

SECTION III REGIONAL ISSUES

“PEASANT” JANISSARIES?

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In the second volume of the monumental sequence “Osmanlı Kanunnameleri”, compiled by A. Akgündüz, there is an interesting law (*Devşirme Kanunnamesi*) concerning recruitment of Christians for the needs of the Janissary Corps during the reign of Sultan Bayazid II (1481–1512). Among the various provisions about the procedure for recruiting and sending young men to the Ottoman Capital, the following passage attracts attention:

Ve buyurdum ki, yeniçeri oğlanı cem’ olub yüz ve yüz ellişer nefere yetişdüğe defter ile mutemed adamına koşub ve kadılar dahi bile mutemed adam koşub ve ol vilâyetlerde ve voynuk olan yerlerde voynuk; voynuk olmayan yerlerde müsellemeden ve sipahi adamlarından anların maksûduna kifâyet edecek mikdârı kimesneleri bile koşub İstanbul’da Yeniçeri Ağasına göndereler ki, yolda ve izde tamam mahfûz ve mazbût olub kimesnesi gitmek ve gaybet eylemek ihtimâli olmaya.¹

Significant here is the role assigned to the *voynuks*: as trusted agents of the Ottoman authorities in the Balkan provinces, they had to guard the Christian youths, recruited to become Janissaries, on the long way from their homelands to Istanbul. Since the law mentions the *voynuks*, it is clear that the Ottoman authorities deem them most suitable among those for the job. We are thus faced with an apparently strange situation: both *voynuks* and the boys taken under the Janissary levy originate from the Christian peoples, subjects of the Sultan. It is even known that the *voynuk* corps consisted mainly of Bulgarians² and therefore Bulgarian historiography offers some generalisations of the following kind: *voynuks* are “a stratum of the Bulgarian society with strong freedom-loving traditions . . . , with a spirit of liberty and solidarity in the struggle against the Ottoman feudal order’s injustice, with their own place in the great centuries-old process of preservation and manifestation of the Bulgarian national self-consciousness in the fifteenth—seventeenth centuries”.³

But here is an Ottoman source text, which puts those heroes in a completely different light. In it they do not look like freedom-loving fighters against “the Ottoman feudal regime” etc.; rather they are more like assistants to the Ottoman masters who plan, as some Turkish historians maintain, “through recruiting Christian youths for the Janissary Corps gradually to Islamise the non-Muslim population of the Balkans and through this new army to strengthen the Ottoman state”.⁴

This important detail sheds new light on the collection of the Janissary levy, but it could hardly change the historical notion of the “blood” or “children’s”

levy, as it was known in the Balkans. This notion, preserved by generations in the folklore and the historical annals, represents the conversion of Christian youths into Muslims and defenders of the Ottoman Empire, as one of the darkest episodes in the lives of the Balkan Christians under Ottoman rule. Professional historiography has also been influenced by this notion with its emotional conclusion that during the Ottoman era, Christian families decisively renounced their Janissary sons, seeing them as tools in the hands of an alien power.⁵

In fact the Janissary institution impresses generations mainly with the act of Islamisation. It is the “child levy” (*Devşirme*) that most fully demonstrates the situation of the Christians as object of long-term Islamisation intentions, carried out under compulsion. These purposive acts of the state, which some historians called an “Islamisation policy”, seem to be the backbone of the conversion process in the Balkans, conquered by the Ottoman Turks. But however strange it may look at first, studying the Janissaries is a good way of looking at Islamisation, both in the context of externally conditioned causality (the forced separation of Christian youths from their families to turn them into warriors of Islam), and from the point of view of voluntary religious conversion.

On the following pages I will discuss the Ottoman source material, related both to the Janissary Corps and to the spread of Islam in the Ottoman Balkans. I will attempt to examine the “Janissaries—Islamisation” correlation in a broader sense—the concept of “social conversion” which was introduced by R.W. Bulliet⁶ some time ago. The social existence of the converts changed immediately with their conversion—from Christian they became Muslim *reaya*. This transformation had an immediate positive effect on their economic status—the new Muslims stopped paying *Cizye* tax. They gained other prerogatives in their relationship with the administration, avoiding the numerous everyday inconveniences that were the lot of Christian subjects. Apart from that, the Muslim person had one more important advantage—the opportunity for further social prosperity by entering the so-called “military class” (*askerî*). By this the converts acquired additional fiscal comfort and economic advantages. All these were not imaginary; they were real opportunities. I call the phenomenon of conversion of this kind by referring to such converts as “peasant” Janissaries. This is the issue I will discuss in the following pages, hoping to contribute to the literature on “social conversion to Islam.”

The reasoning behind such an approach can only be studied if the historical development of the Janissary Corps is considered. Compulsion was characteristic of Janissary recruitment in the first two centuries of its existence (15th–16th Century), when the law of *Devşirme* was consistently implemented. That could be called the first or even the classical period in the history of the institution. The second one—the period of changes—began in the seventeenth century and its distinctive feature was abolition or rather gradual abandonment of *Devşirme*.

It is not quite clear when recruiting boys for the Janissaries was abandoned. The Ottoman chronicles provide contradictory information; nor is there any agreement among researchers. Some are inclined to accept J. v. Hammer’s point of view that *Devşirme* was abolished by Sultan Murad IV in 1639; others think this happened in the middle or the end of the century. It is known, however, that in the early eighteenth century there was a large scale campaign to recruit youths for urgent reinforcement of the corps’ units in Istanbul. After his ascension to

the throne in 1703 Sultan Ahmed III (1703–1730) removed 800 Janissaries of the *Bostancı* corps from the Capital and the Palace;⁷ they had instigated the big riots against the central government. Immediately after that, the new Sultan issued an order to recruit fresh Janissaries from the European provinces of the Empire.⁸

A Turkish historian of the Janissary Corps, İ. H. Uzunçarşılı, suggests the most acceptable opinion on the abolition of the Janissary levy. He discovered that in the second half of the seventeenth century, the intensity of *Devşirme* gradually decreased, but there was evidence that boys continued to be recruited in incidental campaigns until about the first half of the eighteenth century.⁹ The central government’s decrease in *Devşirme* is explained by pressure from the Janissaries themselves for changes in the procedure for augmenting the corps—it was insisted that priority be given to the Janissary’s sons and grandsons. But even when *Devşirme* was about to disappear, the Janissary Corps continued to recruit in its ranks essentially Christian subjects of the Sultan. One phenomenon deserves special attention here as it coincided with the gradual abandonment of *Devşirme* and the corps becoming a closed corporate organisation.

Recently, historians have turned their attention to the so-called petitions for voluntary conversion to Islam. Analysis of those archival materials reveals a very interesting peculiarity—the process gained momentum and became popular from the mid-seventeenth century onwards.¹⁰ So far, the study of those sources has mainly emphasized the importance of social and economic factors in the religious conversion. In other words, some specific taxes as *Cizye*, imposed only on the non-Muslims, acted as a kind of “economic argument” or “indirect duress” encouraging conversion to Islam. It turned out, however, that many would-be-Muslims motivated their conversion petitions with aspiration for a place in the Janissary Corps. This important peculiarity was either initially ignored or grossly underestimated by a number of Balkan historians.¹¹ National emotions and ideological prejudices prevented us from noticing that in these archival materials we are faced with the personal motivation of a number of Balkan Christians: to acquire the privileges, assured by the Janissary rank, through conversion. Actually there is no better example for religious conversion, dictated by the interests and intentions of the individual. At the same time the Ottoman Government restricted *Devşirme* and the Janissary Corps gradually turned into a closed corporate system. Perhaps this explains the increase in personal petitions for conversion to Islam. One way or another, the facts force us to test some stable historical notions of contemporary Balkan Christians that the “blood levy” and the Janissaries are striking symbols of the “dark centuries of slavery under the Turkish yoke.”

