

THE COMPOSITION, TACTICS AND STRATEGY
OF THE OTTOMAN FIELD ARMY
AT ZRÍNYI-ÚJVÁR AND ST. GOTTHARD (1663-1664)

In April 1663, in an attempt to solve the long-disputed Transylvanian problem by military means, the Ottoman army marched towards the western border of the empire to confront the Habsburg forces. This initiative would eventually bring about a series of military clashes between the Ottomans and a coalition of Christian allies. Despite suffering setbacks during the unexpected winter campaign of Miklós Zrínyi in the first months of 1664, the Ottomans dominated the conflict zone until the battle of St. Gotthard on August 1 of the same year. However, the Ottoman failure along the Rába River revealed the limit of their military power and Ottoman decision-makers hastily sought a peace treaty to secure the territories gained in the ongoing campaign while the political circumstances were still in their favor.

As is the case with all early modern armies, it is difficult to estimate the exact size of the Ottoman forces in the Ottoman-Habsburg war of 1663-64. It is even harder to obtain a reliable figure for the Ottoman soldiers who actually fought in the battle of St. Gotthard. In terms of military time, the Ottoman field army had already been active for two succeeding campaigning years and therefore had already lost an unspecified amount of fighting forces before the two armies met along the Rába River at St. Gotthard. It is certain, however, that contrary to the overwhelming figures expected by many in the West, the Ottoman forces on the battleground in 1663-64 did not exceed the optimal figures held by contemporary military intellectuals such as R. Montecuccoli and Turenne¹.

There are primarily two difficulties in obtaining the Ottoman warriors' precise numbers. Firstly, contemporary chroniclers, Ottoman and Western alike, usually offer obscure and contradicting figures in their narratives which are deeply affected by the inevitable limitations of personal observation. For

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1 Cf. *Max Jähns: Geschichte der Kriegswissenschaften vornehmlich in Deutschland*. Verlag von R. Oldenburg, München-Leipzig, 1891.



Fig. 1. The battle of St. Gotthard, 1st August 1664. Engraving of M. L. L. Ultzmayer

this reason, one must be prepared to delve into the complexities of official documents and give meaning to figures randomly appearing in contemporary accounts. This alone, however, does not overcome the complication. The archival sources on the Ottoman field army of 1663-64 are, so to speak, very unwilling to cover all the military units of the Ottoman army at a given time offering instead glimpses of randomly exposed units on different occasions. Taking such hardships into account, a descriptive picture of the Ottoman fighting forces can surface by critically juxtaposing and aligning all relevant and surviving material.

A MATTER OF CURIOSITY:

THE NUMBER OF JANISSARIES MOBILIZED IN THE WAR OF 1663-64

According to the imperial budget of 1660-61, as recorded by Eyyübî Efendi a few years before the war, there were 54.222 janissaries enlisted in pay-registers

receiving regular salary from the Ottoman treasury². This number seems not to have changed greatly for the succeeding three years. In 1664, the Ottoman central administration paid the salary of 53.371 men in the janissary corps³.

However, only a small section of these infantry musketeers were employed in the field army of 1663–64. Simon Reniger, a Habsburg resident to Constantinople, who accompanied the Ottoman army during the war, claimed that in 1663 the number of janissaries marching towards Hungarian territory did not exceed an average of 10.000. He also added that in the coming year this humble figure further dropped to 6–7000⁴. Rival observers confirmed this assertion and estimated the number of janissaries they confronted during the war was somewhere between 8.000 and 12.000⁵. For ordinary readers not familiar with the technicalities of the Ottoman military, this modest number might seem disappointingly low for an allegedly “giant war machine”. Yet, the Ottoman government was apparently satisfied with the number of janissaries mobilized for the field army. In March 1663, the Ottoman treasury covered the expenses of pack animals purchased for transporting the equipment of 9.521 janissaries⁶. According to an inventory of the ordinance shipped from the imperial arsenal in Constantinople to the western frontier, the Ottoman troops received exactly 10.000 muskets from March 1663 to June 1664⁷. Although there is a difference of 500 men between the two lists, one should keep in mind that the armorers (*cebeci* in Ottoman terminology), who were primarily responsible for the production and maintenance of ammunition at times of need, served also as infantry musketeers. The Ottoman army’s account

2 *Eyyubi Efendi Kânûnnâmesi*: Survey and Text, prep. by Abdülkadir Özcan. İstanbul, 1994. 33.

3 The janissary pay-roll in 1664 has been examined by Gülay Yılmaz in her dissertation on the influence of janissaries on the social fabric of Constantinople. For specific figures see: *The Economic and Social Roles of Janissaries in a 17th Century Ottoman City: The Case of Istanbul* (unpublished PhD, Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University, 2011). 251–274.

4 The final relation of Simon Reniger, the Habsburg resident in Constantinople in 1649–1665, has been published by Alois Veltzé in *Die Hauptrelation des kaiserlichen Residenten in Konstantinopel Simon Renigen von Reningen 1649–1666*. *Mitteilung des k. u. k. Kriegs-Archivs*. N.F., 12. Bd., (1900) 59–169. For the reference see: 144–145. In his letter of April 17, 1664 from Belgrade, S. Reniger wrote that the Ottomans had 6.000 janissaries in their army. Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv (Vienna), Staatenabteilungen Türkei I/137, Konv. 1, fol. 14b.

5 Raimondo Montecuccoli, for instance, estimated the number of janissaries who served in the Ottoman army during the siege of Érsekújvár at around 12.000. For his remarks see: *Raimondo Montecuccoli: Vom Kriege mit den Türken in Ungarn*. In: *Ausgewählte Schriften des Raimund Fürsten Montecuccoli General-Lieutenant und Feldmarschall*, ed. Alois Veltzé. Wien-Leipzig, 1899. II. 390–391.

