OTTOMAN BOSNIA AND HERCEGOVINA: ISLAMIZATION, OTTOMANIZATION, AND ORIGIN MYTHS

Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

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2018

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines how the Ottoman state incorporated Bosnians and Hercegovinians, and how Bosnians and Hercegovinians incorporated themselves, into the Ottoman bureaucratic, military, and social apparatus. This was a multilayered and multilateral process of Ottomanization and Islamization that involved the state and its subjects, two groups that were not mutually exclusive. I focus on the *devşirme* institution, a levy of mostly Christian young men from among Ottoman subjects in Anatolia and the Balkans. These youths were converted and trained as elite slaves of the sultan, instrumental in the governance and defense of the empire. I argue that the *devşirme* was a tool of integration and socialization used by the state and its subjects. I contend that the peculiar ways in which it functioned in Bosnia and Hercegovina, and the ways in which its products were mythologized, contributed to the establishment of Ottoman Bosnian and Hercegovinian communities and identities that still resonate.

Chapter 1 explores how the Kingdom of Bosnia, following the Ottoman conquest in 1463, made the transition into the provinces of Bosnia and Hercegovina. This is the origin point of the provinces' Muslim populations. Chapter 2 focuses on Bosnian and Hercegovinian Muslims in the Ottoman military and administration during the sixteenth century, a period of ascendancy for these groups in the Ottoman state. I analyze how this ascendancy shaped

Bosnian and Hercegovinian identity and how and why particular individuals from these provinces came to prominence. Chapter 3 is devoted to the period of empire-wide crisis in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Military rebellions by *devşirme* elements were a hallmark of this crisis, and Bosnians and Hercegovinians, along with other *devşirme* recruits, were denounced by rival factions within the military and administrative elite. During this period, an origin myth emerged rationalizing the distinctive and privileged status of Bosnian Muslims within the Ottoman Empire by invoking their mythological mass conversion after the 1463 Ottoman conquest. I deconstruct this myth, showing that it obscures a gradual process of conversion in the context of an increasing Bosnian and Hercegovinian presence in the Ottoman military, administration, and elite.

My work is significant because it challenges the notion that the *devşirme* was rigid and static. This notion obscures and oversimplifies its history as a fundamental part of the Ottoman Empire. Moreover, my focus on this subject moves away from past works that have written overwhelmingly on the institution's origins and legality. This work also shines a new light on and deconstructs unexplored myths about the *devşirme*, some produced by Ottoman elites, and others by nationalist histories. It contributes to the fields of Ottoman and Islamic History by exploring the relationship between identity formation, empire, and Islam.

Dedicated to Ljubinka and Gordan Kadrić, my amazing parents

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This dissertation would not have been possible, nor would it have been half as good, without the constant guidance and help of my adviser, Professor Jane Hathaway. The best decision that I made in my graduate career was to seek her out as a mentor. She has truly been there for me and extended her full support and guidance every step of the way. As I wrote this dissertation, she edited each and every page patiently and meticulously. She intervened at the most crucial points, posed challenging questions, and encouraged me to elevate my analysis. I only hope that my writing will one day be as clear and effective as hers, and if it is, it will be because of her influence. *Hocam*, thank you for your mentorship, your support, your kindness, and especially your excellent e-mails.

Throughout my graduate career, I also benefitted greatly from the mentorship of Professor Theodora Dragostinova and Professor Scott Levi. In Theodora's classes and our independent study sessions, I first learned how to verbalize my issues with present-day stereotypes and misconceptions of the Balkans. I am also grateful for the excellent reading material she culled for our classes. I consider myself lucky to have had the opportunity to take a number of Scott's classes and work as his grader. In his classes, I learned how to envision and place my work in a global context and to always take oft-neglected parts of the world into account. I also have him to thank for my enduring love of the Mongols and

Central Asian History. Thank you, Scott and Theodora, for being members of my dissertation committee and for always sharing your advice and laughter.

In my early graduate career, I was also incredibly fortunate to have benefitted from the mentorship and kindness of Professor Snježana Buzov. She pointed me towards crucial theory and sources that provided the foundation for this dissertation. Most importantly, she helped situate me in Columbus and in Istanbul. *Profesorice*, thank you for your support and friendship, and I am looking forward to sharing coffee at Pierre Loti again in the future.

At different points in my graduate career, I was also most fortunate to benefit from the help of other former and current professors across The Ohio State University. Thank you, Clay Howard, Judy Tzu-Chun Wu, Alan Beyerchen, Phil Brown, Carole Fink, Stephen Dale, Robin Judd, Yana Hashamova, Peter Mansoor, Dan Rivers, Claire Robertson, Randy Roth, Dave Staley, and Sam White. I also had immense amounts of help from professors across the world such as Theresa Earenfight (Seattle University), my mighty undergraduate mentor and friend, David Madsen (Seattle University), William Kangas (Seattle University), Tijana Krstić (Central European University), A.C.S. Peacock (University of St Andrews), Selim Kuru (University of Washington), Yorgos Dedes (SOAS University of London), Amila Buturović (York University), Edin Hajdarpašić (Loyola University), Vlada Stanković (University of Belgrade), Amy Singer (Tel Aviv University), Gottfried Hagen (University of Michigan), and

Funda Güven Derin (UW-Madison). It truly does take a village. If I have forgotten anyone, please accept my sincere apologies and thanks.

I also have to thank the many people who supported me in different ways over the past few years and made the world a better place in which to live, work, and research: Amy Archer and Elizabeth Perego, Krupal Amin and Toni Calbert (The Syndicate), The Sixterhood of the Traveling Sorcerers, Conrad Rinto, Zeb Larson and Maysan Haydar, Catalina Hunt and Emily Neumeier, Ali Gibran Siddiqui and Pat (Barış) Scharfe, Doğa Öztürk, Steve Hyland, Jason Drake and Kristen Howard, The Crew From Dulles 239, Alyssa Jocson Porter, Marie Vermaas, Eagle Bear Morgan, Arthur Jin Kim, Lara Hodo, Buffy and Xena, Evi Katsara, Michał (Mik) Połczyński, Zoe Griffith, Ella Fratantuono, Elçin Arabacı, Maddie Elfenbein, Selma Hadžipašić-Čevra, Ilma Begičević, Alma Hašičić, Nina Sakić, Mareikie Bilgihan, Ashley Bowerman, Jim Bach, Kristina Ward, and many, many more. I also want to raise a glass and thank two friends who are no longer with us: Allen Tuazon and Jim Black. You are so missed. If I have forgotten anyone, please accept my sincere apologies and thanks. Thank you all for your love and support. I am in your debt.

The research and writing of this dissertation were made possible by generous grants and fellowships from The Ohio State University Council of Graduate Students (2017); the OSU College of Arts and Sciences (2017); the OSU Graduate School Alumni Grants (2015); the OSU Mershon Center for International Security Studies (2015); the American Council of

Learned Societies (2013-2014); the OSU Office of International Affairs (2013); the Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation (2013); the OSU Department of History (2013-2017); and FLAS fellowships from the OSU Center for Slavic and Eastern European Studies and the OSU Middle East Studies Center.

I would also like to thank various archives and libraries for facilitating my research: Orijentalni institut u Sarajevu and its entire fantastic and indomitable staff, especially Mubera Bavčić; Gazi Husrev-begova Biblioteka and its wonderful staff, especially the kind Azra Gadžo-Kasumović and former director Mustafa Jahić; Historijski Arhiv Sarajevo and its engaging staff; Bošnjacki Institut-Fondacija Adila Zulfikarpašića and its tireless staff, especially Narcisa Puljek-Bubrić; Državni Arhiv u Dubrovniku and its accommodating staff, especially Vesna Rimac; the T.C. Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivleri and its kind staff, especially Ayten Ardel; the Beyazıt Devlet Kütüphanesi and its welcoming staff; the American Research Institute in Turkey, especially Tony Greenwood; and the entire OSU Libraries staff, especially the kind folks at the Interlibrary Loan Office who rescued me on numerous occasions. Lastly, I want to thank Ülkü İnal and Laura Seeger.

Most of all, I want to thank my family, especially my parents, Ljubinka and Gordan Kadrić, from the bottom of my heart. Without you and your constant love and support, none of this would have been possible. This was always my dream, but you always made me feel like it was our dream. And look, we made it!

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INTRODUCTION:
THE OTTOMAN CONQUEST AND THE *DEVŞIRME*

Over the course of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, the medieval Kingdom of Bosnia became the Ottoman *sancak*s (provinces) of Bosnia and Hercegovina, the two westernmost frontier provinces (*serhad*) within an expansive and expanding empire.[1] Though the year 1463 is generally posited as the start of the Ottoman period in this region, conquest was actually gradual, starting almost a century earlier and continuing into the sixteenth century. Following the stable reign of King Stjepan Tvrtko I (r. 1353-1391), the Kingdom of Bosnia, which included the region of Hercegovina, began to experience feudal disintegration and territorial losses.[2] The power of the king waned as nobles operated nearly independently by the end of the fourteenth century. At this time, Ottoman *akıncı*s began to make raids into the region. In 1384, Timurtaş Paşa made the first incursion into Bosnian territory. In 1388, Murad I (r. 1362-1389) sent Lala Şahin Paşa and his troops towards the Kingdom of Bosnia again. This set the stage for a three-way conflict that would persist until the main Ottoman offensive at the end of the fifteenth century. The participants included the Hungarian army, Ottoman *akıncı* troops, and the Bosnian king and nobles.[3]

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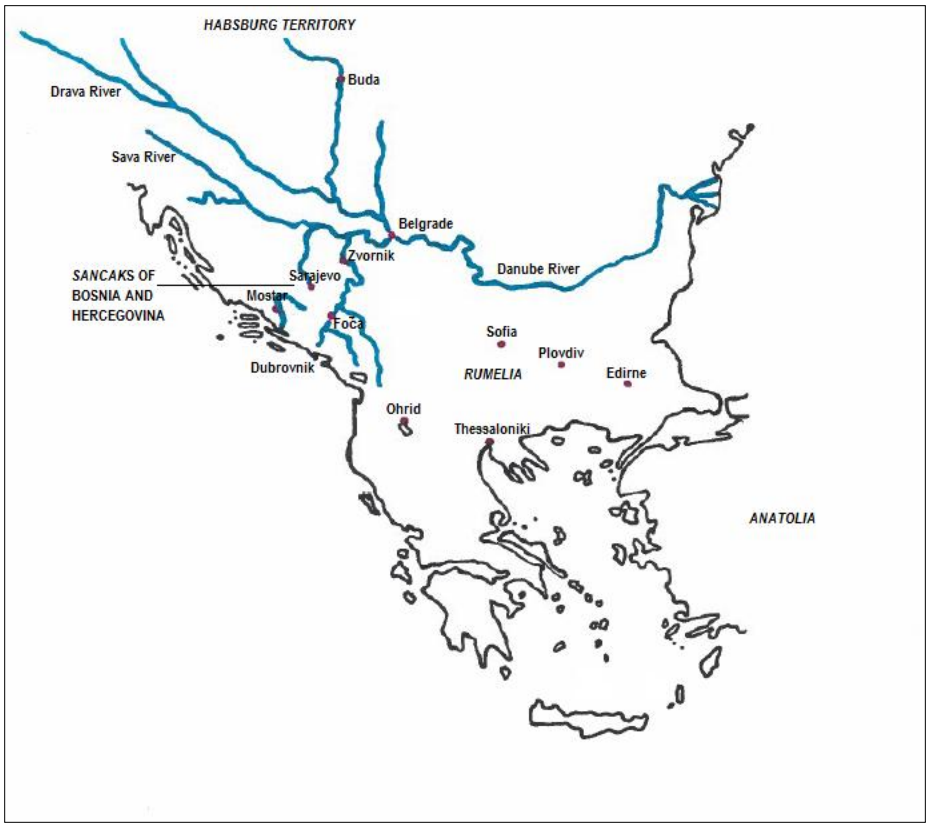
[1] In Ottoman sources, these *sancak*s are referred to as *Bosna* (Bosnia) and *Hersek* (Hercegovina).

[2] Prior to the Ottoman conquest, the region of Hercegovina was known as Hum or Zahumlje.

[3] Hazim Šabanović, *Propast Bosanskog Kraljevstva i Osnivanje Bosanskog Sandžaka* (Sarajevo: ND NRBiH Djela - Odjeljenje Istoriskofilološih Nauka, 1959), 38; Ramiza Ibrahimović, "Struktura Vojničke Klase u XV i Početkom XVI Vijeka s Posebnim Osvrtom na Širenje Islama u Bosnia," *Prilozi za Orijetalnu Filologiju* 41 (1991): 269; Hazim Šabanović, "Vojno Uređenje Bosne od 1463 Godine do Kraja XVI Stoljeća," *Godišnjak*



Map 1: The Ottoman Balkans

The Ottoman statesman and historian Idris Bitlisi (1457-1520) recounted these first Ottoman incursions into the Kingdom of Bosnia in his early sixteenth-century *Heşt Bihişt*, a celebratory account of Ottoman history written for Sultan Bayezid II (r. 1481-1512). Despite the fact that Idris Bitlisi was not present at these campaigns, his account is an important example of how they were remembered in later Ottoman histories. He wrote that the kingdom was a powerful state and, aside from Albania, the only one that had evaded

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Društva Istoričara Bosne i Hercegovine 11 (1960): 213; Colin Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300-1650: The Structure of Power* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 22-29.

Ottoman vassalage. Murad I was intent on conquering it but knew that this had to be done gradually because of the difficulty of the terrain, the kingdom's strong fortifications, and the bravery of its people. The Ottoman frontier *beg*s (lords) were therefore instructed to lead constant surprise attacks on the kingdom. These constant raids over the course of the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries were ultimately successful in persuading a number of Bosnian and Hercegovinian nobles to accept Ottoman vassalage.[4]

There were pro-Ottoman and pro-Hungarian parties among these nobles, who were already divided and fighting among themselves. Noble families such as the Pavlovićes, the Hranićes, the Kovačevićes, and the Kosačas began to rely on Ottoman *akıncı*s to further their own political and military aims and, in doing so, established early connections with the empire. Bosnians and Hercegovinians entered Ottoman service soon after the region became a raiding ground, presumably either having been taken captive or having joined the retinues of frontier *beg*s willingly. Records attest to the presence of Bosnian *kapı kulları* (elite slaves of the sultan) in high positions at the Ottoman court as early as 1444.[5] This seems to have been part and parcel of the Ottoman strategy in the Balkans, inserting themselves into polities already experiencing fragmentation and incorporating their people into Ottoman

[4] Salih Trako, "Pretkosovski Događaji u Hešt Bihiştu Idris Bitlisija," *Prilozi za Orijetalnu Filologiju* 20-21 (1970-1971): 171, 190-191; Kritovoulos, *History of Mehmed the Conqueror*, trans. Charles T. Riggs (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1954), vii, 187.

[5] Halil İnalcık, *Fatih Devri Üzerinde Tetkiler ve Vesikalar*, vol. 1 (Istanbul: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1954), 215-217.

service.[6] In his *Heşt Bihişt*, Idris Bitlisi regularly heaps praise on Balkan nobles who had the good sense to join the Ottomans and become loyal servants of the sultan.[7]

The Kingdom of Bosnia was regularly raided by both the Ottomans and the Hungarians at the start of the fifteenth century. This, along with conflicts with the neighboring Republic of Dubrovnik (Ragusa) and wars with the Serbian kingdom over the silver mine of Srebrenica, brought on population loss, land destruction, food shortages, and economic disruption. All of these things contributed to the weakening of the kingdom and aided the Ottoman conquest. By the 1430s, the Ottomans had already extended their control over the kingdoms of Serbia and Albania, and in 1435, Murad II (r. 1421-1451) wed Mara, the daughter of the Serbian despot Đorđe (George) Branković. Following this, the Bosnian king Tvrtko II (r. 1404-1409, 1420-1443) finally recognized Ottoman suzerainty. Around the same time, the Ottomans began to settle and build up a stronghold in the center of the Bosnian kingdom, then known as Hodidjed or Saray-ovası, and today known as Sarajevo. From 1448 to 1463, it was administered and built up to a sizeable city by its founder, the frontier *beg* Isa Beg Ishaković (Ishakoğlu).[8]

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[6] Cemal Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds: The Construction of the Ottoman State* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 17-27; Halil İnalcık, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age, 1300-1600*, trans. Norman Itzkowitz and Colin Imber (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1973), 9-16; Ibrahimović, "Struktura Vojničke Klase u XV i Početkom XVI Vijeka s Posebnim Osvrtom na Širenje Islama u Bosnia," 269.

[7] Trako, "Pretkosovski Događaji u Hešt Bihiştu Idris Bitlisija," 160-181.

[8] Jelena Mrgić, "Transition from Late Medieval to Early Ottoman Settlement Pattern: A Case Study on Northern Bosnia," *Südost-Forschungen* 65-66 (2006-2007): 54; Halil İnalcık, ed., with Donald Quataert, *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1300-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 259-265; Robert J. Donia, *Sarajevo: A Biography* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006), 8-17.

The 1463 Ottoman offensive against the Kingdom of Bosnia was prompted by King Stjepan Tomašević's (r. 1461-1463) refusal to send tribute. He began to negotiate with the king of Hungary and Pope Pius II (1458-1464), and to ask the Venetian Republic and the Republic of Dubrovnik (Ragusa) for aid. All four powers rejected the plea for an alliance against the Ottomans, but a peace treaty was signed between Venice and the Kingdom of Hungary. When Venice also sought negotiations with Uzun Hasan, ruler of the Akkoyunlu Turcomans, who were hostile to the Ottomans, Mehmed II (r. 1444-1446, 1451-1481) resolved to invade the Bosnian kingdom. The frontier *beg*s in Bosnia were first mobilized to prevent Hungarian aid to the Bosnian king and to gain control of the Danube and Sava rivers. The main Ottoman offensive came in the summer of 1463 from the area of northern Bosnia. Some noble families, such as the Hranićes, Vukčićes, Pavlovićes and Kovačevićes, had long been in collaboration with the Ottomans and submitted their territories without resistance. Fortresses such as Bobovac (Boboca) and Visoko were either taken by force or surrendered. The sultan and his army chased after the fleeing Stjepan Tomašević and eventually caught up with him at the fortress of Ključ. Ključ was put to siege, and after four days, negotiations began between the king and the grand vizier Mahmud Paşa (term 1455-1474), a former Balkan noble of the Angelović family.[9]

[9] İnalcık, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age, 1300*-1600, 28; Šabanović, *Propast Bosanskog Kraljevstva i Osnivanje Bosanskog Sandžaka*, 38; İnalcık, ed., with Quataert, *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1300-1914*, 256; Machiel Kiel, "Ottoman Sources for the Demographic History and the Process of Islamization of Bosnia-Hercegovina and Bulgaria in the 15th-17th Centuries: Old Sources – New

Tursun Beg, an Ottoman statesman and historian present at these negotiations in the retinue of Mahmud Paşa, wrote that the Bosnian king offered fortresses and his treasury in exchange for his personal safety. He was then sent to the sultan. It is unclear what prompted his eventual execution, although his initial disloyalty was a probable cause. In any event, his execution signaled the end of the Kingdom of Bosnia and the region's official incorporation into the Ottoman Empire. Bosnia and Hercegovina became the empire's westernmost frontier provinces. Like all new provinces at the time, they were surveyed and registered, divided into districts, put under the *timar* (land revenue grant) system, and incorporated into the taxation system.[10]

I. Muslims and the Devşirme

The Ottoman *devşirme* was a levy, a conscription of sorts, of young men from the rural, mostly (but not entirely) Christian, Ottoman subjects in the Balkans and Anatolia. These young men were intended as elite servants loyal only to the sultan and instrumental in

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Methodology," in *Ottoman Bosnia: A History in Peril*, eds. Markus Koller and Kemal H. Karpat (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004), 105; Mrgić, "Transition from Late Medieval to Early Ottoman Settlement Pattern: A Case Study on Northern Bosnia," 54; Snježana Buzov, "Ottoman Perceptions of Bosnia as Reflected in the Works of Ottoman Authors Who Visited or Lived in Bosnia," in *Ottoman Bosnia: A History in Peril*, eds. Markus Koller and Kemal H. Karpat (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004), 84-85; Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300-1650: The Structure of Power*, 22-29; Tursun Beg, *The History of Mehmed the Conqueror*, trans. Halil İnalcik and Rhoads Murphey (Minneapolis: Bibliotheca Islamica Inc., 1978), 11-19, 50; Konstantin Mihailović, *Memoirs of a Janissary*, trans. Benjamin Stolz (Ann Arbor: Dept. of Slavic Languages and Literatures, University of Michigan, 1975), 137-141, 228.

[10] Tursun Beg, *The History of Mehmed the Conqueror*, 51; Mihailović, *Memoirs of a Janissary*, 228-229; Šabanović, *Propast Bosanskog Kraljevstva i Osnivanje Bosanskog Sandžaka*, 38-40; Mrgić, "Transition from Late Medieval to Early Ottoman Settlement Pattern: A Case Study on Northern Bosnia," 54.

the governance and defense of the empire. *Devşirme* recruits served in the imperial palace, the provincial and central administrations, and the military, especially the elite infantry known as the Janissary corps. While some recruits became low-ranking Janissaries, others could reach some of the highest positions within the Ottoman state.[11] While the particulars of the institution will be expanded on later, it suffices to say for now that it was well-established and long-standing by the time Bosnia and Hercegovina were incorporated into the Ottoman Empire. As a part of the Ottoman Balkans, these *sancak*s became recruiting grounds for the *devşirme* relatively soon after their incorporation. This is the main subject of this work.

I became particularly interested in how the *devşirme* functioned in Bosnia and Hercegovina after coming across a peculiarity in the recruitment process that repeated itself in Ottoman sources throughout the sixteenth century. My interest grew when I came across what seemed to be a myth about Ottoman Bosnians in an early seventeenth-century Ottoman reform manual. The peculiarity that I refer to is the levying of Muslim youth from the *sancak*s of Bosnia and Hercegovina, a deviation from the usual standards of the institution, which levied mainly Christian subjects and, in accordance with Islamic law, did

[11] Aleksandar Matkovski, "Prilog Pitanju Devširme," *Prilozi za Orijentalnu Filologiju* 14-15 (1964-1965): 275; İ. Metin Kunt, "Transformation of Zimmi into Askeri," in *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire*, eds. Benjanim Braude and Bernard Lewis (New York: Holmes and Meier Publishers, Inc., 1982), 55; Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300-1650: The Structure of Power*, 121-122; İ. Metin Kunt, *The Sultan's Servants: The Transformation of Ottoman Provincial Government, 1550-1650* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 32; Paul Wittek, *The Rise of the Ottoman Empire* (London: Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, 1938), 50.

not, at least in theory, permit the enslavement of Muslims.[12] However, various sources from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries attest to the fact that Muslims from the *sancak*s of Bosnia and Hercegovina, as well as Albania, were regularly recruited into the *devşirme*.

The earliest mention of these Muslims being levied occurs in Feridun Beg's *Mecmua-yı Münşeat ül-Selatin* (Correspondence of Sultans), a collection of more than five hundred state records available to the complier as a high member of the Ottoman chancery. It was compiled as a gift for Murad III (r. 1574-1595) upon his accession. The records that fall under the reign of Selim I (1512-1520) include a note regarding the levying of recruits from Bosnia and Hercegovina. In late 1515, an order was given for the governor of Bosnia, Mustafa Paşa, and the governor of Hercegovina, Evrenosoğlu İskender Beg, to collect one thousand *yeniçeri oğlanı* (Janissary recruits) from the young men of the Muslim *Poturnak*s (*Müslüman olan Poturnak oğlanlarından*).[13] Who were these *Poturnak*s? The term is contested, a debate that I will return to later, but I would like to suggest that they were people from the Bosnian and Hercegovinian *sancak*s who served the Ottoman state in some way, converted to Islam, and gradually become culturally and socially Ottoman. The Bosnian-language verb "*poturčiti*

[12] V.L. Ménage, "Sidelights on the Devshirme from Idris and Sa'duddin," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 18, no. 1 (1956): 181-183; Kunt, "Transformation of Zimmi into Askeri," 61; Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300-1650: The Structure of Power*, 122.

[13] Feridun Beg, *Mecmua-yı Münşeat ül-Selâtin,* vol. 1 (Istanbul: Takvimhane-yi Âmire, 1858), 471-473; Dimitris Kastritsis, "Ferīdūn Beg's *Münşe'ātü's-Selātīn* ('Correspondence of Sultans') and Late Sixteenth-Century Ottoman Views of the Political World," in *Imperial Geographies in Byzantine and Ottoman Space*, eds. Sahar Bazzaz, Yota Batsaki and Dimiter Angelov (Washington, D.C.: Center for Hellenic Studies, Trustees for Harvard University, 2013), 91-110.

se" is and has in the past been used to signify becoming Turkish or Ottoman.[14] It would seem that this group was granted the privilege of acceptance into the *devşirme*, and the high status of *kapı kulları* (elite slaves of the sultan) for their progeny. In this case, the *devşirme* seems to have served as a tool of integration, gradually incorporating favorably-disposed people, as well as perhaps the *sancak*s at large, into the Ottoman Empire, state, and elite.

One result of this is the aforementioned myth about Ottoman Bosnians that appears in the 1606 *Laws of the Janissaries*, a reform manual and law code written for Ahmed I (r. 1603-17). Although the author's identity is unclear, he appears to have been a high-ranking, retired member of the Janissary corps. While I will reserve my analysis of the myth for the third chapter of this work, I will summarize the myth's contents here briefly. Following the conquest of Bosnia by Mehmed II in 1463, the whole of the Bosnian population, in awe of the sultan, submitted to him and converted to Islam voluntarily. Upon seeing this, the sultan granted them whatever they wished of him, and their wish was for young men from their region to be accepted into the *devşirme*. This serves as an explanation for why Bosnian Muslims were accepted into the institution while Anatolian Turks were forbidden entry. The

[14] Noel Malcolm, *Bosnia: A Short History* (New York: New York University Press, 1994), 60; Miloš Mladenović, "The Osmanlı Conquest and the Islamization of Bosnia," *Slavic and East-European Studies* 3, no. 4 (1958-1959): 224; Alexander Lopašić, "Islamization of the Balkans with Special Reference to Bosnia," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 5, no. 2 (1994): 179-180; Mehmed Zeki Pakalin, *Osmanlı Tarih Deyimleri ve Terimleri Sözlüğü* (Istanbul: Milli Eğitim Basimevi, 1946-56), 780; Tijana Krstić, "Conversion and Converts to Islam in Ottoman Historiography of the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries," in *Writing History at the Ottoman Court*, eds. H. Erdem Çıpa and Emine Fetvacı (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 58-79; Nenad Moačanin, "Mass Islamization of Peasants in Bosnia: Demystifications," in *Mélanges Professeur Machiel Kiel*, eds. Machiel Kiel and Abdeljelil Temimi (Zaghouan: Fondation Temimi pour la Recherche Scientifique et l'Information, 1999), 357-358; Kunt, "Transformation of Zimmi into Askeri," 59.

author notes that up to his time, the majority of young men taken from Bosnia had proven themselves honest in their service either in the palace or outside of it, and that those who had achieved high positions had shown themselves to be wise people.[15]

This story is either briefly mentioned, totally ignored, or taken at face value in most secondary scholarship. This treatment is odd given that we have absolutely no sources that corroborate any kind of a mass conversion following the conquest of the Bosnian kingdom.[16] The story is quite plainly a myth, so it is logical to inquire for what purpose such a myth was created and why it was created in the early seventeenth century. These are the questions that I hope to answer by approaching the myth critically, analyzing and placing it within its historical context. While the story is evidently a fabrication, I contend that it is connected to and can illuminate the identity of *Poturnak*s and how they were incorporated into the Ottoman state and society.

On a larger scale, through the lens of the *devşirme*, I hope to demonstrate how some Bosnians and Hercegovinians became Ottoman. I understand that there are multiple actors to recognize in this process. For a well-rounded understanding, I consider three groups in

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[15] Ahmed Akgündüz, *Osmanlı Kanunnâmeleri ve Hukûkî Tahlilleri,* IX. Kitap: *I. Ahmed, I. Mustafa ve II. Osman Devirleri Kanunnâmeleri (1012/1603-1031/1622)* (Istanbul: Osmanlı Araştırmaları Vakfı, 1996), 138, 141; Adem Handžić, "O Janičarskom Zakonu," *Prilozi za Orijentalnu Filologiju* 46 (1996-1997): 142-150.

[16] Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300-1650: The Structure of Power*, 123-124; Norman Itzkowitz, *Ottoman Empire and Islamic Tradition* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1972), 26-31; V.L. Ménage, "Devshirme," *Encyclopaedia of Islam,* 2nd ed. The only work that establishes the connection between this myth and actual *devşirme* practices in Bosnia is Adem Handžić's "O Janičarskom Zakonu," 142-150; see also Buzov, "Ottoman Perceptions of Bosnia as Reflected in the Works of Ottoman Authors Who Visited or Lived in Bosnia," 84-86, 90-91.

particular: people from the *sancak*s of Bosnia and Hercegovina who became Ottoman, the observers of this process, and the Ottoman state. I recognize that these groups were not mutually exclusive and that an individual could be, and often was, a member of all three. With all of this in mind, I hope to shed some light on the larger question of how early modern empires incorporated their subjects by looking at the particular case of Ottoman Bosnia and Hercegovina and the *devşirme*. How did Bosnians and Hercegovinians situate themselves within the Ottoman Empire and state? How did the Ottoman state incorporate the people of these provinces into its empire? What role did the *devşirme* play in this process? Finally, in recognizing that this process was neither static nor continuous, how did it change from the Ottoman conquest of the Kingdom of Bosnia in the late fifteenth century to the late seventeenth century, when the *devşirme* seems either to have become far less prevalent or to have gone out of use entirely?

The first chapter of this study focuses on the transition from the late medieval Kingdom of Bosnia to the Bosnian and Hercegovinian *sancak*s, and the first mention of *Poturnak*s in the early sixteenth century. Given that a fair number of regional nobles were incorporated into the Ottoman state early on, it is fair to ask whether this process had any connection to *Poturnak*s. While the exact identity of this group is still something of a mystery, I hope to suggest a few possibilities as to their origins.

The second chapter focuses on the mid- to late sixteenth century, a period of seemingly great prominence for Bosnians and Hercegovinians in the Ottoman state. Moreover, in 1580, Bosnia's territorial status was elevated from a province within Rumelia to an *eyalet* (super-province) in its own right. The *sancak* of Hercegovina was included in this larger Bosnian super-province. During this time, we encounter Ottoman political commentators ruminating on the composition of the Ottoman elite, as well as the subject of religious orthodoxy within the empire. While some writers praised and encouraged the predominance of recruits from the western parts of the empire, namely the Balkans, others began to see it as problematic for a variety of reasons. It will be important to analyze how Bosnians and Hercegovinians, and *Poturnak*s specifically, fit into this discussion, especially given that the practice of levying Muslims from these regions continued during this time.

The third chapter of this study focuses on the first half of the seventeenth century, a period of political turmoil within the empire that involved the *devşirme* and its products. *The Laws of the Janissaries*, with its myth about Bosnian Muslims, was created in the context of this tumult. Why did it emerge at that particular time? What purpose did it serve, and what can it ultimately tell us about *Poturnak*s? I hope to answer these questions by analyzing the political turmoil in Istanbul during this time, the ethno-regional factionalism within the Ottoman elite that informed it, and the Bosnian Muslim myth that emerged out of it.

Referring to the *devşirme*, İ. Metin Kunt writes that "the shepherd who rose to become an illustrious grand vizier was a figure that never ceased to fascinate European observers."[17] He also speaks of Ottoman observers of the *devşirme* who did not participate in it and, for a host of reasons and agendas, found it fearsome and the statesmen it produced fanatical. However, this institution continues to fascinate. For a host of political and social reasons, it interests the citizens and politicians of formerly Ottoman territories in which the institution operated. Equally, it interests casual students of Ottoman history. Clearly, it continues to fascinate Ottoman historians as well. Despite the fact that those of us in the last category are privy to primary sources that lay bare the *devşirme's* functioning and are presumably alert to Orientalist and nationalist myths that contort its history, the fascination remains. This is partially because past studies of the institution, while both authoritative and thought-provoking, have not necessarily been comprehensive. While some scholars have devoted their attention to the institution's questionable legality, others have discussed its origins. Yet others have taken a regional approach and focused on the *devşirme's* application in a particular province. However, aside from a few legendary compendia such as that of İ. H. Uzunçarşılı, these studies remain scattered and disconnected.[18] For that reason, in this introduction, I seek to bring the insights of a representative selection of these studies together in a comprehensive overview of the *devşirme*.

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[17] Kunt, *The Sultan's Servants: The Transformation of Ottoman Provincial Government, 1550-1650*, 32.

[18] Ismail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devleti Teşkilatından Kapukulu Ocakları*, 2 vols. (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basimevi, 1943).

II. Bosnians and/or Hercegovinians?

Throughout this work, when referring to Bosnians and Hercegovinians, I refer to people native to the Kingdom of Bosnia, which included the region Hercegovina.[19] To understand why, it would be helpful to briefly address these regions' shared history. The royals of Bosnia were connected to the royals of Hercegovina through marriage as early as the late twelfth century, but the two regions existed as separate entities. While Bosnia remained under Hungarian vassalage, in 1184, Hercegovina was annexed by neighboring Raška, a medieval Serbian state. Hercegovina would be ruled by princes from Serbian dynasties until the year 1326. In the summer of 1326, most of Hercegovina was annexed by the Bosnian *ban*, or regional overlord, Stjepan Kotromanić (r. 1318/22-1353) and, for the first time, joined to the Kingdom of Bosnia. After the annexation, Hercegovinian nobles continued to manage their respective domains while recognizing Bosnian suzerainty. The annexation caused tension between the kingdoms of Bosnia and Serbia, and an attempt to recover the territory was made in 1350. It failed due to a simultaneous Byzantine attack on the Serbian state, and Hercegovina remained a part of the Kingdom of Bosnia until the mid-fifteenth century. In fact, in the 1370s, Bosnian *ban* and future King Stjepan Tvrtko I (r.

[19] Prior to the Ottoman conquest, the region of Hercegovina was known as Hum or Zahumlje.

1353-1391) managed to annex the remainder of Serbian Hercegovina by capitalizing on political disunity within the Serbian state.[20]

Hercegovina was the first to face Ottoman incursions into the Kingdom of Bosnia towards the end of the fourteenth century. In 1388, Ottoman *akıncı*s crossed into the region but were repelled by the nobleman Vlatko Vuković. Following the death of the Bosnian king Tvrtko II (r. 1404-1409, 1420-1443), his successor King Stjepan Tomaš (r. 1443-1461) began to lose his grip on Hercegovina as well as the remainder of the kingdom due to civil wars with and between nobles. Stjepan Vukčić-Kosača emerged from these conflicts as a powerful player and the de facto lord of Hercegovina. He was from one of the most powerful Bosnian noble families of the time and cultivated a good relationship with the Ottomans, then the most powerful players in the region. Vukčić-Kosača made his initial stand by refusing to recognize the new Bosnian king in 1443. By 1448, Vukčić-Kosača had proclaimed himself a Herceg (*herzog*, duke), dropping his previous title of Bosnia's *vojvoda*, or provincial governor, and declaring his independence from the kingdom. It is from his new title that the region's name of Hercegovina emerged. King Stjepan Tomaš responded by invading Hercegovina and attempting to use regional politics, including Vukčić-Kosača's conflict with

[20] Malcolm, *Bosnia: A Short History*, 14-17; John V. A. Fine, *The Late Medieval Balkans: A Critical Survey from the Late Twelfth Century to the Ottoman Conquest* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1987), 8, 19-20, 52, 117, 137, 145, 266-7, 279, 322-323, 392-393.

Dubrovnik (Ragusa) and the friction between him and his eldest son, to his benefit. Both powers would fall to the Ottomans over the next three decades.[21]

Following the Ottoman conquest of the Kingdom of Bosnia, the territory was officially reconfigured as the Ottoman *sancak*s of Bosnia and Hercegovina. When I refer to Bosnians and Hercegovinians from the mid- to late fifteenth century to the year 1580, I refer to people native to the Bosnian and Hercegovinian *sancak*s. In 1580, as noted above, the *sancak* of Bosnia was promoted to an *eyalet* (super-province). Hercegovina continued to exist as a *sancak*, but it did so as part of the Bosnian super-province. When I refer to Bosnians from the year 1580 to the late seventeenth century, I refer to people native to the Bosnian *eyalet* at large, including Hercegovina.

As much as the sources permit, I specify the *sancak*, city, and village in which each of the *devşirme* recruits I discuss originated and provide as much detail as possible with regard to his origins. If the Ottoman sources specify an individual's ethno-regional background (*cins*, e.g. *Bosnalı* (Bosnian), *Hersekli* (Hercegovinian)) or hometown (e.g. *Nevesinli* (from the town of Nevesinje in Hercegovina)), I note this.[22]

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[21] Malcolm, *Bosnia: A Short History*, 20-23; Fine, *The Late Medieval Balkans: A Critical Survey from the Late Twelfth Century to the Ottoman Conquest*, 421, 454-455, 469-481, 576-590.

[22] İ. Metin Kunt, "Ethnic-Regional (Cins) Solidarity in the Seventeenth-Century Ottoman Establishment," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 5, no. 3 (1974): 233-238; Antonina Zhelyazkova, "Islamization in the Balkans as a Historiographical Problem: The Southeast-European Perspective," in *The Ottomans and the Balkans: A Discussion of Historiography*, eds. Fikret Adanır and Suraiya Faroqhi (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 276-277.

III. Elite Military and Bureaucratic Slavery

Ottoman bureaucratic and military slavery drew on previous examples in the Islamic world, most notably the *ghulams* of the Seljuk Sultanate of Rūm, which ruled parts of Anatolia from 1077-1307, and the *mamluk*s of the Mamluk Sultanate, which ruled Egypt, Syria, the Hijaz, and southeastern Anatolia from 1250-1517. What, and who, were *ghulam*s and *mamluk*s? David Ayalon refers to the *mamluk* institution as a fundamental socio-military system that defined the history of Islam. He traces the use of *mamluk*s back at least to the Umayyad period (661-750) but credits the Abbasid caliph al-Mu'tasim (r. 833-842) with making large-scale systematic use of them and creating *mamluk* regiments within his army. The root of the Arabic word *mamluk*, *m-l-k,* designates ownership. In the early Islamic period, it likely referred to a free client or follower of a ruler. At some point, however, the term began to be used specifically to designate an elite military slave.[23]

The word *ghulam* was similar in meaning to and often used interchangeably with the word *mamluk*. Like a *mamluk*, a *ghulam* was an elite, high-status slave of a ruler. *Ghulam*s were generally either purchased or obtained as war booty and could serve in a variety of functions, from royal guards to military commanders, to governors. C. E. Bosworth describes the life of a *ghulam* in the medieval Islamic period as a transformative one: being brought

[23] David Ayalon, "Aspects of the Mamluk Phenomenon," *Der Islam* 53 (1976): 196-224; Robert Irwin, *The Middle East in the Middle Ages: The Early Mamluk Sultanate 1250-1382* (London: Croom Helm, 1986), 3; David Ayalon, "The Muslim City and the Mamluk Military Aristocracy," *Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities Proceedings* 2, no. 14 (1967): 311-329.

into the Islamic world at a young age, becoming steeped in high political, social and religious cultures, and ultimately rising to privileged positions within the empire.[24] The careers of Ottoman *devşirme* recruits would follow the same general trajectory.

The Ottomans were greatly influenced by the practices of their predecessors in Anatolia, the Seljuks of Rūm, and by the Great Seljuks of Iraq and Iran, of whom the Rūm Seljuks were an offshoot. The Seljuks employed *ghulam*s in bureaucratic, military and palace service. A.C.S. Peacock posits that the Great Seljuks did so partially in order to follow the established Middle Eastern-Islamic practice of elite military and bureaucratic slavery. For this reason, they added a professional *ghulam* army to their existing nomadic Turcoman troops following their conquest of Baghdad in 1055.[25]

The Ottomans were also influenced by their neighbors to the south, the Mamluk Sultanate (1260-1517). *Mamluk*s served the Ayyubid dynasty (1171-1250) and famously rebelled against their Ayyubid masters and founded the Mamluk Sultanate, most of whose rulers were manumitted *mamluk*s. The earliest *mamluk*s employed by the sultanate were Turks from the Kipchak steppe who were held in esteem for their military abilities and horsemanship. In later centuries, however, they were procured, either as prisoners of war or

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[24] C. E. Bosworth, *The Ghaznavids: Their Empire in Afghanistan and Eastern Iran 994:1040* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1963), 4, 28-56, 70-77, 98-107, 138.

[25] Nizam al-Mulk, *The Book of Government or Rules for Kings: The Siyar al-Muluk or Siyasat-nama of Nizam al-Mulk*, trans. Hubert Drake (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, Ltd., 1960), 100-102; A.C.S. Peacock, *Early Seljūq History: A New Interpretation* (London: Routledge, 2010), 5, 73, 95-97, 167; Speros Vryonis, "Seljuk Gulams and Ottoman Devshirmes," in Vryonis, *Byzantium: Its Internal History and Relations with the Muslim World: Collected Studies,* no. 9 (London, Variorium Reprints, 1971), 224-252.

as purchased slaves, from a wide array of populations, including Circassians above all, but also Abkhazians, Mongols, and occasionally Anatolian Greeks. While they were provided with rigorous military and religious schooling, Robert Irwin warns against considering the *mamluks* "Oriental zombies." After completing their training, they were manumitted and went on to serve the ruler personally, politically and militarily. As would be the case with *devşirme* recruits, they had the chance to rise to the highest positions in government and became what Ayalon refers to as "an urban military aristocracy."[26]

Despite the fact that the Rūm Seljuks employed Anatolian *ghulam*s, they remained somewhat dependent on slaves from outside their own territories. Therefore, they ran into difficulties procuring *ghulam*s. The Mamluk Sultanate encountered the same problem with procuring *mamluk*s. The Ottomans avoided this unstable element within the practice of military and bureaucratic slavery by initially levying recruits exclusively within their own territories and from among their own subjects.[27] This new form of recruitment came to be known as the *devşirme* (literally, "collection"). While the *devşirme* drew on previous examples of military and bureaucratic slavery, it reshaped and refined the practice and stood apart in many of its features.

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[26] Irwin, *The Middle East in the Middle Ages: The Early Mamluk Sultanate 1250-1382*, 62-70, 154-155; Ayalon, "The Muslim City and the Mamluk Military Aristocracy," 315-327.

[27] A.C.S. Peacock, "The Saliūq Campaign Against the Crimea and the Expansionist Policy of Early Reign of 'Alā' al-Dīn Kayqubād," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 16, no. 2 (2006): 141-143; Vryonis, "Seljuk Gulams and Ottoman Devshirmes," 241-252.

IV. The Origins and Legality of the Devşirme

The origins and legality of the *devşirme* have received a great deal of attention in Ottoman historiography. Despite debates over the exact origin date, there is a consensus that the institution emerged during the period of the Ottoman state's transition from a *gazi*, or frontier "holy warrior," polity to a bureaucratic empire, so sometime between the late fourteenth and the early fifteenth century. Though one of the purposes of the *devşirme* was to fill the ranks of the Janissary corps, it is thought to have originated roughly half a century, if not more, after the foundation of the Janissaries. The Janissary corps is believed to have originated sometime between the reigns of Orhan (1326-1360) and Murad I (1362-1389), although primary sources disagree on the exact date.[28]

An issue that complicates the origin of the *devşirme* is the blurry distinction between this form of recruitment and the recruitment of prisoners of war. The early Abbasids during the ninth century procured *mamluk*s from prisoners of war, as did other medieval Muslim dynasties, so this practice was not without precedent.[29] Chroniclers of the early Ottoman Empire from Idris Bitlisi to Neşri insist that the Ottoman sultans observed the *pencik*, the ruler's right to one-fifth of all moveable spoils of war, including human captives. According

[28] Speros Vryonis, Jr., "Isidore Glabas and the Turkish Devshirme," *Speculum* 31, no. 3 (Jul., 1956): 433-434; Ménage, "Devshirme;" Wittek, *The Rise of the Ottoman Empire*, 50; J.A.B. Palmer, "The Origin of the Janissaries," *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 35 (1952): 454 – 461; Itzkowitz, *Ottoman Empire and Islamic Tradition,* 20-21.

[29] Matthew S. Gordon, *The Breaking of a Thousand Swords: A History of the Turkish Military of Samarra (A.H. 200-275/815-889 C.E.)* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001), 15-23, 42, 61.

to these chroniclers, a legal expert by the name of Kara Rüstem who was knowledgeable in *sharia*, first reminded the early sultans of this right.[30] Since at least a portion of the prisoners of war were trained for the Janissary corps and palace service, we can understand the *pencik* as an early form of the *devşirme*.[31] The chronicler Aşıkpaşazade dates the *pencik* to the reign of Orhan (c. 1324-62).[32] However, the chronicles of Uruj ascribe the initial application of the *pencik* to Murad I (r. 1362-89). Scholars have tended to support the later date. Aleksandar Matkovski, for example, notes that during the reign of Murad I, *pencik oğlanları*, youths captured in war, received education for the Janissary corps and palace service.[33] Vassilis Demetriades cites a 1707 *ferman* (imperial edict) regarding a Macedonian endowment created between 1383 and 1387 that refers to an exemption from the *pencik* for a particular community. This also places the institution within the reign of Murad I.[34]

Matkovski claims that the transition from the *pencik* to the *devşirme* took place after Timur's defeat of the Ottomans at the Battle of Ankara in 1402, when Ottoman expansion and, by extension, the acquisition of war captives was halted. A decision was therefore made to levy from within, and a law code governing the institution was penned. The two

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[30] Trako, "Pretkosovski Događaji u Hešt Bihiştu Idris Bitlisija," 168; Mehmed Neşri, *Neşri Tarihi I*, ed. Mehmet Altay Köymen (Ankara: Başbakanlık Basımevi, 1983), 97.

[31] Bojanić-Lukač, Dušanka, "Povodom Izraza Čilik," *Vesnik Vojnog Muzeja Jugoslovenske Narodne Armije* 6-7 (1962): 237-239.

[32] Palmer, "The Origin of the Janissaries," 461.

[33] Matkovski, "Prilog Pitanju Devširme," 275-6; Handžić, "O Janičarskom Zakonu," 143; Ménage, "Devshirme."

[34] Vassilis Demetriades, "Some Thoughts on the Origins of the Devshirme," in *The Ottoman Emirate (1300-1389): Halcyon Days in Crete I: A Symposium Held in Rethymnon*, ed. Elizabeth Zachariadou (Rethymnon: Crete University Press, 1993), 24-30; Pakalin, *Osmanlı Tarih Deyimleri ve Terimleri Sözlüğü*, 9.

institutions coexisted until the *devşirme* superseded the *pencik,* which was henceforth exacted in monetary form. Other scholars date the transition to the reign of Bayezid I (1389-1402).[35] As of yet, the earliest law code found referring to the *devşirme* is from the reign of Bayezid II (1481-1512), titled *Yeniçeri içün Oğlan Almak Kanun* (Law governing the taking of youths for the Janissaries). It briefly addresses the functioning of the *devşirme*. It does not mention it by this name yet stipulates that *re'aya* (peasant subject) youths are suitable candidates for recruitment. Interestingly enough, a *pencik kanunnamesi* from the reign of Bayezid II exists as well. Unlike the *devşirme kanunnamesi*, it deals with all manner of procedures related to captives taken during military expeditions. This seems to indicate that the two institutions were separate by this time.[36] The exact origin date of the *devşirme* is not integral to this work, as it is certain that it was well-developed by the time it was levied in Bosnia.[37] Nevertheless, this debate is one of note.

More relevant to this study is the debate over the legality of the *devşirme*. Islamic law (*sharia*) forbade the enslavement of Muslims and non-Muslims who lived under Muslim sovereignty within the *Dar al-Islam*. The latter were considered protected, tax-paying

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[35] Matkovski, "Prilog Pitanju Devširme," 275-6; Handžić, "O Janičarskom Zakonu," 143; Ménage, "Devshirme;" Itzkowitz, *Ottoman Empire and Islamic Tradition,* 21; John Haldon, "The Ottoman State and the Question of State Autonomy: Comparative Perspectives," in *New Approaches to State and Peasant in Ottoman History*, eds. Halil Berktay and Suraiya Faroqhi (London: Frank Cass and Co. Ltd., 1992), 58.

[36] Ahmed Akgündüz, *Osmanlı Kanunnâmeleri ve Hukûkî Tahlilleri,* II. Kitap: *II. Bâyezid Kanunnâmeleri* (Istanbul: Hilâl Matbaası, 1990), 123-134.

[37] Mihailović, *Memoirs of a Janissary*, xxi-xxviii, 159; V.L. Ménage, Review of *Memoirs of a Janissary by Konstantin Mihailović*, trans. Benjamin Stolz, historical introduction by Svat Soucek, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* no. 1 (1977): 156-7.

subjects (*dhimmis*) and their lives and property fell under the ruler's protection. This means that the *devşirme* was illegal in the eyes of holy law. This discrepancy caught the eyes of Ottoman historians and writers such as Idris Bitlisi, Sa'duddin (1536-1599) and Mustafa Ali (1541-1600). Idris Bitlisi, a Kurdish nobleman and historian active in Ottoman politics, who wrote between 1500 and 1510, justified the *devşirme* on the basis of the *pencik*.[38] Focusing on the benefits it brought to the empire, he maintained that in the case of *dhimmis* whose territories were conquered by force, the institution was allowable by *sharia*. Sa'duddin, an Ottoman theologian, revised Bitlisi's opinion by omitting the fact that the *devşirme* was levied on *dhimmi* children. Instead, he wrote "children of the infidels" and left out Bitlisi's justification on the basis of forcible conquest. Because Sa'duddin was a theologian and knew the *devşirme* to be illegal, he excluded any attempt to justify it on the basis of *sharia*.[39]

This illegality continues to confuse Ottomanists who have tried to explain it in numerous ways. İ. Metin Kunt has argued that Islamic principles were secondary considerations to the Ottoman *gazi* state, which was preoccupied with military expansion and conquest. Peacock confirms that the Seljuks, like the Ottomans, maintained a commitment to Sunnism and the Hanafi tradition. Nevertheless, these commitments were pragmatic, varied according to circumstances, and allowed for the retention of some pre-Islamic beliefs. Similarly, according to Kunt, the version of Islam practiced in the fourteenth

[38] Ménage, "Sidelights on the Devshirme from Idris and Sa'duddin," 181-183; Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300-1650: The Structure of Power*, 118-122; Palmer, "The Origin of the Janissaries," 448-480.

[39] Ménage, "Devshirme;" idem, "Sidelights on the Devshirme from Idris and Sa'duddin," 181-183.

century by frontier groups such as the Ottomans allowed for the retention of pre-Islamic, Turkic customs that may have justified the *devşirme*.[40]

Cemal Kafadar has argued against this line of ahistorical thinking, writing that judging the Ottomans as "not Muslim enough" confuses our understanding of heterodoxy with the historical reality of the early Ottoman world. While his work does not touch on the *devşirme*, Guy Burak has also suggested that we cannot assume that the early Ottomans had only a loose commitment to Sunni orthodoxy. His studies of imperial provincial madrasas and how they bound the Ottoman dynasty, Hanafi jurisprudence, and Islamic law together suggest that the Ottomans actively engaged orthodoxy and jurisprudence early on.[41] Some have argued that the sultan followed the *sharia*-approved tradition of his *gazis*, taking *pencik* from their tenants, and levied the same tax on his own subjects. Others have posited that the sultan simply extended the range of the *pencik* institution to encompass *dhimmi* youth. Some have even suggested that the Ottomans turned to an interpretation of the Shafi'i legal rite of Sunni Islam for a justification of this institution, rather than their usual Hanafi rite.[42]

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[40] Kunt, "Transformation of Zimmi into Askeri," 56-59; idem, *The Sultan's Servants: The Transformation of Ottoman Provincial Government, 1550-1650,* 7; Peacock, *Early Seljūq History: A New Interpretation*, 1-5, 127, 167.

[41] Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds: The Construction of the Ottoman State*, 11, 16, 51-73, 89-95; Guy Burak, "Dynasty, Law, and the Imperial Provincial Madrasa: The Case of al-Madrasa al-'Uthmaniyya in Ottoman Jerusalem," *Journal of Middle East Studies* 45 (2013): 111-121; Peacock, *Early Seljūq History: A New Interpretation*, 98.

[42] Palmer, "The Origin of the Janissaries," 466-467; Paul Wittek, "Devshirme and Shari'a," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 17, no. 2 (1955): 272-76.

I find two strands in this debate particularly compelling. One asks that we revise our understanding of elite military and bureaucratic slavery in the Ottoman Empire. In that vein, Colin Imber reminds us that only a small minority of the imperial household were legally free. The majority were slaves, but they held the highest social status in the empire by virtue of being members of the sultan's household. When it came to status, membership in a household, and the reputation and power of that household, mattered more than legal status as a slave or freedman.[43] By the same token, other scholars have suggested that we put aside our contemporary understanding of slavery when considering Islamic elite military and bureaucratic slavery. In the Ottoman context, they tell us, words used to describe recruits such as *kul*, *ghulam*, and *acemi oğlanı* were ambiguous and could be used to designate a servant or officer. In response, others have pointed to manumission documents that refer to *kapı kulları* as '*abd,* a relatively unambiguous term for a slave.[44] Attempting to bridge the two positions, Kafadar provides another possibility. He notes that one did not have to be a Muslim theologian to know and consider Islam the "natural religion" of all human beings. In that case, an institution such as the *devşirme* that brought non-believers back into the fold, back to their natural tendencies, and elevated them to the highest status, was inherently

[43] Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300-1650: The Structure of Power*, 135.

[44] Irwin, *The Middle East in the Middle Ages: The Early Mamluk Sultanate 1250-1382*, 3; Kunt, *The Sultan's Servants: The Transformation of Ottoman Provincial Government, 1550-1650,* 41-45; idem, "Transformation of Zimmi into Askeri," 55, 60-62; V.L. Ménage, "Some Notes on the 'Devshirme,'" *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 29, no. 1 (1966): 65-69; İnalcık, *Fatih Devri Üzerinde Tetkiler ve Vesikalar,* vol. 1, 204-217.

good. Similarly, İnalcık has written that the Ottomans never considered the *devşirme* slavery but rather an extraordinary tax on their *dhimmi* subjects.[45]

Another compelling argument reminds us that the *devşirme* resided under the legal auspices of *kanun* (sultanic law, which could include codified imperial customary law, known as *örf*), not *sharia*. After all, the levy could be enacted only by sultanic decree.[46] This is mirrored in imperial orders discussing the *devşirme*. In 1574, an order was sent to the *zağarcıbaşı* Mustafa asking him to collect recruits from Bilecik in western Anatolia. (The *zağarcıbaşı* was head of the imperial houndsmen, who constituted the sixty-fourth regiment of Janissaries.) The order specifies that recruits be collected from *dhimmis* in accordance with the accompanying *berat* (order) and *kanun* (*sana virilen berat-i alışanımda ve beyan olunan kanun üzere*).[47] Another 1574 *devşirme* order for a different region also outlines how the levy should be enacted and references *kanun* (*nişan-ı hümayunumda mestur olan kaide*

[45] Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds: The Construction of the Ottoman State*, 83-86, 61; İnalcık, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age, 1300-1600*, 78.

[46] Haldon, "The Ottoman State and the Question of State Autonomy: Comparative Perspectives," 58-59; Douglas A. Howard, "Ottoman Historiography and the Literature of 'Decline' of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," *Journal of Asian History* 22 (1988): 57-59; Itzkowitz, *Ottoman Empire and Islamic Tradition*, 49-50; Dušanka Bojanić-Lukač, "Povodom Izraza Čilik," 238; Cornell H. Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual in the Ottoman Empire: The Historian Mustafa Ali (1541-1600)* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1986), 92-94, 261-263.

[47] BOA, Mühimme Defteri 24, no. 157 (29 Zilhicce 981/21 April 1574); Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devleti Teşkilatından Kapukulu Ocakları*, vol. 1, 106.

kanun üzere").[48] In my research, I have yet to see an imperial order discussing the *devşirme* that does not invoke *kanun*, often multiple times.

What was *kanun* to the Ottomans? It was codified Ottoman dynastic law that supplemented *sharia*. In imperial orders, it is often invoked as *kanun-i kadim üzere* ("according to ancient law").[49] It recognized custom, a traditional way of doing things that became an established norm and accrued authority over time. *Kanun* was invoked in a 1536 *devşirme kanunnamesi* to note that collecting youths for the Janissary corps from the protected lands of the Ottoman Empire had occurred since ancient times (*kadim-i eyyamdan*) and was a customary practice (*adet-i mu'tad oldu*).[50]

To understand the interplay between *kanun* and *sharia*, it helps to explore the relationship between *sharia* and sovereignty. In the medieval Islamic world, it was recognized that *sharia* was holy and an "ultimate guide to life," but also that practical matters required order through an earthly power. This earthly power was responsible for ensuring the rule of *sharia*, but also the practical maintenance of order. *Kanun* resulted from the need for practical regulations and recognized the legal prerogative of a ruler to maintain order and

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[48] BOA, Mühimme Defteri 23, no. 132 (29 Zilkade 981/22 March 1574); Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devleti Teşkilatından Kapukulu Ocakları*, vol. 1, 103-104.

[49] İnalcık, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age, 1300-1600*, 70; Howard, "Ottoman Historiography and the Literature of 'Decline' of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," 59; Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual in the Ottoman Empire: The Historian Mustafa Ali (1541-1600)*, 92-94, 261-263.

[50] *Yeniçeri Oğlanı Cemi Etmek Kanunnamesi (Devşirme Kanunnamesi)*, Beyazit Devlet Kütüphanesi, Veliyuddin Efendi Koleksiyonu MS 1969, fols. 124-127; Ahmed Akgündüz, *Osmanlı Kanunnameleri ve Hukuki Tahlilleri,* II. Kitap: *II Bayezid Devri Kanunnameleri* (Istanbul: Hilal Matbaası, 1990), 124; Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual in the Ottoman Empire: The Historian Mustafa Ali (1541-1600)*, 92-94, 261-263.

justice through personal decree. Rather than opposing one another, *kanun* and *sharia* were supposed to operate in symbiosis. Ottoman political theory placed particular emphasis on *kanun* as a legitimate source of law and justice. It was codified via *kavanin* (plural of *kanun*), a collection of sultanic decrees passed and recognized by each successive sultan and known collectively as the *Kanunname-i Al-i 'Osman*. If we understand the *devşirme* as a tax on Ottoman subjects that was established by *kanun*, as opposed to *sharia*, then its illegality in the eyes of the latter was irrelevant. As Wittek puts it, the practice existed "outside of the range of *şeriat*," justified by "*ada* and *darura,*" custom and necessity.[51]

It is difficult to gauge how and whether the legality of the *devşirme* was interpreted on the ground, but one particular episode from early nineteenth-century Bosnia is telling. It came after the 1826 abolition of the Janissary corps by Mahmud II (r. 1808-1839). The abolition was widely opposed in the super-province, and three months after the news arrived, a petition was crafted asking for exemption for Bosnia. The petition was written by representatives from thirty-two districts at a general assembly in Sarajevo. It was signed by 374 individuals, and although the occupational breakdown is currently not available to us, among them were a wide variety of religious and military officials: *muftis*, who gave

[51] Linda Darling, *Revenue-Raising and Legitimacy: Tax Collection and Finance Administration in the Ottoman Empire 1560-1660* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 26, 82; İnalcık, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age, 1300-1600*, 68-78; Howard, "Ottoman Historiography and the Literature of 'Decline' of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," 55-57; Kunt, "Transformation of Zimmi into Askeri," 58; Wittek, "Devshirme and Shari'a," 275; Demetriades, "Some Thoughts on the Origins of the Devshirme," 30; Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual in the Ottoman Empire: The Historian Mustafa Ali (1541-1600)*, 92-94, 261-263.

officially-sanctioned legal opinions in accordance with the *sharia*; *kadıs* (judges); *imams* (prayer leaders); members of the *ulema*, or religious scholars, in general; *begs* (district governors); Janissary officers, known as *hassekiyye*; *alemdars* (standard bearers); Janissary volunteers known as *serdengeçti*; and regional militia commanders, known as *kapudan*s. These representatives doubted that abolition of the Janissaries was even permissible according to *sharia* given that the Janissary corps was responsible for defending Islam in Bosnia, and furthering and bringing glory to it throughout the world. Here, we see a defense of the Janissary corps, an organization that, in earlier centuries, had been filled through the *devşirme*, based on *sharia*. While this is a singular anecdote outside of the time frame of this study, it is telling, especially given that the complaint came from people learned in religious and customary law.[52]

In any event, it is important to recognize that the institution's dubious legality never actually hindered its practice, nor was it ever seriously challenged. Even when questions of legality were raised in the sixteenth century, we do not know that they ever sparked a wider debate. Moreover, the Ottomans themselves saw no contradiction in mentioning *sharia* alongside *kanun* when it came to the *devşirme*.[53] The two were often referenced side by side

[52] Ahmed S. Aličić, *Pokret za Autonomiju Bosne od 1831. do 1832. Godine* (Sarajevo: Orijentalni Institut u Sarajevu, 1996), 158-167.