In the Ottoman sources I found numerous records of “peasant” Janissaries in two regions of the Ottoman Balkans; it is likely that information about other parts of the Peninsula could be found. The first region is the Western Rhodope Mountain, included in the former Ottoman *kaza* of Nevrekop.¹² This region was characterized by an intensive process of Islamisation among the local population leading to the appearance of a large Slavic-speaking Muslim population (*Pomaks*)¹³ that still lives there. The second region includes north-eastern Bulgaria, where the cities of Shoumen (Şumnu), Targovishte (Eski Cuma) and Raz-

grad (Hezargrad) are located, together with the adjacent villages. Some sources tell us about vigorous Turkish colonisation of those areas during the Ottoman era, as well as an energetic conversion process among the local Christian population. The two regions are characterized by large scale spread of Islam, and this is perhaps connected to the presence of numerous local Janissaries in the villages. Before going into the essence of this issue, I would like to present a small excerpt from the Ottoman registers, which provides us with an initial impression spread of this kind of Janissary in the villages of these regions. A detailed register for collecting *Avarız* tax in 1723–1724 in the *kaza* of Nevrekop (Western Rhodope Mountain) indicates that there were a significant number of Janissaries in the villages; 30 of 78 Muslim households in the village of Musomishte; 20 of 52 Muslim households in the village of Koprivlen; 12 of 51 Muslim households in the village of Lyalyovo etc.¹⁴ The *Avarız* tax register in the northern region of Şumnu—Eski Cuma—Hezargrad presents a similar picture already in the mid-seventeenth century. In 1642–43 in the *kaza* of Şumnu, for example, only 28 of 110 villages showed no entries for “peasant” Janissaries.¹⁵ These same sources tell us that in many places the Janissaries even formed the majority of the Muslim population. So, where did all those Janissaries come from?

Examination of the detailed Ottoman registers (*mufassal*) from the second half of the seventeenth century and the early eighteenth century discloses something quite important: most of the “peasant” Janissaries were not recruited under the *Devşirme* levy. This is clear from the Muslim names of their fathers: Mehmed *beşe*¹⁶ son of Veli; Mustafa *beşe* son of Mehmed, etc. It is impossible that these were warriors from the Capital, sons of Janissaries, assigned to service in the provincial garrisons, because such men would be included in the records of the peasant population. How could we explain this situation?

At this point, we return to the history of *Devşirme*. From the mid-fifteenth century onwards, ethnic origin was decisively important in the development of the Ottoman ruling elites.¹⁷ Because the military and administrative system was made up of cadres trained in the Janissary schools of the Court, quite a lot of the positions in the central administration were occupied by Muslim converts (the so called *Devşirmes*) of Albanian, Greek, Croatian, Serbian, Bulgarian, etc. origin. Recruiting youths for the Janissaries was a precisely controlled system aimed at preventing any possibility that “Russians, Persians, Gypsies and Turks” would become members of the corps and of the state government. This was what Sultan Süleyman I (1520–1566) ordered. The sovereign also decreed that youths from the regions of Harput, Diyarbakır and Malatya (territories in South-eastern Anatolia under strong Kurdish and Shiite influence) were not to be recruited. Recruitment in the lands from Karaman to Erzerum should be attempted with utmost care, because there the Christian population was also mixed with Turkmen and Kurds. “Whoever violates this order and brings foreigners among my pure blooded slaves,” ends Süleyman I, “shall be damned by the Prophet 120 thousand times!”¹⁸

But there was one exception. Long before the time of Süleyman I, his great-grandfather Mehmed II, the Conqueror (1444–1446 and 1451–1481), recruited youths for the Janissaries exclusively from sons of the Balkan Christians. The recruits underwent several medical examinations to prevent the admission of circumcised Muslim boys to the Janissary ranks. The Chief Physician of the Court

was a member of the Commission for admission of recruits and responsible for this program.

Soon after conquering Bosnia, however, Mehmed II gave way to the insistence of the local converts to Islam, that their children should be admitted to the Janissary corps. This called forth the famous “Bosnian exception”, when *sünnetlüler*, i.e. circumcised youths, sons of Bosnians, who had recently adopted Islam, also started being admitted to the corps.¹⁹ In such a case it can be assumed that our “peasant” Janissaries were also the result of such an “exception”. We know that in the first half of the seventeenth century there was an intensive conversion process among the Christian population in North-eastern Bulgaria, in the Central and Western Rhodope Mountain.²⁰ Since the new Muslims in Bosnia had been admitted to the Janissary Corps some time before, why then should this not be valid for the later Muslim converts in other parts of the Balkans?

In historiography, the Janissaries’ presence away from the Capital is usually explained by the role of the Ottoman military in the provincial economy.²¹ Such an approach holds when explaining the Janissary multitude in the Balkan towns. However this same approach does not seem to work when addressing the origin of “peasant” Janissaries. The presence in the villages of so many could hardly be explained as the desire of metropolitan warriors to acquire cultivated land in order to embark on non-prestigious agricultural labour. It would be more logical to suppose that military needs forced the authorities to recruit soldiers for Janissary service from certain rural areas, but it is not clear why those were the villages in North-eastern Bulgaria and the Western Rhodope Mountain. It is also not clear why the said soldiers remained in their native villages, since in principle the Janissaries’ place was in the Capital or in the garrisons of the big cities. It seems that the spread of Islam in some parts of the Balkans is directly linked to the occurrence of “peasant” Janissaries. My assumption is that for many Christian subjects, enrolment in the Janissary Guards and the ensuing immediate social re-categorisation was a sufficient motive for adopting Islam. This situation directly falls into the realm of what R. W. Bulliet calls “social conversion to Islam”.²²

I need to digress here. Firstly, I would like to emphasize a fact which is closely related both to social conversion and to the appearance of “peasant” Janissaries. It was mainly Janissaries that collected the *Cizye* tax, payable by the Christian subjects of the Muslim state.²³ This business resulted in considerable benefits from misappropriations, but it also leads to some reflections about psychology related to the contacts between Janissaries and their former Christian fellows in the whole area of the Ottoman Balkans.

In the 1630s, the Ottoman political writer Koçi Bey noted in his work *Risale*:

For some time the soldiers of *Altı Bölük Halkı*²⁴ acquired the right to collect state revenue. They put a hand on the tax registers, which they sold to tax collectors . . . They, on their part, collected the taxes in increased amounts.²⁵

Archival documentation fully supports Koçi Bey’s words. The fiscal accounts clearly show the mechanism by which the Janissaries disposed of the state revenue. All this started from the central administration. Usually a high ranking official obtained a register for collecting *Cizye* tax somewhere in the provinces, which he would immediately sell to enterprising Janissaries. They then went to

the respective regions as taxation agents; there a fiduciary awaited them with a sufficient amount of money and with a good knowledge of local conditions.²⁶

All this was normal everyday life in the Ottoman provinces.²⁷ Let us try to imagine the psychological effect of the Janissary enterprises in the provinces. First, we will have to forget the notion that young Janissaries were torn away from their families, lost into the unknown and forgetting about their relatives. In the early seventeenth century we see exactly the opposite—they never severed their ties with the homeland, in our case, appearing there later in the capacity of fiscal agents and representatives of the Central power. In this remarkable situation, the payers of the burdensome Cizye tax, the Christian subjects of the State are confronted by tax-collectors who were formerly also Christians and even fellow countrymen. These same people committed those outrages against the taxpayers, about which we learn from sources on levying the *reaya*.²⁸ This has made some authors claim that Balkan Christians deeply and irrevocably renounced their Janissary sons, labelling tools in the hands of the Muslim authorities.²⁹ But was the situation so tragic? Of course not, as evidenced by the following excerpts:

