JANISSARY POLITICS ON THE OTTOMAN PERIPHERY (18TH-EARLY 19TH C.)

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This article's main thesis is that, towards the end of its lifespan, the Janissary corps became an increasingly decentralised institution, a fact that redefined its political stance *vis-à-vis* the Ottoman government, its own central administration, and its involvement in provincial politics.[1] In the course of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, its political power passed mainly into the hands of low-ranking officers who, following a series of reforms, took the opportunity to create strong bonds with local societies. Such bonds were defined by 'bottom up' networking processes which allowed the regiments in the provinces to follow a trajectory of increased administrative and financial emancipation from Istanbul. The result was the creation of various different organisational structures inside the corps, which developed their own distinct characteristics, but remained, at the same time, organically connected to one another through a common institutional and legitimising frame of reference. By taking a close look at the case of the Janissaries of Crete, I thus argue that in order for us to understand the political role of the Janissaries in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, we have to start looking away from Istanbul and examine their history mainly from a provincial perspective.

I. The Janissary Corps as a Decentralised Institution

The Janissary establishment was never static. It evolved immensely through time and the Ottoman central government played a major role in this process, since for centuries Istanbul developed new sets of rules and methods in order to ensure the corps' alignment with its political mindset. The significance of Janissaries as safe-keepers of sultanic authority in the Empire increased as the territory of the Ottoman state expanded. Janissary

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1 Research for this paper was carried out in the framework of the project "Janissary networks in early modern Mediterranean, 18th-early 19th centuries", funded by the Greek State Scholarships Foundation (IKY) within the action "Funding of postdoctoral research" with funds from the Operational Program Education and Lifelong Learning, NSRF 2014-2020, priority axes 6, 8 and 9, co-funded by Greece and the European Social Fund.

garrisons were stationed in all strategically important fortresses, and the corps was given the status of one of the four 'pillars' of provincial administration alongside the *sancakbeğ*is, the *kadı*s, and the *defterdar*s. The four institutions were independent of one another and reported straight to Istanbul, thus maintaining a system of checks and balances and giving prominence to the Sultan as the ultimate arbitrator in the Empire's provincial affairs. Unfortunately for the central government, though, as Janissary garrisons were being established in an ever-growing number of imperial fortresses away from the capital, maintaining control over them became an increasingly complicated task.

One way of keeping the Janissaries on the state's periphery under central control was through financial means. The imperial treasury was responsible for the yearly distribution of revenues destined for the corps' salaries and, in order to prevent the latter's entanglement in the interests of provincial financial/political networks, it did its best to keep the resources used for the payments of different Janissary garrisons detached from the localities to which they were appointed.[2] Another method used for restraining the power of the Janissaries in the provinces was the periodical rotation of their regiments from one fortress to another every three years.[3] This measure aimed at limiting the corps' interaction with the Ottoman provincial economies and societies, while keeping most of its combatant soldiers from remaining idle in Istanbul for long periods, a recipe for the creation of political effervescence in the capital.

Although at its core the idea that the imperial Janissary corps was an agent of sultanic authority remained intact through the years, the augmentation of its size in the post-Süleymanic era fundamentally remoulded its financial-*cum*-political status *vis-à-vis* the Ottoman centre. Combined with the deteriorating condition of the Empire's economy in the second half of the sixteenth century, measures originally used for controlling the corps turned into liabilities. In this vein, the overcomplicated centrally-regulated system of reallocation of financial resources used for the corps' salary distributions led to constant delays in the payment of the numerous provincial Janissary garrisons.[4] As a result, in the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, payment-related uprisings in the capital and various fortresses on the Empire's periphery became a regular phenomenon, while an ever-increasing amount of tax resources started being permanently allocated for the payment of specific provincial garrisons in the form of *ocaklık*s.[5]

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2 In Crete, for instance, the sources of payment of the imperial Janissary garrisons were constantly changing. Thus, the soldiers were being paid one year from revenues coming from the Peloponnese, another year from Lebanon, from Aydın, and so on; Turkish Archive of Herakleio (TAH) 18:68; TAH.15:358; TAH.23:12; BOA, C.AS.841/35909; BOA, C.AS.1106/48950; BOA, C.AS.1078/47511; BOA, C.AS.460/19185; BOA, C.BH.213/9933; Archives Nationales de France (ANF), Affaires Etrangères (AE), B1, La Canée, Vol. 9 (5 January 1749).

3 İ. H. Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devleti Teşkilâtından Kapukulu Ocakları*, Vol. 1 (Ankara 1988), 325.

4 M. L. Stein, *Guarding the Frontier: Ottoman Border Forts and Garrisons in Europe* (London and New York 2007), 126-128.

5 For the use of *ocaklık*s as a method of payment of the Ottoman garrisons in Bosnia and Crete, see M. R. Hickok, *Ottoman Military Administration in Eighteenth-Century Bosnia* (Leiden, New York and Cologne 1997), 42-53 and TAH.33:69-70; BOA, C.AS.1145/50890.

In view of the difficulties that the state faced in financing the corps of a policy of frozen salaries which inevitably followed the scaling up of the Ottoman army's size, and of the inflationary tendencies in the Empire's economy following the first half of the sixteenth century, it comes as no surprise that a twofold process of financial emancipation of the Janissaries from centrally controlled institutions started to unfold. At an individual level, an ever increasing number of soldiers began to be involved in non-military financial activities, while, at an institutional one, the regiments' common funds (*sandık*) started looking for alternative ways to increase their income, mainly through large-scale investments in real estate and interest loans. This tendency, which was already gaining momentum in late sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Istanbul,[6] reached its peak in many places where Janissary garrisons were stationed throughout the eighteenth century.

Similar decentralisation processes were also taking place at an administrative level. Privileges granted to the Janissary corps in order to minimise its dependence on authorities with potentially centrifugal tendencies, like provincial governors, turned into one of the Janissaries' main instruments for avoiding central control. Their right to extradition only by their own officers, combined with their access to the means of violence, made them virtually unanswerable to other imperial agents and gave them an overpowering position *vis-à-vis* authorities such as *sancakbeğ*is and *kadı*s, whose main defence mechanism against the Janissaries was to appeal to Istanbul for intervention, a procedure that often resulted in even more tensions and large-scale uprisings.

The eighteenth century can be seen as the pinnacle of this trajectory of decentralisation. Ironically, it was three measures that the Ottoman government itself put into effect that contributed most to its culmination. Two of them were part of a financial reform which overturned the corps' old system of payments. It was the same need for cash which had led Istanbul to the adoption of the *malikâne* reform in 1695, which brought about, some time before 1736,[7] the outsourcing of the office of the paymaster of the Janissary organisation to wealthy individuals from outside the corps, the *ocak bazirgân*s. This measure was followed by the legalisation of the buying and selling of Janissary titles of payment in 1740.[8] Selling Janissary pay-certificates was already an established practice in the black markets of the imperial capital. Its official authorisation by Mahmud I was a measure which prompted the titles' unofficial holders to register such transactions, thus rendering them more controllable and profitable for the *ocak bazirgân*s. In this way, the latter acquired a better idea of what the true size of the Janissary establishment was, while the financial leverage of the central fisc on them increased. The third measure was part of a general eighteenth-century policy of reducing the operational costs of the Janis-

6 G. Yılmaz, 'The Economic and Social Role of Janissaries in a 17th Century Ottoman City: The Case of Istanbul', unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, McGill University, Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, Institute of Islamic Studies (Montreal 2011), 2, 175-243.

7 Uzunçarşılı, *Kapukulu Ocakları*, 1:408.

8 H. A. Reed, 'Ottoman Reform and the Janissaries: The Eşkenci Lâhiyası of 1826', in O. Okyar and H. İnalcık (eds), *Türkiye'nin Sosyal ve Ekonomik Tarihi (1071-1920)* (Ankara 1980), 194; *EI*^{2}, s.v. 'Yeñi Čeri' (R. Murphey), 328; B. Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire: Political and Social Transformation in the Early Modern World* (Cambridge 2010), 205, 209, 225.

sary organisation, while weakening its political strength at the Empire's capital.[9] This reform, which took place approximately at the same time as the two above-mentioned measures, aimed at the decrease and the ultimate cessation of the periodical rotations of Janissary regiments in provincial fortresses. As a result, by the mid eighteenth century, all regiments deployed on the Ottoman periphery were tied to specific locations.[10]

If we look at such measures from the viewpoint of the Ottoman capital, it is difficult to understand the great impact which they had on the economic and political life of the Ottoman Empire. Istanbul, which hosted the corps' headquarters and training camps, was home to the largest Janissary garrison in the Empire and one of the few places where, for centuries, non-combatant and trainee Janissaries resided *en masse* alongside their active comrades-in-arms. All Janissary regiments had a considerable number of soldiers with a permanent presence in the city,[11] a fact that helped them preserve their local networks even when sent out to war or appointed to provincial garrisons for a number of years. This stable Janissary presence was one of the main reasons why Istanbul became one of the first places in the Empire where the corps started to intermingle with the local population and to be involved in the local economy. Consequently, by the time the above reforms were implemented, the Ottoman capital was already a place where extended Janissary networks were dominating the city's economic and political life.[12] Yet, this was not the case with the rest of the Empire.

It is true that, by the end of the sixteenth century, groups of Janissaries who had the right to permanently reside in fortresses outside Istanbul had increased in size and that the gradual decline of the *devşirme* system gave the Muslim population in many provinces access to the corps.[13] It is also true that, even since the seventeenth century, in many provinces with Janissary garrisons, members of the corps had been involved in the local financial and political life.[14] Yet, it would be misleading to assert that, before the eighteenth century, the ties of the Janissaries' with the Empire's provincial population were

9 I. Mouradgea d'Ohsson, *Tableau général de l'Empire othoman*, Vol. 7 (Paris 1824), 7:331.

10 In Crete, the measure's implementation started in the 1730s and was completed before the end of the 1750s. According to Uzunçarşılı, sources like Koçi Bey, Silahdar, and Naima mention that the three-year rotation period of Janissary regiments in provincial fortresses was still in effect during the seventeenth century; Uzunçarşılı, *Kapukulu Ocakları*, 1:325. In the late 1780s, Mouradgea d'Ohsson wrote: "*Les* Ortas *restent en permanence dans les places fortes qui leur ont été assignées; on ne les déplace en temps de paix que lorsqu'il éclate entre deux compagnies une animosité dangereuse*"; Mouradgea d'Ohsson, *Tableau général*, 7:321. For the measure's implementation in Vidin, see R. Gradeva, 'Between Hinterland and Frontier: Ottoman Vidin, Fifteenth to Eighteenth Centuries', in A. C. S. Peacock (ed.), *The Frontiers of the Ottoman World* (New York 2009), 340-341.

11 For a detailed description of the distribution of Janissaries in various fortresses and Istanbul in the years 1663-1664, see Yılmaz, 'Economic and Social Role of Janissaries', 251-267.

12 Ibid., 112, 175-243.

13 *Kavanin-i Yeniçeriyan: Yeniçeri Kanunları*, ed. T. Toroser (Istanbul 2008), 77-78, 81, 100, 102-105, 138-139.

14 See, for instance, A. Raymond, *Le Caire des janissaires: L'apogée de la ville ottomane sous 'Abd al-Rahmân Kathudâ* (Paris 1995), 13-14, 21.

developing at the same pace and had the same stability as those established in the case of Istanbul. This becomes clear if we consider the difficulties created in this direction by the constant mobility of Janissary regiments from one fortress to another. The periodical rotation of regiment officers limited their connection with provincial societies. To a large part of the Empire's Muslim population, joining the corps seemed a non-viable 'investment', since entering one of its regiments meant that, if not granted a status of permanence in provincial garrisons,[15] they could eventually be sent to another fortress away from their homeland, families, and businesses. It thus comes as no surprise that, in the seventeenth century, one of the most popular channels used by Ottoman Muslims to enter the Empire's military apparatus was through the various local (*yerlü*) military forces that existed on the Empire's periphery. Such local corps, among which local Janissary units (*yerlü yeniçeriyân*), which are not to be confused with their imperial counterparts (*dergâh-ı âli yeniçerileri*),[16] gave a considerable number of people in the provinces the opportunity to participate in the Ottoman system of administration, offering them a steady salary and tax-exemptions.[17] Yet, they did not offer the same amount of privileges

15 Usually this status was granted to soldiers through the title of '*yamak*'. The *yamak*s were Janissaries who had the right to remain in the garrisons of specific fortresses even if their regiments were stationed elsewhere.

16 It is a common mistake of modern historiography to confuse the recruits of such local forces with the members of the imperial Janissary corps. The confusion often stems from the fact that these different categories of soldiers bore the same titles, such as '*beşe*', a word used sometimes abusively as an indicator of imperial Janissary presence in various areas. In fact, this title could refer to low-ranking soldiers of all sorts of different local and imperial corps, such as *cebeci*s, *topçı*s, etc. It should be noted, though, that, depending on the political circumstances, a vague institutional connection between local and imperial Janissaries could be claimed or denied by local people or the Ottoman government in different regions of the Empire. For example, in the case of Bosnia, where the abolition of the Janissary corps proved to be a very difficult task, the central government, in order to prevent a coalition between the two military groups, maintained that the local Janissaries did not have to be abolished because they were not institutionally connected to the imperial corps. In Crete, on the other hand, where the 1821 Greek Revolution neutralised any popular reactions to the abolition of the corps, the government claimed that the local Janissaries originated from the imperial ones, and, thus, had to be abolished. For the case of Bosnia, see F. Sel-Turhan, 'Rebelling for the Old Order: Ottoman Bosnia 1826-1836', unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Boğaziçi University, 2009, 104-106. For Crete, see BOA, HAT.289/17345 where we read the following: "*Memalik-i mahrusede ba'zı mahallerde yerlü kulı ta'biriyle bulınan yerlü neferâtı yeniçeri takımından haric ise de cezire-i mezkûrede yerlü yeniçeri denilen yerlü kulı olmayub bunlar mukaddema hîn-i fetihde bırağılmış ve orta ta'biriyle bulınanlar dahi sonradan buradan gönderilmiş olarak iki takımı dahi yeniçeri olub yevmiyeleri dahi bu tarafdakiler gibi beynlerinde beyi ve şira ile kendülerine me'kel olmış*".

