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Inherited Intimate Bonds: Exploring Same-Sex Relationships in the Ottoman Janissary Corps

This research project focuses on homosexual relationships and dynamics in Janissary Corps, a prominent military institution of the Ottoman State during the early modern period. It examines the highly idiosyncratic sexual structure and gender roles of this military organization, making connections between its Islamic aspect (especially its roots in the bektashi branch of Sufism), possible Byzantine influences, and the everyday lives of the soldiers. It explores the complexity of the queer relations (Butler, 2004) that developed within the confines of this military order and sheds light on the relationships that emerged in barracks, Janissary baths and coffeehouses (Kafadar, 2007), especially during the period when the military role of the janissaries was transformed into a more urban one as they were tasked with ensuring the security of Istanbul (Aksan, 2007). While researching the homosexuality of the Janissaries, it will also be taken into consideration whether there is any continuity and variability in the perception regarding homosexuality between the Byzantine empire and the Ottoman empire, whether there are lingering effects and remnants of Byzantine culture in the Ottoman Empire, whether practices and sexual perception during periods of conquest or coexistence affect attitudes towards homosexual relations.