim Kaya & Yaşar Baş. (Ankara: BETAV, 2008).

<sup>5</sup> “Kavânî-i Yeniçeriyân-i Dergâh-i Âli” in Ahmet Akgündüz ed., *Osmanlı Kanunnâmeleri ve Hukukî Tahlilleri*, vol. 9 (Istanbul: OSAV, 1996), 127-268, facsimile, *ibid.*, 269-366; *Kitâb-i Müstetâb*, *Kitabu Mesâlihi'l Müslimîn ve Menâfi'i'l-Mü'minîn*, -*Hürzü'l-Mü'minîn*, ed. by Yaşar Yücel. (Ankara: TTK Basımevi, 1988); Azîz Efendi, *Kanûnnâme-i Sultân-i Li 'Azîz Efendi*. (Aziz Efendi's Book of Sultanic Laws and Regulations: An Agenda for Reform by a Seventeenth-Century Ottoman Statesman) ed. by Rhoads Murphey. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University, Office of the University Publisher, 1985); Koçi Bey, *Koçibey Risaleleri*. ed. by Seda Çakmakcioğlu. (Istanbul: Kabalcı, 2007).

evaluated this subject matter at length in their studies.<sup>6</sup> In the national historiography of the Balkan regions, too, the devshirme system has been a popular topic of discussion. The general inclination in these accounts, however, has been to suggest that the Ottoman government enslaved the Christian population of the Balkans, assimilated them to such an extent that they forgot their own roots, families, and religions, and caused a demographic catastrophe among the Balkan Christian population. Hristo Gandev and Tsvetana Georgieva are some of the leading scholars of this literature.<sup>7</sup>

In the field of Ottoman warfare literature, the studies of Rhoads Murphey, Gabor Agoston, and Caroline Finkel are some of the most prominent. On the kapıkulus' role within the socio-economic realities of the Ottoman world, the works of Halil İnalcık, Evgeni Radushev, Linda Darling, and Cemal Kafadar come to the mind first.<sup>8</sup>

It is necessary to note that the studies of İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı have had a significant impact on research into the kapıkulu institution and devshirme system. In

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<sup>6</sup> J. A. B. Palmer, "The Origin of the Janissaries," *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 35/2 (1952-3): 448-481; Paul Wittek "Devshirme and Sharia," *BSOAS* 17 (1955): 271-278; Speros Vryonis, "Isidore Glabas and the Turkish Devshirme," *Speculum* 31/3 (1956): 433-443; Basilike D. Papoulia, *Ursprung und Wesen der "Knabenlese" im Osmanischen Reich* (München: Verlag R. Oldenbourg, 1963); Victor L. Ménage, "Some Notes on the 'Devshirme'" *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London* 29/1 (1966): 64-78; Gümeç Karamuk, "Devşirmelerin Hukuki Durumları Üzerine," *Söğüt'ten İstanbul'a*, ed. Oktay Özel & Mehmet Öz (Ankara: İmge Kitapevi, 2005).

<sup>7</sup> H. Gandev, *The Bulgarian People during the 15<sup>th</sup> Century: A Demographic and Ethnographic Study* (Sofia: Sofia Press, 1972); Tsvetana Georgieva, *Enicharite v Balgarskite Zemi* (The Janissaries in the Bulgarian Lands) (Sofia: 1988).

<sup>8</sup> Rhoads Murphey, *Ottoman Warfare, 1500-1700* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1999); Gabor Agoston, *Guns for the Sultan: Military Power and the Weapons Industry in the Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Caroline Finkel, *The Administration of Warfare: The Ottoman Military Campaigns in Hungary, 1593-1606*. (Vienna, 1988); Halil İnalcık, "Military and Fiscal Transformation in the Ottoman Empire, 1300-1600" *Archivum Ottomanicum* 6 (1980): 283-337; Evgeni Radushev, "'Peasant' Janissaries?" *Journal of Social History* 42/2 (2008): 447-467; Cemal Kafadar, "Yeniçeri Esnaf Relations and Conflict" M.A. Thesis (McGill University, 1980).

his *Kapıkulu Ocakları* and *Osmanlı Devleti'nin Saray Teşkilâtı*, he comprehensively examined the institution and its organizational structure in all of its aspects.<sup>9</sup>

The main intention of this study, too, is to question the kapıkulu institution and its organizational features in terms of their human factors. To this end, I begin in Chapter 3 by examining the kapıkulu members' recruitment process through the devshirme system. In this chapter, I scrutinize their age range, physical features, their numbers, and their origins with an eye to identifying the selection criteria employed by the state in selecting its future soldiers and administrators. In the subsequent chapter, Chapter 4, I examine their education and training process in the institutional organization and look at the role of this process in determining their positions in the different governmental and military cadres. In this chapter, I also evaluate their exact population in the regiments and how the mobilization between the kapıkulu units was conducted at both the bureaucratic and administrative level. Following this, in Chapter 5, I study their role in the state's fiscal organizations, which allows me to draw certain conclusions about their economic well-being and their financial conditions.

I should also mention that I have devoted a separate chapter in this thesis, Chapter 2, to evaluating the devshirme system in the literature in terms of slavery. Although the general tendency of the literature is to treat the devshirmes as the sultan's slaves in legal terms, in this chapter I propose an alternative reading of the devshirme system in this regard.

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<sup>9</sup> Uzunçarşılı, İsmail Hakkı. *Osmanlı Devleti Teşkilâtından Kapıkulu Ocakları*, vol. I-II. (Ankara: TTK Basımevi, 1988), and *Osmanlı Devleti'nin Saray Teşkilâtı*. (Ankara: TTK Basımevi, 1988)

## 1.2. Sources and Methodology

This study has been shaped by the contents of the archival documents that I have found in the Prime Ministry Ottoman Archive in Istanbul, in the Saint Cyril and Methodius National Library of Sofia, and in the Tapu Kadastro Genel Müdürlüğü Arşivi of Ankara. These are conscription registers from late fifteenth and early seventeenth centuries, a *mevâcib* (salary) register of the kapıkulu regiments from the first quarter of the sixteenth century, a *muhalefât* (probate) register of the Janissaries from the early seventeenth century, and the fiscal registers of *nüzül*, *mukataa*, *iltizam*, and *tahrir* from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. I have evaluated these sources in three case studies in line with the three main categories I have questioned and examined in this thesis.

In the first case study, two conscription registers, the only such documents found in the archives so far, are evaluated. These registers provide us relatively solid ground to evaluate the principles the Ottoman government employed in selecting its future military and administrative cadres. Since these registers were prepared in different eras, they can also help to trace whether any changes took place in the regulation of the devshirme system in terms of the selection criteria of the state.

It is necessary to note that these documents have been only ever been previously examined by Gülay Yılmaz in her unpublished PhD thesis, in which she evaluates the urbanization process of the Janissaries in Istanbul during the seventeenth century.<sup>10</sup> Yılmaz studies these registers to understand the selection criteria of the Ottoman state in choosing its future military and administrative cadres. Although at

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<sup>10</sup> Yılmaz, Gülay, “The Economic and Social Roles of Janissaries in a 17<sup>th</sup> Century Ottoman City: The Case of Istanbul” (PhD Thesis McGill Univ. 2011).

some points we follow similar questions, our approaches to evaluating the data in the registers do not always correspond to each other, which I will explain in detail in the third chapter of this study.

In the second case study, I first revisit the state's efforts to establish a centralized standing army and the methods by which it attempted to do so. I then examine a *mevâcib* (salary) register of the kapıkulu regiments that provides information about the exact population of the salaried units of the kapıkulu institution in the first quarter of the sixteenth century. It is necessary to note that Gabor Agoston has utilized this register in his book on the Ottoman strategy and military power, but he has evaluated the data for only eleven regiments out of the total of twenty-four that the register includes.<sup>11</sup> This document is noteworthy also because it offers a basis upon which to survey the organizational structures of the kapıkulu units.

The third case study provides a perspective on the role of the Kapıkulus in valuable revenue sources—in other words, in the state's fiscal organization. In this case study, I also evaluate the wealth distribution among the members of the Janissary units that lost their lives during the battle against the Habsburgs on the island of Çepel in the Danube River in 1603-4. In this chapter, I analyze a *muhalefât* (probate) register of these Janissaries. This register also provides information about how many Janissaries could be lost in a defeat in battle in the early seventeenth century. In addition to this, it offers a basis upon which to investigate the distribution of wealth among the Janissaries who lost their lives during this single battle.

As part of the third case study, I also focus on the roles of the kapıkulus in the valuable revenue sources of the state. On this subject, I analyze some fiscal registers

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<sup>11</sup> Gabor Agoston, *Osmanlı'da Strateji ve Askerî Güç* (Istanbul: Timaş Yayınları, 2012).

of *tapu tahrirs*, *iltizam*, *nüzül*, and *mukataa* from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. I should mention that in this section, I draw heavily from the work of Evgeni Radushev on the peasant Janissaries and the Ottoman ruling nomenclature, Linda Darling on the tax collection and financial administration of the state, and Mehmet Genç and Erol Özvar on the Ottoman fiscal budgets.



## CHAPTER II

### THE QUESTION OF DEVSHIRME IN TERMS OF SLAVERY

In the nineteenth century, scholars started to analyze imperial history in Europe and became particularly interested in the southeastern corner of the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans. From that point on, the *devshirme* system has been one of the most controversial subjects in the historiography of the region. Since each national historiography in the Balkans utilizes the mythos of a national past as a tool to create the consciousness of a modern nation, the *devshirme* system was turned into a romantic playground, especially for Ottomanist historians. Thus, every generation of researchers on Ottoman history has been interested in the matter and created its own definitions of and schema for the system. These approaches to the *devshirme*, from the beginning of the nineteenth century until today, have generally treated the system in a negative light, and have built up several axioms about the nature of the system that obscure its historical context and make it difficult to approach the system in a more objective light. Of these axioms, the ones that present the most significant impediments to a fairer understanding of the *devshirme* system are as follows:<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> See for instance, H. Gandev, *The Bulgarian People during the 15<sup>th</sup> Century: A Demographic and Ethnographic Study* (Sofia: Sofia Press, 1972); Tsvetana Georgieva, *Enicharite v Balgarskite Zemi* (The Janissaries in the Bulgarian Lands) (Sofia: 1988).



- The youths recruited to the *devshirme* were the slaves of the sultan;
- The recruitment of only Christian youths was a conscious project of assimilation on the part of the Islamic government;
- The *devshirme* was the major reason for the so-called demographic gap or catastrophe for the Christian people of the Balkans under Ottoman rule;
- The legacy of the *devshirme* system has been an obstacle to socio-economic and cultural development in the modern Balkan nations.
- The *devshirme* system was a kind of tax taken from the Christian subjects of the Ottoman State in what amounted to a traumatic “blood levy.”

This chapter focuses on the first of the axioms above: that *devshirme* youths were the slaves of the Ottoman sultans. The remainder will be addressed in the following chapter, where they will be discussed in light of data from the Ottoman conscription registers. But to understand the discussions about the *devshirme* system, it is necessary to examine the foundation of these axioms as a whole: a flawed understanding of the socio-economic relationships of the pre-industrial world. One study stands out in particular in this regard and epitomizes the degree to the axioms above are accepted as unquestionable facts. In her book *Enicharite v Balgarskite Zemi* (*The Janissaries in the Bulgarian Lands*), published in 1988, Tsvetana Georgieva describes the *devshirme* system as “unusual burden” on the Christian subjects of the Ottomans.<sup>13</sup> This statement makes me wonder, if the *devshirme* really was an “unusual burden,” just what does “unusual” mean in the context of the pre-industrial world?

Since my intention is to question the *devshirme* system in terms of slavery, I will first examine the realities of the pre-industrial period to clarify how the societies

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<sup>13</sup> Tsvetana Georgieva, *Enicharite v Balgarskite Zemi* (*The Janissaries in the Bulgarian Lands*) (Sofia: 1988).

of this era perceived their own world as different than the modern-day scholars' considerations. This clarification will also reveal the fact that how devshirme system has been misconceptualized in the literature which prevents the researcher to evaluate the devshirme system as what it is. After this, I will question the slavery organization in the Ottoman world to clarify its relationship with the devshirme system. At last, I will examine the meanings of *kul*, which was used as the title of the devshirmes, since this term generally confuses the scholars' minds and thus create a chain of misunderstandings on the devshirme system.

## **2.1. "Unusual Burden"**

Three particular features defined the pre-industrial world: the fundamental economic system was agriculture; agricultural production was processed by peasant families at a subsistence level; the types of production were determined by the geographical and climatic zone where societies existed. Some scholars go so far as to say that the term "pre-industrial" is essentially synonymous with "agrarian."<sup>14</sup> Patricia Crone, for example, asserts that, "given the absence of modern industry, agriculture was by far the most important source of wealth, sometimes the only one."<sup>15</sup> Different civilizations, however, established and maintained various agriculturally based socio-economic relationships. This diversity has led to a great deal of discussion among many modern-day scholars, discussions in which the Ottoman Empire often has a prominent place. The established theories on the matter are often ideologically tinted,

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<sup>14</sup> P. Crone, *Pre-Industrial Societies* (Oxford, Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 1989), 1.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, 13.

and include the Feudal Mode of Production,<sup>16</sup> Asiatic Mode of Production,<sup>17</sup> and Patrimonial State Organization,<sup>18</sup> all of which tend to focus on the issues of land ownership and surplus.<sup>19</sup> The smallest production unit, however, has been ignored in these theories. Some scholars realized this gap and examined the problem from broader perspectives.<sup>20</sup> The result was the realization that in the agricultural world without machinery, the main and smallest production unit was composed of a peasant family, their arable parcel of land, and a pair of oxen (or horses for some climates) to cultivate it.<sup>21</sup> How and which taxation system was implemented was another question, but this smallest production unit was the fundamental basis of any kind of agrarian society. Since agricultural activity was vital for the continuity of the societies, the human factor had a constant value in this equation.

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<sup>16</sup> Selected readings on this topic include: Gyula Kaldy-Nagy, "The Effect of the Timar-System on Agricultural Production in Hungary," *Studia Turcica* (Budapest, 1971): 241-48; Henri M. Stahl, *Traditional Romanian Village Communities: The Transition from the Communal to the Capitalist Mode of Production in the Danube Region*, translated by D. Chirot and H. C. Chirot (New York and London: Cambridge University Press, 1980); Vera Mutafchieva, *Agrarian Relations in the Ottoman Empire in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> Centuries* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1988); Ömer Lütfü Barkan, *Türkiye'de Toprak Meselesi* (Istanbul: Gözlem Yayınları, 1980), 873-895; Halil Berktaş, "The feudalism debate: The Turkish end – is 'tax - vs. - rent' necessarily the product and sign of a modal difference?" *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 14/3 (1987): 291-333; Cemal Kafadar, "The Ottomans and Europe," in *Handbook of European History 1400-1600: Late Middle Ages, Renaissance and Reformation*, vol. 1, ed. T. A. Brady, Jr., H. A. Oberman, and J. D. Tracy, 589-635 (Leiden: BRILL, 1994).

<sup>17</sup> Selected readings: S. Dıvıçođlu, *Asya Tipi Üretim Tarzı ve Az Gelişmiş Ülkeler*, (Istanbul: Çeltüt Yayınları, 1966), and *Asya Tipi Üretim Tarzı ve Osmanlı Toplumunu*, (Istanbul: Alfa Yayıncılık, 2015); M. A. Şevki, *Osmanlı Toplumunun Sosyal Bilimle Açıklanması*, (Istanbul: Elif Yayınları, 1968); I. Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System*, (New York: Academic Press, 1974); H. İslamođlu & Ç. Keyder, "Agenda for Ottoman History", *Review* 1:1 (1977), 31-55.

<sup>18</sup> Selected readings: K. A. Wittfogel, *Oriental Despotism, A Comparative Study of Total Power*, (New Haven, London: Yale Univ. Press, 1964); M. Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, edit. G. Roth & C. Wittich, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978); H. İnalçık, "Comments on Sultanism: Max Weber's Typification of the Ottoman Polity", *Princeton Papers in Near Eastern Studies* 1 (1992): 49-72.

<sup>19</sup> On this matter, the following article is very informative: H. İnalçık, "On the Social Structure of the Ottoman Empire: Paradigms and Research", in *From Empire to Republic: Essays on Ottoman and Turkish Social History*, (Istanbul: Isis Press, 1995).

<sup>20</sup> See for instance: A. V. Chayanov, *The Theory of Peasant Economy*, ed. by D. Thorner, B. Kerblay, and R. E. F. Smith, (Homewood, Illinois: Published by Richard D. Irwin, 1966); H. İnalçık, "The Çift-Hane System and Peasant Taxation", in *From Empire to Republic*, (Istanbul: Isis Press, 1995), 61-72.

<sup>21</sup> Halil İnalçık defines this system as "çift-hane". He also underlines the fact that this system existed in different terminologies in Roman, Byzantine, Seljukid, and Russian societies. For further information, see: H. İnalçık, "The Çift-Hane System and Peasant Taxation", in *From Empire to Republic*, (Istanbul: Isis Press, 1995), 61-72.

My main interest here is the peasant family, in other words the human factor. It is not complicated to understand the importance of humans in production prior to the industrial revolution. In all earlier historical periods, technological developments in human life were just small steps. Inventions like axe, wheel, bow and arrow, spear, and plough were, of course, important. But they were small steps in a very long process, one that lasted until the eighteenth century.<sup>22</sup> No one can deny the fact that the pre-industrial world was familiar with mechanical devices; there were water wheels, windmills, ships, etc. But these, too, depended on the power of humans or animals (which were steered by people) to function.<sup>23</sup> All economic activities prior to the eighteenth century—agricultural activities, salt production, animal husbandry, mining, trading, warfare, etc.—were based on human power, labor, and initiative; this is also why the slave trade (which I intend to examine in detail later in this chapter) characterized the period. Thus, the human sources of production had a crucial importance for sustaining the existence of any kind of ruling system. This was the socio-economic nature of the pre-industrial world.

If we could look through the eyes of a person from this world, his or her definition of “usual” would quite possibly appear quite “unusual” to us today. If we consider this world from the perspective of our modern-day conceptions, morals, and reality, it may well appear “cruel,” “savage,” “barbaric,” and “ignorant.” However, a historian must be careful not to allow the biases of modern life color his or her view of the past. More importantly, the historian must be aware of the mythical elements on

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<sup>22</sup> To understand the importance of these inventions, see: I.G. Simmons, “Transformation of the Land in Pre-Industrial Time”, in *Land Transformation in Agriculture*, ed. by M. G. Wolman and F. G. A. Fournier, SCOPE 32, (Chichester: John Wiley and Sons, 1987): 45-77; and to recognize the reason of this longevity, see: S. Aiyar, C. J. Dalgaard & O. Moav, “Technological Progress and Regress in Pre-industrial Times”, *Journal of Economical Growth*, 13/2 (2008): 125-144.

<sup>23</sup>As Crone states, “The industrial breakthrough freed production from its dependence on animal and human muscle on an unprecedented scale, generating the huge quantity and range of goods which we have come to take for granted”, in *Pre-Industrial Societies*, 13.

the basis of which one builds one's arguments. Thus, the definition of Tsvetana Georgieva for the *devshirme* system as an "unusual burden" seems nothing but an anachronistic judgment.

## 2.2. Slavery in the Pre-Industrial World

In our modern-day life, "slavery" is without question accepted as a cruel, savage, barbaric, and ignorant practice. In a world that sustained its existence mainly through agriculture and the power of human labor, however, it is not surprising that slavery was widespread. In fact, slavery had been common for five thousand years of human history, from the Sumerians until the nineteenth century.<sup>24</sup> Even the holy books of Abrahamic religions such as the Bible and Quran accepted it. They might have suggested that their followers be nice towards their slaves, or have encouraged believers to set their slaves free, as suggested in Quran, but none of them abolished slavery. As Seymour Drescher asserts:

Beyond the organization of society, enslavement was often conceived as the model for the hierarchical structure of the physical universe and the divine order. From this perspective, in a duly arranged cosmos, the institution was ultimately beneficial to both the enslaved and their masters. Whatever moral scruples or rationalizations might be attached to one or another of its dimensions, slavery seemed to be part of the natural order. It was as deeply embedded in human relations as warfare and destitution.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> To examine the history of slavery see: M. Gann and J. Willen, *Five Thousand Years of Slavery*, (Canada: Tundra Books, 2011); Norman Davies, *Europe: A History*, (London: Pimlico, 1997); Debra Blumenthal, *Enemies & Familiars: Slavery and Mastery in Fifteenth-Century Valencia*, (Ithaca and London: Cornell Univ. Press, 2009); Pierre Bonnassie, *From Slavery to Feudalism in South-Western Europe*, trans. by Jean Birrell, (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2009); Olivia Remie Constable, *Housing the Stranger in the Mediterranean World: Lodging, Trade, and Travel in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2003); S. Drescher, *Abolition: A History of Slavery and Antislavery*, (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2009); Gülnihal Bozkurt, "Eski Hukuk Sistemlerinde Kölelik", *AÜHFĐ* 37 (1981): 65-103.

<sup>25</sup> S. Drescher, *Abolition: A History of Slavery and Antislavery*, (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2009), in Preface part, page: IX.

In the Roman Empire, for instance, 35 to 40 percent of the whole population were slaves. The practice of slavery lasted through the ages. After all, centuries later, the famous “American Dream” was built on the practice. After the fall of the Eastern Roman (Byzantine) Empire, in European cities there were enormous numbers of slaves, mainly of Albanian, Greek, Russian, Tartar, Mesopotamian, Indian, or Chinese origin.<sup>26</sup> It is crucial to note here that according to Martin Luther, slavery was essential for the survival of civilization.<sup>27</sup> It was also a way of for the poor to earn a livelihood, if we consider that people sold themselves every winter in Genoa as galley slaves.<sup>28</sup> This was a period when the wealth of a man was equated with how many slaves he had, and one in which many armies were based on slaves. If we compare the pre-industrial world to the modern day, we see that machines have taken the place of slaves. Some believe that this is one of the main reasons for the unemployment problems we are confronted with today. There is no need for slaves, even for independent people, to cultivate the lands, for instance, because we have tractors and combine harvesters for these activities. For military service, as with agriculture, the modern states resort to different kinds of methods: they pay for mercenaries, establish their own army with professional and salaried soldiers, and/or recruit their citizens (generally males) for temporary military service. The link between slavery and warfare in the pre-industrial world, however, was ineradicable. In this respect, it is impossible to disagree with Crone’s statement that:

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<sup>26</sup> J. Powell, *Greatest Emancipations: How the West Abolished Slavery*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 10.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*, 10.

<sup>28</sup> F. Braudel, *Civilization and Capitalism 15<sup>th</sup> -18<sup>th</sup> Century: The Structures of Everyday Life – The Limits of the Possible* (London: Fontana, 1985), 285.

Basically, pre-industrial states were expansionist because land was the source of all or most of their wealth: the conquest of tax-yielding agricultural land was by far the simplest method of increasing revenues, and it might also be the only method whereby the ruler could replenish his stock of land with which to reward members of the elite. ... Political frontiers might also be so fluid as to render the distinction between internal and external meaningless. At all events, agricultural land was the key objective of most conquerors, though labour (in the form of slaves) and other booty (notably precious metals) might also be desired. The fact that there is a limited amount of land on earth encouraged the view that wealth was a fixed quantity which could only be acquired at the expense of someone else: you could not get richer without others getting poorer.<sup>29</sup>

The expansionist nature of states was based on the need for more arable lands and humans to work them. Therefore, people enslaved other people instead of killing them. If we consider the demographic conditions of the pre-modern world, this seems understandable. In his work, Braudel gives the estimated world population at around 465 to 545 million in 1650.<sup>30</sup> He also asserts that the wellbeing of a society was directly proportionate to its demographic increase.<sup>31</sup> One of the explanations for this figure might be that the amount of arable land was constant but the population number of people was unstable, decreasing in some periods to undesirable numbers and thus resulting in inadequate production or the other way around. These facts express clearly the reason behind the importance of humans as resources in pre-modern times. Slavery, however, had been established on a condition whereby each society was to enslave the *other*. Being a foreigner was a sufficient condition to be a slave, since they were the aliens for a defined society, as Christians were the aliens for Muslims and vice versa. Pagan Vikings were collecting Slavic people as the *other* and selling them to Muslim

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<sup>29</sup> P. Crone, *Pre-Industrial Societies*, 62-63.

<sup>30</sup> F. Braudel, *Civilization and Capitalism 15<sup>th</sup> -18<sup>th</sup> Century*, 42. This number, however, includes also the population of America and the Far East.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.* 32-34.

Arabs, who were another *other*, in return for golden coins.<sup>32</sup> The slave markets of the pre-modern world were headquarters for these alien *others* and for traders.

The image of the *other*, however, showed some diversity. Crete, for instance, was captured by the Venetians after the siege of Constantinople by the Latins in 1204. The sources show that during this period, the slave trade was so frequent in the Aegean region that even the bureaucracy played a significant role in the market. A study on the Macedonian Bulgarians sold as slaves in the fourteenth century shows that the slave trade was happening before the notary public. The study shows that during the time of Venetian Crete, some Christians sold their Christian slaves to Christians, again with the approval of a Christian official. The document used as the basis of this research offers the following account:

*May 2, 1381: Before the notary public, the sale of the female slave Rosa, from Bulgarian origin was signed.*

*May 14, 1381: Before the notary public, the sale of the female slave Kali, from Debar, Macedonia, was signed.*

*May 18, 1381: Before the notary public, Pietro from Kandiye<sup>33</sup> sold his slave Maria, from Bulgarian origin, to Mateo Sanuto Marangono from Kandiye.*

*May 23, 1381: Before the notary public, Marko Pistola from Kandiye freed his slave Maria, from Bulgarian origin.*

*June 7, 1381: Before the notary public, Doctor Toma de Fano from Kandiye bought Irina, from Melnik, Bulgaria, as his new slave.<sup>34</sup>*

The document continues with similar examples. It is important to note that the interest of the compiler of this volume of the document was only the slaves who were of Bulgarian origin. The rest of the population of the Balkan Peninsula was not his concern. It is notable, however, that in the fourteenth century, the slave trade in the Aegean region was already well established and under bureaucratic regulation, as is

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<sup>32</sup> Mary A. Valante, "Castrating Monks: Vikings, the Slave Trade, and Value of Eunuchs" in *Castration and Culture in the Middle Ages* ed. Larissa Tracy (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2013), 174-187.

<sup>33</sup> Modern Heraklion.

<sup>34</sup> List of slaves traded on the island of Crete at the end of the fourteenth century before the Ottoman conquest, in Petar Petrov, *Po sledite na nasiliето (On the Footsteps of Terror)* (Sofia, 1972), 67-69.



clear from the fact that these sales were happening before the notary public. Another interesting point is that it was ordinary for one Christian to sell another Christian to yet another with the permission of an established regulation. It may be that the different churches allowed the sale of “outsider” Christians, if we consider that Crete was a Venetian island at that time, and that Venetians were Catholic Christians but Macedonian Bulgarians were Orthodox.

The Vikings had a strong hold over the slave market in the Slavic regions, the inhabitants of which were sold in the Byzantine and Arab markets. There is also a strong argument today that suggests the word “Slav” derived from “slave.”<sup>35</sup> If we consider that the military of the Umayyad Sultanate in Spain was mainly based on those Slavs<sup>36</sup> (called *sakalibe* by the Umayyads, meaning “slave”), it is easy to imagine that they made up the majority of the slave population in the European markets. In later periods, the Italians, mainly Genoese merchants, held the leading position in the slave trade in the Aegean and Black Sea regions. During the period when the Ottomans were growing from a small emirate to an empire, it was these Italians who held a monopoly over the slave trade. Once the Ottomans established their sovereignty over the area, they, too, kept pace with this already established system.<sup>37</sup> In the pre-modern world, the slave markets were a source of wealth and profitable trade. Since demand generally determines the diversity of goods, it can be said that slaves were very much sought after. Prisoners-of-war were one of the main sources of the slaves in these markets.<sup>38</sup> Since they were the members of the defeated side, that is, the enemy, they were the *others* to the conquerors.

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<sup>35</sup> Bernard Lewis, *Ortadoğu: Hıristiyanlığın Başlangıcından Günümüze Ortadoğu'nun İki Bin Yıllık Tarihi*, trans. Selen Y. Kölay (Ankara: Arkadaş Yayınevi, 2005), 201.

<sup>36</sup> Levi Provençal, “Sakalibe”, İA, VI, s.89-90

<sup>37</sup> H. İnalçık, *Osmanlılar: Fütühat, İmparatorluk, Avrupa ile İlişkiler*, (İstanbul: Timaş, 2010), 174-175.

<sup>38</sup> P. Crone, *Pre-Industrial Societies*, 33.

In Islamic states, however, the prisoners-of-war had another important meaning. Those states showed a tendency to use them for forming their own standing armies. They trained in military schools (i.e., *gulâm* schools) and served in the armed forces.<sup>39</sup> They started their careers as slaves but they rose above *reaya* class in the social hierarchy of the Seljuks. This kind of social mobility was nearly impossible for people living in European world. As Franz Babinger states:

While in other countries a rigid class structure held the common people down, on the Bosphorus the meanest slave could hope, through force of character and good fortune, to rise to the highest offices in the state. ... But this perfect social equality, which everywhere forms the foundation of Oriental despotism, existed only for the master race of the faithful. Between it and the *reaya* there yawned an enormous gulf.<sup>40</sup>

Like other Islamic states, the Ottomans, too, used prisoners-of-war for their military and administration. These prisoners-of-war became soldiers and state officials, as allowed by their skills and in line with the state's needs. That system had proved itself to be a successful method to establish an efficient army and well-running administrative staff. The Abbasids, Ghaznavids, Samanids, Mamluks, Fatimids, and Seljuks were other Islamic states that built their military and administrative staff on this system.<sup>41</sup> Future soldiers were generally chosen from among young slaves<sup>42</sup> who were educated in schools according to their talents. The Mamluk Sultanate, for instance, established its whole military-administrative structure on slavery, namely, on

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<sup>39</sup> Among other, non-Islamic states, there were also slaves that helped their masters during wars, but these were not trained as soldiers and are not supposed to have formed an armed army. For further information on these practices in the Islamic world, see: Daniel Pipes, *Slave Soldiers and Islam: The Genesis of A Military System*, (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 1981); David Ayalon, "Memlûk Devleti'nde Kölelik Sistemi", trans. Samira Kortantamer, *Tarih İncelemeler Dergisi* IV (1988): 211-247.

<sup>40</sup> Franz Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror and His Time*, ed. by W. C. Hickman, trans. by R. Manheim, (Princeton Univ. Press, 1992), 435.

<sup>41</sup> It is noteworthy that among these *gulâm* units, the majority consisted of Turks; see the entry for "Ghulam" in EI, vol. 2, 1079-1091.

<sup>42</sup> There were certain rules, however, governing the sale of slaves. Free-born Muslim or *zimmi reaya* and freed slaves could not be enslaved, for instance, and those who attempted to do so were severely punished.

the *gulâm* system. Even the term “mamluk” means *gulâm*, he who *comes from a slave origin*. They were originally and generally Turks, Kurds, Rums, or Slavs. The state or emirs bought these boys from the bazaars and educated them in schools where they learned the Islamic religion and military skills. When the *gulâm* successfully completed his long education period, he was freed by his master and attained a high position in the social hierarchy. In the schools, they followed a strict discipline and by the end of their training, they became extremely loyal to their masters. Even after they were freed, that loyalty remained. Furthermore, a lack of loyalty to the master was perceived as a contemptible behavior by the society.<sup>43</sup> A few of them entered the sultanic palace school and were educated along with the princes. Although this was a privileged position given to only a few *gulâms*, it was talent and training that were the determining factors in climbing the steps of the social hierarchy for all *gulâms*. They came from the lowest stratum of the society, but with a bit of luck, they could even become the sultan in the future.<sup>44</sup>

The Seljuks of Rum, too, used educated *gulâms* in their military and administrative staff. The non-Muslim youths bought from the markets or chosen from among the prisoners-of-war were trained in the palace schools (*gulâmhanes*). The army of the Seljuks was based on these youths.<sup>45</sup> İbn Bibi writes that the Seljuks *gulâms* were originally Kurds, Turks, Georgians, Armenians, Russians, Franks, and Kipchaks.<sup>46</sup> These *gulâms*, too, were educated as loyal servants of their master, and their priority became serving and protecting him and the state. In fact, in the earlier times of the sultanate, nomadic groups were the backbone of the Seljuk army. Their

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<sup>43</sup> David Ayalon, *Memluk Devleti'nde Kölelik Sistemi*, 240.

<sup>44</sup> Erdoğan Merçil, “Gulâm”, *DİA*, XIV, (Istanbul: 1996), 181.

<sup>45</sup> Köprülü, *Bizans Müesseselerinin Osmanlı Müesseselerine Tesiri*, (Istanbul: Ötüken, 1986); 133; Erdoğan Merçil, “Selçuklular-Selçuklular’da Devlet Teşkilatı”, *DİA*, XXXVI, (Istanbul: 2009), 390.

<sup>46</sup> Merçil, “Gulâm”, 183; Erkan Göksu, *Türkiye Selçuklularında Ordu*, PhD Thesis (Ankara: Gazi University, 2008), 374.

independent nature and lack of discipline, however, drove the state to establish a centralized army to protect the interests of the sultan. To be able to establish that kind of army, the state turned to the *gulâm* system.<sup>47</sup>

The *gulâms* of the earlier Islamic states were educated in the palace schools for service to the sultan, the military class, or ordinary individuals.<sup>48</sup> As Bosworth asserts, “The advantage of slave troops lay in their lack of loyalties to anyone but their master and the fact that they had no material stake in the country of their adoption.”<sup>49</sup> It was, indeed, a different type of approach to slavery than the one western Christian states adopted, because these slaves came from the lowest stratum of society, but sooner or later they had the opportunity to rise to the top. Before anything else, *gulâm* meant more than a slave. In Arabic, it signifies:

A young man or boy[,] then, by extension, either a servant, sometimes elderly and very often, but not necessarily, a slave servant; or a bodyguard, slave or freedman, bound to his master by personal ties; or finally sometimes an artisan working in the workshop of a master whose name he used along with his own in his signature.<sup>50</sup>

The Ottoman Empire, too, utilized prisoners-of-war not just for military needs but also as slave-workers in agriculture, animal husbandry, vineyards and orchards, and also in commercial activities. As a matter of fact, in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, there was a huge demand for slaves in the Ottoman bazaars. The Ottoman raiders, *akıncıs*, were providing slaves for those bazaars from the *darü'l-harb* (domain of war) in the Balkans. Their willingness to engage in raids and sieges was likely connected to this, because the slave trade was an important source of their income. Among the slave markets, Bursa was the most prominent one by the end of

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<sup>47</sup> Coşkun Alptekin, “Selçuklu Devletinin Askeri Teşkilatının Eyyubi Devleti Askeri Teşkilatına Tesiri”, *Bellekten* LIV / 209 (1990): 119.

<sup>48</sup> H. İncik, “Ghulam”, *EI*, vol.2, pp. 1085.

<sup>49</sup> C. E. Bosworth, “Ghulâm”, *EI*, vol. 2, pp. 1081-82.

<sup>50</sup> D. Sourdel, “Ghulâm”, vol. 2, p. 1079.

the fifteenth century. The sultans also used to sell some of their slaves at the market in Bursa, which provided a good source of income to the treasury.<sup>51</sup>

Using slave labor in agriculture was a common practice among the Ottomans in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, especially in the sultanic *hasses* and *çiftlik*s (big farms) belonging to the state, the dignitaries, and the waqfs (pious foundations). Due to the inadequate number of producers, those lands were uncultivated and empty. The peasants, *reaya*, cultivated their allotted lands and paid taxes. For the empty lands, however, there was need for human labor, which is why Mehmed II used prisoners-of-war, along with the *sürgüns* (re-settled *reaya*) to populate Istanbul and the villages around the capital.<sup>52</sup>

A *sipahi* could also settle prisoners-of-war in his *timar* district. In that way, he would open more areas for agriculture and collect more taxes. Furthermore, the owners of *çiftlik*s were after profit from their land and they would use slave labor since it was the cheapest source of labor. While they could collect at most one-eighth of a peasant family's grain surplus, they could share almost half of it with their *ortakçı*, or slave workers. The wide use of prisoners-of-war was a common practice during the early stages of the Ottoman state because raids in enemy territories were frequent and the prisoners were plenty in number. This is why the slave price was low and using slave labor was widespread during the early ages of the Ottomans.<sup>53</sup>

In the sixteenth century, however, the situation changed.<sup>54</sup> The former *ortakçıkullar* had already become free farmers by that period. Living among the *reaya*

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<sup>51</sup> H. İnalçık, *Osmanlılar: Fütühat, İmparatorluk, Avrupa ile İlişkiler*, (Istanbul: 2010), 175-176.