*Your Majesty, our illustrious and generous Sultan, may you be healthy!
We, Your slaves, wish to be granted the honour to adopt Islam. Our request of the Sultan is that we two wish to be enlisted in the Janissary Corps and in accordance with the law, be issued with Janissary uniforms. The rest is left to the decree of His Majesty the Sultan.
Your two slaves—new Muslims.*³⁰

*Your Majesty, my prosperous and generous Sultan, may you be healthy!
I, Your humble servant, abandoned the lost [Christian] faith and was granted the honour of adopting the right one, Islam. I beg of my merciful Sultan to fill me with joy by enlisting me in the Janissary Corps. Benevolence and order belong to His Majesty the Sultan.
Your humble servant, etc.*³¹

Indeed, the seventeenth century was an intense period of conversion in the Ottoman Balkans.³² Service in the Janissary Corps was only one of many motives for the adoption of Islam. The following documents illustrate the religious atmosphere in the Peninsula during that period:

*Your Majesty, my merciful Sultan, may you be healthy!
Your humble servant is one of the educated people. I was honoured with Holy Islam in the Highest Presence of my Lord. I plead to my merciful Lord that, since the granting of my [Muslim] clothes and my circumcision are still to come and I don't have a place designated for the latter, you order that a place for performance of my circumcision be designated. I also plead to be appointed among the group of your enlightened servants. The rest is left to the decree of my illustrious and gracious Sultan.
Your servant, the new Muslim, a [former] priest.*³³

Or:

*Your Majesty, blessed and powerful Padishah, defender of the world!
I, Your slave, having convinced myself in Allah's truth and Divine unity, having learned the wise religion and made my vow, became a Muslim. Let this slave of Yours be favoured with affluence in defiance of the other infidels!
Your servant, the new Muslim.*

Or:

*Your Majesty, blessed and happy, my Sultan!
I, Your humble servant, praise be to God, was granted the honour of adopting Islam and
even circumcised myself with my own hand [. . .].
Your servant, [the new Muslim] Mustafa from Karlovo.*³⁴

There are a few important issues related to these personal petitions for permission to adopt Islam, as a step toward enlisting in the Janissary Corps. Undoubtedly the recruitment of youths as Janissaries had, for some centuries, led to the conversion of many Balkan Christians to Islam. In this most specific meaning the Christian *reaya* was an object of Islamisation initiative, having been obliged to pay a child levy (*Devşirme*). Subsequently however, becoming a Janissary turned into an extra motive for adopting Islam—an unavoidable result of the natural course of complex social and economic processes and cultural-religious influences among Christians in the Ottoman Balkans. There was one more important circumstance. The personal petitions for adoption of Islam (which have recently attracted research interest), do not reveal the full scale of the conversion that was motivated by the desire to serve as Janissaries. The conversions which those sources describe are mainly related to events in the Ottoman Capital and therefore reveal the intentions of a small group of people from a narrow social stratum.³⁵ Is it reasonable then to think that Janissary service motivated the population to convert in the rural areas of the Ottoman Balkans?

R. W. Bulliet observes that the final stage of conversion to Islam in a given region was related to the formation of two groups of Muslim converts, the so-called “late majority” and “laggards”.³⁶ This stage is usually observed in religiously mixed settlements (consisting of both Christians and Muslims), where the gradually decreasing number of new converts marked the fading and final cessation of the conversion process. Observations on Ottoman sources reveal that formation of these two groups of Muslim converts in the rural areas of the Central and Western Rhodope Mountain and in Northeast Bulgaria took place in the late seventeenth century and the first two-three decades of the eighteenth century.³⁷

To give an example, according to an Ottoman register, there were 159 newly converted people in the *kaza* of Nevrekop in 1723. At that time, Muslims in this part of the Rhodope Mountain outnumbered Christians, reaching nearly 81% of the total population. This situation was a natural result of a gradual process of conversion in this region lasting for two and a half centuries. Thus in 1723, out of the 112 settlements registered in this *kaza*, only 36 had some Christian population remaining.³⁸ Even nowadays this region is characterized by a majority of Slavic language-speaking Muslims (Pomaks). But to return to our 159 new converts (sons of Abdullah)—we understand from the register that 14 of them served as Janissaries. Therefore one may confidently suggest that their motive to convert to Islam was the Janissary service. If this was true, these new reinforcements bring the total number of Janissaries in the Nevrekop villages in 1723 to 240.³⁹

Essentially there are two possible explanations for the existence of so many Janissaries in the villages of this mountainous area. They could be soldiers, sent from the Capital to provincial garrison service; or they could be local Christians

who have adopted Islam of their own free will for the purpose of obtaining the regular salary and privileges provided by service in the Janissary Corps.

The child levy (*Devşirme*) must have converted a number of Rhodopean Christians into Muslims and trustworthy warriors of the Sultan. But during the period when this tax was most active—the second half of the sixteenth century—sources fail to provide information about any Janissary presence in the mountainous town of Nevrekop, or in the neighbouring villages. At the same time, we have long known that Janissaries did not stay in the corps' barracks in Istanbul and Edirne. From very early on they were dispersed to the fortress garrisons of the big cities; occasionally they appeared in rural areas as *timar* holders.⁴⁰ But the Rhodope Mountain was not included in the strategic plans of the Ottomans and there was no reason for any elite military units, such as Janissaries, to be stationed there. We must conclude that during that period, Nevrekop was a region where Christian youths were recruited for Janissary service, but it was not a strategic location for stationing Janissary units.

The large number of Janissaries in the Nevrekop villages, as evidenced by the register of 1723, must have some other explanation. I have mentioned the possibility that the origin of the “peasant” Janissaries might be related to the so-called “Bosnian exception”—those local circumcised youths (*sünnetlüler*), sons of the Bosnian converts to Islam who were given permission by Sultan Mehmed II to become Janissaries. The exception also included Albanian Muslims.⁴¹ The powerful process of conversion to Islam among the Christian population of the Central and Western Rhodopes turned this part of the mountain into a predominantly Muslim region. Perhaps the descendants of the Rhodopean Pomaks were admitted to Janissary service as were their brethren from Bosnia and Albania. The register of 1723, however, also mentions first generation converts (sons of Abdullah) among the “peasant” Janissaries. Therefore it was not only the descendants of the local converts to Islam who formed and manned the group of “peasant” Janissaries. We will obviously have to accept that by the beginning of the eighteenth century, when the Janissary levy (*Devşirme*) was collected only in extraordinary cases,⁴² voluntary conversion to Islam had become a trampoline for those Christian peasants who aimed at Janissary service. It was those people who best exemplified the process that R. W. Bulliet called “social conversion.”

But why were these soldiers left in their native places and why were many villages packed with Janissaries? Here one may always object that these were not necessarily local people, recruited and then left to do military service in their homelands. Why should these not be soldiers from the metropolitan units, temporarily assigned to provincial service, an approved old practice?⁴³ It is well known, however, that under such service Janissaries were dispatched to the fortress garrisons of the big cities, where some of them managed to combine their corps obligations with activities, such as trade and crafts that were not normally expected from a military man. Thus with the passage of time they permanently infiltrated the cities' economic life.⁴⁴ Some of them oriented themselves towards the opportunities a rural economy provided, establishing private farms (*çiftlik*s) where they employed waged labour.

