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# Whatever Happened to the Janissaries? Mobilization for the 1768–1774 Russo-Ottoman War

Virginia H. Aksan

While most Ottoman historians would acknowledge warfare as an implicit or explicit part of the Ottoman *modus operandi*, no studies of a majority of the Ottoman military campaigns exist, exceptions being those of Rhoads Murphey and Caroline Finkel for the post-Suleymanic period.<sup>1</sup> What follows is a preliminary exploration of the mobilization practices of the 1768–74 Russo-Ottoman War, part of a larger study in progress on the nature and impact of that war on Ottoman society of the period. For the Ottomans, like their European counterparts, found the costs of war in the eighteenth century outstripping revenue, and the results of such warfare devastating, disappointing and inconclusive. Ottoman historians have long asked what became of the janissaries after 1700. The question might be better framed as who or what replaced them, how they were recruited and how the central government viewed them.

One of the more interesting views on state formation in the early modern European world interprets it as a response to endemic internal violence, an increasingly costly spiral of control of the military and the technology required to make it efficient. Some western historians see state formation as the struggle over ancient territorial rights, viewing the rise of local leaders and aristocracies as directly related to the management of military manpower for and/or against the state.<sup>2</sup> Others construct models to account for the rise of bureaucracies and tax systems as a direct result of the need to finance violence, considering success or failure in harnessing and financing the military as the sole imperative of state for-

<sup>1</sup> R. Murphey, 'The Functioning of the Ottoman Army under Murad IV (1623–1639/1032–1049)' PhD dissertation, Univ. of Chicago, 1979); C. Finkel, *The Administration of Warfare: Ottoman Campaigns in Hungary, 1593–1606* (Vienna, 1988). This paper was originally presented at the American Research Institute in Turkey in Istanbul, Apr. 1995.

<sup>2</sup> F. Tallett, *War and Society in Early Modern Europe, 1495–1715* (New York, 1992).

mation. In Tilly's *Coercion, Capital and European States*, militarization and state formation are inextricably linked. To put it crudely, as many of his critics have, states make wars make states make wars.<sup>3</sup> It would seem obvious that the escalation of war, its increasing size and extent, would mean a deeper mobilization of state resources, determining the essential link of militarization and bureaucratization, i.e., more war, more taxes, more bureaucracy. Each successive war, especially in the eighteenth century, meant increased indebtedness, which meant 'oppression', here meaning conscription and discipline of the countryside, and 'negotiation', meaning financing mobilization and supply, leading to increased taxation and to a further reduction of the financial autonomy of local communities.

While European historians examining military history in the social context are anxious to include the Ottoman empire in their works, and have already done so with some success,<sup>4</sup> many others stress the limitations inherent in a comparison of western and Ottoman economic models, and have begun the construction of a non-western theory of state formation. The military imperatives of Mughal India, for example, have been studied by Dirk Kolff, who sees state formation in seventeenth-century India as a process of negotiation between a minority government and an armed agrarian class so huge and diverse that it 'did not allow the court to become the foundation of a unilateral "law and order" imposed on the peasant strata'. He adds that 'political and military energies' could not possibly be frozen into any kind of ' "early modern" repose'. Though they could not be ruled, he continues, such autonomous communities could be 'let into the empire' by the state which was 'the largest and most honourable employer of the country, whose huge army was the fundamental expression of its achievement', a view that one might characterize as the 'billiard ball model'. More recently, Karen Barkey has drawn similar conclusions about the Ottoman state, arguing that it was most effective in 'embodying within itself the potential forces of contention'.<sup>5</sup> Both eastern and western models of state formation remain provocative, and have influenced what follows.

In the Ottoman empire, the countryside was more or less armed by 1600, as it was in Europe in the same period, and control of the armed, landless peasantry was a continual preoccupation.<sup>6</sup> The long history of

<sup>3</sup> C. Tilly, *Coercion, Capital and European States AD 990-1990* (Oxford, 1990). See also 'States Making Wars Making States Making Wars', the title of J. Goldstone's review in *Contemporary Sociology* XX (1991), 176-8; W.H. McNeill, *The Pursuit of Power* (Chicago, 1982).

<sup>4</sup> As examples J. Black, *European Warfare 1660-1815* (London, 1994), treats the Ottomans as active players in the European arena, whereas J. Keegan, *History of Warfare* (New York, 1993), describes Ottoman Istanbul as 'planted ... in the capital city of the eastern Roman empire ... where the horsetail standards of battle were processed before great men, and stables stood at the door' (p. 182).

<sup>5</sup> D. Kolff, *Naukar, Rajput, and Sepoy: The Ethnohistory of the Military Labour Market in Hindustan, 1450-1850* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 2, 19; K. Barkey, *Bandits and Bureaucrats: The Ottoman Route to State Centralization* (Ithaca, NY, 1994), p. 241.