6 BOA (The Prime Ministry Ottoman Archives, İstanbul), Kamil Kepeci, 1957, p. 8.

7 BOA, Maliyeden Müdevver Registers, 3279. 171–174.



Fig. 2. Azamoglans with guns in Sultan Mehmed IV's entourage. Painting of Claes Râmb (1657)

book indicates there were over 600 armorers active in the campaigning year of 1663, roughly supplementing the overall number to 10.000⁸.

The relatively small number of janissaries in the 1663-64 Ottoman-Habsburg war inevitably raises a question. By the mid-17th century, central European military practices had already transitioned to a combat model that utilized the devastating effect of superior firepower. Although traditional cavalry charges continued to be a prevailing option for opposing armies, the unbearable financial burden compelled early modern militaries to recruit infantries equipped with firearms in ever-increasing numbers. However, the low participation rate of infantry janissaries in the war would demand an explanation to how the Ottomans made up their army in the years 1663 and 1664.

In this respect, there could be two possible explanations for the low participation rate of janissaries in the 1663-64 war. There is the long-established view that the Ottoman military was not able to keep up with the latest changes in the West and thus continued to employ cavalry-based

⁸ BOA, Kamil Kepeci, 1957. 26.

armies. R. Murphey, for instance, believes that the 17th-century Ottoman field army comprised two or sometimes even three mounted soldiers for a single infantry one⁹. This assumption, however, rests upon Ottoman officials' nominal figures which were intended for estimating the size of future provincial troops, commonly believed by many scholars today to have been composed exclusively of mounted soldiers. Yet, provincial troops may well have been infantry forces as well. A closer look at contemporary narratives reveals further factors at play in the formation of the Ottoman field army. This brings us to the second explanation.

AN INDEPENDENT VARIABLE IN THE OTTOMAN ARMY: HOUSEHOLD TROOPS AND MERCENARY UNITS

Despite limited contribution from the janissary corps, the Ottoman army operating along the Hungarian frontier in 1663-64 had many infantry soldiers in its ranks. Ottoman historiography has already noted that from the end of the 16th century Ottoman notables raised household troops at their own expense; these troops joined the state troops financed by the central treasury in the field¹⁰. This system of recruiting seems to have become firmly established in the course of the 17th century. In fact, in the Ottoman-Habsburg war of 1663-64, members of the ruling elite provided the Ottoman army with numerous troops. However, these mercenaries enlisted by a pasha's household were by definition out of the Ottoman military network, a fact which makes any attempt to estimate their exact number extremely difficult. In terms of military practice, though, the nature of household troops is well-established. The bulk of mercenaries fighting under an Ottoman dignitary's flag were infantry musketeers. Although notables sought to keep a regular guard force, the majority of the troops they took to war were newly-recruited mercenaries who served for a fixed time period. For this reason, in face of financial shortages, the temporary warriors who gathered under the command of an Ottoman pasha tended to be non-professionals (but not necessarily inexperienced in

9 *Rhoads Murphey*: Ottoman Warfare 1500-1700. Rutgers University Press, London, 1999. 49-63.

10 For an authoritative work on Ottoman household troops see: *I. Metin Kunt*: The Sultan's Servants: The Transformation of Ottoman Provincial Government, 1550-1650. Columbia University Press, New York, 1983.

military affairs) who usually preferred long-range combat to fighting in close-quarters which required proper military training.

In fact, in the 17th century the Ottoman government continued to ask for well-armed mounted fighters, most probably in the hope of launching heavy cavalry charges in the field¹¹. Financial circumstances, however, seem to have played a part and, although a higher wage was promised to volunteers in possession of a war-horse, there were still few who could meet the recruitment requirements. Furthermore, those who enrolled as mounted soldiers among household troops or in a mercenary band contracted by the Ottoman administration for military service did not favor fighting on horseback. In most cases they were *dragoons* who travelled on horseback for swift deployment across the battleground and resorted to firearms during combat. Therefore, mounted fighters in household troops directly contributed to Ottoman firepower, particularly in siege operations.

A pasha's household functioned very similarly to the Ottoman palace but on a smaller scale. The Ottoman notable, in this example, as the rightful head of the house handed over his authority to a group of officials who formed a semi-permanent administrative body. This apparatus included, among many others, commissioners who were responsible for recruiting able-bodied men to fight in the cause of the "house". During provincial duties, it was seemingly enough for an Ottoman statesman to maintain a force of a few hundred men to collect taxes and to secure public order in the areas under his jurisdiction. In times of war, on the other hand, when called for duty by the central administration pashas tended to assemble a force as large as possible in short notice so that they could acquire a leading position in campaign planning. This, however, required a considerable sum of money not easily gathered in an early modern empire. In this, Ottoman notables were most likely supported by the central treasury that leased lump sums of money to pashas and other members of the ruling elite.

In 1663, many Ottoman governor-generals received differing amounts of money from the central treasury which most probably was used for their household expenses during the war. According to narrative sources, these were the same notables who contributed largely to the fighting power of the Ottoman army in 1663 and 1664. In order to demonstrate the extent of their

11 Sächsische Landesbibliothek-Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Dresden (SLUB) Eb. 387, fol. 42b (evâhir-i Zilkade 1071/17–27 July 1661); fol. 104b (evâhir-i Şevval 1073/28 May–6 June 1663); fol. 114b (evâhir-i Receb 1074/17–27 February 1664); fol. 115a (evâhir-i Receb 1074/17–27 February 1664).



Fig. 3. Turkish camp during the campaign of 1663 in Hungary. Engraving from Paul Rycaut's work on the Ottoman Empire (1694)

contribution, certain names brought forward by contemporary accounts will prove useful.

