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A GENERAL OVERVIEW OF JANISSARY SOCIO-ECONOMIC PRESENCE IN ALEPPO (1700-1760S)

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Abstract

Focusing on the Janissaries, and covering a period between the early eighteenth century and the 1760s, this study draws on preliminary findings from the Aleppo court records in order to highlight their roles in that city's socio-economic life. Most of the Janissaries of Aleppo and their families came to the city from the surrounding countryside; they tried to survive and earned their livelihood as ordinary townsmen, a process that signaled their integration into the urban fabric. This process manifested itself in their relations with other social groups, their conglomeration in specific quarters, and their increasing capacity to diffuse into other areas and expand their economic activities. This expansion, however, resulted in a conflict between their interests and those of the *eşraf/ashraf*, who consisted of members of established merchant families, religious dignitaries, and other people who claimed to be descendants of the Prophet. The competing interests of the two groups, especially after the 1760s, were destined to reshape the role of the Janissaries in Aleppo as well as their interactions with other social groups. These confrontations also strengthened the solidarity and *esprit de corps* among the Janissaries, who had until then preferred to distinguish themselves by their ethnic, tribal, and country-based affiliations.

Keywords: *eşraf/ashraf*, credit relations, guilds, investments, Janissaries, *yerliyye*.

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Yeniçerilerin Halep'teki Sosyal ve Ekonomik Varlığına Dair Genel Bir Değerlendirme (1700'den 1760'lara)

Öz

Konu üzerinde devam etmekte olan araştırmaların ilk sonuçlarına dayanan bu makale temel olarak mahkeme kayıtlarını kullanarak 18. yüzyılın başlarından 1760'lara değin Halep yeniçerilerine odaklanmakta, onların ana hatlarıyla kentin sosyal ve iktisadi yaşamındaki rollerine değinmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Büyük bir kısmı kırsal kökenlere sahip Halep yeniçerilerinin ve ailelerinin ifade edilen dönemde çoğunlukla sessiz sedasız bir şekilde çalışarak ve uyum göstererek kente tutunmaya ve burada bir yaşam kurmaya çalışmaları kentlileşme sürecinin bir örneği olarak görülebilir. Bu süreci onların farklı toplumsal kesimlerle kurdukları ilişkiler, kentin belli mahallelerine yoğunlaşmakla birlikte her yerinde var olma kapasiteleri ve iktisadi faaliyetleri üzerinden somut olarak gözlemlemek mümkündür. Ancak etkilerinin genişlemesine paralel olarak kentin yerleşik ticari ve dini kesimlerini temsil eden ve Peygamber Muhammed'in soyundan geldikleri iddiasında olan *eşraf/ashraf* ile yaşadıkları gerginlikler 1760'lardan itibaren hem kentteki varlıklarının hem de farklı toplumsal kesimlerle ilişkilerinin yeniden tanımlanması sonucunu doğuracaktır. Bu gerginlik kendilerini etnik, aşiret ve coğrafi bağlar üzerinden tanımlamakta ısrar eden yeniçerilerin yeniçerilik kimliği etrafında birleşmelerini ve birbirlerine daha fazla yakınlaşmalarını sağlayacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *eşraf/ashraf*, kredi ilişkileri, loncalar, yatırımlar, yeniçeriler, *yerliyye*

Introduction

Aleppo, which together with Damascus is one of the two most important cities in Syria, stands at the crossroads linking Iran and Iraq in the east to the Mediterranean, and Anatolia in the north to the Arab world. As one of the most vibrant cultural centers of the region during the Mamluk period, the city kept its importance after the Ottoman conquest in 1517. Like other Arab cities such as Mosul, Baghdad, Damascus, and Cairo, the city continued to grow and prosper from the sixteenth to the second half of the eighteenth century, thanks in particular to the caravan trade carrying Iranian silk to the west. With a trade boom in the sixteenth century, Europeans, including English, French, and Venetian wholesalers, contributed to this growth and to the socio-cultural richness of the city by transferring their consuls from Damascus to Aleppo. By the seventeenth century, with its population of around 100,000, Aleppo was the third most populous city of the Ottoman Empire, after Istanbul and Cairo.[1]

[1] See André Raymond, "The Population of Aleppo in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries According to Ottoman Census Documents", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 16/4,

The Ottomans did not change the administrative system in Syria that they inherited from the Mamluk regime, so, after its conquest, Aleppo continued to be ruled by a governor residing in Damascus. However, they had to alter this system after the uprising led by the governor Canberdi Gazali, an old Mamluk notable who claimed to be the sovereign after the death of Sultan Selim I.[2] In the years following the rebellion, Aleppo was turned into an administrative center of the province within the framework of an imperial strategy to create "*an alternative power center*"[3] to act as a check on Damascus. This strategy involved the appointment of a governor directly by the imperial center. This reorganization enriched the political and economic structures in northern Syria, and also cemented the region's ties with the Ottoman capital.[4]

Despite this administrative reshuffling, however, Aleppo remained tied to the Damascene fiscal sphere in the following decades. Even after the official separation of the two cities' treasuries in the 1560s, the Damascene authorities continued to draw upon Aleppo's tax revenues. A part of the Damascene Janissaries' payments came from taxes collected in Aleppo; in the ledgers of Aleppo's treasury in the years 1582-1583, for instance, payment installments for the Damascene Janissaries were registered among the expenses.[5] Moreover, some of the Damascene Janissaries dispatched to Aleppo resided in the castle, while others were engaged in tax collection under the authority of the local treasurer.[6] Some of these Janissaries expanded their ties with Aleppo and its environs, acquired properties and utilized them for their *vakf*s as more and more of them became permanently based in the city.[7]

Although settled in Damascus, rather than in the politically more quiet northern zones, the Janissaries kept intervening in the affairs of Aleppo so as to extract more fiscal resources and reap benefits from the city's caravan trade.[8] In

(1984), p. 447-460; Bruce Masters, "Aleppo: The Ottoman Empire's Caravan City", *The Ottoman City between East and West: Aleppo, Izmir, and Istanbul*, (eds. Edhem Eldem, Daniel Goffman, and Bruce Masters), Cambridge 1999, p. 17-78; Michele Lamprakos, "Life in the Khans: The Venetians in Early Ottoman Aleppo", *Muqarnas*, 34, (2017), p. 125-155; Mary Momdjian, "Halabis and Foreigners in Aleppo's Mediterranean Trade: The Role of Levantine Merchants in Eighteenth-Century Commercial Networks", *Aleppo and Its Hinterland in the Ottoman Period*, (eds. Stefan Winter and Mafalda Ade), Leiden 2019, p. 109-129.

2 For the riot see İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, Volume 2, Ankara 1983, p. 307-309.

3 Masters, "Aleppo", p. 22.

4 Ibid, p. 21-22; Margaret L. Meriwether, *The Kin Who Count: Family and Society in Aleppo, 1770-1840*, Austin 1989, p. 20; Yasuhisa Shimizu, "16. Yüzyılın İkinci Yarısında Halep Defterdarlığı", *Osmanlı Araştırmaları*, 51, (2018), p. 31-32.

5 Shimizu, "16. Yüzyılın İkinci Yarısında Halep Defterdarlığı", p. 34-35, 55.

6 Linda T. Darling, *The Janissaries of Damascus in the Sixteenth Century, Or, How Conquering a Province Changed the Ottoman Empire*, Berlin 2019, p. 9-14.

7 Herbert L. Bodman, *Political Factions in Aleppo, 1760-1826*, Durham 1963, p. 74-75; Charles L. Wilkins, *Forging Urban Solidarities: Ottoman Aleppo, 1640-1700*, Leiden 2010, p. 121-122.