[53] Kunt, *The Sultan's Servants: The Transformation of Ottoman Provincial Government, 1550-1650*, 32; Ménage, "Some Notes on the 'Devshirme,'" 71; Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds: The Construction of the Ottoman State*, 153; Mustafa Ālī, *Mustafā Ali's Counsel for Sultans of 1581 (II): Edition, Translation, Notes*, trans. Andreas Tietze (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1982), 30-32; Aličić,

as *şer' ve kanun.* In a 1638 Muslim court record pertaining to an order for *devşirme* recruitment, *kanun-i kadim* and *sharia* are invoked to warn officials that no behavior conflicting with either would be accepted. Moreover, *kadı*s, the so-called dispensers of *sharia,* and "the representatives of Holy Law within the state apparatus," oversaw *devşirme* levies themselves in their respective regions.[54] It is possible, then, that the Ottomans were simply not preoccupied with the questions of legality that interest us today, and saw nothing legally incompatible in the institution.

V. The Functioning of the Devşirme

The *devşirme* functioned as a conscription, levying young men from various Ottoman territories and bringing them to Istanbul in order to groom them for elite palace, bureaucratic, and military service. From its inception until the mid-sixteenth century, the conscription was entrusted to functionaries in the provinces such as *beğlerbeği*s, *sancakbeği*s and local *kadı*s. However, due to apparent corruption, and perhaps also a desire for more central oversight, the conscription was reassigned to specific members of the Janissary corps. The Janissary officers who were appointed to the task were the *sekbanbaşı* (literally, "head mercenary," the Janissary *ağa*'s representative), the *solakbaşı* (head guardsman), the

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Pokret za Autonomiju Bosne od 1831. do 1832. Godine, 164-167; Howard, "Ottoman Historiography and the Literature of 'Decline' of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," 59-70.

[54] Matkovski, "Prilog Pitanju Devširme," 301-306; Darling, *Revenue-Raising and Legitimacy: Tax Collection and Finance Administration in the Ottoman Empire, 1560-1660*, 203.

zağarcıbaşı (literally, "head houndsman," commander of the 64th Janissary regiment), the *turnacıbaşı* (head of the crane-keepers), the *zemberekçibaşı* (commander of the 82nd Janissary regiment), the *yayabaşı* (head foot-soldier), and the *deveci* (commander of the first five Janissary regiments).

Older scholarship has claimed that the *devşirme* was enacted yearly or every four to seven years. Others have argued more convincingly that it was done out of necessity in times of military or bureaucratic need. In my own research, I have found references to *devşirme* orders in the following years: 1564, 1567, 1574, 1601, 1607, 1610, 1622, 1638 and 1666. Koçi Beg's early-seventeenth century *Kitab-i Müstetab*, a reform manual, notes that the levy occurred every seven to ten years, or according to need, and was not imposed repeatedly on the same territory, but rotated.[55]

The proportion of one young man for every forty households in a given locale was an upper limit; fewer were collected at times. The levy was assessed against tax units consisting of one or more villages rather than against individual households, so this lightened the burden. Only a single young man could be levied from any one household. The ages of the recruits varied from fourteen to twenty-five, although some have argued that boys as young

[55] BOA, Mühimme Defteri 7, no. 45 (4/6 Safer 975/10/12 August 1567); BOA, Mühimme Defteri 24, no. 157 (29 Zilhicce 981/21 April 1574); BOA, Mühimme Defteri 23, no. 132 (29 Zilkade 981/22 March 1574); BOA, Mühimme Defteri 79, no. 236 (Muharrem 1019/April 1610); Matkovski, "Prilog Pitanju Devširme," 277, 291-306; Itzkowitz, *Ottoman Empire and Islamic Tradition*, 49-50; Ménage, "Devshirme;" Handžić, "O Janičarskom Zakonu," 143-144; Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devleti Teşkilatından Kapukulu Ocakları*, vol. 1, 103-106, 127; Varvari Ali Paša, *Rimovana Autobiografija Varvari Ali-Paše*, trans. Marija Đukanović (Belgrade: Filološki Fakultet Beogradskog Univerziteta, 1967), 7-13; Ahmed Akgündüz, *Osmanlı Kanunnâmeleri ve Hukûkî Tahlilleri,* IX. Kitap, Vol. 2: *II. Osman Devri Siyâsetnâmeleri ve Kanunnâmeleri* (Istanbul: FEY Vakfı, 1996), 596, 605.

as seven were taken. The aforementioned *devşirme kanunu* from the reign of Bayezid II (r. 1481-1512) specifies that recruits are to be between the ages of fourteen and eighteen. A 1536 *devşirme kanunnamesi* confirms this. A military roll compiled after 1533 lists the names and descriptions of sixty *devşirme* recruits from the *sancak* of Bosnia and gives an age range from thirteen to nineteen.[56]

There was a recruiting preference for young men from Rumelia, particularly Albania, Bosnia, Hercegovina, Greece, and Bulgaria. Jewish, Arab, Kurdish, Persian, Roma, Daylami, Georgian, and above all, Turkish young men were not accepted.[57] According to the anonymous author of the 1606 *Laws of the Janissaries*, at a certain time, neither were Croatians, Hungarians, or Serbs. However, it is doubtful that such a prohibition ever existed or was imposed, because there were numerous Croatian and Serbian Ottoman officials of *devşirme* origins in the sixteenth century alone. The *devşirme kanunnamesi* from the reign of Bayezid II specifies that care must be taken not to recruit *levend*s (irregular military

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[56] Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300-1650: The Structure of Power*, 122-129; Ménage, "Some Notes on the 'Devshirme,'" 77; Bojanić-Lukač, "Povodom Izraza Čilik," 237-239; İ. Metin Kunt, "Ethnic-Regional (Cins) Solidarity in the Seventeenth-Century Ottoman Establishment," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 5, no. 3 (1974): 234-235; Itzkowitz, *Ottoman Empire and Islamic Tradition*, 50; Matkovski, "Prilog Pitanju Devširme," 277-278, 292-298, 301-306; Ménage, "Devshirme;" Handžić, "O Janičarskom Zakonu," 143; Paul Rycaut, *The Present State of the Ottoman Empire* (London: Charles Brome, 1686), 74; Pakalin, *Osmanlı Tarih Deyimleri ve Terimleri Sözlüğü*, 8; Akgündüz, *II. Bâyezid Kanunnâmeleri,* 123-127; *Yeniçeri Oğlanı Cemi Etmek Kanunnamesi*, fol. 124; Rifki Melül Meric, "Birkaç Mühim Arşiv Vesikası," *Istanbul Enstitüsü Dergisi* 3 (1957): 35-40.

[57] Matkovski, "Prilog Pitanju Devširme," 276; Ménage, "Devshirme;" C.G. Fisher & A.W. Fisher, "Topkapı Sarayı in the Mid-Seventeenth Century: Bobovi's Description," *Archivum Ottomanicum* 10 (1985): 30; Akgündüz, *II. Osman Devri Siyâsetnâmeleri ve Kanunnâmeleri*, 599, 603, 625; Faris Çerçi, *Gelibolulu Mustafa Âlî ve Künhü'l-Ahbâr'ında II. Selim, III. Murat ve III. Mehmet Devirleri,* vol. 1 (Kayseri: Erciyes Üniversitesi Matbaası, 2000), 135.

forces). It is also generally accepted that married youths and members of the urban merchant population were exempt. However, recruitment trends varied and there were numerous exceptions to these rules. Others exempt included only sons, orphans, those with squints and fresh-faced and/or beardless youths (likely an age reference), the unattractive, the bald, those too tall or too short, the overweight, those from ill-reputed households, and those with behavioral problems. A variety of reasons were given for these exemptions, ranging from fear that young men fitting these descriptions might be using the *devşirme* for career opportunities, to fear that they were obstinate or just plain stupid.[58]

Entire cities such as Istanbul and Bursa, and islands like Rhodes, could be exempt from the levy, as could communities that provided critical functionaries to the state, such as miners; boot-makers; caravanserai stewards; guardians of roads, passes and meadows; and those who raised horses and camels for the state. Dwellers on lands endowed to religious foundations were also exempt. These exemptions were granted by the sultan and confirmed with a *ferman*, or imperial edict, kept by the community. These were temporary privileges that could be renewed or withdrawn by each new sultan.[59] A 1655 *ferman* issued by

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[58] Akgündüz, *II. Bâyezid Kanunnâmleri,* 124; Ménage, "Devshirme;"Matkovski, "Prilog Pitanju Devširme," 277-279, 292-298; Handžić, "O Janičarskom Zakonu," 143; Akgündüz, *Osmanlı Kanunnâmeleri ve Hukûkî Tahlilleri,* IX. Kitap: *I. Ahmed, I. Mustafa ve II. Osman Devirleri Kanunnâmeleri (1012/1603-1031/1622)*, 137-138; Mustafa Âli, *Mustafa Ali's Counsel for Sultans of 1581 (II): Edition, Translation, Notes*, 30; Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300-1650: The Structure of Power*, 120-130; Itzkowitz, *Ottoman Empire and Islamic Tradition*, 50.

[59] BOA, Mühimme Defteri 39, no. 182 (27 Zilkade 987/15 January 1580); BOA, Mühimme Defteri 3, no. 369 (28 Zilhicce 966/1 October 1559); Matkovski, "Prilog Pitanju Devširme," 280-282; Ménage, "Devshirme;" Demetriades, "Some Thoughts on the Origins of the Devshirme," 24-30; Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devleti*

Mehmed IV (r. 1648-1687) to the Bosnian village of Rudo is a fitting example. The original was granted in 1575 by Murad III (r. 1574-1595). It assigned Rudo to Lala Kara Mustafa Paşa Sokolović (d. 1580) as *mülk*, or private property. Because the village was then depopulated and Murad wished for it to be revitalized, he exempted it from a variety of taxes, one being the *devşirme*. In 1655, Mehmed IV renewed these exemptions.[60]

In terms of the actual process, the levy began when an order was given by the sultan and disseminated to the appropriate provinces. One of the aforementioned officers, accompanied by a *katib* (scribe), visited the districts in which the levy was to be applied with documents of authorization (a *ferman* and a letter from the Janissary *ağa*) and uniforms. Young men would then be summoned with their fathers and religious functionaries carrying baptismal records. The Janissary officer in charge, supervised by the district's *kadı*s and *sipahi*s, the *timar*-holding cavalry officers, would select the most eligible youths. The *katib* would then create two registers listing the recruits' names, dates of birth, parentage, villages of origin, the *sipahi*s on whose *timar*s (land revenue grants) they resided, their ages, and physical descriptions.[61] These recruits were called *acemi oğlanları*, or novice recruits.

Each district affected by the levy was responsible for paying for the uniforms of their own *acemi oğlanları.* This was considered a sort of tax and referred to as *hil'at bahası* (robe

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Teşkilatından Kapukulu Ocakları, 113-114; Adem Handžić, *Opširni Popis Bosanskog Sandžaka iz 1604 Godine,* Vol. 1, 2, 3 and 4 (Sarajevo: Bošnjački Institut Zürich Odjel Sarajevo and Orijentalni Institut u Sarajevu, 2000), 84, 90-91, 147, 266, 300, 360, 368, 419, 507, 582.

[60] Historijski Arhiv Sarajevo (HAS), Fond Haci Sinanova Tekija, S. 269, 1655 Rudo Ferman.

[61] İnalcık, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age, 1300-1600*, 104-119.

price), *kaput bedeli* (coat price), *kırmızı 'aba* (red cloth) or *kul akçesi* (slave money). The outfit consisted of a red tunic (*üst dolaması*) and yellow pants (*iç dolaması*). The cost of these outfits could range from 100 to 600 *akçe*. In addition to this, the district also provided *tıraş akçesi*, money for the young men's grooming on their trip to Istanbul. These expenses are mentioned in a 1638 court case from Dragoš (Macedonia) in which Petko, the father of an *acemi oğlanı* named Niško, registers that he has received the *kırmızı 'aba* as well as the *tıraş akçesi* from the inhabitants of their village.[62]

Once a group of 100-150 *acemi oğlanları* was assembled, a Janissary officer known as the *sürücübaşı*, or chief driver, was entrusted with leading the boys to Istanbul.[63] During the trip, the *sürücübaşı* and his armed Janissary entourage were responsible for caring for and protecting the recruits. The villages they passed along the way were responsible for accommodating the group for no more than a single night. Imperial orders recorded in the *mühimme defterleri*, or registers of important affairs, attest to the fact that the recruits were not always well-received. In 1566, the *kadı* of Ohrid in Macedonia sent a note to the *beg* of Elbasan in Albania complaining that a group of *acemi oğlanları* from Akhisar (Krujë, Albania) and their escorts had been attacked on the way to Istanbul by the villagers of

[62] Matkovski, "Prilog Pitanju Devširme," 279, 301-306; Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300-1650: The Structure of Power*, 125-129; Ménage, "Devshirme."

[63] *Yeniçeri Oğlanı Cemi Etmek Kanunnamesi (Devşirme Kanunnamesi)*, fol. 125.

Brezište while attempting to stay the night.[64] The trip is estimated to have taken one to three months, depending on the distance from the capital to the recruits' native districts.

Upon arriving in Istanbul, the *acemi oğlanları* were first tallied by the *ağa* of the Janissaries and then inspected by the Rumelian and Anatolian *ağa*s, the head Janissary commanders of the two respective provinces. After physiognomy- and phrenology-based inspections, they underwent various tests to determine their talents. Then the *ağa*s decided on the next step in their education. Finally, they were circumcised, converted and given new, Islamic names.[65]

Once they had arrived in Istanbul, the new recruits were separated into groups that followed different paths. Perhaps the least promising avenue was being assigned to the *Türk üzerinde/üzerine olmak*, the "Turkification" group. These *acemi oğlanları* were first hired out to Anatolian farmers for a small fee. The purpose behind this practice seems to have been manifold. On one hand, it brought in some money to the state and aided Anatolian farmers. On the other, it was meant both to teach the recruits the Turkish language and Islamic practice, and to toughen them up physically. In that way, the practice seems to have been

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[64] BOA, Mühimme Defteri 5, no. 959 (20 Receb 973/10 February 1566); Matkovski, "Prilog Pitanju Devširme," 288-290; Akgündüz, *I. Ahmed, I. Mustafa ve II. Osman Devirleri Kanunnâmeleri (1012/1603-1031/1622)*, 143.

[65] Matkovski, "Prilog Pitanju Devširme," 277-280; Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300-1650: The Structure of Power*, 125-129; Itzkowitz, *Ottoman Empire and Islamic Tradition*, 50; Kunt, "Transformation of Zimmi into Askeri," 61; Rycaut, *The Present State of the Ottoman Empire*, 46; Akgündüz, *I. Ahmed, I. Mustafa ve II. Osman Devirleri Kanunnâmeleri (1012/1603-1031/1622)*, 143.

informed by practical needs, as well as the need for acculturation.[66] This practice is recorded in numerous Ottoman sources, most notably the aforementioned 1606 *Laws of the Janissaries* law code and advice manual. This source dates the practice to the reign of Mehmed II and provides a most interesting justification. The story goes that Mehmed II noticed that recruits were unable to properly greet him. His grand vizier, Mahmud Paşa, remarked that this was because they were converts and relatively illiterate, presumably referring to the ways of Islam but also Turkish customs. The sultan therefore proposed that the first step in a recruit's training be a sort of education in Turkishness, learning Turkish but also becoming Turkish (*Türk üzerine verüp Türkçe'yi ögrense*). The author also sees fit to mention that recruits are to be sold only to Anatolian farmers. They could not be sold to law men or judges, because these people did not engage in agriculture. They should not be sold to people in Istanbul, because the city cultivated evil in them. Lastly, they were not to be sold to artisans, because artisans were busy with profit rather than service.[67] In this instance, "*Türk*" seems to have been used to invoke countryside honesty, hardiness, and lack of sophistication, as well as a form of folk Islam and Turkish folk customs.

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[66] The number of the entry is too faded to make out, so I have listed the page number instead: BOA, Mühimme Defteri 6, pg. 186 (23 Rebiyülevvel 972/29 October 1564); BOA, Mühimme Defteri 6, no. 479 (8 Cemaziyülevvel 972/12 December 1564); BOA, Mühimme Defteri 46, no. 313 (989/1581-1582); Ménage, "Devshirme;" İnalcık, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age, 1300-1600*, 79; Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devleti Teşkilatından Kapukulu Ocakları*, 115-116; Akgündüz, *I. Ahmed, I. Mustafa ve II. Osman Devirleri Kanunnâmeleri (1012/1603-1031/1622)*, 135-136, 141-145; idem, *Siyâsetnâmeleri ve Kanunnâmeleri,* 596, 605-606.

[67] Akgündüz, *I. Ahmed, I. Mustafa ve II. Osman Devirleri Kanunnâmeleri (1012/1603-1031/1622)*, 135-136, 143-145.

The Rumelian and Anatolian *ağa*s and their staff were responsible for overseeing the entirety of this process. Along with hiring out, keeping track of and eventually retrieving the recruits, they also retrieved runaways.[68] Various records attest to this being an occasional occurrence. In 1524, it was recorded in an Istanbul court record that a runaway *acemi oğlanı* from the *sancak* of Bosnia by the name of Nazlı was to be redelivered to his *sahip* (owner).[69] In the same year, a similar case occurred involving a Russian runaway.[70] In 1528, another order was issued concerning a runaway Hungarian recruit serving in Iznikmid (Izmit) who was to be retrieved and returned to his *sahip*.[71] In 1564, an imperial order was sent to the *begi* and *kadı* of Sis (Kozan, Turkey) regarding the need to apprehend seven recruits taken from the region who then apostatized and returned home with the aid of their relatives.[72] A similar order was sent to the *begi* and *kadı* of Kayseri in 1565.[73]

The *acemi oğlanları* sent to live and work with Anatolian farmers were likely destined to end up as "ordinary" Janissaries. Once their *Türk üzerinde olmak* education was

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[68] BOA, Mühimme Defteri 7, no. 45 (4/6 Safer 975/10/12 August 1567); Itzkowitz, *Ottoman Empire and Islamic Tradition*, 50-51; Akgündüz, *I. Ahmed, I. Mustafa ve II. Osman Devirleri Kanunnâmeleri (1012/1603-1031/1622)*, 145; Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devleti Teşkilatından Kapukulu Ocakları*, 127.

[69] İSAM, Istanbul Kadı Sicilleri: Üsküdar 5, no. 342 (20-30 Zilhicce 930/19-29 September 1524).

[70] İSAM, Istanbul Kadı Sicilleri: Üsküdar 5, no. 397 (20-30 Receb 930/24 May-3 June 1524); We have no records suggesting that the *devşirme* was levied in Russia, yet the runaway in question is identified as an *acemi oğlan*. It is most likely that he was a *mamluk*.

[71] İSAM, Istanbul Kadı Sicilleri: Üsküdar 5, no. 560 (15 Zilkade 934/1 August 1528); İSAM, Istanbul Kadı Sicilleri: Üsküdar 5, no. 499 (1-10 Şevval 935/8-17 June 1529).

[72] BOA, Mühimme Defteri 6, no. 551 (26 Cemaziyülevvel 972/30 December 1564); Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devleti Teşkilatından Kapukulu Ocakları*, 126.

[73] BOA, Mühimme Defteri 6, no. 574 (29 Cemaziyülevvel 972/2 January 1565); BOA, Mühimme Defteri 7, no. 2632 (22/23 Cemaziyülevvel 976/12/13 November 1568); BOA, Mühimme Defteri 46, no. 313 (989/1581-1582); Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devleti Teşkilatından Kapukulu Ocakları*, 126-128.

deemed complete, they were called up and registered, and received a place in one of the Janissary barracks in Istanbul, as well as a post.[74] Various records attest to this process. In 1566, an order was sent to the Janissary *ağa* (commander) noting that Pirizade, the Master General of Artillery (*topcubaşı*), needed apprentices. It ordered that twenty-five *acemi oğlanları* be selected from those placed with Anatolian farmers and registered as apprentice gunners (*topçu şakird*).[75] Other posts included lower palace service, apprenticeships in the Istanbul dockyards, firewood transport, work on the ferries, carpentry, firefighting, work in the armory or gunnery, weapons production, blacksmithing and many more. Some even helped with architectural projects in Istanbul.[76]

All new Janissaries learned at least one trade useful not only in Istanbul but also on campaign. These trades included saddlery, kettle-making, cooking, carpentry, ship-building and supply transport. Though it was ultimately up to the Istanbul *ağa*s to decide where the new Janissaries were funneled, their talents and requests were taken into account. In 1564, the Janissary *ağa* (commander) received a request that eight recruits who had completed their training be appointed as apprentices to imperial halter and rope makers (*hassa yularcı ve muytablara şakird*). The request asked that the recruits be suited for or have some talent

[74] *The Laws of the Janissaries* recommends that this education last anywhere from four to eight years: Akgündüz, *I. Ahmed, I. Mustafa ve II. Osman Devirleri Kanunnâmeleri (1012/1603-1031/1622)*, 136-151; idem, *II. Osman Devri Siyâsetnâmeleri ve Kanunnâmeleri*, 596, 605-606.

[75] The number of the entry is too faded to make out, so I have listed the page number instead: BOA, Mühimme Defteri 6, pg. 186 (23 Rebiyülevvel 972/29 October 1564); Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devleti Teşkilatından Kapukulu Ocakları*, 115-116.

[76] Ebru Boyar and Kate Fleet, *A Social History of Ottoman Istanbul* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 143; Fisher, "Topkapı Sarayı in the Mid-Seventeenth Century: Bobovi's Description," 29, 77.

for this craft.[77] In 1568, the Janissary *ağa* received a request that forty *acemi oğlanları* be "graduated to the gate" (*kapıya çıkarup*) and sent to Egypt.[78] This was likely in response to the Zaydi rebellion that had recently erupted in Yemen.[79] In this instance, graduating to the gate meant being promoted from novice recruits to servicemen and being drafted into military service outside of the imperial palace.

The process of becoming a low-ranking Janissary was long and arduous. An equally laborious, but more prestigious, avenue was to be appointed to the imperial gardens immediately after recruitment. This was reserved for the more hardy and less cerebral of the elite. The gardeners' corps (*bostancılar*) had three main purposes. One was tending the palace gardens and producing fruits, vegetables and flowers for sale and consumption. Another was serving as the armed imperial bodyguard. The third was acting as the retinue of the *bostancıbaşı* (head gardener), the police chief of Istanbul and its surroundings. All three purposes required a certain physicality, so it is no surprise that this corps acquired the reputation of being physically imposing rather than intellectually stimulating.[80] Albert

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[77] BOA, Mühimme Defteri 6, no. 479 (8 Cemaziyülevvel 972/12 December 1564).

[78] BOA, Mühimme Defteri 7, no. 2313 (28 Rebiyülevvel 976/20 September 1568); BOA, Mühimme Defteri 6, no. 284 (18 Rebiyülevvel 972/24 October 1564); BOA, Mühimme Defteri 2, no. 78 (12 Rebiyülevvel 963/25 January 1556); BOA, Mühimme Defteri 36, no. 90 (19 Zilhicce 986/16 February 1579); Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devleti Teşkilatından Kapukulu Ocakları*, 128; Matkovski, "Prilog Pitanju Devširme," 285; Boyar and Fleet, *A Social History of Ottoman Istanbul*, 83; Suraiya Faroqhi, "Labor Recruitment and Control in the Ottoman Empire," in *Manufacturing in the Ottoman Empire and Turkey, 1500-1950*, ed. Donald Quataert (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 27-37.

[79] Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300-1650: The Structure of Power*, 54.

[80] Akgündüz, *I. Ahmed, I. Mustafa ve II. Osman Devirleri Kanunnâmeleri (1012/1603-1031/1622)*, 141, 146; Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300-1650: The Structure of Power*, 140; Boyar and Fleet, *A Social History of*

Bobovi, an enslaved Pole who came into the sultan's service as a music instructor (*sazendebaşı*) in the mid-seventeenth century, wrote that in his time, there were seven to eight thousand gardeners throughout Istanbul. He noted that their job was to protect the sultan and city, and that they had sailors and archers in their ranks.[81] Pakalin wrote that there were usually three to four hundred gardeners in Topkapı Sarayı.[82] The discrepancy in the estimates is likely due to the fact that Pakalin was taking into account only gardeners within Topkapı Sarayı and not those employed in other imperial gardens throughout Istanbul.

There are disagreements over how promising imperial garden service was in terms of career advancement. Some claimed that it could lead to high positions. Others, such as the late seventeenth-century British diplomat Paul Rycaut, wrote that it was a menial service reserved for those "in whom appearing more strength [sic] of body than of mind…."[83] Nevertheless, recruits to the gardens still had the benefit of proximity to the sultan and the potential for promotion. In 1568, for example, the sultan asked the Janissary *ağa* to (commander) see that 300 deserving and seasoned recruits (*acemi oğlanların eskilerinden*) in the imperial gardens were graduated to the gate (*kapıya çıkağa*). Unlike the previous record

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Ottoman Istanbul, 225; Fisher, "Topkapı Sarayı in the Mid-Seventeenth Century: Bobovi's Description," 29, 77; Fariba Zarinebaf, *Crime and Punishment in Istanbul, 1700-1800* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2010), 135.

[81] Fisher, "Topkapı Sarayı in the Mid-Seventeenth Century: Bobovi's Description," 6-7, 50, 61.

[82] Pakalin, *Osmanlı Tarih Deyimleri ve Terimleri Sözlüğü*, 240, 664.

[83] Boyar and Fleet, *A Social History of Ottoman Istanbul*, 120, 147, 196-197, 215-217, 243; Rycaut, *The Present State of the Ottoman Empire*, 74-76; Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300-1650: The Structure of Power*, 125-126.

invoking such a graduation, which specified that the recruits in question were bound for Egypt, this one provides no such detail. However, it would be safe to assume that both records referred to a graduation from the status of novices to active servicemen in the Ottoman military. Garden recruits also had the benefit of proximity to the *bostancıbaşı*, a very high palace functionary. Along with serving as Istanbul's police chief, chief investigator and chief executioner, he was also the commander of the garden staff and therefore the head of the imperial guard.[84] Perhaps most importantly, he was the helmsman of the sultan's barge, which ensured regular access to and conversation with the sultan. One could easily rise from this post to that of grand vizier.[85] Bobovi wrote that the *bostancıbaşı* also played a role in the social and political mobility of others and that "When the sultan is informed of the merits of someone, roads to better jobs can be opened…."[86]

By far the most prestigious avenue for the recruits, however, was to be selected for palace service immediately after the *devşirme*. This honor was reserved for the most physically attractive and intellectually promising recruits, and was likely to lead to high military and administrative service. These elite recruits were first educated and served apprenticeships in one of the outer palace schools such as the Old Palace and New Palace in

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[84] BOA, Mühimme Defteri 7, no. 2660 (25 Cemaziyülevvel/15 November 1568); İnalcık, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age, 1300-1600*, 82.

[85] Boyar and Fleet, *A Social History of Ottoman Istanbul*, 120, 147, 196-197, 215-217, 243; Rycaut, *The Present State of the Ottoman Empire*, 74-76; Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300-1650: The Structure of Power*, 140.

[86] Fisher, "Topkapı Sarayı in the Mid-Seventeenth Century: Bobovi's Description," 6-7, 50, 56.

Edirne or Galata Palace (*Galatasarayı*) and Ibrahim Paşa Palace in Istanbul. Bobovi wrote that those who served in the highest positions in the empire underwent a rigorous training period and decades-long service in one of these page-training outer palaces before reaching Topkapı Sarayı. Recruits could be apprentices for seven to eight years before being promoted. According to their service and progress, the best of the best were chosen to serve the sultan in Topkapı Sarayı. All of the elite servants in the imperial palaces made up the sultan's household and were referred to as *kapı kulları*, literally servants of the gate, meaning the servants of the sultan.[87]

The education of elite recruits differed significantly from that of ordinary recruits. In groups of eighty to 100, they first learned the Qur'an and the Muslim faith, as well as the Turkish language. Then, they learned Arabic and Persian, both essential to administrative service, religious sciences, mathematics, calligraphy, and music. Each recruit also learned an artistic skill such as bookbinding or miniature painting. Further education depended on the interests and proclivities of the recruits, whether legal, financial, religious or otherwise. Military education was a top priority, so recruits trained in archery, horsemanship, wrestling and weapons proficiency. As their service and training progressed, and as they were

[87] BOA, Mühimme Defteri 7, no. 764 (27 Receb 975/27 January 1568); Akgündüz, *I. Ahmed, I. Mustafa ve II. Osman Devirleri Kanunnâmeleri (1012/1603-1031/1622)*, 141; Fisher, "Topkapı Sarayı in the Mid-Seventeenth Century: Bobovi's Description," 6-7, 19, 28-29, 50; Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300-1650: The Structure of Power*, 119-127; Itzkowitz, *Ottoman Empire and Islamic Tradition,* 51.

promoted to higher positions within the palace, their stipends rose.[88] While in palace service, all recruits were under strict supervision and expected to behave and stay put. However, Istanbul court records indicate that this was not always the case, as some recruits engaged in drinking, fighting, and general unruliness.[89]

Many of these details come alive in the autobiography of Varvari Ali Paşa, a *devşirme* recruit from the *eyalet* of Bosnia levied during the reign of Mehmed III (r. 1595-1603), who went on to have an illustrious career in Ottoman government and a tragic end following his rebellion against Ibrahim I (r. 1640-1648).[90] After being levied, he was sent straight to Galatasarayı, one of the palace schools where pages were trained, and given a stipend of two *akçe*s daily. After four years, upon the accession of Ahmed I (1603-1617) and a *büyük çıkma* ("large graduation"), he was appointed to the *Büyük Oda* of Topkapı Sarayı, the lowest chamber, reserved for brand-new transfers.[91]

> They taught me good manners and responsibility,
> Because a man comes by reputation through education.
> I spent ten years there [in Topkapı Sarayı] with a contented heart,
> I served as much as I could.
> Following that, thanks to God's mercy, I became a falconer.

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[88] Itzkowitz, *Ottoman Empire and Islamic Tradition,* 52; Rycaut, *The Present State of the Ottoman Empire*, 48-51, 55-59.

[89] İSAM, Istanbul Kadı Sicilleri: Üsküdar 17, no. 613 (20-30 Muharrem 958/28 January-7 February 1551); İSAM, Istanbul Kadı Sicilleri: Üsküdar 56, no. 280 (n.d.); İSAM, Istanbul Kadı Sicilleri: Üsküdar 84, no. 825 (20-30 Zilhicce 1000/27 September-7 October 1592).

[90] Varvari Ali Paša, *Rimovana Autobiografija Varvari Ali-Paše,* 7-13, 20; Caroline Finkel, *Osman's Dream: The Story of the Ottoman Empire* (New York: Basic Books, 2005), 228-233.

[91] Varvari Ali Paša, *Rimovana Autobiografija Varvari Ali-Paše*, 7-13, 75-85.

I was happy and enjoyed the sweets of this world.[92]

Aside from Varvari's general contentment, we learn that his initial education lasted for many years and was a path to a higher position as a *falconer* in the *Doğancı Koğuşu* ("Falconers' Room") of Topkapı Sarayı. His stipend rose, and he spent ten years in this post. From here, he moved up to the more prestigious *Seferli Odası* ("Room of the Campaigners") of Topkapı Sarayı. Progressing further and further, he became a battalion commander and eventually graduated from the palace as a member of the imperial cavalry. From there, he became a Janissary commander in Egypt, an *atmacacıbaşı* (head of the hawk-keepers), a *şahincibaşı* (head falconer), a *sıpahi ağa* (cavalry officer), a *çadırcıbaşı* (head tent-erecter), the *beğlerbeği* of Rumelia, and the governor of various provinces such as Cyprus, Adana, and his native Bosnia.[93]

The best recruits were employed in the *Hass Oda*, the privy chamber of the sultan and the highest and most prestigious chamber in Topkapı Sarayı. They had direct access to the sultan as a servant entourage of sorts. Their posts ranged from clothes-bearer to weapons-bearer, standard-bearer, keeper of the hounds, falconer, water-bearer, turban-bearer, stirrup-holder, barber, master of the horse and various other housekeeping positions. These were

[92] Varvari Ali Paša, *Rimovana Autobiografija Varvari Ali-Paše*, 79-80: "23. Podučavali su me lepom ponašanju i dužnostima, Jer čovjek stiče ugled obrazovanjem. 24. Boravio sam tamo deset godina zadovoljnog srca, Služio sam koliko god sam mogao. 25. Zatim sam zahvaljujući božijoj miloski postao sokolar. Bio sam srećan I uživao slasti ovog sveta."

[93] Ibid., 9-11, 77-103.

ceremonial and practical, because the individuals actually conducted these tasks and physically served the sultan. While sweeping a room may not seem particularly glamorous, sweeping the room of the sultan was a different matter. The *Hass Oda* gave the recruits access to the sultan, as well as political connections with the remainder of his retinue, opening the door to the highest military and bureaucratic positions within the empire.[94] The career of Lütfi Paşa, Süleyman's grand vizier from 1539 to 1541, and a *devşirme* recruit from Albania, is a fitting example. After entering the *Hass Oda* as a clothes-bearer (*çukadar*), he rose to be a member of the elite *Müteferrika* corps, then taster (*çaşnıgır*), head gatekeeper (*kapıcıbaşı*), standard bearer (*bayrakdar*), governor of Kastamonu in north central Anatolia, governor of Karaman in south central Anatolia and, lastly, grand vizier and *damad,* or son-in-law of the sultan. There were numerous similar cases, such as that of the famous Pargalı Ibrahim Paşa, whom Süleyman decided to promote directly from the head of the *Hass Oda* to the grand vizierate, which he held from 1523 to 1536.[95]

For most *kapı kulları*, service in the palace ended with a graduation known as the *çıkma*. This involved being appraised, going in front of the sultan, and receiving robes and a horse. While some have argued that the *çıkma* was the equivalent of legal manumission, others hold that it had no effect on servile status. Regardless, those who graduated from the

[94] Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300-1650: The Structure of Power*, 134-163; Itzkowitz, *Ottoman Empire and Islamic Tradition,* 51-52.

[95] Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300-1650: The Structure of Power*, 151; Itzkowitz, *Ottoman Empire and Islamic Tradition,* 53.

palace usually became members of the imperial cavalry, high-ranking Janissary officers, provincial functionaries, or directors of palace affairs.[96] Various records attest to this process. In 1565, the *ağa* of the imperial palace in Edirne was ordered to graduate skillful senior recruits (referred to as "*gilman*," plural of *ghulam*) to the right and left wings of the imperial cavalry. Furthermore, in an undated court register, a Tavaşi Ahmed Ağa noted that the trustee of his pious endowments (*evkaf*) will be Ali, the son of his brother Mehmed and a recruit in Galatasarayı (*Galatasarayı'nda içoğlanı olan*). He named another trustee in case Ali failed to graduate (*çıkmayıp*) or passed away.[97]

Despite being taken from their native lands and thrust onto the imperial career path, *devşirme* recruits were not completely removed from their previous surroundings or their familial networks. Numerous records testify to this, and while it is a subject for upcoming chapters, I will mention a few cases here. In 1556, a relative of Sinan, an officer in the imperial halberdier corps, converted to Islam and was granted a *timar* (land revenue grant). In the same year, a new convert and the nephew (*karındaşı oğlu*) of one of the eunuchs of the *Hass Oda* was given money and appointed as a doorkeeper (*bevvab*). A *timar* was also given to the converted brother (*karındaş*) of a messenger recruit (*kapı oğlanı*). In 1582, an

[96] R. C. Repp, "Notes and Communications," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 31, no. 1 (1968): 137-139; Kunt, "Transformation of Zimmi into Askeri," 60-62; Ménage, "Some Notes on the 'Devshirme,'" 65-69; İnalcık, *Fatih Devri Üzerinde Tetkiler ve Vesikalar*, vol. 1, 204-217; Itzkowitz, *Ottoman Empire and Islamic Tradition,* 53.

[97] BOA, Mühimme Defteri 6, no. 1028 (13/14 Ramazan 972/14/15 April 1565); İSAM, Istanbul Kadı Sicilleri: Balat 2, no. 11 (n.d.); The epithet Tavaşi indicates that Ahmed Ağa was a eunuch, most likely in the *Hass Oda* of Topkapı Palace.

Üsküdar court record mentions a recruit (re)named Ali ibn Abdullah selling his portion of an inheritance from his father to his brother, Sinan Beg. Bobovi wrote in the mid-seventeenth century that some palace pages "who have their parents or friends in Constantinople" even send their linens to them to be washed.[98] All of these records indicate that *acemi oğlanı* remained connected to, and could benefit, their families.

VI. Conclusion: From Kingdom to Sancak

Over the course of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, the former medieval Kingdom of Bosnia was transformed into two of the westernmost provinces of the Ottoman Empire, Bosnia and Hercegovina. This transition incorporated and was aided by former members of Bosnian and Hercegovinian nobility, as well as other cadres of society, who accepted Ottoman vassalage and came to serve the Ottoman state. One of the ways in which Bosnians and Hercegovinians were incorporated into the Ottoman state and military was the *devşirme*, a levy of young men from the rural Ottoman subjects of the Balkans and Anatolia. These two *sancak*s became recruiting grounds for the *devşirme* relatively soon after their conquest. A peculiarity in the *devşirme* recruitment process emerged in both *sancak*s in

[98] BOA, Mühimme Defteri 2, no. 464 (25 Cemaziyülevvel 963/6 April 1556); BOA, Mühimme Defteri 2, no. 108 (13 Rebiyülevvel 963/26 January 1556); BOA, Mühimme Defteri 2, no. 2009 (Rebiyülevvel 964/January 1557); BOA, Mühimme Defteri 2, no. 1505 (Zilhicce 963/October 1556); BOA, Mühimme Defteri 2, no. 1573 (13 Zilhicce 963/18 October 1556); BOA, Mühimme Defteri 4, no. 1036 (19 Şevval 967/13 July 1560); BOA, Mühimme Defteri 4, no. 827 (10 Ramazan 967/4 June 1560); İSAM, İSAM, Istanbul Kadı Sicilleri: Üsküdar 56, no. 195 (Cemaziyülevvel 991/May-June 1583); Fisher, "Topkapı Sarayı in the Mid-Seventeenth Century: Bobovi's Description," 6-7, 48-50.

which Muslim volunteers were repeatedly levied throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. These volunteers were referred to as *Poturnak oğlanları*, or Poturnak youth.

Who were these *Poturnak*s? I suggest that they were people from the *sancak*s of Bosnia and Hercegovina who served the Ottoman state in some way, converted to Islam, and gradually become culturally and socially Ottoman. They were granted the privilege of acceptance into the *devşirme*, and the high status of *kapı kulları* (elite slaves of the sultan) for their progeny. The next part of this work is devoted to elaborating on this definition of the group and suggesting a few possibilities as to their origins, as well as a discussion of how, at least in the early sixteenth century, some Bosnians and Hercegovinians became Ottoman.

CHAPTER 1:
OTTOMANIZATION AND *POTURNAK*S
FROM THE LATE FIFTEENTH TO THE MID-SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Who were the first *Poturnak*s? I suggest that they were people from the Ottoman *sancak*s (provinces) of Bosnia and Hercegovina who served the Ottoman state in various ways, converted to Islam, and gradually became culturally and socially Ottoman.[99] In order to better define this group and understand its origins, it is helpful to look to the etymology of the term *Potur*. While some have argued that it referred specifically to rural peasantry who allied with the Ottomans, I argue for a wider definition of the term.[100] I suggest that *Potur* referred more generally to Ottomanized Bosnian and Hercegovinian Slavs of all social classes. As mentioned in the Introduction, *Potur* likely derives from the verb "*poturčiti se*," meaning to Turkify oneself, indicating a change in behavior, customs, and religion.[101] This definition does not have any rural or social connotations, and it does not apply solely to peasants. Regional folk songs discussed later in this chapter also bear out a wider definition of the

[99] In Ottoman sources, these *sancak*s are referred to as *Bosna* (Bosnia) and *Hersek* (Hercegovina).

[100] Malcolm, *Bosnia: A Short History*, 60; Pakalin, *Osmanlı Tarih Deyimleri ve Terimleri Sözlüğü*, 780; Osman A. Sokolović, "Pjesnik Aga-dede iz Dobor-grada o svome zavičaju i pogibiji Osmana II: O Jednom Autografu Gazijine Biblioteke," *Anali Gazi Husrev-begove Biblioteke u Sarajevu* 1 (1972): 9; Derviš Korkut, *Makbûl-i 'Âryf (Potur-Šáhidija) Üsküfî Bosnevija* (Sarajevo: Hrvatski Zemaljski Muzej, 1942), 371-408; Alija Nametak, "Tri Rukopisa "Makbuli-Arifa" ("Potur-Shahidije")," *Anali Gazi Husrev-begove Biblioteke u Sarajevu* 5-6 (1978): 146-164; Ismet Smailovich, "O Uskufijinu Rječniku Maqbuli Arif – Potur Shahidija," in *Muhamed Hevai Uskufi*, eds. Muhamed Huković, Ahmet Kasumović and Ismet Smailović (Tuzla: Biblioteka Baština "Univerzal", 1990), 99-135.

[101] Krstić, "Conversion and Converts to Islam in Ottoman Historiography of the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries," 58-79; Moačanin, "Mass Islamization of Peasants in Bosnia: Demystifications," 357-358; Mladenović, "The Osmanlı Conquest and the Islamization of Bosnia," 224; Lopašić, "Islamization of the Balkans with Special Reference to Bosnia," 179-180; Pakalin, *Osmanlı Tarih Deyimleri ve Terimleri Sözlüğü*, 780; Kunt, "Transformation of Zimmi into Askeri," 59.

term.[102] I will expand on the subject of etymology later in the chapter, but for now, suffice it to say that *Potur* and *Poturnak* likely denoted a wide variety of individuals who underwent various forms of Ottomanization, from service to the Ottoman state to religious conversion to marriage to Ottoman officials.

In order to conquer and secure the Kingdom of Bosnia, the Ottomans needed the cooperation and allegiance of the native population. The first, as well as subsequent, conquests of the kingdom were orchestrated with the help of, and by, native Bosnians and Hercegovinians. The Ottomans depended on and regularly collaborated with natives. These early allies were likely the first *Poturnak*s. They aided the conquest of the region, were integrated into the Ottoman state, and continued to serve it after the transition from kingdom to *sancak*. They came from a variety of social classes, from peasants and serfs to high and low nobility.[103] In return for their service and, in some cases, as a way of honoring their former stations, they were incorporated into the Ottoman military and administration.[104]

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[102] Luka Marjanović, *Hrvatske Narodne Pjesme: Junačke Pjesme Muhamedovske*, vol. 3 (Zagreb: Tiskara Karla Albrechta, 1898), 56-460.

[103] Itzkowitz, *Ottoman Empire and Islamic Tradition*, 40-42, 48; İnalcık, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age, 1300-1600*, 13; Ehud R. Toledano, "The Emergence of Ottoman-Local Elites (1700-1900): A Framework for Research," in *Middle Eastern Politics and Ideas: A History from Within*, eds. Ilan Pappé and Moshe Ma'oz (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 1997), 150; Mladenović, "The Osmanlı Conquest and the Islamization of Bosnia," 219-220.

[104] Ibrahimović, "Struktura Vojničke Klase u XV i Početkom XVI Vijeka s Posebnim Osvrtom na Širenje Islama u Bosnia," 270-277; Nenad Filipović, "Islamizacija Bosne u Prva Dva Desetljeća Osmanske Vlasti," *Prilozi za Orijentalnu Filologiju* 41 (1991): 62; Šabanović, "Vojno Uređenje Bosne od 1463 Godine do Kraja XVI

The gradual Ottomanization of these first *Poturnak*s involved not just a conversion to Islam, which at the time was not a requirement for joining the Ottomans, but service to the Ottoman state and sultan, the adoption of Ottoman culture and customs, the formation of patronage-client ties (*intisap*) with members of the Ottoman elite, and, in some cases, the inclusion of one's progeny in the *devşirme*.[105] Here, the *devşirme* functioned as a form of second-generation state clientage rather than a means of Ottomanization. I stress that Ottomanization was complex and could have involved any, all, or perhaps none of these elements. I maintain that Ottomanization remained fluid, and that it varied according to the period and circumstance. It was not a unilateral effort on the part of the Ottoman state to incorporate its provinces and people. Rather, Ottomanization was shaped, redefined, challenged, and utilized by a range of actors, from state to subject. I look at one thread of

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Stoljeća," 196-206; Aladin Husić, "Maglaj u Ranom Osmanskom Periodu (15. i 16. Stoljeće)," *Anali Gazi Husrev-begove Biblioteke u Sarajevu* 27-28 (2008): 120.

[105] Gabriel Piterberg, "The Alleged Rebellion of Abaza Mehmed Paşa: Historiography and the Ottoman State in the Seventeenth Century," in *Mutiny and Rebellion in the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Jane Hathaway (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 2002), 23; Stanford J. Shaw, "The Ottoman View of the Balkans," in *The Balkans in Transition: Essays on the Development of Balkan Life and Politics Since the Eighteenth Century*, eds. Charles and Barbara Jelavich (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1974), 58-65; Behija Zlatar, "O Nekim Muslimanskim Feudalnim Porodicama u Bosni u XV i XVI Stoljeću," *Prilozi Instituta za Istoriju* 14-15 (1978): 82-87; Itzkowitz, *Ottoman Empire and Islamic Tradition*, 60-61; Lopašić, "Islamization of the Balkans with Special Reference to Bosnia," 179-180; Zhelyazkova, "Islamization in the Balkans as a Historiographical Problem: the Southeast-European Perspective," 227; Hatidža Čar-Drnda, "Remnants of the Tîmâr System in the Bosnian Vilâyet in the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century," in *Ottoman Bosnia: A History in Peril*, eds. Markus Koller and Kemal H. Karpat (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004), 171-174; Nenad Moačanin, "Defterology and Mythology: Ottoman Bosnia up the Tanzîmât," in *Ottoman Bosnia: A History in Peril*, eds. Markus Koller and Kemal H. Karpat (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004), 194; İnalcık, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age, 1300-1600*, 7; Filipović, "Islamizacija Bosne u Prva Dva Desetljeća Osmanske Vlasti," 64; Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds: The Construction of the Ottoman State*, 19-27; Toledano, "The Emergence of Ottoman-Local Elites (1700-1900): A Framework for Research," 154; Kunt, "Transformation of Zimmi into Askeri," 59.

Ottomanization woven throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries: *Poturnak*s and the inclusion of their progeny in the *devşirme*.

When were *Poturnak*s first allowed to present their children for the *devşirme*? The earliest known mention of this comes from Feridun Beg's late-sixteenth century *Mecmua-yı Münşeat ül-Selatin* (Collection of Sultanic Documents, or Correspondence of Sultans), which dates the practice to 1515. The *Mecmua-yı Münşeat ül-Selatin* was discussed briefly in the Introduction, but to reiterate, it is a collection of state records spanning the reigns of numerous sultans. The records that fall under the reign of Selim I (1512-1520) include a brief note regarding the levying of recruits from the *sancak*s of Bosnia and Hercegovina. This brief note is part of a lengthier day-to-day account of Selim I's military campaign against the Safavids. Among the records of ambassadorial visits, council meetings, state and military appointments, there is a note that late in the year 1515, an order was given for the governor of Bosnia, Mustafa Paşa, and the governor of Hercegovina, Evrenosoğlu Iskender Beg, to collect one thousand *yeniçeri oğlanı* (Janissary recruits) from the young men of the Muslim *Poturnak*s (*Müslüman olan Poturnak oğlanlarından*).[106]

I suggest that these youths were taken as *devşirme* recruits at a time of military need. At this time, the Ottomans were waging war on multiple fronts, a circumstance that I will

[106] Feridun Beg, *Mecmua-yı Münşeat ül-Selâtin,* 471-473; Kastritsis, "Ferīdūn Beg's *Münşe'ātü's-Selātīn* ('Correspondence of Sultans') and Late Sixteenth-Century Ottoman Views of the Political World," 91-110; There was indeed a Mustafa Paşa, likely Mustafa Paşa Skenderpaşazade, who served as the *sancakbegi* of Bosnia from 1513 to 1515. He apparently built a mosque in the *varoš* of Maglaj. See Husić, "Maglaj u Ranom Osmanskom Periodu (15. i 16. Stoljeće)," 117, 130-133.

expand on later in this chapter. Moreover, the conquest of the Kingdom of Bosnia was not yet complete; full incorporation of Bosnia as an Ottoman province would extend well into the early sixteenth century. This first mention of a *Poturnak*-related levy occurs during this time of flux. This indicates that early in the sixteenth century, during the reign of Selim I (r. 1512-1520), recruiting the Muslim youth of Bosnian and Hercegovinian *Poturnak*s for the *devşirme* was not an established practice or custom, but more likely an extraordinary measure in time of military need. It may have also been a practical arrangement between the Ottoman state and its allies in these provinces.

As this and subsequent chapters will demonstrate, this practice would become customary during the reign of Selim's successor, Süleyman I (r. 1520-1566). Records from the sixteenth century indicate that the practice was a part of, perhaps a complement to, what we know as the standard *devşirme*, which recruited non-Muslim subjects in the *sancak*s of Bosnia and Hercegovina. What distinguished the *Poturnak* youths (*Poturnak oğlanları*) was that their parents were *Poturnak*s, not simply converts to Islam, but early Ottoman allies. They were also distinguished by the fact that they were Muslim-born, something that should have barred them from the *devşirme*. The aforementioned records, which will be discussed in depth in this and subsequent chapters, hint that *Poturnak oğlanları* were individual, volunteer *devşirme* recruits levied alongside other, non-Muslim youths recruited involuntarily, who were known as *acemi oğlanları* (literally, foreign youths, recruits from

the outside). *Poturnak oğlanları* and regular *acemi oğlanları* were not synonymous, nor did they become synonymous over the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. *Poturnak oğlanları* were simply one component of *devşirme* levies in the *sancak*s of Bosnia and Hercegovina over the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

In this chapter, I explore the emergence of the first Bosnian and Hercegovinian *Poturnak*s and their early connections with the Ottoman Empire from the late fifteenth to the mid-sixteenth century. I contextualize the aforementioned records of *Poturnak*s within Bosnia and Hercegovina's early Ottoman histories as new *sancak*s. I shed light on how nobles and peasants from the former Kingdom of Bosnia were incorporated into the Ottoman Empire's military and bureaucracy, as well as how some Bosnians and Hercegovinians became Ottoman, and what this Ottomanization entailed. Within this context, potential *Poturnak* origins and identities begin to emerge.

I. The Late Medieval Kingdom of Bosnia

Various historians of the late medieval period have commented on the difficulty of reconstructing a clear picture of society in the Kingdom of Bosnia. This is due to sparse population, settlement, and taxation records, as well as the absence of royal, feudal, and city archives. Nevertheless, the works of these scholars provide us with a partial picture. The key social distinctions in this society were among royalty; high, middling, and low nobility; and

commoners and slaves. Noble status was hereditary, so there was likely little opportunity for social mobility. The kingdom was divided into domains held by the Bosnian *ban* (regional overlord), mostly concentrated in central Bosnia, and domains held by the most powerful noble families. These nobles exerted total control over their respective domains, meaning that life may have differed from region to region. They were aided by *župan*s and *knez*es, heads of lower and middling noble families, who oversaw the districts (*župa*s) into which domains were divided.[107]

Rural settlements outside of the *ban*'s domain were located on large estates entirely in the hands of the kingdom's most powerful noble families. These nobles directed and controlled the regional economy and rented small plots of land to tenant farmers. Tenant farmers were usually peasants who were the nobility's serfs (*kmet*s). In the Kingdom of Bosnia, serfs were probably engaged in cereal and vineyard cultivation. They owed military and agricultural service to their lords, as well as a tithe to the Bosnian *ban*. They likely paid off their dues through labor, in cash, or in agricultural products. If their situations were similar to those of serfs in the neighboring kingdom of Serbia, about whom more is known, they labored on their lord's lands two days a week, but received a share of the crop in return.

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[107] Jelena Mrgić, "The Center of the Periphery: The Land of Bosnia in the Heart of Bosnia," in *The Balkans and Byzantine World Before and After the Captures of Constantinople, 1204 and 1453*, ed. Vlada Stanković (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2016), 165-181; Fine, *The Late Medieval Balkans: A Critical Survey from the Late Twelfth Century to the Ottoman Conquest*, 18-20, 43, 206, 282-284, 315-319, 456-457, 472, 480-487, 579-583, 608-609; Florin Curta, *Southeastern Europe in the Middle Ages 500-1250* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 416-426.

They were also obligated to work their lord's lands at critical points during the year, such as harvest time. Nobles seem to have exercised a significant amount of control over the lives of their serfs. They settled their legal disputes, collected their dues, harnessed their labor, and mobilized them into their military retinues. Serfs likely had little recourse and could not take complaints against them to the Bosnian *ban*.[108]

The kingdom's economy was not entirely dependent on agriculture. Hercegovina, for example, was more mountainous and arid, and therefore less fertile, than the rest of the Bosnian kingdom, and for this reason, its economy relied on transhumant pastoralism. It was populated mostly by nomadic Vlach herdsmen, a group that will be discussed later in this chapter. These Vlachs also paid dues to their lords, but they did so in the form of transportation of goods and animals.[109]

Despite the plethora of mountainous terrain, the Kingdom of Bosnia was relatively well-connected by old Roman roads, especially to the neighboring Republic of Dubrovnik (Ragusa) and the Adriatic coast. A number of urban centers developed along these roads, built up by nobles in their respective domains. Each of these centers coalesced around a

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[108] Mrgić, "The Center of the Periphery: The Land of Bosnia in the Heart of Bosnia," 165-181; Fine, *The Late Medieval Balkans: A Critical Survey from the Late Twelfth Century to the Ottoman Conquest*, 18-20, 43, 206, 282-284, 315-319, 456-457, 472, 480-487, 579-583, 608-609; Curta, *Southeastern Europe in the Middle Ages 500-1250*, 416-426.

[109] Mrgić, "The Center of the Periphery: The Land of Bosnia in the Heart of Bosnia," 165-181; Fine, *The Late Medieval Balkans: A Critical Survey from the Late Twelfth Century to the Ottoman Conquest*, 18-20, 43, 206, 282-284, 315-319, 456-457, 472, 480-487, 579-583, 608-609; Curta, *Southeastern Europe in the Middle Ages 500-1250*, 416-426.

fortress or castle, and a local market. They were maintained, taxed, and controlled entirely by regional nobles.[110]

It is likely that a number of the kingdom's inhabitants were also involved in mining. Bosnia's mines were often invested in, administered, or worked by outsiders, so this trade brought foreigners into the kingdom and brought native populations into contact with the outside world. One group of foreigners were the merchants of Dubrovnik (Ragusa), who administered and invested in Bosnia mines. Another were the Saxon miners who were brought in from the region of Saxony in what is now eastern Germany for their technical expertise in mining. Natives apparently began as laborers in the mines and acquired technical expertise over time, likely learning from the Saxon experts. Other inhabitants of the kingdom worked as merchants and craftsmen. Some were fine stone masons and carvers, while others worked as silver-smiths and workers in non-precious metals. Others produced weapons, as Bosnia was the first inland kingdom in Europe to produce firearms and cannon. Some were permanent soldiers, serving as professional garrison forces for the Bosnian king and nobles, while others were simply serfs mobilized by their lords for temporary military service.[111]

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[110] Mrgić, "The Center of the Periphery: The Land of Bosnia in the Heart of Bosnia," 165-181; Fine, *The Late Medieval Balkans: A Critical Survey from the Late Twelfth Century to the Ottoman Conquest*, 18-20, 43, 206, 282-284, 315-319, 456-457, 472, 480-487, 579-583, 608-609; Curta, *Southeastern Europe in the Middle Ages 500-1250*, 416-426.

[111] Mrgić, "The Center of the Periphery: The Land of Bosnia in the Heart of Bosnia," 165-181; Fine, *The Late Medieval Balkans: A Critical Survey from the Late Twelfth Century to the Ottoman Conquest*, 18-20, 43,

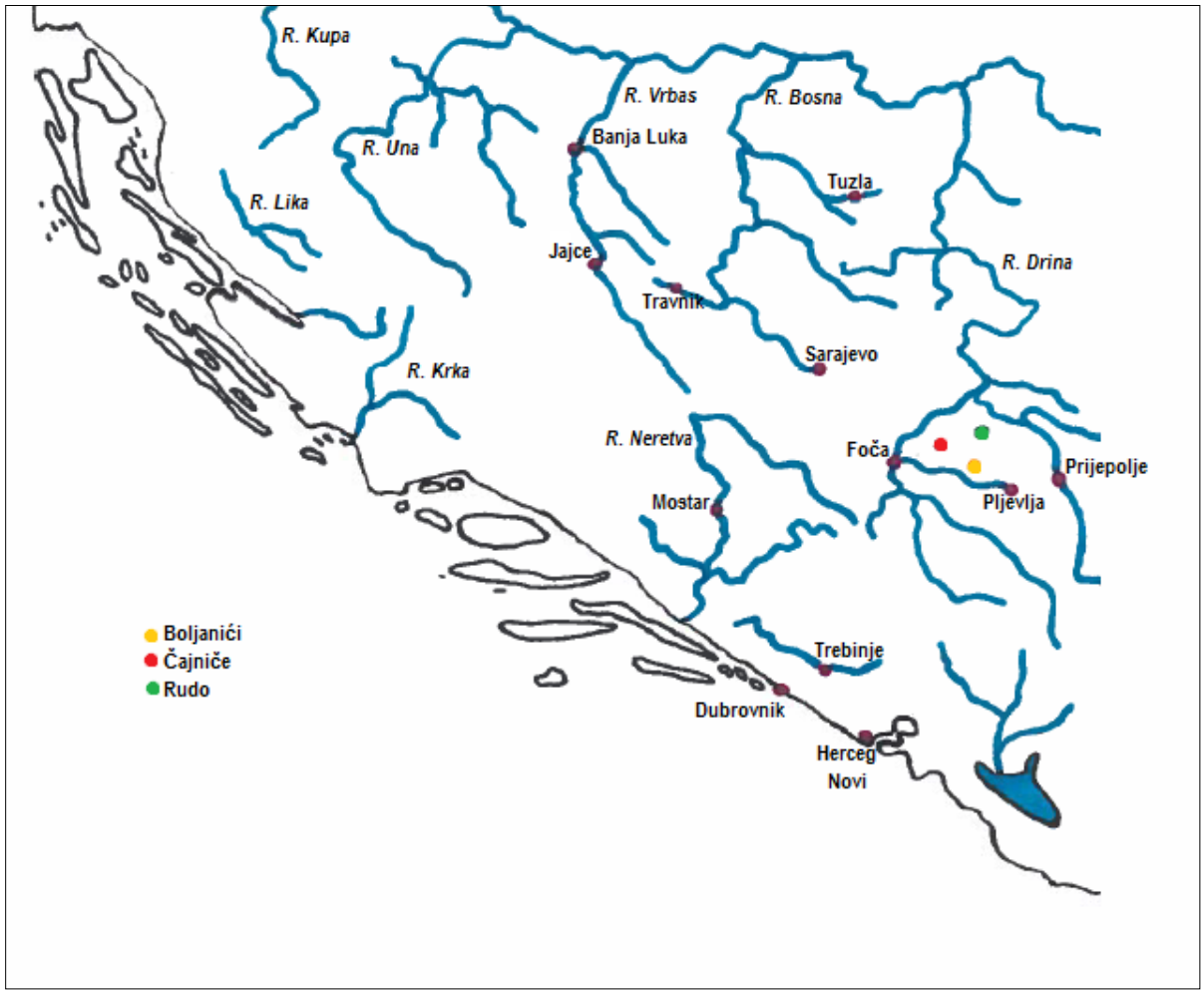
The kingdom was religiously diverse. Depending on the region, the inhabitants may have been in contact with Orthodox Christianity, Roman Catholicism, or an offshoot of the latter known as the Bosnian Church. Other sects were present, but they seem to have drawn fewer adherents. Orthodox Christianity was strongest in eastern Bosnia and Hercegovina. The Bosnian Church was dominant in central Bosnia, while northwestern Bosnia was mostly Roman Catholic. Religious developments within the late medieval Kingdom of Bosnia are discussed further in the next section of this chapter.[112]

With this brief sketch of late medieval society in the Kingdom of Bosnia in mind, I pose the question, what induced some of the population to support the Ottomans? Prior to their arrival, the kingdom was plagued by political, economic, and religious strife. Political and economic strife emerged from internal conflicts between Bosnian rulers and nobles, and from conflicts between the Kingdom of Bosnia and various regional powers, including the papacy, the Kingdom of Hungary, and the Ottomans. Religious strife stemmed from tensions between the Catholic Church and at least two other Christian communities that attracted followings among the population. It is helpful to delve into these forms of conflict in order to

206, 282-284, 315-319, 456-457, 472, 480-487, 579-583, 608-609; Curta, *Southeastern Europe in the Middle Ages 500-1250*, 416-426.

[112] Mrgić, "The Center of the Periphery: The Land of Bosnia in the Heart of Bosnia," 165-181; Fine, *The Late Medieval Balkans: A Critical Survey from the Late Twelfth Century to the Ottoman Conquest*, 18-20, 43, 206, 282-284, 315-319, 456-457, 472, 480-487, 579-583, 608-609; Curta, *Southeastern Europe in the Middle Ages 500-1250*, 416-426.

elucidate the origins of *Poturnak*s and shed light on what induced some of the population to support the Ottomans.