Fazıl Ahmed Pasha, the grand vizier, commander-in-chief of the Ottoman army and head of the Ottoman financial resources at hand, naturally commissioned the largest household troop. According to P. Rycaut, British diplomat and writer of an authoritative book on Ottoman history, Fazıl Ahmed Pasha maintained a permanent force of 100 to 400 men who were recruited among the able-bodied young population of Albanian and Bosnian lands. The British author was of the opinion that the Ottoman grand vizier deliberately chose Albanians as his personal guards to whom he had ethnic and regional links, as his father Köprülü Mehmed Pasha had done before him¹².

However, the grand vizier commanded a much larger force in the wars of 1663-64, most probably recruited by his *aghas* shortly before the beginning of

12 Paul Rycaut: *The History of 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*. printed for Charles Brome, at the Gun, at the West-End of St. Paul's Church-Yard, London, 1686. 379.

the spring campaign of 1663. One particular example from the following spring serves well to illustrate the details of the enrollment process. In March 1664, in an attempt to replenish the human resources of the exhausted Ottoman army, Fazıl Ahmed sent a few of his Albanian military officers to the Mani Mountains where they gathered a mercenary troop of a thousand musketeers. The *aghas* of Albanian origin, probably using their personal links to the region, offered a regular pay to the infantry volunteers who accepted to serve in the army as long as the Ottoman forces campaigned along the Hungarian frontier. They were not enlisted in the personal household of Fazıl Ahmed Pasha and therefore, as can be deduced from the date of the payment, the Ottoman treasury delivered 500 *akçes* in advance for each mercenary, a sum most likely intended to cover initial expenses¹³. In the following months this newly-recruited military unit played a significant role in the siege of Zrínyi-Újvár and the battle of St. Gotthard¹⁴.

The Ottoman military command recruited additional troops in the course of the campaign, especially in the second campaigning season. In one such example, the Ottoman treasury paid a monthly allowance of 271.800 *akçes* for 906 foot soldiers summoned from the province of Rumelia. This unit was divided into 18 companies, each commanded by a *bölükbaşı* (captain) and three subordinate officers (a *bayraktar*, flag-bearer; a *ser-oda*, lieutenant; a *çavuş*, sergeant)¹⁵. The number of company officers suggests there was tight control of the fighting soldiers; a company of approximately 50 warriors was commanded by at least four officers. Most probably, the mercenary cavalry was even smaller in numbers; again a body of four officers commanded a division of nearly 37 mounted soldiers¹⁶. It appears that the mercenary units and probably the units recruited for pasha households alike, were well-adjusted for positional warfare where the infantry units equipped with muskets played a key role. Knowing in advance how many musketeers would be available in the ranks, in other words

13 For the travel allowance paid for a thousand mercenary musketeers recruited in Northern Albania see: BOA, Kamil Kepeci, 1957, p. 86 (13 Şaban 1074/11 March 1664). Also see: SLUB Eb. 387, fol. 119a, evâsıt-ı Şaban 1074/8 – 18 March 1664.

14 These soldiers were deployed under the command of the *beys* of Niğbolu, Avlonya and Dukakin, and served alongside the main fighting force in the siege of Zrínyi-Újvár. *Erzurumlu Osman Dede: Târih-i Fâzıl Ahmed Paşa*, prep. by Arslan Boyraz (Köprülüzâde Fazıl Ahmet Paşa Devrinde (1069–1080) Vukuatı Tarihi: Transkripsiyon ve Değerlendirme. (unpublished master thesis, Marmara University, İstanbul, 2002), 44–45.; *Hasan Ağa: Cevâhirü't-Tevârih* prep. by Abubekir Sıddık Yücel, (Mühürdar Hasan Ağa'nın Cevâhirü't-Tevârih'i, unpublished PhD, Erciyes University, Kayseri, 1996). 267–268.; SLUB Eb. 387, fol. 127a (evâhir-i Ramazan 1074/16–26 April 1663).

15 BOA, Kamil Kepeci, 1960, 53. (25 Muharrem 1075/18 August 1664).

16 BOA, Kamil Kepeci, 1960, 50. (25 Muharrem 1075/18 August 1664).

knowing the army's firepower capacity was a decisive factor in early modern warfare.



Fig. 4. Portrait of the Grand Vizir Fazıl Ahmed pasha
in Priorato's book entitled
Historia di Leopoldo Cesare (1670)

It seems plausible that Fazıl Ahmed Pasha used similar methods in organizing his household troops. According to Hasan Ağa, the grand vizier's personal seal-bearer, at the time his master rushed to the aid of the Ottoman garrison in Kanizsa that was besieged by the allied forces under the command of M. Zrínyi and J. Hohenlohe in the spring of 1664, Fazıl Ahmed Pasha was accompanied by 5.000 men¹⁷. According to a list compiled most probably by a German eyewitness who was in Érsekújvár when the Ottoman army camped around the city nearly eight months earlier, however, the grand vizier led a troop of 4.000¹⁸. It is unlikely that Fazıl Ahmed Pasha managed to increase the number of his fighting units in the course of the war; the opposite, in fact, usually occurred. But, in any event, it isn't a bold guess to put the number of

¹⁷ *Hasan Ağa*: op. cit. 255.

¹⁸ "Der Groß-Vezier hatte für sich in allem". *Martin Meyer (Philemerici Irenici Elisii)*: *Diarium Europaeum Insertis quibusdam, maximè verò Germano-Gallo-Hispano-Anglo Polono Sueco-Dano-Belgo-Turcicis Actis Publici*. Verl. Wilhem Serins, Franckfurt am Mäyn, 1664. X. 680.

Fazıl Ahmed's household warriors at around 4.000 - a truly considerable contribution to Ottoman fighting power. Another important fact for the argument of this paper is that the majority of this force was undoubtedly infantries equipped with muskets¹⁹.

