The First "Little Mehmeds": Conscripts for the Ottoman Army, 1826-53

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İlk Mehmetçikler Kimlerdi?: Osmanlı Ordusunun Neferleri, 1826-1853

Öz ■ 1826 yılında Yeniçeri Ocağı'nı ortadan kaldıran ve yıllardan beri içerden ve dışardan siyasi ve askerî olarak otoritesi sürekli tehdit edilen Osmanlı merkezî hükümeti, çareyi uzun yıllar boyunca silah altında tutulmak üzere toplanmış "başıbağlu" neferlerden oluşan Avrupa tipi bir ordu kurmakta bulmuştu. Osmanlı devleti, yeni kurduğu alayların artan asker ihtiyacını karşılamak üzere Müslüman köylüleri ve alt tabakadan gelen şehirlileri zorla askere aldı. Bu makale tarih araştırmaları bağlamında yeterince çalışılmamış bu askerlerin hikayelerine odaklanmaktadır. Çalışmada halkın ve askere alınanların zorunlu askerliğe karşı verdikleri tepkiler ve askere alınanların toplumsal arkaplanları incelenmektedir. Makalede aynı zamanda dinin, etno-kültürel kimliklerin, sosyal statünün ve askerlik tecrübesinin Osmanlı devletinin askere alma siyasetini ve halkın askerliğe dair düşüncelerini nasıl etkilediği, milliyetçilik hislerinin Müslüman Osmanlı tebaası arasında yayılmasından önceye tekabül eden bu dönemde tahlil edilecektir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Askere Alma, Zorunlu Askerlik, II. Mahmud, Tanzimat, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Reform

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This article is based on my MA thesis, titled "Ottoman Military Recruitment and the Recruit, 1826–1853," completed at Bilkent University in Ankara in 2005, and on my doctoral dissertation under way at McMaster University in Hamilton, Canada. The text has been updated to my recent research. Some of the arguments and material presented here were summarized in Veysel Şimşek, "Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Düzenli Ordu için Asker Toplanması: 1826-1853," *Toplumsal Tarih* 198 (2010), 36-42. I am grateful to Dr. Virginia H. Aksan and Dr. Petra Dreiser for reading my drafts and for their invaluable comments and suggestions. Of course, the responsibility for mistakes and viewpoints is solely mine.

From the destruction of the Janissary Corps in 1826 to the outbreak of the Crimean War (1853–56), the Ottoman state inducted and dispatched tens of thousands of soldiers to battlegrounds in Anatolia, Kurdistan, Syria, and in the Balkans. Despite the catastrophic losses it suffered, especially between 1828 and 1839, the reformed Ottoman army enlarged continuously and drafted new conscripts to maintain its size. In 1834, a new military organization called *Redif Asakir-i Mansure* (Victorious Reserve Soldiers) was founded to provide a pool of trained recruits for the regular army during wartime. Its muster rolls indicate that *Redif* quickly expanded to a 50,000-men strong force by 1838.[1] Eleven years after the demise of the Janissary Corps, Mahmud II's new *Asakir-i Mansure-i Muhammediye* (Victorious Soldiers of Muhammad) had drawn some 161,000 conscripts into its ranks, while its effective force was 47,000 men strong.[2] Excluding the *Redif*, the Ottoman standing army grew to a force of 80,000 men, up from a few thousand raw recruits in the imperial capital in 1826.[3] At the outbreak of the Crimean War, the Ottoman military establishment mobilized between 145,000 and 178,000 troops in Rumelia, and at least 87,000 in Anatolia.[4] By the mid-1840s, perhaps a total of as many as 300,000 men had been inducted into the Ottoman military, with the drilling, marching, and parading uniformed soldiers a common sight in Istanbul and in many of the provinces. According to the 1829–32 censuses, this figure represented more than one-tenth of all Muslim males registered and one-fourth of all men considered eligible for military service by the Ottoman authorities.[5] Three decades earlier, about 1.5 million Frenchmen had been conscripted during the Consulate period (1796–99) and following the imperial era (1804–14), which corresponded to 7 percent of the population in the pre-revolutionary borders of

1 A series of muster rolls covering the time between 1835 and 1838 (H. 1251–53) give the information that the total number of *Redif* soldiers increased from 48,497 to 53,851 in 1838. See BOA (Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi [The Ottoman Archives of the Prime Minister's Office, Istanbul]) D. ASM (Asakir-i Mansure Defterleri) 38883 for a detailed track of each regiment's number of men, including the salary paid to the reserve army for the years mentioned.

2 BOA, KK (Kamil Kepeci) 6799. Also see Appendix A.

3 BOA, İ.MVL (İrade Meclis-i Vâlâ) 42/ 782 (1257/ 1841).

4 Candan Badem, *The Ottoman Crimean War (1853-1856)* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 103, 145-146.

5 Numerical data is compiled from Enver Ziya Karal, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda İlk Nüfus Sayımı 1831* (Ankara: T.C Başvekâlet İstatistik Umum Müdürlüğü, 1943), D.ASM 37912, BOA, TS.MA.d (Topkapı Sarayı Müze Arşivi Defterleri) 4895 (H. 29 Receb 1247/ 30 May 1832), accessed from BOA. Istanbul's population is drawn from BOA, NFS.d (Nüfus Defterleri) 567 (dated by the archive as H. 1260/ 1844-1845, but apparently the figures shown were taken in Istanbul's previous census in the late 1820s).

France.[6] Thus we can compare the unprecedented level of Ottoman mobilization from the 1820s to the 1840s to that of France during the Napoleonic Wars.

This essay will focus on the Ottoman conscripts, who together with their families formed a distinct and sizable social group within the larger Ottoman society in the decades following the elimination of the Janissary Corps. Most Ottomanists have largely ignored this demographic as a subject of scholarly investigation in a bid not to trespass into the "forbidden" realm of military history—a field associated with Turkish nationalists and militarists.[7] This approach has meant disregarding the story, historical significance, and impact of a large group on the history of the later Ottoman Empire. Building on existing scholarship, and utilizing primary and secondary sources, this article will consider the following questions: Who were the soldiers of the Ottoman army in the second quarter of the 19th century? Why did they serve in or desert the army? Is it possible to trace Ottoman soldiers' own voices concerning their lives as conscripts? If it is, what did these "Little Mehmeds" (*Mehmetçik*s) have to say?[8] What was the interplay between military recruitment policies and ethno-cultural identities in the Ottoman Empire? And finally, how did conscription affect the emergence of the novel identity of the "Ottoman soldier," and how might it have contributed to transforming ethno-cultural identities in the later Ottoman Empire?

The era in question was marked by the drastic changes wrought by the transformation and reconsolidation of the Ottoman state and its new governance. After

6 H. D. Blanton, "Conscription in France during the era of Napoleon," in *Conscription in the Napoleonic Era,* eds. Donald Stoker et al (London: Routledge, 2009), 19-20.

7 Only very recently have several analytical works come out on late Ottoman military-political transformation. See for instance, Khaled Fahmy, *All the Pasha's Men* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press [henceforth UP], 1997); Erik Zürcher, ed., *Arming the State Military Conscription in the Middle East and Central Asia 1775- 1925* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1999); Virginia H. Aksan, *Ottoman Wars 1700-1870*: *An Empire Besieged* (London: Pearson-Longman, 2007); Tobias Heinzelmann, *Cihaddan Vatan Savunmasına, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Genel Askerlik Yükümlülüğü 1826-1856*, trans. Türkis Noyan (Istanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2008); Gültekin Yıldız, *Neferin Adı Yok, Zorunlu Askerliğe Geçiş Sürecinde Osmanlı Devleti'nde Siyaset, Ordu ve Toplum: 1826-1839* (Istanbul: Kitabevi, 2009); Fatih Yeşil, "Nizam-ı Cedid'den Yeniçeriliğin Kaldırılışına Osmanlı Ordusu" (PhD diss., Hacettepe University, 2009). For reviews of the existing scholarship of Ottoman military matters, see Kahraman Şakul, "Osmanlı Askeri Tarihi Üzerine Bir Literatür Değerlendirmesi," *Türkiye Araştırmaları Literatür Dergisi*, 1 (2003), 529-571 and "Yeni Askeri Tarihçilik," *Toplumsal Tarih* 198 (2010), 31-36.

8 The Turkish word "*Mehmetçik*" came to affectionately denote the ordinary Ottoman-Turkish conscript, not dissimilar to the British "Tommy" and the French "Poilu."

the destruction of the Janissary Corps in 1826, Mahmud II (r. 1808–39) initiated wide-ranging military, fiscal, and bureaucratic reforms aimed at strengthening the central authority in the face of internal and external challenges. His new European-style army, *Asakir-i Mansure-i Muhammediye*, was one of the prime instruments for achieving these changes, alongside a growing and diversifying bureaucracy, the imposition of new taxes, and active diplomacy with the Great Powers. The Tanzimat Decree of 1839 and ensuing legislation in the 1840s and 1850s were meant to manifest the new kind of Ottoman governance, but in many ways the Tanzimat era in fact marked the continuation and culmination of earlier policies rather than a rupture.

Military conscription, one of the "innovations" of Mahmud II's later rule, has remained one of the formative experiences of thousands of men and their families in the Middle East and the Balkans until today. After Mahmud II's death, the Tanzimat Decree promised a fair, codified system of military recruitment that also stressed the necessity and therefore obligatory nature of military service for the imperial forces. What was promulgated in the decree soon culminated in the military reforms of 1843 and the conscription code of 1846. The reforms set the active army's strength at 150,000, and every year, 30,000 new recruits were to replace the discharged. The recruitment quotas were to be adjusted according to each district's population.[9] In 1844, the male Muslim population from which the recruits would be drawn was about 4 million. The authorities derived that figure from about 2.9 million men actually counted, and another 1.16 million estimated to reside in Albania and the Arab provinces.[10] In 1843, five regional standing armies with their specific recruitment districts were established as the armies of Rumelia, Istanbul, Anatolia, Arabia and the Guards. In 1848, a sixth army was established in Iraq. All these armies had their own *Redif* units attached to them.[11] Thus were set the fundamental legal, discursive, and administrative structures for conscription that survive, with imperfections and some differences, until the end of the empire.

9 *Kur'a Kanunname-i Hümayunu*, Istanbul H. 1262 [1846], Article 3, pp. 4-5 and BOA, İ.MSM (İrade, Mesail-i Mühimme) 10/ 206 (1843).

10 İ.MSM 10/ 206 (1843). For a detailed breakdown of population figures in the document, see Heinzelmann, *Cihaddan Vatan Savunmasına*, 275-279.

11 Erik Zürcher, "The Ottoman Conscription System in Theory and Practice, 1844-1918," in *Arming the State Military Conscription in the Middle East and Central Asia 1775- 1925*, ed. Erik J. Zurcher (London: I.B. Tauris, 1999), 82.

The Ottoman Quest for the Ideal Soldier, 1789-1839

When Selim III (r. 1789–1807) and his reformers attempted to create an armed formation outside the Janissary Corps and irregular units as a part of his *Nizam-ı Cedid* reforms in the late 18th century, the ideal recruits they sought much resembled the ideal Janissary levy of two centuries earlier.[12] Recommended for recruitment were young, rootless boys (preferably orphans) from the lower classes (both urban and rural) who could be easily indoctrinated in the barracks isolated from the common populace and the Janissaries.[13] After the "Auspicious Event" and the creation of *Asakir-i Mansure-i Muhammediye*, the image of the model soldier proved identical to that of the *Nizam-ı Cedid* recruit, and again, rather ironically, had a lot in common with the ideal Janissary whose corps Mahmud II wanted to destroy. Absolute loyalty, obedience, discipline, and an almost religious devotion to military duty were once more the key traits expected of a *Mansure* soldier.

As Virginia H. Aksan and Gültekin Yıldız have underlined, Ottoman military reforms between the 1770s and 1830s were not limited to hiring European military instructors, importing Western military weaponry, or to translating French military treatises or Prussian drill manuals. Especially after 1826, they should rather be seen as a wide-scale and radical political and social transformation project.[14]

The post-1826 military reform program meant the creation of novel military formations and the reconfiguration of existing ones. These policies resulted in the redefinition of who was an Ottoman soldier and in the emergence of new military identities in the minds both of the state bureaucracy and of ordinary subjects. The eradication of the "Janissary identity" was thus as important as the physical extermination of the corps itself. Adolphus Slade, a shrewd observer of the Mahmudian state, noted that

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12 For the descriptions of ideal Janissary recruits, see Colin Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300-1650: The Structure of Power* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 135-141; Erdal Küçükyalçın, *Turna'nın Kalbi: Yeniçeri Yoldaşlığı ve Bektaşilik* (Istanbul: Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Yayınevi, 2009), 32-39.

13 Enver Ziya Karal, "Nizam-ı Cedid'e Dair Layihalar," *Tarih Vesikaları* 1, no. 6 (1941), 414-425; 2, no. 8 (1942), 104-111; 2, no. 11 (1943), 342-351; 2, no. 12 (1943), 424-432; Ergin Çağman, ed., *III. Selim'e Sunulan Islahat Lâyihaları* (Istanbul: Kitabevi, 2010). Especially, Reşid Efendi's report in Karal, "Layihalar," 2, no. 8, 105; Abdullah Berri Efendi's report in Karal, "Layihalar," 1, no. 6, 424; Çağman, ed., *III. Selim'e Sunulan Islahat Lâyihaları*, 63.

14 For a detailed analysis of the Ottomans' "New Absolutism," see Aksan, *Ottoman Wars, 1700-1870*, 180-342; Yıldız, *Neferin Adı Yok,* 17-130.