<sup>52</sup> Ömer Lütfi Barkan, "XV. ve XVI. Asırlarda Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Toprak İşçiliğinin Organizasyonu Şekilleri, Kulluklar ve Ortakçı Kullar", *İFM*, I/1 (1939): 37-38.

<sup>53</sup> H. İnalçık, *Osmanlılar: Fütühat, İmparatorluk, Avrupa ile İlişkiler*, 170.

<sup>54</sup> Through the end of the sixteenth century, due to the strengthened resistance beyond the Ottoman-European borders, the source of prisoners-of-war switched to the northern part of the Black Sea region. During the pre-Ottoman period, the slave markets of the Black Sea were under the control of Italian merchants. Russian, Circassian, and Tartar slaves were transmitted to the European markets and to the Mamluk Sultanate by those merchants. The Ottomans, however, forbade the sale of slaves to non-

majority and marriages to free people had naturally transformed them from slave-farmers to free-producers.<sup>55</sup> From that century onwards, the borders of the Ottomans in Europe were more or less stabilized; thus, the flow of prisoners-of-war slowed down and slave prices went up. As a result, the demand for slave labor during that period came mostly from rich families, merchants of long distance trade, or luxury manufactures.<sup>56</sup> According to the qadi registers of Sofia, for instance, in the seventeenth century, the all slave owners were from among the local dignitaries, with titles like “*Bey, Çelebi, Seyyid, Hacı, Ağa, Kethüda, Efendi, and Beşe.*”<sup>57</sup>

Like other Islamic states, the Ottomans also used prisoners-of-war for military purposes. Some of them formed the origin of the Janissary army, some *gulâms* were awarded with a *timar* district,<sup>58</sup> some became the *cebelüs* of the *timar*-holders,<sup>59</sup> and some were even utilized in auxiliary forces like the *yörük* units.<sup>60</sup> As the source of

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Muslims. In the sixteenth century, this market became the monopoly of the Crimea. The slave profile also changed to slaves of Russian, Polish, or Caucasian origin. A *pençik iltizamı* register of Istanbul port customs shows that the income of this *iltizam* belonged to two people, one of whom was Muslim and the other was Jewish. *Ibid.* 174-175.

<sup>55</sup> Ö. L. Barkan, *XV ve XVI. Asırlarda Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Toprak İşçiliğinin Organizasyon Şekilleri I: Kulluklar ve Ortakçı Kullar*, 41.

<sup>56</sup> Slaves working for merchants worked according to a contract called a *mukâtaba*. According to this, the slave and the master were bound by certain conditions. The slave was responsible for a specific task that he had to fulfill in a specified time. This was a limited-service contract in Islamic law. Mehmed II used slaves of this sort to restore the Istanbul city walls, after which service they were freed. H. İnalcık, *Osmanlılar: Fütühat, İmparatorluk, Avrupa ile İlişkiler*, 165-171.

<sup>57</sup> İ. Etem Çakır, “Osmanlı Toplumunda Köle ve Cariyeler, Sofya 1550-1684”, in *Türkiyat Araştırmaları Dergisi* 36 (2014): 213.

<sup>58</sup> See: H. İnalcık, *Hicri 835 Tarihli Suret-i Defter-i Sancak-i Arvanid*, (Ankara: TTK, 1954).

<sup>59</sup> H. İnalcık, “Methods of Conquest” *Studia Islamica* II (1951): 121.

<sup>60</sup> They became the *yamaks* of the *yörüks*. *Yörüks* were pastoral nomadic groups, mostly Turkomans. Those in Rumelia often served in the Ottoman army. According to Barkan, in the early sixteenth century, these *yörüks* made up one-fifth of the whole population in the Ottoman Balkans. The *yörüks* of this region, unlike the Anatolian ones, displayed a tendency toward a sedentary lifestyle that in time replaced their former seasonal transhumance movement. In the law codes of Mehmed II, it was specified that a *yörük* unit consisted twenty-four men, one of whom was a soldier (*eşkinici*), three were his aides (*çatal*), and twenty were the *yamaks* who were responsible for duties back home. This number was increased to thirty men at the time of Süleyman. They served, generally as the provincial auxiliary forces. They were responsible for military transport, construction, and maintenance of roads. They were also the guardians of those roads and mountain passes, as well as horse raiders, falconers, ship builders, etc. In 1543, in the register of the *yörüks* of Kocacık, we observe many first-generation converts, “sons of Abdullah,” among the *yamaks*. In such a Turkoman organization, their existence is quite interesting. These people, most probably, were the prisoners-of-war that the *yörüks* took as their booty during their campaigns in Europe. They subsequently became the *yamaks*. It seems that they converted to Islam at some point and joined their former masters instead of running away. This is a sign of the diversity in Ottoman social

Ottoman Janissary army, the *pençik* system had an important role in the state. The *pençik* system was most probably established during the reign of Murad I, when his advisors Kara Rüstem and Çandarlı Kara Halil recommended him to take one-fifth of the prisoners-of-war—or the equivalent their price—as his divine right, which corresponds with Sharia.<sup>61</sup> The term originates from Persian *penç-yek*, which means “one-fifth.” The *pençiks* of the sultan could be sold in the slave market of Bursa for a good price, or could be chosen for the palace schools to become future warriors and administrators.<sup>62</sup> The ones chosen for the palace schools were generally talented youths who had mental and physical potential or appropriate candidates who met the state’s needs. Since the Ottomans were at the westernmost part of the Islamic world and their neighbors were Christian countries, which stood for *darü’l-harb*, slaves earned a much more important connotation for the Ottomans than for the rest of the Islamic world. These people, because, were the others to the Ottomans both in terms of culture and religion, and the territory of these others—*darü’l-harb*— had a big potential for gathering slaves through the raids and wars.

In the earlier ages of the Ottomans, the expansion towards both west and east created the need for more warriors. The essential need was, actually, for a standing army. During the reign of Orhan, *yaya* (infantry) and *müsellem* (cavalry) units were established from the Turkomans to fill this gap.<sup>63</sup> They constituted a remarkable portion of the provincial forces. The *yaya* units were, in fact, peasant *reaya* who were cultivating their lands but who participated in campaigns in times of war. In return for

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life and how the relationship between slave and master might have taken shape. See: Barbara Kellner-Heinkele, “Yörük” in *EI*, Vol. 11: 338-341; Suraiya Faroqhi, “Yaya” in *EI*, Vol. 11: 301; F. Müge Göçek, “Müsellem” in *EI*, Vol. 7: 665; M. T. Gökbilgin, *Rumeli’de Yürükler, Tatarlar ve Evlad-i Fatihan*, (Istanbul: Istanbul Univ., 1957): 173-243.

<sup>61</sup> “Pendjik”, in *EI*, Vol. 8: 293-294.

<sup>62</sup> H. İnalçık, *Osmanlılar: Fütühat, İmparatorluk, Avrupa ile İlişkiler*, 176.

<sup>63</sup> See: C. E. Bosworth, “Yaya”, in *EI*, Vol. 11: 301; and F. M. Göçek, “Müsellem”, in *EI*, Vol. 7: 665.

their services, they were exempted from taxes.<sup>64</sup> The *müsellem* units, in the beginning, were granted a small piece of a land and enjoyed exemption from taxes in return for their services.<sup>65</sup> As opposed to the *sipahis*, they had their own land to cultivate and did not receive income from tax collection. As it turns out, they were not suitable in nature to generating the standing army that the state needed, since they were primarily concerned with their lands and crops. The state, however, needed true warriors. Thus, in later years, they lost their privileged positions and the Janissary units took their place.

Since the prisoners-of-war were plenty in number during those early periods, the advice of Kara Rüstem and Çandarlı Kara Halil to regulate the *pençik* system was well received. In the beginning, the *pençik* boys (*pençik oğlanı*) were used to handle the transfer of cargo between Asia Minor and Europe. They were placed at Gallipoli for this reason. It was not easy, however, to keep the prisoners in their place. When they had a chance, they did not hesitate to escape. To solve this problem, the state began to send them to the Muslim peasants of Anatolia, where they would learn Islam and its way of life and also adapt to the circumstances of their new world.<sup>66</sup> This method seems to have worked well until the Battle of Ankara in 1402. The defeat of Bayezid I by Timur dragged the state into chaos, as the state was left without a leader and the sons of Bayezid I struggled with each other for the throne. This period, known as Interregnum, must have shown Mehmed I the administrative and military fragility

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<sup>64</sup> Similar to *yörük* units, the *yayas* were supported by their *yamaks* back home. Suraiya Faroqi, “Yaya” in *EI*, Vol. 11: 301. Former soldier Şeyhülislam İbn Kemal states that the rich booty the *sipahis* brought back from the *darü'l-harb* made the *reaya* eager to be infantry; thus, they were enrolled for the unit.

<sup>65</sup> A *müsellem* unit consisted of thirty men, only five of whom participated in campaigns. The rest supported them as their *yamaks* at home. In the fifteenth century, with the expansion of the Janissary units, the role of the *müsellems* in the campaigns was transferred to auxiliary labor teams that were responsible for digging trenches, opening roads, and hauling guns. F. Müge Göçek, “Müsellem” in *EI*, Vol. 7: 665.

<sup>66</sup> M. Z. Pakalın, *Osmanlı Tarih Deyimleri ve Terimleri Sözlüğü*, Vol.II, (Istanbul: Milli Eğitim Basımevi, 1983), 766-768.



of the state. During this time, while the princes were struggling with one another, the ruling military staff of the state, such as ghazi leaders, Turkomans, *timarlı sipahis*, and *kazaskers*, all supported different princes.<sup>67</sup> This must have made the future sultan, Mehmed I, much more careful and determined to establish a centralized army under the direct control of the state. Besides, during the Interregnum, the expansions stopped and the source of prisoners-of-war dried up. Even after Mehmed I took the throne, he had to spend some time re-consolidating state power. It was thus essential to create a trustworthy, centralized army. The idea of the *devshirme* system, collecting Ottoman Christian *reaya* youths to educate and train them for military service in the palace schools and to create trustful administrators and warriors from them, seems to have emerged during the time of Mehmed I.

But what exactly was the status of the *devshirme* youths? Is it appropriate to describe them as the slaves of the Ottoman sultan? To answer these questions, the historical and linguistic context of the term needs to be examined in detail.<sup>68</sup>

### 2.3. Slave or Servant?

Contemporary sources offer different versions of the origin of the *devshirme* system. The fifteenth-century Ottoman chroniclers Aşıkpaşazâde and Oruç use the account of Yahşi Fakih for the events until 1422.<sup>69</sup> According to this source, the *yaya* unit was established during the reign of Orhan I, but the *pençik* system started at the

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<sup>67</sup> Adülkadir Özcan, “Devşirme.” *DİA* 9 (1994): 254-257.

<sup>68</sup> The following sub-section of “Slave or Servant” has been broadly evaluated in my published article, for comparison see, Nergiz Nazlar, “Re-reading Glabas in terms of the Question of the Origin of the Devshirme” *International Journal of Turkish Studies* 22, no: 1-2 (2016): 1-16.

<sup>69</sup> Written by an eyewitness, the account of Yahşi Fakih seems more reliable than other Ottoman sources, also see: Halil İnalcık, “The Rise of Ottoman Historiography” in *From Empire to Republic*, 2-5.

time of Murad I. None of these sources, however, mention the date of the *devshirme* system. The term *devshirme* is, however, used in the accounts to specify the act of collecting and in the verbal form (as *to collect* = *devşirmek*).<sup>70</sup> The sixteenth-century account of İdris Bitlisi, *Heşt Bihişt*, on the other hand, assumes that the establishment of the *yaya* unit and the *pençik* and *devshirme* regulations dated to the reign of Orhan I.<sup>71</sup> The seventeenth-century Ottoman source of *Kavânin-i Yeniçeriyân*, conversely, points to the time of Süleyman Paşa (d. 1357).<sup>72</sup> The Western contemporary sources also offer different dates. While Isidore Glabas suggests that the *devshirme* system was established during the reign of Bayezid I, Philotheos of Athos indicates that it happened in the time of Murad I.

From the aforementioned two western accounts, the account of Philotheos is problematic as evidence for the *devshirme* in the late fourteenth century. This is because Philotheos and his brother were living in Chrysopolis (modern day Üsküdar) when the Ottoman forces appeared in the area in the 1380s, which means the territory was not yet the domain of the Ottomans. Philotheos and his brother could not escape from the Ottoman forces and were captured by them. Some say they were taken to prison, while others claim they were recruited as Janissaries. It is not certain how they were freed, but somehow, they managed to take shelter in a monastery. At the time, Mount Athos was full of such refugees from all parts of the Balkans who were escaping Ottoman invasions.<sup>73</sup> Either way, it is certain that they were taken as prisoners-of-war,

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<sup>70</sup> Aşıkpaşazade, *Aşıkpaşaoğlu Tarihi*, ed. Nihal Atsız (Ankara: Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı, 1970), 58; Oruç, *Oruç Bey Tarihi*, ed. Necdet Öztürk (İstanbul: Çamlıca Basım, 2008), 24-25.

<sup>71</sup> The account of İdris Bitlisi was written much later, in the sixteenth century, and is full of anachronistic statements; for comparison, see: İdris-i Bitlisi, *Heşt Bihişt*. vol. I-II, eds. Mehmet Karataş, Selim Kaya & Yaşar Baş. (Ankara: BETAV, 2008).

<sup>72</sup> If we consider that the Ottomans had only begun to enter European lands during this suggested period, the statement of the author seems doubtful; also see *Kavânin-i Yeniçeriyân*, 55-56.

<sup>73</sup> To see the account please visit: <http://www.atlantasrbs.com/learnmore/ThisMonthInOrthodoxy-November.htm>. (accessed in August 30, 2017); also see for comparison: Look at the term for “Philotheos of Athos” in *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, vol. 3, 1662; E. A. Zachariadou, “Mount

and if they were recruited as Janissaries, they became *pençik oğlanı*. This example is, therefore, not acceptable as the evidence of *devshirme* regulation at that time but as an example of *pençik* system.

The other Western account is the sermon of Glabas. This particular account deserves to be analyzed in detail because, although many scholars use it as evidence for the early existence of the *devshirme* system, it has yet to receive the critical scrutiny it deserves.

It seems that the foreign sources of the fourteenth century very likely designate the *pençik* system, not *devshirme* since they describe the Ottoman levy of the boys as seizing, kidnapping, or grabbing. In 1395, the metropolitan of Thessalonica, Isidore Glabas, for instance, mentioned in his sermon that “the Ottomans were *seizing* children *suddenly* and *violently* to construct their army.”<sup>74</sup> This description has been interpreted by many scholars as evidence of the existence of the *devshirme* system in the fourteenth century.<sup>75</sup>

In 1397, the chancellor of Florence, Coluccio Salutati, wrote in a letter that “the Turks seized/snatched (*rapiunt*) boys to train as soldiers.”<sup>76</sup> Similarly, in the late

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Athos and the Ottomans c. 1350-1550”, pp. 154-168, in *Cambridge History of Christianity*, vol. 5: Eastern Christianity, ed. by M. Angold (Cambridge Univ. Press, 2008), p. 161.

<sup>74</sup> For the text I use the meticulous translation prepared by Angela C. Hero in: “The First Byzantine Eyewitness Account of the Ottoman Institution of Devşirme: The Homily of Isidore of Thessalonike Concerning the ‘Seizure of the Children’,” in *To Hellenikon Studies in Honor of Speros Vryonis, Jr.*, vol. 1, ed. John S. Langdon et al. (New Rochelle: Artistide D. Caratzas, 1993), 136.

<sup>75</sup> Speros Vryonis was the first scholar to use the sermon for this purpose, in “Isidore Glabas and the Turkish Devshirme,” *Speculum* 31/3 (1956): 433-443. Victor L. Ménage, in “Some Notes on the ‘Devshirme,’” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London* 29/1 (1966): 64-78, and Basilike D. Papoulia, in *Ursprung und Wesen der “Knabenlese” im Osmanischen Reich* (München: Verlag R. Oldenbourg, 1963), are other prominent scholars who adopted this approach. More recently, it is found in Karen Barkey, *Empire of Difference: The Ottomans in Comparative Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2008), p. 123; Colin Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300-1650: The Structure of Power* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 122; Gabor Agoston, “Devşirme,” *Encyclopedia of the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Gabor Agoston & Bruce Masters (New York: Facts On File, 2009), 183-185; Adam Ali, “Ottoman Institutions, Devshirme,” *Cultural Sociology of the Middle East, Asia, & Africa An Encyclopedia: The Middle East*, vol. 1, ed. Andrea L. Stanton (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publication, 2012), 179-181.

<sup>76</sup> Francesco Novati, *Epistolario di Coluccio Salutati*, vol. 3 (Rome, 1896), 208. Gümeç Karamuk draws our attention to this narrative in her article “Devşirmelerin Hukuki Durumları Üzerine,” *Söğüt'ten İstanbul'a*, ed. Oktay Özel & Mehmet Öz (Ankara: İmge Kitapevi, 2005), 559.

fourteenth century, Saint Denys noted in his chronicle that “the Ottomans remove/kidnap (*enlévent*) children to raise them in their impure faith.”<sup>77</sup> Each of these sources from that century, including the sermon of Glabas, describes the Ottoman levy of the boys as *seizing*, *kidnapping*, or *grabbing*. Yet, do they refer to the *pençik* system, which was based on seizing or kidnapping boys from outside Ottoman domains during the course of war? Or, do they equate the conscription of Ottoman Christian subject boys into the army under the devshirme system with kidnapping? Although there are no definite answers, asking these questions is valuable in and of itself. It shows the ambiguity inherent in such narratives and the difficulty of using them as conclusive evidence for the existence of the devshirme system in the late fourteenth century, an uncertainty that is reinforced by the silence of contemporary Ottoman sources on the issue.

Complicating the picture above is the question of language. If the key difference between the *pençik* and the devshirme systems had to do with the process of recruitment and with the status of those recruited, both aspects of this distinction exist in semantically muddy areas. The first problem here is that the word “devshirme” itself can refer both to the devshirme system described in the paragraph above and more generally to the act of collecting (in the infinitive form of the verb as *to collect*, or in Turkish, *devşirmek*). Consequently, the collection of boys for either system could be referred to as a devshirme, but without meaning that anyone so collected was necessarily recruited into the devshirme system. The second problem, that of status, involves the word *kul*, which had and retains a wide range of meanings, from outright slave to model servant to exemplar of piety.<sup>78</sup> Thus a *pençik* slave, a devshirme

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<sup>77</sup> Louis F. Bellaguet, *Chronique du Religieux de Saint-Denys*, vol. 2 (Paris, 1840), 425.

<sup>78</sup> Halil İncik, Gümeç Karamuk, and Gülay Yılmaz, too, emphasize these different meanings of the term. While Halil İncik and Gümeç Karamuk state that in the devshirme case the term does not connote a situation of slavery, Gülay Yılmaz considers these people as free Christian people reduced to slavery

administrator, and a Muslim going about his or her daily business could all be referred to using this ambiguous designation. Interpreting the exact status implied by any particular instance of the term *kul* is a problematic venture.

In this context, it is important to remember that the majority of the contemporary Byzantine and Western sources concerning the Ottomans from this period were written by priests, metropolitans, and clerics like Glabas. As a consequence, they portray losing Christians to “the religion of the *devil*,” Islam, as the ultimate evil. For instance, the Franciscan Brother Bartholomaeus de Jano, sent to Constantinople on behalf of the consul of Florence in 1438, wrote that:

Add to this, if it is of any importance, that he (Murad II) recently took from all the towns, cities, and castles subject to his authority—which number almost one hundred thousand—one tenth of the total number of Christian boys from age ten to twenty. These he makes his special slaves and arms-bearers and— what is worse—Saracens.<sup>79</sup>

Thus, according to him, becoming Muslim was even worse than being *slaves* or *servants* to the Ottoman Sultan.<sup>80</sup> The priority these sources put on propagandizing and protecting the *true faith* is also seen in the sermon of Glabas from 1395: “And the worst of all evils, alas, is that he [the seized boy] is miserably separated from God and most wretchedly entangled with the Devil, and in the end he is sent to darkness and hell with the demons.”<sup>81</sup> The religious tone of these accounts and perspective of their authors, therefore, must be taken into consideration.

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by conscription. See Halil İnalçık, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu Klasik Çağ (1300-1600)*, (Istanbul: YKY, 2003), 83-84; and *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun Ekonomik ve Sosyal Tarihi: 1300-1600*, vol. 1, ed. Halil İnalçık and Donald Quataert, trans. Halil Berktaş (Istanbul: Eren Yayıncılık, 1997), 453; Gümeç Karamuk, “Devşirmelerin Hukuki Durumları Üzerine,” *Söğüt'ten İstanbul'a*, ed. Oktay Özel & Mehmet Öz (Ankara: İmge Kitapevi, 2005), 557-72; Gülay Yılmaz, “Becoming a Devşirme: The Training of Conscripted Children in the Ottoman Empire,” *Children in Slavery through the Ages*, ed. Gwyn Campbell, et al., (Athens: Ohio University Press 2009), 119-122.

<sup>79</sup> *Saracens* was the term that was given to the Muslims during the age of the Crusades.

<sup>80</sup> Bartolomeo de Giano, “A Letter on the Cruelty of the Turks,” trans. William L. North, 9. [https://apps.carleton.edu/curricular/mars/assets/Bartholomeus\\_de\\_Giano.pdf](https://apps.carleton.edu/curricular/mars/assets/Bartholomeus_de_Giano.pdf) (accessed August 30, 2017)

<sup>81</sup> Angela C. Hero, “Seizure of the Children,” 136.

The Byzantine context also offers a number of reasons to doubt whether Glabas's words refer to the devshirme system, and the interpretation of other available sources from the period is plagued by similar problems. Were the children Glabas referred to impressed into service as slave-soldiers or recruited as soldier-servants into the Ottoman army? Any attempt to resolve this question ultimately runs up against a problem of terminology. Just who was a slave, and who was a servant?

The main tendency in the field of Ottoman history has been to evaluate the devshirme as a system of *slavery*, eliding the distinction between the status of devshirme youths and *pençik* boys.<sup>82</sup> The main reason for this misunderstanding is that scholars unquestioningly accept these two systems as the same institution. There are, of course, countervailing trends and alternative readings of the two systems that have recently been gaining popularity.<sup>83</sup> Nevertheless, the traditional view, which regards the two systems as essentially the same institution, remains dominant, both in the field of Ottoman History and in the field of Middle Eastern Studies more broadly. As an example of just how well entrenched this tendency to conflate the two systems is, even the *Encyclopedia of Islam* explains the *pençik* system as “one based on youths collected for military service from the *zimmi reaya* (the Christian tax-paying subjects) of the Ottomans.”<sup>84</sup> In other words, it defines the *pençik* as the devshirme. Accepting

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<sup>82</sup> Prominent early examples of work in this vein include: Albert H. Lybyer, *The Government of the Ottoman Empire in the Time of Suleiman the Magnificent*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1913); J. A. B. Palmer, “The Origin of the Janissaries,” *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 35/2 (1952-3): 448-481; Paul Wittek “Devshirme and Sharia,” *BSOAS* 17 (1955): 271-278; Speros Vryonis Jr., “Isidore Glabas and the Turkish Devshirme”; Basilike D. Papoulia, *Ursprung und Wesen*; and Victor L. Ménage, “Some Notes on the ‘Devshirme’.”

<sup>83</sup> For example, Halil İnalçık states that the devshirme was an important innovation that the Ottomans introduced into the *kul* system, in which the collected boys were not the slaves of the Sultan, in *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu Klasik Çağ (1300-1600)*, 83. Gülay Yılmaz also describes the differences between the status of devshirme and *pençik* people and evaluates the first as a relationship between patron and client but the second as one between a master and slave in “Becoming a Devşirme: The Training of Conscripted Children in the Ottoman Empire,” *Children in Slavery through the Ages*, ed. Gwyn Campbell, et al., (Athens: Ohio University Press 2009), pp. 119-134.

<sup>84</sup> Clifford E. Bosworth, et al., “Pendjik,” *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., vol. 8 (Leiden: E. J. Brill 1995), 293-294. For more recent examples of this in the field of Ottoman history specifically, see Vassilis Demetriades's article “Some thoughts on the Origins of the Devşirme,” *The Ottoman Emirate*

these two terms, *devshirme* and *pençik*, as synonymous with each other, however, creates a chain of misunderstandings that obscures the historical realities.

I believe there are two fundamental problems in this regard. First, the concept of *kul*, which was used as a title in both *devshirme* and *pençik* circles, has several meanings but only its *slave* connotation is considered by most scholars. Second, the fact that distinct *servant* and *slave* personnel cadres in the military and administrative systems were referred to using the term *kul* leads to unfounded generalizations in the literature. Insofar as the *devshirme* system is regarded as having served as the backbone of Ottoman economic and social life for several centuries, the question of how the *devshirme* system and its *kul* components are conceptualized affects, on a grand scale, how scholars interpret Ottoman history and the history of the Middle East more broadly.

For the first problematic, the misconceptualization of the *devshirme* stems from a lack of knowledge about, or perhaps a willful ignorance of, the several meanings of the term *kul*. In the context of Ottoman history, Halil İnalcık lists several such meanings, including (1) slave, (2) the taxpayers of the State, and (3) the servants and soldiers of the Sultan”.<sup>85</sup> To this list might be added dependent/subject, a loyal person, one who has submitted himself to God, and one who is in the service of God. The term therefore does not necessarily refer to a *slave*, although that is one of its

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(1300-1389), ed. Elizabeth Zachariadou (Crete: Crete University Press, 1993), 23-33; Selçuk A. Somel, *Historical Dictionary of the Ottoman Empire* (Oxford: The Scarecrow Press, 2003), 56-57, 159; Karen Barkey, *Empire of Difference*, 123-125; Gabor Agoston, “Devşirme,” 183-185, and “Military Slavery,” 382-383; Colin Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300-1650*, 121-122; Adam Ali, “Ottoman Institutions, Devshirme,” 179-181. For examples from the field of Middle Eastern Studies more generally, see William L. Cleveland & Martin Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2009), 45-47; Arthur Goldschmidt & Lawrence Davidson, *A Concise History of the Middle East*, (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2010), 138.

<sup>85</sup> Halil İnalcık, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun Ekonomik ve Sosyal Tarihi: 1300-1600*, vol. 1, ed. Halil İnalcık and Donald Quataert, trans. Halil Berktaş (Istanbul: Eren Yayıncılık, 1997), 453.

meanings. These multiple meanings doubtlessly create certain complication in the minds of researchers.

The term *kul* is actually the Turkish translation of the Arabic term *'abd*. It is important to note that first-generation converts were registered in the Ottoman records as *Abdullah*, which means the *kul* of *Allah*, or the servant of God. There are several meanings of *'abd* in Arabic that are also captured by *kul* in Turkish.<sup>86</sup> Because it is vital to understand these meanings of *'abd* and their connotations in the context of the Ottoman Islamic state, one first has to examine the term in the Qur'an.<sup>87</sup> In the holy book of Islam, all human beings are accepted as the *'abds* of Allah. But Jesus, David, Job, and Muhammad are also described as *'abd*,<sup>88</sup> in this case, referring to the *servants of God*.

*'Abd* also means *worshipping God*. While the word *worshipping* only entails the fulfillment of certain rituals, the term *'abd* involves the whole range of a person's actions in the name of God. In other words, it can mean *working, serving, and being honest, productive, and good*.<sup>89</sup> The term *'abd* thus describes the moral relationship between human beings and God.

The *slave* connotation of *'abd* is just one of the many meanings of the term,<sup>90</sup> and is open to multiple interpretations depending on its context. Sometimes it describes the one who become the *slave* of evil, luxury, or money; at other times it refers to the status of a *slave* in legal terms. In sum, the term *kul* can refer to a *human being* who has succumbed to temptation, to one who is literally a *slave* (i.e., owned by another),

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<sup>86</sup> For the meanings of *'abd* in the Qur'an, see the unpublished PhD thesis of Nermin Akça, "Vahiy Geleneğinde 'Abd Kökünün Semantik Açıdan İncelenmesi" (Ankara University, 2004), 164-186.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 164-186.

<sup>88</sup> Pertinent sections of the Qur'an include *Meryem*: 19/30; *Sâd*: 38/30; *Sâd*: 38/44; *İsra*: 17/1; *Necm*: 53/10; and *Kehf*: 18/1.

<sup>89</sup> Nermin Akça, "Vahiy Geleneğinde 'Abd Kökünün Semantik Açıdan İncelenmesi", 169-171.

<sup>90</sup> As, for example, in the Qur'an, *Bakara*: 2/221.



or frequently to *a believer or a servant*.<sup>91</sup> In order to understand the meaning in any particular case, one has to look at the context.

In the devshirme context, as the children of free *reaya* (tax-payer) families, the term *kul* refers to *a servant*, namely, a *servant* of the Porte, the Sultan, the State, the People, and God. Because Muslim believers, too, are supposed to be seeking to serve God, from this point of view, they are also *kuls* (servants) of *Allah*, and someone who has converted to Islam is called the *true servant* of God. That the devshirme *kuls* were not slaves in a legal sense is borne out by the fact that the inheritance law prescribed different procedures for them than it did for actual slaves.<sup>92</sup>

The second problematic arises from the existence of both *kul* (servant) and slave personnel cadres together in the Ottoman military and administrative systems. It is true that the *pençik* boys were the slaves of the Sultan, and it is also true that some of them were trained in the palace schools, just like the devshirmes. If one carefully analyzes the *pençik* code of laws, however, one sees that they were taken as prisoners-of-war.<sup>93</sup>

In the early years of the Ottomans, the *pençik* system was the main source of manpower for the Janissary unit. The devshirme system was most likely developed only after this source dried up, in tandem with the political fragmentation of the Ottoman State, to solve the problem of securing manpower by allowing the Ottomans to recruit from the Christian *reaya* families already under their control. Although the regulations governing the devshirme and *pençik* show certain differences between the

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<sup>91</sup> Nermin Akça, "Vahiy Geleneğinde 'Abd Kökünün Semantik Açıdan İncelenmesi", 182-186.

<sup>92</sup> Gümeç Karamuk, "Devşirmelerin Hukuki Durumları Üzerine," 568-569. For further information on the slavery system in the Ottoman Empire, see also Ömer L. Barkan, "XV ve XVI. Asırlarda Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Toprak İşçiliğinin Organizasyonu Şekilleri, I, Kulluklar ve Ortakçı Kullar," *İFM* 1/1 (1939): 29-74; Nihat Engin, "Osmanlılar'da Kölelik," *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 26 (Ankara: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 2002), 246-248; İbrahim E. Çakır, "Osmanlı Toplumunda Köle ve Cariyeler, Sofya 1550-1684," *Türkiyat Araştırmaları Dergisi* 36 (2014): 201-216.

<sup>93</sup> Ahmed. Akgündüz, *Osmanlı Kanunnâmeleri ve Hukukî Tahlilleri*, 129-132.

free and slave status of the youths involved in each system, both groups were categorized as *kul*. This fact, coupled with the tendency of scholars to ignore the multiple connotations of the term, seems to be one of the reasons why these two systems have been confused by researchers who have consequently located the origins of the devshirme system in the fourteenth century, far earlier than is supported by contemporary sources.

One significant problem in the scholarly literature on the subject is that the *pençik* and devshirme systems are treated as equivalent in terms of slavery. The misconceptualization of these two systems creates the dominant misinterpretation in the literature that the devshirme *kuls*—the converted free Christian subjects of the Ottoman Sultan—were actually his slaves in legal terms. The main reason behind this misinterpretation lies in the tendency to evaluate the term *kul* only in its *slave* connotation. On this reading, it becomes impossible to distinguish between different *kul* cadres within the Ottoman system and thus impossible to trace the nuanced changes that took place within that system over time, including the major transformation of the Ottoman system itself under Mehmed I. In the absence of such a distinction, a *kul* is a *kul* and a slave is a slave, and this rather crude simplification inaccurately projects a timeless, unchanging quality onto the nature of the Ottoman system itself.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **QUESTION OF DEVSHIRME SYSTEM**

The Ottoman military organization formed the backbone of the Ottoman regime for more than three hundred years. Since it had vital importance for maintaining the central authority, it will be necessary to examine the foundation stone of this organization: the devshirme system. The Ottoman state used this system not just to collect promising candidates to generate an effective army, but also to train and educate capable administrators.

The devshirme system also functioned as a bridge between the substratum level of the social hierarchy, which was in this case composed mostly of tax-paying Christian peasant subjects, and the high-ranking Muslim governors. The conscription regulation of the devshirme system sheds light on the selection criteria of the Ottoman government for creating its future trustworthy soldiers and officers. Since the collected youths were chosen to form the governmental and military backbone of the state through a meticulous training process, it is critical to examine the regulations in principle and practice. Such an examination gives us a chance to comprehend the origins of these officers and soldiers, the criteria on which they were selected for the

system, and how the selection criteria of the state changed in accordance with the necessities of the time.

It is crucial to remember that the governmental elements of the state, namely *kapukulus* (the servants of the Porte), were at the center of the social, fiscal, military, and bureaucratic affairs of the empire for more than three hundred years. This makes it critical to understand who these *kapıkulu* people initially were. I should, however, note that in this chapter I only focus on the devshirme system and exclude members of the *kapıkulu* institution who came from *pençik* or slave origin.

Our knowledge of the selection criteria for the conscriptions is generally based on the monumental work of İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, *Kapukulu Ocakları*.<sup>94</sup> Uzunçarşılı compiled his data from the imperial decrees (*ferman*) on the *Kavânin-i Yeniçeriyân* (regulations written by an anonymous Janissary in the early seventeenth century and literally meaning “the Laws of the Janissaries”),<sup>95</sup> *Mühimme* registers, court registers, contemporary chronicles, and other sources; his study does not, however, utilize any conscription registers.

The only surviving devshirme conscription registers known to exist are two registers that are present in different catalogues of the Prime Ministry Ottoman Archive. The earlier of the two lists the conscriptions of 1493–1495 (H. 899–900) and 1497–1499 (H. 903–904), and is in the *Müteferrik Defterler* collection of the archive.<sup>96</sup> The other register is in the *Maliyeden Müdevver Defterler* collection and contains the conscription of 1603–1604.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> İ. H. Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devleti Teşkilâtından Kapukulu Ocakları*, Vol. I (Ankara: TTK Basımevi, 1988); and *Osmanlı Devletinin Saray Teşkilâtı*, (Ankara: TTK Basımevi, 1988).

<sup>95</sup> “Kavânin-i Yeniçeriyân-ı Dergah-i Ali” in Ahmet Akgündüz ed., *Osmanlı Kanunnameleri ve Hukuki Tahlilleri*, vol. 9 (Istanbul, 1996), 127-268, facsimile, *ibid.*, 269-366.

<sup>96</sup> D.M.d.36805

<sup>97</sup> MAD 7600

These registers, in fact, have recently been found in the archive and have been studied in detail by only one scholar so far. In her unpublished doctoral dissertation, “The Economic and Social Roles of Janissaries in a 17<sup>th</sup> Century Ottoman City: The Case of Istanbul,” Gülay Yılmaz analyzes these registers to a certain extent.<sup>98</sup>

The data revealed in the registers give us a chance to get the answers to the following questions: (1) how the conscriptions were conducted at certain dates, (2) the age range of the youths selected into the system in different time periods, (3) how the physical appearances of the youths reveal the selection criteria that the state employed, (4) how many youths were collected for each conscription, (5) from which parts and religions of the empire the youths were enlisted, and (6) the purpose for which they were selected—for the *acemi ocağı* (novice barracks of Janissary units) or for the palace schools. In the following part of this chapter, my focus will be the analysis of the data on these questions.