Köse Ali Pasha who had been granted great authority in Transylvanian matters also joined the Ottoman army with his personal troops. At least in one particular occasion, in October 1663, he received 500.000 *akçes* from the Ottoman treasury when he was assigned to a line of forward trenches facing the defensive walls of Érsekújvár²⁰. Ottoman and Western sources describing the battlefield agree that the majority of Köse Ali Pasha's household troops were infantry musketeers of Bosnian or Albanian origin²¹. Although Ottoman chroniclers propound highly differing figures for the soldiers brought by the celebrated "conqueror of Nagyvárad", Hasan Ağa who placed the troops of Köse Ali at a total of 3.000 cavalry and infantry, once again seems to offer the most reasonable number²². Hasan Ağa's estimation is confirmed by an eyewitness defender of Érsekújvár who explicitly noted that 2.000 out of 3.000 men were infantries²³. According to another remark made by the same anonymous source, these soldiers received their salaries directly from Köse Ali Pasha and were admittedly fine and daring warriors carrying long-barreled flintlocks and swords²⁴.

Kibleli Mustafa Pasha, the governor-general of Damascus and brother-in-law of the grand vizier Köprülü Fazıl Ahmed Pasha was among the leading decision-makers in the Ottoman military camp. He was a member of the wider network of the Köprülü household and, most probably by exploiting these familial connections, was generously supported by the Ottoman treasury: he received at least 1.320.000 *akçes* in loan at different times – the single largest amount of money allocated to an Ottoman notable during the Ottoman-Habsburg war of 1663-64²⁵. Although there are several references in Ottoman chronicles to the military actions of Mustafa Pasha's troops, none of these sources contain a specific

19 *E. Osman Dede*: op. cit. 29-30.; *Hasan Ağa*: op. cit. 221.

20 BOA, Kamil Kepeci, 1957, p. 43 (21 Rebiülevvel 1074/23 October 1663).

21 Evliya Çelebi b. Derviş Mehmed Zilli: *Evliyâ Çelebi Seyahatnâmesi*, 6. Kitap: Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi Revan 1457 Numaralı Yazmanın Transkripsiyonu-Dizini. Prep. by Seyit Ali Kahraman, Yücel Dağlı. Yapı Kredi Yayınları İstanbul, 2002. 200-201.

22 *Hasan Ağa*: op. cit. 138.

23 *M. Meyer*: *Diarium Europaeum* op. cit. X. 680.

24 "Die Albaneser oder Bossneser /seyn mittelmässige Leut /mit langen Flinten-Röhren /und einem Säbel /und seyn etliche dapfere Leut /sonderlich die bey dem Ali Bassa; halten sich hin und wider bey den Bassen auff /und haben von ihnen ihren Sold" (*M. Meyer*: *Diarium Europaeum* op. cit. X. 684).

25 BOA, Kamil Kepeci, 1957, p. 29, 37, 39, 42.

figure for his soldiers. The list describing the Ottoman siege army in 1663, however, asserts that Kibleli Mustafa Pasha commanded a force of 2.500 men at the time of the siege; 500 men of these men were taken from the garrison of Damascus and were not a part of his personal household troops²⁶. The German eyewitness seems to be the only source promulgating a figure, a fact that casts a shadow of doubt on his account. However, Ottoman narrative and archival sources firmly confirm that Kibleli Mustafa Pasha, as the governor-general of Damascus, had in his company exactly 500 cavalymen from the garrison of Damascus (*Şam kulu* or Damascene janissary in Ottoman terminology) who were famous for their use of firearms on horseback²⁷. The fact that the anonymous German was aware of such minute details of the Ottoman army's composition encourages confidence in his narrative. Moreover, it is certain that although officially holding the title of the governor-general of Damascus, Kibleli Mustafa Pasha was not accompanied by the province's land-holding *sipahis* who had been excused from military service in return for a lump sum of money paid to the Ottoman treasury²⁸. In other words, Kibleli Mustafa's household troops most likely comprised 2.000 men recruited for a limited time period.

In a noteworthy example, Kaplan Mustafa Pasha, another brother-in-law of Fazıl Ahmed Pasha, commanded roughly 1.000 men during the Ottoman-Habsburg military engagements in 1663-64²⁹. He received at least 1.100.000 *akçes* from the Ottoman treasury on the condition that he remained with the Ottoman army and stood at the head of critical tasks³⁰. However, there was something particular about Kaplan Mustafa Pasha's and some other notables' cases: even though they participated in strategic planning and contributed with their personal troops to Ottoman fighting power, they did not hold an office at the time of the operation along the Hungarian-Croatian borderline. According to Ottoman sources, Kaplan Mustafa Pasha was "between tenures" when he readily rushed to take part in the campaign organized by his brother-in-law³¹.

26 „Kibleli Bassa von Damasco/ des Groß-Veziers Schwestermann/ hatte 2000. seiner eygenen Leute und 500. von der Besatzung zu Damasco/ in allem 2500". *Martin Meyer (Philemerici Irenici Elisii): Theatrum Europaeum oder außführliche und warhafftige Beschreibung aller und jeder denkwürdiger Geschichten* Verl. Matth. Merian, Franckfurt am Mäyn, 1672. IX. 633.

27 *E. Osman Dede*: op. cit. 6.; SLUB Eb 387, fol. 113a (evâhir-i Rebiülâhır/21-30 November 1663; Bibliotheca Albertina-B or. 295, fol. 2b (evâil-i Cemaziyelevvel 1074/1-10 December 1663).

28 BOA, Maliyeden Müdevver Registers, 3774, p. 22 (27 Cemaziyelevvel 1074/12 December 1663).

29 *M. Meyer*: *Diarium Europaeum* op. cit. X. 680.