> the Porte expected probably that the inconvenience of juvenile levies would remedy itself, and be amply repaid, should they grow up untinctured by Janissariism [*sic*]; by which time also it hoped that the anti-reform feeling would be worn out, when the people would no longer object to the new order of things.[15]

To aid the creation of its ideal army, the Ottoman state produced an unprecedented number of founding ordinances and printed drilling manuals, army regulations, penal codes, and religious books. At least on paper, these texts outlined how Ottoman officers should train, instill discipline, motivate, and manage soldiers' lives. In addition, the military and civilian bureaucracy expanded and diversified to handle new, larger tasks. For instance, unlike the Janissaries, *Mansure* soldiers did not receive personal pay slips. Instead, the central government managed their salaries by muster rolls with their names on them. The Ottoman bureaucracy compiled detailed periodical reports about the size, cost, and provisioning of the reformed army, many of which were enthusiastically examined by Mahmud II himself.[16]

After 1826, the Mahmudian state gradually located existing holders of *timar*s and members of *evlad-ı fatihan* and other ancient military organizations (such as *derbendci*s) through empire-wide surveys. It then attempted to organize those still fit to fight into new model regiments.[17] But various irregular troops of different names (*deli*s, *levend*s, *segban*s, *nefir-i âm* soldiery, etc.), who had joined the colors either by contractual agreements or by coercion, also continued to exist after 1826, for both practical purposes and immediate military necessities. These troops included ethnic and regional warrior bands who performed soldiering for the state as their customary "business" as well as individuals who offered their services as professional fighters.[18]

Nevertheless, the Mahmudian regime strove to replace the seasonal irregular troops with relatively cheaper, better disciplined, and better trained long-term

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15 Adolphus Slade, *Turkey Greece and Malta*, vol.1 (London: Saunders and Oetley, 1837), 489.

16 For a detailed report of this sort on the artillery and sapper regiments that Mahmud II reviewed, see TS.MA.d 10740 (H. M 1254/ March-April 1838).

17 Aksan, *Ottoman Wars*, 358; Yıldız, *Neferin Adı Yok*, 345-346; Karal, *İlk Nüfus Sayımı*, 51, 57, 56, 62, 66, 157-159.

18 This essay mainly focuses on the soldiers that served in the regular/active (*Asakir-i Mansure*, *Nizamiye*) and reserve (*Redif*) units. For valuable overviews on the irregulars (*başıbozuk*s) during Mahmud II's reign, see Tolga Esmer's article in this volume, as well as Yıldız, *Neferin Adı Yok*, 212-248.

conscripts fed and equipped by the central state as the empire's main fighting force. And Mahmud II proved successful in changing the balance toward the regular and reserve formations by the end of his reign, at least in terms of numbers. The irregulars had indeed constituted a numerically and qualitatively important part of the Ottoman armed forces during the Greek Revolt, the Ottoman-Russian War of 1828–29, and the first war against Egypt in 1831–33.[19] At the battle of Nizib in 1839, however, there were 25,000 regular and reserve infantry, cavalry, and artillery in the 34,000-men-strong field army.[20] In the early 1840s, some 80,000 *Nizamiye* and 50,000 *Redif* soldiers appeared on the muster rolls, outnumbering the irregular troops.[21] The center also wanted to know and limit the number of hired warriors employed by provincial power magnates and state officials. It made conscious efforts to transfer and incorporate the mercenaries from the personal entourages into the regular formations under the authority of the central military command.[22] The military penal code of 1829 designated all servants, irregulars, regulars, and officers of any Ottoman army as a "member of the military" (*askerî*) and put them in the same legal category.[23] The language and concepts utilized in Ottoman institutional ordinances, penal codes and other regulations from the late 1820s to the mid-1840s attest, I believe, to the emergence of two distinguishable social as well as legal statuses in the modern sense: "civilian" (non-members of any military formation) and "military" (formed by regulars, reservists and even irregulars). Within the redefined Ottoman "military class", regulations, at least on paper, aimed to establish a distinction between officers and the rank and file

19 Yıldız, *Neferin Adı Yok,* 161-162, 173-174, 236-237; Avigdor Levy, "The Military Policy of Sultan Mahmud II," (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1968), 406-407; Fahmy, *All the Pasha's Men*, 63, 65; H. Muhammed Kutluoğlu, *The Egyptian Question (1831-1841)* (Istanbul: Eren, 1998), 75, 81.

20 Quoted from William Francis Ainsworth, *Travels and Researches in Asia Minor, Mesopotamia, Chaldea, and Armenia*, vol. 1 (London, 1842), 316. Helmuth von Moltke also provided a similar figure; 25,000–28,000 regular infantry and 5,000 cavalry. Helmuth von Moltke, *Türkiye Mektupları*, trans. Hayrullah Örs (Istanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 1969), 256.

21 İ. MVL 42/ 782 (H. 1257/ 1841), İ. DH (İrade Dahiliye) 68/ 3357 (H. 1258/ 1842), İ. MSM 11/ 224 (H. 1260/ 1844).

22 Yıldız, *Neferin Adı Yok,* 162-172; for the registration and classification of the men in the retinues of several provincial notables and administrators, see Karal, *İlk Nüfus Sayımı,* 29, 55.

23 *Kanunname-i Ceza-i Askeriye*, H. Evahir Z 1245 [June 1830] Istanbul, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi (Istanbul), Esad Efendi no. 2844, Article 1, Sub-Article 14, p. 5.

by describing each individual's responsibilities and duties in great detail and by reconfiguring hierarchy for the members of the military.[24]

The official Ottoman documents used elevated language to describe the moment of conscription: By joining the colors, the recruit "received the honor of becoming one of the Victorious Soldiers [of Muhammad]" (*Asakir-i Mansure neferatına iltihakla müteşerref olanlar*) or "obtained the rank of a soldier of the sultan" (*asker-i padişahî rütbesini ahz [edenler]*).[25] In the early stages of Mahmudian military reform, the administrators in Syria referred to Turcophone *Mansure* recruits from Anatolia as "Ottoman soldiers," distinguishing them from the other, probably local, troops they had.[26] Along with the term "*Asakir-i Mansure*," the Ottoman bureaucracy used the phrases "*Asakir-i Muntazama*" and "*Asakir-i Nizamiye*" between 1826 and 1839, delineating the image of the new army. The term "*Asakir-i Mansure-i Muhammediye*" gradually vanished after 1839; the regular regiments were more often called "*Nizamiye*" or sometimes the "*Nizam*," which could refer both to the units and to the individual soldiers in them.[27] Mahmud II further diversified the composition of his army by creating new military formations, such as the Guards (*Hassa*) and the reserve (*Redif*) regiments. The reformed Ottoman army retained its infantry, artillery, and cavalry arms, while specialized units were added to the line and reserve battalions, such as light infantry, sharpshooting riflemen, grenadiers, sappers, horse artillery, and even mounted cuirassiers. The state also designed and issued European-inspired uniforms and novel military insignia and paraphernalia, inaugurating a new era in Ottoman military tradition and symbolism.[28]

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24 See, for instance, the description of the ideal Ottoman "officer and gentleman" in *Müzekkere-i Zabitan* H. 1251 [1835-36], Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Hüsrev Paşa no. 822.

25 Karal, *İlk Nüfus Sayımı*, 112; Varna Court Records no. 2, case 292 (H. 7 R 1253/ 11 July 1837) transcribed in Erhan Alpaslan, "1247-1254 H./ M. 1830-1838 Tarihli 2 No'lu Varna Şer'iye Sicil Defterinin Transkripsiyonu ve Değerlendirmesi" (MA thesis, Kahramanmaraş Sütçü İmam Üniversitesi, 1996), 444-45.

26 Hakan Erdem, "Recruitment for the "Victorious Soldiers of Muhammad" in the Arab Provinces, 1826-1828," in *Histories of the Modern Middle East: New Directions*, eds. Israel Gershoni, Hakan Erdem and Ursula Woköck (London: Lynne Rienner, 2002), 203.

27 Frederick Walpole, *The Ansayrii or the Assassins, with Travels in the further East in 1850-51, including a visit to Ninaveh*, vol. 3 (London: Richard Bentley, 1851), 186.

28 For some visual samples, see Ethem Eldem, *İftihar ve İmtiyaz: Osmanlı Nişan ve Madalyaları Tarihi* (Istanbul: Osmanlı Bankası Arşiv ve Araştırma Merkezi, 2004) and Mahmut Şevket Paşa, *Osmanlı Teşkilat ve Kıyafet-i Askeriyesi* (Ankara: TTK, 2010) [reprint].

It is hard to fully determine how the Ottoman soldiers associated with their units, but some scattered evidence suggests how units and individual soldiers were linked. The Guard units seemed to have a higher status than the line units, and more was expected of them. Mahmud II joined the drills of his Cavalry Guard in person, wearing the uniform of a major of the Guards.[29] In his memoirs, Zarif Pasha described his regimental commander, Şerif Bey, acting as an extremely proud and stern officer during the march against the Albanian rebels in 1832, because his unit was a Guard regiment and no Guard unit had been dispatched to the provinces until that time.[30] Other examples, however, give *Hassa* soldiers a more mixed record. Between 1829 and 1831, at a time when only a few Guard units existed, 168 men from the Guard regiments took furlough and never returned.[31] At the battle of Nizib, Moltke wrote about how quickly some of the Guard cavalrymen scattered and dispersed under a light cannonade, while Ainsworth described how the Ottoman Guard infantry bravely fought against the whole Egyptian army without support.[32]

Redif soldiers, who had to train for a limited time every year and were expected to be mobilized only in times of war, likely made neither eager nor proficient warriors. They did not want to leave their provinces and were dragged to distant battlefields against their will just as were the regulars, where their fate was uncertain.[33] It was thus unsurprising that the Ottoman authorities had serious concerns when they decided to convert a large number of *Redif* to *Nizamiye* soldiers in 1843 and 1844 to replenish their active regiments. Again, unsurprisingly, the population and reservists responded with evasion, desertion, and even armed resistance, testifying to the unwillingness of the *Redif* to serve on active duty.[34]

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29 Gültekin Yıldız, "Üniformalı Padişah II. Mahmud," in *II. Mahmud: Yeniden Yapılanma Sürecinde İstanbul*, ed. Coşkun Yılmaz, (Istanbul, 2010), 108-109; Şerafetttin Turan, "II. Mahmud'un Reformlarında İtalyan Etki ve Katkısı" in *Sultan II. Mahmud ve Reformları Semineri, 1989* (Istanbul: Istanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi, 1990), 118-119.

30 Enver Ziya Karal, "Zarif Paşa Hatıratı, 1816-1862," *Belleten* 4, no. 16 (1942), 450.

31 D. ASM 37592 (H. Ca 1245 to R 1247/ October 1829 to October 1831).

32 Moltke, *Türkiye Mektupları,* 270; Ainsworth, *Travels and Researches*, vol. 1, 347.

33 Moltke, *Türkiye Mektupları*, 262; HAT 453/ 22433-B (H. 19 Ca 1252/ 1 September 1836); Heinzelmann, *Cihaddan Vatan Savunmasına*, 84-86; Adolphus Slade, *Turkey and the Crimean War* (London, 1867), 275.

34 Heinzelmann, *Cihaddan Vatan Savunmasına*, 114-131.

The Selection and Social Background of Ottoman Conscripts

Some of the first *Asakir-i Mansure* recruits came from the personal retinues of state dignitaries, from religious schools, and from lower-ranking *ulema*. The guards of Bosphorus fortresses, sappers, bombardiers, cannon, and cannon-wagon corps who remained loyal to Mahmud during the "Auspicious Event" were soon incorporated into the new army.[35] Subsequent purges showed that some ex-Janissaries also ended up as *Mansure* soldiers. Some ex-Janissary officers, who proved to be loyal during the showdown in the capital, were commissioned to lead the new military formations. The most famous of these was perhaps Ağa Hüseyin Paşa, a former commander of the Corps who closely collaborated in its destruction and was appointed by the sultan as the *serasker* (commander in chief) of the new *Mansure* army. According to Ahmed Lütfi Efendi, enlistment began almost immediately, and a regiment was formed three days after the "Auspicious Event." By July 20, the first regiment-size unit (*tertib*) had been formed, with two more completed by the end of the month. The founding ordinance of the new army, based principally on earlier *Nizam-ı Cedid* regulations, was hastily drafted.[36] The ordinance ruled that only men aged fifteen to thirty could sign up, though anyone up to forty could enroll if he was considered "courageous." The recruits were supposed to sign up voluntarily to serve for twelve years. They also were supposed to have a clear past, good standing in society, and should not be converts to Islam. A *Mansure* soldier would be subjected to periodical military training and needed to be ready for duty at his barracks or wherever he was stationed. Men who became too old to serve or incapacitated would receive pensions based on the level of their disabilities.[37]

Before the comprehensive military reforms and the drafting of military codes in the 1840s, the duties and powers of the recruiters and the recruiting process were not defined in detail. In general, however, the task of finding recruits during the reign of Mahmud II fell to local notables and various community and tribal leaders. Military officers, administrators, scribes, and members of *ulema*

35 Ahmed Lütfi Efendi, *Tarih-i Lütfi*, transcribed by Ahmet Hezarfen, Yücel Demirel and Tamer Erdoğan (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 1999), 117; Levy, "Military Policy of Sultan Mahmud II," 179, 360-361. There were 358 and 322 discharged *Mansure* veterans from Istanbul in August-September 1837 (H. Ca 1253) and January-February 1838 (H. Za 1253), respectively, who were receiving pensions. D. BŞM (Başmuhasebe Kalemi ve Bağlı Birimlere Ait Defterler) 10455; D. BŞM 10479.