<sup>6</sup> *Op. cit.*, and H. Inalcik, 'Military and Fiscal Transformation in the Ottoman Empire, 1600-1700', *Archivum Ottomanicum* VI (1980), pp. 283-337.

the Ottoman empire can be studied from a perspective which assumes that the control of violence at all levels remained the chief imperative of whatever one means by 'the state', and that that imperative had a very significant impact on Ottoman society, which in turn altered the ideological assumptions and relationships of various constituencies (or elite groups) within the Ottoman hegemony. As the state was forced to dip deeper and deeper into the resources of provincial society, a process of social transformation was initiated that diminished the rights of access of the traditional aristocratic households, and empowered a new class of regional upstarts, who then either challenged the central government with raised expectations, much as did the displaced grandees, or cooperated in the creation of the absolutism of the nineteenth-century Ottoman empire. The trends appear to coexist in the later eighteenth century, when the continuing monetarization of state revenues was radically transforming rural social relations. If we accept the management of war as the primary cause of that evolutionary transformation of the Ottoman state, then we can effectively address the strategies of negotiation with peasant and elite, and the impact of those strategies on the ideological assumptions of the empire.

For military historians in general, 1700–1800 is viewed as the period of greatest difficulty for pre-modern societies in raising and maintaining massive armies, often larger than many of the towns and cities of Europe. One estimate for the late seventeenth century suggests that an army of 60 000 soldiers required a daily ration of 45 tons of bread, 40 000 gallons of beer, 200–300 cattle for meat, and 90 tons of fodder for animals. Perjes, studying the same period and similar size army, calculated that a projected one month's supplies would require a wagon train 198 km long.<sup>7</sup> The mercenary, multi-ethnic federative forces of the sixteenth to mid-seventeenth centuries were gradually being replaced by cohesive, expensive, standing armies made up of native volunteers, recruits and, latterly, conscripts. Local landed aristocracies, accompanied by military entourages which they recruited and supported, were replaced by military contractors and suppliers of emerging states, who increasingly drew on native manpower, the flotsam and jetsam of the agrarian unemployed, always a real presence and threat to rural (and urban) society before the nineteenth century.

The creation of a new-style army to replace the janissaries in the Ottoman empire can be examined from much the same point of view. 'Simply keeping the army in being became an end in itself'.<sup>8</sup> The Ottomans implicitly embarked on the creation of an eighteenth-century standing army by the increasing use of the armed irregular, the *levend*, which evolved from many of the same fundamental territorial imperatives as the European versions: the need to control local violence internally and

<sup>7</sup> Tallet, *War and Society*, p. 55. G. Perjes, 'Army Provisioning, Logistics and Strategy in the Second Half of the 17th Century', *Acta Historica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* XVI (1970), p. 11.

<sup>8</sup> Tallett, *War and Society*, p. 61.

the need for larger armies externally. The *levend* regiments under discussion here for the 1768–74 war constituted an army parallel to the janissaries, numerically greater, replacing the now completely dysfunctional benefice-style soldiers (the *timarhs*, or *sipahis*),<sup>9</sup> and on occasion merging with the janissaries themselves.

The Ottomans had created a standing army, the converted slave army of the janissaries, by the late fourteenth century, an elite, highly educated infantry corps, drawn from the tributary Christian children of newly acquired Balkan territories. Equally well developed was Ottoman logistical mastery, far ahead of similar developments in European military thinking. By the eighteenth century, however, when new territory was no longer added to the empire, the system had been discontinued, and was in complete disarray. The janissaries had become increasingly ineffective in and irrelevant to the kinds of warfare in which the Ottomans were engaged, partly because of a typical elite military resistance to innovation, partly because of the dissolution of their discipline and solidarity and their gradual merging with rural and urban society, where they had evolved into 'an almost unpaid militia, made up of small tradesmen whose main rewards were judicial and tax immunities, which they were increasingly unable to justify on the battlefield'.<sup>10</sup>

Such privileges were deeply entrenched within all levels of Ottoman society, especially after the Patrona Halil rebellion in 1730. This was in part a janissary reaction to the Ottoman government's abortive efforts to curb the excesses of the corps, particularly in the matter of the pay tickets of the muster rolls, entitlements to salaries and rations, which were inflated to a great extent by names of the long dead and of deserters.

Registration in the rolls of the janissaries, which guaranteed both the monthly salary and the daily rations, or their monetary equivalent, represented the single greatest privilege of the corps, by which all profited, up to and including the grand vizier. The income from fictional lists of combatants was in fact lining the pockets of officers and civil administrative officials alike, and constituted the most intractable problem in the janissary organization – much the same problem as that facing all the

<sup>9</sup> The decline of the *timar* system – the assignment of a fief in exchange for military service – while related to a number of the issues discussed above, is beyond the purview of the present paper. *Timarh* soldiers were simply not present in any great numbers on the Danube in 1768. A new study by A. Salzmann is radically altering our conception about Ottoman fiscal decline: 'Measures of Empire: Tax Farmers and the Ottoman Ancien Regime, 1695–1807', (PhD dissertation, Columbia University, 1995).

