

The Janissaries of Damascus in the  
Sixteenth Century, Or, How Conquering a  
Province Changed the Ottoman Empire

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# The Janissaries of Damascus in the Sixteenth Century, Or, How Conquering a Province Changed the Ottoman Empire

Linda T. Darling

Fascination with the Ottoman household, and in particular with the sultan's household of family members and powerful slaves, reverberates in discussions of "the transition to a slavery-based elite" in the mid-sixteenth century<sup>1</sup> and "the eventual replacement of local vassals with the members of an imperial household of slaves."<sup>2</sup> These slaves are of course the men of the *devşirme*, collected as boys from the non-Muslim families of the empire and raised to become "the Sultan's servants,"<sup>3</sup> that is, his officials, his household, and his Janissary army, and the issue is their takeover of the highest offices in the realm after the middle of the sixteenth century. Our concept of their role requires rethinking, however, because ironically, just at the point when the slaves achieved political dominance, they started to cease being slaves.

This change, the so-called 'corruption of the Janissaries' by the admission of non-slave outsiders into their ranks, was given a huge impetus by the conquest of the Arab lands in 1516–1517, and it resulted in the irrevocable alteration of the constitution of the Ottoman Empire. This alteration was long considered part of the notorious decline of the empire, characterized by corruption and the disintegration of the systems and processes that had made the empire great in its classical age. Specialists now challenge that concept of decline, and this study contributes to that challenge with a close examination of the Janissaries'

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<sup>1</sup> Kaya Şahin, "Staging an Empire: An Ottoman Circumcision Ceremony as Cultural Performance," *American Historical Review* 123.2 (April 2018): 465 n. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Baki Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire: Political and Social Transformation in the Early Modern World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 12.

<sup>3</sup> The phrase belongs to İ. Metin Kunt, *The Sultan's Servants: The Transformation of Ottoman Provincial Government, 1550–1650* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983).

transformation in the region of greater Syria (hereafter “Syria”) and a new assessment of what that change entailed.<sup>4</sup> The change might have occurred in any case as the empire expanded; Janissary conditions in the Syrian provinces can be seen in other provinces as well and were likely part of a broader transformation already in process. But events came together in mid-sixteenth century Syria in a unique way that had repercussions not only on the Janissaries but also on the subsequent structures of the empire.

The Ottoman conquest of Syria in 1516 initiated an enormous expansion of the empire into the Arab world and elsewhere over the next several decades and turned Syria from a frontier province of the Mamluks into a central staging ground for further Ottoman conquests to the east and south. The employment of the Janissaries of Damascus to meet the manpower needs of campaigns in Iran, Cyprus, and particularly Yemen was one of the most important results, dramatically changing the character of the Janissary corps and eventually the empire as a whole. It transformed the Janissaries from an elite military unit of slave soldiers into an assemblage of men from diverse origins, slave and free, who did a variety of jobs for the empire in addition to waging war.<sup>5</sup> It generated friction between the slave and free elements that contributed to several political ruptures in the following hundred years, and it underlay the decline narrative of the advice literature or *nasihatname*, which so strongly shaped all subsequent views of the Ottoman Empire. This transformation affected the role of the Janissaries in Ottoman politics as well as their own concept of themselves and their role, giving rise to a variety of controversial assessments of their character, from “riffraff” to the “sole dike against absolute power.”<sup>6</sup> This study examines, through a variety of

<sup>4</sup> Within the field such challenges have become commonplace; see Rifa’at ‘Ali Abou-El-Haj, *Formation of the Modern State: The Ottoman Empire, Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991); Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire*; Linda T. Darling, *Revenue-Raising and Legitimacy: Tax Collection and Finance Administration in the Ottoman Empire, 1560–1660* (Leiden: Brill, 1996).

<sup>5</sup> See Gülay Yılmaz, “The Economic and Social Roles of Janissaries in a 17th Century Ottoman City: The Case of Istanbul” (PhD diss., McGill University, 2011).

<sup>6</sup> Cemal Kafadar, “Janissaries and Other Riffraff of Ottoman Istanbul: Rebels without a Cause?” in *Identity and Identity Formation in the Ottoman World: A Volume of Essays in*

Ottoman documents, how and why that transformation began and how its actual beginning differed from what the advice writers reported.

