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Een Spiegel voor de Sultan. Staatsideologie in de Vroeg Osmaanse Kronieken, 1300-1453



Kaftinformatie: *Miniature of Sultan Orhan Gazi in conversation with the scholar Molla Alâeddin. In: the Şakayıku'n-Nu'mâniyye, by Taşköprülüzâde. Source: Topkapı Palace Museum, H1263, folio 12b.*



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A Mirror for the Sultan

State Ideology in the Early Ottoman Chronicles, 1300-1453

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Introduction: Methodology and Conceptual Framework

Ottoman political thought, especially in its incipient phase during the fifteenth century, has not received much scholarly attention, and it has often only been treated in rather schematic terms. Though there are quite a few exceptions, many historians have considered the fifteenth century a period about which not much can be said due to the lack of sources, or else as an age which did not produce any original political discourse. For instance, when comparing Ottoman and Burgundian political ideas, Antony Black, a specialist of the history of Western political thought, categorised Ottoman political discourse as stagnant and underdeveloped compared to its European counterpart: ‘in the Islamic world, with the exception of Ibn Khaldûn, political ideas remained unchanged after the fall of the Abbasid Caliphate (1258); there were to be no major new developments.’¹ Black also upheld that ‘there was no concept of consent of subjects as necessary to political legitimacy. In the Islamic world, everyone agreed that authority resided in the sultan and the Sharia; there was no conflict of ideas about forms of government. There was, finally, no concept of the state as an abstract entity separate from the individual ruler or dynasty. [...] In the fifteenth century, there was hardly any Islamic political theory.’² Likewise, the older generations of scholars have ascribed a certain uniqueness to the historical trajectory of Europe and have assumed that the nature of Ottoman history was inferior to that of Europe.³ It seems that such orientalist notions, which since the last decades have been surpassed in the study of Ottoman history, still somewhat resound in Black’s view.

¹ Anthony Black, ‘Ottoman Political Thought. A Comparison with Europe’, in: ed. Robert Stein, *Powerbrokers in the Late Middle Ages. The Burgundian Low Countries in a European Context* (Turnhout, 2001) 235.

² Ibidem, 236.

³ Especially, see: Herbert E. Gibbons, *The Foundation of the Ottoman Empire* (Oxford, 1916) 41; Perry Anderson, *Lineages of the Absolutist State* (London, 1974) 379, 382-384, 397-398.

In this study, I intend to shift the focus from ‘political thought’ in the sense of the ‘high theory’ that can be found in learned treatises to the more mundane and everyday political discourse one encounters, for instance, in historiographical and diplomatic texts. I will specifically aim at a textual analysis of the earliest Ottoman chronicles, all written until the end of the fifteenth century. By rereading these fifteenth-century chronicles, I will examine how an Ottoman ‘state ideology’ was developed in this period and what kind of a political discourse was reflected in those early historiographical texts. It will be shown that conclusions like those of Black’s have been far too premature and that a specific political discourse was developed within the Ottoman sphere of power during the early stage of its state formation.

When it comes to empirical research of the fifteenth-century sources, specialists of Ottoman history such as Cemal Kafadar, Suraiya Faroqhi, Dimitris Kastritsis and Feridun Emecen have pointed out that there still remains a lot of qualitative text analysis to be done on the early Ottoman chronicles, especially concerning Ottoman state-building and ideology.⁴ This is precisely the focus of this Ph.D. research. I set myself the task of re-exploring and re-interpreting the early fifteenth-century Ottoman state building process and ideology through the analysis of the discourse in these early chronicles. My objective is to contribute to the study of the genesis of Ottoman political language or ‘state ideology’ in general. My main objective is to study the specific ideas and concepts that formed, as it were, the ‘building blocks’ or ‘central notions’ of the early Ottoman ‘state ideology’. The fifteenth century is especially interesting in this respect, as it is a period of experimentation with both ideological discourses and specific forms of state formation. The fifteenth century is also the age when the foundations were laid for the Ottoman Empire as a world power in the later period. And finally, this study of the early Ottoman state ideology is also a modest attempt to search for alternative approaches to early Ottoman history that go beyond the Orientalist assumptions.

Until a few decades ago, under the influence of a strict positivist stance, the earliest Ottoman historiographical sources have been often too quickly rejected by reasoning that they were useless for the scientific reconstruction of historical events.⁵ Even a well-known and learned historian like Colin Imber too quickly discards, in my opinion, the

⁴ Especially, see: Cemal Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds. The Construction of the Ottoman State* (Los Angeles, 1996) 91-117; Suraiya Faroqhi, *Approaching Ottoman History. An Introduction to the Sources* (Cambridge, 1999) 146-147; Dimitris Kastritsis, *The Sons of Bâyezid. Empire Building and Representation in the Ottoman Civil War of 1402-1413* (Leiden, 2007) ; Feridun M. Emecen, *Osmanlı Klasik Çağında Siyaset* (İstanbul, 2011) 13-47; Rudi Paul Lindner, ‘Anatolia, 1300-1451’, in *Cambridge History of Turkey*, ed. Kate Fleet (Cambridge, 2009) 105.

⁵ Aziz S. Atiya, *The Crusade of Nicopolis* (London, 1934) 35; Rudi P. Lindner, *Nomads and Ottomans in Medieval Anatolia* (Bloomington, 1983) 19-20; *ibid.*, ‘Stimulus and Justification in Early Ottoman History,’ *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 27 (1982): 207-224; Colin Imber, ‘The Legend of Osman Gazi’, in: E. Zachariadou ed., *The Ottoman Emirate, 1300-1380. Halcyon days in Crete* (1993) 67-75; *ibid.*, ‘The Ottoman Dynastic Myth’, *Turcica* 19 (1987) 7-27.

early Ottoman chronicles for scientific historical analysis. He argues that early Ottoman history represented 'a black hole'.⁶ In his view, the early Ottoman chronicles were all commissioned by the princely court. And thus, Imber assumes that these narratives merely consisted of legends and stories that must be regarded as unreliable propaganda.

There is of course plenty of sense in such a critical attitude, but the same might also be said about historical texts from many other regions across the world, which all easily blend 'facts' with 'fiction' or 'myth'. It is evident that ancient and medieval historiographical texts should be looked at using strict historical-critical methods. Nevertheless, an exaggerated form of historical criticism can unwillingly become a sort of orientalist view, which does not allow the 'Orientals' (in this case the Ottomans) to speak for themselves. Characteristic of the fifteenth-century Ottoman texts is the strong stylisation of their forms of expression.⁷ The Ottoman chronicles, but also genres like mirrors-for-princes and the epic poetry from this period, similar to the Western '*chansons de geste*', share an elaborate series of concepts, words, expressions and metaphors. The unity found in theme, style and genre is all the more valid for those works that disseminated the Ottoman principles of ideal kingship or 'state ideology'.

Imber's rejection of the early Ottoman sources as useless for historical reconstruction is thus somewhat problematic as they still offer, as I will show, clear reflections of actual political developments, and also form excellent sources for ideological and cultural history. Although they cannot be taken at face value, their narratives provide us with interesting clues and suggestions about how the Ottomans constructed and described their own history. In fact, new research into the Ottoman historical tradition has shown that the Ottoman chronicles of the fifteenth century can be neither taken for granted nor dismissed entirely. They reflect a plurality of voices stemming from different social groups and one has to understand and to explain the interconnections between these texts.⁸ In Chapter 1, I will discuss this corpus of sources more in detail. It is noteworthy that the ideas of the early Ottomans were transmitted to the later generations in the form of their oral tradition of accounting stories. In this tradition, these stories carried morals and values significant to the social lifestyle of the early Ottomans. Whether they were true or invented, these stories obviously had a role to play in the consciousness of the historical actors. They often seem to have served to prescribe a given set of political and moral values. Moreover, the accounts of the Ottoman chronicles also helped to refine the

⁶ Imber, 'The Legend of Osman Gazi', 75.

⁷ A detailed discussion of the chronicles that I have used is provided in Chapter 1.

⁸ Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*, 103; Halil İnalcık, 'The Question of the Emergence of the Ottoman State', *International Journal of Turkish Studies* 2 (1980) 71-79; *ibid.*, 'How to Read Ashik Pasha-zade's History' in: *ibid.*, *Essays in Ottoman History* (Istanbul, 1998) 31-50; Kastritsis, *The Sons of Bâyezid*, 14, 21.

manner in which these actors saw themselves, according to their social and political preferences, cultural values and attitudes.

In recent western historiography, there is an elaborate literature that deals with discursive representation in medieval European fictional and non-fictional sources, for instance in the Burgundian chronicle tradition.⁹ However, scholars of Ottoman historiography have not yet fully explored the broad field of discourse analysis of early Ottoman historical texts. Hence, my goal is precisely to explore what the narratives of the Ottoman chronicles tell us about early Ottoman state ideology. To do this, I will make use of the conceptual framework of 'Critical Discourse Analysis' (CDA), as developed by the British linguist Norman Fairclough and his followers.¹⁰ The advantage and interest of the methodologies encompassed by CDA, which contrasts with the positivist premises, is that it takes the narrative of the texts seriously and considers them as valuable. This method departs from the idea that value judgments are pervasively present in discourse. CDA thus aims at reconstructing the 'utopic' assumptions of these discourses. Making use of the methodological 'toolkit' offered by CDA, but using it pragmatically and avoiding an overload of theoretical jargon, I will scrutinise the ideological discourse that can be found in the early Ottoman chronicles and situate it within the larger historical and cultural context in which it was produced. Particularly in Chapter 3, I will empirically explore the 'ideological' values and dominant ideas of the Ottoman world-view as they were expressed by the chroniclers up to the fifteenth century.

This study also deals with Ottoman state formation in general. As is generally known, early and mid-twentieth-century scholarship on Ottoman history constructed a narrative describing the Ottoman state as a 'Holy War machine', rapacious and lacking rationality, dynamism and knowledge of state building because of its so-called 'oriental despotism', Islamic ideology and Asiatic nomadic origins.¹¹ The categorisation of Ottoman political

⁹ For example, see: Frederik Buylaert and Jan Dumolyn, 'Beeldvorming rond adel en ridderschap bij Froissart en Bourgondische kroniekschrijvers', *Bijdragen en Mededelingen betreffende de Geschiedenis der Nederlanden* 124/4 (2008): 609-632; Dumolyn, 'Le Povre Peuple estoit moult opprimé: Elite Discourses on 'the People' in the Burgundian Netherlands (Fourteenth to Fifteenth Centuries)', *French History* 23/2 (2009): 171-192; *ibid.*, 'Philippe de Commines et les Discours Politiques en Flandre Médiévale', ed. J. Blanchard, *1511-2011: Philippe de Commines. Droit, écriture: deux piliers de la souveraineté* (Genève, 2012) 33-50; *ibid.*, 'Justice, Equity and the Common Good. The State Ideology of the Councillors of the Burgundian Dukes', ed. J. D. Boulton and J. R. Veenstra, *The Ideology of Burgundy: The Promotion of National Consciousness, 1364-1565* (Leiden, 2006) 1-20.

¹⁰ On the methodology of CDA, see among others: Norman Fairclough, *Language and Power* (Harlow, 2001); M. Jorgensen and L. Philips, *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method* (London, 2002).

¹¹ Nicola Jorga, *Geschichte des osmanischen Reiches nach den Quellen Dargestellt* (Gothe, 1908-1913); *ibid.*, *Byzance après Byzance: Continuation de l'Histoire de la Vie Byzantine* (Bucarest, 1935); Lilo Linke, *Allah Dethroned. A Journey through Modern Turkey* (London, 1937); Paul Wittek, *The Rise of the Ottoman Empire: Studies on the History of Turkey, 13th - 15th Centuries*, ed. Colin Heywood (London, 2008; first published in 1938); Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* (London, 1961); Stanford J. Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey: Volume 1, Empire*

thought as the antithesis of the European ideas of sovereignty has indeed very much been part of western discourse since the Renaissance.¹²

In line with Orientalist attitudes in historiography and the social sciences in general, the older scholarly studies on Ottoman history shared the simple presumption that European civilisation had inevitably produced 'modernity'. The premise was that unlike European culture, non-western civilisations – such as the Ottoman Empire – lacked a possibility for progress and were therefore frozen in their historical trajectory, incapable of changing themselves into a version of modernity without the intrusion of outside (i.e. European) forces. This view was most vividly expressed by the Austrian orientalist and founding father of 'Ottoman Studies' Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall. When the Ottomans had begun to reform their state by implementing European ideas and institutions, he noted: 'Finally, the writer and the reader of Ottoman history can freely breathe [...] Ottoman history has become humane. The stiff ice crust of the Turks melts down, at least from outside, with the warm importation of European culture and politics, which blows a gentler touch of fine human civilisation. A new life is awakening in the Ottoman Empire.'¹³

The history of the Ottoman state and society has also often been framed in terms of 'arbitrary use of power' or 'oriental despotism'.¹⁴ Traditional scholarship on Ottoman state formation owed a great deal to Max Weber's theories. In his theory of *patrimonialism* and *sultanism*, Weber referred to the Ottoman state as 'an extreme form of *patrimonialism* and of 'oriental despotism'. He defined 'oriental despotism' as a regime in which the ruler uses the state institutions as 'purely personal instruments' to accumulate 'arbitrary' power. The Ottoman sultan allegedly demanded total servility of the state and its people for his personal whims. As a subcategory of patrimonialism, he described *sultanism* as a patrimonial regime that 'operates on the basis of discretion, which is distinct from every form of rationality'.¹⁵

of the Gazis: The Rise and Decline of the Ottoman Empire 1280-1808 (New York, 1976); Even some recent works still bear some traces of this view, see: Jason Goodwin, *Lords of the horizons. A History of the Ottoman Empire* (London, 2000) 10; Caroline Finkel, *Osman's Dream. The Story of the Ottoman Empire 1300-1923* (London, 2006) 10.

¹² Margaret Meserve, *Empires of Islam in Renaissance Historical Thought* (Cambridge, 2008); Nancy Bisaha, *Creating East and West. Renaissance Humanists and the Ottoman Turks* (Philadelphia, 2004).

¹³ Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall, *Geschichte Des Osmanischen Reiches*, vol. 7 (Pest, 1831) 1-2: 'Endlich kann der Schreiber und Leser osmanischer Geschichte freier aufatmen (...) Die osmanische Geschichte wird menschlicher. Die starre Eis Rinde des Türken taut wenigstens von außen auf, in dem warmen Verkehre europäischer Politik und Kultur, es weht ein sanfterer Hauch menschlicher Milde und feiner Gesittung, ist auch im osmanischen Reiche ein neues Leben erwacht.'

¹⁴ On Weberian *sultanism* and for its variant 'oriental despotism', see: Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, transl. G. Roth and C. Wittich (Berkeley, 1978) 231-232, 1031.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*.

Weber contrasted *sultanism*, located in ‘the Near East’, to an *estate type dominion* that existed in medieval Europe. As opposed to both of these types of authority and rule, he considered bureaucracy or ‘rational bureaucracy’ as a polity based on objective and impersonal rules and laws that characterised the relations between the rulers, administration and civil society. Following this conceptualisation, many scholars have claimed that in Ottoman history such notions as rationality and public service were not to be found.¹⁶ This perspective adheres to a belief that Europe made unique contributions to world history, whereas other cultures are supposed not to have contributed at all. In Chapter 2, I give an overview of the Ottoman state formation process based on a wide range of existing scholarship. It will become clear that the thesis of ‘oriental despotism’ is not supported by the empirical material. The Ottoman polity in fact gradually developed into a ‘bureaucratic’ and ‘centralised’ dynastic state.

During the twentieth century some influential studies of Ottoman history still validated a set of orientalist premises. This was particularly the case with the recurring discursive register on the ‘gaza’ (‘conquest’) ideology, which has wrongly been translated as ‘holy war’. Relying on Ottoman chronicles, the Austrian historian Paul Wittek claimed that the *gaza* – which he understood as continuous ‘holy war’ and proselytism against Christians – was the *raison d’être* of the Ottoman state. As I will discuss in detail in Chapter 2, Wittek’s thesis for generations remained the dominant explanation of the Ottoman state and is even today still quoted.

In line with recent tendencies in Ottoman and world historiography,¹⁷ this research casts doubt on the explanatory capacity of such orientalist premises about Ottoman history. Of course, since the last decades, orientalism has already received its share of criticism in the scholarly debate.¹⁸ In studying Ottoman history, Huri İslamoğlu, for instance, has demonstrated that typical orientalist assumptions and conceptions often lack appropriateness and scientific relevance. Like many recent scholars, she has suggested to rewrite and to decolonise Ottoman historiography.¹⁹

¹⁶ For a critic of Weber’s thesis, see: Halil İnalcık, ‘Comments on Sultanism: Max Weber’s typification of the Ottoman Polity’, *Princeton Papers in New Eastern Studies* 1 (1992) 49–79. Haim Gerber refuted Weber’s premises on the supposed arbitrary juridical institution and practice in the Muslim world. See: Gerber, *State, Society and Law in Islam. Ottoman Law in Comparative Perspective* (New York, 1994).

¹⁷ S.N. Balagangadhara, *Reconceptualizing India Studies* (New Delhi, 2012); Rifa’at Abou-El-Haj, *Formation of the Modern State. The Ottoman Empire, Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries* (New York, 2005); Janet Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony: the World System A.D. 1250-1350* (Oxford, 1989); Suraiya Faroqhi, *The Ottoman Empire and the World around It* (London, 2005); Immanuel Wallerstein, *Unthinking Social Science: The Limits of Nineteenth Century Paradigms* (Cambridge, 1991).

¹⁸ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London, 1979); Huri İslamoğlu, ‘Oriental Despotism in World System Perspective’, in: ed. *ibid.*, *The Ottoman Empire and the World Economy* (Cambridge, 1987) 1–24; S.N. Balagangadhara, *The Heathen in His Blindness: Asia, the West, and the Dynamic of Religion* (Leiden, 1994).

¹⁹ İslamoğlu, ‘Oriental Despotism’, 2–5.

Similarly, the current study departs from the observation that a pattern of distortion is present in many studies on Ottoman history. The reason is that these studies have translated Ottoman concepts by using western concepts as their synonyms. Terms like ‘oriental despotism’, ‘cleric’, ‘proselytism’, ‘slaves of the sultan’, ‘holy war’ or the Marxist concept of ‘Asian Mode of Production’ have invariably led to the distortion of not only the connotation of Ottoman concepts, but also of our understanding of Ottoman history and its political realities. In popular language and culture, the faulty translation and interpretation of Ottoman concepts has resulted in a discourse on ‘fanatic warriors’, ‘cruel barbarians’, ‘despotic sultans’, etc. In this respect, I am aware that using the term ‘ideology’ is perhaps equally problematic, but I will explain below in which sense I will use the concept as an analytical tool.

In short, the aim of this study is to explore and to situate the concepts present in fifteenth-century Ottoman texts in their own historical and semantic context and as such to diminish the degree of distortion. In this research, I explore the possibility of going beyond the ‘orientalist’ and ‘colonial’ premises and descriptions of Ottoman history. Indeed, concepts and conceptualisations matter; they form the basis of our knowledge frameworks, which are very influential in the construction of not only social reality, but also in the writing of history. In this respect, this study is a modest effort to let the Ottomans speak for themselves in their own words.

Theories of State Formation

The problem at the start of this study is an obvious one: without having a theory about the phenomenon of state, one cannot meaningfully engage in a discussion about state formation. The theoretical approach to Ottoman state-building which I propose in Chapter 2 is eclectically composed. I will deploy Ibn Khaldûn’s early political sociology; Nicola Di Cosmo’s theory on nomadic state formation;²⁰ John Haldon’s conceptualisation of the ‘tributary state’; Immanuel Wallerstein’s analysis of world-system theory; and finally also Pierre Bourdieu’s conceptualisation of the state and his concept of ‘symbolic power’.²¹

²⁰ Nicola Di Cosmo, *Ancient China and Its Enemies. The Rise of Nomadic Power in East Asian History* (Cambridge, 2002) 162-184; Thomas J. Barfield, ‘Turk, Persian and Arab: Changing Relationships between Tribes and State in Iran and its Frontiers’, ed. Nikki R. Keddie and Rudolph P. Matthee, *Iran and the Surrounding World: Interactions in Culture and Cultural Politics* (Washington, 2002) 61-78.

²¹ Pierre Bourdieu, Loïc J. D. Wacquant, and Samar Farage, ‘Rethinking the State: Genesis and Structure of the Bureaucratic Field,’ *Sociological Theory* 12 (1994) 3.

This composite approach is very useful to understand the early Ottoman state building process, as it goes beyond the classic theories of state-building that strictly emphasise the development of institutions and taxation. The blending of the theories mentioned above can help to go beyond the outdated theories of 'Asian Mode of Production' and 'Oriental Despotism'. These theories provide tools to understand Ottoman political organisation and the manner in which the Ottoman dynasty mobilised the various social groups in joining their efforts. Indeed, early state formation took place when the early Ottomans still had minimal organisational structures at hand. But they did make use of many social relations and ties in order to influence, control and create networks. It was precisely in this way that they generated political institutions and attracted followers.²²

What is a 'state'?

I must of course clarify what I mean by the term 'the state', a crucial heuristic tool in studies on history but at the same time often a very vague concept. Surely, one directly encounters the problem that the term 'state' itself has been hotly debated for many decades and a great number of definitions have been proposed. In everyday usage, we are accustomed to thinking of a state in terms of a clearly defined national unit, representing the same cultural, ethnic, ideological and linguistic characteristics. This is somehow true for the modern nation-states,²³ which Benedict Anderson has called 'imagined communities'.²⁴ However, as my unit of analysis is the fifteenth-century Ottoman Empire, an ancient 'world-empire', it is necessary to make a distinction between 'capitalist' and 'pre-capitalist' societies.²⁵ It has also been demonstrated that the paradigms on feudalism and the 'Asian Mode of Production' are empirically and scientifically inadequate for the understanding of the Ottoman state formation.²⁶

I will make use of a more pragmatic and eclectic view of the early Ottoman state. I define a state as a territorially demarcated region, controlled by a centralised political establishment which has the monopoly over the use of coercion and taxation. A state is represented by a particular idea of sovereignty, which serves to legitimise its existence and the position of the ruling elite. This can provide a specific identity to the population

²² Also see: Karen Barkey, *Empire of Difference. The Ottomans in Comparative Perspective* (New York, 2008) 9-33.

²³ Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, in: *ibid.*, *Selected Works* (London, 1968) 94-179, 169.

²⁴ Benedict Anderson, *Verbeelde Gemeenschappen. Bespiegelingen over de Oorsprong en de Verspreiding van het Nationalisme* (Amsterdam, 1983) 17-19.

²⁵ Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Capitalist World-Economy* (New York, 1979) 158.

²⁶ For an overview and criticism of the Marxist state theory of the 'Asian Mode of Production', see: John Haldon, *The State and the Tributary Mode of Production* (London, 1993) 14-69.

as subjects of a state, members of a religion, etc.²⁷ In addition, a state also usually relies on a class or social group that mediates the relationship between the ruler/ruling elite and the population, by controlling and redistributing the resources; a degree of institutional reproduction of important administrative functions; a hegemonic political theory or ideology which provides the ruling class or the ruler with a legitimation for their rule and claims on sovereignty. The Ottoman ideological discourses express the political tensions between various social groups and bind the various elements of a society and state structures together.²⁸

Pierre Bourdieu remarked that the classic theories of state formation did not ask *who* benefitted from having the monopoly on power, symbolic and material. According to the French sociologist and anthropologist, the building of dynastic states was accompanied by the concentration of various kinds of power, or 'capital' in his specific terminology. Different forms of 'capital' (political, cultural, social, symbolic, intellectual) were combined and accompanied the creation of various corresponding 'fields'. In Bourdieu's conceptual framework, fields are more or less institutionalised relations, in which activities take place. State-building was accompanied by the creation of a specific 'field of power', the arena in which the holders of different fields and kinds of 'capital' contended for state power. According to Bourdieu, this conflict was the result of the fact that state power granted control over various kinds of resources as well as over the control of their reproduction.²⁹

Another interesting conceptualisation of 'the state' has been formulated by Immanuel Wallerstein in his method of 'World-Systems Analysis'. He has argued that modern national state structures exist within an overarching capitalist world economy. This world economy is a social system that emerged in medieval northwest Europe after the demise of feudalism. It gradually expanded and encompassed the whole world.³⁰ As a formal structure, the capitalist world-economy is defined by absence of an overarching political authority. Without a political structure, the surplus within the world-system is redistributed via 'the market'. Hence, 'historical capitalism' is characterised by a unified economic structure that operates worldwide, reproducing a hierarchy between various states and cultural forms, based on the extraction of surplus from the outlying regions in the world to the powerful states at the core areas, as a result of technological progress. Wallerstein has argued that the profound inequalities of distribution within the capitalist

²⁷ Haldon, *The State and the Tributary Mode*, 140.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 7-8.

²⁹ Jan Dumolyn, *Staatsvorming en Vorstelijke Ambtenaren in het Graafschap Vlaanderen (1419-1477)* (Antwerpen, 2003) 6.

³⁰ Wallerstein, *The Capitalist World-Economy*, 161-162.

world-system ensue in greater inequalities than has ever been the case in 'ancient' empires.³¹

Indeed, before this capitalist world economy emerged, there obviously existed many other social and political systems in history, among which the large political entities that Wallerstein has called 'world-empires'. These 'ancient' empires were administered by one overarching political structure within which various economic systems and cultural forms coexisted.³² Therefore, the 'world-empire' is a fundamentally different kind of social system in comparison to the capitalist 'world-economy', which is the most important distinction between the 'modern' and 'pre-modern' states. A world-empire was based on the collection of agricultural and artisanal surplus in the form of taxes or tribute. Subsequently, this surplus was redistributed to the administrative classes of the state (bureaucracy) and to other segments in the society (as in the Ottoman case, in the form of poorhouses, land-donations, hospitals, high schools, bathhouses, infrastructure works, public buildings and monuments, etc.). Despite the obvious inequalities between the producing and tax-paying classes and the ruling elite of state officials who did not pay taxes, there were many inbuilt social and political limits to profit. These limits prevented the unrestricted surplus accumulation by a group within the ruling elite at the expense of impoverishment and starvation of the producing groups. They also prevented the emergence of rival political groups within the elite, by maintaining control of resources and surplus in the hands of the central authority. Hence, the fundamental feature of a world-empire was the political unity of the economy, in the form of a relatively highly centralised state structure. In short, there existed an all-encompassing political governance within which various kinds of economic and cultural systems co-existed. A relatively highly centralised administration controlled the economy in the entire realm.³³ In this respect, the needs of world-empires were facilitated by rationality in administration, which produced immense amounts of records, as was the case with the Ottoman Empire.

Besides the centralised 'tributary and redistributive' mode of production, another crucial factor is the social and cultural context within which states evolve. The political boundaries of the ancient world-empires did not necessarily determine the limits of cultural forms, values, conventions and perceptions and the accompanying set of social relations. The Byzantinist John Haldon has highlighted the cultural hybridity that characterised the ancient states and societies: 'There are always overlapping structures of levels between neighbouring societies – whether in respect of the basic structure of

³¹ Ibidem, 160.

³² Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System*, vol. 1: *Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century* (New York, 1974) 213-216 .

³³ Wallerstein, *The Capitalist World-Economy*, 158.

the family and household, patterns of kinship and lineage attribution, religious and political ideologies and even legal systems. States may intersect in all these features (...) there are historical examples where the same set of legal and juridical principles are adopted by several states sharing a common heritage.³⁴ Similarly, Wallerstein has argued that the successive world-empires in the same geographical zone often shared common cultural forms. There was a certain 'revival' and transmission of elements of a specific culture or civilisation, every time a new world-empire was created in the same place. These patterns of 'high culture' or civilisation were developed and reproduced by the ruling elites.³⁵

Concerning the concept of state, one also has to mention the theory on state building of the fifteenth-century Muslim philosopher of history, Ibn Khaldûn. In his *Muqaddimah*, he noted that *dawla* (the state) was formed and that civilisations were revived and renewed by influxes of nomad peoples from beyond their frontiers.³⁶ His approach is very useful in understanding the emergence and development of the Ottoman state. Ibn Khaldûn argued that there was a strong stimulus within the nomadic tribes to cooperate on a larger scale, which granted them social cohesion. Only under such conditions could large and powerful states emerge. This impetus which he called *asabiyya* ('group solidarity', '*esprit de corps*') was one of the most central concepts in his work. The social bond or *asabiyya* was indeed stronger among nomads than among sedentary peoples. It did not consist of blood ties, for politically, *asabiyya* could also be shared by people who were related to each other by long and close contact as members of a group. A nomadic group with a strong *asabiyya* achieved predominance over other groups and the ruling dynasty would be the one who inspired the strongest social solidarity. It was through this *esprit de corps* that the leader and his dynasty enjoyed the support of one or more groups and that he could retain his dominant position within the group. The leader who enjoyed the support of a sufficient *asabiyya* could succeed in founding a dynasty and gain royal authority. To Ibn Khaldûn, 'dynasty' and 'state' were one and the same thing – the *dawla* or *devlet*. In other words, according to Ibn Khaldûn, the *dawla* was the embodiment of the state power of the ruling dynasty. A state existed only in so far as it was held together by the dynasty; when the dynasty disappeared the state also collapsed.³⁷ This is true for Ottoman empire building as well, as it integrated Islamic legal principles on state formation, Central Asian Turkish political ideas as well as some Eastern Roman traditions.