Sources reveal, however, that our Janissaries were exclusively rural people, strongly bonded to cultivating their own pieces of land. Almost all of them owned plots of land no larger than 0.5—1 *çifts*.⁴⁵ It is highly probable that we

have here the establishment of *çiftlik*s on state land, usually acquired through the back door; this practice was characteristic of the seventeenth century.⁴⁶ Similar farms could be found everywhere in Roumelia and we know that as a rule, they belonged to military and administrative persons, who had permanently settled in the cities and decided to invest their available cash in private ownership of land.⁴⁷ Ottoman sources are full of examples of properties of this type, but let us examine some typical cases from our Nevrekop region:

Çiftlik of Hacı Ahmed, son of Hacı Mehmed in the village of Nisonishte,⁴⁸ former (retired) serdar in the Janissary Corps. Resident of the Mustafa Kadi quarter of the said town [Nevrekop]. This person owns another çiftlik in the neighbouring village of Sadovo.⁴⁹
Çiftlik of Hacı Mustafa ağa. Resident of the Karaca Paşa quarter of the said town [Nevrekop]. Retired from 185 bölük of the Silahdar⁵⁰ Corps.⁵¹

The above texts indicate that Janissaries, owners of *çiftlik*s in the rural areas, were soldiers, often retired, who lived in the city centres. Our “peasant” Janissaries, on the other hand, were different from such people. They owned small plots of land in their native areas; these were no different from a medium sized *reaya* farm, cultivated by its owner and his family.⁵²

The Nevrekop peasants, who managed to get into the corps, formed the well-to-do stratum in the region, thanks to their regular Janissary salary. They were the people who could acquire land in a mountainous area, where supposedly it was in short supply and costly. It is clear from the register of 1723 that very few people in the villages, apart from Janissaries, owned cultivated land. The report of the *kadı* of Nevrekop to the Capital noted in this respect: “[. . .] the residents of the town [Nevrekop] do not own land and most of them are poor [. . .], our villages are located in mountainous and rocky areas, where the plots are mostly unsuitable for agricultural activity”.⁵³ Against this background the Nevrekop “peasant” Janissaries might be considered as a kind of economic and social elite of this mountainous area.

Was this situation an exception to the Ottoman reality? The Janissaries’ presence in the provinces is no longer surprising to historians, but we have been accustomed to finding them in the towns as merchants, craftsmen, money-lenders, and tax collectors; and in rural areas as owners of private farms (*çiftlik*s). The fact that the Ottoman cadastre also describes small landholders with Janissary ranks in the villages along with the local *reaya* indicates that there is nothing peculiar in this. There must have been such situations in other Ottoman possessions in the Balkans such as Bosnia, the Albanian mountains or the island of Crete—areas marked by the wide spread of Islam among the local population. So far, however, I have not come across any sources showing similar situation in these parts of the Ottoman Balkans (which does not mean they did not exist). However I found interesting results in the Ottoman registers for north-eastern Bulgaria. I mentioned earlier that the same situation as in the Rhodopean villages existed in the register of the *Avarız* tax in the areas of the towns of Şumnu, Eski Cuma and Hezargrad in 1642–43.⁵⁴

This source offers a good overview of this part of the Balkans, which shared many common features with the Pomak regions of the Rhodope Mountain. First, there was vigorous colonisation by Turkish Muslims. From the time of the early Ottoman conquest of the Balkans, the Central and Western Rhodope Mountain

were a preferred immigration place for Anatolian *yürüks*. North-eastern Bulgaria was full of small villages and hamlets of Asian colonists with place names typical of the *yürük* tradition⁵⁵. The old (Pre-Ottoman) settlements in those places are distinguished not only by their preserved Slavic names, but also by the fact that most of them have a mixed population of Christians and Muslims. Those “mixed” villages had an abundance of “peasant” Janissaries. Here is one of many typical examples:

Karye-i Novasel:⁵⁶

Mansur [bin] Abdullah; Receb [bin] Abdullah; Mustafa [bin] Abdullah; Mustafa [bin] Osman; Ali [bin] Osman; Ali [bin] Ahmed; Sefer [bin] Abdullah.
Hasan [bin] Ali; Bedir [bin] Ali; Ali [bin] Kurd; Ahmed [bin] Abdullah; Mustafa [bin] Abdullah; Ali [bin] Hızır; Ali [bin] Süleyman; Mehmed [bin] Abdullah.
Derviş [bin] Abdullah; Ramazan [bin] Abdullah; Şaban [bin] Hüseyin; Ramazan [bin] Abdullah; Ahmed [bin] Abdullah; Mahmud [bin] Hıdır; Mustafa [bin] Kasım.
Medhmed [bin] Kasım; Bayram [bin] Abdullah; Bali [bin] Bayram; Hasan [bin] Abdullah; Omer [bin] Hasan; Şaban [bin] Abdullah; Mustafa [bin] Abdullah.
Hasan [bin] Abdullah; Veliko [veled-i] Yanço; Kale [veled-i] Marko; Veliko [veled-i] Puyo; Petre [veled-i] İstanço; Mehmed [bin] İlyas, imaretçi.

Şahincilerdir ki, zıkr olunur:

Dimitre [veled-i] Paraşkev, mevcud; Rusko [veled-i] Veliko, mevcud; Todor [veled-i] Balyo, mevcud; Marko [veled-i] Balço, mevcud; Hrano [veled-i] İstanko, mevcud; Rusko [veled-i] Todor, mevcud.
Jelen [veled-i] Koço, yokdur; Nikola [veled-i] Dane, mevcud; Hüseyin [bin] Hasan, mevcud; Nenko [veled-i] Milço, mevcud; Marko [veled-i] Petre, mevcud; Osman peyk⁵⁷ bin [. . .],⁵⁸ çift 1.

Yeniçerileri beyan eder:

Murtaza beşe⁵⁹ bin [. . .], çift 1; Yusuf beşe [bin] Pervane, racil,⁶⁰ çift 1; Mustafa beşe [bin] Abdullah, çift 1; Mehmed beşe bin Veli, çift 1; Mustafa beşe bin Veli, çift 1. Kurd beşe [bin] Veli, çift 1; Hüseyin beşe [bin] Abdullah, çift 1; Mustafa beşe [bin] Hasan, çift 1; Ali beşe [bin] Abdullah, çift 1; Kurd beşe [bin] Abdullah, çift 1.
Ali beşe bin Abdullah, çift 1; Ali beşe bin Hasan, çift 1; Faik beşe [bin] Hamza, çift 1; Mehmed beşe bin Mustafa, çift 1; Mustafa beşe bin Mehmed, çift 1.