When we answer the above questions, we will have a more clarified understanding about how the devshirme system functioned as a bridge between the ruling cadres and the ones who were ruled. This will also help us to consider how the State strengthenen its central authority through the devshirme system and could established a promising source for its military and administrative cadre potentials.

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<sup>98</sup> Her thesis is an important contribution to the literature on the history of seventeenth-century Istanbul’s military and civilian life. Nevertheless, her analyses of the documents are, in some cases, inconsistent, and our approaches to the registers are different. See, G. Yılmaz, “The Economic and Social Roles of Janissaries in a 17<sup>th</sup> Century Ottoman City: The Case of Istanbul” (2011).

### 3.1. Conscription Process

The devshirme conscriptions were a multi-step process. First, when the necessity arose, the *Yeniçeri ağası*—the head of the Janissary units—would determine how many new candidates were to be recruited. He would then apply to the state council (*divan*) and appoint officers to carry out the recruitment process. For the conscription, the appointed officer would receive a decree (*ferman*) from the sultan and a letter (*berat*) from the *Yeniçeri ağası* with his seal on it. The decrees would have instructions for each officer and details on where they were to be assigned and how many youths they were to collect from the designated areas. The officers would then travel to the *kazas* (jurisdictions) where they had been assigned and collect the youths according to the specified terms.<sup>99</sup>

An imperial decree (*ferman*) would also be sent to the *kadıs* (judges) of the areas where the conscription was to be carried out. According to Uzunçarşılı, in each jurisdiction area, the *kadıs* would assemble the youths in gathering centers after announcements made by *dellals* (town criers). In those areas, the youths that matched the criteria (age, etc.) would gather together in the company of their fathers and their village priests, who would carry with them the list of baptized boys, along with *kadı* and appointed officers.<sup>100</sup> Although there is no direct reference to the baptism registers in the conscription records, in the register of 1493–1495, the ages of the youths are given with the term “*sene*” (year), i.e., “*sene 13*” (year 13),<sup>101</sup> but in the regulation of 1603–1604 the ages are given with the term “*tahminen*” (presumably), i.e., “*tahminen*

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<sup>99</sup> İ. H. Uzunçarşılı, *Kapıkulu Ocakları*, Vol. I, p. 14-16.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.* 16.

<sup>101</sup> BOA, D.M.d.36805.

15 yaş” (presumably 15 years old).<sup>102</sup> This situation might show that the officers used the baptism records to specify the ages of the youths in earlier periods, but that they might have ignored them in later times.

Before a conscription took place in an area, the *kadı* of a certain jurisdiction had to gather all the male youths of the non-Muslim *re‘aya* (tax-paying subjects) along with their fathers. From each group of more or less forty *hanes* (households), one youth would be selected, but he could not be the only son of that family. Hiding a potential candidate from the conscription selection and/or enlisting a non-Christian *re‘aya* to the system was strictly forbidden (except in the case of Bosnian Muslims).<sup>103</sup> The information about the enlisted boys would be recorded into the registers along with the *karye* (village), *kaza* (jurisdiction), and *sancak* (province) where the youths came from. Their former Christian names, their father’s name, and their physical appearances were also recorded in the registers.<sup>104</sup> In the earlier registers, sometimes their parents’ names were written together with their given Muslim names. In some examples, we see expressions about their ages, but sometimes we do not. These various kinds of information form their certificate.

In the 1493–1495 and 1497–1499 conscription records, however, we can trace the names of *timar* or *zeamet* owners, given in accordance with the districts from which the youths were taken. This could be a *hassa*, *zeamet*, or a *timar* village, and some of them had more than one proprietor. There are also examples in the three conscription records of the youths that were selected from town centers called *nefs*.<sup>105</sup> In the register

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<sup>102</sup> BOA, MAD 7600.

<sup>103</sup> Although we know that the *devshirme* system applied only to the *reaya* subjects of the Sultan (at least that is what was indicated in the *devshirme* lawcode), in the registers of 1493–1495 and 1497–1499 we can see that the system was also applied to the *askerî* (non-tax-paying) subjects, which will be examined in the following pages in detail. See Ahmed Akgündüz, *Osmanlı Kanunnâmeleri ve Hukukî Tahlilleri*, vol. 2, p. 123-124;

<sup>104</sup> *Kavanin-i Yeniçeriyân*, p. 140; İ. H. Uzunçarşılı, *Kapıkulu Ocakları*, Vol. I, p. 16-17.

<sup>105</sup> For these, see BOA, D.M.d.36805, p. 476, 487, 488.

of the 1603–1604 conscription, however, we only have the names of some *timar* owners in the district of Premedi in the region of Avlonya,<sup>106</sup> and in the district of Mezrak in the region of Delvine.<sup>107</sup>

The officers would prepare two copies of these registers, one of which would be sent to the palace. For the transfer of the selected youths to the capital, the officers would organize them into the groups of one hundred to two hundred called “*sürü*” (flock), which would be led by “*sürücü*” (driving) officers. (For the number of youths in each *sürü* in the registers, see Table 1 and 2). Each group would be sent to the *Yeniçeri ağası* in Istanbul along with their register and attending officers, who could be from the so-called *voynuk* military unit of the area. If there was no *voynuk* appointee, one of the *müsellem* or *sipahi* officers could fulfill this responsibility.<sup>108</sup> In the registers, there is no record of a *voynuk*, *müsellem*, or *sipahi*; the recorded *sürücü* officers were all Janissaries.

According to Uzunçarşılı, before the second half of the sixteenth century, the *beylerbeyi* (provincial governor), *sancakbeyi* (governor of the *sancak*), and *kadis* were responsible for the process of collecting of youths. Due to the abuse of the rules and instances of bribery, this responsibility was given to the officers of the Janissary units from the second half of the sixteenth century onwards. As a result, beginning from this time period, *Sekbanbaşı*, *Turnacıbaşı*, *Solakbaşı*, *Seksoncubaşı*, *Zağarcıbaşı*, *Hasekiler*, *Deveciler*, *Zenberekçibaşı*, or *Yayabaşı* began to lead the process.<sup>109</sup>

In the 1493–1495 and 1497–1499 conscription records, the appointed officers were *kadis* (e.g., *kadı-i Yanboli*), *yayabaşıs* (e.g., *yayabaşı Ali Bey*), *ser-i piyade* (e.g.,

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<sup>106</sup> BOA, MAD 7600, p. 76-81.

<sup>107</sup> BOA, MAD 7600, p. 116-117.

<sup>108</sup> See, Ahmed Akgündüz, *Osmanlı Kanunnâmeleri ve Hukukî Tahlilleri*, vol. 2, p. 124; İ. H. Uzunçarşılı, *Kapıkulu Ocakları*, Vol. I, p. 16-17.

<sup>109</sup> İ. H. Uzunçarşılı, *Kapıkulu Ocakları*, Vol. I, p. 15; also see *Kavanin-i Yeniçeriyan*, p. 137.



*Ali Niğbolu ser-i piyade-i nahiye-i İpek*), the representatives of the *Sancakbeyi* (e.g. *Ali subaşı*), *kethüdas* (the appointed one of the village), and/or *bölük başları* (the heads of the Janissary units).<sup>110</sup> These data reveal that at least by the end of the fifteenth century, the Janissary officers had already been participating in the conscription processes. I think that this rearrangement in the regulation procedure, whereby the responsibility was transferred from the local representatives of officials to the Janissary officers, did not necessarily occur just to prevent the abuse of rules or bribery. It seems that it occurred naturally along with the growing centralized policy of the state and its standardizing centralization apparatus, the standing army.

The conscription records of 1603–1604 show that when it comes to the seventeenth century, the process was handled only by the appointed officers from the Janissary units, among which the majority belonged to the 71st *orta* (unit) of *Samsoncular*. The other officers were from the 49th *orta* of *Hasekiler*, the 63rd *orta* of *Solaklar*, and from the 45th, 31st, and 23rd units.<sup>111</sup> In this register, in fact, there are only four seals of the head officers that were sent to four different regions to collect the boys. These regions were Rumelia, Avlonya (modern-day Vlore), Anatolia, and Bosnia. In the source, there is only one chief officer's name: Serseksöncü Mustafa, who was responsible for the Rumelia conscription.<sup>112</sup> Some groups have *sürü* (flock) numbers but some does not as you see from the Table 2. At the bottom of some *sürü* entries in the registers are listed the names and hometowns of the *sürücü* officers.

When I examine these officers' identities, I found that at least one *sürücü* officer in each *sürü* was chosen from the ones who came originally from the area where they were appointed to. For instance, one of the *sürücü* officers of the Avlonya–

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<sup>110</sup> BOA, D.M.d.36805, p. 417, 442, 481, 538, 690, 706.

<sup>111</sup> See the examples in BOA, MAD 7600, p.12, 36, 110, 217.

<sup>112</sup> BOA, MAD 7600, p. 154.

Belgrad group was one *Süleyman from Belgrad*; leading the *sürü* of Bursa was *Mehmed from Bursa*; the *sürücü* of Delvine group was *Hüseyn from Delvine*.<sup>113</sup> These data also give us a chance to criticize the discussions in the literature about the assimilation policy of the Ottoman state on the non-Muslim subjects with the devshirme system. According to traditional accounts of the devshirme system, a boy's relationship with his family ended the moment he joined the system. His parents would reject their boy because he became a Muslim. He, thus, would forget his roots, culture, and hometown. He would be assimilated into the Muslim Ottoman world and become the enemy of what he left behind.<sup>114</sup> The data for the *sürücü* Janissary officers, however, make such an account problematic. As we see from the records, the state did not want to assimilate the ones that were trained in the devshirme system to such an extent that they forgot their roots, cultures, or mother lands and languages. On the contrary, the state considered these linkages as an advantage, because assigning an officer to territories that he knew well and whose language he could speak is more logical than assigning someone who knew neither. The noteworthy fact to remember at this point is that the devshirme cadres filled the ranks of the centralized authority of the state and thus they were mostly stationed in the heart of the empire, in Istanbul. Thus, the duties that needed to be accomplished in the provinces would have required officers who knew the local regions and cultures.

The groups on the way to the capital had to follow certain rules, such as not camping in the same village twice. The reason behind these rules seems to be that the state did not want to impose any burden on the locals, since the villagers had to manage their subsistence.<sup>115</sup> The youths were wearing red *aba* cloths with conical hats, the

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<sup>113</sup> BOA, MAD 7600, p. 54, 96, 123.

<sup>114</sup> Tsvetana Georgieva, *Enicharite v Balgarskite Zemi (The Janissaries in the Bulgarian Lands)* (Sofia: 1988)

<sup>115</sup> Ahmed Akgündüz, *Osmanlı Kanunnameleri ve Hukukî Tahlilleri*, vol. 2, pp. 123-125.

price of which was paid by the families of the boys. On the way to the capital, the groups were taken under strict surveillance to prevent their escape or kidnapping, or to eliminate any of them from possibly being replaced with someone from the outside.<sup>116</sup> The conscription registers, however, offer no such information.

Upon arriving in the capital, the youths would rest for two or three days. Then they were taken to the palace, where they were examined for bodily defects in the presence of the *Yeniçeri ağası*.<sup>117</sup> The outcomes of these examinations can be traced in the registers as marginal notes, which also give us a chance to imagine how difficult the journey to the capital could be for some of the youths. In the register of the 1493–1495 and 1497–1499 conscriptions, for instance, the marginal notes show that four youths died during or due to the journey. Three of them were enlisted from the region of Agriboz and one of them was from the region of İpek.<sup>118</sup> There are also records for the runaways (*gürihte*). These were three youths and all of them were from the İskenderiye group.<sup>119</sup>

In the register of 1603–1604, the notes reveal that two youths died and twelve boys became sick during or due to the journey. As Uzunçarşılı asserts, the state required information from the *kadı* of the districts where these youths became sick or died. He adds that the sick ones had to be healed first and then they were supposed to be re-examined in the presence of the *Yeniçeri ağası*.<sup>120</sup> In the register, the dead youths are recorded as *müteveffi şod* and the sick ones as *hastadır mahale*. Interestingly, among the sick youths, only one of them was enlisted in the Gelibolu district and taken

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<sup>116</sup> Uzunçarşılı, I, p. 21.

<sup>117</sup> Kavanin-i Yeniçeriyân, p. 140; Uzunçarşılı, I, p. 23.

<sup>118</sup> BOA, D.M.d.36805, p. 481, 493.

<sup>119</sup> BOA, D.M.d.36805, p. 417.

<sup>120</sup> Uzunçarşılı, v. I, p. 25; also see Kavanin-i Yeniçeriyân, p. 144.

to the Rumelia group;<sup>121</sup> the rest, including the dead ones, were recruited from Bosnia.<sup>122</sup>

Among the marginal notes of this seventeenth-century register, there is also an interesting expression that specifies the condition of some youths as *şikeste* (broken soldier) or *şikeste ber muceb-i arz* (broken soldier – for your concern).<sup>123</sup> There are seven youths recorded as such and these, too, are from the Bosnia region. Two of them, in fact, were enlisted from the Yeni Pazar district, and five of them from the Brizrin district of Bosnia.<sup>124</sup> There are seven boys in this condition. Although it is not clear what this expression actually means, it might signify the boys who suffered an injury on the road to the capital and could not be healed.

**Table 1: 1493–1495 and 1497–1499 Conscriptions**

Sürü #	Location	# of Youths	A.H.	Information
1	İskenderiye	150	899	Name, Father's Name, Physical Features, Age
2	Vize	203	900	Name, Father's Name, Physical Features
3	İlbasan	150	899	Name, Father's Name, Physical Features, Age
4	Agriboz	166	900	Name, Parents' Names, Age
5	İpek	150	899	Name, Father's Name, Physical Features, Age

<sup>121</sup> BOA, MAD 7600, p. 202.

<sup>122</sup> BOA, MAD 7600, p. 256, 257, 256 (m.), 257 (m.), 258, 259, 260, 263.

<sup>123</sup> Yılmaz misreads the notes as “šekine-i arz-i Yahudi” (suspected to be Jews), the correct form of which is “şikeste ber muceb-i arz” (“broken soldier - for your concern”). For comparison see, G. Yılmaz, “The Economic and Social Roles of Janissaries in a 17th Century Ottoman City: The Case of Istanbul” pp. 46, 49.

<sup>124</sup> BOA, MAD 7600, p. 133, 133/1; 271.

6	Hersek	148	899		Name, Father's Name, Physical Features, Age
7	Agriboz	151	900		Name, Parents' Names, Age
8	Avlonya	116	?		Name, Parents' Names, Age
9	(Macedonian Territory)	150	900		Name, Father's Name, Physical Features, Age
10	İskenderiye – Hersek	150	899		Name, Father's Name, Physical Features, Age
<b>Total</b>		<b>1,534</b>			
11	Tırhala	908 (in sub 6 groups)	904		Name, Father's Name, Physical Features
12	Köstendil	745 (in sub 6 groups)	903		Name, Father's Name, Physical Features
<b>Total</b>		<b>1,653</b>			

\*Source: BOA, D.M.d.36805

**Table 2: 1603–1604 Conscription**

Sürü #	Province	# of Youths	A.H.	Purpose
1	Rumeli	105	Şaban-Ramazan 1012	Gayr-i Gılmân-i Acemiyân
2	Rumeli	105	Şaban 1012	Gayr-i Gılmân-i Acemiyân
3	Anadolu	131	-	(Gılmân-i Acemiyân)
4	Avlonya	195	Şevval 1012	Berây-i Gılmân-i Acemiyân
5	Anadolu	165	1012	(Gılmân-i Acemiyân)
6	Avlonya	130	Ramazan 1012	Berây-i Gılmân-i Acemiyân
7	Anadolu	125	--	(Gılmân-i Acemiyân)
8	Rumeli	128	Ramazan 1012	Gayr-i Gılmân-i Acemiyân
9	Delvine	122	Ramazan 1012	Berây-i Gılmân-i Acemiyân
10	Bosna	131	Ramazan 1012	Gayr-i Gılmân-i Acemiyân
11	Rumeli	127	Ramazan-Şevval 1012	Gayr-i Gılmân-i Acemiyân

12	Rumeli	147	Şevval-Zilkadde 1012	Gayr-i Gılmân-i Acemiyân
13	Anadolu	140	Şaban 1012	(Gılmân-i Acemiyân)
14	Rumeli	145	Ramazan 1012	Berây-i Gılmân-i Acemiyân
15	Rumeli	109	Ramazan-Şaban 1012	Gayr-i Gılmân-i Acemiyân
16	Rumeli	118	Zilkadde 1012	Gayr-i Gılmân-i Acemiyân
17	Ohri	151	Zilhicce 1012	Berây-i Gılmân-i Acemiyân
18	Bosna	159	Receb 1013	Gayr-i Gılmân-i Acemiyân
19	Bosna	141	Rebiülahir 1013	Gayr-i Gılmân-i Acemiyân
20	Bosna	70	Zilhicce 1012	Gayr-i Gılmân-i Acemiyân
<b>Total</b>		<b>2,644</b>		

\*Source: BOA, MAD 7600

### 3.2. Age Criteria

The age range of the selected devshirme boys has always been a matter of speculation in the literature. Although the law code from the time of Bayezid II (r. 1482–1512) depicts the preferred age range to be between fourteen and eighteen,<sup>125</sup> contemporary Western sources this span shows variations. While British Ambassador Sir Paul Ricout (1665) recorded the age range to be between ten and twelve,<sup>126</sup> the Franciscan Brother Bartholomaeus de Jano (1438)<sup>127</sup> and Henry Blunt<sup>128</sup> (1638) asserted that the age range was from ten to twenty.

Among the conscription records, only two of them contain the ages of the youths: the conscription records of 1493–1495 and 1603–1604. Due to the fact that we

<sup>125</sup> Ahmed Akgündüz, *Osmanlı Kanunnameleri ve Hukukî Tahlilleri*, vol. 2, 123-125.

<sup>126</sup> Paul Ricaut, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun Hâlihazırının Tarihi (XVII. Yüzyıl)*, 65.

<sup>127</sup> [https://apps.carleton.edu/curricular/mars/assets/Bartholomeus\\_de\\_Giano.pdf](https://apps.carleton.edu/curricular/mars/assets/Bartholomeus_de_Giano.pdf) , 10 (accessed August 30, 2017)

<sup>128</sup> Henry Blunt, *A Voyage into the Levant*, 62.

have so few accounts on the matter, it is not possible to determine the exact age range criteria. But the accounts that we do have offer the basis for a tentative estimate.

First of all, I should mention that in the register that contains the conscription records of 1493–1495 and 1497–1499, recruits' ages are mentioned only sometimes. Although the age of the members of each group (except for one *sürü*) was recorded during the earlier conscription drive, the records for the conscription of 1497–1499 mention no ages at all. It might be that there was no systemized or exact schema yet about which features of the youths to record, at least not until the late fifteenth century, or it was up to the officer scribe's initiative to follow that framework in practice.

The age information given in the registers, when it is given, is quite interesting. It reveals that in the 1493–1495 conscription, the age range of the youths varied between twelve and fifteen. There is no single example of boys under twelve or above fifteen, and the average of the ages is 13.56. In the conscription of 1603–1604, however, the youths range from eleven to twenty years of age,<sup>129</sup> and their average age is 16.52.

The conscriptions of the late fifteenth century show that during this period—and maybe as a characteristic feature of the early periods of the system—the state was intentionally selecting youths between the ages of twelve and fifteen. As we learn from the contemporary sources, when a youth was taken into the system, he was also entering a long education and training process.<sup>130</sup>

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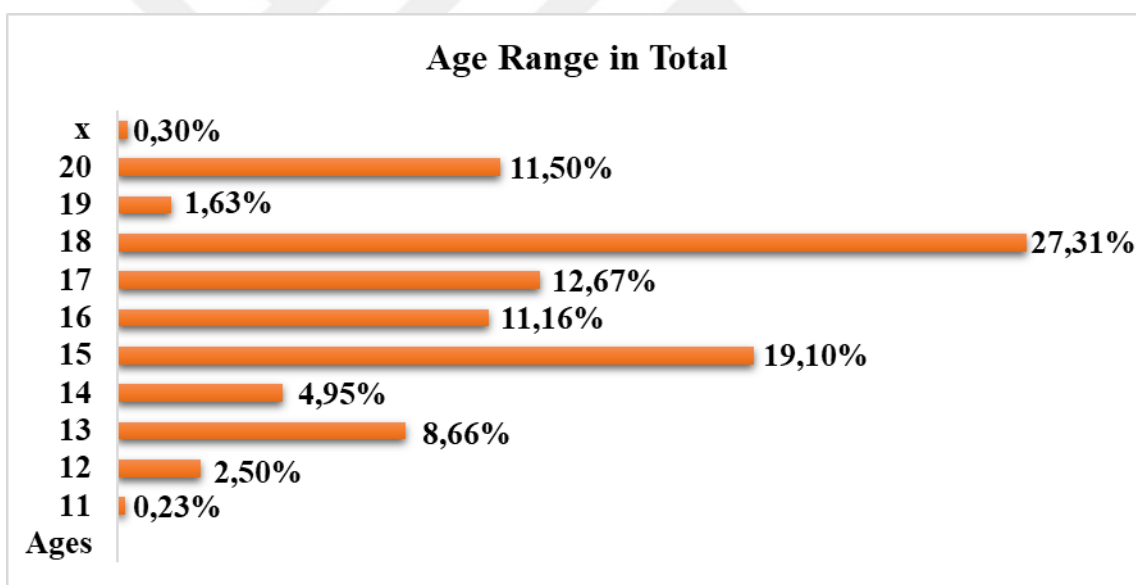
<sup>129</sup> Due to the fact that some parts of the register were deleted, Gülay Yılmaz read one boy's age as six instead of sixteen.

<sup>130</sup> *Kitâb-i Müstetâb*, 6-7.

**Table 3: Age Distribution in the Earlier Conscriptions:**



**Table 4: Age Range in the Seventeenth Century Conscription:**



If a youth was taken to the Janissary units, he would be sent to live with Muslim peasants to learn the Turkish language and the Islamic religion. In addition to these, *Kavânin-i Yeniçeriyân* explains the reason of sending them to the Muslim peasants as “to get them used to troubles” (*belaya mu‘tâd*).<sup>131</sup> Although it is not clear what the

<sup>131</sup> *Kavânin-i Yeniçeriyân*, p. 136, 154.



author meant by this expression, he might have been referring to the process whereby devshirme youths learned to serve and protect the subjects of the sultan. At the end of the day, the youth was now far away from his parents and his village. He was living with strangers of an “other” religion and culture that he was supposed to embrace. While he was learning the new world around him, he was also working for and with these people in the fields. All the details that he had to learn from the moment he entered this new environment might have be the source of the troubles that *Yeniçeriyân* referred to. This learning process among the Muslim peasants generally took around seven or eight years.<sup>132</sup> When he was called to the *acemi ocağı* (the novice barracks), he would be between eighteen and twenty-one years old; at this point, he would start the next stage of his training program before becoming a Janissary.<sup>133</sup>

In the *acemi ocağı*, he would be kept under severe discipline with the other novices that were in similar physical and psychological conditions. As an *acemi*, now he would serve in various working places, such as in the shipyards, construction sites, etc. Along with this, he would also continue his training as a soldier. Depending on the need of the Janissary units, finally he would either join the Janissary units or remain a senior *acemi* throughout his whole military career.<sup>134</sup>

This age range fits the classical expression of the training process of the devshirme youths from their first step into the system until the time they became a Janissary or senior *kapıkulu* (the servant of the Porte).<sup>135</sup> The register of 1603–1604, however, presents a completely different picture. At this time, the age range shows

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<sup>132</sup> Kavânin-i Yeniçeriyân, p. 145-146.

<sup>133</sup> If we assume that he was enlisted to the system as a twelve-year-old years boy, he would be around twenty when he became an *acemioğlan*.

<sup>134</sup> Uzunçarşılı, *Kapıkulu Ocakları*, vol. I, 35, 40-42. There were also other services to which the novices were assigned as *acemioğlanı* out of *acemi ocağı*; for detailed information, see *ibid.*, p. 57-60.

<sup>135</sup> I examine the process of the devshirme youths who were taken to the palace schools in the next chapter.

wide variation, with youths between the ages of eleven and twenty being recruited. Out of 2,644 youths, however, only six are eleven years old. Among the total number, 17 percent were under the age of fifteen but 83 percent are fifteen or above. While in the earlier register, the upper limit for the selected ages is fifteen, this later register shows that the state was inclined to set the age criteria for the selection of the youths at fifteen or above.

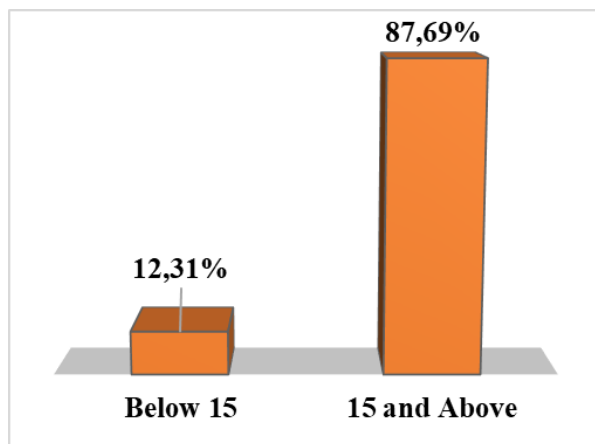
The register also lists who was collected for the Janissary novice schools or for the palace schools. When we look at the age distributions among these different training centers, the result is not very different. As tables 5 and 6 show, the ratio of youths under the age of fifteen have similar percentages. Thus, we do not find a certain preference for the age criteria of the *acemi* or *iç oğlanı* candidates. But then again, it is safe to assert that the selection criteria in terms of ages of the youths was age fifteen and above during that time, which means the state was in need of more mature recruits than it had been in the previous century. The reasons for this situation seem to correlate with the military and economic realities of the day.

İnalçık asserts that the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries were a time when there was a growing need for more soldiers that could use firearms in the battlefields in Central Europe against the Habsburgs. In the late sixteenth century, he says, the nature of warfare had changed as a result of the European military revolution of muskets. This also resulted in the need for more soldiers who knew how to use these guns. Thus, the armies started to increase the number of soldiers using firearms. This military technology did not require a long training process like the traditional training program of the Janissaries using swords and bows and arrows. The Ottoman Empire also applied this method for its armies, and the number of its soldiers tripled. The training process might have been reduced, since they could learn how to use these

weapons in only a few months.<sup>136</sup> In addition to this, if we consider that throughout the sixteenth century, especially from the second half onwards, the Ottoman state was in wars or defensive actions on both the western and the eastern frontiers, the state might have been desperate to find more soldiers that would be sufficient to change the guard. This necessity might also explain the growing number of the guardians in the garrisons in that century, and explains why the age criteria of the government for selecting the devshirme youths changed, with a greater emphasis on older recruits.

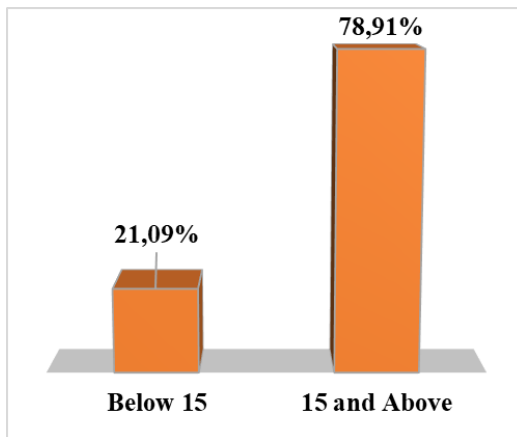
The data corresponding to the age range of the youths from the registers also give us a chance to reevaluate the discussions in the literature about the problem of the legality of converting the formerly Christian devshirme boys to Islam, and for the discussions about the process of assimilating the boys into the devshirme system.

**Table 5: *Gayr-i Gilmân-i Acemiyan* Age Distribution**

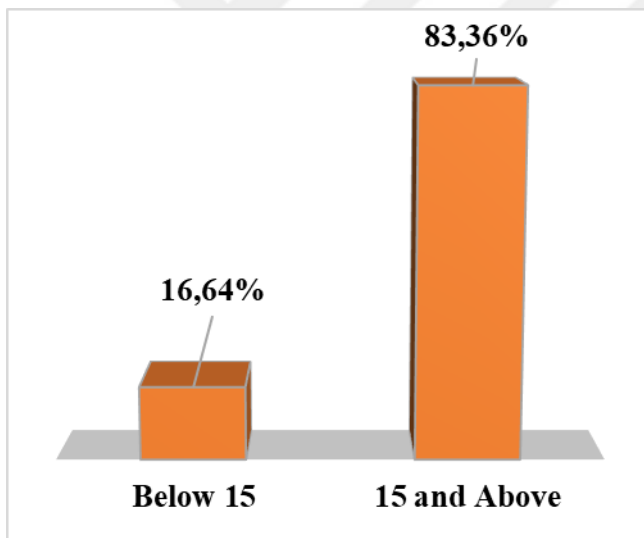


<sup>136</sup> H. İnalçık, "Military and Fiscal Transformation", p. 288-289.

**Table 6: *Berây-i Gilmân-i Acemiyân* Age Distribution**



**Table 7: Age Distribution in Whole Conscription**



On the question of legality of converting the devshirmes to Islam, the scholars propose different perspectives. Some researchers suggest that the obligatory conversion of the devshirmes was in violation of Islamic law, since the Quran forbids such an obligation on *zimmi* subjects. Ménage, for instance, rationalizes this suggestion by pointing out to the effectiveness of the *örf* on some practices rather than the *şer‘i*

legislations.<sup>137</sup> Vryonis, in addition to this, suggests that this regulation is the extension of the *gulâm* system in the former Islamic states. That is to say, he assumes that these peasant youths were enslaved by the government and Islamized, just like the former *gulâm* boys.<sup>138</sup> Wittek, however, tries to interpret the conversion matter from an Islamic perspective. He claims that the Ottomans used the Shafi'i law code to justify the conversion of the youths. According to him, the Ottomans were collecting youths from the circles of Slavs, Bulgarians, and Bosnians, who had only accepted Christianity after the birth of Islam, and were thus not accepted as *zimmi* people in the Ottoman Empire.<sup>139</sup> Although Wittek attempts to understand the terms and regulations of such an Islamic state from an Islamic perspective, his assessment fails to take into account the facts of the regulations. Collecting youths for the system from Rum and Armenian people, for instance, disproves his theory, since these people were Christians even before the rise of Islam.

The intuition of Wittek about the necessity of comprehending the Islamic concepts, however, is a meaningful approach to the conversion question. In his *Tâcü't-Tevârih* (1584), Hoca Sadettin Efendi, who was the *hâce-i sultânî*, the counselor of Sultan Murad III, regards the conversion of devshirmes as an opportunity given to them to be honored by the glory of Islam, which could rescue them in their earthly life as well as in the afterlife. More importantly, he points to a hadith as the reason of their conversions: "each new-born is born upon *fitrat*, *fitrat* of Islam."<sup>140</sup> The Quran, in fact, mentions that each individual comes to life with a *fitrat* (natural disposition).<sup>141</sup> In this

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<sup>137</sup> Ménage, "Some Notes on the 'Devshirme'", 70-71.

<sup>138</sup> Vryonis, "Selçuklu Gulamı ve Osmanlı Devşirmesi", *Söğüt'ten İstanbul'a*, ed. Oktay Özel & Mehmet Öz (Ankara: İmge Kitapevi, 2005), 553-554.

<sup>139</sup> Paul Wittek, "Devshirme and Shari'a", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 17 (1955), 271-278.

<sup>140</sup> Hoca Sadettin Efendi, *Tâcü't-Tevârih*, v. I, ed. İsmet Parmaksızoğlu, (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı, 1979), 69.

<sup>141</sup> "Quran, Rûm, 30/30.

sense, the term means that people have, by creation, a tendency for a religious belief, or for knowing the Creator. It signifies a strong bond between humans and religion. The hadith, in addition to this, mentions that each child is born with the *fitrat*, with this tendency, and that only later do his/her parents make him/her Jewish, Christian, or Zoroastrian.<sup>142</sup> According to some Muslim scholars, as in the case of Hoca Sadettin Efendi, Islam is the innate and original religion and people are born with the knowledge of the Creator. Naturally, they will take the shape of their mold, which is given by their parents. This is why in the hadith it says that “their parents make them Jewish, Christian, or Zoroastrian.”<sup>143</sup>

Claiming that the character of a newborn would be shaped by his/her living environment’s culture and religion reminds us of the philosophical metaphor of *tabula rasa* or “blank slate,” which has been argued since the time of Aristotle. In this view, people come to life as blank slates, and then external factors and experiences mold their characters. J. Locke, for instance, asserts that a child’s mind is like a blank slate; the child is good and clean, but with a bad education his/her mind will eventually deteriorate.<sup>144</sup>

Similarly, in the *fitrat* context, the differentiation of the interpretations of God is the result of the education, training, or orientation that the child gets from his/her family and society. Therefore, the various norms of the family and the society shape the individual. In this sense, education and training have a much more important

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<sup>142</sup> In Turkish translation: “Her çocuk fitrat üzere doğar; sonra onu ana-babası Yahudileştirir, Hıristiyanlaştırır veya Mecusileştirir.”

<sup>143</sup> Z. Ş. Arslan, *Fıtrat Kavramı Çerçevesinde Eğitimde “İnsanın Neliği” Sorusu*, unpublished PhD Dissertation, (2006), p. 24, 26.

<sup>144</sup> John Locke, <http://www.earlymoderntexts.com/assets/pdfs/locke1690book2.pdf> , 18-22 (Accessed 5 August, 2017).

connotation. Some Muslim scholars emphasize the necessity of the education to prevent any deviation from this congenital state of *fitrat*.<sup>145</sup>

In the devshirme system, the youths' "conversion" was, on this reading, rather a process of education and training that was in line with their original *fitrat*, and one that also aimed to make them useful individuals for themselves and for the common benefits of the Ottoman society. This way, in theory and practice, the state might have regarded the whole process as guiding these youths to the *right and proper path*, which was *true* education. Instead of their *parents who will make these youths Christian, Jewish, or else*, the sultan makes them Muslim, which was already in their natural disposition.

It is important to mention here that in the jargon of the devshirmes, the sultan is described as the father of *kuls*, servants. Thus, it can be suggested that the sultan takes the place of their parents. In this case, the important point is to select the people at the age range in which they are open for learning and developing their abilities, and this range is specified as eight to twenty years of age.<sup>146</sup> This range brings us back to the conscription registers. The earlier register states the ages of the enlisted youths to be from twelve to fifteen. The seventeenth-century register, however, shows a variation from eleven to twenty years of age,<sup>147</sup> which is still in the frame of the specified educable age range. Thus, the age range of the youths, from eleven to twenty, supports the inclination of the scholars to evaluate the legality problem of devshirme

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<sup>145</sup> Mustafa Işık, "Fıtrat Hadisi'nin Osmanlı'nın Devşirme Sisteminde Hayata Aksedişi", *Turkish Studies* 8/6 (2013): p. 324.

<sup>146</sup> A. Özcan, "Devşirme," p. 256.

<sup>147</sup> In the early seventeenth-century conscription register, there is a record for a six-year-old, but since this is the only example of this early age in the account and there is no other example of children younger ones than ten years old, I believe that this is recorded as mistake of the Janissary scribe. I believe that he wrote six instead of sixteen. A child of six years old is not educable, and would thus not have been suited for such an exacting training process.

conversion in terms of the *fitrat* description of Islam. This is the result that emerges from the only conscription registers we have today from the archives.

The age span revealed in the registers also gives us a chance to review the speculations on the devshirme system in terms of the assimilation question. Thus, I also intend to reevaluate the assumptions about the assimilation of the devshirmes. Some scholars suggest that the devshirme youths entered a severe assimilation process, at the end of which they forgot their roots, became alienated from their cultures, and turned against their parents.<sup>148</sup> The conscription registers, however, disprove this suggestion, since they show that the enlisted youths were generally at or above the age of twelve.<sup>149</sup> At this age, it does not seem possible to efface a person's memory about his parents, roots, or culture. It is even harder to make someone forget his mother language at this age.