8 Jane Hathaway, *The Arab Lands Under Ottoman Rule, 1516-1800*, London and New York 2008, p. 67-68.

the early seventeenth century, however, Aleppo's governor, Nasuh Paşa, with the help of Canbolatoğlu Hüseyin Paşa, a district governor of Kilis (*sancakbeyi*), was able to expel the Damascene Janissaries from the city. Despite their repeated interventions in the following period, the influence of the Damascene Janissaries in Aleppo gradually declined or was even replaced by that of local Janissary regiments called *yerliyye* or *al-inkişariyye al-yerliyye*.[9] In this vein, descriptions like *ağa bölüğü* and *ağa cemaati*, often affiliated with the imperial (*dergah-ı ali/dergah-ı mualla*) Janissaries/*kapıkulu*s, are to be found mainly in the seventeenth century,[10] with such references in official documents becoming more rare later on, as the *yerliyye*s rose to prominence.[11] Unfortunately, the eighteenth century sources do not generally allow us to make a clear distinction between the *kapıkulu*s and *yerliyye*s. For this reason, this study uses the term "Janissaries" to denote both of these groups, which, as will be discussed below, came to represent the social, ethnic, and economic components of the massive rural migration into Aleppo.

Although we do not know the exact scope of the interactions between the *kapıkulu*s and the *yerliyye*s, both sides seem to have sought to avoid conflict, which indeed made Aleppo's socio-political life quite different from that of Damascus and Cairo, where there were bitter clashes between them.[12] In Aleppo in the second half of the eighteenth century, the power group which acted as an alternative to the Janissaries was the *eşraf* (the plural of the Arabic *şerif*), composed mainly of local Arabs who not only constituted the bulk of the city's powerful economic and religious actors, but also claimed to be descendants of the Prophet Muhammed.[13] The number of Janissaries in the city is not known exactly; sources make various estimations, especially for the second half of the eighteenth and the

9 Abdul-Karim Rafeq, "The Local Forces in Syria in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries", *War, Technology and Society in the Middle East*, London 1975, (eds. V. J. Parry and M. E. Yapp), p. 278; Wilkins, *Forging Urban Solidarities*, p. 120-121.

10 For several examples from the court registers of the mid seventeenth century see İslam Araştırmaları Merkezi/Center for Islamic Studies (İSAM), Halep Şeriyye Sicilleri/Aleppo Court Registers (HS) 21:5, document no. 9 (13 C 1049/October 11, 1639); 21:135, document no. 318 (10 Ş 1049/December 6, 1639); 21:157, document no. 276 (22 Ş 1049/December 18, 1639).

11 Bodman, *Political Factions in Aleppo*, p. 74-76; Devlet Arşivleri Başkanlığı Osmanlı Arşivi/Directorate of State Archives-Ottoman Archives (BOA), Babı Asafi Divan-ı Hümayun Sicilleri Mühimme Defterleri (A.DVNSMHM.d) 108:73, document no. 621 (Evail-i Ş 1107/March 6-16, 1696); 125:73, document no. 294 (Evasıt-ı Za 1128/October 26-December 4, 1718).

12 Rafeq, "The Local Forces in Syria", p. 280; Hathaway, *The Arab Lands*, p. 91; Bodman, *Political Factions in Aleppo*, p. 55-56; A. Hourani, "The Changing Face of the Fertile Crescent in the XVIIIth Century", *Studia Islamica*, 8, (1957), p. 97-99.

13 Abdul-Karim Rafeq, "Changes in the Relationship between the Ottoman Central Administration and the Syrian Provinces from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Centuries", *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Islamic History*, (eds. Thomas Naff and Roger Owen), Carbondale and Edwardsville 1977, p. 53.

early nineteenth centuries, according to which their population seems to have been around 5,000.[14]

Focusing on the Janissaries, and covering a period between the early eighteenth century and the 1760s, this study draws on preliminary findings from the Aleppo court records[15] in order to shed light upon their various roles in the city's socio-economic life. The study suggests that until the 1760s, when tensions between the Janissaries and the *eşraf* began to escalate, the former groups mainly consisted of locals of rural origins who were, as in other parts of the empire, "*well integrated with the guilds*"[16] and the overall socio-economic life of the city, and struggling, like any other city dweller, to survive and make ends meet. Before delving into the details of the daily socio-economic life of the Janissaries, this study will attempt to explain the terminological complexities and difficulties one faces when trying to define who the Janissaries of Aleppo were, an attempt which will also enable us to compare their identities with those of their comrades-in-arms in other parts of the empire.

Janissaries at the Aleppo court: terminological limitations

The provincial nature of the Aleppo Janissaries, who mainly consisted of persons of local origin, is reflected in the relevant terminology. Most of the military terminology employed in the Arab regions was imported by the Ottomans.[17] Despite the rich repertoire, however, only a small portion of this vocabulary was reserved for the Aleppo Janissaries. The vast variety of titles used to define the *kapıkulu*s in other parts of the empire was nearly absent for the Janissaries in eighteenth-century Aleppo. Numerous inhabitants with the title *ağa* came to the Aleppo court, for numerous different reasons, and one may only surmise their Janissary origins by this title.[18] In other cities where large groups comprising different military units were settled, the *kapıkulu*s were generally characterized and distinguished from the soldiers of other corps by means of their affiliations to the 196 imperial Janissary regiments (*cemaat*, *bölük*, or *sekban*). In Aleppo, although

14 BOA, Cevdet Askeriye (C.AS); 505/21090 (29 M 1217/June 1, 1802); Bodman, *Political Factions in Aleppo*, p. 61-62; John Lewis Burckhardt, *Travels in Syria and the Holy Land*, London 1822, p. 653.

15 In Aleppo, along with the *Mahkemetü'l-Kübra*, headed by the chief judge, there were several courts administered by *naib*s. See Wilkins, *Forging Urban Solidarities*, p. 14; Stefan Knost, "The *Waqf* in Court: Lawsuits over Religious Endowments in Ottoman Aleppo", *Dispensing Justice in Islam:* Qadi*s and their Judgments*, (eds. Muhammad Khalid Masud, Rudolph Peters, and David Powers), Leiden 2006, p. 428-434.

16 Ali Yaycıoğlu, *Partners of the Empire: The Crisis of the Ottoman Order in the Age of Revolutions*, Stanford 2016, p. 30.

17 Hâlid Ziyâde, *Sicillâtü'l-Mahkemeti'ş-Şer'iyye "el-Hikbetü'l-Osmâniyye" el-Menhec ve'l-Mustalah*, Beirut 2017, p. 256-257, 271-314.

18 İSAM, HS. 93:261, document no. 954 (28 Ca 1175/December 25, 1761).

references to regiments were already uncommon in the seventeenth century,[19] they almost disappeared in the parlance of the following century. It is mostly the Western accounts that kept these divisions in their references to the Aleppo Janissaries,[20] but they are almost absent in court records. This lack of reference possibly indicates that in a non-frontier (*serhad*) region like Aleppo, with no permanently established imperial regiments,[21] the importance attributed to a regimental affiliation/identity among *kapıkulu* Janissaries could have been smaller than in other regions. Another factor which might have played a role in the locals' lack of effort to create a rigid distinction between the soldiers of the two Janissary corps of the city, the imperial and the local, is the fact that they acted as communicating vessels, with the *yerliyye*s often using the mass recruitment calls known as *tashih be-dergah* as an opportunity to enter the *kapıkulu* ranks.[22] This practice could have blurred the boundaries between the two corps, making the distinction between them less obvious and less worth noting by contemporaries.