Kul oğullarıdır ki zıkr olunur:

İskender [bin] Mustafa, çift 1; Ömer [bin] Pervane, çift 1; Derya [bin] Hamza, çift 1; Nasuh [bin] Kurd, çift 1; Cafer [bin] Veli, çift 1; Ali [bin] Pervane, çift 1; Musa [bin] Kurd, çift 1. Mahmud [bin] Hasan, çift 1; Süleyman [bin] Hasan, çift 1; Hamza [bin] Mahmud, çift 1; Ahmed [bin] Mahmud, çift 1; Hasan [bin] Mahmud, çift 1; Hasan [bin] Bali, çift 1; İbrahim [bin] Mehmed, çift 1.
Mehmed [bin] Ali, çift 1; İbrahim beşe bin Abdullah, çift 1, cebeci, bölük 13, mevcud; Hüseyin beşe bin Kasım, çift 1, cebeci, bölük 15, mevcud; Resullah beşe bin mezbur, çift 1, cebeci, bölük 20, mevcud; Mehmed beşe, cebeci, çift 1, [. . .],⁶¹ mevcud.⁶²

As with the Rhodope Mountain, registers in north-east Bulgaria show that there was widespread conversion to Islam resulting in the religious heterogeneity of the villages in that region. One other coincidence becomes obvious. Everywhere here “peasant” Janissaries also owned small plots of cultivated land of

1–2 *çift*. Here could also be found private farms, specially marked as *çiftlik*s. Their owners here, too, were Janissary officers from the town or men who had retired from high-ranking positions in the corps.⁶³

An explanation is needed here. In the example above, and in the whole register for 1642–43, it is immediately clear that the *reaya*—both Christian and Muslim—were listed without mentioning any land owned. This does not mean that those people were landless. In this region, characteristic for its favourable natural and climatic conditions and more than sufficient land for farming, each peasant household (*hane*) owned a *raiyyet* farm (*çift*). “Peasant” Janissaries belonged to the so-called “military class” (*askerî*) and were required to pay some of the obligations of the local *reaya* under the *Avarız* tax, but only if they had another source of income (land or house) in addition to their Janissary salary. In this case such income was provided by their agricultural activity, and these Janissaries were included in the tax registers according to the amount of land they possessed. In this regard a Janissary household was no different from the mass of ordinary rural producers (*reaya*). Actually this situation fully corresponds to the “*çift-hane*” system, described by H. İnalçık, which formed one of the characteristic features of Ottoman fiscal practice.⁶⁴

Let us go back to the reasons that led to the mass appearance of Janissaries in the villages. It is well known that during the first decades of the seventeenth century the Ottoman state went into a perpetual internal political crisis. Contemporary Ottoman political writers maintain that Janissaries were behind the chaos and the rapidly deteriorating internal situation. This was because after the “old law” (*kânûn-i kadîm*) of the corps was abolished sometime at the end of the sixteenth century, soldiers found a variety of ways to avoid marches; they did anything else but not their military obligations.⁶⁵ Observers all thought that the state would sort matters out as soon as the number of Janissaries was reduced (their numbers swelled unreasonably after the rule of Sultan Süleyman I) and their involvement in government was forbidden.⁶⁶ At the same time Ottoman political writers noted with uneasiness that the Janissary ranks were filled with “a lot of foreign elements”. These elements (*ecnebi*) infiltrated the corps through the Janissary levy (*Devşirme*), which recruited youths who did not meet the requirements. There were also many people who had nothing to do with military service, yet acquired Janissary rank “practically within one day”.⁶⁷

This subject is widely explored in studies of the “Post-classical Ottoman period”, i.e., the seventeenth century onwards. Researchers unanimously conclude that the closed military-professional character of the Janissary Corps was preserved until the last quarter of the sixteenth century at the latest, and then changes occurred: soldiers infiltrated various spheres of economic activity, the corps’ role in the political struggles in the Capital increased with consequences disastrous for the state, and the Janissaries’ military efficiency dropped catastrophically.

There could be some objections to this view. Even in earlier periods, when the “Classical order” was supposed to rule, the Janissaries had already engaged in trade, money-lending and established *çiftlik*s,⁶⁸ but at that time, these did not bother anybody. And the corps’ involvement in political struggles was not new either. Even before conquering Constantinople, the Grand Vizier Çandarlı Halil

Paşa instigated the Janissaries to revolt against the young Sultan Mehmed II.⁶⁹ These facts might lead to a different interpretation of some information in the Ottoman political texts.

The Janissaries' outrages continued through the whole "Classical period", but during this time, the corps generally kept the established order. That order was violated not so much by weak recruits and infiltration of "foreign elements", but by means of a privilege, which the soldiers gained. During the reign of Sultan Selim II (1566–1574) they "wheedled out" the right to establish families through marriage, and after the death of the Grand Vizier Sokollu Mehmed Pasha in 1579, it was decided that their sons could be enlisted in the corps.⁷⁰ This created the category of *kul oğlu*—Janissaries' sons taken into real service. From there on *Devşirme* gradually declined⁷¹ because the Janissaries were not interested in it, anxious as they were to arrange the enlistment of their sons in the corps.

There was one other reason for the decline in the recruitment of young men from the Christian *reaya*: the Commanders-in-Chief started to appoint youths of Muslim-Turkish origin as apprentices to Janissary service (*ağa çıracağı*).⁷² The regular staff disapproved of this new category and suddenly remembered the advantages of the *Devşirme* levy. A Janissary chronicler noted:

Registers were filled with appointed apprentices and this opened the way for Turks to penetrate the Janissary ranks. The recruitment of youths became unnecessary and this was what threw *Devşirme* into confusion . . . It was useless to expect any exhibit of valour from the corps once Turks penetrated it. If *apprentices* were driven away and the practice of recruiting youths through *Devşirme* was re-established, then military victories would be guaranteed.⁷³

This situation with the *Devşirme* levy made some researchers conclude that from the middle of the seventeenth century, the Ottomans no longer recruited youths to the Janissary Corps from among the Christian *reaya*. In fact they recruited only when there was a severe shortage of military force. But obviously the authorities looked for and found a way to maintain some real war-ready strength in the corps, so that they did not need to rely solely on the doubtful qualities and numbers of the metropolitan detachments. Thus began recruitment of Janissaries "at the place of residence", i.e., in those rural areas of the Ottoman Balkans penetrated by voluntary conversion to Islam. Apart from the local people who had already adopted Islam and their sons, those who had traded religious apostasy for a Janissary rank were also enlisted in the corps. This makes me think that during the last decades of the seventeenth century, those appointed to Janissary service were permanent residents of certain rural areas in the Balkans, where the voluntary conversion process had made substantial progress. Thus the corps started to involve local converts, at the same time becoming an additional stimulus for the rest of the Christian *reaya* on the road to religious conversion. Here it is worth remarking once again on the impressive number of Janissaries in the examined regions: of the 110 villages registered in 1642–43 in the *kaza* of Şumnu, only 28 had no "peasant" Janissaries. The same situation held in the other Ottoman *kazas* in the north-eastern Balkan territories—the regions of Hezargrad, Eski Cuma, Rusçuk, etc. In 1723 in the inhospitable mountainous area of the *kaza* of Nevrekep, 50 of 100 villages had no "Peasant" Janissaries registered.

The pressure on the Central authorities to restrict *Devşirme* facilitated a lasting infiltration of the Janissary Corps into rural areas. This process had nothing to do with the practice of sending Janissaries forces from the Capital to relief service in the provincial garrisons. Such forces really did ensure a permanent Janissary presence in strategically important regions of the provinces, but they did not comprise the bulk of the Janissary multitude in some rural areas of the Balkans. If we accept that some of the dispatched Janissaries decided not to return to Istanbul in favour of provincial life, traces of such movement should have been present in the Ottoman cadastre back in the preceding “Classical period”. The detailed registers of the Balkan provinces from the second half of the fifteenth—sixteenth century, however, mention only a few Janissaries who served as rank-and-file soldiers in the *sipahi* cavalry. (It is not clear whether appointing Janissaries to provincial *sipahi* service was a punishment or privilege.)⁷⁴ Obviously in the case of “peasant” Janissaries we must assume the corps’ social base was broadened to include people, traditionally called “*ecnebi*” by Ottoman chroniclers.⁷⁵ Under this new practice the fresh recruits did not go to the corps’ barracks in Istanbul, but remained in their native places for a sort of “provincial service”. Thus the Ottoman Government avoided a dangerous conflict with the metropolitan Janissary elite, while keeping the basic principles of the *Devşirme* levy that recruits should come from the “infidel *reaya*”, i.e. from the agricultural population, but not from the townsfolk—“children of craftsmen, who had seen much in life”.⁷⁶ The process of conversion to Islam in the villages only facilitated things and was, obviously, a compulsory condition for such promotion of Janissaries “on the spot”. I assume a similar situation unfolded in Bosnia, Albania and Crete as well.