Sokullu Mehmed Pasha (1505–1579), for instance, was enlisted from a Serbian family in Bosnia. He was trained and educated through the devshirme system and climbed all the steps of the social and administrative hierarchy to serve as the grand vizier between 1565 and 1579. He never lost his connection with his family, who often visited him in the capital. His relatives, furthermore, gained high positions in Hungary and Bosnia. More importantly, he supported Makarije Sokolovic, his brother or nephew, as the patriarch of Serbia; he helped the restoration of the Pec Patriarchate; and then renewed the Serbian Orthodox Church.<sup>150</sup> We thus know that he had strong contact with his roots.

In addition to the Sokullu example, the conscription registers show that the memories, knowledge, and bonds of the devshirmes to their roots, parents, cultures,

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<sup>148</sup> T. Georgieva, *Enicharite v Balgarskite Zemi (The Janissaries in the Bulgarian Lands)*, 66-67.

<sup>149</sup> In the seventeenth-century register, there are some examples of ten- and eleven-year-olds, but not many.

<sup>150</sup> G. Veinstein, "Sokollu Mehmed Pasha," *EI2*, vol. 9 (Leiden: Brill, 1986), 706-708.



motherlands, and mother languages were necessary parts of the system. In the conscription register of 1603, for instance, as I discussed above in the “Conscription Process” section, we see that at least one of the *sürücü* officers was originally from the area where he conducted the recruitment. In this register, the *sürücü* Süleyman from Belgrade was assigned to the Avlonya district, and he was responsible for enlisting youths from the villages in the Belgrade, Avlonya and Mezakiye jurisdictions; *sürücü* Hasan from Kütahya served in the Bursa district and was responsible for enlisting the youths from the villages of the Mihaliç, Manyas, Aydınçık, and Biga jurisdictions; *sürücü* Mahmud from Premedi was posted to the Avlonya district and was responsible for the villages of the Premedi jurisdiction; *sürücü* Mehmed from Bursa was responsible for the villages of the Bursa district; Hüseyin from Delvine was responsible for the Mezrak, Argirikasrı, and Pogoniye jurisdictions of the Avlonya and Delvine districts; for the jurisdictions and villages of Bosna, *sürücü* Hüseyin from Bosna; for the jurisdictions and villages of Hersek, *sürücü* Ali and Kurd from Yenipazar and *sürücü* Hüseyin from Saray were positioned.<sup>151</sup> All these examples suggest that the state benefitted from the devshirme personnel who spoke the languages and knew the geographies of the territories they were appointed to.

We also witness this kind of state employment policy in the tax collecting system in the Balkans, where the collectors were often originally from the regions they were appointed to.<sup>152</sup> Thus, making the youths forget about their origin, languages, hometowns, and cultures was not beneficial for the state’s interests. Insistently suggesting that the devshirme youths were assimilated to the extent of forgetting all about their roots, motherlands, and mother languages is, therefore, not something that is borne out by the historical record. But this is not to deny that there was some

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<sup>151</sup> BOA, MAD 7600, p. 54, 96, 123.

<sup>152</sup> I discuss this in detail in the fourth chapter.

assimilation in the case of the devshirmes, since they formed the *askerî* (military-administrative) apparatus of the state.

A certain degree of assimilation has always been the *sine qua non* of the military. In the words of Giuseppe Caforio:

Military organizations represent a specific occupational culture which is relatively isolated from society. Military people not only separated barracks and bases, but they also live there frequently ... Cadets and recruits get their training in specific schools and academies, where a sense of uniqueness is emphasized; and military personnel wear uniforms which make them, in a highly visible way, distinct from most other workers. Military organizations are “greedy institutions” because they require a lot from their personnel: during active duty personnel are on a permanent, 24-hour call with rather idiosyncratic working shifts, their leave is subject to cancellation; and they can be ordered to far-off places on short notice.<sup>153</sup>

Living in barracks and bases isolated from society, training in specific schools and academies, and believing in the uniqueness of their group—or the unit—will certainly involve a certain degree of assimilation into the group identity. What I suggest is that this assimilation was not of a degree to alienate the devshirme youths from their former lives, but only to transform their perception of self-identity into one of solidarity with the group in the palace schools or *acemi ocağı* barracks. This transformation happened in the form of becoming a *kul*—Janissary or otherwise—and a part of the group that they were admitted into. In the discipline of sociology, this phenomenon is described as “group solidarity,” in which “cohesion” is one of the most important factors.<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> J. L. Soeters, D. J. Winslow and A. Weibull, “Military Culture”, pp. 237-254, in *Handbook of the Sociology of the Military*, ed. Giuseppe Caforio, (New York: Springer, 2006), 237.

<sup>154</sup> For the related literature, see Michael Hechter, *Principles of Group Solidarity*, (California: University of California Press, 1987); G. D. Spindler, “The Military-A Systematic Analysis”, *Social Forces* 27/1 (1948-49): 83-88; K. A. Bollen & R. H. Hoyle, “Perceived Cohesion: A Conceptual and Empirical Examination”, *Social Forces* 69/2 (1990): 479-504; C. W. Langfred, “The Paradox of Self-Management: Individual and Group Autonomy in Work Groups”, *Journal of Organizational Behavior* 21/5 (2000): 563-585; N. E. Friedkin, “Social Cohesion”, *Annual Review of Sociology* 30 (2004): 409-425.

In the devshirme case, the registers show that youths were generally collected from the same regions of the empire. When we compare the conscription registers of 1495, 1603, and a *mevâcib* (stipend) register of *acemi ođlanları* from the late seventeenth century,<sup>155</sup> it appears that for the conscriptions, the state frequently recruited from certain specific regions of the empire. It seems that there is a pattern that the state followed for the regulation. In this respect, the centers of the conscription activities were mainly the districts of İskenderiye (Albania), Varna, Vize, Filibe, Yanbolu, Silistre, İlbasan, Atina, Ağriboz, Belgrad, İpek, Hersek, Bosna, Saray, Ohri, Avlonya, Premedi, Ohri, Çayniçe, Fenar, Çatalca, Tırhala, Yenişehir, Köstendil, Ilıca, Kırkkilise, and Dimetoka. These are the places where conscriptions were carried out, as observed in the three registers from consecutive centuries. Enlisting youths from specified regions might have helped establish the group solidarity and then the self-identity of the devshirmes. It is important to mention that “solidarity and social order derive not from the biology or personalities of individuals, but from the socially conditioned reactions of individual actors to their circumstances.”<sup>156</sup> Durkheim asserts that “the member of solidary groups act in ways that are consistent with collective standards of conduct, or norms, because they are obligated to do so.”<sup>157</sup> This statement corresponds to the conditions of the devshirmes, who were obligated to act according to the rules of each unit they belonged to, rules that were the products of the collective standards of the state apparatus’s military norms. These military norms remained fairly constant over the centuries, and centered on discipline, decisiveness, obedience, and readiness to make sacrifices.<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> “Saint Saint Cyril and Methodius” National Library (Sofia), Oriental Dept. D. 159 Fol. 44b-50a.

<sup>156</sup> Michael Hechter, *Principles of Group Solidarity*, (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1988), 186.

<sup>157</sup> Michael Hechter, *Principles of Group Solidarity*, 17.

<sup>158</sup> J. L. Soeters, D. J. Winslow and A. Weibull, “Military Culture”, 275.

### 3.3 Physical Features

In the literature, the physical features of the devshirme youths have generally been discussed on the basis of the information provided in *Kavânin-i Yeniçeriyân*.<sup>159</sup> It is important to remember that although this source describes itself as the law of Janissaries, it was, in fact, an anonymous Janissary's account that reflects his own state of mind. Furthermore, it includes many prejudices or opinions of the author about different parts of the social, cultural, and military life of the day, the early seventeenth century, which might also reflect the popular beliefs of the contemporary Janissaries. The author of the source wrote that, for instance, "tall people are goofy and the short ones are factious,"<sup>160</sup> which can only be evaluated as his prejudices. The latter example, however, has been used by Uzunçarşılı as if it were a criterion for the conscription process, according to which tall or short candidates could not be part of the system.<sup>161</sup> This paralogism has, unfortunately, been repeated in the literature as if it were true. Thanks to the conscription registers, however, we have a chance to understand what the actual practice was. Thus, the conscription registers offer us a chance to understand the selection criteria the Ottoman government followed in the enlisting process. This also gives us another chance to check which misinformation is being repeated in the literature.

In the conscription registers of 1497–1499 and 1603–1604, the physical appearances of each youth are recorded. In the register of 1493–1495, however, this

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<sup>159</sup> "Kavânin-i Yeniçeriyân-ı Dergah-ı Ali" in Ahmet Akgündüz ed., *Osmanlı Kanunnameleri ve Hukuki Tahlilleri*, vol. 9 (Istanbul, 1996), 127-268, facsimile, *ibid.*, 269-366;

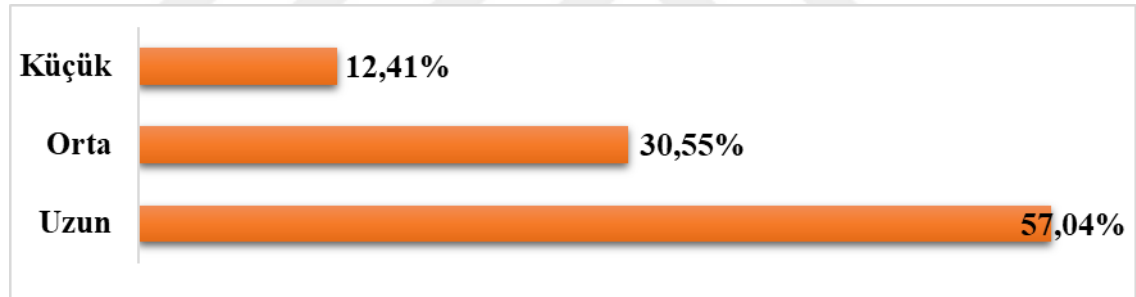
<sup>160</sup> *Kavânin-i Yeniçeriyân* p. 139.

<sup>161</sup> Uzunçarşılı, *Kapıkulu Ocakları*, vol. I, 18. Uzunçarşılı assumes that tall recruits were taken only to the palace or became members of the Solak unit, which guarded the sultan.

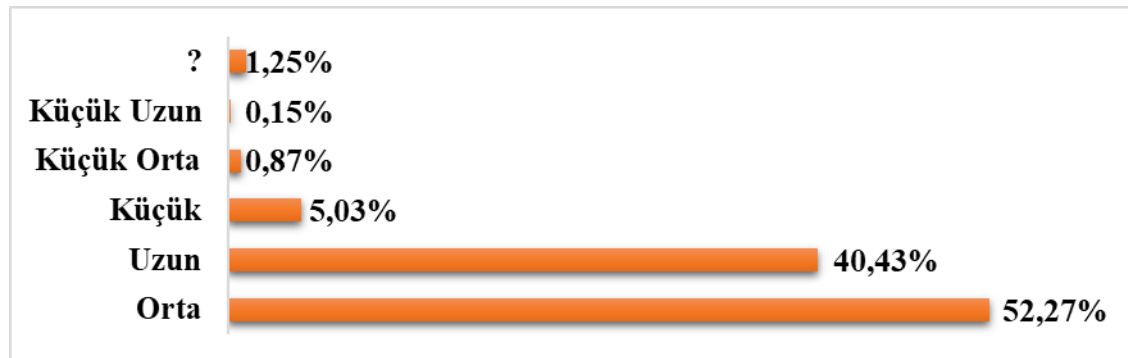
practice seems to have been abandoned for some conscription groups of Ağrıboz and Belgrad-i Arnavutluk.

Although the literature repeats the statements included in the source of *Kavânin-i Yeniçeriyân* about the tall or short boys who were not chosen since they were “goofy” or “factious,” the data recorded in the registers of 1493–1495 and 1497–1499 point to a different practice. According to the recorded features, 57.04 percent of the youths were tall (*uzun*), 30.55 percent were average (*orta*), and 12.41 percent were short (*küçük*). As tables 8 and 9 demonstrate, the majority of the enlisted youths were described as either tall or of average height.

**Table 8: Height Range in the Late-Fifteenth-Century Conscriptions**



**Table 9: Height Range in the Conscription of 1603–1604**



The data from the register of 1603–1604 demonstrate a different classification. There are more criteria than being tall or short. According to this, some youths were recorded as “little tall” (*küçük uzun*) or “little average” (*küçük orta*). At first, I thought these classifications could define the boys that were under the age of sixteen and the boys that were chosen for the palace schools, recorded in the register as “gayr-i gilmân-i acemiyân.” If it was the principle to select the tall candidates for the palace, it would be logical to choose the boys younger than sixteen and “little tall” or “little average” because, I thought, they were young and would eventually grow taller. Surprisingly, however, as tables 10 and 11 show, the majority of these youths were recorded in the register as future *acemi oğlans* (novices) and their age range shows variety.

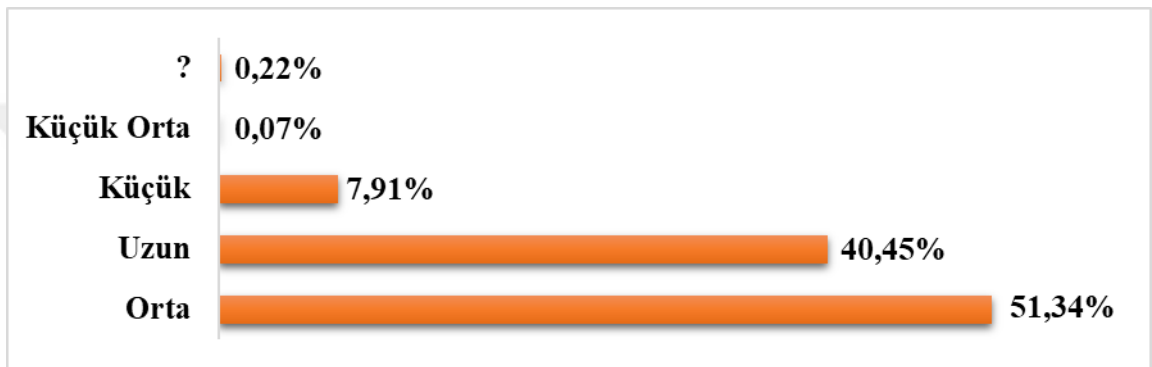
Although the author of *Kavânin-i Yeniçeriyân* claims that only able-bodied, good-looking, clever boys were accepted into the system, the objectivity of this statement is questionable.<sup>162</sup> Looking for “able-bodied” youths is an understandable criterion, since these young men would form the military cadres of the state. In the register of 1603–1604, for instance, there are examples of the youths who were labeled as “broken soldiers” (*şikeste*), who might have become sick or crippled during their travel to the capital. I am not sure whether these boys were sent back to their hometowns, but it is clearly depicted in the register that the youths were able-bodied candidates when they were selected, since they would become future soldiers or governmental officers. It looks suspicious, however, that the state was searching for “good-looking” youths or had certain tools to measure the intelligence of the boys. In fact, the descriptions about their physical features point to an opposite reality. Their physical appearances were generally recorded in line with the information about their height, the color and shape of their eyebrows, and their eye and skin colors. If a youth

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<sup>162</sup> *Kavânin-i Yeniçeriyân* p. 138.

had a birthmark on his face, head, or hand, this was also noted. If he had a mark left behind from a childhood disease, or an accident with a knife or sickle, this was also mentioned. All these data draw the facial picture of the youth, which is reminiscent of the identity cards used today.

**Table 10: Height Range of *Gayr-i Gilmân-i Acemiyân***



**Table 11: Height Range of *Berây-i Gilmân-i Acemiyân* Groups**



What about the criterion of being “good-looking”? As we learn from the article of Gülay Yılmaz, Hedda Reindl-Kiel examined 601 of these youths as a sample and reveals that 66 percent of them had scars from a knife, reaping hook, or stirrup. Yılmaz informs us that Reindl-Kiel evaluates this result as the preference of the officers for

boys that had a tendency to fight.<sup>163</sup> Following Reindl-Kiel's assumption, Yılmaz, too, assumes that the high percentage of scars could be attributed to the aggressive nature of the youths. Yılmaz also assumes that these youths were "strong and aggressive boys."<sup>164</sup> I agree neither with the idea that the officers were choosing the aggressive boys nor with the statement that these youths were aggressive. On the contrary, since these youths were taken into the training and education program of the government, it seems that there would have been a preference for moderate characters more willing to follow the rules. But then again, it is true that in the register there are plenty of youths that had scars. I believe that this is not due to their aggressive characters, but rather to the agrarian environment that they lived in. If we consider that childhood ended early in the early modern world and that all healthy children would have been working in the fields with their peasant families, it might not be surprising for them to have a scar of a knife, reaping hook, or stirrup.<sup>165</sup>

The descriptions in the conscription registers indicate that almost every boy had a birthmark, marks of a disease, or scars. As a result, the notion that the being "good-looking" was a criterion for selection seems suspicious.

As for the criterion of being clever, the registers contain nothing indicating the cleverness of youths. If there was a tool or method to measure the level of someone's intelligence, at least one of the contemporary sources would likely have mentioned it; but we do not have any example of this kind of information.

We should also consider that the *sürücü* officers knew how many youths would be collected from which provinces and villages. They had to accomplish their enlisting process in a limited time period. They also had to consider the demographic situation

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<sup>163</sup> G. Yılmaz, "The Desvhirme System and the Levied Children of Bursa in 1603 A.D." *Belleten* 286 (2015): 923.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.* 923, 926.

<sup>165</sup> P. Crone, *Pre-Industrial Societies*, 109-110.



of these places. Thus, they would not have had the luxury of searching for only the “good-looking” boys or to understand which of them were truly clever.

About the physical appearances of the youths, the other important matter we should mention is the evaluation of Gülay Yılmaz in her article on the boys collected from the village of Filedar, Bursa, which is recorded in the register of 1603–1604. Twenty-six youths were recruited from this village.<sup>166</sup> This number seems, as Yılmaz suggests, too large for a single village to provide. She asserts that it might have been the result of a possible plague outbreak, because she suggests that some youths from the village had bubonic plague marks on their faces, which is her interpretation of the description “hıyarcık yaresi” in Turkish in the register.<sup>167</sup> She assumes that many villagers might have died due to this disaster and left many orphans behind. Although the author of *Kavanin-i Yeniçeriyân* wrote that it was prohibited for orphans to be enlisted, this might be, according to Yılmaz, an example of where the regulation was not followed.<sup>168</sup> This suggestion of hers might be the case if “hıyarcık yaresi” were indeed written in the register. Instead of this term, however, the term “kabarcık yaresi” was written, which points to the marks of childhood diseases, such as chicken pox. In addition to this, this term was used in the descriptions of the facial feature of many youths in the register. Apart from this, Yılmaz is right to consider those twenty-six youths collected from a single village to be a surprisingly high number. I will evaluate this case in the following section.

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<sup>166</sup> She mistakenly counted the number of these youths as thirty-three in “The Devshirme System and the Levied Children of Bursa in 1603-4”, p.919.

<sup>167</sup> *Kavanin-i Yeniçeriyân*, p. 138.

<sup>168</sup> G. Yılmaz, “The Devshirme System and the Levied Children of Bursa in 1603-4”, p. 919, 921.

### 3.4 Number of the Youths

The dates of the campaigns recorded in the register suggest that there was a gap of at least four years between each regulation in the fifteenth century. The register also shows that in the first campaign, 1,534 youths were collected in total, and 1,653 in the next. Given that this was a period in which the Ottoman military and administrative apparatus was based on officers of devshirme origin, some of these young men would have been recruited to replace soldiers who had fallen in battle, and some of them would have been destined for administrative positions. Thus, the frequency of four years for each conscription and the number of the enlisted youths seem reasonable.

This register only contains information about the conscription of 1603–1604 (H. 1012–1013). In the register, we can trace twenty groups of youths that were collected from Rumelia, the Balkans, Albania, Anatolia, and Bosnia. A total of 2,644 youths are recorded. There is only one *sürü* of seventy youths, while the others range from 109 to 195.

This early register shows that the conscriptions—at least in the late fifteenth century—were carried out in different parts of the Balkans, but not in Anatolia. It seems that the first conscription campaign took place in the districts of İskenderiye, İpek, İlbasan, Hersek, Akçahisar, Vize, Silistre, Ağriboz, and Belgrade (Belgrad of Albania), and the second one in the territories of Tırhala, Köstendil, Ilica, and İştib. The hometowns of the youths were recorded according to the administrative divisions of the districts with the name of the *liva* (province), *kaza* (jurisdiction), and *karye* (village). It was recorded whether youth was taken from a *hassa*, *zeamet*, or *timar*

village, some of which were in the possession of more than one proprietor. There is only one *sürü* that comprises fifty youths. The number in the other groups varied between 102 and 203, but the majority of the groups each had one hundred and fifty youths.

The register shows that generally one, two, or three youths were collected from the same village. If it was a town center (*nefs*), however, this number could rise to ten or fifteen, since these places were much more crowded than the villages. In fact, it seems that there was a balance between the population of a place and the number of the collected youths from there, with a ratio of roughly one youth per forty households. Although this ratio does not seem to have been used as a strict rule, it can be said that a kind of balance was considered by the officers.<sup>169</sup>

In the register of 1603–1604, however, there is one exception to this trend: the village of Filedar. While no more than five youths were generally collected from a single village, twenty-six youths were collected from Filedar, which was in the district of Bursa.<sup>170</sup> There is only example in the register of such a high number of youths being recruited from a single village. The register offers no explanation about the matter. From the account of Evliya Çelebi, however, we learn that the fields of Filedar were covered by mulberry trees,<sup>171</sup> and that inhabitants of the village were non-Muslim Greeks who produced silk floss.<sup>172</sup> Filedar, indeed, was one of the biggest village of Bursa during the period. In 1675, for instance, there were 346 households that were paying the *cizye* tax.<sup>173</sup> If this number was also valid in 1603–1604, this means one

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<sup>169</sup> Uzunçarşılı, *Kapıkulu Ocakları* Vol. I, p. 16.

<sup>170</sup> BOA, MAD 7600, p. 32, 91-92.

<sup>171</sup> Evliya Çelebi, *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi*, ed. R. Dankoff, S. A. Kahraman, Y. Dağlı (Yapı Kredi Yayınları), 967.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, 3542

<sup>173</sup> Yunus Koç, “Ömer Lütfi Barkan’ın Tarihsel Demografi Çalışmalarına Katkısı ve Klasik Dönem Osmanlı Nüfus Tarihinin Sorunları”, *Bilig* 65 (2013): 194-195.

youth was taken from each group of forty-five households, which normalizes the number of the taken youths.

The law code of the devshirme system, however, states that it was not permissible to take the only son of a family (*hane*), or for more than one son to be taken from any single family. It also states that no more than one boy should be taken from every forty households.<sup>174</sup> The motivation of this regulation is explained in the *Kavanin-i Yeniçeriyân*. According to this, the only son of the family helps his father in the farm and this returns to the *sipahi* of that land as tax. An only son, thus, cannot be recruited.<sup>175</sup> Although we cannot be sure about the exact percentage, it is clear that the state was very protective about its *re'aya* population, which was the backbone of the *çifthane* system and thus the economic base of the empire.

As we observe from the registers, especially in the Balkan regions, the state generally collected one or at most five youths from a single village. The examination on the Christian population of a region shows us that there was a direct correlation between the size of the Christian population in an area and the number of the youths collected there. Although in the law code this ratio depicted as one-fortieth, the registers show that it could be less or more in practice.

As the records from each village reveal, only one youth was generally collected. This number could scale up to three, and in rare examples up to five. Depending on the population of the area, the number of the collected youths could be high. The number of youths collected from the more crowded town centers, however, was much higher. Given that the population of the town centers would have been higher than that of the villages, it makes sense that a higher number of youths would have been collected in these areas.

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<sup>174</sup> See, Ahmed Akgündüz, *Osmanlı Kanunnâmeleri ve Hukukî Tahlilleri*, vol. 2, p. 123-125.

<sup>175</sup> *Kavanin-i Yeniçeriyân*, p. 138.

These numbers, compared with the *icmal*, *tahrir*, and *cizye* registers, provide us the opportunity to reach an average result, but we need more recruitment records to reach a generalization. Although the dates pointed out by these sources are different from each other, the sources provide the opportunity to make comparisons of information before and after the devshirme records. In this case, we can get a general idea of the proportion of the numbers of young people gathered for recruitment from the population of Christian.

The data from the conscription registers about the total number of the youths enlisted in one campaign give us a chance to reconsider the role of devshirme system in the overall process of demographic change. Until recently, Balkan historiography has described the Ottoman conquests as a story of suffering. According to this tradition, inhabitants were deported or enslaved and their settlements, town, or villages, were devastated by Ottoman savagery.<sup>176</sup> The barbaric description of the Ottoman conquest became an important part of the “catastrophe theory” developed by Hristo Gandev, who worked on the historical demography of Bulgaria in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and examined the Ottoman tax registers (*tahrir defterleri*) from the Sofia National Library.<sup>177</sup> His work became one of the popular reference sources in the literature and was translated into many languages, but his argument on the demographic losses remains controversial. He constructed his catastrophe theory with a focus on the *mezraas* (arable lands), and defines them as Bulgarian villages that were destroyed and left uninhabited by the Ottomans. His other claim is that an enormous number of people converted to Islam in the fifteenth century because, according to

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<sup>176</sup> For the related literature, see Machiel Kiel, *Art and Society of Bulgaria in the Turkish Period* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1985).

<sup>177</sup> Hristo Gandev, *The Bulgarian People During the 15th Century: A Demographic and Ethnic Study*, Sofia Pres, Sofya (1987).

him, the infidels were subject to killing or enslavement; thus, the only way for the Bulgarians to escape this fate was to become Muslim.<sup>178</sup>

The catastrophe theory also described the devshirme system as one of the reasons of for “demographic crises” among the Balkan Christian population. Gibbons and Arnakis suggested that a great number of Ottoman Christian families became Muslims into protect their children from the system.<sup>179</sup> According to them, this situation continued through the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries. As Kiel has demonstrated, however, there was only minimal conversion to Islam in the fifteenth century, but much more by the seventeenth century.<sup>180</sup> This undermines the suggestion of Gibbons and Arnakis, if we consider that the state in the seventeenth century did not apply the devshirme regulation as often as it had before.<sup>181</sup> Although addressing this issue is not my main concern, the conscription registers give us a chance to analyze the number of the youths that were collected from each recorded region and to compare these numbers with the Christian population of the related areas. In the conscription registers, however, relatively few youths were collected from the region of Bulgaria. But then again, it would be interesting to compare the number of the youths collected from a region to its estimated population.

Since the arguments on the demography issue center around the region of Rumelia, let us look at, for instance, the case of Agriboz. As I mentioned before, the general tendency of the state officers was to enlist one to three youths—or five, in rare

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<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.* 18-46.

<sup>179</sup> G. G. Arnakis, “The Role of Religion in the Development of Balkan Nationalism”, in *The Balkans in Transition*, ed. by Charles & Barbara Jelavich (Berkeley & Los Angeles: 1963), p. 121; H. A. Gibbons, *The Foundation of the Ottoman Empire*, (Oxford: 1916), p.118-119.

<sup>180</sup> See Machiel Kiel, “The Spread of Islam in Bulgarian Rural Areas in the Ottoman Period (15<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> Centuries): Colonization and Islamization”, in *Musulmanskata kultura po balgarskite zemi: Izsledvaniya (Islamic Culture in the Bulgarian Lands: Studies)* ed. by R. Gradeva and S. Ivanova, (Sofia: IMIR, 1998), p. 72-79.

<sup>181</sup> Anton Minkov, *Conversion to Islam in the Balkans: Kisve Bahasi Petitions and Ottoman Social Life, 1670-1730*, (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2004), p. 70.

cases—from each village of the recruitment region. When we search the situation for the region of Agriboz, the data in the register of 1493–1495 show that 317 youths were enlisted from the area. When we look at the *icmal* registers of the area between the years 1514 and 1530, the number of the non-Christian households who had to pay the extra-ordinary tax of *avâriz-i divaniye* was 30,689 (excluding the households in *mücerred*, *bive*, and also exempted status).<sup>182</sup> This means that approximately one youth was selected from every ninety-six families. The number we have from the recruitment registers, thus, does not support the claims in the literature about the catastrophic effect the devshirme had on the non-Muslim population of the Balkan regions.

### 3.5 Collected origins

From the recruitment registers, we can trace the regions and districts from which the devshirme system collected its recruits. According to the register for 1493–1495 and 1497–1499, conscriptions were conducted in the following districts: İskenderiye, Vize, İlbasan, Agriboz, İpek, Hersek, Avlonya, Tırhala, and Köstendil. These districts today belong to Bulgaria, Turkey, Romania, Albania, Greece, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, and Montenegro.

This early register includes interesting data that shows that devshirmes conscription was also applied to the Eflakân and Voynugân *askerî* (military) groups of the Ottoman Empire. *Eflak* (pl. *Eflakân*) was the term used for the Vlachs by the Ottoman chancery as an administrative fiscal term. The term did not necessarily refer

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<sup>182</sup> 367 Numaralı Muhâsebe-i Vilâyet-i Rûm-ili Defteri ile 114, 390 ve 101 Numaralı İcmâl Defterleri (920-937 / 1514-1530), Vol. I (Ankara: T.C. Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü Osmanlı Arşivi Daire Başkanlığı, 2007), p. 5.

to an ethnic group, but to people who paid “the *resm-i filuri* taxes” (a tax of one golden).<sup>183</sup> They were former lower elites in the Balkans before the Ottomans took control of the region. As a result of the *istimalet* policy, they maintained some of their privileges under Ottoman rule, and served to a certain extent as a colonizing force in the border *sancaks*, like the *yörük* groups.<sup>184</sup>

Halil İnalçık asserts that the status of the Eflak led to a community (*cemaat*) of semi-nomadic people. According to the *sancak-i vilayet-i Hersek* register (1477–1478), for every ten households of these groups, one *eşkünci*, known as a *voynuk*, had to participate in military campaigns when called. Each community was identified according to which *knez* they belonged to.<sup>185</sup> They cultivated and re-populated strategically important lands that were deserted during the conquests. Thus, they had important role in securing border territories. They engaged in animal husbandry, transporting goods, working in mines, and, most importantly, guarding the borders, fortifications, and mountain passes. They also manned the special military groups of *voynuks*, *martoloses*, and *derbendcis*.<sup>186</sup>

In Hersek, the Vlach settlements corresponded to tribal or clan divisions and organized as *knezlik* that formed a village or a *nahiye*. They were presided over by a *sancakbeyi* or *voyvoda*, who collected taxes from them. In the Vlach *nahiye*, the *knez* had the authority over his Vlachs but in the villages a *premikür*, who was a Vlach chieftain, had this authority. Thus, *knezes* and *premikürs* were the state officials—*kethüdas* (chief stewards)—in the *nahiyes* and villages. *Knezes*, in this sense, were

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<sup>183</sup> Halil İnalçık, *Fatih Devri Üzerinde Tetkikler ve Vesikalar I* (Ankara: TTK Basımevi, 1954), 154-155.

<sup>184</sup> Vjeran Kursar, “Being an Ottoman Vlach: On Vlach Identity (Ies), Role and Status in Western Parts of the Ottoman Balkans (15<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> Centuries)”, *OTAM* 34 (2013), 122-124, 137-138.

<sup>185</sup> Halil İnalçık, *Fatih Devri Üzerinde Tetkikler ve Vesikalar*, 154-155.

<sup>186</sup> Vjeran Kursar, “Being an Ottoman Vlach: On Vlach Identity (Ies), Role and Status in Western Parts of the Ottoman Balkans (15<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> Centuries)”, *OTAM* 34 (2013), 130-133.



similar to the *timarli sipahi* class but they had *baştines* (*çiftliks*) instead of *timars*. *Knezes* and *premikürs* were both represented the Vlachs before the authorities. They were also Ottoman agents who helped officers in tax collection, and in the registration of Vlachs into the system. *Voyvodas*, for instance, were agents of the *sancakbeyis*. They settled in each Vlach *nahiye* and oversaw the Vlach populations.<sup>187</sup>

The *voynuks* and *martoloses* had a military character under the Ottoman rule; thus, they did not belong to the *re'aya* circle and were exempted from some *raiyyet* obligations, like *avarız-i divaniye*.<sup>188</sup> It has been suggested that this changed with the growing centralization policy of the state and the changing conditions of the borders by the 1530s, after which point they began to lose their privileged positions and started to pay *re'aya* taxes to the state and provide youths for the devshirme system, unlike before.<sup>189</sup>

In the register of the 1493–1495 and 1497–1499 conscriptions, we see that among the *sürü* collected from the district of İpek (modern-day Albania), fifteen youths were enlisted as devshirme from ten different Eflakân villages. From the *kaza* of Maleşeva of the *liva* of Hersek, a youth from one of each twenty-one communities (*cemaat*) was enlisted into the system. As we see from the description of the first community, which belongs to Kinez Göre, these communities were most probably Voynugân groups. Similarly, from *kaza* of Nova of the *liva* of Hersek, one youth was recruited for each sixty communities, and from the *kaza* of Blagay of the *liva* of Hersek, one youth was recruited for each twenty-six communities.<sup>190</sup> It is also interesting that the marginal notes relate that some of these youths were taken to the

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<sup>187</sup> Vjeran Kursar, “Being an Ottoman Vlach”, 138-142.

<sup>188</sup> Yavuz Ercan, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Bulgarlar ve Voynuklar*, (Ankara: TTK Basımevi, 1989), 75.

<sup>189</sup> Vjeran Kursar, “Being an Ottoman Vlach”, 136.

<sup>190</sup> BOA, D.M.d.36805, p. 490-499.

palace schools (*be enderun mande*).<sup>191</sup> In addition to these, in the register we also see one Voynugân community from the *vilâyet* of Domenike of the *kaza* of Çatalca (in modern-day Greece).<sup>192</sup>

The conscription register shows that these groups provided youths to the devshirme system even as early as the late fifteenth century, a time when they still had a privileged positions in the Ottoman state. In this case, it is a worthy question whether enlisting youths to the devshirme system was a part of their privileges. The other important fact is that Voynugân and Eflakân were not classified as *raiyyet*, but as *askerî*. The devshirme law code, however, specifies that the system was applied only to the Christian *re'aya* subjects, not *askerî* circles. These examples that we trace from the register are puzzling, since we do not have any information about these groups in terms of the devshirme regulation. The only factor that we know from the devshirme law code is that when the *sürü* of the youths was ready, a *sipahi* or *voynuk* would lead them to the capital city.<sup>193</sup> That youths from Eflakân and Voynugân circles joined the devshirme system in this earlier period also raises the question of whether we should consider the enlisted youths of Voynugân and Eflak *cemaats* as willing participants in the system, whose demand for participation was welcomed by the state? Other than this, did the Ottoman state consider devshirme system as a tool to establish an effective bond with certain circles?<sup>194</sup> Maybe it was also the reason that the Ottoman state began

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<sup>191</sup> BOA, D.M.d.36805, p. 495-499.

<sup>192</sup> BOA, D.M.d.36805, p. 605.

<sup>193</sup> Ahmed Akgündüz, *Osmanlı Kanunnâmeleri ve Hukukî Tahlilleri*, vol. 2, p. 124.

<sup>194</sup> This question is worth asking because, as an extension of the nationalistic, romantic history-writing traditions of the Balkans today, the devshirme system is still considered a “blood-levy” by some scholars. According to them, the devshirme regulation was a different form of the *cizye* tax, one paid with the blood of Christian *re'aya* subjects. Support for this speculation generally rests on the meaning of the term *cizye*, which, it is suggested, was derived from the Arabic word “*ceza*”, meaning “punishment.” When we look at the Quran, for instance, we come across this usage of the term. The meaning of the term, however, changed over time into “a tax or price people pay in return for protection provided by the state.” It is also noteworthy that there were examples of some Islamic states that took the *cizye* tax from their Muslim subjects. When we consider this situation, the description of the devshirme as a blood levy reveals itself as an ideological attempt to manipulate the realities of history. This is a very dangerous attitude because it can create a post-traumatic effect on the generations growing

to collect youths from Anatolia in the sixteenth century, a period when the disturbances and uprising began to emerge there, to establish a bridge between the lower strata of the society and the state by select some of them for high positions and assigning them as the direct representatives of the central authority.