The main source for this inquiry is the registers of important affairs (*mühimme defterleri*), containing copies of outgoing orders sent usually in response to petitions or reports from officials and subjects of the empire.<sup>7</sup> These are supplemented by Janissary salary registers listing Janissaries in Syria, Egypt, and Cyprus; in a general way, the Janissaries' names indicate their identities. Through these documents I examine the initial aspect of the transformation of the Janissaries, that is, the admission of outsiders (*ecnebiler*) in the form of sons and brothers of Janissaries, as well as local residents, into the corps. This was the regular Janissary corps; these events took place well before the establishment of a separate corps for locals, the *yerliye*.<sup>8</sup> Technically, the Janissaries' sons and, in Syria, many of the local residents, could not be enslaved, since they were Muslims. On that basis, they had not previously been eligible to join the Janissary corps, although some had maneuvered their way in. The Ottoman documents not only identify when and how this changed but explain at least in part why it changed. They reveal the stresses to which the empire was subject and the ways in which the Ottomans addressed the problems intrinsic to their continued expansion.

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*Honor of Norman Itzkowitz*, ed. Baki Tezcan and Karl K. Barbir (Madison, WI: Center for Turkish Studies at the University of Wisconsin, University of Wisconsin Press, 2007), 113–34; Şerif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought: A Study in the Modernization of Turkish Political Ideas* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962), 133, 165 n. 108, quoting Victor Fontanier.

<sup>7</sup> Most of the *mühimme* registers are housed in Turkey's Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi; some have been published, and some others are available online as Turkish university theses. They were used extensively by Adnan Bakhit for his book on sixteenth-century Syria referenced below. Those used here cover the years 1558–1571, with some gaps. Citations are to entry number rather than page.

<sup>8</sup> On the *yerliye* in a later period see Herbert L. Bodman, *Political Factions in Aleppo, 1760–1826* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1963); Abdul Karim Rafeq, "The Local Forces in Syria in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," in *War, Technology and Society in the Middle East*, ed. V. J. Parry and M. E. Yapp (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), 277–307.

## Janissary Deployments in Syria under Süleyman (r. 1520–1566)

The standard description of the Janissaries as trained and dedicated slave warriors, protectors of the sultan and the realm who became corrupted after 1580, does not illuminate their transformation as adequately as a review of the situation of the troops in Syria prior to and during the war in Yemen.<sup>9</sup> For the first few decades after the conquest we lack documentary sources, but *mühimme* registers become available from the 1550s on. They show the condition of the Syrian Janissaries at that time to be quite different from the stereotype of the Janissary mentioned above. Several of the changes usually described as starting after 1580 were already, it seems, normal practices decades earlier. Rather than corruptions of the system, they were apparently instituted as solutions to problems occurring in the province.

After the Ottoman victory over the Mamluk army at Marj Dabiq in 1516, although some parts of Syria submitted peacefully, other areas remained in rebellion, occasionally abetted by the Venetians.<sup>10</sup> The conquest also gave openings to bandits and internal raiders, while nomadic tribes took the opportunity to prey upon sedentary villages or even to rebel in their turn.<sup>11</sup> As a result, Sultan Selim I (r. 1512–1520) had to garrison the province while he moved on to other conquests.<sup>12</sup> At first, after stationing Janissaries in the citadel of Damascus, he left the province to Janbardi al-Ghazali, the apparently compliant former

<sup>9</sup> On this image see Cemal Kafadar, “On the Purity and Corruption of the Janissaries,” *Turkish Studies Association Bulletin* 15.2 (September 1991): 273–79.

<sup>10</sup> Muhammad Adnan Bakhit, *The Ottoman Province of Damascus in the Sixteenth Century* (Beirut: Librairie du Liban, 1982), 29; Abdul-Rahim Abu-Husayn, “Problems in the Ottoman Administration in Syria during the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> Centuries: The Case of the Sanjak of Sidon-Beirut,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 24 (1992): 669.

<sup>11</sup> Abu-Husayn, “Problems in the Ottoman Administration in Syria,” 666–68; Stefan Winter, *The Shiites of Lebanon under Ottoman Rule, 1516–1788* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 36–37; Abdul-Rahim Abu-Husayn, “The Long Rebellion: The Druzes and the Ottomans, 1516–1697,” *Archivum Ottomanicum* 19 (2001): 165.

