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## AN ASSESMENT OF THE EMPLOYED FOREIGN EXPERTS OF ASÂKİR-İ MANSÛRE-İ MUHAMMEDÎYYE ARMY AND EDUCATION ISSUES

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### ABSTRACT

The 19th century was a century of great developments and changes for the Ottoman Empire. Almost all the basic institutions of the state were reformed. And the Ottoman army was no exception. The Ottoman State, until 1826, worked on issues such as the recruitment, the reorganization of military education, war technologies and strived to reorganize its military. In 1826, Janissary Quarry was abolished, the existing military traditions were abandoned, and a new military order and education system was adopted. The military void that occurred after the abolition of the Janissary Quarry was filled with Asâkir-i Mansûrei Muhammedîyye which was established as a well-trained and regular army in European style. The formation of the new army has been a long and difficult process. There were many problems regarding the assimilation of the old army to the new one, the reorganization of the military educational system, the selection of the training experts and the budget. In this study, we discussed the foreign experts of the Asakir-i Mansure using the archives and literature, we discussed from which countries these experts were recruited, which officers were commissioned, the training system adopted by these experts, and the effect of this on the Turkish education system.

**Keywords:** Asakir-i Mansure-i Muhammadiye Army, Education System, Foreign Experts, History of Turkish Education.

## INTRODUCTION

Society may experience periods of change just like people. The Ottoman State also experienced many periods of change from its foundation until the 19th century. Especially from the 17th century on, a period of reforms began as a result of the loss of many territories, the existing problems within the state organization, and the solutions proposed to these problems. Hence the state entered a period in which many structures were reformed such as the financial, administrative and military. This wind was strongly felt in the military organization. Janissary corps was founded in 1324 and was one of the pillars of the state. But it had become a center for revolts. Janissaries were not acting gentlemanly, bullying the people, attempting to dethrone padishahs and statesmen, even murdering them. Reformist statemen were aware of these problems and attempted to reform the Janissary corps. Janissary corps was the center of troubles for long. And it was abolished together with all its affiliated institutions after the great rebel of June 17, 1826. This event is known as "Vaka-i Hayriye" (the beneficial event) in the Ottoman history literature (Yaramış, 2002, Elibol, 2009). After the event, the Consultative Assembly (Meclis-i Meşveret) was assembled and they ruled the abolition of the janissary corps. The rule was issued to all sanjaks via a firman (Yaramış, 2002). This study aims to answer some of the lingering questions about the organization of Asâkir-i Mansûre-i Muhammediye Army (Army of the Victorious Soldiers of Muhammad) which is founded after the abolition of the Janissary Corps. Thus, we explored the developments during the organization of the new army, problems experienced during the search process for experts that will train the army, employed foreign experts and their activities, and the expectations of these experts from the Ottoman State. The literature review showed that the majority of the studies focus subjects such as the process of the abolition of the Janissary Corps, the process of the foundation of Asakir-i Mansure, its organizational law, and the recruitment process. Although few, there are also studies on the procurement of uniforms for the new army and the usage of the fez. But the number of studies regarding the employment of trainers and the training issues are relatively fewer. This reason led us to a new literature search with the aim of finding answers to the aforementioned questions. We translated the documents from the Ottoman Archives of the Prime Minister's Office to modern Turkish and used them as our primary sources. In addition to the archive documents, we also studied local and international books and articles. The findings from these documents, books, and articles are presented here under the relevant headings.

### **The Organization of the Asâkir-i Mansûre-i Muhammediye Corps**

After the abolition of the Janissary Corps, the state was left without an army and this had to be amended immediately. It was imperative to establish a military organization which can redeem the previous defeats, establish law and order in the imperial territories, suppress the never-ending rebellions and suppresses the separatist movements which began with the Greek Revolt of 1821. Therefore, the state took immediate action and began to establish a new organization based on modern military techniques and equipment (Gökçe, 2017).