The statute of the “peasant” Janissaries’ descendents was quite different from that of their “colleagues” in the Capital. They were recorded into the fiscal registers as regular taxpayers, but under the name of *kul oğlu*.⁷⁷ The sons of the metropolitan Janissaries, on the other hand, were put on the pay-roll and paid from the moment of enlistment in the corps of the *acemi oğlans*.⁷⁸ According to sources from the first decade of the seventeenth century, the pay-roll registers of this corps included even very little children.⁷⁹ Given that somewhere in the 1570s and 1580s Janissaries were granted permission to marry and enlist their descendents, it seems that the privilege of “salary from the Treasury” was provided even for the first generation of Janissaries’ sons. Therefore stagnation in the *Devşirme* levy could be traced to the very beginning of the seventeenth century, when metropolitan soldiers opposed further recruitment of Christian boys in the provinces and used every opportunity to exert pressure on the authorities to either stop or decrease recruitment. Village enlistment appears to have started immediately after that and in the 1630s and 1640s, their sons—“peasant” *kul oğlus*, already appeared in the registers.

The status of those young men, who, according to the law, should be considered as members of the “military” class, resembles something like “peasant” candidate-Janissaries. For several years they participated in the campaigns as volunteers and then they were put on the Janissary lists, but without salary. They continued to be part of the army, again without salary, until they were finally enlisted in the corps as regulars with appropriate remuneration.⁸⁰ This is why these *kul oğlus* were not included in the Treasury’s pay rolls, in contrast to

their “colleagues” in Istanbul.⁸¹ But they enjoyed good social positions in the villages, ensuring in time their inclusion in the so-called military class (*askerî*). This resulted in the regular salary, fiscal privileges and other benefits, that used to attract numerous Balkan Christians to Islam and the Janissary service.

A careful examination of this documentation, however, reveals, that by no means all the villagers with the title of *kul oğlu* were descendents of Janissaries. In many cases, a particular settlement showed disproportionately more registered Janissary sons (*kul oğlus*) than local “peasant” Janissaries themselves. In the village of Chekendin⁸² in the *kaza* of Eski Cuma, for example, according to the registration of 1642–43 there were 3 Janissaries and 28 *kul oğlus*—a proportion that suggests no parental connection in the vast majority of cases. This could be explained because some “sons” were entered as “sons of Abdullah”⁸³ instead of with their father’s name. These people were local peasants, first generation converts to Islam. A man did not need a Janissary father to fall into the group of “peasant” *kul oğlus*. Probably some local peasants—new converts—were “appointed” as Janissary sons. In this connection there is one impressive example from the Ottoman registers. Among the group of 11 *kul oğlus* in the village of Ak Viran,⁸⁴ a certain İbrahim Papas-oğlu (İbrahim son of Orthodox priest) was listed. Obviously this case impressed the Ottoman clerk and he did not record this man with the traditional new-convert appellation of “bin Abdullah”; he specifically noted that the new Muslim, and “newly appointed” Janissary son was actually the son of the spiritual leader of the Christian community in that village.⁸⁵ This specific episode highlights the deep social and religious crisis which spread through the Orthodox Christian population in the Balkans in the seventeenth century.⁸⁶ Actually this crisis to a large extent determined the quick pace of non-compulsory conversion to Islam, which was one of the characteristic features of the religious development of the Peninsula in that century. As far as the content of the “peasant” *kul oğlu* group is concerned, Ottoman sources present it, as follows:

1. Sons of “peasant” Janissaries, who by right have an opportunity to enlist in the corps in the near future and enjoy the same privileged status as their fathers.
2. First generation converts to Islam, who find a way of acquiring higher social status through religious conversion.

One should not forget that among the “peasant” Janissaries there were many “sons of Abdullah”. We saw above that in 1723, among the 240 Janissaries in the Pomak villages in the Western Rhodope Mountain, 14 were first generation Muslims. Clearly conversion to Islam achieved its social objective when the former Christians attained the salary and privileges connected to service in the Janissary corps. It is still unclear why some new converts were directly enlisted in the corps, while others had to stay in the position of *kul oğlu*, i.e., candidates for active duty and regular salary.

Obviously the institution of the Janissaries is one of the main factors in spreading Islam in the Ottoman Balkans. However one point should be clarified. In historical perspective the role of the Janissary Corps in the conversion process had two stages. In the first stage the Janissary conscription of youths for service

in the corps (*Devşirme*) led to the inevitable Islamisation of a section of Balkan Christians. The memory of this practice left a deep impact on the historical memory of generations, often generating negative national feelings towards the Ottoman Turks and their rule in the Balkans.

The second stage on the other hand was quite different. The most important peculiarity here is the fact that from the 1620s and 1630s, the intensity of *Devşirme* gradually dropped and finally stopped. At the same time there was a visible process of non-compulsory conversion to Islam in the Balkans; this process determined the religious development of vast areas of the Peninsula over a long time. The material benefits and social privileges provided by Janissary service became the major motive for many Balkan Christians to adopt Islam. However there is nothing preserved in the historical memory of the Balkan Christians about voluntary conversion, motivated by desire to serve with the Janissaries. Typically, later generations avoid remembering those episodes of their own history, which they dislike, but this does not mean that these events did not take place.

Thus the Janissary way of life firmly and for a long time became part of life in the Ottoman Balkans. In the 1830s, for example, the observant French geographer and voyager A. Viquesnel reported the following:

The Rhodope Mountains, in their better part, were populated by a fanatic Muslim population. The Pomaks were well-disposed to the Janissaries' cause and provided a sanctuary for this formidable army (during the destruction of the corps in 1826, my note, E.R.). Armed resistance was organised, which had to be subdued by force. The civil war, confiscations and destruction that followed, ruined the rich owners; a significant number of animals, the major wealth of the province, were destroyed.⁸⁷

It is known that in 1826, the Ottoman government easily liquidated the Janissary garrisons in the Capital and the provinces. Bosnia was an exception—in this region with much conversion to Islam, the authorities needed extra years to subdue the local Janissaries.⁸⁸ Viquesnel reports on stormy events in the Rhodope Mountain, too; he even speaks about a “civil war”, which caused large-scale destruction. It is quite possible that such episodes also took place in north-eastern Bulgaria which was known for its high conversion rate. It is instructive that the Ottoman government had difficulties eradicating the corps in exactly the centres where there had been a considerable spread of Islam among the local Christian population. This demonstrates how deeply rooted was the Janissary institution in the lives of generations of Islamic converts, becoming a fate and path of life for many of them.

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ENDNOTES

1. A. Akgündüz, ed., *Osmanlı Kanunnameleri ve Hukuku Tahlilleri*, 9 vols. (İstanbul, 1990), 2: 124, 126. “And I ordered, that when the boys [taken from a certain place]

reach 100–150 in number, they must be registered by a fiduciary and the *kadis* must also use trusted persons [to accompany and protect the boys to the Capital]. In those *vilayets* and regions where there are *voynuks*, *voynuks* [must guard]; in the areas where there are no *voynuks-müsellems* and people of [the local] *sipahis* [must be engaged]. Sufficient number of people must be provided for this purpose, so that the boys be well guarded on the road in order to reach the chief commander of the Janissary corps in Istanbul without allowing any of them to run away or get lost.”