³⁴ Haldon, *The State and the Tributary Mode*, 5.

³⁵ Wallerstein, *The Capitalist World-Economy*, 158.

³⁶ Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, tr. F. Rosenthal (London, 1967) chapter 3:12.

³⁷ Ibn Khaldûn, *The Muqaddimah*, 136-138, 141-142, 244, 251-252.

Nomadic State Formation

In tracing the historical developments of the Ottoman state, it is crucial to review how 'nomadic' state formation has been regarded by historians and social scientists. Because the nomadic tradition was one of the very influential dynamics of Ottoman state building, it may be interesting to shed more light on theories on nomadic state formation. The stereotypical historical image of the nomad is one of a plundering barbarian motivated only by a desire for booty and slaves. This image reflects sedentary cultural biases rather than any historical reality. For a better understanding of the early Ottoman state formation, which was a very complex and multi-layered historical phenomenon, I will briefly consider the social and political developments in the steppe in Chapter 2. I will make use of some recent theoretical models in the field in order to go beyond the sedentary biases on nomads.

The views of Ibn Khaldûn about nomadic state formation has already been mentioned above. A modern scholar, Thomas Barfield, has argued that tribal political structures employed a model of rulership to build groups that acted together in order to organise economic production and preserve internal political order to defend the group against outsiders. 'In these structures, people identified themselves as members of a defined nomad group, not as residents of a particular place.'³⁸ Furthermore, Nicola Di Cosmo conceptualised the nomad state formation primarily in terms of crisis, militarisation and centralisation.³⁹ In this latter theory on state formation in the Central Asian nomad tradition, there are some structural parallels with the earliest Ottoman state formation. Early Ottoman history displays some similarities in its social and political development. Therefore, in Chapter 2 on 'pre-Ottoman history', I will shed some light on the characteristics of nomadic life in the steppe.

According to Di Cosmo, the initial momentum for nomadic state building came from a challenge to the current leadership of a group of nomads at a time of economic and social crisis. Then under an effective military leader, a process of political centralisation took place that would lay the foundations for territorial and political expansion.⁴⁰ Undoubtedly, institutions set up by nomadic empires borrowed administrative knowledge from the sedentary states. However, some nomad states survived without borrowing institutions from the sedentary states, as was the case for the Hsiung-nu and the K k T rk Empires. Recent research does not support that these could only be states if they used administrative institutions and a bureaucracy.⁴¹

³⁸ Barfield, 'Turk, Persian and Arab: Changing Relationships', 62.

³⁹ Di Cosmo, *Ancient China and Its Enemies*, 162-184.

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*, 179.

⁴¹ *Ibidem*, 173.

The second phase of nomadic state-building coincided with building an army to neutralise or dominate the rivals inside and outside their own territory. Although nomadic communities were accustomed to fighting, because of their lifestyle in the steppe, they were not always engaged in war. Their armed conflicts were limited to the level of tribute disputes: raiding the camp of the adversary or avenging a wrong, whereas, the mobilisation for war meant the creation of allied tribal armies. This occurred when a large disturbance or crisis took place in the steppe environment. Drought, overgrazing or epidemics could threaten the survival of the herds which were necessary to sustain the pastoral nomads. Such difficulties could cause unmanageable conflicts among tribes, or force entire communities to leave their homeland for large-scale migration in search of new pasturelands⁴² Migrations of nomadic communities required tightly organised military escorts to protect them. Every male able to fight then became a soldier and enrolled in the nomad army.⁴³

As the power and authority of the charismatic leader grew, members of the defeated tribes were incorporated, ranks were established and leaders were appointed. The creation of a supra-tribal polity increased the size of the army and turned part-time soldiers into full-time warriors. The increase of this non-productive class of ruling elite usually led to the rise of consumption. This in its turn augmented the need for acquiring tools and resources to build a political organisation. The ruling elite sought to incorporate other economies that could supply the revenues necessary to fill the gap between consumption and the productive base of the society. The ability to gain revenues from outside the territorial boundaries of the nomadic polities seems to be the key to the emergence of their state apparatus.⁴⁴

The ability to create revenues from tribute was important for the Central Asian nomadic states. In the scholarly literature, they are referred to as 'tributary states', in which the extraction of tribute and taxes was monopolised by the ruler/*khan* and the ruling elite associated with the *khan*. This implied the limiting of the surplus extraction by other factions within the ruling elite by weakening their control over production and hence limiting their autonomous revenue base. This was meant to prevent the emergence of rivals to the elite.⁴⁵

The third phase of centralisation consisted of a social revolution from decentralised, relatively egalitarian relations of a nomadic society to a centralised and hierarchical set of class relations that emerged along with the birth of a state and that concentrated

⁴² Anatoly M. Khazanov, *The Nomads and the Outside World* (New York, 1984) 46, 52, 69-84.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 181.

⁴⁴ Di Cosmo, *Ancient China*, 183.

⁴⁵ For an important contribution on the tributary states, see: John Haldon, *The State and the Tributary Mode of Production*, 156-57.

power at the top. However, this was never an easy process. The tribes were usually composed of egalitarian lineages and had leaders who ruled by means of consensus and consultation.⁴⁶

The key to the centralisation process was the rise of a supra-tribal leader.⁴⁷ During the crisis and the ensuing 'bureaucratisation', the *khan* emerged from the pool of aristocracy by defeating competing lords and by successfully defending the interest of the tribe. He would receive the support of other tribes whose chiefs elevated him to the position of supreme leader and submitted to him. Isolated individuals could also flock to join the leader and then become part of the emerging polity. According to Barfield, the Turkish-Mongol nomad culture was more accepting of hierarchy and charisma of the *khan* than the Bedouins of the Arabian Peninsula and North Africa. Partly, because they confronted larger and powerful sedentary empires in Asia than the Bedouin tribes.⁴⁸

The establishment of a centralist rule required the khan to expand his original base of authority beyond his own household, retinue and tribe into a supra-tribal position. Only then he could control the other tribes by providing them sufficient benefits in order to retain their loyalty. The khan needed to provide justice that transcended tribal dispute resolution.⁴⁹ His task was to ensure the loyalty of the people by providing them security and justice of which the ruling dynasty would be the guarantor. The khan needed to rapidly consolidate his power base. He achieved this objective by monopolising the surplus extraction (taxes) and redistribution to the military aristocracy that he had collected around him. The khan controlled the resources and rewarded the military class with revenues. The ensuing territorial expansion was an essential part of the state formation process. The tribute revenues from newly conquered lands enabled the khan to reward loyal service and to provide leading positions for members of the ruling elite. If the founder of a dynasty could not place his House in the control of the state, then the foundation of the state would remain weak and the state would itself easily vanish at the death of its leader.⁵⁰

The nomadic cultural and political heritage of the early Ottomans expressed itself in their state building and ideology. The founders of the Roman and Persian Empires were sedentary farmers. The founders of the Ottoman and Seljuk Empires were pastoralist nomads.

⁴⁶ Barfield, 'Turk, Persian and Arab: Changing Relationships', 63.

⁴⁷ Findley, *The Turks in World History*, 31.

⁴⁸ Barfield, 'Turk, Persian and Arab', 65.

⁴⁹ *Ibidem*, 32.

⁵⁰ Di Cosmo, *Ancient China*, 184.

The concept of ideology

Since the core investigation in this study concerns early Ottoman political discourse, the concept of 'ideological discourse' or 'ideology' in general also needs clarification. In order to explain my understanding of Ottoman 'state ideology', I will clarify how I define 'ideology' in this study.⁵¹ Generally, the modern concept of 'ideology' is used to denote views such as liberalism, socialism, nationalism, fascism, etc., all of which have their origins in the eighteenth century. The question is: can we use this concept for 'pre-capitalist' or 'pre-modern' historical systems of the past?

The answer seems to be affirmative, provided that the notion is used with care and understood as nothing more than an analytical category to explain political, cultural and historical phenomena. In that case, ideology is not a 'tool of domination' and cannot simply be equalled to 'power'. I will use the term ideology in the sense of 'a set of discourses which have specific views of relations of power at all levels of social relations'. Of course, subordinate groups can also develop their own ideologies, opposed to the discourse of the hegemonic groups. In this respect, 'utopias' or 'ideologies' have a distinctive rhetoric, one which is simultaneously rational and emotional. As we will observe, early Ottoman political discourse was also framed in value-laden language. The normative principles of the relations between state and society appealed to deep-rooted cultural symbols and ideas.

Indeed, each historical society has developed its own set of claims. The achievement of its principles and ideas would establish the best and desired social order of which humankind was capable, an order of which the justness and legitimacy were self-evident for everyone at the time. Indeed, all states in the pre-modern age also had such 'utopian' ideologies, whereby the ruling dynasty and the elites used a set of values and ideas about sovereignty that to a degree was shared or at least agreed upon by other social groups in that particular society. As Roland Barthes has pointed out, where connotations of words are accepted as normal and evident, they act as a conceptual map of meanings by which we make sense of the world.⁵² In this perspective, ideology can be defined as 'a discourse' by which people live, experience and explain the world.

Every sovereign has had to justify his claim to rule over territories, people and resources to different audiences within his realm and to outsiders. Through these justifications, we can see what individual rulers, their advisors and their subjects thought was important in the conception of rulership and of political organisation. In Chapter 3,

⁵¹ For the concept of 'ideology', see: Edward Shills and Harry Johnson, 'Ideology', in: *International Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*, Vol. 7 (1968) 66-85; Chris Barker, *Cultural Studies. Theory and Practice* (London, 2001) 54-65.

⁵² For this connection between myth and ideology, see: Roland Barthes, 'Myth Today' in *Mythologies*, tr. J. Cape (London, 1973) 117-142.

which makes up the bulk of this thesis, I will explore the predominant ideas of the Ottoman state ideology. As such, Ottoman 'state ideology' can be defined as a set of normative ideas that was used to define and explain the sovereignty of the dynasty. The concepts defining Ottoman rulership were important as they expressed a broadly consented value system. Indeed, the dynasty, the *ulema*, and the opponent *gazi* marcher lords deployed similar ideological discourses in their conflicts over resources and power.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

As already mentioned, I will make use of a hybrid methodology, in which the approaches of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Conceptual History are central. Despite some reservations, the CDA approach can be applied to the study of Ottoman historical texts when common sense and pragmatism are combined with an attempt at a heuristic understanding. The CDA provides some useful elements for a highly practical, well-rounded yet flexible in-depth analysis of discourse of early Ottoman historical texts. Most scholars working within the CDA paradigm have focused on the relationship between language (text, discourse) and power (political struggle, inequality, hegemony, etc.) in modern capitalist society. However, the general insights and the conceptual apparatus of CDA also offer a useful methodology for identifying and interpreting the way 'ideology' works in discourses produced in other older societies, and this also holds for Ottoman historical texts.

However, the CDA model must be complemented by a careful study of the historical and social context in which the Ottoman chronicles were produced. Its particular strength is that it bridges the gap between language phenomena and social processes. The CDA model provides useful insights into the workings of ideology in creating and maintaining social systems, as it considers discourse as a tool through which ideologies are reproduced and disseminated.⁵³

Theoretically, the approach of the CDA method shows some affinity with the work of the French social theorist and philosopher Michel Foucault. A discourse, according to Foucault, is as an entity of sequences, a unit of semiotic signs, in the sense that they form enouncements and statements.⁵⁴ A statement, for Foucault, is composed of ideas,

⁵³ Fairclough, *Language and Power*, 52-54.

⁵⁴ For more details, see: Michel Foucault, *L'Archéologie du Savoir* (Paris, 1969); *ibid.*, *The Archeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*, tr. A. Sheridan Smith (New York, 1972) 26-28.

attitudes, beliefs and practices that systematically construct the subjects' world view and the social world of which they speak or write. It is subject to repetition, transformation and reactivation. It is interlinked, notwithstanding some modifications, to the statements or texts that precede and follow it.⁵⁵ There is always a relation between texts or intertextuality. Foucault has argued that truth and knowledge (*savoir*) are plural, multi-layered, contextual and historically produced through specific ways of using language. He has placed the role of discourse within the wider social and political processes of seeking legitimacy and power. As the claims to truth were socially constructed, according to Foucault, he explored how these truths were maintained and which power relations they carried with them.

Foucault also concluded that power and knowledge were interrelated and therefore that every human relationship was a struggle for and negotiation about power. As such, power forms a discrete capillary woven into the fabric of the entire social order. Power is not simply repressive, but is productive as well; it brings 'subjects into being'.⁵⁶ Power is also always present in language use and can both produce and constrain the truth. Foucault has argued that discourse is controlled by what can be spoken of; where and how one may speak; and who is privileged to speak.⁵⁷ To give a fitting example from Ottoman historiography, the Ottoman historian Neşrî omitted the marriage of Orhan Gazi with the Byzantine princess Theodora in his account. This can be understood when we look at Neşrî's social context. Neşrî was an ulema (cleric) historian writing for an audience of the ruling elite which advocated an image of the Ottoman sultans as the leading Muslim sovereigns. Probably, he omitted this marriage as it did not fit in his ideological narrative of the early Ottoman history. As we shall observe in various text samples, Neşrî usually accorded his selection and framing of events to the norms and expectations of his intended audience, and to his own value preferences and world view.

CDA is also firmly grounded in De Saussure's linguistic structuralism. According to Ferdinand de Saussure meaning is produced through the relationship between the 'signifiers' (i.e. the form or medium of signs) and what it is taken to mean, the 'signified', i.e. concepts and connotations. This relationship suggests that meaning is fluid, as well as culturally and historically specific. Meaning is regulated by specific historical conditions.⁵⁸

Fairclough was also clearly influenced by the Russian linguist Mikhail Bakhtin, even though he does not specifically refer to the latter. Indeed, as Bakhtin also did, CDA argues that concepts do not have fixed meanings, but are rather produced within a mutual

⁵⁵ Foucault, *The Archeology of Knowledge*, 28.

⁵⁶ Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–1977* (New York, 1980) 136.

⁵⁷ *Ibidem*, 139.

⁵⁸ Fairclough, *Language and Power*, 6, 20–23.

relationship between the writer/speaker (addresser) and intended audience (addressee). Meaning is the inherently unstable domain of contestation and not the product of a fixed and pure language.⁵⁹ This view also aligns with what the philologist Robert Jauss has called the 'horizon of expectation' (*horizon d'attente*). In other words, the producers of texts adapt the line and *topoi* of their narratives to the tastes and presuppositions of the intended audience and their knowledge of what has happened.⁶⁰ These concepts of the 'horizon of expectation' of the 'intended audiences' will also be of fundamental importance for my empirical study of the Ottoman chronicles.

Taken together, the general structure of the CDA is a three-level framework: language operates on an *ideational* level (construction and representation of experience in the world); on a *relational* level (enactment of social relations); and on a *textual* level (production of texts).⁶¹ Fairclough considered discourse as something that is produced, circulated and consumed in society. Language connects meanings with their spoken and written expressions. Texts can be made up both by openly drawing upon other texts (inter-textuality) and by making use of elements, such as genre conventions, discursive registers and style. The analyst will need to find out what textual structures and intertextual conventions can be observed. Particular attention is given to the relation of textual expressions and society. Thus in CDA the idea is developed that discourse is a 'social practice'. According to Fairclough, language is subject to social conventions, such as ruling value patterns, spirit of the age, identity and the social group to which one belongs.⁶²

A final word of caution about the use of these theories is the criticism of Jan Blommaert, who has remarked that the methodology of CDA tends to close itself to non-western societies as well as to pre-capitalist periods. The particular shapes of capitalist 'Late Modernity', including its semiotic forms, are even today very different across the world.⁶³ As Blommaert has noted, the historical horizon of CDA, much like its cultural one, is often a limited one. A focus on issues of power in contemporary societies and a synchronic approach to the past are inadequate.

Indeed, some Ottoman concepts simply cannot be translated into English. Because of the time lag and cultural gap, contemporary English might lack that particular concept

⁵⁹ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World* (Bloomington, 1984).

⁶⁰ Jauss defined *horizon d'attente* as: 'le système de références objectivement formulable, qui, pour chaque œuvre au moment de l'histoire où elle apparaît, résulte de trois facteurs principaux : l'expérience préalable que le public a du genre dont elle relève, la forme et la thématique d'œuvres antérieures dont elle présuppose la connaissance, et l'opposition entre langage poétique et langage pratique, monde imaginaire le réalité quotidienne' : H.R. Jauss, *Pour une esthétique de la réception* (Paris, 1978) 49.

⁶¹ L. Chouliaraki and N. Fairclough, *Discourse in Late Modernity. Rethinking Critical Discourse Analysis* (Edinburgh, 1999) 138-140.

⁶² Fairclough, *Language and Power*, 17-19.

⁶³ Jan Blommaert, *Discourse: A Critical Introduction* (Cambridge, 2005) 35-37.

or the connotations attached to it. For instance, this is the case with the problematic translation of 'gaza' as 'holy war' (see Chapter 2). The historical context in which a term developed its meaning can be totally different in another historical context. Likewise, the semantic connotations of terms may have quite different effects as well. In order to avoid this, I will give more attention to the specific historical and semantic contexts of the Ottoman concepts as they were used and understood by the chroniclers.

Still, the emancipatory work of CDA cannot be ignored. The CDA method can certainly be used to scrutinise the narratives of Ottoman chronicles in a more unbiased way than has been the case among the older generations of scholars who interpreted these same texts. When used as a methodological tool and not as a paradigm, the CDA can support the purpose of this study, which is to let the Ottomans speak for themselves.

Outline of this study

Chapter 1 provides an overview of the various genres of Ottoman sources in the fourteenth and fifteenth century. This chapter principally discusses the production of the earliest preserved Ottoman historical texts. Each chronicle is distinctly introduced by situating the social background of its author and the historical context of its production.

Chapter 2 deals with the historical context of the emergence and process of Ottoman state formation. It serves to provide the general background of the historical and social context to what follows in Chapter 3. Chapter 2 mainly deals with the building of institutions and provides a historical overview of the main events. I reconstruct how the Ottoman polity was founded by a group of Turkish Oğuz pastoral nomads, as a frontier principality (*beylik*) in western Anatolia, at the frontiers of the Muslim world. Chapter 2 discusses how the early Ottomans had to start life again in a new geographical, social and cultural environment. They mixed the legacies of their nomad way of life with their new sedentary milieu, habits and institutions. They gradually built up their institutions and developed practices that resulted from this steady blending of nomadic tradition with the sedentary administrative traditions.

During the process of centralisation of state power, there were clear tensions between the Turkish *gazi* nobility and the dynasty. This struggle among the ruling elites was a direct result of a struggle for the control of resources and the centralisation of administration. The creation of state institutions was crucial in order to stabilise the intra-elite tensions. It appears that the early Ottoman dynasty often acted autonomously from the Turkish *gazi* nobility, in terms of its claims to control of resources and by developing institutions. However, when we consider the process of Ottoman state

formation, we may discern different forms of 'ideological' expression, depending on the social groups they represented and on the specific historical context.

Finally in Chapter 3, against this social and political background, I examine the development of the fifteenth century Ottoman 'state ideology'. Surely, the Ottoman dynasty and the gazi circles constructed their own historical narratives about the intra-elite struggle. An important question is: how did the intra-elite competitive power play influence the narratives of the early Ottoman chroniclers?

Chapter 3 mainly explores how a specific Ottoman political language developed on the basis of different traditions. I consider how the various elements were blended together as the needs for legitimacy of the Ottoman sovereignty shifted due to changing historical contexts. The main principles of sovereignty were consolidated after a long process of experimentation and integration that lasted for more than a century and a half. Fifteenth-century Ottoman historical texts reveal that besides the ancient Turkish steppe concepts, Islamic thought was the other important source for Ottoman political language. Somewhat unexpectedly perhaps, the Ottoman chronicles seem to contain no key concepts deriving from the Byzantine tradition, which apparently did not directly influence Ottoman political language. Therefore, I will primarily focus on Turkish nomadic political ideas and on – though a broad and diffuse term – Islamic political thought. These were the two principal languages that the early historical texts amply referred to. I will explore the influences of those traditions on the fifteenth-century Ottoman world view, at least in so far as they were expressed in historiographical production.

To understand the normative value system of the Ottomans, I must consider the particularities of each of those traditions separately. Thereby, I explore the 'discursive registers' or the dominant concepts of Ottoman political language which are frequently expressed in the chronicles. My inquiry in Chapter 3 is clustered around the following questions: which kind of 'state ideology', if any, can we discern from the fifteenth-century Ottoman historical texts? Within this ideological discourse, which 'central signifiers' frequently recurred in the chronicles? And how did they contribute to the construction of the Ottoman political language? In this chapter, I will scrutinise the concepts that represented the paradigmatic ideas and value system of Ottoman political language. I will consider more closely the meanings of those central concepts that formed 'discursive registers', their etymological and semantic development and how they were finally understood and deployed by the early Ottoman authors. Chronologically, I have limited the scope of the study to the fourteenth century up till the experimental period that lasted until the early reign of Sultan Mehmed II (r. 1451-1481). The period after the conquest of Constantinople represented a time of consolidation of centralised governance. I sincerely hope that my study, will give rise to similar studies that will focus on subsequent periods or on other types of textual sources and that may nuance my conclusions in the future.

Chapter 1 The Sources

1.1 Early Ottoman Historiography

Ottoman sources for the study of the early history of the Empire are scarce. For the fourteenth century almost no Ottoman documents have survived, besides coins, inscriptions and some deeds of pious endowment or *waqf*.¹ From the courts of the first Ottoman rulers, Ertuğrul, Osman, Orhan, Murad I and Bâyezid I, there is not a single chronicle that existed from that period. A developed tradition of Ottoman chronicle writing is only available to us from the fifteenth century onwards.² Cemal Kafadar suggested that – apart from hagiographical writings and mostly orally transmitted legendary warrior epics – the early Ottoman literature had not yet produced a written and learned literary and historiographical tradition about the ruling dynasty.³ This observation obviously raises the following question: did Ottoman history writing truly begin that late or have some works already been composed during the fourteenth century, which were perhaps subsequently lost or destroyed in the chaos following Timur's invasion of Anatolia after the Battle of Ankara? We do not know the answer to

¹ İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, 'Gazi Orhan Bey Vakfiyesi', *Belleten* 5 (1941): 277-288. A 'waqf' or property is an inalienable religious endowment in Islamic law. It refers to the practice of donating a building or land or even cash for charitable purposes. The donated assets are held by a charitable trust.

² Franz Babinger, *Die Geschichtsschreiber der Osmanen und ihre Werke* (Leipzig, 1927); Halil İnalcık, 'The Rise of Ottoman historiography', in: *Historians of the Middle East*, eds. Bernard Lewis & P.M. Holt (London, 1962) 152-167; Victor L. Ménage, 'The Beginnings of Ottoman Historiography', in *ibidem*, 168-179. For another very useful survey of Ottoman history writing, see: Suraiya Faroqhi, *Approaching Ottoman History: An Introduction to the Sources* (New York, 1999) 144 –174; Necdet Öztürk and Murat Yıldız, *Osmanlı Tarihçileri. Ahmedî'den Ahmed Refik'e* (Istanbul, 2013). Also see: M. Sertoğlu, 'Osmanlı Tarihinin Kaynakları Hakkında bazı Düşünceler', *Tarih ve Medeniyet* 12 (1955): 145-154; Şehabettin Tekindağ, 'Osmanlı Tarih Yazıcılığı', *Belleten* 35/140 (1971): 655-663.

³ Cemal Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds. The Construction of the Ottoman State* (London, 1996) 93-94.

this question with certainty. We can only base ourselves upon the historical texts which did survive.

Comprehensive chronicles on the Ottoman past, which I shall discuss below, emerged as a series of *History of the House Osman* of Ahmedî (1412), Şükrullah (1458), Enveri (1466), Oruç (1467), Aşık Paşazade (1484) and Neşrî (1495). Yahşi Fakih's chronicle (1390's), which is lost to us, is known as the oldest narrative as the later writer Aşık Paşazade made references to Yahşi Fakih's work as his source for the Ottoman history up until the reign of sultan Bâyezid I (r. 1389-1402).⁴ In all likelihood, Yahşi Fakih, the son of the imam of Orhan Gazi (r. 1326-1362), wrote his memoirs in the years following to Bâyezid's defeat at the Battle of Ankara in 1402. His text partly survived within the chronicle of Aşık Paşazade.⁵ Apart from Yahşi Fakih, Aşık Paşazade's work and other interrelated fifteenth-century chronicles undoubtedly contain echoes of other fourteenth-century texts and orally transmitted popular epics. On several occasions, Aşık Paşazade asserted that he studied and summarised various other records of deeds or *menâkıbs*, which he personally read or heard from eyewitnesses.⁶ However, it is not possible to attribute these to an identifiable author. In general Dimitris Kastritsis remarked that the issue of early Ottoman historical texts is highly complex, and that each account must be compared with others before it is attributed to a particular author or circumstances of composition.⁷

According to Fuad Köprülü, we should not expect to find more than what is already known about the earliest period from other Islamic chronicles or Byzantine and Western sources.⁸ Byzantine and Western chronicles in the great majority of cases do not provide any more reliable information on the first appearance of the Ottomans. The Byzantine chroniclers, Pachymeres, Nikephoras and Kantekouzenos, and the Arab traveller and historians, Ibn Batuta, Ibn Said and el-Umarî, produced their works in the fourteenth century. However, the information they provide on Osman's principality is still very limited.⁹ Fortunately, the available critical editions of the Byzantine writers, with whom

⁴ Aşıkpaşazâde, *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osman*, ed. Kemal Yavuz, Yekta Saraç (Istanbul, 2007) 271: 'Orhan Gazi'nün imâmı Ishak Fakih oğlu Yahşi Fakî'dan kim ol Sultân Bâyezid Han'a gelince bu menâkıbı ol Yahşi Fakî'dan yazılmış buldum [...] ve fakir dahı ba'zı hâllerinden ve kâllerinden ve menâkıblarından ihtisar idüp kalem diline virdüm.'

⁵ Victor L. Ménage, 'The Menaqib of Yakhshi Faqih,' *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 26 (1963): 50-74.

⁶ On Aşıkpaşazade's life and work, see: Halil İncalcık, 'How to Read Ashik Pasha-Zade's History,' in: *ibid.*, *Essays in Ottoman History* (Istanbul, 1998) 31-55.

⁷ Kastritsis, *The Sons of Bayezid*, 21-23; *ibid.*, 'Ottoman Anonymous Chronicles', *Encyclopedia of the Medieval Chronicle*, ed. Dunphy, R. G. (Leiden and Boston, 2010) 1177-1178.

⁸ Fuad Köprülü, *The Origins of the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Gary Leiser (Albany, 1992) 20-22; see also Lindner, *Explorations*, 6-14.

⁹ Erhan Afyoncu, 'Osmanlı Siyasî Tarihinin Ana Kaynakları: Kronikler', *Türkiye Araştırmaları Literatür Dergisi* 1/2 (2003): 102.

the Ottomans were in contact, such as Doukas, Sphrantzes or Kritovoulos, do supplement our information on fourteenth-century and particularly fifteenth-century Ottoman history.¹⁰

As I already mentioned, some modern historians, under the influence of positivism, rejected the earliest Ottoman sources by reasoning that they could not be used at all for historical reconstruction of chiefly military and political events. Herbert Gibbons and George Arnakis dismissed the earliest Ottoman chronicles as later fabrications,¹¹ whereas Fuad Köprülü and Paul Wittek, aware of their problematic nature, did make use of them but only after applying very rigorous means of textual criticism.¹² Specifically dealing with the battle of Nicopolis (1396), Aziz Atiya also dismissed the early Ottoman historical texts, since according to him: 'the Turkish evidence is very doubtful and unreliable, and can hardly be taken into consideration (...) for Turkish knowledge of the West was hazy and unreliable'.¹³ Moreover, the British Ottomanist, Colin Imber, who followed the Gibbons-Arnakis thesis, remarked that the early Ottoman historical texts 'lack any sense of exact chronology'.¹⁴ Imber considered that the early Ottoman chronicles were commissioned by the princely court and rejected all of them as not useful for scientific analysis. In his view, the narrative of the early Ottoman chronicles merely consists on legends and stories that must therefore be regarded as unreliable propaganda.¹⁵ Imber even claimed: 'The best thing that a modern historian can do is to admit frankly that the earliest history of the Ottomans is a *black hole*.'¹⁶

Surely, the same could be said about numerous other historiographical traditions from other parts of the world.¹⁷ Such historical texts follow a linear narrative structure through which they transform the past into a form of memory. They legitimise identities and allow

¹⁰ Michael Doukas, *Decline and Fall of Byzantium to the Ottoman Turks*, transl. Harry Magoulias (Detroit, 1975); Kritovoulos, *History of Mehmed the Conqueror*, transl. by Charles Riggs (Westport, 1954); Chalkokondylas, *Historiarum Libri Decem*, Bekker ed., (Bonn, 1843). On an anonymous Byzantine short chronicle narrating the reign of Bayezid I, see : Paul Gautier, 'Un Récit Inédit du Siège de Constantinople par les Turcs (1394-1402)', *Revue des Études Byzantines* 23 (1965): 100-117. See also : 'Elizabeth Zachariadou, 'Süleyman Çelebi in Rumili and the Ottoman chronicles', *Islam-zeitschrift Fur Geschichte Und Kultur Des Islamischen Orients* 60/2 (1983): 268-296.