Besides, with the abolition of the army, another important change took place in the educational organization of the Ottoman state. Ulema class lost their most important ally with the abolition of the Janissary corps. Space

created with the abolition of the Janissary Corps is filled with the establishment of Asâkir-i Mansûre-i Muhammedîye. A Kanunname (law) outlining the general plan for the establishment of the new army was adopted on July 7, 1826<sup>1</sup>. It included a preamble and the organization of the new army, and detailed instructions regarding issues such as administration, employment, training, clothing, equipment, promotions, retirement, holidays, allowances, and rationing (Keleş, 2006: 227-240).

Asâkir-i Mansûre was first established in Istanbul, then in Anatolia and Rumeli (Yaramış, 2006: 183). Right after its establishment, many volunteers came from both Istanbul and provinces to join the Asâkir-i Mansûre. According to the regulation “converts and idles without clear identities is not be enlisted to the organization, but able-bodied men between ages of fifteen and thirty will be enlisted. However, men up to forty years old can be enlisted if they are hale and hearty”<sup>2</sup> (Özcan, 1991: 457-458). The members of the Asâkiri Mansûre corps could retire after twelve years of service. Retirees were to be paid the same salary as a commissioned officer. Members who were retired due to old age or disability were to be paid one third or two third of the salary of a commissioned officer. Many resisted the establishment of Asâkiri Mansûre. Hence, it had to protect the ideology that established it. For this, it had to be “trained” and “equipped with modern techniques”. It had to be new in every aspect (Şirin, 2002: 47).

### Foreign Experts and Training Issues

The newly found army had many needs. One of the most important was the training issue. They first thought to assign officers that previously worked in Nizâm-ı Cedîd and Sekbân-ı Cedîd corps. But these officers were not in active duty for a long time and unaware of the new training methods. So, they decided to implement another plan. They established a corps from the lords (ağa) of Enderûn-ı Hümâyûn. But this was also abolished due to poor results (Yaramış, 2006: 183-184).

Meanwhile, Mehmed Ali Pasha, the Governor of Egypt was drawing attention for his successful reforms. Mehmed Ali Pasha’s political, economic and administrative success was the result of his expansionist policy and the modern army he established was the main engine of this policy (Kutluoğlu, 2002: 62-65). Sultan II. Mahmut wanted to use the officers of this army and demanded military experts from the governor. Sultan openly stated that he wanted only Turkish and Muslim officers (Çelik, 2008: 92-94). This was due to the religious sensitivities of the Turkish society and soldiers. But Mehmet Ali Pasha declined this demand by declaring excuses such as the incompetence of Muslim officers<sup>3</sup> (Yaramış 2006: 184; Çelik, 2008: 93).

<sup>1</sup> BOA, Kanûnnâme-i Askerî Defterleri (KAD), No. 1.

<sup>2</sup> This situation is explained in detail in the Ottoman archives; “it is very important to choose the soldiers. Vagabond people cannot be recruited, and idle and unemployed people cannot be recruited to the army. .... only those whose conditions are favorable and those aged between fifteen and thirty shall be registered. However, those up to the age of forty could be recruited and vigorous...”

<sup>3</sup> BOA, HAT, nr. 23997; Mehmet Ali Pasha declined the demand of II. Mahmut for many reasons. The following lines are from the original text; “...there are soldiers that we think are capable, but we cannot be sure of them. We don't want to embarrass you and we do not want to disappoint you...”.

After this, they began thinking to employ foreign officers. These experts were recruited by various means such as;

- Invitations sent by embassies,
- Efforts of statesmen,
- Fugitives.

There were serious differences between the ones who came to the state via legal routes and illegal routes (Şahin, 1999). The first attempts to employ foreign officers took place during the period of Serasker Hüsrev Pasha. Hüsrev Pasha met Galliard in his search for officers. Galliard was a man who served under Napoleon and could give training in the French system.