In eighteenth-century Aleppo, Janissaries often bore the title *beşe*. The extent to which this title defined one's military membership remains one of the perennial questions in Ottoman historiography.[23] Generally, however, we can assert that *beşe* could characterize any soldier, Janissary or not, imperial or local, who did not bear the title of *ağa*, and that it was one of the most commonly found titles – if not the most common – used by Janissaries and Janissary affiliates all around the empire.[24] In Aleppo, as in other parts of the empire, shopkeepers, artisans, and traders often bore the title *beşe*, which implied that they might have had some kind of vague affiliation with the Janissaries which offered them – legally or illegally – access to divers economic privileges. This process was not one-directional, however: while

19 Wilkins, *Forging Urban Solidarities*, p. 119-121. Also see İSAM, HS. 21:5, document no. 9 (13 C 1049/October 11, 1639); 21:135, document no. 318 (10 Ş 1049/December 6, 1639); 21:157, document no. 276 (22 Ş 1049/December 18, 1639).

20 John Lewis Burckhardt, *Travels*, p. 653; Bodman, *Political Factions in Aleppo*, p. 76.

21 Aleppo, unlike Damascus which in 1763/1764 had two *kapıkulu* regiments established in its garrison, was not considered to be a frontier region. As a result, no imperial regiments were dispatched to it, and, in turn, its *kapıkulu* soldiers were probably affiliated to various regiments whose leading officers were based in other provinces. As was the case in other non-frontier regions of the Ottoman Empire, the imperial Janissaries of Aleppo were not organized as a unit under the leadership of a Janissary *ağa*, but under the command of a *serdar*. For the office of the *serdar* of Aleppo, see, for instance, BOA, Cevdet Maliye (C.ML) 70/3211 (12 Z 1215/April 26, 1801). For the organization of the Janissary unit of Damascus, see BOA, Maliyeden Müdevver Defter (MAD.d) 6536:692-708.

22 Bodman, *Political Factions in Aleppo*, p. 76.

23 See Hülya Canbakal, *Society and Politics in an Ottoman Town: 'Ayntab in the 17th Century*, Leiden 2007, p. 61-89; Molly Greene, *A Shared World: Christians and Muslims in the Early Modern Mediterranean*, Princeton 2000, p. 90-91.

24 In the case of imperial Janissaries, this usually meant troops under the rank of an *odabaşı*, at least in the eighteenth century; Yannis Spyropoulos, *Κοινωνική, Διοικητική, Οικονομική Και Πολιτική Διάσταση Του Οθωμανικού Στρατού: Οι Γενίτσαροι Της Κρήτης, 1750-1826* [Social, Administrative, Economic and Political Dimensions of the Ottoman Army: The Janissaries of Crete, 1750-1826], University of Crete, Department of History and Archaeology, Ph.D, Rethymno 2014, p. 69-70.

local economic actors tried to gain military titles, the Janissaries gradually entered various professions as well.[25] Combined with the absence of regimental organizational markers, this process further complicates the question of Janissary identity in Aleppo, which was marked by the popularity of the *beşe* title among the lower social strata. Since most of them were migrants from the countryside, they may have used this title as a first and easy sign of their localization. Of course, the linkage between the *beşe* title and a lower social status was not unique to Aleppo.[26] In contrast to these low-ranking Janissaries with *beşe* titles, almost all the Janissary officers, who formed a small minority among the Aleppo Janissaries, bore the title *ağa*.[27]

In exceptional cases the titles *bayrakdar*, *bölükbaşı*, *odabaşı*, and *tüfenkçi* were used to identify Aleppo Janissaries.[28] Another title, "*çorbacı*", which could characterize the heads of Janissary regiments, was as common as the title "*beşe*".[29] In early eighteenth-century Cairo this marker was common among rich merchants affiliated with the Janissary Corps,[30] whereas in Aleppo it could refer both to non-*askeri* affluent persons[31] and to actual members of the military. In an order, unusually written in Turkish, sent to the deputy judge of Cebel Sam'an of Aleppo on July 9, 1744, the service of *serbölüklük* for the court, a kind of executive office, was granted to Seyyid Ahmed Çorbacı.[32] In another appointment record dated May 12, 1745, a *serbölük* who was a *çorbacı* was assigned to the soldiers of the Aleppo castle (*enfar el-asker*).[33] These *çorbacı*s generally came from the same social strata as

25 Wilkins, *Forging Urban Solidarities*, p. 9.

26 Greene, *A Shared World*, p. 91; İrfan Kokdaş, "Land Ownership, Tax Farming and the Social Structure of Local Credit Markets in the Ottoman Balkans, 1685-1855", *Financial History Review*, 24/1, (2017), p. 61.

27 For examples see İSAM, HS. 67:31, document no. 66 (22 M 1156/March 18, 1743); 67:48 document no. 4 (8 Ra 1156/May 2, 1743); 93:36, document no. 135 (9 Ca 1174/December 17, 1760).

28 İSAM, HS. 42:17, document no. 3 (2 Za 1123/December 12, 1711); 66:142, document no. 1846 (3 S 1158/March 7, 1745); 67:408, document no. 2 (13 S 1159/March 7, 1746); 93:89, document no. 417 (25 Ş 1174/April 1, 1761); 93:216, document no. 828 (8 R 1175/November 6, 1761).

29 For the *çorbacı*s see Mehmet Zeki Pakalın, *Osmanlı Tarih Deyimleri ve Terimleri Sözlüğü*, Volume 1, Istanbul 1983, p. 380; İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devleti Teşkilâtından Kapukulu Ocakları*, Volume 1, Ankara 1988, p. 234-235.

30 Quoted from André Raymond, *Artisans et commerçants au Caire au XVIIIe siècle*, Damascus 1973-1974, p. 727-728 in Charles L. Wilkins, "Patterns of Leadership in the Guilds of 17th-Century Aleppo", *Aleppo and Its Hinterland in the Ottoman Period*, (eds. Stefan Winter and Mafalda Ade), Leiden 2019, p. 81.

31 See İSAM, HS. 87:248, document no. 588 (28 L 1170/July 16, 1757); 93:261, document no. 954 (28 Ca 1175/December 25, 1761).

32 İSAM, HS. 66:95, document no. 1556 (28 Ca 1157/July 9, 1744): "*Cebel Sam'an mahkemesinin naibi efendi … bade's-selam inha olunur ki mahkeme-i merkumede vaki ser-bölüklük hıdmeti taraf-ı devlet-i aliyeden Abdülmelek nam kimesnenin firağ ve kasr-ı yedinden berat-ı şerif-i alişan … ile Es-Seyyid Ahmed Çorbacı'ya tevcih ve tasarrufunda olmağla … gerekdir ki vusulünde mezbur Es-Seyyid Ahmed Çorbacı'yı ser-bölüklük hıdmetinde … istihdam eyleyesin …*".

33 İSAM, HS. 67:328, document no. 7 (10 R 1158/May 12, 1745).

the *ağa* and *beşe* title holders, and in some cases their sons and fathers also bore the *ağa* or *beşe* titles. For instance, when Beşir Çorbacı was registered in the court records on April 7, 1747, his father and grandfather were singled out as a *beşe* and *çorbacı*, respectively.[34] In the 1760s, Seyyid Osman was an *ağa*, while his son Mustafa was a *çorbacı*.[35] Although, as mentioned earlier, the title "*çorbacı*" was often used by leading regimental officers of the imperial Janissaries, given that in Aleppo there were no established *kapıkulu* regiments, we can assume that in this case the title was most probably attributed to officers of the city's local corps, such as the *yerliyye* Janissaries or the local *gönüllüyan* (volunteers).[36]