¹¹ George G. Arnakis, *Hoi protoi othomani* (Athens, 1947); Herbert A. Gibbons, *The foundation of the Ottoman Empire* (Oxford, 1916).

¹² Köprülü, *The Origins of the Ottoman Empire* (Albany, 1992); Paul Wittek, *The Rise of the Ottoman Empire* (London, 1938).

¹³ Aziz S. Atiya, *The Crusade of Nicopolis* (London, 1934) 35.

¹⁴ Colin Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300-1481* (Istanbul, 1990) 1.

¹⁵ Colin Imber, 'The legend of Osman Gazi', in: E. Zachariadou ed., *The Ottoman Emirate, 1300-1380. Halcyon days in Crete* (1993) 67-75; idem, 'The Ottoman dynastic myth', *Turcica* 19 (1987) 7-27; idem, 'Canon and Apocrypha in early Ottoman history,' in: *Studies in Ottoman history in honor of professor V. L. Menage*, ed. Colin Heywood en Colin Imber (Istanbul 1994) 117-137.

¹⁶ Imber, 'The legend of Osman Gazi', 75

¹⁷ For the biases of fourteenth-century Indo-Persian historical writings, see: Peter Hardy, *Historians of Medieval India* (London, 1966).

the past to be remembered and forgotten in a certain way. Nevertheless, notwithstanding these objections, the oldest Ottoman historical texts remain important sources expressing the dominant ideas of the fifteenth-century historical consciousness. As is the case for all historical sources, they should not be taken at face value, particularly not when they retrospectively described the events that took place a century earlier. It is obvious that they usually depicted early Ottoman history in flattering terms that prevailed in their own time.

As with Western medieval chronicles, the main themes treated by these works were campaigns, conquests, the incorporation of foreign territories and the organisation of the princely court. But on occasion, the authors also included defeats, the losses of provinces and the truces and peace treaties that, provisionally or on a long-term basis, ended inter-state conflicts. Conventionally, an Ottoman chronicle began with the praise of God and the Prophet and concluded its introduction with a laudation of the reigning sultan. Following the literary pattern of their time, the chronicles focus on the prince and the court and have a concise style of description. Although they sometimes show gaps in the events they cover and are also characterised by occasional emendations, this does not necessarily eliminate the useful information that these sources contain as authentic fifteenth-century narratives. But as we mostly lack other sources these texts remain indispensable as a body of historical information on the fourteenth century and on the Ottoman enterprise as seen from within. In short, the reformulations by the fifteenth-century Ottoman historians about the humble origins of Osman's *beylik* cannot be an excuse to dismiss all the early compilations and historical texts as pure myths. As Kastritsis already showed, the matter is more complicated than this.¹⁸

Kafadar also noted that the Ottoman chronicles of the fifteenth century can be neither taken for granted nor dismissed: 'A critical reading based on systematic suspicion can uncover significant truths underneath the seeming distortions. Different versions need to be understood on their own terms; without looking for one-to-one correspondence between textual variations and ideological orientations, one can still search for patterns identifying various traditions before determining their value.'¹⁹ He concluded that the early Ottoman historiography reflected a plurality of voices and one has to understand the interrelationships of these texts.

While the Ottoman chronicle tradition obviously should be treated with great caution, Imber's somewhat unduly form of positivist application of source criticism tends to result in a view that makes it impossible for the Ottomans to speak for themselves. One cannot simply reject the earliest Ottoman historical tradition as not useful for historical reconstruction. Instead, one can explore the specific historical and intellectual context of

¹⁸ Kastritsis, *The Sons of Bayezid*, 14-15, 23-24.

¹⁹ Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*, 103.

their composition. The Ottoman chronicles can be analytically studied through a critical method, by juxtaposing them to other sources and situating them within the ideals of their own time and context of production. Halil İnalcık, for instance, composed a detailed chronology of the earliest history of Osman's principality. He successfully filled the gaps in the chronology of the early historiography by using both Byzantine and Ottoman chroniclers and reading them from different perspectives.²⁰

1.2 Early Ottoman historical texts

The American historian, Rudi P. Lindner too easily identified the early historical texts as a homogeneous body of 'court chronicles', written by the *ulema* (clerics) at the princely court of the Ottoman state. However, Lindner did have attention for the ideological content of these historiographical texts and he came to the conclusion that by the end of the fifteenth century, court histories were commissioned to glorify the past of the state. He suggested that the chronicles primarily 'masked the nomadic tribal core, with the effect that Ottoman history was overwhelmingly described in terms of the *gaza*-ethos as the main component of a state ideology'.²¹ However, Cemal Kafadar and Halil İnalcık nuanced Lindner's assertion and showed that the early historians, such as Aşık Paşazade, did not write typical court histories that expressed an officially endorsed state ideology. For instance, İnalcık identified Aşık Paşazade's personal and ideological connection to the *gazi* circles, who were involved in vibrant conflicts with the members of the centralising state.²² They shared a target audience of the social groups rubbing up against the lower edges of the emerging Ottoman ruling elite.

Kafadar noted that although Aşık Paşazade wrote his chronicle at the demand of the Ottoman court after 1480, this does not predicate either an ideological homogeneity or an official character in his text. Aşık Paşazade and the authors of the Anonymous Chronicles probably modified the final versions of their writings to some extent to protect themselves from possible risks. They were also undeniably influenced by the official state ideology that emerged during the fifteenth century. But such reservations do not necessarily undermine their specific characteristics. The criticism in these

²⁰ Halil İnalcık, 'The Question of the Emergence of the Ottoman State', *International Journal of Turkish Studies* 2 (1980) 71-79.

²¹ Rudi P. Lindner, *Nomads and Ottomans in Medieval Anatolia* (Bloomington, 1983) 19-20; *ibid*, 'Stimulus and Justification in Early Ottoman History,' *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 27 (1982): 207-224.

²² İnalcık, 'How to Read Ashik Pasha-Zade's History,' 36 -37.

chronicles reflected the world view of the frontier warriors and the Turkish nobility as opposed to the emerging central state. These writers were no 'court historians' in the conventional sense. They expressed the critical voice of this specific milieu, which after the adaptation of the imperial project were marginalised and stood in opposition to the princely court, or the policy upheld by the sultans and statesmen of the late fifteenth century.²³

During the fourteenth century, some written works were indeed produced in the courts of several Turkish principalities (*beyliks*) in Anatolia. However, these were no historical texts, but rather translations or compilations of the Islamic religious sciences. Many works on the practical sciences of medicine and astronomy in Persian literary classics were copied or translated into Turkish in the fourteenth century. In the fourteenth century, the Ottomans generally did not seem to have written down their histories. They rather told what purported to be historical narratives woven around legendary warriors and *dervishes*. These narratives remained focused on heroic 'chivalric' adventures of the legendary Muslim warriors at the frontier region in Anatolia, told from a noble spirit of enterprise. The cultural life of the frontiers was dominated by oral tradition, in particular the narratives that represented the frontier society's perceptions of its own ideals and achievements.²⁴ Two interrelated types of narrative played a prominent role in formulating the historical consciousness of the people of the frontiers, including the early Ottomans: the warrior epics (*gazavatname*) and the hagiographies (*menakibname*).²⁵

The early Ottoman historiography and the Ottoman state formation were to some degree related and at certain junctures they were even closely intertwined. Kafadar again observed that 'the impressive historiographical output of the Ottomans in the fifteenth century must be seen in the larger context of transformations in the historical consciousness of Turkish-Muslim Anatolians.'²⁶ Although early Ottoman historiography is usually based upon the Islamic tradition of history writing, over time the Ottomans also developed new conceptions and their own varieties.²⁷ The first examples of what we might consider as Ottoman historical texts were composed in epic and lyrical prose style.

The 'court chronicles' in the sense of 'official' historical texts actually did not come into being until the late seventeenth century, when the office of *vak'anüvis* or court

²³ Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*, 100.

²⁴ *Ibidem*, 62.

²⁵ For a discussion of these fourteenth-century oral narratives, see: Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*, 63-76.

²⁶ *Ibidem*, 95.

²⁷ For a general overview, see: F. Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography* (Leiden, 1963); S. Hizmetli, *İslam Tarihçiliği Üzerine* (Ankara, 1991).

chronicler had been established.²⁸ The first Ottoman court chronicler was Naima. He was appointed as the official court historian with access to archival materials and he was charged with composing a record of the major events in the history of the Ottoman state.²⁹ In the seventeenth century, the gaza-ideology had lost much of its significance and was replaced by another state ideology, expressing a different historical consciousness. The imperial dynasty no longer saw itself as a distinguished family among gazi-lords. The court chroniclers represented the new identity of the House of Osman as the sovereign of a dynastic, sedentary, bureaucratic and Sunni Muslim Empire. This perception was articulated by writers who belonged to the bureaucracy of the central state. Lindner somehow too readily projected the later seventeenth-century realities to the earlier periods.

1.3 *Gazavatnames* or Books of Campaign

The earliest Ottoman historical texts shared a range of vocabulary and expressions, largely originating in two forms of immensely popular oral narratives: the *menakıbnames* and *gazavatnames*. These two types of narratives portrayed the lives and deeds of the people at the frontiers in Anatolia and have a specific place in Muslim and Turkish historiography. After a critical reading, these two types of sources offer original and valuable information regarding the Turkish-Islamic and Ottoman history and the social-cultural and political life in general.³⁰ The biographical books of the Prophet Muhammad and the epic campaign books, which were produced for the motivation of the soldiers, paved the way for the birth of a new type of historical writing. Especially the *gazavatnames* constitute an important source for the Ottoman history. Probably in the ninth century, the *menakıbs* (مناکب) were created in order to describe the high moral values of both the Prophet and his companions. From the eleventh century onwards, the lives of influential

²⁸ Cornell H. Fleisher, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual in the Ottoman Empire, the Historian Mustafâ Âli (1541-1600)* (Princeton, 1986) 237-238.

²⁹ Lewis V. Thomas, *A Study of Naima* (New York, 1972) 36-42, 68-72.

³⁰ Mehmed Fuad Köprülü, *Early Mystics in Turkish Literature* (London, 2012, originally in 1918); *ibid*, 'Anadolu Selçukluları Tarihinin Yerli Kaynakları', *Belleten* 27 (1943) 379-522; *ibid*, *Islam in Anatolia after the Turkish Invasion*, tr. and ed. Gary Leiser (Salt Lake City, 1993); İsmail Hakkı Mercan, 'Türk Tarihinin Kaynaklarından Olan Bazı Menakıbnâme ve Gazavatnameler Hakkında', *Balıkesir Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 6/10 (2003): 108-130; Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*, 62-76.

Sufi saints (*evliya*), sheikhs and the mystical orders were also accounted by these texts.³¹ The word *menakıb* in the fifteenth-century Turkish meant ‘deeds’ both in an Islamic and in a political sense. In the thirteenth century, the earliest examples of *menakıbs* or hagiographies in the Turkish literature were produced during the Seljuks of Anatolia.³² This was a period in which the cultural and intellectual life developed with the arrival of scholars and Sufi sheikhs to Seljuk Anatolia.

Parallel to these developments, the Turkish communities who migrated to the marches in Anatolia also began to produce warrior *gazi* epics or *gazavat*. This gave rise to the Islamic heroic popular Anatolian Turkish literature of *gazavatnames*. These were recounted within the social and cultural milieu that was conscious of earlier layers of frontier traditions. The gests of Arab warriors, deriving from early Muslim history in the Arab-Byzantine frontiers, continued to play an important role in shaping the self-image and courageous ‘knightly’ behaviour of the Muslim Turkish communities in Anatolia. However, it is not possible to determine when Turkish versions of such normative epics started to circulate, but over time translations appeared in writing. The earlier epics were reworked for new audiences.³³ Comparable to the European genre of the *chanson de geste*, these *gazavat* or *menakıb* works remained focused on heroic ‘chivalric’ and miraculous adventures of famous thirteenth-century *gazi*-leaders, such as the post-Seljuk heroes Seyyid Battal Gazi, Sarı Saltuk or Danişmend Gazi.³⁴ These legendary histories or ‘pseudo-histories’ dealt with the legendary vitae of warriors and dervishes and were produced within the ‘knightly’ *gazi* values of the social and political life in western Anatolia in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. This was a period in which the historical texts in the strictest sense were not yet produced. In any case, written about individual persons or events, about sultans or famous marcher lords, the *menakıbnames* appear in general to give detailed and reliable historical information.³⁵ As I shall discuss below, the early Ottoman chronicle writers of the fifteenth century, such as Aşık Paşazade, were strongly inspired by this genre of the *gazavat* and *menakıb*.

³¹ On the *menakıbnames*, see: Ahmet Y. Ocak, *Kültür Tarihi Kaynağı Olarak Menâkıbnâmeler (Metodolojik Bir Yaklaşım)* (Ankara, 1997) 27-69.

³² Ocak, *Menâkıbnâmeler*, 46-48; Orhan F. Köprülü, *Tarihî Kaynak Olarak 14. ve 15. Yüzyıllarda Anadolu’da Bazı Türkçe Menâkıbnâmeler* (unpubl. Ph.D., Istanbul University, 1953).

³³ Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*, 63.

³⁴ For a more comprehensive overview of these works from the thirteenth and fourteenth century, see: I.H. Uzunçarşılı, *Anadolu Beylikleri ve Akkoyunlu, Karakoyunlu Devletleri* (Ankara, 1937) 209-223, 259-262. Also see: Irène Melikoff, *La geste de Melik Danişmend: étude critique du Danişmendname* (Paris, 1960) ; Saltukname, ed. Ş. Akalın (Ankara, 1988) ; Pertev N. Boratav, ‘Battal’, *İslam Ansiklopedisi* ; Paul Wittek, ‘The Taking of Aydos Castle : A Gazi Legend and its Transformation’, ed. G. Makdisi, *Arabic and Islamic Studies in Honor of H.A.R. Gibb* (Cambridge, 1965) 662-672.

³⁵ İnalçık, *The Rise*, 157.

In the fifteenth century, a growing number of *gazavat* or غزافات (Book of Campaigns) deal with the accounts of the deeds and campaigns of a sultan or a famous commander.³⁶ The *Gazavatname* became a genre that narrated a given campaign and celebrated the victories of the commander or the sultan. Its thematic focus was determined by strong genre conventions, which also provided historical information. The compositional structure and the literary form of the *Gazavatname* genre are reflected in the early Ottoman chronicles, which are rather composed as testimonials to the exemplary deeds of the House of Osman.³⁷

1.3.1 The *Gazavat-ı Sultan Murad bin Mehemmed Han*

One of the first major Ottoman examples of campaign narrative tradition or *gazavatname* is the anonymous fifteenth-century *Gazavat-ı Sultan Murad bin Mehemmed Han* or ‘the Book of the Campaign of Sultan Murad’ concerning the Battles of Izladi and Varna (1444) that took place during the reign of sultan Murad II. This is one of the early drafts of the Ottoman history writing in the fifteenth century and undoubtedly the most important Ottoman source on the Battle of Varna.³⁸ This text is also one of the earliest known examples of its genre of the Ottoman *gazavatnames*. The *Gazavat* survived in a single manuscript, dating from the late fifteenth century and is a valuable source for the Ottoman history of that period. Because it dealt only with the events that took place in the period 1443-1448, it exceeds the early Ottoman chronicles both in length and in accuracy of details. The chronicles of Aşık Paşazade and Oruç (see below) narrated the reign of each sultan individually and therefore kept their descriptions quite short. The *Gazavat-ı Sultan Murad* was discovered and mentioned by İncalcık and Oğuz in 1948.³⁹ İncalcık used the text in greater detail in his analysis of the reigns of Murad II and Mehmed II.⁴⁰ Until 1978, there was no critical edition of this *gazavatname*. In 2006, Imber published an

³⁶ Agah Sırrı Levend, *Gazavatnameler ve Mihaloğlu Ali Bey’in Gazavatnamesi* (Ankara, 1956) 16-170. Levend listed the majority of these works. He included within the term *gazavatname* various other works that belonged to the genre of campaign narratives, such as *fethname*, *zafername* and *şehname*. On the *fethname*, see: G.L. Lewis, ‘The Utility of Ottoman Fethnames’, in *Historians of the Middle East*, ed. Bernard Lewis & P.M. Holt (London, 1962) 192-196.

³⁷ Christine Woodhead, ‘The Ottoman Gazaname: stylistic influences on the writing of Campaign Narratives’, in: ed. Halil İncalcık, *The Great Ottoman-Turkish Civilization*, vol. 3 (Ankara, 2000) 55-60.

³⁸ I will use the critical edition: *Gazavât-ı Sultan Murad bin Mehemmed Han*, ed. Halil İncalcık & Mehmet Oğuz (Ankara, 1978).

³⁹ Halil İncalcık & Mehmet Oğuz, ‘Yeni Bulunmuş bir Gazavât-ı Sultan Murad’ *AÜDTCFD* 8/2 (1949): 481-495.

⁴⁰ Halil İncalcık, *Fatih Devri Üzerine Tetkikler ve Vesikalar* (Ankara, 1954).

English translation of the *Gazavat-ı Sultan Murad* along with excerpts from several other sources on the events of the Battle of Varna.⁴¹

According to the detailed information the anonymous author provides, he seems to have been an eyewitness of the events he described and he probably served in the court of sultan Murad II (1421-1451) as a scribe. As a secretary in the *divan* of Murad II, the chronicler might have had access to intelligence reports on the European meetings, plans and preparations to unite their armies, invade the Ottoman realm and expel the Ottomans. The events of Sultan Murad II's Varna campaign of 1444 are narrated in prose style as an independent text. It was written during the reign of Mehmed II (1451-1481). The account was not composed in the style typical for the later sixteenth-century texts, which were overloaded with panegyric passages with embellishment and stylistic ornamentations. The anonymous author of the *Gazavat-ı Sultan Murad* created a sense of enthusiasm through the pace of his narrative.

He organised his material in a series of discrete chapters, each of which marks a distinct stage in the narrative. He started with a description of the Council of Florence (1439) where the Byzantine emperor pleaded with the pope to instigate a full-scale war against the Ottomans. He also provided detailed information about the political and military decisions and discussions in Europe from the Ottoman perspective. Thereafter, he accounted the plotting of the Turkish *bey* of Karaman with the Byzantines behind Murad's back. Meanwhile in the Balkans, the Hungarian king Wladislas and various Balkan princes break their oath and peace agreements with Sultan Murad II on insistence of the pope's delegate, Ciriacus of Ancona. The suspense of the narrative gradually developed as the sultan fends off the first attacks and it reaches a climax with the abdication of the victorious Murad in favour of his young son Mehmed. The Byzantines saw an opportunity in this change and increased their intrigues, both by supporting a rival pretender to the Ottoman throne and by encouraging the Christian and Karamanid rulers to use this opportunity to invade the Ottoman lands. In the ensuing chaos and desperation, Murad II was recalled and he took the command from his son. He successfully led the army to a victory over a Hungarian-led crusaders army at Varna in 1444.

The author of the *Gazavat-ı Sultan Murad* portrayed the victory as by no means a certain one in advance, which lends extra excitement to his narrative. This suggests that the Ottomans were initially seriously threatened by a united and powerful enemy force. The anonymous writer also paid attention to individual 'bravery and treachery' of the marcher lords as good and bad examples. He depicted the fierce battle immediately around sultan Murad II, who managed to withstand with his *kapıkulu* or household army after the marcher lords had fled the battlefield. This proved to be the turning point in the

⁴¹ Colin Imber, *The Crusade of Varna, 1443-1445* (Hampshire, 2006).

battle. The marcher lords who had fled, returned to the battle when they saw that Murad and his janissaries held their positions.

The narrative almost entirely proceeded through a continual shuttling back and forth between relation of events at Murad's court and that of various other major actors. The author's use of dialogue has the actors – Murad II, his viziers and commanders, the Christian enemy kings – appeared like real historical figures. The use of direct speech was a style of evocative rhetorical ornamentation and this was obviously composed in accordance with the expectation of the intended audiences. The various events were narrated in line with their 'horizon of expectation', in other words the tastes and presuppositions of his courtly public and their knowledge of what had happened. Moreover, the *gazavat* also served to affirm the views and norms of that audience about their society, its worldview and cultural life. The discourse on noble and courageous 'chivalric' gazi behaviour was important in shaping the self-representation and forms of behaviour for the intended audience. In this respect, Sultan Murad II was portrayed as a ruler who confirms to the ideals of a gazi-sultan, who undertakes his campaigns in favour of the Muslim community and is therefore styled as the champion of the faith. A detailed discussion of this shall be given in the following chapters. Here we can say something about the context of the 'performance' of this text.

The work was probably intended for public recitation at the court or in palace circles. The *Gazavat* had to be fairly accurate historically as witnesses to the events could have been present to correct the chronicler and it had to appear reliable. Nevertheless, a book of campaigns could also not be dull. Like many other historical texts the *gazavat* of Murad served to record history as well as to entertain the audience.

Two other Ottoman accounts of the Battle of Varna are less known, but their narrative is complimentary to the anonymous one. The *gazavatname's* of Zaiî and Kâşîfî provide detailed information on the names of the commanders, the military operations at Gallipoli, the main battle and the death of king Ladislas at the battlefield.⁴² The first writer, Zaiî, was a poet at the court of sultan Murad II and wrote an account in Turkish of Murad's campaign at Varna, a text which is an important source for Murad's reign. We know that Zaiî understood Greek and the Serbo-Croat language. And since he was well informed about the events in Hungary, Zaiî might also have served as a spy.⁴³ For instance, he wrote that king Ladislas and Hunyadi held an assembly in Budapest with ambassadors of the Byzantine emperor and the Vatican to discuss the possibilities to invade the Ottoman Balkans. The second writer, Kaşîfî, was a Persian poet who came to

⁴² Gürol Pehlivan, 'The Battle of Varna and *Gazavatname's* as Historical Sources', *Turkish Studies* 3/4 (2008): 588-617.

⁴³ Amil Çelebioğlu, *Eski Türk Edebiyatı Araştırmaları* (Ankara 1998), 151-159.

Istanbul during the reign of Mehmed II. Kaşîfî wrote an account of the Battles of Varna and Kosovo based on oral testimonies of eyewitnesses who took part in these battles. There was also some attention for the Ottoman view of the battle of Kosovo of 1389.⁴⁴

1.4 Early Fifteenth-Century Chronicles

As already mentioned, the writing of comprehensive chronicles began in the second half of the fifteenth century, one and a half centuries after the establishment of the Ottoman *beylik* (principality).⁴⁵ There are several features that distinguish these chronicles from the genres mentioned above. The most important aspect is that these historical texts are the first comprehensive histories of the House of Osman from its beginnings and, in contrast to the *gazavatname*-genre, they no longer focus on the *vitae* of individual sultans or commanders. These chronicles covered a longer period of more than one century and a half, in which the narrative was divided according to the successive reigns of various sultans. As with medieval European chronicles, the main themes treated by these works were campaigns, conquests, the incorporation of foreign territories and state organisation. Although indispensable as the largest body of historical information for the period, these chronicles also contained gaps in coverage and have occasional emendations.⁴⁶

Indeed, the early Ottoman chronicles were at the same time a kind of extension of the earlier popular epics (*gazavatnames*) and they copied each other with some additions or emendations. These texts were still composed according to the popular genre of epic literature (*menakibnames* and *gazavatname*) situated within the oral tradition of the Muslim Oğuz culture in Anatolia.⁴⁷ In a society imbued with the tradition of oral transmission, the early Ottoman chronicles were meant to be read aloud in public gatherings, in the army camp or in the bazaars. The following survey does not pretend to be exhaustive; it includes the works that I shall use for this study. I will mainly rely on the chronicles of Ahmedî, Oruç, Aşık Paşazade, the Anonymous Chronicle, Hadidi, Neşrî and the *Gazavat-ı Sultan Murad*, of which the critical editions have been published in the recent decade. The reason for selecting these works is that they represent the most

⁴⁴ N.C.J. Pappas & L. Brigrance Pappas, 'The Ottoman View of the Battle of Kosovo', in *Kosovo. Legacy of a Medieval Battle*, W.S. Vucinich & T.A. Emmert eds. (Minneapolis, 1991), 41-59.

⁴⁵ Suraiya Faroqhi, *Approaching Ottoman History. An Introduction to the Sources* (Cambridge, 1999) 146-147.

⁴⁶ Suraiya Faroqhi, 'The Ottoman Empire in World History: What the Archives Can Tell Us' in: *ibidem*, *Another Mirror for Princes. The Public Image of the Ottoman Sultans and its Reception* (Istanbul, 2008) 10-11.

⁴⁷ Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*, 62-66, 94.

important works for this period, while the others have either copied them or contain very little useful information for the purpose of this study.

1.4.1 Ahmedî (c. 1410)

Ahmedî's *Tevârîh-i Mülûk-i Âl-i Osmân* (History of the Kings of Ottoman Dynasty) is considered as the oldest identifiable comprehensive Ottoman history.⁴⁸ Ahmedî was not only a historian, but also one of the most prolific and successful writers of Ottoman court poetry.⁴⁹ Ottoman writers of poetry and historical works usually met their public in literary salons (*meclis*) patronised by educated Ottomans. In this cultural milieu, the writers might read out their works or show their manuscripts to their colleagues.⁵⁰ Authors depended on the generosity of a patron (the sultan or a statesman) for their livelihood. They were sometimes rewarded with sums of money and sometimes also with the appointment to an office which might provide a reasonable income.⁵¹ Presenting a chronicle or a work of fiction or poetry at a literary gathering can be regarded as a form of 'publication' in itself, but a more developed form of publication was to present a copy of the manuscript to an influential person, such as a vizier, the sultan himself or later on to a princess of the imperial family.⁵²

Ahmedî was born in Anatolia in 1330 and studied in Cairo, where he became versed in all branches of Islamic sciences. For a long time he lived in Kütahya, the capital of the Germiyan principality, one of the strongest and most cultured of the Turkish successor states of the Seljuk Sultanate in western Anatolia. Before he came under Ottoman patronage, Ahmedî was employed by two other Anatolian princes, Süleyman Shah of the Germiyanids and Isa Bey of the Aydın-oğulları.⁵³ It is still unclear how and when exactly he entered Ottoman service. We do know that in the period between 1389 and 1390, Sultan

⁴⁸ I will use the recent critical edition with facsimile of the text: Ahmedî, *Dasitân-i Tevârîh-i Mülûk-i Âl-i Osman*, ed. Kemal Silay (Harvard 2004).

⁴⁹ Halil İnalçık recently published works on the history of Ottoman-Turkish literature, illustrating the artistic life of court poets in the fifteenth century, see: Halil İnalçık, 'The Poet and the Patron: a Sociological Treatise upon the Patrimonial State and the Arts', *Journal of Turkish Literature* 2 (2005): 9-70; *ibid*, 'Klasik Edebiyat Menşei: İrani Gelenek, Saray İşret Meclisleri ve Musahib Şairler', *Türk Edebiyatı Tarihi*, vol. 1 (Ankara, 2006) 221-282; Fuad Köprülü, 'Ahmedî', *İslâm Ansiklopedisi* I, (Istanbul, 1950), 216; Babinger, *Die Geschichtsschreiber der Osmanen und ihre Werke*, 11-13.

⁵⁰ Fleisher, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual*, 22-23.

⁵¹ Faroqhi, 'The Ottoman Empire in World History', 11; Halil İnalçık, *Şair ile Patron. Patrimonyal Devlet ve Sanat Üzerine bir İnceleme* (Istanbul, 2003), 47-48; Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual*, 202-208.

⁵² Faroqhi, *Approaching Ottoman History*, 144.

⁵³ Ménage, 'The beginnings of Ottoman history', 169-70; Tunca Kortantamer, *Leben und Weltbild des altosmanischen Dichters Ahmedî unter besonderer Berücksichtigung seines Diwans* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1973) 200.

Bâyezid I had annexed the neighbouring Turkish principalities (*beyliks*) in Western Anatolia. At that time, Ahmedi was at the court of Isa Bey, the ruler of the principality of Aydın. Following the annexation of Aydın, Bâyezid appointed his young son Süleyman as the governor (*sancakbey*). Thereupon, seeking the patronage of Süleyman Çelebi, Ahmedî reworked his *Iskendername* (the ‘Epos of Alexander’), which he initially had composed for Isa Bey, and added a short chapter on the Ottoman history.

