In the mid-sixteenth century, approximately 13,000 soldiers were stationed in the fortresses of the province (vilayet) of Buda; this was the local (yerlül) force, which obviously did not include the Janissaries (yeniçeri) deployed from the Ottoman capital. Several payroll registers (mevacib defteri) covering about 11,000 men, or the majority of the local paid force, have survived from the 1540–1560s. Four of these registers contain sufficient data for a statistical evaluation of the place of origin of the soldiers. Two registers are particularly valuable. The first was compiled in 961 (December 7, 1553 – November 25, 1554) and originally covered all the fortresses in the vilayet. The register is incomplete since the beginning and end are missing; the remaining pages list the names of soldiers in ten fortresses. With the exception of absentees and several officers with livelihoods from timar-estate incomes, the register contains brief personal remarks written by the clerk above the name of each of the 3,412 soldiers, including the soldier’s place of origin (or previous residence) and his closest relatives. The second mevacib defteri was compiled several years later in 965 (October 24, 1557 – October 13, 1558); it lists paid soldiers in the 51 fortresses of the province of Buda. This document includes similar personal remarks for 814 soldiers, who were probably new recruits.

By way of example, I cite several entries from both defters. From the 1554 register: Bekir Mahmud, from the village of Laz in the judicial district of Çelebibazari, which lay in the sub-province of Bosna, who had a brother by the name of Piri (Bosna sancağında Çelebi bazari kazasına tabi Laz nam kariyeden olub Piri nam kardeşi varmış); Kurd Abdullah,

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1 Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Orientabteilung Ms. or. fol. 432.
2 ÖNB Türkische Handschriften Mxt. 614.
from the castle of Voćin in the sub-province of Sirem, who had no relatives (Sirem sancağında Vok’ın nam kaleden olub akrabasından kimesnesi yoğmuş). From the 1557 register: Yusuf Abdullah, from the town of Kragujevac in the judicial district of Rudnik, which lay in the sub-province of Semendire, whose father’s name was Mihal (Semendire sancağında Valyeva nam kasabada Veli Turgud mahallesinden [olub] babası adı Mihal idi); Mehmed Abdullah, from the cami district of the town of Prozor in the sub-province of Kilis, whose elder and young brothers were called Hasan and Hüseyn (Kilis sancağında Prozor kasabasında mescid mahallesinde Hasan ve Hüseyn biri ulu biri kıçi karındaşları varmış).  

The most important lesson to be drawn from the entries in the two payroll registers is that the great majority of soldiers serving in the Ottoman fortresses in Hungary, 90.9 per cent in 1554 and 91.1 per cent in 1558, came from the Balkan Peninsula. At both points in time, the largest group was from Bosnia-Hercegovina: 1,383 men (40.5%) in 1554, and 432 (53.1%) in 1558. This region was followed by Serbia as well as the territory between the rivers Drava and Sava, which by this time was settled mainly by Serbs: 1,306 Serbs (38.3%) were serving as soldiers in Ottoman fortresses in Hungary in 1554, and the corresponding figure was 236 (29%) in 1558. The remaining soldiers, 12.1 per cent declining to 9 per cent, came from Bulgaria, Macedonia, Albania, Thessaly–Morea, and Thrace. In 1554, 89 soldiers from Anatolia or the Arab provinces (2.6%) were serving in the Buda vilayet, and the corresponding figure was 20 (2.5%) in 1558. In 1554, soldiers from Hungary itself included 69 Hungarians (2%) and 128 Turks and Serbs (3.8%). In 1558, these two categories amounted to 52 men (2.5%). At both points in time, the force was supplemented by several western Christian soldiers.

Bosnia-Hercegovina’s leading role is obvious not only from the figures but also in other terms. In 1554, 15–20 per cent of the soldiers com-

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3Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Orientabteilung Ms. or. fol. 432, p. 44.
4ÖNB Türkische Handschriften Mxt. 614, pp. 58, 115, 150.