<sup>10</sup> H. İnalcık and D. Quataert, eds, *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1300–1914*, (Cambridge, 1995), p. 659. On the janissaries themselves there is an appalling lack of systematic studies: H. İnalcık, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age, 1300–1600* (London, 1973), remains a useful introduction; H.A.R. Gibb and H. Bowen, *Islamic Society and the West* i, pts. 1 and 2 (London, 1950, 1957), is now a much outdated study of Ottoman institutions. A recent work, G. Goodwin's *The Janissaries* (London, 1994), a series of sensational anecdotes, purports to be a history of the corps.

armies of Europe of the period, as thousands of mini-armies or militias, with officer corps which benefited from control of mobilization and muster rolls, were gradually drawn under central control.<sup>11</sup> In the Ottoman empire the trade in pay coupons, or certificates, sold and bartered for their potential profitability by the end of the eighteenth century, was a privilege especially resistant to reform. Of a possible 400 000 in circulation, only 10 per cent of that number may have represented live soldiers ready for duty.<sup>12</sup> That the reform agenda of the advisors of Selim III (1789–1807) addressed the problem of the certificates, along with recommendations concerning the creation of regiments of trained, disciplined soldiers from raw Muslim recruits of Anatolia, should come as no surprise; but in view of the widespread benefits of the janissary pay system the recommendations themselves should be seen as courageous.<sup>13</sup>

The state's need for soldiers was especially acute in 1768, when the Ottomans decided to undertake a western campaign against Russia after a hiatus of some 30 years. Although the long confrontation with the Persians on the eastern front had continued until the 1740s (itself part of the reason for the janissary rebellions of 1730 and 1740, as they were reluctant to battle against fellow Muslims, even though Shi'ite, and to endure the great hardships imposed by the march across Anatolia), the Danube region had been relatively tranquil. Mobilization in 1768, however, inaugurated an endless round of confrontations with the Russians, which had a disastrous effect on Balkan and Ottoman society. While the janissaries were still a prominent part of the campaigns, and were vilified by the public for the disasters of this war, others, in equal or greater numbers, made up the cannon fodder in 1768.

The use of local forces to supplement and counterbalance the janissaries was not a new phenomenon in Ottoman history. Just the reverse. As it can be argued that the janissary corps itself was created to exert hegemony over local feudatory forces, so too was janissary power both checked and enhanced by the recruitment of local irregular bands, variously known as *levend*, *sarıca* and *sekbân*, as early as the sixteenth century.<sup>14</sup> The terms require some definition. *Sarıca* and *sekbân* both refer to armed infantry musketeers, similar to the local militias of Europe, and drawn from among the *levend*. In the earlier period, the term *levend* most certainly referred to armed, vagrant and landless peasants, or, as with *sarıca* and *sekbân*, 'independent soldiery companies',<sup>15</sup> whose mobiliz-

<sup>11</sup> Tallett, *War and Society*, ch. 3.

<sup>12</sup> Inalcık and Quataert, *Economic and Social History*, p. 716. The source is Baron de Tott, eyewitness to the condition of the Ottoman forces in 1768.

<sup>13</sup> For more information on reform in the Ottoman context, see S. Shaw, *Between Old and New: The Ottoman Empire under Sultan Selim III, 1789–1807* (Cambridge, MA, 1971); D.A. Howard, 'Ottoman Historiography and the Literature of "Decline" of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries', *Journal of Asian History* XXII (1988), pp. 52–77; V.H. Aksan, 'Ottoman Political Writing, 1768–1808', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* XXV (1993), pp. 53–69.

<sup>14</sup> Inalcık, 'Military and Fiscal Transformation', p. 292; M. Cezar, *Osmanlı Tarihinde Levendler* (Istanbul, 1965), pp. 351–56.

<sup>15</sup> Inalcık, 'Military and Fiscal Transformation', p. 295.

ation and demobilization have been linked to great rural upheavals such as the rebellions of the late sixteenth century. Such roving bands, when organized into fighting forces, were called 'household *levend*' or 'state *levend*', the distinction being whether or not they were part of the provincial governors' forces (*kapılı* or *kapı halkı*) or paid directly by the state (*miri*).<sup>16</sup> The bands were organized into companies (*bayrak* or *boluk*), generally of 50 soldiers, both cavalry (*suvarı*) and infantry (*piyade*), commanded by a *bolukbaşı*.<sup>17</sup>

Inalcık argues for a profound change in the organization and control of *levend* after 1700, relating it to the growth of the provincial dynasties of local notables, the *ayans*, who emerge as their leaders especially after the 1720s, organizing local resistance in cooperation with the state-appointed religious official, the *shari'a* court judge (*kadı*), to curb the abuses of the military administrative class and to control countryside violence.<sup>18</sup> It was common enough for the Ottomans to eliminate the militia-turned-bandits by arming the countryside for its own protection, and then enlisting the resulting bands for the next campaign. *Ayans* and *kadis* remain the two most consistently addressed officials in all documents relating to the mobilization and supply of *levend* for the 1768–74 war. McGowan calls these officials 'committees of notables', which evokes both some sense of solidarity at the local level and the need for cooperation against government demands.<sup>19</sup>

The *levend*, the locally mustered soldier, universal in all societies, had become central to Ottoman warmaking by 1750. Recruited in a standardized format by this combination of state-appointed and locally recognized (often elected) officials, he formed the bulwark of the Ottoman army in this war,<sup>20</sup> the alternative to the janissary, ultimately serving as the model for Selim III's 'New Order' (*Nizam-i Cedid*) troops. These were not so much an innovation as an extension and centralization of existing practices in response to a new situation, a continuation of the attempt to accommodate the conflicting demands of both external and domestic violence.<sup>21</sup>

Such temporary mobilization as a means both of raising troops and of controlling banditry (on the rise again in the second half of the eighteenth century) is ubiquitous by the war of 1768–74, so much so that the term *levend* has assumed a far more generalized sense of 'recruit', organized into state financed regiments (*miri levend*). Indeed, the link to the Ottoman official military is so great that the government took steps in 1775 to eradicate the name *levend* from military usage, blaming the failures of the 1768–74 war on them.<sup>22</sup> Other names existed for such

<sup>16</sup> Cezar, *Osmanlı Tarihinde Levendler*, pp. 214–16.