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, Giovanni Maria Angiolello et al., *Seyyahların Göziyle Sultanlar ve Savaşlar*, trans. Tufan Gündüz (Istanbul: Yeditepe Yayınevi, 2007), 109.



Mamluk governor of Aleppo, who on hearing of Selim's death in 1520 led an extensive revolt against the Ottomans.<sup>13</sup> After putting down this rebellion, the Ottomans stationed *sancakbeys* in every district and a *subaşı* in every Damascus neighborhood and village. They centralized the treasury in Aleppo but staffed it with Janissaries from Damascus. They spread *timar*-holders across the landscape to serve as an internal police and tax collection force. They also sent a thousand Janissaries to stiffen the garrison.<sup>14</sup> Fortresses and watchtowers had to be manned in all the major cities and along three routes: the coastal road, the road to Cairo, and the pilgrimage route to Mecca.<sup>15</sup> The seventeenth-century *Kavanin-i Yeniçeriyân* (Laws of the Janissaries) tells us that Sultan Selim recruited as additional fortress garrisons the sons of Janissaries who became *timar*-holders, but it does not say which Selim.<sup>16</sup> In view of the great expansion of the empire in 1516–1517 and the sudden need for more garrison soldiers at that time, it must have been Selim I, although it was previously thought that the reference was to Selim II (r. 1566–1574).<sup>17</sup> By the middle of the century the sons and brothers of Janissaries could be

<sup>13</sup> Ibn Jum'a, cited in Abdul-Kerim Rafeq, *The Province of Damascus* (Beirut: Khayats, 1966), 26.

<sup>14</sup> Ibn Tulun, cited in Bakhit, *Ottoman Province of Damascus*, 34, 96 and n.31. Many, if not all, of the new provinces received such garrisons, and while the intention was perhaps to rotate the personnel, this did not happen and many of the troops assigned to provinces settled down, married, and assimilated; cf. *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, s.v. Yeñi Çeri, [http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912\\_islam\\_COM\\_1367](http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_1367) (accessed 15 January 2019).

<sup>15</sup> Bakhit, *Ottoman Province of Damascus*, 94–99. Bakhit lists the number of soldiers in each garrison from an Ottoman salary register, MAD 3723. This register and all other documentary sources cited here except D.5 are now accessible in the Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi, Istanbul, Turkey; my thanks to the archive staff for their assistance. Authors cite the multiplication of fortresses after 1580 (see, e.g., *EI2*, s.v. Yeñi Çeri), but in fact the expansion began much earlier, with the conquest of the Arab lands and Hungary.

<sup>16</sup> Anonymous, *Kavanin-i Yeniçeriyân*, in *Osmanlı Kanunnameleri ve Hukukî Tahlilleri*, ed. Ahmet Akgündüz (Istanbul: Osmanlı Araştırmaları Vakfı, 1996-), 9: 152 #104 (cited by page and paragraph number).

<sup>17</sup> İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devleti Teşkilâtından Kapıkulu Ocakları*, 2 vols. (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1943, rpt. 1984), 1: 33.

found, not only in fortress garrisons, but also in other units attached to the Janissaries, such as the *sekbans* and *gönüllüyan*.<sup>18</sup>

Information is lacking on provincial military activity during the first few decades of Ottoman rule in Syria. When the documentation becomes fuller, in the late 1550s, the *mühimme* registers provide details about the deployment of the Syrian Janissaries and the problems that aroused official complaints. These registers give us a sense of the lives and duties of the Janissaries in the last years of Sultan Süleyman's reign, 1558–1566. In these years, Janissaries were attached to the governor of Damascus, who assigned them to tasks such as new campaigns into Iran,<sup>19</sup> garrisoning twenty-nine fortresses in various parts of the province like Homs and Kerek,<sup>20</sup> hunting down rebels or bandits,<sup>21</sup> collecting or transporting money for taxes and salaries,<sup>22</sup> or protecting the pilgrimage.<sup>23</sup> Several of them served as guards for a delegation of Syrian officials sent to

<sup>18</sup> A document from 1526 listing *acemi oğlans* shows over one-third of them to be sons of Muslims; *Dictionnaire de l'empire ottoman*, ed. François Georgeon, Nicolas Vatin, and Gilles Veinstein (Paris: Fayard, 2015), s.v. "Janissaires."