What makes the connection between Janissary identities and status titles in Aleppo even more complicated is the fact that Janissaries did not always use their titles. Needless to say, being a military member of a corps or claiming to be a Janissary was an important status symbol in Aleppo, as elsewhere. This Janissary background provided newcomers to the city with a series of advantages, ranging from protection to representation.[37] The Janissaries who were active in many businesses in the city developed patron–client relationships with different segments of the society.[38] Burckhardt observes that Aleppo civilians quite frequently resorted to the help of Janissaries who acted as intermediaries in their disputes, collecting their debts and representing their interests.[39] It must be noted, however, that his observations reflect the realities of the early nineteenth century, when the competition between different social groups as well as the necessity to seek patronage became more acute. Nevertheless, one must also underline the existence of alternative status systems for Aleppo Janissaries, who were well entrenched in the web of local societal relations. As they always had an opportunity to bind themselves to ethnic and tribal linkages, they could survive without their Janissary status or titles. In the second half of the eighteenth century the socioeconomic differences between the *eşraf* and the Janissaries became more visible and developed into an open conflict, which, in turn, built up the Janissary identities and *esprit de corps*. Yet the strengthening of Janissary identity does not necessarily mean the decline of ethnic and tribal affiliations. Quite on the contrary, in their struggles for power the Janissaries frequently sought help from their kin networks among the Kurdish and Bedouin tribes.[40]

34 İSAM, HS. 40:310, document no. 2 (26 Ra 1160/April 7, 1747).
35 İSAM, HS. 93:261, document no. 954 (28 Ca 1175/ December 25, 1761).
36 Wilkins, *Forging Urban Solidarities*, p. 120-121; BOA, A.DVNSMHM.d.110:543, document no. 2524 (evahir-i B 1110/January 22-February 1, 1699).
37 Bruce Masters, *The Origins of Western Economic Dominance in the Middle East: Mercantilism and the Islamic Economy in Aleppo, 1600-1750*, New York and London 1988, p. 47.
38 Bruce Masters, "Aleppo's Janissaries: Crime Syndicate or *Vox Populi?*", *Popular Protest and Political Participation in the Ottoman Empire: Studies in Honor of Suraiya Faroqhi*, (eds. Eleni Gara, M. Erdem Kabadayı and Christoph K. Neumann), Istanbul 2011, p. 160.
39 Burckhardt, *Travels*, p. 654.
40 Masters, "Aleppo's Janissaries", p. 161.

In the pre-eighteenth century period the term *el-kali* (of the citadel) referring to all military units, including Janissaries, had been a very popular title, but during the period under study it gradually disappeared from the local vernacular.[41] Likewise, the terms *cündi's-sultan* (soldier of the sultan), *el-askeri* (soldier), *ricali'l-bab* (men of the gate), *ricali's-sultan* (men of the sultan), and *el-cünd es-sultani* (soldiers of the sultan), which were used to define military men, were common in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries,[42] but gradually lost their importance. All these dynamics emerged in parallel with the creation of a blurry divide between the imperial center and Aleppo's wider region, which, indeed, points to the functioning of a double mechanism: the "Ottomanization" of locals and the "localization/naturalization" of the imperial structures.[43] These processes surely made the identification of Janissaries more difficult, as the line between them and the ordinary Aleppines became more blurred.

Janissaries as social actors: survival and urbanization

Rural origins and tribal bonds were the distinctive features of Aleppo's Janissaries, which mirrored the large-scale migration to Aleppo from Syrian districts and southeastern Anatolia.[44] The repeated use of family names and epithets like El-Antaki, El-Haritani, El-Babi, El-Kürdi, Et-Türkmeni, El-Bedevi, El-Kattan, Er-Rüdeyni, El-Hariri, and El-Ayyat, designating the hometowns of fellow countrymen and tribal and family linkages,[45] shows how migrants carried these old tribal affiliations into the urban environment and attached importance to these markers, aiding their survival in the city. Family names and epithets were not the only indicators of their rural origins in local parlance. Low-ranking Janissaries were repeatedly cited by the neighborhoods where they settled as migrants after their arrival into the city. The quarters along the eastern axis of the city were known not only for their Janissary population, but also for their tribal networks, which constantly supplied the caravan traders with animals such as camels.[46] The Bankusa neighborhood, just outside the city wall, was a popular place for migrants who came to the city seeking their fortune. Once a small urban settlement, it turned over time into a large quarter and came to encompass several small districts. Kahvetü'l-Ağa, the popular meeting place for Janissaries, and the grain market

41 İSAM, HS. 67:363, document no. 7 (7 L 1158/November 2, 1745).

42 See Wilkins, *Forging Urban Solidarities*, p. 121, 166, 173-179.

43 For a discussion on "Ottomanization" and "localization/naturalization", see Canbakal, *Society and Politics in an Ottoman Town: 'Ayntab in the 17th Century*, p. 61-62; Hathaway, *The Arab Lands*, p. 15, 81; Karl Barbir, "From Pasha to Efendi: The Assimilation of Ottomans into Damascene Society, 1516-1783", *International Journal of Turkish Studies*, 1, (1979-1980), p. 68-82.

44 Bruce Masters, "Patterns of Migration to Ottoman Aleppo in the 17th and 18th Centuries", *International Journal of Turkish Studies*, 4, (1987), p. 76-77.

45 Mustafa Öztürk, "1616 Tarihli Halep Avarız-Hane Defteri", *Ankara Üniversitesi Osmanlı Tarihi Araştırma ve Uygulama Merkezi Dergisi*, 8/8, (1997), p. 264.

46 Masters, *The Origins of Western Economic Dominance in the Middle East*, p. 42, 46.

Hanü'd-Dakik, for instance, were located here. Not surprisingly, nearly all the porters working in this market bore the title *beşe*.[47] In other eastern quarters of the city adjacent to Bankusa, such as Babü'n-Nayrab, Karlık, and Babü'l-Malik, one may observe a large migrant and Janissary population too.[48]

Having said this, however, the Janissary houses were by no means confined to a few neighborhoods. As the migration helped them keep their rural origins alive, they continued to diffuse to and settle in different parts of the city. Even before the eighteenth century, it seems that the eastern neighborhoods acted as the springboard for migrant Janissaries to enter into daily city life before scattering into different urban spaces.[49] The recurrent real estate transactions between Janissaries and other segments of society, including non-Muslims and the *eşraf*, played a vital role in easing tensions between these groups and transforming the migrant Janissaries into city dwellers, by prompting the cooperation between different groups and altering their members' identities in the process.

Becoming a city dweller in Aleppo was a complex process for Janissaries, who were regularly engaged in the processes of collective decision-making with regards to the management of life in the streets, neighborhoods, and the city itself. Their involvement in communal affairs through consensus and cooperation, such as the collection and allocation of extraordinary taxes for military expenditures (*avarız*), signaled their desire to be part of the mundane politics of daily life. On April 20, 1712, the residents of the El-Ekrad street, just outside the Babü'n-Nasr quarter, who consisted of Janissaries, non-Muslims, and *eşraf*, came to court and by consensus nominated two non-Muslims for the collection of their extraordinary and regular taxes.[50] Furthermore, Janissaries eagerly participated in collective decision-making processes related to issues such as the cleaning of streets and water-supply channels. On May 7, 1712, the representatives of the El-Farafira and Babü'n-Nasr quarters, including several members of the *eşraf* and one *çorbacı*, Ali Çorbacı bin Kasım, chose Elhac Ahmed and Mahfuz as two expert technicians to repair the quarters' water-supply system.[51]

The Janissaries were also woven into the social fabric of Aleppo through the management of *vakf*s (endowments), which produced modest-scale revenues and were transferred through generations among Janissary families. Following the Ottomans' arrival into the region, the number of *vakf*s multiplied dramatically and touched upon various aspects of everyday life.[52] Despite the well-entrenched *vakf*

47 İSAM, HS. 93:127, document no. 531 (9 Za 1174/June 12, 1761); 93:139, document no. 574 (15 Z 1174/July 18, 1761).

48 Bodman, *Political Factions in Aleppo*, p. 55-78 (for the city's neighborhoods, see the map on p. 58).

49 See the maps in Wilkins, *Forging Urban Solidarities*, p. 132-133.

50 İSAM, HS. 42:109 document no. 5 (13 Ra 1124/April 20, 1712). Also see İSAM, HS.42:195 document no. 4 (22 Z 1126/December 29, 1714).