When we look at the selected regions for the 1603–1604 recruitments, four conscriptions took place in Anatolia, with 561 youths collected in total.<sup>195</sup> This is equivalent to one fourth of the total number, which is a remarkable percentage considering that these youths were collected only from the region of Marmara, such as from Bursa, Balıkesir, Çanakkale (the Anatolian side), and Bilecik. Although it can only be speculation, since there are not enough sources about the devshirme regulations, the state might have been attempting to collect youths from these territories—which geographically form a shield around the capital against the east—to construct an economic and social bond with the people there against the east, where the threat was rising in the sixteenth century.

The account for the Anatolian conscription of 1603–1604 in the register is also interesting since it shows traces that the regulation was also applied to the religiously mixed families of Christians and Muslims. The following examples are such kind: “Mustafa Kostadin veled-i Yorgi ümm Sultana”; “Süleyman Karagöz veled-i Arab ümm İrina”; “Cafer Kulu veled-i Hıdır ümm Panaste”; “... Timur veled-i Durmuş ümm Zobuni”; and “Mustafa Sinan veled-i Murad ümm Kali.”

There are also examples of what were likely Armenian families whose children joined the system, such as: “Mustafa Karagöz veled-i Kostas”; “Kasım Hristodu veled-i Karagöz”; “Malkoç Kosta veled-i Alagöz”; and “Hasan Dimitri veled-i Karaca.”

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up with this myth, especially in the Balkan nations. As Halil İnalçık once told me, “the devshirme system cannot be examined with the principles of modern-day morals and politics.”

<sup>195</sup> BOA, MAD 7600, p. 28-36, 61-73, 88-96, 176-181.

Among the Anatolian conscripts, the most interesting examples are those recorded with full Muslim names for each member of the family. The examples are as the followings: “Mustafa Sinan veled-i Murad”; “İbrahim Hıdır veled-i Durmuş”; “Ali Koçi veled-i Durmuş”; “Mahmud Murad veled-i Ahihan”; “Cafer Kulu [?] veled-i Hıdır”; “Mustafa Aslan veled-i Çavuş”; “Derviş Aslan veled-i Kurd”; “Hüseyin Ali veled-i Bore ümm Aliye”; “Karagöz Yakub veled-i Murad ümm Meryem”; and “Cafer Kasım veled-i Aslan ümm Aliye.”

It seems that during this period, the Muslims of Anatolia, like Muslims of Bosnia,<sup>196</sup> were sometimes enlisted as devshirme. If this is true, the author of *Kavanin-i Yeniçeriyân* was not accurate in stating that Turks (Muslims)—except the Bosnians—could not be collected as devshirmes. The *Kavanin-i Yeniçeriyân* suggests that devshirmes could not be selected from among the Turks, Kurds, Persians, Jews, Gypsies, or the Christians that could speak Turkish language.<sup>197</sup> The objection to the conscription of these groups was that if they became the servants of the sultan, their relatives would abuse this situation and refuse to pay taxes, and it would become difficult to identify who was really the sultan’s servant and who was not. The *Kavanin-i Yeniçeriyân* also suggests that the Christians who knew Turkish would easily desert.<sup>198</sup> It does not, however, seem possible that the youths of these religiously mixed families of Anatolia, especially when the territories were so close to the capital, did not speak Turkish. Such discordances between the information given by the author of the *Kavânin-i Yeniçeriyân* and the data revealed in the conscription registers should

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<sup>196</sup> The author of *Kavanin-i Yeniçeriyân* states that the Bosnian Muslims were permitted to be part of the system. According to the story, when Mehmed II came to Bosnia, the people of the district greeted the sultan well and all of them converted to Islam in his presence. In return, Mehmed II asked what they wish for. At that time, they requested their sons to be collected as the devshirmes, which was accepted by the sultan. They then began to be enlisted to the system and became servants in the palace gardens under the *bostancıbaşı*. See *Kavanin-i Yeniçeriyân*, 141.

<sup>197</sup> *Kavanin-i Yeniçeriyân*, p. 137-138, 143.

<sup>198</sup> *Kavanin-i Yeniçeriyân*, p. 137-138.

make the researchers more careful in evaluating the statements written in the former source.

The other important data we get from the 1603–1604 records is that we can trace whether the youths were chosen for the palace schools or the Janissary novice barracks. In the source, this differentiation marked by the phrase “Berây-i Gılman-i Acemiyân” for those who would be the Janissary novices and “Gayr-i Gılmân-i Acemiyân” for those who would not. “Berây-i Gılman-i Acemiyân” were enlisted from the *livas* of Anatolia, Avlonya, Delvine, Rumeli, and Ohri, but “Gayr-i Gılmân-i Acemiyân” were chosen from only the regions of Rumelia and Bosnia. In the “Gayr-i Gılmân-i Acemiyân” sections, there are two marginal notes for two youths that state “cebe der mucceb-i arz,” which means that they would be taken as future *cebeci* officers.<sup>199</sup>

In the register for the 1493–1495 and 1497–1499 conscriptions, however, there is no such comment. There are, however, some marginal notes for some of the youths that say “be enderun mande,” which means that they were taken to the palace schools, which I will examine in the following chapter.

**Table 12: Berây-i Gılman-i Acemiyân**

Sürü #	Province	# of Youths
3	Anadolu	131
4	Avlonya	195
5	Anadolu	165
6	Avlonya	130
7	Anadolu	125

<sup>199</sup> BOA, MAD 7600, p. 263.

9	Delvine	122
13	Anadolu	140
14	Rumeli	145
17	Ohri	151
Sum		1304

**Table 13: Gayr-i Gilmân-i Acemiyân**

Sürü #	Province	# of Youths
1	Rumeli	105
2	Rumeli	105
8	Rumeli	128
10	Bosna	131
11	Rumeli	127
12	Rumeli	147
15	Rumeli	109
16	Rumeli	118
18	Bosna	159
19	Bosna	141
20	Bosna	70
Sum		1340

## CHAPTER IV

### SIZE MATTERS

In the previous chapter we looked at the principles of the regulation of devshirme system from the late 15<sup>th</sup> to the early 17<sup>th</sup> century. By examining the conscription registers, we can glimpse into the State's priorities while choosing the candidates to transform them into the future administrative and military cadres. In this chapter, we will look at, first, the process through which the Ottomans established a firm standing army, and thus consolidated the central authority. We will then go into the training program of the devshirme origin youths both in the barracks and in the palace schools, and explore how they become a part of the Ottoman army, administrative offices, and the representatives of the central authority. This way, the study will reveal the functioning of the Kapıkulu institution as a whole to maintain the Ottoman central authority. We will then continue our survey on the data that we gather from a salary register of the Kapıkulu circles in the first quarter of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

This register is noteworthy to examine since it gives us information about the exact population of the salaried units of the Kapıkulu institution in this period, which is not exactly known in the literature. It is numbered as 00023 and placed in *Maliyeden*

*Müdevver Defterler* Collection of the Prime Minister Ottoman Archive.<sup>200</sup> It should be noted here that this register has only been partly studied by Gabor Agoston so far but he only evaluates the sections related to the standing army.<sup>201</sup> The register, however, contains information about the size of each salaried unit of the Kapıkulu institution and provide data about the ways of their functioning, thus it deserves to be examined in detail.

#### **4.1 Standing Army Wanted**

The following passage of Evgeni R. Radushev explains the historical background of the devshirme system very clearly:

The Ottomans tried everything at their disposal as possibilities to organize a regular army: troops of persons of the same faith from amongst their own ethnos (existing for about one century, turning finally into a auxiliary military corps), the use of prisoners of war (without success) to reach at the training of youths from the conquered peoples (a method with quick positive results which marked the military and political development of the State for centuries ahead).<sup>202</sup>

In the contemporary Ottoman literature, the beginning of the Ottoman standing army, specifically the Janissary institution, is depicted according to the two main theories. One of them suggests that it was established during the reign of Orhan (1326-1359), and the other proposes the time of Murad I (1359-1389).<sup>203</sup> Before the establishment

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<sup>200</sup> MAD 23.

<sup>201</sup> Gabor Agoston, *Osmanlı'da Strateji ve Askerî Güç* (Istanbul: Timaş Yayınları, 2012) 177-184.

<sup>202</sup> Evgeni Radushev, "The Ottoman Ruling Nomenclature in the 16<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> Centuries", *Bulgarian Historical Review* 3-4 (1998): 23.

<sup>203</sup> We have discussed this matter in the second chapter.



of the standing army, however, the picture of the Ottoman forces is depicted in the modern literature as follows.

During the reign of Osman (1281-1326), the founder of the Ottoman Principality, the fighting forces consisted of the raiders whose main motivation was the plunder. These raiders were generally known as the *alps*.<sup>204</sup> İnalçık states that *alp* meant basically “a brave man” who fights arm to arm but there were nine prerequisites to be considered an *alp*. According to this, he had to be brave, strong, diligent, armored, owner of a good horse (which was also armored), an arch and bow, a sword, a bayonet and a good companion/fellow. *Alps* declared their loyalty to their ruler with an oath, and became the *yoldaş* or *nöker* (comrade) of the ruler. They were granted a piece of land as their *yurtluk* (appanage).<sup>205</sup> In the middle eastern Turkic-Mongolian societies, the *nökerlik* (comradeship) can be compared to the “commendation” or “homage” in the Western feudalism. İnalçık asserts that *nökerlik/yoldaşlık* seems to be the dominant institution during the time of Osman and could have given way to the establishment of *kul* (servant) system later on.<sup>206</sup>

Pachymeres notes that at the time of Osman, the Ottoman forces largely consisted of mounted archers. As their tactics, they used surprise attacks and as their defensive strategy, they used to retreat at speed to rough grounds.<sup>207</sup> They gained success in the countryside of Byzantine Bithynia where there were no defensive structures against their raids. As we learn from the account of John Kantakouzenos,

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<sup>204</sup> Halil İnalçık, *Devlet-i 'Aliyye: Osmanlı İmparatorluğu Üzerine Araştırmalar I*, (İstanbul: İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2009), 10-11.

<sup>205</sup> The later Evrenosoğulları and Mihaloğulları, for instance, gained ground in the Ottoman land with this system. See, Halil İnalçık, *Devlet-i 'Aliyye*, 27-31.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid. 32-33; Halil İnalçık, *Kuruluş Dönemi Osmanlı Sultanları (1302-1481)*, (İstanbul, İSAM, 2010), 22-23.

<sup>207</sup> Colin Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300-1650: The Structure of Power* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 252.

the Ottoman army at the time of Orhan (1326-1359) consisted of infantry and cavalry in which the latter constituted the majority with its mounted archers on fast horses.<sup>208</sup> It can be said that during this early period of the Ottoman State, the Ottoman army had an undisciplined character and was more suited to raids and counterraids than to field battles and sieges. In the second half of the 14th century, however, they began to lose their importance as the main body of the army to be replaced by *yaya* and *müsellem* units, and function as the auxiliary forces.<sup>209</sup> Towards the end of the reign of Orhan, in fact, it seems that the Ottoman forces were capable of managing effective sieges and field battles.

İnalcık suggests that during the time of Orhan, the Ottoman military organization was regulated in a new form. He notes that it was a common practice to build a military force from the Turcoman fighters who proved themselves as successful archers at the raids. These were gathered under the flag of the ruler at the time of expeditions. Taking inspiration from this regulation, Orhan systematized such military organizations known as *yaya* (infantry) and *müsellem* (cavalry) units consisting of Turcoman people. They comprised a notable portion of the provincial forces. These fighters were chosen from the peasant *re'aya* who were cultivating their lands but at times of war, they attended the campaigns. In return for their services, they were exempted from taxes. İnalcık also suggests that it was most probably during the time of Orhan that the *yurtluk* (appanage) system developed through the typical Ottoman *timar* system.<sup>210</sup>

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<sup>208</sup> *Ibid.* 253.

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid.* 254.

<sup>210</sup> The *timar* system was an early development in the Ottoman history. It was, in fact, an Ottoman invention but it seems that the Ottomans adapted the system which was already in use in the territories the Ottomans captured. As it is well known, during this period of pre-modern era, the technological facilities were limited and there was no easy way of collecting the surplus products for the central treasury. In addition to this, the State needed a strong army both to defend and also to expand the

Colin Imber suggests that this situation was more evident during the reign of Murad I and according to him, the Ottomans learned the art of siege warfare and battlefield tactics in the course of the 14th century. Thus, the Ottoman forces, who were once the raiders gathered around the ruler, became more disciplined soldiers that were capable of formal battles. This transformation became evident in the two institutions: the *timar* holding cavalry, i.e. the *timarlı sipahis*, and the Janissaries. During the reign of Murad I, the Ottoman existence in the Balkans began to be more pronounced.<sup>211</sup>

İnalçık suggests that the reforms proceeded in the region became the essential reason of this situation. According to him, the former Christian soldiers in the region were allowed to hold some part of their former lands as *timar* in return for their military services under the Ottoman rule. This situation at least prevented a possible resistance of these people against the Ottoman power. In fact, this policy, known as *istimalet*, formed the main strategy that the Ottoman State followed in the region.<sup>212</sup>

İnalçık also argues that the Ottomans left the fiefs of seigneurs and former pronoia holders to them as *timar*. He says that it was a well-known Ottoman practice to integrate the pre-Ottoman taxes into their own tax-system under the condition that they would not disagree with the Ottoman principles of taxation. In Macedonia or in

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Ottoman lands. This situation brought with it the questions of what kind of army it should be and how the State could afford it. The Ottoman State found the answer to these questions in the *timar* system which was a land regime and a tax system. It was similar to the *ikta* regime in the Seljukid Empire and *pronoia* regulation of the Byzantine Empire. In this system, after specifying the amount of the revenue sources of a territory it was divided into the tax units, known as *dirliks*. These *dirliks* were separated according to the amount of the income they provided, which were from smallest to the biggest amount specified as *timar*, *zeamet*, and *has*. The smallest ones, *timars* were distributed to the *timarlı sipahis*, the cavalries, as their income in return for their service in the battles and in the *timar* district as the protectors of the peasants. See, H. İnalçık, *Devlet-i 'Aliyye*, 27-31; *Kuruluş Dönemi Osmanlı Sultanları (1302-1481)*, 21-25; and *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun Ekonomik ve Sosyal Tarihi: 1300-1600*, vol. 1, 187-199.

<sup>211</sup> Colin Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300-1650: The Structure of Power*, 256-257.

<sup>212</sup> H. İnalçık, "Türkler ve Balkanlar" *Balkanlar* (Istanbul: Eren Yayıncılık, 1993), 16-18.

the Balkans, the Ottoman government did not marginally change the basic production unit and its organization method.<sup>213</sup> Through conquests the Ottoman law guaranteed the security of lands, the farmer households and their labor organization under its protection in return for which they had to fulfill certain liabilities such as paying taxes.<sup>214</sup> The semi-arid climate zone of this region was hinged on wheat and barley production, in other words on dry agricultural production. These conditions were making the peasant family's labor and animal power (a pair of oxen in the most cases) the backbone of the agricultural organization for collecting surplus products and for construction and subsistence of the armies. This method was the same in the lands under the late Roman Empire, Byzantine and also the Ottoman regimes.<sup>215</sup>

Today it is a well-known fact the Ottoman regime did not consolidate itself in the Balkan territories solely as the result of conquests or armed forces but used *istimâlet* policy to keep the local experience of the economic and military activity continuing to a certain extent. Although they were able to keep some of their privileges, the strength of the former aristocracy diminished as a result of Ottoman regime.<sup>216</sup> As I mentioned in the previous chapter, the former middle-class military members kept their status but assumed different duties under the title of *voyvoda*, *knez*,

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<sup>213</sup> Before the Ottoman conquest of Macedonia, each household paid one gold florin as royal tax in two instalments. Under the Ottoman regime, this tax was called as *kapu-resmi* and later on as *ispence* and also collected in two parts as the cash equivalent of labor services. For further information see H. İnalçık, "Osmanlılarda Raiyyet Rüsümü", *Belleten*: 23 (1959), s. 575-610; and "On the Social Structure of the Ottoman Empire", s. 32-33.

<sup>214</sup> *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu: Klasik Çağ (1300-1600)*, s. 76-81; also see: İnalçık, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun Ekonomik ve Sosyal Tarihi*, s. 145-150; İnalçık, "Adaletnameler", *Belgeler*: II (1965), s.49-145; "Osmanlı Hukukuna Giriş", *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu: Toplum ve Ekonomi*, Eren Yay. (Istanbul, 1993).

<sup>215</sup> See H. İnalçık, "Köy, Köylü ve İmparatorluk", *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu: Toplum ve Ekonomi*, Eren Yay. (Istanbul: 1993); "The Çift-Hane System and Peasant Taxation", *From Empire to Republic*, s. 61-72; "Çift-Hane Sistemi ve Köylünün Vergilendirilmesi", *Doğu-Batı, Makaleler II*, Doğu-Batı Yay. (Ankara, 2008), s. 96-110. H. İnalçık *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun Ekonomik ve Sosyal Tarihi (1300-1600)*, c. I: (2000), s. 145-225; "çift-resmi", *EI*, second edition, s. 32; "çiftlik", *EI*, second edition, 32-33; "timar", *EI*, second edition, vol. X, 502-507.

<sup>216</sup> See Halil İnalçık, *Devlet-i 'Aliyye*, 27-31, and "Türkler ve Balkanlar" *Balkanlar* (Istanbul: Eren Yayıncılık, 1993), 16-18.

etc. As Evgeni Radushev asserts, it was easier to rule the occupied territories with their own help, in other words, with the cooperation. He adds that:

This political logic was noticeable particularly well in the formation of the Ottoman armed forces where men were enlisted from the Balkan peoples (the Janissary Corps), allowing a powerful Balkan ethnic presence in the governing structures of the states up to the highest level.<sup>217</sup>

This made the Ottomanization process of the Balkan peoples easier. *Devshirme* at that point became the bridge between the Christian peasant populations of these conquered lands and the state. Through this system, they could become a solid part of the military and administrative apparatus because the government did not only select and train them as soldiers but also as capable and educated administrators.

The Janissary institution was established during this era from the prisoners of war, the *pençiks*. Janissary means “new soldier” in Turkish (*Yeni Çeri*). The reason why they called them new soldier might be that this was the first time the Ottoman State began to collect the prisoners of war to educate and train them as the standing army of the Sultan. They were sent to live with the Turkish peasants, “Türk üzerine vermek”, to learn Turkish language and customs and then summoned back to serve the Porte. Before the establishment of this institution, the members of the Ottoman army consisted generally of peasants and *timarli sipahis*. They, on the other hand, served in the provinces as the protectors of peasants and only attended to the campaigns when they were called. This new army, however, was the direct representative of the central State and generally, its members were stationed and lived in the capital city of Istanbul as well as the former capital cities of Bursa and Edirne.

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<sup>217</sup> E. Radushev, “The Ottoman Ruling Nomenclature”, 20-21.

It also became possible for Selim I to dethrone his father Bayezid II and eliminate his brothers by gaining the support of the Janissaries. In addition to this, these Janissaries being tired of the long campaign against Persia, specifically to Shah İsmail, could dare to shoot at Sultan Selim I's tent as a reaction to him. Although in the contemporary accounts describe the kapıkulu people as the most disciplined and loyal army during the reign of Süleyman I, an eyewitness of the period, Busbecq, notes that Sultan Süleyman was afraid of their power and avoided to gain their hatred.<sup>218</sup>

All these events support the idea that the evolution of the Ottoman force through a strong centralized army also made them aware of their power and game changer role in the political affairs of the Empire. The Ottoman military organization was the foundation of the Sultan's authority and this fact was well-known by both the Sultan himself and the members of this organization. A passage from *Kavanin-i Yeniçeriyan* explains the consciousness of the latter with a limpid metaphor: “İmdi zikr olunan taife Âl-i Osmana kol ve kanad vâki olmuştur.”<sup>219</sup> In addition to this statement, an English traveler, George Sandys, described the Ottoman military (especially the soldiers of *sipahi* and Janissary units) in 1615 as *the nerves and supporters of the Turkish monarchy*.<sup>220</sup> These statements will be better understood if we examine the process the members of the Ottoman standing army were taken into after their recruitment into the devshirme system.

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<sup>218</sup> Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq, *Türk Mektupları: Kanuni Döneminde Avrupalı Bir Elçinin Gözlemleri (1555-1560)*, 172.

<sup>219</sup> Semantically it means that they were the State's wings without which the empire would be perished. See I. Petrosyan, *Kavanin-i Yeniçeriyan*, Op. cit., 209.

<sup>220</sup> George Sandys, *Sandys Travels Containing an History of the Original and Present State of the Turkish Empire*, (7th Edition, 1673), p. 38.

## 4.2 Becoming a Kapıkulu

It is known that the youths chosen as devshirmes and brought to the capital were given a physical and an intellectual examination. Then, the most promising ones among them were taken to the palace schools and the rest were sent to the Muslim peasant families to learn Turkish language, customs, and Islamic way of life before being summoned into the novice barracks (*acemi ocağı*). From that moment on, the youths both in the palace schools and novice barracks could climb the ladders of the official hierarchy according to their talents, abilities, and determination.<sup>221</sup>

The youths taken to the palace schools, however, had a more advantageous position since they formed the future high state administrative personnel. The most prestigious palace school was, of course, the one in the main palace complex of Yenisaray (New Palace), known as *enderûn* (the inner household of the Sultan), and the youths taken there were called as *iç oğlans* (the boys of this inner household). The others were the palace schools of Edirne, Galata, İbrahim Pasha, and İskender Çelebi. The youths chosen for the palace schools were educated under strict discipline for 2-7 years. They learnt Quran, Islamic religion and its ethics, and Turkish language. They also started their training in military skills. In the mean time, they performed the basic services within the palaces. When they completed this process, they were taken through another elimination process which was called *çıkma*. In Turkish, it literally means leaving or pulling out but within this context, it refers to a promotion. The most successful and talented students of the other palace schools could be taken to the main palace to continue their education. Those who were not chosen were sent to the lower

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<sup>221</sup> İ. H. Uzunçarşılı, *Kapıkulu Ocakları* Vol. I, 21-24, and *Osmanlı Devleti'nin Saray Teşkilatı*, 298-301; N. Penzer, *The Harem*, (London, 1965), 239.

cavalry units of the Kapıkulu institution, specifically the corps of *ulufeciler* and *garipler*.<sup>222</sup>

In the palace schools, the main target was to transform the young candidates into the most loyal servants of the Sultan, hence the central authority. The best candidates were taken to the *enderûn* in the main palace where the Sultan himself was living. They continued their education in the departments of this complex. They were taken, indeed, under a serious elimination process. The bottom of the hierarchical steps of *enderûn* school, for instance, started with *Oda-i Büzürg* and *Oda-i Küçük* (big and small chambers). In these sections, the youths were learning reading and writing, Islamic religion, Quran, Arabic and Persian languages. They also received physical training lessons such as wrestling, running and jumping. They also began to learn some military skills like archery, using swords, and horse riding. The most successful candidates of these chambers were promoted to a higher level which was *Seferli Odası* (the expeditionary force chamber). The rest of them were distributed among the *Kapıkulu* cavalry units of *sipahiyan* and *silahdaran*.<sup>223</sup>

In the earlier times, the youths taken to the *Seferli Odası* were responsible for the washing and folding the clothes of the *enderûn* members but in time these chambers became art and craft learning centers. Many intellectuals, scholars, musicians, poets or hair dressers, bath attendants and like were trained in these sections.<sup>224</sup>

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<sup>222</sup> İ. H. Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devleti'nin Saray Teşkilatı*, 300-307.

<sup>223</sup> Uzunçarşılı states that until the time of Mehmed IV, in there was another chamber for those who passed the small and big chamber stages successfully and this was called as *Doğancı Koğuşu* (the chamber of falconers). He asserts that Mehmed IV put an end to these chambers. He also notes that another chamber, *Seferli Koğuşu* (field barracks), was established during his reign. The Sultan choose some youths from big and small chambers and brought them along with himself to the campaign of Revan in 1635. See Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devleti'nin Saray Teşkilatı*, p. 300-311.

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid.* 311-313.



*Kiler Odası* (the commissariat chamber) was higher than the *Seferli Odası* in the hierarchy and established during the reign of Mehmed II. The youths in this chamber were responsible for the preparation of the food for the Sultan and the people of Harem. They were also making coffees and sweets, cleaning the dishes, setting and clearing the tables, supplying the candles for the palace rooms. The head of this chamber could be promoted as the chief of the *Hazine Odası* (the treasury chamber) or the governors (*Beğlerbeği*).<sup>225</sup>

*Hazine Koğuşu*, (treasury chamber) was a bit higher in hierarchy than the *Kiler Odası* and it was also established during the reign of Mehmed II. All sorts of jewelries, coins and articles of great value were kept in this chamber. The head of the chamber was the chief treasurer called as *Baş Hazine*. The so called *ehl-i hiref* groups that worked for the palace as tailors, jewelers, goldsmiths, furriers, frescoists, sword makers, and like were subjected to him. Under his authority, the *iç oğlans* were not just protecting the precious materials of the room, but were also responsible for planning the financial matters of the Harem, maintaining the financial order, and keeping the revenue and expenditure registers.<sup>226</sup>

The most prestigious and high-ranking section in the *enderûn* was *Has Oda*, the royal bedchamber. It was also established during the reign of Mehmed II. The head of these chambers was called as *Has Oda Başı*, and in the hierarchy, he was followed by *Silahdâr* (the Sultan's armor bearer), *Çuhadar* (the Sultan's steward), and *Rikabdâr* (the Sultan's stirrup holder). The servants of these chambers could then be assigned to highest military and administrative offices.<sup>227</sup>

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<sup>225</sup> *Ibid.* 313-315.

<sup>226</sup> *Ibid.* 315-317.

<sup>227</sup> *Ibid.* 322-329.

The regulations for the *iç oğlans* and their chambers were strictly programmed. The candidates had to follow clearly defined rules of behavior. Their daily schedule was well programmed in which sleeping, waking, working and resting times were well defined.<sup>228</sup>

The key element of rising in the hierarchy was to prove oneself in quality of service and loyalty to the dynasty for a number of years. Through several years of training, the *iç oğlans* functioned as a source to supply offices of different services of both central and local administrations, and of the army. These people knew that they were not regular servants of the Sultan but his officers, representatives, and state functionaries. They were not just aware of their highly esteemed and privileged positions but also the importance of their responsibilities as the direct representatives of the central authority.

The youths who were taken to the *acemi ocağı* (novice barracks), on the other hand, were first sent to live with the Muslims peasants to learn Turkish language, Islamic religion and customs. The author of *Kavânin-i Yeniçeriyân* explains their condition as “to get them used to the troubles” (*belaya mu‘tâd*).<sup>229</sup> The author of *Kitab-i Müstetâb* notes that “they serve these peasants, cultivate their lands and get used to cold and hot climates”.<sup>230</sup> According to Koçi Bey, after they served in the rural areas for four or five years they were called back to the capital to be placed into the *acemi ocağı* (novice barracks).<sup>231</sup> It is noteworthy that the practice of sending the youths to the Muslim peasants seems to have diminished in time. As noted in the previous chapter, the State began to select much older candidates at least in the early 17<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>228</sup> Ülker Akkutay, *Enderun Mektebi*, (Ankara: Gazi Üniv., 1984), 127-128.

<sup>229</sup> *Kavânin-i Yeniçeriyân*, 136, 154.

<sup>230</sup> *Kitab-i Müstetab*, 7.

<sup>231</sup> Koçi Bey, 39.

century. Thus, abandonment of this practice might be the reason why they preferred older boys.

As novices, the youths constituted the majority of labor force in numerous tasks. They comprised the main source of laborers in ships, where they were responsible for carrying construction materials of imperial buildings or supplying the kitchens of the palaces. They were also working in imperial building constructions, state workshops or mines. They could be assigned to any kind of service, such as cooks, water carriers, laundrymen, warehousemen, state butchers, gardeners.<sup>232</sup>

When the vacancies emerged, the senior novices, through *çıkma* (promotion) regulation, were assigned to various Janissary, *Cebeci* (armourer), *Topçu* (cannoneer) or *Top Arabacıları* (gun carriage drivers) units according to their skills, talents, and the State's needs.<sup>233</sup> In the earlier periods, since their marriage was forbidden, these people were only stationed in their barracks in the capital city. When they held the right, however, they established families and began to live in the houses. The Janissary organization consisted of 196 units which were also known as *ocaks* (hearth). They formed the main body of the Ottoman army, thus their population was much higher than the other *Kapıkulu* units. The senior Janissaries or the ones who performed successfully in the campaigns and battles could be promoted to the *Kapıkulu* cavalry units. According to their cadres, degrees and services they could also be awarded a *timar*. In times of peace, the Janissaries were guarding the imperial council, *Divan-i Hümayûn*, serving as firemen in the time of fire, securing the order in the capital and escorting the foreign ambassadors. In the urban areas, they could be assigned as *yasakçı* officers to regulate the order and security depending on the demands of the

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<sup>232</sup> İ. H. Uzunçarşılı, *Kapıkulu Ocakları* Vol. I, 40-42.

<sup>233</sup> *Ibid.* 61-65.

population of the related area. In the provinces or in the borders, they could be sent the fortresses and garrisons.<sup>234</sup>

We should also mention that although the main human source of the Ottoman army and administrative offices were the *devshirme* system, for about two hundred years the prisoners of war continued to feed the needs of the State for soldiers and administrators. In a register of *ulufeciyan-i yemin* (Kapıkulu cavalry unit) dated 1578, for instance, we have records for the officers that passed through the palace schools but came from most probably a slave origin because in the register they were recorded with their ethnic origin such as *Alman* (German), *Fransız* (French), and *Frenk* (Western European). The noteworthy detail is here that in the register the people from the same ethnic origin were recorded together, which points the fact that they were allowed to survive in their own ethnic group within the Ottoman military cadres.<sup>235</sup>

One of the most famous prisoners of war, in fact, was İbrahim Pasha who served as grand vizier to Süleyman I. The story of İbrahim Pasha is quite noteworthy since his palace was transformed into a school for the *devshirme* young men. İbrahim Pasha was most probably enslaved in Parga, a Venetian holding, in sometime between 1499 and 1502 during the Ottoman raids on the region. He first served the daughter of the distinguished political and military figure of the day, İskender Pasha, in Edirne where he met prince Süleyman for the first time.<sup>236</sup> İbrahim Pasha was taken to the palace school and his talents, cleverness, high loyalty to the Sultan and his close relationship with Süleyman I elevated him to the position of *Has Oda* (*Has Odabaşı*) and then the grand vizier. He was a prominent diplomat and a distinguished *Kapıkulu*

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<sup>234</sup> Ibid. 57-64.

<sup>235</sup> (CM NL, Or. Dept.) D. 7 fol. 305b-313b.

<sup>236</sup> Ebru Turan, "The Marriage of İbrahim Pasha (ca. 1495-1536): The Rise of Sultan Süleyman's Favorite to the Grand Vizierate and the Politics of the Elites in the Early Sixteenth-Century Ottoman Empire", *Turcica* 41 (2009): 8-9.

member. He was the favorite servant and also friend of the Sultan for a long time, who was even allowed to have his own palace. However, these qualities did not prevent his death ordered by the Sultan himself. After his death, turning his palace into a school of Kapikulu institution, where the most important thing for the candidates of future administrative and military posts was to learn the obedience and loyalty to their Sultan, seems to have been an open message to these young people to not over trust their powerful positions or privileges since their life depended on the will of their Sultan.

#### 4.3 The Expression of the Ottoman Standing Army in Numbers

The Turkish policy permits no loss of power by the loss of soldiers, and is perhaps the only Government that e'er grew stronger by the death of subjects; for having numbers ready upon all occasions to supply the room of such as die, their places are improv'd to double worth by surprising management peculiar to the Turks. (...) They have no occasion on declaring war, or losing battles, to dispatch their officers for fresh recruits about the country, and supply with raw unpollish'd Rusticks, the places of well disciplin'd and skillful soldiers; They have formidable standing armies, in every corner of their empire, which from time to time supply the vacancies of their contending bodies, which like the boundless ocean tho' discharging endless depths of water appears no less in Ebb than Flow, but stands the same in every season, never subject to perceptible diminution.<sup>237</sup>

The quotation above was written by an English traveler, Aaron Hill, in 1709. The metaphor of ocean he used to stress the size of the Ottoman standing army is noteworthy since the Ottoman power had been still perceived as a dangerous threat by the European peoples during this era.

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<sup>237</sup> Aaron Hill, *A Full and Just Account of the Present State of the Ottoman Empire*, (London, 1709) p. 19.

The numbers of Ottoman soldiers stated in the literature so far often rely on contemporary chronicles which do not give exact numbers, or on sources from the second half of the 16th century or from the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Taking a cursory look at the number of soldiers indicated in the existing literature reveals the gaps more clearly. But then again, the dates and numbers many historians agree on are 7.886 Janissaries as stated in 1527 budget register, 13.559 for 1574 as stated in Koçi Bey's chronicle, 35.000 in 1597 as stated in Mustafa Ali's *Kühn al-Ahbar*. For the numbers in the 17th century, *Ayn-i Ali Risalesi* indicates 37.627 Janissaries in 1609, and 1670 budget register indicates 39.740.<sup>238</sup>

Our knowledge of the number of *ulufeli* (salaried) soldiers in the Ottoman army, the *Kapıkulus*, is based solely on either budget registers (*bütçe defterleri*) from various dates or the accounts of Ottoman chroniclers from different eras. The data gathered from these sources usually belong to the second half of the 16th century and after. A register in *Maliyeden Müdevver Defterler* (Treasury/Financial registers) collection of the Prime Ministry Ottoman Archive, however, contains data on the number of various units of the Ottoman Army and the amount of their daily salaries in the first quarter of the 16th century and thus can help fill the gaps in the literature on the financial history of the Ottoman Empire.

The register numbered 00023 in *Maliyeden Müdevver Defterler* Collection of the Prime Ministry Ottoman Archive gives information on the number of *ulufeli* (salaried) corps and the budget allocated to them during the reigns of Bayezid II, Selim I and the early years of Süleyman I's rule. It appears that the pages were randomly gathered since the records in the register do not follow a chronological order.<sup>239</sup>

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<sup>238</sup> Ömer Lütfi Barkan, *Osmanlı Devleti'nin Sosyal ve Ekonomik Tarihi: Tetkikler Makaleler* Cilt I ed. Hüseyin Özdeğer (Istanbul: 2000), 673; Koçi Bey, 55-56; Li Aziz Efendi, 46; Gabor Agoston, *Osmanlı'da Strateji ve Askeri Güç*; 203-205.

<sup>239</sup> BOA MAD 23.

The source is a *mevacib* (salary) register belonging to *ulufeli* soldiers of *kapıkulu ocağı*. In its later pages, there are also entries recording the promotions and retirements of some *nefers* (soldiers). Since it contains data on the total numbers of soldiers in the units and the amount of their salaries in different dates, it seems that the register was also composed as a part of budget preparations. The records of the soldiers appointed as the guardians or tax collectors of certain mines, salines, mints, customs and like in the register have proven this assumption. Since a part of data from the source compiles the information of preparations for or for assessment after a campaign (*sefer*), for instance the campaign of Selim I to the east, it contributes to the literature on the Ottoman military combat organizations and gives us a chance to assess the functions of *ulufeli* soldiers during the campaigns by focusing on the dates and corresponding records of units. As the dates in the register coincide with the rules of three different Ottoman sultans, it also provides a new perspective in order to reinterpret the contemporary chronicles, which narrate the policies of these sultans in times of peace and war. Another important aspect of this register is that it may help us gain an understanding of the burden imposed on the Ottoman finances in the early 16th century by the salaries of *ulufeli* soldiers, which constituted an expensive item in the budget. The register is also remarkable since it records not only the numbers and salaries of soldiers but also information on promotions and retirements.