Map 2: Ottoman Bosnia and Hercegovina

i. Religious Strife

During the twelfth century, the territory that would make up the Kingdom of Bosnia passed between the Hungarians and the Byzantines, although regional nobles recognized the suzerainty of these two powers only nominally. By the end of the century, the Hungarians claimed the region as their banate, ruled by a *ban* and nobles who were considered Hungarian vassals. Nevertheless, these nobles continued to operate nearly independently, prompting the Hungarians to attempt to increase their control over the region. Over the course of the thirteenth century, they and other regional political and religious authorities regularly requested papal sanctions to justify campaigns and crusades against the Bosnian banate. They based their requests on accusations of heresy against the *ban* and nobles. These accusations would define the religious history of this region throughout the late medieval period and contribute to religious and political strife prior to the arrival of the Ottomans.[113]

These accusations of heresy lie at the core of a long-standing historical debate over the identity of an autonomous church that emerged in Bosnia in the thirteenth century and has often been identified with the Bogomil heresy. Bogomilism was a dualist, neo-Manichean religious doctrine founded by a Bulgarian priest named Bogomil who lived and preached

[113] Mrgić, "The Center of the Periphery: The Land of Bosnia in the Heart of Bosnia," 165-181; Ivan Biliarsky, "The Synodicon of Orthodoxy in BAR Ms. S1. 307 and the Hagioriticon Gramma of the Year 1344," in *The Balkans and Byzantine World Before and After the Captures of Constantinople, 1204 and 1453*, ed. Vlada Stanković (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2016), 108-112; Curta, *Southeastern Europe in the Middle Ages 500-1250*, 433-437; Fine, *The Late Medieval Balkans: A Critical Survey from the Late Twelfth Century to the Ottoman Conquest*, 1, 17-18, 43-52, 100, 143-148, 278-282, 370, 459, 477, 480-486, 578-582.

during the reign of Tsar Peter I of Bulgaria (r. 927-969). The Bogomil heresy flourished in the medieval Balkans, spreading eastward from Bulgaria to Constantinople and Asia Minor, and westward to Dalmatia, Italy, and southern France. Its adherents were condemned as heretics and persecuted by both the Catholic and Orthodox churches.[114] Revisionist scholarship has questioned the size and impact of the Bogomil heresy, but in order to understand how the suspicions of such a doctrine emerged in the first place, we need to examine the history of Catholicism in medieval Bosnia.

Starting in the year 1190, the Catholic Church in Bosnia was overseen by the archbishopric of the neighboring Republic of Dubrovnik (Ragusa). In 1202, Pope Innocent III (r. 1198-1216), King Vukan (d. 1209) of Duklja, and the archbishop of Split, in competition with the archbishop of Dubrovnik, accused the Bosnian *ban* Kulin (r. ca. 1180-ca. 1204), his family, and thousands of other Bosnians of sheltering heretics and being heretics themselves. They called for a crusade, but Ban Kulin managed to diffuse the situation. He gathered the leaders of the Catholic Church in Bosnia and had them renounce heresy and recommit to Rome in the presence of the archbishop of Dubrovnik. While this appeased the pope, the accusations of heresy against the Bosnian banate and its rulers continued over the next centuries and were regularly used by the Hungarians to justify incursions into the region. At this time, the Catholic Church had a presence but little

[114] Fine, *The Late Medieval Balkans: A Critical Survey from the Late Twelfth Century to the Ottoman Conquest*, 172-179.

territorial organization in Bosnia, and local bishops were barely connected to Rome. Instead, they were consecrated by the archbishop of Dubrovnik and often in their native language, because they had little to no knowledge of Latin. While Dubrovnik seems to have been rather tolerant of these peculiarities and other local customs, the papacy was not. In all probability, neither Kulin nor the leaders of the Catholic Church in Bosnia were heretics. Doctrinal differences probably arose out of ignorance and a lack of oversight from Rome. Following a series of Hungarian invasions and near-crusades, in 1252, Pope Innocent IV (r. 1243-54) assigned Bosnia to a Hungarian archbishop. John V. A. Fine has speculated that this contributed to the distancing of the banate and the Catholic Church in Bosnia from Rome.[115]

Fine and like-minded scholars have argued that the autonomous Bosnian Church grew out of this very rift. Fine contends that the Bosnian Church, inaccurately defined as the Bogomil heresy, began as a religious movement inspired by monasticism and reforming Christian life. The Catholic Church in Bosnia, he argues, was never consciously heretical but simply drifted away from Rome after 1252 since it was far removed from the Hungarian archbishop who nominally administered it, and continued to administer its own affairs. This new Bosnian Church took root in central Bosnia, while northwestern Bosnia remained mostly Roman Catholic, and southern and eastern Bosnia remained mostly Orthodox

[115] Mrgić, "The Center of the Periphery: The Land of Bosnia in the Heart of Bosnia," 165-181; Biliarsky, "The Synodicon of Orthodoxy in BAR Ms. S1. 307 and the Hagioriticon Gramma of the Year 1344," 108-112; Curta, *Southeastern Europe in the Middle Ages 500-1250*, 433-437; Fine, *The Late Medieval Balkans: A Critical Survey from the Late Twelfth Century to the Ottoman Conquest*, 1, 17-18, 43-52, 100, 143-148, 278-282, 370, 459, 477, 480-486, 578-582.

Christian. The faiths and institutions seem to have coexisted peacefully, and we find adherents of all three among the Bosnian nobility. Documents refer to this Bosnian Church as early as the start of the fourteenth century, confirming that it existed as an institution, and that several Bosnian noble families were members. The papacy and the Hungarians condemned the Bosnian Church as heretical, neo-Manichean, and dualist, and connected it to the Bulgarian Bogomils and the French Cathars. Evidence for the actual connections among these movements remain tenuous, at best, and our knowledge of the Bosnian Church and its practices remains incomplete.[116]

In 1337/8, Pope Benedict XII (r. 1334-42) called for another crusade against the Bosnian banate on the premise of heresy among the Bosnian *ban* and nobles. However, because Bosnia's *ban*, Stjepan Kotromanić (r. 1318/22-1353), had an exceptionally good relationship with the Hungarian king, Charles I (r. 1308-1342), the crusade never materialized. Instead, in the 1340s, Stjepan Kotromanić converted from Orthodox Christianity to Roman Catholicism. With one possible exception, the rulers who succeeded him would all be Roman Catholic. During his reign, he invited the general of the Franciscan

[116] We cannot be sure, for example, whether the Bosnian Church recognized or rejected the pope. John V.A. Fine tells us that its clergy clearly ignored the organizational changes that international Catholicism attempted to force upon them in the early thirteenth century. Given that the papacy and its Hungarian legates reciprocated by condemning the church as heretical, it would not be too far-fetched to posit that it did indeed reject the pope. Nevertheless, we have no direct confirmation of this; Fine, *The Late Medieval Balkans: A Critical Survey from the Late Twelfth Century to the Ottoman Conquest*, 1, 17-18, 43-52, 100, 143-148, 278-282, 370, 459, 477, 480-486, 578-582; Mrgić, "The Center of the Periphery: The Land of Bosnia in the Heart of Bosnia," 165-181; Biliarsky, "The Synodicon of Orthodoxy in BAR Ms. S1. 307 and the Hagioriticon Gramma of the Year 1344," 108-112; Curta, *Southeastern Europe in the Middle Ages 500-1250*, 433-437.

monastic order to visit Bosnia and encouraged Franciscans, especially those knowledgeable in Slavic languages, to establish monasteries in the region. The Franciscan vicariate of Bosnia was created, and by 1385, there were four Franciscan monasteries in the Bosnian banate. By the time of the Ottoman conquest in 1463, there were twelve. Despite the fact that Stjepan Kotromanić and his successor, King Tvrtko I (r. 1353-1391), were Roman Catholic, they seem to have tolerated the Bosnian and Orthodox churches. Both continued to exist up to the Ottoman conquest in 1463. A smaller, separate dualist sect known as Ecclesia Sclavonia also existed in the kingdom. It originated in neighboring Dalmatia but its adherents fled to Bosnia after being persecuted and exiled for heresy.[117]

The last of the Bosnian kings Stjepan Tomaš (r. 1443-1461) and his son, Stjepan Tomašević (r. 1461-1463), were more aggressive in their efforts to further Roman Catholicism in Bosnia. Though the efforts of Ban Stjepan Kotromanić in the mid-fourteenth century certainly contributed to an increasing number of Franciscans and Franciscan monasteries, and a higher profile for Roman Catholicism in the banate, the church by no means dominated the region. In fact, by the mid-fifteenth century, the Catholic Church was still somewhat weak and without territorial organization. Under Stjepan Tomaš, the Franciscans became even more numerous and active, building a significant number of

[117] Mrgić, "The Center of the Periphery: The Land of Bosnia in the Heart of Bosnia," 165-181; Biliarsky, "The Synodicon of Orthodoxy in BAR Ms. S1. 307 and the Hagioriticon Gramma of the Year 1344," 108-112; Curta, *Southeastern Europe in the Middle Ages 500-1250*, 433-437; Fine, *The Late Medieval Balkans: A Critical Survey from the Late Twelfth Century to the Ottoman Conquest*, 1, 17-18, 43-52, 100, 143-148, 278-282, 370, 459, 477, 480-486, 578-582.

monasteries and churches throughout the kingdom. Under his son, Stjepan Tomašević, they undertook efforts to persecute perceived heretics in Bosnia, including adherents of the Bosnian Church, and probably also the *Ecclesia Sclavonia*. This was helped by the fact that Stjepan Tomašević had to submit to the demands of the papacy in order to secure papal aid against the Ottomans. In return, the Franciscans were allowed to enforce a policy of religious persecution, exiling or forcibly converting those who they thought were heretics. Some scholars have posited that this religious persecution led various people in the Kingdom of Bosnia to look more favorably upon the Ottomans.[118]

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[118] Mrgić, "The Center of the Periphery: The Land of Bosnia in the Heart of Bosnia," 165-181; Biliarsky, "The Synodicon of Orthodoxy in BAR Ms. S1. 307 and the Hagioriticon Gramma of the Year 1344," 108-112; Curta, *Southeastern Europe in the Middle Ages 500-1250*, 433-437; Fine, *The Late Medieval Balkans: A Critical Survey from the Late Twelfth Century to the Ottoman Conquest*, 1, 17-18, 43-52, 100, 143-148, 278-282, 370, 459, 477, 480-486, 578-582; Adem Handžić, *Population of Bosnia in the Ottoman Period: A Historical Overview* (Istanbul: IRCICA, 1994), 4-28; Colin Heywood, "Bosnia Under Ottoman Rule, 1463-1800," in *The Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina: Their Historic Development from the Middle Ages to the Dissolution of Yugoslavia*, ed. Mark Pinson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 32-40; Boris Nilević, "Slika Religioznosti Srednjovjekovne Bosne Pred Osmanski Dolazak," *Prilozi za Orijentalnu Filologiju* 41 (1991): 345-346; Mladenović, "The Osmanlı Conquest and the Islamization of Bosnia," 219-225; Suphan Kırmızıaltın, "Conversion in the Balkans: A Historiographical Survey," *History Compass* 5/2 (2007): 646-656; Lopašić, "Islamization of the Balkans with Special Reference to Bosnia," 163-177; Ćiro Truhelka, *O Porijeklu Bosanskih Muslimana* (Sarajevo: Nova Tiskara, 1934), 11-14; Mehmed Handžić, *Islamizacija Bosne i Hercegovine i Porijeklo Bosansko-Hercegovačkih Muslimana* (Sarajevo: Islamska Dionička Štamparija, 1940), 20-21; Fikret Adanır, "The Formation of a 'Muslim' Nation in Bosnia-Hercegovina: A Historiographic Discussion," in *The Ottomans and the Balkans: A Discussion of Historiography,* eds. Fikret Adanır and Suraiya Faroqhi (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 289-290; Muhamed Hadžijahić, "O Jednom Manje Poznatom Domacem Vrelu za Proučavanje Crkve Bosanske," *Prilozi Instituta za Istoriju* 10/2 (1974): 89; Fehim Efendić, "O Islamizaciji," *Gajret* (1940-1941): 65; Kiel, "Ottoman Sources for the Demographic History and the Process of Islamization of Bosnia-Hercegovina and Bulgaria in the 15th-17th Centuries: Old Sources – New Methodology," 104-107; Mitja Velikonja, *Religious Separation and Political Intolerance in Bosnia-Herzegovina* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2003), 57-70; Zhelyazkova, "Islamization in the Balkans as a Historiographical Problem: the Southeast-European Perspective," 249-257; John V. A. Fine, *The Bosnian Church: A New Interpretation* (Boulder, CO: East European Quarterly, 1975), 1-8, 375-387.

ii. Political Strife

Religious strife in the Kingdom of Bosnia was also influenced by political strife. One facet of this political strife was a tumultuous relationship between the Bosnian kingdom and the neighboring Kingdom of Hungary. Throughout the late medieval period, Hungarian monarchs and papal legates interfered in the Bosnian kingdom's affairs and attempted to establish control over the region. Until the year 1353, Bosnia was a Hungarian banate, and the Bosnian *ban* was a vassal of the Hungarian monarch. In 1353, Stjepan Tvrtko (r. 1353-1391) was the first *ban* to proclaim himself king, making the banate of Bosnia into the independent Kingdom of Bosnia.[119] Despite effectively throwing off Hungarian vassalage, none of the Bosnian kings were able to completely prevent Hungarian meddling in Bosnian affairs. Moreover, some Bosnian kings actually cultivated good relations with their Hungarian neighbors. Nevertheless, the constant Hungarian presence contributed to political strife within the Kingdom of Bosnia.

Another facet of political strife was feudal decentralization within the kingdom. After the death of King Stjepan Tvrtko (r. 1353-1391), the first of the Bosnian monarchs to effectively centralize power, Bosnian nobles began to operate independently once again and fight one another for power. Stjepan Tvrtko's successors were unable to control and unite these powerful nobles and had to contend with the addition of another regional power, the

[119] Mrgić, "The Center of the Periphery: The Land of Bosnia in the Heart of Bosnia," 165-181; Fine, *The Late Medieval Balkans: A Critical Survey from the Late Twelfth Century to the Ottoman Conquest*, 17-21, 276, 285, 368-369, 393, 398, 453-457, 463, 469, 474-480, 581.

Ottomans. This resurgence of feudal decentralization resulted in political strife that burdened the population of the kingdom and lasted until the Ottoman conquest in 1463.[120]

However, feudal decentralization was by no means a new element in late medieval Bosnian politics. In fact, for most of the banate and kingdom's history, noble families rivaled, and often superseded, the power of Bosnia's rulers. In fact, those who managed to achieve degrees of centralization and exert control over nobles were exceptions to the rule. One such ruler was Ban Stjepan Kotromanić (r. 1318/22-1353), who not only expanded the Bosnian banate, making a single political entity out of Bosnia and Hercegovina, but also effectively exerted control over Bosnian nobles. His relationship with and support from the Hungarian king, Charles I (r. 1308-1342), was instrumental to his success and set him apart from the majority of Bosnian rulers, who remained at odds with the Hungarian monarchy.

Kotromanić's nephew and successor, King Stjepan Tvrtko (r. 1353-1391), was the first Bosnian *ban* to proclaim himself king. During his reign, the banate of Bosnia became the Kingdom of Bosnia. He expanded the kingdom to include parts of the Dalmatian coast and pushed farther south, making Bosnia the most powerful state in the western Balkans. However, even he had to contend with powerful nobles who rebelled against him in 1366, forcing him to temporarily flee to Hungary. Fine contends that neither Kotromanić nor

[120] Mrgić, "The Center of the Periphery: The Land of Bosnia in the Heart of Bosnia," 165-181; Fine, *The Late Medieval Balkans: A Critical Survey from the Late Twelfth Century to the Ottoman Conquest*, 17-21, 276, 285, 368-369, 393, 398, 453-457, 463, 469, 474-480, 581.

Tvrtko was able to effectively institutionalize this centralization and pass it on to his successors.[121]

Nobles from the Kingdom of Bosnia were able to check the power of the ruler because they had full and unconditional control over their feudal domains and were able to amass significant power bases. Their control over these domains was not dependent on service or military obligations to the king. They managed their own local affairs and courts, collected taxes, distributed cultivable land, established and controlled customs stations and markets, and conducted foreign relations. The lesser nobility who resided on their domains swore loyalty to them, not to the Bosnian ruler. In fact, the only lands over which Bosnian rulers had full control were their own domains in central Bosnia, which included the towns of Visoko, Zenica, Kraljeva Sutjeska, and Hodidjed (Sarajevo).[122]

Nobles from this kingdom were even able to enthrone and oust members of the royal dynasty. These affairs were conducted in state assemblies attended by the most powerful and influential noble families. At the assemblies, nobles also dealt with and negotiated other issues such as land sales and confiscations. Fine writes that at one state assembly, nobles objected to a land sale brokered by one of their own. They gave their blessing for another

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[121] Mrgić, "The Center of the Periphery: The Land of Bosnia in the Heart of Bosnia," 165-181; Fine, *The Late Medieval Balkans: A Critical Survey from the Late Twelfth Century to the Ottoman Conquest*, 17-21, 276, 285, 368-369, 393, 398, 453-457, 463, 469, 474-480, 581.

[122] Mrgić, "The Center of the Periphery: The Land of Bosnia in the Heart of Bosnia," 165-181; Fine, *The Late Medieval Balkans: A Critical Survey from the Late Twelfth Century to the Ottoman Conquest*, 17-21, 276, 285, 368-369, 393, 398, 453-457, 463, 469, 474-480, 581.

noble to march against him, presumably a self-policing act. Fine concludes that the nobility cooperated and united as a loose confederation even while they engaged in power struggles among themselves. This provided them with relative independence as well as protection from their neighbors.[123]

After the death of King Stjepan Tvrtko (r. 1353-1391), nobles began to operate independently once again and fight one another, the king, and the Hungarians for land and power. This multi-pronged conflict politically and economically destabilized the Kingdom of Bosnia. Constant wars destroyed villages and crops. By this time, all had to contend with the presence of the Ottomans and their active involvement in regional politics. When Ottoman raids into the region began in the late fourteenth century, the nobility did not unite to repel them. In fact, nobles, as well as powerful neighbors such as Dubrovnik (Ragusa), began to take their matters and grievances to the Ottomans instead of the Bosnian king.[124] Some have argued that after decades of this political unrest and warfare, the population of the kingdom, especially the peasantry, grew estranged from their nobility, who provided little protection or support.[125]

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[123] Mrgić, "The Center of the Periphery: The Land of Bosnia in the Heart of Bosnia," 165-181; Fine, *The Late Medieval Balkans: A Critical Survey from the Late Twelfth Century to the Ottoman Conquest*, 17-21, 276, 285, 368-369, 393, 398, 453-457, 463, 469, 474-480, 581.

[124] Mrgić, "The Center of the Periphery: The Land of Bosnia in the Heart of Bosnia," 165-181; Fine, *The Late Medieval Balkans: A Critical Survey from the Late Twelfth Century to the Ottoman Conquest*, 17-21, 276, 285, 368-369, 393, 398, 453-457, 463, 469, 474-480, 581.

[125] Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds: The Construction of the Ottoman State*, 17, 131-145; Lopašić, "Islamization of the Balkans with Special Reference to Bosnia," 166; Mrgić, "Transition from Late Medieval to Early Ottoman Settlement Pattern: A Case Study on Northern Bosnia," 52, 62-79; Zhelyazkova, "Islamization in

iii. Pax Ottomanica

Why did the Bosnian king and nobles lose subjects, especially peasants, to the Ottomans? Aside from the political and religious strife that plagued the region, tax dues probably played a part. Fine suggests that peasants in the Kingdom of Bosnia were aware that peasants from the neighboring Serbian kingdom, then already a part of the Ottoman Empire, paid lower taxes to the Ottomans. As the Ottomans continued to demand more tribute from the Bosnian king over time, he was compelled to increase taxes on the populace. Moreover, in order to prepare for battles with one another, as well as with the Ottomans, nobles and kings extracted not only money but military service from their serfs. All of this likely exacerbated the pressure on the peasantry in particular. The Ottomans, on the other hand, lowered taxes and abolished corvée labor in many of the Balkan regions they conquered. Balkan serfs likely fled into Ottoman territory to escape from serfdom. The populace came to view the Ottomans as a viable alternative offering a degree of order and stability, and a better quality of life. Some scholars have asserted that the Ottomans actively sought the support of the Bosnian populace and attempted to foster their loyalty. In a letter from King Stjepan Tomašević (r. 1461-1463) to Pope Pius II (1458-1464), the former requested aid and noted

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the Balkans as a Historiographical Problem: the Southeast-European Perspective," 249; Šabanović, *Propast Bosanskog Kraljevstva i Osnivanje Bosanskog Sandžaka*, 38; İnalcık, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age, 1300-1600*, 10.

that the Ottomans were not simply building fortresses in Bosnia but engaging with the peasantry and promising them good treatment.[126]

Political strife and warfare also endangered the economic stability of the region, most notably the trade routes linking the Kingdom of Bosnia with the Adriatic Sea and the Sava River. The Ottomans brought increasing stability to these trade routes by pushing the military frontier northwestward away from Bosnia and diminishing the Hungarian threat. They also actively worked to bolster the economy through lighter labor services, tax relief, new economic opportunities, and expanded trade networks. All of these things brought about a period of economic stability in the region.[127]

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[126] Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds: The Construction of the Ottoman State*, 17, 131-145; Lopašić, "Islamization of the Balkans with Special Reference to Bosnia," 166; Mrgić, "Transition from Late Medieval to Early Ottoman Settlement Pattern: A Case Study on Northern Bosnia," 52, 62-79; Zhelyazkova, "Islamization in the Balkans as a Historiographical Problem: the Southeast-European Perspective," 249; Šabanović, *Propast Bosanskog Kraljevstva i Osnivanje Bosanskog Sandžaka*, 38; İnalcık, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age, 1300-1600*, 10-13, 71; Fine, *The Late Medieval Balkans: A Critical Survey from the Late Twelfth Century to the Ottoman Conquest*, 1, 18-20, 43, 206, 282-284, 315-319, 456-457, 472, 480-487, 579-583, 608-609; Mrgić, "The Center of the Periphery: The Land of Bosnia in the Heart of Bosnia," 165-181; Curta, *Southeastern Europe in the Middle Ages 500-1250*, 416-426; Itzkowitz, *Ottoman Empire and Islamic Tradition*, 48.

[127] Adanır, "The Formation of a 'Muslim' Nation in Bosnia-Hercegovina: A Historiographic Discussion," 289-290; Handžić, *Population of Bosnia in the Ottoman Period: A Historical Overview*, 20-22; Heywood, "Bosnia Under Ottoman Rule, 1463-1800," 32-40; Zhelyazkova, "Islamization in the Balkans as a Historiographical Problem: The Southeast-European Perspective," 227; Velikonja, *Religious Separation and Political Intolerance in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, 63-65; Husić, "Maglaj u Ranom Osmanskom Periodu (15. i 16. Stoljeće)," 116, 126; Anton Minkov, *Conversion to Islam in the Balkans: Kisve Bahası Petitions and Ottoman Social Life, 1670-1730* (Leiden, Brill, 2004), 96-98; Hatidža Čar, "Demografsko Kretanje, Socijalni i Konfesionalni Sastav Stanovništva u Visočkoj Nahiji," *Prilozi za Orijentalnu Filologiju* 41 (1991): 201-207; Kiel, "Ottoman Sources for the Demographic History and the Process of Islamization of Bosnia-Hercegovina and Bulgaria in the 15th-17th Centuries: Old Sources – New Methodology," 93, 104-107; Mladenović, "The Osmanlı Conquest and the Islamization of Bosnia," 219-223; Lopašić, "Islamization of the Balkans with Special Reference to Bosnia," 163-172; Efendić, "O Islamizaciji," 68.

Various case studies speak to this rehabilitation under the Ottomans. In her study of the Bosnian *nahiye* (district) of Visoko, Hatidža Čar found that the area had been a part of the Bosnian king's domain and experienced violence and economic devastation from the late fourteenth to the early sixteenth century. Many of the surrounding villages became sparsely populated or deserted. The situation improved after the region was secured by the Ottomans, who began to settle semi-nomadic Vlach herdsmen there, and encouraged those who had deserted to return by exempting the region from various taxes. A similar situation unfolded in the small town of Maglaj. After it was secured by the Ottomans around 1512, the nearly-deserted region was repopulated by Vlachs and began to grow. It expanded from a *varoš* (suburb) into a *kasaba* (small town) by the mid-sixteenth century, and its population more than doubled.[128]

Such measures contributed to the revitalization of the region and garnered support for the Ottomans. We even see instances of Bosnian peasants actively aiding the Ottomans. Jelena Mrgić mentions a group of Christian villagers from the region around Zvornik in present-day Bosnia who were exempt from paying various taxes in return for fighting against the Serbian despot Vuk Grgurević and the Wallachian vojvoda Vlad Tepeş around the year

[128] Husić, "Maglaj u Ranom Osmanskom Periodu (15. i 16. Stoljeće)," 116-131; Čar, "Demografsko Kretanje, Socijalni i Konfesionalni Sastav Stanovništva u Visočkoj Nahiji," 195-202; Lopašić, "Islamization of the Balkans with Special Reference to Bosnia," 166.

1476.[129] It is likely, then, that a number of the first *Poturnak*s came from the peasantry. Some have argued, in fact, that the term *Potur* referred specifically to the peasantry.[130] Delving into this debate over the etymology of the term will shed light on the question of whether early *Poturnak*s from the Kingdom of Bosnia were exclusively peasants.

II. Etymology and the Early Poturnaks

The debate over the etymology of the term *Potur* is particularly relevant to our discussion of early *Poturnak*s. As noted above, some scholars have argued that the term referred specifically to rural peasantry.[131] This interpretation leans on sources such as the early seventeenth-century Bosnian-Ottoman dictionary known by two titles, *Makbul-i 'arif* (The Treasured Possession of the Learned Man) and *Potur Şahidi* (Potur, in the Style of Şahidi).[132] The dictionary was written by the Bosnian Muhammad Üsküfi Bosnevi (Hevai),

[129] Mrgić, "Transition from Late Medieval to Early Ottoman Settlement Pattern: A Case Study on Northern Bosnia," 56.

[130] Malcolm, *Bosnia: A Short History*, 60; Pakalin, *Osmanlı Tarih Deyimleri ve Terimleri Sözlüğü*, 780; Sokolović, "Pjesnik Aga-dede iz Dobor-grada o svome zavičaju i pogibiji Osmana II: O Jednom Autografu Gazijine Biblioteke," 9; Korkut, *Makbûl-i 'Âryf (Potur-Šáhidija) Üsküfî Bosnevija*, 371-408; Nametak, "Tri Rukopisa "Makbuli-Arifa" ("Potur-Shahidije")," 146-164; Smailovich, "O Uskufijinu Rječniku Maqbuli Arif – Potur Shahidija," 99-135.

[131] Malcolm, *Bosnia: A Short History*, 60; Pakalin, *Osmanlı Tarih Deyimleri ve Terimleri Sözlüğü*, 780; Sokolović, "Pjesnik Aga-dede iz Dobor-grada o svome zavičaju i pogibiji Osmana II: O Jednom Autografu Gazijine Biblioteke," 9; Korkut, *Makbûl-i 'Âryf (Potur-Šáhidija) Üsküfî Bosnevija*, 371-408; Nametak, "Tri Rukopisa "Makbuli-Arifa" ("Potur-Shahidije")," 146-164; Smailovich, "O Uskufijinu Rječniku Maqbuli Arif – Potur Shahidija," 99-135.

[132] Şahidi refers to the poet and lexicographer Mevlana Şahidi Ibrahim Dede (1470-1550). The two titles are discussed in depth in Chapter 3.

and it defines a *Potur* as a villager (*köylü*).[133] However, other scholars have insisted that *Potur* referred to Islamicized or Turkicized Slavs of all backgrounds.[134] A late sixteenth-century Ottoman miscellany, authored anonymously but likely by another Bosnian, provides a third possible definition. It divides the term into "po" and "tur", claiming that "po" translated to "half" and "tur" to "Turkish." Despite this grammatically untenable division of the term, the source claims that a *Potur* was a heretical Christian-Muslim hybrid. The provenances of both the dictionary and the miscellany will be taken up in later chapters, but suffice it to say here that both sources are layered and should not be taken literally. In the case of the dictionary, there seem to have been numerous motivations behind its creation

[133] Muhammad Üsküfi Bosnevi (Hevai) was born in Zvornik to a family from Tuzla, both in the Bosnian *eyalet*, in the year 1601. His nickname "Üsküfi", therefore, does not indicate that he was from Skopje. His background will be taken up in a later chapter.

[134] Malcolm, *Bosnia: A Short History*, 60; Pakalin, *Osmanlı Tarih Deyimleri ve Terimleri Sözlüğü*, 780; Gliša Elezović, *Turski Spomenici*, vol. 1 (Belgrade: Zadužbina Sofije i Ivana Stojšića, 1940), 621, 624, 650; Korkut, *Makbûl-i 'Âryf (Potur-Šáhidija) Üsküfî Bosnevija*, 371-408; Nametak, "Tri Rukopisa "Makbuli-Arifa" ("Potur-Shahidije")," 146-164; Muhamed Hevai Uskufi, *Bosansko-Turski Rjecnik*, eds. Ahmet Kasumović and Svein Mønnesland (Tuzla: Općina Tuzla – Ministarstvo Nauke i Obrazovanja Federacije Bosne i Hercegovine, 2011), 1-21; Svein Mønnesland, "Bosanski Jezik Prije Četiri Stoljeća - Makbul-i Arif," in *Bosansko-Turski Rjecnik*, eds. Ahmet Kasumović and Svein Mønnesland (Tuzla: Općina Tuzla – Ministarstvo Nauke i Obrazovanja Federacije Bosne i Hercegovine, 2011), 21-36; Ahmet Kasumović, "Bosanski Jezik – Kako Su Bosanci Krupna Stasa, Znaj Da Su Im Tako i Rijeci Krupne," in *Bosansko-Turski Rjecnik*, eds. Ahmet Kasumović and Svein Mønnesland (Tuzla: Općina Tuzla – Ministarstvo Nauke i Obrazovanja Federacije Bosne i Hercegovine, 2011), 42-69; Adnan Kadrić, "Tradicija Konceptualne Poetizirane Leksikografije u Bosni i Stihovani Rječnik Makbul-i Arif – Šta Nam Govore Rukopisi?" in *Bosansko-Turski Rjecnik*, eds. Ahmet Kasumović and Svein Mønnesland (Tuzla: Općina Tuzla – Ministarstvo Nauke i Obrazovanja Federacije Bosne i Hercegovine, 2011), 171-175; Muhamed Huković, "Muhamed Hevai u Horizontima Alhamijado Književnosti: Alhamijado Literatura u Našoj i Stranim Književnostima," in *Muhamed Hevai Uskufi*, eds. Muhamed Huković, Ahmet Kasumović and Ismet Smailović (Tuzla: Biblioteka Baština "Univerzal", 1990), 45-70; Kasumović, "O Uskufijinu Životu i Stvaralaštvu," in *Muhamed Hevai Uskufi*, eds. Muhamed Huković, Ahmet Kasumović and Ismet Smailović (Tuzla: Biblioteka Baština "Univerzal", 1990), 78; Smailovich, "O Uskufijinu Rječniku Maqbuli Arif – Potur Shahidija," 99-135; Alija Nametak, "Još o Makbuli-Arifu ili Potur Šahidiji," in *Muhamed Hevai Uskufi*, eds. Muhamed Huković, Ahmet Kasumović and Ismet Smailović (Tuzla: Biblioteka Baština "Univerzal", 1990), 219.

beyond innocuous language instruction. In the case of the miscellany, given that it was probably written by a native speaker of Bosnian who chose a grammatically incorrect definition of *Potur*, it is likely that the author was making an inside joke for native speakers.[135] I prefer the second interpretation, that *Potur* referred more generally to Ottomanized Slavs of all social classes.

The grammatically correct definition of the term *Potur*, as well as its usage in regional folk songs, makes a compelling case. When the *po* prefix precedes a verb stem, it generally denotes action upon something. *Potur* likely derives from the verb "*poturčiti se*," meaning to Turkify oneself, indicating a change in behavior, customs, and religion.[136] This definition does not have any rural or social connotations and is not applied solely to peasants. It is also borne out by regional folk songs, particularly one that purports to explain the background of Hasan Paşa Predojević, a native Hercegovinian who entered the sultan's service and ultimately served as governor of Bosnia in the 1590s.

This particular folk song will be taken up shortly, but first, we must recognize that folk songs are problematic sources given their lack of accurate dating and their politicization. The songs used in this chapter were collected and written down at the end of the nineteenth

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[135] Krstić, "Conversion and Converts to Islam in Ottoman Historiography of the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries," 72-79; Moačanin, "Mass Islamization of Peasants in Bosnia: Demystifications," 357-358.

[136] Krstić, "Conversion and Converts to Islam in Ottoman Historiography of the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries," 58-79; Moačanin, "Mass Islamization of Peasants in Bosnia: Demystifications," 357-358; Mladenović, "The Osmanlı Conquest and the Islamization of Bosnia," 224; Lopašić, "Islamization of the Balkans with Special Reference to Bosnia," 179-180; Pakalin, *Osmanlı Tarih Deyimleri ve Terimleri Sözlüğü*, 780; Kunt, "Transformation of Zimmi into Askeri," 59.

century by politically motivated publishing houses promoting Croatian national folk culture and attempting to incorporate what they considered "Mohamedan" (Muhamedovske) heroic songs. The written versions of these songs thus date back only a little over a century. The songs themselves, however, may date back much farther and reference historical figures from the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.[137] In that regard, they can be useful sources and bear out a colloquial usage of the term *Potur* to refer more generally to Ottomanized Slavs of all social classes.

One particularly famous folk song that invokes the term *Potur*, and references a historical figure from the early sixteenth century, is that of Niča Predojević. In the folk song, we are introduced to Niča, a young Vlach boy guarding sheep and loudly proclaiming that he wishes that wolves or *hajduk*s (bandits) would eat them all, so that he could be recruited by the sultan and serve in Istanbul. He daydreams that he will undergo a conversion (*poturči me*), study in a *medrese* (theological college), be given control of the treasury and the army, and conquer numerous regions around Bosnia. His lamentations are overheard by an Ottoman official named Osman Paşa who is traveling through the region and carrying an unspecific *ferman* from Istanbul, presumably on business for the sultan. After Osman Paşa takes down Niča Predojević's lamentations, he inquires after the boy and invites him to speak. The boy does so, introducing himself, kissing the *paşa*'s hand, and praising him and

[137] Marjanović, *Hrvatske Narodne Pjesme: Junačke Pjesme Muhamedovske*, vii-xxxix; Edin Hajdarpašić, *Whose Bosnia? Nationalism and Political Imagination in the Balkans, 1840-1914* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2015).

the sultan. Osman Paşa asks Predojević whether he would heed the call if the sultan were to invite him to Istanbul, and Predojević enthusiastically confirms that he would. He asks the *paşa* to tell the sultan about him, and Osman Paşa confirms that he will. At this point in the song, without any context, Osman Paşa first refers to Niča as his new blood brother (*novi pobratime*), and the two part.[138]

Osman Paşa proceeds to Istanbul to tell the sultan about Niča. The sultan is delighted and immediately instructs his *şeyhülislam* (head jurisconsult) to compose a *ferman* requesting that the boy come to Istanbul.[139] He promises to Turkify him and put him in a *medrese* (*poturčim ga, metnem u medresu*). When Predojević receives the *ferman*, he kisses it and bows to Osman Paşa seven times. He invites the *paşa* to his village, where his parents and six brothers live, so that he may ask for their blessing. His parents respond enthusiastically, immediately granting their blessing and thanking God. His father even offers his other six sons for service to the sultan. Upon meeting Predojević, the sultan approves of him and instructs his *şeyhülislam* to find him a new name, a process that signifies religious conversion. Predojević takes the new name of Hasan, and after being

[138] Marjanović, *Hrvatske Narodne Pjesme: Junačke Pjesme Muhamedovske*, 56-75; Efendić, "O Islamizaciji," 68; For more information on *pobratimstvo* or blood brotherhood, see Wendy Bracewell, "Frontier Blood-Brotherhood and the Triplex Confinium," *in Constructing Border Societies on the Triplex Confinium*, eds. Drago Roksandić and Nataša Štefanec (Budapest: Central European University-Budapest History Department, 2000), 29-45.

[139] It should be noted that the *şeyhülislam* was not responsible for composing *ferman*s at the Ottoman court. *Ferman*s were traditionally composed by the sultan's chancery. Nevertheless, the folk song clearly states that the sultan instructed his *şeyhülislam* to compose a *ferman* inviting Niča Predojević to Istanbul.

educated in the *medrese* for nine years, he is called up by the sultan. This is likely a reference to his eventual graduation from the imperial palace.[140]

In actual fact, Hasan Paşa Predojević (1530-1593) was born Nikola (Niča) Predojević to a Vlach family from the Hercegovinian *sancak*. In the folk song, Hasan Paşa claims to be from Glavica, a confusing note given that there are numerous Glavicas throughout Bosnia and Hercegovina. In general, there seems to be little consensus as to the *paşa*'s actual birthplace in the primary and secondary sources that mention him. Nevertheless, we know that he endowed a mosque near Bileća (in the *sancak* of Hercegovina), and that the Predojević family hailed from and had a base in the same town. Esad Kurtović writes that fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Dubrovnik (Ragusa) records mention the family numerous times and identify them as Vlachs. He adds that they were engaged not only in animal husbandry but also in transport of goods, money-lending, craftsmanship, and the occasional highway robbery. They were vassals of first the Pavlović and then the Kosača family, both noble houses of the Kingdom of Bosnia, and notable early Ottoman allies in the region. According to Kurtović, Hasan Paşa may not have been the first of the Predojević clan to enter Ottoman service, because in 1468, a Bogdan Vučihnić vlah Predojević from Bileća is mentioned as part of the retinue of a *vojvođa* named Ahmet in the Bosnian city of Ključ.[141]

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[140] Marjanović, *Hrvatske Narodne Pjesme: Junačke Pjesme Muhamedovske*, 56-75.

[141] Esad Kurtović, "Iz Historije Vlaha Predojevića," *Godišnjak Akademije Nauka i Umjetnosti Bosne i Hercegovine – Centar za Balkanološka Ispitivanja* 40 (2011): 243-254; Kurtović also notes that he found

As for Hasan Paşa, he was sent to Istanbul as an *acemi oğlan* (*devşirme* recruit) during the reign of Süleyman I. By all accounts, he was part of a standard *devşirme* levy on non-Muslim subjects in the *sancak* of Hercegovina despite the fact that his folk song portrays him as an exceptional *devşirme* recruit. This is not to say that *Poturnak oğlanları* – meaning Muslim-born volunteers - were not a part of the group with which Hasan Paşa was levied, but we have no records that connect him to *Poturnak*s despite his family's connections with the Ottomans. He eventually rose to the high position of *çakırcıbaşı* (head falconer). After leaving the palace and serving as the *sancakbegi* (provincial governor) of Segedin (Szeged, Hungary), in 1591, he was appointed *beglerbegi* (governor-general) of Bosnia.[142]

Because of Hasan Paşa's tireless campaigning along the northwestern frontier and his conquest of Bihać (present-day northwestern Bosnia), a Habsburg envoy was sent to Istanbul with the message that if he were not restrained, the peace between the two empires would not hold. According to numerous sources, however, his close relationship with two particular figures guaranteed him protection, as well as his position in Bosnia. One was the grand vizier, Kaniyeli Siyavuş Paşa (terms 1582-1584, 1586-1589, 1592-1593). "Kaniyeli"

Predojevićes throughout the Kingdom of Bosnia, so this may explain some of the confusion around Hasan Paşa's birthplace.

[142] Ibrahim Alajbegović Pećevija (Peçevi), *Historija 1520-1572*, Book 2, trans. Fehim Nametak (Sarajevo: El-Kalem and Orijentalni Institut u Sarajevu, 2000), 105; Safvet Beg Bašagić, *Znameniti Hrvati, Bošnjaci i Hercegovci u Turskoj Carevini* (Zagreb: Štamparija Grafika, 1931), 17, 24-25; Naîmâ Mustafa Efendi (Naima), *Târih-i Na'îmâ* (*Ravzatü'l-Hüseyn fî Hulâsati Ahbâri'l-Hâfikayn*), vol. 1, trans. Mehmet İpşirli (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 2007), 52-53, 60-63; Ljiljana Ševo, *Monasteries and Wooden Churches of the Banja Luka Eparchy* (Banja Luka: GLAS Srpski, 1998), 28; Hivzija Hasandedić, *Muslimanska Baština u Istočnoj Hercegovini* (Sarajevo: El-Kalem, 1990), 167-171.

indicates that Siyavuş Paşa was either from Kanjiža (present-day Serbia) or Nagykanizsa (present-day Hungary). Bašagić mentions him as a Croatian, so the latter is more likely. Regardless, we can ascertain that he was from the same general region as Hasan Paşa.[143]

Hasan Paşa's other backer was Sultan Murad III's close advisor and favorite (*musahib-i hass*), a Hercegovinian by the name of Derviş Ağa Bajezidagić. He was originally from Mostar and may have come to Istanbul with Hasan Paşa as an *acemi oğlan*. His peculiar last name indicates that he was the son of a Bayezid Ağa, meaning that he was probably a Muslim recruit to the *devşirme* and that his father was a *Poturnak*. I have not been able to identify Bayezid Ağa, but given his title, he may have been an Ottoman functionary who sent his son into service in the imperial palace, where he presumably met and forged a friendship with Hasan Paşa.[144] Hasan Paşa certainly seems to have benefitted from the patronage of these two individuals who hailed from the same region that he did.

Aside from campaigning on the northwestern frontier, Hasan Paşa endowed a number of structures in the region. Ljiljana Ševo writes that he renewed the Rmanj Orthodox Christian monastery as a seat for his brother, a monk by the name of Gavrilo Predojević. In June of 1593, as governor of Bosnia, Hasan Paşa led an Ottoman offensive

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[143] Pećevija (Peçevi), *Historija 1520-1572*, Book 2, 105; Bašagić, *Znameniti Hrvati, Bošnjaci i Hercegovci u Turskoj Carevini*, 17, 24-25; Naîmâ, *Târih-i Na'îmâ* (*Ravzatü'l-Hüseyn fî Hulâsati Ahbâri'l-Hâfikayn*), 52-53, 60-63; Ševo, *Monasteries and Wooden Churches of the Banja Luka Eparchy*, 28; Hasandedić, *Muslimanska Baština u Istočnoj Hercegovini*, 167-171.

[144] Pećevija (Peçevi), *Historija 1520-1572*, Book 2, 105; Bašagić, *Znameniti Hrvati, Bošnjaci i Hercegovci u Turskoj Carevini*, 17, 24-25; Naîmâ, *Târih-i Na'îmâ* (*Ravzatü'l-Hüseyn fî Hulâsati Ahbâri'l-Hâfikayn*), 52-53, 60-63; Ševo, *Monasteries and Wooden Churches of the Banja Luka Eparchy*, 28; Hasandedić, *Muslimanska Baština u Istočnoj Hercegovini*, 167-171.

against the triangular fortress of Sisak (Sziszek, Siska) at the confluence of the Sava, Kupa, and Odra rivers in what is now Croatia. The Habsburgs mounted a counteroffensive, and Hasan Paşa perished in the battles that ensued. His death prompted an Ottoman declaration of war and the start of the Long War (1593-1606) between the two empires. His countryman, the mid-seventeenth century Ottoman historian Ibrahim Peçevi, later praised him as a dynamic man. He wrote that during his tenure as the governor of Bosnia, he never stopped campaigning. The sultan apparently even threatened the Habsburgs with him, telling them that if they were to invade the Ottoman Empire, Hasan Paşa would be the one to meet them.[145] The later historian Mustafa Naima (1655-1716), wrote that Hasan Paşa was a capable, brave, and active man (*yarar ve müteharrik*).[146]

The colloquial usage of *Potur* in this folk song invokes Niča Predojević's religious conversion, as well as his voluntary service to the Ottoman sultan. However, in the context of the life of the historical figure of Hasan Paşa Predojević, the song also speaks to Ottomanization more generally. Whether voluntarily or involuntarily, the historical Predojević was a *devşirme* recruit who entered elite palace service and became a *kapı kulu* (elite slave of the sultan). His career continued to progress after he left the palace; he advanced from provincial governor in Hungary to governor-general of his native *eyalet*

[145] Pećevija (Peçevi), *Historija 1520-1572*, Book 2, 105; Bašagić, *Znameniti Hrvati, Bošnjaci i Hercegovci u Turskoj Carevini*, 17, 24-25; Naîmâ, *Târih-i Na'îmâ* (*Ravzatü'l-Hüseyn fî Hulâsati Ahbâri'l-Hâfikayn*), 52-53, 60-63; Ševo, *Monasteries and Wooden Churches of the Banja Luka Eparchy*, 28; Hasandedić, *Muslimanska Baština u Istočnoj Hercegovini*, 167-171.

[146] Naîmâ, *Târih-i Na'îmâ* (*Ravzatü'l-Hüseyn fî Hulâsati Ahbâri'l-Hâfikayn*), 52-53, 60-63.

(super-province) of Bosnia. His legacy lived on not just in regional folk songs, but also in Ottoman histories. Both types of sources celebrate him as a hero. In many ways, he embodies the sixteenth-century *Poturnak*. His historical experience tallies nicely with the folk song's assertions that he volunteered for Ottoman service, and that his parents showed no reluctance in volunteering the remainder of their children. I would suggest that this folk song channeled common knowledge of an existing community from the *sancak*s of Bosnia and Hercegovina, the *Poturnak*s, whether Hasan Paşa was a *Poturnak oğlan* or not.

A folk song describing the career of the late seventeenth-century bandit chieftain Stojan Janković-Mitrović (d. 1687) also features the term *Potur*, but it does so in a different context, demonstrating that the term was not limited to peasants and could be used in various contexts to denote Ottomanization. In this song, Stojan is presented as a prisoner of war captured by a man named Hüseyin Hodžić and given as a gift to a man named Radoslija. Neither of his two masters can be identified, but Hodžić's surname indicates that he may have been the son of a *hoca* (sage). It is most likely that all of these men were regular or irregular troops along the northwestern frontier who participated in intermittent raids along the *triplex confinium*, the Venetian, Habsburg, and Ottoman triple border. In the folk song, Stojan, now a prisoner of war, makes his way to central Bosnia to an Ottoman official in the city of Travnik. From here, he is sent to Istanbul, where, according to his own testimony, he is held in high esteem by the "Turks." According to him, he Ottomanizes out of necessity (*za*

nužda se jesam poturčio) and is given the title "Uskok-Osmanlija" ("Bandit Ottoman") by the sultan himself.[147] After converting, attending a *medrese*, learning Ottoman Turkish, and even starting a family with a wife from Istanbul, he grows disenchanted with this life and returns to Bosnia, presumably reconverting to Christianity and rejecting Ottoman service.[148]

In this story, *Potur* seems to refer less to a religious conversion than to Janković's general conversion in customs and culture and his service to the Ottoman state, as well as his eventual rejection of this Ottoman way of life. In this particular song, we see that *Potur* can refer to all "converts" to the Ottoman way of life, even temporary ones. Some scholars claim that Stojan was an infamous *uskok* (bandit) leader from the northwestern frontier who worked in the service of the Venetian Republic and fought in the Cretan (1645-1669) and Morean (1684-1699) wars against the Ottomans.[149] The current scholarly consensus, however, is that he belonged to the population known as Morlachs, immigrants and refugees from Ottoman territories along the triple border who settled or were resettled on Venetian territory.[150] Though these immigrants are often conflated with the seminomadic Vlachs, they

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[147] Uskok-Osmanlija" translates to an Uskok Ottoman, or an Ottoman who is/was an Uskok.

[148] Marjanović, *Hrvatske Narodne Pjesme: Junačke Pjesme Muhamedovske*, 56-453.

[149] Zdenko Zlatar, *The Poetics of Slavdom: The Mythopoeic Foundations of Yugoslavia*, vol. 2 (New York: Peter Lang, 2007), 638.

[150] It is unclear where the term *Morlach* originated. Some have suggested that it was a Venetian term used to refer to all immigrants and refugees from Ottoman territories along the triple border who were resettled on Venetian territory. Indeed, the Dalmatian hinterland was referred to as *Morlacchia* by the Venetians. Others have suggested that the term was adapted from the Greek *Mavrovlachs*, meaning black or dark Wallachians. This etymology is under debate and remains unclear. Others yet have suggested that Morlachs were simply Dalmatian Vlachs, in other words, Dalmatian Slavs. For more information, see Tea Mayhew, *Dalmatia between Ottoman and Venetian Rule: Contado di Zara 1645-1718* (Rome: Viella, 2008), 18, 63-72, 172-196, 210, 242-

appear to have been diverse in their backgrounds, origins, and religions. Based on his name and marriage to an Orthodox Christian woman, Stojan Janković-Mitrović was probably originally an Orthodox Christian. The Venetian Republic often used Morlachs to settle, guard, and defend their border regions, appointing leaders from prominent families. Members of the Janković-Mitrović family were the hereditary Morlach leaders of the region of Gornji Kotari (near present-day Zadar, Croatia). Perhaps in recognition of their former Ottoman status, the Venetians called these leaders (and the leaders called themselves) *serdar*s and *harambaşı*s (head bandit), and expected them to organize and keep peace among their people, as well as prevent them from making unwanted disturbances along the triple border. While Morlachs began as irregular guerrilla fighters, they were eventually integrated as regulars into the Venetian army. Stojan Janković-Mitrović was one of the most famous Morlach fighters of the late seventeenth century.[151]

The name supposedly given to Stojan by the sultan, "Uskok-Osmanlija," hints at the complicated history of the triple border. *Uskok*s were brigands who operated along the triple

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243, 268; John V.A. Fine, *When Ethnicity Did Not Matter in the Balkans: A Study of Identity in Pre-Nationalist Croatia, Dalmatia, and Slavonia in the Medieval and Early-Modern Periods* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2006), 115-119, 319, 361, 571; Ivan Lovrić, "The Customs of the Morlachs," in *Discourses of Collective Identity in Central and Southeast Europe (1770-1945): Texts and Commentary*, vol. 1, eds. Balázs Trencsényi and Michal Kopeček (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2006), 57-61; Wendy Bracewell, "Travels through the Slav World," in *Under Eastern Eyes: A Comparative Introduction to East European Travel Writing on Europe*, eds. Wendy Bracewell and Alex Drace-Francis (Budapest, Central European University Press, 2008), 147-194.

[151] Mayhew, *Dalmatia between Ottoman and Venetian Rule: Contado di Zara 1645-1718*, 18, 63-72, 172-196, 210, 242-243, 268; Vjeran Kursar, "Being an Ottoman Vlach: On Vlach Identity(Ies), Role and Status in Western Parts of the Ottoman Balkans (15th-18th Centuries)," *Osmanlı Tarihi Araştırma ve Uygulama Merkezi Dergisi* 34 (2013): 145-149.

border and were sometimes employed as irregular soldiers by both the Habsburgs and the Venetians. Though their identities and codes of honor revolved around fighting the Ottomans, historians suggest, and regional folktales confirm, that respecting and befriending Ottoman foes, even accepting them as kin and blood brothers, were also a part of this code. In other words, the Venetians, Ottomans, and Habsburgs of this region shared frontier identities, codes, and values.[152]

Ultimately, the Stojan of the folk song converted to the Ottoman way of life only briefly and chose to leave it behind. Here, the song invokes Stojan Janković-Mitrović's actual history. In March 1666, during a raid on Ottoman territory, Stojan was captured and taken to the court of Mehmed IV (1648-1697) in Istanbul as a prisoner of war. His fate may have reflected his high status and notoriety, as Tea Mayhew tells us that only the most valuable captives were sent directly to the sultan. He remained there for over a year, apparently catching the attention of the sultan and somehow being integrated into his retinue. After fourteen months, Janković and a prisoner-of-war compatriot apparently escaped and returned to the northwestern frontier. From this point on, Janković continued to serve the Venetian Republic against the Ottomans.[153] What transpired during his months in Istanbul is

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[152] Catherine Wendy Bracewell, *The Uskoks of Senj: Piracy, Banditry and Holy War in the Sixteenth-Century Adriatic* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1992), 182; Bracewell, "Frontier Blood-Brotherhood and the Triplex Confinium," 30-42; Drago Roksandić, "Stojan Janković in the Morean War, or of Uskoks, Slaves and Subjects," *in Constructing Border Societies on the Triplex Confinium*, eds. Drago Roksandić and Nataša Štefanec (Budapest: Central European University-Budapest History Department, 2000), 240.

[153] Roksandić, "Stojan Janković in the Morean War, or of Uskoks, Slaves and Subjects," 255-278; Mayhew, *Dalmatia between Ottoman and Venetian Rule: Contado di Zara 1645-1718*, 260.

unknown. I am unaware of any Ottoman sources that mention his time at court, and his biographers make no mention of such sources. However, it is clear that regional folk songs believed that he had temporarily converted to the Ottoman way and, in that regard, was a *Poturnak*. He died in the year 1687 in a Morlach raid on the Ottoman town of Duvno, part of a greater Venetian attack on the city of Herceg Novi.[154]

Though unrelated to regional folk songs, another notable use of *Potur* occurs in Matija Mažuranić's (1817-1881) travelogue of Bosnia from 1839 to 1840. Mažuranić was a leader of the Croatian Illyrian National Movement and went to the Bosnian *eyalet* to seek his long-lost national "brethren" and investigate the possibility of fomenting a nationalist uprising against the Ottoman Empire. During his travels, he learned Ottoman Turkish, earned the nickname Hırvat (Croat) Paşa, and was even appointed an honorary Ottoman magistrate.[155] In his travelogue, he recounts a story about the most famous *devşirme* recruit from Bosnia, the grand vizier Sokollu Mehmed Paşa (Mehmed-paša Sokolović, term 1565-1579), who was originally an Orthodox Christian from the eastern Bosnian village of Sokol. According to Mažuranić, Sokollu Mehmed Paşa made his brothers cavalrymen and persuaded his mother to convert to Islam, but could not persuade his father. For this reason, he built their mausolea according to their respective faiths. Mažuranić uses the verb *poturčiti* to describe both Sokollu's conversion to Islam and his entry into the Ottoman military and

[154] Roksandić, "Stojan Janković in the Morean War, or of Uskoks, Slaves and Subjects," 255-278; Mayhew, *Dalmatia between Ottoman and Venetian Rule: Contado di Zara 1645-1718*, 72.

[155] Antun Barac, *Hrvatska Književnost*, vol. 1 (Zagreb: Matica Hrvatska, 1964), 64, 130-132.

administration. He calls the new convert "Poturčenjak," possibly a nineteenth-century derivative of *Poturnak*.[156]

The definitions of *Potur* borne out by regional folk songs and Mažuranić's travelogue are not limited to peasants. Instead, they seem to describe a wide variety of individuals, in some cases even elite women, who underwent various forms of Ottomanization, from service to the Ottoman state to religious conversion to marriage to Ottoman officials.[157] For this reason, I find it difficult to accept the assertion that *Poturnak*s were exclusively peasants. Rather, I would argue that they were a conglomeration of gradually Ottomanized individuals from various social backgrounds. Even lower nobility with modest feudal holdings and small military retinues could become *Poturnak*s, since they could be useful allies to the Ottomans.[158] In return for their service, and as a way of honoring their former stations, they were likely incorporated into the Ottoman military and administration. It is not far-fetched to posit that their former serfs could have followed them into Ottoman service. In his work on slavery in the Ottoman Middle East, Ehud R. Toledano discusses a nineteenth-century example of this phenomenon, detailing how landed Circassian leaders fleeing Russian

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[156] Matija Mažuranić, *Pogled u Bosnu ili Kratak Put u Onu Krajinu, Učinjen 1839-40 po Jednom Domorodcu* (Zagreb: Zaklada Tiskara Narodnih Novina u Zagrebu, 1938), 20, 54, 66; idem, *A Glance into Ottoman Bosnia, or a Short Journey into the Land by a Native in 1839-40*, trans. Branka Magaš (London and Beirut: SAQI in association with the Bosnian Institute, 2007), 8-14.

[157] Marjanović, *Hrvatske Narodne Pjesme: Junačke Pjesme Muhamedovske*, 56-453.

[158] Itzkowitz, *Ottoman Empire and Islamic Tradition*, 40-42, 48; İnalcık, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age, 1300-1600*, 13; Toledano, "The Emergence of Ottoman-Local Elites (1700-1900): A Framework for Research," 150; Mladenović, "The Osmanlı Conquest and the Islamization of Bosnia," 219-220.

encroachment and immigrating into Ottoman territory in the nineteenth century brought their enslaved serfs with them.[159]

Though we do not yet have records identifying lower Bosnian nobility as *Poturnak*s, if we consider *Poturnak*s as a conglomeration of individuals who became Ottomanized in a variety of ways, then Ottomanized nobility would have fallen into this category. The next section of this chapter is devoted to discussing key examples of native Bosnians and Hercegovinians of all backgrounds, from peasantry to nobility, who became Ottoman and were likely the first *Poturnak*s.

III. Kingdom to Sancak, Allies to Subjects

The Ottoman conquest of the Kingdom of Bosnia was gradual. In the early sixteenth century, the Ottomans finally secured all of the territories that made up the Bosnian and Hercegovinian *sancak*s and permanently pushed the Ottoman-Hungarian border to the northwest of the former Kingdom of Bosnia. The fifteenth-century chronicler Tursun Beg reflected on the decades-long struggle to secure the Kingdom of Bosnia and hold on to the towns and fortresses captured after 1463. Following their execution of Stjepan Tomašević (r. 1461-1463), the last Bosnian king, the Ottomans subdued large parts of the former kingdom, but regional rivalries remained. Tursun Beg mentions a Christian alliance that invaded parts

[159] Ehud R. Toledano, *Slavery and Abolition in the Ottoman Middle East* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1998), 81-82.

of Bosnia from Hungary soon after 1463, likely referring to a Hungarian-Venetian coalition aided by Herceg (*herzog*, duke) Stjepan Vukčić-Kosača of Hercegovina (r. 1435-1466). Led by the Hungarian king Matthias Corvinus (r. 1458-1490), this coalition gained control of various parts of northwestern Bosnia. Most notably, they captured the fortified town of Jajce, which had previously submitted to, and been garrisoned by, the Ottomans. Jajce's garrison commander, or *vojvođa*, reportedly freely surrendered to the invaders. Tursun Beg emphasizes that the rest of Bosnia remained in the hands of those loyal to the sultan, but loyalties and the Ottoman hold on the region seem to have been more tenuous at this time.[160]

In northern Bosnia, Matthias Corvinus founded the banate of Srebrenik, capturing many of the fortified frontier towns previously conquered by the Ottomans such as Srebrenik, Teočak, Sokol, and Tešanj. The Ottomans held on to Srebrenica, Zvornik, Tuzla, Doboj, and other towns in central and eastern Bosnia.[161] They moved quickly to recapture Jajce, putting the city to siege in 1464. However, the Venetian-Hungarian-Hercegovinian coalition was not their only preoccupation. In 1476, the Wallachian *vojvođa* Vlad Tepeş (later immortalized as "Dracula," r. 1448; 1456-1462; 1476) and the Serbian despot Vuk Grgurević (r. 1471-1485) led a campaign against the Ottomans in the area around Zvornik

[160] Tursun Beg notes that, "When the King of Hungary marched into Bosnia, the garrison commander and *voyvoda* at Yayce treasonably surrendered the fortress to him without a fight. The rest of Bosnia, however, remained in the hands of loyal officials of the Sultan." For more information, see Tursun Beg, *The History of Mehmed the Conqueror*, 52-53; Šabanović, *Propast Bosanskog Kraljevstva i Osnivanje Bosanskog Sandžaka*, 40-42; Mrgić, "Transition from Late Medieval to Early Ottoman Settlement Pattern: A Case Study on Northern Bosnia," 55; Kritovoulos, *History of Mehmed the Conqueror*, 201.

[161] The banate of Srebrenik included the town and fortress of Srebrenik. Neither is to be confused with the eastern Bosnian town of Srebrenica.

and Srebrenica. The Akkoyunlus and the Venetians also struck an alliance. The Ottomans managed to subdue both by 1479, but fighting on multiple fronts and against multiple coalitions must have stretched the Ottoman state and military. In 1480, Matthias Corvinus managed to penetrate far into central and southern Bosnia and invade the provincial capital of Sarajevo, forcing the Bosnian *sancakbegi* (provincial governor) Davud Paşa to flee. The battle for Bosnia continued until 1503, when a ten-year truce demarcating the military border was signed between the Ottomans and the Hungarians. Finally, in 1512, the Ottomans reconquered the lost parts of central, western, and northern Bosnia. From here, they pushed the military border farther northwest.[162]

The 1526 Ottoman victory over the Hungarians at Mohács solidified their hold on the former Bosnian kingdom. Ottoman forces led by Süleyman I (r. 1520-1566) and the Bosnian *sancakbegi*, Gazi Hüsrev Beg, pushed as far northwest as the outskirts of Vienna. By 1527, the Ottomans had conquered the banate of Jajce established by Matthias Corvinus. By 1533, they had recaptured parts of northern Bosnia all the way up to the River Sava, including the banate of Srebrenik, as well as parts of western Bosnia. Defeating and expelling the Hungarians from these regions gave the Ottomans access to territory formerly controlled by Matthias Corvinus. Gazi Hüsrev Beg furthered these gains by defeating the Serbian despot

[162] Mrgić, "Transition from Late Medieval to Early Ottoman Settlement Pattern: A Case Study on Northern Bosnia," 55-57; İnalcık, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age, 1300-1600*, 28-31; İnalcık, ed., with Quataert, *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1300-1914*, 20-21; Husić, "Maglaj u Ranom Osmanskom Periodu (15. i 16. Stoljeće)," 116-118; Čar, "Demografsko Kretanje, Socijalni i Konfesionalni Sastav Stanovništva u Visočkoj Nahiji," 207.