2. Y. Ercan, a researcher of the *voynuk* organisation notes, “when *voynuks* are mentioned, we immediately, by association, remember the Bulgarians.” See Y. Ercan, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’nda Bulgarlar ve Voynuklar* (Istanbul, 1986), 7.
3. B. Cvetkova, “Introduction,” in B. Cvetkova, ed., *Fontes Turcici Historiae Bulgaricae*, 7 vols. (Sofia, 1974), 5: 10.
4. A. Akgündüz, ed., *Osmanlı Kanunnameleri*, 2: 123. Compare İ. H. Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devleti Teşkilatından Kapıkulu Ocakları*, 2 vols. (Ankara, 1984), 1: 13. I do not share those authors’ idea that through the Janissary Corps the Ottoman government aimed, before everything else, at the Islamisation of its Christian subjects. Apart from that the Ottoman reality, as reflected in the sources, does not give us a reason to think that Sultans followed a long-term political line for Islamisation of the Balkan Christians either through the Janissary Corps or through other mechanisms of government.
5. Cv.Georgieva, *Enitcharite v balgarskite zemi* [The Janissaries in the Bulgarian Lands] (Sofia, 1988), 93.
6. R. W. Bulliet, *Conversion to Islam in the Medieval Period. An Essay in Quantitative History* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, 1979), 33–41. See below, note 25.
7. A Janissary unit, assigned to guard the Sultan’s palaces and gardens. The obligations of its commander—*bostancı-başı*, were of police-administrative character. Most often he was assigned to carry out capital punishments.
8. İ. H. Uzunçarşılı, *Kapıkulu Ocakları*, 1: 68.
9. *Ibid.*, 66–70.
10. M. Kalitzin, A. Velkov, E. Radoshev, ed., *Sources ottomanes sur le processus d’Islamisation aux Balkans XVI^e–XIX^e s.* (Sofia, 1990); A. Minkov, *Conversion to Islam in the Balkans. Kisve Bahası Petitions and Ottoman Social Life, 1670–1730* (Leiden-Boston, 2004).
11. See Str. Dimitrov, “Avant-propos,” in M. Kalitzin, A. Velkov, E. Radoshev, ed., *Sources*, 18–19.
12. Today Gotze Delchev, town in south-western Bulgaria.
13. M. Kiel “Newrokop,” *The Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Web CD Edition, Brill Academic Publishers, 2003). Compare E. Radoshev, *Pomatsite* [The Pomaks] (Sofia, 2005), 258–402.
14. Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi, Mevkufat Kalemî 2873.
15. *Ibid.*, TD 771, 187–255.

16. Title, awarded to the ordinary Janissaries.
17. İ. Metin Kunt, “Transformation of *Zimmi* into *Askeri*,” in B. Braude, B. Lewis, ed., *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire. The Functioning of a Plural Society*, 2 vols. (New York-London, 1982), 55–63. Compare E. Radushev, “The Ottoman Ruling Nomenclature in the 16th–17th Centuries (Monopoly of the *Devşirmes*—First and Second Stages),” *Bulgarian Historical Review* 3–4 (1998).
18. İ. H. Uzunçarşılı, *Kapıkulu Ocakları*, 1: 20–21.
19. I. Petrosyan, ed., *Mebde-i Kanun-i Yeniçeri Ocağı Tarihi* (Moscow, 1987), 54–55; E. Radushev, “Demographische und ethnographische Prozesse in den Westrhodopen im XV–XVIII. Jh.,” *Bulgarian Historical Review* 3–4 (2002): 80; İ. H. Uzunçarşılı, *Kapıkulu Ocakları*, 1: 18.
20. Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi, TD 771, TD 775; E. Radushev, *Pomatsite* [The Pomaks], 396–400.
21. Bulgarian historians made a lot of effort in this direction. See Cv. Georgieva, *Enitcharite* [The Janissaries], 116–192; E. Radushev, *Agrarite institutsii v Osmanskata imperia prez XVII–XVIII vek* [Agrarian Institutions in the Ottoman Empire in the 17th–18th Centuries] (Sofia, 1995), 135–170.
22. According to R. W. Bulliet, understood as a socially determined process, the conversion to Islam derives more from the intention of the individuals than from that of the group. In this relation the author formulates two axioms of social conversion: 1. The convert’s expectations of his new religion will parallel his expectations of his old religion; 2. Leaving aside ecstatic converts, no one willingly converts from one religion to another, if by virtue of conversion he markedly lowers his social status. See R. W. Bulliet, *Conversion to Islam*, 41.
23. The easiest way for the reader to convince himself on this issue would be to open Str. Dimitrov, E. Grozdnova, St. Andreev, ed., *Fontes Turcici Historiae Bulgaricae*, vol. 7, (Sofia, 1986). S/he will see there that from the sixteenth century onwards, numerous representatives of the Janissary corps collected the most significant revenue for the State Treasury—*Cizye* tax. For the first time this issue was distinctly marked by L. Darling, *Revenue-Raising and Legitimacy. Tax Collection and Finance Administration in the Ottoman Empire 1560–1660* (Leiden-New York-Köln, 1996), 169–177.
24. Janissary Cavalry Guard of the Turkish Sultan.
25. Koçi Bey, *Risale* (İstanbul, 1939), 64.
26. L. Darling, *Revenue-Raising and Legitimacy*, 170–178. According to the summary register for collecting *Cizye* in the financial year 1600–1601, **all** fiscal agents in the European domains were members of the Janissary Corps. Cf. “St. St. Cyril and Methodius” National Library, Oriental Department, F. 6A, a. u. 790, p. 26.
27. Numerous examples of similar situations can be found in the “Nevrokop” section of the Ottoman Archive in Sofia. See, for example, “St. St. Cyril and Methodius” National Library, Oriental Department, F. 126A, a. u. 72, 73, 76 (fol.1–2), 78, 86 etc.
28. Apart from *Cizye* tax, the Janissary Corps laid their hands on the collection of almost all of the State Treasury’s revenue—extraordinary and normal taxes, levies on animal pro-

duce, military supplies etc. It could not but be noticed that the financial administration of the Ottoman Empire was turned into a kind of extension of the military organization of the State—a normal condition of authoritarian regimes, where militarization of the government was *condictio sine qua non* for their existence. See E. Radushev, “Ruling Nomenclature.”