During ten years of completion, he continuously made additions and modifications according to the political changes in Anatolia and waited for the best opportunity to present his *magnum opus*.⁵⁴ Ahmedî finally presented his *Iskendername* to Süleyman Çelebi, who was one of the competitors for re-establishing the integrity of the Ottoman realm after his father Bâyezid had lost the Battle of Ankara in 1402 against Timur. During the civil war after the battle of Ankara, Süleyman had formulated his claim on the Ottoman capital in Edirne and he was known for his generosity towards poets. It was an utterly unstable period due to the political turmoil of the civil war.⁵⁵ Ahmedî gained the patronage of Süleyman Çelebi. The fifteenth-century Ottoman chronicler Enverî knew Ahmedî and gave details on the poet who enjoyed the patronage of Süleyman Çelebi: ‘Emir Süleyman spent his time to feast, and often got intoxicated with Ahmedî; Ahmedî was poor, the *şah* made him rich.’⁵⁶

The earliest redaction of Ahmedi's chronicle seems to have been written before the Battle of Nicopolis (1396), an event which he did not mention. Nevertheless, Ottoman historical consciousness seems to have been already fairly developed under Bayezid I (r. 1389-1402). The dynasty started to outgrow its nomadic identity and began to acquire modes of governing and ideologies associated with the sedentary Islamic culture, much more systematically and self-consciously than before.⁵⁷ Ahmedî certainly survived into the reign of Çelebi Mehmed I and he died in 1413 at the age of eighty.⁵⁸

Ahmedî was highly educated. He mastered the Persian and Arabic languages and could easily attach himself at the court of the rising Ottoman state. However, he chose to compose his *magnum opus* *Iskendername* in Turkish. Ahmedî dedicated the last chapter consisting of 334 couplets, to the history of the Ottomans from Ertuğrul to Emîr Süleyman. His *Iskendername* is written in a long *mesnevi* or *mathnavi* poem style. The term *mesnevi* refers to a literary genre written in rhyming couplets, based on independent, internally rhyming lines. This is a poetic style that includes alliteration or a rhyme scheme within

⁵⁴ Ménage, ‘The beginnings of Ottoman history’, 169-70.

⁵⁵ Kastritsis, *The Sons of Bâyezid*, 222-242.

⁵⁶ ‘Mîr Süleyman dün ü gün sohbet ider, Ahmedî’le dem-be-dem işret ider; Ahmedî dervîşdi bay eyledi şâh, Oldı muhtâc ana cümle ehl-i câh’: *Düstûrnâme-i Enverî*,

⁵⁷ Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*, 84-85.

⁵⁸ Halil İncalcık, ‘Klasik Edebiyat Menşei’, 253-259.

the ending words of two lines, and follows a specific meter.⁵⁹ Ahmedî's work thus comprises over 8.000 couplets and is the earliest known versified Alexander romance in Ottoman literature. Around the legend of Alexander, Ahmedî wove a series of discourses on philosophy, theology, mysticism, medicine, geography and many other subjects. A large portion of the *İskendernâme* constitutes an account of the world history. In his work, Ahmedî made Alexander ask his tutor Aristotle to relate to him the history of the world until their own time. Of course, the Alexander romance was a familiar genre in the Muslim literary tradition, as writers gave the classical conqueror a distinguished role as a figure linking political and religious history.

In this longstanding literary tradition, Alexander was known as *Zülkarneyn* in Turkish or in Arabic *Dhul-Qarnayn*, literally 'the Possessor of Two Horns'. He is in fact a figure who is also mentioned in the Quran itself, where he is described as a great and righteous ruler who built the wall that kept Gog and Magog from attacking the people whom he met on his journey to the East.⁶⁰ *Zülkarneyn*, usually identified as Alexander the Great, had traveled to Hejaz and had visited the two Holy Cities of Islam.⁶¹ Alexander's successes had left a rich legacy inherited by Islamic literature and historiography. *Zülkarneyn* or *İskender* represented the ideally dynamic, triumphant and prudent king, frequently used by Muslim authors to portray the ideal ruler.⁶² The fifteenth-century Ottoman historian, Tursun Beg, for instance, also starts his chronicle on the reign of Sultan Mehmet II by referring to Alexander and citing a verse from the Qur'an, in which he is named.⁶³ Within this same tradition, the Alexander legend was a convenient literary device for Ahmedî to achieve his goal of legitimising the Ottomans, who were caught in a civil war. In his narrative, he appealed to a set of ideas which supported the Ottoman dynasty in its claims to legitimacy by manifestly glorifying the heroism made by the Ottoman gazi-warriors and their justice toward people. The gaza discourse and the idea of justice already existed when Ahmedî wrote his work. He reworked the predominant themes from the canonical Islamic literature.⁶⁴

In line with the tradition of Anatolian Turkish poetry, Ahmedî used the canonical sources of Islamic poetry as an inspiration for his narrative of early Ottoman history: the Qur'an, the Prophetic tradition, the already established Persian and Arabic literature on

⁵⁹ B. Flemming, M. Rahman, 'Mathnawi', *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition.

⁶⁰ W.M. Watt, 'al-Iskandar' *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition.

⁶¹ Ibidem.

⁶² Babür Turna, 'Perception of History and the Problem of Superiority in Ahmedî's Dastan-i Tevarih-i Müluk-i Al-i Osman', *Acta Orientalia Academia Scientiarum Hung.*, 62/3 (2009): 267-283.

⁶³ 'Ve yes'elûneke an Zi'l-karneyn kul se-etlû aleyküm minhü zikrâ' – And they ask you about Zulkarneyn ; say I will recite you an account of him', in: Tursun Beg, *Târîh-i Ebû'l-Feth* (Istanbul, 1977) 3.

⁶⁴ Silay, *Ahmedî's History of the Kings of the Ottoman Lineage*, VIII-XIV.

the 'virtues' of gaza and the thirteenth-century Anatolian Turkish *Gazavatname*'s and *Menakîbname*'s.⁶⁵ Ahmedî's source has not been identified yet. It is possible that he copied and rewrote the chapter on the Ottoman history from an earlier work by an unknown author. His account was copied with little changes by the later historian Neşrî (see below).

Ahmedî certainly portrayed the early Ottoman rulers as gazis and thus provided twentieth-century historians with material to assume that the *raison d'être* of the Ottoman state was 'warfare against Christians'. Ahmedî presented the Ottoman sultans as *gazi*-kings and defined the *gazi* as: 'the servant of God' (*Tangrınun ferrâşıdur*), 'the sword of God' (*Hak kılıcıdur*) and 'the support and refuge of the people of religion' (*püşt ü penâh-ı ehl-i dîn*).⁶⁶ The influential Ottomanist, Paul Wittek used these verses of Ahmedî as his main textual evidence for the gaza-thesis, which I shall discuss extensively in the following chapter.⁶⁷ Although warfare is only one aspect of state formation, Wittek initiated a controversial debate and claimed that the gaza – which he understood as continuous 'holy war' and proselytism against Christians – was the key ideological motive of the Ottoman state.⁶⁸ Wittek described the Ottoman Turks as 'fanatic warriors of Islam' who 'from their first appearance, warfare against their Christian neighbours was the principal factor in this political tradition, and this struggle never ceased to be of vital importance to the Ottoman Empire.'⁶⁹

However, Ahmedî's portraying of the Ottoman rulers as *gazi*-sultans should be situated within the early fifteenth-century historical context. The use of the *gazi*-prestige as the dominant form of self-identification for the Ottoman dynasty in the fifteenth century was strongly related to an event that had changed the course of Ottoman history.⁷⁰ In 1402, Sultan Bâyezid I was defeated by Timur Lenk (r. 1370-1405) – the powerful Turkish ruler from Central Asia.⁷¹ Most importantly, Bâyezid's defeat in the hands of Timur created a crisis of legitimacy and a loss of prestige for the Ottoman dynasty. The post-Timurid period was a time during which the Ottomans expended their energies to restore their legitimacy.

In Islamic historiography, such as the one developed by Ibn Khaldûn among others, there was a classical cyclical vision of the different phases of the state: genesis, apogee

⁶⁵ Popular literature, emerged from the dervish tradition, that recounted individual deeds and battles of the early gazis. They were written in simple language and intended for recitation before public in towns, army camps and at court.

⁶⁶ Ahmedî, *Dasitan-i Tevârîh*, 27.

⁶⁷ Paul Wittek, *The Rise of the Ottoman Empire* (London, 1938) 14.

⁶⁸ Recently, a collection of Wittek's work was published, see: Paul Wittek, *The Rise of the Ottoman Empire. Studies in the History of Turkey, thirteenth-fifteenth centuries*, ed. Colin Heywood (London, 2012).

⁶⁹ Wittek, *The Rise*, 2.

⁷⁰ Anooshahr, *The Ghazi Sultans*, 128; Kastritsis, *The Sons of Bayezid*. 206-207.

⁷¹ Mathilde Alexandrescu-Dersca, *La Campagne de Timur en Anatolie, 1402* (London, 1977).

and decline. The dervish-gazi audience, familiar with this cycle of a 'triad of kings', situated the Ottoman dynasty within the final phase of decline after Bâyezid's defeat by Timur. Bâyezid was relegated to the category of a depraved and debouched ruler. In order to recover from the civil war and to reunite the territories, Ahmedî tried to show that the Ottoman dynasty was not declining as was suggested by critics from gazi and dervish circles.⁷² Recent discussions situated Ahmedî's work within this ideological and political debate of the time to legitimise the weakened Ottoman sovereignty.⁷³ His text devotedly and explicitly emphasised the gazi-identity of the Ottoman sultans in order to fulfill the Ottomans' political need for legitimacy. Others suggested that Ahmedî's narrative was not purely a chronicle, but a combination of various genres of history writing, *nasihatname* or mirrors-for-princes and epic literature.⁷⁴ Ahmedî addressed his patron, Süleyman, the son of Bâyezid I, advising him to avoid conflicts with the Timurids, and to direct gaza-battles against the Christian kings in order to keep the Timurids off his back, and thereby to unite the confused princes of Bâyezid. His attitude towards the gaza-motive in his *İşkerdername* was a source of identity and legitimacy for the dynasty against the looming Timurid threat and the gaza was a convenient vehicle to overcome disunity and internecine conflicts.

1.5 The period of Murad II (r. 1421-1451)

The period of Murad II represents the real formative period of the early Ottoman historical tradition. The first half of the fifteenth century was an active and brilliant age for literary compositions and historical texts. The restoration of the Ottoman state during the reign of Çelebi Mehmed I (r. 1413-1421) and the reinvigoration of the dynasty during the reign of his son Murad II resulted in the production of several historiographical texts. Sultan Murad II himself was a ruler who loved literature and music. Among the Ottoman sultans, he was the first who wrote poetry himself. He understood the lyrical art very well and also protected gifted artists. Moreover, he showed great interest in music and Islamic

⁷² Anooshahr, *The Ghazi Sultans and the Frontiers of Islam*, 120, 156-157.

⁷³ Hilmi Kaçar, 'Moedige Krijgers of het Zwaard van God? Een Conceptuele Herevaluatie van Paul Wittek's Gaze-thesis over de Osmaanse Staatsvorming', *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* 127/2 (2014): 265-268.

⁷⁴ Silay, *Dasitân-i tevârîh-i* ; Heath Lowry, *The Nature of the Early Ottoman State* (New York, 2003) 15-31; Cemal Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*, 55, 93-95; Babür Turna, 'Perception of History and the Problem of Superiority in Ahmedî's Dastan-i Tevarih-i Müluk-i Al-i Osman', *Acta Orientalia Academia Scientiarum Hung.*, 62/3 (2009): 267-283.

sciences as well.⁷⁵ As a generous sultan, he patronised scholars and artists, paid them special salaries and gave endowments (*waqf*) on various occasions. In short, Murad's court was a stage open to artists and scholars, who came from different regions of Anatolia, Turkestan, Persia, Arabia and the Crimea. They performed their skills and carried scholarly discussions. According to the contemporary sources, Murad himself would sometimes select the topic of the debate among the scholars who gathered at his court.⁷⁶

Murad II's reign represented the production of not only historical texts but also of translations of various works on sciences and arts. With encouragement of Murad II, some important works of Islamic history were translated. About twenty-one texts in prose on various topics, most of which were translations, were presented to Murad II.⁷⁷ Among these, the historical texts included the following: the work by the name *Selçuknâme: Tevarih-i Al-i Selçuk* (History of the House of Selçuk), which included the epic of Oğuz or *Oğuznâme*. The Turkish political tradition considered as central figure the mythical ruler Oğuz Khan, who was portrayed in the epic of *Oğuznâme* [Book of Oğuz] as a universal ruler who conquered the world together with his six sons.⁷⁸ Oğuz Khan is a mythical personage. A group of Turkish nomadic communities identified themselves as descendants of Oğuz Khan and created various Oğuz genealogies. On request of Murad II, the epic of *Oğuznâme* was reproduced in the History of the House of Selçuk, written in 1436 by the Ottoman historian and scholar Yazıcı-zâde Ali.⁷⁹ And in 1432, the translation of the *Kâbusnâme*, a Persian mirror-for-princes written by Keykâvus in 1082, was produced by Ahmed bin Ilyas and presented to Murad II.⁸⁰

Earlier, in 1421-1422, another Persian book of advice literature had been translated by the poet, Bedr-i Dilşâd, into Turkish. He dedicated his work to Sultan Murad II and called it *Muradnâme*.⁸¹ Based upon the *Kâbusnâme*, the book refers to the ideas of the ancient philosophers, Qur'anic verses and the traditions of the Prophet. The advice given in the *Muradnâme* is not very different from the advice literature of contemporary European literature.

⁷⁵ Gönül Tekin, 'Turkish Literature: Thirteenth to Fifteenth Centuries', in: ed. Halil İnalcık and Günsel Renda, *Ottoman Civilization*, vol. 2 (Ankara, 2009) 511.

⁷⁶ Halil İnalcık, 'II. Murad', *İslam Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 8, 614.

⁷⁷ Tekin, 'Turkish Literature: Thirteenth to Fifteenth Centuries', 512.

⁷⁸ For the oldest known version of the Oğuz-nâme, see: Zeki Velidi Togan, *Oğuz Destanı. Reşideddin Oğuznâmesi, tercüme ve tahlili* (İstanbul, 1982).

⁷⁹ Yazıcı-zâde 'Ali: *Tevârih-i Âl-i Selçuk*, ed. Abdullah Bakır (İstanbul, 2009); Yazıcı-zâde 'Ali: *Tevârih-i Âl-i Selçuk*, 2 vol., ed. Sevim Y. Önder (İstanbul, 2009).

⁸⁰ Keykâvus, *Kâbusnâme*, ed. Orhan Ş. Gökyay (İstanbul, 2007).

⁸¹ *Bedr-i Dilşâd'ın Murâd-nâmesi*, 2 vols., ed. Âdem Ceyhan (İstanbul, 1997).

1.5.1 Royal Calendars or *Takvims*

It was also during Murad's reign that the Ottoman historical annals or lists (*Tarihi Takvimler*) were produced. Although these *Takvims* or Royal Calendars are very short texts, they constituted the bases for the early Ottoman chronicles because they contained historical data.⁸² They were composed for the palace and began with chronological lists of the prophets from Adam to Mohammed, of the caliphs and of the main events of the Seljuk, Ottoman and Karamanid states. The genre of Ottoman *takvims* belonged to an early branch of Islamic astronomy. Astrologers of the early centuries of Islam included in their works chronological lists on important political and natural events, such as earthquakes, astronomical phenomena, fires and pest. It appears that the Anatolian Turks were interested very early in this science of annalistic writing, as a basis to make predictions for the ruler. An original copy of a calendar, the *Cetvel al-Ihtiyarat*, written in Sivas in 1371, has been preserved. It contains a chronological list of the Seljuks and the Ilkhanids. The oldest Ottoman annals that survived, date from the years 1444 and 1446 and relied on earlier works. At the beginning of each year, a calendar was drawn up for the use of the sultan.⁸³ The first entries in the sections on Ottoman history are very short, recording only the birth and accession of the sultans and their conquests. The entries for the first half of the fifteenth century are much more elaborate, containing several events and some very detailed. Major events in other Muslim states are included as well.⁸⁴

1.5.2 Anonymous Chronicles

The core texts of the popular fifteenth-century 'Anonymous Chronicles', usually bearing the title *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osmân*, were composed during the early reign of Murad II. There are about fifty manuscripts in European and Turkish libraries.⁸⁵ The first versions relied on a common text, which was a collection of tales and historical data.⁸⁶ The textual material

⁸² Osman Turan, *İstanbul'un Fethinden Önce Yazılmış Tarihi Takvimler* (Ankara, 1954); Nihat Atsız, *Osmanlı Tarihine ait Tarihi Takvimler* (İstanbul, 1961); V.L. Menage, 'The Annals of Murad II', *BSOAS* 39/3 (1976): 570-584.

⁸³ İnalcık, 'The Rise of', 157.

⁸⁴ Ménage, 'The Beginnings of Ottoman History', 170.

⁸⁵ For a detailed discussion and a list of the various manuscripts, see: *Anonim Osmanlı Kroniği (1299-1512)*, ed. Necdet Öztürk (İstanbul, 2000) XXXI-XLIX; Friedrich Giese, *Die altosmanischen anonymen Chroniken, Teil I* (Breslau, 1922), *Teil II* (Leipzig, 1925). On their sources, see: Giese, 'Einleitung zu meiner Textausgabe der altosmanische anonymen Chroniken', *Mitteilungen zur Osmanischen Geschichte*, I (1921-1922); S. Buluç, 'İki Yazma Anonim Tevârih-i Al-i Osman Hakkında', *III. Tarih Kongresi* (Ankara, 1943) 230-142; F. R. Unat, 'Anonim Bir Tevârih-i Al-i Osman Hakkında', *VI. Tarih Kongresi* (Ankara, 1961) 271-274; H. J. Kissling, 'Eine anonyme altosmanische Chronik über Sultan Bayezid II', *Der Orient in der Forschung* (Wiesbaden, 1967) 409-433.

⁸⁶ Ménage, 'The Beginnings', 171.

was regarded as common property and each author or copyist felt himself free to change or elaborate as he wished.⁸⁷ The later versions of the Anonymous Chronicles edited under Bâyezid II (1481-1512) are more complete texts than the earlier ones. They made use of the *gazavatnames* on the great campaigns such as the Battles of Varna in 1444 and Kosovo in 1448. In this study, I will use the recent critical edition of the Anonymous Chronicle, which is a compilation of the Giese edition and the manuscript in the Library of Topkapı Palace Museum.⁸⁸ These Anonymous Chronicles are all related to each other and start with the migration of Süleyman Shah to Anatolia. Regarding the events of the reign of Murad II, they are composed in a series of short entries, very similar in style to the Royal Calendars. For example, the description of the Battle of Varna is rendered in a more detailed manner but thereafter it reverts to a concise annalistic record. The anonymous chronicles are composed in fifteenth-century popular Turkish and bear a resemblance to the genre and language of Aşık Paşazade, Oruç and Neşrî (see below).

The versions of the Anonymous Chronicles, written in the 1480s, provide interesting information not mentioned in the chronicles of Neşrî and Aşık Paşazade. For instance, the anonymous texts mention that Gedik Ahmed Pasha, who had conquered the Italian city of Otranto, was called back to Istanbul when the succession struggle had started between Cem and Bayezid II, after the decease of their father Sultan Mehmed II in 1481.⁸⁹ While Aşık Paşazade generally praises the former Byzantine general, Gedik Ahmed Pasha, for his brilliant military successes, he does not mention his execution by the order of Bâyezid II. In contrast, the anonymous chroniclers write that he was executed by Bayezid II during a 'wine feast' at the court in Edirne and lament his death by calling Gedik Ahmed a martyr or *shehîd*.⁹⁰

Moreover, the writers of the anonymous texts did not hide their criticism of the centralising policies of the dynasty and the statesmen. An obvious reason is that they belonged to the social group of the marginalised gazi circles and Turkish nobility who suffered from the imperial and fiscal policy of Mehmed II. By contrast, chroniclers such as Oruç, Tursun Beg and Neşrî belonged to urban officials and respectively were closer to the court as scribe, bureaucrat and scholar, who had expectations for their careers. In this respect, the anonymous chroniclers rather narrated the events in line with the horizon of expectation of the *gazi* milieu and Turkish nobility. They wrote in accordance with the

⁸⁷ Ménage, 'The Beginnings', 173; Hasan H. Adalıoğlu, 'Osmanlı Tarih Yazıcılığında Anonim Tevarih-i Al-i Osman Geleneği', *Türkler* vol. 11, ed. Hasan Celal Güzel (Ankara, 2002) 286.

⁸⁸ *Anonim Osmanlı Kroniği (1299-1512)*, ed. Necdet Öztürk (İstanbul, 2000).

⁸⁹ Ibidem, XXXVII: 'Cem Sultan Karaman'dan gelüp hurûc idüp Bursa şehrine gelüp karâr idüp, Sultan Bayezid dahi Gedük Ahmed'i Pulya'dan getürdüp.'

⁹⁰ Ibidem, 131: 'Sultan Bayezid şarab meclisin idüp o gice Edrene'de Yeni Saray'da bu meclisde Gedik Ahmed Paşa'yı şehîd eyledükden sonra..'

tastes and values of their non-courtly audience and their knowledge of what was happening.

The anonymous texts also seem to affirm the concerns and values of that gazi-audience about its society, its worldview and political life at the frontiers in the Balkan. For example, when accounting the conquest of the first Ottoman bases in Europe during the reign of Orhan Gazi (r. 1329-1362), they emphasised the gaza-spirit by narrating an alleged spoken testimony of Süleyman Pasha, the son of Orhan Gazi, who led the Ottoman forces in the Balkans. Therein, Süleyman addressed his gazi-followers directly and asked them to bury him there (Bolayir) after his death, in order to hold this newly seized place against Byzantine counter-attacks. He also demanded 'to keep his corps out of the hands of the infidels.'⁹¹ Furthermore, the anonymous chroniclers accounted that the outnumbered Ottoman forces succeeded to fend off the Byzantine counter-attack, only after the charge of the mounted 'grey horses' (*boz atlular*), which symbolised and suggested the help of 'heavenly forces'.⁹² This passage shows that the anonymous writers included folk-legends that were inspired on the genre of the fourteenth-century *gazavat* and *menakıb* works of 'legendary-histories', emphasising heroic and miraculous adventures of the gazis, who enjoyed heavenly support.

In the historical tradition of the marginalised gazis of the fifteenth century, represented by the anonymous chronicles, things started to go wrong during the reign of Murad I (r. 1362-1389) and continued to deteriorate under his son, Bâyezid I (r. 1389-1402).⁹³ The process of centralisation of state power, everything and everyone who, from the gazi perspective, embodied this process was criticised. The bluntest criticism was directed towards the alleged drunkenness and carelessness of Sultan Bâyezid I, having allegedly led to his defeat against Timur in Ankara (1402): 'Until Vülkoğlu's daughter [daughter of the Serbian king] came to him, Bâyezid Khan did not know what drinking wine and feasting was. He did not drink. In the time of Osman Gazi, wine was not drunk. At that time the sultans were humble and listened to the words of the *ulema*.'⁹⁴ Furthermore, Bâyezid I is criticised for not having consulted the statesmen during his

⁹¹ *Anonim Osmanlı Kroniği*, 23: 'meger Süleyman Paşa'ya ol hâl vaki' olmazdan öndin yanında olan gâzilere vasiyyet itmişdi kim : 'Ben bu yakında dünyâdan gidiserim. Beni bu vilayetde Bolayır'da defn eylen ve eger kâfirler size üşerse kaçmayasız' demiş idi. Ve hem gayret idesiz, benüm ölümü kâfirlere aldirmayasız' demiş idi.'

⁹² *Ibidem*, 24: Râviler şöyle rivayet iderler kim: Sonra ol kaçup kurtulan kâfirlerden haber aldılar kim ayıtdılar: Heman kim denizden ayrılduk, gördük kim, bir alay boz atlular çıkageldiler. Bizi anlar kırdılar. [...] Kâfirler anları bizden sandılar. Anlar hod gâyib erenlermis. Hak te'âlâ anları bize meded gönderdiler.'

⁹³ Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*, 104-105.

⁹⁴ *Anonim Osmanlı Kroniği*, 36: 'Tâ Vilk-oglu kızı gelmeyince Bayezid Han sohbet ve işret neydüğün bilmedi. Hiç şarab içmezdi. Osman Gazi zamanında şarab içmezlerdi. Anlar dahı ulemadan utanıp ne dirlerse sözlerinden çıkmazlardı.'

preparations to confront Timur Lenk. He is said to have fallen prey to his pride.⁹⁵ After Bâyezid lost the battle and was taken prisoner by Timur, the anonymous chronicle gave an account of an imaginary conversation between Timur and Bâyezid. Timur says that they had both been given rulership by God but Bâyezid lost it because he did not know how to treasure it to its value.⁹⁶ Bâyezid's sultanate, which had taken sedentary bureaucratic forms and adopted Persian-Islamic principles of sovereignty, experienced great difficulties to maintain the loyalty of his *gazi* followers. The anonymous chronicler, who addressed the *gazi* audience, suggested that Bâyezid lost the battle because he failed to satisfy the needs of his followers, that he should have known better in order not to lose the divine support for his kingdom and to behave accordingly. The narratives of the anonymous chronicler, who was certainly no court historian, reflected the increasing tensions due to the antagonism between the Ottoman dynasty and the world of the egalitarian nomadic frontier society. The underlying sense of the waning of *asabiyya* (group solidarity) was apparent.

⁹⁵ *Anonim Osmanlı Kroniği*, 46: 'hiç kimseyle meşveret itmedi. Nice kim nasihat itdiler işitmedi. Kendi kendüyle mağrur olup yürüdi ve kimseyle tanışmadı.'

⁹⁶ *Ibidem*, 48-49 : 'İy Bayezid Han! Hak ta'âlâya çok şükürler olsun kim senünle bana pâdişâhlık virdi. [...] Belki sen Hak ta'âlânın şükürini bilmedün ola. Anın için sana bu güşmâli eyledi ola', didi. Yine dönüp ayıtdı: 'İy kardaş, gam yime, âdem ki sağ ola devlet bulunur' deyüp teselli eyledi.'

1.6 Chronicles from the period of Mehmed II (1451-1481)

With his *Behcetüt Tevârih* or *Splendor of Histories*, the Ottoman *ulema* scholar and historian, Şükrullah, wrote the second oldest Ottoman historical tekst. It was composed in Persian between 1456 and 1458.⁹⁷ Şükrullah was also a musical theorist and translated a treatise on music into Turkish on demand of Murad II.⁹⁸ He wrote his universal history during the reign of Mehmed II, in retirement in Bursa and presented it to the grand vizier Mahmud Paşa. Şükrullah recorded a history of the world known to him in thirteen chapters. He not only narrated Islamic history but also paid attention to the histories of the Turks, China, India, Persia and Africa. Şükrullah also added a discussion of the Greek philosophers and the important thinkers of other religions. Finally, in the last chapter, he added a short history of the Ottomans. The Ottoman chapter contains a fairly full account up to the accession of Murad II and deals with the virtues and pious foundations of the sultans. As an example of Ottoman ‘high culture’ historiography, Şükrullah’s work enjoyed considerable prestige and remained a favourite source for sixteenth-century historians writing on universal and Ottoman history.⁹⁹

Another historical text from this period is the *Düstûrname*¹⁰⁰, the chronicle of Enverî. Enverî wrote it in 1465 in dedication to Mahmud Paşa, the grand vizier of sultan Mehmed II.¹⁰¹ It is very likely that Enverî, like the other cultivated people of his time, had knowledge of Persian and Islamic literature, and that he was inspired by canonical works when writing his chronicle in Turkish. *Düstûrname* is composed according to the rules of a *mesnevî*. This chronicle consists of three distinct parts. The first part is the history of the prophets and of the Persian dynasties. The second part is a comprehensive narrative on Umur Paşa, the ruler of the Aydın-oğulları dynasty in Anatolia. Finally, in the third part, he briefly accounts the history of the Ottoman sultans until the reign of Mehmed the Conqueror. The account ends in 1464. The information on the first rulers is very brief. The deeds of emir Süleyman and the campaigns of sultan Mehmed II are elaborately described, according to reports of eyewitnesses of the campaigns in which he took part. Enverî’s account of Ottoman history constitutes a compilation from the chronicle of

⁹⁷ Şükrullah, *Behcetüt Tevârih* [In the Light of History], ed. and tr. Hasan Almaz (İstanbul, 2013).

⁹⁸ Ahmed Oğlu Şükrullah, *Şükrullah’ın Risalesi ve 15. Yüzyıl Şark Musikîsi Nazariyatı* (İstanbul, 2008).

⁹⁹ Şükrullah, *Behcetüt Tevârih*, XII-XIII.