17 Even before the second half of the sixteenth century, maintaining salaried local corps was used extensively by Istanbul in *serhad* areas like Hungary, in order to have soldiers constantly in position for expeditions and to reduce the expenses of long-distance transportation of large imperial forces; K. Hegyi, 'The Ottoman Military Force in Hungary', in G. Dávid and P. Fodor (eds), *Hungarian-Ottoman Military and Diplomatic Relations in the Age of Süleyman the Magnificent* (Budapest 1994), 132-133, 139-140.

and protection provided by the imperial Janissary corps to its members. Enjoying no jurisdictional autonomy from local authorities and being dependent on local *defterdar*s for their payments, the soldiers of local corps were usually much easier to control by the provincial administration.[18] Moreover, the authorities at the *sancak* level had direct access to their payrolls, a fact that left little space for the creation of networks beyond their regiments, since it was easier for outsiders to discern who was a member of their organisation and who was not.

Basically, what the reforms of the first half of the eighteenth century did was that they gave the opportunity to a large number of imperial Janissary regiments to settle permanently in specific provinces, as was the case with the local corps, while preserving the privileges stemming from their status as agents of Istanbul. Furthermore, they allowed their financial and administrative independence from the centre to increase as not only did the palace give its right to control the corps' payments away to private individuals, but also the central Janissary administration distanced itself from the officers at a regiment level. This, of course, meant the acceleration of a decentralisation process inside the corps itself.

The cessation of the regiments' periodical rotations provided low and mid-ranking officers, such as *çorbacı*s, *odabaşı*s, and *aşçı*s, with the opportunity to create much stronger affiliations with provincial societies and to become influential power-brokers at a *sancak* level. In theory, an officer could not accept an unlimited number of soldiers into his regiment, as it was up to the central Janissary administration and the *ocak bazirgân*s to define the number of Janissary pay certificates available for each regiment and provincial garrison. In practice, though, since most people were mainly interested in the privileges and protection offered by the corps and not in its meagre salaries, this problem was easily dealt with at a local level via their unofficial enrolment in the regiments. The names of such Janissary-pretenders, generally referred to in the sources as "*taslakçı*s", were not listed in the payroll registers which were sent to the central Janissary administration. As a result, they were not entitled to any salary, but enjoyed the same privileges as real Janissaries under the auspices of their patron officers.

We should note at this point that, until the eighteenth century, pseudo-Janissaries were not often mentioned in official Ottoman sources pertaining to the provinces. It is only after the permanent establishment of Janissary regiments in particular fortresses and the subsequent minimisation of control over the latter by the government and the Janissary officers in Istanbul that the phenomenon of *taslakçı*s seems to have flourished on the Ottoman periphery.[19] In other words, the growing 'claim of being a Janissary'

18 For an Ottoman document from Hanya, in Crete, showcasing the difference in protection from local authorities offered by the imperial Janissaries and the local corps to their members, see Y. Spyropoulos, *Οθωμανική διοίκηση και κοινωνία στην προεπαναστατική δυτική Κρήτη: Αρχειακές Μαρτυρίες (1817-1819)* [Ottoman Administration and Society in Prerevolutionary Western Crete (1817-1819): Archival Testimonies], ed. A. Papadaki, (Rethymno 2015), 273; BOA, KK.d.827:52.

19 The earliest reference to *taslakçı*s in areas outside Istanbul that I was able to locate at the BOA pertains to the province of Bilecik and is dated 24 Şevval 1111 (4/14/1700); BOA, C.

(*yeniçerilik iddiası*) among the Empire's provincial population should be treated mainly as an eighteenth and early nineteenth-century phenomenon which expressed a 'bottom-up' networking process, defined by off-the-record arrangements between outsiders who wanted to enjoy the privileges offered by the corps and officers at a regiment level.

Yet, neither did the formation of Janissary networks have the same intensity nor did it follow the same trajectory and time-line in every Ottoman region. A number of factors influenced the dynamics created between Janissaries and the Empire's various local populations. One factor was, for instance, the geopolitical importance of each area and if it was considered to be frontier territory (*serhad*) or not by the Ottoman administration. In such areas the Janissary corps had stronger representation and was, thus, more likely to develop broader connections with the local people.[20] This does not mean, though, that the inhabitants of areas with no *serhad* status, but of great financial importance for the Ottoman market, such as Izmir, could not develop strong liaisons with the corps, especially as the latter was increasingly becoming involved in the Empire's economic life.[21]

Other factors were the historical relation of an area with the corps, its proximity to Istanbul, and its administrative status. Owing to their location and the conditions prevalent at the time of their conquest, places like Edirne, Bosnia, and Vidin had, for instance, es-

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ZB.12/595. After the above-mentioned reforms, the references to Janissary-pretenders in Ottoman provinces become more dense. In particular, out of the 26 cases which refer to the period before 1826 and contain explicit mentions to *taslakçı*s, 21 pertain to the years from 1737 to 1823 and 19 to the period after 1756; BOA, İE.ŞKRT.6/557; BOA, İE.ŞKRT.5/382; BOA, İE.EV.41/4666; BOA, İE.ŞKRT.7/598; BOA, C.ML.185/7747; BOA, C.MF.113/5605; BOA, C.ML.147/6247; BOA, C.ADL.7/469; BOA, C.ML.212/8709; BOA, C.EV.457/23112; BOA, C.ADL.46/2800; BOA, C.AS.1110/49123; BOA, C.ZB.90/4490; BOA, C.ML.285/11708; BOA, C.AS.42/1949; BOA, C.ZB.39/1921; BOA, HAT.1388/55236; BOA, C.ZB.49/2438; BOA, C.DH.64/3155; BOA, C.DH.120/5978; BOA, C.ZB.2/78; BOA, HAT.651/31797 (25 Cemaziü'l-ahir 1229); BOA, HAT.651/31797 (11 Receb 1229); BOA, HAT.341/18505; BOA, C.AS.769/32503. That is not to say that *taslakçı*s were not existent outside Istanbul before the eighteenth century. For a relevant reference, see *Kavanin-i Yeniçeriyan*, 82.

20 According to Mouradgea d'Ohsson, in the late eighteenth century 32 *serhad ağaları* were in charge of Janissary garrisons appointed to the most important fortresses of the Empire; Mouradgea d'Ohsson, *Tableau général*, 7:316. Yet, this number seems to have been subject to changes through time, since it varies from one payroll register of the Janissary corps to another.

21 The French traveller Tancoigne, who visited Izmir at the beginning of the nineteenth century, writes: "*Ce* mutésellim *a sous ses ordres une soldatesque nombreuse et turbulente de Janissaires, qui ne demandent que pillage et désordre, et auxquels les incendies qui ravagent si souvent cet entrepôt du commerce de l'Anatolie, procurent de fréquentes occasions de s'abandonner à leur penchant pour la rapine*"; J. M. Tancoigne, *Voyage à Smyrne, dans l'archipel et l'île de Candie* (Paris 1817), 29-30. For the infamous Janissary rebellion of 1797 in Izmir and its results, see Ministère des Affaires Etrangères (MAE), Correspondance Consulaire et Commerciale (CCC), Smyrne, Vol. 31:98 ff; S. Laiou, 'Το ρεμπελιό της Σμύρνης (1797)' [The Rebellion of Izmir], in *Η ιστορία της Μικράς Ασίας: Οθωμανική κυριαρχία* [The History of Asia Minor: Ottoman Rule], Vol. 4 (Athens 2011), 105-120; N. Ülker, '1797 Olayı ve İzmir'in Yakılması', *Tarih İncelemeleri Dergisi*, 2 (1984), 117-159.

tablished from a very early point firm bonds with the Janissaries, who played a prominent role in their economic and political life until – or in some cases even after –[22] the abolition of the corps. It is interesting to note, at this point, that one of the first detachments of parts of the Janissary provincial administration from the corps' central organisation took place in Sultan Süleyman's time, following the conquest of the areas that came to be known as the *ocak-ı mümtaze*, i.e., the regencies of Algeria, Tunisia, and Tripolitania. It should not come as a surprise that, although thousands of imperial Janissaries were deployed in these three areas, their military forces are nowhere to be found in the payroll registers (*mevacib defterleri*) preserved in the Ottoman archives of Istanbul. That is because these self-administered areas were given the right to recruit and finance their soldiers on their own.[23] Janissary forces resided permanently in the three regencies ever since their conquest and developed a very different type of organisation and a distinct political trajectory from their counterparts in other provinces.[24] This was not only because of the regencies' distance from Istanbul and the autonomous status of their administration, but also because of the religious and ethnic conditions prevalent in them, another important factor affecting the relation of Janissaries with the Empire's provincial populations.

The corps seems to have had the tendency to gain stronger popular support in areas with a history of extended conversions to Islam after their Ottoman conquest, like the Balkans, Anatolia, and Crete. On the other hand, in areas with large Arabic-speaking communities, its members often distanced themselves from the latter, manned their units mainly with non-local soldiers, and, in some cases, maintained an elite status which generally alienated them from the indigenous populations. In Damascus, for instance, the imperial regiments recruited people mainly from Anatolia, the Balkans, and from Kurdish regions, while they were often in conflict with the Damascenes, who took political refuge in the city's local Janissary corps (*yerliyya*).[25] Also, in Aleppo, the imperial Janissaries "seemed to have been immune to large-scale penetration by the local people", a large part of whom expressed their opposition to the corps' political domination by becoming *eşraf*

22 Sel-Turhan, 'Rebelling for the Old Order', 300-315 and *passim*.

23 Unfortunately, apart from the fact that it had a military organisation similar to that of the other two regencies, very little is known about the Janissary forces of Ottoman Tripolitania. For an overview of the role of Janissaries in the regencies of Tunisia and Algeria, and relative bibliography, see A. Moalla, *The Regency of Tunis and the Ottoman Porte, 1777-1814: Army and Government of a North-African Ottoman Eyālet at the End of the Eighteenth Century* (London and New York 2004), 87-107; T. Shuval, *La ville d'Alger vers la fin du XVIIIe siècle : Population et cadre urbain* (Paris 2002), 57-117 and *passim.*

24 For an analytical examination of the structure of the Janissary organisation in Algiers, see J. Dény, 'Les registres de solde des Janissaires conservés à la bibliothèque d'Alger', *Revue Africaine*, 61 (1920), 19-46, 212-260. Also, for two unpublished payroll registers of the same unit, see Archives Nationales d'Outre-Mer d'Aix-en-Provence (ANOM), 15 MIOM, Vol. 118 and the unclassified register entitled 'Régistre des Janissaires, Bibliothèque d'Alger' preserved at the Archives privées de Jean Deny (CETOBaC).

25 A. Rafeq, 'The Local Forces in Syria in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries', in V. J. Parry and M. E. Yapp (eds), *War, Technology and Society in the Middle East* (London 1975), 277-280.

and creating alternative groups of political power.[26] Moreover, in the Maghreb regencies, where the imperial Janissaries formed the main axis of the administration, the corps' intermingling with the local populace remained limited, while its soldiers were usually recruited from Anatolia, the Balkans, and from regions around the Aegean.[27] Yet, this did not mean that in the above-mentioned areas Arabs were completely excluded from the corps. In many cases the socio-political, and economic conditions led the Janissary authorities to accept locals in their ranks. According to André Raymond, for instance, in Cairo, "the recruitment of 'Arabs' annoyed the authorities, but they did not have the means to oppose it, since they were in need of troops for the large sultanic expeditions".[28] In Aleppo, peasants and other strata of the local people reportedly managed to enter the corps,[29] while in Algiers the development of the institution of *kuloğlı*s[30] had become an entrance-gate into the corps for various indigenous ethnic groups.[31] Generally, though, we can maintain that in Arab regions the penetration of Janissary ranks by local people never reached the levels seen in the Balkans, Anatolia, and Crete. In these last areas, the imperial regiments often absorbed large parts of the local Muslim communities into their networks, to the extent that in the eyes of outside observers the corps was often identified with local Islam.

The above phenomena ineluctably give rise to a series of questions: can the preference of the Janissaries to integrate into their networks populations with a recent past of conversion be linked back to the old practice of the *devşirme*? Was it related to the fact that an *en masse* recruitment of Islamic populations in predominantly Muslim ar-

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26 Ibid., 280-281. According to Bruce Masters, "although the Janissaries were well integrated into Aleppo's society by the eighteenth century, with native-born sons and grandsons succeeding the original migrants into the Janissary ranks, those in the city whose ancestral pedigrees were much older could still disdain them collectively as 'ousiders'"; B. Masters, 'Aleppo's Janissaries: Crime Syndicate or *Vox Populi*?', in E. Gara, M. E. Kabadayı, and Ch. K. Neumann (eds), *Popular Protest and Political Participation in the Ottoman Empire: Studies in Honor of Suraiya Faroqhi* (Istanbul 2011), 161.