<sup>17</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 289; Inalcık, 'Military and Fiscal Transformation', p. 295.

<sup>18</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 301, 307–8.

<sup>19</sup> Inalcık and Quataert, *Economic and Social History*, p. 659.

<sup>20</sup> Cezar, *Osmanlı Tarihinde Levendler*, p. 350.

<sup>21</sup> Barkey, *Bandits and Bureaucrats*, p. 75, on the practice under Osman II and Murad IV.

<sup>22</sup> Cezar, *Osmanlı Tarihinde Levendler*, p. 306. The tactic was previously tried on the far smaller *sekbân* organization in 1718, and equally unsuccessfully; *op. cit.*, pp. 303–5.

troops before and after 1774, but *levend* is by 1768 far and away the most prevalent term in the documentary evidence.<sup>23</sup> That the other names persist at all can be attributed to a general military mentality concerning titles and trappings of distinction and solidarity, and a popular evocation of earlier heroes.

The evidence for these assertions, compiled from a register and account book devoted exclusively to the mobilization of the *levend* from 1768–74, points to as many as 100 000–150 000 of these troops who may have reached the battle-front in the course of war, suggesting, if the death and desertion rate for the Russian levies of one in two can be used as a guide,<sup>24</sup> a mobilization of perhaps twice that number of men from the countryside of the Balkans and Anatolia, less so from the Arab provinces of the empire.

Mobilization statistics for all wars are generally unreliable, but indications from earlier studies are that such mobilization of *levend* in sixteenth-century campaigns (Egri, Hungary, in 1596) was more along the lines of 15–20 000 *levend* and *sekban*,<sup>25</sup> and for the later seventeenth century regiments of 4000 *sekban* have been noted.<sup>26</sup> Figures for the total size of the assembled forces in the Danube basin from 1768 to 1774 vary from 80 000 to 600 000, depending upon the source of information. Sadullah Enveri, court historian and battle-front chronicler, lists 20–30 000 janissaries, ignoring the composition of the rest of the forces except to say that over 400 000 men and animals assembled in Bender in 1769.<sup>27</sup> A janissary roll from early 1771, as the army left Babadagi (in present-day Romania) winter quarters for Isakçi and Kartal on the Danube, gives a total figure of 62 611, a roll perhaps inflated by the ‘pay certificate disease’ mentioned above.<sup>28</sup> Perhaps the most interesting figure comes from the contemporary Mustafa Kesbi, one of the chief accountant’s staff, who gives a total of 254 900 janissaries and *miri levend*, a figure which does not include the Danube fortress guards.<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, in a breakdown of those figures, Mustafa Kesbi lists 45 commanders (*paşas* and/or governors of provinces) who were each to bring

<sup>23</sup> İnalçık, ‘Military and Fiscal Transformation’, p. 303.

<sup>24</sup> Prime Minister’s Archives, Maliyeden Mudewer Collection [MM] 4683. This remarkable record includes both the source of recruits and where they were being sent. The statistic on Russian mobilization is from C. Duffy, *Russia’s Military Way to the West* (London, 1981), pp. 126–29. Tallett suggests that a 25% loss rate of all men under arms was standard in the seventeenth-century French army (p. 105). The distances which both Ottoman and Russian soldiers had to cover to get to the battle-front in this war accounts for the greater number of casualties. Disease also took its toll in an area notorious for waves of the plague.

<sup>25</sup> Cezar, *Osmanlı Tarihinde Levendler*, p. 308.

<sup>26</sup> Murphey, ‘Ottoman Army’, p. 55.

<sup>27</sup> *Tarih*, Istanbul University, MS T 5994, dated 1780, fos. 8b and 22b–24.

<sup>28</sup> MM 17383. This figure is suspect, as the long period of truce and negotiation (1771–3) was then under way.

<sup>29</sup> *İbretnuma-yi Devlet*, Millet Library, Ali Emiri Collection, MS 484, undated, fo. 35b. This figure represents the expectations of the government at the beginning of the war. It has been estimated that 97 000 *miri* soldiers participated in the 1769 campaign: M. D’Ohsson, *Tableau general de l’empire othoman* (Paris, 1788–1824) vii, pp. 381–82.