36 HAT 294/ 17481 (H. 1241/ 1826); Levy, "The Military Policy of Sultan Mahmud II," 177-79, 182-184.

37 Veli Şirin, *Asakir-i Mansure Ordusu ve Seraskerlik* (Istanbul: Tarih ve Tabiat Vakfı Yayınları, 2002), 101.

(especially *kadıs*) could be appointed by the center to oversee recruitment at the local level.[38] In practice, the procedures of conscription were not uniform throughout the empire, despite attempts at reform and improvement, as will be discussed below. In one place, recruitment parties could round up men arbitrarily, while in another, draft boards would use census records and draw lots to conduct a fairer selection process.

There is documentary evidence of draft lotteries before the Tanzimat era and the more comprehensive military reforms of 1843 and 1846. The wording of these levy orders suggests that the authorities considered the method "just," because able-bodied men from both "the rich and the poor" had an equal chance to be selected.[39] But it would be the conscription code of 1846 that fully defined the composition and duties of the draft boards, the methods of recruitment, and those eligible for draft lotteries. Every year, on *Rûz-ı Hızır* (May 5), all male inhabitants aged twenty to twenty-five were required to assemble in the administrative center of each *kaza*. The local judge, notables, and religious dignitaries constituted the mixed draft board (*kur'a meclisi)*. The state provided military officers, doctors, clerks, and other personnel to the board to execute required medical examinations and to oversee other bureaucratic procedures. The boards were to choose eligible young men by lottery who would serve for five years in the *Nizamiye* army. Discharged soldiers and those civilians who were not conscripted for five consecutive years during the drawing of lots would serve in the *Redif* regiments for seven years.[40]

The state granted a wide range of exemptions to members of the scribal, clerical, and administrative classes. Members of the scribal and administrative bureaucracy were not required to serve.[41] Members of the religious and judicial elite were also spared, a policy that traces back to the early 1830s.[42] The list

38 For the sample draft orders and the role of local notables, see BOA, C. ZB (Cevdet Zabtiye) 3780 (H. Evasıt C 1245/ December 1829) and C. ZB 2074 (H. 3 Za 1247/ 4 April 1832), Ahmed Lütfi Efendi, *Tarih-i Lütfi,* 643.

39 For the levy order to Tırnova, see BOA, C. As (Cevdet Askeriye) 46712 (H. 13 R 1253/ 17 July 1837). For another example in 1837, see Alpaslan, "Varna Şer'iye Sicil Defterinin," 444-445. It is noteworthy that the recommended selection procedure in the latter document was almost identical to the procedure described by the conscription code of 1846.

40 *Kur'a Kanunname-i Hümayunu*, Articles 4, 7, 8, 14, 15, 25, pp. 5-7, 10-11, 15.

41 *Kur'a Kanunname-i Hümayunu*, Articles 14, 15, pp. 10-11.

42 During the empire-wide census in the early 1830s, the census-takers did not put the religious students (*talebe-i ulûm*) under the category of militarily eligible men in Amasya, Tırnova, Bursa, and Eskişehir. Karal, *İlk Nüfus Sayımı*, 44-45, 94-95, 110, 148.

of exempted persons also included *imam*s (prayer leaders), *müezzins* (prayer callers), *hüteba* (preachers), and *kayyiman* (caretakers of the mosques). *Medrese* (religious school) students had to pass an examination to obtain an exemption from the lottery, exams carried out by *alay imamları* (regimental chaplains) or *mümeyyizler* (examiners) from religious schools. The law, at least on paper, prevented the conscription of those whose enlistment would bring calamity to their families. For instance, an eligible man who was the sole breadwinner of his household, had elderly parents, or was the son of a widow was exempt from conscription.[43]

Istanbul's population, and more specifically the lower orders of the capital, was considered a readily accessible source for the new army. One of the first things the authorities did after the "Auspicious Event" was to carry out a census in Istanbul from June to October 1826; it found some 45,000 Muslim males residing in the city. Those between fifteen and forty-five—17,000—were flagged.[44] Another census was taken in the capital toward the end of the Russian War of 1828–29, and the authorities specifically registered about 18,000 bachelors (*bikâr*s), in addition to 54,000 adult (*kübar*) Muslim males.[45] A variety of documents indicate that the state clearly considered bachelors, vagrants (*serseri*s), non-registered or "excess" shopkeepers, vegetable sellers, and other migrant day workers an easily accessible group for induction into the regular army.

One particular incident in 1838 reveals the Ottoman state's consistent policy of rounding up bachelors, vagrants, and unauthorized shopkeepers for the army. That year, a new levy demanding 8,021 men was imposed on Istanbul and Northwestern Anatolia.[46] During this levy, a recruiter named Ahmed Ağa, along with other officials, reportedly pressed men into service by using force and sheer terror, and collected more recruits than he had been authorized to in the streets and vineyards around Üsküdar. He allegedly grabbed anyone he encountered, bachelor or married/settled (*müteehhil*), and tied the conscripts' hands, a scene that caused widespread terror among other subjects. In response, a decree was issued stating that levy orders were to be carried out without such abuses, and Ahmed Ağa was eventually dismissed. The documents disclose, however, that the authorities were frustrated only by the method of recruitment, which should have been carried

43 For details on exemptions, see *Kur'a Kanunname-i Hümayunu*, Articles, 7, 14, 15, 18-23, pp. 6, 10-14.

44 Ahmed Lütfi Efendi, *Tarih-i Lütfi*, 206.

45 NFS.d 567 (1828-1829).

46 HAT 305/ 18001, B (1254/ 1838); BOA, ASK.MHM.d (Mühimme-i Asakir Defterleri) no. 31, p. 6. (H. Evahir Za, 1254/ 4-14 February, 1839).

out "wisely" instead of terrorizing the population, especially disturbing the lives of the settled men.[47]

On September 6, 1843, about four years after the declaration of the Tanzimat, a large military ceremony was staged in Istanbul to discharge those who had been under arms for a long time. The authorities wanted to keep the *Nizamiye* in strength, but they lacked the fresh recruits to do so. As a result, in addition to the unsuspecting *Redif* soldiers who had come to Istanbul from the provinces for the ceremony, they forcibly enrolled all bachelors and unauthorized shopkeepers from the provinces residing in the capital, as well as the city's unemployed. The official chronicler Ahmed Lütfi Efendi himself was among the recruiters and described the process in detail. According to his account, the recruitment parties hunted down said shopkeepers and concentrated their efforts in the neighbourhoods where bachelors were known to live.[48]

The "substitutes"[49] were another source of conscripts, sent by those who did not want to serve themselves and who could afford to arrange for a replacement. The practice began during the reign of Mahmud II,[50] and it was formally abolished only in 1886.[51] The temporary 1844 conscription code and the 1846 conscription code recognized and further regulated the rules and the procedures of substitute selection.[52] The 1846 conscription code stipulated that the eligible substitute be a healthy man between twenty-five and thirty (thus outside the designated manpower pool for the *Nizamiye* army), had not served in *Nizamiye*, and hail from the same army district as the applicant. It permitted the sending of substitutes for those occupied with "a trade, commerce or another important occupation/business" that might be ruined if left for five years. It was forbidden to sell a house, farmland, or farm equipment to cover the expense of finding a substitute. Therefore only affluent subjects appeared to have had this option;[53]

47 HAT 486/ 23822 (H. 21 Ca 1254/ 12 August 1838).

48 Ahmed Lütfi Efendi, *Tarih-i Lütfi,* 1147-48.

49 "*Bedel"* in the conscription code of 1846 and "*bedel-i şahsi"* in the conscription code of 1870. Heinzelmann, *Cihaddan Vatan Savunmasına,* 156.

50 *Kanunname-i Ceza-i Askeriye*, Article 37, pp. 119-120.

51 Heinzelmann, *Cihaddan Vatan Savunmasına*, 158.

52 C.As 6095 (H. 23 S 1258/ 5 April 1842); *Nizamat-ı Cedide-i Askeriye Kanunnamesi* (Includes the temporary Conscription Regulations), H. Evahir M 1260 [February 1844] Istanbul, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Hüsrev Paşa no. 815 M1, Article 54, p. 65; *Kur'a Kanunname-i Hümayunu*, Article 28, pp. 16-17.

53 *Kur'a Kanunname-i Hümayunu*, Article 28, pp. 16-17.

as one Turkish folk song says: "Our rich are exempted for money, our soldiers are of the needy."[54]

The founding ordinance of the *Asakir-i Mansure* and the following regulations on military recruitment[55] specifically wanted the recruits to be without criminal records. In a number of cases, however, Ottoman authorities inducted those they considered criminals, rebels, vagabonds and idlers into the regular army. Following a common practice of the time, the Ottoman state thus sometimes used military service as a kind of "punishment," a tool for social control and an instrument that could turn the useless into someone useful for the state. During the Crimean War, some two hundred able-bodied subjects from Kurdistan, who were accused of collaborating with brigands, were captured and delivered to the capital as conscripts for the Army of Rumelia.[56] In 1857, a local Ottoman administrator sent four captured brigands to the army to be considered for military service.[57] After the insurgencies of Haleb and Nablus in 1856, the authorities did not hesitate to impress into the army those accused of rebellion, to be deployed in the Balkans.[58]

During the centralization efforts from the 1820s to the 1850s, the Ottoman state subjected "reconquered" populations to military service as quickly as pos-

54 *"Zenginimiz bedel verir, askerimiz fakirdendir."* The song is probably from a later era; the word "*bedel*" here likely denotes the exemption money rather than the substitute sent. In contemporary France, the search for substitutes created a large "market": Every year, about 20,000 "victims" of draft lotteries paid for substitutes, and after the 1820s, "insurance companies" emerged even in the countryside to provide a steady guarantee for those who continuously "invested" large sums of money into the system. In the 1850s, the substitutes, who were mostly the "poor lads seeking a way to raise some money, or veterans who meant to re-enlist in any case and who, this way, made a profit on their decision," constituted one-fourth of the yearly recruit intake. (Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*: *The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1976), 292-293) It would be interesting to see what sort of interaction and bargaining happened over finding substitutes at the societal and bureaucratic levels in the 19th century Ottoman context.

55 See, for instance, İ. MVL (İrade Meclis-i Vâlâ) 10290, *i`lam* (H. 19 Ra(?) 1267/ 21 Jan(?) 1851).

56 İ. DH 20795 (H. 13 N 1271, 30 May 1855). It was also mentioned that this was an exceptional situation and that new soldiers were desperately needed at that time

57 A. MKT. NZD (Mektubi Kalemi, Nezaret ve Devair) Dosya no. 230, Vesika no. 87. (H. 7 Z 1273/ 29 July 1857).

58 Ufuk Gülsoy, "1856 Halep ve Nablus Olayları," *Tarih İncelemeleri Dergisi* 9 (1994), 279-288.

sible. Here, the imperial army served as an immediate instrument of military recruitment. Some 20,000 Albanians and Bosnians, whose recent revolts had been crushed, were pressed into service in Reşid Mehmed Pasha's army that countered the invading Egyptian forces in 1832–33. To "persuade" them to fight, the army took hostages from the population and kept them in the Ottoman fortresses in the Balkans.[59] Reşid Pasha, the governor of Sivas, recruited "a lot of regular soldiers" from the tribesmen and nomads in the Kurdish areas in Southeastern Anatolia in the summer of 1835 after pacifying them.[60] Moltke wrote in detail that the Ottoman Army forcibly recruited Kurds after their resistance was broken during the punitive campaigns of the late 1830s in Eastern Anatolia. In Siirt, for instance, the army immediately imposed a levy of 400 men on the population soon after the town's capture.[61] After the forceful occupation of Tal Afar in Northern Iraq by six infantry and cavalry battalions, the Ottoman central forces captured 3,000 men; 500 among them were distributed to the regiments.[62] Ömer Pasha, who would eventually become the Ottoman commander in chief in the Crimean War, told a European traveler that he had collected a levy of 2,000 men after crushing the revolt in Albania in the early 1840s.[63] During 1842–45, the Ottoman center managed to forcibly conscript some 20,000 Albanians into the central army, causing widespread discontent in the region.[64] The situation was similar in the Arab provinces after the Tanzimat, as the army regiments aided the authorities in carrying out population censuses and military recruitment.[65] The recruitment parties were accompanied by soldiers, and the practice became increasingly common from the 1830s onward. Ottoman officials recommended that recruitment officers should

59 Frederick Anscombe, "Islam and the Age of Ottoman Reform," *Past and Present* 208 (2010), 181.

60 Yıldız, *Neferin Adı Yok*, 244-245.

61 Moltke, *Türkiye Mektupları*, 197.

62 HAT 448/ 22332 (H. 13 Ra 1253/ 17 June 1837) in Yıldız, *Neferin Adı Yok*, 249, n. 275.

63 Hubert vol. Boehn, *Zustand der Türkei im Jahre der Propheziung* (Berlin, 1853), 29 in Gisela Haberer, "Die Aufstellung von Redif-Truppen in der Frühen Tanzimatzeit" (MA thesis, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, 1999), 36-37.

64 Heinzelmann, *Cihaddan Vatan Savunmasına*, 171-177; Tobias Heinzelmann, "Changing Recruiting Strategies in the Ottoman Army, 1839-1856," in *The Crimean War 1853-1856*, ed. Jerzy W. Borejsza (Warsaw: Neriton, 2011), 23.