27 For the recruitment of soldiers into the Tunisian and Algerian Janissary garrisons, see T. Bachrouch, 'Les élites tunisiennes du pouvoir et de la dévotion : Contribution à l'étude des groupes sociaux dominants (1782-1881)', unpublished Ph.D dissertation, Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 1981, 509-511; M. Colombe, 'Contribution à l'étude du recruitment de l'Odjak d'Alger dans les dernières années de l'histoire de la régence', *Revue Africaine*, 87 (1943), 166-183. Also, see, MAE, CCC, Alger, Vol. 43 (31 March 1817; 30 June 1817; 30 September 1817).

28 Raymond, *Le Caire des Janissaires*, 13. For the enrolment in the Egyptian Janissary corps of members of the Havâre tribe, see S. Shaw, *The Financial and Administrative Organization and Development of Ottoman Egypt, 1517-1798* (Princeton 1962), 190-191.

29 H. L. Bodman, *Political Factions in Aleppo, 1760-1826* (Chapel Hill 1963), 63.

30 According to the *Kavanin-i Yeniçeriyân*, in the sixteenth century, the *kuloğlı*s were the sons of Janissaries, who had the right to be admitted to the corps, alongside the *devşirme* recruits; *Kavanin-i Yeniçeriyan*, 24, 26, 33-35 and *passim*. Yet, in later periods, both the criteria for their admittance and their institutional role seem to have varied in different regions; E. Radushev, *'"*Peasant*"* Janissaries?*'*, *Journal of Social History*, 42 (2008), 459; TAH.3:417; TAH.19:173, 178-179, 327.

31 Shuval, *La ville d'Alger*, 107-117.

eas could fundamentally disrupt the administrative and financial order imposed by the '*askerî-reaya*' nexus? To what extent did the inequalities created by the '*reaya*ization' of non-Muslims in certain areas on account of the rapid expansion of Janissary networks contribute to the rise of national and religious conflicts? For the time being, the existing research does not suffice to answer comprehensively any of the above questions. As long as we insist on keeping our main focus on Istanbul when examining the Janissary institution, it will continue to be very difficult to understand the implications brought about by its decentralisation. We are, thus, in need of more case studies which will reveal how the corps functioned in different regions. In this vein, the pages which follow will examine in detail the political effects of these processes as witnessed in the *eyalet* of Crete.

II. The Janissaries of Crete as Political Actors

The history of the Janissaries of Crete starts with the island's Ottoman invasion in 1645. The siege of its biggest fortress, the city of Kandiye, lasted for 24 years and cost the lives of tens of thousands of soldiers, while the fortified islets of Souda and Spinalonga, the last Venetian strongholds in the area, passed to Ottoman hands only in 1715. The many military difficulties that the Ottomans encountered during the War for Crete made them realise that the local population's support was crucial for defeating the Venetian army. This realisation resulted in an extended campaign for the recruitment of Cretan soldiers into the army, which began in the earliest phase of the war. They organised 13 different types of local corps which were installed in all of the island's fortresses, drawing their manpower mainly from local people. It was during that time that the first massive conversions of Cretans started taking place and soon a sizeable local Muslim community was created.

Although the imperial Janissaries, the main driving force behind the conquest of Crete, enjoyed an elevated status compared to the soldiers of these local corps, during that first phase the island's population was still quite reluctant to join their forces. Despite the much discussed process of the corps' infiltration by 'aliens' and guild members which was taking place in Istanbul, the Janissaries who invaded Crete consisted mainly of professional soldiers who travelled from far away in order to fight, only to depart for other posts a few years later.[32] This constant military migration, of course, meant that it was very difficult for them to get involved in the island's financial and political life.[33]

The conquest of the city of Kandiye signalled the beginning of a new era for the island. Despite the on-going war with Venice, this great victory consolidated the Ottoman presence in the area and gave rise to a gradual shift from a war-driven administration towards a more sustainable financial and political system of governance for the province.

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32 For the composition of the forces sent to Crete during the war, see E. Gülsoy, *Girit'in Fethi ve Osmanlı İdaresinin Kurulması (1645-1670)* (Istanbul 2004), 187-198.

33 The fact that after the conquest of Kandiye only 28 imperial soldiers were registered as house-owners in the city, although in 1663-1664 4,636 imperial Janissaries were deployed in its siege, is indicative of this reality; Ibid., 252; Yılmaz, 'Economic and Social Role of Janissaries', 251-267.

This shift would only be completed after the signing of the Treaty of Passarowitz in 1718, which officially put an end to the Ottoman-Venetian struggle. One of the most important consequences of the end of the War for Crete was the progressive withdrawal of most of the Empire's imperial troops from the region, which would eventually leave, by the late 1750s, only a limited, but not insignificant, number of Janissaries in the province's three cities, Kandiye, Hanya, and Resmo (mod. Herakleio, Chania, and Rethymno). Another important development brought about by the new conditions was the belated implementation of the *malikâne* system in 1720. Both the departure of thousands of soldiers of non-Cretan origin and the newly imposed method of tax-farming played a pivotal role in the passing of the biggest part of the province's administration into the hands of the local population. Additionally, as was the case in all Ottoman provinces, the regular periodical rotation of Janissary regiments gradually stopped. The result was that, starting in the 1730s and before the end of the 1750s, a specific group of imperial regiments had their presence in the area consolidated. This process set off a rapid localisation of the Janissaries' manpower and financial resources and brought about profound changes in the local political scene.

1730-1770: Localisation and popularisation

Before their localisation, the imperial Janissary regiments' involvement in the actual political life of Crete was very limited. That is not to say that their soldiers did not carry with them on the island their long tradition of violent revolts and mobilisations, one of which erupted even in the earliest phase of the War for Crete, in 1649, owing to a leave-refusal to some of the soldiers who had been fighting in the trenches of Kandiye for two years.[34] In 1688, another mutiny of imperial Janissaries, which cost the life of the island's governor and of various military officers, broke out in the same city. Although the exact details of this incident are unknown, according to Silahdar, the reason was "grain provisions".[35] Despite these violent mobilisations, in early Ottoman Crete, revolts of the local corps seem to have been more frequent than those instigated by imperial troops,[36] who remained largely detached from local political developments.

It is only in the 1730s that the sources testify to a more active involvement of the imperial Janissaries in the political life of Crete. In 1731, a Janissary revolt broke out in Kandiye because of an accusation of theft made by a local Muslim notable against a Janissary. In a display of arrogance, the local governor not only decided to ignore the

34 R. Murphey, *Ottoman Warfare, 1500-1700* (London 1999), 28; Gülsoy, *Girit'in Fethi*, 189-190.

35 M. Sariyannis, 'Rebellious Janissaries: Two Military Mutinies in Candia (1688, 1762) and their Aftermaths', in A. Anastasopoulos (ed.), *The Eastern Mediterranean under Ottoman Rule: Crete, 1645-1840. Halcyon Days in Crete VI: A Symposium Held in Rethymno, 13-15 January 2006* (Rethymno 2008), 268-272.

36 The local soldiers of Kandiye had caused three uprisings from 1692 to 1746, all of which because of their corps' internal administrative and financial issues TAH.7:19; TAH.15:300; TAH.16:44, 167; BOA, C.AS.1218/54668.

accused Janissary's special jurisdictional status and to incarcerate him, but he also sent away the agha of the imperial Janissaries when he tried to intervene. As soon as the rest of the Janissaries were informed of this insolence committed against their fellow-soldier and their leading officer by the pasha, they marched to the latter's residence and, after threatening him, seized the Muslim notable by force and cut him to pieces in the middle of the street.[37] In September 1733, another revolt took place, this time against the pasha of Hanya,[38] due to a long delay in the payment of Janissaries.[39] Around that time, a group of soldiers attacked the French Vice-Consul of Kandiye and some French sailors, who had been previously mistreated by a group of local Christians as well. The tension created between the French community and the Janissaries in Kandiye was quickly transposed to Hanya, where the recent uprising against the pasha converged with the agitation of the local population against the French and turned into a large-scale sedition. In the months which followed, multiple violent incidents contributed to the prolongation of social unrest in the city and led to a climax in the summer of 1734. In August, Christians and Muslims, joined by a group of Janissaries and led by Christian captains, attacked the house of the French consul in Hanya. As the pasha remained inert and incapable of intervening for fear of a new revolt against him, the only response to the crisis came from the agha of the corps, who sent a regiment of Janissaries in order to save the French from the hands of the mob.[40]

These incidents are very revealing with regard to the gradual transformation that the Janissary corps underwent in Crete. The 1731 revolt points to the fact that the Janissaries continued to behave primarily as a professional corporate group whose focus was on issues pertaining to their military status, such as their salaries and privileges. Yet, as demonstrated by the incidents of 1733-1734, some of their mobilisations had now started also to project non-military claims made by parts of Cretan society, such as those related to the financial rivalry of local Christians and Muslims with French merchants, whose commercial activity on the island was expanding dramatically in the 1720s and 1730s. The French consuls of Crete observe with concern this gradual amalgamation of the interests of Janissary groups with those of local society,[41] and note that there was a radical increase in the number of "dangerous" people on the island in recent years.[42] Yet, most of

37 ANF, AE, B1, La Canée, Vol. 4 (the document has two different dates: 20 February 1731 and 3 August 1731).

38 ANF, AE, B1, La Canée, Vol. 4 (15 October 1733).

39 This problem would still remain unresolved by the end of 1735; ANF, AE, B1, La Canée, Vol. 5 (27 December 1735).

40 ANF, AE, B1, La Canée, Vol. 4 (25 November 1733; 1 December 1733; 18 December 1733; 31 December 1733; 2 January 1734; 2 January 1734; 9 January 1734; 15 January 1734; 28 January 1734; 1 March 1734; 4 April 1734 1734; 11 August 1734; 13 August 1734; 22 September 1734; 25 December 1734); ANF, AE, B1, La Canée, Vol. 5 (1 January 1735; 31 January 1735).

41 ANF, AE, B1, La Canée, Vol. 5 (29 November 1735); "*les gens du pays qui sont fort mal intentionnés venant à se joindre à quelques Janissaires, dont il ya icy un très grand nombre aussy mal disciplinés*".

42 ANF, AE, B1, La Canée, Vol. 5 (27 December 1735).

the thousands of Janissaries deployed on the island[43] seem to have stayed separate from this alignment of interests when no purely military claims were involved. Thus it should not come as a surprise that it was the Janissaries again who were called upon to intervene and protect those threatened by their own comrades-in-arms.

Another very interesting issue is the transmission of tensions from one city to another and its relation with the political developments in the Ottoman capital. In December 1733, the French Consul of Hanya noted that "the bad example of the incident that took place in Kandiye against Mr Baume[44] has embroiled the Janissaries of this place [Hanya] in a movement that we could call a sedition".[45] He also writes in one of his reports that "security and tranquillity are nowhere to be found in this city, after the soldiers have lost the respect due for their commanders, who are terrified of chastising the wrongdoers in fear of a general uprising",[46] specifying, in another letter, that it is "since the revolution of Istanbul and the revolt that took place in Kandiye, that the soldiers and their supporters have lost their respect and obedience, to the extent that they are afraid of neither their commanders nor their peers".[47]

It is worth underlining the connection that the Consul sees not only between the regional revolts of Kandiye and Hanya, but also between the mobilisations of the Janissaries of Crete and the 1730 Patrona Halil incident in Istanbul. Despite its decentralisation, the Janissary corps always remained an institution empowered by its status as an agent of Istanbul. Its centrally-based organisation was a constant frame of reference for its soldiers, even if they had never set foot in the Empire's capital. Crete is a great example of the umbilical-cord-like liaisons which joined the corps' peripheral organisation to its headquarters. Yet, this connection should not be interpreted as proof of a strict control exercised by the latter over the former. It rather points to the existence of a common source of legitimacy and of a sense of camaraderie and networking that ran through the entire Janissary establishment, even when plain soldiers refused to obey their Janissary officers in Istanbul or elsewhere. It is, after all, no coincidence that the Patrona Halil rebellion was not the result of a top-to-bottom instigation within the corps, and nor were the 1733-1734 revolts in Crete. In other words, a strong ideological connection with Istanbul could exist side by side with the soldiers' unwillingness to obey their high-ranking officers in the capital.

In the years which followed, the Janissaries started increasingly to get involved collectively and in large numbers in local politics. Their mobilisations in the early 1730s on

43 In 1741, the number of imperial Janissaries in Kandiye was 3,166: 1.182 in Resmo, and 1,801 in Hanya; BOA, MAD.d.6568:363-384, 389-403, 663-695.

44 Baume was the Vice-Consul of France in Crete. In 1733 he was beaten mercilessly by a group of Janissaries in the middle of the market of Kandiye; ANF, AE, B1, La Canée, Vol. 4 (25 November 1733).

45 ANF, AE, B1, La Canée, Vol. 4 (18 December 1733). For another similar comment on the easiness with which Janissary uprisings were transmitted from one city to the other, see ANF, AE, B1, La Canée, Vol. 6 (23 January 1739).