29. Cv.Georgieva, *Enitcharite [The Janissaries]*, 93.
30. “St. St. Cyril and Methodius” National Library, Oriental Department, CG 34/2, fol. 6.
31. Ibid., F. 1/10981, fol. 5. In the Ottoman archive in Sofia there are many more Ottoman documents of this kind.
32. See M. Kalitzin, A. Velkov, E. Radushev ed., *Sources*, 80–128, 250–289.
33. “St. St. Cyril and Methodius” National Library, Oriental Department, F. 1A/6808.
34. “St. St. Cyril and Methodius” National Library, Oriental Department, F. 1A, a.u. 57370, fol. 1, and OAK 34/35, fol. 1. Compare E. Radushev, “Nyakoi cherti ot struktura na osmanskoto obshtestvo prez XVIII vek” [Some Features of the Structure of the Ottoman Society in the 18th Century], in E. Radushev, V. Stoyanov, ed., *Studia in Honorem Professoris Verae Mutafchieva* (Sofia, 2001), 309–311.
35. Str. Dimitrov, “Avant-propos,” 37–38; A.Minkov, *Conversion*, 165; E. Radushev, *Pomatsite [The Pomaks]*, 313.
36. Observing the spread of Islam in Iran, R. W. Bulliet divides the converts into five groups according to the pace of the process: 1) innovators—pioneers in the adoption of the new religion, representing up to 2.5% of the population; 2) early adopters—the next 13.5% to accept the new religion; 3) early majority—the next 34%; 4) late majority—the next 34% and 5) laggards—the final 16%. My observations on Ottoman source materials concerning the regions of Western Rhodopes and Deliorman in Ottoman Roumelia show a similar dynamic in the conversion process there from the fifteenth to the first half of the eighteenth century. See R. W. Bulliet, *Conversion*, 33–42, 49–62. Compare E. Radushev, *Pomatsite [The Pomaks]*, 398–401.
37. E. Radushev, *Pomatsite [The Pomaks]*, 375–402.
38. E. Radushev, *Pomatsite [The Pomaks]*, 385, 412–414.
39. E. Radushev, *Pomatsite [The Pomaks]*, 392–393. Compare BOA, Mevkufat Kalemi 2873.
40. H. İnalçık, ed., *Sûret-i Defter-i Sancak-i Arvanid* (Ankara, 1954), 11–12; J. v. Hammer, *Des Osmanischen Reiches Staatsverfassung und Staatsverwaltung*, 2 vols. (Wien, 1815), 2: 193–195; A. Djévid Bey, *Etat Militaire Ottoman depuis la fondation de l'Empire jusqu'à nos jours. Livre premier. Les Janissaires* (Paris, 1882), 163–171; İ. H. Uzunçarşılı, *Kapukulu Ocakları*, 2: 160–161, 351–354; C. Georgieva, *Enitcharite [The Janissaries]*, 130–152.
41. İ. H. Uzunçarşılı, *Kapukulu Ocakları*, 1: 18; A. Zelyazkova, *Razprostranenie na islama v zapadno-balkanskite zemi pod osmanska vlast prez 15–18 vek* [The Spread of Islam in the Western Balkan Lands under Ottoman Rule, 15th–18th Centuries] (Sofia, 1990),

- 131–132; A. Matkovski, “Prilog pitanju devşirme,” *Prilozi za orientalnu filologiju* 14–15 (Sarajevo, 1969): 276–277.
42. İ. H. Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, 6 vols. (Ankara, 1988), 4/1: 41.
43. See I. Petrosyan, *Mebde-i Kanun-i Yeniçeri Ocağı*, 138; İ. H. Uzunçarşılı, *Kapukulu Ocakları*, 1: 324.
44. C. Georgieva, *Enitcharite* [The Janissaries], 119–132.
45. As a measure of surface *çift* means the land that could be cultivated with a pair of oxen. If the soil is good a *çift* amounts to 60–80 *dönüms*, if average—90–100 and if poor—130–150 *dönüms*. *Dönüm* is equal to 40 steps to the square or approximately 1088 m².
46. For similar cases in Anatolia see O. Özel, *Changes in Settlement Patterns, Population and Society in Rural Anatolia: A Case Study of Amasya (1576–1642)*. Ph.D. Thesis, Department of Middle Eastern Studies, University of Manchester (1993), 160–166.
47. See H. İncalcık, “Çiftlik,” *The Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Web CD Edition, Brill Academic Publishers, 2003); E. Radushev, *Agramite institutsii* [Agrarian Institutions], 135–170.
48. Today Musomishta, village, Blagoevgrad County, Bulgaria.
49. Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi, Mevkufat Kalemî 2873, p. 34 and 46.
50. One of the corps of the horse janissary guards of the Sultan, called “*Altı Bölük Halkı*”.
51. Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi, Mevkufat Kalemî 2873, p. 39.
52. H. İncalcık, “The *cift-hane* system: the organization of the Ottoman rural society,” in H. İncalcık, D. Quataert ed., *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire 1300–1914* (Cambridge, 1994), 133–143.
53. Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi, Mevkufat Kalemî 2873, p. 108.
54. Ibid., TD 771.
55. With regard to the names of the settlements of the *yürüks* see M. T. Gökbilgin, *Rumeli’de Yürükler, Tatarlar ve Evlad-i Fatihan* (Istanbul, 1957), 146–149.
56. Today Novosel, village, Shoumen district, Bulgaria.
57. Title awarded to the soldiers in the units of the horse janissary guards of the Sultan “*Altı Bölük Halkı*”.
58. No name is noted.
59. See above, note 16.
60. Infantryman.
61. Illegible text.

62. Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi, TD 771, p. 204.
63. Ibid., TD 771, p. 4–205.
64. H. İncalcık, “The çift-hane system,” 133–143.
65. Y. Yücel, ed., *Kitabu Mesalihi'l-Muslimin ve Menafi'i'l-Mu'minin* (Ankara, 1981), 45–55; Y. Yücel ed. *Kitab-i Mustetab* (Ankara, 1974), passim; R. Murphey, ed. *Kanûn-nâme-i Sultânî Li'Azîz Efendi*, (Harvard University, 1985), 27–33.
66. Y. Yücel, “Osmanlı Devletindeki Bozuklukları Giderme Çabaları,” in Y. Yücel, ed., *Kitabu Mesalihi'l-Muslimin*, 5. Compare Y. Yücel, “Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Desentralizasyona (Adem-i Merkrizyet) Dair Genel Gözlemler”, *Belleten*, 38/152 (1974).
67. R. Murphey, *Kanûn-nâme-i Sultânî*, 30.
68. M. Akdağ, *Türk Halkının Dirlik ve Düzenlik Kavgası* (Ankara, 1975), 61–68.
69. H. İncalcık, *Fatih Devri Üzerinde Tetkikler ve Vesikalar*, 116–117.
70. I. Petrosyan, *Mebde-i Kanun-i Yeniçeri Ocağı*, 67; W. L. Wright, *The Book of Counsel. Ottoman Statecraft* (Princeton, 1935), 39.
71. P. Rycaut, *The Present State of the Ottoman Empire* (London, 1668), 80, 197.
72. R. Murphey, *Kanûn-nâme-i Sultânî*, 30, 32.
73. I. Petrosyan, *Mebde-i Kanun-i Yeniçeri Ocağı*, 60.
74. R. Murphey, *Kanûn-nâme-i Sultânî*, 46–47.
75. Foreigner. Term used to designate Janissary recruits from non-*devşirme* origin.
76. I. Petrosyan, *Mebde-i Kanun-i Yeniçeri Ocağı*, 65.
77. Son of a member of the Janissary Corps.
78. A term, meaning “novice”, applied to Christians enlisted for service in the Janissary Corps.
79. I. Petrosyan, *Mebde-i Kanun-i Yeniçeri Ocağı*, 14–15.
80. İ. H. Uzunçarşılı. *Osmanlı Tarihi*, 3: 277.
81. A. Özcan, ed., *Eyyubi Efendi Kanunnamesi* (İstanbul, 1994), 33, 40.
82. Village, Shoumen district, Bulgaria.
83. Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi, TD 771, p. 89.
84. Today Byal Bryag, village, Shoumen district, Bulgaria.
85. Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi, TD 771, p. 43.

86. For some more similar source materials see E. Radushev, V. Stoyanov, ed., *Studia in Honorem Professoris Verae Mutafchieva*, 309–311.

87. A. Viquesnel, *Voyage dans le Turquie d'Europe*, (Paris, 1861), after B. Deribeev, “August Viquesnel v Rodopite” [August Viquesnel in the Rhodopes], *Rodopski Sbornik*, 5 (1993): 260–261.

88. Str. Dimitrov, *Sultan Mahmud II i krayat na enicharite* [Sultan Mahmud II and the end of the Janissary Corps] (Sofia, 1993), 241–245.

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