<sup>19</sup> Bakhit, *Ottoman Province of Damascus*, 34, 101, citing Uriel Heyd, *Ottoman Documents on Palestine, 1552–1615* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960), 72–74, documents from *Mühimme* 23 dated 1578 and 1579.

<sup>20</sup> *3 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri (966–968/1558–1560)*, *Özet ve Transkripsiyon* (Ankara: T.C. Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü, Osmanlı Arşivi Daire Başkanlığı, 1993), #592, #593, #1436, #1437; *12 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri (978–979/1570–1572)*, *Özet – Transkripsiyon ve İndeks* (Ankara: T.C. Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü, Osmanlı Arşivi Daire Başkanlığı, 1998), #88, #423, # 509, #532. The count of 29 fortresses comes from the contents page of the salary register; see also Bakhit, *Ottoman Province of Damascus*, 94–98.

<sup>21</sup> *3 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri*, #564, #565, #566, #718; *5 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri (973/1565–1566)*, *Özet ve İndeks* (Ankara: T.C. Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü, Osmanlı Arşivi Daire Başkanlığı, 1994), #550; *7 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri (975–976/1567–1569)*, *Özet – Transkripsiyon - İndeks* (Ankara: T.C. Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü, Osmanlı Arşivi Daire Başkanlığı, 1998), #1983, #2010, #2487.

<sup>22</sup> *7 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri*, #33, 2386, 2578; Linda T. Darling, "Crime among the Janissaries in the Ottoman Golden Age," in *A Historian of Ottoman War, Peace, and Empire: A Festschrift in Honor of Virginia Aksan*, ed. Frank Castiglione, Ethan Mechinger, and Veysel Şimşek (Leiden: Brill, 2019).

<sup>23</sup> *5 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri*, #509, #1047; Bakhit, *Ottoman Province of Damascus*, 107–15; Suraiya Faroqhi, *Pilgrims and Sultans: The Hajj under the Ottomans* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1994), 54, 69.

investigate a case of financial malfeasance in Egypt.<sup>24</sup> A number were deployed to Aleppo, some to garrison the citadel and 100 others to collect and transport revenues under the direction of Aleppo's treasurer.<sup>25</sup> The Janissaries attached to Aleppo were supposed to be rotated every three months, but those there in 1558 had been on site for three or four years, both those serving in the garrison and those attached to the treasury. This was discovered when 100 more Janissaries were sent and the contingent was overloaded. A decree came from the Porte for them to rotate once a year.<sup>26</sup>

By this time the Janissaries had been in Syria for nearly forty years and had begun to settle down; they were arguably not anxious to be moved again. In this period I and other scholars have found a surprising number of Janissaries, in Syria and in other provinces, not living as slaves; some of them were married with children, dwelling in towns and villages, or being killed or wounded in bar fights or on the roads as they traveled individually or in pairs.<sup>27</sup> These Janissaries were already

<sup>24</sup> Linda T. Darling, "Investigating the Fiscal Administration of the Arab Provinces after the Ottoman Conquest of 1516," in *The Mamluk-Ottoman Transition: Continuity and Change in Egypt and Bilād al-Shām in the Sixteenth Century*, ed. Stephan Conermann and Gül Şen (Göttingen: Bonn University Press at V&R unipress, 2016), 153. In 1564/65, we find several Janissaries of Damascus guarding the Hurrem Sultan İmaret in Jerusalem and conveying its funds; 6 *Numaralı Mühimme Defteri (972/1564–1565), Özet – Transkripsiyon ve İndeks* (Ankara: T.C. Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü, Osmanlı Arşivi Daire Başkanlığı, 1995), #57. Amy Singer, in her study of this *vakıf*, discusses revenue collection and transport, but mentions only the leadership, not the staff assigned to these tasks or the guards; Amy Singer, *Constructing Ottoman Beneficence: An Imperial Soup Kitchen in Jerusalem* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), 108, 122.