It was hard to find experienced and high-ranking foreign experts that the new army needed. Ottoman state's relation with many western countries was bad because of the Greek Rebellion. Instead, they could only find jobless, low-ranking and inexperienced officers. Sergeant Gaillard and Captain Calosso were among the few who were appreciated for their services and practices French Gaillard was appointed as a training officer and established a naval infantry troop in the likeness of the French system. And Calosso<sup>4</sup> (assumed name Rüstem Bey) trained twenty specially selected soldiers (Yaramış 2006: 184). In 1827, a booklet (Eşkal Risalesi) was translated from Italian. This booklet was published and distributed to all troops in order to harmonize the training methods in the army (Çelik, 2008: 99).

Mekteb-i Tıbbiye (Medical School) was opened in 1827 in order to meet the doctor demand of the new army. In the following years, Mekteb-i Harbiye (Military School) was opened. These practices prove that II. Mahmut preferred to establish a new system instead of reforming the old. II. Mahmut's preference led to a confrontation between the reformists and the ulema who are proponents of the old system (Karataş, 2003: 234). Padishah was aware of this and strived to gain the approval of both the public and ulema. In order to strengthen the central authority, they first eliminated the risks posed by the old army and ulema, then established an official education system (Akyıldız, 2004). In addition, many works on military education, politics and military history were translated to Turkish between 1826-39. Some are listed below;

- Field Manual for Cavalry (1830) (from French),
- Infantry Mobilization Services Regulation (from French),
- A Booklet under the title of "Fenn-i Harbden Nasb-ı Hıyâm Usûlüne Dâir" (translated by İshak Efendi),
- Military Code of Prussia,
- Some works regarding the Landwehr (redif) system and military organization of Germany, asked from Prussian officer Moltke in 1835 (Çelik, 2008: 113-114).

In 1836, II. Mahmut asked German Emperor Willhem to send an instructors for his army, a group of instructors came to Ottoman state. Hellmut von Moltke, Köpke, Laue, Mühlbach, Vinche and Fisher came and was employed.

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<sup>4</sup> Some of the experts used Turkish/ Muslim names in order to be more easily accepted.

Particularly, the memoirs of Helmuth von Moltke (Field Marshal, Count) was very helpful. During his service of 4 years, Moltke drew the maps of border regions and recommended for new fortifications. Besides he worked to improve the infantry and cavalry units and to improve artillery production (Çelik, 2008: 111-113). Moltke was born in 1800 to a noble family from East Germany. He graduated from the Royal Military Academy in Copenhagen and served in the Danish Army. In 1822, he began to serve in the Prussian Army, one year later he entered the Military Academy and graduated with honors in 1826. As an officer who loves history studies and travel, Moltke came to Istanbul after his Europe travel and entered the service of the Ottoman Army as a foreign expert with the duty of organizing the army and training the units. He took notes about his experiences and impressions during his 4 years of service. His works are not just dry, technical and military reports, but they contain important information and literary descriptions on history and geography of regions, daily lives of people, and natural beauties. During his stay in Anatolia, he wrote many letters to his relatives. His letters are published under the title of "Letters on Conditions and Events in Turkey in the Years 1835-1839" (Dünheim, 1984: 555). This book drew great interest in Europe, especially as a work that describes the differences between the Western and Eastern mindsets (Karal, 2007: 165). Famous geographer Karl Ritter wrote a preface for the second edition of this book. He emphasized the importance of the book: "You can learn from these letters ten times more from acclaimed geography books, namely new insights into the Oriental life, Oriental traditions, and the soul of an Oriental man and the nature of Orient. Romanians, Bulgarians, Turks, Armenians, and Romans introduced to us by Moltke are materializes in front of our eyes; like we can hear they talk and see their memoirs in the photographs" (Dünheim, 1984: 556). In addition, Moltke is praised for supporting his military genius with a deep historical understanding. Moltke benefited from his studies during his service which focuses on military strategies employed in European wars, particularly in the Napoleonic Wars (Beydilli, 2005: 267).