1000–2000 *levend* recruits to the front, an initial recruitment of 45 000–90 000, not including their own entourages, which were often quite large, nor the officers of the recruits.<sup>30</sup>

An account notebook, which lists the total monies (*kuruş*)<sup>31</sup> spent on *levend* for July 1769 to June 1772 (36 months) as 3 744 131 *kuruş*, may at least give some idea of the proportional representation of the two types of troops, when contrasted to janissary salaries for a similar period. It cannot be considered a final total, as the sources of income for the *levend*, as for the Janissaries, were diverse and dispersed.<sup>32</sup> My own figure to date is closer to 6 000 000 *kuruş* for the three years.<sup>33</sup> By contrast, the payrolls for the janissaries at Babadagi headquarters, for the period February 1769 to September 1771 (20 months, not quite two years), amounted to 6 005 443 *kuruş*, with the last payment made in September 1772, a year late but still prompt by general military standards.<sup>34</sup> A preliminary figure for the war expenses distributed from the privy purse (*rikab-i humayun*) and the state mint (*darbhane*) for the period July 1768–September 1772 (four years and two months) is 32 884 543 *kuruş*.<sup>35</sup> That is only the actual cash distribution part of the war costs, but should give some idea of the scale – the Ottoman budgets we know of before and after the war running at only 14 000 000–15 000 000 *kuruş* a year.<sup>36</sup>

Of more compelling interest is the evidence of the ways in which these troops were perceived by the central government. One order, addressed to the governor of the province of Anatolia, is quite explicit about the control of the *levend*. Beginning with the statement that their misbehaviour was the cause of much harm to the countryside, especially as they had been cut off from service and rations due to the lack of campaigns, the order goes on to announce the coming campaign with Russia, and the need for many soldiers. It continues by extending an amnesty to the miscreants, and emphasizing the necessity of gathering them up for the spring offensive. It also spells out the explicit role of the local provincial officers (*mutasarrıf*: governors of *sancaks*, subdivisions of a province) in the organization of the provincial troops.<sup>37</sup>

Orders for companies of 50 *levend*, usually expressed in terms of 500

<sup>30</sup> Kesbi, *Ibretnuma*, fo. 35.

<sup>31</sup> One Ottoman *kuruş* (or piaster) was equal to 120 *akçe*. An idea of the value of the *kuruş* can be gained from eighteenth-century exchange rates: one Venetian ducat was worth between 3 and 8 *kuruş*, while one pound sterling was worth from 5 to 15 *kuruş*. (Inalcık and Quataert, *Economic and Social History*, pp. 966–7).

<sup>32</sup> MM 5970, fos. 20–3.

<sup>33</sup> Calculations drawn from MM 4683, which include rations.

<sup>34</sup> MM 11786, fo. 110, Feb.–Oct. 1769, 909 750 *kuruş* n.d.; fo. 105, Nov. 1769–Jan. 1770, 919 500 *kuruş*, paid in May 1770; Prime Minister's Archives, Bab-ı Defter Baş Muhasebe Collection [D.BŞM] 4144, fos. 4–9, Feb.–Sept. 1770, 1 801 250 *kuruş*, paid in Dec. 1770; D.BŞM 4203, Oct.–Dec. 1770, 474 480 *kuruş*, paid in Dec. 1771; MM 5970, fos. 4–5, Jan.–Mar. 1771, 649 928 *kuruş*, paid in Apr. 1772, and Apr.–Sept. 1771, 1 250 000 *kuruş*, paid in Sept. 1772. This represents the janissary salaries (*mevacip*) only.

<sup>35</sup> D.BŞM 4203, fo. 100; D.BŞM 4144; MM 5970, fos. 2–6.

<sup>36</sup> Inalcık and Quataert, *Economic and Social History*, p. 717.

<sup>37</sup> Prime Minister's Archives, Muhimme Collection defter 167, fo. 25.

or 1000 soldiers (10 or 20 companies), were addressed to the *mutasarrıf* and the judge of a particular region, with stipulations concerning salary and rations. Expressed in the formulaic style of the Ottoman chancery, they can only be read as the expectations of the government, not the reality of the battle-front. The orders include the number of soldiers (*nefer*), the mobilization or sign-up bonus (*bahşı*), the monthly salary (*ulufe*) distributed in six-month lump sums, as the general estimated length of the campaign season, with a 10 per cent commission for the officers (*ondalık*), and a calculation of the rations, similarly defined for six months' service, based on the daily individual ration, the *yevmiye*. Six months was the norm, but two-month periods were also specified, sometimes as an extension of service, sometimes for winter quarters, for passage to the front, or for fortress duty. In addition, money for other supplies, such as tents, copper cauldrons, frying-pans, ladles, water-skins, spigots, buckets, and packhorses, was routinely distributed to each company. The latter equipment was sometimes delivered in kind from central stores, as it would be for the janissaries. The officers of the company, two or more in number, were expected to buy the necessaries for their companies and distribute them.