46 ANF, AE, B1, La Canée, Vol. 4 (1 December 1733).

47 ANF, AE, B1, La Canée, Vol. 4 (9 January 1734).

the side of Cretan Christians and Muslims seem to have quickly made them appear, in the eyes of the local people, as their protectors from the encroachments of other local authorities. In August 1737, 500-600 Christian subjects (g*recs raÿas*) from various villages of the countryside of Hanya gathered outside the gates of the city and demanded to see the pasha, declaring that they would stop paying the excessive amounts of irregular taxes imposed on them by the latter. While doing so, they asked for the protection of the Janissaries. The corps immediately sided with them and chose to disregard the direct orders of the pasha not to let the Christians inside the city walls and to treat them as rebels. Instead, the agha of the Janissaries called for a plenary session of the corps' members with the participation of Janissary elders, the *kadı*, the *müfti*, and the city notables. The body collectively decided to send a petition (*arz*) to the Porte exposing the misconducts of the pasha, and sent, for this purpose, several delegations to Istanbul consisting of Janissary officers and representatives of the Christian *reaya*s.[48] This is the first instance in which the sources explicitly represent the Janissaries as a body which utilised collective procedures in order to decide unanimously on political issues with direct reference to local society. Such initiatives would only increase in subsequent decades.

According to the Ottoman registers, in the 1740s and 1750s, the number of Janissaries in Crete decreased by 40%, bringing the gradual retirement of imperial forces from the island to an end. The number of regiments in the cities was reduced to five in Kandiye, one in Resmo, and two in Hanya (in later years this would rise to five), diminishing their manpower from a total of 6,149 soldiers in 1741 to 3,682 men in 1758.[49] Apart from temporary punitive transfers and minor changes, the regiments on the island in the late 1750s remained in place until 1826. Despite the overall reduction in the number of imperial Janissaries in the province, in the subsequent decades the regiments would manage to become the dominant power in local politics. The explanation of this seemingly paradoxical phenomenon lies beyond the Janissaries' diminishing official numbers, in the emergence of a group of 'soldiers' who cannot be traced in the corps' payrolls, the *taslakçı*s.

The existence of this group of Janissary-pretenders is easier to observe in non-official sources. In his 1818 description of the military organisation of Crete, Zacharias Praktikidis provides a quite accurate report on the manpower of the various local military corps of Kandiye, but, when he tries to calculate the number of imperial Janissaries deployed in the same city, the discrepancy between the numbers given in his account and those in the Janissary payrolls is striking: although the officially registered imperial Janissaries numbered 1,692,[50] Praktikidis' estimation rises to 25,000 men.[51] Similar inflated numbers are

48 ANF, AE, B1, La Canée, Vol. 5 (27 August 1737); (12 December 1737).

49 Cf. BOA, MAD.d.6568:363-384, 389-403, 663-695 with BOA, MAD.d.6950:635-652, 657-668, 967-989; BOA, MAD.d.7015:529-546, 549-560, 583-603 and BOA, MAD.d.5866:1055-1084, 1087-1104, 1107-1120; BOA, MAD.d.5552:581-598, 601-614, 841-870.

50 BOA, MAD.d.17575:71.

51 Z. Praktikidis, *Χωρογραφία της Κρήτης, συνταχθείσα τω 1818 υπό Ζαχαρίου Πρακτικίδου, παραστάτου πληρεξουσίου και γενικού φροντιστού της δικαιοσύνης τω 1822-1829 εν Κρήτη* [To-

to be found in most traveller accounts from the mid eighteenth century onwards, but not in earlier periods.[52] It is, after all, around that time that the corps starts to become increasingly identified by outsiders with local Islam. In the mid 1740s, Pococke writes that "all the Turks" in Kandiye "belong to some military body".[53] In a similar fashion, Savary notes in 1779 that "all the male children of the Turks become members of the corps of Janissaries at their birth".[54] De Bonneval and Dumas write in 1783 that "the despotic and military administration brings no harm to the Turks, who can bear arms, as they all belong to a military corps".[55] In 1794, Olivier claims that the Muslims of Crete are "almost all enrolled among the Janissaries".[56] Tancoigne writes in 1812, that "almost all the Turks of the island of Crete are Janissaries",[57] while, Sieber mentions in 1817 that "every young Turk, upon his birth or after his circumcision, which he undergoes in a festive manner when he becomes ten or twelve years old, is enrolled in one of the Janissary regiments".[58]

In the official Ottoman sources, the first reference to Janissary-pretenders that we come across is from an imperial edict of 1762 which was sent after a Janissary rebellion in Kandiye. In his edict the Sultan forbids "the acceptance in the various regiments of *taslakçı*s, people without pay-certificates",[59] as a measure to restrain the seditious tendencies of the local population. The extremely violent uprising of 1762, which cost the lives of the Janissaries' *başçavuş* and *kâtib*, and resulted to the deposition of their agha, seems to have acted as a wake-up call for Istanbul concerning the issue of popular support for Janissary mobilisations.[60] Yet, the problem that the above-mentioned *ferman*

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pography of Crete, compiled in 1818 by Zacharias Praktikidis, Deputy Attendant and General Commissary of Justice in Crete, during the Years 1822-1829] (Herakleio 1983), 43.

52 Cf., for instance, the numbers given for the city of Kandiye by De Bonneval and Dumas in 1783 with those mentioned by Tournefort in 1700; De Bonneval-Dumas, *Αναγνώριση*, 190; J. P. de Tournefort, *Relation d'un voyage du Levant, fait par ordre du roi...*, Vol. 1 (Amsterdam 1718), 16.

53 R. Pococke, 'A Description of the East', in J. Pinkerton (ed.), *A General Collection of the Best and Most Interesting Voyages and Travels in All Parts of the World*, Vol. 10 (London 1811), 611-612.

54 C. É. Savary, *Letters on Greece: Being a Sequel to Letters on Egypt…* (Dublin 1788), 374.

55 P. De Bonneval and M. Dumas, *Αναγνώριση της νήσου Κρήτης: μια μυστική έκθεση του 1783* [Survey of the island of Crete: a secret report of 1783], trans. G. B. Nikolaou and M. G. Peponakis (Rethymno 2000), 213.

56 G. A. Olivier, *Travels in the Ottoman Empire, Egypt, and Persia, Undertaken by Order of the Government of France, during the First Six Years of the Republic*, Vol. 2 (London 1801), 243-244.

57 Tancoigne, *Voyage à Smyrne*, 1:102.

58 F. W. Sieber, *Reise nach der Insel Kreta im griechischen Archipelagus im Jahre 1817*, Vol. 2 (Leipzig 1823), 186.

59 "*bilâ esami olan taslakçı makulesini gayrî ortalara bir vechle kabul etmemek*"; TAH.3:361-363.

60 On this incident, see TAH.3:345-350, 361-363, 365-366; TAH.9:365-366; BOA, C.ML.165/6920; ANF, AE, B1, La Canée, Vol. 11 (27 June 1762; 15 September 1762); Sariyannis, 'Rebellious Janissaries', 255-274; E. Karantzikou and P. Photeinou, *Ιεροδικείο Ηρακλείου. Τρίτος κώδικας (1669/1673-1750/1767)* [Kadı court of Heraklion. Third codex

tried to address was nothing new. It was, in fact, the product of a tendency that had made its appearance as early as three decades before the incident. In the period from 1730 to 1760, Ottoman and French sources make reference to 16 revolts in the island's three cities, and in 12 of these cases, the involvement of imperial Janissaries is explicitly mentioned.[61] Of these revolts, three took place because of delays in the corps' payments,[62] while the rest were pertinent to non-military financial and political issues, touching on greater problems of the local population, who actively participated in the mobilisations.

One significant development of the decades following 1731 was the growing intolerance of the Janissaries towards the political authority of centrally appointed governors. It would not be an exaggeration to say that, a few exceptions notwithstanding, from 1731 to 1812 the political leverage of the pashas/governors in Crete becomes largely neutralised by the growing power of the Janissary regiments, which became gradually, in the words of an Austrian observer, "absolute masters, recognising only formally the authority of the pasha who is sent by Istanbul".[63] More specifically, in the above-mentioned period, the sources testify to the eruption of 18 revolts against governors, ten of which resulted in their deposition and one even in the murder of one of them.[64] In view of these events

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(1669/1673-1750/1767)], ed. E. A. Zachariadou (Heraklion 2003), 416-417, 426-427, 429; N. S. Stavrinidis, *Μεταφράσεις τουρκικών ιστορικών εγγράφων αφορώντων εις την ιστορίαν της Κρήτης* [Translations of Turkish historical documents relating to the history of Crete] (Heraklion 1985), Vol. 5, 193-194, 196-200, 207-210.

61 ANF, AE, B1, La Canée, Vol. 4 (20 February 1731; 28 July 1731; 29 August 1731; 15 October 1733; 13 August 1734); ANF, AE, B1, La Canée, Vol. 5 (27 August 1737; 12 December 1737); ANF, AE, B1, La Canée, Vol. 6 (23 January 1739; 6 February 1739); ANF, AE, B1, La Canée, Vol. 9 (20 January 1749; 8 March 1749; 30 December 1749; 4 September 1751; 29 January 1753); ANF, AE, B1, La Canée, Vol. 10 (4 March 1755; 8 April 1755; 12 September 1755; 6 November 1756); Archives Diplomatiques de Nantes (ADN), Constantinople, Correspondance avec les Echelles (Série D), Candie, Vol. 1 (15 March 1756; 22 October 1756); ANF, AE, B1, La Canée, Vol 11 (3 December 1760); BOA, C.AS.1218/54668; TAH.18:264-265; M. Sariyannis, 'Ένας ετερόδοξος μουσουλμάνος στην Κρήτη του 18ου αιώνα [A heterodox Muslim in 18th century Crete]', in K. Lappas, A. Anastasopoulos, and E. Kolovos (eds), *Μνήμη Πηνελόπης Στάθη. Μελέτες ιστορίας και φιλολογίας* [In memory of Penelope Stathi. Studies in history and philology] (Herakleion 2010), 371-385.

62 ANF, AE, B1, La Canée, Vol. 4 (20 February 1731); ANF, AE, B1, La Canée, Vol. 6 (23 January 1739; 6 February 1739); ANF, AE, B1, La Canée, Vol. 9 (4 September 1751).

63 "*Die neun Regimenter sind unumschränkte Herren und nehmen den Bascha, der von Konstantinopel gesendet wird, nur der Form wegen auf*"; Sieber, *Reise nach der Insel Kreta*, 2:183. Sieber refers to nine out of the 11 regiments based on the island in 1817, owing to a temporary exile of two of them when he was travelling in Crete.

64 ANF, AE, B1, La Canée, Vol. 4 (15 October 1733); ANF, AE, B1, La Canée, Vol. 5 (27 August 1737); ANF, AE, B1, La Canée, Vol. 6 (6 February 1739); ANF, AE, B1, La Canée, Vol. 9 (4 September 1751); ANF, AE, B1, La Canée, Vol. 9 (29 January 1753); ANF, AE, B1, La Canée, Vol. 10 (4 March 1755; 8 April 1755; 12 September 1755); ANF, AE, B1, La Canée, Vol. 13 (3 November 1772; 22 May 1773); ANF, AE, B1, La Canée, Vol. 14 (16 May 1775; 3 June 1775; 8 December 1776); ANF, AE, B1, La Canée, Vol. 15 (22 January 1777; 20 April 1777); ANF, AE, B1, La Canée, Vol. 16 (31 December 1779; 6 February 1780; 23 April 1780); ANF, AE,

it comes as no surprise that De Bonneval and Dumas reported in 1783 that the Janissary officers "compete with the authority of the pashas owing to their popularity […] they are always ready to foster a revolt and evoke terror in the pasha, who is afraid that he is going to become their first victim […] the authority of the pashas of two horsetails is even more limited", while the local Muslims "believe they are free when they can massacre without consequences those who govern them".[65] According to the French consular reports, the "republican and rebel"[66] Muslims of Crete had created such a bad reputation for themselves[67] that certain pashas were even bribing the Sublime Porte in order to avoid an unfavourable transfer to the island.[68]

Istanbul often responded to the Janissary-inflicted violence against its chosen governors by the appointment of military officials, such as Janissary aghas and other high-ranking Janissary officers from the capital or other places outside Crete, with orders to punish those responsible for the rebellions. Yet, although such agents often succeeded in chastising groups of rebellious Janissaries and even managed to exile some of the regiments for a few years, insurrections against them were also becoming commonplace.[69] This persistent reaction against centrally selected corps officers led, from the second half of the eighteenth century onwards, to the very frequent appointment of Janissary aghas from among the members of the regiments of Crete.[70] It is during that period that the Janissary administration of the island takes on its most decentralised form, allowing a series of local families to acquire an almost hereditary monopoly over its highest echelons.

The examples of Cretan families who came to power through this decentralisation process are plentiful. Their power was mainly grounded in a combination of financial and political activities which brought people from the Cretan countryside and urban centres together under the auspices of Janissary networks. The Karakaş household, for instance,

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B1, La Canée, Vol. 17 (14 July 1783; 30 September 1783); MAE, CCC, La Canée, Vol. 21:81-83; V. Raulin, *Description physique de l'île de Crète*, Vol. 1 (Paris 1867), 292; V. Psilakis, *Ιστορία της Κρήτης από της απωτάτης αρχαιότητος μέχρι των καθ' ημάς χρόνων* [The history of Crete from the remotest antiquity to our time], Vol. 3 (Chania 1909), 86.

65 De Bonneval and Dumas, *Αναγνώρισι*, 213-214, 217. On this issue, see also J. Bowring, *Report on Egypt and Candia. Addressed to the Right Hon. Lord Viscount Palmerston, her Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, &c. &c. &c.* (London 1840), 154.

66 "*On dit hautement icy que le consul de France a si souvent dépeint les candiottes comme des républiquains et des rebelles qu'il est enfin parvenu à attirer sur eux la colère du souverain. Je n'ay garde de les désabuser de cette opinion, je souhaitte au contraire qu'ils y persistent, elle ne peut que contenir ces insulaires dans le devoir et à assurer notre repos*", ANF, AE, B1, La Canée, Vol. 11 (15 September 1762).