30 BOA, Kamil Kepeci, 1957. 7, 31, 41.

31 The Ottoman central administration addressed Kaplan Mustafa Pasha simply by his name without using official titles during the war. SLUB Eb 387, fol. 110b (evâhir-i Safer 1074/23

THE MISSING PIECE IN THE PUZZLE:
OTTOMAN CAVALRY IN THE WAR OF 1663-64

According to the imperial budget of 1661, 15.248 cavalry soldiers in the so-called six regiments of the *kapıkulu* corps received pay from the Ottoman treasury³². However, it is not certain to what degree these cavalry units were mobilized in the Ottoman-Habsburg war of the ensuing years. The aforementioned anonymous eyewitness claims to have seen 12.000 *sipahis* around the fortress of Érsekújvár in the autumn of 1663³³. Ottoman sources, on the other hand, remain interestingly silent on the matter. The only clear reference discovered thus far is a financial entry computing the salary of a



Fig. 5. Sipahis and janissaries. Engraving of Alain Manesson Mallet (1683)

September–2 October 1663); 117a (evâhir-i Receb 1074/17–27February 1664); 125a (evâsıt-ı Ramazan 1074/6–16 April 1664).

32 E. E. *Kânûnnâmesi*: op. cit. 37.

33 M. Meyer: *Diarium Europaeum* op. cit. X. 680.

section of the Ottoman palace cavalry, whose presence on the battlefield is therefore indisputable. In as much as can be deduced from this isolated information, in the summer of 1663 when the Ottomans proceeded to the Danube River the army comprised 352 right and 257 left *garibs*³⁴. When compared to the number of *garibs* in the 1661 imperial budget, the Ottoman administration seems to have displayed remarkable success by mobilizing almost over 80 percent of its potential force. If the same rate of mobilization is applied to the other regiments of *kapıkulu* cavalry, this would increase their number to approximately 12.000 – a figure suggested by the anonymous chronicler. However, according to another account of the campaign, the number of the *garib* cavalries in the army dropped the coming year from a total of 609 to 450. At this time, there appear to have been 503 *ulufeci* cavalries along with their *garib* fellowmen in the army³⁵, a number which corresponds only to half of the *ulufeci* regiments registered in the 1661 imperial budget.

Consequently, there are solid reasons to argue that the Ottoman military administration was not able to summon such a large part of its nominal cavalry strength. Firstly, the most populous of the six cavalry regiments, the *sipahis* and the *silahdars*, were in no way suitable for mass mobilization. In accordance with the structural characteristics of the Ottoman military, a significant number of these cavalry regiments was scattered across the empire performing various tasks in the company of Ottoman notables. Secondly, regardless of the number of *kapıkulu* cavalries mobilized in 1663, the Ottoman army seems to have managed to put significantly fewer cavalries into combat in the battle of St. Gotthard the coming summer. Most probably, in order to alleviate the financial burden caused by the wintering troops, Fazıl Ahmed Pasha gave a portion of salaried cavalry permission to return home for the winter. During the spring of 1664, however, the Ottoman military administration sought relentlessly and with limited success to bring them back³⁶. For this reason, the number of *kapıkulu* cavalries that actually fought in the siege of Zrínyi-Újvár and at the battle of St. Gotthard in 1664 can be estimated at fewer than 10.000.

There is even less to say about the participation of *timar*-holding provincial cavalry in the war of 1663–64. The main problem arises from the fact that in the 17th century a considerable proportion of the *timar* estates had either accumulated in the hands of notables who then transferred them to their protégées or were distributed among the garrison troops in fortresses. In

34 BOA, Kamil Kepeci, 1957. 41.

35 BOA, Kamil Kepeci, 1960. 37.

36 SLUB Eb. 387, fol. 114b (evâhir-i Receb 1074/17–27 February 1664), 115a evâhir-i Receb 1074/17–27 February 1664).

military terms, this might have triggered a change in the nature and characteristics of the *timar*-holding class in that they were no longer necessarily mounted soldiers. And due to the political influence of Ottoman notables in *timar* granting, at least some of the *timar*-holders were incorporated into household troops particularly for commanding positions³⁷.

This aside, the Ottoman army in 1663-64 included *timar*-holding *sipahis* in the traditional fashion who were put under the command of their regional *alaybays*. Whatever their number might have been, it is certain that these forces, as light cavalry, served as auxiliary troops and were not particularly visible in the battlefield when armies engaged in close combat. In terms of military needs, they still constituted an indispensable part of the army by, among others, undertaking reconnaissance missions; pillaging enemy ground; terrorizing hinterland population to provoke disorder; gathering intelligence; and acting as a screening force in siege operations, all of which decided the fate of a campaign. However, as was the case in the Ottoman army marching towards the fortress of Zrínyi-Újvár in 1664, they were increasingly isolated from the main fighting force.

THE OTTOMAN ARMY AT WORK: TACTICAL PERCEPTIONS AND THE PREDOMINANCE OF POSITIONAL WARFARE

In the end, the Ottoman field army in the years of 1663-64 seems to have been an evenly balanced force of cavalry and infantry: the number of janissary musketeers was roughly equal to that of salaried cavalry from the six regiments. Although the Tartar warriors formed a mighty mounted force that could alone unbalance the composition of the Ottoman army, in reality, Tatar cavalries