The information in the register on the number of *ulufeli* soldiers and their salaries corresponding to different dates are recorded under the title “*Mevâcib-i cema’ât-i mülâzimân-i dergâh-i ‘âli*”. Therefore, it is essential to question what the word “*mülâzimân*” means. *Mülâzimân* is the plural case of *mülâzim*. Although *mülâzim* connotes a lieutenant in the military in the late Ottoman Empire, for the period in question, such usage is not valid. In this early period, “*mülâzim*” was a term

belonging to the ranks of *ilmiyye* (judicial) class and was used for individuals who completed their education and were candidates for posts such as *müderris* or *kadi*. We encounter another usage of the term during the reign of Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent. Süleyman I chose 300 of his experienced *kapıkulu süvaris* and designated them to be his close bodyguards under the name “mülâzım”. Upon return from his campaign, he rewarded some of these men with *mültezimlik* of large pious endowments or the right to collect substantial amounts of *mukataa* or *cizye* taxes.<sup>240</sup> However, both of these usages do not correspond to the word “mülâzimân” in the register. The closest definition to the meaning conveyed in the register is in the salaried servants list in Ömer Lütfi Barkan’s publication on a sample budget for the 1527-1528 fiscal year. The list Ömer Lütfi Barkan printed as addendum to the budget register also falls under the title of “*mevâcib-i mülâzimân-i dergâh-i ‘âli*.” Barkan interprets this title as members of *Kapıkulu ocakları*. This interpretation is also adopted for the purposes of this dissertation since it presents the most plausible definition in line with the register.<sup>241</sup>

The register I use as the basis of this chapter, however, corresponds to the first quarter of the 16th century as seen in the table below. When 1525 and 1530 records in the register are compared to Barkan’s salaried list from 1527 budget, the numbers appear to agree. Thus, the register is highly significant for showing the number of Ottoman *ulufeli* soldiers at the beginning of the 16th century.

As it can be seen in the the register accounts the *kapıkulu* units, in other words “*cema’ât-i mülâzimân-i dergâh-i ‘âli*”, under the twenty-five regiments of *yeniçeriyân* (Janissaries), *sipahiyân*, *silahdarân*, *ulufeciyân-i yemin*, *ulufeciyân-i yesar*, *gurebâ-i*

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<sup>240</sup> İ. H. Uzunçarşılı, *Kapıkulu Ocakları* Vol II, 157-160. “Mülaziman” EI, vol. 7, 545-546. Kavanin-i YEniçeriyân, 50.

<sup>241</sup> Ömer Lütfi Barkan, *Osmanlı Devleti’nin Sosyal ve Ekonomik Tarihi*, 626, 688.



*yemin*, *gurebâ-i yesar*, *istabl-i âmire* (the stable organization), *müşaherehorân* (monthly salary takers), *ehl-i hiref* (the palace artisans), *cebeciyân* (armourers), *topçiyân* (cannoneers), *arabaciyân-i top* (gun carriage drivers), *şahinciyân* (the keepers of the Sultan's birds of prey, peregrine falcons), *çakırciyân* (the keepers of the Sultan's birds of prey, goshawks), *atmacaciyân* (the keepers of the Sultan's birds of prey, sparrow-hawks), *gilmân-i acemiyân* (novices), *bevabîn* (the palace gatekeepers), *teberdarân* (the palace gatekeepers and axe holders), *sakayân* (water carriers), *mehterân-i hayme* (the Sultan's tent pitchers), *mehteran-i âlem* (the Sultan's standard bearers), *tabbahîn* (the palace cooks), *hayyâtin-i hassa* (the palace tailors), and *hayyâtin-i hilat* (the palace tailors of kaftan).<sup>242</sup>

**Table 14: Kapıkulu Population I**

<b>A.H.</b>	<b>889</b>	<b>917</b>	<b>920</b>	<b>926</b>
<b>A.D.</b>	<b>1484</b>	<b>1511-12</b>	<b>1514</b>	<b>1520</b>
Yeniçeriyân	7841	8164	10065	7780
Sipahiyân	1401	1059	1951	1771
Silahdarân	1446	1337	2064	1664
Ulufeciyân-i Yemin	384	484	695	728
Ulufeciyân-i Yesar	353	479	648	620
Gurebâ-i Yemin	356	259	431	456
Gurebâ-i Yesar	366	277	413	428
Istabl-i Amire	1329	1697	2264	2540
Müşaherehorân			534	310
Ehl-i Hiref			485	425

<sup>242</sup> *Sipahiyân*, *silahdarân*, *ulufeciyân-i yemin*, *ulufeciyân-i yesar*, *gurebâ-i yemin*, and *gurebâ-i yesar* formed the Six Standing Cavalry Regiments of *Kapıkulu* army (called as *altı bölük halkı*). *Yeniçeriyân*, and *gilmân-i acemiyân* were the foot soldiers. *Cebeciyân*, *topçiyân*, and *arabaciyân-i top* were the artillery corps. See Uzunçarşılı, *Kapıkulları*, Vol. I, 2-4; Rhoads Murphey, *Ottoman Warfare, 1500-1700*, 45.

Müşaherehorân&Ehl-i Hiref		897		
Cebeciyan		401	451	518
Topçiyân		331	353	394
Arabacıyan-i Top		346	378	305
Şahinciyan		144	145	185
Çakırcıyan		50	58	58
Atmacacıyan		20	21	19
Gılmân-i Acemiyan		3467		2668
Bevvabın		203	278	252
Teberdarân				19
Bevvabın&Teberdarân				
Sakayân				15
Mehterân-i Hayme&Sakayân				224
Mehterân-i Hayme		196	187	
Mehterân-i Âlem			169	173
Tabbahın		193	230	263
Hayyâtin-i Hassa			252	
Hayyâtin-i Hassa&Hilat		169		214
Cem'an	13,476	20,174	22,072	22,029

**Table 15: Kapıkulu Population II**

<b>A.H.</b>	<b>927 R.</b>	<b>927 L.</b>	<b>929 M.</b>	<b>929 R.</b>
<b>A.D.</b>	<b>1521</b>	<b>1521</b>	<b>1522-23</b>	<b>1523</b>
Yeniçeriyân	8349	7422	7150	7164
Sipahiyân	2133	2190	2228	2358
Silahdarân	1848	1893	1782	1798
Ulufeciyan-i Yemin	740	767	742	722
Ulufeciyan-i Yesar	596	545	504	492

Gurebâ-i Yemin	449	440	397	384
Gurebâ-i Yesar	426	402	369	364
Istabl-i Amire	2761	2710	2726	2687
Müşaherehorân	667	666	496	604
Ehl-i Hiref	546	546	523	570
Müşaherehorân&Ehl-i Hiref				
Cebeciyan	504	496	484	517
Topçiyân	560	539	688	600
Arabaciyân-i Top	544	550	543	542
Şahinciyân	217	217	214	220
Çakirciyân	56	57	56	74
Atmacaciyân	20	19	19	24
Gilmân-i Acemiyan	3333	3315	3002	
Bevvabîn	291	302	296	
Teberdarân	21	39	36	
Bevvabîn&Teberdarân				335
Sakayân	18	18	15	
Mehterân-i Hayme&Sakayân				244
Mehterân-i Hayme	241	240	227	
Mehterân-i Âlem	205	194	196	204
Tabbahîn	277	299	260	272
Hayyâtin-i Hassa				280
Hayyâtin-i Hassa&Hilat	267	271	300	
Cem'an	25,069	24,137	23,253	20,455

**Table 16: Kapıkulu Population III**

<b>A.H.</b>	<b>930</b>	<b>931</b>	<b>936</b>
<b>A.D.</b>	<b>1523-24</b>	<b>1524-25</b>	<b>1530</b>

Yeniçeriyân	8641	9390	8407
Sipahiyân	2274	2278	1953
Silahdarân	1734	1779	1582
Ulufeciyân-i Yemin	686	701	577
Ulufeciyân-i Yesar	474	504	434
Gurebâ-i Yemin	370	374	179
Gurebâ-i Yesar	344	361	181
Istabl-i Amire	2707	2831	2898
Müşaherehorân	604		
Ehl-i Hiref	562	612	601
Müşaherehorân&Ehl-i Hiref			
Cebeciyân	568	528	528
Topçiyân	594	632	687
Arabaciyân-i Top	543	516	1168
Şahinciyân	214	211	198
Çakırciyân	70	70	115
Atmacaciyân	21	21	20
Gılmân-i Acemiyan	3514	4961	3640
Bevvabîn			286
Teberdarân			36
Bevvabîn&Teberdarân	314	337	
Sakayân			18
Mehterân-i Hayme&Sakayân	225	299	
Mehterân-i Hayme			277
Mehterân-i Âlem	193	193	228
Tabbahîn	279	279	323
Hayyâtin-i Hassa	318		329
Hayyâtin-i Hassa&Hilat		345	
Cem'an	25,249	27,222	24,665

As mentioned above, this register has only been studied by Gabor Agoston so far. Agoston, however, only examines the corps of the Kapıkulu standing army, thus, takes into account only ten regiments of *ulufeli* (salaried) units of the Kapıkulu institution (*yeniçeriyân, topçiyân, arabacıyân-i top, cebeciyân, silahdarân, sipahiyân, ulufeciyân-i yemin, ulufeciyân-i yesar, gurebâ-i yemin, and gurebâ-i yesar*). The data about the Kapıkulu administrative offices and palace servants revealed in the register do not take place in his work. Therefore, he numbers the population of the standing army at 15.000-16.000 and he adds that this excludes the numbers of *acemiyân* unit. I prefer, however, to consider all units together to see both the human potentials during the campaigns even though they were not fighting soldiers and the total number of each kapıkulu units for each time periods given in the register.<sup>243</sup>

The earliest date recorded in the register is 1484. It appears that this record was noted for comparing it with the data from succeeding years. The numbers of *ulufeli* soldiers and their salaries for 1484 seems to be compiled before Bayezid II's Boğdan campaign (started in May), because the data comprise the months May, June and July of the same year.<sup>244</sup> From 1484 to 1511, the major events of the Ottoman history starts with Bayezid's Boğdan campaign. Between 1485 and 1491, Ottoman-Mamluk conflicts arose and the Ottoman forces were defeated at almost every encounter. In 1492, we witness the Hungarian campaign and large-scale Ottoman raids such as on *Lehistan* (Poland) lands. In 1499, the Ottoman-Venetian war took place. In 1508-9, Shah Ismail attacked the Ottoman Anatolian lands. In 1510, an earthquake which was called as *Küçük Kıyamet* (Little Apocalypse) devastated Istanbul. In the summer of 1511, a serious contestation between Bayezid and his son Selim came to the boil. Yet,

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<sup>243</sup> Gabor Agoston, *Osmanlı'da Strateji ve Askerî Güç*, 177-179

<sup>244</sup> BOA MAD 23, fol. 17a.

when we compare the records of the units from 1484 with the ones of 1511, we do not see a drastic difference between the numbers.<sup>245</sup>

The record dated 1511 in the register comprises January, February, and March. Since Selim ascended the throne at the end of April, this might have been in preparation for the *cülus* distribution.

The warlike character of Selim I is observable in the dramatic rise of Janissary numbers. When we compare the numbers of 1514 with the ones of 1520 we observe a dramatic decrease which direct our attention to the loss of soldiers in war campaigns of Selim I. Although the 1514 record does not list *acemiyan* numbers, this may show that there had been a considerable number of promotions (*çıkma*) from *acemi* corps to Janissary corps when we bear in mind the increasing number of promoted Janissaries. Additionally, 1514 survey (*yoklama*) demonstrates that there had been a significant increase in the number of *nefers* (soldiers) for each unit. The numbers in 1511 were largely outnumbered by that of 1514. However, it should also be remembered that, unlike 1511, *acemiyan* numbers were not recorded in 1514. In other words, if we subtract the number of *acemis* from the total number of soldiers in 1511 records, we find the number of *nefers* to be 16.667. When we compare this result with the numbers in 1514, we see that the head count in the units, leaving aside the *acemiyan*, went up by 5.395 within three years.<sup>246</sup>

What made such an increase possible during the reign of Selim I should be first analysed within the context of budget since the peaceful policies pursued by Bayezid II had allowed the treasury to thrive at an unprecedented scale. The increase in revenues should have been enough to afford *ulufe* costs that such a rise in the number of soldiers would bring about. So, what was the reason behind this dramatic increase

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<sup>245</sup> BOA MAD 23, fol.1b-2a, 15b-16a

<sup>246</sup> BOA MAD 23, fol. 23b-24a, 31b-32a.

in the number? The answer to this question lies in Selim's character and his plans for military campaigns. As is widely known, Selim had a warlike character in contrast to his father. He doubled the Ottoman lands in just eight years. His aggressive disposition, in the first place, allowed Selim to gain the support of Janissaries in his struggle for the throne against his father and brothers. The 1514 survey (*yoklama*) in the register, on the other hand, must have been done in preparation for Selim's Iran Campaign. The number of soldiers could have been increased in order to put an end to the protracted problem of Shah Ismail and the ongoing clashes with the Mamluks.<sup>247</sup>

The dates in the register that comprise the first quarter of Süleyman I's reign points to the pursuit of a more balanced war policy in the initial years of his rule. The 1520 data in the table coincides with either Selim I's preparation for Rhodes Campaign or for *cülus* distribution for Süleyman I's accession to the throne. We also know that Süleyman I started his Belgrade campaign in 1521, he was also at the battle against the Hungarians in 1524-25.

Erol Özvar draws our attention to the fact that when the balance between revenues and expenditures shifted in favour of the former, the Ottomans entered a serious war. As examples of such cases, Özvar proposes the conquest of Budin and first siege of Vienna in 1529. He suggests that these were actualized following the few years of financial relief until the fiscal year of 1527-28.<sup>248</sup> As we see above, this looks like also the case when we check the dates recorded in the register and compare them with the political agenda of the State. In other words, it seems that the records in our register were prepared either immediately before or after a campaign to the west or east.

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<sup>247</sup> Also see, Gabor Agoston, *Osmanlı'da Strateji ve Askerî Güç*, 180-181.

<sup>248</sup> Erol Özvar, *Osmanlı Devleti'nin Bütçe Harcamaları (1509-1788)*: 197-238, in *Osmanlı Maliyesi Kurumlar ve Bütçeler* V. I Ed. Mehmet Genç and Erol Özvar (İstanbul, 2006), 236.

#### 4.4 The Social Mobility Within the Kapıkulu Units

In the register, another interesting data shows the current official place of the *kapıkulus* among each unit. According to this, there are three kinds of specifications which are *ibtidâ*, *izdiyâd* and *inkitâ*.<sup>249</sup>

*İbtidâ* literally means introduction or beginning. In the Ottoman military organization, it signifies a kind of identification certificate, consisting of the information about the physical features of the *kapıkulu* officer, which unit he belongs to and the amount his salary.<sup>250</sup> The document of the *ibtida* is called as *tezkire-i ibtida*. It signifies the changing official position of a *kapıkulu* member. The appointment of a member to a different unit or position is designated by the reciprocation office of infantry and cavalry corps (“Piyade ve Süvari Mukabele Kalemi”). The designation area is specified in the document and called as “Rüüs-i Hümayun or Küçük Berat”.<sup>251</sup> When a member of *kapıkulu* units was appointed to a new position, he was given this certificate with which he got his new type of salary according to his new post.

*İzdiyâd* literally means increase. It signifies the increase in the amount of the salary of the officer.<sup>252</sup> It is noteworthy that it could be awarded to an officer when he informs the State about another officer’s absence. In other words, if an officer of a *kapıkulu* unit informs the State about his confrere’s demise or the condition of missing in action (for instance during a campaign) he got a raise in his salary as an award. This

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<sup>249</sup> Asparuh, Velkov, *Vidove osmanoturski dokumenti: Prinov kam osmanoturskata diplomatika (Types of Ottoman Turkish Documents: A Contribution to Ottoman Turkish Diplomats)* (Sofia, 1986), 178-181, 215-218, 219-222.

<sup>250</sup> M. Z. Pakalın, *Osmanlı Tarih Deyimleri ve Terimleri Sözlüğü*, vol. 2, p. 14.

<sup>251</sup> In these documents for instance it is written that “ibtida-i mevacib-i Ali Mehmed siyavuş an cemaat-i cebeciyan-i dergah-i ali...” National Library St. & St Methodius (Sofia) Oriental Department fon 1 (F. 1) Archival Unite (A.U.) 17378, folio (fol.) 3.

<sup>252</sup> Mübahat S. Kütükoğlu, “Tezkire”, TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi, vol. 41, p. 74.



situation shows the control mechanism of the Ottoman government over the population of the *kapıkulu* units and on their salaries. It is understandable that during the premodern era, the control mechanism of the governments over their armies was a problematic matter. In the campaigns, they lost many of their soldiers. Since in those eras there was no photography the governments had to produce their own way to create identification certificate for their subjects. In the Ottoman case, the government was preparing certificates that comprised the facial features of an officer or a military member along with the information about his office and salary. But then again, these certificates could be seized by another officer or person to take his salary as his own. To prevent such abuse, the Ottoman government established a kind of information mechanism by increasing the salary of those who notified the State about the any absence from the *Kapıkulu* units.

*İnkıta* literally means cessation. In the register, it signifies the *kapıkulu* officers whose links to their units were cut. These officers could be promoted to a higher office in the hierarchy, or assigned to a fortress or a *timar*, could also be missing, deceased, retired, etc.

These three kinds of information recorded in the register give us a chance not only to see the control mechanism of the Ottoman government over its standing army and officers of the Porte but also to analyze the certain data in terms of the hierarchical transitions between the units. According to this, between 11 July 1526 and 4 January 1527, for instance, twenty-six *gılman-i acemiyân* (novices) were assigned to the Janissary unit. Thirteen of them were formerly the novices of *Istanbul*, eleven of them were the novices of the gardens of Edirne palace, one of them was working in storehouse while the other one was working in bakery. In addition to this, seventy-two soldiers were newly appointed to the *kapıkulu sipahiyan* unit. Among the *silahdaran*

unit, on the other hand, sixty-six soldiers were newly nominated as *silahdaran* during these six months.<sup>253</sup>

When we look at the *izdiyad* records, we see that three *sipahiyân* soldiers gained salary rise with 11 *akçes* while seven *silahdaran* obtained 15 *akçes*, one *ulufeciyân-i yemin* soldier took 7 *akçes*, and two officers from *bevvabîn* and *teberdarân* groups had 2 *akçe* salary rises.<sup>254</sup>

During the same period, as *inkita* records show, the ties of 1019 Janissaries with their units were cut. Among them, 25 Janissaries were assigned as *ser-i bölük* (the head of the corps); 16 became *kethüda* (chief stewards); 58 were designated as *solak* soldiers (the closest guardians of the Sultan especially at the time of military campaigns); 19 became *sekban* cavalries (they accompanied the Sultan during his hunting activities); 47 of them became *kapıkulu sipahi* soldiers; 46 of them became *silahdar*; 401 of them nominated as *merdan-i kal'a* (protectors of the fortress, most probably this was the fortress of Budapest); 112 of them were assigned to *timars*; 245 of them were dead; 36 were lost; 7 of them were runaways; and the other 7 were selected as *beride* (the messengers).<sup>255</sup>

One *sipahiyân* soldier became *ağa* (chief); one was assigned to *zeamet timar* and became *zaim* (*zeamet timar* holder); the other one was retired with 27 *akçe* salary; fifty-three *sipahiyân* were dead; thirty-three of them were missing.<sup>256</sup>

One *silahdaran* became *defterdar-i ferman* (head of the financial department who was responsible for preparing the edicts) with a salary of 40 *akçes*. One *ulufeciyân-i yemin* soldier assigned as *silahdaran* with a salary of 11 *akçes*. Five

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<sup>253</sup> BOA MAD 23, fol. 22b-23b.

<sup>254</sup> BOA MAD 23, fol. 22b-23a

<sup>255</sup> BOA MAD 23, fol. 22b-23b

<sup>256</sup> BOA MAD 23, fol. 22b

*cebeciyan* and thirty-seven *topçiyân* were nominated as *merd-i kal'a* (attendants of the fortress).<sup>257</sup>

Among the *gilmân-i acemiyân-i Istanbul* (the novices of Istanbul) *ibtida* records are also noteworthy. According to this, twenty novices were recorded as formerly *fodla ahz*. Uzunçarşılı states that *fodlahoran* (those who collect *fodla* -flour or bread) were the sons of Janissaries. They were orphans and took specified amount of flour in specified period of times -or its equivalent money- from the State. If this is the case in our register, it is safe to assert that Uzunçarşılı was right by saying that in the first quarter of the sixteenth century the Janissaries did have the right to get married.<sup>258</sup> The other interesting data is that eleven people recorded as *gürihte ahz*, who captured the runaways, and became novices. If I am not wrong here it seems that being a novice was considered an award. Among the *inkita* records for this unit, we see that four novices were assigned to storehouses and cellars; 18 of them left the capital; and one of them became *bevvab* (doorkeeper).<sup>259</sup>

**Table 17: Social Organization Within the Regiments**

July 1526 - January 1527	İbtidâ	İzdiyâd	İnkıtâ
Yeniçeriyân	26	-	1019
Sipahiyân	72	3	92
Silahdarân	66	7	42
Ulufeciyân-i Yemin	13	1	24
Ulufeciyân-i Yesar	11	-	8
Gurebâ-i Yemin	1	-	8

<sup>257</sup> BOA MAD 23, fol. 22b

<sup>258</sup> Uzunçarşılı, *Kapıkulu Ocakları*, v. I, p. 306-308. BOA MAD 23, fol. 23b

<sup>259</sup> BOA MAD 23, fol. 23b

Gurebâ-i Yesar	-	-	7
Istabl-i Amire	23	-	78
Ehl-i Hiref	6	-	8
Cebeciyan	-	-	18
Topçiyân	-	-	62
Arabaciyân-i Top	-	-	35
Şahinciyân	-	-	1
Gilmân-i Acemiyan	31	-	105
Bevvabîn&Teberdarân	-	2	8
Mehterân-i Hayme&Sakayân	14	-	4
Mehterân-i Âlem	-	-	3
Tabbahîn	-	-	13
Hayyâtin	-	-	7
Cem'an	263	13	1542

In the register, there is a significant information about the Janissary unit. According to this, in the period between June and August/September of 1521, 485 Janissaries were on duty in the fortress of Belgrade.<sup>260</sup> This record provides us an idea about how many Janissaries the Ottoman government preferred to assign in a strategically important fortress, like Belgrade, on the border at least during the first quarter of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. At the end of the record, the note also shows that during this period, 138 *kapıkulu* soldiers were lost or dead in this period. According to this, 12 *sipahiyan*, 7 *silahdaran*, 16 *ulufeciyan-i yemin*, 97 *ulufeciyan-i yesar*, 2 *gureba-i yemin* and 4 *gureba-i yesar* were either lost or dead.<sup>261</sup> The high number of losses from the *ulufeciyan-i yesar* might be quite interesting especially for those who study on the Ottoman combat strategies and war tactics. The record shows the total population of

<sup>260</sup> BOA MAD 23, fol. 22b-23b

<sup>261</sup> BOA MAD 23, fol. 23b

the unit which was 8349; the number of Janissaries left in the Belgrade fortress was 485; and what remained from the total number was 7864, who returned to the capital.

These units were the direct representatives of the central authority both in Istanbul and wherever they were stationed. For instance, we can trace in the register the members of the *kapıkulu* units who were assigned as the *yasakçı* officers (the protector and the managers/organizers) of the valuable State revenues like mines, customs houses, etc.<sup>262</sup> These people were assigned to these important revenue posts not only as the trustful subjects of the State but also its direct representatives. We will discuss this matter broadly in the following chapter.

#### 4.5 The Evaluation of the Register

From the data in the register it is apparent that there is a gradual increase in the number of the *kapıkulus* from 1514 to 1530. Selim I's program for increasing the *kapıkulu* population served his war policy. This might have been a trend that was followed by his successor Süleyman I, which continued throughout the 16<sup>th</sup> century and to the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century as the table below shows.<sup>263</sup>

**Table 18: Janissary Population from 1567 to 1652**

Date	Janissary Number
<b>1567-68</b>	<b>12.798</b>
1574	13.599
<b>1582</b>	<b>16.905</b>

<sup>262</sup> BOA MAD 23, fol. 43a-47b.

<sup>263</sup> The data that prepared for the table has been taken from Gabor Agoston, *Osmanlı'da Strateji ve Askerî Güç*, 203.

<b>1592</b>	<b>23.323</b>
<b>1597</b>	<b>35.000</b>
1609	37.627
<b>1632-33</b>	<b>43.000</b>
<b>1652</b>	<b>55.151</b>

When we take the Janissary unit as the sample to see the dramatic changes in the population of the salaried soldiers of the empire from the beginning of the sixteenth century to the mid seventeenth century the picture will be as the table above represents. As we see from this data, until the second half of the sixteenth century, Janissary numbers can be considered to be fixed around 8000-9000 (the campaign of Selim I to Persia seems to be an exception). From the second half of the sixteenth century, however, there is a drastic increase in the Janissary population. As we see from 1530 to 1567-68 the number is doubled, and in the next 30 years it is tripled and when we look at the mid 17<sup>th</sup> century, the number is five times higher than that of 1560's.

The long war against the Habsburg Empire in 1593-1606 is one of the factors of the drastic changes in the Ottoman army especially in terms of the population of the soldiers. The changing war strategies and technologies like firearms that were used by the Habsburg army in the war forced the Ottoman government to find a way to empower its own army. The solution came with the idea of increasing the number of the soldiers. İnalçık asserts that this was a time of growing need for more soldiers that could use firearms in the battlefields in the Central Europe against the Habsburgs.<sup>264</sup> Whatever the reason, the army of the Ottoman Empire had grown considerably. This

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<sup>264</sup> For the related discussions see, Rhoads Murphey, *Ottoman Warfare, 1500-1700* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1999); Gabor Agoston, *Guns for the Sultan: Military Power and the Weapons Industry in the Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Caroline Finkel, *The Administration of Warfare: The Ottoman Military Campaigns in Hungary, 1593-1606*. (Vienna, 1988); Halil İnalçık, "Military and Fiscal Transformation in the Ottoman Empire, 1300-1600" *Archivum Ottomanicum* 6 (1980): 283–337.

situation, however, led the salaries of the members of the *kapıkulu* units to take up an enormous portion of the expenditures of the central treasury.

From the register, we can trace the total amount of the annual salaries of the *Kapıkulu* units for certain dates which you can observe from the table below. When we compare them with the total expenditures of the central treasury for the exact or closer dates specified in the table below we can see that the annual salaries of the *kapıkulu* units were nearly half of the total expenditures.

**Table 19: Annual Salaries Amount of Kapıkulu Regiments**

<b>Year: A.H. (A.D.)</b>	<b>Salaries in Total</b>
917 (1511/12)	36,619,176
920 (1514)	53,758,440
926 (1520)	57,492,432
927 (1521 June-August)	80,243,302
927 (1521 Sept.-Nov.)	78,871,908
929 (1523 June-August)	72,567,657
929 (1522/23 Nov.- Febr.)	75,142,872
930	74,164,416
933 (1526/27)	60,688,698

<b>Year: A.H. (A.D.)</b>	<b>Expenditures in Total</b>
914 (1509/10)	68,468,297
929 (1523/24)	118,783,849
930 (1524/25)	126,581,347
933 (1527/28)	185,620,549

Through the end of the sixteenth century, however, the size of the *kapıkulu* army was almost tripled. As a result, the burden of the salaries on the treasury might

have also increased considerably. Özvar notes that for both the Ottoman and other European states, the sixteenth century was a remarkable era for the fiscal growth.<sup>265</sup> From the first quarter of this century to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in the Ottoman budget registers, the expenditures were mainly organized under three categories: “mevacibat” (salaries), “teslimat” (deliveries) and “ihracat” (disbursements).<sup>266</sup> The salaries of the naval soldiers were recorded under the ihracat (disbursements) heading. The salaried soldiers were sometimes recorded in the budget register as those who participated to the campaigns or not or whom became retired.<sup>267</sup> Mevacibat comprised the biggest portion in the budget expenditures. These were the salaries of all members of the kapıkulu institution, known as askerî, except for the has or timar revenue owners. Özvar asserts that the most important expenditure section of the central treasury was the salaries of the military class. He notes that the salary expenditures were changing from 66 million *akçes* to 133.5 million *akçes* between the first and last quarters of the sixteenth century. The second biggest portion of the expenditures in the central fiscal budgets was organized under the teslimat (delivery) section which covered the expenses of the palace supplies and the ammunitions of the army. As Özvar states, during the sixteenth century, the military expenses including the salaries covered ninety – ninetyfive percent of the total budget expenditures and eightyfive years it increased around four hundred percent.<sup>268</sup> At the beginning of the seventeenth century, the salary expenditures were almost tripled in terms of *akçe*.<sup>269</sup> This situation by itself well explains why we began to see the members of the kapıkulu units among the tax

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<sup>265</sup> Erol Özvar, *Osmanlı Devleti'nin Bütçe Harcamaları*, 212-213.

<sup>266</sup> For the detailed information about teslimat and ihracat sections *Ibid.*, 213-218.

<sup>267</sup> *Ibid.* 231.

<sup>268</sup> *Ibid.* p. 213-217.

<sup>269</sup> Erol Özvar, no: 7, p. 229.



collectors or in the peasant farms more through the seventeenth century, which have been also considered in the scope of the following chapter.



## CHAPTER V

### WHEN THE COIN IS MIGHTIER THAN THE SWORD

In the previous chapter, we have examined the size of the *kapıkulu* units in the first quarter of the sixteenth century and how their burden on the Ottoman central treasury gradually increased. We also took a closer look at the functioning of these units. In this chapter, we will examine the roles of the members of the Kapıkulu institution in the socio-economic spheres from the first quarter of the sixteenth through to the end of the seventeenth centuries. We will first explore the differences between their financial status by examining the probate registers. Then we will take a closer look at the roles of the members of the *kapıkulu* institution in the different economic spheres, specifically in the State revenues, of the Ottoman State.

#### 5.1 A Probate Register of the Janissaries from Early Seventeenth Century

In the Prime Minister's Ottoman Archives in Istanbul, we have found a *muhalefât* (probate) register in the *Maliyeden Müdevver Defterler* section that includes the probate records of the Janissaries who died during the campaign against the

Habsburgs in 1600-1603/4.<sup>270</sup> In contrast to the other probate registers evaluated in the literature so far, this one includes the probate records of the soldiers who died in the process of a battle. It is also noteworthy since it demonstrates how many soldiers died during the movement of the army and the number of the military casualty during a single combat in the early seventeenth century against the Habsburgs.

The register shows that the Ottoman army departed from Istanbul to Belgrade in 1600. They first arrived in Atik Baba (modern-day Babaeski in Edirne) and continued their route through Kanije to Belgrade. During their movement, they lost only a few soldiers on the roads whose probate records were also noted in the register.<sup>271</sup>

The data shows that in Kanije they were involved in a combat where some Janissaries died. The biggest loss of life, however, was during the battle which took place on the island of Çepel in the Danube River. It is understood from the data that the army passed through this island from Belgrade. They lost many Janissary soldiers as a result of this battle defeat in 1603. I intend to take the records for the loss in this island and examine them as sample to understand the regulations proceeded for the lost soldiers during a battle and their financial status when they died. The records reveal that in the battle of Çepel, the Janissary corps lost 576 soldiers. It is noteworthy that this number shows only the loss of Janissary units and do not include the records for other regiments.<sup>272</sup>

In the register, information such as the name of each soldier, the regiment he belonged to and their status were recorded. The information also includes the lists of

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<sup>270</sup> MAD 101.

<sup>271</sup> BOA MAD 101 fol. 1b-22a.

<sup>272</sup> BOA MAD 101 fol. 22b-59a.

the soldiers' personal belongings one by one along with their values. Among them, there are calpacs, boots, shoes, leggings, underwear, raincoats, waistcloths, rugs, belts, axes, razors, knives, bowls, saddles, items. The equivalent price was recorded for each item and if it was old or worn, they were noted as *köhne*. The units' sergeants or heads seem to have had good economic means since their belongings consisted of many valuable items like horses, luxury ornamented swords, knives and belts. Some of them had slaves and big amount of coins in gold or silver. The poor soldiers, however, had generally low valued objects and small amounts of *akçe*.

We can ask whether these recorded items were the only assets from these soldiers or they had more belongings at where they lived during the peace time. Since the main center where Janissaries were stationed at those times was the city, of Istanbul it is necessary to compare our data with the probate register records of the capital. Although Said Öztürk studied the probate records of the military class from *Istanbul* between 1595 and 1668, we do not have any examples for the Janissary records for the years of 1600-1603/4.<sup>273</sup> This situation reveals the fact that most probably these items were the only assets of these soldiers, recorded in the register.

The total amount of the asset for each soldier was also calculated and written in the register. If he had any coins, it was added to this total. If his deceased body was found, the expenses of the shroud and funeral were deducted from the total amount of his asset under the phrase of “berây-i techîz ve tekfîn dâde”. If he had debt, its amount was written as “edâ‘ deyn” and specified to whom it would be given. This amount was also deduced from the asset but if he was the payee, the amount was added. When all

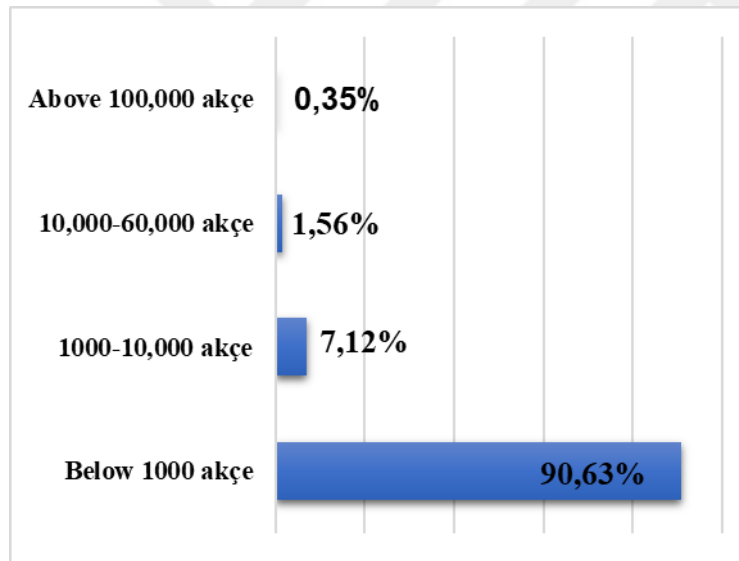
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<sup>273</sup> Said Öztürk, *Istanbul Tereke Defterleri (Sosyo-Ekonomik Tahlil)*. (Istanbul: OSAV, 1995).

this adding and subtracting was finalized, the rest of his asset was given to his family if he had one, if he did not it was added to his regiment's budget.<sup>274</sup>

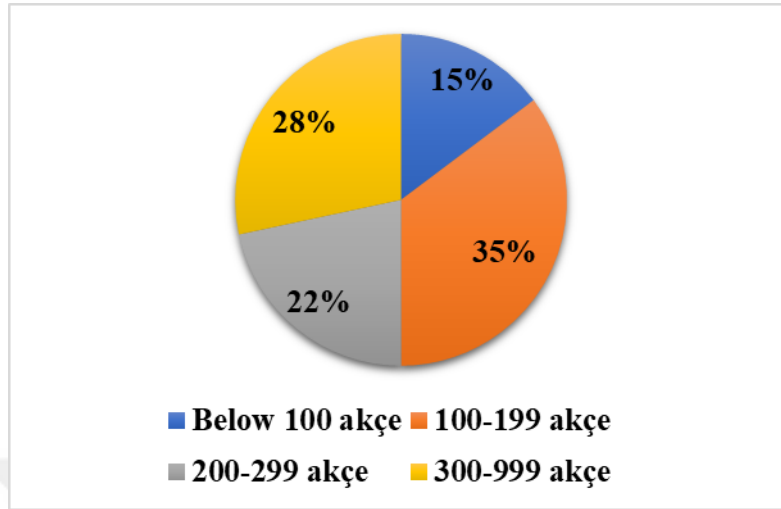
The records for the military loss in the island of Çepel also gives us a chance to see the differentiations in the economic situations of these Janissary soldiers. According to this, as we see from the table below, ninety percent of these Janissary soldiers had no more than 1,000 *akçe* assets each. When we look at the distribution the assets among these soldiers, the picture reveals itself as the table below. As we see, half of these people had less than 200 *akçe* assets each.