In his work entitled "1828-1829 Turkish-Russian Wars in Rumelia", Moltke describes the struggle between the people and the climate and geography of the region. He describes the hardships they endured in Dobruca, the desolateness of the frosted coasts of Danube, and the dark plague following the 1828-29 campaign. Besides, he added important photographs to this book (Dünheim: 1984: 573). Moltke prepared many military reports, plans, and maps. Among those, there is a general situation evaluation report, an evaluation regarding the situation of the fortifications in Turkish castles and passages in Balkans; maps of Dobruca, Macin, Podolia and Tulca regions and the plans of the castles located there, such as Burgas, Sozopol, Pomorie, Misivri, Balchik, Kavarna, Köstendil, and Harshova; and plans of Varna, Pravadi, and Şumnu by Fischer and plans of Pyce, and Silistre by Mühlbach (Beydilli quotes from Wagner, 1839: 57-58). Moltke also joined to short visits to Anatolia and Rumelia. He accompanied Mahmud the Second during his inspection trips and draw maps of İstanbul, Bosphorus, and Dardanelles. His maps and drawings were deemed to be highly functional (Beydilli, 2005: 268). Experts deem the reports of this inspection reports from the period and the included photographs as historically important. This information was used in the education of new officers and archived for further use.

Moltke's observations contain important information regarding various subjects such as the Ottoman lands, social structure, military organization, and Ottoman statesmen. Moltke described the Asakir-i Mansure Army as "... disciplined soldiers wearing Russian jackets and Turkish pants in line with European fashion. These soldiers

use French saddle, English sword, and Tatar harness, and originate from timariots. They are young soldiers who devoted their lives to military service and are followers of their leaders. The training system of the army is based on the French system and its teachers are from all over Europe...” (Aksan, 2013: 71). His impression on the Ottoman statesmen and the Turkish nation is rather curious; “... Turks are realists who let this slide, and their realism are their philosophy. This explains a lot about the many miracles of the Orient and the conflicting judgments of Europeans travelers on this nation.” He described Mahmud the Second as a very polite, sincere and gracious person. This conflict with the prevailing impression about him in Europe during the period as a cruel Sultan who destroyed his army by executing thousands of janissaries right before the Great War. “Turkish pashas are reliable, frank and calm gentlemen towards the foreigners. They are a little bit inclined to be ridiculed, but they don’t look like the monsters described in newspapers. Foreigners coming here with their prejudices will surely be disappointed. Moderation, goodwill, and righteousness of Turks is unpredictable and may change suddenly. But these qualities are valid unless otherwise necessary. If necessity requires, apathy takes over. If someone becomes irritating or dangerous, the master can chop his most loyal servant’s head without hesitation and throw it in front of his feet; whoever gains power kills his previous benefactor” (Dünheim: 1988: 558). Here, Moltke refers to the Hüsrev Pasha example. Moltke was amazed at how he was exiled because of his inappropriate actions despite his previous successes. As seen, Moltke has served to the Ottoman State much better than most of the Ottoman officers. He contributed to the Ottoman Army both with his field studies and his books. In addition, he observed the Ottoman communities and published his observations in Europe.

#### **Employed Foreign Experts and their Demands from the Ottoman State**

During the last years of II. Mahmut’s reign, European states began to accept sending military experts. Especially many Prussian (German) commissions were invited (Yaramış, 2002: 155). Archive documents show that foreign experts coming to the Ottoman State have quite high demands. Ottoman state asked from Germany officers and engineers from infantry, cavalry, and artillery classes for three years of employment. German state replied that they will send officers if the conditions listed below are met.

- Ottoman state should allocate residents to the officers in accordance with their ranks,
- In case of death, Ottoman State should pay salary to the family of the officer.
- Ottoman State should also pay the same amount that officers were paid in Germany to the military fund in Berlin<sup>5</sup>.

II. Mahmut asked from German Emperor III. Willhem for experts in 1836. Prussia sent a delegation including famous names such as Hellmut Von Moltke, Köpke, Laue, Mühlbach, Vinche and Fisher. Especially Moltke is appreciated by Ottoman authorities. Moltke served for 4 years. He mapped the border regions and recommended fortifications. Moreover, the Ottoman state worked to improve its infantry and cavalry corps (Çelik, 2008:111-113).