67 ANF, AE, B1, La Canée, Vol. 13 (12 April 1771).

68 ANF, AE, B1, La Canée, Vol. 14 (8 December 1776).

69 ANF, AE, B1, La Canée, Vol. 6 (23 January 1739); ADN, Constantinople, Série D, Candie, Vol. 1 (5 February 1769); ANF, AE, B1, La Canée, Vol. 12 (2 March 1770); ANF, AE, B1, La Canée, Vol. 13 (18 September 1771; 28 September 1771); ANF, AE, B1, La Canée, Vol. 14 (5 February 1776); Sariyannis, 'Rebellious Janissaries', 255-274.

70 ANF, AE, B1, La Canée, Vol. 17 (12 September 1784).

four members of which had risen to the rank of the Janissary agha of Kandiye, was made up of administrators of various *vakıf*s and *malikâne* aghas of the oil-producing areas of Neapoli and Merambelo in Eastern Crete. Being primarily based in Kandiye, its members opened a soap industry and invested a great amount of capital in shipping, thus creating a vertical line of production and trade in oil and soap which extended from the Cretan countryside to places such as Istanbul, Izmir, Alexandria, and Marseilles.[71] The Janissary networks' support was more than crucial for this development. On the one hand, they ensured the issuing by regiment *vakıf*s of loans for such businesses and contributed to wiping out financial competitors either through tariffs and other measures imposed by the council of the *ağa kapusı* or through Janissary-instigated violent mobilisations.[72] On the other hand, they provided protection from the encroachments of centrally appointed officials through the use of their status of administrative and judicial autonomy and/or by means of intimidation.[73]

A lot of the financial competition that the Janissary networks were trying to eliminate was coming from local Christian merchants. The Janissary networks' opening to local society had led to an increase in number of Cretan converts who joined Islam with an eye to entering the corps. At the same time, though, as one's Muslim identity was increasingly becoming identified with his participation in a group bearing administrative-*cum*-military authority, the *de facto* exclusion of local Christians from this privileged status put the latter in an inferior position. It thus contributed to the creation of a striking divergence in the interests of the two religious groups. Although this separation of interests was also connected with other reasons, such as the one-sided application of

71 For references to various members of the Karakaş family and their activities, see TAH.3:282; TAH.9:283-285; TAH.17:125; TAH.25:43-45, 208; TAH.31:104; TAH.33:27-28; TAH.39:56-58, 187-188; TAH.40:26-27, 91, 145; TAH.41:17, 68-69, 76-77, 134-135, 137-140; TAH.42:7-8, 10-19, 23-25, 30-31, 50, 55-57, 157-158; BOA, C.ADL.92/5520; BOA, MAD.d.17505:51; BOA, HAT.339/19376; BOA, HAT.339/19401; BOA, HAT.720/34322; BOA, HAT.500/24476; BOA, HAT.340/19444; BOA, HAT.340/19444 C; Psilakis, *Ιστορία της Κρήτης*, 3:242, 627-629; N. S. Stavrinidis, *Ο καπετάν Μιχάλης Κόρακας και οι συμπολεμιστές του* [Kapetan Michalis Korakas and his comrades-in-arms], Vol. 1 (Heraklion 1971), 64-66; K. Kritovoulidis, *Απομνημονεύματα του περί αυτονομίας της Ελλάδος πολέμου των Κρητών* [Memoirs of the war of the Cretans for the autonomy of Greece] (Athens 1859), 377-382; E. Aggelakis, «Ο γενιτσαρισμός εν Σητεία» [The Janissaries in Siteia], *Κρητικαί Μελέται*, 1 (1933), 188; M. Dialynas, 'Ο Δονταραλής' [Dontaralis], *Δρήρος*, 3 (1940), 874.

72 Such revolts were responsible for the abandonment, on several occasions, of Kandiye by French commercial houses; Olivier, *Travels in the Ottoman Empire*, 2:248-249. For the annulment of the plan for the creation of sustainable French soap industries on the island because of the competition with the local networks, see ANF, AE, B1, La Canée, Vol. 11 (2 May 1761). For a characteristic example of a Janissary mobilisation used to wipe out non-Janissary financial competition, see BOA, HAT.511/25076; TAH.42:153-154; TAH.43:156; Th. Detorakis, 'Γεώργιου Νικολετάκη, χρονικά σημειώματα' [Georgios Nikoletakis, notes about various events], *Κρητολογία*, 5 (1977), 136-137; Sieber, *Reise nach der Insel Kreta*, 1:492-494; Stavrinidis, *Ο καπετάν Μιχάλης Κόρακας*, 1:17-19.

73 MAE, CCC, La Canée, Vol. 21:81-83; Bowring, *Report on Egypt and Candia*, 154.

the *malikâne* system by Istanbul on the island, which excluded Christians from getting involved in tax collection,[74] the expansion of the Janissary networks was beyond a doubt one of the most important factors that led to it. As a result, although in the 1730s the Christians repeatedly counted on the Janissaries for the projection of their claims to the Ottoman administration, this practice is nowhere to be found from the 1740s onwards. The terms 'non-Muslim' and '*reaya'* become one and the same in both Ottoman and Western sources, the same way that all Cretan Muslims become identified as Janissaries in traveller accounts. Yet, despite the increasing political alienation created between the island's two major religious groups, this separation of interests did not lead to a direct clash between them until the 1770s.

1770-1812: Masters of the island

The years between 1770 and 1812 represent the apex of the political-*cum*-financial domination of the Janissary networks on Crete, a phenomenon created by the convergence of the above on-going processes with a series of incidents and developments at an imperial and a local level. Maybe the most important of these developments was the 1770 uprising, which came to be known in Greek historiography as the 'Daskalogiannis' Revolution' (Επανάσταση του Δασκαλογιάννη), a by-product of the Russian-instigated Orlov Revolt in the Peloponnese, which took place within the framework of the Russo-Ottoman war of 1768-1774.

When the exclusively Christian population of the mountainous *nahiye* of Sphakia in south-western Crete revolted against the Ottoman regime, the Janissaries, along with other local military forces and reinforcements from outside Crete, were called upon to suppress the rebellion through an expedition that cost thousands of lives in both camps. Although the revolt was mostly confined to the Sphakia area and the vast majority of local Christians did not side with the rebels, its consequences for the relations between the two major religious groups were grave. As the Muslims of the Cretan countryside started fleeing to the urban centres and the number of casualties grew, tension built up and a series of revolts and violent mobilisations against the Christian inhabitants of the three cities broke out.[75] From that point on, the sources testify to an increased polarisation in

74 For the implementation of the *malikâne* system on Crete, see TAH.15:308-311; A. N. Adıyeke, 'Farming Out of *Mukataa*s as *Malikâne* in Crete in the Eighteenth Century: The Rethymno Case', in Anastasopoulos (ed.), *The Eastern Mediterranean under Ottoman Rule*, 233-242.

75 TAH.31:47, 49, 50, 56, 57, 69-70, 72-73, 74, 78-79, 93, 114; ANF, AE, B1, La Canée, Vol. 12 (29 March 1770 and ff.); ANF, AE, B1, La Canée, Vol. 13:*passim*; ADN, Constantinople, Série D, Candie, Vol. 1 (8 January 1771); Olivier, *Travels in the Ottoman Empire*, 2:211-213; V. Laourdas, 'Η επανάστασις των Σφακιανών και ο Δασκαλογιάννης κατά τα έγγραφα του Τουρκικού Αρχείου Ηρακλείου' [The revolution of the Sphakiots and Daskalogiannis according to the documents of the Turkish Archive of Herakleion] *Κρητικά Χρονικά*, 1 (1947), 275-290; G. Papadopetrakis, *Ιστορία των Σφακίων* [History of Sphakia] (Athens 1888), 123-176; Psilakis, *Ιστορία της Κρήτης*, 3:123.

the relations between the two religious groups,[76] which would culminate with the 1821 Greek War of Independence.

During the insurrection of the Sphakiots, Janissary rebellions acquired, for the first time, a strong religious justification and symbolism,[77] which was nowhere to be found in the sources before 1770. This religious tension made, without a doubt, the everyday life of the local Christians, who did not have the right to bear arms, more difficult. Yet, the violence of this period was a very complex phenomenon that cannot be examined only through a religion-based approach.[78] In fact, the period between 1770 and 1812 marks a general increase of violent incidents of both an inter and intra-communal nature. The combination of conversion to Islam with the expansion of Janissary networks, gave rise to large waves of migration from the Cretan countryside to the cities. These waves consisted mostly of people of modest means of subsistence who had, on many occasions, severed their bonds with their old social milieu in search of a better life. Treated by the authorities and by the local urban society as outsiders and pariahs,[79] many of them found refuge in the Janissary regiments, creating relations of social and financial dependence. In that light, it comes as no surprise that such converts were often recruited as personal guards of Janissary officers who used them to protect their interests in ways reminiscent of mafia-like practices.[80]

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76 The tension built between the two religious groups was demonstrated on various occasions. Upon the appointment of the Russian consul Spalchaber, for example, the Christian inhabitants of Hanya were warned by their Muslim compatriots that "the first among them to visit the consul of Russia was going to be slaughtered" (*Les grecs en revanche, sont dans la joye de leur coeur. Ils auroient certainement démontré cette joye, s'ils ne craignoient d'être assomés [sic] par les turcs qui leur ont signifié que le premier d'entr'eux, qui irroit [sic] chez le consul russe seroit mis en pièces*); ANF, AE, B1, La Canée, Vol. 18 (6 October 1785). For another incident, characteristic of this religious tension, see ADN, Constantinople, Série D, Candie, Vol. 2 (1 September 1780).

77 See, for instance, the uprising against the pasha of Kandiye that took place in November 1770 owing to the escape of some Sphakiot prisoners. The attack on the part of the rebels started when their leader, Numan Ağa, "*donna le signal de la rebellion, avec l'étendard sacré du Prophète Mahomet qu'il portoit à la main*"; ANF, AE, B1, La Canée, Vol. 12 (24 November 1770; 4 December 1770).

78 This approach is typical of the traditional Greek historiography. On this issue, see Spyropoulos, *Προεπαναστατική δυτική Κρήτη*, 97-142.

79 "*şakavete tasaddi ve sekran oldıkları halde mahallat aralarında müsellah geşt ü güzar ve ibadullahın ehl ve ayal ve evlad ve a'râzlarına taarruz*"; TAH.3:345-346.

80 "*ferman-i âli yahud ağa mektubı olmadıkça lüzumı yoğiken orta zâbıtanı tama-ı hamlarından naşi şürut-ı islâmı ve erkânı bilmeyüb raiyet hükminde olan bilâ-dirlik burma ta'bir olınur eşhası ortalara idhal ile müceddeden yoldaş yazmamak ve suffe ta'bir olınur mahalle hidmeti sebkat etmedikçe idhal etmemek*"; TAH.3:361-363. "*bir müddetden berü belde-i mezkûrede ikametleri mümted olmakdan naşi derun-ı şehirde ve taşra kuralarda sakin ehl-i şakavete tesahub ve miyanelerine yoldaş yazılmaların tergib ile yol ve erkân bilmez yaramaz eşkiyayı zümrelerine idhal*"; BOA, C.AS.524/21898; TAH.34:163. "*Ceux qui ont commis le plus d'assassinats sont recherchés par les régiments, et jouissent de la protection entière de leurs Chefs, et des Agas, qui s'en servent au besoin, soit pour assommer à coups de bâton, ou faire assassi-*

The period was also marked by an uncontrolled possession of weapons, which, combined with the declining authority of the pashas and the *kadı*s and on account of the protection given by Janissary officers to their clients and guards, granted a status of impunity to a considerable part of the local population and provided many of them with the opportunity to take the law into their own hands.[81] The importance of this last development can be evaluated in its true dimensions only if we take into consideration the insular character of Cretan society, which held – and still holds in certain areas – in great esteem the local tradition of blood-feuds and self-redress.[82] As a result of all of the above, the period after 1770 was dominated by a steep rise of criminality.[83] This phenomenon afflicted both the Christian and Muslim inhabitants of the island, and overwhelmed the Ottoman authorities, who tried in vain to convince the military officers to put an end to it.[84]

Criminality constituted only one aspect of Janissary violence. Another one of its dimensions was the collective mobilisations initiated by the corps on account of political and financial claims. From 1770 to 1812, without counting the numerous uprisings against Christians in the island's three cities which took place during the Sphakiot revolt,

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ner ceux qui leur déplaisent, soit pout susciter des révoltes contre les officiers superieurs de la Porte, tels que Pachas, Janissaire-Agas, Mufti et Cadi, qu'ils suspendent de leurs fonctions, ou embarquent ignominieusement"; R. Pashley, *Travels in Crete*, Vol. 2 (Cambridge and London 1837), 183.

81 During this period dozens of complaints on the part of local people and the administration concerning murders committed by Janissaries who were protected by their officers "owing to their solidarity relations" (*zâbitleri dahi kendü cinslerinden olmak mülâbesesiyle*) are to be found in the sources. See, for instance, TAH.32:24; TAH.34:158, 163; TAH.37:8, 29, 31, 40, 42, 109, 137; TAH.40:5-6, 10, 96-97, 104, 105-106, 107, 124, 136-137; BOA, C.ZB.22/1075; Olivier, *Travels in the Ottoman Empire*, 2:186.