¹⁰⁰ The title of this chronicle has a Persian origin and has two meanings: ‘Book of the Grand Vizier’, as it was dedicated to grand vizier Mahmud Paşa; or also ‘Book of Advices’, as Enverî mentioned in his chronicle that his goal was to tell moral stories to his readers, so that they would take an example for them.

¹⁰¹ *Düstûrnâme-i Enverî: Osmanlı Tarihi kısmı 1299-1466*, ed. Necdet Öztürk (İstanbul, 2003); Irène Melikoff-Sayar, *Le Destân d’Umur Pacha (Düstûrname-i Enverî)*, (Paris, 1954).

Ahmedî and other unknown authors, popular tales and calendars. And because of its simple style, his chronicle tends to treat Ottoman history merely as a catalogue of events, names and dates.¹⁰² The historical texts of Ahmedî, Şükrullah and Enverî treat Ottoman history merely as an appendix to a world history. Their Ottoman histories are basically compilations from popular tales and calendars.

Another very important early historical text is the work of Tursun Beg, who was a high-ranking bureaucrat and familiar with the administrative issues of his days. He wrote an original work on the reign of Mehmed II the Conqueror in his *Târîh-i Ebu'l-Feth* or 'the History of the Father of Conquest'.¹⁰³ What is known about Tursun Beg derives mainly from the autobiographical references in his chronicle. He was probably born in Bursa in the 1420s, to an already prominent family of bureaucrats. Tursun Beg mentioned his uncle Cebe Ali Bey who had served as governor in Bursa, and his grandfather Firuz Beg in Iznik. He was, while relatively young, the holder of a *timar*, probably inherited from his father Hamza Beg.¹⁰⁴ He retired sometime after 1480 and settled in Bursa, where he probably died after 1491.

By virtue of his position as secretary of the *Divan* or chancellery, Tursun Beg was present when important decisions were made and witnessed important events first hand in the entourage of Sultan Mehmed II.¹⁰⁵ He was also present at the conquest of Constantinople in 1453 and was subsequently employed as secretary on several survey tasks. Promoted to the office of scribe at state council (*divan katibi*) in 1461, he acquired a close knowledge of governmental affairs. Tursun also participated in the major campaigns of Mehmed II, especially those involving his principal patron, the grand vizier Maḥmud Paşa. As a specialist of the financial bureaucracy, Tursun may have risen to the post of *defterdar* (director of finances) of Anatolia.¹⁰⁶ Tursun Beg's work is based on his own personal observations. His chronicle is a detailed and panegyric history of the reign of Mehmed II, continuing up to ca. 1488 in the reign of Bayezid II, to whom the work was dedicated. Although rarely referred to by later Ottoman historians, Tursun Beg's chronicle is significant, first as an insider's account of events of the later fifteenth century. And secondly, for its theoretical preface on the nature of Ottoman political

¹⁰² İnalçık, 'The Rise of Ottoman Historiography', 152-167; and Ménage, 'The Beginnings of Ottoman Historiography', 168-179.

¹⁰³ For a critical edition, see: Tursun Beg, *Târîh-i Ebü'l-Feth*, ed. Mertol Tulum (İstanbul, 1977).

¹⁰⁴ Tursun Beg, *Târîh-i Ebü'l-feth*, XI-XII; H. İnalçık and R. Murphey, *The History of Mehmed the Conqueror by Tursun Beg* (Chicago, 1978) 11.

¹⁰⁵ İnalçık, 'Tursun Beg, Historian of Mehmed the Conqueror's Time', in *The Middle East and the Balkans under the Ottoman Empire: Essays on Economy and Society* (Bloomington, 1993), 417-431; Kenan İnan, 'The Incorporation of Writings on Periphery in Ottoman Historiography: Tursun Bey's Comparison of Mehmed II and Bayezid II', *International Journal of Turkish Studies* 9 (2003): 109, 111

¹⁰⁶ İnalçık and Murphey, *The history*, 16.

thought.¹⁰⁷ He wrote his work in ornamented Turkish, containing a lot of Persian and Arabic terms and signalled the ornamented and mixed use of language of the later sixteenth-century historians.



¹⁰⁷ Christine Woodhead, 'Tursun Beg', EI².

1.7 Chronicles from the period of Bâyezid II (1481-1512)

1.7.1 Aşık Paşazade (c. 1480s)

Many of the general histories of the Ottoman dynasty were composed during Bâyezid II's reign (1481-1512), in other words already after the consolidation of the Ottoman imperial central administration. At this period, various *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osman* or 'Histories of the House of Osman' were written as a result of the consciousness of having established a true empire. This was a new phase in Ottoman historiography, in which original historical texts flowered. Sultan Bâyezid II, the son of Mehmed the Conqueror, was probably keenly aware of a need to bolster his image as the most prestigious Muslim Sultan of his time and to provide the empire his father had founded with cultural and historiographical legitimacy. In the previous historical texts of Ahmedî and Şükrullah, which were conceived as world histories, Ottoman history only occupied a modest place as a story of *gazis* at the frontiers of the Islamic world. However, now Sultan Bâyezid II claimed to be the most distinguished and honored Muslim Sultan and he commissioned works which recorded the achievements of his ancestors. He was conscious of having established a Muslim Empire with a claim to universal rule, which was competing for supremacy with the Mamluk Sultanate in Egypt. It was precisely at this period that the Ottomans had entered a long war against the Mamluks for the control of South Anatolia. This situation required a new outlook for the Ottoman historiography.

The first coherent work as a history of the Ottoman dynasty is the chronicle of Aşık Paşazade (1400-1502).¹⁰⁸ As a member of a famous Sufi family, Aşık Paşazade was born around 1400 in the village of Elvan Çelebi near Amasya, where he spent his youth among the dervishes in the Sufi 'convent' (*tekke*) of Elvan Çelebi.¹⁰⁹ He lived through the entire century and reportedly died in 1502.¹¹⁰ His great-grandfather was the famous Turkish mystic poet Aşık Paşa (1272- 1333), the author of the *Garibnâme*, a prose work on tasavvuf (mysticism). Aşık Paşa belonged to a dervish family that had migrated from Khorasan to Anatolia in the thirteenth century.¹¹¹ The pseudonym of the historian referred to his great-grandfather, Aşık Paşa. Because of the lack of any information on the life of Aşık Paşazade in the fifteenth and sixteenth-century sources, we can only get information on

¹⁰⁸ On Aşık Paşazade's life and work, see: Halil İnalcık, 'How to Read Ashik Pasha-Zade's History,' in: *ibid*, *Essays in Ottoman History* (Istanbul, 1998) 31-55.

¹⁰⁹ Semavi Eyice, 'Elvan Çelebi Zaviyesi', *DİA*, vol. 11, 65-67; Köprülü, 'Aşık Paşazade', *IA*, vol. 1, 707.

¹¹⁰ İnalcık, 'How to Read Ashik Pasha-Zade's History,' 34.

¹¹¹ Günay Kut, 'Aşık Paşa', *Diyanet İslam Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 11, 63-64; Fuad Köprülü, 'Aşık Paşa', *İslam Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 1 (Istanbul, 1965) 701-706.

his life from his own work. His real name was Ahmed, as he mentioned in his genealogy: 'Oh dervishes (*aziz*)! This *fakir*, Dervish Ahmed Aşıkî is the son of Sheikh Yahya, grandson of Sheikh Selman and the great grandson of the sultan of wisdom Aşık Paşa.'¹¹² The word for dervish in Turkish at that time was *aziz*. The audience he wished to address were the dervishes from the Wafaiyya order. In one passage, he directly addressed the gazi-dervishes, saying that his history was composed on the knowledge and sources that he personally observed or heard.¹¹³

There is no indication that Aşık Paşazade received a higher education at a *medrese* or Islamic university. He was certainly educated at the Sufi convent of Elvan Çelebi according to the culture of dervishes. Aşık Paşazade noted that the members of his family were called Aşıkî by the Ottoman dynasty. They were all born and lived in the realm of the Ottoman sultans who always extended their favours to them.¹¹⁴ Throughout the reign of Murad II and in the early period of the reign of Mehmed II, Aşık Paşazade was active as a dervish and gazi-soldier. During his long and active life, he took part in all the campaigns of sultan Murad II and directly participated in raids with the gazi-leaders. He was well qualified to write down his memoirs or to collect first-hand accounts from his comrades-in-arms, especially concerning the fifteenth-century events. Aşık Paşazade wrote his history in Turkish in the final years of the fifteenth century towards the end of his life. In retirement in Istanbul and, not worrying about career considerations, he did not hide his views when criticising statesmen and generals. He noted that he begun to compose his history in 1484 at the age of eighty-six, when Bâyezid II started his campaign against Bogdan.¹¹⁵

Aşık Paşazade's *History* is stylistically straightforward and fluently composed in the popular Turkish language of the fourteenth and fifteenth century. It was meant to be read aloud and listened to by an audience of dervish-gazi circles in public meeting places. His work adhered to these cultural and linguistic conventions and genre, based in part on popular tales and historical facts. He mastered Persian and Arabic as well, as he used words from these languages in his poems. The first part of his History on the fourteenth century agrees with the common text of the Anonymous Chronicles. The *menakib* of Yahşî Fakih, which deals with the period from Osman Beg until the reign of Bayezid I and

¹¹² I use the recent critical edition of *Aşıkpaşazade Tarihi*, ed. Necdet Öztürk (İstanbul, 2013) 3. I have also checked it with the edition by Kemal Yavuz and Yekta Saraç, *Aşık Paşazade Tevarih-i Al-i Osman* (İstanbul, 2007).

¹¹³ *Aşıkpaşazade Tarihi*, ed. Öztürk, 49: 'Hey azizler! Vallahi bu menâkıbı kim fakir yazdum, cemî'isine ilmüm irişdi, andan yazdum. Siz sanmanız kim güzafin yazdum.'

¹¹⁴ *Aşıkpaşazade Tarihi*, 5: 'Kim neseb ü neslüm bu âlile doğdu; Hem doğanumuz bu âli gördü; Nesl ü nesebüme Âl-i Osman Âşıkî deyüb ederler ihsan.'

¹¹⁵ *Aşıkpaşazade Tarihi*, 49: 'Bu ömür seksen altı olduğunda, Bayezid Han Boğdan'a agduğunda menâkıb yazmağa defter çıkardum.'

continues until 1422, is mentioned by Aşık Paşazade as his source for this period. Unfortunately, Yahşi Fakih's text did not survive separately. Concerning the first century of Ottoman history, the text of Yahşi Fakih seems to be the common source for both Aşık Paşazade and the Anonymous Chronicles. Yahşi Fakih probably wrote his work during the reign of Mehmed I (1413-1421), after the civil war. He had been granted land by Mehmed I, whom he had probably supported in his struggle for the throne. Aşık Paşazade's criticism on Süleyman and Çandarlı Ali Paşa apparently came from Yahşi Fakih.¹¹⁶

Aşık Paşazade, Neşrî and the Anonymous Chronicles each used their common source in their own way. Generally, Aşık Paşazade's chronicle is more detailed, adding new information from oral sources and the menakibnames. However, the Anonymous Chronicles are more detailed in their criticism of Ottoman centralising policies. Furthermore, individual copies of these chronicles may be as important as different texts because their authors made revisions at various dates with additions or omissions. Aşık Paşazade also made such new revisions.¹¹⁷ He often added his personal observations and orally obtained pieces of information to his sources, which he says he summarised in his work. As his oral source to the capture of Bâyezid by Timur in the aftermath of the Battle of Ankara, Aşık Paşazade referred to Koca Naib, the janissary guard (*solak*) of Sultan Bayezid I.¹¹⁸ His source for the events of the Battle of Nicopolis (1396) was the oral testimony of Umur Beg, the son of marcher lord Kara Temürtaş, an Ottoman marcher lord who was present in the battle.¹¹⁹ According to İnalcık, the History of Aşık Paşazade and the Anonymous Chronicles contain two kinds of menakibname: the typical folk-tales, such as the dream narrative of Osman Bey, and real historical information in the gazavatname genre.¹²⁰ These texts combined both genres to appeal to their intended audience, the dervish-gazis milieu. In any case, these texts give without doubt detailed and reliable historical information.

Aşık Paşazade noted that he met Yahşi Fakih in Geve in 1413, on his way from the Elvan Çelebi convent (*zaviye*) to probably the Balkans. Aşık Paşazade fell ill at Geve and stayed in the house of Yahşi Fakih, the son of the imam of Orhan Bey. There, Yahşi Fakih gave him his History, from which he 'transmitted' (*nakl ederin*) the events until the reign

¹¹⁶ İnalcık, 'The Rise of Ottoman Historiography', 152.

¹¹⁷ Ibidem, 154; Ménage, 'The Beginnings of Ottoman History', 174-175.

¹¹⁸ *Aşıkpaşazade Tarihi*, 107: 'Ey derviş! Sen hod o cengde bile degüldün. Ya bu mâcerâyı kimden nakl idersin? Bursa'nın bir nayibi varıdı, Koca Nayib dirleridi. Ve o Bayezid Han'un solaklarından idi. [...] Fakir kim andan nakl etdüm.'

¹¹⁹ Ibidem, 91.

¹²⁰ İnalcık, 'The Rise of Ottoman historiography', 157.

of Bâyezid I.¹²¹ The year 1413 was the final period of the civil war among the sons of Yıldırım Bâyezid Khan after the Battle of Ankara. At that point in the struggle for the Ottoman throne, Çelebi Mehmed I and his brother Musa were opposing each other. Aşık Paşazade probably travelled together with a group of dervishes from the convent of Elvan Çelebi to assist Mehmed I in his struggle. The convent of Elvan Çelebi was located in the region of Amasya, the seat of Çelebi Mehmed. In his final confrontation with his brother Musa, Çelebi Mehmed left Bursa in 1413, but Aşık Paşazade could not accompany him because of his illness. Mehmed was successful in gaining the support of the Turkish marcher lords and dervishes in the area. This seems to have been a decisive factor in his final victory over his brothers and Mehmed I gained the throne. In this region, the *babai* dervishes, to whom Aşık Paşazade belonged, must have had an important influence.¹²²

Autobiographical notes recur when Aşık Paşazade accounted the conflict between the young sultan Murad II and his uncle Mustafa at the Battle of Ulubat in 1422. In this crucial struggle against Mustafa, Murad II sought the support of the Sufi leaders of his time and obtained the blessings of Emir Sultan in Bursa. Murad also released the marcher lord Mihal-oğlu Mehmed Bey from the prison in Tokat. Earlier in 1413, after his victory against Musa, his father Çelebi Mehmed had put Mihal-oğlu Mehmed in prison. Mihal-oğlu had supported Musa as the leader of the marcher lords in the Balkans against Çelebi Mehmed. Aşık Paşazade notes that Mihal-oğlu Mehmed Bey, on his way from Tokat to Sultan Murad's camp on the Ulubad river, visited the convent of Elvan Çelebi and took Aşık Paşazade with him to join Murad II.¹²³ Aşık Paşazade's detailed description of Yörgüç Paşa's activities as governor of Amasya between 1422-1424 suggest that Aşık Paşazade had returned and lived in the convent of Elvan Çelebi.¹²⁴ From 1422 until 1436, we have no further data of his biography. But we do know that in 1436, he went on a pilgrimage to Mecca and returned to live in Skopje under the patronage of the famous marcher lord, Yiğit-oğlu Ishak Bey. He writes that he participated in *akın*-raids in the Balkans together with the son of Ishak Bey: 'When Ishak Bey returned from Mecca, Semendire had not yet been taken. At that time, I also returned from Mecca along with Ishak Bey. A messenger came to Ishak Bey from the sultan with the following order: Go up against Nigeobru and lay siege to it. [...] Now, I had come with Ishak Bey to Üsküb and taken part in all sorts of

¹²¹ *Aşıkpaşazade Tarihi*, 114: 'Hünkar, devletilen Bursa'dan göçdü, yürüdü geldi, Yorusa konu. Ol vakit duacı fakir Gevye'de kaldum, Orhan'un imamı oğlu Yahşî Fakih evinde hasta oldum. Menakıb-ı Al-i Osman'ı tâ Yıldırım Han'a gelince ol imam oğlundan nakl ederin.'

¹²² İnalçık, 'How to Read Ashik Pasha-Zade's History,' 32.

¹²³ *Aşıkpaşazade Tarihi*, 129-130: 'Hapisden kim çıkardılar. Geldi, bizüm Elvan Çelebüm Tekyesine ugradı. Fakiri aldı, bile gitdi. Ulubat Köprüsünü Sultan Murad kesmişidi.'

¹²⁴ *Aşıkpaşazade Tarihi*, 147-154.

adventures. Once, I went on a raid together with Paşa Bey, the son of Ishak Bey, and Kılıccı Doğan.’¹²⁵

Aşık Paşazade recorded history according to the set of values and norms that his intended gazi-dervish audience expected to hear about. While he had depended on older written sources for relating the rise of the Ottoman state until the reign of Bâyezid I, much of his writing on the reign of Murad II (1421-1451) was actually derived from his own personal memory. In general, Aşık Paşazade’s work was deeply influenced by the vibrant conflicts between the dervish-gazi circles and the bureaucratic elite of the centralising state. He was bitter when accounting Bâyezid’s conflict with Timur and his policy of centralisation and unification of the Turkish principalities. His work bears the marks of the great disappointment at the collapse of Bâyezid’s empire and was apparently influenced by Yahşi Fakih’s perception. The early chroniclers were at pains when justifying questionable conflicts with the fellow Muslim states in Anatolia, which posed a thorny problem. These writers felt the need to have a general outlook on their historical existence and at the same time sought a historical basis for their future claims.¹²⁶ The soft and generous policies of Murad II are contrasted to the harsh centralising policies of Bayezid I and Mehmed II. The differences in the ideological programs of the early Ottoman historiography were related to the struggles among the two alternative and struggling groups within the Ottoman ruling elite: gazi-dervishes and the *kapikulu* officials of the central state.

Victor Ménége provided a deeper understanding of the early Ottoman historiography by pointing out the fact that Aşık Paşazade belonged to these Turkish gazi dervish circles. He emphasised that Aşık Paşazade’s narrative was far from being the next court chronicle.¹²⁷ Kafadar remarked that Aşık Paşazade’s History consistently reflected the worldview of the gazi-dervish milieu that was marginalised and to some extent in opposition to the Ottoman court and to the centralist policies upheld by statesmen, particularly after the conquest of Constantinople and the adoption of the imperial project.¹²⁸ In 1470s, Sultan Mehmed II undertook to a drastic reform in landholding by putting all the *mulk* and *waqf* lands belonging to the Turkish aristocracy and the dervishes and sheikhs under state ownership. This drastic fiscal measure, which was meant to

¹²⁵ Ibidem, 167: ‘Ishak Beg Mekke’den geldi. Henüz Semendire dahi alınamamışdı. Fakir, Ishak Beg ile Mekke’den bile geldüm. Hünkârdan Ishak Beg’e kul geldi kim: Nigeobru’nun üzerine var, anı hisar et, didiler. [...] Fakir dahi ol zamanda Üsküb’e Ishak Beg ile Mekke’den bile gelmişdüm. Gâh gâh bu mâcerâlarda bile bulunurdum. Ve bir def’a dahi Ishak Beg’ün oğlu Paşa Beg ile ve Kılıccı Doğan ilen harâmîlga bile gitmişdüm. [...]

¹²⁶ İncalcık, ‘The Rise of’, 155.

¹²⁷ Among his numerous contributions, the most pertinent is: Victor L. Ménége, *Neshri’s History of the Ottomans: The Sources and Development of the Text* (New York, 1964).

¹²⁸ Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*, 100.

finance the imperial policies, led to resentment and confusion among the ruling elite and the people in general.¹²⁹

Aşık Paşazade also owned a considerable amount of property in Istanbul (in Unkapanı and Galata) and was exposed to the imperial fiscal measures of Sultan Mehmed II and his officials. The discontentment was also widespread among the sheikhs and dervishes who had lost their means of income and *zaviye waqf* for their convents. Aşık Paşazade certainly must have felt uneasy and discontent with Sultan Mehmed II's centralist and fiscal policies. His bitterness has a lot in common with the one of the authors of the Anonymous Chronicles, who frequently criticised the Ottoman dynasty for depriving the Turkish aristocracy of their privileges, income and positions. For instance, when Rum Mehmed Paşa was appointed as vizier in 1465, Aşık Paşazade remarked in most suspicious words: 'Another Byzantine [Rum] has become vizier, know that thieves have entered this religion; the *khan* had called him a Muslim, but he searched for opportunities to display his hatred; since infidels became vizier, see with which poisonous tyranny they treated the Muslims. [...] Rum Mehmed, who was revengeful, has displaced many Muslim families from their houses and lands in Larende and Konya [...] Rum Mehmed had ended the continuation of some of the old traditions of the Ottoman state.'¹³⁰

Aşık Paşazade targeted another vizier, Nişancı Paşa, for the implementation of the ill-reputed fiscal policy of confiscating *waqf*-donations: 'His [Nişancı Paşa's] origins are unclear. He reached his hands upon the properties, lives and decency of the people. Every illicit act was his invention. In the Ottoman realm, he disrupted the property rights of all the *waqf* donations and the *mulk*-lands that were bestowed according to the Islamic Law of the Sharia. He brought the profits [of this measure] in the treasury of the sultan. Once, I asked him: Why have you confiscated the property rights of the *waqfs* and other possessions, which are bestowed by the Law of the Prophet? How can you abolish the Law of the Prophet? He replied to me: What has been taken of you that you ask me such a question?'¹³¹

¹²⁹ İnalçık, 'How to Read Ashik Pasha-Zade's', 38-39.

¹³⁰ *Aşıkpaşazade Tarihi*, 240, 242, 297: 'Bir aceb Rum vezir oldu gene, Şöyle bil kim uğrı girdi bu dine; Adını mü'min komuşdı han anun, Fursatun gözlerdi gönülde kine; Bu vezir oldu kafirler gör nider, Ağu verür der Müsülmanı kına. [...] El hasıl-ı kelâm, Lârende'den ve Konya'dan ziyâde ev almakdan murâdı ehl-i İslâm'un evlerin yıkdurmagıdı. Rum Mehmed pâdişah emrinden dahi ziyade evler sürdü. [...] Âl-i Osman kapusunda, tâ ol vezir oluncaya değin teşrifün ba'zısın o kesdürdi.'

¹³¹ *Aşıkpaşazade Tarihi*, ed. Necdet Öztürk, 298; and Aşık Paşazâde, *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osmân*, ed. Kemal Yavuz & Yakta Saraç (Istanbul, 2007) 479: 'Âsâr-ı Nişancı Paşa: Kim ol nesl-i bühtandır. Allah'un kullarının malına ve kanına ve ırzına tama' itmişidi. Ve her kanda kim mühmel işler varısa anun ihdâsıdır. Ve vilâyet-i Osman'da ne kadar şer'i Muhammed'ilen olmuş vakıflar ve mülkler varısa cemî'sini bozdu. Hasıllarını padişahun hazînesine getürdi. Fakir sü'al itdüm: Şer'i Muhammed-ile olan vakıflar ve mülkler neden mensûh oldu? Hazret-i Muhammed Resûlullah kim hâtemü'l-enbiyâdur, didüm. Bir peygamber dahı gelmedi anun şer'ini mensûh ide, didüm. Fakire cevâb virdi kim: Senüñ neñ aldılar kim bunun gibi sü'âl idersün, didi.'

In his chronicle Aşık Paşazade expressed the historical consciousness and ideals of the Muslim Turkish gazi aristocracy and its followers, with whom he strongly identified. The chronicle of Aşık Paşazade is thus one of the contemporary sources that expressed in their narrative style and perception the popular Turkish dervish-gazi milieu. The tendentious presentation of the Ottoman history in the chronicles resulted from the fact that they were produced for different audiences. Aşık Paşazade expressed the historical consciousness of the gazi-dervish milieu that was aware of its marginalisation and consequently felt alienated from the centralising Ottoman dynasty and its officials. This was a historiography full of bitterness and nostalgia for the good old days of more egalitarian relations and the sharing of power during the reigns of Osman and Orhan. The bitterness stemmed from deep feelings of loosening ties within a socio-political group of Turkish aristocracy, which had helped the House of Osman to build a state and had received in return the severe fiscal policies of Sultan Mehmed II. Precisely at a crucial point in the formation of Ottoman historical tradition, Sultan Bayezid II (r. 1481–1512) was trying to soften his father's severe policies. Aşık Paşazade praised Sultan Bayezid II for putting an end to the illegal dispositions introduced by Nişancı Paşa and Rum Mehmed Paşa; for returning hundreds of *waqf* and *mulk* lands and villages to their former owners; for re-establishing the justice and the Ottoman law and order [*kânun-ı Osmanî*] by restoring the means of livelihood of his people [sheikhs, dervishes and Turkish aristocracy].¹³²

The dervish-historian Aşık Paşazade appears to be discontent with Sultan Mehmed II's fiscal policy of centralisation and the costs of rebuilding Istanbul as the new Ottoman capital. The payment of this imperial project also affected Aşık Paşazade's life. This is the reason for his idealised egalitarian description of the reign of Osman Bey, in which he also tried to demonstrate how the *Wafa'i* sheikh Ede Bali and his own family played a crucial role in the establishment and rise of the Ottoman state.¹³³ He intended to criticise his own period by presenting the first Ottoman ruler, Osman, as an ideal ruler. He emphasised the respect shown by the first rulers for the dervishes by generously granting them lands as livelihood. This indirectly meant a denunciation of the centralising policies of Sultans Bâyezid I and Mehmed II, who abolished the property rights on *waqf* (donation) lands.

¹³² *Aşıkpaşazade Tarihi*, 292-293: 'Ve hem vilyetinde adl ü dâd, bedl ü ihsan ve kerem memlû olundu. Ve hem ol Rum vezir bozduğu teşrifleri girü evvelki kanun-ı Osmânî üzerine mukarrer etdi. Ve ol nesli bühtan vezir kim vakıfları ve mülkleri kim bozmuşıdi. Gine sâhiblerine mukarrer itdi.'

¹³³ A detailed analysis of this feature is made by İnalçık, 'How to Read Ashik Pasha-Zade's History,' 39-48.

1.7.2 Neşrî (c. 1490s)

Shortly after Aşık Paşazade, Mevlânâ Mehmed Neşrî wrote his chronicle. There is no other information on the author himself to be found in his work. The only autobiographical note consists in the mentioning of his pseudonym, Neşrî.¹³⁴ Whereas Aşık Paşazade was a dervish-historian, Neşrî belonged to men of high learning or the *ulema*. Not much is known of his life. He is said to have been educated at the medrese and worked in Bursa.¹³⁵ It is certain that he was present in the Ottoman army camp when Mehmed II died in 1481. Neşrî wrote that he was sleeping near the tent of the ‘master-assayer’ (*sâhib-ayâr*), who woke him with the news that the dignitaries had all struck up camp and gone. In panic, he went back to Istanbul, where he witnessed the riots of the janissaries after the decease of Sultan Mehmed II.¹³⁶

We have no certain indication for Neşrî’s date of birth and death. It has been suggested that Neşrî must already have been an educated young man as early as the reign of Murad II (1421-1451). One is Koca Naib, the former janissary guard (*solak*) of Bayezid I, who was the *naib* of Bursa early in Murad’s reign. However, there is no evidence that Neşrî has known him personally, for he took this reference to Koca Naib from his main source, Aşıkpaşazade’s History. Neşrî wrote that he had been interested all his life in the science of history, which suggests that he had already reached a mature age when he wrote his chronicle.¹³⁷ The sixteenth-century biography writer, Latifi, noted that Neşrî came from the principality of Karaman and died during the reign of Selim I (1512-1520). We are thus left with little information on Neşrî. He was certainly a scholar of the *ulema* and was writing in the early years of the reign of Bayezid II (1481-1512). The very few references to him show that Neşrî lived a quiet life and enjoyed little personal fame, but his work lasted.¹³⁸

Of Neşrî’s World History or *Cihân-nümâ*, only the sixth book has survived. Not a single manuscript of the first five sections has come down to us.¹³⁹ Neşrî dedicated this last book

¹³⁴ Ibidem, 391: ‘Dergehinde Neşrî’yâ her müşkilün âsândur.’

¹³⁵ Ménage, *Neshrî’s History of the Ottomans*, 2.

¹³⁶ In this study, I will use the following critical edition: Neşrî, *Cihânnümâ*, ed. Necdet Öztürk (İstanbul, 2008) 369: ‘Bî-çâre ol seferde bileydüm. Sâhib-ayâr çadırına yakınduk. Sâhib-ayâr dün yarusında gelüp, kemîneyi uyarup, eyitdi: ‘Turuñ, atıñuz eyerlen’. Gördük, paşaların ve kadı-askerlerüñ çadırları yirinde yiller eser. Cân başumuza sıçrayup, bir halvet yoldan azm-i Üsküder kıldık. [...] Yeñiçeriler aç kurt koyuna nice koyulursa, İstanbul’a şöyle koyuldular.’