Stjepan Berislavić (r. 1515-1535) and capturing Dobor, Brod and Novigrad.[163] The situation in Bosnia and Hercegovina stabilized as the military border was pushed outwards in the late 1520s and 1530s.

The Ottomans accomplished the conquest of the Kingdom of Bosnia with the help of native Bosnians and Hercegovinians. The Ottomans regularly collaborated with natives in order first to conquer, and then to administer, the region. In his *Heşt Bihişt*, Idris Bitlisi regularly praises Balkan leaders who had the sense to accept Ottoman suzerainty, and notes that they became loyal servants.[164] *Poturnak*s of all backgrounds likely emerged out of this larger group of early Ottoman allies in the former Kingdom of Bosnia who were integrated into the Ottoman state and continued to serve it after the transition from kingdom to *sancak*s.

We know that in the *sancak* of Bosnia, the Ottomans incorporated former nobles of various ranks into their state as *sıpahi*s and sometimes assigned them *timar*s – grants of land revenue rights in exchange for cavalry service - equivalent to their feudal holdings.[165] In his *Heşt Bihişt*, Idris Bitlisi provides the origin story of these individuals, sometimes referred to

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[163] Donia, *Sarajevo: A Biography*, 18-19; Husić, "Maglaj u Ranom Osmanskom Periodu (15. i 16. Stoljeće)," 118-119; Mrgić, "Transition from Late Medieval to Early Ottoman Settlement Pattern: A Case Study on Northern Bosnia," 58-60; Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300-1650: The Structure of Power*, 27-52, 264; İnalcık, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age, 1300-1600*, 35; Sokolović, "Pjesnik Aga-dede iz Dobor-grada o svome zavičaju i pogibiji Osmana II: O Jednom Autografu Gazijine Biblioteke," 5-34.

[164] Trako, "Pretkosovski Događaji u Hešt Bihiştu Idris Bitlisija," 160-181.

[165] Ibrahimović, "Struktura Vojničke Klase u XV i Početkom XVI Vijeka s Posebnim Osvrtom na Širenje Islama u Bosnia," 270-277; Filipović, "Islamizacija Bosne u Prva Dva Desetljeća Osmanske Vlasti," 62; Šabanović, "Vojno Uređenje Bosne od 1463 Godine do Kraja XVI Stoljeća," 196-206; Husić, "Maglaj u Ranom Osmanskom Periodu (15. i 16. Stoljeće)," 120.

as *voynuk*s. He writes that Murad I (r. 1362-1389) appointed a wise, pious, and worthy commander by the name of Timurtaş as the highest commander in all of Rumelia. Timurtaş was so influential that the military laws he put in place were still valid in Bitlisi's own time. The mobilization of troops from the ranks of "unbelievers" in Rumelia, the *voynuk*s, was his most important contribution. This *cemaat*, a term usually used to denote Janissary regiments, was vital to the sultan's campaigns. Christians who now resided within the *dar al-Islam* (abode of Islam), but who had served in military functions prior to the arrival of the Ottomans, made up the regiment. These Christians lent their military capabilities and bravery to the army of Islam. Bitlisi praises their trustworthiness and notes that they protected the army's weapons and supplies, and the sultan's stores, arsenals, and stables. He adds that they were exempt from certain taxes.[166] Who were these former nobles?

Answering this question requires returning to the first Ottoman incursions into the Kingdom of Bosnia in the late fourteenth century. It bears repeating that pro-Ottoman parties existed among the Bosnian nobility well before the actual conquest in 1463. These families used their connections with the Ottomans to further their own political and military aims. After 1463, some remained and continued to administer their former lands, which became *timar*s (land revenue grants). In the Introduction, I mentioned noble families such as the Pavlovićes, the Hranićes, the Kovačevićes, and the Kosačas. Other compelling examples

[166] Trako, "Pretkosovski Događaji u Hešt Bihiştu Idris Bitlisija," 187-188; Lopašić, "Islamization of the Balkans with Special Reference to Bosnia," 174; Šabanović, "Vojno Uređenje Bosne od 1463 Godine do Kraja XVI Stoljeća," 214-215, 220-223.

of high and low nobility who allied with the Ottomans exist, the Hercegovinian Obrenović family being one.[167]

The head of this family, *knez* Petar Obrenović, served the Ottomans and obtained a *timar* (land revenue grant) in the late fifteenth century.[168] His three sons all became Ottoman high functionaries. Hamza Beg, the eldest of the three, served as the *sancakbegi* of his native Hercegovina from 1469 to 1474. Mehmed Beg served in, and was likely raised in, the imperial palace. He was a *kapıcıbaşı* (head of the palace doorkeepers) during the reign of Bayezid II (1481-1512). In 1500, he followed in his brother's footsteps and became the *sancakbegi* of his native Hercegovina. Halil Paşa served as the *beglerbegi* (governor-general) of Rumelia. While their father, *knez* Petar, retained his faith, his sons clearly converted to Islam but kept their Obrenović patronymic.[169] The Vlahović family was a similar case. The

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[167] Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds: The Construction of the Ottoman State*, 17-27; İnalcık, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age, 1300-1600*, 9-16; Ibrahimović, "Struktura Vojničke Klase u XV i Početkom XVI Vijeka s Posebnim Osvrtom na Širenje Islama u Bosnia," 269; Trako, "Pretkosovski Događaji u Hešt Bihiştu Idris Bitlisija," 160-181; Mladenović, "The Osmanlı Conquest and the Islamization of Bosnia," 219-221; Zlatar, "O Nekim Muslimanskim Feudalnim Porodicama u Bosni u XV i XVI Stoljeću," 97; Kiel, "Ottoman Sources for the Demographic History and the Process of Islamization of Bosnia-Hercegovina and Bulgaria in the 15th-17th Centuries: Old Sources – New Methodology," 105; Donia, *Sarajevo: A Biography*, 11; Mrgić, "Transition from Late Medieval to Early Ottoman Settlement Pattern: A Case Study on Northern Bosnia," 54; Tursun Beg, *The History of Mehmed the Conqueror*, 52; Jusuf Mulić, "O Nekim Posebnostima Vezanim za Postupak Prihvatanja Islama u Bosni i Netačnostima Koje Mu Se Pripisuju," *Anali Gazi Husrev-begove Biblioteke u Sarajevu* 23-24 (2005): 182; İbn Kemal (Kemalpaşazade), *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osman*, vol. 7, ed. Şerafettin Turan (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1991), 235.

[168] The term "knez" usually denoted a prince, but could also be used to refer to counts, mayors, fortress commanders, or the heads and military leaders of major families. In this case, the title likely denoted *knez* Petar Obrenović as the head of a noble Hercegovinian family. A *timar* was a land grant awarded by the Ottoman state, usually in compensation for cavalry service in the Ottoman armies.

[169] Zlatar, "O Nekim Muslimanskim Feudalnim Porodicama u Bosni u XV i XVI Stoljeću," 99-103; Elezović, *Turski Spomenici*, 491; Zlatar, "Neki Podaci o Sandžak-begu Mehmed-begu Obrenoviću," 341-346;

two sons of *knez* Ivan Vlahović, Ali Beg and Smail Beg, served at the court of Mehmed II (r. 1444-1446, 1451-1481). The other male members of the family also served the Ottoman state in some capacity, given that they were granted *timar*s.[170]

The Vuković-Desisalić noble family of Hercegovina is another noteworthy case. Late-fifteenth century Ottoman *ferman*s (imperial edicts) concerning the republic of Dubrovnik (Ragusa) mention various *knez*es from this family. To contextualize these mentions as well as their significance, it is necessary briefly to describe Dubrovnik's status and its relationship with the Ottoman Empire.

The independent, mercantile republic of Dubrovnik (Ragusa) was well-connected to the Kingdom of Bosnia through trade and the Catholic Church well before the arrival of the Ottomans. In 1358, Dubrovnik became a vassal of Hungary. At the same time, however, it cultivated a relationship with the Ottomans when the latter began to invade portions of the eastern Balkans where Dubrovnik merchants operated. This relationship grew as the Ottomans moved farther westward across the Balkan Peninsula and geographically closer to the republic. Dubrovnik merchants grew quite wealthy from trade enabled and facilitated by the Ottomans, and the republic requested Ottoman support in conflicts with regional powers such as the Kingdom of Bosnia. Perhaps in light of this increasing dependence on the

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Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds: The Construction of the Ottoman State*, 17; İnalcık, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age, 1300-1600*, 9-16.

[170] Zlatar, "O Nekim Muslimanskim Feudalnim Porodicama u Bosni u XV i XVI Stoljeću," 99-103; Elezović, *Turski Spomenici*, 491.

Ottomans in realms of trade and politics, in 1433, Dubrovnik severed its association with Hungary and recognized Ottoman suzerainty. The relationship was formalized, extended, and renewed at various points over the next few decades. Dubrovnik remained autonomous but paid a yearly tribute to the Ottoman sultan in return for free passage and trade privileges, peace, and protection. Around this time, Dubrovnik merchants also began to serve the Ottoman state as tax farmers of regional customs and mines.[171] Regional nobles allied with the Ottomans, such as the Vuković-Desisalić family, seem to have played a hand in facilitating this process.

The aforementioned late-fifteenth century Ottoman *ferman*s (imperial edicts) mention the *knez*es Mihoć and Ivan Desisalić. According to a 1490 *ferman*, Mihoć and Ivan Desisalić farmed the taxes of a wide range of revenue-producing operations; the customs for the port of Herceg Novi, Herceg Novi's saltern (a pit where seawater evaporates to produce salt), the customs for the fortress in the nearby town of Risan, and an additional salt pit. They likely purchased the tax-collection rights at an imperial auction, sent agents to collect the revenues, and remitted these revenues to the imperial treasury. The princelings seem to have been unable to keep up their payments to the Ottoman treasury and had accrued a sizeable

[171] HR-DAD, Fermani 1, no. 3 (15 Zilhicce 866/10 September 1462); İnalcık, ed., with Quataert, *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1300-1914*, 256-259.

debt. The *ferman* in question specifies that *knez*es from Dubrovnik, in turn, owed the Desisalićes 25,000 *akçe*.[172]

The details are unclear as to how or why the parties came to this arrangement, but these *knez*es from Dubrovnik (Ragusa) paid their debt to the Desisalićes directly to the Ottoman imperial treasury, effectively paying off the Desisalić brothers' debt. It is likely that the brothers were sub-contracting tax-farming rights out to these Dubrovnik-based *knez*es, but it is also possible that these *knez*es served as guarantors (*kefil*) for the Desisalić brothers, especially given Dubrovnik's proximity to Herceg Novi and Risan. Guarantors assured the payment of all or parts of the sum contracted with the imperial treasury, and they usually resided near the tax resources in question. For our purposes, the exact circumstances are immaterial. What matters more is that members of the Vuković-Desisalić noble family were clearly involved with the Ottoman state and Dubrovnik, and conducted Ottoman affairs in their region in the late fifteenth century.[173] The family's most famous member, Ferhad Beg Vuković-Desisalić, became a *sancakbeg* (provincial governor) of Bosnia in the mid-sixteenth

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[172] Darling, *Revenue-Raising and Legitimacy: Tax Collection and Finance Administration in the Ottoman Empire 1560-1660*, 123-136; HR-DAD, Fermani 1, no. 43 (29 Ramazan 895/16 August 1490); Herceg Novi is currently located in Montenegro. In the late fifteenth century, it was under Ottoman control and considered a part of the *sancak* of Hercegovina. It is approximately thirty-five miles from Dubrovnik.

[173] HR-DAD, Fermani 1, no. 43 (29 Ramazan 895/16 August 1490); Yuzo Nagata, "Introduction: Tax Farming under the Ottoman Empire," in *Tax Farm Register of Damascus Province in the Seventeenth Century: Archival and Historical Studies*, eds. Yuzo Nagata, Toru Miura, Yasuhisa Shimizu (Tokyo: The Toyo Bunko, 2006), 1-6; Yuzo Nagata and 'Abdul Rahim 'Abdul Rahman, "The Iltizâm System in Egypt and Turkey: A Comparative Study," in *Studies on the Social and Economic History of the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Yuzo Nagata (Izmir: Akademi Kitabevi, 1995), 57-81; Jane Hathaway, *The Arab Lands under Ottoman Rule, 1516-1800* (Harlow, Essex: Pearson/Longman, 2008), 82, 171-172.

century and endowed the iconic Ferhadija mosque in Sarajevo. His brothers likely remained Christian but served the Ottomans as *vojvoda*s.[174]

Natives of the Bosnian *sancak* without noble background also joined the Ottomans voluntarily or involuntarily and became powerful regional players. The family of the mid-seventeenth century Ottoman historian Ibrahim Peçevi (1572-1658), the Alajbegovićes, was one. Their connections with the Ottomans were established prior to or during the reign of Mehmed II (r. 1444-1446, 1451-1481). During this time, Peçevi's great-grandfather Kara Davud entered the imperial palace and became a *silahdar* (weapons-bearer). He seems to have done so with the help of fellow Bosnians already in Ottoman service. In 1496, Kara Davud was granted a *zeamet* (large grant of revenue-collection, like a "super-*timar*") in the Bosnian town of Kakanj with the help of another Bosnian, Yakup Paşa, the *beglerbegi* of Rumelia. He became an *alaybeg* (literally, "procession commander"), the military rank associated with *zeamet*-holders and the origin of the family's last name, Alajbegović (Alaybegzade). Peçevi's grandfather, Cafer Beg, also served in the *sancak* of Bosnia as an *alaybeg*. He fought at the 1526 Battle of Mohács alongside Süleyman I; his friend the governor of Bosnia, Gazi Hüsrev Beg; and his own eight sons.[175] If the family was of noble

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[174] Adem Handžić, "Gazi Husrev-begovi Vakufi u Tešanjskoj Nahiji u XVI Stoljeću," *Anali Gazi Husrev-begove Biblioteke u Sarajevu* 2-3 (1974): 161-174; Zlatar, "O Nekim Muslimanskim Feudalnim Porodicama u Bosni u XV i XVI Stoljeću," 131.

[175] Pećevija (Peçevi), *Historija 1520-1572*, Book 1, 1-14, 89-90; Dino Mujadžević, "Ibrahim Pečevija (1574.-1649.) – Osmanski Povjesničar Hrvatske i Bosne i Hercegovine Podrijetlom iz Pečuha," *Scrinia Slavonica* 9 (2009): 379-394; Lopašić, "Islamization of the Balkans with Special Reference to Bosnia," 175, 181; Zlatar, "O

origin, Peçevi and his biographers never mention it. It is more likely that Kara Davud volunteered, or was taken as a captive, and entered Ottoman palace service in this way.

Aga Dede, a relatively unknown Bosnian writer who composed a work in Ottoman Turkish on the 1622 murder of Osman II that will be taken up in a later chapter, is another fascinating example. As well as being a writer, Aga Dede served as a *dizdar* (fortress commander), *imam* and *hatib* (preacher) in Dobor Grad, a small town in Bosanska Posavina, the region along the northern Ottoman-Hungarian border. Aga Dede writes that his ancestors were Janissary *kullar* (slaves) in the service of Mehmed II. By the early seventeenth century, the family had an established history of military service on the frontier. Aga Dede emphasizes that their loyalty never wavered and that none of his predecessors was ever dismissed from service. His great-grandfather, Ilyas (Ilijas), probably served Mehmed II. His grandfather, Muhjudin, was in charge of a frontier fortress in Bügürdelen (Böğürdelen), modern-day Šabac (in Serbia). He relocated to Dobor Grad in 1536, when Gazi Hüsrev Beg (1480-1541) conquered and secured the region. He settled there and became a beekeeper, most probably for the same Gazi Hüsrev Beg, who had endowed 150 bee hives as a *vakıf* (pious foundation) in the town. His father, Jusuf Ağa (1521-1609), would become the *dizdar* of Dobor, and Aga Dede would inherit this position. In his writings, he does not mention any

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Nekim Muslimanskim Feudalnim Porodicama u Bosni u XV i XVI Stoljeću," 108-109; Smail Balić, "Ottoman Bosnia in Vienna: Records of the Bosniacs in the Latest Catalogue of the Austrian National Library," in *Ottoman Bosnia: A History in Peril*, eds. Markus Koller and Kemal H. Karpat (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004), 58.

noble origins, so it is more likely that his great-grandfather was a Christian peasant who volunteered for service, was taken as a war captive, or was levied into the *devşirme*.[176]

While some individuals, such as Aga Dede's great-grandfather Ilyas, served as low-ranking Janissaries, others became elite slaves of the sultan known as *kapı kulları*. *Kapı kulları* from Bosnia served at the Ottoman court as early as 1444. Four elite Bosnian *kullar*, Mahmud, Ahmed, Şahin and Halil, are mentioned in a 1444 *azadname* (grant of manumission) renewal. Two of them were *şahinci*s (hawk-handlers), one was a *çakırcı* (falconer), and the fourth's post is not mentioned. They were part of a larger contingent of *kapı kulları* who had faithfully served Murad II (r. 1421-1444, 1446-1451) for many years and were to be manumitted upon his death. In this 1444 *azadname*, Murad II renewed an earlier grant of manumission upon his death (*tadbir*) for this contingent. It is clear from the document that these Bosnian *kapı kulları* entered palace service well before 1444. Their service may have begun with Murad II's accession in 1421, but it is perfectly plausible that they entered elite palace service before that date, perhaps even before the start of the fifteenth century. In any case, this indicates that individuals from the *sancak* of Bosnia

[176] Sokolović, "Pjesnik Aga-dede iz Dobor-grada o svome zavičaju i pogibiji Osmana II: O Jednom Autografu Gazijine Biblioteke," 5-34; Adem Handžić, "Dokumenat o Prvom Službenom Popisu Husrev-begova Vakufa iz 1604 Godine," *Anali Gazi Husrev-begove Biblioteke u Sarajevu* 15-16 (1990): 3-18.

served in the imperial palace as *kapı kulları* well before 1444, and certainly before the 1463 conquest of the Kingdom of Bosnia.[177]

Bosnian and Hercegovinian royalty also joined the Ottomans, mostly after the 1463 conquest. Kraloğlu ("son of the king") Ishak Beg of Bosnia and Hersekzade ("son of the duke") Ahmed Paşa of Hercegovina are two of the most famous examples of this phenomenon. The former was possibly Stjepan Tomašević's half-brother Sigismund, who was captured during the 1463 offensive. He later converted and became one of Mehmed II's companions. It is likely that he was not the only member of this royal line who joined the Ottoman elite.[178] The latter was the youngest son of Herceg (*herzog*, duke) Stjepan Vukčić-Kosača (1404-1466) of Hercegovina. He also converted and joined the retinue of the sultan, marrying Fatima Sultan, a daughter of Bayezid II. An Ottoman *ferman* concerning Dubrovnik (Ragusa) confirms that he served as the *beglerbegi* (governor-general) of Anatolia in 1496.[179] He later served as Selim I's (r. 1512-1520) army commander and grand vizier numerous times. Two of his four sons, Siri Ali Beg and Mustafa Beg, were raised at the court of Selim I.[180]

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[177] İnalcık, *Fatih Devri Üzerinde Tetkiler ve Vesikalar*, 215-217; Ahmed S. Aličić, "Popis Bosanske Vojske Pred Bitku Na Mohaču 1526 Godine," *Prilozi za Orijentalnu Filologiju* 25 (1975): 182, 187.

[178] Handžić, *Islamizacija Bosne i Hercegovine i Porijeklo Bosansko-Hercegovačkih Muslimana,* 20-21; Tursun Beg, *The History of Mehmed the Conqueror*, 50-53; Husić, "Maglaj u Ranom Osmanskom Periodu (15. i 16. Stoljeće)," 113-114.

[179] HR-DAD, Fermani 2, no. 51 (1-10 Cemaziyülahir 901/16-26 February 1496).

[180] Elezović, *Turski Spomenici*, 650; Zlatar, "O Nekim Muslimanskim Feudalnim Porodicama u Bosni u XV i XVI Stoljeću," 91-92; Finkel, *Osman's Dream: The Story of the Ottoman Empire*, 106; Lopašić, "Islamization of the Balkans with Special Reference to Bosnia," 165; Ibrahimović, "Struktura Vojničke Klase u

Bosnians and Hercegovinians who came into Ottoman service, both voluntarily and involuntarily, before and after 1463, clearly came from a variety of social classes. Some of them participated in the conquest of the Kingdom of Bosnia, and some played important roles in its post-conquest reorganization and administration.[181] This is not to say that only Bosnians and Hercegovinians were active in the Bosnian and Hercegovinian *sancak*s during this time. The Ottoman conquest and the push northwestward necessitated troops from various regions of the empire, both non-native *ghulam*s of the sultan and non-native *akıncıları* (frontier raiders). Some of these troops received *timar*s (land revenue grants) and *zeamet*s (a "super-*timar*") and settled in the region permanently. Late fifteenth-century Ottoman *defters* (registers) from this region mention officials from Bulgaria, Macedonia, Albania, Anatolia, Hungary, and various other regions.[182] A 1533 *tapu tahrir defteri* (cadastral survey register) for the nearby *sancak* of Zvornik mentions non-native *sipahi*s (timariots,

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XV i Početkom XVI Vijeka s Posebnim Osvrtom na Širenje Islama u Bosnia," 273; Olga Zirojević, "On the Distinctive Features of the Bosniacs," in *Ottoman Bosnia: A History in Peril*, eds. Markus Koller and Kemal H. Karpat (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004), 168-169; Tursun Beg, *The History of Mehmed the Conqueror*, 51; Bašagić, *Znameniti Hrvati, Bošnjaci i Hercegovci u Turskoj Carevini*, 8, 74.

[181] Čar-Drnda, "Remnants of the Tîmâr System in the Bosnian Vilâyet in the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century," 171-174; Zlatar, "O Nekim Muslimanskim Feudalnim Porodicama u Bosni u XV i XVI Stoljeću," 81; Ibrahimović, "Struktura Vojničke Klase u XV i Početkom XVI Vijeka s Posebnim Osvrtom na Širenje Islama u Bosnia," 276; Moačanin, "Defterology and Mythology: Ottoman Bosnia up the Tanzîmât," 189-194.

[182] Ibrahimović, "Struktura Vojničke Klase u XV i Početkom XVI Vijeka s Posebnim Osvrtom na Širenje Islama u Bosnia," 269-276; Zlatar, "O Nekim Muslimanskim Feudalnim Porodicama u Bosni u XV i XVI Stoljeću," 86; Šabanović, "Vojno Uređenje Bosne od 1463 Godine do Kraja XVI Stoljeća," 205.

cavalrymen) such as Ibrahim from Morea (southern Greece), Ilyas from Bitol (Macedonia), and Yusuf from Filibevi (Plovdiv, Bulgaria).[183]

We must also take into account Vlachs, semi-nomadic and nomadic pastoralists living in the Balkans, who were regularly incorporated into Ottoman service as irregular military units. They also settled and revitalized neglected and uninhabited conquered regions. In the *sancak* of Bosnia, many of them were settled in the northern region along the frontier as an anti-Habsburg bulwark, as well as in central Bosnia in places like Žepče, Maglaj, and Tešanj. They were often given *timar*s and *zeamet*s in compensation for their service. The exact origins and religious affiliations of Balkan Vlachs are still contested. Vjeran Kursar warns against modernizing ancient and pre-modern Vlach identities to suit our present political vocabulary. He writes that the debate over the origins and religious affiliations of Balkan Vlachs is a vulgarization of the historical question through "politicization and inevitable ahistorization." With this in mind, I follow his careful definition of Vlachs as indigenous, Romanized nomadic peoples who lived in the highlands of the central Balkans before the Slavic migrations in the sixth and seventh centuries C.E.. Following the influx of Slavs and Avars into this region, the Vlachs mixed with and acculturated to the newcomers, and vice versa. They also began to Slavicize and take on elements of Slavic languages. Given that Vlachs were indigenous, Romanized peoples of the Balkans, it is likely that they came in

[183] Adem Handžić, *Dva Prva Popisa Zvorničkog Sandžaka iz 1519 i 1533 Godine*, book 22 (Sarajevo: Akademija Nauka i Umjetnosti Bosne i Hercegovine, 1986), 48, 54, 58, 64.

contact with Christianity well-before the arrival of the Slavs and Avars. However, it is also likely that their large-scale Christianization occurred later, in the ninth century, along with that of the rest of the Balkan population.[184]

In some ways, the Vlachs' service to the Ottoman state was a continuation of their roles in medieval Balkan kingdoms. In the Middle Ages, Vlachs served the kingdoms in whose territory they resided militarily and through colonization. They engaged in the transport of goods, animal husbandry, and craftsmanship. Following the Ottoman conquest, just like other natives of the Kingdom of Bosnia, some Vlachs retained their religion, mostly but not exclusively Orthodox Christianity, while others converted to Islam and took on new, Muslim names.[185]

Though *Poturnak*s probably came from this larger group of early Ottoman allies in the *sancak*s of Bosnia and Hercegovina, it is less likely that they came from native and non-native *ghulam*s, that is, elite slaves of the sultan who were trained in the palace and posted to

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[184] Kursar, "Being an Ottoman Vlach: On Vlach Identity(ies), Role and Status in Western Parts of the Ottoman Balkans (15th-18th Centuries)," 115-117, John V. A. Fine Jr., *The Early Medieval Balkans: A Critical Survey from the Sixth to the Late Twelfth Century* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 1991), 35-41.

[185] Kursar, "Being an Ottoman Vlach: On Vlach Identity(ies), Role and Status in Western Parts of the Ottoman Balkans (15th-18th Centuries)," 115-149; Kurtović, "Iz Historije Vlaha Predojevića," 243-254; Lopašić, "Islamization of the Balkans with Special Reference to Bosnia," 164; Mulić, "O Nekim Posebnostima Vezanim za Postupak Prihvatanja Islama u Bosni i Netačnostima Koje Mu Se Pripisuju," 184-190; Čar, "Demografsko Kretanje, Socijalni i Konfesionalni Sastav Stanovništva u Visočkoj Nahiji," 195-196, 205-206; Husić, "Maglaj u Ranom Osmanskom Periodu (15. i 16. Stoljeće)," 116, 124-125; Handžić, *Opširni Popis Bosanskog Sandžaka iz 1604 Godine*, xliv-xlvi; idem, *Dva Prva Popisa Zvorničkog Sandžaka iz 1519 i 1533 Godine*, 23; *Kanuni i Kanunname za Bosanki, Hercegovački, Zvornički, Kliški, Crnogorski i Skadarski Sandžak,* trans. Hazim Šabanović, Branislav Đurđev, Nedim Filipović, Hamid Hadžibegić, Muhamed Mujić (Sarajevo: Štamparski Zavod Veselin Mesleša, 1957), 46-47; BOA, Tapu Tahrir Defteri 157 (936-937/1530).

the region. The term *Poturnak* implies a process of Ottomanization, whereas these *ghulam*s would have been considered already Ottomanized. It is also unlikely that all *Poturnak*s were Vlachs. Vlach groups and individuals certain did ally with and serve the Ottoman state, and they were clearly identified in state records. However, we have no state records using the terms *Poturnak* and Vlach interchangeably. We do, however, find various mentions in Bosnian and Hercegovinian folk songs of Vlachs becoming *Poturnak*s. This indicates that, though not all *Poturnak*s were Vlachs, Vlachs could certainly become *Poturnak*s. Lastly, even though members of the Bosnian and Hercegovinian royal families were incorporated directly into the Ottoman elite, and that their new titles honored their old status (Kraloğlu – son of the king, Hersekzade – son of the duke), it is highly unlikely that they were considered *Poturnak*s. If they had been, then, taking into account their high profiles and statuses, it is fair to assume that they would have been designated as such in the plethora of sources that mention them. Yet, we have no sources that connect the *Poturnak*s to former royalty of the Kingdom of Bosnia.

With all this in mind, I maintain that *Poturnak*s were individuals from the *sancak*s of Bosnia and Hercegovina. They were of all backgrounds, from rural peasants and serfs to high and low nobility but not usually royalty. These people voluntarily converted to Islam and joined the Ottoman administration as individuals or perhaps small groups. This process occurred over the course of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. I refer to this

process as Ottomanization, but stress that it was neither static nor continuous. The definition of "Ottoman" remained fluid, and varied according to the period and circumstances. For this reason, it is crucial to explore what being Ottoman may have entailed in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.

IV. Islamization or Ottomanization?

I maintain that Ottomanization in the *sancak*s of Bosnia and Hercegovina from the late fifteenth to the early sixteenth century entailed more than simply conversion to Islam. If *Poturnak*s were distinctive because of this Ottomanization, the process must also have entailed a cultural conversion of sorts, such as the adoption of Ottoman customs and allegiance to the Ottoman state. Others have aptly described this as the acquisition of an Ottoman socio-cultural status, the adoption of "the Ottoman way," and an acculturation to new social, cultural, political, and economic mechanisms.[186] In his work on the Ottoman Balkans, Stanford Shaw posited that Ottomanization was a path to social mobility. He noted that it could be actualized in two ways: through involuntary recruitment for the *devşirme*, or through the acquisition, without participation in the *devşirme*, of attributes required for

[186] Piterberg, "The Alleged Rebellion of Abaza Mehmed Paşa: Historiography and the Ottoman State in the Seventeenth Century," 23; Shaw, "The Ottoman View of the Balkans," 65; Itzkowitz, *Ottoman Empire and Islamic Tradition*, 60-61; Lopašić, "Islamization of the Balkans with Special Reference to Bosnia," 179-180; Zhelyazkova, "Islamization in the Balkans as a Historiographical Problem: The Southeast-European Perspective," 227; Moačanin, "Defterology and Mythology: Ottoman Bosnia up to the Tanzîmât," 194; İnalcık, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age, 1300-1600*, 7; Filipović, "Islamizacija Bosne u Prva Dva Desetljeća Osmanske Vlasti, 64; Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds: The Construction of the Ottoman State*, 19-27; Toledano, "The Emergence of Ottoman-Local Elites (1700-1900): A Framework for Research," 154.

membership in the Ottoman elite, which were enumerated at the beginning of this chapter.[187] The case of the *Poturnak*s reveals that the system was not quite so rigid and that there was likely a third option, Ottomanization through voluntary participation in the *devşirme*. *Poturnak*s certainly took advantage of this option, volunteering their youth for the *devşirme* and gradually adopting some or all of the attributes enumerated by Shaw as required for membership in the Ottoman elite.

For all of these reasons, I argue that the terms *Potur* and *Poturnak* referred to specific people with distinctive characteristics, not simply new Muslims. If the Ottomans had wanted to indicate the latter, they could have used a number of other terms such as *dönme* or *nevi müslimin*.[188] What distinguished *Poturnak*s was their Ottomanization and the participation of their offspring in the *devşirme*. It is possible, for example, that early *Poturnak*s, the parents of *Poturnak oğlanları* who volunteered for the *devşirme*, were Christians who entered Ottoman service and adopted Ottoman customs but converted only later.[189] In the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, their faith would not have barred them from service to the Ottoman state, elite Ottoman patronage, or the adoption of Ottoman culture. However, their offspring, the *Poturnak oğlanları*, would certainly have been Muslim-born.

Various records attest to the presence of non-Muslims in Ottoman military and administrative functions in the *sancak* of Bosnia from the late fifteenth to the mid-sixteenth

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[187] Shaw, "The Ottoman View of the Balkans," 58-61.
[188] Moačanin, "Defterology and Mythology: Ottoman Bosnia up the Tanzîmât," 194-195.
[189] Kunt, "Transformation of Zimmi into Askeri," 59.

century. Using cadastral surveys, Hazim Šabanović has shown that in 1469, just six years after the Ottoman conquest, 111 of the 135 *timar*-holding *sıpahi*s in Bosnia were Christian. *Sıpahi*s were certainly not *devşirme* recruits or *Poturnak oğlanları*, but there is no reason why the parents of *Poturnak oğlanları*, *Poturnak*s themselves, could not be *sıpahi*s. By 1516, the number of *sıpahis* grew to 328, and only eleven of those were Christian. This reflects a gradual Islamization over a period of five decades.[190] In her study of the Bosnian *nahiye* of Visoko, Hatidža Čar-Drnda found that the estimated twenty percent of Muslim *voynuk*s in 1485 rose to forty percent by 1489. The remainder of the *voynuk*s remained Christian.[191]

As late as 1519, a *tapu tahrir defteri* for the neighboring *sancak* of Zvornik recorded a community of Christian *müsellem*s (recruits for military service to the Ottoman state) and their sons. A *yoklama defteri* (military inspection roll) created sometime between 1516 and 1526 for the *sancak* of Bosnia, likely in preparation for the 1526 Battle of Mohács, also makes numerous references to Christian *sıpahi*s.[192] A 1529 record reveals that a Christian *sıpahi* by the name of Petar was given a *timar* (land revenue grant) on the basis of his deceased father's having held one worth 13,098 *akçe* in the *sancak* of Smederevo in Serbia.[193] A 1531 *tapu tahrir defteri* for Zvornik mentions a *timar* held by Stjepan, the son of Knez Nikola. Later in

[190] Šabanović, "Vojno Uređenje Bosne od 1463 Godine do Kraja XVI Stoljeća," 196-206.

[191] Čar, "Demografsko Kretanje, Socijalni i Konfesionalni Sastav Stanovništva u Visočkoj Nahiji," 203-204.

[192] Aličić, "Popis Bosanske Vojske Pred Bitku na Mohaću 1526 Godine," 182-192.

[193] Handžić, *Dva Prva Popisa Zvorničkog Sandžaka iz 1519 i 1533 Godine*, 23, 45-46, 155-161.; The record does not specify whether this was the general or annual worth of the *timar*.

the register, other *timar*s belonging to Christian *knez*es such as Knez Pave (son of Petar), Knez Mate (son of Vukac), Knez Martin, Knez Mikloš (son of Vukac), Knez Milić, and Knez Rohać, are noted.[194] These cavalrymen were not simply Christians, but also minor princelings. All of these records attest to the presence of non-Muslims in the Ottoman military and administration in and around the *sancak* of Bosnia during the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Again, *sipahi*s were certainly not *devşirme* recruits or *Poturnak oğlanları*, but there is no reason why the parents of *Poturnak oğlanları*, *Poturnak*s themselves, could not be *sipahi*s.

The Islamization of the Bosnian *sancak* was ultimately thorough but proceeded gradually, and conversion rates throughout the province testify to this. For example, according to cadastral surveys, in the *nahiye* (district) of Visoko in 1468, there were no Muslim households. By 1485, thirteen percent of the households were Muslim. The figure jumped to nineteen percent by 1489. By 1516, forty-six percent of the population was Muslim, and by 1538, the number had risen to fifty-seven percent. By the end of the sixteenth century, the area was almost entirely Islamized.[195] This evidence of gradual

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[194] Handžić, *Dva Prva Popisa Zvorničkog Sandžaka iz 1519 i 1533 Godine*, 38, 42-43.

[195] BOA, Tapu Tahrir Defteri 56 (1-10 Muharrem 922/5-14 February 1516); Čar, "Demografsko Kretanje, Socijalni i Konfesionalni Sastav Stanovništva u Visočkoj Nahiji," 195-209, 240-248; Husić, "Maglaj u Ranom Osmanskom Periodu (15. i 16. Stoljeće)," 120-126; Kiel, "Ottoman Sources for the Demographic History and the Process of Islamization of Bosnia-Hercegovina and Bulgaria in the 15th-17th Centuries: Old Sources – New Methodology," 104-105; Tursun Beg, *The History of Mehmed the Conqueror*, 50-53; Kunt, "Transformation of Zimmi into Askeri," 55-59; Aličić, "Popis Bosanske Vojske Pred Bitku na Mohaću 1526 Godine," 171-172, 182-192; Hamid Hadžibegić, "Bosanska Kanun Nama iz 1565 Godine," *Glasnik Zemaljskog Muzeja u Sarajevu* 3 (1948): 222; Handžić, *Dva Prva Popisa Zvorničkog Sandžaka iz 1519 i 1533 Godine*, 23-196;

conversion calls into question the myth about Ottoman Bosnians and their post-conquest mass conversion in the 1606 *Laws of the Janissaries.* Though this myth will be taken up in a later chapter, it is important to reiterate here that Islamization was not synonymous with Ottomanization, nor was it the hallmark of *Poturnak*s. They likely stood apart from new converts due to their Ottomanization, including their service to the Ottoman state, their adoption of Ottoman customs and patronage, and in some cases, the voluntary inclusion of their offspring in the *devşirme*.

V. Why Bosnia(ns) and Hercegovin(ians)?

Halil İnalcık once referred to Rumelia, the super-province that covered much of the Balkans, as the backbone of the Ottoman Empire during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. It was there that the Ottomans found resources to regroup and a new base from which to expand after their 1402 defeat by Timur (r. 1370-1405) at the Battle of Ankara. Rumelia provided foodstuffs, fresh water, raw materials, land, booty, and manpower. These resources replenished the imperial treasury and provided for the growing Ottoman military and bureaucracy throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.[196] Bosnia and Hercegovina were valuable subdivisions of this super-province.

Ahmed Akgündüz, *91, 164, MAD 540 ve 173 Numaralı Hersek, Bosna ve Izvornik Livaları – İcmal Tahrir Defterleri 926-939 / 1520-1533* (Ankara: Osmanlı Arşivi Daire Başkanlığı, 2006), 31-109.

[196] İnalcık, ed., with Quataert, *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1300-1914*, 20, 256; Matkovski, "Prilog Pitanju Devširme," 276; Itzkowitz, *Ottoman Empire and Islamic Tradition*, 42; Tursun

All of the northern and western Bosnian lands were strategic launching points for campaigns against regional enemies. Idris Bitlisi remarks in his *Heşt Bihişt* that Bosnia touched Hungarian lands to the north and Venetian lands to the west. Kritovoulous, a Byzantine who entered Mehmed II's service soon after the 1453 conquest of Constantinople and served as governor of the island of Imbros, his home, elaborates on this military importance in his own history. He writes that this region lay on the boundary with the Hungarians, could accommodate a sizeable Ottoman garrison, and enabled incursions into Hungary.[197] During the initial conquest of Bosnia, the Ottomans were also able to capture the German cannon-founder Jörg of Nuremberg and take advantage of his expertise in artillery.[198] Moreover, Sarajevo, the capital of the *sancak* and an important regional trade center, was also a city of great military importance. Robert Donia calls it a staging area for military offensives against the Venetians and the Hungarians due to its proximity to the

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Beg, *The History of Mehmed the Conqueror*, 50; Mrgić, "Transition from Late Medieval to Early Ottoman Settlement Pattern: A Case Study on Northern Bosnia," 50; Suraiya Faroqhi, "Labor Recruitment and Control in the Ottoman Empire (Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries)," in *Manufacturing in the Ottoman Empire and Turkey, 1500-1950*, ed. Donald Quataert (Albany, State University of New York Press, 1994), 20; İnalcık, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age, 1300-1600*, 28-35.

[197] Kritovoulos, *History of Mehmed the Conqueror*, vii, 189, 198; Trako, "Pretkosovski Događaji u Hešt Bihiştu Idris Bitlisija," 216; Mrgić, "Transition from Late Medieval to Early Ottoman Settlement Pattern: A Case Study on Northern Bosnia," 52; Šabanović, *Propast Bosanskog Kraljevstva i Osnivanje Bosanskog Sandžaka*, 39; Lopašić, "Islamization of the Balkans with Special Reference to Bosnia," 165, 172.

[198] Gábor Ágoston, *Guns for the Sultan: Military Power and the Weapons Industry in the Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 44; Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300-1650: The Structure of Power*, 273.

northern frontier and the Dalmatian coast. Aside from its strategic location, the city also provided manpower for campaigns.[199]

Bosnia was also rich in silver, which enabled the Bosnian kings to mint their own coins. After the 1463 conquest, the Ottomans took over the operation of these Bosnian silver mines. Along with gaining control over these resources, they were able to disrupt silver supplies to the Venetians.[200] The importance of precious metals to the Ottomans is discernible in Idris Bitlisi's *Heşt Bihişt*. Throughout this work, he ranks conquered regions by how abundant gold and silver are within their boundaries.[201] Tursun Beg, present for the initial campaigns in Bosnia and trained as a provincial surveyor, remarks that it was an extensive land rich not just in silver but also in gold. Like Bitlisi, he never fails to note the presence of precious metals in regions of interest to the Ottomans.[202]

The *sancak*s of Bosnia and Hercegovina were equally integral to regional trade. The Ottomans certainly took advantage of their proximity to and relationship with the economic powerhouse of Dubrovnik (Ragusa). They sought help from allies among the Bosnian and Hercegovinian nobility who had close connections with Dubrovnik, such as the Obrenovićes and the Vuković-Desisalićes of Hercegovina. Such families often acted as intermediaries

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[199] Donia, *Sarajevo: A Biography*, 20; İnalcık, ed., with Quataert, *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1300-1914*, 256.

[200] Buzov, "Ottoman Perceptions of Bosnia as Reflected in the Works of Ottoman Authors Who Visited or Lived in Bosnia," 83-85; Lopašić, "Islamization of the Balkans with Special Reference to Bosnia," 167-168; İnalcık, ed., with Quataert, *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1300-1914*, 256-259.

[201] Trako, "Pretkosovski Događaji u Hešt Bihiştu Idris Bitlisija," 180; Mrgić, "Transition from Late Medieval to Early Ottoman Settlement Pattern: A Case Study on Northern Bosnia," 70.

[202] Tursun Beg, *The History of Mehmed the Conqueror*, 1-19, 50.

between the Ottomans and Dubrovnik and must have influenced Dubrovnik's eventual recognition of Ottoman suzerainty in the early fifteenth century.[203]

It is not surprising that the Ottomans worked to militarily secure and revitalize this region over the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. An integral part of this effort must have been securing the cooperation and allegiance of the native population, especially former military functionaries, to form a bulwark against the Habsburgs.[204] The Habsburg threat remained ever-present in the 1530s. Aladin Husić cites a letter written in 1529 by the Habsburg archduke and King of Bohemia and Hungary, Ferdinand I (r. 1526-1564), calling on two Christian *knez*es named Žarko and Jurašin, living in Maglaj and Žepče and in the service of the Ottoman state, to defect and support an attack on the Bosnian *sancak*.[205] At the time, Žarko held a *çiftlik* (agricultural estate) worth 865 *akçe* and a *timar* (land revenue grant) worth 1100 *akçe*. The same letter was sent to a *vojvođa* named Hasan who held a much larger *timar* worth 15,111 *akçe*.[206] As late as 1529, the Habsburgs were clearly reaching out and attempting to recruit Ottoman Bosnian functionaries. Even the 1539 *kanunname* (law code) for the *sancak*s of Bosnia, Hercegovina and Zvornik forbade the export of cloaks,

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[203] Zlatar, "O Nekim Muslimanskim Feudalnim Porodicama u Bosni u XV i XVI Stoljeću," 99-103; Elezović, *Turski Spomenici*, 491; Zlatar, "Neko Podaci o Sandžak-begu Mehmed-begu Obrenoviću," 341-346; Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds: The Construction of the Ottoman State*, 17; HR-DAD, Fermani 1, no. 3 (15 Zilhicce 866/10 September 1462); İnalcık, ed., with Quataert, *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1300-1914*, 256-260.

[204] Shaw, "The Ottoman View of the Balkans," 63-65.

[205] In 1529, Ferdinand I was the Habsburg archduke and the King of Hungary and Bohemia. His brother, Charles V, was the Holy Roman Emperor.

[206] Husić, "Maglaj u Ranom Osmanskom Periodu (15. i 16. Stoljeće)," 120-121.

armor, swords, horses, iron, seemingly anything that could be of military use to the Habsburgs.[207]

The Ottomans needed the cooperation and assistance of native Bosnians and Hercegovinians to secure and govern this region, and this is likely the context from which *Poturnak*s emerged. It is not far-fetched to posit that their children were accepted for the *devşirme* on the basis of their parents' service and loyalty. As well as a reward and a gesture of good faith, this specialized levy complemented Ottoman goals of securing and incorporating the young Bosnian and Hercegovinian *sancak*s into the Ottoman Empire. Nenad Moačanin is correct in asserting that there was no special prerogative or outright preference for Bosnian Muslims for the *devşirme* in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.[208] Instead, this was likely a practical arrangement between the Ottomans and their allies in Bosnia and Hercegovina, who were gradually integrated into the Ottoman apparatus and became Ottomans themselves. Volunteering their sons for the *devşirme* was a part of this Ottomanization, and it was a practice from which both sides undoubtedly stood to benefit. What remains to be seen is how the practice was reflected in primary sources from the early to mid-sixteenth century.

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[207] *Kanuni i Kanunname za Bosanki, Hercegovački, Zvornički, Kliški, Crnogorski i Skadarski Sandžak,* 48-49, 54; ("…*ve zikr olunan sancaklarda yasal olunup kepenek ve cebe ve kılıç ve at ve demir*…")

[208] Moačanin, "Defterology and Mythology: Ottoman Bosnia up the Tanzîmât," 190-191.

VI. Poturnaks in Primary Sources

The earliest mention of a *Poturnak devşirme* recruit dates to the early sixteenth century and can be found in Feridun Beg's aforementioned late sixteenth-century *Mecmua-yı Münşeat ül-Selatin*, also known as the Collection of Sultanic Documents, or Correspondence of Sultans. Feridun Beg (d. 1583) was the private secretary of the Bosnian grand vizier Sokollu Mehmed Paşa, and later rose to the posts of *nişancı*, the functionary who affixed the sultan's *tuğra* on imperial documents, and *reisülküttab*, the chief scribe. He compiled this work under Sokollu Mehmed Paşa's patronage, intending it as a gift for Murad III upon his accession in 1574. It was a collection of more than five hundred state records to which the author had access as a member of the Ottoman chancery.

The authenticity of some of the records and the impetus behind the collection's creation have been questioned. Dimitris Kastritsis has written about the work as a reflection of Sokollu Mehmed Paşa's imperial vision and an act of imperial legitimation. It was meant to produce "an idealized picture of Ottoman diplomacy, rather than an accurate record of the day-to-day dealings of the Ottoman chancery." [209]Despite the fact that the *Poturnak* record within the collection takes up less than three sentences of a larger narrative, it must be approached with this caution in mind. Moreover, we must remember that Sokollu Mehmed Paşa was arguably the most famous *devşirme* recruit from the *sancak* of Bosnia during the

[209] Kastritsis, "Ferīdūn Beg's *Münşe'ātü's-Selātīn* ('Correspondence of Sultans') and Late Sixteenth-Century Ottoman Views of the Political World," 91-110.

sixteenth century. It is not inconceivable that Feridun Beg mentions *Poturnak*s in order to honor and praise Ottoman Bosnians and his patron. Given that Sokollu Mehmed Paşa was an Ottoman Bosnian, this would have been a complement to his imperial vision, and a reference to his native region's illustrious history within the Ottoman Empire.[210]

The entire collection spans the lifetimes of numerous sultans, including Selim I (r. 1512-1520). The records that fall under his reign include a brief note regarding the levying of recruits from the *sancak*s of Bosnia and Hercegovina. This note reports that late in 1515, an order issued to the governor of Bosnia, Mustafa Paşa, and the governor of Hercegovina, Evrenosoğlu Iskender Beg, to collect one thousand *yeniçeri oğlanı* (Janissary recruits) from the sons of the Muslim *Poturnak*s (*Müslüman olan Poturnak oğlanlarından*).[211]

The contemporaneous war between the Ottomans and the Safavids was certainly the backdrop to this order. In 1514, Selim I defeated Shah Ismail at the Battle of Çaldıran, a crucial victory for the Ottomans and a turning point in their campaign against the Safavids. However, this battle did not definitively secure the eastern frontier. Moreover, Selim was already planning a campaign against the Mamluk Sultanate, which controlled Egypt, Syria, the Hijaz, and parts of southeastern Anatolia. In Feridun Beg's work, the 1515 order

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[210] Feridun Beg, *Mecmua-yı Münşeat ül-Selâtin,* 471-473; Kastritsis, "Ferīdūn Beg's *Münşe'ātü's-Selātīn* ('Correspondence of Sultans') and Late Sixteenth-Century Ottoman Views of the Political World," 91-110.

[211] Feridun Beg, *Mecmua-yı Münşeat ül-Selâtin,* 471-473; Kastritsis, "Ferīdūn Beg's *Münşe'ātü's-Selātīn* ('Correspondence of Sultans') and Late Sixteenth-Century Ottoman Views of the Political World," 91-110; There was indeed a Mustafa Paşa, likely Mustafa Paşa Skenderpaşazade, who served as the *sancakbegi* of Bosnia from 1513 to 1515. He apparently built a mosque in the *varoš* of Maglaj. See Husić, "Maglaj u Ranom Osmanskom Periodu (15. i 16. Stoljeće)," 117, 130-133.

regarding *Poturnak oğlanları* occurred amid preparations for these campaigns. I suggest that these youths were recruited as volunteers in a time of need to cover campaigns on multiple fronts. Neither the *pencik kanunnamesi* nor the *devşirme kanunnamesi* from the reign of Bayezid II (r. 1481-1512) mentions anything about *Poturnak oğlanları* or levying Muslim subjects from the *sancak*s of Bosnia and Hercegovina.[212] This indicates that the practice was not yet established custom but an extraordinary measure at a time of military need.

There is also cause to believe that new troops were preferred over the troops of existing Balkan frontier commanders because the latter were suspected of Shi'ite sympathies. Mariya Kiprovksa writes about this in her piece on the famous Mihaloğlu family of frontier raiders and commanders. This family's actual and fictitious connections with the Baba'is, a group of dervishes whose Alevi ideology was not in line with Sunni Islam, brought it under suspicion during and after the sixteenth century. Kiprovska connects this to a larger trend of marginalization of frontier lords who venerated the same dervishes. This marginalization was apparently part and parcel of the Ottoman state's efforts to gradually centralize power by establishing "a religious and political hegemony over certain centrifugal elements in Ottoman society."[213] In other words, frontier commanders and their troops became more of a threat than an asset to the Ottoman state because of the challenges they posed to state

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[212] Akgündüz, *Osmanlı Kanunnâmeleri ve Hukûkî Tahlilleri,* II. Kitap: *II. Bâyezid Kanunnâmeleri*, 123-134.

[213] Mariya Kiprovska, "The Mihaloğlu Family: *Gazi* Warriors and Patrons of Dervish Hospices," *Journal of Ottoman Studies* 32 (2008): 193-196, 200-222.

centralization and the authority of the sultan. Heterodox dervishes such as the Baba'is also voiced "open dissatisfaction" with this new order. Drawing connections between the two implied Shi'ite sympathies and called into question the loyalties of frontier commanders and their troops.[214]

Particularly noteworthy is that this 1515 order for *Poturnak oğlanları* was issued to the governor of Hercegovina, Evrenosoğlu Iskender Beg. His name indicates that he was a member of the famous Evrenos family of frontier raiders and commanders. This cautions against setting up a dichotomy that pits frontier lords against *Poturnak*s in the early sixteenth century. As Kiprovska recognizes, some frontier lords were successfully reassigned as *sancakbeg*s, a shift that allowed them to retain their possessions yet integrated them into the centralized Ottoman army, and recognized them as officials subservient to the sultan. Nevertheless, after the Ottoman victory at Çaldıran, the existing Janissary troops forced Selim I to retreat from Tabriz. Caroline Finkel likens this to a mutiny, and writes that the Janissaries even fired on the sultan's tent while stationed at a camp north of Lake Van.[215] It may be that the sultan was looking to replace these wayward troops with fresh Janissary recruits in preparation for further campaigns in the east, and a campaign against the Mamluk Sultanate.

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[214] Kiprovska, "The Mihaloğlu Family: *Gazi* Warriors and Patrons of Dervish Hospices," 193-196, 200-222.

[215] Kiprovska, "The Mihaloğlu Family: *Gazi* Warriors and Patrons of Dervish Hospices," 214-215; Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300-1650: The Structure of Power*, 258; Finkel, *Osman's Dream: The Story of the Ottoman Empire*, 106.

All this tallies nicely with the fact that some of the most prominent military commanders on the campaigns against the Safavids and the Mamluks were from the *sancak*s of Bosnia and Hercegovina. The most famous was Sinan Paşa Borovinić, the son of *knez* Tvrtko Borovinić of the Borovina family. He was raised at the court of Bayezid II and eventually married into the Ottoman dynasty. He served as a *sancakbeg* in Bosnia in the late fifteenth century and as the *sancakbegi* of Hercegovina from 1504 to 1506. In 1514, he was appointed *beglerbegi* of Anatolia and fought at the Battle of Çaldıran. He died in the subsequent campaigns against the Mamluks and was apparently bitterly mourned by Selim I.[216]

Sicils from Istanbul *sharia* courts testify to the presence of Janissary recruits from the *sancak* of Bosnia in Istanbul by 1526.[217] Nevertheless, we have no reference to *Poturnak* recruits between Feridun Beg's 1515 record and 1530. Bosnian *tapu tahrir defterleri* and *yoklama defterleri* from this period continually mention new Muslims, but none uses the term *Poturnak*.[218] The first potential reference to the group occurs in the 1530 travelogue of Benedikt Kuripešić, a member of a delegation sent by the Habsburg archduke Ferdinand I to sue for peace with the Ottomans. As he passed through Bosnia, Kuripešić took note of the

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[216] Safvet Beg Bašagić, *Znameniti Hrvati, Bošnjaci i Hercegovci u Turskoj Carevini*, 68.

[217] İSAM, Istanbul Kadı Sicilleri: Üsküdar 5, no. 73 (10-20 Receb 930/14-24 May 1524); Üsküdar 5, no. 74 (10-20 Receb 930/14-24 May 1524); Üsküdar 5, no. 75 (10-20 Receb 930/14-24 May 1524); Üsküdar 5, no. 76 (10-20 Receb 930/14-24 May 1524); Üsküdar 5, no. 77 (10-20 Receb 930/14-24 May 1524).

[218] Handžić, *Dva Prva Popisa Zvorničkog Sandžaka iz 1519 i 1533 Godine*, 20-21, 75; Aličić, "Popis Bosanske Vojske Pred Bitku na Mohaću 1526 Godine," 184-192.

religious communities. He wrote of three traditions, the first being the Roman Catholicism of the old Bosnians. According to him, the Roman Catholic peasantry had been allowed to retain their faith, churches and clergy. The next religious tradition was that of "Saint Paul," presumably referring to Orthodox Christianity. The third religious group was the one in power, the "Turks" (i.e., Muslims), who supervised all of the Christians. According to Kuripešić, the "Turks" allowed the Christians to retain their faith and churches as long as they tended the land. Along with these three communities, however, Kuripešić also describes a fourth: those who had been led by youthful folly to convert to Islam and perniciously wage war against Christians. Some of them admitted to him that they had committed a grave sin by warring against Christians, but that it could not be avoided. Other, more malicious, converts happily went to war and converted. Kuripešić wrote that these "Christians" dressed just like the Turks and differed only in that they did not shave their heads. He added that the sultan preferred to take agile Bosnian youths, and that all of the best Ottoman Janissaries, functionaries, and servants were Bosnian. According to him, Turks considered them the best and most pious and trustworthy people who held themselves proudly as real Turks and were more trusted than actual Turks. Kuripešić weighed in on this, noting that Bosnians truly did differ from other "Turks" in their beauty, agility, and how they carried themselves.[219] We cannot be sure how he procured this information and must recognize his anti-Ottoman bias.

[219] Benedikt Kuripešić, *Putopis Kroz Bosnu, Srbiju, Bugarsku i Rumeliju*, trans. Đorđe Pojanović (Beograd: Svjetlost, 2001), 10-49.

Nevertheless, this fourth group that he describes is incredibly similar to the depiction of *Poturnak*s in the 1606 *Laws of the Janissaries*. Despite the fact that they are decades apart, it is possible that both sources were channeling local myths about *Poturnak*s and their privileged position in the Ottoman state.

The next mention of the *Poturnak*s occurs in a 1539 *kanunname* for the *sancak*s of Bosnia, Hercegovina, and Zvornik in reference to *ispence* tax rates.[220] The *ispence* was a cadastral tax on all subjects paid to the *sıpahi* who held the *timar* (land revenue grant) for their land. When applied to Muslims, it was called the *resm-i çift*. The rate of the tax varied according to one's religion, marital status, and location. The standard rates were twenty-five *akçe* for married non-Muslims and twenty-two *akçe* for married Muslims. Unmarried subjects paid less, and certain groups in service to the state were either exempt from, or paid a percentage of, the tax.[221] This particular *kanunname* stipulates that non-Muslims (*kafirs*) should pay twenty-five *akçe*, married *Potur*s should pay twenty-two *akçe*, and unmarried *Potur*s of age should pay twelve *akçe*.[222] Given that Muslims are not mentioned at all, and that married *Potur*s are to pay the standard *ispence* rate for married Muslims, it may be that

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[220] In 1539, Bosnia, Hercegovina, and Zvornik were separate but neighboring *sancak*s. The *sancak* of Zvornik was established in 1480. After 1580, it became one of the many *sancak*s making up the greater *eyalet* of Bosnia.

[221] Halil İnalcık, "Ispendje," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed; Handžić, *Opširni Popis Bosanskog Sandžaka iz 1604 Godine*, xliii-xlvii, 106; Husić, "Maglaj u Ranom Osmanskom Periodu (15. i 16. Stoljeće)," 125; Čar, "Demografsko Kretanje, Socijalni i Konfesionalni Sastav Stanovništva u Visočkoj Nahiji," 200-203; Palmer, "The Origin of the Janissaries," 462-464; Handžić, *Dva Prva Popisa Zvorničkog Sandžaka iz 1519 i 1533 Godine*, 23.

[222] *Kanuni i Kanunname za Bosanki, Hercegovački, Zvornički, Kliški, Crnogorski i Skadarski Sandžak*, 46-47, 50-51, 56, 134-135; The *kanunname* uses the term *kafir* and not *dhimmi*.

the *kanunname* uses the term *Potur* to describe Bosnian and Hercegovinian Muslims. This gives us some insight into how the term was understood in the early to mid-sixteenth century.

Lastly, we have an undated *devşirme* roll that reveals how *Poturnak* recruitment in the *sancak* of Bosnia may have functioned. Rifki Melül Meriç speculates that the roll was produced after the year 1533, putting it sometime in the middle of Süleyman's reign. It gives the names and detailed descriptions of sixty young men recruited for the *devşirme* from the Bosnian district of Novi Pazar, forty-four Muslims and sixteen non-Muslims. While the term *Poturnak* is not used, Muslims are denoted by their names (e.g., *Veli veled-i Ahmed*) which differ from those of the non-Muslims (e.g., *Ahmed: Nikola veled-i Havido*, meaning Nikola, newly named Ahmed, the son of Havido). It is striking that the majority of the recruits, more than seventy-three percent, were Muslim. This likely reflects the fact that *Poturnak*s themselves were converts, but that their children were Muslim-born. It is even more interesting that the author of the list chose to employ the term *veled* as opposed to the standard *ibn* used to denote the son of a Muslim (e.g., *Veli ibn-i Ahmed*).[223] This seems to indicate that the author may not have considered these individuals to be true Ottoman Muslims, but grouped them with the sixteen non-Muslims. It may be that he believed the

[223] Meric, "Birkaç Mühim Arşiv Vesikası," 35-41; Kunt, "Transformation of Zimmi into Askeri," 55, 61; Kunt, *The Sultan's Servants: The Transformation of Ottoman Provincial Government, 1550-1650,* 45, 76, 97.

entirety of the group needed to be Ottomanized in the same manner, or that these Muslims lacked something in regard to their Ottomanness.

The standard formula for registering the Muslim recruits was as follows:

Name	Son of	Father's Name	Village
Receb	veled-i	Hüseyin	ez karye-i[224] Osvi

Detailed description and age

The standard formula for registering the non-Muslim recruits was as follows:

New name	Old name	Son of	Father's name	m[225] Name	Village
Hamza	Petro	veled-i	Üstüyan[226]	m Miliç	ez karye-i Iskofik

Detailed description and age

In theory, *devşirme* rolls needed to contain the recruits' names (new and former), dates of birth, ages, parentage, physical descriptions, villages of origin, and the *sıpahi*s on whose *timar* (land revenue grant) they resided.[227] In this roll, the entries for the Muslim recruits are sparser than those for the non-Muslims. They omit the attachment of the father, denoted by "m _____", probably an abbreviation for a *merd* (man) of a particular *sıpahi*. For example, in the case of the aforementioned non-Muslim recruit, newly named Hamza, the register notes that Hamza, formerly named Petro, was the son of Üstüyan, Miliç's man, from the village of Iskofik. Meriç postulates that the "m" was actually an abbreviation denoting a

[224] "…ez karye-i…" translates to "…from the village of…"

[225] Here, "m" is an abbreviation for "*merd*" meaning man, or the man or follower of another higher-ranking individual.