51 İSAM, HS. 42:153 document no. 2 (30 Ra 1124/May 7, 1712).

52 Ruth Roded, "Great Mosques, *Zâwiya*s and Neighborhood Mosques: Popular Beneficiaries of *Waqf* Endowments in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Aleppo", *Journal of the American*

system among other notable groups of the city, the Janissaries seem to have not formed large regimental endowments (*orta sandığ*).[53] This small scale, and even the absence of large collective Janissary endowments, may be related to the great ethnic, cultural, tribal, and geographical diversity which defined their group, and the notable absence of regimental structures in the city. In some imperial provinces with large military populations – usually frontier (*serhad*) regions – the *vakf*s of Janissary regiments functioned as common funds which provided for the well-being of soldiers and their families, also acting as an investment tool and a money pool for provisions.[54] Yet the Janissary *vakf*s in Aleppo were typically family *vakf*s, small in scale, which served the needs of groups of poor and deserving people. A fertile land plot at the outskirts of the city, a commercial building at the center, or a house, usually constituted the assets of these institutions. In 1744, Muhammed İbrahim Beşe bin Muhammed Beşe established a *vakf* to help the poor in the El-Kalase neighborhood and to repair and maintain its water-supply system, for which he endowed a garden in the northern parts of Aleppo, enclosing fruit trees, a water pool, and a waterwheel.[55] Like his other comrades, he appointed family members as the *vakf* administrators (*mütevelli*), guaranteeing the flow of revenues into his family. These *vakf*s, together with projecting an image of generosity and benevolence, could be read as a means for establishing patronage networks and boosting the benefactors' popularity with the public.[56] These family *vakf*s, albeit small in size, raise an intriguing question of how the Janissaries were able to accumulate wealth, despite their rural origins. The next section tries to deal with this question.

Janissaries in Aleppo's economic life: trade, crafts, and investments

Although Aleppo was still famous worldwide for its position in international trade, linking Anatolia, Iran, the European countries, and India in the first half of

Oriental Society, 110/1, (1990), p. 32-38; Heghnar Zeitlian Watenpaugh, *The Image of an Ottoman City: Imperial Architecture and Urban Experience in Aleppo in the 16th and 17th Centuries*, Leiden 2004; Margaret L. Meriwether, "Women and *Waqf* Revisited: The Case of Aleppo, 1770-1840", *Women in the Ottoman Empire: Middle Eastern Women in the Early Modern Era*, Leiden 1997, p. 128-152.

53 Wilkins, *Forging Urban Solidarities*, p. 94.

54 See Uzunçarşılı, *Kapukulu Ocakları*, p. 311-320; Gülay Yılmaz, *The Economic and Social Roles of Janissaries in a 17th-Century Ottoman City: The Case of Istanbul*, McGill University, Institute of Islamic Studies, Ph.D, Montreal 2011, p. 223-243; Ali Şenyurt, "Yeniçeri Ortaları Yardımlaşma Sandıkları", *Kocaeli Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, 33, (2017), p. 155-170; Yannis Spyropoulos, "Janissary Politics on the Ottoman Periphery (18th-Early 19th c.)", *Halcyon Days in Crete IX: Political Thought and Practice in the Ottoman Empire*, (ed. Marinos Sariyannis), Rethymno 2019, p. 472, 478.

55 İSAM, HS. 67:266 document no. 5 (6 L 1157/November 12, 1744).

56 Beshara Doumani, "Endowing Family: *Waqf*, Property Devolution, and Gender in Greater Syria, 1800 to 1860", *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 40/1, (1998), p. 3-41.

the eighteenth century,[57] Janissary investments were confined mainly to the retail market in and around the city. International trade shaped the economic pace of nearly all sectors, but Janissaries do not appear as major merchants[58] participating in the international commercial networks of Aleppo, which were controlled by Armenians, Arab Christians, Jews, Muslims, and Europeans. On the other hand, through actively interacting with these commercial groups in daily life, the Janissaries cooperated with them in dealing with collective matters regarding the administration of quarters and streets. Europeans seem to have benefited from the city-wide networks and power of Janissaries. On many occasions, Janissaries acted as small-scale local agents for Europeans and were engaged in real estate transactions with them.[59]

Speaking of the trade between Mosul and Aleppo in the eighteenth century, Dina Rizk Khoury, for instance, noted that Christian Mosulis kept their monopoly in this trade for a long period. This, however, does not mean that Muslim traders were absent from this commercial route.[60] For Muslim and Christian Mosuli dealers, sustainable long-distance trade always required trustworthy and rich partners in Aleppo. They were definitely not Janissaries. Only on rare occasions were the Janissaries able to broaden their mercantile activities beyond the local. In the 1740s, Elhac Nasri Beşe el-Kattan, possibly a Janissary merchant of perfumes (*ıtr*), had a partner, Elhac Ali, known as El-Bağdadi, seemingly from Baghdad. This partnership ended with a serious legal dispute.[61] In another case, İbrahim Beşe el-Hariri, again probably a Janissary, had business contacts in Egypt. He gave a significant loan of 300 *zincirli altın* and 300 *riyali guruş* to Elhac Süleyman Odabaşı el-Azb, who died in Cairo. After the death of Elhac Süleyman, İbrahim Beşe nominated Said el-Pehlivan as a deputy to collect this debt from his heirs.[62]

Despite scanty evidence on the role of the Aleppo Janissaries in international trade, they appear quite frequently in court records as active agents of regional markets dominated by guilds and artisans. For the 1640-1700 period, Charles L. Wilkins noted that seventeen out of thirty-two registered guilds had members with the title *beşe*, the holders of this title being very active in the guild of butchers, but almost absent from that of the tanners, which was dominated by the *eşraf*. He also added that the Janissaries' influence within the guilds came to increase in the following century, an observation which corroborates our

57 For the rise and decline of Aleppo's role and position in international trade see Masters, "Aleppo", p. 17-78.

58 Bodman, *Political Factions in Aleppo*, p. 55-78. Also see İSAM, HS. 87:81, document no. 194 (17 Ca 1170/February 7, 1757).

59 See İSAM, HS. 85:53, document no. 237 (20 Za 1167/September 8, 1754); 67:71, document no. 1 (18 R 1156/June 11, 1743).

60 Dina Rizk Khoury, *State and Provincial Society in the Ottoman Empire Mosul, 1540-1834*, Cambridge 1997, p. 147-148.

61 İSAM, HS. 66:34, document no. 1145 (29 C 1156/August 20, 1743).

62 İSAM, HS. 67:40, document no. 3 (4 S 1156/March 30, 1743).

findings.[63] In 1712, for instance, after the head of the tanners' guild, whose father bore the title *beşe*, resigned from office at his own request, Halife Beşe was chosen to replace him.[64] It seems that in later years Halife Beşe's son continued to conduct his father's business.[65] We do not know the extent to which these examples reflected the quantitative changes of the Janissary presence in the guild itself. It is probable that they did not, because in 1754 when the tanners came to the court to defrock Seyyid Taha from the guild, only two out of a few dozen of them had the *beşe* title.[66]

Reflecting on the socio-ethnic composition of the industrial and artisanal sectors in Aleppo, Bruce Masters points to the existence of a distinct division of labor between the *eşraf* and Janissaries in guild membership, which resulted in a factional strife between the two. He notes that the Janissaries, with their local and tribal bonds, were engaged mainly in sectors related to animal husbandry, like butchery, tent making, and wool clipping, whereas the *eşraf* specialized in relatively more "respected" and lucrative areas, like silk weaving.[67] Indeed, in some sectors, there was a concentration of either *eşraf* or Janissaries. For instance, porters in the grain market Hanü'd-Dakik were largely connected with the Janissary groups who were chiefly settled in the neighborhood around this market.[68] Sometimes incoming migrants of the same rural origins and ethno-religious identities formed guilds.[69] However, it is difficult to reduce the disputes or specialization in one sector to the factional politics between the *eşraf* and Janissaries. In the conflicts between butchers and tanners over the supply of leather and its price, for instance, there were Janissaries and *eşraf* on both sides.[70]