¹³⁷ Neşrî, *Cihânnümâ*, 5: ‘Pes bu ma’ânî-i zahireyi tezekkür idüp, tûl-i ömrümde ben dahi sevdâ itdüm ki, alâ-kadri’t-tâkati’l-beşeriyet ilm-i târîhden Türkî dilde bir kitab cem’ idem.’

¹³⁸ Ménage, *Neshrî’s History of the Ottomans*, 4-5.

¹³⁹ Paul Wittek, ‘Zum Quellenproblem der ältesten osmanischen Chroniken (mit Auszügen aus Nesri)’, *Mitteilungen zur Osmanischen Geschichte* 1 (1921): 77-150; Franz Taescher, *Mz (Einleitung Codex Manzel)*, 1-9; ibid,

to Ottoman history until the early reign of Bayezid II. His chronicle is divided into three sections: one on the descendants of the Oğuz tribe, one on the Seljuks and one on the Ottomans. The oldest manuscript which has survived dates from 1493. He is considered a great historian who influenced the later chronicle writers. Neşrî basically presented a similar style of narrative on the history of the fourteenth century as Aşık Paşazade, which suggests that they used the same sources. He did not claim that he was a witness of any of the events that he described.¹⁴⁰

At the start of his *Cihân-nümâ*, Neşrî describes how he decided to compose his *History*. He found that while for other sciences many adequate and exhaustive works had been produced, the existing historical works in Turkish were dispersed and not assembled together, and, moreover, they were sometimes lacking in agreement and not correctly arranged. So, he composed a history of the whole world, from the creation down to his own day, which he called *Kitâb-ı Cihân-nümâ* or ‘the Book of Cosmorama’.¹⁴¹ The ornamented style and vocabulary of the introduction to his work suggest that he mastered the classical languages of Arabic and Persian as well the historical works in these languages. Neşrî probably composed his work as a Universal History after the models of classical Arabic and Persian works. His chronicle was perhaps the first of this genre to be written in fifteenth-century Anatolian Turkish.¹⁴²

The first chapter is a summary account of the ancestors and descendants of the Turkish mythic ruler, Oğuz Han, and of the Karahanid state. The second is an equally short history of the Great Seljuk Empire and the emergence of the Rum Seljuk Sultanate of Anatolia until the Mongol invasions. He includes a history of the Karaman beylik in the fourteenth century. In the following chapters, which form the majority of the text, Neşrî accounts the history of the Ottoman dynasty from its beginnings until the first years of the reign of Bayezid II, the latest date being 1485.

Although Neşrî nowhere refers to a written source, it has been demonstrated that he blended three clusters of historical sources.¹⁴³ The first is a group of sources of which Aşık Paşazade’s text is a major representative; the second comprises what can be called ‘court

‘Eine Ausgabe von Neschri’s altosmanischer Chronik’, *Der Islam*, XXIV (1949): 307-317; ibid, ‘Neşrî Tarihi Elyazıları üzerine Araştırmalar’, *Belleten* 15 (1951): 497-505; Faik R. Unat, ‘Müverrih Mehmet Neşrî’nin Eseri ve Hayatı Hakkında’, *Belleten* 21 (1957) 297-300; V.L. Ménage, *Neshrî’s History of the Ottomans. The Sources and Development of the Text* (New York, 1964) 2-83; ibid, ‘The Beginnings of Ottoman Historiography’, 175-179; İnalçık, ‘The Rise of Ottoman Historiography’, 152-165.

¹⁴⁰ Ménage, ‘The Beginnings of Ottoman Historiography’, 175.

¹⁴¹ Neşrî, *Cihânnümâ*, 5: ‘Zirâ gördüm ki, sâyir ulûmda musannifât-ı kesîre tasnîf ve te’lîf olunmuş ki, her biri şâfi vü kâfi; amma ilm-i tevârihde olan kitâblar müteferrik ve gayr-i müctemi’ buldum. Ve hiç bir târîh dahi mevki’inde vaki’ olmamış, husûsan Türkî lisânda. Pes ibtidâ-yı âlemden, nakl müsâ’ede itdükce, ilâ-yevminâ hâzâ tesvîd idüp, cemî’i âleme vukuf virdügiçün işbu kitâba, *Kitâb-ı Cihân-nümâ* diyü ad virdüm.’

¹⁴² Ménage, *Neshrî’s History of the Ottomans*, 7.

¹⁴³ Ménage, ‘The Beginnings’, 175.

histories': most notably those of Ahmedî and Şükrullah; the third includes annalistic calendars.

His main source for the Ottoman history was the work of Aşık Paşazade, which he followed chapter by chapter with a very close verbal correspondence. Here and there, he modified a word or a phrase; Aşık Paşazade's poems were omitted or paraphrased into prose and all the autobiographical references were left out. However, the vigor and directness of Aşık Paşazade's narrative was untouched. The most remarkable redaction that Neşrî made, was when he softened Aşık Paşazade's criticism of the statesmen. As an *ulema*-historian, the intended audience of Neşrî was the sedentary and highly educated Ottoman public and he sought the patronage of Bayezid II. He was rather inclined to follow the official historical narrative that was endorsed by the Ottoman court. As a member of the *ulema* seeking patronage, Neşrî's work was written for the learned circles in general.

Relying on Wittek's work, Kafadar pointed this out by comparing Aşık Paşazade's and Neşrî's representations of the conquest of Aydos Castle.¹⁴⁴ At first glance the accounts appear so similar that it may seem that Neşrî reformulated Aşık Paşazade's account. However, Neşrî, whose audience consisted mainly of *ulema* scholars, displayed in his narrative an indifference to the gazi-warrior traditions that are vividly expressed by Aşık Paşazade. Kafadar concludes: 'although Aşık Paşazade was transmitting a tradition he had obtained from another source, he was able to capture the mentality of his source while Neşrî was not. This difference occurred, not because he was closer in time to the events than Neşrî, who wrote only a decade after Aşık Paşazade, but clearly because they were from two different social worlds.'¹⁴⁵

Another source used by Neşrî is the set of Royal Calendars or *Takvims*.¹⁴⁶ His third source was the text of the Anonymous Chronicles, from which he drew extensively to supplement the account of Aşık Paşazade. Neşrî completely rearranged Aşık Paşazade's narrative on the reign of Bayezid I to accord it with the chronology of the events and he reconciled the divergent chronologies of these three sources. However, İnalçık remarked that the calendars and the Anonymous Chronicles are far more chronologically exact than the later compilation of Neşrî.¹⁴⁷ Neşrî tried to unite the different groups of sources by selecting the account of an event from one of these sources and arranging his selection chronologically, without making any striking changes in the account itself. Menage's source criticism of Neşrî's text suggests that while these clusters have common features,

¹⁴⁴ Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*, 102-103.

¹⁴⁵ Ibidem, 103.

¹⁴⁶ İnalçık, 'The Rise', 157-158.

¹⁴⁷ Ibidem, 159.

they have kept their distinct identity at the same time.¹⁴⁸ It seems that Neşrî used a text which had copied Ahmedî's source more faithfully than Ahmedî himself and continued until the end of the reign of Mehmed I (1413-1421). Neşrî made two long additions to these sources, one about Murad II's expedition against the Karaman beylik and the Battle of Kosovo (1448); the other concerning Mehmed I's struggle for the throne against his brothers. Neşrî's work is the oldest compilation that sought to combine the various traditions from the Anonymous Chronicles and Aşık Paşazade.¹⁴⁹

The historical works written during the reign of Bayezid II were very important for Ottoman historiography. It was these compilations that formed the basis of all the historical texts written later in the sixteenth century on the first centuries of Ottoman history. The chronicles of Aşık Paşazade and Neşrî were respected as sources by later sixteenth-century historians such as Kemal Paşazade (1458-1534) and Hoca Sa'adeddin (1537-1599). But the latter disliked their tone of popular storytelling and their unsophisticated use of language. Kemal Paşazade, rising to be *Şeyh-ül-Islam* under Suleyman the Magnificent, would introduce an entirely new outlook on Ottoman historiography with his approach.¹⁵⁰ He endeavoured to present a more historically analytical and linguistically elegant history of the dynasty than his predecessors. His account shows the attitude of a statesman trying to see a pattern in events and looking for guidance in policy.¹⁵¹ Kemal Paşazade apparently used a detailed copy of Neşrî, but also relied on other sources such as Oruç and Tursun Bey. He added many important details from his personal knowledge as well as from his contacts with informants.¹⁵² The language of Kemal Paşazade's History is sixteenth-century Turkish, developed at the court as a hybrid compilation of Anatolian Turkish, Persian and Arabic. Its inherent complexity required far-reaching education to attain any degree of fluency. When the ornamentation is stripped off, the basic narrative of the fifteenth-century events is based on the works of Aşık Paşazade and Neşrî.

1.7.3 Oruç Beg (c. 1502)

One of the other Ottoman prose chronicles is the *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osmân* (History of the House of Osman) written by Oruç Beg.¹⁵³ Oruç was the son of a silk merchant and was born in

¹⁴⁸ Ménage, *Neshrî's History of the Ottomans*, 10-79.

¹⁴⁹ İnalçık, 'The Rise', 165.

¹⁵⁰ Ménage, 'The Beginnings', 177; İnalçık, 'The Rise', 165-167;

¹⁵¹ For example, see: Kemalpaşazade, *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osman, IV. Defter*, ed. Koji Imazawa (Ankara, 2000) 237-265.

¹⁵² İnalçık, 'The Rise', 167.

¹⁵³ In this study, I will use the recent critical edition: *Oruç Beg Tarihi*, ed. Necdet Öztürk (İstanbul, 2008).

Edirne, where he worked as a scribe (*katip*). Unfortunately, there is no information about the life of Oruç Beg in Ottoman biographical works. He was probably born in the second half of the fifteenth century and belonged to the urban intellectual social group. He wrote his work in Turkish, but his use of language shows that he also mastered Arabic and Persian and had received a high education.¹⁵⁴ In his work, he introduced himself as ‘Oruç, the son of Âdil the silk merchant, scribe in Edirne’ or ‘Oruç bin Âdil el-kazzâz kâtibü’l-Edrenevi’.¹⁵⁵ There is no other information on him. Franz Babinger speculated that his family had moved from Bursa to Edirne.¹⁵⁶ Beldiceanu-Steinherr found information on the economic situation of Oruç Beg in a waqf-record from Edirne. This waqf-record, dating from 1499-1500, states that Oruç established a waqf (donated property) to the value of 4.000 akçes (Ottoman monetary unit) and its annual income amounted to 1.848 akçes. The income was distributed among the students of the medrese-college, the imams and concierges serving at the waqf and to the management of the waqf itself. It also mentions Oruç as one of the executive directors of this waqf.¹⁵⁷

Oruç wrote a comprehensive history of the Ottoman dynasty from its beginnings until the reign of Mehmed II (1451-1481). He probably wrote this first version (Oxford and Cambridge manuscripts) during the reign of Mehmed II, as the account ends in 1467-1468. Oruç Beg re-edited a second version of his text (the Manisa and Paris manuscripts) with more detailed information, which concludes with the events of 1502, during the early reign of Sultan Bâyezid II.¹⁵⁸ In his own fashion, he used the common source of Yahşî Fakih describing the events from the political rise of Osman Gazi up to 1413. Oruç openly refers to the text of Aşık Paşazade as one of his sources that he made use of.¹⁵⁹ He noted that Aşık Paşazade’s source for the period until 1413 was the text (*menâkib*) of Yahşî Fakih and that he transmitted the events of this period from this source. In some passages, Oruç provided a fuller treatment of his common source than Aşık Paşazade. He also added new information from various sources to the original source of Yahşî Fakih, such as oral testimonies and *menakıbnames*. Individual copies of all these historical texts may be as

¹⁵⁴ Nihal Atsız ed., *Oruç Beg Tarihi* (İstanbul, 1972) 8.

¹⁵⁵ *Oruç Beg Tarihi*, ed. Necdet Öztürk, XXIII.

¹⁵⁶ Franz Babinger, *Die Geschichtssreiber*, 23-24; *ibid*, *Die frühosmanischen Jahrbücher des Orudsch (Quellen des islamischen Schrifttums)* (Hannover, 1925).

¹⁵⁷ Irène Beldiceanu-Steinherr, ‘Un legs pieux du chroniqueur Oruç’, *BSOAS* 32 (1970): 359-363.

¹⁵⁸ Victor L. Ménage, ‘Another text of Oruç’s Ottoman Chronicle’, *Der Islam* XLVII (1971) : 273-277 ; *ibid*, ‘On the Recensions of History of the Ottomans’, *BSOAS* 30 (1967) : 314-322. Also see: Fâik Reşit Unat, ‘Oruç’, *İslam Ansiklopedisi*, vol.I (İstanbul, 1950), 706-709; Richard F. Kreutel, *Der Fromme Sultan Bayezid die Geschichte seiner Herrschaft (1481-1512) nach den altosmanischen des Oruç und anonymus Hanivaldanus* (Köln, 1978); *Haniwaldanus Anonimi’ne Göre Sultan Bayezid-i Veli (1481-1512)*, transl. N. Öztürk (İstanbul, 1997); Necdet Öztürk, ‘Oruç Beyi Tarihi ile Türkçe Anonim Kronikler Arasındaki İlişkiye Dair’, *Bir* 5 (1996): 117-125.

¹⁵⁹ *Oruç Beg Tarihi*, 3: ‘Aşık Paşa-oglu Elvân Çelebi menâkib’ında ma’lûm itmişdür.’

important as different texts, because their authors made revisions at various dates by adding or omitting information.¹⁶⁰

In the manuscripts that represent the second version of his chronicle, dating from 1502, Oruç mentioned his colleague Aşık Paşazade: 'If one would ask me how I knew these events and from where I collected them, I can refer to the eyewitness [account] of a dervish who lives now in the City of Kostantin [İstanbul]. He is called Dervîş Ahmed Âşıkî, a wise man of hundred years old. [...] He has collected these events. However, his source was the son of the imam of Orhan Gazi, Bahşı Fakı, who lived until the reign of Sultan Mehemmed, the father of Sultan Murad.'¹⁶¹

Regarding the period after 1422, Oruç depended on various sources. The Anonymous Chronicles and Oruç basically follow a common source from 1422 until 1484. Their common sources for this period appear to be the Royal Calendars or *Takvims*. In contrast to the writers of the Anonymous Chronicles, Oruç copied the calendars fairly well. The authors of the Royal Calendars or *Takvims* must have used a historical text for the first Ottoman rulers, since it is unlikely that any Ottoman calendar was written in the early fourteenth century. The calendars also give very brief information until the last years of the reign of Sultan Murad I (r. 1365-1389). Important contemporary events, such as the battle of Varna, are related more in detail in the calendars. Oruç's account of this battle is even much more elaborate than the calendars. Apparently, Oruç and the Anonymous Chroniclers made use of the existing *gazavatnames* for the great events. In the chronological listing of the events, Oruç's text is far more systematic than the compilation of Neşrî.¹⁶²

Relying on this corpus of early historical texts, I will explore the 'ideological' discourse of their narratives. By situating their discourses in the larger political and cultural framework, I will explore the 'ideological' values and representations of the Ottoman world-view as they were expressed by these chronicles. As a general historical background to what follows, the next chapter will provide a discussion of the Ottoman state formation process and the establishment of institutions.

¹⁶⁰ İnalçık, 'The Rise of Ottoman Historiography', 154.

¹⁶¹ Oruç *Beg Tarihi*, 9.

¹⁶² İnalçık, 'The Rise', 159.

Chapter 2 Patterns of State Formation in the Early Ottoman Empire, c. 1300-1453

2.1 The world of the steppe

To genuinely understand and to explain the genesis of a state ideology within the Ottoman polity as it is reflected in the earliest chronicles, a structural and elaborate overview of the state formation processes at work is a necessary precondition. In what follows I will try to suggest a synthesis of what has been written on this topic but with clear points of personal emphasis. Explaining several of these factors in some detail is necessary for a further understanding of the ideological discourses that will be under scrutiny in the next chapter.

The Ottoman state emerged after the massive migration of the Turkish nomads into Anatolia in the thirteenth century. The stereotypical historical image of the nomad is a plundering barbarian motivated only by a desire for booty and slaves. As Fernand Braudel noted: ‘when civilizations are defeated or seem to be defeated, the conqueror is always a ‘barbarian’. It is a figure of speech.’¹ But then again, Braudel also referred to the nomads as: ‘the real dangers to civilization (...) a poor section of humanity (...) In short, they represent an exceptional case of a long parasitical existence that came to an end once and for all.’² This image obviously rather reflects the sedentary cultural biases than the historical realities. For a better understanding of the early Ottoman state formation, which was a very complex and multi-layered historical phenomenon, we must first look briefly at the social and political developments in the steppe.

The pre-Ottoman historical trajectory of the Turkish peoples was in a sense a struggle to assert their own identity, a process marked by cultural appropriations and political

¹ Fernand Braudel, *Civilization and Capitalism vol. 1: The Structures of Everyday Life, the Limits of the Possible* (Berkeley, 1992) 93.

² Ibidem, 98.

reorientations. The term 'Turks' tends to refer to a homogenous community in Central Asia, which shared the same culture and religion. However, such a view is incompatible with the historical facts. The nomadic Turkish communities in the steppe constituted a group of people who shared their languages and some aspects of lifestyle, but who were also very diverse among themselves.³ Instead of assuming an ethnically 'pure' essence, I depart from the idea of a multi-ethnic and 'multicultural' steppe milieu, as there was a continuous ethnical and cultural exchange among the nomadic communities and with the neighbouring sedentary communities.⁴

In the pre-modern era, the steppes of Central Asia served as one of the major crossroads of civilisation. Over time, various Turkish communities had undergone profound transformations as they migrated alongside sedentary cultures. During these migrations new communities were formed and old ones disintegrated, but they also projected their identity while some elements necessarily shifted. Many outsiders depicted them as not enough civilised or simply barbarians, because of their nomadic lifestyle and martial skills. But as the historical trajectory of the Turks progressed, they fused with and transformed the sedentary-agrarian societies they encountered. The Turks were the transporters and caravaners *par excellence* on the Silk Route from China to Byzantium. They interconnected with the neighbouring societies and often integrated with them. The dialectical interaction between the pastoral nomadic and sedentary-agrarian societies was a multi-layered process, which in some ways echoed Ibn Khaldûn's conception of the historical change in the pre-modern times.

The Turkish communities in the Central Asian steppe were pastoral nomads whose basic economic activity was livestock production, carried out through the seasonal movement of animals. Pastoral nomadism, like sea navigation, was a dangerous trade. To make a living on the steppe as a pastoralist was a *tour de force*. Just like the sea, the steppe is a hostile natural environment. The nomad could not stay in one place for too long. Unless he kept moving, he would perish. The steppe provided grazing for domesticated animals on condition that the nomad kept moving them from one seasonal (winter and summer) pasture ground to another. This required skilled and masterful leadership and a disciplined execution of the commands of the leader. The nomad was in a permanent state of battle with the harsh steppe conditions, which trained their alertness and discipline as required in the war with an enemy. Many sedentary armies could not withstand the nomad armies that mastered highly advanced archery skills on the composite bow and high skills of horsemanship.

³ See for a general introduction: Ergun Çağatay and Doğan Kuban ed., *The Turkic Speaking Peoples. 2,000 Years of Art and Culture from Inner Asia to the Balkans* (Prestel, 2006), 68-81, 83-103; Peter B. Golden, *An Introduction to the History of the Turkic Peoples: Ethnogenesis and State Formation in Medieval and Early Modern Eurasia and the Middle East* (Wiesbaden, 1992).

⁴ Carter Vaughn Findley, *The Turks in World History* (Oxford, 2005) 39; Golden, *An Introduction*, 120-124.

Nomadic life was harsh to those who could not maintain the minimum herd necessary for survival (usually 60-100 sheep, mutton, horses, cattle, goats and camels). Pastoral nomadism, supplemented with hunting and limited farming, allowed for little surplus, which was often exchanged with neighbouring communities. This economic basis left limited margins for the formation of any group that was not involved in production. Social cohesion was necessary for survival, for economic production and for migration. Social stratification entailed the existence of two social classes, the commoners and the aristocracy. But all in all, this seems to have been a relatively egalitarian set of relations, as even the members of aristocracy were often engaged in direct production. However, pastoral nomadism could not generate the great quantity and variety of foodstuffs to support as large a population as sedentary-agrarian economies did. There was a constant need for interaction with agricultural economies. The nomad's diet essentially consisted of two basic elements: meat and milk products, with a supplement of vegetables. A disturbance in the pastoral environment, such as drought, overgrazing or epidemics could threaten the survival of the necessary size of herds to sustain the people. These difficulties could cause disturbing economic and social crises, leading to unmanageable conflicts among tribes; or entire tribes could mobilise for large-scale migration in search of new pasturelands and conquests.⁵

Of course, economic need did not necessarily lead to political unity. The mobility of nomad communities gave its members freedom of residence and to some degree also freedom of political alliance. The dissatisfied and displeased could leave and attach themselves to a new leader. This permitted great flexibility; nomadic groups could easily regroup and re-unite. Statehood was not a necessary condition for a traditional nomad society.⁶ The nomads who were unable to find relatives willing or capable to help them, hired themselves as herders or were forced to settle into sedentary life. The more daring ones united into bands that raided nomad and sedentary communities alike. The breakdown of tribal bonds allowed for a greater degree of social mobility. Leadership ability counted more than birth or noble lineage. As in the Ottoman case, successful leaders could prove themselves and emerge at these times. These processes became catalysts for new political and social organisations.⁷

Those Who Draw the Bow - the Nomad as Empire-BUILDER

The nomad and sedentary interaction stretched over a broad spectrum of relationships, peaceful and hostile, depending on the political and economic needs of the two societies at a given period. In the fields ranging from state formation, army organisation, trade and

⁵ Anatoly M. Khazanov, *The Nomads and the Outside World* (New York, 1984) 46, 52, 69-84.

⁶ Golden, *An Introduction*, 2-4.

⁷ Fredrik Barth, *The Nomads of South Persia* (Boston, 1961) 16-18, 108-110.

belief traditions, nomad and sedentary worlds tended to acculturate and to form original socio-political innovations. Conflicts with sedentary societies arose largely from access to the goods of agrarian and urban productions. It is often thought that nomads traded or raided for these goods and that the military strength of both parties determined the outcome.⁸ For instance, China often chose the prospect of trade as a means of control.⁹ Such interactions or conflicts over agricultural and urban goods seem to have provided the impetus for nomadic state formation. However, some considerations review the validity of the thesis that Central Asian nomadic Empires were created merely for the purpose of forcing the farmers, by the sheer power of military force and threat, to surrender products the nomads needed or desired, such as cereals or luxury goods. Although the nomad's need for agricultural goods might have resulted in a process of state formation, this was in some cases not the main factor. Archaeological findings show that some degree of farming was practised among nomads. The pastoral nomads consumption of cereals was minimal, for their main diet was based on meat, milk products and vegetables.¹⁰ Historical sources indicate that nomadic raiding of sedentary communities did often not arise out of the need to agricultural products; they usually took away animals and people as booty.¹¹ The frontier zone was an area in which local economies and cultures were neither purely nomadic nor purely sedentary, but a combination of both.¹²

The proto-Turkish nomads entered the history records, when by the late fourth century B.C.E the Chinese chroniclers mentioned the Central-Asian nomad groups, who then formed the Hsiung-nu Empire.¹³ This earliest nomadic empire was probably a poly-ethnic confederation of tribes who were united more by common interests than by shared descent. It has been argued that the ruling elite might have had a Turkish origin, but this is still the subject of scholarly debate. Scholars have also suggested that the Huns, who have ties with the later Turks and Mongols, were an extension of the Hsiung-nu.¹⁴ In an important contribution on the nomadic steppe state formation that left its mark on Chinese culture, Thomas Barfield correlated the emergence of the Hsiung-nu empire as a reaction to the powerful rule in China, which had invaded into nomad's territory.¹⁵ He

⁸ Golden, *An Introduction*, 8.

⁹ Khazanov, *The Nomads*, 202-206.

¹⁰ Di Cosmo, *Ancient China*, 169.

¹¹ Hayashi Toshio, 'The Development of a Nomadic Empire: The Case of the Ancient Türks (Tujue)', *Bulletin of the Ancient Orient Museum* 11 (1990): 135-184.

¹² Di Cosmo, *Ancient China*, 170-171.

¹³ Findley, *The Turks in World History*, 28.

¹⁴ Di Cosmo, *Ancient China*, 163-166.

¹⁵ Thomas Barfield, *The Perilous Frontier: Nomadic Empires and China 221 B.C. to AD 1757* (Cambridge, 1989) 9-12, 27-28.

suggested that the nomads developed their state in response to expansions of a powerful sedentary state. Barfield argued that the political unification of the nomads was necessitated by the unequal power relation imposed by the emergence of a strong sedentary state in China, against which the small and dispersed communities of pastoral nomads were powerless. This forced them to organise themselves into one larger political entity.¹⁶

Scholars have long argued that crises of various kinds led to the formation of steppe-empires. Concerning the unification of the nomad tribes within the Hsiung-nu Empire, their state formation, however, cannot be explained by simply presenting it as a case of chronic aggressive behaviour.¹⁷ Recent approaches pointed out that the formation of the Hsiung-nu empire was not only related to the power relations with China. Its emergence was also stimulated by a social and economic crisis in the steppe that served as the catalyst for a new political organisation. Nicola Di Cosmo conceptualised the Central Asian nomadic state formation in terms of crisis, militarisation and centralisation. The initial momentum for nomadic state building came from an internal challenge to the present leadership at a time of economic and social crisis, followed by general chaos. Eventually, under a successful military leader, a process of power centralisation occurred that would lay the foundations for a state.¹⁸ We shall see that the theses of Barfield and Di Cosma on nomadic state formation provide the useful conceptual tools and background for the emergence of the Ottoman principality.

2.2 The Kök Türk Empire

From a broad perspective, the thirteenth-century Muslim Turkish states in Anatolia, such as the Ottomans, drew upon the influences of the political traditions that rooted in the pre-Islamic *kaghanates* or steppe-empires in Central Asia.¹⁹ Although there is earlier

¹⁶ Ibidem, 37.

¹⁷ Di Cosmo, *Ancient China*, 162.

¹⁸ Ibidem, 179.

¹⁹ For works on these *kağanates* or Turkish empires in Asia, see: Vasilii V. Barthold, *Histoire des Turcs d'Asie Centrale* (Paris, 1945); V. Barthold, *Turkestan down to the Mongol Invasions* (London, 1968); Togan, *Umumî Türk Tarihine Giriş*, 279-309; Golden, 'Imperial Ideology and the Sources of Political Unity Amongst the Pre-Cingissid Nomads of Western Eurasia', *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 2 (1982): 37-76; René Grousset, *The Empire of the Steppes. A History of Central Asia* (New Jersey, 1970) 80-136; Jean-Paul Roux, *Histoire des Turcs. Deux mille ans de Pacifique à la Méditerranée* (Paris, 1984); Findley, *The Turks in World History*, 21-55; Tekin, *Orhon Yazıtları: Kül Tigin, Bilge Kağan, Tunyukuk*.

evidence of Turkish polities in Chinese sources, the first Turkish state, the *Kök Türk kağanate* was founded around 552 by İstemi and Bumin on the Orhun river in Central Asia.²⁰ The *Kök Türks* were in fact the first tribal nomad confederation who used the name ‘Turk’ as a political name. Their successor states were the Uyghurs (744-840) and the Khazars (630-965).²¹ The most important source for the *Kök Türk* period are the Orhun inscriptions from the eighth century, carved on stone pillars near the Orhun river. The stone pillars are engraved with the old Turkish script, also known as *Kök Türk* or Orhun script, which is the alphabet used by the *Kök Türks* and other early Turkish empires to record the old Turkish language.²²

It was the first and only script that the Turks had created; after their conversion to Islam, they adopted the Arabic script. The Orhun Inscriptions, which are among the earliest products of Turkish intellectual history, reflect the self-awareness of these ‘proto-Turks’, describing the lifestyle of their nomadic community, state form, cultic practices and belief systems.²³

Particularly, the political significance of the *Kök Türk* Empire was great. Its political system established norms for Turkish states for centuries.²⁴ It was developed in the steppes of Central Asia and passed through the Oğuz communities into the Seljuk and Ottoman statecraft. Within the nomadic political constellation, at the top, the *Kaghan* (king) ruled by heavenly mandate (*Kut*), embodying and demonstrating ‘sky god’s (*Kök Tengri*) favour through military successes and through the performance of his functions as ruler.²⁵

²⁰ Golden, *An Introduction*, 117: *Kök* or *gök* means ‘blue’, the color identified with the sky and also with the East, so that ‘*Kök Türk*’ meant ‘the Turks of the Sky or the East’; Ahmet Taşağıl, *Gök Türkler*, 3 vols. (Ankara, 2012).

²¹ Findley, *The Turks*, 37.

²² Wolfgang Scharlipp, *An Introduction to the Old Turkish Runic Inscriptions* (Engelschoff, 2000).

²³ Tekin, *Orhun Yazıtları*, 25-34.

²⁴ Ibidem, 43.