<sup>25</sup> 3 *Numaralı Mühimme Defteri*, #164, #165, #190. On the treasury's operation see Yasuhisa Shimizu, "16. Yüzyılın İkinci Yarısında Halep Defterdarlığı," *Osmanlı Araştırmaları* 51 (2018): 29–61. These Janissaries later became oppressive and insubordinate and were finally eliminated; Muhammad Adnan Bakhit, "Aleppo and the Ottoman Military in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century (Two Case Studies)," *al-Abhāth* 27 (1978/79): 27–38; Abdul-Rahim Abu-Husayn, "Janissary Insubordination in the Province of Aleppo at the Turn of the Sixteenth Century as Depicted in Ottoman Documents," in *Les provinces arabes à l'époque ottoman*, ed. Abdeljelil Temimi (Zaghouan: Centre d'Études et de Recherches Ottomanes et Morisco-Andalouses, 1987), 33–38.

<sup>26</sup> 3 *Numaralı Mühimme Defteri*, #164, #165, #190, #191.

<sup>27</sup> Darling, "Crime among the Janissaries." These Janissaries are not described as retired. The Damascus court registers for this date are no longer available, but for their

involved in the local economy, as shown by a 1566 order to stop the Janissaries of İskenderiye from profiteering; they were buying up the district's honey, butter, and other goods cheaply in order to sell them elsewhere at a high price.<sup>28</sup> This is the first documentary notice of Janissaries being involved in the Syrian economy, but undoubtedly not their first involvement.<sup>29</sup> An order from 1569 commanded the removal of craftsmen and shopkeepers from the Janissary corps and their replacement with the brothers of Janissaries (*kul karındaşları*).<sup>30</sup> Janissaries were also involved in government finance; an entry in 1567 stated that *timar*-holders in Syria without *timars* had been awarded *mukataas* (tax farm revenues) to collect, and that when they received *timars*, Janissaries illegally got their *mukataas*. The Porte tried to prevent the Janissaries, not from getting *mukataas*, but from getting anything without an order from the center.<sup>31</sup> This arrangement seems to be contradicted in a later entry, where the treasurer of Aleppo stated that he had received an order, apparently omitted from the *mühimme* register, not to give *mukataas* to *timar*-holders or Janissaries but only to *kapıkulları* (slaves of the Porte).<sup>32</sup> An order from 1568 documents the opposite situation; it complains that

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evidence for a later period on Janissary involvement in the countryside see Jean-Paul Pascual, "The Janissaries and the Damascus Countryside at the Beginning of the Seventeenth Century According to the Archives of the City's Military Tribunal," in *Land Tenure and Social Transformation in the Middle East*, ed. Tarif Khalidi (Beirut: American University of Beirut, 1984), 357–69.

<sup>28</sup> 5 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri, #730. On this topic see Kafadar, "On the Purity and Corruption of the Janissaries."

<sup>29</sup> Kafadar cites evidence of Janissary involvement in local economies as early as the reign of Mehmed II; "On the Purity and Corruption of the Janissaries," 276, n.6.

<sup>30</sup> Orhan Paşazade, "9 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri (977–978/1569–1570) <Özet ve Transkripsiyon >," (MA thesis, T.C. Marmara Üniversitesi, 2006), #601.

<sup>31</sup> 7 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri, #1173.

<sup>32</sup> 7 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri, #1267. *Kapıkulları* began extorting fees from *timar*-holders holding *mukataas* at six *akçe* per thousand, then imprisoned them (presumably for non-payment, as the treasurer reported that all the *mukataas* were distressed). The treasurer claimed that when he petitioned concerning this problem, he was told that the *timar*-holders should only have to pay one and a half *akçe* per thousand. This problem demands further investigation; were the Janissaries at that period supposed to hold *mukataas* or not, and under what conditions, and how did this change over time? And were *kapıkulları* actually allowed to extort fees, however small, from *timar*-holders?

some Arabs were collecting *mukataa* revenues on condition of receiving Janissary *gediks* (permanent posts). After getting them they were awarded *timars* and left their *gediks* to their minor sons, while the local Rumi candidates remained without *gediks*. The governor was warned not even to think of awarding Janissary *gediks* to Arabs, and certainly not to their minor sons.<sup>33</sup> The state seems to have been trying to preserve the order of the past, but if that was impossible, it favored official appointees over outsiders and Rumis over people of other origins.