**Table 20: Distribution of Wealth Among Soldiers**

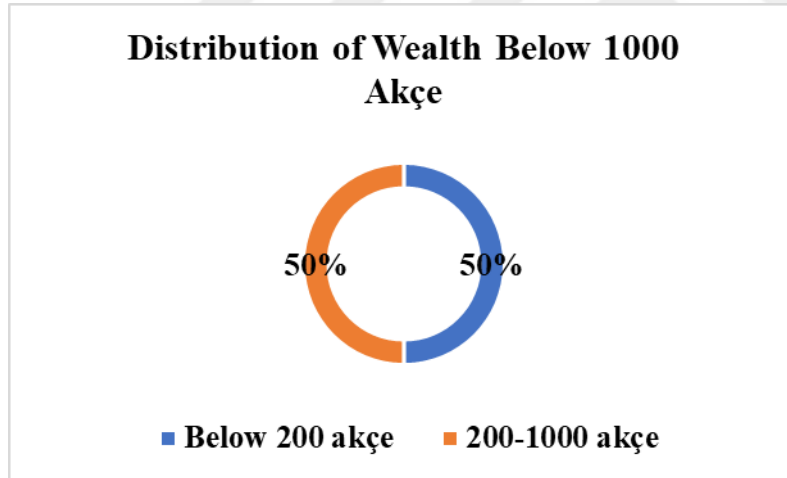


<sup>274</sup> In the Janissary organization, the properties of the dead Janissaries were inherited by the regiment waqfs. These functioned as the cash waqfs and their main purpose was to assist the members or units in the time of need. The amount of the debt of the soldiers were recorded and if one died before paying his debt, the equal amount was deducted from what was left from him. The promoted members used to pay some gold to the waqf and this money was operated with interest and the income of this proceeds was spent for the expenditures of the regiment, such as cargo animals to carry their stuff to the campaign. In the same way, to support the expenditures of the Janissaries who lived in the barracks, such as kitchen expenses, firewood, oil lamps, and etc. these regiments waqfs were used. See Barkan, *Edirne Askeri Kassamı'na Âit Tereke Defterleri (1545-1659)*, p. 35. For more information about the cash waqfs, see Tahsin Özcan, *Osmanlı Para Vakıfları: Kanûnî Dönemi Üsküdar Örneği*, (Ankara: TTK Basımevi, 2003); Murat Çizakça, "Cash Waqfs of Bursa: 1555-1823", *JESHO* 38 no:3 (1995): 313-354; Ronald Jennings, "Loans and Credit in Early 17<sup>th</sup> Century Ottoman Judicial Records: The Sharia Court of Anatolian Kayseri", *JESHO* 16 no.2/3 (1973): 168-216.

**Table 21: Distribution of Wealth Below 1000 Akçe**



**Table 22: Distribution of Wealth Below/Above 200 Akçe**



When we compare the data above with the work of Ömer Lütfi Barkan, who examines the probate registers from Edirne between 1545 and 1659, we come across a different conclusion. According to this, the members of the *kapıkulu* units, which has been examined by Barkan, seem to be engaged generally in the trades, crafts, agricultural or industrial businesses. Their assets, thus, demonstrate their well-being standards.<sup>275</sup>

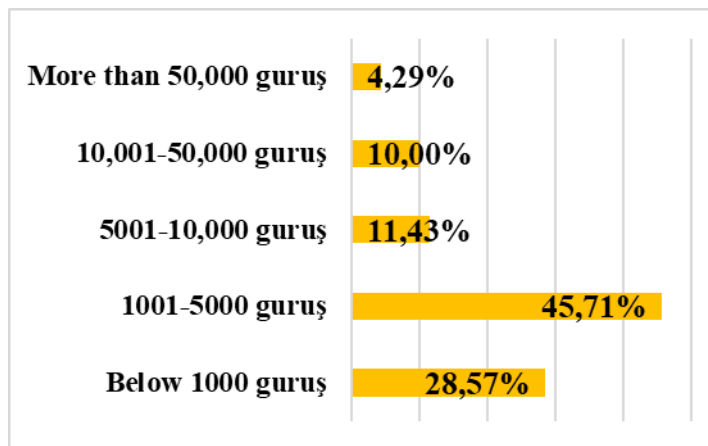
<sup>275</sup> See Barkan, Edirne Askerî Kassamı'na Âit Tereke Defterleri (1545-1659), 59.

At this point, however, we should remember that the kapıkulu members that Barkan surveys were the high rank kapıkulus like cavalry regiments' members.

As another example, Gülay Yılmaz examines the assets of the Janissaries, based on the data Said Öztürk provides between 1604 and 1668. She demonstrates that among 173 Janissaries in this period, 9 percent held less than 1,000 *akçes*; 27 percent possessed 1,000 to 9,999 *akçes*; 39 percent had assets from 10,000 to 49,999 *akçes*; 9 percent had 50,000 to 99,999 *akçes*; and 16 percent had 100,000 or more *akçes*.<sup>276</sup> Although her work shows the Janissaries as a heterogeneous group in terms of wealth, the highest percentage points to the ones from modest living standards.

As a third example, in her study, Georgieva examines probate records of the Janissaries from the garrisons of Hacıoğlu Pazarı, Rusçuk and Vidin in the eighteenth century. She takes 70 soldiers as sample and calculates the distribution of wealth among them.<sup>277</sup> According to her conclusion the distribution is as in the chart below.

**Table 23: Distribution of Wealth**



<sup>276</sup> Yılmaz, Gülay. "The Economic and Social Roles of Janissaries", 181-182.

<sup>277</sup> Georgieva, *Enicharite v Balgarskite Zemi (The Janissaries in the Bulgarian Lands)*, 155. As we from the chart, the assets were recorded in terms of *guruş*, which gradually replaced *akçe* since the latter decreased in value as a result of the debasement policies of the State. For more information see, Şevket Pamuk, "Money in the Ottoman Empire" in H. İnalcık and Quataert eds., *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire*, p. 964.

Although the percentage of the poorer soldiers that possessed under 1,000 *guruş* was higher than the ones in the sample of Yılmaz, the work of Georgieva reveals that the majority of the Janissaries seems to have had modest life standards in the eighteenth century as well. In our probate register, however, the majority of the Janissary soldiers, 90,63 percent to be exact, seems to have very poor life standards. It is important to note here that since our register includes the information only for the Janissaries that lost their lives in the battle of Çepel, it is not possible to compare its data with the life standards of the whole Janissaries in the empire. It provides, however, a chance to see the distribution of wealth within these recorded soldiers in the register. This sample, on the other hand, makes us think about the orientation of the *kapıkulus*, especially the Janissaries, towards the additional financial resources like agriculture, trade and other occupations.

From the probate records of Edirne in 1545-1659, we see that many *kapıkulu* members were engaged in trade activities or big farms although they were in active military service. These were not just the members of the *kapıkulu* cavalry units but also the Janissaries. Barkan suggests that it was logical to expect from anybody to enjoy their free times to learn and practice a craft, especially since it is a well-known fact that the Janissary novices worked in various jobs and had skills in many professions. He adds that the untraditional recruitments of people, who were selected by the terms of the devshirme system, seems also to have affected the urbanization of the regiments. He, however, suggests that these *kapıkulu* members did not hesitate to use their privileges as the State's soldiers to gain an advantageous position among the circles of traders or businessmen.<sup>278</sup> I am not sure whether this assumption could be

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<sup>278</sup> See Barkan, *Edirne Askerî Kassamı'na Âit Tereke Defterleri (1545-1659)*, p. 60.



generalized for all kapıkulu members but I can safely argue that the State itself supported their presence in the economic fields of the *reaya*.

## 5.2 Janissaries in the Mîrî Lands

Before we examine the parts of the kapıkulus in the agricultural facilities, it is necessary to look at how the State operated the arable lands and how it distributed the right to cultivate these lands. In the Ottoman Empire, the majority of arable lands were under State ownership, which were known as *miri* land. The peasants were just the tenants of these lands and had the *tapu* (deed) contracts with the State. The deeds were not making them the private owner of these lands but provided the right of the usufruct.<sup>279</sup> According to the contract, they had to pay their tax, *çift-resmi*,<sup>280</sup> and perform certain services to the State and to the appointed *timarlı sipahi* in their district.

The deeds were only given to the ones that could cultivate the land and pay the taxes. The deed owner peasants could not sell, donate, endow or leave their farms or transform them to the vineyards or orchards. They, however, had the right to handover their farms to another farmer in return for monetary compensation (which had to be a lawful transaction) and the right to bequeath it to his son, wife, daughter and/or brother.<sup>281</sup> In the state owned *miri* lands, the right of possession could only be

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<sup>279</sup> See İnalçık, *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire*, p. 105-106.

<sup>280</sup> In the Ottoman Empire, *çift resmi* signified the tax that a peasant family was responsible to pay to the State. The social strata of the peasants depended on their ability to pay different amounts of taxes. In the *tahrir* registers, the peasant's tax status and obligations were recorded. See İnalçık, *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire*, 149-151.

<sup>281</sup> *Ibid.* 108-111.

transferred under certain conditions. In the process of such transfer contracts (*devir ve ferağ*), for instance, the permission and supervision of *timarlı sipahis* was the necessary condition and the transaction could be done by handing over the *tapu* (deed) of the possession right on the land.<sup>282</sup>

It is well known fact that the *çift-hane* system was the main land system in the Ottoman Empire and it was composed of three elements which were the household as the source of labor, a pair of oxen to cultivate the land, and the field.<sup>283</sup> The Ottoman sultans aimed to protect the unity of the *çift-hane* units by taking most of the agricultural lands under its ownership (*miri*). This guaranteed the continuation of the *çift-hane* system which was the basis of the agricultural revenue of the state. In this system, the peasants were accepted as the permanent tenants of the land but they had the hereditary right over their fields.<sup>284</sup>

Halil İnalçık asserts that the members of the military class were, in principle, excluded from the deed contract for a *çiftlik* (farm) but if they involved they had to accomplish the obligations of which the peasants were also responsible for.<sup>285</sup> In a register from “Tapu Kadastro Arşivi” in Ankara,<sup>286</sup> we have examples for the *kapıkulu* members in this kind. According to the record, some of *reaya* farms (*çiftlik*) in the

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<sup>282</sup> See Barkan, *Edirne Askerî Kassamı'na Âit Tereke Defterleri (1545-1659)*, p. 48.

<sup>283</sup> The minimum size of a field that a family could cultivate was known as *nim-çift*, which signified the half size of a *çift*. The size of a farm could vary from 60 to 150 *dönüm* (one *dönüm* equals to 919 sq. meters). The size of the farm-land (*çiftlik*) had to also be big enough to supply the needs of a family, re-production expenses and the tax they had to pay to the State. See İnalçık, *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire*, p. 145-148.

<sup>284</sup> See İnalçık, *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire*, p. 145-148; “The Emergence of Big Farms, Çiftliks: State, Landlords and Tenants”, p. 106; Barkan, “Çiftlik”, *İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, III, ss. 392-397, (*Istanbul*, 1945), 392-397.

<sup>285</sup> See İnalçık, “The Emergence of Big Farms, Çiftliks: State, Landlords and Tenants”, p. 108-109; İnalçık, *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire*, p. 108-109.

<sup>286</sup> TKGM 187

*havass-i hümayun* lands (under the State ownership) were in the utilization of *kapıkulu* soldiers:<sup>287</sup>

Karye-i Şugova tabi-i Timurhisar an havas-i hümayun  
Çiftlik-i Ali yeniçeri halâ der yed-i Süleyman bin Tanrıverdi  
Çiftlik-i Hızır (an) ulufeciyan hala der yed-i Hacı yeniçeri  
Çiftlik-i İsa Bali yeniçeri  
Çiftlik-i Rüstem yeniçeri hala der yed-i Mustafa bin Mehmed, çift  
Çiftlik-i Mustafa an ulufeciyan hala der yed-i Bali bin Ali, çift  
Çiftlik-i Mehmed bin Abidin yeniçeri hala der yed-i Hüseyin bin Bali,  
çift.<sup>288</sup>

We see from the quotation above, in practice, the *kapıkulu* members could become the owner of a deed but they used to assign a representative to run the farm in their behalf. These representatives would sell the production in the market and pay the tax to the State. Thus, in the register it is written that “an yedd-i Mustafa” which means “in the responsibility of Mustafa”.

When we examine this passage, we see that in the first line it notes that the Janissary Ali has a title deed of a farm in the village of Şugova but assigned Süleyman, the son of Tanrıverdi as the person in charge. According to this, the tax collector would call Süleyman as the contact person of the Janissary Ali.

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<sup>287</sup> Distribution of the revenues of the State lands was taken in three categories, which were called as *timar*, *zeamet* and *hass*. The number of tax-payers and the amount of the revenue in a land specified these different categories. “Hass-i Hümayun” or “Havass-i Hümayun” was the imperial demesne and the revenues from this kind of land were collected for the central state treasury. The high dignitaries such as the viziers and *beys* generally had their income from the *Hass* called lands which brought over 100,000 *akçe* revenues. *Zeamet* typed lands, however, were distributed to the lesser ranked military members, who were called as *zaim* whose income was changing between 20,000 and 100,000 *akçe*. The smallest *timar* revenues, however, could only be up to 20,000 *akçe*. From the *havass-i hümayun* land, the peasant could collect the large amount of wheat surplus and sell them in the urban centers or export them to European markets. See İnalçık, *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire*, p. 126, 133, 141.

<sup>288</sup> TKGM 187 fol 3b sld 7, distributed to the lesser ranked military members, who were called as *zaim* whose income was changing between 20,000 and 100,000 *akçe*. The smallest *timar* revenues, however, could only be up to 20,000 *akçe*. From the *havass-i hümayun* land, the peasant could collect the large amount of wheat surplus and sell them in the urban centers or export them to European markets. See İnalçık, *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire*, p. 126, 133, 141.

<sup>288</sup> TKGM 187 fol 3b

In the second line, it stresses that the *ulufeciyan* officer Hızır is the owner of title deed of a farm and assigned a Janissary, whose name is Hacı, as the person in charge. We can safely suggest that most probably this Janissary Hacı was a stationed soldier in a fortress or a garrison close by the farm since he had possibility and time take its responsibilities on himself. It is also noteworthy that we see two *kapıkulu* officer in this example one of whom as the owner of deed and the other as his contact person.

In the third example, we see that the Janissary İsa Bali was both the owner of the title deed of the farm and also the person in charge. In the fourth example, Janissary Rüstem was the owner of the farm but his representative is a *reaya* whose name was Mustafa. This Mustafa was the son of a Mehmed and he also had his own farm. In the fifth case, the owner of the deed was an *ulufeciyan* officer, Mustafa, who assigned Bali, the son of Ali, as his person in charge but this Bali had his own farm, too. In the last example, Janissary Mehmed, the son of Abidin, assigned Hüseyin, who was the son of Balia and also had his own farm, as his contact person.

It is obvious that the deeds' owners like *ulufeciyan* officers Hızır and Mustafa and Janissaries Ali, Rüstem and Mehmed were not present in their farms that is why they appointed people to take the responsibilities of their farms. In fact, *kapıkulu* members, if they were not assigned to the provincial works like serving in the fortresses or garrisons they lived in the capital city but as we see from these examples they could make investments on such farms even if they were not around. After all, they could sell the products from this farms in the markets or ports and could get the extra incomes. Or, someone else could do these things in their behalf. In any case, however, they had to pay their taxes the State since they had the deeds of these farms.

In the case of the Janissary, it is noteworthy that he seems to be assigned by the State to a garrison or fortress or like at least for a period that he had opportunity to run a farm by himself. It is also noteworthy to mention that as we see from the first example, who is responsible in the farm of Janissary Ali is a landless person since there is no note for him as the owner of a *çift* or like, because the note as *çift* shows that the *reaya* who has their own land deed. In addition to this, it is important to remember that those, who had their own farms but also run the other's, had to pay tax to the State both farms. In the *fetva* records it is written that even though if someone was a Janissary but had run a farm he had to pay his tax to the State. This situation makes it clear to accept that the State had no objection for the *kapıkulu* officers to have their own farms as long as they paid the tax.

This register provides also other interesting anecdotes. In the village of Puleva in the Timurhisar district, for instance, there was a *zeamet* of Kasım, the son of Mustafa. This *zeamet* was given to Kasım as his salary by the State, which means he had the right to collect the taxes from this district. As the register shows that there were some kind of farm corporations on the territory of this *zeamet*:

Çiftlik-i Müsliheddin bin İlyas, çift  
Çiftlik-I Halil bin Kalgıl hala der yed-I müsliheddin ve abdi  
Çiftlik-i Mehmed bin Ali hala der yed-i Memi bin Abdullah ve Malkoç  
Çiftlik-i Memi bin Nasuh hala der yed-i mezkurin  
Çiftlik-i Memi bin Abdullah.<sup>289</sup>

As we see from the passage above, Müsliheddin, the son of İlyas, established a farm except from his *çift*. Likewise, the farm of Mehmed (the son of Ali) was run under the partnership of Memi (the son of Abdullah) and Malkoç. Another farm, which was under the ownership of Memi (the son of Nasuh) was managed by Abdullah and the

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<sup>289</sup> TKGM 187 fol 3b fol. 25a

same Malkoç (*yed-i mezkurin*). In the Kuruşeva village, as another example, there was the *zeamet* of an Ahmed (the son of Mustafa Pasha) and on this *zeamet* there were ten farm corporations. The record for one of them is quite interesting to mention. According to this, there was a farm of Bali (the son of Ali) and Koçi and the men in charge of this farm were the whole *ehl-i karye*, the *villagers* group of the village. If we say that the expenses of this farm are about 5,000 *akçe* the whole craftsmen of the village came together and pay the expenses.

In another record, it is written that in the village of Mavrokoste in the Timurhisar district there is a *zeamet timar* of Süleyman and his associates (*şüreka*). The records for the farm corporation on this *zeamet* are quite interesting:

Çiftlik-i Memi Çelebi bin Solak hala der yed-i Mustafa velediş  
Çiftlik-i Hüseyin Çelebi bin Solak merd-i timar hala der yed-i Ali  
velediş, voyvoda  
Çiftlik-i Piri Çelebi der yed-i mezbur  
Çiftlik-i Ahmed Çelebi merd-i timar hala der yed-i Mustafa el mezbur  
Çiftlik-i Kerim Çelebi bin Solak hala der yed-i Mustafa merd-i timar.<sup>290</sup>

In these examples, we see that all farm owners were prominent people since they had the title of “Çelebi”. Apart from this, as we see that as the of a *Solak* officer Memi had a farm in the area and assigned his son, Mustafa, as its person of charge. Hüseyin was the other son of this *Solak* officer and had both a *timar* and a farm. His son, Ali, was a *voyvoda* but took the responsibility of his father’s farm. This Ali also took the responsibility of the farm of Piri. Ahmed Çelebi had both a *timar* and a farm but gave his farm’s responsibility to Mustafa, the son of above mentioned Memi. Kerim was the third son of the same *Solak* and assigned Mustafa, who had also his own *timar*, as his contact person.

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<sup>290</sup> TKGM 187 fol. 28b-29b

These examples are enough to examine how farm corporations and partnerships established in the third quarter of the sixteenth century in the Ottoman Balkans. The important point is here that these were *miri* lands and the State allowed its *kapikulu* members to be a part of the economic operations on them as long as they paid their taxes.

It is noteworthy that in the region we have examined so far there were many farm corporations. The locations of these farms, however, makes easier to understand this situation. Timurhisar district, for instance, was in the territory of *liva-i Paşa* and located in the Aegean Macedonia where there were fertile soils, an active market and a port. If there were a fertile soil and a market or a port it is logical to expect to see farms around since the exploiters could sell their production in these markets or ports.

In such an earlier period of the Ottoman history, however, to see the members of the *kapikulu* institution, especially the Janissaries in the agricultural facilities is quite interesting. One can ask that: were those farms private properties; or did these *kapikulus* grasped the lands of the government possessions?

Barkan states that especially in the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century the revolts and disturbances along with the uncontrolled price movements gave a way to establishment of big farm units in the hands of the military class. Many peasants especially in Anatolia escaped from their villages to protect themselves from the bandits. And some lands became empty due to the plague epidemics. These undesirable events resulted in the emergence of the big farms and investing money agricultural facilities had always been a safe enterprise. He adds that people, who were benefitted from the inflation, moneylending, and such, began to buy the lands of the peasants, who were getting poorer, by the way of *murabaha* (lending money at an

illegal rate of interest).<sup>291</sup> In the edicts (*ferman*) such farm owners were warned to leave these lands and gave them back to their former owners, peasant *reaya*.<sup>292</sup>

The plantation-like farms, in the Ottoman Empire, were large in size and organized under a single ownership. This type of farms was mostly cultivated for the markets. Before the eighteenth century, they were generally established in the waste or abandoned lands (*mawat*) and usually the labor of slaves or sharecroppers used on them. They were organized under the freehold status (*mülk*) which was reclaimed by the private individuals who transferred these waste or abandoned lands to agricultural units. When their proclamations were approved by the State, they got a document which was called as *temlikname*. Since this process necessitated huge amount of capital, these private individuals were generally the members of the higher ruling elites. İnalçık states that even in the earlier periods, *reaya* could agree to supply extra work on these lands outside of their *timar* lands. Runaway or landless peasants could also work for them.<sup>293</sup> Through the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, however, *miri* lands began to be converted into the big farms, as the private estates. These were organized generally by the members of the *kapıkulu* officers in the provinces.<sup>294</sup>

In the perception of the central government, protecting the ability of the small peasant farms to survive and pay their taxes was in vital importance since the main economic structure of the empire based on the agricultural taxes. From this point, it can be understandable why the government did not prefer the tax-exempted members of the military class to have freeholding farms because this meant the cut in the tax

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<sup>291</sup> See Barkan, *Edirne Askerî Kassamı'na Âit Tereke Defterleri (1545-1659)*, p. 48-49.

<sup>292</sup> See Çağatay Uluçay, *Saruhan'da Eşkîyalık ve Halk Hareketleri*, Vol. I, 208-214; Barkan, *Edirne Askerî Kassamı'na Âit Tereke Defterleri (1545-1659)*, 48-50.

<sup>293</sup> See İnalçık, "The Emergence of Big Farms, Çiftlik: State, Landlords and Tenants", p. 108-109.

<sup>294</sup> Due to the continuous disturbances by the Celalis many peasant households left their farms and moved somewhere else. These big farms were generally constructed on these abandoned lands of the peasants. See İnalçık, "The Emergence of Big Farms, Çiftlik: State, Landlords and Tenants", p. 111.



incomes. In the law codes, thus, there were strict statements to prevent the division of the peasant's farms.<sup>295</sup>

Our examples, however, points to neither the big private lands (*mülk*) nor the plantation-like farms of the eighteenth century. In fact, as we see from the examples in the register that there was no illegal attempt to operate these farms because their owners, a *kapıkulu* or a peasant, had the possession right on these since they had the title deeds. If there was any kind of illegal situation we would see them in the court records instead of the cadastral registers. The noteworthy fact is here that the State has no objection for this. When we look at the village of Şugova in the Timurhisarı district, for instance, we see that there were sixteen farm corporations. In the six of them *kapıkulu* soldiers had title deeds.

To see the *kapıkulus* in the farming facilities, however, seems to create a foundation for the emergence of the peasant *kapıkulus* in around a century later even in the unpreferable geographic locations in the mountainous Rhodope regions. In his pioneer work, "Peasant Janissaries?", Evgeni Radoshev demonstrate that in the seventeenth century there were many demands from the peasants to the State to become a Janissary who eventually became one in their local villages. These people, however, were ordinary peasants who had a small plot of land to cultivate and paid their tax to the State. In the *avarız* tax register, which includes data for the towns of Şumnu, Eski Cuma, and Hezargrad in the Rhodope mountains in 1642-43, there is village called as Tersenik in which we see this kind of *kapıkulu* members in majority:

*Kul oğullarıdır.*<sup>296</sup>

*Ali bin Abdülkerim (/); Ramazan [bin] Abdülkerim (/); Hüseyin [bin] Şahmerdan (/); Alişah [bin] Merdan (/); İbrahim [bin] Ali (/); Hızır [bin] Pîrali (/); Hüseyin [bin] Pîrali (/).*

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<sup>295</sup> See Barkan, Edirne Askerî Kassamı'na Âit Tereke Defterleri (1545-1659), p. 48.

<sup>296</sup> The translation is "the sons of *kapıkulus*".

*Mustafa [bin] Arslan (/); Dursun [bin] Dur Bali (/); Mustafa [bin] Eynesi (/); Nebi, el-mütevelli (/); Musli [bin] Hüseyin (/); Ahmed [bin] İnal (/); Hüseyin [bin] İbrahim (/).  
Zalbeği [bin] Mustafa (/); Satılmış [bin] Şahmerdan (/); Mehmed [bin] Osman (/); Hasan [bin] Habib (/); Hasan [bin] Bayramlı (/); Kara Mehmed (/); Ali [bin] Kumral (/).  
Ali bin Mustafa (/); Hüseyin [bin] Kumral (/).*

*Esami-i cebeciyandır ki zikr olunur:*<sup>297</sup>

*Veli Beşe bin Mirza, bölük 5, mevcûd, çift 1; Bayram Beşe bin, bölük [...], mevcûd, çift 1; Bayram Beşe bin Zülkadır, bölük 15, mevcûd, çift 1; Hüseyin Beşe bin Abdullah, bölük 46, mevcûd, çift 1; Kurd Beşe bin Hızır, bölük [...], yokdur, çift 1 (/); Musa Beşe bin Resûl, yokdur, çift 1 (/).*

*Musa [bin] Abdullah, bölük 17, mevcûd, çift 1; Arslan [bin] Hüseyin, bölük kâtibi, mevcûd, çift 1; Dur Bali Beşe bin Kaya, bölük 14, mevcûd, çift 1; Memi Beşe bin Osman, bölük 14, mevcûd, çift 1; Süleyman [bin] Nazır, yokdur, çift 1 (/); Şahmerdan [bin] Osman, yokdur, çift 1 (/).*

*Ramazan [bin] Abdullah, bölük 23, mevcûd, çift 1; Ali [bin] Cihanbeği, bölük 30, mevcûd, çift 1; Osman Beşe bin Cihanbeği, râcil, mevcûd, çift 1; Sefer [bin] Eynebeği, cebeci, yokdur, çift 1 (/).*

*Esami-i sipahiyan ki sakindir der karye-i mezbûre:*<sup>298</sup>

*Receb Peyk bin [...], el-mütekaid, çift 1; Mustafa Peyk bin [...], çift 1; Mehmed Peyk bin [...], timâr sipahisidir, çift 1; diğer Mustafa Peyk bin [...], çift 1; İbrahim Peyk bin [...], çift 1.*

*Halil Peyk bin [...], çift 1; Mehmed Peyk bin [...], çift 1; Ramazan Peyk bin [...], çift 1; Yakub Peyk bin [...], çift 1; Ahmed Peyk bin [...], çift 1; Şaban Peyk bin [...], çift 1.*

*Hüseyin Peyk bin [...], timâr sipahisi, çift 1; Zallı Peyk bin [...], çift 1; Veli Peyk, çift 1; Eynesi Peyk bin [...], çift 1; Aslıhan Peyk, çift 1; Receb Peyk, çift 1.*

*Osman Peyk bin [...], çift 1; Salih Peyk bin [...], çift 1; diğer İbrahim Peyk bin [...], çift 1; Kurd Peyk bin [...], çift 1; Mehmed Peyk bin [...], çift 1.*

*Adil Peyk bin [...], çift 1; İlyas Peyk bin [...], çift 1; Mehmed Peyk bin [...], çift 1; Ali Peyk bin [...], çift 1; Sefer Peyk bin [...], çift 1; Ali Peyk bin [...], çift 1.*<sup>299</sup>

It seems that the presence of the *kapıkulus*, specifically the Janissaries, in the agricultural facilities from the second half of the sixteenth century onwards resulted

<sup>297</sup> The correct translation is “the names of the cebeciyân are as the followings”.

<sup>298</sup> The translation is “the names of the sipahiyan who live in this village”.

<sup>299</sup> BOA, TD 771, page 163.

with the militarization of the rural population in around an era. But then again, why did the Janissaries involve in the agricultural organizations?

Barkan notes that it is important to answer the presence of the *kapıkulu* members in the agricultural, trade and industrial activities in the towns or villages, where they stationed. He asks that how and when these well-educated soldiers left their barracks and spread into the towns and villages at the furthest corners of the empire and involved in other professions. He questions that since when, how and for what reason these people became chandlers, leather dealers, bakers, saddlers, or owners of coffee houses, or involved in the trade of leather, alum, linen and lumber, or turned out to be the tax-farmers (*mültezims*). He asks that whether these military class members began to deal with these professions or the civilians that occupied these jobs infiltrated into the military cadres to enjoy the privileges given to the members of this class.<sup>300</sup>

From the probate register that we have examined above, we can suggest that one of the answers to these questions should be searched in the financial situations of the *kapıkulu* members, especially the Janissaries. Since the majority of the assets displays that they lived under the poverty line, it seems that their motivation to involve in the non-military professions was to live a better life in economic terms. The *kapıkulu* cavalry regiments, however, show a different picture than these Janissary soldiers. The archival documents reveal that they always played an important role in the valuable revenue sources of the State. Before analyzing such documents, however, it is necessary to take a closer look of the operational systems that the State proceeded on these revenue sources.

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<sup>300</sup> See Barkan, *Edirne Askerî Kassamı'na Âit Tereke Defterleri (1545-1659)*, 59.

### 5.3 Kapıkulu Members in the Valuable Revenue Sources

The revenue collection was proceeded mainly by the tax-farming system in the Ottoman Empire. An appointed salaried commissioner of the government, known as *emin* (trusted person), could also do the tax-farming. In some cases, the Sultan assigned one of his servants, usually a member of *kapıkulu* cavalry regiments. This officer became responsible of collecting the revenue of the State and bringing it to the capital or to the recipient. If a revenue was collected by *emanet* system the officer in charge was called as *emin* who was assisted by a *kâtib* who was also assigned by the government. If the revenue was collected by *iltizam* system the attended officers were *mültezim* and his officials. İnalcık states that in 1528, around 30 percent of the total income of the central treasury came from the *muqataa* revenues of the regions of Rumelia, Anatolia, Damascus and Egypt. Not all of them, however, were brought to the central treasury because the transport costs were high and the security problems were valid. But then again, they were spent for the local expenditures, such as for the salaries of the soldiers or officers in that region.<sup>301</sup>

Since the state had the ownership of the *miri* lands, they could not be sold, donate or mortgaged by the possessors. The inheritance rights over this kind of land were also restricted. The possession rights, however, could be transferred. The *miri* lands had two main categories which were the *tapulu* (under the deed contract) and *mukataalu* (under the rental contract for a limited period) lands. Since we have examined the *tapulu* lands above, it is necessary to look at the *mukataalu* lands. The

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<sup>301</sup> See İnalcık, *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire*, p. 65.

*mukataalı* lands could be given to anybody, not only peasants, under a lease contract. The leaser did not have to cultivate the land or perform any services but had to pay the agreed amount of cash or *öşür* (tithes) to the State. But then again, he was free to rent the land to the third party.<sup>302</sup>

In the Ottoman fiscal budgets, there were three main categories. According to this, *avarız* and *nüzul* taxes were taken from the Muslim or non-Muslim reaya who had the right of possession on agricultural lands. *Cizye* tax was taken from healthy and working male non-Muslim reaya as the worth of imperial production. The third one was the *mukataa* taxes.<sup>303</sup>

From the classical period, apart from *timar*, the state revenues were organized as *mukata'as*. The state sometimes used these revenues by the way of *iltizam* or *emanet*. Literally *iltizam* means, in return for an annual payment, a private person's taking over the collection of a tax revenue which belonged to the state for a specified period. The person who was wishing to take the right to collect a revenue, called as *mültezim* (tax-farmer), would account his incomes and outcomes first, then specify his profit expectation and offer a bid in the auction. The person who got the right of tax-collecting, *iltizam*, would pay a certain amount in advance, called as *muaccele*, and pay the remaining amount in certain installments, called as *mal*. The installments could be monthly, quarterly or twice in a year. Generally, *iltizams* were given for three years (*tahvil*).<sup>304</sup>

In the *muqataa* organization, there were many officials with different functions. Some of them was responsible with the managing and operating the revenue

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<sup>302</sup> See İnalcık, *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire*, p. 139.

<sup>303</sup> Mehmet Genç, "Osmanlı Maliyetisinde Mukataa Kavramı", 57-64, in *Osmanlı Maliyesi Kurumlar ve Bütçeler V*. I Ed. Mehmet Genç and Erol Özvar (İstanbul, 2006), 61.

<sup>304</sup> Linda Darling, *Revenue-Raising and Legitimacy*, 194-195.

source. *Emin* officer was the head of the enterprise. He was its collector and manager. He was the supervisor and decision maker for his attended *muqataa*. In the *has* lands or land properties this official could be *voyvoda*, *müsellim* or *mütesellim*, or *mütevelli*. *Voyvoda* was the financial supervisor in a *kaza*. *Müsellim* or *mütesellim* was the financial agent of a *sancak*. *Mütevelli* was the supervisor of a waqf. Linda Darling states that an *iltizam* could consist of sub-forming portions of a revenue which involved another layer of officials. She notes that in urban districts a number of *muqataas* could be consolidated under one or few major *mültezims*, who could rent out the *muqataas* of their *iltizam* to others. Similarly, in the rural districts same process could be organized in vast area of the territory. This shows a pyramidal hierarchy of tax farmers of which the upper levels dealt directly with the state. Among this upper level there were generally the prominent military-administrative officials like the heads of the *kapıkulu* cavalry units or the chiefs of the Janissary corps, or *sancak beys* and provincial governors. The attended officers could be recompensed from the *emanet* or *iltizam* revenues.<sup>305</sup>

The reasons of the Ottoman Empire to apply to *iltizam* system widely, like other Near-Eastern Empires, were mainly the technical, economical and bureaucratic difficulties of protecting and collecting the state revenues, especially when the taxes were in product typed. In the war times, to be able to cover the military maintenance and expenses, the state treasury had been frequently in the need of cash.<sup>306</sup> In the second half of the sixteenth century, the long and costly wars with the Safavids in the east and Habsburgs in the west were creating a serious burden on the treasury. In

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<sup>305</sup> Linda Darling, *Revenue-Raising and Legitimacy*, 129-132.

<sup>306</sup> Şevket Pamuk, "Osmanlı Devleti'nin İç Borçlanma Kurumlarının Evrimi, 1600-1850", 27-38, in *Osmanlı Maliyesi Kurumlar ve Bütçeler V*. I Ed. Mehmet Genç and Erol Özvar (İstanbul, 2006), 27-28; L. Darling, "Osmanlı Maliye Tarihinde Gelir-Toplama ve Meşrutiyet", 39-50, in *Osmanlı Maliyesi Kurumlar ve Bütçeler V*. I Ed. Mehmet Genç and Erol Özvar (İstanbul, 2006), 43-44.

addition to this, the State had to increase the numbers of the soldiers to cope with the enemies in the battle fields. More soldiers, however, meant more burden on the treasury. To compensate this unbalanced situation, the State began to extend the scope of the *iltizam* system in the second half of the sixteenth century.

Linda Darling states that in the second half of the sixteenth century bidders requested salaries and positions in the *iltizam* and also positions in the governmental offices to guarantee continuous salary and status which in some cases provided by the government. She adds that -effective bidders of *iltizam*, the *mültezims*, created the conditions to appoint the military members to the tax-collecting positions.<sup>307</sup> She also underlines the benefit of using them in these positions for the State's behalf. She notes that this situation made them busy during the off-war seasons and also afforded to them extra income which protected the central treasury from the burden of the obligation to raise the salaries. In the end, the presence of standing cavalry soldiers in the profitable assignments like *cizye* collection reached to nearly 80 percent by the middle of the sixteenth century.<sup>308</sup>

There must be another benefit of the State to assign the members of the *kapıkulu* cavalry regiments as the tax collectors. After all, it was the State itself enlisted them into the *devshirme* system, then put into a serious elimination process, and consequently well trained, educated, and equipped them and transformed them into trustful representatives of the central authority that could be assigned to any post in each corner of the empire. Who else could provide the safety of the flow of the revenues to the central treasury other than them!

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<sup>307</sup> Linda Darling, *Revenue-Raising and Legitimacy*, 149-151.