Janissaries appeared as important actors in many inter- and intra-guild matters by being elected as their leaders, cooperating with their fellow guildsmen, and intermediating in conflict resolution. Some of them, like Bezzazistani Emin Beşe, an expert witness and mediator in the conflict between the court auctioneers and jewelers in 1760, were held in high regard by the public.[71] There was a balance within the guilds, and sensitivity in reflecting their ethno-religious diversity, especially in collective matters. In some cases, just one *beşe* in a specific profession came to court as one of the guild representatives. In the collective decision-making processes of some occupational guilds, like those of the sesame and olive oil sellers

63 Wilkins, *Forging Urban Solidarities*, p. 161-164.
64 İSAM, HS. 42:41, document no. 5 (17 Z 1123/January 26, 1712).
65 İSAM, HS. 85:61, document no. 283 (7 Z 1167/September 25, 1754).
66 Ibid.
67 Masters, *The Origins of Western Economic Dominance in the Middle East*, p. 47.
68 İSAM, HS. 93:127, document no. 531 (9 Za 1174/June 12, 1761); 93:139, document no. 574 (15 Z 1174/July 18, 1761).
69 Masters, "Patterns of Migration to Ottoman Aleppo in the 17th and 18th Centuries", p. 82.
70 İSAM, HS. 42:106, document no. 1 (3 Ra 1124/April 10, 1712).
71 İSAM, HS. 93:25, document no. 94 (22 Ra 1174/November 1, 1760).

(*taifetü'l-masaraniyye*),[72] manufacturers of woolen cloths (*taifetü'l-abaciyye*),[73] and coal porters around Bab Antakya, Babü'l-Makam, and Bab Kınnasrin (*taifetü hammalinü'l-fahm*),[74] a *beşe* usually appeared as one of the representatives of the guilds. It seems that the *beşe*s in these guilds were a minority group.[75] Although at this stage of research it is difficult to give quantitative data for the *beşe*s' presence in the guilds, it must be noted that they acted as guild representatives in many cases.[76] By the eighteenth century the appearance of *beşe*s as guild members in the courtroom became routinized, which may point to the expansion of their influence and networks in the city.

The appointment of leading guild officers, tax disputes, and conflicts between artisans and traders were oft-cited reasons for the guilds' resorting to the courts, which arose principally from a complex credit system. Butchers were the most active group in the credit market, especially in collective loans. Though the present state of research does not allow any definite conclusions on the full scale of credit structures, one might still tentatively claim that butchers in Aleppo customarily took loans from state-affiliated people. Their close relationship with Janissaries enabled butchers to borrow from title-holders, and we could mention here that a kind of patronage relationship seems to have existed between butchers as debtors and state/military officials as creditors. In the autumn of 1756, for example, Salyaneci Hasan Çavuş issued a loan of 9,000 *guruş* to the butchers' guild. In order to pay off this debt, they later borrowed a sizeable amount of money from Kasabbaşı (head of the butchers) Muhammed Ali Beşe bin İsmail Beşe.[77]

Credit provided by Janissaries was also linked to rural production, as the loans they gave allowed them to expand their investments into Aleppo's hinterland and acquire land. There was a growing trend in the credit operations between peasants and urban entrepreneurs throughout the eighteenth century, which indeed dated back to the previous century and involved members of the military, including Janissaries. In the seventeenth century the loans given to peasants by military groups constituted approximately 30% of all credit transactions in the region,

72 İSAM, HS. 93:106, document no. 455 (7 N 1174/April 12, 1761).

73 İSAM, HS. 93:95, document no. 428 (29 Ş 1174/April 5, 1761); 93:97, document no. 437 (29 Ş 1174/April 5, 1761).

74 İSAM, HS. 93:108, document no. 462 (12 N 1174/April 17, 1761).

75 For information on the guilds' names and their activities, see Ahmed Hüseyin Abd el-Cubûrî, *El-Kuds fi el-'Abd el-Osmânî (m. 1640-1799): Dirâse Siyâsiyye-'Askeriyye-İdâriyye-İktisâdiyye-İctimâiyye-Sekâfiyye*, Volume 2, Amman 2011, p. 164-186.

76 İSAM, HS. 42:106, document no. 1 (3 Ra 1124/April 10, 1712); 85:61, document no. 283 (7 Z 1167/September 25, 1754); 87:81, document no. 159 (17 Ca 1170/February 7, 1757); 93:97, document no. 437 (29 Ş 1174/April 5, 1761); 93:108, document no. 462 (12 N 1174/April 17, 1761); 93:144, document no. 594 (26 Z 1174/July 29, 1761); 93:186, document no. 736 (1 Ra 1175/September 30, 1761).

77 İSAM, HS. 87:25, document no. 59 (23 S 1170/November 17, 1756); 87:235, document no. 562 (21 L 1170/July 9, 1757); 93:116, document no. 488 (5 L 1174/May 10, 1761).

whereas this figure climbed to 60% in the following century.[78] In the second half of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries the credit transactions between these two groups became deeper, owing to the declining caravan trade and the rising exports of agricultural products like cotton and silk.[79] The accelerated tempo of commercialization and commodification further augmented the demand for land among urban entrepreneurs.

The credit arrangements between the Janissaries and peasants were indeed two-layered. On one layer, there were Janissary commanders who were eager to extend credit to peasants but generally abstained from acquiring land. On the other layer, however, there were *beşe* Janissaries who were able and preferred to possess land rather than to give credit. Janissaries with rich financial resources, mostly bearing the title of *ağa*, were able to create their own credit networks and establish patronage ties with debtor villagers. For instance, Muhammed Ağa bin Muharrem Ağa, a Janissary commander in the 1740s, owned a *çiftlik* (large estate) in the Minak village of the Azez district in the north of the city. In return for working in his *çiftlik* lands, peasants took a loan from him, which they used for tax payments.[80]

The boundaries of Janissary interests in the hinterland were restricted to a narrow region around Aleppo, surrounded by Afrin, Azez, Kilis, and El-Bab in the north, northwest, and northeast; Maarrat Mısrin, Idlib, and Maarratü'l-Numan in the south and southwest; the Antioch corridor in the west; and a wide desert in the east.[81] Overlapping with the local credit chains, this area was also a provisioning zone for the city. There are two reasons behind the geographical distribution of Janissary rural properties. First, their interest in the countryside went hand in hand with their kinship networks. Epithets like El-Babi, El-Kilisi, and El-Nayrabi used by a sizeable number of Janissaries reflected their home villages and towns in the vicinity of Aleppo. Some of them even settled in or inherited arable fields in these villages and towns.[82] Several Janissaries, for example, settled in the village of Haritan, belonging to Cebel Sam'an, and occupied themselves with the village's affairs.[83] Together with rural immovables, they also acquired houses.[84] Second, like other capital owners, the well-off Janissaries saw rural properties on the fertile

78 Masters, *The Origins of Western Economic Dominance in the Middle East*, p. 153-164; Wilkins, *Forging Urban Solidarities*, p. 171.

79 Meriwether, *The Kin Who Count*, p. 26.

80 İSAM, HS. 67:48, document no. 4 (8 Ra 1156/May 2, 1743). Also see İSAM, HS. 66:13, document no. 914 (11 Ra 1156/May 5, 1743); 66:16, document no. 922 (30 Ra 1156/May 24, 1743); 87:208, document no. 495 (23 N 1170/June 11, 1757).