[226] This is probably an Ottoman-Turkicization of a Slav name, likely Stojan or Ostojan.

[227] Matkovski, "Prilog Pitanju Devširme," 278; Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300-1650: The Structure of Power*, 137-138; Ménage, "Devshirme," *Encyclopaedia of Islam,* 2nd ed.

ghulam, making Hamza's father a slave or servant of someone named Miliç. However, I argue that "m" was an abbreviation for *merd* (man), and that being the *merd* of a *sıpahi* likely meant residing under him as a tenant, or being attached to him as a follower or a part of his retinue.[228] The remainder of non-Muslim recruits were registered in the same way, their fathers being *merd*s of particular individuals.

The entries for the Muslim recruits omit this information entirely, for reasons that remain unclear. If they were simply Muslim as opposed to non-Muslim subjects, they would have still been affiliated with a particular *sıpahi* on whose *timar* (land revenue grant) allotment they resided, and it would have been conventional and necessary to record this. It is possible that their fathers had no such attachments. Perhaps they were *sıpahi*s or other Ottoman functionaries themselves. In other words, the recruits' parents may have been *Poturnak*s, Ottoman allies and servants of the state. There are numerous other mid- to late sixteenth-century *devşirme* records that mention *Poturnak*s and testify to the continued levying of the songs of this group. These will be taken up in the next chapter.

[228] *Ghulam*s and similar military clients of individual households and patrons in Ottoman Egypt were often referred to in registers as *tabi'-i*, meaning "follower of," in salary registers. In other words, the term was similar to *merd* in that it denoted a member of a patron's entourage or household. The term was also used in other Ottoman provinces and the imperial center; For more information, see Jane Hathaway, *The Politics of Households in Ottoman Egypt: the Rise of the Qazdağlıs* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 23-24; Kunt, *The Sultan's Servants: The Transformation of Ottoman Provincial Government, 1550-1650,* 31-56, 77-93.

VII. Conclusion: Early Ottoman Allies and the Rise of the Devşirme

The practice of levying *Poturnak oğlanları* in the early sixteenth-century from the *sancak*s of Bosnia and Hercegovina reveals that the *devşirme* was neither rigid nor static. If we fixate on the levying of non-Muslim subjects as the accepted norm, then the inclusion of Bosnian and Hercegovinian Muslims does seem like an abnormality. However, if we consider their inclusion to have been a practical arrangement and a regional variation in recruitment practice, then it seems less extraordinary and speaks to the more open and fluid nature of the institution.[229] It is likely that this practice first arose out of military necessity during the reign of Selim I, and became an established custom during the reign of his successor, Süleyman I. Cornell Fleischer has written about Süleyman's reign as a time in which the bureaucratic structure of the empire expanded significantly and necessitated manpower. The ideal of the typical Ottoman bureaucrat was in flux, and paths of recruitment into the Ottoman chancery were "open, varied, and irregular."[230] Though *Poturnak*s were not civilian bureaucrats or members of the Ottoman chancery, it is possible that this permeability extended beyond the chancery and the civilian bureaucracy to the Ottoman military and state at large, providing *Poturnak*s with the opportunity to carve out a space for themselves.

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[229] Ešref Kovačević, "Jedan Dokumenat o Devširmi," *Prilozi za Orijentalnu Filologiju* 22-23 (1976): 204-205; Toledano, "The Emergence of Ottoman-Local Elites (1700-1900): A Framework for Research," 152.

[230] Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual in the Ottoman Empire: The Historian Mustafa Ali (1541-1600),* 45-62; Zlatar, "O Nekim Muslimanskim Feudalnim Porodicama u Bosni u XV i XVI Stoljeću," 84.

The focus of this chapter has been on the identities of early *Poturnaks* and the question of why their sons were allowed into the *devşirme*. Delving into primary sources and historical context, such as Bosnia's and Hercegovina's histories as new Ottoman *sancak*s, has provided us with valuable clues as to the group's emergence and early connections with the Ottoman state. I argue that the first *Poturnak*s were early Ottoman allies from the Kingdom of Bosnia who aided in its conquest and were gradually integrated into the Ottoman military administration. They came from a variety of social classes, from peasants and serfs to high and low nobility. Their gradual Ottomanization involved not just conversion to Islam, which at the time was not a requirement for joining the Ottomans, but service to the Ottoman state, the adoption of Ottoman culture and customs, the patronage of Ottoman elites, and the inclusion of their progeny in the *devşirme*.[231]

While there was likely no outright preference for Bosnian Muslims, the *sancak*s of Bosnia and Hercegovina, and Bosnians and Hercegovinians themselves, were important to the Ottomans during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries for a variety of reasons. The Kingdom of Bosnia was militarily and economically valuable, and in order to conquer and secure it, the Ottomans needed the cooperation and allegiance of the native population. This is likely when *Poturnak*s first emerged. For their service and loyalty, they and their progeny

[231] As I noted, at the time, conversion to Islam was not a requirement for joining the Ottomans and becoming a sıpahi. *Devşirme* recruits, however, were certainly converted to Islam. As I noted earlier in this chapter, *sıpahi*s were certainly not *devşirme* recruits or *Poturnak oğlanları*. However, there is no reason why the parents of *Poturnak oğlanları*, *Poturnak*s themselves, could not be *sıpahi*s.

were incorporated into the Ottoman state and military. Their incorporation into the empire must have aided the incorporation of the *sancak*s at large, so the practice was beneficial to both *Poturnak*s and the state. It would continue over the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

The overall effect of the influx of Bosnians and Hercegovinians into the Ottoman Empire, even in the context of the *devşirme*, is difficult to gauge. Nevertheless, we can glean that a sort of mythology emerged not just about *devşirme* recruits from Rumelia, but about the people of this region in general. It is likely that some of this mythology was self-generated and reflected the increasing predominance of Rumelian *devşirme* recruits in high positions in the Ottoman military and bureaucracy.[232] Nevertheless, it was powerful, and it stuck, shaping the collective consciousness of Ottomans in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

In his *Heşt Bihişt*, Idris Bitlisi writes that Rumelia was beautiful and pleasant and that its inhabitants were mild, wise, and cultured. Rumelia was unparalleled on earth and especially revered as the birthplace of Alexander the Great and the home of Athens, a famous city of sages. The region was rich in flora, fauna, water, and precious metals. Though he was not present during the campaigns in Bosnia, he does not hesitate to heap praise on this region as well. He writes that it is prosperous and progressive, with many developed and beautiful

[232] Moačanin, "Defterology and Mythology: Ottoman Bosnia up the Tanzîmât," 190; Shaw, "The Ottoman View of the Balkans," 62.

towns. In regard to the inhabitants, he writes that slaves from this region are especially coveted in all corners of the world for their physical and mental beauty, and considered the most valuable of the unbelievers.[233] There are some similarities between the ways in which Rumelian *devşirme* recruits were prized in the sixteenth century, and the ways in which Turkish *ghulam*s were coveted in the medieval Islamic world.[234]

The *devşirme* in general seems to have achieved more prominence during Süleyman's reign. An image of the recruitment was even included in the *Süleymanname*, an official history of his reign.[235] If this book was a celebration and projection of Süleyman I's imperial ethos, then it is noteworthy that the *devşirme* was accorded a place in the work. In many ways, it would seem that the sultan preferred the *devşirme* element among his elite. We may recall that in 1522, he made an unprecedented move in elevating the head of his privy chamber (*Hass Odabaşı*), a Greek *devşirme* recruit, to the position of grand vizier.[236] After 1523, most of his grand viziers were *devşirme* recruits from the western Balkans.[237] The rise and dominance of these western *devşirme* recruits, Bosnians and Hercegovinians in particular, contributed to the collective mythologizing of this group. Simultaneously, over

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[233] Trako, "Pretkosovski Događaji u Hešt Bihiştu Idris Bitlisija," 191; idem, "Bitlisijev Opis Balkanskog Poluostrva," *Prilozi za Orijentalnu Filologiju* 12-13 (1962): 209-218.

[234] Ayalon, "Aspects of the Mamluk Phenomenon," 205-224; Ayalon, "The Muslim City and the Mamluk Military Aristocracy," 314-323; Ayalon, "Mamlūk," 2nd ed.

[235] I would like to thank Cornell Fleischer for encouraging me to explore the implications of the depiction of the *devşirme* in the *Süleymanname*. The depiction can be found in Esin Atıl, *Süleymanname: The Illustrated History of Süleyman the Magnificent* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1986), 94-95.

[236] İnalcık, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age, 1300-1600*, 80.

[237] Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300-1650: The Structure of Power*, 164.

the course of the sixteenth century, the importance of Bosnia and Hercegovina as *sancak*s grew, and a large number of *Poturnak* levies took place. The next chapter focuses on situating these levies within the wider historical context, exploring how western and Bosnian *devşirme* recruits were mythologized, as well as how this mythology and the Rumelian supremacy that it evoked began to be questioned in the mid- to late sixteenth century.

CHAPTER 2:
THE RUMELIAN MONOPOLY:
POTURNAK OĞLANLARI IN THE MID- TO LATE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Over the course of the sixteenth century, the *sancak*s of Bosnia and Hercegovina grew in size and importance. Both were integral frontier provinces (*serhad*s) that contributed heavily to military efforts throughout the empire, most notably along the Ottoman-Habsburg-Venetian triple border. The *sancak*s were crossed by key commercial and military routes that began as old Roman roads and were rehabilitated by the Ottomans.[238] Towns along these routes such as Sarajevo grew and underwent gradual Islamization.

By the seventeenth century, Sarajevo had grown from a small settlement to the third largest city (*şehir*) in the Ottoman Balkans. It boasted a population of 23,500 and more than one hundred *vakıf* (pious foundation) properties. It benefited as a strategic base for military operations along the triple border as well as one of the primary commercial centers linking Anatolia to Dubrovnik (Ragusa) and the Adriatic Sea. Another notable example of population growth and gradual Islamization in the region is the city of Banja Luka. Due to its proximity to the triple border, it became the seat of Ottoman government in Bosnia in the mid-sixteenth century. It grew significantly thanks to its primary benefactor, the Bosnian native

[238] Toma Popović, "Upravna Organizacija Hercegovačkog Sandžaka u XVI Veku," *Prilozi za Orijentalnu Filologiju* 12-13 (1965): 83-84; Adem Handžić, "O Gradskom Stanovništvu u Bosni u XVI Stoljeću," *Prilozi za Orijentalnu Filologiju* 28-29 (1980): 247; Enes Pelidija and Behija Zlatar, *Pljevlja i Okolina u Prvim Stoljećima Osmansko-Turske Vlasti* (Pljevlja: Prosveta, 1988), 9-12; Vasilis Evangelidis, Michail-Antisthenis I. Tsompanas, Georgios Ch. Sirakoulis and Andrew Adamatzky, "Application of Slime Mold Computing on Archaeological Research," in *Advances in Physarum Machines: Sensing and Computing with Slime Mold*, ed. Andrew Adamatzky (Cham, Switzerland: Springer, 2016), 351-353.

Ferhad Paşa Sokolović (d. 1586), who endowed no fewer than 216 properties in the city. His *vakıf* was one of the biggest and most important in the *sancak* of Bosnia, second only to the endowments of Gazi Hüsrev Beg (1480-1541).[239]

Around 1580, the *sancak* of Bosnia was promoted to an *eyalet*, a super-province that included the *sancak* of Hercegovina as well as parts of Dalmatia and Slavonia (today the southwestern coast and easternmost region, respectively, of Croatia). Its first *beglerbeg* (governor-general) was none other than Banja Luka's primary benefactor, Ferhad Paşa Sokolović. This elevation in status reflected the increasing importance and growth of Bosnia and Hercegovina.[240] It also reflected the predominance of Bosnians and Hercegovinians, officials such as Ferhad Paşa Sokolović, in the Ottoman elite during and after the reign of Süleyman I (1520-1566).

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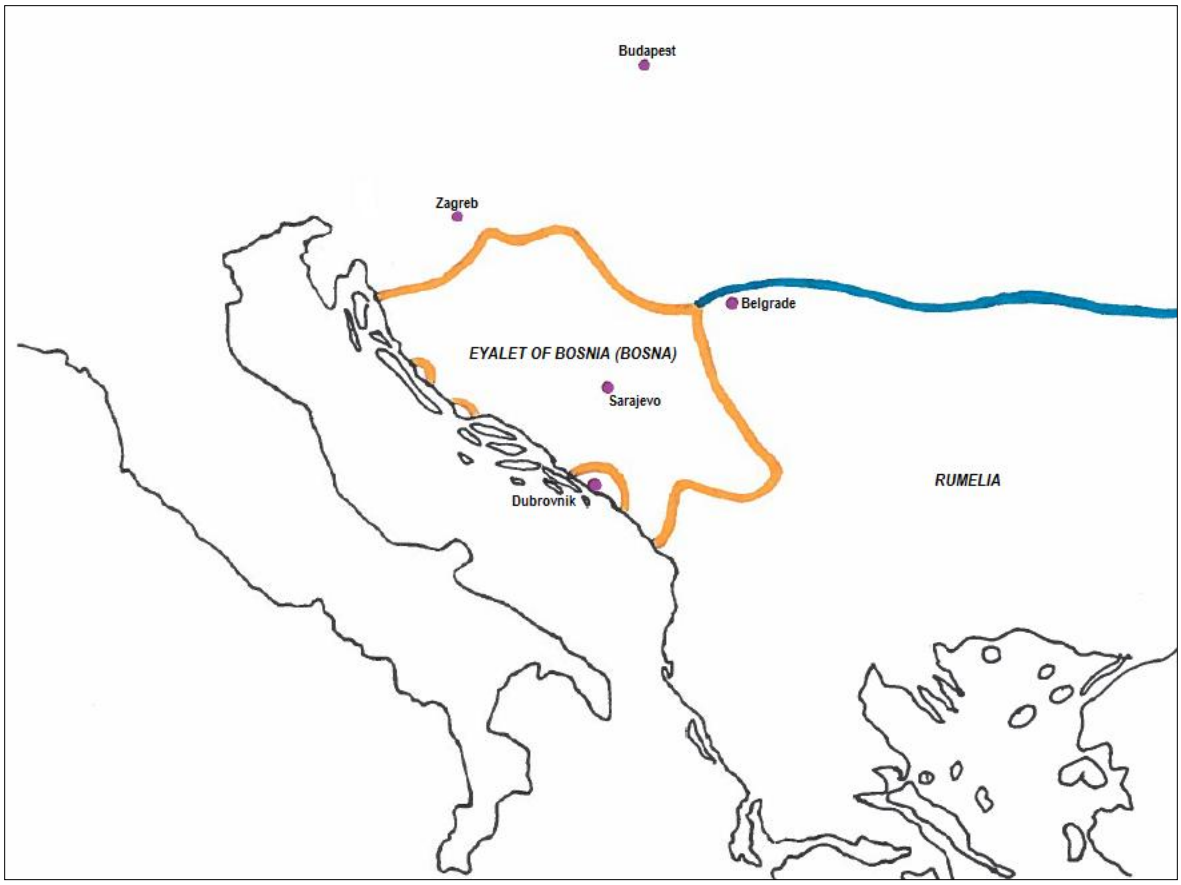
[239] Donia, *Sarajevo: A Biography*, 20-23; Behija Zlatar, "The Importance of Vakf Registers in Defters as Historical Sources," in *Ottoman Bosnia: A History in Peril*, eds. Markus Koller and Kemal H. Karpat (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004), 176; Finkel, *Osman's Dream: The Story of the Ottoman Empire*, 176; İnalcık, *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1300-1914*, 265; Bašagić, *Znameniti Hrvati, Bošnjaci i Hercegovci u Turskoj Carevini*, 20; Handžić, *Opširni Popis Bosanskog Sandžaka iz 1604 Godine,* Vol. 1, 2, 3 and 4, 430, 507; Aladin Husić and Osman Lavić, *Bosanske Vakufname – Katalog Izložbe* (Sarajevo: Vakufska Direkcija Gazi Husrev-begova Biblioteka, 2013), 49-50; Salih Sidki Hadžihuseinović (Müvekkit), *Tarih-i Bosna – Povijest Bosne*, trans. Abdulah Polimac, Lamija Hadžiosmanović, Fehim Nametak, Salih Trako (Sarajevo: El-Kalem, 1999), 158-159, 166, 169.

[240] İnalcık, *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1300-1914*, 265; Zlatar, "The Importance of Vakf Registers in Defters as Historical Sources," 176.



Map 3: The super-province of Bosnia

The reign of Süleyman I is often characterized as a period of growth for the Ottoman state, both in terms of its military and its bureaucracy. Many have written about how paths of recruitment into Ottoman service were numerous, fluid, and dependent on one's connections with Ottoman elites. Writing about the Ottoman scribal service, Cornell Fleischer has noted how one's connections were far more important than education, legal status, or professional experience. Those who benefitted from association with high-ranking

Ottoman elites were known as the *ehl-i mansıb*, the people of position. They could parlay their associations into secure employment, a salary from the imperial treasury, social mobility, even the status of being Ottoman.[241] The first part of this chapter is devoted to exploring this phenomenon. I am particularly interested in how familial and ethno-regional ties were essential for recruitment into Ottoman service, particularly for individuals from the *sancak*s of Bosnia and Hercegovina such as Ferhad Paşa Sokolović.

I. Family Matters: Recruitment through Familial and Ethno-Regional Ties

The assumption that *devşirme* recruits were completely severed from their native networks and lands has precluded us from exploring the possibility that they were essential in recruiting for Ottoman service. This myopia is a product of what Suraiya Faroqhi has called "state fetishism," the desire to view the Ottoman state as a classic example of an autonomous ruling class.[242] The reality was much more complex.

Despite being taken from their native lands and thrust onto the imperial career path, *devşirme* recruits were hardly removed from their former networks. Numerous records confirm that recruits who entered imperial palace service could and did cultivate and benefit

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[241] Maria Pia Pedani, "Safiye's Household and Venetian Diplomacy," *Turcica* 32 (2000): 9-32; Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual in the Ottoman Empire: The Historian Mustafa Ali (1541-1600),* 45-62; idem, "Between the Lines: Realities of Scribal Life in the Sixteenth Century," in *Studies in Ottoman History in Honour of Professor V. L. Ménage*, eds. Colin Heywood and Colin Imber (Istanbul: Isis Press, 1994), 45-62; Zlatar, "O Nekim Muslimanskim Feudalnim Porodicama u Bosni u XV i XVI Stoljeću," 84.

[242] Suraiya Faroqhi, introduction to *New Approaches to State and Peasant in Ottoman History*, eds. Halil Berktay and Suraiya Faroqhi (London: Frank Cass and Company Limited, 1992), 9-11.

from their native networks.[243] Archival records are full of examples of relatives of high-ranking palace functionaries receiving *timar*s (land revenue grants) simply because of their familial relationships. In April 1556, a new convert renamed Ali was entrusted with a *timar* on the occasion of his conversion. He was a relative (*akrabasından olup*) of Sinan Ağa, the chief of the imperial halberdier corps and the sultan's bodyguard (*çavuşbaşı*). Sinan Ağa was most likely a product of the *devşirme* and a high-ranking *kapı kulu* (elite slave of the sultan), and Ali clearly benefited as his recently-converted relative.[244]

Ali's case was not an isolated incident. In October 1556, the converted relatives of Yakup Ağa received similar treatment. Yakup Ağa was a *hazinedarbaşı*, the white eunuch who served as chief of the outer palace treasury. His relatives from Aştıb (present-day Štip, Macedonia) were entrusted with *timar*s on the occasion of their conversions.[245] Like Sinan Ağa, Yakup Ağa was a high-ranking *kapı kulu* and likely a product of the *devşirme*. His relatives benefited from their connection with such a high-ranking official within the

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[243] BOA, Mühimme Defteri 2, no. 464 (25 Cemaziyülevvel 963/6 April 1556); BOA, Mühimme Defteri 2, no. 108 (13 Rebiyülevvel 963/26 January 1556); BOA, Mühimme Defteri 2, no. 2009 (Rebiyülevvel 964/January 1557); BOA, Mühimme Defteri 2, no. 1505 (Zilhicce 963/October 1556); BOA, Mühimme Defteri 2, no. 1573 (13 Zilhicce 963/18 October 1556); BOA, Mühimme Defteri 4, no. 1036 (19 Şevval 967/13 July 1560); BOA, Mühimme Defteri 4, no. 827 (10 Ramazan 967/4 June 1560); İSAM, İSAM, Istanbul Kadı Sicilleri: Üsküdar 56, no. 195 (Cemaziyülevvel 991/May-June 1583); Fisher, "Topkapı Sarayı in the Mid-Seventeenth Century: Bobovi's Description," 6-7, 48-50.

[244] BOA, Mühimme Defteri 2, no. 464 (25 Cemaziyülevvel 963/6 April 1556); Formally, the *çavuşbaşı* served as the chief of the halberdier corps, the imperial messengers, and the sultan's bodyguard. He was also what we would consider in the present day to be a law enforcement officer who supervised a sort of imperial police force. He brought suspects to court and enforced the decisions of the courts as well as the imperial council. Moreover, he was in charge of punishing and executing errant officials. For more information, see Fariba Zarinebaf, *Crime and Punishment in Istanbul, 1700-1800* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2010), 135.

[245] BOA, Mühimme Defteri 2, no. 1505 (Zilhicce 963/October 1556).

imperial palace. Similarly, in July 1560, a new convert by the name of Mahmud was awarded a *timar* worth 6,000 *akçe*. Records show that that he was the brother (*karındaşı*) of Ahmed, the chief of the imperial falconers (*şahincibaşı*).[246] Even connections with low-ranking *kapı kulları* and ordinary members of the Janissary corps could be beneficial. For example, in October 1556, the newly-converted brother (*karındaşı*) of a *kapı oğlanı* (recruit for palace service) was awarded a *timar*.[247] In 1572, a Janissary from Albania intervened on behalf of his relatives who were being taxed illegally.[248]

Blood relatives of *kapı kulları* could gain more than *timar*s. Some obtained official appointments within and outside of the imperial palace. In 1556, the nephew (*karındaşı oğlu*) of Ali Ağa, a eunuch of the Old Palace of Istanbul (*Eski Saray Ağası*), converted to Islam and took the name Mehmed. He was rewarded by being appointed gate-keeper (*bevvab*) at the palace gates, a position that came with a stipend.[249] In the same year, Mustafa, the brother (*birader*) of a gatekeeper (*bevvab*) named Mehmed, and Iskender, the brother of a gatekeeper named Cafer, were appointed to service in the imperial gardens.[250] In January 1557, a recently-converted relative of palace eunuch Mahmud took the name Mustafa and was appointed to guard a fort (*hısar gedik*).[251] While these documents refer to brothers,

[246] BOA, Mühimme Defteri 4, no. 1036 (19 Şevval 967/13 July 1560).
[247] BOA, Mühimme Defteri 2, no. 1573 (13 Zilhicce 963/18 October 1556).
[248] Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devleti Teşkilatından Kapukulu Ocakları,* vol. 1, 27-28.
[249] BOA, Mühimme Defteri 2, no. 108 (13 Rebiyülevvel 963/26 January 1556).
[250] BOA, Mühimme Defteri 2, no. 14 (2 Rebiyülevvel 963/ 15 January 1556).
[251] BOA, Mühimme Defteri 2, no. 2009 (Rebiyülevvel 964/January 1557).

nephews, or unspecified relatives, others mention the actual children of *kapı kulları*. One record in particular, dated June 1560, details the case of deceased court taster (*çaşnıgır*) Hüsrev Ağa. The late Hüsrev Ağa's sons, Ibrahim and Ismail, were appointed as salaried prefects (*beşer akçe vazife*). Attempts were clearly made to care for and set up the children of deceased *kapı kulları*.[252]

Along with aiding their children and other relatives, *kapı kulları* occasionally provided personal recommendations for *devşirme* recruitment from their native lands. Rifki Melül Meric has published a list enumerating these recommendations made to a *devşirme* recruiter. It pertains to young, non-Muslim men from the Bosnian *sancak*:

In the Sarajevo *kaza*
Village of Dolnakora (Donja Gora)[253]
Radoya, son of Narancık, has three sons, but the youngest is a good young man.[254]
Pazar of Honice (Konjic)
Yorko Liçulyepik has a very capable son[255]
Kurek, son of Gurupik"[256]

[252] BOA, Mühimme Defteri 4, no. 827 (10 Ramazan 967/4 June 1560).

[253] Metin Kunt speculates that the names in the document were written by someone unfamiliar with the Bosnian *sancak* and Slavic languages. I suggest that the two locations are Donja Gora and Konjic, located between sixty and one hundred kilometers west of Sarajevo. For more information, see Sanja Kadrić, "The Islamisation of Ottoman Bosnia: Myths and Matters," in *Islamisation: Comparative Perspectives from History*, ed. A.C.S. Peacock (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017), 277-295.

[254] "*…üç oğlu var imiş, ama kiçisi eyü oğlan imiş…*"

[255] *"…bir yarar oğlu var imiş…"*

[256] Meric, "Birkaç Mühim Arşiv Vesikası," 40-41; Kunt, "Transformation of Zimmi into Askeri," 55, 61; idem, *The Sultan's Servants: The Transformation of Ottoman Provincial Government, 1550-1650,* 45, 76, 97.

Metin Kunt refers to this phenomenon as an irregularity and an abuse, and I do not mean to suggest that it occurred often or even regularly.[257] However, we need to consider it alongside the numerous other examples of recruited family members and countrymen. In that context, one begins to wonder whether this pattern of recruitment was really so irregular. In reality, recruitment into state service may have been much less rigid and much more dependent on familial and ethno-regional ties.

One phenomenon that speaks to the importance of ethno-regional ties is the recruitment of countrymen into elite, private households modeled on the household of the sultan. Metin Kunt has done extensive work on this subject, referring to it as a private *devşirme* of sorts. His study of a 1562 register is of particular interest. The register lists the personal slaves of an unnamed Chief White Eunuch (*bāb üs-saāde ağası*), the chief of the eunuchs who guarded the threshold of the sultan's audience chamber. In theory, the Chief White Eunuch was the only *kapı kulu* permitted to keep a household outside of the imperial palace. A total of 122 slaves are listed, along with their professions, provenances, and the ways in which they were acquired. While most were purchased from slave markets, some became slaves of their own volition (*kendi iradesiyle bende olan*). Kunt suggests that they

[257] Kunt, "Transformation of Zimmi into Askeri," 61.

were *zimmi*s, *re'aya* volunteers, and that there must have been a regular and extensive system of *zimmi* youth joining elite, private Ottoman households.[258]

Kunt has published another list that reveals that these elite, private Ottoman household slaves were able to enter imperial palace service and become *kapı kulları* themselves. The 1556 list contains the names and details of 156 slaves of deceased Chief White Eunuch Cafer Ağa. Their ages and occupations varied, from legal experts and musicians to bakers and tailors. They hailed from various corners of the empire, but more than two-thirds were from the northwestern provinces. Nearly a third of them were from the *sancak* of Bosnia. Due to the large presence of Bosnians in his retinue, Kunt has postulated that Cafer Ağa was Bosnian himself. At the time of his death, some of his slaves were already employed in the imperial palace, while others were away from Istanbul conducting his affairs. Upon his death, thirty-nine of his slaves were immediately taken into the imperial palace, and the rest petitioned to follow them. The thirty-nine were young boys (*küçük oğlanlardır*) who were to be educated in the palace by order of the sultan. Thirteen of them were from the *sancak* of Bosnia. The majority of the slaves, 101 of the 156, requested that they be taken into service in the Old Palace (*Saray-ı Atik*), essentially requesting to

[258] İbrahim Metin Kunt, "Kulların Kulları," *Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Dergisi* 3 (1975): 27-28; idem, "Transformation of Zimmi into Askeri," 61-63; idem, *The Sultan's Servants: The Transformation of Ottoman Provincial Government, 1550-1650,* 45.

become *kapı kulları*.[259] Kunt's conclusion is that the imperial palace was not a homogeneous institution. The imperial *devşirme* was clearly not the only method of recruitment for palace service, as recruits could also come from elite, private Ottoman households.[260]

The households of viziers and provincial grandees (*ayan*) in particular could serve as precursors to imperial palace service. One notable example elucidated by Jane Hathaway is that of African harem eunuchs. These eunuchs usually entered the imperial palace after first serving and being educated in the household of the Egyptian governor or the households of wealthy Egyptian grandees. If a eunuch could succeed in the imperial palace and attain the position of Chief Harem Eunuch, he could be a vital ally to the Egyptian governor or the grandee who initially presented him to the imperial palace.[261]

Other Ottoman elites also maintained large retinues of slaves who later served in the imperial palace. The mid-seventeenth century Ottoman historian Ibrahim Peçevi recounts that Iskender Çelebi, a *nişancı* (an official who affixed the sultan's *tuğra* to documents) during the reign of Süleyman I (1520-1566), left a hundred slaves behind when he died.

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[259] "*Kendinin kulları olmayup efendisi kulları olup emekdarları imiş saray-ı atık bevvablığın inayet rica iderler*"; This practice was not entirely without precedent in Islamic history. C. E. Bosworth has written about a Ghaznavid military commander, governor, and eunuch named Anushtigin Khassa (d. 1037). He requested that his *ghulam*s not be split up after his death. The sultan honored his wishes, taking some *ghulam*s into his household and giving others to his sons. For more information, see Bosworth, *The Ghaznavids: Their Empire in Afghanistan and Eastern Iran 994-1040*, 106.

[260] Kunt, "Kulların Kulları," 27-42; idem, "Transformation of Zimmi into Askeri," 61-63.

[261] Hathaway, *The Arab Lands under Ottoman Rule, 1516-1800*, 102-107; idem, *Beshir Agha: Chief Eunuch of the Ottoman Imperial Harem* (London: Oneworld Publications, 2005), 4-5, 12-14, 17-31; idem, "Out of Africa, into the Palace: The Ottoman Chief Harem Eunuch," in *Living in the Ottoman Realm*, eds. Christine Isom-Verhaaren and Kent F. Schull (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016), 225-237.

Ibrahim Paşa (presumably grand vizier Pargalı Ibrahim Paşa, term 1523-1536), took some of these slaves and distributed others to high functionaries.[262]

Some of Iskender Çelebi's slaves also went to the sultan, who was impressed with their abilities. Among these were future viziers such as Ahmed Paşa, Behram Paşa, and Urus Hasan Paşa. Based on Peçevi's wording and the placement of this story within his narrative, it is highly likely that the Ahmed Paşa in question was grand vizier and *damad* Kara Ahmed Paşa (term 1553-1555).[263] The story confirms that the slaves of elite, private Ottoman households could enter imperial palace service and even rise to the post of grand vizier. In turn, Kara Ahmed Paşa established his own slave retinue. In 1554, he was granted a *temlik* (land grant held in freehold) for abandoned land that he had purchased, and he settled his Serbian, Bulgarian, and Hungarian slaves on this land.[264]

It is also important to note the predominance of newly-converted and Muslim-born recruits in imperial palace gardener regiments. This speaks further to the fluid nature of recruitment into Ottoman service and the importance of familial and ethno-regional ties. A 1526 salary register (*defter-i mevacib*) published by Lajos Fekete attests to the practice. It contains the names and salaries of *devşirme* recruits (*gilman-ı acemiyan*) serving in the

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[262] Ibrahim Alajbegović Pećevija (Peçevi), *Historija 1520-1572*, Book1, 37, 53; Peçevi does not note the year in which Iskender Çelebi passed.

[263] Ibrahim Alajbegović Pećevija (Peçevi), *Historija 1520-1572*, Book1, 37, 53.

[264] Ibrahim Alajbegović Pećevija (Peçevi), *Historija 1520-1572*, Book1, 37, 53; İnalcık, *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1300-1914*, 124.

imperial gardens, firewood storehouses, and bakeries in Istanbul. Four different *cemaat*s (regiments) are listed:

1. The *cemaat* of Yusuf Debri Ağa (with Hasan *haracı*, the tax-collector, and *kethüda* Hüseyin Siruz)
2. The *cemaat* of Hasan (Bosna)
3. The *cemaat* of Ali Salih, the master of the Mevlana Halimi Hoca garden
4. The cemaat of David (Bosna), the master of the Kozi Beg garden[265]

The *cemaat*s of David and Ali Salih total eighty-seven recruits. The names, places of origin, and salaries of individual recruits are listed in this manner: Yusuf/ Bosna/ 1 ½ akçe; Ayas/ Hersek/ 1 ½ akçe. The individual notations all resemble one another, aside from differing places of origin and salaries. The salaries differ by one or two *akçe* at most. The recruits came from areas throughout the Balkan Peninsula and Anatolia, from Bosnia to Trabzon. This confirms that the *devşirme* was levied widely in the early sixteenth century.[266]

The *cemaat*s of Yusuf Debri Ağa and Hasan are of more interest, because the majority of recruits in these two divisions are registered differently from those in other divisions. Of the ninety-five recruits listed in the *cemaat* of Yusuf Debri Ağa, eighty-six seem to have been Muslim-born. Their places of origin are not listed. Instead, they are identified by their names and the names of their fathers, in this manner:

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[265] The fact that "Bosna" follows the names of both Hasan and David probably means that both were from the *sancak* of Bosnia; Lajos Fekete, *Die Siyāqat-Schrift in der türkischen Finanzverwaltung: Beitrag zur türkischen Palaögraphie mit 104 Tafeln*, Vol. I (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1955), 146-163, Table IX.

[266] Fekete, *Die Siyāqat-Schrift in der türkischen Finanzverwaltung: Beitrag zur türkischen Palaögraphie mit 104 Tafeln*, 146-163, Table IX.

Mustafa bin Mehmed/ 5 akçes
Mehmed bin Ali/ 5 akçes
Abdullah bin Mustafa/ 4 akçes
Abdi bin Hasan/ 4 akçes
Mehmed bin Yusuf/ 3 ½ akçes

Moreover, two of these eight-six recruits are listed as "Mustafa bin Hasan *haraci*" and "Mehmed bin Hasan *haracı*." These are almost certainly the sons of Hasan *haracı*, the regimental commander. The nine remaining recruits, whose names are scattered throughout the list, are probably non-Muslim; their listings follow the formula used for the *cemaat*s of David and Ali Salih: name, place of origin, salary. These nine, the minority, were likely the non-Muslim recruits.[267]

In the cemaat of Hasan, we find twenty-four Muslim-born recruits, denoted similarly by name, father, and salary. We also find seventy-nine non-Muslim recruits, denoted by name, place of origin, and salary. The compositions of both of these *cemaat*s indicate that, in the early sixteenth century, Muslims and non-Muslims alike were recruited into the *devşirme* and into palace service.[268] This practice continued throughout the sixteenth century. A May 1560 imperial order notes that four Muslim-born individuals (*nefer*) were ordered to the imperial gardens: Hasan (bin) Cafer, Ferid (bin) Ali, Mehmed (bin) Ali, <illegible> (bin) Kasim.[269]

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[267] Fekete, *Die Siyāqat-Schrift in der türkischen Finanzverwaltung: Beitrag zur türkischen Palaögraphie mit 104 Tafeln*, 146-163, Table IX.

[268] Ibid.

[269] BOA, Mühimme Defteri 4, no. 679 (10 Şaban 967/ 6 May 1560).

These records connect Muslim-born *devşirme* recruits to service in the imperial gardens. Others connect recent converts to this area of palace service. A May 1556 order dictates that two new Muslims (*yeni Müslüman olan*) named Mehmed and Iskender should be added as garden service recruits *(hass bahçe oğlanlarına*).[270] Two similar orders date from December 1559. One notes that a *zimmi* from Çatalça, referring to the village of Prača in the *sancak* of Hercegovina, converted to Islam and took the name Mehmed.[271] He was ordered to the imperial gardens (*hass bahçeye buyuruldu*).[272] Another notes that a *zimmi* by the name of Yorgi converted to Islam and was ordered to the imperial gardens as well, likely alongside the newly-converted Mehmed.[273] Lastly, in 1582, an imperial order notifies the Janissary *ağa* (commander) that thirty young men are needed for garden service in the imperial palace of Edirne. The order requests that thirty worthy and capable young men from those who have come to Islam (*Islama gelen oğlanlardan*) be signed up.[274] While it is possible that these converted youths came to Istanbul as part of a specialized *devşirme* similar to the recruitment of *Poturnak oğlanları*, it is also possible that they were connected to members of the Ottoman elite, or that they came to Istanbul by some other means. This suggests that the gardener regiments and related corps of palace soldiery were used to channel recruits of a

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[270] BOA, Mühimme Defteri 2, no. 670 (29 Cemaziyülahir 963/ 9 May 1556).

[271] Çatalça can also refer to a western suburb of Istanbul, but that is almost certainly not what is meant here.

[272] BOA, Mühimme Defteri 4, no. 34 (1 Rebiyülahir 967/ 30 December 1559).

[273] BOA, Mühimme Defteri 4, no. 35 (1 Rebiyülahir 967/ 30 December 1559); Yorgi's new Muslim name is too illegible to decipher.

[274] Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devleti Teşkilatından Kapukulu Ocakları,* vol. 1, 116.

various backgrounds into Ottoman service, from Muslims and non-Muslims to recent converts to the sons of lower-ranking Ottoman officials. This mechanism may have played a similar role to that of the *müteferrika* corps through which sons of higher-ranking Ottoman officials entered imperial service.[275] It speaks to the fluid nature of recruitment into Ottoman service and the importance of familial and ethno-regional ties.

Given the plethora of records that connect service in the imperial gardens with Muslim-born or recently-converted *devşirme* recruits, it is less surprising that the gardens are mentioned explicitly in the 1606 *Laws of the Janissaries* myth about Ottoman Bosnians. I will reserve my analysis of this myth for the next chapter, but I will note that one part of it plainly states that Bosnian Muslim recruits were funneled into the imperial gardens.[276] I suggest that this area of palace service became associated with Muslim-born and converted recruits, and by extension, the *Poturnak oğlanları*. It is certainly not far-fetched to posit that, over the course of the sixteenth century, some *Poturnak oğlanları* ended up serving in the imperial gardens.

The varied methods of recruitment discussed in this section speak to the fluid nature of entry into Ottoman service in the sixteenth century. Moreover, they demonstrate the

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[275] Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devleti Teşkilatından Kapukulu Ocakları,* vol. 1, 80-81, 138, 167-171, 223-224; 27-28; vol. 2, 62-65, 102-106; 138-144; idem, *Osmanlı Devletinin Saray Teşkilatı* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basimevi, 1945), 388-392, 428-431; I would like to thank Prof. Jane Hathaway for suggesting this parallel with the *müteferrika* corps.

[276] Akgündüz, *Osmanlı Kanunnâmeleri ve Hukûkî Tahlilleri,* IX. Kitap: *I. Ahmed, I. Mustafa ve II. Osman Devirleri Kanunnâmeleri (1012/1603-1031/1622)* , 138-141.

importance of connections with Ottoman elites and how familial and ethno-regional ties were essential for recruitment into Ottoman service. Rather than being removed from their native lands and networks, *devşirme* recruits cultivated these networks in a variety of ways. Countrymen were recruited into elite, private households, sometimes even joining the household of the sultan. Newly-converted and Muslim-born recruits, as well as the sons of regiment commanders, were allowed into imperial garden service. These varied routes to palace service hint at the regular practice of targeted recruitment, as opposed to what was long thought to be a "norm" of massive, relatively anonymous, natally alienating recruitment.

The discussion above provides the context for understanding the contemporaneous phenomenon of the *Poturnak oğlanları* and their inclusion in the *devşirme*. If recruitment into Ottoman service was generally fluid and varied, and if it depended on familial and ethno-regional ties, then the levying of *Poturnak oğlanları* seems less of an aberration and more of another example of targeted recruitment. It was another point of entry into Ottoman service. The next section of this chapter is devoted to these *Poturnak oğlanları* and the records of their recruitment from the mid- to late sixteenth century.

II. Poturnak Oğlanları Recruitment

Records that speak to the actual process of recruiting *Poturnak oğlanları* in the mid- to late sixteenth century attest to a number of specialized *devşirme* levies that targeted Bosnian and Hercegovinian Muslims, sometimes to the exclusion of the local Christian population. One such *devşirme* levy occurred in 1565. An imperial order from May of that year reveals that circumcised young men native to the *sancak*s of Bosnia, Hercegovina, and Klis (present-day Croatia, along the Dalmatian coast) were to be collected (*sünnetlü olan oğlanları kadimden ol yerlü olup*). The order was addressed to the *kadı*s (judges) of these *sancak*s, who were raising objections to some part of the levying process. Their objections are not specified. The order emphasizes that most of the youths collected from these *sancak*s were circumcised, meaning Muslim-born. Those who were circumcised and collected had to be native to, and long-established in, these *sancak*s (*kadimden ol yerlü olup*). This was a deliberately local, Muslim levy. It is important to also note the use of "*kadimden*" meaning "from time immemorial," or "ages ago," in the document. Its use promotes the idea that the recruitment of circumcised youth was an old and established custom in these *sancak*s, whether this was true or not. The earliest record we have of *Poturnak oğlanları* being recruited is from 1515, fifty years prior to this order.[277]

[277] "*…varıcak şöyle ki sünnetlü olan oğlanlar kadimden ol yerlü olup mücerret acemi oğlan olmak içün sonradan varmış olmayalar veyahut acemi oğlanı alınmamak içün sünnet olunmuş olmaya anun gibi sünnetlü olanları almak murat edindikte mâni' olmayup aldırasın amma bu bahane ile tezvir ve telbis ile hariçten varan sünnetlü oğlan yazılmaktan hazer olunup şimdiye değin alınugelduği üzre kadimi yerlü olan sünnetlü*

A warning about those who claim to be local, circumcised youth but are not native to the region and come only for the purpose of recruitment is another noteworthy point. In a similar vein, the order alerts the recruiters to young men who are eligible for recruitment but whose families have deliberately opted not to have them circumcised in order to avoid it. In other words, the recruiters are warned to look out for individuals pretending to be Christian in order to actually avoid the *devşirme*. This is an extraordinary warning that upends our understanding of the "classical" Christian-targeted *devşirme*. The order expresses real concern about limiting recruitment to local Muslims but also ensuring that local Muslims do not escape recruitment. This indicates that this was a local, Muslim *devşirme* and that recruitment was a sort of privilege (though, apparently, not necessarily voluntary) granted to certain natives of these *sancak*s, namely the sons of the *Poturnak*s.

This interpretation squares with other documents that describe a similar process. Vassilis Demetriades discusses a 1707 *ferman* (imperial edict) preserved in the court records of Thessaloniki that orders that a special register be created of those who belonged to the *ocak* (regiment) of the *koruciyan* (village guards). These guards cared for the meadows in their region and reared horses and camels for the Ottoman army. They came from six regional villages and had been entrusted with this service hereditarily "from ancient days," as written in the "old defter." In exchange for their service, the guards were exempted from a

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oğlanlardan yararların cem' ittiresin…"; BOA, Mühimme Defteri 5, no. 220 (13 Şevval 972/ 13 May 1565); Kovačević, "Jedan Dokumenat o Devširmi," 203-209; Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devleti Teşkilatından Kapukulu Ocakları,* vol.1, 108.

variety of taxes. This fact must have drawn others who did not belong to the guards to settle in their villages and attempt to claim the same exemptions. In order to sidestep this trickery, the *ferman* demanded that a register of the actual members of the regiment be compiled. The foci of the two documents differ, but the ultimate goal seems to be the same: to guard a special privilege granted to a specific group of people. In both cases, the privilege is portrayed as an age-old and established custom.[278]

Though the 1565 *devşirme* order does not employ the term *Potur*, a 1573 order does. It notes that the levy is to be applied to the *sancak*s of Bosnia, Hercegovina, and Klis, and notifies the *kadı* of these sancaks that *Anadolu Ağası* (Anatolian commander) Ferhad Ağa has been dispatched to conduct recruitment. Furthermore, it states that young men from both the non-Muslim population and the *Potur* group (*eğer kefereden ve eğer Potur taifesindendir cem' ittirup*) are eligible.[279] At least two other *devşirme* orders were issued in 1574 and applied to the *sancak*s of Karaman, Zülkadriye, Maraş, Kayseri, Niğde and Beğşehri (Beyşehir), but there are no mentions of *Potur*s in these orders. This is probably because the target region was Anatolia, and we have no records suggesting that *Poturnak*s or *Poturnak oğlanları* ever came from that region.[280]

The last sixteenth-century *devşirme* order mentioning *Poturnak*s dates to November 1589. By this time, the *sancak* of Bosnia had been elevated to an *eyalet* (super-province) and

[278] Demetriades, "Some Thoughts on the Origins of the Devshirme," 23-26, 32-33.
[279] BOA, Mühimme Defteri 22, no. 590 (26 Rebiyülahir 981/ 24 August 1573).
[280] BOA, Mühimme Defteri 23, no. 132 (981/1574).

included the *sancak*s of Hercegovina and Klis. This is likely why neither of the smaller units is mentioned in the order, which was now addressed to the *beglerbegi* of Bosnia. It differs slightly from the previous orders in that it seems to refer solely to the *Poturnak* community. The *beglerbegi* is instructed to collect local youth, as has been done from the days of yore (*kadimden cem alinugelen yerlerden acemi oğlanı cem içün*). These young men should be capable and circumcised, but not Turcophone (…*Bosna vilayetinden dahi üslub-ı kadim üzre alınan Potur oğulları sünnetlü olan amma Turkçe bilmeyup acemi oğlan gibileri alup…yaramazın cem' itmeden ve hilâf emir türkleşmiş oğlan alınmaktan…*). The ineligibility of Turcophone youth is repeated twice in the order. The *beglerbegi* is then warned against mixing up eligible recruits with those who falsely claim to be *Poturnak oğlanları*.[281] The fixation on barring Turcophone youth is a point that will be taken up later in this and other chapters, but it suffices to say that it reinforces the idea that this was a special privilege granted to a specific group of people, and that it was made to seem a long-established custom.

These are the records that describe the actual process of recruiting *Poturnak oğlanları* in the mid- to late sixteenth century. They attest to a number of specialized levies that targeted Bosnian and Hercegovinian Muslims, essentially local, Muslim *devşirme*s. By all accounts, this seems to have been a special privilege granted to a specific group of people. It

[281] BOA, Mühimme Defteri 66, no. 143 (15 Muharrem 998/ 23 November 1589); Mustafa Efendi Selânikî, *Tarih-i Selânikî*, vol. 1 (971-1003/1563/1595), trans. Mehmet İpşirli (Istanbul: Edebiyat Fakültesi Basımevi, 1989), 220.

also upholds the impression of a wide spectrum of means of entry into Ottoman service in the sixteenth century and the extent to which entry was dependent on ethno-regional origin. The levying of *Poturnak oğlanları* is another example of targeted recruitment, another point of entry into Ottoman service. The story of Hüseyin Paşa Boljanić, to be discussed below, a late sixteenth-century Ottoman vizier and a *Poturnak oğlanı* from the *sancak* of Hercegovina, ties together many of these threads.

III. Bosnian and Hercegovinian Political Networks

Hüseyin Paşa Boljanić and his brother Kara Sinan Beg, both *Poturnak oğlanı*, were part of a larger group of Bosnian and Hercegovinian statesmen who dominated Ottoman politics in the mid- to late sixteenth century. They benefitted from familial, ethno-regional, and political clientage (*intisap*) ties with one another. Some of them were *Poturnak oğlanları* while others had significant connections with the group. In order to contextualize the careers of Hüseyin Paşa and Kara Sinan Beg Boljanić, it is useful to examine this larger group of Bosnian and Hercegovinian statesmen.

The first statesman relevant to our subject is Rüstem Paşa (d. 1561), grand vizier from 1544 to 1553 and again from 1555 to 1561. His exact birthplace is still a mystery. Some argue that he was from Sarajevo, while others claim that he was from a town on the Dalmatian coast called Skradin. If the latter is true, he was probably taken to Istanbul as a prisoner of

war (*pencik oğlanı*) following a 1521 raid on this region.[282] He eventually made his way into the *Hass Oda*, the privy chamber of the sultan and the highest and most prestigious chamber in Topkapı Sarayı. There, he served as a *silahdar* (weapons-bearer) and *rikabdar* (stirrup-holder) before attaining the prestigious outer service rank of *mirahor*, or Master of the Horse. After graduating from the palace, he became the governor of Diyarbakır, and following that, Anatolia. He was then promoted to the Imperial Council. In 1539, he married the daughter of Süleyman, Mihrimah Sultan, and became a bridegroom (*damad*) of the dynasty. In 1544, he became grand vizier for the first time. His endowments in the *sancak* of Bosnia include the famous Brusa (Bursa) *bezistan* (cloth market) and a *hamam* in Sarajevo. In 1574, his younger brother Bali Ağa built a mosque in the central Bosnian town of Prusac. Another brother named Karagöz Mehmed Beg left a number of endowments in the Bosnian city of Mostar. A third brother, Sinan Paşa, was a *kapı kulu* who graduated from the imperial palace and served as *sancakbegi* of Hercegovina and *kapudan paşa* (grand admiral).[283] All of the

[282] Ibrahim Alajbegović Pećevija (Peçevi), *Historija 1520-1572*, Book 1, 23, 34-35; Bašagić, *Znameniti Hrvati, Bošnjaci i Hercegovci u Turskoj Carevini*, 14-15, 65.

[283] Zlatar, "The Importance of Vakf Registers in Defters as Historical Sources," 178; Bašagić, *Znameniti Hrvati, Bošnjaci i Hercegovci u Turskoj Carevini*, 52; Hamdija Kreševljaković, *Rustem-paša, Veliki Vezir Sulejmana I* (Zagreb: Tisak Zaklade Tiskare Narodnih Novina, 1928), 272-287; Hafzija Hasandedić, "Muslimanske Biblioteke u Mostaru," *Anali Gazi Husrev-begove Biblioteke u Sarajevu* 1 (1972): 112; Evliya Çelebi, *Günümüz Türkçesiyle Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnâmesi: İstanbul*, Vol. 1, trans. Seyit Ali Kahraman and Yücel Dağlı (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2003), 127; ; Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300-1650: The Structure of Power*, 151-152.

brothers were titled state functionaries and Ottoman elites. It is highly likely that they benefited from familial ties with Rüstem Paşa, the highest-ranking member of the family.[284]

Rüstem Paşa's son-in-law and successor as grand vizier (1561-1565) was a *Poturnak oğlanı* named Semiz Ali Paşa (Ali-paša Pračić). According to his epithet, he was from the village of Prača in the *sancak* of Hercegovina. Peçevi calls him Kalın Ali Paşa and says that he was a relative of Çeşte Bali, the *kethüda* (steward) of grand vizier Pargalı Ibrahim Paşa (term 1523-1535). We cannot say whether it was through the *devşirme* or other means, but on account of being well-educated, Ali Paşa came into the imperial palace. He worked his way up to *kapıcıbaşı*, then Janissary *ağa* (commander), *beglerbegi* (governor-general) of Rumelia, *kapudan paşa*, and finally, grand vizier. Aside from being the son of a *Poturnak*, we do not know much about his origins or early history, apart from the fact that he probably benefited from his familial ties with Çeşte Bali, Pargalı Ibrahim Paşa's *kethüda*.[285] Later, he likely benefited from familial and ethno-regional ties his father-in-law, the grand vizier Rüstem Paşa.[286]

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[284] Pedani, "Safiye's Household and Venetian Diplomacy," 9-32.

[285] Hazim Šabanović, *Bosanski Pašaluk: Postanak i Upravna Podjela* (Sarajevo: Svjetlost, 1982), 117, 131; Bašagić, *Znameniti Hrvati, Bošnjaci i Hercegovci u Turskoj Carevini*, 11; Gülrü Necipoğlu, "Connectivity, Mobility, and Mediterranean 'Portable Archaeology': Pashas from the Dalmatian Hinterland as Cultural Mediators," in *Dalmatia and the Mediterranean: Portable Archaeology and the Poetics of Influence*, ed. Alina Alexandra Payne (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 325; İbrahim Efendi Peçevi, *Peçevi Tarihi I*, trans. Bekir Sıtkı Baykal (Ankara: Başbakanlık Matbaası, 1981), 19; Peçevi writes that, "*Sadrazam Ibrahim Paşa'nın kethüdası Ceşte Bali'nin akrabası olduğundan iyi bir eğitim görmüş ve bu sayede padişah sarayına girmişti…*"

[286] Pedani, "Safiye's Household and Venetian Diplomacy," 9-32.

Semiz Ali Paşa was succeeded as grand vizier by the great Mehmed Paşa Sokolović (Sokollu Mehmed Paşa, term 1565-1579). Arguably the most famous of Süleyman I's grand viziers, he was a Bosnian *devşirme* recruit who served as grand vizier for fourteen years. His tenure spanned the reigns of three sultans: Süleyman I (1520-1566), Selim II (1566-1574), and Murad III (1574-1595). He was born at the start of the sixteenth century to an Orthodox Christian family in the Bosnian village of Sokolovići. There are conflicting reports regarding his recruitment into service. Some argue that he was simply a gifted young man who caught the eye of an Ottoman official named Yeşilce Mehmed Beg. This official then recruited him into the *devşirme*. Others have claimed that he was brought into service by family members who were already serving the Ottoman state. In fact, Mehmed Paşa was by no means the first or only Sokolović to enter into Ottoman service. He was preceded by, among others, his cousin Deli Hüsrev Paşa (1495-1544). Hüsrev Paşa was likely the first Sokolović recruited through the *devşirme*. By 1534, he had worked his way up to the rank of second vizier. Some speculate that he was involved in Mehmed Paşa's recruitment, indicating that the latter benefited from familial ties. This adds more nuance to the conventional notion of the *devşirme*. Rather than an entirely random levy, it occasionally targeted family members of existing Ottoman officials.[287]

[287] Mustafa Ali, *Mustafā Ali's Counsel for Sultans of 1581 (II): Edition, Translation, Notes*, 71; Bašagić, *Znameniti Hrvati, Bošnjaci i Hercegovci u Turskoj Carevini*, 48-49; Ibrahim Alajbegović Pećevija (Peçevi), *Historija 1520-1572*, Book 2, 20; Müvekkit, *Tarih-i Bosna – Povijest Bosne*, 146; Evlija Čelebi, *Putopis: Odlomci*

We can say for certain that Mehmed Paşa ended up in the imperial palace at Edirne. This indicates that he was not initially chosen for the most elite level of palace service and had to work his way up to Istanbul. He served as the commander of the imperial guard from 1542 to 1546, grand admiral from 1546 to 1551, governor of Rumelia from 1551 to 1555, third vizier from 1555-1561, second vizier from 1561 to 1565, and finally, grand vizier from 1565 to 1579. He was particularly close with Selim II, marrying his daughter, Ismihan Sultan. Even prior to but certainly during his tenure as grand vizier, Mehmed Paşa devoted his efforts to creating what some have called an *intisap* empire.[288] He built an expansive and powerful political network that dominated Ottoman politics in the mid- to late sixteenth century by promoting and building up the careers of protégés, some of them relatives, from his native *sancak* of Bosnia and the neighboring *sancak* of Hercegovina.[289]

Given that several *devşirme* levies involving *Poturnak oğlanları* occurred over Mehmed Paşa's illustrious career and the construction of his *intisap* empire, it is fair to question whether he had connections with *Poturnak*s or their progeny.[290] Although nineteenth-century sources identify the Sokolović family as *Poturnak*s, we have no

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o Jugoslovenskim Zemljama, trans. Hazim Šabanović (Sarajevo: Sarajevo Publishing, 1996), 400; Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual in the Ottoman Empire: The Historian Mustafa Ali (1541-1600),* 46-48.

[288] Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual in the Ottoman Empire: The Historian Mustafa Ali (1541-1600),* 46-48

[289] Pedani, "Safiye's Household and Venetian Diplomacy," 9-32; Mehmed Paşa certainly had allies and protégés who did not originate in the *sancak*s of Bosnia and Hercegovina. This chapter does not intend to indicate otherwise but simply to focus on these two *sancak*s as particular strongholds of this powerful network.

[290] BOA, Mühimme Defteri 5, no. 220 (13 Şevval 973/3 May 1566); BOA, Mühimme Defteri 22, no. 590 (26 Rebiyülevvel 981/26 July 1573).

sixteenth-century sources that verify this claim.[291] Therefore, we cannot say whether any of the Sokolovićes were *Poturnak*s or *Poturnak oğlanları*. However, we can say with certainty that *Poturnak*s and their progeny were a part of Mehmed Paşa's political network and benefited from his career patronage (*intisap*). Hüseyin Paşa and Kara Sinan Beg Boljanić are two prime examples.

i. *Poturnak oğlanları*: Kara Sinan Beg and Hüseyin Paşa Boljanić

The Boljanić family originated in the village of Boljanići (present-day Montenegro) located in the *sancak* of Hercegovina. Kara Sinan Beg, Hüseyin Paşa's elder son, served as the *sancakbegi* (provincial governor) of Hercegovina from 1552 to 1557 and the *sancakbegi* of Bosnia from 1562 to 1563. From 1563 to 1567, he returned to his post of *sancakbegi* of Hercegovina and held it again numerous times between 1567 and his death in 1582.[292] Hüseyin Paşa had a more illustrious political career. After serving as a taster (*çaşnıgır*), he graduated from the imperial palace at an unknown date. He then served as the *subaşı* (chief of police) of Popovo Polje, a territory along the Sava River and the Ottoman-Habsburg frontier. In 1567, he was elevated to the post of *sancakbegi* of Hercegovina. In 1569, he rose to the post of *sancakbegi* of Bosnia. From 1572 to 1573, he served as the *beglerbegi*

[291] Matija Mažuranić, *Pogled u Bosnu ili Kratak Put u Onu Krajinu, Učinjen 1839-40 po Jednom Domorodcu*, 20.

[292] A number of scholars have claimed, and Evliya Çelebi confirms, that Kara Sinan Beg did rise to the rank of *paşa* at some point in his career. See Zlatar, "O Nekim Muslimanskim Feudalnim Porodicama u Bosni u XV i XVI Stoljeću," 129 and Evlija Čelebi, *Putopis: Odlomci o Jugoslovenskim Zemljama*, 400.

(governor-general) of Diyarbakır. In 1573, he was appointed governor of Egypt with the rank of vizier. He retained this post until he was recalled to Istanbul in 1575. The next decade of his career is nebulous, but we know that in 1585, he served as the *beglerbegi* of Baghdad. The last we hear of the *paşa* is in 1594, when he served as the *beglerbegi* of Bosnia, was removed from the post, and went to Budin.[293] Sometime over the course of his career, he also served as the *beglerbegi* of Van and of Damascus. Peçevi mentions both appointments but does not specify when Hüseyin Paşa held these posts."[294]

More importantly, Peçevi refers to Hüseyin Paşa as Potur Hüseyin Paşa.[295] His account is particularly important and likely to be accurate because he was a contemporary. The two were near-countrymen and certainly ran in the same elite circles. It is likely that they met and campaigned alongside one another in the retinue of Lala Mehmed Paşa Sokolović on the Ottoman-Habsburg frontier in the late sixteenth century. We know for certain that Peçevi's uncle and guardian, Ferhad Paşa Sokolović, campaigned alongside Kara

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[293] Behija Zlatar and Enes Pelidija, "Prilog Kulturnoj Istoriji Pljevalja Osmanskom Perioda - Zadužbine Husein-paše Boljanića," *Prilozi za Orijentalnu Filologiju* 34 (1985): 116-117; Toma Popović, Spisak Hercegovačkih Namesnika u XVI Veku," *Prilozi za Orijentalnu Filologiju* 16-17 (1970): 97-98; Pelidija and Zlatar, *Pljevlja i Okolina u Prvim Stoljećima Osmansko-Turske Vlasti*, 22-25; Evlija Čelebi, *Putopis: Odlomci o Jugoslovenskim Zemljama*, 400; Necipoğlu, "Connectivity, Mobility, and Mediterranean 'Portable Archaeology': Pashas from the Dalmatian Hinterland as Cultural Mediators," 313-330.

[294] İbrahim Efendi Peçevî, *Tarîh-i Peçevî*, eds. Fahri Ç. Derin and Vahit Çabuk (Istanbul: Enderun Kitabevi, 1980), 444; Ibrahim Alajbegović Pećevija (Peçevi), *Historija 1520-1572*, Book 1, 363-364; İbrahim Efendi Peçevi, *Peçevi Tarihi I*, 19, 310; "…*Hersek'te Bıraca adlı kasaba…haremden çaşnıgırlık ile çıkup…beglerbegisi olmuş idi…Van, ve Bağdat, ve Mısır ve Şam beglerbegisi olup…bir mu'tedil adam idi*…"; "…He is from a *kasaba* in Hercegovina named Prača…he left the imperial palace as a taster…he was a governor-general…he was the governor-general of Van, Baghdad, Egypt, Syria…he was a mild man…"

[295] İbrahim Efendi Peçevî, *Tarîh-i Peçevî*, 444; Ibrahim Alajbegović Pećevija (Peçevi), *Historija 1520-1572*, Book 1, 363-364; İbrahim Efendi Peçevi, *Peçevi Tarihi I*, 19, 310.