65 See for instance, İ. DH 12223 (H. 24 R 1266/ 9 March 1850) for the dispatch of two battalions and of some irregulars to help census-taking in the population. It was implied that the system of drawing lots would follow the expedition. See also, Moshe Ma'oz, *Ottoman Reform in Syria and Palestine 1840-1861* (London: Oxford UP, 1968), 81-82; Karal, "Zarif Paşa'nın Hatıratı," 466-471.

call for armed support should the nomads of Western and Central Anatolia resist conscription.[66] The practice continued as punitive expeditions against the nomads of Southern Anatolia in the mid-1860s, as the armed forces were used to exert central control and secure taxation and conscription.[67]

Another reality of the era was the continual appearance of underage boys and sick men in army ranks. The levy orders sent to the districts forbade the conscription of children, the physically weak, and of those who lacked limbs[68] or were suffering from disease, thus likely attesting to a widespread practice.[69] In the mid-1830s, for instance, of the 22,272 men drafted from the provinces to replenish the Guards and the line regiments, 3,794 men, nearly one-sixth of the total number, were rejected for being unfit for military service.[70] One reason this occurred was that the Ottoman state could not provide adequate bureaucratic and medical support for the necessary physical examinations of all recruits on-site.[71] Consequently, the recruiters in the provinces did not hesitate to fill their quotas by sending the very young (most likely the orphans) and physically unfit, an easily "conscriptable" social group. Some recruits, anticipating their eventual rejection, might have even agreed to be dispatched as substitutes following a local arrangement.

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66 C. As 2103 (Not dated, but must have been penned after 1843).

67 See, Paul Dumont, "1865 Tarihinde Güney-Doğu Anadolu'nun Islahı," *İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Tarih Enstitüsü Dergisi* 10-11 (1979-80), 369-94.

68 Varna Court Records no. 2, case 32 (H. 13 Ş 1247/ 17 January 1832) in Alpaslan, "Varna Şer'iye Sicil Defterinin," 168-69.

69 Ibid, 197-98. See also Isparta Court Records no. 183 (H. Evail Za 1250/ March 1835) in Halil Erdemir "1246-1254 (1831-1838) Tarihli 183 Numaralı Isparta Şer'iye Sicili Üzerine Bir İnceleme" (MA thesis, Konya Selçuk Üniversitesi, 1995), 10-11.

70 ASK.MHM.d no. 30 (H. 1250-54/ 1834-39), pp. 232-235. It was inscribed in the register that these numbers show the entirety of recruits who came to the capital until December 11, 1835 (H. 20 Ş 1251). In contemporary Russia, landlords and village communities tried to send the troublesome, the disabled, and the old men to the army to meet their required quotas. Consequently, the annual intake of the Russian recruits was nearly equal to the number of those rejected for health reasons, physical disabilities, age, and height in the 1840s. Elise Kimerling Wirtschafter, *From Serf to Russian Soldier* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1990), 3-25; and John H. L. Keep, *Soldiers of the Tsar Army and Society in Russia 1492-1874* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1985), 143-75.

71 Isparta Court Records no. 183 (not dated, but likely to be issued just after *Tanzimat*) in Erdemir "183 Numaralı Isparta Şer'iye Sicili," 12-13.

Soon after the creation of the *Mansure* army, Ottoman officials noticed that there were more than one hundred boys under the age of 15 enrolled despite the existing regulations. According to a proposal by İbrahim Saib Efendi, a high-ranking *Mansure* official, these recruits could not yet be used as active soldiers. However, they could be trained in religion, reading and writing, military drills (with wooden muskets), and various trades as apprentices. After having trained and become accustomed to the military life, some of them could be enrolled as officers, engineers, and scribes in the military, while others could serve as apprentices in the armaments industries.[72] Thus, about a month after the "Auspicious Event," an ordinance was drafted for a "Training Center" for these youngsters.[73] The Ottoman "child soldiers," however, continued to show up in the ranks of the active army. The British traveler Adolphus Slade dubbed Mahmud's new army sent against the Russians in 1828–29 "an army of conscript boys, the most part under eighteen."[74] In the mid-1830s, Slade encountered Ottoman soldiers in the Balkans, "few of [whom] appeared above fifteen years old, while the looks of each of these victims of a harsh, ill-levied conscription, seemed to say 'I shall never see my home again.'"[75] The muster rolls of the *Mansure* army support Slade's observations, as the names of under-aged boys appear on them.[76] In the winter of 1833, there were sixty boys in *Mansure* units stationed in the city of Edirne.[77] A few months later, a number of boys were dispatched from different *kaza*s of Anatolia and handed over to various Istanbul artisans as apprentices.[78]

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72 For the report, see HAT 292/ 17435 (H. 1241/ 1826). The project was also mentioned in Ahmed Lütfi Efendi's chronicle, which was depicted as a preliminary experiment that eventually became the Ottoman military academy established in 1834. Ahmed Lütfi Efendi, *Tarih-i Lütfi*, 147-48.

73 For the ordinance, namely "Nizam-ı Talimgâh-ı Sıbyan-ı Asakir-i Mansure-i Muhammediye", see Ahmet Yaramış, "Osmanlı Ordusunda Çocuk Askerler Meselesi (Talimhane-i Sıbyan)," *Afyon Kocatepe Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 8, no. 1 (2006), 53-62.

74 Adolphus Slade, *Records of Travels in Turkey, Greece, &c. and of a Cruise with the Capitan Pasha, in the years 1829, 1830, and 1831*, vol.1 (London: Saunders and Oetley, 1832), 302.

75 Slade, *Turkey Greece and Malta,* vol. 2, 411-412.

76 For instance, four soldiers were registered as "*neferat-ı sıbyan*," with a *derkenar* (postscript) saying "*Bu çocukların mahiyesi onbeş yaşlarına girinceye değin beş kuruşdur.*" D. ASM 37849 (H. 27 S 1247/ 7 August 1831)

77 HAT 311/ 18387 B, C, D (H. 28 B 1249/ 11 December 1833).

78 C. As 33918 (H. 12 Za 1249/ 23 March 1834).

Voluntarism vs. Compulsion: Why Did the Men Serve (or Not Want to Serve) in the Ottoman Army?

It is hard to quantify the appetite of ordinary soldiers to join and fight in the armies of Mahmud II and the Tanzimat reformers, but as happened in France, Prussia, and Austria during the late 18th and early to mid-19th centuries,[79] the popular response to conscription were indifference, evasion, and in some cases, armed resistance.

The founding ordinance of *Asakir-i Mansure-i Muhammediye* had in fact indicated that the soldiers were supposed to enlist voluntarily. And volunteers from the lower classes continued to step forward after 1826,[80] to receive a small monthly salary, free food, shelter, clothing and some hope of rising up through the ranks. Yet the number of volunteers simply did not suffice to meet the military's continuous and mounting manpower requirements, so that recruitment became increasingly coercive and obligatory. Accordingly, Ottoman documents and treatises about military reform from the early 1830s reveal that contemporary Ottoman military policies, which used Islam as justification and aimed at large-scale military mobilization, depended on a strategic understanding that required compulsory military service of the empire's Muslim population.[81]

The Ottoman military and civilian population quickly realized that conscription meant forceful indictment, prolonged years of service without discharge, and exposure to the various dangers of military life. Consequently, thousands of potential recruits and active soldiers responded with resentment, evasion, and hostility. They ran away from the recruitment parties or, once conscripted, deserted their units.[82] The Ottoman authorities never had any illusions about ordinary subjects'

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79 Harold D. Blanton, "Conscription in France during the era of Napoleon," 12-13, Dierk Walter, "Meeting the French Challenge: Conscription in Prussia, 1807-1815," 72-74; Frederick C. Schneid, "Napoleonic conscription and the militarization of Europe?" in *Conscription in the Napoleonic Era,* eds. Donald Stoker et al., 197.

80 In a document showing the names of the Ottoman conscripts dispatched from the *kaza* of Priveşte in the Balkans, just two out of ninety-one recruits were indicated as volunteers. C. As 1984. The document is not dated, but it was likely written between the 1820s and 1840s.

81 See, for instance, *Devlet-i Aliye'nin Ahval-i Haziresine Dair Risale* (H. 1253/ 1837-1838), Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Hüsrev Paşa no. 851 and *Askerlik Kanunname-i Hümayunu* (probably written sometime between 1834 and 1839), Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Hüsrev Paşa no. 875, Karal, *İlk Nüfus Sayımı,* 12.

82 For instance, about 20,000 *Mansure* soldiers deserted between 1826 and 1837, while another 21,000 went "missing in battle." See Appendix A.

enthusiasm. In the early 1830s, the imperial orders about the new census that were read to the public reasoned that the surveys were carried out primarily to justly distribute taxes. Internal bureaucratic communiqués and the sultan's own remarks revealed, however, that the "main motive" (*meram-ı asli,* as some imperial orders put it), cataloging eligible men for military service, should be kept secret.[83]

In 1836, a memorandum on military recruitment underlined the "obvious, well-known fact" of the fright and reluctance of the population of Anatolia concerning enlistment. The report's author argues that the populace was more inclined to enlist for *Redif* regiments. His recommendation was not to extract more recruits from Anatolia that year in order to remove the existing feelings of fright and hesitation toward the *Asakir-i Mansure*, advising instead to concentrate on the training of the *Redif* force. To replenish the dwindling ranks, deserters hiding in the countryside should be caught, instead of imposing new recruit levies.[84] In February 1835, a district governor from the Kurdish provinces wrote to the Sublime Porte that local notables were spreading the word among the nomads that "all their sons were to be conscripted."[85] In his *Netayicü'l-Vukuat*, Mustafa Nuri Paşa wrote that when Ottoman subjects saw their sons conscripted into the army, they considered them dead, since they did not know when they would be discharged.[86] According to Moltke, although the soldiers were provided with adequate food and were treated and paid well, desertion continued in Southeastern Anatolia in the 1830s. Despite the bastinado and the occasional use of firing squads, captured deserters did not generally show remorse or fear; they immediately began looking for new opportunities to run away.[87] Moltke attributed the widespread desertions to soldiers longing for their families.[88]

It is doubtful that the Tanzimat Decree and the early Tanzimat reforms drastically changed public perception about conscription. The emphasis on the "secrecy" of counting militarily eligible men was repeated in the population censuses of the 1840s.[89] Frederick Walpole, a traveler visiting Ottoman lands in the early

83 See for instance HAT 19217 (undated), HAT 19725 (H. 16 Ca 1247/ 23 October 1831); Karal, *İlk Nüfus Sayımı,* 12.

84 HAT 453/ 22433-B (H. 19 Ca 1252/ 1 September 1836).

85 Yıldız, *Neferin Adı Yok*, 251.

86 Mustafa Nuri Paşa, *Netayicü'l-Vukuat*, ed. Neşet Çağatay (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1992), 298.

87 Moltke, *Türkiye Mektupları*, 232-33, 241. For more details on desertion and various state countermeasures, see Şimşek, "Ottoman Military Recruitment and the Recruit: 1826-1853," 74-79.

88 Moltke, *Türkiye Mektupları*, 197.

89 Heinzelmann, *Cihaddan Vatan Savunmasına*, 196.

1850s, in the Northern Levant wrote "the sheik had returned … with orders to send the men to draw lots for the conscription. So there was not a gay voice to be heard, and one man was punished for saying he hoped the Sultan would die. They cursed us [he probably referred to Europeans], as the cause of all." He observed that in another town, "in the morning they had cried from the mosques for all to come to draw, and the road I had passed was thronged with villagers, women, and children. They generally cursed me dreadfully, saying, 'the Franks were the cause of it.'"[90] Slade also claimed that the Ottoman soldiers, especially the older reservists, sent to the Crimea in 1854 were "more or less painfully affected with nostalgia; a veritable, often fatal, disease in connection with fatalism. The Turkish soldier on service has rarely any means of communicating with his family. He broods over the forlorn condition in imagination of his wife and children in case of his death."[91] The households, farms, and crafts that the soldiers left behind became vulnerable as they lost an able-bodied man to the army. In one case, a soldier sent a complaint to his local court stating that his wife had been kidnapped by four individuals from his village. Some of the culprits were punished, but the soldier's wife had died.[92] An Ottoman veteran of several imperial campaigns reportedly complained in an Istanbul coffeehouse that

> the troops from Anatolia and Rumelia were ordered to assemble in Istanbul. I have been serving for six years and could spend only two months in my homeland. [While waiting to receive my unpaid wages in the capital], the troops from [my?] district would begin to arrive. [We would likely to be deployed somewhere soon, so] it would be impossible to visit my home again. There is no one to take care of my children; I am in grief because of that.[93]

Like their European contemporaries, Ottoman standing army suffered more from various contagious diseases and inadequate medical care than from actual battle deaths. In comparative perspective, however, an Ottoman *Mansure* soldier was more likely to lose his life during his military service than his British, French,

90 Walpole, *The Ansayrii or the Assassins,* vol. 3, 169, 188.

91 Slade, *Turkey and the Crimean War*, 275.

92 Karahisar-ı Sahib Court Records no. 568, cases 63 (H. 15 Ş 1261/ 19 August 1845), 64 (H. 11 L 1261/ 13 October 1845) in Naci Şahin, "568 Numaralı Karahisar-ı Sahib Şer'iye Siciline göre Afyon (H. 1260/ 1265-M. 1844/ 1849)" (MA thesis, Afyon Kocatepe Üniversitesi, 1998), 197-98.