²⁵ The semantic origins of the concept *kaghan* and its links to *han* or *khan* are unclear, see: Golden, *An Introduction*, 71, 146-153; ibid, ‘Imperial ideology and the Sources...’, 39-73; Denis Sinor, ‘The Establishment and Dissolution of the *Türk* Empire,’ in: *The Cambridge History of Early Inner Asia*, ed. Denis Sinor (Cambridge, 1990) 313-316.

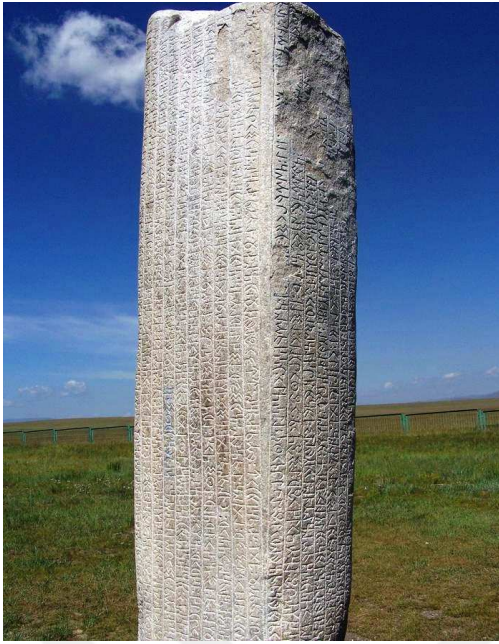


Figure 1: *The Orhun Inscriptions carved on a stone pillar.*
Source: Wikipedia.

The *Kaghan* had to ensure the welfare of his followers and subjects, share the war booty and redistribute tribute to feed and clothe them. His legitimacy depended on his ability to redistribute and mobilise resources, whether through trade or tribute. Here appears the state dominance over the economy, a characteristic of pre-capitalist world-empires in Wallerstein's model. According to the steppe traditions of distribution of resources, all conquered lands belonged to the imperial dynasty and were distributed to relatives and state elite.²⁶

The investiture of the khan's supreme sovereignty was seen as appointed by the 'eternal sky god' (*kök tengri*). As a result, the authority of the assembly (the *Kurultay*, or the *Populus* in the Roman sense) that elected the leader was transferred to the person of the supreme leader, the *Kaghan* or *Khan*.²⁷ As soon as this power investiture took place, a new set of social relations emerged. It required loyalty to the *Kaghan* and the ruling dynasty, which transformed the social and political relations from relatively egalitarian to hierarchical. After the authority of the *Kaghan* was recognised, a new governmental organisation took shape. This was made up by a standing army and bodyguard corps, an

²⁶ V. Barthold, *Turkestan down to the Mongol Invasions* (London, 1968); Findley, *The Turks*, 21-55; Togan, *Umumi Türk Tarihine Giriş*, 100, 106.

²⁷ Di Cosmo, *Ancient China*, 183; Thomas Barfield, 'Turk, Persian and Arab: Changing Relationships between Tribes and State in Iran and its Frontiers', in: ed. Nikki Keddie, *Iran and the Surrounding World: Interactions in Culture Politics* (Seattle, 2002) 187.

administrative class of appointed military and civil officials.²⁸ As I will discuss in Chapter 3, some of these elements reappear in the discourse of the first Ottoman chronicles, which account that Osman was elected as the new *Bey* (prince) by the assembly (*Kurultay*) of the tribe.²⁹ Thereafter, Osman Bey managed to create an independent political entity after defeating the Byzantine army at the Battle of Bapheus (Koyunhisar) in 1302.³⁰

Furthermore, the *Kaghan*, as one of the Orhun inscriptions noted on the Kök Türk founders İstemi and Bumin, also furnished his people with both state and laws or *Törü* (*töre/türe*). They wrote that the ideal state is one governed in accordance with the *törü*.³¹ The Turkish term *töre* corresponded to the nomadic custom and traditions codified, such as the *yasa* (laws) of Cenghiz Khan.³² *Yasa* and *töre* expressed Central Asian steppe concepts of impersonal justice, and derived their authority from custom and formal proclamation by the ruler.³³ The Turkish nomadic tradition regarded justice as the objective application of the *törü*, a code of laws established by the founder of the state. Sovereignty and law were two interconnected terms.³⁴ Adapted to life in the steppes, the Turkish nomad traditions also took a different attitude towards finance and taxation. The eleventh-century Turkish Mirror for Princes, *Kutadgu Bilig* (Wisdom of Royal Happiness), for instance, advised the sovereigns ‘to open their treasury and distribute their wealth’.³⁵ In Chapter 3, we will demonstrate that redistribution of wealth was also a pivotal duty that was expected to be carried out by the Ottoman Sultan.

Following the collapse of the Kök Türk Empire in the eighth century and the diffusions of the nomadic tribes, a variety of transformations took place. Long established tribal unions, often of complex origins, broke down. Various communities and polities developed and re-emerged, such as the *Oğuz* (see below), retaining elements of the ancient Turkish culture and at the same time growing into new directions. The creation of the Great Seljuk Empire in the Islamic world was situated within this historical context. The Great Seljuk dynasty of nomadic origin acquired power over an agrarian society with a

²⁸ Barfield, ‘Turk, Persian and Arab’, 184; İnalçık, ‘Osmanlılar’da Saltanat Veraseti’, 77-78; Osman Turan, *Türk Cihan Hakimiyeti Mefkuresi Tarihi*, 147.

²⁹ Neşrî, *Cihânnümâ*, 39.

³⁰ Ibidem, 50-52.

³¹ Tekin, *Orhon Yazıtları: Kül Tigin, Bilge Kağan, Tunyukuk*, 25-34.

³² Denise Aigle, ‘Le grand yasaq de Gengis-Khan, l’empire, la culture mongole et la sharī’a’, *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 47/1 (2004): 31-79; David Morgan, ‘The Great Yasa of Chingis Khan’, in: *Mongols, Turks and Others: Eurasian Nomads and the Sedentary World*, ed. Reuven Amitai and Michal Biran (Leiden, 2005) 291-308.

³³ Tekin, *Orhon Yazıtları*, 38-39.

³⁴ İnalçık, *The Ottoman Empire*, 67.

³⁵ İnalçık, ‘Turkish and Iranian Political Theories and Traditions in *Kutadgu Bilig*’, in: *The Middle East and the Balkans under the Ottoman empire: Essays on Economy and Society* (Bloomington, 1993) 13.

sedentary culture and they established the Great Seljuk Empire (c. 1040-1194).³⁶ The nomadic, steppe origins of the Seljuks were of much greater importance in determining the early development of the empire than was previously assumed.³⁷ A similar process of state building, which adopted elements of the settled cultures it had mastered, repeated in a great degree under the Ottomans as well.

2.3 The Great Seljuk Empire

In the middle of the tenth century, before the creation of the Great Seljuk Empire, the Muslim world was split into factions that openly contended or secretly intrigued against each other. The political unity was fragmented into a series of regional states and the power and prestige of the Abbasid Caliphs had declined. A shift occurred with the rise of Shi'ite groups such as the Zaydis and the Twelvers, who began to assert their power in Iraq and Iran under the rule of the Buyids.³⁸ Since 969, the Isma'ili Fatimid Empire, who rejected the authority of the Abbasid Caliph in Baghdad, gained a base in Egypt, Syria and North Africa.³⁹

At about this time of political chaos, the arrival of the Turkish *Oğuz* nomads from the Central Asian steppes changed the fate and future of the Islamic lands. When in 980, Selçuk – the eponymous founder of the Seljuk dynasty – came with his followers to Jend, a Muslim frontier zone at Khorasan (in today's Iran and Azerbaijan), he decided to convert to Islam, aiming to settle his tribe securely in a new Muslim habitat and setting.⁴⁰ The conversion of Selçuk to Islam also proved to be a crucial step with longstanding political

³⁶ Until recently, no monographs were dedicated to the Great Seljuk Empire in the western historiography. By far, the largest contribution to Great Seljuk history is made by Turkish scholars, whose detailed studies were neglected by western scholars who did not know Turkish. Some works were written on individual areas of the Seljuk state: Claude Cahen, *Pre-Ottoman Turkey: A General Survey of the Material and Spiritual Culture and History, c. 1071-1330* (California, 1968); George Makdisi, *History and Politics in 11th-Century Baghdad* (Aldershot, 1991). In recent years, there appears more and more works: Aziz Başan, *The Great Seljuqs: A History* (New York, 2010); Andrew C.S. Peacock, *Early Seljuq History: A New Interpretation* (New York, 2010); Christian Lange and Songül Mecit ed., *The Seljuqs: Politics, Society and Culture* (Edinburgh, 2011); Songül Mecit, *The Rum Seljuqs: Evolution of a Dynasty* (New York, 2013).

³⁷ Peacock, *Early Seljuq History*, 17-40.

³⁸ B. Spuler, 'The Disintegration of the Caliphate in the East', in: *The Cambridge History of Islam*, vol.1, ed. P.M. Holt, A. Lambron, B. Lewis (London, 1977) 149, 152.

³⁹ Bernard Lewis, 'Egypt and Syria', *The Cambridge History of Islam*, vol.1, 184.

⁴⁰ Mehmet A. Köymen, *Büyük Selçuklu İmparatorluğu Tarihi*, vol. I (Ankara, 2011) 21-23.

consequences that not only transformed the Islamic history, but also the history and identity of the Turks.⁴¹ The conversion of the early Seljuks involved both the adoption of Muslim ideals in a new life environment and blending of Islamic principles with their pre-Islamic traditions and ideas.⁴² We shall see in the following chapter that this specific ideological constellation would also be explicitly reflected within early Ottoman historiography.

As the tribe of Selçuk had migrated out the world of the steppe, the old tribal links had fragmented. Those who deviated from ancestral tradition would have been left dangerously unprotected. In order to prevent the disintegration in such a situation, a nomad ruler was obliged to make radical changes for the existence of his community. Therefore, it was more assuring for the entire community to make the same change at once. For instance, Selçuk's adoption of Islam led to a break of their ties with the other 'pagan' Oğuz Turkish groups in the neighbouring areas, against whom Selçuk now undertook gaza-raids.⁴³ The nomads who had followed Selçuk were thus forced to re-organise and the role of the successful leader had become even more crucial in determining the identity of the group. As the leader, Selçuk's position was dependent on his success in providing pasture and livelihood for his followers, who if dissatisfied could join a rival chief. We shall see that the early Seljuks borrowed the Islamic discursive register of gaza and turned it into a powerful political identity and motive, which legitimised their state building. The success of the early Seljuks rendered a certain aura of prestige to the ruling dynasty and this was reflected in the name of the emerging polity: the *Selçuklu* or Seljuks were the 'men/followers of Selçuk', precisely as in the case of *Osmanlı* or Ottomans.

In one century, the Seljuk dynasty of nomadic *gazi*-warriors acquired power of an agrarian society of sedentary culture and they established the Great Seljuk Empire (c. 1040-1194).⁴⁴ The early Seljuks were initially caught up as auxiliary troops in the conflict

⁴¹ Barthold, *Histoire des Turcs*, 54-63; Osman Turan, *Selçuklular Tarihi ve Türk-Islam Medeniyeti* (Ankara, 1965), 34-37; Emel Esin, *İslamiyetten Önceki Türk Kültür Tarihi ve İslâma Giriş* (Istanbul, 1978), 163-84.

⁴² Devin De Weese, *Islamization and Native Religion in the Golden Horde: Baba Tükles and Conversion to Islam in Historical and Epic Tradition* (Pennsylvania, 1994) 51.

⁴³ Köymen, *Büyük Selçuklu İmparatorluğu*, 24-28; Turan, *Selçuklular Tarihi*, 44.

⁴⁴ Until recently, no monographs were dedicated to the Great Seljuk Empire in the western historiography. By far, the largest contribution to Great Seljuk history is made by Turkish scholars, whose detailed studies were neglected by western scholars who did not know Turkish. Some works were written on individual areas of the Seljuk state: Claude Cahen, *Pre-Ottoman Turkey: a general survey of the material and spiritual culture and history, c. 1071-1330* (California, 1968); George Makdisi, *History and Politics in 11th-Century Baghdad* (Aldershot, 1991). In recent years, there appears more and more works: Aziz Başan, *The Great Seljuqs: A History* (New York, 2010); Andrew C.S. Peacock, *Early Seljuq History: A New Interpretation* (New York, 2010); Christian Lange and Songül Mecit ed., *The Seljuqs: Politics, Society and Culture* (Edinburgh, 2011); Songül Mecit, *The Rum Seljuqs: Evolution of a Dynasty* (New York, 2013).

between the fading regional states of the Samanids, Ghaznavids and the Karahanids.⁴⁵ They were involved in the Karahanid takeover of Transoxania. In 1035 and in 1040, Selçuk's grandson, Çağrı Beg routed several times the army of the Ghaznavids and led the Seljuk armies into Khurasan, where they expanded their control across Iran.⁴⁶ After their victory against the Ghaznavids at the famous Battle of Dandanakan in 1040, Çağrı Beg and his brother Tuğrul Beg were aware that they had founded a state, which later was called the Great Seljuk Empire. Under Çağrı and Tuğrul Beg, the Seljuk realm was ruled according to ancient Turkish tradition, which was bi-partite. Çağrı and Tuğrul had agreed to divide and share the lands they conquered but they helped each other. There was only one overarching sovereign. Other members of the dynasty had to acknowledge the supreme authority of the ruler. Given the extent of the lands they ruled directly, the reigns of their successors can be referred to as an empire.⁴⁷

Çağrı Beg stayed in the east where he established his base in Marw and was succeeded by his son Alp Arslan when he died in 1060. Tuğrul Beg expanded westward and in 1055 on the request of the Abbasid Caliph in Baghdad, who stood under dominion of the Shi'ite Buyid emir, Tuğrul Beg seized Baghdad. Having freed the caliph from the supremacy of the Buyids (*Buheyvî's*), the Caliph in turn honoured Tuğrul Beg with the title of the 'Sultan of East and West'. By granting Tuğrul Beg the title of Sultan, the Caliph actually conceded him fullest power as the supreme sovereign, with the guarantee of the caliph's authorisation. Hence, the Great Seljuk Empire was founded.⁴⁸ The title 'Sultan of East and West' had never been used in Islamic history before. It had its roots in the nomadic steppe-concept of world governance – a symbol of Turkish principle of sovereignty, meaning that *khan's* rule extended from where the sun rose to where it set.⁴⁹

Sultan Tuğrul then began to co-operate closely with the Abbasid Caliph in Baghdad, who legitimised the Great Seljuk hegemony in the Islamic world. To seal the union between the Seljuk and Abbasid dynasties, the Caliph married a niece of the Sultan, who married the daughter of the Caliph.⁵⁰ However, his hegemony was not secure. He struggled with the other descendants of the dynasty to secure the tribal support of the

⁴⁵ Cihan Piyadeoğlu, *Selçuklular'ın Kuruluş Hikayesi: Çağrı Bey* (İstanbul, 2011) 19; Erdoğan Merçil, *Müslüman-Türk Devletleri Tarihi* (Ankara, 1991) 45-48. For a detailed discussion of this period, see: Köymen, *Büyük Selçuklu*, 45-290.

⁴⁶ Turan, *Selçuklular Tarihi*, 58-65. See the passages on the arrival of the Oğuz and the deeds of Selçuk's sons in: Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil fi at-Tarikh*, tr. Kivameddin Burslan (İstanbul, 1943) LIV-LXIII.

⁴⁷ Başan, *The Great Seljuqs*, 21.

⁴⁸ See the Arab chronicler of the Seljuks: Al-Bündârî, *Zübdetün-nusra ve Nühbetül-usra*, tr. Kivameddin Burslan (İstanbul, 1943) 11-12.

⁴⁹ The Kök Türk Empire in the sixth century was organized on a bi-partite or the principle of dividing power between the members of dynasty over the lands in East and West; see: Peter B. Golden, 'War and warfare in the pre-Cinggisid Western Steppes of Eurasia', ed. Nicola Di Cosmo, *Warfare in Inner Asian History* (Leiden, 2002) 112.

⁵⁰ Turan, *Selçuklular Tarihi*, 92-93.

nomads.⁵¹ When Tuğrul Beg died in 1063, leaving no heirs behind, his nephew Alp Arslan succeeded him as Sultan ruling over a united Great Seljuk realm. During the reigns of Sultan Alp Arslan and his son and successor, Sultan Melik Shah, the Great Seljuk Empire was firmly established and became the dominant power in the eastern Muslim world.⁵²

Moreover, with the House of Selçuk, which in some ways formed the original roots of the Ottoman state, began the remarkable career of the Turks as empire-builders in the Islamic world. Indeed, the Great Seljuks represent the first independent Turkish dynasty ruling over a great part of the Islamic world. Most importantly, the creation of the Great Seljuk Empire brought a new political stability in the fragmented Muslim world, most of which was united under a single state for the first time since the early years of the Abbasid caliphate.⁵³ At the end of the eleventh century, the Great Seljuk Empire, with its centre in Iran, controlled a vast area stretching from the Hindu Kush to eastern Anatolia and from Central Asia to the Persian Gulf. The process of Seljuk state formation accelerated the symbiosis of various ethnic, linguistic, religious and cultural elements.⁵⁴

The Great Seljuk period was also the dawn of a new era in the history of Islam. It was under their rule that Sunni Islam revived; the scholar al-Ghazalî reconciled Sufism with Sunnism and it was then that the *medreses* or Islamic universities were established. It should be noted that the religious policies of the Great Seljuks varied at different times and places, according to the political circumstances.⁵⁵ The Great Seljuks tried to create a lasting political presence by joining forces with scholars, such as al-Ghazali who enjoyed state patronage for teaching and research. This practice was also applied by the Ottomans through founding *medreses* and scholars. In order to legitimise their political power, Seljuk rulers presented themselves as champions of what they alleged was a Sunni and normative view of Islam. Their religious view was constructed by administrators in state-sponsored arenas such as *medreses*, which illuminates the complex relationship between power and knowledge. The Great Seljuks can be seen as both benevolent Muslim rulers and patrons of the Sufi mystics.⁵⁶

⁵¹ Ibidem, 66-68.

⁵² Ibidem, 94-95;

⁵³ Lewis, *The Middle East*, 88.

⁵⁴ Osman Turan, 'Anatolia in the Period of the Seljuks and the Beyliks', in: *The Cambridge History of Islam*, vol. 1, 231.

⁵⁵ Peacock, *Early Seljuq History*, 100-108.

⁵⁶ Omid Safi, *The Politics of Knowledge in Premodern Islam. Negotiating Ideology and Religious Inquiry* (Chapel Hill, 2006).

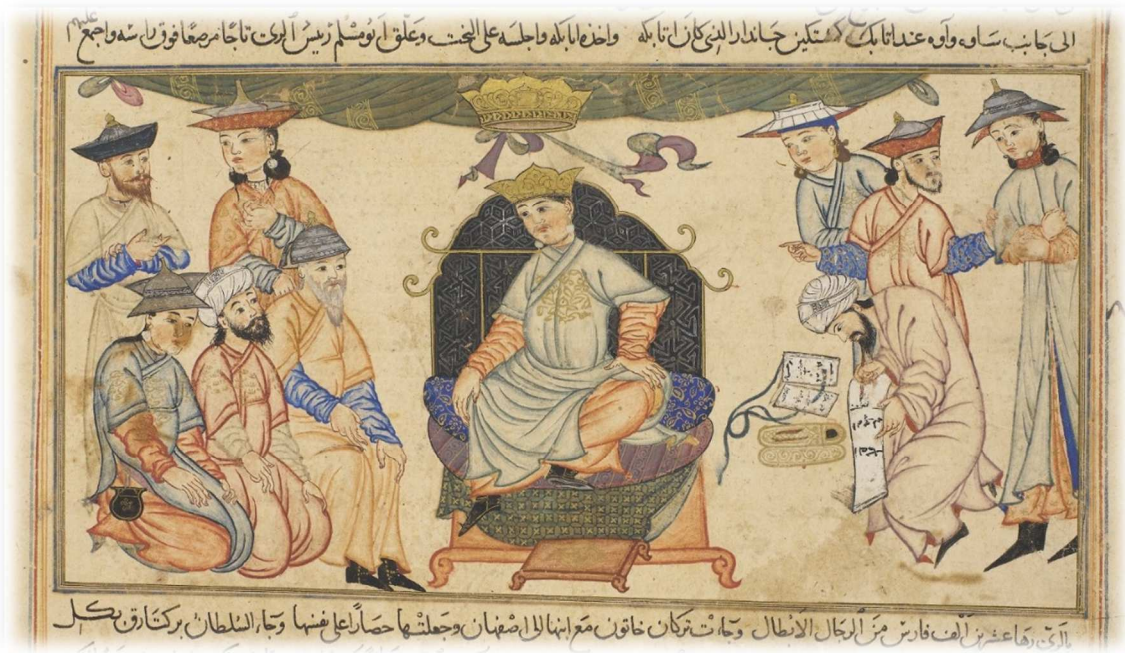


Figure 2: Great Seljuk Sultan Berk Yaruk ibn Malik Shah (r. 1093-1105). Miniature included in Rashid al-Din's 'World History' or *Jami'al Tevarih* (c. 1314).

After the death of Sultan Malik Shah in 1092, the Great Seljuk Empire decomposed into several regional states. The division of the Great Seljuk Empire was mainly caused by the rivalries among independent commanders, social revolts of the Turkish nomads and the succession struggles within the Seljuk dynasty. According to the Turkish political lore, a senior official was appointed as a tutor or *atabeg* ('father-lord') of a Seljuk crown prince. These *atabegs* held the nominal position of governor of a given territory, where they factually exercised the real power. The position of these *atabegs* would often become hereditary and sometimes, as with the most powerful of these *atabeg* dynasties, they would further boost their legitimacy by marrying into the Seljuk dynasty.⁵⁷ Once the Seljuk dynasty became more and more divided because of the succession struggles, these *atabegs* began then to assert their own status independently, first as governors then for their own power. These *atabegs* and other commanders not attached to the Seljuks began to set up independent states in Syria, Iraq, Iran and Turkey. For instance, Nureddin Mahmud, the son of the Seljuk *atabeg* Zangi, his commander Salaaddin, and the Rum Seljuk Sultans in Turkey all rivalled each other in claiming the legacy of the universal sovereignty of the Great Seljuk Empire.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Peacock, 'Seljuk Legitimacy in Islamic History', eds. Lange and Mecit, *The Seljuqs: Politics, Society and Culture*, 80-81.

⁵⁸ Mecit, 'Kingship and Ideology under the Rum Seljuqs' eds. Lange and Mecit, *The Seljuqs*, 63-78.

2.4 The Seljuk *Rum* Sultanate of Anatolia (c. 1080-1308)

The Seljuk *Rum* dynasty gathered all the Muslim and Turkish territories in Anatolia under one single monarchy. Conscious of their filiation to the Great Seljuks, they represented the Islamic urban high culture in Anatolia. They also aimed to transform Anatolia into a land that could rival the other Seljuk dynasties in north Syria and Iraq in wealth, culture and political power.⁵⁹ At the frontier zone with Byzantium, the Seljuks also legitimised their claim on power by proclaiming that they as *gazis* safeguarded the gates of the Islamic world. While they fought against Byzantium and the crusaders, they also had to struggle with the Turkish dynasty of Danishmends, who ruled in central and eastern Anatolia. The following period was a succession of wars between the Rum Seljuks, Byzantines, crusaders and other Muslim states in Syria. The Byzantine defeat at the Battle of Myriokephalon in 1176 against Sultan Kılıç Arslan II (r. 1156-1192) was the final and unsuccessful attempt of the Eastern Romans to recover the central Anatolian plateau.⁶⁰

The succession strife between the heirs of Sultan Kılıç Arslan II coincided with the Third Crusade, which gave the crusaders an opportunity to move easily into Syria and Palestine. However, despite their internal conflicts, after the initial setback the Rum Seljuks successfully defended their realm. For instance, while fleeing from the Seljuk armies after his defeat at the Battle of Konya in 1190, the German Holy Roman Emperor Frederick Barbarossa drowned in the Silifke river and his army returned back to Germany.⁶¹ Neşrî described the occupation of Byzantium by the German crusaders as follows: 'During the reign of Sultan Izzeddin Kılıç Arslan, the king of Serbia and the German [*Alaman*] Görge [Frederick Barbarossa], a famous infidel who carried the title of despot, invaded the lands of Rome [*bilâd-ı Rum*] from beyond Constantinople with a huge army of 140.000 mounted warriors and countless infantry. He plundered all the lands of Rome [*Rum-ili*], came to Constantinople where he overthrew the *tekvur* [Byzantine emperor] and made him obedient to himself.'⁶² Interestingly, Neşrî referred to the Byzantine emperor as *tekvur*, meaning 'governor'. He also uses the term *despot*, Serbian title for sovereign, when referring to the German king.

During the Fourth Crusade in 1204, not the Seljuks, but Byzantium received a ferocious blow from Latin Europe. The crusaders turned against Christian Byzantium and their armies captured and sacked Constantinople. Byzantium would never recover from the Latin occupation, which endured until 1261 and had forced the Byzantine elite into exile

⁵⁹ Wittek, 'Two Chapters in the History of *Rûm*', 107.

⁶⁰ Turan, 'Anatolia in the Period of the Seljuks', 241-245.

⁶¹ Turan, *Selçuklular Zamanında Türkiye*, 220-229.

⁶² Neşrî, *Cihannüma*, 16.

in Nicea (İznik).⁶³ It is also then that the Seljuk prince Kay Hüsrev I, the son of Kılıç Arslan II, was released from his exile in Constantinople. Kay Hüsrev I acceded to the throne in 1205 in Konya with the assistance of the gazis and re-united the Rum Seljuk state by ending the succession wars. On the other hand, the Ayyubid state had collapsed and was divided among Saladin's successors.⁶⁴

During the first half of the thirteenth century, the Rum Seljuk state of Anatolia reached its brilliant zenith, achieving its cultural, political and economic apogee. Particularly, during the reign of sultan Alaeddin Keykubad I (1220-1237), the Anatolian Seljuks gained outlets to the Mediterranean at Antalya, Alanya and to the Black Sea at Sinop.⁶⁵ These conquests were actually the result of the peace agreement with Byzantium, which was more concerned with the Latin occupation of Constantinople. Sultan Alaeddin Keykubad prevented the western gazis from attacking the Byzantines in Nicea (İznik). As a compensation for the gazis, he diverted their actions against the Byzantine Empire of Trebizonde, from which Sinop was conquered; against Antalya, that was seized from the Latins and against his rivals in Syria.⁶⁶ Sultan Keykubad was a ruler fully aware of *realpolitik* and created a united and powerful state in central and eastern Anatolia and directed an active policy toward the east. Because his primary interests diverged from the Byzantine state of Nicea which was focused on the west, they were not conflicting with each other.⁶⁷ As an example of this alliance, Sultan Alaeddin Keykubad I married a Byzantine princess and strengthened his relations with Byzantium to the west. He also lived for many years in Nicea and became acquainted with the customs at the Byzantine court.⁶⁸

This political balance enhanced the trade going as far west as Venice and north to Crimea. A network of Seljuk caravanserais in Anatolia strengthened the trade routes along which alum, salt, minerals and other goods began to flow as far as distant northern Europe. Sultan Keykubad granted commercial and legal treaties to the Genoese and the Venetians at the ports of Sinop and Antalya.⁶⁹ Besides gold, there were substantial amounts of silver mines to strike coins. In the first half of the thirteenth century, Anatolia was a land of immense wealth, exploited to a degree unknown since the heyday of Rome and it earned the Seljuks the riches and power to support their state. The Rum Seljuks of Anatolia became one of the most influential dynasties of the thirteenth-century Middle

⁶³ Jonathan Phillips, *The Fourth Crusade and the Sack of Constantinople* (New York, 2004) 258-79.

⁶⁴ Turan, *Selçuklular Zamanında Türkiye*, 360-365.

⁶⁵ Ibidem, 395-403.

⁶⁶ Wittek, 'Two Chapters', 108.

⁶⁷ Fuad Köprülü, *The Origins of the Ottoman Empire*, tr. Gary Leiser (New York, 1992) 29, 32.

⁶⁸ Köprülü, *Early Mystics in Turkish Literature*, tr. Gary Leiser (London, 2006) 149.

⁶⁹ Ibidem.

East, controlling some of the major trade routes of the period and playing a crucial role in connecting East and West of the medieval world.⁷⁰ Hence, it was during this period that the real development of the Rum Seljuk state took place; cities, especially the capital Konya, were developed and *medreses*, mosques and caravanserais constructed. Islamic high culture thus began to take root in the Seljuk cities.