<sup>308</sup> *Ibid.* 170-171.

In the *mevacib* (salary) register we have examined in the previous chapter, for instance, there is section showing that the *kapıkulu* cavalry soldiers were appointed as *yasakçı* officers into almost each important revenue sources in the first quarter of the sixteenth century. If we consider their presence in the precious revenue sources like silver mines, customs offices, rice fields, salt pools and coin mint centers and their roles in these spots as the managers and operators of the facilities we can come to the conclusion that their parts in the State economic facilities began much earlier times.

Pakalın describes the meaning of *yasakçı* as the safeguard officer. He adds that before the *Tanzimat* era for the protection of the foreign ambassadors the Janissaries were assigned and they were also called by this name.<sup>309</sup> Sometimes *kulluk* and *yasakçı* were used as their synonyms and described as the Janissary officers in the towns that were responsible of the public order like police forces, who were appointed among from the experienced Janissary officers. Uzunçarşılı notes that who assigned for town services known as *kulluk* but the ones who were appointed to the provinces or at the gates of the fortresses called as *yasakçı*.<sup>310</sup> There is also another meaning of this terms which was mentioned in the *yasaknames*, law codes, of the fifteenth century so often. According to this, the officers that were assigned from the center and deployed to regulate the prohibitions on a certain matter were also called with this title.<sup>311</sup>

Özer Ergenç suggests that the *yasakçı* organization was established as a need of the law enforcement agency during the late 16<sup>th</sup> century. He explains that until that time public order was organized by the members of executive class (*ehl-i örf*) and Muslim judges (*kadı*), but due to the increasing disturbances and banditry facilities in late sixteenth century these officers could not manage the order any more. Thus, the

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<sup>309</sup> Pakalın, *Osmanlı Tarih Deyimleri ve Terimleri Sözlüğü* vol. 3, p. 606.

<sup>310</sup> Uzunçarşılı, *Kapıkulu Ocakları* Vol. I, p. 196-197, 324.

<sup>311</sup> Emine Dingeeç, "16. Ve 17. Yüzyıllarda Taşra'da Yasakçılar" *CIEPO* 18: (2008) p. 933.



state began to appoint the *kapıkulus* with this title to secure the peace and safety where it was needed. Ergenç, however, points to another type of *yasakçı* officers which functioned as enforcement forces during the chaotic atmosphere of the late sixteenth century.<sup>312</sup>

There was, however, another kind of *yasakçı* officer. In the law codes from the time of Mehmed II and Bayezid II, there were records for *yasakkulu* and *yasakçıkulu* officers as who were responsible in the strategic revenue sources such as silver mines, salt mines, fishponds, coin mints, customs and their operations. They regulated the prohibitions and rules in these spots and also were responsible of collecting the revenues for the state treasury.<sup>313</sup> In our register under the title of “defter-i yasaknâme-i cedîd” (the register of new code of law), there are records of the important revenue spots of this type. It is noteworthy to mention that as we see from the register only the members of the *kapıkulu* cavalry regiments were appointed in these spots.

İnalçık states that in 1527-28, the highest revenue in the Ottoman Empire came from Rumelia region which was 198 million *akçe*.<sup>314</sup> The majority of the state revenues was disbursed for the salaries of the soldiers and officers. Having such a huge army and numerous garrisons meant the continuous need for liquid cash for the centralized authority. It was important, thus, to get the control of favorable mines of silver and gold, along with the prominent trade centers and roads. The rich mines of this kind in Serbia and Bosnia, therefore, became the matter of struggle between the Ottomans, Hungary and Italian states since the time of Murad I. It was during the reign of

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<sup>312</sup> Özer Ergenç, *XVI. Yüzyılda Ankara ve Konya*, (Ankara: Ankara Enst. Vakfı, 1995), 72.

<sup>313</sup> Emine Dingec, p. 933.

<sup>314</sup> See İnalçık, *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire*, p. 79, 82.

Mehmed II, the Ottomans achieved to take them under their control in the period 1435-1465.

Apart from these, salt was very precious substance in the Ottoman era since it was sine qua non for mankind nutrition and preserving meat and vegetables. Mines and beds of salt, thus, were designated as the state properties but to guarantee its continuous production the private enterprises were encouraged by the central authority in return of one fifth of the product.<sup>315</sup> When we look at the records in the register, in fact, we see that almost all of these important revenue spots were taken under protection of the *kapıkulu* cavalry soldiers as *yasakçıs*. Some of these recorded revenues and their spots were the salt mines (*memleha*) of Ahiyolu, Kavak, İnos, Aydın, Novi, Tuna, Avlonya, Kozluca, Tuzla, İneçik, Selanik, Mora, Tekfur Gölü, Eğri; the rice plants (*çeltük*) of Filibe, Tatarpazarı, Siroz, Dırama; the fishponds (*dalyan*) of *Istanbul*, Galata, İneçik, İskele, Kili; the customs (*gümrük*) of *Istanbul*, Galata, Kili, Gelibolu; the coin mints (*darphane*) of Bursa, Amasya, Konya, Edirne, *Istanbul*, Üsküp, Halep; the mines (*maden*) of Blasiçe (?), Novebirda, Kratova, Sireveniçe.

These records also present another important fact that the members of the *kapıkulu* institution were already in a significant position in the economic and administrative regulations in the towns and provinces at least during the first quarter of the sixteenth century. They were the esteemed members of *kapıkulu* organization, specifically from the units of *ebna-i sipahiyan*, *silahdaran*, *ulufeciyan-i yemîn* and *ulufeciyan-i yesar*. As we learn from a side notice (*der kenar*) they were paid from the places that they were assigned. They were assigned to these very profitable sources as

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<sup>315</sup> Ibid. 58-60.

the trustful representatives of the Sultan's law and well-educated agents of the central authority. It is noteworthy information that in the record we see the sign of the corporation groups that had already began among these *kapıkulu* units. The attended officer of the customs of *Istanbul* and Galata, for instance, was Mustafa from Bosnia, an *ebna-i sipahiyan* and an associate of the head of Janissary corps (*ağa-i yeniçeriyân*).

In another type of register, a *nüzül* register from 1542/43, for instance, we see that all tax collectors were appointed from the *kapıkulu* cavalry units. *Nüzül* was a tax kind that was taken during the extra ordinary times, especially to meet the subsistence expenditures of the army in or after a campaign. It was taken in kind of the agricultural products of cereals and grains. After the second half of the sixteenth century, however, it became a permanent tax and began to collect in terms of cash.<sup>316</sup> In addition to this, our source shows that it was collected by the *kapıkulus* as we can see in the table below.<sup>317</sup>

**Table 24: Kapıkulus as Nüzül Tax Collectors, 1542/43**

Region and Districts	Appointed Officers
Liva-i Paşa	
Kaza-i Nevrekop	Ebnâ-i Sipahiyân
Kaza-i Pirlepe	Ebnâ-i Sipahiyân
Kaza-i Dırâma	Ebnâ-i Sipahiyân
Kaza-i Zihna	Silahdarân
Kaza-i Timurhisar	Silahdarân
Kaza-i Karaferiye	Ebnâ-i Sipahiyân
Kaza-i Yenice-i Vardar	Ebnâ-i Sipahiyân

<sup>316</sup> Ömer İşbilir, "Nüzül" in DİA, p. 311-312.

<sup>317</sup> BOA MAD 118 fol. 1a-5b.

Kaza-i Florine	Silahdarân
Kaza-i Köprülü	Ebnâ-i Sipahiyân
Kaza-i Serfiçe	Ebnâ-i Sipahiyân
Kaza-i Manastır	Ebnâ-i Sipahiyân
Kaza-i Siroz	Ulufeciyân-i Yemîn
Kaza-i Kalkandelen	Ebnâ-i Sipahiyân
Kaza-i Kırçova	Silahdarân
Liva-i Vidin	Gurebâ-i Yesâr
Kaza-i Fühüislam	Gurebâ-i Yesâr
Kaza-i İsfirlik	Silahdarân
Liva-i Niğbolu	
Kaza-i İvraca	Silahdarân
Kaza-i Lofça	Ulufeciyân-i Yemîn
Kaza-i Niğbolu	Ebnâ-i Sipahiyân
Kaza-i Tirnovi	Ebnâ-i Sipahiyân
Kaza-i Şumnu	Ebnâ-i Sipahiyân
Kaza-i Çernovi	Silahdarân
Kaza-i Hezargrad	Silahdarân
Liva-i Alacahisar	
Kaza-i Niş	Silahdarân
Kaza-i Alacahisar	Silahdarân
Kaza-i Pruş (?)	Ulufeciyân-i Yesâr
Kaza-i Ürgüp	Silahdarân
Liva-i Vılçitrın	
Kaza-i Vılçitrın	Silahdarân
Kaza-i Novaberde	Ebnâ-i Sipahiyân
Kaza-i Priştine	Gurebâ-i Yemîn

Liva-i Köstendil	
Kaza-i Ilıca	Silahdarân
Kaza-i Ustrumca	Ebnâ-i Sipahiyân
Kaza-i Kıratova	Ebnâ-i Sipahiyân
Kaza-i İvraniye	Ulufeciyân-i Yemîn
Liva-i Prizrin	
Kaza-i Prizrin	Silahdarân
Kaza-i Hotor (?) / Potor (?)	Ulufeciyân-i Yemîn
Kaza-i Travnik	Ulufeciyân-i Yemîn
Liva-i Tırhala	
Kaza-i Tırhala	Silahdarân
Kaza-i Alasonya	Gurebâ-i Yemîn
Kaza-i Fenar	Ulufeciyân-i Yemîn
Kaza-i Saliç (?)	Ulufeciyân-i Yemîn
Kaza-i Yenişehir	Gurebâ-i Yemîn
Liva-i Sofya	
Kaza-i Sofya	Ebnâ-i Sipahiyân
Kaza-i Şehirköy	Silahdarân
Kaza-i Berkofçe	Silahdarân
Liva-i Filibe	
Kaza-i Filibe	Ebnâ-i Sipahiyân
Kaza-i Tatarpazarı	Gurebâ-i Yesâr
Kaza-i Samako	Ebnâ-i Sipahiyân

In an *iltizam* register from 1550/51, we again see their role as the *emin* (trusted) officers of the State to collect the *has* revenues:

*Emânet-i hassa-i Görlice an tahvîl-i Mehmed Paşa has şod der uhde-i Ali bin Hüseyin ulufeciyân-i yesâr.*

*Emânet-i hassa-i Zihna ve Drama ve gayrihi ki an tahvîl-i Mehmed Paşa hass şod der uhde-i Ali bin Sefer an silahdarân ki eda-i hizmet tezkere.*

*Emânet-i hassa-i Pirlepe ve Morihova ki an tahvîl-i Mehmed Paşa hass şod der uhde-i Hamza-i Kalkandelen an ebnâ-i sipahiyân der bölük-I 110 (/) bunun der uhdesi bitince diğeri Emr olundu (/) Taleb (/) Mustafa bin İskender an cemaât-i ulufeciyân-i yemîn der bölük-i 2 fi yevm 10 ber muceb-i defter-i vilâyet sene 111,689.*

*Emânet-i hassa-i Timurhisarı vilâyetinin Sidrekapsi (kazası) ki an tahvîl-i Mehmed Paşa hass şod; (/) Emr olundu (/) Taleb (/) İskender teberdâr an silahdâr bölük 22 fi yevm 17 ber muceb-i defter-i vilâyet sene 68,616*

*Emânet-i hassa-i Karaferye ki an tahvîl-i Mehmed Paşa hass şod der uhde-i Haydar gulâm-i der, an silahdarân; (/) Emr olundu (/) Taleb (/) Hasan Mustafa an silahdarân bölük 30 fi yevm 13 (/) Ber muceb-i defter-i vilâyet fi sene 90,427.*

*Emanet-i hassa-i Niş ve Semendere an tahvîl-i Mehmed Paşa hass şod der uhde-i Hıdır-i Mora an ebnâ-i sipahiyân ki an tahvîl-i Mehmed Paşa hass şod; (/) Emr olundu (/) Taleb (/) Mehmed bin Hasan ulufeciyân-i yesâr bölük 22 fi yevm 11 (/) Ber muceb-i defter-i vilâyet fi sene 66,500*

*Emanet-i hassa-i Niğbolu ki an tahvil-i Mehmed Paşa hass şod der uhde-i Hızır Narda an silahdaran (/) Emr olundu (/) Taleb (/) Mehmed bin İbrahim an ebna-i sipahiyân bölük 9 fi yevm 12 (/) Ber muceb-i defter-i vilâyet fi sene 87,466*

*Emanet-i hassa-i Vilçitrın Mehmed Paşa uhde-i Pir Mehmed bin Ömer an ebna-i sipahiyân fi sene 53,710 der uhde-i mezbur nâm mande*

*Emânet-i hassa-i Tırhala ve İnebahtı ki an tahvîl-i Mehmed Paşa hass şod der uhde-i Mustafa bin İbrahim an ebnâ-i sipahiyân der uhde-i mezbur nâm mande Ber muceb-i defter-i vilâyet fi sene 63,690*

*Emânet-i hassa-i Serfiçe ve tevabiha (Makedonya) der hassa-i Mehmed Paşa ki hassa-i hümayûn ilhak şod der uhde-i Mustafa bin İbrahim an ebnâ-i sipahiyân. Der uhde-i mezbur 76,486.<sup>318</sup>*

According to this, the former *hass* of a Mehmed Pasha was confiscated by the State (*hassa-i hümayûn ilhak şod*), divided into pieces through *mukataa* and taken under the tax collecting method of *emanet*. The State appointed the officers from the *kapıkulu*

<sup>318</sup> BOA MAD 141 Fol. 4a-5a.

cavalry units as its trusted (*emin*) agents to collect and bring these revenues into the central treasury. As we see the the *kapıkulu* cavalry units as the trusted agents of the State were always in close contact with the high amount of money. Through the end of the sixteenth century they would compose the majority also in the *iltizam* tax collection method.

The *yasakçı* officers, in fact, were the enforcer of *iltizam* regulations. Darling notes that she did not come across with them in the seventeenth century documents, but came across with few examples from the late sixteenth century registers.<sup>319</sup> We see, however, they played a major role in these posts in the first quarter of the sixteenth century. After a decade, this time we see them as the *emin* (trusted) agents of the Sultan to collect the taxes by the *mukataa* system. This is not a surprising fact since they were the experienced officers of such revenue sources and the business took part on them. In the same century, they would also be the officers who profited from the *iltizam* system as being the *mültezims*. This picture also disproves the discussion in the literature that suggests the *kapıkulu* circles found a crack in the system by using the advantageous of the socio-economic crises of the late sixteenth century and made their purse rich. On the contrary, we see from the registers they were already at the profitable spots during the reign of Süleyman I.

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<sup>319</sup> Linda Darling, *Revenue-Raising and Legitimacy*, 131.

## CONCLUSION

In this study, I have questioned one of the main wheels of the Ottoman central authority, the kapıkulu institution, and its organizational features in terms of their human factors. I have done so under the three main categories through three distinct case studies. For the first, I investigated the conscription methods of the devshirme system, by which the future military and administrative cadres of the Ottoman state were selected. Secondly, I examined the administrative and organizational structure of the kapıkulu institution. Thirdly, I looked at the roles of the kapıkulus in the state's fiscal organizations.

In the first category, I examined the kapıkulu members' recruitment process through devshirme system. In this part, I utilized the contents of two conscription registers, respectively from late fifteenth and early seventeenth centuries. I scrutinized the age range, physical features, the numbers, and the origins of the youths that were taken into the devshirme system in order to identify the criteria used by the state in selecting its future military and administrators. The registers that I examined in this section provide information about the age range of the youths selected into the system in different time periods. They reveal that in the late fifteenth century, the state preference for the age range of the youths varied between twelve and fifteen years of age. In the early seventeenth century, however, the age range shows wide variation,



with youths between the ages of eleven and twenty being recruited. The physical features of the conscripted youths recorded in the registers reveal that the majority of the enlisted youths were either tall or of average height. Although youths of shorter height were also taken into the system, they were not many in number.

The records also contain information about how many youths were collected for each conscription. The earlier of the two registers shows that the conscriptions—at least in the late fifteenth century—were carried out in different parts of the Balkans, but not in Anatolia. The register shows that generally one, two, or three youths were collected from the same village. If it was a town center (*nefs*), however, this number could rise to ten or fifteen, since these places were much more crowded than the villages. The data from the conscription registers about the total number of the youths enlisted in one campaign present an opportunity to reconsider the role of devshirme system in the overall process of demographic change. In fact, it seems that there was a balance between the population of a place and the number of the youths collected from there, with a ratio of roughly one youth per forty households. Although this ratio does not seem to have been used as a strict rule, it can be said that a kind of balance was considered by the recruitment officers.

In terms of the origins of the devshirme youths, we have seen that although the devshirme regulation was applied to the reaya peasants in the majority of the registers, the military circles of Eflakân and Voynugân were also subjected to the system, at least in the late fifteenth century. In the early seventeenth-century register, on the other hand, we have seen that the conscriptions were also conducted in the Anatolian regions and that the Muslim population in these territories was also subjected to the devshirme system. All the data I have gathered from these registers show how the devshirme system functioned as a bridge between the ruling cadres and the ones who were ruled,

and reveal the state's criteria in choosing its future military and administrative cadres in different time periods.

In the second category, I examined the process of educating and training these future members of the military and administrative cadre in the institutional organization and looked at how this process determined their positions in the different governmental and military cadres. In this section, I first examined the process through which the Ottomans established a firm standing army, and thus consolidated the central authority. I also reevaluated the training program the devshirme-origin youths underwent both in the barracks and in the palace schools and the methods through which they become a part of the Ottoman army and administrative offices, as well as representatives of the central authority. In this chapter, I also examined a *mevâcib* (salary) register from the first quarter of the sixteenth century. This register detailed the exact population of each kapıkulu regiment in the period and the total amount of their annual salaries.

In this chapter, I also examined how the state molded the youths who were taken into the kapıkulu institution through the devshirme system as a bridge between the ruling cadres and the ones who were ruled. We saw how the state transformed these young peasants into the representatives of the central authority through the kapıkulu institution. I also examined how these people then functioned in the state organization and how their mobilization was conducted within the regiments at both the bureaucratic and administrative levels.

In the third category, I evaluated the role of the kapıkulus in the state's fiscal organizations. Doing so also revealed information about their economic status and financial well-being. In this part, we saw from a *muhalefât* (probate) register how the

wealth distribution among a small group of Janissaries on the battlefield could show variation during the early seventeenth century. I also examined in this section the roles of the kapıkulus in the fiscal revenue sources. The data I gathered from some fiscal documents showed that the kapıkulus were already present and involved in the revenue sources as the collectors of *iltizam*, *emanet*, and *mukataa* in the first half of the sixteenth century. I also showed that they were present the *raiyyet* farms in the Balkan regions in the same period. All the data I have gathered from these registers shows how the state strengthened its central authority by appointing its direct representatives, the kapıkulus, into each corner of the state's fiscal organizations from the late fifteenth to the mid-seventeenth century.

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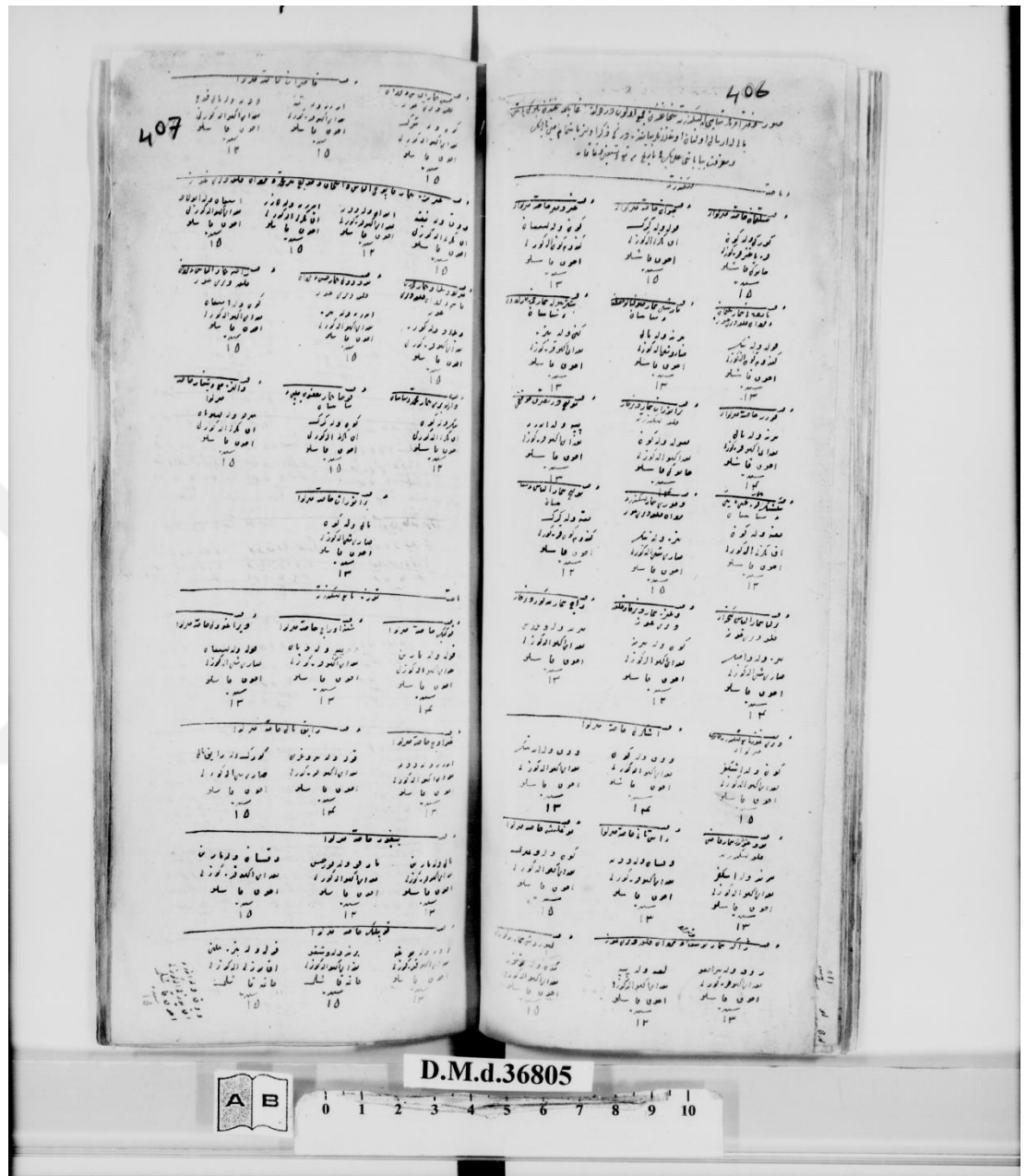
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## APPENDIX





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499  
498  
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D.M.d.36805



باد کوه بود  
باز بیاست  
بند کوه در این قاشان  
بهرای آکل و در شرب بود

باب اول در بیان

عادت حاجی در سفر از سر راه کوه قاشان  
بدر کوه بود  
مانند عمارت کوه  
شیر کوه در این قاشان  
بهرای آکل و در شرب بود

باب دوم در بیان

عادت حاجی در سفر از سر راه کوه قاشان  
بدر کوه بود  
مانند عمارت کوه  
شیر کوه در این قاشان  
بهرای آکل و در شرب بود

باب سوم در بیان

عادت حاجی در سفر از سر راه کوه قاشان  
بدر کوه بود  
مانند عمارت کوه  
شیر کوه در این قاشان  
بهرای آکل و در شرب بود

باب چهارم در بیان

عادت حاجی در سفر از سر راه کوه قاشان  
بدر کوه بود  
مانند عمارت کوه  
شیر کوه در این قاشان  
بهرای آکل و در شرب بود

باب پنجم در بیان

عادت حاجی در سفر از سر راه کوه قاشان  
بدر کوه بود  
مانند عمارت کوه  
شیر کوه در این قاشان  
بهرای آکل و در شرب بود

باب ششم در بیان

عادت حاجی در سفر از سر راه کوه قاشان  
بدر کوه بود  
مانند عمارت کوه  
شیر کوه در این قاشان  
بهرای آکل و در شرب بود

بهر کوه بود  
بند کوه در این قاشان  
بهرای آکل و در شرب بود

باب هفتم در بیان

عادت حاجی در سفر از سر راه کوه قاشان  
بدر کوه بود  
مانند عمارت کوه  
شیر کوه در این قاشان  
بهرای آکل و در شرب بود

باب هشتم در بیان

عادت حاجی در سفر از سر راه کوه قاشان  
بدر کوه بود  
مانند عمارت کوه  
شیر کوه در این قاشان  
بهرای آکل و در شرب بود

باب نهم در بیان

عادت حاجی در سفر از سر راه کوه قاشان  
بدر کوه بود  
مانند عمارت کوه  
شیر کوه در این قاشان  
بهرای آکل و در شرب بود

باب دهم در بیان

عادت حاجی در سفر از سر راه کوه قاشان  
بدر کوه بود  
مانند عمارت کوه  
شیر کوه در این قاشان  
بهرای آکل و در شرب بود

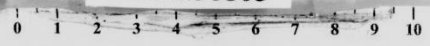
باب یازدهم در بیان

عادت حاجی در سفر از سر راه کوه قاشان  
بدر کوه بود  
مانند عمارت کوه  
شیر کوه در این قاشان  
بهرای آکل و در شرب بود

باب بیستم در بیان

عادت حاجی در سفر از سر راه کوه قاشان  
بدر کوه بود  
مانند عمارت کوه  
شیر کوه در این قاشان  
بهرای آکل و در شرب بود

D.M.d.36805

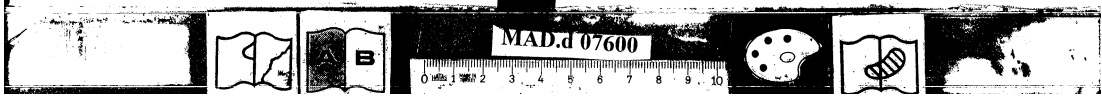


BOA MAD 7600:

The image displays an open manuscript with two pages of handwritten Arabic text and musical notation. The notation consists of a series of horizontal lines with various symbols and characters written above and below them. The text is written in a cursive script. At the bottom of the manuscript, there is a ruler and a label that reads "MAD.d 07600". The ruler shows measurements in centimeters, ranging from 0 to 10. The manuscript is mounted on a dark background, and the pages are slightly aged and show some wear.

— 00 —

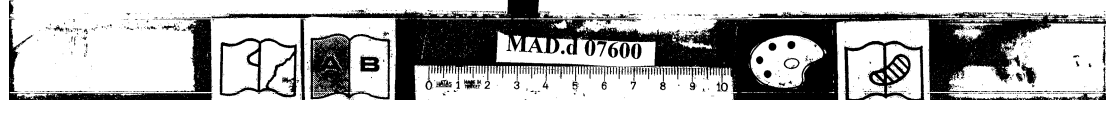
Handwritten text in Arabic script, organized into columns and rows. The text is dense and appears to be a list or a series of entries. There are some markings and lines between the columns, possibly indicating different sections or items. The handwriting is somewhat cursive and difficult to read in detail.



Handwritten text in Arabic script, organized into columns and rows. The text appears to be a list or a series of entries, possibly related to a manuscript or a collection of items. The script is dense and fills most of the page area.

Handwritten notes or a signature in Arabic script, located in the upper right corner of the page. It includes some illegible characters and possibly a name or title.

3





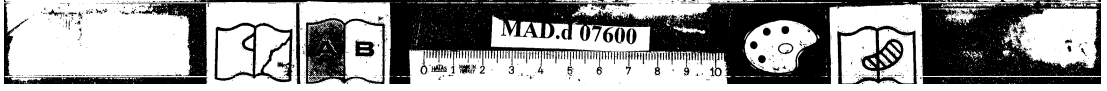
Handwritten text in Arabic script, organized into columns and rows. The text appears to be a list or index of items, possibly related to a library or collection. The entries are written in a cursive style and include various numbers and words.

MAD.d 07600





Handwritten text in a cursive script, likely Persian or Arabic, arranged in columns on two pages. The text is dense and appears to be a list or a series of entries, possibly related to a historical or administrative document. The script is highly stylized and difficult to read without specialized knowledge of the language.

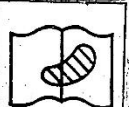
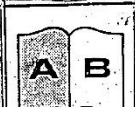




Handwritten text in Arabic script, organized into columns and rows. The text appears to be a list or a series of entries, possibly related to a manuscript or a collection of documents. The script is dense and fills most of the page area.



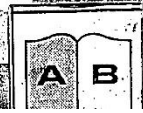
MAD d 00023



Handwritten text in Arabic script, organized into columns and rows. The text appears to be a list or index of items, possibly related to a library or collection. The script is dense and fills most of the page area.



MAD d 00023



سواله هدی العبدی تیر ۹۲۴

سواله هدی العبدی تیر ۹۲۴

عاشقانه در کمال  
بدری بگریم بوزگانه  
عاشقانه در کمال  
بدری بگریم بوزگانه

عاشقانه در کمال  
بدری بگریم بوزگانه  
عاشقانه در کمال  
بدری بگریم بوزگانه

عاشقانه در کمال  
بدری بگریم بوزگانه  
عاشقانه در کمال  
بدری بگریم بوزگانه

عاشقانه در کمال  
بدری بگریم بوزگانه  
عاشقانه در کمال  
بدری بگریم بوزگانه

عاشقانه در کمال  
بدری بگریم بوزگانه  
عاشقانه در کمال  
بدری بگریم بوزگانه

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بدری بگریم بوزگانه  
عاشقانه در کمال  
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بدری بگریم بوزگانه  
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بدری بگریم بوزگانه  
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بدری بگریم بوزگانه

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بدری بگریم بوزگانه  
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بدری بگریم بوزگانه

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بدری بگریم بوزگانه  
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بدری بگریم بوزگانه

عاشقانه در کمال  
بدری بگریم بوزگانه  
عاشقانه در کمال  
بدری بگریم بوزگانه

عاشقانه در کمال  
بدری بگریم بوزگانه  
عاشقانه در کمال  
بدری بگریم بوزگانه

AB

MAD d 00023









تاریخ تالیفات استاد

ردیف	عنوان	تاریخ
۱	تفسیر قرآن مجید	۱۳۰۵
۲	تفسیر احادیث	۱۳۰۶
۳	تفسیر روایات	۱۳۰۷
۴	تفسیر کتب معتبره	۱۳۰۸
۵	تفسیر کتب معتبره	۱۳۰۹
۶	تفسیر کتب معتبره	۱۳۱۰
۷	تفسیر کتب معتبره	۱۳۱۱
۸	تفسیر کتب معتبره	۱۳۱۲
۹	تفسیر کتب معتبره	۱۳۱۳
۱۰	تفسیر کتب معتبره	۱۳۱۴

ردیف	عنوان	تاریخ
۱	تفسیر کتب معتبره	۱۳۱۵
۲	تفسیر کتب معتبره	۱۳۱۶
۳	تفسیر کتب معتبره	۱۳۱۷
۴	تفسیر کتب معتبره	۱۳۱۸
۵	تفسیر کتب معتبره	۱۳۱۹
۶	تفسیر کتب معتبره	۱۳۲۰
۷	تفسیر کتب معتبره	۱۳۲۱
۸	تفسیر کتب معتبره	۱۳۲۲
۹	تفسیر کتب معتبره	۱۳۲۳
۱۰	تفسیر کتب معتبره	۱۳۲۴



Handwritten notes in Persian script, organized into several sections with headings and sub-headings. The text includes various numbers, names, and descriptive phrases, possibly related to administrative or financial records.

**Section 1 (Top Left):** Includes a heading "کتابخانه" (Library) and lists of names and numbers, such as "کتابخانه شماره ۱" and "کتابخانه شماره ۲".

**Section 2 (Top Right):** Contains a heading "کتابخانه" and lists of names and numbers, including "کتابخانه شماره ۳" and "کتابخانه شماره ۴".

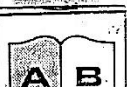
**Section 3 (Middle Left):** Features a heading "کتابخانه" and lists of names and numbers, such as "کتابخانه شماره ۵" and "کتابخانه شماره ۶".

**Section 4 (Middle Right):** Includes a heading "کتابخانه" and lists of names and numbers, including "کتابخانه شماره ۷" and "کتابخانه شماره ۸".

**Section 5 (Bottom Left):** Contains a heading "کتابخانه" and lists of names and numbers, such as "کتابخانه شماره ۹" and "کتابخانه شماره ۱۰".

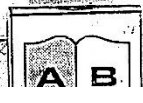
**Section 6 (Bottom Right):** Includes a heading "کتابخانه" and lists of names and numbers, including "کتابخانه شماره ۱۱" and "کتابخانه شماره ۱۲".

MAD d 00023



Handwritten notes and tables in Arabic script, organized into columns and rows. The text includes various numbers, names, and descriptive phrases, possibly representing a ledger or a list of items. The handwriting is dense and fills most of the page.

MAD d 00023



لن ...  
 لن ...  
 لن ...  
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لن ...  
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 لن ...  
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لن ...  
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 لن ...  
 لن ...

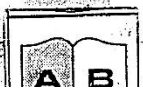
لن ...  
 لن ...  
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لن ...  
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لن ...  
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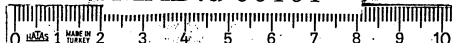
لن ...  
 لن ...  
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لن ...  
 لن ...  
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 لن ...



Handwritten musical notation on a manuscript page, featuring a central staff with a large upward-pointing arrow. The page is filled with dense handwritten text in Arabic script, organized into several systems. Each system includes a line of musical notation (likely a vocal line) with corresponding lyrics written below it. There are also smaller tables or grids of numbers and symbols interspersed within the text, possibly representing rhythmic patterns or tablature. The handwriting is in a traditional style, and the overall layout is dense and detailed.

MAD.d 00101



Handwritten header text in Arabic script, possibly a title or reference.

Handwritten musical notation on a staff with various notes and symbols.

Below the staff, there are several lines of handwritten text and numbers, including:

- 13443
- 12163

Handwritten header text in Arabic script, similar to the top of the page.

Handwritten musical notation on a staff with various notes and symbols.

Below the staff, there are several lines of handwritten text and numbers, including:

- 118800
- 7770
- 7210
- 7210
- 7210

Handwritten musical notation on a staff with various notes and symbols.

Below the staff, there are several lines of handwritten text and numbers, including:

- 7210
- 7210
- 7210

Handwritten header text in Arabic script.

Handwritten musical notation on a staff with various notes and symbols.

Below the staff, there are several lines of handwritten text and numbers, including:

- 1800
- 1800
- 1800
- 1800
- 1800

Handwritten musical notation on a staff with various notes and symbols.

Below the staff, there are several lines of handwritten text and numbers, including:

- 1800
- 1800
- 1800

Handwritten header text in Arabic script.

Handwritten musical notation on a staff with various notes and symbols.

Below the staff, there are several lines of handwritten text and numbers, including:

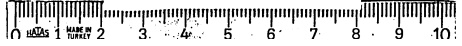
- 1800
- 1800
- 1800
- 1800
- 1800

Handwritten musical notation on a staff with various notes and symbols.

Below the staff, there are several lines of handwritten text and numbers, including:

- 1800
- 1800
- 1800

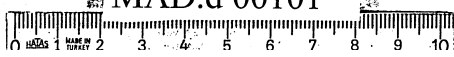
MAD.d 00101



Handwritten musical notation on the left page, featuring multiple staves with notes and lyrics in Arabic script. The text is dense and covers most of the page area.

Handwritten musical notation on the right page, featuring multiple staves with notes and lyrics in Arabic script. The text is dense and covers most of the page area.

MAD.d 00101





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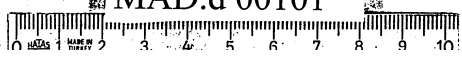
۴۰

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MAD.d 00101





Handwritten manuscript page with musical notation and text. The page is divided into two columns by a vertical line. The left column contains ten systems of notation, each starting with a large number '28' and a smaller number '28'. The right column contains ten systems of notation, each starting with a large number '13' and a smaller number '13'. Each system includes musical notation on a staff, with various symbols and numbers written below it. The text is in Arabic script.

MAD.d 00101