37 Ottoman intellectuals describing the change within the Ottoman administrative system criticized the fact that from the end of the 16th century Ottoman *timar* lands began to accumulate in the hands of certain notables and the provincial troops, therefore, started to join the retinues of Ottoman pashas in contrary to the traditional practice whereby they were grouped under provincial banners alongside cavalries from neighboring regions. *Ayn Ali Efendi: Kavânin-i Âl-i Osman der Hülâsa-i Mezâmin-i Defter-i Divân ve Risâle-i Vazîfe-horân ve Merâtib-i Bendegân-ı Âl-i Osmân*. Prep. by M. Tayyib Gökbilgin. Enderun Kitabevi, İstanbul, 1979. 75.; *Osmanlı Devlet Düzenine Ait Metinler I: Kitâb-i Müstetâb*. Prep. by Yaşar Yücel, Ankara Üniversitesi Basımevi, Ankara, 1974. 16.; *Hezarfen Hüseyin Efendi: Telhîsü'l-Beyân fî Kavânin-i Âl-i Osmân*. Prep. by Sevim İlğürel. Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, Ankara, 1998. 143.

functioned as an independent army commanded by separate headquarters. Moreover, in the latter year of the war, when the Ottoman government resorted to the predictable measure of recruiting infantry mercenaries, the army turned into a primarily infantry-based force. The *bey* of Gyula, Derviş Mehmed, for instance, joined the Ottoman army probably just before the siege of Zrínyi-Újvár at the head of 500 newly-recruited infantry musketeers³⁸.

The total of Ottoman household troops in any event numbered nearly as many as the central troops. The number of notables contributing to the Ottoman military power was, needless to say, much higher than the examples examined above. They gathered troops of various sizes which marked a fundamental change in the composition of the Ottoman army. One might claim that in actuality newly-recruited soldiers under a notable's flag represented no essential transformation within the system since the same individuals as holders of provincial administrative posts were customarily obliged to maintain a fixed amount of warriors in exchange for land. However, in the so-called classical system, Ottoman provincial governors in principle maintained a group of "retainers" who were subordinated to their master at all times. They served the governor in times of peace as well and in theory their number did not increase when called for duty under the military command of the Ottoman *bey* or *beylerbeyi*. Household troops in the 17th century, on the other hand, leaving aside a small body of permanent guards, were assembled in short notice for temporary military service. Contrary to the pitched battles and sieges of the previous century, 17th-century warfare tended to evolve into prolonged wars demanding ever increasing numbers of warriors readily available for military service. The need to constantly deploy fresh units to the frontier removed the once privileged cavalry from the battlefield and opened the way for infantry musketeers who were relatively easy to equip and mobilize. This, in turn, practically changed the mode of warfare and the Ottoman armies of the 17th century adopted a mixed tactical view that included both frontal assault and positional warfare. Positional warfare, however, was becoming increasingly important since an all-out attack on the enemy as a final blow required time-consuming planning which once again required the endurance of infantry musketeers in fixed positions. So, the more household troops participated in the Ottoman army, the greater the reliance of the Ottoman army on positional warfare which was undoubtedly the case in 1663-64.

The Ottoman field army in 1663-64 was very well adapted to siege operations. The Ottoman siege train had no particular difficulty in obtaining