A complaint from the Aleppo treasurer in 1564/65 stated that over 200 of the Janissaries of Damascus assigned to his treasury were drinking excessively and committing disorder and oppression (*fesad ve ta'addi*); he was directed to replace them with men recruited locally and send the list of replacements to Damascus.<sup>34</sup> The treasurer described most of the culprits as *Tat* (Persians, or perhaps foreigners, non-Turks).<sup>35</sup> The governor of Egypt was also told to recruit locally to fill the gaps in his own Janissary garrison.<sup>36</sup> Local recruitment is probably how all those *Tat* got into the Janissaries sent to Aleppo, although numerous orders in the *mühimme* registers (see below) warn the provincial authorities against recruiting *Tat*, 'Acem, or 'Arab.<sup>37</sup> The existence of local recruitment suggests that despite the Porte's wish to control Janissary recruitment, the demand for Janissaries was expanding faster than the corps of trained men that could be assigned from Istanbul. This suggestion is borne out by the fact that when in 1560 the governor of İskenderiye in Syria requested 300 Janissaries to put down chronic rebellion that had been endemic since the conquest, the Porte replied that sending Janis-

<sup>33</sup> 7 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri, #2198.

<sup>34</sup> 5 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri, #991, #1121.

<sup>35</sup> For the alternate translations of *Tat* see Rafeq, *Province of Damascus*, 27 and Bakhit, *Ottoman Province of Damascus*, 96. Since most of the Janissaries were non-Turks, however, Bakhit's translation is not useful.

<sup>36</sup> 5 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri, #1146.

<sup>37</sup> The parallelism between these terms and Rumi or Kurd seems to preclude the idea that 'Arab here refers only to Bedouin nomads. In context, at least some of these 'Arab seem to be villagers or urbanites. The term *evlad-i 'Arab* does not appear in these documents.

saries was not possible at that time, but they would send *sipahis* from the Balkan province of Hersek.<sup>38</sup>

Thus, by around 1560 the Janissaries were already short of manpower to fulfill their duties, both at the Porte and in the province.<sup>39</sup> When the writers of advice literature issued complaints about the increase in Janissary numbers, they were clearly not paying attention to the empire's real needs. The conquest of the Arab lands had added numerous provinces to the empire in the east and south, while by mid-century the empire was also growing in the west and north. This was the period of the greatest expansion of Ottoman territory and administration; the number of provinces went from two to thirty-four in these years.<sup>40</sup> Selim I recognized that every new province had to have a garrison, which vastly increased the demand for Janissaries. At the same time, the Ottomans were intermittently at war with powerful enemies to the east and west, the Safavids and the Habsburgs. Moreover, some of the Arab provinces were still quite rebellious internally, especially since the Ottomans had made numerous legal and administrative changes. The empire continually needed more men, but although the *timar* system was capable of infinite expansion, the *devşirme* system was not. The Ottomans had to balance the need for recruits against the population's tolerance for providing children for the *devşirme*, as well as the ability of the system to train them. The need for men was outstripping the system's capacity.

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<sup>38</sup> 3 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri, #718. A *devşirme* was ordered in İskenderiye in 1566, perhaps in response to its need for a garrison; 5 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri, #947.

<sup>39</sup> İnalçık makes this point for the period after 1580, but it was already applicable decades earlier. Janissary numbers at the Porte doubled between 1520 and 1590 and again between 1590 and 1630; Halil İnalçık, "Military and Fiscal Transformation in the Ottoman Empire, 1600–1700," *Archivum Ottomanicum* 6 (1980): 289, n. 14, rpt. in *Studies in Ottoman Social and Economic History* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1985), Selection V; see also Rhoads Murphey, *Ottoman Warfare, 1500–1700* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1999), 45. These figures apparently do not include the provincial Janissaries paid by the provincial treasuries.

<sup>40</sup> Douglas A. Howard, "From Manual to Literature: Two Texts on the Ottoman Timar System," *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 61.1–2 (2008): 91.