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The Idea of Peasant Soldiery in the Byzantine and Ottoman States in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries

(Abstract)

The practice of specialization of certain groups into a peasant militia by the granting of land in compensation for military service existed with certain similarities in both the Byzantine and Ottoman states as in the example of Byzantine stratiotes as smallholding soldiers and the Ottoman *yaya* corps. The paper focuses on this impact of the Byzantine organization of its peasant soldiery to that of the Ottomans in the first half of the fourteenth century. On the other hand, it was the Ottomans who influenced the Byzantine military in the second half of the fifteenth century which was significant in the case of the Despotate of Morea as the two late contemporary Byzantine philosophers had pointed out. Thus, a comparative analysis of both sides shows the inevitable acculturation between cultures in the Medieval period by the way of social and military elements or through the influence of contemporary Byzantine and Ottoman intellectuals, who are familiar with both cultures. This phenomenon shows that the military practices are transformed throughout the centuries as if it is a genetic circle within the cultures.

Keywords: Ottoman, Byzantine, Peasant Soldiery, Stratiotes, Smallholding, *Yayas*.

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