93 İ. DH 1776 (H. 21 S 1257/ 14 April 1841) in Cengiz Kırlı, *Sultan ve Kamuoyu: Osmanlı Modernleşme Sürecinde "Havadis Jurnalleri"* (Istanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2008), 219-220.

and Prussian counterparts. The yearly death rate for the *Mansure* army was around 90–100 men for every 1,000 in 1826–37, excluding battlefield deaths,[94] whereas Western European standing armies lost between 10 and 20 men in every 1,000 during the same time period.[95] The Russian army's rate of loss is probably the closest to the Ottomans': 37 Russian soldiers out of every 1,000 died annually before the Crimean War, while this ratio increased to 67 and even 95 in conflict zones like the Caucasus.[96] The Ottoman military medical school had been founded in 1827, but it did not provide the desperately needed trained personnel in sufficient numbers and quality.[97] In the late 1830s, Moltke rated the surgeons accompanying the Ottoman army in Eastern Anatolia as utterly useless.[98] He wrote that in one year alone, diseases killed almost one-third of the Ottoman soldiers, who never actually fought against an enemy.[99] Indeed, according to Ottoman records, between 200 and 400 soldiers died in the hospitals around Istanbul every month in the 1830s and early 1840s.[100] According to a spy report from March 1844 in Istanbul, a grocer situated close to the Selimiye barracks said: "We do our business mostly with the soldiers [here]… they are carrying away 8–10 sick [soldiers] every day."[101] In another spy report, a mercenary (*segban*) captain, whose service experience in his detachment must have been comparable to those of the regular soldiers, complained that

> they sent us to İzmid. For ten days, the soldiers stayed in the open countryside. After that an epidemic struck, 200–300 died in İzmid. Now they brought us here [Istanbul], but 2–3 men are dying every day. The regulars saw a dead man's foot eaten by the dogs at the dock. … Instead of keeping us here in misery for nothing,

94 Compiled from Appendix A. The average size of the regular army was estimated as 45,000 between 1826 and 1837.

95 *Statistical Reports on the Sickness, Mortality, & Invaliding in the United Kingdom, Mediterranean and British America* (London, 1839).

96 John Shelton Curtiss, *The Russian Army Under Nicholas I, 1825-1855* (Durham: Duke UP, 1965), 250-251.

97 Stanford J. Shaw and Ayşe Ezel Kural Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002), 29; Moltke, *Türkiye Mektupları*, 210; Yıldız, *Neferin Adı Yok*, 305-306.

98 Ainsworth, *Travels and Researches*, vol. 1, 344, Moltke, *Türkiye Mektupları*, 187.

99 Moltke, *Türkiye Mektupları*, 241.

100 See Appendix B for the number of deaths from disease in the military hospitals around Istanbul.

101 İ. DH 3661 (H. 4 Ra 1259/ 4 April 1841) in Kırlı, *Sultan ve Kamuoyu,* 388.

> they should just as well let us go back to our homelands, [otherwise] we will all perish here without food and water.[102]

Serving soldiers and potential recruits would have been aware of the possible dangers, prolonged terms of service, and uncertainties of life in the military described above.[103] Ahmed Lütfi Efendi condoned the Albanians' reluctance to sign up in 1828. After all, they "could end up in any place between Belgrade and Baghdad" without any pay, while their families would be left behind unprotected.[104] In an Istanbul coffeehouse in 1841, a grocer thus reasoned, "they are recruiting *segban*s now. We, together with some others, better go and enlist. But one is afraid [about where and how] one would end up (*amma insan sonundan korkuyor*)."[105]

To what extent were soldiers' salaries an incentive to serve? Foreign observers, such as Moltke and Henry Skene, argued that the Ottoman regular soldiers' salaries were satisfactory, at least on paper. Skene stated, "The pay of a private varies … from 20 to 30 Turkish piasters [*kuruş*] per month—that is from 3s. 6d. to 5s. 6d. sterling, which is exclusive of food, medicines, and clothing … [T]he expense to the government of each ration is 60 piasters per month, which, with his clothing, for which no stoppage is made, raises the pay of a Turkish soldier above that of a British one."[106] But other evidence suggests that Ottoman irregulars might have had more access to material incentives for service than did soldiers in *Mansure* or *Redif* units, and the salaries offered to the central army proved insufficient to persuade many recruits to leave their families and risk their limbs and lives as conscripts.

According to Skene's calculation, the wages of regulars/active reservists and irregulars (if they covered their own clothing, food, and equipment expenses) were actually comparable. For instance, the mercenaries in the Eastern and the Arabian provinces in the 1840s usually received 60 *kuruş* if they were infantry and 80 *kuruş* if they were cavalry.[107] However, it was not unusual for the state to

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102 İ. DH 1106 (H. 20 Ş 1256/ 17 October 1840) in Kırlı, *Sultan ve Kamuoyu,* 167.

103 Charles MacFarlane, *Kismet; or, the Doom of Turkey* (London, 1853), 58. It should be noted that according to their founding ordinance, *Mansure* soldiers were granted furloughs for six to eight months every five years depending on the distance of their homelands. In 1837, about 10 percent of the active army were on furlough (KK 6799).

104 Ahmed Lütfi Efendi, *Tarih-i Lütfi*, 191-92.

105 İ. DH 1802 (H. 29 S 1257/ 22 April 1841) in Kırlı, *Sultan ve Kamuoyu*, 265.

106 James Henry Skene, *The Three Eras of Ottoman History; A Political Essay on the Late Reforms of Turkey* (London, 1851), 65-66; Moltke, *Türkiye Mektupları*, 232-233, 262-263.

107 C. ZB 4068 (H. Ş 1259/ 4 September 1843), C. ZB 1262 (H. 9 Ra 1265/ 2 February 1849), C. As 46872 (R. Haziran 1265/ June-July 1849); C. DH (Cevdet Dahiliye) 12159 (August 1840) in Kırlı, *Sultan ve Kamuoyu*, 128.

provide irregulars' food, equipment, and weapons during the campaigns, so their pay remained intact. In some cases, the irregulars' monthly salaries could reach handsome sums, such as 110, 250, or 300 *kuruş* per month even in the 1820s.[108] Furthermore, the irregular warriors were probably more likely to bring home war booty than the *Nizamiye* or *Redif* soldiers. Kabudlı Vasfi's personal account indicates that as a low-ranking Ottoman mercenary in the early 1820s, his monthly pay changed from 25 to 35 *kuruş*, which was similar to that of a *Mansure* corporal or sergeant. But on many occasions, the state provided his food and equipment during the campaigns, and he benefited directly from plunder and received extra bounty for his actions on the battlefield.[109]

The monthly wage for a *Mansure* private was set at 15 *kuruş* at the army's establishment, and it was increased to 20 *kuruş* on August 25, 1826.[110] This amount remained the standard monthly pay for privates in the following decades,[111] when the Ottoman lands experienced rampant inflation and the debasement of coinage because of the expenses of war and costly military-bureaucratic reforms. From 1822 to 1839, the silver content of the *kuruş* decreased more than half.[112] Şevket Pamuk notes that the daily wage of an unskilled worker in the capital was 6 *kuruş*, while a loaf of bread (1 *okka* = 1.28 kg) cost 1 *kuruş* and 1 *okka* of meat cost 4–4.5 *kuruş* in the 1840s.[113] The important point is that the pay of both Ottoman regular and irregular soldiers was often in arrears or nonexistent. The commanding officers and scribes often falsified the figures on muster rolls.[114] Kabudlı Vasfi, an irregular, also recorded a number of incidents between the troops and the commanders over unpaid wages.[115] Like Kabudlı Vasfi, a mercenary captain from Gümülcine

108 Erdem, "Recruitment," 198; Yıldız, *Neferin Adı Yok,* 161-162.

109 See also Tolga Esmer's article in this volume. Jan Schmidt, "The adventures of an Ottoman horseman: The autobiography of Kabudlı Vasfi Efendi, 1800-1825," in *The Joys of Philology: Studies in Ottoman Literature, History and Orientalism (1500-1923)*, vol. 1 (Istanbul: Isis Press, 2002), 195, 198, 229-230, 234.

110 Levy, "The Military Policy of Sultan Mahmud II," 186-87.

111 See, C. As 44920 (H. R 1256/ June 1840); KK 7025 (R. Nisan-Mayıs 1265/ May-June 1849). The wage of the Ottoman privates remained at 20 *kuruş* between 1826 and 1849.

112 Şevket Pamuk, *A Monetary History of the Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000), 188-200.

113 Pamuk, *A M*onetary History, 208, n. 9; İ. DH 3363 (H. 11 B 1260/ 27 July 1844) in Kırlı, Sultan ve K*amuoyu*, 470.

114 For various incidences to this effect, see Badem, *The Ottoman Crimean War: 1853-1856*, 168, 174, 191, 228, 233-234.

115 Schmidt, "The adventures of an Ottoman horseman," 207, 224.

mentioned earlier, he complained that they did not receive anything more after the first two months of pay in 1840.[116]

Utilizing local court records and commodity prices, a study on *Mansure* veterans in Ankara argues that the 10 *kuruş* monthly pension for discharged unwounded soldiers was insufficient to live on. In 1839, one could buy only 20 *okka* of bread (about 25 kg) or about 1 *okka* of butter for that money, which would hardly suffice for one person to survive for a month, let alone his family.[117] A discharged corporal named Mehmed Ağa, on his way from Istanbul to his home district of Teke in 1845, died due to poor health in Bolvadin in Western Anatolia. According to local court records, the deceased soldier's possessions (mostly everyday clothing) was worth 217 *kuruş*, and he had 268 *kuruş* as cash, from which the funeral cost of 51.5 *kuruş* had to be deducted. The records give no further information about him, but if he had served for the full five years, the money he accumulated equaled nine months of his salary.[118] With his "military savings," he could buy one cow for 250–300 *kuruş* in the central Anatolian countryside, but would not be able to afford a second cow.[119] One official report indicated that fourteen of the sixteen discharged wounded or disabled *Mansure* pensioners living in Uşak were working on local farms even though some of them had serious injuries, likely out of necessity.[120] Finally, and importantly, not every veteran discharged for health reasons received a pension.[121] There were instances of authorities discharging "useless" soldiers, who lost their health during their service, on the condition that they did not demand any pensions.[122] Between 1826 and 1837, 17,131 veterans were discharged after having served in the *Mansure* army, but only 1,834 of these were entitled to pensions.[123]

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116 İ. DH 1106 (H. 20 Ş 1256/ 17 October 1840) in Kırlı, *Sultan ve Kamuoyu,* 167.

117 Mustafa Öztürk, "Asakir-i Mansure-i Muhammediye Ordusundan Emeklilik ve İhraç" in *Birinci Askeri Tarih Semineri, Bildiriler II* (Ankara: Genel Kurmay Basımevi, 1983), 1-11.

118 Karahisar-ı Sahib Court Records no. 569, case 105 (H. 16 Ca 1261/ 23 May 1845) in Mehmet Biçici, "569 Numaralı Karahisar-ı Sahib Şer'iye Sicili" (MA thesis, Afyon Kocatepe Üniversitesi, 1998), 93-94. For the wages of the corporals, see KK 6979 (H. 1256/ 1840-41) and KK 7023 (H. 1264/ 1847-48).

119 For the price of a cow in the environs of Niğde, see C. ZB 1833 (June 1840) in Kırlı, *Sultan ve Kamuoyu*, 109.

120 D. ASM 38998 (H. S-Ra 1252/ July 1836).

121 İ. DH 4022 (H. 12 B 1259/ 10 August 1843) in Kırlı, *Sultan ve Kamuoyu,* 422-423.

122 C. As 38816 (H. 18 B 1256/ 15 September 1840), and especially C. As 38815 (H. 26 M 1257/ 20 March 1841).

123 Appendix A and ASK.MHM.d no. 30 (H. 1250-54/ 1834-39), pp. 232-235.

Conscription and the Peoples of the Empire

Further empirical research is needed to establish a definitive map of the geographical and ethnic origins of the conscripts during the era in question. Yet the archival sources consulted for this essay suggest that a significant portion of the regular and reserve troops were drawn, especially between the mid-1820s and the late 1830s, from the predominantly Turkophone population living south of the Danube in Europe and west and north of the Euphrates in Anatolia, the areas Ottomanists often refer to as the "core provinces."[124] For instance, the center demanded about 27,000 new recruits for the *Mansure* army mainly from these regions in a mid-1830s levy. The levy produced some 22,000 actual conscripts, which amounted to about half of the active *Mansure* soldiers at the time.[125] Between 1826 and 1838, the sultan ordered ten subsequent recruit levies in the district of Çirmen (which covers Eastern and Western Thrace), which amounted to 15,365 conscripts by 1838, enough to furnish more than ten full-size *Mansure* regiments.[126] If this number was fully extracted, levies from Çirmen alone must have constituted one-tenth of the total recruits taken into the *Mansure* army between 1826 and 1837.[127] Another levy in 1838–39 targeted Northwestern Anatolia and Thrace and ordered the collection of 8,021 recruits to replenish the ranks of the regular army.[128]

Why did the majority of the conscripts come from the Turkish-speaking "core provinces"? First, Mahmud II's centralizing policies proved to be more successful in these areas.[129] The sultan exterminated the notables who had wielded considerable power and proved disloyal, while he subordinated many others through coercion, bargaining, power and revenue sharing.[130] The Ottoman center therefore often ensured the help of provincial notables while conducting its military levies in these areas, and accordingly, Mahmud II felt

124 For the places where the new *Mansure* regiments were raised, see KK 6799.

125 ASK.MHM.d no. 30 (H. 1250-54/ 1834-39), pp. 232-235.

126 Mehmet Esat Sarıcalıoğlu, "II. Mahmut Döneminde Edirne'nin Sosyo- Ekonomik Durumu (Şer'iye Sicillerine göre)" (PhD diss., İstanbul Üniversitesi, 1997), 154, table 19.