Sinan Beg Boljanić earlier in the century. Therefore, it is possible that Peçevi came across the elder Boljanić brother as well. Regardless, even if he had never met the brothers, it is certain that his primary informants would have been familiar with them.[296]

I suggest that Hüseyin Paşa was called *Potur* because his father, Bayram Ağa, was a *Poturnak*. This would make Hüseyin Paşa and Kara Sinan Beg *Poturnak oğlanları*, the children of *Poturnak*s. This designation squares with their recruitment into Ottoman service, something that will be discussed later in this section. All we know about Bayram Ağa is that he held a *timar* (land revenue grant) in Boljanići, the family's home village. It is unclear whether the Boljanićes were a relatively anonymous, converted peasant family or converted gentry from the Kingdom of Bosnia.[297]

Kara Sinan Beg and Hüseyin Paşa both left notable endowments (*vakıf*) in their native Hercegovina. Hüseyin Paşa's endowments were based in Pljevlja (Taslıca) in present-day Montenegro. Prior to the Ottoman conquest, Pljevlja was home to a market (*trg*) important to regional trade and well-connected to Dubrovnik (Ragusa). The town and its surroundings produced leather, wool, dairy products, honey, wax, and metals, while Dubrovnik traders

[296] Peçevi, *Historija 1520-1572*, Book 1, 5-6, 12; Bašagić, *Znameniti Hrvati, Bošnjaci i Hercegovci u Turskoj Carevini*, 20, 28, 47-48, 68.

[297] Zlatar and Pelidija, "Prilog Kulturnoj Istoriji Pljevalja Osmanskom Perioda - Zadužbine Husein-paše Boljanića," 116; Radovan Samardžić, *Mehmed Sokolović* (Beograd: Narodna Knjiga, 1982), 157; Pelidija and Zlatar, *Pljevlja i Okolina u Prvim Stoljećima Osmansko-Turske Vlasti*, 22; Aside from Kara Sinan Beg and Hüseyin Paşa, Bayram Ağa had two sons, Ali Beg and Davud Beg, and two daughters, Maksuma and Zulkada.

brought oil, clothing, and luxury items.[298] After the Ottoman conquest in 1465, and the establishment of the Hercegovinian *sancak* in 1470, Pljevlja began to grow and gradually Islamize. In 1468, it consisted of seventy-two households and twenty-three bachelors. By 1477, this number had risen to 101 households but only twelve bachelors. Growth continued throughout the early sixteenth century. In 1516, there were 130 Christian households and twenty Muslim households. These numbers would continue to rise gradually until the establishment of Hüseyin Paşa's *vakıf* properties.[299]

The first crucial change for Pljevlja occurred in 1567, when Hüseyin Paşa, then the *sancakbegi* of Hercegovina, relocated the seat of the *sancak* there.[300] Various buildings such as a *saray* were constructed to accommodate the *sancakbegi* and his retinue. During this time, the number of craftsmen in Pljevlja rose and the town's gradual expansion continued. The second crucial change occurred around 1570, when Hüseyin Paşa obtained a *muafname* (document of exemption from taxation) and permission from Selim II (r. 1566-1574) to establish his *vakıf* properties in the town. This elevated Pljevlja's status to that of a *kasaba*

[298] In the vicinity of Pljevlja, there was an iron mine as well as a mine for material essential to the production of gunpowder (*crnobarit*). See Pelidija and Zlatar, *Pljevlja i Okolina u Prvim Stoljećima Osmansko-Turske Vlasti*, 17.

[299] BOA, Tapu Tahrir Defteri 654 (979-980/1572); Toma Popović, "Upravna Organizacija Hercegovačkog Sandžaka u XVI Veku," 75-79, 95-96; Handžić, "O Gradskom Stanovništvu u Bosni u XVI Stoljeću," 248-253; Šabanović, *Bosanski Pašaluk: Postanak i Upravna Podjela*, 138-139, 156, 194; Pelidija and Zlatar, *Pljevlja i Okolina u Prvim Stoljećima Osmansko-Turske Vlasti*, 10-20, 35-44; Zlatar and Pelidija, "Prilog Kulturnoj Istoriji Pljevalja Osmanskom Perioda - Zadužbine Husein-paše Boljanića," 115-128; Toma Popović, "Kad je Sedište Hercegovačkog Sandžaka Premešteno iz Foče u Plevlja," *Prilozi za Orijentalnu Filologiju* 10-11 (1961): 270; Adem Handžić, "Vakuf Kao Nosilac Određenih Državnih i Društvenih Funkcija u Osmanskom Carstvu," *Anali Gazi Husrev-begove Biblioteke* 9-10 (1983): 113-117; Samardžić, *Beograd i Srbija u Spisima Francuskih Savremenika: XVI-XVII Vek*, 112.

[300] Prior to 1567, the seat of the Hercegovinian *sancak* was in Foča.

(small town). Its population was exempted from taxes such as the *resm-i çift* (farmland tax), the *avarız-ı divaniye* and *tekâlif-i örfiye* (extraordinary state-customary taxes). In 1570, Pljevlja boasted 195 households and three Muslim and one Christian *mahalles* (neighborhoods). The *tapu tahrir defteri* (cadastral survey register) for the period registered a significant number of converts. By 1585, approximately eighty-two percent of the population was Muslim. The number of Muslims in Pljevlja, as well as the town's overall population, continued to rise over the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.[301]

Around 1572, Hüseyin Paşa endowed an impressive mosque in Pljevlja that stands to this day. Nearly a century after its construction, Evliya Çelebi marveled at it and compared it to a sultan's mosque. Hüseyin Paşa's other *vakıf* properties included a large caravanserai, an *imaret* (large public kitchen), two *han*s (inns), a *mezarıstan* (cemetery), a *şadırvan* (ablution fountain), a *saat kulesi* (clock tower), a *mekteb* (Qur'an school), a *hamam* (public bathhouse), a watermill, thirty-four *dukkan*s (shops), five barbershops, and various gardens and fields.[302]

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[301] BOA, Tapu Tahrir Defteri 654 (979-980/1572); Toma Popović, "Upravna Organizacija Hercegovačkog Sandžaka u XVI Veku," 75-79, 95-96; Handžić, "O Gradskom Stanovništvu u Bosni u XVI Stoljeću," 248-253; Šabanović, *Bosanski Pašaluk: Postanak i Upravna Podjela*, 138-139, 156, 194; Pelidija and Zlatar, *Pljevlja i Okolina u Prvim Stoljećima Osmansko-Turske Vlasti*, 10-20, 35-44; Zlatar and Pelidija, "Prilog Kulturnoj Istoriji Pljevalja Osmanskom Perioda - Zadužbine Husein-paše Boljanića," 115-128; Popović, "Kad je Sedište Hercegovačkog Sandžaka Premešteno iz Foče u Plevlja," 270; Handžić, "Vakuf Kao Nosilac Određenih Državnih i Društvenih Funkcija u Osmanskom Carstvu," 113-117; Samardžić, *Beograd i Srbija u Spisima Francuskih Savremenika: XVI-XVII Vek*, 112.

[302] BOA, Tapu Tahrir Defteri 654 (979-980/1572); Zlatar and Pelidija, "Prilog Kulturnoj Istoriji Pljevalja Osmanskom Perioda - Zadužbine Husein-paše Boljanića," 118-124; Zlatar, "O Nekim Muslimanskim Feudalnim Porodicama u Bosni u XV i XVI Stoljeću," 130; Pelidija and Zlatar, *Pljevlja i Okolina u Prvim Stoljećima Osmansko-Turske Vlasti*, 27-33; Evlija Čelebi, *Putopis: Odlomci o Jugoslovenskim Zemljama*, 392-399; Bašagić, *Znameniti Hrvati, Bošnjaci i Hercegovci u Turskoj Carevini*, 28; Müvekkit, *Tarih-i Bosna – Povijest Bosne*, 202-207; Necipoğlu, "Connectivity, Mobility, and Mediterranean 'Portable Archaeology': Pashas from the Dalmatian

The hub of Kara Sinan Beg's endowments was Čajniče, only fifty kilometers away from Pljevlja and about half that distance from the brothers' home village of Boljanići.[303] His *vakıf* properties had a similar effect on Čajniče to his brother's endowments in Pljevlja: they spurred the urbanization and the Islamization of the region. Kara Sinan Beg endowed a Friday mosque, *mescid* (small mosque), *mekteb* (Qur'an school), *medrese* (theological seminary), *imaret*, *tekke* (dervish lodge), *misafirhane* (guesthouse, inn), caravanserai, twenty-two *dukkan*s, two tanneries, and two mills on the Janjina River. In nearby Sopot, he also left a *cami* (Friday mosque), a *mescid* (mosque for daily prayer) and a *mekteb*. In nearby Priboj, he built a caravanserai. He also left endowments in the *sancak* of Bosnia, particularly a caravanserai, *mekteb*, and *hamam* in Jajce and Cernik. Both he and his wife, Şemsa Kadın, endowed a number of properties in Banja Luka. In order to maintain these endowments, Kara Sinan Beg left 444,000 *akçe* and various plots of land. Şemsa Kadın provided 80,000 *akçe*, one of the richest contributions made by an Ottoman woman from this region. Their combined *vakıf* properties comprised one of the largest foundations ever established in this region.[304]

Hinterland as Cultural Mediators," 313-325; Evliya Çelebi also notes that he built a mosque in the nearby town of Prijepolje, so it may be that his *vakıf* extended farther. Without his *vakıfname* (foundation charter), which has been either lost or destroyed, it is possible only to reconstruct a partial picture.

[303] Kara Sinan Beg's *vakıfname* is still in existence.

[304] *Vakufname iz Bosne i Hercegovine (XV i XVI Vijek)*, ed. Lejla Gazić, trans. Salih Trako (Sarajevo: Orijentalni Institut u Sarajevu, 1985), 193-215; Zlatar and Pelidija, "Prilog Kulturnoj Istoriji Pljevalja Osmanskom Perioda - Zadužbine Husein-paše Boljanića," 116; Zlatar, "O Nekim Muslimanskim Feudalnim Porodicama u Bosni u XV i XVI Stoljeću," 114, 129; Šabanović, *Bosanski Pašaluk: Postanak i Upravna Podjela*, 139, 194-195, 223; Evlija Čelebi, *Putopis: Odlomci o Jugoslovenskim Zemljama*, 213, 392-400; Müvekkit, *Tarih-i*

What can the brothers' endowments tell us about their motivations for building up Pljevlja and Čajniče? The obvious answer is that both remained attached to their native regions and elected to build up territory surrounding their home village of Boljanići. Beyond that, it seems that both brothers were quite oriented towards regional trade. Their endowments included numerous caravanserais at points along key trade routes. They also supported numerous tanneries, leather being one of the region's key exports.[305] Various scholars have also pointed out that Kara Sinan Beg's and his wife's *vakıfname* (foundation charter) specifies that their cash endowments are to support trustworthy local merchants and craftspeople.[306] In Hüseyin Paşa's case, enhancing regional trade would have only complemented Pljevlja's history as a commercial hub connected to Dubrovnik (Ragusa) and other key points by old Roman roads.[307]

Bosna – Povijest Bosne, 145; Bašagić, *Znameniti Hrvati, Bošnjaci i Hercegovci u Turskoj Carevini*, 68; Pelidija and Zlatar, *Pljevlja i Okolina u Prvim Stoljećima Osmansko-Turske Vlasti,* 22-23, 39-40; Zejnil Fajić, "Popis Vakufnama iz Bosne i Hercegovine Koje se Nalaze u Gazi Husrevbegovoj Biblioteci u Sarajevu," *Anali Gazi Husrev-begove Biblioteke* 5-6 (1978): 257; Muhamed A. Mujić, "Neke Vakuf-name iz Bosne i Hercegovine (15. – 17. Stoljeće): Forma, Jezik i Stil," *Anali Gazi Husrev-begove Biblioteke* 9-10 (1983): 18; Hivzija Hasandedić, "Hercegovački Vakufi i Vakifi," *Anali Gazi Husrev-begove Biblioteke* 9-10 (1983): 63; Kerima Filan, "Women Founders of Pious Endowments in Ottoman Bosnia," in *Women in the Ottoman Balkans: Gender, Culture, and History*, eds. Amila Buturović and Irvin Cemil Schick (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007), 109-118; Salih Trako, "Značajniji Vakufi na Području Jugoistočne Bosne," *Anali Gazi Husrev-begove Biblioteke* 9-10 (1983): 79-82; Hivzija Hasandedić, *Muslimanska Baština u Istočnoj Hercegovini* (Sarajevo: El-Kalem, 1990), 145.

[305] Pelidija and Zlatar, *Pljevlja i Okolina u Prvim Stoljećima Osmansko-Turske Vlasti,* 18, 38-39.

[306] Aladin Husić, "Novčani Vakufi u Bosni u Drugoj Polovini 16. Stoljeća," *Anali Gazi Husrev-begove Biblioteke* 32 (2011): 46; Filan, "Women Founders of Pious Endowments in Ottoman Bosnia," 109-118; Amila Buturović, *Carved in Stone, Etched in Memory: Death, Tombstones and Commemoration in Bosnian Islam since c. 1500* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate Publishing, 2015) 69-70.

[307] Šabanović, *Bosanski Pašaluk: Postanak i Upravna Podjela,* 165.

The connectivity provided by old Roman roads rehabilitated by the Ottomans is central. Čajniče and Pljevlja lay between two principal trade and communication routes, Via Egnatia and Via Militaris. The two towns stood on north-south subsidiary roads that connected Via Egnatia in the south to Via Militaris in the north. These roads enabled transit to and from the Aegean region, the central Balkans, and the Danube.[308] Heading southward, one could take the roads to Dubrovnik, the coastal town of Risan mentioned in the previous chapter, Ulcinj, Skadar, and Dyrrachium. From Dyrrachium, one could cross the Adriatic Sea and continue westward along Via Appia, or continue eastward to Istanbul along Via Egnatia. Heading northward, one could access numerous points along Via Militaris such as Belgrade and Sofia, and travel the entirety of the transportation network along the Danube River. Since Via Militaris was a continuation of the Claudia Augusta military route, the Ottomans could have used it to travel as far north as the Rhine had that region been under their control.[309] These roads were of great commercial and military importance, and they all touched Pljevlja and Čajniče. It stands to reason that Hüseyin Paşa and Kara Sinan Beg developed both towns with strategic commercial and military interests in mind. The brothers' connections to Dubrovnik (Ragusa) clarify this point further.

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[308] Popović, "Upravna Organizacija Hercegovačkog Sandžaka u XVI Veku," 83-84; Handžić, "O Gradskom Stanovništvu u Bosni u XVI Stoljeću," 247; Pelidija and Zlatar, *Pljevlja i Okolina u Prvim Stoljećima Osmansko-Turske Vlasti*, 9-12; Evangelidis, et al, "Application of Slime Mold Computing on Archaeological Research," 351-353.

[309] Popović, "Upravna Organizacija Hercegovačkog Sandžaka u XVI Veku," 83-84; Handžić, "O Gradskom Stanovništvu u Bosni u XVI Stoljeću," 247; Pelidija and Zlatar, *Pljevlja i Okolina u Prvim Stoljećima Osmansko-Turske Vlasti*, 9-12; Evangelidis et al., "Application of Slime Mold Computing on Archaeological Research," 351-353.

ii. The Boljanić Brothers and Dubrovnik

Hüseyin Paşa and Kara Sinan Beg both served as *sancakbeg*s of Bosnia and Hercegovina, key frontier provinces along the Habsburg-Ottoman-Venetian triple border. It stands to reason that both had a vested interest in shoring up key points such as Pljevlja and Čajniče along important military routes. Both towns were also well-connected to Dubrovnik (Ragusa). The *sancakbeg*s of Hercegovina and Bosnia generally maintained a strong relationship with this republic for military and trade purposes. Dubrovnik often provided intelligence, weapons, and funds for Ottoman war efforts. It also provided materials and manpower for building fortifications along the triple border. In 1568, while serving as the *sancakbegi* of Hercegovina, Hüseyin Paşa asked the chief magistrate of Dubrovnik for tools and masons. He needed them to build a fortress in the Dalmatian port of Makarska in preparation for the Ottoman naval campaign against Cyprus.[310] Later in his career, as the *beglerbegi* of the *eyalet* of Bosnia, he asked Dubrovnik for funds to purchase cannons for campaigns against the Habsburgs.[311]

In return, Dubrovnik relied on a good relationship with the *sancakbeg*s of Bosnia and Hercegovina for its own trade and security. In 1565, when Kara Sinan Beg was the *sancakbegi* of Hercegovina, the Ottoman army was stationed in Belgrade and preparing for

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[310] Necipoğlu, "Connectivity, Mobility, and Mediterranean 'Portable Archaeology': Pashas from the Dalmatian Hinterland as Cultural Mediators," 313-330.

[311] Zlatar and Pelidija, "Prilog Kulturnoj Istoriji Pljevalja Osmanskom Perioda - Zadužbine Husein-paše Boljanića," 118; Pelidija and Zlatar, *Pljevlja i Okolina u Prvim Stoljećima Osmansko-Turske Vlasti*, 25-26.

war with the Habsburgs. During this time, Dubrovnik traders in Belgrade made enormous amounts of money provisioning the army, and trade between Dubrovnik and Belgrade rose exponentially.[312] Strategic points along the route from Dubrovnik to Belgrade such as Čajniča and Pljevlje would have been essential to this exchange.

Aside from political aspirations and state interests, a good relationship with Dubrovnik stood to benefit and enrich the *sancakbeg*s of Hercegovina and Bosnia personally. Kara Sinan Beg and Hüseyin Paşa, as well as all other *sancakbeg*s of Hercegovina, customarily received greetings and gifts from Dubrovnik. Kara Sinan Beg's wife, Şemsa Kadın, received particularly lavish gifts during her husband's terms as *sancakbegi*.[313] Kara Sinan was also personally dependent on Dubrovnik for doctors to treat his vision problems.[314]

This is not to say that personal and political interests, as well as military and commercial matters, were the only things of import to Hüseyin Paşa and Kara Sinan Beg.[315] Nevertheless, we must take into account that the *vakıf* properties of both brothers showed a great orientation towards fostering regional trade. They chose to build up Čajniče and

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[312] Popović, "Upravna Organizacija Hercegovačkog Sandžaka u XVI Veku," 75, 81-84; Samardžić, *Mehmed Sokolović*, 160-164.

[313] Zlatar and Pelidija, "Prilog Kulturnoj Istoriji Pljevalja Osmanskom Perioda - Zadužbine Husein-paše Boljanića," 115-117; Popović, "Upravna Organizacija Hercegovačkog Sandžaka u XVI Veku," 79-80, 91-93, 99.

[314] Zlatar, "O Nekim Muslimanskim Feudalnim Porodicama u Bosni u XV i XVI Stoljeću," 130; Popović, "Spisak Hercegovačkih Namesnika u XVI Veku," 97; Samardžić, Mehmed Sokolović, 158-159; Popović, "Upravna Organizacija Hercegovačkog Sandžaka u XVI Veku," 105; Necipoğlu, "Connectivity, Mobility, and Mediterranean 'Portable Archaeology': Pashas from the Dalmatian Hinterland as Cultural Mediators," 313-330; Zlatar and Pelidija, "Prilog Kulturnoj Istoriji Pljevalja Osmanskom Perioda - Zadužbine Husein-paše Boljanića," 118-121; Pelidija and Zlatar, *Pljevlja i Okolina u Prvim Stoljećima Osmansko-Turske Vlasti*, 25-26;

[315] Buturović, *Carved in Stone, Etched in Memory: Death, Tombstones and Commemoration in Bosnian Islam since c. 1500*, 19-20.

Pljevlja, two point of military and commercial importance in the region that reinforced their relationship with Dubrovnik. The great significance of their *vakıf* properties becomes even clearer when considered in the context of the Boljanić family's political and familial network.

iii. *Intisap*: The Boljanićes and the Sokolovićes

In the mid- to late sixteenth century, Mehmed Paşa Sokolović created his *intisap* empire by constructing an expansive and powerful political network made up of protégés whose careers he patronized.[316] The Boljanić brothers were one part of this vast network, benefiting from political clientage (*intisap*), familial, and ethno-regional ties with Mehmed Paşa. The famous grand vizier was born just twenty miles to the northeast of the brothers' base in Boljanići. Some have speculated that he knew and helped the family's patriarch, Bayram Ağa.[317] Kara Sinan Beg's wife, the aforementioned Şemsa Kadın, was Mehmed Paşa's sister. There were clear kinship and ethno-regional ties between the two families, and Mehmed Paşa's patronage (*intisap*) was essential to the political careers of both brothers.

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[316] Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual in the Ottoman Empire: The Historian Mustafa Ali (1541-1600),* 46-48; Pedani, "Safiye's Household and Venetian Diplomacy," 9-32.

[317] Mehmed Paşa Sokolović was born in the village of Sokolovići; Zlatar, "O Nekim Muslimanskim Feudalnim Porodicama u Bosni u XV i XVI Stoljeću," 89, 112; Müvekkit, *Tarih-i Bosna – Povijest Bosne*, 146; Peçevi, *Peçevi Tarihi I*, 7, 19-22; Machiel Kiel, *Studies on the Ottoman Architecture of the Balkans* (Aldershot, Hampshire: Variorum, 1990), 65; Zlatar and Pelidija, "Prilog Kulturnoj Istoriji Pljevalja Osmanskom Perioda - Zadužbine Husein-paše Boljanića," 116.

It is unclear how early Kara Sinan Beg became Mehmed Paşa's protégé. His career likely began when he was recruited into the *devşirme* as a *Poturnak oğlanı* and educated in the imperial palace schools of Istanbul. Some sources claim that, despite his poor looks, his modesty and industriousness caught the eye of Mehmed Paşa. At some point, he became not only his political patron but also his brother-in-law.[318]

The circumstances are clearer when it comes to Hüseyin Paşa, who had a more successful and illustrious political career than his older brother. James D. Tracy has cited anecdotal evidence that Mehmed Paşa was displeased with Kara Sinan Beg's lack of political ambition, which he demonstrated by electing to remain in Hercegovina for most of his career.[319] It is possible that Mehmed Paşa pinned his hopes on the younger, perhaps more ambitious, Hüseyin Paşa. Peçevi confirms this, writing that "…*Sadrazam Mehmed Paşa merhume intisap ile beglerbegisi olmuş idi*…"[320] After graduating from the imperial palace, Hüseyin Paşa ontinued to benefit from Mehmed Paşa's patronage. Even after his patron's assassination in 1579, Hüseyin Paşa remained connected to the Sokolović family. After he

[318] Zlatar, "O Nekim Muslimanskim Feudalnim Porodicama u Bosni u XV i XVI Stoljeću," 89, 112; Müvekkit, *Tarih-i Bosna – Povijest Bosne*, 146; Peçevi, *Peçevi Tarihi I*, 7, 19-22; Zlatar and Pelidija, "Prilog Kulturnoj Istoriji Pljevalja Osmanskom Perioda - Zadužbine Husein-paše Boljanića," 116.

[319] James D. Tracy, *Balkans Wars: Habsburg Croatia, Ottoman Bosnia, and Venetian Dalmatia, 1499-1617* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefied, 2016), 235.

[320] Peçevî, *Tarîh-i Peçevî*, 444; Peçevi, *Historija 1520-1572*, Book 1, 363-364; Peçevi, *Peçevi Tarihi I*, 310; "…*with the aid of the late grand vizier Mehmed Paşa, he became a governor-general*…"

was removed from the post of *beglerbegi* of Bosnia in 1595, he went to Budin to fight alongside Lala Mehmed Paşa Sokolović (d. 1604), Ali Beg Sokolović, and Ibrahim Peçevi.[321]

The careers of *Poturnak oğlanları* such as Kara Sinan Beg and Hüseyin Paşa Boljanić demonstrate the importance of ethno-regional, familial, and political clientage ties (*intisap*) in Ottoman politics in the mid- to late sixteenth century. The brothers were part of a larger group of Bosnian and Hercegovinian statesmen who dominated Ottoman politics during this time. They owed their political success at least partially to the patronage of the powerful Mehmed Paşa Sokolović.[322] The practice of accepting *Poturnak oğlanları* as a specialized and voluntary *devşirme* predated and outlasted him, but he was certainly connected to it throughout his political career. The next section of this chapter is devoted to other prominent Bosnian and Hercegovinian statesmen, likely *Poturnak oğlanları*, who also dominated the Ottoman political landscape in the mid- to late sixteenth century.

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[321] Zlatar and Pelidija, "Prilog Kulturnoj Istoriji Pljevalja Osmanskom Perioda - Zadužbine Husein-paše Boljanića," 117-118; Popović, Spisak Hercegovačkih Namesnika u XVI Veku," 97; Pelidija and Zlatar, *Pljevlja i Okolina u Prvim Stoljećima Osmansko-Turske Vlasti*, 23-26; Peçevi, *Historija 1520-1572*, Book 1, 5-6, 23, 363-364; Peçevi, *Peçevi Tarihi I*, 8, 310-311; Peçevî, *Tarîh-i Peçevî*, 443.

[322] Pedani, "Safiye's Household and Venetian Diplomacy," 9-32; Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual in the Ottoman Empire: The Historian Mustafa Ali (1541-1600)*, 46-48; There are a number of other sixteenth-century records that mention more anonymous *Poturnak*s or *Poturnak oğlanları* from the *sancak* of Hercegovina. One example is a *ferman* from the year 1559 demanding the capture of a Potur Ali, who had been selling citizens of Dubrovnik into slavery illegally, see HR-DAD, Fermani 5, no. 217 (12-21 Şaban 966/19-28 May 1559) and HR-DAD, Fermani 5, no. 218 (2-11 Zilkade 966/5-14 August 1559).

iv. Prominent Bosnian and Hercegovinian *Poturnak Oğlanları*

There are many examples of *kapı kulları* from the *sancak*s of Bosnia and Hercegovina who came to prominence in the Ottoman state in the mid- to late sixteenth century. These individuals have yet to be identified as *Poturnak oğlanları*, but they share many similarities with the Boljanić brothers. One example is the Bosnian Haci Mustafa Ağa, the son of a Mehmed Beg from Varcar Vakuf (Mrkonjić Grad, Bosnia). While serving with a Bosnian contingent in Yemen around 1560, Mustafa forged a connection with and joined the household of the Bosnian governor, Mahmud Paşa. Years later, Mahmud Paşa helped place Mustafa in the palace corps of the white eunuchs. The latter clearly benefitted from ethno-regional and clientage (*intisap*) ties with the former. He eventually worked his way up to the position of Chief Harem Eunuch (*darüssaade ağası)*, becoming one of only two white Chief Harem Eunuchs between 1593 and 1623. Due to his failing health, he retired to Bosnia and obtained a *mülkname* (grant of land ownership) from Murad III (r. 1574-1595) for his hometown of Varcar Vakuf. He endowed a number of properties there in 1591 and 1595.[323]

Another example is Derviş Paşa Mostarac (d. 1603), the son of a Bayezid Ağa from Mostar. Derviş Paşa was mentioned in the previous chapter as a political ally and protector of

[323] Fajić, "Popis Vakufnama iz Bosne i Hercegovine Koje se Nalaze u Gazi Husrevbegovoj Biblioteci u Sarajevu," 267; Bašagić, *Znameniti Hrvati, Bošnjaci i Hercegovci u Turskoj Carevini*, 53; Pedani, "Safiye's Household and Venetian Diplomacy," 9-32; Mustafa Efendi Selânikî, *Tarih-i Selânikî*, vol. 1, 281; idem, *Tarih-i Selânikî*, vol. 2 (1003-1008/1595-1600), trans. Mehmet İpşirli (Istanbul: Edebiyat Fakültesi Basımevi, 1989), 568; He was also known as Beyazı Mustafa Ağa. I would like to thank Prof. Jane Hathaway for bringing this and other details regarding his career to my attention.

Hasan Paşa Predojević. After coming to Istanbul as an *acemi oğlan*, likely a *Poturnak oğlanı*, he served as *doğancıbaşı* (chief falconer) in 1587. By 1592, on account of being one of Murad III's favorites, he obtained the position of *musahib-i hass* (sultan's boon companion). After Murad III's death in 1595, he campaigned on the northwestern frontier and served as the *beglerbegi* of Bosnia numerous times. In 1593 and 1602, in his native Mostar, he endowed a number of stunning *vakıf* properties such as a mosque, *mekteb*, *medrese*, and a library with a number of manuscripts and collections of his own poetry.[324]

These are just a few individuals, notable *Poturnak oğlanları*, who made up the Bosnian and Hercegovinian contingent of statesmen who dominated Ottoman politics in the mid- to late sixteenth century. Their stories demonstrate how they benefited from familial, ethno-regional, and political clientage (*intisap*) ties with one another, as well as how *Poturnak oğlanları* fit within this larger narrative. The next section of this chapter is devoted to the effects of the influx of Bosnian and Hercegovinian *kapı kulları* into the Ottoman elite.

IV. The Rumelian Monopoly

The overall effect of the influx of Bosnians and Hercegovinians into the Ottoman state over the sixteenth century is difficult to gauge. It occurred in the larger context of a

[324] Müvekkit, *Tarih-i Bosna – Povijest Bosne*, 177-181, 225, 231; Bašagić, *Znameniti Hrvati, Bošnjaci i Hercegovci u Turskoj Carevini*, 17; Fajić, "Popis Vakufnama iz Bosne i Hercegovine Koje se Nalaze u Gazi Husrevbegovoj Biblioteci u Sarajevu," 256; Mujić, "Neke Vakuf-name iz Bosne i Hercegovine (15. – 17. Stoljeće): Forma, Jezik i Stil," 19-21; Hasandedić, "Hercegovački Vakufi i Vakifi," 32.

Rumelian monopoly on Ottoman politics. What did it mean to be Rumelian in the mid- to late sixteenth century? In the pre-Ottoman period, the term *Rum* referred to the Byzantine Empire, the successor of the Roman Empire in the east. As such, it denoted the Greek-speaking, Orthodox Christian peoples of Asia Minor. This meaning shifted somewhat in the Ottoman period. Geographically, it shifted westward, referring to the Ottoman heartland in western Anatolia, especially Istanbul, and the Ottoman Balkans. In fact, Rumelia was the name given to the Ottoman super-province that covered most of the Balkan Peninsula. Therefore, in the mid- to late sixteenth century, being Rumelian meant originating from either the Ottoman Balkans, Bosnia and Hercegovina included, or western Anatolia. Generally speaking, it meant being from the western parts of the Ottoman Empire.[325]

Numerous Ottoman writers of the sixteenth century lauded these westerners (*Rum*, Rumelians) and set them apart from the rest of the sultan's subjects. In his *Heşt Bihişt*, Idris Bitlisi writes that of all the northern lands, Rumelia and western Europe are the most beautiful. Their inhabitants are mild, wise, and cultured, and Rumelia is unparalleled and revered. He also heaps praise on the *sancak* of Bosnia, writing that it is prosperous and progressive, and that slaves from this region are especially coveted for their all-around

[325] Jane Hathaway, "The Evlâd-i 'Arab ('Sons of the Arabs') in Ottoman Egypt: A Rereading," in *Frontiers of Ottoman Studies: State, Province, and the West*, eds. Colin Imber and Keiko Kiyotaki (London: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd, 2005), 203-216; eadem, "The 'Mamluk Breaker' Who Was Really a Kul Breaker: A Fresh Look at Kul Kıran Mehmed Pasha, Governor of Egypt 1607-1611," in *The Arab Lands in the Ottoman Era: Essays in Honor of Caesar Farah*, ed. Jane Hathaway (Minneapolis, MN: Center for Early Modern History, University of Minnesota, 2009), 93-109.

beauty. He was not alone in this overwhelming praise. A sort of reverent mythology about westerners developed in the sixteenth century.[326]

Rather than simply revering westerners over others, Ottoman writers juxtaposed them with other population groups and placed them in direct opposition to these others. They focused increasingly on the ethno-regional origins (*cins*) of the Ottoman elite, approaching *cins* as a natural feature of Ottoman society.[327] Some *cinsler* were praised while others were criticized. Westerners were usually presented as superior to easterners, people from the empire's Asiatic and North African provinces, Safavid territory and the Safavid-Ottoman borderlands, and Central Asia. Preference for westerners was often expressed in opposition to other groups such as Arabs, Persians, Kurds, Jews, Romas, Georgians, Daylamis, and Turks. In this context, "Turk" referred to the largely Muslim and Turcophone population of rural eastern Anatolia.[328]

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[326] Trako, "Pretkosovski Događaji u Hešt Bihiştu Idris Bitlisija," 191; idem, "Bitlisijev Opis Balkanskog Poluostrva," 209-218; Buzov, "Ottoman Perceptions of Bosnia as Reflected in the Works of Ottoman Authors Who Visited or Lived in Bosnia," 83-92; Uriel Heyd, *Ottoman Documents on Palestine, 1552-1615: A Study of the Firman according to the Mühimme Defteri* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960), 68-69, Plate III; Hathaway, "The Evlâd-i 'Arab ('Sons of the Arabs') in Ottoman Egypt: A Rereading," 203-216; idem, "The "Mamluk Breaker" Who Was Really a Kul Breaker: A Fresh Look at Kul Kıran Mehmed Pasha, Governor of Egypt 1607-1611," 93-109.

[327] Moačanin, "Defterology and Mythology: Ottoman Bosnia up the Tanzîmât," 190; Shaw, "The Ottoman View of the Balkans," 62; For a detailed discussion of *cins*, see "Ethnic-Regional (Cins) Solidarity in the Seventeenth-Century Ottoman Establishment," 233-239.

[328] Matkovski, "Prilog Pitanju Devširme," 276; Ménage, "Devshirme;" Fisher, et al., "Topkapı Sarayı in the Mid-Seventeenth Century: Bobovi's Description," 30; Akgündüz, *II. Osman Devri Siyâsetnâmeleri ve Kanunnâmeleri*, 599, 603, 625; Çerçi, *Gelibolulu Mustafa Âlî ve Künhü'l-Ahbâr'ında II. Selim, III. Murat ve III. Mehmet Devirleri,* vol. 1, 135; Mustafa Ali, *Mustafā Ali's Counsel for Sultans of 1581 (I): Edition, Translation, Notes*, 63; Hathaway, "The Evlâd-i 'Arab ('Sons of the Arabs') in Ottoman Egypt: A Rereading," 203-216; eadem, "The 'Mamluk Breaker' Who Was Really a Kul Breaker: A Fresh Look at Kul Kıran Mehmed Pasha,

At the start of the seventeenth century, the author of *The Laws of the Janissaries* railed against the acceptance of Turks into Ottoman state service. He writes that Turkish youth, whether *kafir*s (unbelievers, non-Muslims) or otherwise, whether they speak Turkish or not, are neither trustworthy nor pious. He adds that the majority of them are merciless, lacking in faith, and undisciplined. Moreover, recognizing that family members sometimes follow recruits into service, he writes that if Turks enter the sultan's service, their followers and relatives are bound to cling to them.[329] Ultimately, they will bring hardship and affliction to the entirety of the empire, especially because they shirk paying taxes.[330] In 1623, Aziz Efendi, a scribe of the imperial council (*divan katibi*) and a self-professed distinguished veteran of the sultan's service, wrote an advice manual recommending state reform. In it, he laments that the imperial palaces are filled with undesirable types and urges that they be replaced with Albanians, Bosnians, and people of slave origin (…*kanun-i kadim üzere Arnavud ve Bosna ve kul cinsi konulmak gerektir*…).[331]

Governor of Egypt 1607-1611," 93-109; Suraiya Faroqhi, comment on Rhoads Murphey, "Evolving Versus Static Elements in Ottoman Geographical Writing between 1598 and 1729: Perceptions, Perspectives and Real-Life Experience of 'The Northern Lands' (Taraf al-Shımali) Over 130 Years," in *Ottoman Bosnia: A History in Peril*, eds. Markus Koller and Kemal H. Karpat (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004), 73-82, 147-148.

[329] This is a very telling critique given that it was often levied in the other direction, against Rumelian recruits themselves.

[330] Akgündüz, *Osmanlı Kanunnâmeleri ve Hukûkî Tahlilleri,* IX. Kitap: *I. Ahmed, I. Mustafa ve II. Osman Devirleri Kanunnâmeleri (1012/1603-1031/1622)*, 137-138.

[331] Aziz Efendi, *Kanûn-nâme-i Sultânî li 'Azîz Efendi - Aziz Efendi's Book of Sultanic Law and Regulations: An Agenda for Reform by a Seventeenth-Century Ottoman Statesman*, trans. Rhoads Murphey (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), 6-8, 29-31. *Kul cinsi* here probably refers to Christian converts as opposed to Muslim-born Albanians or Bosnians.

This antagonism between the westerners and easterners of the Ottoman Empire was connected to the *devşirme*, and by extension, the influx of Bosnians and Hercegovinians into the Ottoman state. Throughout the sixteenth century, westerners dominated the Ottoman establishment. Their monopoly was enabled by the *devşirme* and the other points of entry into Ottoman service discussed in this chapter. By all accounts, the *devşirme* was levied exclusively in western Anatolia and the Balkans, so these regions became the primary sources of manpower for the Ottoman state, the very backbone of the empire. Products of the *devşirme*, predominantly westerners, became the elite slaves of the sultan and monopolized key palace offices, the palace soldiery, and provincial governorships.[332]

Süleyman I (r. 1520-1566) certainly seems to have preferred the *devşirme* element among his elite, most of whom hailed from the western Balkans. He was even fluent in Bosnian.[333] This chapter has cited numerous influential Bosnian and Hercegovinian statesmen of *devşirme* or *Poturnak oğlanı* origin who dominated Ottoman politics and patronized other westerners. This continued well into the seventeenth century. Handan Sultan (d. 1605), the concubine of Mehmed III (r. 1595-1603) and mother and *de facto* regent

[332] Hathaway, "The Evlâd-i 'Arab ('Sons of the Arabs') in Ottoman Egypt: A Rereading," 203-216; idem, "The "Mamluk Breaker" Who Was Really a Kul Breaker: A Fresh Look at Kul Kıran Mehmed Pasha, Governor of Egypt 1607-1611," 93-109.

[333] İnalcık, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age, 1300-1600*, 80; Atıl, *Süleymanname: The Illustrated History of Süleyman the Magnificent*, 94-95; Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300-1650: The Structure of Power*, 164; Kreševljaković, *Rustem-paša, Veliki Vezir Sulejmana I*, 272-273; Bosworth, *The Ghaznavids: Their Empire in Afghanistan and Eastern Iran 994:1040*, 99.

of Ahmed I (r. 1603-1617), was Bosnian and patronized Bosnians within the imperial palace and among the Ottoman elite.[334]

I suggest that much of the reverent mythology about westerners that developed in the sixteenth century was self-generated and reflected the Rumelian monopoly of Ottoman political offices. Many of the writers who praised westerners were either westerners themselves or were connected to political networks and patrons of western origin. Self-propagandizing aside, this mythology was resilient and must have permeated the consciousness of the Ottoman elite to some extent. We even find traces of it in the early nineteenth century.[335]

However, the mythology did not go unchallenged. In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, the Ottoman state faced a multi-pronged, empire-wide crisis that will be taken up in the next section of this chapter. One hallmark of this crisis was military rebellions led by *kullar* of western and *devşirme* origin that were aimed at the Ottoman court. In response, rival factions within the elite began to criticize, and later to denounce, the rebellious *kullar*. There seems to have been a growing sense that the *kullar* had

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[334] Handan Sultan was never promoted to the status of *haseki*, the sultan's favorite concubine; Leslie Peirce, *The Imperial Harem: Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 126-127, 198, 212-218, 237, 243, 288, 311, 332-333; Günhan Börekçi, "Ahmed I," *Encyclopedia of the Ottoman Empire*, eds. Gábor Ágoston and Bruce Masters (New York: Facts on File, Inc., 2009), 22-23; Günhan Börekçi, "Smallpox in the Harem: Communicable Diseases and the Ottoman Fear of Dynastic Extinction during the Early Sultanate of Ahmed I (r. 1603-17)," in *Plague and Contagion in the Islamic Mediterranean: New Histories of Disease in Ottoman Society*, ed. Nükhet Varlık (Kalamazoo, MI: ARC Humanities Press, 2017), 135-152.

[335] Aličić, *Pokret za Autonomiju Bosne od 1831. do 1832. Godine*, 162-167.

overstepped their authority and become uncontrollable. The next section of this chapter is devoted to that subject.

V. Challenges to the Rumelian Monopoly

A major harbinger of the crisis came late in 1593, when the peace between the Habsburgs and the Ottomans broke down following the death in battle of the *beglerbegi* (governor-general) of Bosnia, Hasan Paşa Predojević. After increasing raids on both sides of the Ottoman-Habsburg border, in June of 1593, Hasan Paşa led an offensive against the fortress of Sisak (Sziszek, Siska). The Habsburgs mounted a counteroffensive, and Hasan Paşa perished in the battle that ensued. His death prompted an Ottoman declaration of war and the start of the Long War (Thirteen Years' War, 1593-1606).[336] This war came on the heels of a decade-long conflict with the Safavids. By 1590, the Ottomans had emerged victorious and enlarged their territory in the northeast, but the military was exhausted from the long years of fighting and averse to a new war on a completely different front.[337]

At the same time, the state had to contend with the Celali rebellions, a series of uprisings led by armed peasant mercenaries (*sekban*s) raised as irregular infantry to supplement the Janissaries in the Long War. When these mercenaries were released from

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[336] Ibrahim Alajbegović Pećevija (Peçevi), *Historija 1520-1572*, Book 2, 105; Bašagić, *Znameniti Hrvati, Bošnjaci i Hercegovci u Turskoj Carevini*, 17, 24-25; Naîmâ Mustafa Efendi (Naima), *Târih-i Na'îmâ* (*Ravzatü'l-Hüseyn fî Hulâsati Ahbâri'l-Hâfikayn*), 52-53, 60-63; Hasandedić, *Muslimanska Baština u Istočnoj Hercegovini*, 167-171.

[337] Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300-1650: The Structure of Power*, 66-71.

military duty and returned to rural Anatolia, they confronted a society buffeted by rampant inflation and a landscape ravaged by drought – both the results of worldwide demographic, economic, and environmental change. Faced with bleak prospects, they turned to brigandage and, in many cases, joined bands led by mercenary strongmen. In some cases, these strongmen were actual provincial governors who began to style themselves as alternatives to the Ottoman sultan. The Celalis posed a serious threat to the imperial order before the Ottoman central authority managed to tamp down the rebellions in the 1610s.[338]

The imperial Janissaries and cavalry (*sipahi*s), who consisted largely of *kullar* recruited through the *devşirme*, likewise suffered from the impact of galloping inflation combined with seemingly endless warfare. During these years, they received their salaries from the imperial treasury either late or in debased coinage, sometimes both. Meanwhile, the purchasing power of their salaries plummeted. Financial woes, endless warfare, and specific political grievances led to violent, *kullar*-led rebellions among the imperial soldiery.[339] The

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[338] Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300-1650: The Structure of Power*, 66-76; Pećevija (Peçevi), *Historija 1520-1572*, Book 2, 105; Bašagić, *Znameniti Hrvati, Bošnjaci i Hercegovci u Turskoj Carevini*, 17, 24-25; Naîmâ, *Târih-i Na'îmâ* (*Ravzatü'l-Hüseyn fî Hulâsati Ahbâri'l-Hâfikayn*), 52-53, 60-63; Stanford J. Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey,* vol. 1 (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 184; İnalcık, *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1300-1914*, xx-xxi, 414-419; Sam White, *The Climate of Rebellion in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 90, 144-145; Hathaway, *The Arab Lands under Ottoman Rule, 1516-1800*, 62-67; Baki Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire: Political and Social Transformation in the Early Modern World* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 65, 141-151; Günhan Börekçi, "Factions and Favorites at the Courts of Sultan Ahmed I (r. 1603-1617) and His Immediate Predecessors," (PhD diss., The Ohio State University, 2010), 25-76, 148-197.

[339] Şevket Pamuk, *A Monetary History of the Ottoman Empire* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 11-47, 58-67, 74-95, 126-161; Ömer Lütfi Barkan, "The Price Revolution of the Sixteenth Century: A Turning Point in the Economic History of the Near East," trans. Justin McCarthy, *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 6 (1975): 4-23; Huri Islamoğlu-Inan and Çağlar Keyder, "Agenda for Ottoman History," in

rebellions were directed at the Ottoman court and often targeted court officials and factions accused of corruption, hoarding, or leading the sultan astray in political and military matters.[340]

The imperial soldiery, both Janissaries and cavalry, staged rebellions in 1589, 1591, 1593, 1595, 1600, 1601, and 1603. In 1589, the cavalry troops forced Murad III (r. 1574-1595) to execute Mehmed Paşa, his vizier and favorite companion (*musahib-i hass*). In 1591, the Janissaries attacked the brother of Canfeda Hatun, the steward of the harem (*kethüda hatun*) and a very influential courtier. In 1593, the cavalry troops forced the sultan to replace his grand vizier, Kaniyeli Siyavuş Paşa (terms 1582-1584, 1586-1589, 1592-1593), with Sinan Paşa, a vizier they favored. In 1595, the same cavalry troops rebelled in order to retain Sinan Paşa as grand vizier upon the accession of Mehmed III (r. 1595-1603). In March 1600, the

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The Ottoman Empire and the World-Economy, ed. Huri Islamoğlu-Inan (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 52; Relli Shechter, "Market Welfare in the Early-Modern Ottoman Economy: A Historiographic Overview with Many Questions," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 48, no. 2 (2005): 254-60; Immanual Wallerstein, Hale Decdeli, and Reşat Kasaba, "The Incorporation of the Ottoman Empire into the World Economy," in *The Ottoman Empire and the World-Economy*, ed. Huri Islamoğlu-Inan (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 90; Inalcık, *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire,1300-1914*, 48-52, 98-100, 333, 345, 359, 375, 968-970; Baki Tezcan, "The Ottoman Monetary Crisis of 1585 Revisited," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 52 (2009): 460-501; Dennis O. Flynn and Arturo Giráldez, "Cycles of Silver: Global Economic Unity through the Mid-Eighteenth Century," *Journal of World History* 13, no. 2 (2002): 391-427; Reşat Kasaba, *The Ottoman Empire and the World Economy: The Nineteenth Century (*Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988), 11-12; Darling, *Revenue-Raising and Legitimacy: Tax Collection and Finance Administration in the Ottoman Empire, 1560-1660,* 38-45, 99-100; Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire: Political and Social Transformation in the Early Modern World*, 11, 141-150, 179-189; Hathaway, *The Arab Lands under Ottoman Rule, 1516-1800*, 62-67.

[340] Jane Hathaway, "Introduction," in *Mutiny and Rebellion in the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Jane Hathaway (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2002), 7-10; 23; Hathaway, *The Arab Lands under Ottoman Rule, 1516-1800*, 62-67; Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire: Political and Social Transformation in the Early Modern World*, 65, 100-107, 175, 182; Börekçi, "Factions and Favorites at the Courts of Sultan Ahmed I (r. 1603-1617) and His Immediate Predecessors," 25-76, 148-197.

cavalry troops lynched Queen Mother Safiye's *kira*, the Jewish merchant woman who supplied luxury goods to the harem, and one of her sons, believing that their salaries had been paid with debased coins from the *kira*'s tax farms. The troops also demanded the executions of the *bostancıbaşı* (chief gardener) and another of Safiye's protégés, the Chief White Eunuch, Gazanfer Ağa. In 1601, the cavalry troops rebelled again, renewing their request for Gazanfer Ağa's execution. This time, they threatened the sultan with deposition. They were ultimately placated with the dismissal of the *bostancıbaşı*. Finally, in January 1603, the cavalry troops combined with the Janissaries to force Mehmed III to execute both Gazanfer Ağa and the Chief Harem Eunuch on the grounds that the two eunuchs had misnformed the sultan about the gravity of the Celali rebellions and had dissuaded him from acting.[341] In each of these cases, the *kullar* targeted one or more influential members of the Ottoman court and aired both political and economic grievances.

As noted by Baki Tezcan, Gabriel Piterberg, and others, these violent *kullar*-led rebellions demonstrated that the *kullar* had become a powerful political pressure group. They responded to constraints on their livelihoods resulting from the general crisis by

[341] Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire: Political and Social Transformation in the Early Modern World*, 65-68, 101-104, 175, 183-188; Pedani, "Safiye's Household and Venetian Diplomacy," 22-27; Börekçi, "Factions and Favorites at the Courts of Sultan Ahmed I (r. 1603-1617) and His Immediate Predecessors," 25-76, 148-197; Kunt, *The Sultan's Servants: The Transformation of Ottoman Provincial Government, 1550-1650,* 76-97; Gabriel Piterberg, *An Ottoman Tragedy: History and Historiography at Play* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003), 21-23, 149-150.

regularly flexing their muscles and baring their teeth.[342] As a result, they posed a threat not just to particular officials but to the sultan himself. They had, in short, become a problem for the Ottoman state.

i. The *Kul* Problem

Some critics admonished the *kullar*, and above all the imperial cavalry, for failing to perform their military duties while continuing to exact privileges. Others complained about their habit of bringing followers and relatives into Ottoman service, a sixteenth-century phenomenon made plain in this chapter. In fact, this seems to have been a point of contention among a few critics. Mustafa Ali (1541-1600) blames the late sixteenth and early seventeenth-century *kullar* rebellions on those who joined the imperial cavalry regiments via connections with high-ranking administrators and grandees. The late sixteenth-century Ottoman historian Mustafa Selaniki confirms that it was the followers of particular viziers among the cavalry corps who caused the unrest. In other words, the followers of the *kullar*, likely the protégés whom they brought into service and who formed their political networks, were perceived as part of the problem.[343]

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[342] Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire: Political and Social Transformation in the Early Modern World*, 100-107, 175, 182.

[343] Kunt, *The Sultan's Servants: The Transformation of Ottoman Provincial Government, 1550-1650,* 79; Markus Koller, "Introduction: An Approach to Bosnian History," in *Ottoman Bosnia: A History in Peril*, eds. Markus Koller and Kemal H. Karpat (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004), 17; Smail Balić, "Ottoman Bosnia in Vienna: Records of the Bosniacs in the Latest Catalogue of the Austrian National Library," in *Ottoman Bosnia: A History in Peril*, eds. Markus Koller and Kemal H. Karpat (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press,

This discussion of *kullar* followers resonated with the increasing focus on the ethno-regional composition of the Ottoman elite. Certain critics focused pointedly on the subject of *cins*. Mustafa Ali believed that *cins*-based cliques hindered the functioning of the state and threatened its very existence. Though he was generally well-disposed towards Bosnians, if only because one of his patrons originated in the *sancak*, he nevertheless criticized the Bosnian *cins* for being clique-oriented.[344] The implication is that Bosnians patronized other Bosnians and stuck together, another sixteenth-century phenomenon made plain in this chapter. Though he showers the Bosnians with praise and chalks their brilliance up to nothing short of divine intervention, he groups them with the Albanians, of whom he is brutally critical. He accuses the Albanians of being particularly clique-oriented and equates this with primitiveness, criticizing their allegiance to their clans as opposed to the Ottoman state. Despite his overwhelming praise of Bosnians, he remarks that they also tend towards *cins*-based loyalties. Mustafa Ali was surely responding to the formation of *cins*-based interest groups among the Ottoman elite during his time. Those who hailed from the same

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2004), 55; İnalcık, *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1300-1914*, 23; Gelibolulu Mustafa ʿAli, *Mevâʿidüʾn-Nefāis Fî-kavâʿıdiʾl-Mecâlis*, trans. Mehmet Şeker (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1997), 154-158; Hathaway, *The Arab Lands under Ottoman Rule, 1516-1800*, 65; Mustafa Ali, *Mustafā Ali's Counsel for Sultans of 1581 (II): Edition, Translation, Notes*, 39-61; Barkan, "Price Revolution of the Sixteenth Century: A Turning Point in the Economic History of the Near East," 19; Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire: Political and Social Transformation in the Early Modern World*, 183.

[344] Mustafa Ali's foremost patron was the Bosnian Lala Kara Mustafa Paşa Sokolović (d. 1580). However, he had others over the course of his career. One notable patron was the Venetian *kapı ağası* (Chief of the White Eunuchs) Gazanfer Ağa (d. 1603). Gazanfer Ağa was a member of the powerful court faction of Safiye Sultan, the favorite of Murad III (r. 1574-1595) and mother of Mehmed III (r. 1595-1603). For more information, see Pedani, "Safiye's Household and Venetian Diplomacy," 9-32; Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual in the Ottoman Empire: The Historian Mustafa Ali (1541-1600)*, 39-72, 84-87, 110-114, 125-126, 130, 150-182; Mustafa Ali, *Mustafā Ali's Counsel for Sultans of 1581 (I): Edition, Translation, Notes*, 7.

region and shared languages and customs, and sometimes kinship ties, established *intisap* and shared political networks.[345] This was apparently one facet of the *kul* problem.

However, discomfort with the *kullar* went beyond indignation at their rebellious followers and cliques. There seems to have been a growing sense of unease with the *devşirme*, the source of all these Rumelian *kullar*. Nonetheless, we have no explicit condemnations of the *devşirme* from contemporary Ottoman writers save one, Mustafa Ali. He is the only known author of his time who openly criticized the institution and questioned its legality. In his work, he objects to those in charge of the levy, noting their brutishness and lack of adherence to the laws regulating the institution. He also notes that the *devşirme* is inconsistent with holy law (*şeriat*) and was adopted in the past only for the purpose of Islamization. However, instead of calling for its abolition, he merely recommends that it be implemented by local personnel instead.[346] It is difficult to tell whether Mustafa Ali was straddling the line in order not to offend any of his patrons, some of whom were products of the *devşirme*, or whether he really was ambivalent about the institution. He does not suggest abolishing it, but at the same time, he condemns it as illegal and implies that it was brutish and arcane. I suggest that his appraisal betrays a more general ambivalence towards the

[345] Buzov, "Ottoman Perceptions of Bosnia as Reflected in the Works of Ottoman Authors Who Visited or Lived in Bosnia," 83-92; Mustafa Ali, *Mustafa Ali's Counsel for Sultans of 1581 (I): Edition, Translation, Notes*, 7; idem, *Mustafa Ali's Counsel for Sultans of 1581 (II): Edition, Translation, Notes*, 50, 59, 70-73, 85; Gelibolulu Mustafa ʿAli, *Mevâʿidü'n-Nefâis Fî-kavâʿıdi'l-Mecâlis*, 284, 320, 341, 368; Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual in the Ottoman Empire: The Historian Mustafa Ali (1541-1600)*, 39-72, 84-87, 110-114, 125-126, 130, 150-182; Kunt, "Ethnic-Regional (Cins) Solidarity in the Seventeenth-Century Ottoman Establishment," 233-239.

[346] Mustafa Ali, *Mustafa Ali's Counsel for Sultans of 1581 (II): Edition, Translation, Notes*, 29-30.

devşirme and its products (and their followers) that may have circulated in some elite Ottoman circles in the late sixteenth century.

An anecdote from a collection of Hanafi *ulema* biographies also hints at ambivalence towards products of the *devşirme* in the late sixteenth century. The biographical collection, *Kata'ib a'lam al-akhyar min fuqaha madhhab al-Nu'man al-mukhtar*, was composed by Mahmud b. Sulayman al-Kaffawi (d. 1582), a native of Kaffa in the Crimea who became a judge in Istanbul in the mid-1500s. In his biography of Molla Fenari, the famous *kadıasker* (military judge) of Rumelia from 1523 to 1537, al-Kaffawi relays an anecdote of a dispute between the judge and Süleyman I's famous grand vizier, the Greek *devşirme* recruit and famous upstart Pargalı Ibrahim Paşa, whom Süleyman promoted directly from the head of the *Hass Oda* to the grand vizierate, an office he held from 1523-1536. After Ibrahim Paşa tried to intervene in a case that Molla Fenari was hearing, the judge told him that his testimony was unacceptable by the terms of the *şeriat* because he was an unmanumitted slave. Even after Süleyman freed Ibrahim, the judge refused to accept his testimony until he (the judge) had drawn up a deed of manumission himself and presented it to the grand vizier in front of the imperial council.[347] R. C. Repp notes that Molla Fenari's actions were intended

[347] R.C. Repp, "Notes and Communications," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies 31*, no. 1 (1968): 137-139.

to humiliate Ibrahim Paşa by reminding him of his origins. More broadly, the anecdote reads as a reminder to *devşirme* upstarts of their humble, slave origins.[348]

ii. A Challenge to *Poturnaks*?

What effect did this ambivalence towards the *kullar*, products of the *devşirme*, have on *Poturnak oğlanları*? A 1585 miscellany (*mecmua*) of indeterminate authorship provides some clues. It relays an apocryphal tale of how, after the Ottoman conquest, the Bosnian peasantry attempted to alleviate their tax burden by arranging for select villagers to convert to Islam, thus attaining tax-exempt status. They were helped by a sympathetic Mesih Paşa who was sent to survey the territory. Though some of these converts became good Muslims, the majority secretly retained their previous faith, incorporating a host of bad habits such as polytheism. The tale identifies these apostates as Poturs, which it defines as "half" (*po*)-"Turk" (*tur*). In sum, according to this account, a "Potur" was a heretical, Bosnian, Christian-Muslim hybrid.[349]

The tale confirms that there were negative stereotypes about *Poturnak*s and *Poturnak oğlanları* circulating in the late sixteenth century. Who was responsible for their circulation,

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[348] Repp, "Notes and Communications," 137-139.

[349] Krstić, "Conversion and Converts to Islam in Ottoman Historiography of the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries," 58-79; Moačanin, "Mass Islamization of Peasants in Bosnia: Demystifications," 356-358; Tursun Beg, *The History of Mehmed the Conqueror*, 64. For a parallel case involving negative stereotypes of Egyptian peasants, see Gabriel Baer, "Fellah and Townsman in Ottoman Egypt: A Study of Shirbīnī's Hazz al-quhūf," *Asian and African Studies Journal of the Israel Oriental Society* 8, no. 3 (1972): 221-256; idem, *Fellah and Townsman in the Middle East: Studies in Social History* (Abingdon, U.K.: Frank Cass and Company Limited, 1982), 1-47.

and why? Some have suggested that the author of the miscellany was a Bosnian native making a joke for native speakers and defending the orthodoxy of the majority of Bosnian Muslims. In other words, the author was mounting a defense in the form of satire. A few elements of the tale support this theory. Firstly, the story about *Poturnak*s is apocryphal and anachronistic. The reference to Mesih Paşa is an especially fitting anachronism given that he was a prominent Byzantine convert with a questionable reputation. Moreover, the division of the term "Potur" does not conform to grammatical standards. It is likely that the author was engaging in wordplay recognizable to native speakers, jokingly modifying the term to call into question the orthodoxy of this particular group.[350]

Tijana Krstić has suggested that the anecdote constitutes humor-laced commentary on developments within the empire at this time, particularly the increasing focus on normative, Sunni Islam as the empire's religious ethos. The focus on orthodoxy and orthopraxy became particularly pronounced during the reign of Murad III (r. 1574-1595), who wanted to be known as and considered himself the *müceddid*, a renewer of the faith who appeared once every one hundred years according to Islamic tradition.[351]

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[350] Krstić, "Conversion and Converts to Islam in Ottoman Historiography of the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries," 58-79; Moačanin, "Mass Islamization of Peasants in Bosnia: Demystifications," 356-358. For a parallel case of ethno-regional self-defense, see Baer, "Fellah and Townsman in Ottoman Egypt: A Study of Shirbīnī's Hazz al-quhūf," 221-256; idem, *Fellah and Townsman in the Middle East: Studies in Social History*, 1-47.

[351] Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual in the Ottoman Empire: The Historian Mustafa Ali (1541-1600),* 112, 151-152; idem, "Ancient Wisdom and New Sciences: Prophecies at the Ottoman Court in the Fifteenth and Early Sixteenth Centuries," in *Falnama: The Book of Omens*, eds. Massumeh Farhad and Serpil Bağcı (Washington, D.C.: Freer Gallery of Art and the Arthur M. Sackler Galley, Smithsonian Institution,

The author may indeed have been defending the genuine religiosity of the majority of Bosnian Muslims. He may have also been making a politically-conscious joke for native speakers. However, it is difficult to ignore the fact that the tale paints all Bosnians in a negative light. It implies that their initial conversion to Islam was entirely motivated by their desire to avoid taxes. Two decades later, the author of *The Laws of the Janissaries* would accuse eastern Anatolian Turks of entering Ottoman service for the same purpose.[352] The tale implies that the Bosnians, even those who became good Muslims, were opportunists from the very start. It hints at an anti-Bosnian agenda. The author may have been a member of a rival *cins*-based faction, or was simply lamenting the predominance of Bosnians and Hercegovinians among the Ottoman elite. The miscellany attests to some antagonism towards *Poturnak*s and *Poturnak oğlanları*, possibly as extensions of the *kullar* and the *devşirme*.

2009), 231-243; Emine Fetvacı, *Picturing History at the Ottoman Court* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 43; Krstić, "Conversion and Converts to Islam in Ottoman Historiography of the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries," 58-79; Moačanin, "Mass Islamization of Peasants in Bosnia: Demystifications," 356-358; Baer, "Fellah and Townsman in Ottoman Egypt: A Study of Shirbīnī's Hazz al-quhūf," 221-256; idem, *Fellah and Townsman in the Middle East: Studies in Social History*, 1-47; İnalcık, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age, 1300-1600*, 172, 182-185; idem, *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1300-1914*, 20-21; Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds: The Construction of the Ottoman State*, 73, 90-98, 153-155.