82 On the tradition of blood-feuds in Ottoman and Venetian Crete, see Pashley, *Travels in Crete*, 2:245-251. On the modern dimensions of the phenomenon, see A. Tsantiropoulos, *Η βεντέτα στη σύγχρονη ορεινή Κεντρική Κρήτη* [Blood-feud in modern mountainous Central Crete] (Athens 2004); idem, 'Collective Memory and Blood Feud; the Case of Mountainous Crete', *Crimes and Misdemeanours* 2 (2008), 60-80; Spyropoulos, *Προεπαναστατική δυτική Κρήτη*, 107-125.

83 This increase in violent incidents is often referred to in French sources as a "violent crisis" (*crise violente*); MAE, CCC, La Canée, Vol. 20:334-337.

84 See, for instance, the 1800 negotiations between the Governor of Kandiye, Hakkı Mehmed Pasha, and the local military elite pertaining to this issue; TAH.37:42, 43, 49-50. The Governor wrote in one of his orders "Since my arrival to Kandiye I feel great pain seeing the tragic condition to which the poor subjects of the *nahiye* have been reduced" (*Kandiye'ye geleli dermande nahiye sakin reayaların haline vâkıf oldıkça ciğerim kebab olmada olub*); TAH.37:49-50. Also, see the following reports sent to the Porte in 1810 by another governor in search of a solution to the problem; BOA, HAT.650/31789 N; BOA, HAT.650/31789 E; BOA, HAT.650/31789 i; BOA, HAT.650/31789 C; BOA, HAT.650/31789 L; BOA, HAT.650/31789 M; BOA, HAT.650/31789 G; BOA, HAT.650/31789 B; BOA, HAT.650/31789 J. In 1808, the French Consul of Hanya comments on the incapability of a certain pasha of stopping criminality, and writes that during his one-year administration more than 200 assassinations had been committed; MAE, CCC, La Canée, Vol. 21:69-70.

the sources make reference to a staggering 37 Janissary revolts and collective violent mobilisations.[85] It is during this period that the long process of popularisation and 'demilitarisation' of the Janissaries of Crete reaches its completion. Despite the continuing delays in Janissary payments,[86] in 1779 the last Janissary revolts on account of salary-related issues took place.[87] From that point on, it becomes clear that the Janissary mobilisations did not reflect the concerns of a professional army any more, but only those of certain local interest groups and, sometimes, of larger parts of the Cretan Muslim population. This can be easily explained: the *taslakçı*s' numbers had been increasing to such an extent that the province's salaried soldiers ended up constituting only a small fraction of the total Janissary population of Crete. Besides, even the real Janissaries were progressively becoming uninterested in their military wages, which they saw as mere supplements to their income from their other financial activities in the local market. That was owing to

85 ANF, AE, B1, La Canée, Vol. 12 (25 October 1770, 24 November 1770, 4 December 1770); ANF, AE, B1, La Canée, Vol. 13 (10 July 1771; 14 October 1771; 10 December 1771; 3 November 1772; 23 January 1773; 26 April 1773; 27 October 1773); ADN, Constantinople, Série D, Candie, Vol. 1 (16 October 1771); ANF, AE, B1, La Canée, vol. 14 (10 March 1774; 5 February 1776; 21 September 1776; 10 October 1776; 8 December 1776; 14 June 1775; 24 August 1775; December 1775); ANF, AE, B1, La Canée, Vol. 15 (22 January 1777; 20 April 1777); ANF, AE, B1, La Canée, Vol. 16 (14 May 1779; 16 May 1779; 10 July 1779; 31 December 1779; 23 April 1780); ADN, Constantinople, Série D, La Canée, Vol. 11:79-81; BOA, MAD.d.17942:83-84; BOA, C.AS.1141/50724; TAH.7:274-275; TAH.31:61-62; TAH.32:51-68, 81-92, 102, 132-134; A. Anastasopoulos, 'Political Participation, Public Order and Monetary Pledges (*Nezir*) in Ottoman Crete', in Eleni Gara, M. Erdem Kabadayı, and Christoph K. Neumann (eds), *Popular Protest and Political Participation in the Ottoman Empire: Studies in Honor of Suraiya Faroqhi* (Istanbul 2011), 127-142; De Bonneval-Dumas, *Αναγνώριση*, 217-218; ANF, AE, B1, La Canée, Vol. 17 (14 July 1783; 30 September 1783); ADN, Constantinople, Série D, La Canée, Vol. 12:100-103; ADN, Constantinople, Série D, Candie, Vol. 2 (17 June 1784); ADN, Constantinople, Série D, La Canée, Vol. 13:32, 36-37, 39-40; ADN, Constantinople, Série D, La Canée, Vol. 14:15-20; ANF, AE, B1, La Canée, Vol. 18 (10 April 1785; 10 May 1785; 30 July 1785); ANF, AE, B1, La Canée, Vol. 19 (28 April 1786; 30 August 1791); ADN, Constantinople, Série D, La Canée, Vol. 15:13-14, 19-20; ADN, Constantinople, Série D, Candie, Vol. 2 (14 May 1786; 21 May 1786;1 June 1786; 17 June 1786; 14 October 1786; 14 August 1787; 26 February 1810); TAH.34:158, 163; BOA, C.AS.524/21898; BOA, C.AS.332/13769; BOA, C.AS.534/22328; BOA, C.AS.1093/48239; BOA, C.ADL.10/689; General State Archives of Greece (GSAG), Archives of Rethymno Prefecture (ARP), R.-F.210A/92; MAE, CCC, La Canée, Vol. 20:245-267, 294-295, 334-337; MAE, CCC, La Canée, Vol. 21:23-43, 49-54, 69-70; 81-83 and *passim*; S. Xanthoudidis, 'Ανέκδοτον επεισόδιον εν Κρήτη επί Τουρκοκρατίας' [Unpublished incident in Crete during Turkish rule], in N. Panagiotakis and Th. Detorakis (eds), *Στεφάνου Ξανθουδίδου Μελετήματα* [Studies of Stephanos Xanthoudidis] (Herakleio 1980), 74-75; Raulin, *Description physique*, 296; Sieber, *Reise nach der Insel Kreta*, 1:108.

86 BOA, C.AS.1031/45233.

87 ANF, AE, B1, La Canée, Vol. 16 (14 May 1779; 16 May 1779; 10 July 1779; 31 December 1779; 23 April 1780); ADN, Constantinople, Série D, La Canée, Vol. 11:3.

the fact that their salaries had been frozen since at least 1740,[88] despite the decreasing silver content of the *akçe*.[89]

The demilitarisation of the Cretan Janissaries also becomes evident through their increasing refusal to send soldiers outside Crete in order to fight in imperial wars. In the years from 1777 to 1792, impressments of Cretan soldiers took place without much resistance.[90] Yet, from that point onwards, local society would start to react to any attempts on the part of Istanbul to recruit Cretan Muslims for the Ottoman navy. This led the central government, following a series of incidents directed against its delegates, eventually to acquiesce in accepting money instead of recruits from the island.[91]

This reaction reflects the pressure that the Cretan population was putting on the local notables who were put in charge of the recruitment process by Istanbul. These aghas, most of whom were high-ranking Janissaries, were not willing to clash with their clients, who, in turn, did not want to see their children go to war. In other words, the sources testify to a bottom-up process of negotiation inside the corps, which directly influenced its overall stance towards imperial politics. Such internal negotiations and conflicts are often visible in this period and reveal a multi-layered and multi-centred structure of the Janissary networks. Thus, when referring to the latter's politics in Crete, we should bear in mind that we are not talking about a homogeneous or strictly hierarchical system of decision-making, but rather about the interaction of a series of groups of interests which could, depending on the circumstances, converge or diverge.[92]

The corps' financial was analogous to and interdependent with its political influence. The Christian uprising of 1770 gave the opportunity to some of the Janissary entrepreneurs of Crete to take hold of the island's flourishing soap industry. In 1750, 70% of Kandiye's soap production belonged to local Christians.[93] Yet, following the above uprising, a series of Janissary revolts led to the destruction of Kandiye's soap factories and facilitated their gradual, but complete, acquisition by Muslims.[94] As a result, by 1811, only four persons, three of whom were high-ranking military officers, were in control of all local soap factories.[95] Similar developments can be seen in the cases of interest loans

88 Cf. BOA, MAD.d.6568:363-384, 389-403, 663-695 with BOA, MAD.d.6280:567-584, 691-704, 915-940 and BOA, MAD.d.6351:419-432, 603-620.

89 Pamuk, *A Monetary History*, 162-164, 188-195.

90 TAH.19:283-288; TAH.29:128-129, 161; TAH.34:51-53, 110-111, 114-115.

91 TAH.39:187-188, 191; TAH.40:37-38, 46-47, 55, 109; BOA, KK.d.827:7, 31; MAE, CCC, La Canée, Vol. 21:253-254; Spyropoulos, *Προεπαναστατική δυτική Κρήτη*, 170, 213.

92 See, for instance, the following occasions on which different interest groups inside the corps clash with each other: BOA, C.AS.1141/50724; TAH.7:274-275; TAH.31:61-62· TAH.32:51-68, 81-92, 102, 132-134; MAE, CCC, La Canée, Vol. 21:23-43, 49-54, 81-83 and *passim*. Also, see the relevant comment of Kritovoulidis, *Απομνημονεύματα*, ιδ΄-ις΄.

93 TAH.3:286; T.A.H.37:132; V. Kremmydas, *Οι σαπουνοποιίες της Κρήτης στο 18ο αιώνα* [The soap factories of Crete in the eighteenth century] (Athens 1974), 39.

94 ADN, Constantinople, Série D, Candie, Vol. 1 (16 October 1771); ANF, AE, B1, La Canée, Vol. 13 (14 October 1771; 10 December 1771).

95 TAH.40: 110.

and maritime commerce, in which Muslim entrepreneurs with Janissary affiliations rose as the main rivals of the French. Already in the 1790s local Muslim maritime activity had been developing rapidly,[96] yet it was Napoleon's invasion of Egypt in 1798 and the subsequent imprisonments of French diplomats and merchants that gave the opportunity to the Cretan Janissary networks to take over a large part of the latter's lucrative commerce.[97] The same happened with the control of interest loans, another privileged domain of the French. The loans given by Janissary *vakıf*s to local businessmen, many of whom were old clients of French creditors,[98] sky-rocketed in the beginning of the nineteenth century, as can be deduced both by Kandiye's probate inventories (*tereke defterleri*) and by the confiscation registers of regiment properties in 1826.[99]

Another very important development which gave momentum to the political and financial activities of the Janissaries of Crete after the 1770s was the rise in Ottoman politics of the Cretan *valide kethüdası* Yusuf Ağa. Yusuf, who in the course of his career managed to become one of the richest and most influential individuals in the Empire, had established a solid network of relations with Crete, where he and his relatives owned vast properties and very profitable tax-collection contracts. He was one of the most important investors in the oil and soap industry of the island and a close collaborator of the local Janissary elite.[100] Being virtually part of the imperial household and very close to Selim III, he often used his position in order to depose and punish those officials who acted against the interests of his affiliates.[101] His presence in the central government thus acted as a guarantee of the smooth continuation of the financial-*cum*-political activities of the

96 MAE, CCC, La Canée, Vol. 20:231-233.

97 TAH.37:14; MAE, CCC, La Canée, Vol. 20:245-267; V. Kremmydas, 'Χαρακτηριστικές όψεις του εξωτερικού εμπορίου της Κρήτης (τέλος 18ου και αρχές 19ου αιώνα)' [Characteristic aspects of the external trade of Crete (end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries)], *Ο Ερανιστής*, 16 (1980), 194-195; Tancoigne, *Voyage à Smyrne*, 2:21-22.

98 Cf., for instance, TAH.45:98-117 with ADN, Constantinople, Série D, La Canée, Vol. 3:65-66 and Y. Triantafyllidou-Baladié, 'Οι πιστώσεις στις εμπορικές συναλλαγές στην Κρήτη τον 18ο αιώνα' [Credit in the commercial transactions in Crete in the 18th century], in *Πεπραγμένα Ε΄ Διεθνούς Κρητολογικού Συνεδρίου*, Vol. 3 (Herakleio 1985), 227.

99 TAH.3:269; TAH.19:358-359, 381-383; TAH.32:78-79; TAH.33:46-47; TAH.34:102, 168-170; TAH.37:11, 40, 43-44, 47, 73, 94, 134-135; TAH.38:27-29, 86-87; TAH.40:155; T.A.H.41:14, 17, 27, 35, 37, 59-60, 63-64, 124, 137-140; TAH.42:12-19, 70-72, 165-166; TAH.43:59, 67, 68, 79, 86, 93-94, 98, 112-113, 128, 180; TAH.45:98-117.

100 For the life of Yusuf Ağa and his property in Crete, see TAH.19:333-334; TAH.33:65; TAH.39:138-139; TAH.39:138-139, 179-180; TAH.43:125-126; İ. H. Uzunçarşılı, 'Nizam-ı Cedid Ricalinden Valide Sultan Kethüdası Meşhur Yusuf Ağa ve Kethüdazade Arif Efendi', *Belleten*, 20 (1956), 485-525; S. J. Shaw, *Between Old and New: The Ottoman Empire under Sultan Selim III, 1789-1807* (Cambridge 1971), 88-89 and *passim*; Bodman, *Political Factions in Aleppo*, 39-40; Stavrinidis, *Ο καπετάν Μιχάλης Κόρακας*, 1:40-42, 45; Olivier, *Travels in the Ottoman Empire*, 1:209-210; M. Sariyannis, 'Μια πηγή για την πνευματική ζωή της οθωμανικής Κρήτης του 18ου αιώνα' [A source about spiritual life of the eighteenth century Ottoman Crete], *Αριάδνη*, 13 (2007), 87-88.