127 See Appendix A.

128 HAT 18001 B (Spring-Summer?, 1838); ASK.MHM.d no. 31, p. 6. (H. Evahir Za, 1254/ 4-14 February, 1839).

129 Shaw and Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire*, vol. 2, 14-16.

130 Halil İnalcık and Donald Quataert, eds., *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1300-1914*, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 768-769.

secure enough to permit the local dignitaries and their sons to command *Redif* detachments from 1834 onward.[131]

In the 19th century, small family farms dominated the rural landscape of Central and Western Anatolia.[132] When recruitment parties arrived in such villages, the menfolk there proved easy prey, in contrast to the more mobile and often more aggressive nomadic or settled warrior communities who lived in distant and rugged Albanian, Bosnian, and Kurdish territories. In addition, the proximity of the "core provinces" to the capital and their geographical accessibility enabled the central authority to impose tighter control and conduct larger levies. A third reason why the Turkish speakers populated the Mahmudian army, as Hakan Erdem and İlber Ortaylı have pointed out, could be the result of a "preference" on the part of the Ottoman political-military establishment.[133] Based on their past experiences with unreliable irregulars of other ethnic origins, Ottoman commanders had already "urged the center to provide troops of the *Türk uşağı* [Turkish lads]."[134] According to the official chronicler Ahmed Lütfi Efendi, Albanian contingents were unruly and unthankful mobs, who "could well be dispatched to hell if someone pays them a salary."[135] To garrison the fortresses in Morea, one local commander insisted on having *Türk uşağı*s instead of Albanian troops.[136] During 1827–28, the Ottoman authorities specifically wanted to bring "Turkish lads" from the Anatolian provinces to get rid of the undisciplined and inefficient local troops in Damascus and Aleppo Provinces and to substitute them with new *Asakir-i Mansure* units. In the initial stages of the project, an official from Damascus claimed that the local troops were on "very friendly" terms with the Bedouins, while the settled Arabs "valued their lives [too] much" to become conscripts. The same official correspondence also indicated that Kurds and nomads were not wanted among the recruits drawn from Anatolia.[137]

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131 However, the *Redif*'s founding ordinance also stipulated that *Redif* officers, who were also provincial notables, should not interfere in "local affairs" "as if they were *voyvoda*s." For said ordinance, see Cahide Bolat, "Redif Askeri Teşkilatı (1834-1876)" (PhD diss., Ankara Üniversitesi, 2000), 17-24.

132 Reşat Kasaba, *The Ottoman Empire and the World Economy: The Nineteenth Century* (Binghamton: State University of New York, 1988), 62-63.

133 İlber Ortaylı, *İmparatorluğun En Uzun Yüzyılı* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2003), 137-38, Erdem, "Recruitment," 192, 204-205, Hakan Erdem, "Türkistan: Nerede, Ne Zaman?," *Toplumsal Tarih* 58 (1998), 38-44.

134 Erdem, "Recruitment," 193.

135 Ahmed Lütfi Efendi, *Tarih-i Lütfi,* 192-193.

136 C. AS 46942 (not dated by probably from the late 18th or early 19th century).

137 Erdem, "Recruitment," 196-202.

Further practical problems emerged in Aleppo where Arabs were recruited as cavalrymen: The foreign drill instructors spoke "Frankish," and their directions had to be translated into first Turkish and then Arabic for the ordinary soldiers.[138] Moltke also wrote about the hastily inducted and maltreated Kurdish conscripts who could not understand their officers' language prior to the battle of Nizib.[139] Menemencioğlu Ahmed Bey, a power magnate in the Adana region who allied himself with the invading Egyptian army against the Ottoman center, recounted the difficulties in communication between the Arab soldiers, Turkish-speaking irregulars, and the conquered population of the Adana region.[140] In the Crimean War, the Ottoman irregulars "spoke so many different languages that, even within small units, translators and criers had to be employed to shout out the orders of the officers."[141] These incidents all point to the one of the many daunting tasks the Ottoman state faced in raising, training, and maintaining cohesion in a conscript army drawn from a diverse population, a challenge contemporary Austrian and Russian armies also faced.[142] Recruiting the bulk of soldiers from among Turkish speakers would help overcome this problem.

The conscription code of 1846 stipulated that regiments could not be constituted entirely by conscripts from the same city/district (*hemşehri*) or the same ethnicity/nationality (*cinsiyet*). To ensure ethnic and territorial heterogeneity in the ranks, the code allocated separate recruitment districts to each army, and its 13th article stipulated the continuous rotation of the regiments between the provinces.[143] In practice, however, Ottoman decision-makers did not mind if the "Turkish lads" constituted the majority of the imperial army, and a number of units were made up entirely of Turkish recruits, which was another manifestation of the described "preference" and the Turks' perceived reliability. The authorities were often more concerned about the increasing numbers of non-Turks (Arabs, Kurds, Albanians, and sometimes non-Muslims) in a particular unit and their location of service, thus the regulations about "ethnicity" were mostly applied to non-Turks.[144]

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138 Erdem, "Recruitment," 201-202.

139 Moltke, *Türkiye* Mektupları, 262.

140 Yılmaz Kurt, ed., *Menemencioğulları Tarihi* (Ankara: Akçağ, 1997), 106-109.

141 Orlando Figes, *Crimea: The Last Crusade* (London: Allen Lane, 2010), 120.

142 Compare, for instance, Robert Baumann, "Universal Service Reform and Russia's Imperial Dilemma," *War and Society* 4, no. 2 (1986), 31-49; Istvan Deak, *Beyond Nationalism: A Social and Political History of the Habsburg Officer Corps, 1848-1918* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1990).

143 *Kur'a Kanunname-i Hümayunu*, Article 13, pp. 9-10.

144 It is possible that the Ottoman authorities put some effort into preventing entire units being raised from the same (Turkish or non-Turkish) town or region (*hemşehris*).

Two detailed reports from the early 1850s, for instance, warned the Ottoman authorities that the number of Arabs was increasing in the Army of Arabia (*Arabistan Ordusu*) and requested the dispatch of Turkish recruits (*Türk uşağı*) destined for other armies from a list of Anatolian districts.[145] Otherwise the Army of Arabia was "going to be entirely composed of the sons of Arabs,"[146] which would lead to "an inconvenience related to ethnicity."[147] It is important to remember that during this era, Syria and Lebanon showed resistance to Ottoman centralization efforts. The Ottoman authorities might thus have mistrusted the Arab recruits and wanted to bring more ethnic Turkish soldiers to the regiments in the region. In February-March 1848, a debate among high-ranking state officials on the recruitment of non-Muslims and Muslims from different ethnicities reveals the complexity of the issue, as well as Ottoman pragmatism. *Serasker* Mehmed Said Pasha called attention to the risks of forming units from non-Muslims that were homogenous in their ethno-religious composition. Mustafa Reşid Pasha disagreed with the *serasker* regarding the recruitment of non-Muslims and also favored the conscription of non-Turks and non-Muslims, arguing that the British, Austrians, and French already had units entirely made up of Scots, Sepoys, Italians, Czechs, Hungarians, and Algerian Arabs. Yet he cautioned that these "ethnic units" should not be forced to fight against their own "nations" (*hemcins*). For instance, Albanians should be sent to the Arab provinces, while Arabs and Kurds should be sent to Albania. The Ottoman Greeks and Armenians should not be used in any armed incidents at the Greek border or in Eastern Anatolia, respectively.[148]

All this said, it would be a mistake to think of the Ottoman center's practical preference as an ideological choice. The Ottoman state in the 1820s–1850s was certainly not a nation-state based on Turkish ethnicity and identity. Besides, the Ottoman state did not categorically exclude its non-Turkish Muslims from armed military service and inducted large numbers of Arabs, Kurds, Albanians, and Bosnians into the active and reserve army units whenever the opportunity arose.[149]

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145 İ. DH 14404 (H. 21 Şevval 1267/ 19 August 1851) and İ. DH 16001 (H. 20 Ca 1268/ 22 March 1852), also cited in Ortaylı, *İmparatorluğun En Uzun Yüzyılı*, 137.

146 "…*ordu-yı hümayun-ı mezkurun kuvve-i askeriyesi bütün bütün evlad-ı arabdan kalarak…*" İ. DH 14404.

147 "…*sair ordular neferat-ı cedidesinden münasib mikdar Türk uşağı gönderilerek hemcinslik mahzurunun def'i, icab-ı maslahatdan olacağına…*" İ. DH 14404.

148 Heinzelmann, *Cihaddan Vatan Savunmasına,* 224-226.

149 Moltke, *Türkiye Mektupları*, 197, 256, 261-263, 268, 271, 276; Badem, *The Ottoman Crimean War*, 81. Ainsworth, *Travels and Researches,* vol. 1, 316, 318-319; BOA, İ MTZ (05) (İrade Memalik-i Mümtaze) 05/ 128 (H. 10 L 1256/ 5 December 1840); Ebubekir

The era's Ottoman army was in fact not only multiethnic but also multiracial: documentary evidence suggests the existence of black Muslim soldiers. Many of the troops in question were possibly composed of slaves sent to the army as substitutes by their masters. The court records of Kayseri from 1831 indicate that five out of twelve recruits from the city and one out of sixty-seven recruits from the surrounding villages were black (*zenci*). The records also mention black soldiers among the conscripts taken in the following levies.[150] Based on the number of recruits and local demography, it is likely that the richer and better-connected white townsfolk managed to find and deliver more slaves than those in the rural areas to complete their recruitment quotas. The conscription codes that the Ottoman state created in 1844 and 1846 referred to the existing practice of sending slaves to the army as substitutes.[151] Interestingly, the 1846 code stipulated that slave substitutes had to be white.[152] Unfortunately for historians, the law does not explain the Ottoman state's racial preference.[153] Finally, the population surveys of the early 1830s indicate that Ottoman officials did not consider Muslim Roma (*kıbti*) as "soldier material." On more than one occasion, military-age Muslim Roma were excluded from conscription, even though they were registered in the survey.[154]

What did being an "Arab," "Turk," "Kurd," and "Albanian" mean to the Ottoman officials, ordinary subjects and soldiers? The evidence suggests that neither the Ottoman state nor Muslim ethno-cultural communities in this period adhered to any ideologically articulated nationalist sentiment in the modern sense. Yet often ordinary subjects and state officials manifested their association with a

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Ceylan, *The Ottoman Origins of Modern Iraq* (I. B. Tauris, 2010), 58-67; Heinzelmann, *Cihaddan Vatan Savunmasına,* 171-205; Heinzelmann, "Changing Recruiting Strategies in the Ottoman Army, 1839-1856," 23, 37-38.

150 Mustafa Kılıç, "[Kayseri] 197/ 1 Numaralı Şer'iye Sicili (H. 1246-1248/ M.1831-1832) Transkripsiyon ve Değerlendirme" (MA thesis, Kayseri Erciyes Üniversitesi, 2002), 71-74, 154-57, 172-74. For a black soldier from Kayseri who served, was discharged, and was entitled to a monthly pension of 15 *kuruş*, see ibid., 330.

151 *Nizamat-ı Cedide-i Askeriye Kanunnamesi*, Article 54, p. 65; *Kur'a Kanunname-i Hümayunu*, Article 28, pp. 16-17.

152 In 1852, a certain conscript named Ali, who drew a bad number, was obliged to give a white slave if he wanted to send a substitute instead of serving himself. BOA, A. MKT. MHM (Mektubi Kalemi, Mühimme) Dosya no. 112, Vesika no. 100. (H. 21 Ra 1268/ 14 January 1852).

153 *Kur'a Kanunname-i Hümayunu*, Article 28, pp. 16-17.

154 These Roma were living in Thrace, Western, and Northeastern Anatolia. Karal, *İlk Nüfus Sayımı*, 33, 34, 36, 135-136, 158, 179.

certain collective ethnic and/or religious identity and were conscious of which ethnic or/and religious group lived where and how. They might also speculate about other groups' collective characters, histories, and loyalties. The term "*Türk uşağı*" (Turkish lads), for instance, repeatedly appeared in the official documents, referring to the Turkish-speaking population of the Balkans and the Middle East. Ottoman state documents often denoted Mehmed Ali Pasha's forces as "*Havain-i Mısriye*" (Egyptian traitors), "*Mısır Askeri*" (Egyptian soldiery), or sometimes simply as "*Mısırlu*" (Egyptians), calling the enemy by a term of origin. The spy reports from the 1840s that recorded unsuspecting ordinary subjects on the streets of Istanbul provide more interesting and direct information on the subject. While watching the parade of "prisoners from Egypt," a hazelnut seller named "Şakir the Arab" and a chestnut seller called Abdullah spoke to each other in Arabic, saying that "most of these are the Egyptian *Redif* soldiers, some of them are our brothers and some of them are our relatives. May God curse Mehmed Ali! ... [The Imperial forces] took Greater Syria already, hopefully, they will occupy the interior too, so that the [locals of Syria] would be content."[155] A *tatar* (courier) named İsmail Ağa, while discussing the military strength of Mehmed Ali Pasha in what seem to be exaggerated figures, used the terms "trained Arab soldiers," "Turkish lads," and "Albanians" to describe not only different types of military assets but also their ethnicity.[156] An Istanbulite captain from the Ottoman navy commented on the defection of the Ottoman fleet to Egypt; after distinguishing "Turkish" and "Arab soldiers," he emphasized that "none of our [Turkish] soldiers went over [to Egyptian side] voluntarily, they all in fact went crying."[157] A neighborhood headman (*muhtar*) named Mustafa Ağa and a colonel named Ahmed Bey freshly arrived from Trablus both commented on how "treacherous," "strange," and "cowardly" the "Arabs" were.[158] A certain İzzet Ağa mentioned and distinguished the "Turkish soldiers" (*Türk askeri*), who probably came to Alexandria with the defected Ottoman fleet, from the "Arab soldiers" (*Arab askeri*), who almost fought each other because of the alleged conspiracies of a particular captain, possibly a convert called "Frenk Mehmed."[159] Another Istanbulite "*hoca efendi*" asked, "How are the Kurds in Kurdistan doing now? Previously Reşid Paşa put everything in order and he used not to show any mercy to the Kurds. The

155 İ. DH 1210 (H. 18 N 1256/ 13 November 1840) in Kırlı, *Sultan ve Kamuoyu*, 184.