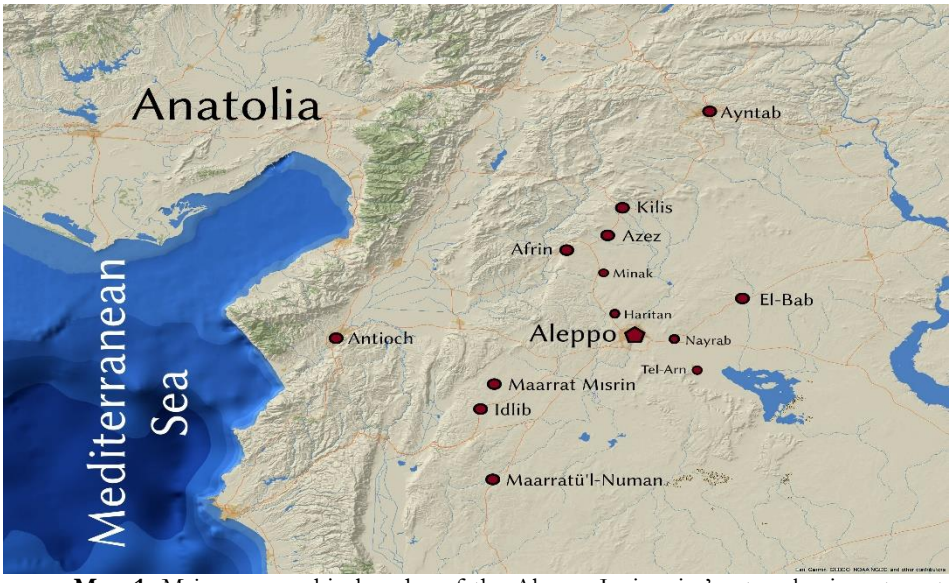
81 Masters, *The Origins of Western Economic Dominance in the Middle East*, p. 156.

82 İSAM, HS. 93:28, document no. 104 (29 Ra1174/November 8, 1760); 42:46, document no. 4 (8 M 1124/February 16, 1712); İSAM, Halep Evamir-i Sultaniye Sicilleri/Aleppo Evamir-i Sultaniye Registers (HES) 2:111, document no. 191 (12 L 1136/July 4, 1724).

83 İSAM, HS. 67:116, document no. 1 (23 L 1156/December 10 1743); 67:117, document no. 1 (23 L 1156/December 10, 1743); 67:138, document no. 2 (14 M 1157/February 28, 1744). For a contribution to the topic see Canbakal, *Society and Politics*, p. 86-88.

84 İSAM, HS. 66:24, document no. 983 (24 Ca 1156/July 16, 1743).

plain around the city as a secure and profitable venture. Again and again, real estate transactions brought the Janissaries to the court. Ranging from vineyards and gardens to mansions, rural estates constituted the lion's share of Janissary portfolios.[85] Peasant indebtedness was not unique to Aleppo, nor did rural credit instruments emerge out of a vacuum in the eighteenth century. Speaking of the transformation of land tenure in eighteenth-century Damascus, Abdul-Karim Rafeq pinpoints the repeated transfers of usufruct rights from peasants to city dwellers. He notes that city inhabitants accumulating capital through commerce and moneylending penetrated into the countryside and advanced loans, a process which resulted in the seizure of the debtor peasants' lands by the moneylenders.[86]



Map 1: Major geographical nodes of the Aleppo Janissaries' networks, investment outlets, and credit relations

Despite the repeated orders prohibiting moneylenders from expropriating the lands of debtor peasants,[87] it seems that the ecosystem of rural credits and peasant indebtedness dramatically expanded from the eighteenth century onwards.[88] Nevertheless, the asymmetrical relations between peasants and city dwellers in the eighteenth century that were created through moneylending do not

85 For the real estate market in the same period see Abraham Marcus, "Men, Women and Property: Dealers in Real Estate in 18th-Century Aleppo", *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 26/2, (1983), p. 137-163.

86 Abdul-Karim Rafeq, "Economic Relations between Damascus and the Dependent Countryside, 1743-71", *The Islamic Middle East, 700-1900: Studies in Economic and Social History*, (ed. A. L. Udovitch), Princeton 1981, p. 664.

87 Halil İnalcık, "Adâletnâmeler", *Belgeler*, 2/3-4, (1965), p. 49-145.

88 For this phenomenon, see İrfan Kokdaş's article in the present issue.

explain the rural investment patterns among Janissaries. For instance, in the late sixteenth century, Damascene Janissaries had already begun to acquire lands around the city abounding in water. They were followed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries by merchants and religious dignitaries.[89] Compared to their Damascene comrades, Aleppo Janissaries indeed controlled limited economic resources, even in the seventeenth century when they tried to consolidate their power. The Janissaries' presence in the Aleppo countryside dated back to the sixteenth century through the enterprises of Damascene Janissaries. One may detect their *vakf*s even as late as the eighteenth century.[90] In the eighteenth century, Aleppo Janissaries did the same thing; they established *vakf*s endowed with rural properties such as vineyards, gardens, and arable fields.[91] In this period they seem to have been net purchasers in the rural market, the value of their land acquisition exceeding that of their sales.

As the Aleppo Janissaries intensified their expansion toward the countryside, they emerged as very active agents in the urban estate market as well.[92] Janissaries generally bought or sold modest Aleppo houses[93] consisting of a kitchen, water well, two or three rooms, and a small courtyard, although they sometimes put their money into buying extravagant mansions with their own water resources.[94] Their voluminous transactions in the urban estate market, in fact, show how deeply they became integrated into the city over the eighteenth century.

Not surprisingly, the overwhelming majority of records on the transfers of urban estates in which Janissaries appear as buyers refer to houses in the Bankusa neighborhood. However, Janissaries bought houses in other quarters too, such as Babü'n-Nasr in the north, a popular place among the *eşraf*.[95] While the leasing, purchase, or sale of house shares were also very popular among the Aleppo Janissaries, they also appeared regularly among the sellers or hagglers for various urban properties, especially in the inheritance division. One interesting aspect of

89 James A. Reilly, "Status Groups and Propertyholding in the Damascus Hinterland, 1828-1880", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 21/4, (1989), p. 517-539; Jean-Paul Pascual, "The Janissaries and the Damascus Countryside at the Beginning of the Seventeenth Century According to Archives of the City's Military Tribunal", *Land Tenure and Social Transformation in the Middle East*, (ed. Tarif Khalidi), Beirut 1984, pp. 357-369; Kenneth M. Cuno, "Was the Land of Ottoman Syria *Miri* or *Milk*? An Examination of Juridical Differences within the Hanafi School", *Studia Islamica*, 81, (1995), p. 150.

90 İSAM, HS. 67:135, document no. 2 (3 M 1157/February 17, 1744); 67:225, document no. 4 (21 Ca 1157/July 2, 1744).

91 İSAM, HS. 67:266, document no. 5 (6 L 1157/December 12, 1744); 93:323, document no. 1161 (18 L 1175/May 12, 1762).

92 Wilkins, *Forging Urban Solidarities*, p. 130-141.

93 For the housing in Aleppo, see André Raymond, *Osmanlı Döneminde Arap Kentleri*, (trans. Ali Berktay), Istanbul 1995, p. 206-208.

94 İSAM, HS. 66:33, document no. 1135 (6 C 1156/July 28, 1743); 88:28, document no. 148 (27 C 1171/March 8, 1758).