101 Kritovoulidis, *Απομνημονεύματα*, ιε΄.

Cretan Janissary networks and for the impunity of their clients.[102] Yet, all of the above was about to change.

1812-1821: Fighting for the established order

In 1807, Selim III was dethroned and his favoured Yusuf Ağa was executed, while Mahmud II's ascent to the throne in 1808 gave a new dynamic to Ottoman politics. Mahmud, who was a supporter of the creation of a centralising, authoritarian Ottoman polity that left little space for centrifugal powers to evolve, quickly realised that the various provincial power-brokers, be they *ayan*s or Janissaries, were standing in his way. In his effort to rid himself of the political opposition in the provinces, he decided to use as a weapon a number of devoted imperial agents who were to be sent to various *sancak*s with orders to intervene violently in local politics. According to Şükrü Ilıcak, this 'de-*ayan*ization' project was launched at the beginning of the second decade of the nineteenth century, resulting throughout the next years in dozens of violent clashes between these centrally appointed governors and various provincial magnates.[103]

In Crete, the governor who was called upon to initiate this process in 1812 was Hacı Osman Pasha or, as the Cretans called him, the 'Strangler' (Πνιγάρης). Osman was also followed by other disciplinarian governors, most of whom acted in an extremely violent fashion, always under the direct supervision and support of the Sultan. Mahmud II, in his dozens of *hatt-ı hümayun*s, openly prompted his pashas to show no mercy to anyone who resisted their policy, no matter what his social class or military rank was, and no matter if he was protected by the Janissary status of impunity or not. The *pasha*s, on the other hand, went to Crete ready for war, bringing with them huge entourages which consisted of several hundred soldiers.[104]

Tancoigne, who was in Hanya when Hacı Osman Pasha arrived to Crete, describes the first months of his rule as follows:

> Upon his arrival, Osman sought all the assassins who had been infesting the city [Hanya] and its countryside for years. More than 60 were killed by his exterminating sword. An even greater number managed to escape his inexorable justice by fleeing. In a period of three months he

102 In 1805, the French consul commented on the neutralising effect that the actions of Yusuf and his family had on any attempts of the governors of Crete to contain the Janissaries of the island. He writes about the "*prépondérence à Constantinople*" that certain aghas of Crete had, and mentions that, following a revolt and a murder committed by Janissaries in Hanya, "*deux fermans sont vénus pour la punition des coupables, et l'on a vu en même temps l'un des assasins arriver de Constantinople muni de lettres de recommandation du frere du validé kiahia, plus puissantes que tous les fermans*"; MAE, CCC, La Canée, Vol. 20:334-337. On Yusuf's pro-Janissary intervention in Cretan politics, also see ADN, Constantinople, Série D, La Canée, Vol. 15:19-20.

103 H. S. Ilicak, 'A Radical Rethinking of Empire: Ottoman State and Society during the Greek War of Independence (1821-1826)', unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 2011, 27-99.

104 BOA, HAT.500/24476; BOA, HAT.868/38598.

> finally restored peace and the law in an area which seemed not to recognise other authorities than that of the leaders who had torn it apart… The terror and the horror were widespread. Even the oldest crimes, those considered to be forgotten, were investigated and punished immediately with the same severity as the most recent ones.[105]

Indeed, the Mahmudian governors' draconian rule succeeded in reducing criminality on the island.[106] As far as the collective mobilisations of the Janissary networks, on the other hand, are concerned, their tactic had the exact opposite results.

Although the Mahmudian policies were a terrible blow for the Cretan Janissaries, soon after the first shock, they started regrouping and flexing their muscles once again. The period from 1812 to 1821 became a time of unprecedented clashes between them and the Ottoman governors. The pashas, in order to break the bonds between the officers of Crete and the local population, tried to weaken the whole set of privileges that jelled the Janissary networks together. They systematically violated the jurisdictional autonomy of the corps, they ordered the death of hundreds of simple soldiers, and they even caused the execution and confiscation of the properties of some of their most prominent leaders.[107] Through the co-operation of the central Janissary administration, the governors succeeded in prompting the appointment of persons of non-local origins to the highest ranks of the Cretan Janissary hierarchy.[108] Moreover, they attempted, and sometimes succeeded in this, to transfer temporarily the island's most rebellious regiments to other Ottoman provinces.[109] They even went as far as to ask Istanbul for the execution and replacement

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105 Tancoigne, *Voyage à Smyrne*, 2:29-30. Also, see the French consular report on the issue, MAE, CCC, La Canée, Vol. 21:288-290.

106 Sieber writes in 1817: "Since then [1812] the roads in the whole of Crete are very safe and, during my one-year stay, I was not warned once of bandits, which always stands as a proof for the greatest of safety. The son of a Turk, from whom I was renting a house and who was meeting with me regularly, complained to my escort that this year's Bayram was awful. 'Can you imagine', he asked, 'that not even one Greek was shot this year; In the old days it was fun to see the Greeks rolling on the ground'"; Sieber, *Reise nach der Insel Kreta*, 1:502. Also, see MAE, CCC, La Canée, Vol. 21:297-298.

107 During this period, the judicial records of Kandiye are full of probate registers of Janissaries. Many of them contain the phrase "died by hanging" (*masluben fevt olan*). For the cases of various Janissaries and aghas who were executed and/or their properties confiscated, see TAH.42:7-8, 10-25, 28-30, 50, 55-59, 63, 92-95, 157-158, 175-188, 199-201, 202-203; BOA, C.DH.239/11906; BOA, HAT.339/19376; BOA, HAT.339/19401; BOA, HAT.720/34322; BOA, HAT.500/24476; BOA, C.AS.598/25213; BOA, HAT.340/19444; BOA, HAT.340/19444 C; BOA, HAT.341/19513; BOA, HAT.519/25364; Detorakis, 'Χρονικά σημειώματα', 133-135; Sieber, *Reise nach der Insel Kreta*, 1:316, 420; Tancoigne, *Voyage à Smyrne*, 2:29-30.

108 BOA, HAT.500/24476; BOA, HAT.340/19444; BOA, HAT.340/19444 C; BOA, HAT.341/19513; BOA, HAT.1339/52333; BOA, HAT.1338/52214; BOA, HAT.720/34346; BOA, HAT.753/35540; Psilakis, *Ιστορία της Κρήτης*, 3:190; Kritovoulidis, *Απομνημονεύματα*, ιε΄; Detorakis, 'Χρονικά σημειώματα', 135.

109 BOA, HAT.1339/52333; BOA, HAT.339/19376; BOA, HAT.339/19401; BOA, HAT.500/24476; BOA, C.AS.598/25213; BOA, HAT.511/25076; TAH.42:153-154; TAH.43:156; Th. Detora-

of plain *orta* officers by centrally appointed ones,[110] an extraordinary measure which aimed at attacking the networks at their core, the regimental level, threatening their local character and *ipso facto* their very existence.

It is important to underline that, although several Janissary revolts against Ottoman governors have been taking place even before 1812, after that year there is an obvious change in their intensity, their scope, and the type of mobilisation that fuelled them. The lightning-fast purges that Mahmud II orchestrated in Crete spurred the Janissary networks into collective action and channelled the much more haphazard and fragmented violence of the period before 1812 into a consistent fight for a common political purpose. Throughout this process, the Janissaries undoubtedly lost part of their previous power, but they also became much more united and self-aware than before, claiming, for the first time, the right to be recognised as the official representatives of the local Muslim population.

The changing wording used in Ottoman documents stands as proof of this reality. When, for instance, a governor of Kandiye tried in 1814 to exile two regiments which had revolted against his predecessor, the above-mentioned Hacı Osman Pasha, the Janissaries called for meetings in their barracks, where everyone (*sıgar ü kibar*) signed an agreement. The population gathered outside the *paşa kapusı*, where the representatives of the five regiments of the city presented themselves in front of the governor and declared that

> the punishment of one of us equals the punishment of all of us. According to our agreement, either all of our comrades who belong to the five regiments of the garrison of Kandiye will be exiled together with the area's entire Muslim population or our governor, under the command of whom we are, will give pardon and exonerate our regiments which are being banished.[111]

As mentioned above, extended popular participation in Janissary mobilisations was not something new. Yet, both the official admission of governors that by confronting the Janissaries they were, in fact, dealing with the area's entire Muslim population,[112] and the official claim of the Janissaries that they were one and the same with the latter are nowhere to be found in Ottoman documents of earlier periods. Before 1812, all official sources were vaguely treating the Muslim population as something separate from the Janissaries. Thus, the *taslakçı*s were always represented as marginal groups of bandits, usually converts, detached from the rest of society.[113] At the same time, the Janissaries never officially admitted their popular support, as they were well aware that it was the result of the illegal admittance on their part of thousands of pseudo-Janissaries to their

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kis, 'Χρονικά σημειώματα', 136-137; Sieber, *Reise nach der Insel Kreta*, 1:492-494; Stavrinidis, *O καπετάν Μιχάλης Κόρακας*, 1:17-19.

110 BOA, HAT.720/34322.

111 "*birimizin hakkında zuhûr eden te'dib cümlemiz hakklarında olmış gibidir mukteza-yı ittifakımız üzere Kandiye kalesi muhafazasında mevcud olan beş orta kâffeten yoldaşlarımız ve ahali-i memleket ile beraber kalkub gideriz ve yahud maiyetine memur oldığımız muhafız paşa nefy ve iclâl olınan ortalarımızı afüv ve ıtlak etdirir*"; BOA, HAT.500/24476.

112 BOA, HAT.720/34322; BOA, HAT.1338/52214; BOA, HAT.511/25076.

113 See, for instance, TAH.3:345-346; BOA, C.AS.524/21898.

ranks. It was the frontal collision created by the new political stance of Istanbul which led to the overt recognition by both sides of the inextricable relation of the local Muslim society with the Janissaries, a recognition which would continue until the suppression of the corps. When in 1826 the *Vak'a-i Hayriye* was announced in Crete, for instance, Mehmed Ali of Egypt consulted with the governors of the three cities and expressed his doubts to the Sultan concerning the application of the measure in Crete, which was then being ravaged by the Greek War of Independence. His comment was that "their [the island's three cities'] Muslim population is the strength of the Janissaries and, according to them [the governors], the zeal of the Janissaries is the zeal of Islam, it is acceptable and appropriate under the circumstances".[114]

Besides the official acknowledgment of this entanglement that the various references to the popular support of the Janissaries demonstrate, such references are also reflections of an intensifying political clustering of the Muslim society around the corps. As explained above, until 1812, the Janissary networks behaved mainly as the sum of a number of separate patronage sub-networks which could either co-operate with or diverge from one another. Such groups of interests had been attacked several times – mostly unsuccessfully – by representatives of the central Ottoman administration. Yet, Mahmud II's policy did not target only specific parties inside the Cretan Janissary organisation. Instead, it violently contested the very fundamental privileges and rules which formed the bedrock of the political and financial strength of the corps itself. In other words, it threatened to bring about, in a very abrupt way, major changes to the lives of thousands of Cretans who were dependent upon the Janissaries for the preservation or amelioration of their social status, for the protection and funding of their financial activities. The gravity of this external threat surpassed by far that of any local grudges and, consequently, brought the various Janissary sub-networks closer to each other in defence. As a result, when the Greek War of Independence broke out in 1821, the Muslim population of Crete was, at a political level, more united than ever before.

1821-1826: The fall

It is very hard to calculate the extent to which the political banding together of the Cretan Muslims affected the way they reacted to the military conflict that erupted between them and their Christian compatriots. One thing is for sure, though: the 1821 revolution found the Janissaries completely unprepared for war and in a very vulnerable position. As the military conflict quickly spread from the Sphakia area to the rest of the Cretan *nahiye*s, Muslims started flocking from the countryside to the island's urban centres. In the next three years, the news of massacres of Muslims by Christian fighters led to a series of violent Janissary mobilisations inside the cities which would increase the polarisation between the two religious groups even further.[115]

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114 "*bunların ahalisi kavi-yi yeniçeri olub indlerinde yeniçerilik gayreti gayret-i islâmiyet müreccah ve hasbe'l-mevaki*"; BOA, HAT.290/17385.

115 BOA, HAT.747/35284; BOA, HAT.843/37888 G; BOA, HAT.843/37888 J; BOA,

On the battlefield, it quickly became obvious that the Janissaries' gradual demilitarisation had taken its toll on their military performance. In September 1821, three months after the eruption of the revolution on the island, the governor of Hanya, Lütfüllah Pasha, sent an angry letter to the Sultan, in which he explained in detail the military inefficacy of the Cretan soldiers, asked for reinforcements, and expressed the fear that "God forbid, should help come by foreign powers to the traitors of the *millet* of the *Rum*s, they [the soldiers] will not be able to last for more than three days against the enemy".[116] In 1822, thousands of Egyptian and non-Cretan Ottoman troops landed on the island in order to support the besieged Cretan military forces. In the presence of this tremendous power and being under constant attack by the advancing Christians, the Janissary networks realised that they could not continue to pursue their goal of political domination over the centrally appointed Ottoman officials any longer.[117] Their fight quickly turned into one of survival and their only hope of winning the war became the Mahmudian and Egyptian forces. When, in 1826, the suppression of the corps was officially promulgated, no one dared to react.[118]

Although in the edict announcing the abolition of the corps the Janissaries were denounced as rebels, spies, crypto-Christians, etc.,[119] the main justification used by the cen-

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HAT.904/39704; N. Stavrinidis, 'Τουρκοκρατία' [Period of Turkish Rule], in S. Spanakis (ed.), *Το Ηράκλειον και ο νομός του* [Heraklion and its prefecture] (Heraklion and Athens 1971), 197; S. Motakis (ed.), *Συλλογή εγγράφων Ζαχαρία Πρακτικίδη (ή Τσιριγιώτη). Έγγραφα ετών 1810-1834* [Collection of documents of Zacharias Praktikidis (or Tsirigotis). Documents of the years 1810-1834] (Chania 1953), 12-14; Pashley, *Travels in Crete*, 2:185-187; Ch. R. Scott, *Rambles in Egypt and Candia, with Details of the Military Power and Resources of Those Countries and Observations on the Government Policy, and Commercial System of Mohammed Ali*, Vol. 2 (London 1837), 335.