156 İ. DH 1038 (H. 1 Ş 1256/ 28 September 1840) in Kırlı, *Sultan ve Kamuoyu*, 145.

157 İ. DH 1155 (H. 1 N 1256/ 27 October 1840) in Kırlı, *Sultan ve Kamuoyu*, 172-173.

158 İ. DH 1210 (H. 18 N 1256/ 13 November 1840) and İ. DH 1802 (H. 29 S 1257/ 22 April 1841) in Kırlı, *Sultan ve Kamuoyu*, 190-191, 260-261.

159 İ. DH 1802 (H. 29 S 1257/ 22 April 1841) in Kırlı, *Sultan ve Kamuoyu*, 263.

Sublime Porte will benefit a lot if these Kurds will be put in line, because beneath the mountains where they dwell are a lot of *maden* (underground minerals), no other place has any *maden* like that."[160]

Soon after the creation of the *Mansure* and *Redif* armies and the ensuing recruit levies, Ottoman statesmen, foreign travelers, and even the Tanzimat Decree mentioned the drain on the Muslim population. Eventually, despite Mahmud II's initial reluctance, the Ottoman state attempted to recruit non-Muslims, particularly Armenians and Greeks, to unarmed labor battalions and the imperial navy between 1826 and 1853.[161] But these attempts had limited scope and success because of mutual suspicion and distrust between almost every involved party, such as Ottoman decision-makers, non-Muslim, and Muslim communities.[162] In a series of official discussions in 1847–48, Mustafa Reşid Pasha strongly recommended the recruitment of non-Muslims to the land army, under the pretext that they shared a fatherland with the Muslims.[163] Yet Mustafa Reşid Pasha was not really interested in promoting equality between the Muslim and non-Muslim subjects; rather, he wanted to decrease the burden of conscription on the former. If the state did not expand the manpower base beyond the Muslim population, he argued, the Muslims would soon cease to be the "ruling nation" (*millet-i hakime*) of the empire.[164] Indeed, Charles Blunt, the British consul in Ottoman İzmir in the mid-19th century, reported that the Turkish population was gradually declining and facing impoverishment because of military conscription. After their discharge, the Turkish soldiers returned to their villages and towns only to find their fields empty and their families destitute. Desperate to support their families and rebuild their previous lives, many became heavily indebted to Christian creditors who often took over their fields. Those who could not become farmers again sold

160 İ. DH 4207 (H. 28 M 1260/ 18 February 1844) in Kırlı, *Sultan ve Kamuoyu*, 447.

161 Official memoranda on the conscription of non-Muslim subjects indicated that the Ottoman leadership treated its Jewish subjects like the Muslim Roma by not considering them "soldier material" because they were a small population, were allegedly cowardly, and would not get along with other (non-Muslim) *millet*s. HAT 311/ 18381 (c. 1838) and HAT 1251/ 48355-A (c. 1838) in Heinzelmann, *Cihaddan Vatan Savunmasına*, 217, n. 56.

162 For two recent overviews of this subject, see Heinzelmann, *Cihaddan Vatan Savunmasına*, 206-261; Ufuk Gülsoy, *Cizyeden Vatandaşlığa Osmanlı'nın Gayrimüslim Askerleri* (Istanbul: Timaş, 2010), 15-80.

163 "*mademki şu memleket anların dahi vatan-ı müştereklerıdir*". İ.MSM 16/ 365 (H. 8 Za 1263/ 18 October 1847) cited in Heinzelmann, *Cihaddan Vatan Savunmasına*, 224.

164 Heinzelmann**,** *Cihaddan Vatan Savunmasına*, 222-226.

their possessions, which usually ended up in the hands of Greeks or Armenians.[165] Other British observers during the 1840s and 1850s such as William Nassau and Charles MacFarlane also underlined the demographic and economic losses of the Muslim population created by continuous military conscription.[166] As discussed above, the households who sent away their young men were not only deprived of a breadwinner but also became more vulnerable to harassment, extortion, violence, and other kinds of abuse. Non-Muslim communities, the observers claimed, were enriching themselves and becoming more populous thanks to their exemption from military service.

Indeed, in the turbulence of political crises, pressing manpower needs, and rising nationalist sentiments between 1856 and 1909, Ottoman statesmen intermittently debated whether non-Muslims should serve in the armed forces, and if so, how. In the end, non-Muslims were recruited in negligible numbers to serve predominantly in supporting branches.[167] Only in 1909 did the Young Turks impose obligatory military service on non-Muslims, and for the first time during the Great War, hundreds of thousands of Ottoman Armenians, Greeks, and Jews served in the unarmed "labor battalions."

What effect could the disproportionate representation of Muslims in the armed forces have had on the identities of the Muslim and non-Muslim Ottoman subjects in the long run? Khaled Fahmy and Eugen Weber argued for 19th-century France and Khedivial Egypt that since military service homogenized the experience of thousands of conscripts for several generations, it would contribute to the development of their respective national consciousness and national identities.[168] For Ottoman lands after 1826, Hakan Erdem and Virginia Aksan argue that Ottoman conscription, which mainly targeted Muslims, may have contributed to the demarcation between Muslims and non-Muslims in the Ottoman Empire by enforcing ethno-religious and ethno-cultural boundaries.[169] According to Erdem, this may well have created a "rift"

165 Bilal Şimşir, ed., *British Documents on Ottoman Armenians 1856-1880*, vol. 1 (Ankara: TTK, 1982), 16.

166 Nassau William Senior, *A Journal Kept in Turkey and Greece in the Autumn of 1857 and the Beginning of* 1858 (London, 1859), 139, 163-164; MacFarlane, *Kismet*, 58-60.

167 Gülsoy, *Cizyeden Vatandaşlığa*, 81-205.

168 Fahmy, *All the Pasha's Men*, 268; Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*, 292-302.

169 Virginia H. Aksan, "Locating the Ottomans Among Early Modern Empires," *Journal of Early Modern History* 3 (1999), 132-133; Virginia H. Aksan, "The Ottoman Military and State Transformation in a Globalizing World," *CSSAAME* 27, no. 2 (2007), 264-267, 269, 270; Erdem, "Recruitment," 192, 204-205.

> between the army as a whole and the non-Turkish provinces of the empire, whether they were inhabited by Muslims or non-Muslims.… A regular Ottoman army that did not or could not incorporate non-Turkish Muslims into its ranks would be increasingly perceived as a foreign army of occupation and would strengthen the anti-Ottoman/Turkish sentiments of non-Turkish provincials when it was used to pacify such provinces. Similarly, the "Turks" who bore the greatest burden of the defense of the empire would have come to view the internal and external others very much in the same light, and as one could claim, they would tend to create their own reactive nationalist sentiment against the enemy from within or without.[170]

Their experiences during military service directly affected not only the conscripts but also their families and communities at home. Both the servicemen and their communities suffered from any death or absence. As the conversations intercepted at the coffeehouses, taverns, and streets of Istanbul indicate, many serving or discharged Muslim Ottoman soldiers must have recounted their adventures, observations, and judgments to their friends, relatives, neighbors and strangers. No matter the emotional tenor of the soldiers' recollections, they will have inevitably created or reinforced ethno-religious or ethno-cultural "typing," leading to an "us" (soldiers and those who identified with them) versus "them" (the enemy or those who did not serve) dichotomy.

Islam and the Ottoman Soldiers

What role did Islam play in convincing recruits to join and serve the Ottoman armies during the period in question? Could it have been the opium for the masses of Ottoman infantry and cavalry, as some contemporary and modern historical sources suggest?

Ottoman decision-makers and ideologues presented the era's armed conflicts as ones waged between the rightful Islamic state and "foreign infidels," "enemies of Islam," "heretics," or, in cases such as the war against Mehmed Ali Pasha, as against rebels who had taken up arms against their legitimate Islamic ruler.[171] Mahmud II, whom his critics ironically nicknamed the "infidel sultan," actively presented himself and the new regime as the rightful promoters and protectors of Sunni Islam after 1826. The sultan was also careful to obtain the approval of the *ulema*

170 Erdem, "Recruitment," 192.

171 For Mahmud II's and several Ottoman officials' statements, see Yıldız, *Neferin Adı Yok,* 21-23, 44-46, 101.

elite for every major policy decision or for various reform projects.[172] He also used Islamic symbols and propaganda to legitimize his actions and policies. The imperial decrees and state-sponsored chronicles and booklets targeted various segments of Ottoman society, maligning the Janissaries not only as useless, undisciplined, and self-interested soldiers but also as faithless, heretical traitors. Accordingly, the new regime persecuted the Bektashi faith, which was closely associated with the Janissary Corps and with blasphemy. In this regard, the name of the new army, *Asakir-i Mansure-i Muhammediye* (Victorious Soldiers of the [Prophet] Muhammad [Himself]), was not chosen arbitrarily. Orta Camii, the mosque attached to the former Janissary barracks, was renamed Ahmediye (it still bears the same name) in a clear reference to the Prophet Muhammad.

Mansure soldiers were ordered to read verses from the Qur'an, pray five times a day, and attend Friday prayers as a group. According to the *Mansure* army's founding regulations, the soldiers were to gain some knowledge about Islam, "as much as a commoner needs". Salaried *imam*s were appointed to each battalion to lead prayers and preach to the soldiers on matters of Islam and their duties as soldiers of the sultan and the faith. The authorities supervised the printing of religious treatises that outlined the basic tenets of Sunni Islam, such as *Dürr-i Yekta* and *Birgivi Risalesi*, and sent them to the regiments as well as administrative districts. According to Yıldız, the periodical prayers and religious services together with continuous physical drilling aimed to accustom the recruits to and convince them of the demands of their new, regimented military life.[173] The system's pragmatic goal was to mobilize as many as possible behind its policies and turn the subjects into "active militants" of the regime.[174]

In a time of national emergencies, the Mahmudian state used a discourse that related the obligatory nature of military service to being Muslim. In a public dec-

172 İlhami Yurdakul, *Osmanlı İlmiye Merkez Teşkilatı'nda Reform (1826-1876)* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2008), 234-237, 274-282.

173 Yıldız, *Neferin Adı* Yok, 352-353, 368-369, n. 271; also, for similar "expectations" from the soldiers and officers, see the later *Müzekkere-i Zabitan*, 6. In a different world but for similar goals, British colonial authorities together with local religious agents in 19th-century India crafted what Nile Green has called a "sepoy religion" or "barracks Islam" for the Muslim rank and file. This "barracks Islam" was aimed at creating a more effective military force for the British by instilling discipline, devotion, and loyalty. Nile Green, *Islam and the Army in Colonial India* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2009), 136-149.

174 Yıldız, *Neferin Adı Yok*, 371.

laration that clearly sought to mobilize Muslim subjects in 1828 for a likely war with Russia, it was declared that

> the Muslims too would unite and rise to their feet to fight for the sake of their religion and state. The great statesmen and religious scholars and perhaps all the Muslims were unanimous on this point. This coming war had nothing to do with the previous wars that were pursued by the state and that were about land and boundaries. As explained, the goal of the infidels was to eradicate the Islamic millet from the face of the earth. This war was a war of religion and of the millet [din ve millet gavgası]. Muslims should spend their own money for that purpose and not ask for salaries or wages, as the gaza and cihad were obligatory for all, great and small [gaza ve cihad farz-ı ayn olmuş].[175]

The Ottoman state maintained this overarching, mobilizational discourse during the 1830s. A treatise dated 1837–38, from Hüsrev Pasha's library, considered every able-bodied Muslim male between eighteen and sixty, regardless of his wealth, "obligated" to be a part of the Ottoman military by virtue of "customary and Islamic law." But since it was impossible to mobilize everyone in wartime, the state had to select those who were to become soldiers.[176] In the early Tanzimat era, the first article of the 1846 conscription code had a strikingly similar wording: any Muslim selected as a conscript was bound to serve, a duty sanctioned by "customary and Islamic law."[177]

The Islamic flavor and justification were apparent in the induction process, which ceremonially and legally initiated the conscript to his new life as a member of the Ottoman "military class".[178] The 1846 conscription code stipulated that the draft lottery should be initiated after a proper prayer[179] and that a member of the *ulema* should be employed in the drawing of lots.[180] The selected

175 Hakan Erdem,"'Do not think of the Greeks as agricultural labourers': Ottoman responses to the Greek War of Independence," in *Citizenship and the Nation-State in Greece and Turkey*, eds. Faruk Birtek and Thalia Dragonas (Abingdon: Routledge, 2005), 77.

176 *Devlet-i Aliye'nin Ahval Haziresine Dair Risale* (H. 1253/ 1837-1838), 2a-b.

177 *Kur'a Kanunname-i Hümayunu*, Article 1, pp. 3-4.

178 A number of Ottoman military codes and ordinances used the ancient term "*askerî*" to denote the conscripted subject's new status. See, for instance, *Kanunname-i Ceza-i Askeriye*, Article 2, p. 5.