Conditions of service are also described in the orders, in what amounts to a contract between the central government and the local recruiting officials: that the conscripts/recruits be upright, handsome Muslims, committed to war for the faith; that they have guarantors in the region from which they are supplied, responsible for their behaviour, and fined at two times the advance from the imperial treasury for the desertion of their soldiers, and that deserters be returned to the imperial army under heavy guard within 30 days. The local officials were responsible for the selection of officers, and it is certainly in this period that terms like *yuzbaşı* (captain) and *binbaşı* (major) make a regular appearance.<sup>38</sup>

The striking absence of any reference to guns, ammunition, etc., needs mention. It must have been assumed that any *levend* signing on for a campaign came with a gun and, in the case of the cavalryman, his horse. One historian has speculated that the sign-on bonus was intended for that purpose: for the recruit to outfit himself for a campaign.<sup>39</sup> Perhaps, but the bonus must also have served as an enticement to impoverished young men, the attraction universal to military service. Many of the orders for *levend* specify that the recruits should know how to use a gun, without also specifying that they own one. Small arms and their distribution were under the jurisdiction of the imperial armoury (*Cebehane*), guns being destined for the various janissary corps. This story is by no

<sup>38</sup> The example used here is Prime Minister's Archives, Cevdet Askeriye Collection [CA] 18671, from Sept. 1770, which is reproduced in Cezar, *Osmanlı Tarihinde Levendler*, pp. 443-44. In many instances, the *mutasarrıf* himself was the commander of the forces.

<sup>39</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 353-54.

means complete.<sup>40</sup> The practice of hiring an armed soldier parallels the situation in the European eighteenth century, but 'armed' could be a relative term in both cases. Şemdanizade Suleyman Efendi, a key eyewitness in this war, noted that the whole world turned up to enlist, considering 'sopa' and 'zerdeste' (clubs) as weapons, a sword or a rifle being too expensive.<sup>41</sup>

The only variables in the *levend* formula were in the sign-up bonus, which distinguished first and foremost between a cavalryman and an infantryman, generally distributing double the amount for the horseman, with a concomitant amount of fodder (barley) in the calculations of daily rations. The range varied considerably, from 5 to 80 *kuruş*.<sup>42</sup> The normal bonus was 12 *kuruş* for an infantryman and 20–25 for a cavalryman, but it varied, based probably on the negotiating ability of the locals involved, and most certainly on the length of the war, as the incentive appears to have increased as the war drew on. The salary (*ulufe*) remained consistent at 2.5 *kuruş* per month, or 10 *akçe* a day for both cavalry and infantry, a figure continuously distributed until at least the early decades of the nineteenth century, and totally unrealistic in terms of its ability to support the individual soldier. The janissary salary is equally difficult to calculate for this period – in the seventeenth century it never topped 12 *akçe* a day.<sup>43</sup> The sign-on bonus, salary and commission monies were distributed in cash directly from the army treasury (*ordu hazinesi*).

The daily rations were broken down into four or five categories: bread, meat, and barley for the packhorses of both infantry and cavalryman, but additionally rice, cooking fat, and additional barley for the saddle horses of the man with a horse. The privileges for the mounted soldier are significant, in common with the normal janissary expectations, suggesting a greater value attributed to the services of the man with the horse, but the protein needs of the man on foot are also recognized in the formula as described below.

The *levend* infantryman at war was expected to need a daily intake of a double loaf of bread (100 dirhem or roughly 320 gm), or a 50-dirhem biscuit (160 gm), and was allowed half an okka of meat (641 gm); a half kile (12–13 kg) of fodder barley for the packhorses of 50 men. This was the equivalent of the janissary rations. The cavalryman was entitled to the same amount of bread, but only 100 dirhem (320 gm) of meat, and additionally 100 dirhem of rice (320 gm), 25 dirhem (80 gm) of cooking

<sup>40</sup> New work on Ottoman armaments is beginning to change that picture, e.g. the articles by G. Agoston, 'Ottoman Artillery and European Military Technology in the Fifteenth and Seventeenth Centuries', *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* XLVII (1994), pp. 15–48, and 'Gunpowder for the Sultan's Army: New Sources on the Supply of Gunpowder to the Ottoman Army in the Hungarian Campaigns of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries', *Turxica* XXV (1993), pp. 75–96.

<sup>41</sup> S. Şemdanizade, *Mur'it-Tevarih*, ed. M. Munir Aktepe (Istanbul, 1980) ii(B), p. 12.

<sup>42</sup> CA 42036, 15 *kuruş*, and D.ŞM 4250, fo. 10, 30 *kuruş*, both for cavalrymen; CA 18671, 12 *kuruş* for an infantryman; Cezar cites the figure of 80 *kuruş*, *Osmanlı Tarihinde Levendler*, p. 355.

<sup>43</sup> İ. H. Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devleti Teşkilatında Kapukulu Ocakları* (Ankara, 1988) i, p. 413.

oil or fat, and a *yem* of barley, roughly 6.5 kg per day per man. These rations are far more generous than those of the Russian soldier, who was expected to live on rye flour and groats to make gruel (*kasha*),<sup>44</sup> and to forage for the rest. The janissaries expected their wartime rations in kind. It must be noted, however, that cash substitution for rations was initially the norm for the *levend*, calculated in the formula on the documents, and probably never equivalent to battlefield prices. Many of the records of the fortress commissaries complain about being forced to purchase provisions at inflated prices, which (of course) they had to account for in their records. Abundant documentary evidence also indicates the persistence of the Ottoman central government in tracing misspent or mislaid funds, especially regarding provisioning.