116 "*maazallahü te'alâ, sair düvel tarafından Rum milleti hainlerine bir iane ederi olsa üç gün mukabele-i âdada paydar olamayacakları*"; BOA, HAT.868/38598. For the letters sent to the Sultan by the Janissaries and the rest of the local authorities in response to Lütfüllah's accusations, see BOA, HAT.936/40498 B; BOA, HAT.865/38559 E.

117 For analytical descriptions of the campaigns as witnessed by the Christian side, see Psilakis, *Ιστορία της Κρήτης*, 3:333 and ff.; Kritovoulidis, *Απομνημονεύματα*, 1-370; N. V. Tomadakis and A. A. Papadaki (eds), *Κρητικά ιστορικά έγγραφα, 1821-1830* [Cretan historical documents, 1821-1830] 2 vols (Athens 1974), *passim*. For accounts of the damage caused by the war and its consequences for the Cretan Muslim population, see Bowring, *Report on Egypt and Candia*, 155; C. A. Vakalopoulos, 'Quelques informations statistiques sur la Crète avant et après la révolution de 1821', in *Πεπραγμένα του Δ΄ Διεθνούς Κρητολογικού Συνεδρίου*, Vol. 3 (Athens 1981), 30. For Ottoman sources referring to military campaigns until 1826, see TAH.43:167-170; BOA, HAT.868/38598; BOA, C.AS.847/36182; BOA, HAT.936/40498 B; BOA, HAT.865/38559 E; BOA, HAT.747/35284; BOA, HAT.865/38559 A; BOA, HAT.915/39931 B; BOA, C.AS.16/674; BOA, HAT.843/37888 I; BOA, HAT.858/38284; BOA, HAT.904/39704.

118 For the absence of reaction on the part of the Janissaries of Crete following the announcement of the *Vak'a-i Hayriye*, see MAE, CCC, Turquie, Vol. 2:38-42.

119 "*bu defa tutılub siyaset olanların içlerinde kefereden kolında hem yetmiş beş nişanı ve hem gâvur haçı bulınarak işte içlerine ecnas-ı muhtelif karışmış ve iman içlerinde bu makule kefereden ehl-i İslâm kiyafetinde casuslar bulınduğı*"; TAH.45:82-85.

tral government was a military one. The document made explicit reference to the corps' 100-year-old military decline and stressed its inefficiency during the 1787-1792 war. Yet, if we take a closer look at the measures promulgated by it, we understand that, at least in the way they were imposed in the case of Crete, their goals were much more political and financial than military.

The edict announced the creation of the army which would replace the Janissary corps, the *Asakir-i Mansure-i Muhammediye* (Victorious Soldiers of Muhammad). It also specified that the new corps would be manned with ex-Janissaries, who were to keep their old salaries, use their old barracks, and serve at the same posts as before, while no measures whatsoever were taken concerning the soldiers' training. In military terms, such measures were barely changing anything but the name of the corps, thus fully justifying the expression "from now on the *name* of the Janissaries is being removed and replaced by the *title* 'Victorious Soldiers of Muhammad'" used in the document.[120] The superficial nature of the 1826 military reform in Crete was underlined by the governors of the province as well; in a joint petition to the Porte they complained that "since, of course, the soldiers enrolled in the *Asakir-i Mansure* will have to come from the suppressed corps, it is obvious that they will be useless".[121] Yet, although no significant military changes were brought about by the *Vak'a-i Hayriye* in Crete, the same cannot be said with regard to the local army's non-military functions.

Unlike what happened with the military-orientated aspects of the reform, to which the Ottoman sources devote no more than a few lines, dozens of documents refer to the confiscation of the Janissary corps' *vakıf* properties. Only the confiscation record of the imperial regiments of Kandiye are extant today. Yet, even from this document alone it is easy to understand the tremendous economic power that the Janissary regiments had acquired in Crete. In the barracks of only five of them, without taking into account their real estate property and with the money in cash of one of the regiments having mysteriously disappeared, the source lists a property of approximately 1,000,000 *guruş*. Two thirds of this sum were recorded as debts of hundreds of individuals to the Janissary *vakıf*s in the form of loans.[122]

The most direct consequence of this confiscation was the disconnection of the financial interests of thousands of Cretans from resources controlled until then by the island's military elite. Moreover, the declaration of 1826 noted that the old 'Law of the Janissaries' would be replaced by a new one.[123] According to the 'Law of the Victorious Soldiers of Muhammad' (*Kanunname-i Asakir-i Mansure-i Muhammediye*), any offences of the *Asakir-i Mansure* troops in the provinces would, from that point on, be reported to the

120 "*Fimabad yeniçerinin namı külliyen ortadan kalkub anın yerine ma'lûm Asakir-i Mansure-i Muhammediye unvanıyla din ü devlete yaracak ve gaza ve cihada düşmana cevab verecek*"; ibid.

121 "*Kandiye ve Resmo Asakir-i Mansure namıyla yazdıkları neferat elbette ocak-ı merfu takımından olmak lâzım geleceğine binaen işe yaramayacağı tebeyyün etmiş*"; BOA, HAT.289/17345.

122 TAH.45:98-117.

123 "*Ocağın isim ve resim terkini ve kâffeten kanun-ı kadimi âhir heyetiyle tecdid olınarak...*"; TAH.45:82-85.

local governors, who would now be responsible for their punishment.[124] This measure negated in practice the administrative and jurisdictional autonomy which the Cretan soldiers enjoyed until 1826, as well as the protection that any remaining ex-Janissary officers could offer to their old clients.

The Ottoman government also declared that in order for ex-Janissaries to continue receiving their wages they had to first present their old titles of payment to the central administration, a measure intended to discourage any Janissary-pretenders from joining the new corps.[125] Finally, the new army was given almost none of the provincial administrative duties of the Janissaries. The abolished councils of the *ağa kapusı*s were not replaced by any equivalent military institution, while the new councils of the provincial governors included no military officers whatsoever.[126] In fact, of all the non-military functions of the Janissaries, the only one that was preserved and transferred to the *Asakir-i Mansure* of Crete was policing, and even that eventually passed into the hands of the soldiers of the Egyptian administration. In other words, although the abolition of the Janissary corps in Crete was officially presented as a purely military reform, its real emphasis was on the suppression of any official and unofficial non-military activities which had enabled the development of the financial and political power of the Janissary networks in the province.

III. Conclusion

The year 1826 did not mark just the abolition of an old corps and the creation of a new one. Rather, it represented a radical change in the Ottoman government's perception of what the role of an imperial army ought to be in a changing world. In the early modern era, the military included the vast majority of the Ottoman state's employees and had institutional functions and duties which were indispensable for the Empire's administration and economy. The term '*asker*', used for the members of the entire Ottoman governing class, is, after all, a reflection of this inextricable relationship.

Although war was only one of the many challenges it had to face, most of the Ottoman army's non-military functions are not evaluated by historians in their own right as fundamental features of an early modern institution. Instead they are treated as devia-

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124 *Kanunname-i Asakir-i Mansure-i Muhammediye* (Istanbul 1829), 136-137.

125 H. A. Reed, 'The Destruction of the Janissaries by Mahmud II in June, 1826', unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton University, Department of Oriental Languages and Literatures, 1951, 336.

126 For various references to the composition of the new administrative councils of the three cities, see *İA*, s.v. 'Girit' (C. Tukin); A. Anastasopoulos, 'Η Κρήτη στο οθωμανικό πλαίσιο' [Crete in the Ottoman context], *Κρητολογικά Γράμματα*, 17 (2001), 105-106; Bowring, *Report on Egypt and Candia*, 155-156; Peponakis, *Εξισλαμισμοί και επανεκχριστιανισμοί*, 152-153; Scott, *Rambles in Egypt and Candia*, 294, 344-345; L. Cass, *An Historical, Geographical and Statistical Account of the Island of Candia, or Ancient Crete* (Richmond 1839), 12; M. Chourmouzis, *Κρητικά. Συνταχθέντα και εκδοθέντα υπό Μ. Χουρμούζη Βυζάντιου* [Subjects pertaining to Crete. Compiled and published by M. Chourmouzis Vyzantios] (Athens 1842), 20-21.

tions from the army's 'true' purpose, i.e., conducting war, and as products either of an exogenous institutional decline or of private initiatives and interests. Yet, it was some of the oldest non-military functions and institutions of the Janissaries, such as their administrative role in the provinces, their policing and judicial duties, and their common funds, which played the most important role in the development of their Empire-wide networks and helped them become major political players in both the Empire's centre and periphery. It should, thus, come as no surprise that the Mahmudian reforms gave great emphasis to the transformation of the imperial army from a multifunctional establishment into an institution with strictly military functions under the absolute control of the central government.

Another goal of the Mahmudian regime was to tame the Empire's provincial forces. In this light, when examining the *Vak'a-i Hayriye*, it is crucial to understand that, albeit formally Istanbul-based, the imperial Janissary corps was, by 1826, essentially a provincial institution. According to Mouradgea d'Ohsson, in the second half of the eighteenth century, the number of Janissary *orta*s installed in the capital was only 43,[127] out of the corps' 195 regiments.[128] As explained in this article, the remaining 152 *orta*s had been appointed permanently to specific locations, gradually developing their own regional networks and interests. At the same time, though, they remained entangled with one another and with their central organisation by means of a common institutional and legitimising frame of reference.

When studying the history of Janissary units and networks in different Ottoman provinces, one can spot both similarities and differences in their development. This, after all, is the quintessence of the decentralisation processes explained above. One should not set out to look for absolute uniformity, when the main element which defined the evolution of the Janissary corps in its later phase was the adjustment of various regiments to the cultural, financial, and political milieu of dozens of different areas.

The case of Crete demonstrates the ways in which provincial Janissary networks could be formed in areas with a frontier status and a military-orientated administration, in places at a great distance from Istanbul, large Muslim and Christian communities, and a strong contact with the West. It gives us valuable information on the processes which led to these networks' popularisation and political evolution, on the circumstances under which their interests could converge or diverge, on the benefits they offered to their members and to local economies, but also on the problems and conflicts they created at a local and imperial level. It showcases, at the same time, that the decentralisation of Janissary politics did not bring about a rupture with imperial politics. Instead, Janissary political initiatives on the periphery could be influenced by developments in Istanbul and

127 Mouradgea d'Ohsson, *Tableau général*, 7:312; The number rises to 77 if we add the 34 regiments of the *acemi oğlan*.

128 According to d'Ohsson, although the total number of Janissary regiments was officially 196, the 65th cemaat had been accused of the murder of Sultan Osman II and abolished by Sultan Murad IV in 1623; Mouradgea d'Ohsson, Tableau général, 7:312. In its place, the Janissary payrolls register the soldiers of the 34 sekban regiments.

transmitted from one provincial city to another. It thus underlines the need to examine the Janissary establishment as an organic whole in its diversity. Yet, it also acts as a reminder of the fact that we have to be very careful with generalisations when examining the history of the corps. The latter was a very complex institution and its trajectory of decentralisation described here only made it even more colourful and difficult to analyse. It is only through a case-by-case study that we will be able to put more pieces of this puzzle together.

The examination of the Janissaries on the Ottoman periphery holds the key to our better understanding of a series of crucial political processes of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Being a centrally-based institution with branches in most of the Empire's provinces and the ability to incorporate all sorts of different social elements in its ranks, the Janissary corps was one of the best conductors for the transmission of people and ideas in the Ottoman state. As such, not only did it give an imperial dimension to provincial politics, it also played an important role in the creation of networks which transcended localities and social strata, and greatly contributed to the popularisation of political participation in the Empire. At the same time, though, Janissary networks were formed on the basis of religious, or sometimes even ethnic, criteria which could create tensions and act as incubators of political conflicts.

Historians of the Ottoman Empire often tend to see the evolution of the Janissary corps' political identity as a, more or less, homogeneous and linear process, largely defined by developments in Istanbul. It is true that the Janissaries' chain of command led to the imperial capital and that their organisation cannot be fully understood without references to their central administration. It is also true that Istanbul remained until 1826 one of the most important stages of their political activity and that the Ottoman sources give emphasis on the corps' stance towards big players in imperial politics, like Sultans, Grand Viziers, and other powerful officials who were close to the palace. Yet, what this paper proposes is that, in order to understand the true nature of Janissary politics and their implications for the Ottoman state and society, one has to pay attention to their provincial aspects as well. Throughout the years, the Janissary administration became increasingly decentralised. As a result, the more one approaches the last centuries of the corps' existence, the more indispensable the examination of its history from a provincial perspective becomes for the proper understanding of its political role.