179 *Kur'a Kanunname-i Hümayunu*, Article 42, pp. 26-28.

180 *Kur'a Kanunname-i Hümayunu*, Article 46, pp. 29-31.

conscripts were to be told that they were going to serve for five years in the active army for the "state and religion" (*din-ü devlet*). Then they were to take an oath in front of the *ulema* present that they would come back to join the Ottoman army after their initial twenty-day leave, avoiding dishonor and shame in their new lives in the regiments.[181] The induction process and ceremonies marked the end of the conscripts' previous lives and initiation into a new legal and social status.

The evidence consulted for this study concerning the impact of such religious propaganda is rather mixed. Slade attributed the steadfastness of the unpaid Ottoman soldiers during the Crimean War (1853–56), to "their Prophet's promises. Mohammed said, 'The sword is the key of heaven: a drop of bloodshed in action, or a night passed under arms, is more meritorious than two months of fasting and prayer. Who dies in battle his sins are pardoned.…' When men are inspired by a sentiment such considerations are of little account."[182] Religious differences between the foes, he hinted, could motivate the Ottoman soldiers more and result in the escalation of violence on the battlefield. In Moltke's account, Ottoman soldiers charged the rebellious Yezidi villages not only with fixed bayonets but also with the conventional Muslim Turkish battle cry of "Allah Allah!" According to Moltke, the soldiers' fighting zeal would increase when they attacked enemies who were not only affluent but also "devil-worshippers."[183] Kabudlı Vasfi's firsthand account expressed the demarcation between "us" (Muslim Ottoman forces) and the "infidel" in the battlefields of Greece as two opposing sides.[184]

Other contemporary observers had no illusions that religious convictions sufficed to keep the Ottoman rank and file in the army camps and barracks and argued that a steady flow of cash, provisions, and equipment were necessary. An earlier treatise by Koca Sekbanbaşı during the reign of Selim III asserted that the days when Muslims fought wars just to please God had long passed; everyone now expected material benefits if he was to risk his life.[185] In September 1841, a

181 *Kur'a Kanunname-i Hümayunu*, Article 49, pp. 33-34.

182 Slade, *Turkey and the Crimean War*, 175-176.

183 Moltke, *Türkiye* Mektupları, 191-193.

184 The Ottoman soldiers prayed for their fallen comrades and attacked their enemies with the battle cries of "Allah Allah!" or "Allahu Ekber!" with unfurled war banners. The Greek rebels recited their Gospels, screaming "Oh Cross, Oh Jesus!" (*Ya Haç, Ya Put!*) under the overseeing priests while attacking the Ottomans forces. Schmidt, "The adventures of an Ottoman horseman," 223, 230, 235, 248, 251, 253, 270.

185 Abdullah Uçman, ed., *Koca Sekbanbaşı Risalesi* (Istanbul: Tercüman 1001 Temel Eser), 166.

certain *mirahur* named Deli Ahmed in his Istanbul coffeehouse was overheard saying that soldiers who did not receive their due wages would not be useful on the battlefield.[186] Furthermore, forcing men who did not have a personal stake in the fighting might further hamper ordinary soldiers' morale. An eyewitness to the battle of Nizib reflected on the Ottoman soldiers who had also to fight against Mehmed Ali's Muslim Egyptians. His words are worth quoting in full:

> What was it to the soldiers, if the Sultan had one great province more or less, in his vast dominions! The enemy was also of the same faith as themselves, and few that were on the field had ever met them before, or bore rancour or hatred, or even ill-feeling towards an Egyptian. There had not even been any of the usual little incentives put into play to excite their feelings, and there existed nothing but the sense of duty, and a decent regard for honour, to keep the men to their posts. The Egyptians, it might be said, had not greater incentives to the struggle; this is true,—but they were perpetually talked up to a contempt of the disgraced of Homs and Koniyeh.[187]

In their seminal works on Ottoman warfare between 1500 and 1800, Gábor Ágoston and Rhoads Murphey challenged the argument of "Islamic fanaticism," which has been used to explain the Ottoman armies' military prowess and early victories. The concept of "Holy War" and the prospects of material gain (e.g., plunder, cash bonuses, other material or in-kind awards) certainly formed an integral part of Ottoman military culture and warrior ethos, and they must have attracted volunteers and increased common soldiers' courage. But Ágoston and Murphey provided nuanced explanations backed by archival research, attributing the Ottomans' military successes mainly to abundant manpower and financial resources, a competent administrative-military bureaucracy, a remarkable military-industrial complex, and an impressive logistical structure by contemporary standards.[188] The effect of religion on the Ottoman rank and file in the 19th century has yet to be studied in more detail, but similar parameters probably shaped the morale and motivation of a 16th-century and a 19th-century Ottoman trooper. The period between the 1820s and the 1850s nevertheless proved to be extremely tumultuous, and during it, a new, ambitious regime made unprecedented demands on its populace to execute its policies without offering much

186 İ. DH 2221 (H. 6 Ş 1257/ 23 September 1841) in Kırlı, *Sultan ve Kamuoyu*, 298.

187 Ainsworth, *Travels and Researches,* vol. 1, 340-341.

188 Gábor Ágoston, *Guns for the Sultan, Military Power and the Weapons Industry in the Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005); Rhoads Murphey, *Ottoman Warfare 1500-1700* (London: UCL Press, 1999).

in return. The state policies, religious propaganda, and personal religious convictions failed to turn conscription, mass mobilization, and war into a popular affair in the eyes of the Ottoman subjects. An official report recorded that about one-eighth of the 161,000 *Mansure* soldiers deserted between 1826 and 1837, while an equal number went "missing in battle," sometimes no doubt due to desertion.[189] In the following years, thousands of soldiers and potential recruits continued to desert from their regiments and to evade conscription.

Conclusion

Witnessing the low morale and widespread desertion in the late 1830s, Moltke could not conceal his surprise. The new conscripts, according to him, did not possess "their forefathers' warrior spirit," he wrote, probably referencing the Janissary Corps and the timariot cavalry of the Ottoman "Classical Age."[190] Indeed, the *Asakir-i Mansure Muhammediye* was primarily manned by ordinary Muslim villagers and the urban poor, who wore distinct uniforms, billeted in isolated barracks, and trained and organized with European-style discipline, command, and tactics. These soldiers did not form a privileged administrative-military elite like the ones in the earlier centuries. Instead, they constituted the Ottoman state's first mass-conscript army, with which the Ottoman authorities thought to replace the Janissaries, *nefir-i âm* levies, irregular mercenary companies, and tribal forces that had made up the bulk of the Ottoman army by the late 18th century.

The archival evidence indicates that most conscripts were forcibly recruited, received very little, or no, salaries, were kept under arms for years without seeing their families, and suffered heavily from diseases and other hazards of soldiering in the 19th-century Middle East. The Ottoman state resorted to coercion, military discipline, and religious rhetoric to persuade these conscripts, a great number of whom were Turkish-speaking subjects, to serve the "state and religion." In the and the Tanzimat Decree and subsequent legislation did not really guarantee a truly "just" conscription for the Ottoman subjects, and the actual procedures of selection indicate that an individual's social and economic status basically determined his chances of becoming a draftee.

Far from being established and accepted traditions by the turn of the 19th century, conscription and obligatory military service remained among the unpopular

189 KK 6799.

190 Moltke, *Türkiye Mektupları,* 232.

innovations of Ottoman reformers. From its beginning, the state was perfectly aware that its subjects would not prove willing soldiers, while tens of thousands of potential recruits and those already conscripted desperately tried to evade military service. Thus the currently popular belief in Turkey (shared by some Westerners) that "Turks" form a "military nation," the perception that every Turk has the essential skills and zeal to be a "born soldier," is proved a nationalist myth through historical evidence available for the first Ottoman wide-scale conscription effort in the second quarter of the 19th century.[191]

Generations of compulsory military service must have had a great impact on the formation of ethnic or religious identities and national consciousness. In this regard, further micro-studies on conscription in the selected communities and regions would yield crucial information about changes and continuities in the economic, demographic, political, and cultural history of the Ottoman Empire between 1826 and 1918. Furthermore, they would contribute to our knowledge of what made an "Ottoman soldier," as well as to a better understanding of changing inter-communal relations, identity formation, and the meanings of subjecthood, loyalty to the state, and territoriality of individuals in the later Ottoman Empire.

The First "Little Mehmeds": Conscripts for the Ottoman Army, 1826–53

Abstract ■ In 1826, the Ottoman central authority, which had destroyed the Janissary Corps and had been facing an array of political and military challenges from both inside and outside for years, decided to create a European-style army manned by long-term conscripts. To meet the mounting manpower needs, the Ottoman state forcibly drafted Muslim peasants and the urban poor for its newly formed regiments. This essay focuses on these men, the rank and file of the Ottoman army in the second quarter of the 19th century, a social group that scholars often disregard as a topic of historical investigation. The article examines the conscripts' social background, as well as the responses of both the general public and the serving soldiers to military service. The essay will also analyze how religion, ethno-cultural identity, social status, and the actual experience of military service shaped the state's recruitment policies and the subjects' attitudes toward conscription in an era before modern sentiments of nationhood took root among the Muslim peoples of the empire.

Keywords: Conscription, Obligatory Military Service, Mahmud II, Tanzimat, Reform in the Ottoman Empire

191 For a critical study of the topic for the republican era, see Ayşe Gül Altınay, *The Myth of The Military Nation, Militarism, Gender, and Education in Turkey* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: The balance sheet for the Mansure Army between 1826 and 1837[192]

Active Army in February 1837		**%**
Number of soldiers ready for duty in their regiments	47,639	29.58
Those granted furloughs	5,478	3.4
In hospitals	1,553	0.96
Subtotal	**54,670**	**33.94**
Discharged since June 1826		
Discharged without pensions	15,297	9.49
Discharged with pensions[193]	1,834	1.13
Subtotal	**17,131**	**10.63**
Losses since June 1826		
Deaths[194]	45,496	28.25
Deserters	20,117	12.49
Missing in combat[195]	21,298	13.22
Killed in combat	1,269	0.78
Taken Prisoner	1,055	0.65
Subtotal	**89,235**	**55.41**
Grand Total	**161,036**	**100**

192 Compiled from Kamil Kepeci 6799. This *defter* was probably first used by Avigdor Levy in his PhD dissertation. (See Levy, "The Military Policy of Sultan Mahmud II," 597-599) The *defter* was re-consulted, and the figures for the hospitalized and granted furloughs were added.

193 About one-sixth of these pensioners hailed from Istanbul. D. BŞM 10455 (H. Ca 1253/ August-September 1837); D. BŞM 10479 (H. Za 1253/ January-February 1838).

194 The reasons of death were not specifically mentioned.

195 "*Hîn-i muharebede ğaib…*" It is not clear how these men went missing. They might have deserted, run to the opposing side, fallen prisoner, or simply been killed in battle with the authorities losing track of them.

APPENDIX B: Deaths in Military Hospitals in and near Istanbul

Source	Start Date	End Date	Number of Deceased	Number of Months	Name of the Military Hospital(s)
D. BŞM 42154	13 Feb. 1831	12 May 1831	388	3	Maltepe
D. BŞM 10000	21 Apr. 1833	18 Jul. 1833	451	3	Mühimmat-ı Harbiye and others (*ve mahal-i saire*)
D. ASM 38363	12 Jan. 1834	10 Feb. 1834	219	1	Maltepe, Mühimmat-ı Harbiye and others
D. ASM 38364	11 Feb. 1834	11 Mar. 1834	188	1	Maltepe, Mühimmat-ı Harbiye and others
D. ASM 38375	12 Mar. 1834	10 Apr. 1834	266	1	Maltepe, Mühimmat-ı Harbiye and others
D. BŞM 10077	11 Apr. 1834	09 May 1834	264	1	Maltepe
D. ASM 38476	08 Jul. 1834	06 Aug. 1834	139	1	Maltepe, Mühimmat-ı Harbiye and others
D. ASM 38476	05 Sept. 1834	04 Oct. 1834	227	1	Maltepe, Mühimmat-ı Harbiye and others
D. BŞM 10148	03 Nov. 1834	02 Dec. 1834	299	1	Maltepe, Mühimmat-ı Harbiye and others
D. ASM 38573	01 Jan. 1835	30 Jan. 1835	303	1	Maltepe, Mühimmat-ı Harbiye and others
D. ASM 38587	31 Jan. 1835	28 Feb. 1835	270	1	Maltepe, Mühimmat-ı Harbiye and others
D. BŞM 10262	22 Nov. 1835	20 Dec. 1835	230	1	Maltepe, Kavakağacı
D. ASM 38922	19 Mar. 1836	17 Apr. 1836	168	1	Maltepe, Sakızağacı and others
D. BŞM 10453	3 Aug. 1837	1 Sept. 1837	78	1	Maltepe, also including those who died in their regiments
C. As 42211	14 Sept. 1843	14 Oct. 1843	240	1	Maltepe, Bab-ı Müşiri
Average Number of Deaths in Military Hospitals in and near Istanbul, based on the samples above (1831–43): 196 (monthly), 2,352 (yearly), 23,520 (10-year estimate)					

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D. ASM (Asakir-i Mansure Defterleri) 37592, D. ASM 37849, D. ASM 37912, D. ASM 38363, D. ASM 38364, D. ASM 38375, D. ASM 38476, D. ASM 38573, D. ASM 38587, D. ASM 38883, D. ASM 38922, D. ASM 38998,

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İ. MTZ (05) (İrade Memalik-i Mümtaze) 05/128

İ. MVL (İrade Meclis-i Vâlâ) 42/ 782, İ. MVL 10290

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