38 SLUB Eb. 387, fol. 126b (evâhir-i Ramazan 1074/16-26 April 1664).

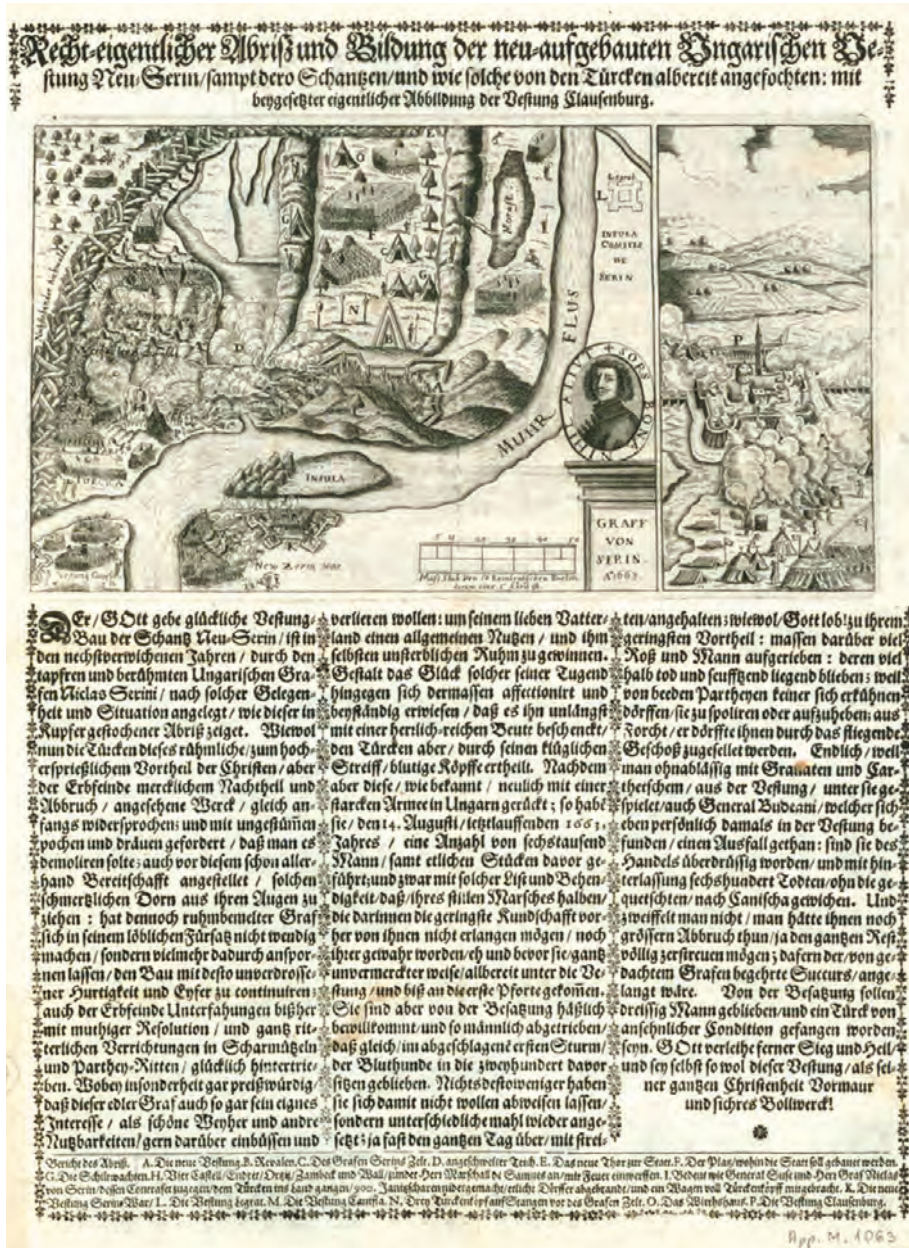


Fig. 6. Sieges of Zrínyi-Újvár (left) and of Kolozsvár (right) in 1663, with the portrait of Nicolas Zrínyi in the middle of a contemporary brochure

heavy or medium-sized guns. The logistical system functioned properly and maintained a constant flow of gunpowder, ammunition and other necessities to the incessantly roaring guns along the siege lines. However, a siege operation required a tremendous effort from thousands of people. For this reason, in the sieges of Érsekújvár in 1663 and Zrínyi-Újvár in 1664, the Ottoman military leaders instructed almost everyone in the camp to work in the trenches and help erect earthworks. Sunullah Ağa, *sipahiler ağası*, the head of the most prestigious elite cavalry regiment, died “on soil” while working in a company trying to raise an earthen bank across the walls of Érsekújvár³⁹. The *timar*-holding light cavalry was employed *en masse* in trench digging, producing defensive baskets for siege artillery, and carrying earth and timber to siege lines⁴⁰.

The cavalry companies brought by Ottoman notables to the battlefield could be defined as *dragoon* soldiers who in combat favored positional warfare tactics. R. Montecuccoli, the commander-in-chief of the Habsburg army, noticed the similarity between the *dragoon* cavalry in Western armies and the mounted *sekbans* and *sarıca* in pasha households. According to Montecuccoli, these mounted warriors were able to fight both on horseback and on foot depending on the differing circumstances of the war⁴¹. This is confirmed by the British diplomat P. Rycaut who during his stay in the Ottoman camp observed many of these mounted musketeers serving leading statesmen⁴². Mounted *sekbans*, however, were mainly equipped with long-barreled muskets rather than pistols, an indication that they were more practical in fixed positions than in cavalry charges⁴³. Therefore, in most cases, they operated jointly with their infantry companions from the same household as well as with janissaries. For instance, in July 1664, following the destruction of Zrínyi-Újvár by Ottoman forces, two cavalry companies from the household troops of Fazıl Ahmed Pasha were sent along with the siege force to take the fort of Pölöske⁴⁴. Another contemporary observer of the Ottoman army, probably a

39 *Hasan Ağa*: op. cit. 172.; *Tâ'ib Ömer*: Fethiyye-i Uyvar ve Novigrad. Rare Books Library of Istanbul University, İbnülemin Mahmud Kemal, 2602, fol. 17b; *Mehmed Halife*: Tarih-i Gılmanî. Prep. by Ertuğrul Oral (unpublished PhD). Marmara University, İstanbul, 2000. 101.

40 Among a multitude of references see: *Evlîya Çelebi*: op. cit. VI. 191., 195., 203-204., 230.; *P. Rycaut*: op. cit. 328.; *R. Montecuccoli*: Vom Kriege op. cit. 504.; *Hasan Ağa*: op. cit. 171.

41 *R. Montecuccoli*: Vom Kriege op. cit. 399. “Giebt es auch Einige, die zu Fuss und zu Pferde, wie unsere Dragoner und gewöhnlich bei den Paschas dienen” (475-476.).

42 “... and the others [segbans] on Horse-back like Dragoons in Christendom ...” (*P. Rycaut*: op. cit. 379-380.).

43 “Die gemeine Reuterey führet lange Röhr/ und gar selten Pistol/im übrigen einen Säbel” (*M. Meyer*: Diarium Europaeum op. cit. X. 683.).

44 *E. Osman Dede*: op. cit. 45.; *Hasan Ağa*: op. cit. 267-268.

French officer taken prisoner by the Ottomans in 1663, noted that “Ottoman cavalry” (*dragoons* in this example) dismounted their horses and participated in the planned marches against the defensive walls⁴⁵.

After defeating the allied forces at Zrínyi-Újvár in July 1664, the Ottoman army began marching alongside the Rába River in an attempt to cross it and penetrate further into enemy territory. When realizing the threat posed by the Ottomans, Montecuccoli adapted a defensive strategy to prevent any such advance. The two armies raced each other on the opposite banks of the river; whereas Ottomans sought to discover a suitable ford before the allied soldiers blockaded the passage, Montecuccoli urged his reconnaissance parties to discover and repel any Ottoman initiative before it became a real threat. During these tactical maneuvers, both sides erected hastily-built earth emplacements along the river banks for protecting themselves from enemy fire. On July 27, for example, Ottoman janissaries succeeded in clearing off a bridge by opening heavy fire from behind earthworks. German and French forces soon came to aid and recovered the bridge⁴⁶. On the eve of the battle of St. Gotthard, an Ottoman contingent made a more successful attempt to secure a bridgehead for the planned crossing of larger forces. A group of Ottoman infantry musketeers carrying Albanian banners, according to Montecuccoli, crossed Rába and quickly erected a circle of earthworks to make full use of their firearms⁴⁷. Their intention was clear: to hold the ground until the main Ottoman forces arrived and turned this initial step into a proper crossing. Again, the allied forces swept the Ottoman soldiers, probably a contingent from the grand vizier's household troops, into the fortifications and pushed the intruders back to their camp on the other side of the river.