95 İSAM, HS. 41:23, document no. 101 (10 M 1111/July 8, 1699); 42:103, document no. 3 (14 Ra 1124/April 21, 1712); 42:160 document no. 1 (15 C 1124/July 20, 1712).

the real estate market in the city of Aleppo is the very limited presence of Janissaries in the exchanges related to selling properties such as *gedik*s, shops, and workshops, despite their concentration in some sectors. This issue would require further research, but, at this stage, we may offer two tentative explanations. The well-developed *vakf* mechanisms along the commercial axis[96] may have prevented others from possessing workshops, cellars, and shops. It is also possible that Janissaries preferred to pour their hard-earned cash into more lucrative assets, like land and houses.

The post-1760s or a new era?

On August 11, 1762, several town criers (*dellak*s), headed by their *dellalbaşı* (head of the town criers) Seyyid Muhammed bin Seyyid Abdüllatif, came to the court to accuse several people from the same guild of opposing the equal allocation of tax burdens among guild members. The plaintiffs were all well prepared; their claims were based on the old market custom which was still in effect (*el-adetü'l-kadime beyne sair ahali'l-belde*) and a *fetva* (legal opinion) issued by the provincial *müfti* (supreme religious authority). The *fetva* explicitly stated that the taxes and other responsibilities should be shared equally among the guild members. Based on this legal opinion, the court decided the case in favor of the *dellalbaşı* and the guildsmen, against whom the defendants raised their voices immediately. They claimed to be Janissaries, hence exempt from taxation. It was probably the only legal maneuver for escaping the tax burden. As a response, Seyyid Muhammed, citing the equal distribution of the tax burden in the guilds of butchers and coffeemakers, rejected their claim by adding that "*an* askeri *has no privilege over others* (*la tafdil li-askeri ala gayrih*)".[97] What Seyyid Mustafa emphasizes here is not that *askeri*s should have the same tax obligations as the *reaya*, but that they should not expect privileged treatment over civilians when engaging in trade.

Seyyid Muhammed's reference to the guilds of butchers and coffeemakers, which contained many military men, is indeed a clear message to the Janissaries in the guild of criers, reminding them of their responsibilities despite their military status. The engagement of Janissaries in artisanal and commercial activities and the consequent disputes over their tax responsibilities constituted an old source of debate in the empire.[98] But in this dispute one should also take the special conditions of Aleppo into consideration. It is possible that even the defendant Janissaries knew the tax allocation policies of other guilds, so their strategy may reflect the wider changes in Aleppo's local political environment after the 1750s.

96 Raymond, *Osmanlı Döneminde Arap Kentleri*, p. 168-172; Masters, *The Origins of Western Economic Dominance in the Middle East*, p. 127.

97 İSAM, HS. 93: 399, document no. 1440 (20 M 1176/August 11, 1762).

98 Eunjeong Yi, *Guild Dynamics in Seventeenth-Century Istanbul: Fluidity and Leverage*, Leiden 2004, p. 133; Mehmet Mert Sunar, *Cauldron of Dissent: A Study of the Janissary Corps, 1807-1826*, SUNY-Binghamton, Ph.D, New York 2006, p. 88-95.

Among the petitioners who criticized the Janissary claims one can find criers (*dellal*s) who came from different segments of Aleppo society. Their voices were, however, carried to the courtroom by a *şerif*, Seyyid Mustafa. This later period in the eighteenth century witnessed deepening strife between the Janissaries and the *eşraf*,[99] which not only strengthened group loyalties[100] but also influenced everyday politics in the city. It is, thus, not coincidental that in highlighting their Janissary identities the defendants saw a chance to fortify their "special" position in the guild.

The *eşraf* were very active in Aleppo's quotidian social and political life in this period. One may, of course, encounter this group of privileged men in other parts of the empire,[101] but their high social status and privileges turned into a non-negligible economic power in Aleppo, Ayntab, and Maraş. Focusing on the role of regional dynamics in shaping the political balance in the region, Jane Hathaway argues that the small number of *kapıkulu*s may have been a factor for their rise as a political power.[102] Although the *eşraf* did not have political aspirations or powerful group solidarity in earlier periods, their rising socio-economic claims both in the market and local politics throughout the eighteenth century seem to have been a strong response to those of the Janissaries.[103] By the 1760s, together with the Janissaries, they turned into a power group in the city. As noted earlier, in the following period this changing political balance tended to generate bloody conflicts between the two groups, which further promoted their internal homogenization and triggered the intervention of the imperial center in local politics.[104]

These dynamics had their own effect on the Janissaries, whose ranks in the first sixty years of the century continued to be swelled by migration from the countryside, with the newcomers trying to survive in the city. Their competition with the *eşraf* led them to stick more to their Janissary identity, despite having been distinguishing themselves through their ethnic, tribal, and country-based affiliations for a long period prior to this development. A part of this conflict was possibly rooted in the rural origins of the Janissaries, which challenged the *eşraf*'s established position. Presenting themselves as the real masters of the city, the *eşraf* seem to have felt the pressure created by the affiliation of incoming migrants with the Janissaries and their support for the Janissaries' claims in a period of rising strife over the existing economic resources.[105] As a result of the long-lasting

99 See Bodman, *Political Factions in Aleppo*, p. 103-139.

100 Abdul-Karim Rafeq, "Changes in the Relationship", p. 66.

101 Hülya Canbakal, "The Ottoman State and Descendants of the Prophet in Anatolia and the Balkans (c. 1500-1700)", *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 52, (2009), p. 542-578.

102 Hathaway, *The Arab Lands*, p. 91-92.

103 Bruce Masters, "Power and Society in Aleppo in the 18th and 19th Centuries", *Revue du monde musulman et de la Méditerranée*, 62, (1991), p. 154.

104 As an example see BOA, Hatt-ı Hümâyûn (HAT) 261/15056 (29 Z 1207/August 7, 1793); Cevdet Dahiliye (C.DH) 51/2539 (5 Ca 1212/October 26, 1797).

105 Meriwether, *The Kin Who Count*, p. 26.

military campaigns in the second half of the eighteenth century, the *eşraf* thus tried to fill the vacuum left by the Janissaries. Yet their policies and strategies only brought short-term benefits and did not decisively undermine the Janissaries' power base. As mentioned above, their politics deepened the strife between the Janissaries and the *eşraf* and increased the power, voice, and representative capacity of the former.[106]

As the power of the Janissaries rose, the established families led by the *eşraf* could not easily compete with them and thus continued to disdain the Janissaries as outsiders, an attitude that went hand in hand with a feeling of anxiety and fear.[107] Just after the murder in 1833 of the leading Janissary Ahmed Ağa bin Haşim by İbrahim Paşa, in front of Kahvetü'l-Ağa, a place symbolizing the Janissary power in the city, the anger against the Janissaries found its echo in the first verses of a poem penned by the contemporary scholar and poet Şeyh Abdurrahman el-Muvakkit, who welcomed the destruction of the Janissaries with great euphoria: "*they are the men of evil, their permanent wickedness is felt in the splendid city of Aleppo; they are malicious, one could not find a peaceful person among them; they don't respect the leading and ruling group of any origin; they killed many, shed innocent blood, and profaned the sacred…*".[108] This anti-Janissary rhetoric continued to be utilized by the literati among the *eşraf* and upper classes of the city even decades after the abolition of the corps.[109]

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106 Bodman, *Political Factions in Aleppo*, p. 103-139.

107 Masters, "Aleppo's Janissaries", p. 160.

108 "*Ehlü'l-fesâdi şerruhum fî Halebü'ş-Şehbâi dâimü*
Tâifetün habîsetün felâ terâ minhüm müsâlimü
Ve yebğadûne zümrete'l-eşrâfi min külli'l-'avâlim
Kem ketelû kem sefekû kem hetekû sitre'l-mehârim": Muhammed Râgıb et-Tabbâh el-Halebî, *İ'lâmu'n-Nubalâ bi-Târîh Halebi'ş-Şehbâ*, Volume 3, second edition, Aleppo 1988, p. 341.

109 Masters, "Aleppo's Janissaries", p. 159-160.

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