[352] Akgündüz, *Osmanlı Kanunnâmeleri ve Hukûkî Tahlilleri,* IX. Kitap: *I. Ahmed, I. Mustafa ve II. Osman Devirleri Kanunnâmeleri (1012/1603-1031/1622)*, 137-138.

VI. Conclusion: (Re)defining the Ottoman Elite

Despite growing discomfort, the mid- to late sixteenth century was a period of ascendancy for those of western and *devşirme* origin, especially high-ranking *kapı kulları* from the *sancak*s of Bosnia and Hercegovina. These *kapı kulları*, some of them *Poturnak oğlanları*, were influential in the growth and elevation of their native regions. They established powerful political networks within the Ottoman state. Perhaps partially through their self-generated mythology, they were able to carve out a space for themselves as well as a lasting legacy within the Ottoman state.

John Haldon has written that Mehmed II (r. 1444-1446, 1451-1481) succeeded in shifting the definition of "Ottoman" from the established Anatolian Turkish begs and the warrior elite who fought with them to the increasingly influential *devşirme* element, which hailed overwhelmingly from the western parts of the Ottoman Empire. According to him, those of *devşirme* origin who entered Ottoman service were "ideologically reconstituted – as 'Ottomans.'"[353] I suggest that this process of reconstitution continued well after Mehmed II's reign, into the sixteenth century. It was partially directed by the *devşirme* element itself, which consolidated its monopoly on the Ottoman elite and state service by producing its own mythology. In other words, this powerful group produced its own hype, reconstituting and portraying themselves as the new and true Ottomans.

[353] Haldon, "The Ottoman State and the Question of State Autonomy: Comparative Perspectives," 55.

The *devşirme* itself was actively portrayed as a foundational Ottoman institution in the sixteenth century. It was prominently depicted in the *Süleymanname* as an integral part of Süleyman I's imperial ethos and image.[354] The *devşirme kanunnamesi* from Süleyman's reign, dated approximately 1536, noted that collecting youth for the Janissary corps from the protected lands of the Ottoman Empire had occurred since ancient times (*kadim-i eyyamdan*) and was a customary practice (*adet-i mu'tad oldu*).[355] In many ways, during the sixteenth century, being Ottoman came to mean either being a product of or being closely associated with products of the *devşirme*.

[354] Atıl, *Süleymanname: The Illustrated History of Süleyman the Magnificent*, 94-95.

[355] *Yeniçeri Oğlanı Cemi Etmek Kanunnamesi (Devşirme Kanunnamesi)*, Beyazit Devlet Kütüphanesi, Veliyuddin Efendi Koleksiyonu MS 1969, fols. 124-127.

CHAPTER 3:
THE RECKONING:
POTURNAK OĞLANLARI AND THE *DEVŞIRME* ESTABLISHMENT IN THE EARLY SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

The *devşirme* continued to function in the seventeenth century. The earliest seventeenth-century levy probably took place in 1601 during the reign of Mehmed III (1595-1603) and the grand vizierate of Damad Ibrahim Paşa (1599-1601), a *kapı kulu* of Bosnian and *devşirme* origin.[356] Another levy was ordered in 1607 and recruited from the *eyalet* (super-province) of Bosnia and the *sancak*s of Skopje (Üsküp), Vučitrn (Vilçtrin/Vulçitrin), and Prizren (Pirzerin).[357] A similar order followed in 1610.[358] In 1622, an order was issued for the *eyalet*s of Rumelia and Bosnia, nearly the entirety of the Balkan Peninsula.[359] This order detailed how the levy was to be enacted, who was to be recruited and in what numbers, how they should be registered and how registers should be kept, and how recruits were to be

[356] Zlatar, "O Nekim Muslimanskim Feudalnim Porodicama u Bosni u XV i XVI Stoljeću," 135; Kiel, "Ottoman Sources for the Demographic History and the Process of Islamization of Bosnia-Hercegovina and Bulgaria in the 15th-17th Centuries: Old Sources – New Methodology," 93; The 1604 *tapu tahrir defteri* (cadastral survey register) for the Bosnian *eyalet* mentions new Muslims but does not use the term *Potur*; see Handžić, *Opširni Popis Bosanskog Sandžaka iz 1604 Godine,* Vol. 1, 2, 3 and 4, 257, 454-464.

[357] As discussed in the previous chapter, the *eyalet* of Bosnia included the *sancak* of Hercegovina and parts of Dalmatia and Slavonia.

[358] Matkovski, "Prilog Pitanju Devširme," 291-292; BOA, Mühimme Defteri 79, no. 236 (Muharrem 1019/April 1610); The 1607 and 1610 records mention that provincial administrators such as *sancakbeg*s and *sipahi*s, along with re'aya, were interfering with the collection.

[359] Matkovski, "Prilog Pitanju Devširme," 292-298; It was addressed to all of the *kadi*s of the two *eyalet*s, including Üsküp, Köstendil, Pirzerin, Elbasan, Delvine, Avlonya, İskenderiye, Ohri, Yanya, Dukagin, Vilçtrin/Vulçitrin, İzvornik, Aştıp, Korice/Korça, Samakov, Astarova, Belgrad, Ergirikasri, Perlepe, İpek, Kırçov, Persepe, Yeni Pazar, Sarıgöl, Taslıca, Foça, Berine, Manastır, İnekale, Mostar, Imotski, Böğürdelen, Göl-i Kostriya, Hurpışta, and Bihlişte; Donald Edgar Pitcher, *An Historical Geography of the Ottoman Empire From Earliest Times of the End of the Sixteenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 1972), 88-93, 137-138, 145-171.

brought to Istanbul. Similar to sixteenth-century orders, it warned against trickery and assured that offenders would be severely punished. Trickery involved taking bribes, exempting eligible villages, and preventing those in charge of the levy from carrying it out. Perhaps more importantly, it included hiding eligible recruits and recruiting the ineligible, notably young men not native to the *eyalet*s of Bosnia and Rumelia. This order presented the levy as an old and established custom.[360] We see many continuities between these seventeenth-century *devşirme* orders and the sixteenth-century orders discussed in the previous chapter.

None of the seventeenth-century orders mentions *Poturnak oğlanları*, yet we have evidence that they continued to be levied. The first piece of evidence is from 1638-1639. Recruits were collected from the *eyalet*s of Bosnia, Rumelia, and Albania, nearly the entirety of the Balkan Peninsula. The order explained that collecting young men from the Christian *re'aya* was long-established custom (*cem' olunmak kanun-i kadim olup*). The time had come to collect suitable, capable, and strong young men between the ages of sixteen and twenty-five (*hizmete layık yarar ve tuvana*). If Albanian and Bosnian Muslims wanted to be recruited of their own will (*Müslüman olup Arnavud ve Boşnak cinsinden kendi ihtiyarile*), provided they were capable and suitable for service in the Janissary corps, they were to be

[360] Matkovski, "Prilog Pitanju Devširme," 292-298, 306; Another Balkan-focused *devşirme* occurred in 1646-1647.

accepted and registered separately.[361] These voluntary local Muslim recruits were clearly *Poturnak oğlanları*.

There are a few additional notes of interest in the order. One is that only suitable, capable, and strong young men should be recruited, and that any conduct contrary to *şeriat* would be dealt with unmercifully. The order was particularly concerned with quality control, reiterating multiple times that only suitable, capable, and strong young men should be chosen for the very important *devşirme* (*devşirme ahvalı emr mühimden*). Another point of interest is that if a young man were to volunteer for recruitment (*kendi ihtiyarile*) and was found suitable, he could be registered. There are no references to religious affiliation, indicating that this was not an exclusively local, Muslim levy. Unlike in the sixteenth century, volunteers seemed to have been accepted more widely. Nevertheless, the order still specified that suitable volunteers between the ages of sixteen and twenty from the Bosnian and Albanian Muslim populations (*hizmete yarar müslüman olandan Arnavud ve Boşnak*) could be recruited and should be registered separately.[362] This indicates that inclusion in the *devşirme* for specific groups of Muslims was still considered a special privilege. An order similar to this one was issued again in 1666. It specified that recruits should be between the

[361] Matkovski, "Prilog Pitanju Devširme," 298-306.
[362] Ibid.

ages of fifteen and twenty, that Bosnian and Albanian Muslim volunteers were acceptable, and that they should be registered separately.[363]

These state records confirm that *Poturnak oğlanları* continued to be included in the *devşirme* in the seventeenth century. However, they do not reveal much about the political and social context in which *devşirme* levies occurred. Literary sources mentioning *Poturnak*s and *Poturnak oğlanları* are more helpful in this regard. The next section of this chapter is devoted to discussing two such literary sources.

I. Bosnevi, Rycaut, and Seventeenth-Century Politics

The term *Potur* is defined in a 1631 Bosnian/Ottoman-Turkish dictionary entitled *Makbul-i 'arif*, or *Potur Şahidi*. This dictionary, the oldest known Bosnian dictionary, was written by Muhammad Üsküfi Bosnevi (pseudonym Hevai), a writer and a poet who composed many famous *kaside*s (odes) and *ilahi*s (hymns). Bosnevi was born in 1601 in Zvornik (present-day Bosnia), but the rest of his early life remains a mystery. Some have suggested that he was an orphan. Others have connected him to the Begovićes of Tuzla (present-day Bosnia), a family of some means and repute. We know for certain that he was a *kapı kulu* in the imperial palace in Istanbul during the reign of Murad IV (1623-1640). Bosnevi reveals this himself but does not specify his position. However, he does mention the *gilman-ı enderun* (recruits of the Inner Palace) in the introduction to his dictionary, listing

[363] Matkovski, "Prilog Pitanju Devširme," 276-277, 307.

them as an inspiration for his work, praising their talents, and noting that some were learned and composed good dictionaries. This is likely a reference to himself, so Bosnevi probably served in the Inner Palace.[364]

Some have suggested that Bosnevi was actually a Janissary and that his nickname came from the cap worn by Janissary officers. Others believe that he was a clerk in the sultan's service and earned his pension as well as his education through this work. Whatever the case may be, Bosnevi emerged from palace service as a learned man with a superb knowledge of Bosnian and Ottoman Turkish, among other languages. After serving for two decades, he received a pension and retired to Bosnia. He settled down in his native Zvornik and began to write various works, one of them being *Makbul-i 'arif*.[365]

The original manuscript of the dictionary has not been found, but numerous copies were made by his students and other readers. The dictionary seems to have been quite popular. Evliya Çelebi even quoted a portion of it in his *Seyahatnamesi*. Bosnevi had originally named the work *Makbul-i 'arif*, meaning, approximately, the treasured possession of the learned man. However, sometime after the dictionary's composition and proliferation, it came to be known colloquially as *Potur Şahidi*. The *Şahidi* portion of the nickname referred to Mevlana Şahidi Ibrahim Dede (1470-1550), a poet and lexicographer from Muğla

[364] Korkut, *Makbûl-i 'Âryf (Potur-Šáhidija) Üsküfî Bosnevija*, 384-385; Mønnesland, "Bosanski Jezik Prije Četiri Stoljeća - Makbul-i Arif," 36; Kasumović, "O Uskufijinu Životu i Stvaralaštvu," 78.

[365] Korkut, *Makbûl-i 'Âryf (Potur-Šáhidija) Üsküfî Bosnevija*, 385-387.

(present-day Turkey) who wrote *Lügat-i Şahidi*, a famous Turkish-Persian dictionary.[366] In the introduction to his dictionary, Bosnevi praised Şahidi as a great inspiration. When *Potur* is added to *Şahidi*, it translates to "Potur, in the style of Şahidi," meaning a *Potur* writing in the style of Şahidi or using Şahidi as an example.[367]

What is the meaning of *Potur* here? Some have argued that the dictionary makes that plain. Bosnevi defines *köy* as *selo* (village) and *potur* as *köylü*, meaning a villager. Therefore, according to some, the dictionary was intended to serve Bosnian country-folk. This is supported by the fact that it was written in clear and simple Ottoman Turkish and Bosnian, without any Arabic or Persian loan-words. It was therefore practical in nature and clearly meant to address the language spoken by country-folk. Others have argued that the purpose of the dictionary was to teach recent converts Turkish, and that the term *Potur* referred to recent converts. Some have gone as far as conflating the term *Potur* with Bosnian and arguing that the nickname translated to, a Bosnian in the style of Şahidi, or the Bosnian Şahidi (Bosanac Šahidija).[368]

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[366] *Şahidi* seems to have been Ibrahim Dede's pen name. It may have denoted that he was someone who witnessed and recorded things, or it could have referred to his handsomeness.

[367] Korkut, *Makbûl-i 'Âryf (Potur-Šáhidija) Üsküfî Bosnevija*, 385-387; Kasumović, "Bosanski Jezik – Kako Su Bosanci Krupna Stasa, Znaj Da Su Im Tako i Rijeci Krupne," 42; Smailovich, "O Uskufijinu Rječniku Maqbuli Arif – Potur Shahidija," 124; Mønnesland, "Bosanski Jezik Prije Četiri Stoljeća - Makbul-i Arif," 23; Sait Okumuş, "Muhammed Hevâî Üsküfî ve Türkçe-Boşnakça Manzum Sözlügü Makbül-i Ârif (Potur Şâhidî)," *Turkish Studies* 4, no. 4 (2009): 826; Mevlana Şahidi Ibrahim Dede wrote his dictionary in 1515.

[368] Korkut, *Makbûl-i 'Âryf (Potur-Šáhidija) Üsküfî Bosnevija*, 401; Nametak, "Tri Rukopisa "Makbuli-Arifa" ("Potur-Shahidije")," 149; Mønnesland, "Bosanski Jezik Prije Četiri Stoljeća - Makbul-i Arif," 34; Smailovich, "O Uskufijinu Rječniku Maqbuli Arif – Potur Shahidija," 104-121-122; Kasumović, "Bosanski Jezik – Kako Su Bosanci Krupna Stasa, Znaj Da Su Im Tako i Rijeci Krupne," 42, 45.

These explanations are all valid, but they fail to take into account the historical context. *Makbul-i 'arif* was written in the Bosnian language but using Arabic script. It is unlikely that recent converts would have been familiar with this script, and even less likely that Bosnian country-folk would have been able to read it. The introduction and epilogue to the work, where most of the information on the author, his motivations, and the work's *ethos* are found, are also in Ottoman Turkish. It is highly unlikely that recent converts or country-folk would have been well-versed in this language.[369] Lastly, as a word bank, the dictionary is quite poor and includes only 500 words.[370]

Edina Ustavdić has suggested that the work is far more complex than a simple dictionary. Firstly, Bosnevi chose to write it in metric versification, a form that makes instruction quite difficult. Moreover, he used multiple allusions, metaphors, and mytho-religious associations throughout the work. These would have only been intelligible to a highly-educated audience. So, if the work was not aimed at recent converts or Bosnian peasants, who was Bosnevi's intended audience? It seems to have been Murad IV (1623-1640), the person to whom he dedicated the work. The dictionary includes lines such as "*kulun olmak nice lütfe erilir*" (how wonderful it is to be your servant) and "Üsküfiya,

[369] In the early seventeenth century, Bosnian was written in Bosančica, a regional variant of the Cyrillic alphabet. This variant was used primarily in the western Balkans (present-day Bosnia and Croatia) and originated in the tenth century, possibly earlier. At the time that Bosnevi wrote *Makbul-i 'arif*, Bosnian could also be written in Arabic script, but probably only by the very learned; For more information, see Muhamed Hadžijahić, "O Jednom Manje Poznatom Domacem Vrelu za Proučavanje Crkve Bosanske," 55-109.

[370] Nametak, "Tri Rukopisa "Makbuli-Arifa" ("Potur-Shahidije")," 146.

kulluğumuz padişaha sadikadir" (my [our] service to the sultan is true). Bosnevi likely sought some reward from the sultan. He hints at this in the dictionary when he politely bemoans his meager pension.[371]

It is likely that Bosnevi's primary motivations were to please the sultan and secure a monetary reward. However, these were not his only motivations. He writes that he wanted to create something that had never been seen before and thought up just the thing, a dictionary in Bosnian. He hoped that it would be illuminating for two groups, Bosnians who could learn to say things in Ottoman Turkish, and men of wide horizons whose knowledge would be increased. However, the dictionary would also be helpful to those "in the know" (*nef'i bilince*), and an enlightened person would be able to recognize the gems within it (*işaret u gumuzun*).[372] The dictionary was clearly not written with the intention of instructing Bosnian country-folk or recent converts. Therefore, the dictionary's nickname and its definition of *Potur* as villager should be questioned.

Firstly, why was *Makbul-i 'arif* nicknamed *Potur Şahidî*? I suggest it was because Bosnevi was a *Poturnak oğlanı*. We know that he was born a Bosnian Muslim and that he was able to enter the imperial palace and become a *kapı kulu*. This aligns with what we

[371] Smailovich, "O Uskufijinu Rječniku Maqbuli Arif – Potur Shahidija," 130-135; Edina Ustavdić, "The First Bosnian-Turkish/Turkish Bosnian Lexicographic Word," *HUMAN* 1, no. 2 (2011): 49-50; Mønnesland, "Bosanski Jezik Prije Četiri Stoljeća - Makbul-i Arif," 34; Korkut, *Makbûl-i 'Âryf (Potur-Šâhidija) Üsküfî Bosnevija*, 396, 405; Kasumović, "Bosanski Jezik – Kako Su Bosanci Krupna Stasa, Znaj Da Su Im Tako i Rijeci Krupne," 47.

[372] Korkut, *Makbûl-i 'Âryf (Potur-Šâhidija) Üsküfî Bosnevija*, 387.

know about *Poturnak oğlanları* and their recruitment into palace service in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Others have also suggested that it was likely a family member who secured Bosnevi a position in the palace. This explains why his work was dubbed *Potur Şahidi*. It was the work of a "Potur", likely a shortened version of *Poturnak oğlanı*, written in the style of Mevlana Şahidi Ibrahim Dede.

Why did Bosnevi define *Potur* as villager? I suggest that his dictionary was a piece of self-defensive satire similar to the 1585 miscellany discussed in Chapter 2. If the author of that miscellany defined Potur as a heretical Christian-Muslim hybrid in order to make a politically-conscious inside joke for native speakers, and in order to defend the orthodoxy of the majority of Bosnian Muslims, then Bosnevi was doing something similar.[373] Mounting a defense in the form of satire, he poked fun at his own *Poturnak* background by jokingly casting *Poturnak*s and *Poturnak oğlanları* as country bumpkins.[374] This genre was not unique to Ottoman Bosnia. According to Gabriel Baer, al-Shirbini did something similar in his mid-seventeenth-century *Hazz al-quhuf fi sharh qasid Abi Shaduf* (Brains Confounded by the

[373] Krstić, "Conversion and Converts to Islam in Ottoman Historiography of the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries," 58-79; Moačanin, "Mass Islamization of Peasants in Bosnia: Demystifications," 356-358.

[374] Smailovich, "O Uskufijinu Rječniku Maqbuli Arif – Potur Shahidija," 99-135; Korkut, *Makbûl-i 'Âryf (Potur-Šáhidija) Üsküfî Bosnevija*, 371-408; Nametak, "Tri Rukopisa "Makbuli-Arifa" ("Potur-Shahidije")," 146-164; Mønnesland, "Bosanski Jezik Prije Četiri Stoljeća - Makbul-i Arif," 21-36; Kasumović, "Bosanski Jezik – Kako Su Bosanci Krupna Stasa, Znaj Da Su Im Tako i Rijeci Krupne," 42-69; Kadrić, "Tradicija Konceptualne Poetizirane Leksikografije u Bosni i Stihovani Rječnik Makbul-i Arif – Šta Nam Govore Rukopisi?" 71-75; Muhamed Huković, "Muhamed Hevai u Horizontima Alhamijado Književnosti: Alhamijado Literature u Našoj i Stranim Književnostima," in *Muhamed Hevai Uskufi*, eds. Muhamed Huković, Ahmet Kasumović and Ismet Smailović (Tuzla: Biblioteka Baština "Univerzal", 1990), 45-70; Kasumović, "O Uskufijinu Životu i Stvaralaštvu," 78; Okumuş, "Muhammed Hevâî Üsküfî ve Türkçe-Boşnakça Manzum Sözlügü Makbül-i Ârif (Potur Şâhidî)," 826; Ustavdić, "The First Bosnian-Turkish/Turkish Bosnian Lexicographic Word," 48-50; Referring to someone as a country bumpkin is still a popular jab in the western Balkans.

Ode of Abu Shaduf Expounded), joking about Egyptian peasant life as a way of distancing himself from it.[375]

Why would Bosnevi feel the need to do this, and what can it tell us about attitudes towards *Poturnak oğlanları* in the early seventeenth century? He was probably responding to negative stereotypes about this group, stereotypes similar to those that circulated in the late sixteenth century. It would appear that some antagonism towards *Poturnak*s and *Poturnak oğlanları* persisted into the early seventeenth century.[376] Bosnevi seems to have been offering humor-laced commentary on the subject. In particular, he was playing with the negative stereotype of *Poturnak oğlanları* being country bumpkins. His need to engage in this kind of humor hints at continued discomfort with the political supremacy of *devşirme* products and their followers at large. He was probably also informed by the demographic flux in the Ottoman Empire in the seventeenth century that brought different ethno-regional (*cins*) groups in competition with one another for military and administrative positions.[377] These themes also emerge in other works of this century, Paul Rycaut's work being one.

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[375] Baer, "Fellah and Townsman in Ottoman Egypt: A Study of Shirbīnī's *Hazz al-quhūf*," 221-256; idem, *Fellah and Townsman in the Middle East: Studies in Social History*, 1-47.

[376] Krstić, "Conversion and Converts to Islam in Ottoman Historiography of the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries," 58-79; Moačanin, "Mass Islamization of Peasants in Bosnia: Demystifications," 356-358; Baer, "Fellah and Townsman in Ottoman Egypt: A Study of Shirbīnī's *Hazz al-quhūf*," 221-256; idem, *Fellah and Townsman in the Middle East: Studies in Social History*, 1-47.

[377] Hathaway, "The Evlâd-i 'Arab ('Sons of the Arabs') in Ottoman Egypt: A Rereading," 205-213.

i. Paul Rycaut

More than thirty years after Bosnevi wrote *Makbul-i 'arif*, Paul Rycaut, an English consul living in the Ottoman Empire, wrote his work *The Present State of the Ottoman Empire*.[378] Rycaut was born in 1629 to a family of English royalists of Huguenot descent. His father had been a wealthy merchant and financier but lost his property in the English Civil War and the establishment of the Commonwealth because of his royalist sympathies. After the Restoration in 1660, Rycaut was appointed secretary for the Levant Company and secretary to the Earl of Winchelsea, King Charles' ambassador to the Ottoman Empire. He went to Istanbul and stayed there for six years. In 1667, he was appointed consul for the Levant Company in Izmir (Smyrna) and remained in this position for eleven years. He may have crossed the Balkan Peninsula on his two trips from Anatolia to England, which means that he likely spent some time in the *eyalet* of Bosnia. His work was completed and presented to England's secretary of state in 1665 and published in 1668, so around the time of his transition from Istanbul to Izmir. The work is a compilation of his personal observations on phenomena he came across during his time in the Ottoman Empire.[379] One of the groups that caught his eye were the *Poturnak*s.

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[378] The full title of Paul Rycaut's work is *The Present State of the Ottoman Empire: Containing the Maxims of the Turkish Polity, the Most Material Points of the Mahometan Religion, Their Sects and Heresies, Their Convents and Religious Votaries. Their Military Discipline, with an Exact Computation of their Forces both by Sea and Land. Illustrated with Diverse Pieces of Sculpture, Representing the Varieties of Habits among the Turks*.

[379] Rycaut, *The Present State of the Ottoman Empire*, 247-248; Aleksandar Solovjev, "Engleski Izvještaj XVII Vijeka o Bosanskim Poturima," *Glasnik Zemaljskog Muzeja u Sarajevu* 7 (1952): 101-109; Linda T. Darling,

He refers to *Poturnak*s as a religiously syncretistic sect that combined elements of Christianity and Islam.[380] The sect's adherents, he claims, are mainly soldiers living in Hungary and Bosnia. They read the Gospel in the Slavic tongue, but also the Qur'an in Arabic and Persian, and they believe that Muhammad was the Holy Ghost. They reject iconography and the sign of the cross, and they practice circumcision. They drink wine and pay the same taxes that Christians do. According to Rycaut, they also protect Christians from "Turks" and show them charity and affection.[381]

What are we to make of this account? Linda Darling has argued convincingly that Rycaut's work was not a straightforward eyewitness account but "commentary on English politics in Turkish guise."[382] In other words, we must take into account Rycaut's royalist political views and his religious background when appraising the contents of his work. Certainly, some parts of the work are error-riddled, fanciful, confused, and difficult to corroborate, although, according to Darling's analysis, even ostensible errors may actually constitute criticism of the English regime.[383] On the other hand, we cannot ignore that Rycaut spent a significant amount of time in the Ottoman Empire, particularly Istanbul. He spoke Ottoman Turkish and had contacts among the Ottoman elite. Darling emphasizes that

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"Ottoman Politics through British Eyes: Paul Rycaut's "The Present State of the Ottoman Empire*"," Journal of World History* 5, no. 1 (1994): 72-97.

[380] Paul Rycaut refers to *Poturnak*s as "Potures."

[381] Rycaut, *The Present State of the Ottoman Empire*, 247-248; Aleksandar Solovjev, "Engleski Izvještaj XVII Vijeka o Bosanskim Poturima," *Glasnik Zemaljskog Muzeja u Sarajevu* 7 (1952): 101-109.

[382] Darling, "Ottoman Politics through British Eyes: Paul Rycaut's "The Present State of the Ottoman Empire*","* 74.

[383] Ibid., 72-97.

he collected eyewitness reports and conducted interviews with *kapı kulları*. Some of his account of the *Poturnak*s rings true. He locates the group in and around Bosnia, notes that they practiced circumcision, and emphasizes that they spoke Slavic, Arabic, and Persian. All of this would have been true of *Poturnak oğlanları* recruited through the *devşirme*. Some parts of his account can therefore be corroborated and should be taken seriously.

However, how do we contend with the more dubious parts of his account? Rycaut's assertion that *Poturnak*s were religiously syncretistic is of particular interest. I suggest that Rycaut, like Bosnevi, was reflecting negative stereotypes about *Poturnak oğlanları*, and perhaps antagonism towards products of the *devşirme* at large, in the seventeenth century. Bosnevi played around with stereotypes about *Poturnak*s being country bumpkins. Rycaut clearly picked up on stereotypes about *Poturnak*s and Bosnian Muslims being religiously suspect. These stereotypes emerged in the late sixteenth century and were discussed in the previous chapter in the context of a 1585 miscellany referring to *Poturnak*s as heretical Christian-Muslim hybrids.[384] Clearly, they persisted even in the late seventeenth century. Rycaut probably came into contact with the stereotypes through his elite Ottoman informants and reproduced them in his work. The greater significance of such stereotypes is the subject of the next section.

[384] Krstić, "Conversion and Converts to Islam in Ottoman Historiography of the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries," 58-79; Moačanin, "Mass Islamization of Peasants in Bosnia: Demystifications," 356-358.

ii. Stereotypes and Seventeenth-Century Politics

Bosnevi and Rycaut, writing nearly forty years apart, both mentioned negative stereotypes of *Poturnak oğlanları*. Their works confirm that these *devşirme* recruits, perhaps all products of the *devşirme*, were still a sore spot in seventeenth-century Ottoman politics and society. The ambivalence, if not outright antagonism, towards them that developed in the late sixteenth century clearly persisted well into the late seventeenth century. Why was this?

As noted in the previous chapter, despite numerous challenges, the mid- to late sixteenth century was a period of ascendancy for the westerners, products of the *devşirme* (and their followers) who hailed from the Ottoman Balkans and western Anatolia.[385] A number of especially prominent statesmen hailed from the *sancak*s of Bosnia and Hercegovina, and some of them were *Poturnak oğlanları*. These westerners established powerful political networks within the Ottoman state. Through self-generated mythology, they were able to carve out a space for themselves in the Ottoman administrative elite. They rebranded themselves and were rebranded by their supporters as the new and true Ottomans.[386] In other words, being Ottoman gradually began to mean either being a product of or being closely associated with products of the *devşirme*. I argue that this rebranding

[385] Hathaway, "The Evlâd-i 'Arab ('Sons of the Arabs') in Ottoman Egypt: A Rereading," 203-216; idem, "The "Mamluk Breaker" Who Was Really a Kul Breaker: A Fresh Look at Kul Kıran Mehmed Pasha, Governor of Egypt 1607-1611," 93-109.

[386] Haldon, "The Ottoman State and the Question of State Autonomy: Comparative Perspectives," 55.

process continued and peaked in the seventeenth century. Clearly, it continued to ruffle feathers.

Critics of and challengers to the *devşirme* element survived and thrived in the early seventeenth century. The multi-pronged, empire-wide crisis discussed in the previous chapter that began in the late sixteenth century peaked in the early seventeenth century. The state faced inconclusive wars on two fronts, a bloated and exhausted military, the Celali rebellions in Anatolia, financial issues, relatively young and inexperienced sultans, intensified factionalism among the elite, and violent, *kullar*-led rebellions. This was a time of significant political turbulence, and some of it was blamed on the *devşirme* element.

These issues would come to a head with the 1622 execution of Osman II (r. 1618-1622), but they festered in the early seventeenth century. This is borne out by various Ottoman sources, particularly *nasihatname*s (advice literature) advising political, economic, and military reform. One popular subset of this genre consisted of *edebül'-kavanin*, reform-minded manuals that advised the sultan on protocol pertaining to sultanic law and imperial regulations. On one hand, these works were prescriptive and practical, albeit at times untenable.[387] However, they were also products of an individual and his or her politics and

[387] For example, some sixteenth and seventeenth-century advice literature advocated a return to the traditional cavalry-based army. Given the importance of the infantry, this was simply untenable at the time. For more information, see Darling, *Revenue-Raising and Legitimacy: Tax Collection and Finance Administration in the Ottoman Empire 1560-1660*, 184.

preoccupations. They could therefore also be considered polemics. Overall, they were reflections on social and political order and warnings against threats to this order.[388]

A number of seventeenth-century reform manuals fixated on the issue of military reform, stressing in particular the need to improve the Ottoman army. The army, particularly the standing infantry, had begun to expand earlier in the sixteenth century. Recruitment peaked during the Long War (Thirteen Years' War, 1593-1606).[389] The Janissary corps and the *kapı kulları*, both recruited primarily through the *devşirme* and both responsible for the violent rebellions in Istanbul in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, grew. These *kullar* were admonished for failing to perform their military duties while continuing to exact privileges, for bringing followers and relatives into Ottoman service, and for contributing to factionalism among the Ottoman elite.[390]

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[388] Rifa'at 'Ali Abou-El-Haj, *Formation of the Modern State: The Ottoman Empire Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2005), 23-26, 41; Howard, "Ottoman Historiography and the Literature of 'Decline' of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," 55-59; Tal Shuval, "The Ottoman Algerian Elite and its Ideology," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 32 (2000): 327.

[389] Gábor Ágoston, *Guns for the Sultan: Military Power and the Weapons Industry in the Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 1-30; idem, "Habsburgs and Ottomans: Defense, Military Change and Shifts in Power," Turkish Studies Association Bulletin 22, no. 1 (1998): 126-141.

[390] Kunt, *The Sultan's Servants: The Transformation of Ottoman Provincial Government, 1550-1650,* 79; Koller, "Introduction: An Approach to Bosnian History," 17; Balić, "Ottoman Bosnia in Vienna: Records of the Bosniacs in the Latest Catalogue of the Austrian National Library," 55; İnalcık, *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1300-1914*, 23; Gelibolulu Mustafa 'Ali, *Mevâ'idü'n-Nefâis Fî-kavâ'ıdi'l-Mecâlis*, 154-158; Hathaway, *The Arab Lands under Ottoman Rule, 1516-1800*, 65; Mustafa Ali, *Mustafa Ali's Counsel for Sultans of 1581 (I): Edition, Translation, Notes*, 7; idem, *Mustafā Ali's Counsel for Sultans of 1581 (II): Edition, Translation, Notes*, 39-61, 70-73, 85; Barkan, "Price Revolution of the Sixteenth Century: A Turning Point in the Economic History of the Near East," 19; Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire: Political and Social Transformation in the Early Modern World*, 183; Pedani, "Safiye's Household and Venetian Diplomacy," 9-32; Buzov, "Ottoman Perceptions of Bosnia as Reflected in the Works of Ottoman Authors Who Visited or Lived in Bosnia," 83-92; Kunt, "Ethnic-Regional (Cins) Solidarity in the Seventeenth-Century Ottoman Establishment," 233-239; Ágoston, *Guns for the Sultan: Military Power and the Weapons Industry in*

In 1603, Ahmed I (r. 1603-1617) barred the sons of non-Janissary state officials from entering the Janissary corps. This had little effect on overall growth or corruption. By 1612, the number of *kapı kulları* in the *Hass Oda*, the privy chamber of the sultan, had risen to 900. This was nearly double the number of *kapı kulları* in 1568. In 1510, there were 500 gatekeepers to the imperial palace. By the mid-seventeenth century, there were 2007. The number of Janissaries tripled from 12,000 in 1566 to 37,000 in 1609.[391] The last figure seems to have been most alarming for reform writers. They identified the problem as widespread corruption in recruitment and registration for the Janissary corps. Some thought the corps was too large and ineffective. Others, such as Koçi Beg, singled out particular problems such as the infiltration of the corps by Muslim-born sons of imperial cavalry and infantrymen and

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the Ottoman Empire, 1-30; idem, "Habsburgs and Ottomans: Defense, Military Change and Shifts in Power," 126-141.

[391] Ménage, "Devshirme;" Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300-1650: The Structure of Power,* 128-130; P.M. Holt, *Egypt and the Fertile Crescent 1516-1922: A Political History* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1966), 64; Kunt, "Ethnic-Regional (Cins) Solidarity in the Seventeenth-Century Ottoman Establishment," 235; Mustafa Ali, *Mustafā Ali's Counsel for Sultans of 1581 (I): Edition, Translation, Notes*, 55-61; idem, *Mustafā Ali's Counsel for Sultans of 1581 (II): Edition, Translation, Notes*, 34-37, 73; Handžić, "O Janičarskom Zakonu," 142-143; İnalcık, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age, 1300*-1600, 80-83; Itzkowitz, *Ottoman Empire and Islamic Tradition,* 51; Piterberg, *An Ottoman Tragedy: History and Historiography at Play*, 25; Akgündüz, *Osmanlı Kanunnâmeleri ve Hukûkî Tahlilleri,* IX. Kitap, Vol. 2: *II. Osman Devri Siyâsetnâmeleri ve Kanunnâmeleri*, 596-602; Aziz Efendi, *Kanûn-nâme-i Sultânî li 'Azîz Efendi - Aziz Efendi's Book of Sultanic Law and Regulations: An Agenda for Reform by a Seventeenth-Century Ottoman Statesman*, 6-7; Ágoston, *Guns for the Sultan: Military Power and the Weapons Industry in the Ottoman Empire*, 1-30; idem, "Habsburgs and Ottomans: Defense, Military Change and Shifts in Power," 126-141. İnalcık provides an excellent table showing an increase in various orders of palace servants between the late fifteenth and the early seventeenth centuries. Piterberg estimates that by 1620, there were approximately 30,000 Janissaries in the corps. Koçi Beg claims that there were 12,000 Janissaries during Süleyman I's reign (1520-1566) and that the number had risen to 35,000 by 1617. He lso notes that the number of imperial cavalrymen rose from 9,000 to 19,000. Aziz Efendi claims that there were 13,500 Janissaries and 6,200 imperial cavalrymen in 1574, but that these numbers rose to 43,000 Janissaries and 27,000 imperial cavalrymen in 1632-1633. Gábor Ágoston, whose figures I used in this chapter, notes that the number of Janissaries between 1514 and 1526 actually decreased. However, after 1526, the number rose from 17,798 in 1567 to 37,627 in 1609 to 54,222 in 1660.

kapı kulları. Apparently, their parents bribed clerks to register them as Janissaries. Even ordinary civilians seeking the benefits and protection of the Janissary corps could bribe clerks for entry. Aziz Efendi warned the sultan that the imperial treasury could not sustain such large numbers of salaried military personnel. Like Koçi Beg, he pointed out various abuses, such as retired military men who received pensions but worked in the markets, and non-military personnel who were inscribed on the military pay registers. He recommended a general purge.[392]

The size and composition of the Ottoman military were clearly on the minds of Ottoman advice literature-writers in the early seventeenth century. Most recommended some form of military reform. One particular source, a 1606 reform manual entitled *The Laws of the Janissaries*, took up this very subject. In doing so, it produced a fascinating defense of both the *devşirme* and the *devşirme* element. It also provided an illustrious origin myth for *Poturnak oğlanları*. *The Laws of the Janissaries* is therefore a fascinating microcosm of the political turbulence within the Ottoman state and elite in the early seventeenth century.

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[392] Akgündüz, *Osmanlı Kanunnâmeleri ve Hukûkî Tahlilleri,* IX. Kitap, Vol. 2: II. *Osman Devri Siyâsetnâmeleri ve Kanunnâmeleri*, 596-602; Howard, "Ottoman Historiography and the Literature of 'Decline' of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," 64-68; Abou-El-Haj, *Formation of the Modern State: The Ottoman Empire Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries*, 30-37; Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300-1650: The Structure of Power*, 128-130; Barkan, "Price Revolution of the Sixteenth Century: A Turning Point in the Economic History of the Near East," 26; Aziz Efendi, *Kanûn-nâme-i Sultânî Li 'Azîz Efendi - Aziz Efendi's Book of Sultanic Law and Regulations: An Agenda for Reform by a Seventeenth-Century Ottoman Statesman*, 4-11, 18-22, 29-31; Howard, "Ottoman Historiography and the Literature of 'Decline' of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," 71.

II. The Laws of the Janissaries

The Laws of the Janissaries was composed in 1606 as a reform manual for Ahmed I (r. 1603-17). The author remains anonymous, but we know that he was a retired Janissary *korucu* (guard) who served as a Janissary *katib* (bookkeeper) for twenty-one years. He was also the grandson of a Janissary *ağa* (commander) of Istanbul named Saka Mahmud who served in this position for fourteen years. The author was clearly a learned member of the Ottoman elite with an esteemed pedigree and advanced knowledge of the functioning and history of the military.[393]

The practical purpose of his manual was to detail the laws that governed the Janissary corps and the imperial palace. The author may have known that Ahmed I desired to follow in the footsteps of Süleyman I (r. 1520-1566) as a pious warrior-sultan. In imitation of his great-great-grandfather, Ahmed even produced his own law code. Gifting the sultan with a manual that detailed the laws governing the Janissary corps and the imperial palace would have certainly complemented these aspirations.[394] Moreover, according to the author, these laws had slackened, resulting in chaos and disorder within the Ottoman military and the empire at large. He found changes to the methods of *devşirme* recruitment particularly problematic and sought to rectify this problem.

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[393] Handžić, "O Janičarskom Zakonu," 142-150; Akgündüz, *Osmanlı Kanunnâmeleri ve Hukûkî Tahlilleri,* IX. Kitap: *I. Ahmed, I. Mustafa ve II. Osman Devirleri Kanunnâmeleri (1012/1603-1031/1622)*, 149, 239-240.

[394] Börekçi, "Ahmed I," 22-23; idem, "Smallpox in the Harem: Communicable Diseases and the Ottoman Fear of Dynastic Extinction during the Early Sultanate of Ahmed I (r. 1603-17)," 146.

The first chapter of his work is devoted to that subject: who is suitable for the *devşirme*, how they are to be collected, and who should be in charge of recruitment.[395] The author begins by discussing who is suitable and unsuitable for the *devşirme*. His discussion is reminiscent of the division and antagonism between the "westerners" and "easterners" in the Ottoman military and administration discussed in Chapter 2. According to the author, *kafir* (non-Muslim, unbeliever) youth are particularly suitable because they become zealous and exhibit a special ardor for Islam upon conversion. On the battlefield, they are manly, brave, and full of valor. They are less likely than Turkish youth, by whom he means members of the largely Muslim and Turcophone population of rural eastern Anatolia, to be entangled by family ties.[396]

In contrast, the author finds Turkish youth entirely unsuitable for the *devşirme*. He rails against them, noting that whether they are *kafirs* or not, whether they speak Ottoman Turkish or not, they are untrustworthy and lacking in piety.[397] Moreover, they are merciless and undisciplined, and they lack true faith. If they enter the sultan's service, he warns, they

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[395] Akgündüz, *Osmanlı Kanunnâmeleri ve Hukûkî Tahlilleri,* IX. Kitap: *I. Ahmed, I. Mustafa ve II. Osman Devirleri Kanunnâmeleri (1012/1603-1031/1622)*, 128-129; Howard, "Ottoman Historiography and the Literature of 'Decline' of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," 70-71; Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300-1650: The Structure of Power*, 122-129; Kunt, *The Sultan's Servants: The Transformation of Ottoman Provincial Government, 1550-1650*, 32; Itzkowitz, *Ottoman Empire and Islamic Tradition*, 50.

[396] Akgündüz, *Osmanlı Kanunnâmeleri ve Hukûkî Tahlilleri,* IX. Kitap: *I. Ahmed, I. Mustafa ve II. Osman Devirleri Kanunnâmeleri (1012/1603-1031/1622)*, 138.

[397] With this cover-all statement, I suggest that the author was emphasizing that the entirety of the population of rural eastern Anatolia regardless of their faith or language should be barred from the *devşirme*.

will bring their relatives with them and these relatives will refuse to pay taxes. Ultimately, they will bring hardship and affliction to the entirety of the empire.[398]

According to the author, new recruits must learn Ottoman Turkish as part of their training, but young men who already know the language are not to be recruited.[399] His logic seems to be that if a young man already knows Ottoman Turkish, he is probably from rural eastern Anatolia (an easterner) and therefore not suitable for recruitment.[400] The emphasis on language is an interesting parallel with the 1589 *devşirme* order discussed in the previous chapter. This order specified that *Poturnak oğlanları* from the *eyalet* of Bosnia were suitable for the *devşirme*, but that Turcophone youth were barred. *The Laws of the Janissaries* provides an explanation of sorts: proficiency in Ottoman Turkish was associated with the rural population of eastern Anatolia, and this population was theoretically barred from the *devşirme*.[401]

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[398] Akgündüz, *Osmanlı Kanunnâmeleri ve Hukûkî Tahlilleri,* IX. Kitap: *I. Ahmed, I. Mustafa ve II. Osman Devirleri Kanunnâmeleri (1012/1603-1031/1622)*, 137-138; Akgündüz, *Osmanlı Kanunnâmeleri ve Hukûkî Tahlilleri,* IX. Kitap, Vol. 2: *II. Osman Devri Siyâsetnâmeleri ve Kanunnâmeleri*, 599-625; Aziz Efendi, *Kanûn-nâme-i Sultânî Li 'Azîz Efendi - Aziz Efendi's Book of Sultanic Law and Regulations: An Agenda for Reform by a Seventeenth-Century Ottoman Statesman*, 7; In his 1623 advice manual, Aziz Efendi lamented that the imperial cavalry was full of undesirable types such as Turks. Koçi Beg also claimed that it was contrary to old custom to recruit Turks.

[399] Akgündüz, *Osmanlı Kanunnâmeleri ve Hukûkî Tahlilleri,* IX. Kitap: *I. Ahmed, I. Mustafa ve II. Osman Devirleri Kanunnâmeleri (1012/1603-1031/1622)*, 137-138.

[400] The author does not imply that only Ottoman Turkish is spoken in rural eastern Anatolia, only that if one already knows Ottoman Turkish, they are more than likely from this region.

[401] BOA, Mühimme Defteri 66, no. 143 (15 Muharrem 998/ 23 November 1589); Mustafa Efendi Selânikî, *Tarih-i Selânikî*, 220; Akgündüz, *Osmanlı Kanunnâmeleri ve Hukûkî Tahlilleri,* IX. Kitap, Vol. 2: *II. Osman Devri Siyâsetnâmeleri ve Kanunnâmeleri*, 599-603, 625; Pakalin, *Osmanlı Tarih Deyimleri ve Terimleri Sözlüğü*, 11, 447.

After repeating that only *kafir* youth should be recruited, the author recounts a curious story about Bosnian Muslims. He likely understood Bosnian to mean all of the peoples of the Bosnian *eyalet*, which included Hercegovina, Klis, and other parts of Dalmatia and Slavonia. The author recounts that in Bosnia, it was customary also to collect Muslim youths. Most of these youths were bound for the imperial palace and gardens, differentiating them from the less promising recruits who were sent to train in the Anatolian countryside. The author refers to this treatment of Bosnian Muslims as *i'tibar*, a special consideration or an honor bestowed upon the group (*taife*).[402]

Why were Bosnian Muslims deserving of this special honor? According to the author, the explanation dated back to Mehmed II's 1463 conquest of the Kingdom of Bosnia. When Mehmed entered Bosnia with his victorious army, he was greeted by the entirety of the population, peasants and nobles alike (*re'aya ve beraya*). Faced with the sultan's might and vigor, the Bosnians first paid him respect by bowing. Then, they converted to Islam. Upon witnessing this, the sultan proclaimed that they were not a wicked people. In return for their show of respect, and presumably also their conversion to Islam, the sultan granted them whatever they wished. Their wish was for youth to be collected from their kingdom for military and administrative service. Their wish was granted, and it became customary to

[402] Akgündüz, *Osmanlı Kanunnâmeleri ve Hukûkî Tahlilleri,* IX. Kitap: *I. Ahmed, I. Mustafa ve II. Osman Devirleri Kanunnâmeleri (1012/1603-1031/1622)*, 141; Handžić, "O Janičarskom Zakonu," 148-150.

collect youth from Bosnia. The author notes that both circumcised and uncircumcised young men, implying Muslims and non-Muslims, were collected from Bosnia.[403]

The author adds that it was not customary to inspect this particular group. He was presumably referring to the standard *devşirme* selection process during which recruits' parentage, baptismal records, mental health, and physical appearances were inspected. Nevertheless, the author advises inspection, if only to prevent infiltration by outsiders such as Turks. Trustworthy and upright men, he says, should be entrusted with the task.[404]

Lastly, the author notes that the majority of those collected from this group, presumably referring to Muslim and non-Muslim Bosnians, have proven themselves adept in their service, whether it be in the palaces, gardens, or other places. He writes that they are smart and capable, and attain high posts. For all of these reasons, they are not rented to Anatolian farmers but go directly to the imperial palaces and gardens.[405]

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[403] Akgündüz, *Osmanlı Kanunnâmeleri ve Hukûkî Tahlilleri,* IX. Kitap: *I. Ahmed, I. Mustafa ve II. Osman Devirleri Kanunnâmeleri (1012/1603-1031/1622)*, 141; Handžić, "O Janičarskom Zakonu," 148-150; Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devleti Teşkilatından Kapukulu Ocakları*, vol. 1, 18-19; Moačanin, "Mass Islamization of Peasants in Bosnia: Demystifications," 354-355; Handžić and Moačanin disagree over the translation of the passage in question, both using another copy of *The Laws of the Janissaries* located in Saint Petersburg, edited and translated by I. E. Petrosyan. The Akgündüz copy used here states that, "*Bosna diyârında cem' olunan oğlanların cümlesi müslüman iken cem' olunmak kanun olduğundan*…" While this debate is worth noting, the particulars are not central to our subject.

[404] Akgündüz, *Osmanlı Kanunnâmeleri ve Hukûkî Tahlilleri,* IX. Kitap: *I. Ahmed, I. Mustafa ve II. Osman Devirleri Kanunnâmeleri (1012/1603-1031/1622)*, 141; Handžić, "O Janičarskom Zakonu," 148-150; Ismail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devleti Teşkilatından Kapukulu Ocakları*, 18-19; Moačanin, "Mass Islamization of Peasants in Bosnia: Demystifications," 354-355.

[405] Akgündüz, *Osmanlı Kanunnâmeleri ve Hukûkî Tahlilleri,* IX. Kitap: *I. Ahmed, I. Mustafa ve II. Osman Devirleri Kanunnâmeleri (1012/1603-1031/1622)*, 141; Handžić, "O Janičarskom Zakonu," 148-150; Ismail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devleti Teşkilatından Kapukulu Ocakları*, 18-19; Moačanin, "Mass Islamization of Peasants in Bosnia: Demystifications," 354-355.

Before taking up the implications of this story, we should note the tale that directly follows it, which concerns the people of Trabzon. In this tale, the people of Trabzon, the easterners, seem to serve as a counterpoise to the Bosnians, the westerners. The author begins by noting that *kafir*s from Trabzon, presumably Pontic Orthodox Christians for the most part, are absolutely not to be collected for the *devşirme*. According to him, they are excessively wicked and untrustworthy, and they lack valor, military skills, and discipline. Selim I (r. 1512-1520) was the first to consent to their recruitment, perhaps because he governed Trabzon when he was a prince. However, they proved to be unreliable on his military campaigns in Anatolia and Egypt. For all of these reasons, the author pleads with Ahmed I (r. 1603-1617) not to collect recruits from Trabzon.[406] The enduring excellence of Bosnian recruits is clearly contrasted with the treachery and unreliability of recruits from Trabzon.

A number of scholars have taken these stories at face value. Colin Imber remarks that the story of mass conversion has some credibility given that cadastral surveys from 1463 indicate a large number of conversions in Bosnia. He cites the work of Noel Malcolm, which also glosses over most of the subject matter. V. L. Ménage recognizes that the Islamization of the Kingdom of Bosnia was not instantaneous, but he implicitly assumes that the liability of

[406] Akgündüz, *Osmanlı Kanunnâmeleri ve Hukûkî Tahlilleri,* IX. Kitap: *I. Ahmed, I. Mustafa ve II. Osman Devirleri Kanunnâmeleri (1012/1603-1031/1622)*, 141-143.

Bosnian Muslims for the *devşirme* was explained by their Islamization.[407] Those that do not take the story at face value tend to provide confused variations of it, but they fail to cite their sources.[408] Though their interpretations of the story differ, only the works of Adem Handžić and Nenad Moačanin approach the story critically. I follow in their footsteps and push their analyses further by contextualizing the story.[409]

i. The Origin Myth

I contend that the mass conversion of the Kingdom of Bosnia is entirely apocryphal. We have no Ottoman sources from this period corroborating such an extraordinary event. Tursun Beg, who took part in and wrote extensively about the 1463 conquest, mentions nothing of the sort. As Snježana Buzov notes, no other Ottoman sources take up the subject of Bosnia's legendary mass obeisance or show concern with the conversion of Bosnia's inhabitants. She writes that, "…to say that Bosnians were better, more cultured and more loyal because more of them were Muslims…simply does not fit the worldview of Ottoman

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[407] Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300-1650: The Structure of Power*, 124. Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300-1650: The Structure of Power*, 124; Ménage, "Devshirme;" Pakalin, *Osmanlı Tarih Deyimleri ve Terimleri Sözlüğü*, 7-8, 14, 445; Malcolm, *Bosnia: A Short History*, 60; Peter F. Sugar, *Southeastern Europe under Ottoman Rule, 1354-1804* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1977), 57-58; Suphan Kırımızıaltın, "Conversion in the Balkans: A Historiographical Survey," *History Compass* 5, no. 2 (2007), 653; Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey,* 114; Mulić, "O Nekim Posebnostima Vezanim za Postupak Prihvatanja Islama u Bosni i Netačnostima Koje Mu Se Pripisuju," 187-190; İnalcık, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age, 1300*-1600, 78.

[408] Mulić, "O Nekim Posebnostima Vezanim za Postupak Prihvatanja Islama u Bosni i Netačnostima Koje Mu Se Pripisuju," 201.

[409] Handžić, "O Janičarskom Zakonu," 142-150; Moačanin, "Defterology and Mythology: Ottoman Bosnia up the Tanzîmât," 190.

authors, because it would cast doubt on the right of the ruler to rule, on his sovereignty, which was based on the postulates of the Empire's equity and order, where every subject had his place."[410]

Nevertheless, various historians have drawn a connection between this apocryphal mass conversion and the dualist Bulgarian heresy known as Bogomilism. This sect and the autonomous Bosnian Church with which is it commonly and erroneously conflated, were discussed in Chapter 1. We know that the Bogomils were perceived as a threat by the Pope and his legates and persecuted up to the Ottoman conquest of Bosnia. Some argue that this persecution, as well as similarities between Islamic and Bogomil theology, led the sect's adherents to accept Islam and submit to Mehmed II (r. 1444-1446, 1451-1481).[411] While this is a very convenient and romantic explanation of events, it stands on very shaky ground.

The lack of consensus on the history and theology of Bogomilism problematizes using it as a basis for any theories pertaining to the Ottoman history of the Balkans. Those who

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[410] Buzov, "Ottoman Perceptions of Bosnia as Reflected in the works of Ottoman Authors Who Visited or Lived in Bosnia," 90-91.

[411] Mrgić, "The Center of the Periphery: The Land of Bosnia in the Heart of Bosnia," 165-181; Biliarsky, "The Synodicon of Orthodoxy in BAR Ms. S1. 307 and the Hagioriticon Gramma of the Year 1344," 108-112; Curta, *Southeastern Europe in the Middle Ages 500-1250*, 433-437; Fine, *The Late Medieval Balkans: A Critical Survey from the Late Twelfth Century to the Ottoman Conquest*, 1, 17-18, 43-52, 100, 143-148, 278-282, 370, 459, 477, 480-486, 578-582; Handžić, *Population of Bosnia in the Ottoman Period: A Historical Overview*, 4-23; Eugen Sladović, *Islamsko Pravu u Bosni i Hercegovini* (Belgrade: Izdavačka Knjižarnica Gece Kona, 1926), 3-4; Miloš Mladenović, "The Osmanlı Conquest and the Islamization of Bosnia," 219-224; Lopašić, "Islamization of the Balkans with Special Reference to Bosnia," 163-172; Truhelka, *O Porijeklu Bosanskih Muslimana*, 11-14; Handžić, *Islamizacija Bosne i Hercegovine I Porijeklo Bosansko-Hercegovačkih Muslimana*, 20-21.

have studied the sect warn that our knowledge of it is simply incomplete.[412] Moreover, Ottoman writers present at the conquest of the Kingdom of Bosnia never mention such a mass conversion.[413] Various scholars negate it as well, noting poll tax registers, cadastral surveys, military rolls, and court records that give no indication of immediate or rapid rates of conversion, but show a moderate pace and variable rates from one location to another. These records also reveal a large number of Christian-held *timar*s (land revenue grants) in the years following the Ottoman conquest, refuting the notion of immediate conversion.[414] Some have also questioned the size of the Bogomil sect and its impact on the Bosnian population, arguing that it was much smaller and less influential than originally posited. Others reject the idea that Bosnians had any "theological affinity" for Islam and wonder why a large-scale conversion did not occur in other Ottoman lands with significant Bogomil populations.[415] All in all, this Bogomil theory is outdated and rests on nationalist assumptions.

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[412] Fine, *The Bosnian Church: A New Interpretation*, 1-8, 375-387.

[413] Tursun Beg, *The History of Mehmed the Conqueror*, 50-53.

[414] BOA, Tapu Tahrir Defteri 56 (1-10 Muharrem 922/5-14 February 1516); Husić, "Maglaj u Ranom Osmanskom Periodu," 120-126; Čar, "Demografsko Kretanje, Socijalni i Konfesionalni Sastav Stanovništva u Visočkoj Nahiji," 200-207, 240-248; Kunt, "Transformation of Zimmi into Askeri," 55-59; Aličić, "Popis Bosanske Vojske Pred Bitku na Mohaću 1526 Godine," 171-172, 182-192; Akgündüz, *91, 164, MAD 540 ve 173 Numaralı Hersek, Bosna ve Izvornik Livalari – İcmal Tahrir Defterleri 926-939 / 1520-1533*, 31-109; Handžić, *Dva Prva Popisa Zvorničkog Sandžaka iz 1519 i 1533 Godine*, 23-196; Fine, *The Bosnian Church: A New Interpretation*, 375-387; Moačanin, "Mass Islamization of Peasants in Bosnia: Demystifications," 353.

[415] Fine, *The Bosnian Church: A New Interpretation*, 1-8, 375-387, Moačanin, "Mass Islamization of Peasants in Bosnia: Demystifications," 353; Adanır, "The Formation of a 'Muslim' Nation in Bosnia-Hercegovina: A Historiographic Discussion," 289-290; Heywood, "Bosnia Under Ottoman Rule, 1463-1800," 32-40; Lopašić, "Islamization of the Balkans with Special Reference to Bosnia," 163-177; Hadžijahić, "O Jednom Manje Poznatom Domacem Vrelu za Proučavanje Crkve Bosanske," 89; Kuripešić, *Putopis Kroz Bosnu, Srbiju, Bugarsku i Rumeliju*, 26.

It is a better reflection of the political and social priorities of the modern Balkans than of the realities of early modern Islamization.

With all of this in mind, I contend that the mass conversion story *in The Laws of the Janissaries* is apocryphal. Others who have written about this genre of Ottoman literature have warned that it should not be taken literally as an exposition of historical fact.[416] Some historical accounts were intended as allusive devices, shedding light on controversial contemporary issues by combining elements of fact and fiction.[417] We should understand the apocryphal mass conversion story as such.

I argue that the story was an origin myth consciously constructed and promoted by the author of *The Laws of the Janissaries*. Cemal Kafadar writes that modern historiography has little patience for dreams and legends as explanation. Though the story of Bosnian Muslims may seem bizarre even to an Ottomanist, we must remember that its intended audience would not have had this problem. The use of a myth to make a particular point would have been perfectly intelligible to Ottoman elites learned in myths and steeped in literary allusions.[418]

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[416] Abou-El-Haj, *Formation of the Modern State: The Ottoman Empire Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries*, 23-26.

[417] Tayeb El-Hibri, *Reinterpreting Islamic Historiography: Hārūn al-Rashīd and the Narrative of the ʿAbbāsid Caliphate* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 2, 13.

[418] Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds: The Construction of the Ottoman State*, 9; El-Hibri, *Reinterpreting Islamic Historiography: Hārūn al-Rashīd and the Narrative of the ʿAbbāsid Caliphate*, 53; Darling, *Revenue-Raising and Legitimacy: Tax Collection and Finance Administration in the Ottoman Empire 1560-1660*, 2; Gottfried Hagen, "From Haggadic Exegesis to Myth: Popular Stories of the Prophets in Islam," in *Sacred Tropes:*

Benjamin Braude's discussion of foundation myths in the Ottoman Empire is particularly helpful here. He writes about myths within the Jewish, Greek, and Armenian communities and how they were used to create the impression of privileged standing for these non-Muslim communities dating to the conquest of Constantinople. These communities each claimed a close relationship with Mehmed II (r. 1444-1446, 1451-1481) and exploited the collective memory of this relationship in various ways: to bolster pleas to the Ottoman court, for example, or to justify new policies by relating them to the past and allowing communities to claim privileges based on this past. Such foundation myths were recognized and honored by the Ottoman government.[419] I argue that the origin myth about Bosnian Muslims within *The Laws of the Janissaries* had a similar function.

What was the author's purpose in producing such an origin myth? As discussed earlier in this chapter, the Ottoman military expanded during the sixteenth century, and various commentators criticized this phenomenon. Some paid special attention to corruption in recruitment for the Janissary corps and the imperial palace, including the admission of Muslim-born recruits. Ahmed I (r. 1603-1617), the sultan for whom *The Laws of the Janissaries* was written, took measures to deal with this corruption, however ineffectual they

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Tanakh, New Testament, and Qur'an as Literature and Culture, ed. Roberta Sterman Sabbath (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 304-316.

[419] Benjamin Braude, "Foundation Myths of the *Millet* System," in *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire*, eds. Benjanim Braude and Bernard Lewis (New York: Holmes and Meier Publishers, Inc., 1982), 69-88; Shuval, "The Ottoman Algerian Elite and its Ideology," 327; I would like to thank Prof. Jane Hathaway for directing me to Benjamin Braude's work.

may have turned out to be.[420] Writing in 1606, the author must have been aware of these developments, and they must have influenced his work. Because he advised military reform and correct *devşirme* practices, he likely felt pressure to defend the practice of recruiting Bosnian Muslim *Poturnak oğlanları*.[421] The author needed to justify this practice on the basis of privileged precedent, and he did so with through an origin myth. In other words, the expanded recruitment of Bosnian Muslims explains the myth rather than vice versa.

I suggest that the author, along with playing defense, was making a clever offensive move. His origin myth about Bosnian Muslims historicized, legitimized, and celebrated this powerful group within the Ottoman elite. Elite Bosnians were particularly prominent around the time that *The Laws of the Janissaries* was written. Handan Sultan (d. 1605), the concubine of Mehmed III (r. 1595-1603) and mother and de facto regent of Ahmed I (r.