Ottoman tactical maneuvers in the battle of St. Gotthard were, in fact, no different from their military strategy in the last week before the battle. On

45 *Aussag über 23 Puncten deß Frantzösischen Renegatens, welcher an heut den 23. Augusti 1663. Jahrs, von dem Türkischen Lager, so jenseits deß Fluß Neutra vorhero vmb das Dorff Udler geschlagen, Freywillig herüber naber Neubäusel kommen ...*, 1663. For the reference see: Article 12. French officer's booklet has been assessed by Vojtech Kopčan in *Bemerkungen zur Benutzung der europäischen Quellen in der osmanischen Geschichtsschreibung* *Asian and African Studies* 11 (1975) 147-160.

46 *Allerjüngster /Warhafftiger /recht gründlicher und unpartheyischer BERICHT /Was bey der am 23. Julii vorgehabten Cavalcade /absonderlichen aber /bey dem darauf den 1. Augusti unsern dem Closter S. Gotthard an der Raab mit dem Türcken gehaltenen memorablen Treffen ...*, in *Druck verfertigt/im Wein-Monat dieses 1664.* 7-8.

47 R. Montecuccoli's report to Emperor Leopold I (31 July 1664). Österreichische Kriegsarchiv, Alte Feldakten, Türkenkrieg 1664/VIII/2b. This report has been published by Georg Wagner in his “Die Steiermark und die Schlacht von St. Gotthard-Mogersdorf” *Mitteilungen des Steiermärkischen Landesarchivs* XIV (1964). 68-69.

August 1, very early in the morning, a janissary party crossed the river at a secluded site and began to dig a line of trenches that would serve as a defensive position against the allied forces. Meanwhile the Ottomans began erecting a bridge on either side of the river. Informed by scouts, the allied command immediately initiated an attack on the Ottoman positions. However, the Ottoman line of defense held this time. Nearly 10.000 Ottoman infantry and cavalry hastened to cross the river and fight alongside the janissaries struggling to keep a safe passage for their companions⁴⁸.

At this early stage of the battle, the Ottoman cavalry seems to have played a crucial role in making room for the incoming Ottoman troops. Carrying the combat in close quarters, they resorted to cold weapons for opening a breach in the enemy line. The Ottoman attack seems to have been well-planned since the cavalry delivered its blow to the middle of the allied forces, the location of the *Reichskreisarmee* units with the least fighting experience⁴⁹. Nonetheless, Ottoman military leaders knew very well that a single blow from the cavalry would not suffice to break the enemy's morale and ordered the digging of new trenches to gain more territory on the captured side of the river. According to Western eyewitnesses, the Ottomans dug ten parallel trenches fortified by earthworks and emplacements to safeguard the crossing of new troops. The leading commanders in the allied camp prized the tactical importance of the earthworks erected by the invading Ottoman forces, but at least one German officer, J. Stauffenberg, seems to have been deeply impressed. He commented that the Ottomans had intentionally dug downward on a slope in order to ensure every rank in the trenches got a clear shot and nobody's point of view was blocked⁵⁰. This, indeed, describes the very nature of 17th-century Ottoman warfare. In the opening stage of the battle of St. Gotthard, the Ottomans, having gained the upper hand, did not hesitate to engage with hostile forces. However, until the moment they believed to have an advantage, they were strictly compliant with the rules of positional warfare and rested mainly on firepower. This mode of warfare was the optimal choice for an army composed of evenly numbered ranks of infantry and cavalry and, therefore, heavily equipped with firearms.

48 *E. Osman Dede*: op. cit. 45-46.; *Hasan Ağa*: op. cit. 275-276.; *Evlîya Çelebi*: op. cit. VI. 31-32.

49 *Johann von Stauffenberg*: Gründliche warhafftige und unpartheyische Relation des blutigen Treffens/zwischen dem Erbfeinde Christlichen Nahmens und Blutes auff einer/und dem Christlichen Kriegsheer auf anderer Seiten/gehalten den 1. Augusti An; 1664 bey S. Gotthard in Ungarn. Christoff Fischer, Regensburg, 12 Febr. Anno 1665. 30., 34., 43.; *M. Meyer*: Theatrum Europaeum op. cit. IX. 1218.

50 *J. Stauffenberg*: op. cit. 50.

AZ OSMÁN HADSereg ÖSSZETÉTELE, HARCÁSZATA ÉS HADÁSZATA ZRÍNYI-
ÚJVÁRNÁL ÉS SZENTGOTTHÁRDNÁL
(1663–1664)

1663–1664-ben az oszmán haderő egy hosszú – 1606 óta tartó – szünet után jelent meg ismét a nyugati hadszíntéren. E viszonylag hosszú időszak alatt az oszmán hadseregben számos hadügyi változtatást vezettek be, amelyek hatása a harctéren is megfigyelhető volt. E változtatások közül a legfontosabb – amint erre a tanulmány felhívja a figyelmet –, hogy megnőtt az oszmán gyalogos katonaság aránya a lovassághoz képest. Másrészt pedig nagymértékben megnőtt az udvari katonaság aránya és szerepe a korábban elsődlegesnek számító timariota katonasággal szemben. Ez a változás összefüggésben állt a gyalogság arányának növekedésével, mivel az udvari katonaság jelentős részét sokkal inkább kézi lőfegyverrel, mint a közelharcban használatos fegyverekkel látták el. Annak ellenére, hogy nagyon nehéz pontosan megállapítani az 1663–1664-es hadjáratokban részt vett oszmán hadsereg valós létszámát, a tanulmány szerzője oszmán források, valamint osztrák és brit diplomaták korabeli jelentései és egyéb elbeszélések alapján igyekszik hiteles képet adni róla.