Later in the war, an initial distribution of one or two months' cash equivalent was distributed to the company and their officers as 'rations money for the march', and further rations were distributed from the commissary stores, as with the janissaries. We are a long way from solving the problem of how responsible the Ottoman soldier was for his own welfare. There was a real distinction between being at war and being at peace in the amount of calories and the ways in which rations were distributed.<sup>45</sup> In any event, the proposed meat ration must have served largely as an ideal, rarely achieved, as those who study military records are well aware. The primary preoccupation of the documents so far examined is grain, bread and fodder.

It is tempting to see the changes over the course of this war – the fact that for the first time the Ottoman grand vizier and commander-in-chief stayed on the battlefield through the winter, and the gradual centralization of the distribution of provisioning to the entire assembled army – as part of the evolution to 'modern' systems. The main problem facing the Ottoman commanders was, according to contemporary accounts, that too many men showed up for the war. Şemdanizade commented that the whole of Rumeli and Anatolia were passing themselves off as janissaries, and that anyone who claimed to be a Janissary was accepted as such. Some regiments had 20 000 men. While the government prepared rations for 120 000 men, 600 000 turned up.<sup>46</sup> Ahmed Resmi, second-in-command during much of the war, saw the arrival of the irregulars on the Danube:

<sup>44</sup> D.BŞM, Ordu Hazinesi (Army Treasury) Collection [ORH] dosya 48, gomlek 91, July 1769, a formula for that office; D.BŞM 4250, fo. 8, June 1771, for a detailed cavalryman's account; Duffy, *Russia's Military Way*, p. 13, for the Russian side. 1 okka = 400 dirhem = 1.282 k; 1 kile = 20 okka = 25.659 kg (Inalcık and Quataert, *Economic and Social History*, pp. 990–91).

<sup>45</sup> The protein increase for men at war was a standard military practice of European armies as well. See V. H. Aksan, 'Feeding the Ottoman Troops on the Danube, 1768–1774', *War and Society XIII* (1995), pp. 1–14; D'Ohsson, *Tableau general* vii, p. 341, lists the late eighteenth-century janissary requirements. A janissary *Serdengeçti* fortress guard could count on a double loaf of bread with 1 okka of meat and 1 kile of barley per 5 men (CA 13272 for Silistre in 1772).

<sup>46</sup> Şemdanizade, *Mur'i't-Tevarih* II(B), pp. 7, 13.

The *paşas* from Anatolia recruited thieves and the homeless and then were held captive by them – at every hamlet or bridge-crossing, the men demanded salaries and bonuses, a tyranny completely contrary to custom. Such men were disruptive in camp by his estimation. Even though the *paşas* brought along enough men for a battalion, in three days they had scattered, and they could not even raise 100 men.<sup>47</sup>

On one occasion, as the army tried to cross the Danube bridge at Isakçı, the entourage of the grand vizier, some 800, demanded 400 *kuruş* apiece of Grand Vizier Mehmed Emin, surely an exaggeration.<sup>48</sup> Is this rebellion, or chaos and decline? Or is it representative of a true social transformation, a democratization of the army?<sup>49</sup>

That there was no shortage of manpower, no matter how widespread the desertion, appears a certainty. A Russian observer at Hantepesi (the major Ottoman mobilization and supply camp north of the Danube) noted in June 1769, as the Ottomans prepared to confront the Russians at Hotin:

On 21 June, they began to dispatch military supplies to Hotin . . . Mehmet Paşa was declared the Commander, and entrusted with 15 Janissary regiments (around 8000 men), and a hundred *bayraks* [of *levend*], . . . approximately 15 000 troops . . . Abaza Paşa, with 100 cavalry *bayraks*, several thousand Janissaries, and the Hotin garrison troops (4000–5000 men) was ordered to support him [Mehmet Paşa], for a total of around 60 000 troops.<sup>50</sup>

What about the soldier's point of view? Anecdotal material is scarce, but the occasional story emerges from the narrative and documentary sources. While serving as a judge in Tokat in 1771, Şemdanizade was required to enlist 1500 soldiers he calls janissaries, to be sent to Ozu on the Black Sea. He refused further applications once the number reached 6000, rejecting the young and the old, and organized 1500 for the battle-front (30 companies of 50 each, presumably). Subsequently, he encountered the same troops in Sinop, and discovered that each company now comprised only 11 men and a commander. When he asked the reason, he was told that his successor in the office of *kadı*, and the Tokat governor had excused the men from service for a payment of 25 *kuruş* (the sign-on bonus given the men?), which they split and pocketed. The soldiers were glad to escape the discipline and hardships, estimating that it

<sup>47</sup> *Layiha* (for Grand Vizier Halil Paşa), Istanbul University, MS TY 419, fo. 3. Ahmed Resmi was equally censorious about the janissaries.

<sup>48</sup> Şemdanizade, *Mur'it-Tevarih* II(B), pp. 4, 12.

<sup>49</sup> The large body of literature on the restless peasants of Europe has demonstrated that the practice of enrolling them as recruits for the standing armies of the Napoleonic period initiated a process of 'democratization' and 'solidarity' that revolutionized man's view of government, one of the fundamental theses of McNeill's *Pursuit of Power*.