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<sup>5</sup> BOA, HAT, nr. 34991; The original text regarding the demands of Prussia for German experts is given in Turkish expanded abstract of the article.

As seen, some of the countries which were very helpful in this endeavor actually working for their and their officers' best interest. France and Germany are the best examples. The French government also demanded the scope of capitulations to be expanded and perpetuation of its privileges.

After a while, becoming an expert in the Ottoman Army became quite interesting. Because the benefits of social benefits, as well as a full salary, prizes, gifts and this profession has become a favorite profession (Levy, 1971: 38). Very few individuals submitted to become a foreign expert in the Ottoman Army despite these advantages. And not every one of them was idealists. Because, despite famous experts, some persons came just to earn money. Experts explain the failure of the strategy of employing foreign experts with factors such as "contracts in the form of international agreements; people working for the interest of their countries, as agencies of firms, or as middlemen instead of military experts; and experts not leaving İstanbul" (Şahin, 1999: 90). As seen, most of the experts saw the Ottoman State as exploitable, and some even tried to sell the military technologies of their countries.

## CONCLUSION

Studies on the relevant period and the archive documents from the period show that the new army was founded with great goals, but had a very hard time meeting these high expectations. English ambassador Reverend Walsch foresee these hardships, observed the process and said that "Ottoman Empire is now in a dangerous impossibility. The old army was abolished, but the new one was not organized; the courage of the soldiers is broken, allies of the state are alienated" (Aksan, 2013: 70). This was a very concise expression of what happened and what will happen.

As mentioned above, it was seen that the newly established army brought many problems. One of the problems that arose during the establishment of Asâkir-i Mansûre was the employment of foreign experts. The first problem was to find and bring these experts to the country. The second problem was the financial demands of the experts such as high salary, high retirement pensions, additional insurance, etc. The third problem was the resistance of Turkish soldiers against taking orders from foreign officers who belong to a different religion.

In the first years of the new army, Ottoman soldiers declined to take lessons from this non-Muslim, "gavur" officers which was a big problem. Just because of this, the Ottoman state was forced to ask II. Mahmud for experienced, Muslim officers, but to no avail. So, they worked around this problem by giving Turkish names to some of the foreign experts.

Furthermore, during the reign of II. Mahmut, there were many events such as the revolts in provinces, wars with France and Russia, and problems with Greece, Moldovia-Wallachia, Serbia, and Bulgaria. Asâkir-i Mansûre Army failed to show the desired success because of developments such as the immigration of hundreds of thousands from Balkans, the revolt of Mehmet Ali Pasha, and his progress to İstanbul.

In addition to these problems, there were the extreme financial demands of foreign experts, the commercial and political privilege demands of the origin countries of these experts, the inexperience of the employed experts,

and activities of these experts in favor of their countries. All these developments lead us to think that the establishment of this new army was rushed.

The establishment of Asâkir-i Mansûre coincided with a period of political distress. That is why this new army lost many battles due to inexperience. In such a complicated environment, Padishah was forced to ask help from Russia to defeat his governor. But this help led to the Treaty of Hünkâr İskeleyi. As we have seen in this study, the Ottoman State experienced many problems and found many workarounds. But they failed to reach the desired results.

Based on the documents used in the research, it is seen that there are many problems related to the newly established army and there are various and temporary solutions to these problems, but it is thought that the desired results cannot be reached in full terms. On the other hand, in spite of the unfavorable developments experienced, important technical and scientific developments were experienced in the Turkish army in this period when significant and radical reforms took place in the Ottoman Empire. Numerous training books, military history books have been added to the literature, field studies have been conducted, regional maps have been drawn, new training methods have been tried and students have been sent abroad. It is thought that this period, in which significant progress has been made in the modernization of the Ottoman education system, although great difficulties have been experienced, is very important for the history of education. Thanks to the new schools opened during this period and the soldiers who graduated from these schools years later, Turkish history has made significant gains.

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