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[420] Ménage, "Devshirme;" Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300-1650: The Structure of Power*, 128-129; Holt, *Egypt and the Fertile Crescent 1516-1922: A Political History*, 64; Kunt, "Ethnic-Regional (Cins) Solidarity in the Seventeenth-Century Ottoman Establishment," 235; Mustafa Ali, *Mustafā Ali's Counsel for Sultans of 1581 (I): Edition, Translation, Notes*, 55-61; idem, *Mustafā Ali's Counsel for Sultans of 1581 (II): Edition, Translation, Notes*, 34-37, 73; Akgündüz, *Osmanlı Kanunnâmeleri ve Hukûkî Tahlilleri,* IX. Kitap, Vol. 2: *II. Osman Devri Siyâsetnâmeleri ve Kanunnâmeleri*, 596-602; Howard, "Ottoman Historiography and the Literature of 'Decline' of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," 64, 71; Abou-El-Haj, *Formation of the Modern State: The Ottoman Empire Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries*, 35-36; Barkan, "Price Revolution of the Sixteenth Century: A Turning Point in the Economic History of the Near East," 26; Aziz Efendi, *Kanûn-nâme-i Sultânî Li 'Azîz Efendi - Aziz Efendi's Book of Sultanic Law and Regulations: An Agenda for Reform by a Seventeenth-Century Ottoman Statesman*, 4-11, 18-22, 29-31; Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300-1650: The Structure of Power*, 128-130; Handžić, "O Janičarskom Zakonu," 142-143.

[421] Palmer, "The Origin of the Janissaries," 448-480; Ménage, "Sidelights on the Devshirme from Idris and Sa'duddin," 181-183; Ménage, "Devshirme;" Kunt, "Transformation of Zimmi into Askeri," 56-57; Wittek, "Devshirme and Shari'a," 272-276; Mustafa Ali, *Mustafā Ali's Counsel for Sultans of 1581 (II): Edition, Translation, Notes*, 29-30; *Yeniçeri Oğlanı Cemi Etmek Kanunnamesi (Devşirme Kanunnamesi)*, Beyazit Devlet Kütüphanesi, Veliyuddin Efendi Koleksiyonu MS 1969, fols. 124-127; Akgündüz, *Osmanlı Kanunnameleri ve Hukuki Tahlilleri,* II. Kitap: *II Bayezid Devri Kanunnameleri*, 123-127.

1603-1617) was Bosnian and patronized Bosnians within the imperial palace and among the Ottoman elite.[422] Ahmed I, the intended recipient of the work, had Bosnian heritage. These circumstances must have inspired the origin myth about Bosnian Muslims. The myth clearly explained why Bosnian Muslims held privileged status by providing their illustrious origin story. In doing so, it legitimized the group and its place within the Ottoman elite.[423]

I argue that the origins myth spoke well of the *devşirme* element at large. This becomes even clearer when we consider Mehmed II's (r. 1444-1446, 1451-1481) role in it. On one hand, he acts as the ultimate legitimator, the conqueror of Constantinople and a potent symbolic figure who honored this particular group of people with acceptance into Ottoman service. However, his role becomes even more significant when we consider his promotion of the *devşirme*. The majority of Mehmed II's troops were Ottoman by education rather than birth. Nearly all of his grand viziers were of western Balkan slave origins. Some argue that he struck a balance between the traditional Anatolian establishment, the frontier lords, and the new *devşirme* element. Nevertheless, he is thought to have empowered the

[422] Peirce, *The Imperial Harem: Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire*, 126-127, 198, 212-218, 237, 243, 288, 311, 332-333; Börekçi, "Ahmed I," 22-23; idem, "Smallpox in the Harem: Communicable Diseases and the Ottoman Fear of Dynastic Extinction during the Early Sultanate of Ahmed I (r. 1603-17)," 135-152.

[423] Fred M. Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers: At the Origins of Islam* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010), 195-217; Hagen, "From Haggadic Exegesis to Myth: Popular Stories of the Prophets in Islam," 304-316; Moačanin, "Defterology and Mythology: Ottoman Bosnia up the Tanzîmât," 197.

last group the most.[424] If ever there was a patron saint of the *devşirme* element, Mehmed II was it.

The author of *The Laws of the Janissaries* also recognized this in another peculiar story that follows those of the Bosnian Muslims and the people of Trabzon. He writes that Mehmed II was circumcised upon the accession of his father, Murad II (r. 1421-1444, 1446-1451). After the circumcision, a feast was held, and at this feast, a number of *kafir* youth converted to Islam. Because it was customary to provide these new converts with a reward, someone proposed that they join the ranks of the *cebecileri* (armorers) or the *topçuları* (gunners). Instead of joining their ranks, the new converts were taken as *devşirme* recruits. The author notes that this was a gift bestowed by the sultan on special occasions. The story connects the newly-circumcised prince, Mehmed II, with new converts and *devşirme* recruits. For this reason, I argue that his inclusion in the origin myth of Bosnian Muslims is particularly significant. It legitimized Bosnian Muslims and the devşirme element at large.[425]

This origin myth was also informed by growing *cins* (ethno-regional origin) factionalism among the Ottoman elite in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

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[424] El-Hibri, *Reinterpreting Islamic Historiography: Hārūn al-Rashīd and the Narrative of the 'Abbāsid Caliphate*, 11; Braude, "Foundation Myths of the *Millet* System," 69-88; Finkel, *Osman's Dream: The Story of the Ottoman Empire*, 102; İnalcık, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age, 1300*-1600, 77; Haldon, "The Ottoman State and the Question of State Autonomy: Comparative Perspectives," 59-61; Itzkowitz, *Ottoman Empire and Islamic Tradition*, 25-31, 52-53; Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds: The Construction of the Ottoman State*, 146-147, 152.

[425] Akgündüz, *Osmanlı Kanunnâmeleri ve Hukûkî Tahlilleri,* IX. Kitap: *I. Ahmed, I. Mustafa ve II. Osman Devirleri Kanunnâmeleri (1012/1603-1031/1622)*, 155; Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers: at the Origins of Islam*, 195-217.

The formation of *cins*-based interest groups was discussed in the previous chapter. In the mid- to late sixteenth century, elites who hailed from the same region and shared languages, customs, sometimes familial networks, established *intisap* (political clientage) and shared political networks.[426] This continued to fragment the Ottoman elite well into the seventeenth century and influenced the author of *The Laws of the Janissaries*.

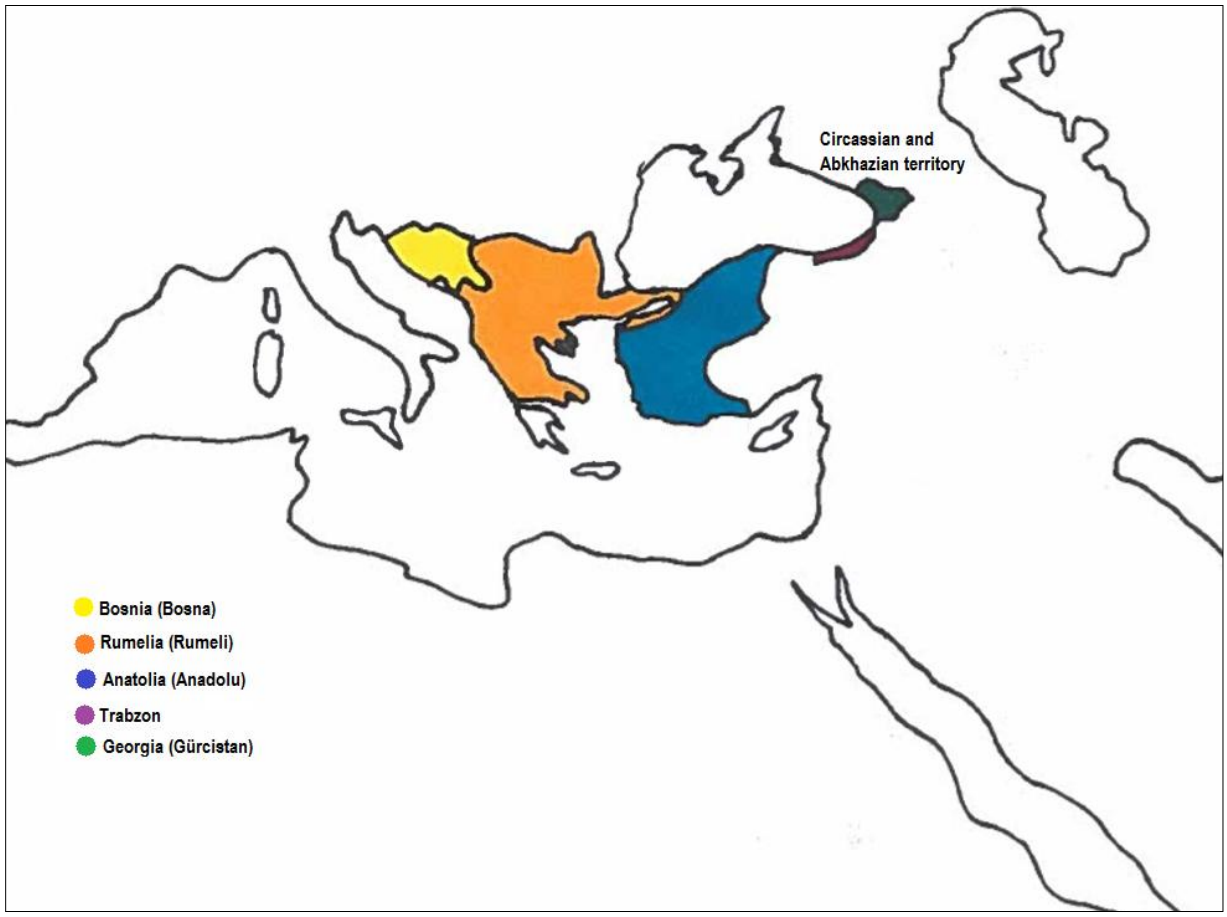
ii. *Cin*s Factionalism

As well as being implicated in the multi-pronged, empire-wide crisis that peaked in the early seventeenth century, the *devşirme* element had to contend with a more pointed challenge. This challenge came from a growing body of non-*devşirme* elite slaves (*mamluk*s) imported into Ottoman territory from the Caucasus. Some were mercenaries while others were captured through warfare or imported as slaves.[427] The tension between these *devşirme* and non-*devşirme* recruits accounts for some of the *cins* factionalism among the Ottoman elite in the early seventeenth century. In some ways, it was a continuation of the antagonism between westerners and easterners noted above. In this case, the *devşirme* element, hailing primarily from the Balkans and western Anatolia, was usually represented by Bosnians,

[426] Kunt, "Ethnic-Regional (Cins) Solidarity in the Seventeenth-Century Ottoman Establishment," 233-239.

[427] Hathaway, "The Evlâd-i ʻArab ('Sons of the Arabs') in Ottoman Egypt: A Rereading," 203-212; idem, "The "Mamluk Breaker" Who Was Really a Kul Breaker: A Fresh Look at Kul Kıran Mehmed Pasha, Governor of Egypt 1607-1611," 102; Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300-1650: The Structure of Power,* 66-67.

Croats, Albanians, and Greeks. The non-*devşirme* "easterners" were represented primarily by Circassians, Abkhazians, and Georgians from the Caucasus.



Map 4: Select eastern and western provinces of the Ottoman Empire

The late sixteenth and the early seventeenth centuries were dominated by grand viziers of western and *devşirme* origin such as the Albanians Koca Sinan Paşa (d. 1596), Yemişci Hasan Paşa (d. 1603), and Nasuh Paşa (term 1611-1614), and the Bosnians Lala

Mehmed Paşa Sokolović (term 1604-1606), Derviş Mehmed Paşa (term 1606), and Kuyucu Murad Paşa (term 1606-1611), to name a few.[428] Lala Mehmed Paşa, cousin of the famous Mehmed Paşa Sokolović, had gained particular notoriety at the time that *The Laws of the Janissaries* was composed. By the start of the early seventeenth century, he had already built an impressive career, serving as the governor of Bosnia (1566-1574), a tutor for a prince, a Janissary commander (1582), and the *beglerbegi* of Rumelia and Anatolia. In 1600, he earned the rank of vizier. In 1601, he became third vizier and the *serdar* (commander) of the Ottoman army on the northwestern front. He was tasked with turning things around in the Long War against the Habsburgs. This was probably because he was experienced and had spent much of his career campaigning along the triple border.[429]

Lala Mehmed Paşa had much success with this task, and by September 1604, the Ottoman army managed to retake Pest (present-day Hungary). In the same year, he was named grand vizier and spearheaded another campaign against the Habsburgs. This campaign was so successful that he managed to place an Ottoman ally, István Bocskai, on the Hungarian throne and plot with him and his nobles to take Vienna in 1605. Much to his

[428] According to Safvetbeg Bašagić, Kuyucu Murad Paşa was Croatian. Some say that he earned his nickname (Kuyucu, Jamar in Bosnian, well- or pit-digger) because he buried his slain enemies in wells. Bašagić claims that he earned the nickname on account of the large pits he dug to bury all of the Celali rebels that he killed. Indeed, Murad Paşa is credited with finally eliminating the Celali threat in Anatolia in the early seventeenth century. Rumor has it that he was poisoned in 1611 by his replacement as grand vizier, the Albanian Nasuh Paşa. For more information, see Bašagić, *Znameniti Hrvati, Bošnjaci i Hercegovci u Turskoj Carevini*, 52; Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300-1650: The Structure of Power,* 75-76.

[429] Müvekkit, *Tarih-i Bosna – Povijest Bosne*, 239-242; Evlija Čelebi, *Putopis: Odlomci o Jugoslovenskim Zemljama*, 472; Bašagić, *Znameniti Hrvati, Bošnjaci i Hercegovci u Turskoj Carevini*, 17, 47-48; Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300-1650: The Structure of Power,* 70-71.

disappointment (and apparently, rage), another Bosnian by the name of Derviş Mehmed Paşa was able to convince Ahmed I (r. 1603-1617) to send Lala Mehmed Paşa to the east and appoint his protégé as *serdar* in Hungary instead. Derviş Mehmed Paşa was a protégé of the Queen Mother, the Bosnian Handan Sultan (d. 1605), so this may explain his influence with the sultan. Rumor has it that he also had Lala Mehmed Paşa poisoned in 1606. He certainly stood to benefit, as he replaced him as grand vizier. Derviş Mehmed Paşa's tenure was not long; he was grand vizier from June to December of 1606, when he was executed on Ahmed I's orders.[430] As I noted earlier in this chapter, it may be that the author of *The Laws of the Janissaries* was reflecting on the political prominence of, and conflict among, Bosnian grand viziers and their factions during his time.[431]

However, the Bosnian and Albanian monopoly on Ottoman politics did not last. The early to mid-seventeenth century saw the ascendancy of "easterners" such as the Georgian Gürcü Mehmed Paşa (term 1622-1623), the Circassian Mehmed Paşa (term 1624-1625), and the Abkhazian Melek Ahmed Paşa (term 1650-1651). This was partially a result of the murder of Osman II (r. 1618-1622), the subject of the next section of this chapter. The

[430] Müvekkit, *Tarih-i Bosna – Povijest Bosne*, 239-242; Evlija Čelebi, *Putopis: Odlomci o Jugoslovenskim Zemljama*, 472; Bašagić, *Znameniti Hrvati, Bošnjaci i Hercegovci u Turskoj Carevini*, 17, 47-48; Börekçi, "Ahmed I,"22-23; Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire: Political and Social Transformation in the Early Modern World*, 108.

[431] It is worth noting that Hafiz Ahmed Paşa, a Bosnian of *devşirme* origin, was one of Ahmed I's close confidants and favorite viziers; For more information, see Börekçi, "Smallpox in the Harem: Communicable Diseases and the Ottoman Fear of Dynastic Extinction during the Early Sultanate of Ahmed I (r. 1603-17),"139.

tension between the "westerners" and "easterners" is visible in the works of contemporary writers who extoll Bosnians and Albanians while deriding easterners.[432]

The Ottoman poet Veysi (1561-1628) grouped the Albanians and Bosnians into a single *cins* of westerners who dominated the Ottoman establishment at the expense of the easterners. According to Kunt, Ottoman writers tended to "deride the 'easterners' ruthlessly." Writing around 1617, the author of *Kitab-i Müstetab* wrote that it was contrary to established custom to recruit peoples from the east such as Turks, Kurds, Roma peoples, Persians, Armenians, and Arabs for the *devşirme* – i.e., geographically "marginal" populations who were not likely to be recruited as *mamluk*s, either, but probably sought opportunities to join the Ottoman military for personal gain. Instead, he recommended that recruits be taken from the western lands of Rumelia (*Rumeli memleketlerine oğlan devşirmesi emr olunurdu*). Aziz Efendi echoed this sentiment. He lamented that the imperial palace had come to be filled with undesirable recruits and urged that they be replaced with Albanians and Bosnians (…*kanun-i kadim üzere Arnavud ve Bosna ve kul cinsi konulmak gerektir*…). Writing around 1639, the Bosnian Ibrahim Peçevi did not address *cins* directly, but he often directed barbs at Circassians.[433]

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[432] Kunt, "Ethnic-Regional (Cins) Solidarity in the Seventeenth-Century Ottoman Establishment," 233-238; Piterberg, *An Ottoman Tragedy: History and Historiography at Play*, 181; Buzov, "Ottoman Perceptions of Bosnia as Reflected in the works of Ottoman Authors Who Visited or Lived in Bosnia," 85-87; Ibrahim Alajbegović Pećevija (Peçevi), *Historija 1520-1572*, Book 1, 45, 81; Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300-1650: The Structure of Power*, 2.

[433] Kunt, "Ethnic-Regional (Cins) Solidarity in the Seventeenth-Century Ottoman Establishment," 233-238; Akgündüz, *Osmanlı Kanunnâmeleri ve Hukûkî Tahlilleri,* IX. Kitap, Vol. 2: *II. Osman Devri*

These anti-Caucasian prejudices dated as far back as the Ottoman conquest of the Mamluk Sultanate in 1517. This was the first time that Balkan and Caucasian populations had come into sustained contact, at least in the Ottoman context, and Ottoman propaganda labeled the predominantly Circassian *mamluk*s as repulsive and contemptuous. Their sultans were derided as the sons of slaves. For this reason, seventeenth-century "westerners" were not strangers to anti-Caucasian prejudices. The prejudices simply took on new life in the early seventeenth century, when *mamluk*s imported from the Caucasus began to challenge the western *devşirme* element. Jane Hathaway notes that the scale on which these *mamluk*s were imported hints at an agreement between the Ottoman state and the peoples of the region. One must wonder if the agreement was similar to the relationship between the *Poturnak*s and their offspring, and the Ottoman state. This challenge must have reinvigorated old prejudices and engendered new ones. Abkhazians were derided as simple-minded and treacherous.[434] Circassians were painted as sly, prideful, unfriendly, and hateful.[435] Georgians were stereotyped as mean and avaricious.[436] These seventeenth-century

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Siyâsetnâmeleri ve Kanunnâmeleri, 599, 603, 625; Aziz Efendi, *Kanûn-nâme-i Sultânî Li 'Azîz Efendi - Aziz Efendi's Book of Sultanic Law and Regulations: An Agenda for Reform by a Seventeenth-Century Ottoman Statesman*, 6-8, 29-31; Howard, "Ottoman Historiography and the Literature of 'Decline' of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," 71; Mustafa Ali, *Mustafā Ali's Counsel for Sultans of 1581 (I): Edition, Translation, Notes*, 81; Ibrahim Alajbegović Pećevija (Peçevi), *Historija 1520-1572*, Book 1, 45, 81.

[434] This is probably because several of the Celali rebel governors such as Abaza Mehmed Paşa (d. 1634) and Abaza Hasan Paşa (d. 1658) were Abkhazian.

[435] Ibrahim Alajbegović Pećevija (Peçevi), *Historija 1520-1572*, Book 1, 45, 81.

[436] Hathaway, "The Evlâd-i 'Arab ('Sons of the Arabs') in Ottoman Egypt: A Rereading," 209-212; Kunt, "Ethnic-Regional (Cins) Solidarity in the Seventeenth-Century Ottoman Establishment," 238-239; Piterberg, *An Ottoman Tragedy: History and Historiography at Play*, 149-150, 181.

stereotypes about Caucasians accorded with the general divide between the westerners and easterners of the Ottoman Empire.

This is not to say that all elite Ottomans subscribed to *cins*-based prejudices. I simply suggest that such divisions existed and contributed to factionalism among the Ottoman elite. Nevertheless, we should heed Robert Irwin's warning about racial solidarity among the Mamluk elite: it was only one part of the struggle for political power, and the Mamluks were not dominated by "tribal atavism or by irrational solidarity bonds." Loyalty, as well as self-interest, crossed ethno-regional lines. As the story of Derviş Mehmed Paşa and Lala Mehmed Paşa demonstrates, there could be rivalries within a particular *cins*. There were also rivalries between western populations such as Bosnians and Albanians. We glean hints of this in Ibrahim Peçevi's history. He refers to a number of Albanian statesmen as spiteful, contrary, arrogant, and hateful, hinting at a Bosnian-Albanian rivalry.[437]

Nevertheless, *cins*-based divisions existed. *Intisap* (political clientage) often formed along ethno-regional lines. The Albanian Köprülü Mehmed Paşa, the scion of the Köprülü family, which produced nine grand viziers, benefited from *intisap* with the Bosnian Gazi Hüsrev Paşa (Ekrem Hüsrev Paşa, Boşnak Hüsrev Paşa, grand vizier from 1628-1631). Mehmed Paşa was born in Ruznik (Albania) in the 1570s. With the help of a *hemşeri* (a

[437] Kunt, "Ethnic-Regional (Cins) Solidarity in the Seventeenth-Century Ottoman Establishment," 233-239; Irwin, *The Middle East in the Middle Ages: The Early Mamluk Sultanate 1250-1382*, 157; Irwin, *The Middle East in the Middle Ages: The Early Mamluk Sultanate 1250-1382*, 92, 154-155; Mustafa Ali, *Mustafā Ali's Counsel for Sultans of 1581 (I): Edition, Translation, Notes*, 56; Mustafa Ali, *Mustafā Ali's Counsel for Sultans of 1581 (II): Edition, Translation, Notes*, 206.

patron of common origin), he was recruited into the *devşirme*. After entering palace service, he became a cook. After graduating, he was given a *timar* (land revenue grant) in Anatolia. With the *intisap* of Gazi Hüsrev Paşa, who was, notably, another statesman of *devşirme* origin, his political career took off. When Gazi Hüsrev Paşa was promoted from *silahdar* (weapons-bearer) to Janissary *ağa* (commander) to grand vizier, Mehmed Paşa served as his treasurer, companion, and adviser. He had enough political acumen to survive Gazi Hüsrev Paşa's fall from grace and execution in 1632, and managed to attach himself to a new Albanian patron.[438]

Bosnians and Hercegovinians also aided one another as they had done in the mid- to late sixteenth century. One example is that of the Bosnian Silahdar Mustafa Paşa (Tuccarzade Mustafa Paşa). The son of a wealthy Sarajevan merchant (Haci Sinan), he served in various Istanbul households before entering palace service as a page and rising to the post of *silahdar* (weapons-bearer). In 1635, he became a vizier and advisor to the sultan. In 1637, he became the governor of Damascus, and in 1641, the *beglerbegi* of Rumelia. His political patronage was essential to the career of the Hercegovinian Nevesinli Salih Paşa (grand vizier, 1645-1647). After Mustafa Paşa's death, Salih Paşa secured the *intisap* of another Bosnian, Rüznameci Ibrahim Efendi. With his help, he entered the imperial palace, serving as *kapıcılar kethüdası* (superintendent of the ushers) and *mirahor* (Master of the Horse). From

[438] Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300-1650: The Structure of Power*, 166; Itzkowitz, *Ottoman Empire and Islamic Tradition*, 77; Kunt, "Ethnic-Regional (Cins) Solidarity in the Seventeenth-Century Ottoman Establishment," 235-239; Finkel, *Osman's Dream: The Story of the Ottoman Empire*, 206-207.

there, he rose to Janissary *ağa* (commander, in 1644), then *başdefterdar* (head finance minister), and finally grand vizier (1645-1647). Salih Paşa was famous for bringing a host of protégés and relatives into palace service, many of whom rose to high posts within the empire.[439]

I suggest that *cins* preferences and solidarity also influenced the writer of *The Laws of the Janissaries*, particularly his articulation of the Bosnian Muslim origin myth. By supporting the recruitment of Bosnian Muslims, he was supporting the western *devşirme* element at large. These westerners were facing growing competition from easterners, who offered an alternative to rebellious *devşirme* recruits. The author likely deployed the origin myth to defend the continued levying of westerners, above all, Bosnians. It would appear that his concern was warranted. During his reign, Osman II (1618-1622) planned to replace the *devşirme* element with troops levied from Anatolia. In 1622, this culminated in a violent reckoning and his execution. Was this the triumph of the *devşirme* element?

[439] Kunt, *The Sultan's Servants: The Transformation of Ottoman Provincial Government, 1550-1650*, 97; Lopašić, "Islamization of the Balkans with Special Reference to Bosnia," 180; Bašagić, *Znameniti Hrvati, Bošnjaci i Hercegovci u Turskoj Carevini*, 57, 67; Varvari Ali Paša, *Rimovana Autobiografija Varvari Ali-Paše,* 13, 94, 103; In his autobiography, Varvari Ali Paşa also notes that he benefited from the help of the Albanian grand vizier Tabanıyassı Mehmed Paşa, who made him the governor of Maraş, and the Bosnian Sultanzade Mehmed Paşa (great-grandchild of Rüstem Paşa and Mihrimah Sultan), who made him the governor of Bosnia.

III. A Reckoning: The Execution of Osman II

In 1622, deteriorating relationships between Osman II and his *kapı kulları* led to a rebellion. His reform projects, including his plan to reform the *devşirme* and supplement the Janissary corps with a new army from Anatolia, led to his deposition and execution. The situation prior to these events remains somewhat murky, but Gabriel Piterberg has identified three actions on the part of the sultan that were meaningful and upsetting not just to his troops but also to contemporary Ottoman historians.[440]

One problem was Osman II's unsuccessful 1621 Polish campaign, during which his relationship with the *kapı kulları* deteriorated. There are conflicting accounts of the campaign. Some, clearly including the sultan, ascribed the failure to the incompetence of the military. Others claimed that the military was uninspired due to the sultan's poor attitude. The Janissary corps seems to have opposed the campaign altogether. The *kullar* were also enraged at his threats to pay only a portion of the troops, to withhold monetary campaign rewards, and to conduct an inspection of the Janissary corps.[441]

The second problem was Osman II's decision to adopt an austere persona, eschewing the customary sultanic displays of imperial magnificence by wearing plain clothing and forgoing jewelry. Apparently, this was all-around uninspiring. However, he was most hated

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[440] Piterberg, *An Ottoman Tragedy: History and Historiography at Play*, 19-24; Hathaway, "The Evlâd-i 'Arab ('Sons of the Arabs') in Ottoman Egypt: A Rereading," 211-212.

[441] Piterberg, *An Ottoman Tragedy: History and Historiography at Play*, 21-23; For more information on the Polish campaign, see Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300-1650: The Structure of Power*, 77-78; Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire: Political and Social Transformation in the Early Modern World*, 120, 131-140.

for his raids on the taverns and coffeehouses of Istanbul frequented by *kapı kulları*. Those who were found in the establishments were punished, creating an atmosphere of mutual mistrust and animosity. According to Piterberg, the *kapı kulları* thought that, "the sultan was tormenting them for no reason apart from his aversion to them."[442]

Osman II's plan for reform may not have involved the complete abolition of the *devşirme* and the Janissary corps, but his troops feared this would be the case. There were also rumors that the sultan intended to transfer the imperial capital from Istanbul to Bursa, Damascus, or Cairo. These things may seem unrelated, but moving the capital was highly symbolic. In the mid-fifteenth century, when Mehmed II moved his capital from Edirne to Istanbul, it signaled a significant shift for the Ottoman dynasty. It solidified Mehmed II's position as emperor and sultan, the head of a centralizing state and the heir of the Roman Empire. Mehmed II favored and empowered the *devşirme* element. I even referred to him as the patron saint of this element. In that sense, Istanbul was both his city and the city of this *devşirme* element. Moving the Ottoman capital nearly two centuries later to a city in Asia, or even Africa, must have registered as a slap in the face for the westerners. It would have shifted the core of the empire from western Anatolia and the Balkans, where *devşirme* troops

[442] Piterberg, *An Ottoman Tragedy: History and Historiography at Play*, 19-24.

were recruited, to the east, making it much less of a Balkan empire and much more of an "Asiatic" empire.[443]

Sometime around May 18/20, 1622, the sultan ordered that his belongings be transferred to the Anatolian side of Istanbul. This included his imperial pavilion, tents, a small number of Janissaries and cavalrymen loyal to him, and possibly also the imperial treasury. He proposed to cross the Bosphorus under the pretext of going on pilgrimage, the first sultan ever to attempt this, but many believed he was actually making his move to Asia. This seems to have been the last straw, and a rebellion broke out. Piterberg estimates that at least a thousand *kapı kulları* participated. Unarmed Janissaries and cavalrymen first assembled at Süleymaniye Mosque and marched to the hippodrome and the Janissary barracks. They wrote a petition demanding that the sultan give up his plans and punish those who had led him astray. They even obtained a *fetva* (legal opinion) from Esad Efendi, the *şeyhülislam* and Osman II's father-in-law, supporting their cause. After receiving this petition, the sultan abandoned his plan and turned back, but he refused to surrender his advisors. This served to prolong the rebellion.[444]

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[443] Hathaway, "The "Mamluk Breaker" Who Was Really a Kul Breaker: A Fresh Look at Kul Kıran Mehmed Pasha, Governor of Egypt 1607-1611," 102; Haldon, "The Ottoman State and the Question of State Autonomy: Comparative Perspectives," 59-61; Itzkowitz, *Ottoman Empire and Islamic Tradition,* 25-31; 52-53; Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds: The Construction of the Ottoman State*, 146-149, 152.

[444] Piterberg, *An Ottoman Tragedy: History and Historiography at Play*, 22-27; Finkel, *Osman's Dream: The Story of the Ottoman Empire,* 200; Mithat Sertoğlu, "Tuği Tarihi," *Türk Tarih Kurumu Belleten* 11, no. 41-44 (1947): 493; Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire: Political and Social Transformation in the Early Modern World*, 125, 153-174.

The rebels armed themselves, reassembled, and marched to Topkapı Palace. The sultan responded by surrendering his advisors, all of whom were executed. The rebels then began to hatch a plan to enthrone his uncle Mustafa I, who had held the throne briefly before Osman II's accession. The *ulema* talked them out of doing so, assuring them that the sultan would heed their demands. In the meantime, the sultan hid in the home of the Janissary *ağa* (commander) and planned to bribe the rebels. Ultimately, both he and the Janissary *ağa* were captured and executed.[445] The rebels had committed regicide.

i. Mixed Reactions

This was a polarizing event, and a number of individuals took rather surprising stances. The rebels were mainly members of the Janissary corps and the imperial cavalry, but they had sympathizers and aid from *kapı kulları* in the imperial palace and the *ulema*. *Şeyhülislam* Esad Efendi initially attempted to dissuade the sultan from his plan to go on pilgrimage. He issued a *fetva* advising that he see to the condition of his people instead.[446]

However, some *kapı kulları* like the *bostancıbaşı* (head of the Gardener corps) and the Janissary *ağa* supported Osman II. It was the *bostancıbaşı* and his gardeners who conducted

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[445] Piterberg, *An Ottoman Tragedy: History and Historiography at Play*, 25-27; Caroline Finkel, *Osman's Dream: The Story of the Ottoman Empire,* 67-68; Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire: Political and Social Transformation in the Early Modern World*, 167-174.

[446] Finkel, *Osman's Dream: The Story of the Ottoman Empire,* 200; Piterberg, *An Ottoman Tragedy: History and Historiography at Play*, 22-24; Sertoğlu, "Tuği Tarihi," 495-498; Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire: Political and Social Transformation in the Early Modern World*, 166, 171.

tavern and coffeehouse raids throughout Istanbul that infuriated other *kapı kulları*. Hüseyin Tuği writes that when the rebels entered the imperial palace in search of Osman II, they feared encountering these armed gardeners who doubled as the imperial bodyguard and police. Abaza Mehmed Paşa (d. 1634), the Abkhazian governor of Erzurum, purported to avenge the sultan by marching to Istanbul with an army of *sekban*s, the very mercenaries with whom Osman II may have planned to supplant his existing troops.[447]

Hüseyin Tuği himself supported the rebels. He was the son of a Janissary and followed in his father's footsteps. He campaigned in Anatolia and along the Ottoman-Safavid frontier. At some point, he secured the *intisap* of the Janissary *ağa* (commander) who placed him in an elite unit that escorted the sultan on outings. He retired as an imperial bodyguard (*solak*). As a pensioned veteran, he had reason to be angry with Osman II, who cut veteran pensions. Tuği witnessed the rebellion and wrote about it during the reign of Murad IV (1623-1640). He sympathized with and defended the rebels.[448]

Tuği wrote that the rebels cooperated with men of law and men of religion while the sultan and his cronies deviated from Ottoman custom.[449] He asked the sultan, "Was it with *sekban* (mercenaries) that your forefathers conquered provinces?" For Tuği, the rebellion

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[447] Sertoğlu, "Tuği Tarihi," 497; Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300-1650: The Structure of Power*, 152; Piterberg, *An Ottoman Tragedy: History and Historiography at Play*, 19; Hathaway, "The Evlâd-i ʿArab ('Sons of the Arabs') in Ottoman Egypt: A Rereading," 212; Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire: Political and Social Transformation in the Early Modern World*, 104, 162, 173-174.

[448] Piterberg, *An Ottoman Tragedy: History and Historiography at Play*, 27, 45-73; Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire: Political and Social Transformation in the Early Modern World*, 163.

[449] Baki Tezcan, "The 1622 Military Rebellion in Istanbul: A Historiographical Journey," in *Mutiny and Rebellion in the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Jane Hathaway (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 2002), 28-49.

clearly coalesced around a struggle been the established *devşirme* element, with whom Osman II's predecessors had conquered provinces, and new irregular troops who had openly challenged the Ottoman state and dynasty earlier in the seventeenth century in the Celalbi rebellions. Tuği reminded his readers that the *devşirme* element was instrumental in building the Ottoman Empire, but also that it was a part of Ottoman custom. The sultan had violated this custom.[450]

Others took a more neutral stance or condemned the rebels. Ibrahim Peçevi seems to have had a positive view of the sultan and wrote that he was dethroned violently and, after his death, reached the highest level of heaven. His recollection of the rebellion seems mostly devoid of blame, but he seems to have viewed the sultan more favorably than his executioners.[451] Varvari Ali Paşa took a more pointed stance. In his 1640 autobiography, he speaks well of Osman II, implying that he was one of his favorites and saying that they often hunted together. He initially won his favor by jumping over a very large pit with his horse, which earned him passage to the 1621 Battle of Hotin as Osman II's battalion commander. Ali Paşa graduated from the palace as an imperial cavalryman and left to serve in Damascus before the rebellion.[452] He describes it in this way:

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[450] Piterberg, *An Ottoman Tragedy: History and Historiography at Play*, 27, 45-73; Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire: Political and Social Transformation in the Early Modern World*, 141.

[451] Piterberg, *An Ottoman Tragedy: History and Historiography at Play*, 107; Ibrahim Alajbegović Pećevija (Peçevi), *Historija 1520-1572*, Book 2, 293, 321.

[452] Varvari Ali Paša, *Rimovana Autobiografija Varvari Ali-Paše*, 9-11, 77-103; Osman II was apparently very fond of horses, so Ali Paşa's stunt may have been especially impressive to him. For more information, see Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire: Political and Social Transformation in the Early Modern World*, 118.

And in that year, while I stayed in Damascus,
Evil days befell Istanbul….
The kinds of trickery invented and used
Hadn't been seen in the whole wide world, from one end to another….
I learned of the condition created by the *sıpahi*s.
I left my way of life and went to work.
I withdrew and stopped being a *sıpahi*,
For my service, I received 50 *akçe* from the *şah* [i.e., the sultan].
After that, I wished to go to Egypt,
And went there as a Janissary *ağa*."[453]

His coverage is brief but clear. He blamed his own class of imperial cavalrymen for the rebellion and temporarily retired from service because of it. He seems to have been rather disturbed by the incident.

Perspectives on the rebellion clearly varied among the elite. Some condemned the rebels and eulogized the sultan, while some took a more neutral stance. Others condemned the sultan for his violation of Ottoman custom. They blamed him for turning away from those who had ensured the military successes of his predecessors. Yet, how was the rebellion understood on the ground by Ottoman non-elites? Aga Dede's account provides one perspective.

ii. Aga Dede on Osman II

Aga Dede was a relatively unknown Bosnian writer who served as a *dizdar* (fortress warden), *imam* and *hatib* (preacher) in Dobor Grad, a small town along the northern

[453] Varvari Ali Paša, *Rimovana Autobiografija Varvari Ali-Paše*, 10, 84-87.

Ottoman-Habsburg border. His ancestors were Janissary *kulları* (slaves, implying *devşirme* recruits) in the service of Mehmed II (r. 1444-1446, 1451-1481). By the early seventeenth century, the family had a long history of military service along the frontier. Aga Dede was not high in rank, but he had connections with high-ranking officials such Osman Efendi, the Bosnian *defterdar* (provincial director of finance) and Ibrahim Beg, the governor-general.[454]

Aga Dede's account of the 1622 rebellion is all the more interesting because of his relative obscurity. He professes to be self-educated as a matter of necessity because he was raised on the frontier, far from the urban centers of the empire. Nevertheless, Osman Sokolović points out that Aga Dede certainly knew Ottoman Turkish and perhaps even Persian. He had an active cultural life, owned and valued books, and wrote frequently.[455] He was also affiliated with a Sufi order, possibly a branch of the Halvetis or the Bektaşis. The title "Dede" implies that he was a *şeyh* (Sufi sheikh).[456] He wrote about the rebellion and execution barely a year after it occurred, sometime between February and August 1623.[457] It is likely that he heard details of the events from his higher-ranking patrons, so to some

[454] Sokolović, "Pjesnik Aga-dede iz Dobor-grada o svome zavičaju i pogibiji Osmana II: O Jednom Autografu Gazijine Biblioteke," 5-34; Handžić, "Dokumenat o Prvom Službenom Popisu Husrev-begova Vakufa iz 1604 Godine," 3-18.

[455] Sokolović, "Pjesnik Aga-dede iz Dobor-grada o svome zavičaju i pogibiji Osmana II: O Jednom Autografu Gazijine Biblioteke," 5-34; Handžić, "Dokumenat o Prvom Službenom Popisu Husrev-begova Vakufa iz 1604 Godine," 3-18.

[456] Sokolović, "Pjesnik Aga-dede iz Dobor-grada o svome zavičaju i pogibiji Osmana II: O Jednom Autografu Gazijine Biblioteke," 5-34; Aga Dede's teacher was a Hasan Efendi who moved around the frontier frequently and participated in the 1566 Siege of Szigetvár.

[457] We know this because Aga Dede ends his work with an encomium for the Albanian grand vizier, Mere Hüseyin Paşa, who served from February to August 1623.

extent, his standpoints may be partially theirs. Nevertheless, Aga Dede was clearly a learned man, and he made his perspective on the events clear.

Aga Dede was a conservative in the sense that he was of the established *devşirme* element. His family had been associated with the Janissary corps for generations. It is not surprising, then, that he sides with the rebels and paints Osman II as incapable, greedy, unjust, and careless. According to him, the world was simply too small for the haughty sultan.[458]

Aga Dede begins his account with Osman II's 1621 Polish campaign. He condemns this campaign as foolhardy and writes that the sultan embarked on it against the advice of his viziers, looking for a fight. He explains that campaigning in Poland was horrendously difficult: the land was hard to maneuver in, there was no food for the troops and their horses, and it was difficult to transport supplies. He adds that the sultan exacted severe taxes from the populace to prepare for this campaign. Despite the fact that he did not know how to wage war, he says, he refused to take the advice of those who did.[459]

Going into the campaign, neither the Janissaries nor the cavalrymen wanted to fight, as they were provided with neither food nor incentive. When the campaign ended in a

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[458] Sokolović, "Pjesnik Aga-dede iz Dobor-grada o svome zavičaju i pogibiji Osmana II: O Jednom Autografu Gazijine Biblioteke," 5-34.

[459] Sokolović, "Pjesnik Aga-dede iz Dobor-grada o svome zavičaju i pogibiji Osmana II: O Jednom Autografu Gazijine Biblioteke," 5-34; Indeed, at 16, Osman II was the youngest Ottoman sultan to lead a military campaign. For more information, see Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire: Political and Social Transformation in the Early Modern World*, 115, 120.

stalemate, the sultan did not greet or praise his troops. Instead, he was angry and bent on revenge. According to Aga Dede, his passions overtook his common sense, and he became unjust and unlikeable. He planned to build a new army and move the capital to Egypt or Damascus with the help of his crooked entourage.[460]

When Osman II attempted to cross the Bosphorus on the pretext of going on pilgrimage, an informant immediately notified the military. They and the *ulema* sprang into action. The *ulema* visited the sultan and told him that the move was unacceptable and unprecedented. The sultan responded by tearing up their *fetva*. According to Aga Dede, this motivated the rebels to take up arms. He asks a telling question at this point in the narrative: How had the old warriors wronged the sultan?[461]

After the sultan refused to surrender his entourage, Aga Dede relates that the rebels resolved to find Mustafa I. He was found on his deathbed, yet still wise and strong. After rescuing and fawning over him, people cried and cheered, Mustafa's mother most of all. Osman II finally surrendered his entourage and hid in the Janissary *ocak* (barracks). His plan was to persuade the Janissaries to join him.[462]

In the meantime, the rebels guarded Mustafa I in the Orta Cami, a mosque associated with the Janissary corps. They ruminated on their plans and fears. What if Osman II

[460] Sokolović, "Pjesnik Aga-dede iz Dobor-grada o svome zavičaju i pogibiji Osmana II: O Jednom Autografu Gazijine Biblioteke," 5-34.

[461] Ibid.

[462] Ibid.

succeeded in escaping to the Anatolian side? What would happen then? Aga Dede notes that the Anatolian side was sympathetic to the sultan, and if he succeeded in escaping over the Bosphorus, there would be bloodshed between the two sides. This part of the narrative evokes an east-west dichotomy and antagonism. Aga Dede ends the section by noting that Mustafa I calmed the worried soldiers.[463]

The events that followed are told rather confusingly. The sultan's entourage take refuge with the Janissary *ağa* (commander) and attempt to pacify the troops with bribes. The exchange angers the rebels further, resulting in the sultan's representative getting a *hançer* (dagger) to the face and being hacked to pieces. After this, Osman II and his entourage are captured. Osman II appeals to the troops by telling them that his only fault was following the advice of his tutor. His pleas are ignored, and he is taken to meet with Mustafa I. The two talk and Mustafa I chastises Osman II. He tells him that he overturned the laws of the House of Osman and asks why he strayed from the ways of his predecessors. Osman II is then jailed.[464]

The rest of Aga Dede's account is fragmented because of missing pages. We can make out that a new grand vizier, the Bosnian Kara Davud Paşa, came to power. However, Aga Dede claims that he was a malicious man who allowed Osman II to be strangled. In this roundabout way, he reveals that the sultan was indeed executed. It may have been a way of

[463] Sokolović, "Pjesnik Aga-dede iz Dobor-grada o svome zavičaju i pogibiji Osmana II: O Jednom Autografu Gazijine Biblioteke," 5-34.

[464] Ibid.

expiating guilt for the regicide. He ends with a prayer for Osman II, asking the reader to do the same. He notes that it was, after all, during his reign that he received his salary.[465]

Throughout his account, Aga Dede supports and defends the rebels. This may be because he was of the established *devşirme* element with a long family history in the Janissary corps. He may have also been echoing the sentiments of his patrons. His argument against Osman II and his defense of the rebels are clear. Osman II had a number of poor qualities and missteps. He was not a military man, and he did not look after his military. He failed to take good advice and was swayed by malicious advice.

His worst mistake was shunning, offending, and attempting to replace his existing troops, or as he calls them, the old warriors. Much like Hüseyin Tuği, Aga Dede he implies that the sultan violated a fundamental tenet of the Ottoman dynasty, overturning the laws of the House of Osman and going against the customs of his predecessors.[466] The implication is that the long-established relationship between the *devşirme* element and the dynasty was sacred and inviolable. The conclusion takes up this relationship.

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[465] Sokolović, "Pjesnik Aga-dede iz Dobor-grada o svome zavičaju i pogibiji Osmana II: O Jednom Autografu Gazijine Biblioteke," 5-34.

[466] Tezcan, "The 1622 Military Rebellion in Istanbul: A Historiographical Journey," 28-49; Piterberg, *An Ottoman Tragedy: History and Historiography at Play*, 27, 45-73; Sokolović, "Pjesnik Aga-dede iz Dobor-grada o svome zavičaju i pogibiji Osmana II: O Jednom Autografu Gazijine Biblioteke," 5-34.

IV. Conclusion: The Guardians of the State

Why did the rebels go as far as executing Osman II, a member of the dynasty to which they had sworn undying loyalty? Caroline Finkel suggests that the troops must have felt a "profound unease" at being rejected and nearly supplemented by the sultan. Given the diversity of their supporters, this unease must have been shared by others. It went beyond the threat to their livelihoods. The troops saw themselves as guardians of the Ottoman state. In their eyes, the sultan was attempting to undermine its foundational pillars. As Finkel puts it, "Individual sultans were expendable, but the continuity inherent in the centrality of the Ottoman dynasty was an article of faith."[467] The rebels questioned the actions of one wayward sultan, not the centrality of the Ottoman dynasty.

By the early seventeenth century, the *devşirme* was, from all appearances, entrenched as an integral part of the Ottoman Empire's institutional underpinnings. *Devşirme* elements had helped expand, defend, and administer the empire for more than two centuries. Functionaries of *devşirme* origin, such as *Poturnak oğlanları*, had carved out a space for themselves within the Ottoman state and elite. Osman II's actions threatened to erase that space. He threatened to actualize the *devşirme* element's fears, to uproot and supplement

[467] Finkel, *Osman's Dream: The Story of the Ottoman Empire*, 201, 234; Abou-El-Haj, *The 1703 Rebellion and the Structure of Ottoman Politics*, 1-8; Piterberg, *An Ottoman Tragedy: History and Historiography at Play*, 23-27,45-73; Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire: Political and Social Transformation in the Early Modern World*, 117, 163-170.

them with new troops from Anatolia. In removing that threat, his execution served the immediate political interests of the *devşirme* element.

However, it would be wrong and simplistic to consider this as the ultimate climax of the "near absolute power" of the *kapı kulları* over the Ottoman dynasty.[468] Again, the rebels questioned the actions of one wayward sultan, not the centrality of the dynasty. In fact, their actions actually reinforced their deep investment in the dynasty. How so? Cemal Kafadar has written that the creation of the Janissary corps and the *kapı kulları*, essentially the *devşirme*, was a way of creating "an institution of artificial kinship."[469] Over the course of the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries, products of the *devşirme* began to be considered and to consider themselves guardians and extensions of the Ottoman imperial household. By the early seventeenth century, a deep and particular kinship and reciprocity had formed between this *devşirme* element and the Ottoman dynasty. Contemporary sources attest to the fact that this relationship was perceived as customary, sacred, and long-established.[470] Osman II threatened to sever the bond. By executing him, the rebels were not asserting their

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[468] Rifa'at Ali Abou-El-Haj, *The 1703 Rebellion and the Structure of Ottoman Politics* (Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 1984), 1-8; Shaw, "The Ottoman View of the Balkans," 67-70; Stanford Shaw has gone as far as suggesting that the "political triumph of the *devşirme* class," which he dates to the late sixteenth century, was responsible for the decline of the empire, the breakdown of the financial and administrative system, and the disintegration of administrative efficiency and honesty.

[469] Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds: The Construction of the Ottoman State*, 17, 112-114, 139-144, 147-148.

[470] Tezcan, "The 1622 Military Rebellion in Istanbul: A Historiographical Journey," 28-49; Piterberg, *An Ottoman Tragedy: History and Historiography at Play*, 27, 45-73; Sokolović, "Pjesnik Aga-dede iz Dobor-grada o svome zavičaju i pogibiji Osmana II: O Jednom Autografu Gazijine Biblioteke," 5-34; Hathaway, "Introduction," 7-10; 23; Haldon, "The Ottoman State and the Question of State Autonomy: Comparative Perspectives," 61.

absolute power over the Ottoman dynasty. They were actually reinforcing their inseparability from it. In other words, they were protecting these artificial kinship ties.

CONCLUSION:
THE NEW OTTOMANS

The Bosnian king Tvrtko II (r. 1404-1409, 1420-1443) recognized Ottoman suzerainty in the early fifteenth century. By the end of that century, the Kingdom of Bosnia and semi-independent Hercegovina had already fallen to the Ottomans. Within a hundred years, Bosnia was not only a crucial frontier province but had been elevated to a super-province in its own right and was considered a part of the Ottoman heartland. I have attempted to elucidate this transition from an independent, medieval Christian kingdom to a predominantly Muslim, key super-province of the Ottoman Empire. I have examined how Bosnia and Hercegovina, as well as some Bosnians and Hercegovinians, became Ottoman. I have also shed light on how these Ottoman Bosnians and Hercegovinians redefined what it meant to be Ottoman in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In that sense, this dissertation is part of a larger effort to understand how early modern empires incorporated their subjects and how these subjects shaped their empires.

The provinces of Bosnia and Hercegovina, later the super-province of Bosnia, were important to the Ottomans for a variety of reasons. They provided the state with manpower as well as essential resources such as silver. They were integral to regional trade, housing a number of vibrant commercial centers that connected the Ottoman Empire to the neighboring Republic of Dubrovnik (Ragusa), the Venetians, and the Habsburgs. Given that

both provinces formed a part of the northwestern frontier, Bosnia and Hercegovina were also of great military importance to the Ottomans. They served as strategic staging areas for military offensives across the *triplex confinium*, the Venetian, Habsburg, and Ottoman triple border. With all of this in mind, we should not be surprised that the Ottomans fought for decades to conquer, secure, and revitalize this region.

Even prior to the Ottoman conquest, however, the Bosnian king and nobles began losing subjects to the Ottomans, who offered a viable political alternative, a better quality of life, and a degree of order and stability. The Ottomans actively cultivated the support and aid of the kingdom's populace. Without it, conquest would have been an even lengthier and more difficult process. Native Bosnian and Hercegovinian allies were therefore crucial to the Ottoman conquest of the region in the latter half of the fifteenth century. The *Poturnak*s, Ottomanized Bosnian and Hercegovinian Slavs of all social classes, were one group among these early allies who accepted Ottoman subjecthood and came to serve the Ottoman state.

The gradual Ottomanization of these *Poturnak*s involved not just a conversion to Islam, which at the time was not a requirement for joining the Ottomans, but service to the Ottoman state and sultan, the adoption of Ottoman culture and customs, the formation of patron-client ties (*intisap*) with members of the Ottoman elite, and, in some cases, the inclusion of their progeny in the *devşirme*. This group of Muslim *devşirme* recruits were known as the *Poturnak oğlanları*, and their access to this cornerstone of an Ottoman

institution seems to have been granted as a special privilege. While their parents were rewarded for their service and loyalty by serving in the Ottoman military and administration, *Poturnak oğlanları* were given the opportunity to become *kapı kulları*, the elite slaves of the sultan and the highest-ranking officials in the Ottoman Empire.

I fully agree with Nenad Moačanin that there was likely no special preference for Bosnian Muslims for the *devşirme* in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.[471] Instead, this was probably a practical arrangement that stood to benefit the Ottomans and their early allies in the Kingdom of Bosnia who gradually became Ottomans themselves. In that sense, the levying of *Poturnak oğlanları* seemed to function as a complement to what we know of as the "classical" *devşirme*, which recruited non-Muslim subjects from western Anatolia and the Balkans. This specialized levy enabled the Ottoman state to incorporate certain Bosnians and Hercegovinians, but it also granted these Bosnians and Hercegovinians access to the Ottoman bureaucratic, military, and social apparatus. In that sense, the *devşirme* acted as a tool of integration and socialization used not just by the Ottoman state but also its subjects. It bound state and subject, gradually creating artificial but powerful kinship ties between the two.

At times, these ties of kinship were so powerful that they became restrictive. This certainly seems to have been the case in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, when products of the *devşirme*, many of them natives of Bosnia and Hercegovina and some

[471] Moačanin, "Defterology and Mythology: Ottoman Bosnia up the Tanzîmât," 190-191.

of them *Poturnak oğlanları*, monopolized Ottoman politics. They benefitted from familial, ethno-regional, and political clientage (*intisap*) ties with one another, constructing expansive and powerful political networks. They and their clients even generated their own mythology which justified their ascendancy and dominance over Ottoman politics, and answered their critics, who were growing in number.

The Laws of the Janissaries is a piece of this self-generated mythology, and it should be analyzed in the context of the multi-faceted, empire-wide crisis faced by the Ottoman state in the early seventeenth century. *Kullar* of western and *devşirme* origin were implicated in numerous military rebellions aimed at the Ottoman court. There was growing discomfort with this element. Some thought that they had overstepped their authority and become too powerful and uncontrollable. The author of *The Laws of the Janissaries* mounted a defense of the *devşirme*, arguing for reform as opposed to abolition. As a proponent of Bosnians among the Ottoman elite, he created an illustrious origin myth for the *Poturnak oğlanları*. This origin myth historicized, legitimized, and celebrated this powerful group within the Ottoman elite and explained why they held privileged status at a time of crisis and antagonism.

Yet, despite ambivalence and antagonism towards products of the *devşirme*, this element still succeeded in reconstituting what it meant to be Ottoman in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century. It did so partially by producing its own mythology, its own

hype, portraying products of the *devşirme* as the new and true Ottomans. Simply put, in the sixteenth century and up to the early seventeenth century, being Ottoman came to mean either being a product of or being closely associated with products of the *devşirme*. The *devşirme* element had successfully carved out a space for itself in the Ottoman state and elite. When Osman II threatened to erase that space, the *kullar* reminded everyone in the most visceral way that the kinship between the state and its guardians, no matter how artificial, was inviolable. As I have argued in this dissertation, rather than asserting their absolute power over the Ottoman dynasty, the *kullar* were actually expressing their inseparability from it.

In some ways, however, Osman II's murder had the opposite effect. It brought even more scrutiny to products of the *devşirme* and contributed to the ascendancy of Caucasian statesmen of *mamluk* origin. In the seventeenth century, these statesmen rivalled and often exceeded the power of western *devşirme* recruits. At some point in the eighteenth century, the devşirme was abandoned altogether. Yet, myths about it and its products survived even into the early nineteenth century. I was particularly surprised to come across elements of these myths in records from 1826. Here, I refer to an episode briefly mentioned in the Introduction about the reception of Mahmud II's (r. 1808-1839) abolition of the Janissary corps. The Janissary corps cannot and should not be conflated with the *devşirme*, but these

records hint at lasting associations between Bosnians and *devşirme*-related services to the Ottoman state.

The abolition of the Janissary corps was widely opposed in Bosnia, and numerous communications were exchanged between Ottoman officials in the super-province and Istanbul discussing the matter and the possibility of Bosnia's exemption. A letter written by the Janissary *ağa* (commander) in Bosnia at the time, Rusçuklu Ali Ağa, stands out in particular. It is evident from his name that he was a native not of Bosnia but of Ruse in Bulgaria, yet he seems to have assumed the voice of Ottoman Bosnians. After noting that the imperial edict regarding the abolition of the corps had not been accepted in Bosnia, he insisted that Bosnia would continue to adhere to the old laws and hoped that an exemption could be made. What could justify such an exemption? According to Ali Ağa, it was the fact that, for nearly three hundred years, Bosnians had served as grand viziers of the empire and the notables of their native regions.[472]

A similar petition for exemption was composed by members of the Janissary corps in Bosnia. In it, the petitioners invoke Bosnia's three hundred years-long history of elite palace and military service to the Ottoman state. Specifically, they mention service in Janissary regiments, as sergeants in the sultan's bodyguard, and service as standard bearers.[473] All three positions carry clear associations with the Janissary corps and *kapı kulları*, and by extension,

[472] Aličić, *Pokret za Autonomiju Bosne od 1831. do 1832. Godine*, 158-167.

[473] Ibid., 163; The Janissaries refer to *hasekilik* (service in the sultan's bodyguard), *turnacılık* (service in Janissary regiments), and *alemdarlık* (service as standard bearers).

with the *devşirme*. The credibility of their petition rested on this claim to a venerable history of service to the Ottoman state. The response to some of these petitions is particularly telling. Certain officials bemoaned the fact that Bosnians thought that they were the most important Muslims in the whole empire and always asked for exemptions. What's worse, they complained, they nearly always got them.[474] It seems that the myths, as well as the criticism, could still be felt in the early nineteenth century.

I. Oriental Zombies and the "Classical" Devşirme

At first glance, the existence and levying of *Poturnak oğlanları* seems like a peculiarity, an aberration from the "classical" *devşirme*. After all, this practice was a deviation from the usual standards of the institution, which levied mainly Christian subjects and, in accordance with Islamic law, did not, at least in theory, permit the enslavement of Muslims. In fact, the *Poturnak oğlanları* upend our understanding of this "classical," Christian-targeted *devşirme*. Their existence hints at the possibility that the *devşirme* was neither rigid nor static. If we fixate on the levying of non-Muslim subjects as the accepted norm, then the inclusion of Bosnian and Hercegovinian Muslims seems like an abnormality. Yet, if we consider their inclusion as a practical arrangement and a regional variation in *devşirme* practice, then it seems less aberrational. Here, it is particularly important to note that Bosnians may not have been the only Muslims included in the *devşirme*. Numerous

[474] Aličić, *Pokret za Autonomiju Bosne od 1831. do 1832. Godine*, 158-167.

records suggest that the practice was extended to Albanian Muslims, and this warrants further study.

Lastly, in this dissertation, I stress what Robert Irwin emphasized when he wrote about the *mamluk*s: that products of the *devşirme* were not anonymous, lobotomized, or isolated "Oriental zombies."[475] Despite being taken from their native lands and thrust onto the imperial career path, they were not completely removed from their native regions or their familial networks. This assumption has precluded us for too long from exploring the possibility that *devşirme* recruits were essential in recruiting for Ottoman service. They could and did cultivate and benefit from their native networks. Like any other persons in history, they were multivalent.

This dynamism comes through in a variety of sources, but in my opinion, nowhere as poignantly as in the autobiography of Varvari Ali Paşa, a Bosnian *devşirme* recruit levied during the reign of Mehmed III (r. 1595-1603). He discusses his recruitment for the *devşirme* briefly but candidly, revealing both gratefulness and helpless disillusionment:

> I was the son of a poor man,
> Poorest among people.
> I wandered the valley of cries,
> And I did not know in what state I would exit it.
> In his goodness and mercy, His Highness
> Sent me him who would lead me to the right path.
> While Mehmed Han [Mehmed III, r. 1595-1603] sat on the throne,
> He ordered one day that boys be collected.
> And they took me, helpless and in tears,

[475] Irwin, *The Middle East in the Middle Ages: The Early Mamluk Sultanate 1250-1382*, 62-70, 154-155.

I did not know what would happen to me.[476]

His discussion of his recruitment is brief but frank. It reveals an honest interplay of emotions, yet Varvari Ali Paşa does not dwell on nor does he seem particularly preoccupied with the subject. Instead, the rest of his autobiography is devoted to his training, his exciting and illustrious career, and some of the troubles he and his empire faced. He comes across as a staunch Ottoman, but he does not shy away from admitting that being appointed as the governor of his homeland deeply moved him.

> I returned there [the *eyalet* of Bosnia] after forty-three years,
> And I exclaimed, "My wish is granted."
> I truly felt his excellent mercy,
> And I forgot all earthly suffering.
> If God's mercy pours out on a slave,
> A shepherd becomes the governor of a province.[477]

Varvari Ali Paşa does not end there, and neither did his career. He ends with a prayer for Ibrahim I (r. 1640-1648), the Ottoman state, and the Ottoman dynasty.[478] As for his career, he was appointed to a number of governorships before he was executed for rebelling

[476] Varvari Ali Paša, *Rimovana Autobiografija Varvari Ali-Paše,* 76-77; 9. Ja sam bio sin jednog siromaha, Najubogijeg medju ljudima. 10. Lutao sam dolinom plača, A nisam znao kakav ću iz nje izaći. 11. U svojoj dobroti i milosti Svevišnji, Posla mi onoga ko će me izvesti na pravi put. 12. Dok je sedeo na prestolu sultan Mehmed han, Naredio je jednoga dana da se sakupe dečaci. 14. I mene uplakanog i bespomoćnog uzeše, Nisam znao šta će biti samnon.

[477] Varvari Ali Paša, *Rimovana Autobiografija Varvari Ali-Paše,* 103-104; 168. Uslišivši mjegove molbe, Učinio me je valijom Bosne. 169. Vratio sam se tamo posle četrdeset i tri godine, Uskliknuo sam, moja želja je ispunjena. 170. Njegovu savršenu milost sam dobro osetio, Zaboravio sam sve ovozemaljske patnje. 171. Ako se Božija milost izlije na nekoga roba, Govedar postaje vladar pokrajine.

[478] Ibid.

against the very same Ibrahim I (r. 1640-1648) to whom he had devoted a prayer. He was clearly a complex and dynamic figure, a *devşirme* recruit from Bosnia, and a true Ottoman.

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