<sup>50</sup> P.A. Levashov, *Plen i stradanie Rossian u Turkov* (St Petersburg, 1790), p. 74. The total number here is not as important as the proportion of designated janissary to non-janissary troops.

would cost each of them 250 *куруş* to go to war.<sup>51</sup> Many of the deserters of the first year of the war complained that rations in kind were distributed only every three to five days (the normal practice for the janissaries), while the money distributed as substitute for food and supplies was insufficient: one week's allotment barely sufficed for a day, because of insufficient control of the prices.<sup>52</sup> Ottoman estimates of the individual soldier's needs, in this period at least, never reflected the reality of battlefield or market.

A final story about one Genç Ali, charged with bringing 1000 *levend* to the battlefield in the spring of 1771, may serve to illustrate the difficulty in preserving order with this kind of recruitment system. In fact only 400 were enrolled, and when Genç Ali was ordered to Rusçuk he mustered his troops instead near Babadağı, oppressing the local population. The janissary commander was himself forced to return the miscreants to Babadağı, where Genç Ali continued to insist on ranks, pay and rations for his men.<sup>53</sup> Desertion and disobedience, of course, were endemic to armies of pre-modern Europe, and preoccupied the strategists of the eighteenth century.

This article began by asking what had happened to the janissaries by the eighteenth century. Although central state records continue to make a clear distinction between the janissary troops and the irregular *levend*, at the provincial level, as in Şemdanizade's example, and on the battlefield, the two appear often to have been conflated. This was particularly true of the *Serdengeçti* corps, which traditionally served as auxiliaries (shock troops and reserves) for all the imperial corps, and which in this war was recruited on the march. The rump of the janissary organization was to be found in the imperial guard in Istanbul and, in small numbers, on the battle-front and in the fortresses. *Levend* troops, however, are encountered everywhere, side by side with janissaries, in the fortresses as well as in the massive confrontations, scarce for this war, but significant at Hotin (1769) and Kartal (also known as Kagul, 1770). Significantly, the word *levend* disappears from the documentation after 1775, when its use was prohibited by the government because of the evocation of the disasters of the recent war. It is interesting to note, however, that the accounts for the *levend* troops continue in the previously described account book in the same manner, with the same formula of 2.5 *куруş* a month, the only difference being that the word *asakir* (sing. *asker*, 'soldier') has replaced *levend*.<sup>54</sup> The two had come to mean the same thing to Ottoman officials, among whom began to emerge men like Ahmed Resmi, calling for reform of the army and its leadership.<sup>55</sup> It was as 'soldiers' (*asakir*) that Selim III established his standing army in 1793,

<sup>51</sup> Şemdanizade, *Mur'it-Tevarih* II(B), p. 61.

<sup>52</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 10.

<sup>53</sup> Suleymaniye Library Collection Hacı Mahmud, MS 4859, fos. 40b-41.

<sup>54</sup> MM 4683, fos. 578-9.

<sup>55</sup> See V. H. Aksan, *An Ottoman Statesman in War and Peace: Ahmed Resmi Efendi, 1700-1783* (Leiden, 1995), especially chs 3-4.

building separate barracks, and deliberately recruiting Anatolian, Muslim Turkish stock.

On the local level there were large numbers of *levend* and janissary aspirants, and just as many passing themselves off as the real thing on the fictional pay certificate system which maintained the privileges of the corps. In order actually to get troops to the battle-front and simultaneously to curb the demands of the landless, the Ottomans had to accelerate alternative systems, such as the *levend* troops, with the pragmatism which characterizes the lengthy history of the empire. It is possible to argue that the 1768–74 war is crucial in the transition to a more ‘modern’ Ottoman army, in the creation from indigenous, landless populations of the infantry and cavalry regiments who would face Napoleon and Muhammad Ali of Egypt in the decades following the end of the war. Equally, the impact on Ottoman society, especially the erosion of the *askeri/reaya* class distinction (soldier/peasant, tax-exempt/taxed) so beloved of Ottoman historians and bureaucrats, must have been considerable, and is obvious from the disdain of the statesmen and civil servants evident in the stories above.

War-making had grown prohibitively expensive, and the Ottomans hovered on the brink of bankruptcy at the conclusion of this war, provoking a monetary crisis that would extend into the middle decades of the next century.<sup>56</sup> Dipping so deeply into local resources, through levies and taxation, paved the way for the bureaucratic absolutism of the nineteenth century, as was the case in Europe.<sup>57</sup> The spiralling debt entailed increasing reliance on local officials for men and war *materiel*, which in turn precipitated the significant rise in power of the rural gentry in the latter half of the century, some of whom would eventually challenge Ottoman centrality, others of whom would form the bulwark of nineteenth-century Ottoman bureaucracy. The particular Ottoman strength lay in its ability to ‘convince the contenders of its legitimacy’ and in its creative ‘distribution of rewards’ often ‘temporary, calculated and reversible’.<sup>58</sup> Control of internal violence and the prosecution of war, early modern state preoccupations everywhere, drove Ottoman mobilization and military fiscalism in the late eighteenth century, propelling the emergence of Ottoman mid-nineteenth-century-style hegemony.

McMaster University

<sup>56</sup> İnalcık and Quataert, *Economic and Social History*, pp. 966–70.

<sup>57</sup> Tilly, *Coercion, Capital and European States*, p. 104.

<sup>58</sup> Barkey, *Bandits and Bureaucrats*, p. 239.