The Disintegration of the Rûm Seljuk Sultanate

However, this period of prosperity did not last long. As a result of the incompetent rule of Gıyaseddin Keyhüsrev II (1237-1243), the Anatolian Seljuk state began to break down.⁷¹ Until the rule of Keyhüsrev II, the state functioned as a confederation of provinces governed by *emirs*, who supported each other in order to prevent the increase of the power of the central government and hence of the sultan. The emirs assembled and debated when important decisions concerning the succession to the throne or military campaigns had to be reached. Keyhüsrev, who grew up in comfort and the ease of luxury, had become estranged to the toughness of nomad life and the strength of his ancestors. With his ascendance to the throne, the seeds of disintegration were sown. The desire of his vizier Köpek to gain personal control of the state power led to a conflict between the dynasty and *emirs*. The result of all this was that the rivalries among the Seljuk *emirs* increased so much that they had begun to intrigue against each other. Finally, the system of cooperation between the provincial *emirs* broke down and the Rum Seljuk state as a whole weakened.⁷²

At the same time, the cultural alienation between the nomadic Turkish communities and the Seljuk central government began to grow. The nomadic Turkish tribes that lived on the Byzantine marches, which were always fraught with difficulties and dangers, lived a harsh army life with their households. The women of these nomadic communities were also armed and exhibited great courage in battle.⁷³ In the fifteenth century, we read from the Burgundian spy Bertrandon de la Broquière that the Turkish nomads in southern Anatolia still maintained their lifestyle and traditions. On his way to Bursa, he came across a group of armed Turkish nomad women, of whom he writes with great admiration concerning their martial skills and moral qualities.⁷⁴ Moreover, the nomads recognised no political authority outside the tribal system and they despised the settled villagers and city dwellers. They opposed the settlement policies of the sedentary Seljuk government. Whenever the greed and abuse of tax collectors of the central government increased,

⁷⁰ Lindner, *Explorations in Ottoman Prehistory*, 3; Peacock and Yildiz eds., *The Seljuks of Anatolia*, 2.

⁷¹ Mecit, *The Rum Seljuqs*, 116-117; Turan, *Selçuklular Zamanında Türkiye*, 404-416.

⁷² Mecit, *The Rum Seljuqs*, 119.

⁷³ Fuad Köprülü, *Islam in Anatolia after the Turkish Invasion*, tr. and ed. Gary Leiser (Salt Lake City, 1993) 27.

⁷⁴ Broquière, *Le Voyage d'Outremer*, 82-98.

when the nomads lost their herds to drought or with the political ambitions of a tribal leader, they did not hesitate to rebel and to attack cities.

The Seljuk state was then managed by bureaucrats and Muslim scholars (*ulema*) and favoured the interests of a sedentary administration. A great number of Persian bureaucrats, who fled for the Mongol outburst, had come to Anatolia. It is under their influence that the Rum Seljuk dynasty adopted the Persian-Islamic culture at court and introduced Persian as the court language. Concerning the private life of the Anatolian Seljuk Sultans, their names and palace ceremonial, the most definite influence was Persian. The names given to later Rum Seljuk sons and grandsons are almost all derived from the ancient epic Persian tradition and are the most visible testament for this. As a result, Sultan Keykubad I presented himself as an absolute monarch and laid special emphasis on the elements derived from the Persian model of sovereignty.⁷⁵

The religiously and ethnically diverse society in which the Seljuks lived was also reflected in the princely court of the dynasty.⁷⁶ Not only the ruling Seljuk nobility, but also the Turkish communities in the cities and villages were in close contact with the Greco-Roman and local Christian traditions.⁷⁷ The Seljuk Sultans publicly supported a sedentary model of civilisation. The Seljuk court style was deeply influenced by the Persian culture, their poets wrote Persian. By contrast, the Seljuk court did not support the culture and interests of the Turkish nomads whose martial skills had mastered the lands they governed. The growing cultural and political separation between the Turkish Oghuz nomads and the sedentary Seljuk government resulted in their mutual alienation and prepared the way for a series of revolts, that would shake the Seljuk state of Anatolia at the height of its power in the thirteenth century.⁷⁸

The nomads took their revenge, first without success during the *Babai* revolt in 1239, and then successfully during the Mongol invasion of Anatolia. The resentments of many nomadic Turkish groups resulted in a severe popular revolt led by a heterodox dervish, *baba ilyas-i Horasani*, who claimed that he was *Resul Allah*, a prophet. The figure of *baba* or 'father' was a continuation of the shaman character, typical for the syncretic Islam of the nomad Turkish communities. These *baba*'s guided their people as spiritual masters and sometimes as political leaders.⁷⁹ Due to the growing tensions with the Seljuk central government, Baba İlyas proclaimed the *jihad* against sultan Gıyaseddin Keyhüsrev II and led a growing mass of Turkish nomads, including women and children, into a ferocious rebellion. The Turkish nomads and the Gazis, who were very close to each other, appear

⁷⁵ Mecit, 'Kingship and Ideology under the Rum Seljuqs', 69-70.

⁷⁶ Peacock and Yildiz eds., *The Seljuks of Anatolia*, 4.

⁷⁷ Köprülü, *Early Mystics*, 149.

⁷⁸ Lindner, *Explorations in Ottoman Prehistory*, 3-4.

⁷⁹ Claude Cahen, 'Bâbâ'î', *Encyclopedia of Islam. Second Edition* (online).

to have allied. This so-called Babai Revolt shook the Seljuk state of Anatolia in its fundamentals. Sultan Keyhüsrev anxiously fled from the capital Konya and the government suppressed this uprising only with difficulty, among other things by employing Frankish and Georgian mercenaries and the troops that were preserved against the awakening Mongol assault.⁸⁰

2.5 The Arrival of the Mongols

A year after this major political revolt, the Mongol Ilkhanids, who had settled in Azerbaijan, easily invaded Anatolia, defeating the Seljuk army at Köseadağ in 1243, and becoming the real suzerains of Anatolia. Although the Seljuk army was reinforced by Byzantine contingents and Frankish mercenaries, and although it was only a detachment of Mongol army that had entered Anatolia, defeat could not be avoided. The Rum Seljuks were too much assimilated into sedentary life and posed no match against the nomadic warrior skills of the Mongols. The Mongols made the Seljuk rulers their tribute paying vassals. After 1277, the period of the independent Seljuk state of Anatolia came to an end.⁸¹

In the second half of the thirteenth century, during the last fifty years of its existence, the Rum Seljuk dynasty had lost all significance. It was in this chaotic environment that the famous mystics Yunus Emre and Jelaleddin Rumi lived. This was a time of successive political and social crises and confusion. There were rivalries between the Seljuk Sultans and their emirs, constantly collaborating with the Mongols against each other. There were revolts, punitive actions and wars followed the revolts. Sometimes the Mongol commanders also fought among themselves.⁸² Wishing to profit from this situation, the papacy also sent missionaries to Anatolia to convert the pagan Mongols to Christianity. One of these missionaries was the Dominican friar, Simon de Saint-Quentin, who left an interesting account of the social life and the Seljuk wealth in Anatolia at this period.⁸³ The Mongols remained for a time indifferent to both Christendom and Islam. Eventually, the Mongol Ilkhanid ruler Gazan Khan converted to Islam in 1296. His conversion speeded up the spreading of Islam among the Mongol tribes. These Mongol tribes generally likened

⁸⁰ Turan, *Selçuklular Zamanında Türkiye*, 422-23.

⁸¹ Ibidem, 427-457.

⁸² Köprülü, *The Origins*, 33-34.

⁸³ Simon de Saint-Quentin, *Historia Tartarorum*, ed. Jean Richard (Paris, 1965).

the Turkish *babas* (spiritual masters) to their own shamans and gradually started to embrace Islam through the Turkish Sufis, to whom they felt close and adopted to sedentary life style.⁸⁴

Most importantly, the Mongol expansion had caused a new migration of Turkish nomad groups from Azerbaijan and even from distant Transoxania who came to Anatolia. They mainly settled in the western frontier regions. These western marches of the Islamic world proved to be the safest place from the Mongol invasion. All those who had to flee the Mongols sought a refuge on the frontier: nobles of the Rum Seljuk state who had organised the resistance against the Mongols fled with their entire families and followers; city-dwellers who settled in towns and marches; peasants whose villages were in ruin or who no longer endured the heavy fiscal burdens imposed on them by the Mongols. The Turkish villagers that came from western Turkistan brought much of their farming culture with them to Anatolia, established villages and began to till the land.⁸⁵ The old Roman-Byzantine cities were revitalised and became more prosperous than before thanks to vigorous trading activity.⁸⁶

2.6 The Emergence of Turkish principalities in Anatolia

Several developments had helped the Turkish nomads to rise as a polity. Despite the political turbulences and human catastrophes, Mongol hegemony created vast possibilities. The migrating Turkish nomads were accompanied by sheikhs and wandering dervishes, and a crowd of merchants and artisans who flowed in from all the provinces invaded by the Mongols. Sometimes, the sending of military forces to Anatolia for various reasons led to the establishment of a number of Mongol and Turkish tribes in different areas. They came with all their baggage and families to areas that had been granted to them as *iqta* (land grants as revenue for military service).⁸⁷ Some principalities, such as the one of the Ottomans would emerge from such an *iqta*-fief. Although the early Ottoman sources anachronistically cast the first Ottomans into vassalage with the Anatolian Seljuks, it was probably the Ilkhanid Mongol government that sent Ertughrul,

⁸⁴ Ahmet Y. Ocak, 'Social, Cultural and Intellectual Life, 1071-1453', in: ed. Kate Fleet, *The Cambridge History of Turkey vol.1*, 389-390.

⁸⁵ Ibid, 370-72.

⁸⁶ For a discussion on the development of the cities, urban culture, trade and industry in Anatolia, see: Köprülü, *The Origins*, 56-70; Ocak, 'Social, Cultural and Intellectual Life', 372-80.

⁸⁷ Köprülü, *The Origins*, 42-54.

father of Osman, together with his tribe with some Mongol nomads to settle and guard the western frontiers.⁸⁸ It is probable that Osman Gazi recognised the Ilkhanid Gazan Khan as his overlord. The early Ottoman vassalage with the Mongol Ilkhanids is documented, as a budget document from 1350 identifies Orhan Gazi, son of Osman, as a lord of the Anatolian marches paying tribute to the Mongols.⁸⁹

While a large number of the Turkish Muslim population that came to Anatolia were nomadic tribes, some gradually settled on the steppe lands and in empty Byzantine villages or in villages that were inhabited by the local population. Apart from Turkish nomads, Mongol nomadic tribes also arrived after 1246. The Mongols also settled in the steppes of Anatolia and set up their own villages or settled in Turkish villages where they intermingled with the Turkish population. These Turkish and Mongol tribes gradually shifted from a nomadic existence to a semi-settled life and the Turkish and Mongol communities increased within a half century.⁹⁰ There was also a significant amount of non-Muslim populations, made up of Orthodox Greeks, Armenians, Georgians, Assyrians or Syriacs, Jacobites and Jews living across entire Anatolia. The Seljuks and their successor Turkish principalities apparently did not force the Christian and Jewish population to convert, as they wished rather to maintain the existing social and economic structures. By implementing Islamic law and the principle related to co-existence with non-Muslims, the *ahl al-dhimma*, they adopted a policy designed to win the consent of the population, a policy known in the Ottoman period as *istimalet*.⁹¹ The local Christian and Jewish population were culturally and religiously untouched when the Turks took over the political power. They even regarded the wars that Turks won against Byzantines as punishing Byzantium, which had oppressed them culturally and politically.⁹²

For instance, in the early thirteenth century, the *akritai*, the Byzantine marcher-warriors, found the fiscal policy of the Byzantine administration insupportable as it gravely affected their interests. These *akritai*, who were for the most part Armenians, were also deeply wounded in their religious sentiments by the Byzantine Orthodox Church, which attempted to assimilate the Assyrians and Armenians, and they frequently stood up in revolts.⁹³ As the non-Greek Christian population of Anatolia resented the Byzantine policies, they were benevolent towards the Turkish conquerors, who replaced

⁸⁸ William L. Langer and Robert P. Blake, 'The Rise of the Ottoman Turks and its Historical Background', *The American Historical Review* 37, 3 (1932), 489-90; Baki Tezcan, 'The Memory of the Mongols in Early Ottoman Historiography', ed. Erdem Çıpa and Emine Fetvacı, *Writing History at the Ottoman Court* (Bloomington, 2013), 23-38.

⁸⁹ Togan, 'Moğollar devrinde Anadolu'nun İktisadi Vaziyeti', 31-33.

⁹⁰ Ocak, 'Social, Cultural and Intellectual Life', 367-369.

⁹¹ Halil İnalcık, 'Ottoman Methods of Conquest', 103-129.

⁹² Ocak, 'Social, Cultural and Intellectual Life', 387-388.

⁹³ Wittek, 'Two Chapters in the History of Rûm', in: ed. Heywood, *The Rise*, 103-104.

the Byzantine rule and did not interfere in their religious traditions. This seems to have played an important role in easing the Turkish settlement in Anatolia and the acceptance of Turkish rule.⁹⁴ The resistance towards the Turkish hosts that was shown mainly by the towns broke down almost everywhere. In many places they were even led into the country by the *akritai* themselves.⁹⁵

In spite of the clashes with Byzantium, life on those frontiers was marked by hybridity and accommodation, which were more usual outcomes. The conditions in these frontiers were quite analogous on both sides. The march-warriors, both the *gazis* and *akritai*, were continually ready to parry the raids of the foe and in turn also to undertake similar raids, penetrating deep into the territory of the enemy. Moreover, there were strong political and cultural tensions between the marches and the respective hinterlands. Aspiring to the greatest possible independence and fully conscious of their importance in their relations with their respective governments, the *gazis* and *akritai* tended to resist all administrative interference and detested taxation. The Assyrian, Jacobite and Armenian Churches that were forced to assimilate to the Byzantine imperial Greek Church, found in the Anatolian marches a secure place of refuge.⁹⁶ Frontier life would also profoundly affect the Turkish experience as Muslims; there occurred certain exchanges in cultural life. Deriving their cultural features from the same conditions of life, both sides were in daily contact with each other and this contact was not always belligerent. Volunteers, prisoners, deserters and wives taken from the other side facilitated the cultural exchange. It is important to note that the Turks who arrived in Anatolia were not primitive nomads equipped with only a rudimentary culture, as it was often argued. It is now generally agreed that the Turks came and settled in Anatolia 'as a group which had synthesised Islamic civilization, which infused their entire way of life, with Turkish culture and traditions.'⁹⁷

As a result of all this, the refugees in the frontier zones of Anatolia were saturated with migrations and experienced leaders awaited the opportunities for new enterprises. At this time, Byzantium was occupied with reconquering its lost provinces in Europe. The centre of gravity of Byzantine politics was no longer in Anatolia. As a result, the Turkish frontier advanced westwards until the shores of Marmara.⁹⁸ The Mongols indirectly created a profitable conjuncture for these nomad Turks to assert their independence by breaking down the existing political structures of the Anatolian Seljuks.⁹⁹ The Turkish

⁹⁴ Claude Cahen, *Pre-Ottoman Turkey* (London, 1968) 204.

⁹⁵ Wittek, 'Turkish Asia Minor up to the *Osmanlıs*', in: *The Rise*, 56.

⁹⁶ *Ibidem*, 46.

⁹⁷ Köprülü, *Türk Edebiyatında İlk Mutasavvıflar*, 191.

⁹⁸ Wittek, 'Two Chapters in the History of Rum', 110.

⁹⁹ Sara Nur Yıldız, *Mongol Rule in Seljuk Anatolia: The Politics of Conquest and History-Writing, 1243-1282* (Leiden, 2009).

nomads and *gazis* began to set up new marcher principalities (*beyliks*) on the lands they conquered, such as the *beyliks* of Karaman, Menteshe, Karası, Aydın and Germiyan.¹⁰⁰ Byzantium had no strength to oppose these *gazi* lordships.

Of the Anatolian Turkish marcher principalities, the earliest created, the longest existed and the most powerful rival of the Ottomans was the beylik of Karaman in south-central Anatolia. By 1300, it had established itself in the former Seljuk capital of Konya as its seat of power. Their power resulted from the unification of the Turkish nomads living in the mountainous regions of Cilicia. They claimed to be the heirs of the Rum Seljuks and appealed to supremacy over the other principalities in Anatolia.¹⁰¹ On the south coast, around Antalya, lay the beylik of Teke. To the north of Teke and lying inland were the territories of Hamid, around Isparta, and the beylik of Germiyan, with its capital at Kütahya. The beylik of Germiyan was established by nomads who belonged to the Afşar branch of the Oğuz. During the early fourteenth century, the Germiyanids represented a powerful political entity. At the southernmost tip of the Aegean coast lay the principality of Menteşe.¹⁰² To the north of Menteşe were the beyliks of Aydın and Saruhan, with Tire and Manisa as their respective capitals. However, the beylik of Aydın soon came under the attack of crusaders; they lost their navy and key harbours, and were forcibly pacified.¹⁰³ To the north of Saruhan, lay the maritime beylik of Karasi with part of its shoreline along the Dardanelles and with Balıkesir and Edremit as main cities. The beyliks of Karasi, Saruhan and Aydın were founded by the emirs or commanders in service of the Germiyanid dynasty, to which, at least in their foundation period, they had obeyed. The Hamidoğulları too had to rely on the Germiyanids to seek protection against the Karamanids. Finally, to the north-west of Karasi, in the former Byzantine province of Bythinia, around Söğüt lay the tiny beylik of Osman. While its bigger and powerful rivals became targets of Byzantine and Ilkhanid attacks, the Ottomans stayed away from these dangers and benefited from their results.¹⁰⁴

All these *beyliks* were more or less acquainted with the administrative and military structures of the Harezmshahs and Rum Seljuks. Some of them had participated in the

¹⁰⁰ On the Turkish *beyliks* in Anatolia, see: Uzunçarşılı, *Anadolu Beylikleri ve Akkoyunlu ve Karakoyunlu Devletleri* (Ankara, 1988). On the power struggle between the Anatolian beyliks and the Ottomans: Hasan Bahri Karadeniz, *Osmanlılar ile Anadolu Beylikleri Arasında Psikolojik Mücadele* (Istanbul, 2011). See also: Faruk Sümer, *Kara Koyunlular* (Ankara, 1992); Woods, *The Aqqoyunlu*.

¹⁰¹ Köprülü, *The Origins*, 36.

¹⁰² On this principality, see: Paul Wittek, *Menteşe Beyliği* (Ankara, 1999).

¹⁰³ Elizabeth A. Zachariadou, *Trade and Crusade: Venetian Crete and the Emirates of Menteshe and Aydın (1300-1415)* (Venice, 1983); Paul Lemerle, *L'Emirat d'Aydın, Byzance et l'Occident; Recherches sur La Geste d'Umur Pacha* (Paris, 1957)

¹⁰⁴ Imber, *The Ottoman Empire*, 7-8.

Babai rebellion of the nomad tribes in 1238-41.¹⁰⁵ A factor that helped the initial independence of Turkish *beyliks* was the intervention of the Mamluk sultan Baybars, who attempted to end Mongol rule. In 1277, Baybars defeated the Mongol army and advanced as far as Kayseri, but the *beyliks* did not rise against the Mongol Ilkhanids as he had hoped.¹⁰⁶ These *beyliks* gradually built their own regional power, which gave them better prospects to negotiate with Byzantium.¹⁰⁷ Their emergence augmented the regional redistribution of resources that otherwise would have been extracted by Mongol Ilkhanid imperial centres.¹⁰⁸ As a result, new commercial opportunities were created by mixing the sedentary urban and agrarian economies with pastoral nomadism. This situation contributed to the coexistence between the Byzantine governors in Bithynia and the early Ottomans.¹⁰⁹ At first the Ottoman principality played a very modest part among the other emirates. Nevertheless, it was exactly this modest principality that was to be transformed into the most important regional power in the next 150 years.

¹⁰⁵ Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, *Babailer İsyanı* (İstanbul, 1980); Claude Cahen, 'Notes pour l'histoire des turcomans d'Asie Mineure au XIII^e siècle', *Journal Asiatique* 239 (1951): 335-354.

¹⁰⁶ Köprülü, *The Origins*, 34.

¹⁰⁷ Klaus Mattschke, 'Commerce, Trade, Markets and Money: Thirteenth-Fifteenth Centuries', in : Angeliki E. Laiou ed., *The Economic History of Byzantium: From the Seventh to the Fifteenth Century* (Washington, 2002) 771-806.

¹⁰⁸ Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*, 6-7.

¹⁰⁹ Keith Hopwood, 'Nomads or Bandits: The Pastoralist/Sedentary Interface in Anatolia', *Byzantinische Forschungen* 16 (1991): 179-194; Âşık Paşazâde, *Tevarih-i Al-i Osman*, eds. Yavuz and Saraç, 334.

2.7 From Osman's *Beylik* (principality) to an Empire (c. 1302-1402)

Turkish political control of Anatolia was achieved in two stages. During the eleventh century, nomad Turkish *Oghuz* tribes from Central Asia entered Anatolia, a region which did not only partly belong to the Seljuk Empire, but which was also divided among the Christian Byzantine and Armenian principalities. These polities made up the political structure of medieval Anatolia. At that time, the Turkish communities still constituted a minority in Anatolia.¹¹⁰ The Byzantines applied a relatively peaceful policy vis-à-vis the newcomers on their frontiers.¹¹¹ During the period after the Battle of Manzikert (1071), about a million Turkish migrants entered Anatolia and settled throughout the region.¹¹² It was actually only two centuries later, after the second great wave of Turkish tribes from Central Asia, that Anatolia became a new homeland for the Turkish migrants.¹¹³ In this second phase, which began with the Mongol expansions, great numbers of nomad tribes migrated from Transoxiana, Khorasan and Azerbaijan. They were fleeing together with the Turkish city-dwellers from Merv, Tabriz, Balkh, Bukhara and Samarkand, seeking refuge in Anatolia. It is exactly in this second phase that Turkish demographic figures would increase and transcend the local population.¹¹⁴ The newly arrived found a milieu that was familiar to them. Their predecessors had to a certain extent already 'turkified' the marches. However, the Turkish conquest of Anatolia did not lead to a fundamental rupture in local cultural and religious traditions.¹¹⁵ A 'melting pot' of the various sedentary and nomad traditions and peoples came into being during this process.¹¹⁶

Fuat Köprülü noted that in the late thirteenth century the material and cultural dynamics of Turkish society were sufficiently developed to cultivate the emergence of the Ottoman polity. The demographic push of the Turks into western Anatolia, fleeing for the Mongol assault, was a major factor in the early Ottoman state formation. Köprülü emphasised that the Mongol expansion had uprooted not only the nomads, but also the urban Turkish population from Central Asia. The early Ottomans could thus from the

¹¹⁰ For a discussion of the ethnic structure of Anatolia at the arrival of the Turkish nomads: Claude Cahen, 'Le problème ethnique en Anatolie', *Cahiers d'Histoire Mondiale* 2/1 (1954-55): 347-362.

¹¹¹ Michel Balivet, *Romanie byzantine et pays de Rûm Turc: histoire d'un espace d'imbrication gréco-turc* (İstanbul, 1994); *ibid*, *Byzantins et Ottomans: relations, interaction, succession* (İstanbul, 1999).

¹¹² Golden, *An Introduction*, 224-225; Findley, *The Turks*, 72.

¹¹³ Turan, *Selçuklular Zamanında Türkiye*, 36; Togan, *Umumi Türk Tarihine Giriş*, 196.

¹¹⁴ Togan, *Umumi Türk Tarihine Giriş*, 196.

¹¹⁵ Wittek, 'Two Chapters in the History of Rûm', 106.

¹¹⁶ Wittek, 'The Sultan of Rum', 96.

beginning rely on an urban Turkish population. Although the other Turkish principalities also wanted to control these groups, the beylik of Osman had the best credentials, particularly due to its strategic location.¹¹⁷ Köprülü further argued that the early Ottoman beylik in the organisation of its administrative, military and juridical institutions built particularly on the administrative experience and knowledge accumulated by the dynasties of the Seljuks, Kharezmshahs and the Ilkhanids.¹¹⁸

2.7.1 Before the founding of the *Beylik* (principality)

The immediate ancestors of Osman Bey, the eponymous founder of the Ottoman dynasty, arrived in Anatolia during the second great migration wave, which took place after the Mongol expansions under Djengiz Khan during the 1220s. The Mongol expansions uprooted the nomadic Turkish tribes in Central Asia and Iran and forced them to migrate in several waves to the west, into Anatolia.¹¹⁹ The pressure of the Mongols forced many Turkish pastoralist nomads to seek new pastures in the west. The ancestors of Osman arrived in one of these waves to north-western Anatolia and settled in the Turkish-Byzantine frontier land of Bithynia.¹²⁰ Their actual arrival date is not known, but they must have established their presence around the 1260s under the leadership of Ertuğrul Bey, the father of Osman.¹²¹

They constituted a community of Turkish pastoralist nomads. The Ottoman chronicles outlined the genealogy of the House of Osman to the epic ruler *Oğuz Han*, descending from the line of *Kayı*. The *Oğuz* Turks constituted the majority among the masses who came to Anatolia. However, their tribal structure and connections were probably very loose because of the settlement policy of the Seljuk State of Anatolia.¹²² The gradual breakdown of tribal bonds due to the migration must also have been important. Nevertheless, this disintegration allowed a greater degree of social mobility and reorganisation. During this brief period, the ancestors of Osman remained under the nominal control of the Çobanid

¹¹⁷ Köprülü, *The Origins*, 111-116.

¹¹⁸ Ibidem, 11-21 en 87-88.

¹¹⁹ Köprülü, *The Origins*, 43-47.

¹²⁰ There has been long a scholarly debate on the origins of Osman's forefathers and there is no agreement about the time or manner in which they came to Anatolia, but there is no doubt that they were Turkish nomads. See: Köprülü, *The Origins*, 72-77; Paul Wittek, 'Der Stammbaum der Osmanen', *Der Islam* 14 (1925): 94-100; ibid, *The Rise of the Ottoman Empire*, 7-13; Colin Imber, 'The Ottoman Dynastic Myth', *Turcica* 19 (1987): 7-27; Lindner, *Explorations*, 15-34.

¹²¹ Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*, 2.

¹²² The Seljuk and later Ilkhanid and Ottoman states divided the large tribes into smaller groups and sent them to the frontiers. By breaking tribal solidarity, they hoped to eliminate possible nomadic revolts.

beys, who were the official governors general (*beylerbeyi*) of the Seljuk northwest frontiers.¹²³ During the winter, the ancestors of Osman remained around Söğüd (i.e. ‘the willow tree’), close to the routes along the Sakarya river. Their summer pastures were on the slopes of the Domaniç mountain, which oversaw several vital routes. Their new homeland was situated in a favourable geographical location with strategic importance. It was close to all the great routes that linked the Marmara region with the Anatolian hinterland. They were also favourably positioned with relatively easy access to the eastern territories of the Byzantine Empire and to the trade routes.¹²⁴ Their location provided them with great possibilities for wealth and expansion to the north and northwest. The early Ottoman conquests aimed to control the cities of Bythynia, the trade roads and the access to resources.¹²⁵

When the Seljuk commander Şemseddin Yaman Candar defeated and killed the Ottomans’ overlord Çobanoğlu Mahmud Bey in 1292, the Ottomans had become virtually independent.¹²⁶ Until then the Ottomans had been under the nominal control of the Çobanid lords. But the real advantageous political circumstances were created with the rebellion of Mongol commander Sülemiş in 1298. Osman’s activities in the years 1298-1301 coincided with the rebellion of Sülemiş, who became popular among the Turkish frontier warriors.¹²⁷ Sülemiş gained the support of the Turkish frontier warriors, granting them symbols of independence, and he also gained control of the entire central and western lands of the former Rum Seljuk State. Osman might have cooperated with Sülemiş against the Ilkhanid Khans.¹²⁸ In 1300, the Ilkhanids managed to defeat the rebellion and killed Sülemiş, however, they were unable to establish firm control on the western frontier lands.¹²⁹

2.7.2 Osman Gazi founds a dynasty and state

Ottoman tradition asserts that Osman Gazi (r. 1302-1326) became a *bey* after he had been selected as the leader of the *Kayı*-line of the Oğuz when his father Ertuğrul died in 1299.

¹²³ Köprülü, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunun Kuruluşu*, 86, 132.

¹²⁴ Irène Beldiceanu-Steinherr, ‘L’installation des Ottomans en Bithynie’, in: ed. Bernard Geyer et Jacques Lefort, *La Bithynie au Moyen Age* (Paris, 2003) 351-374.

¹²⁵ Lindner, *Explorations*, 50-53.

¹²⁶ Yaşar Yücel, *XIII. ve XV. Yüzyıllar Kuzey-Batı Anadolu Tarihi: Çobanoğulları ve Candaroğulları Beylikleri* (Ankara, 1980) 48-49.

¹²⁷ Halil İnalcık, ‘Osman Ghazi’s siege of Nicaea and the Battle of Bapheus’, in: *ibid*, *Essays in Ottoman History* (Istanbul, 1998) 59-61.

¹²⁸ Togan, *Umumi Türk Tarihine Giriş*, 228-231, 243.

¹²⁹ Turan, ‘Anatolia in the Period of the Seljuks and the Beyliks’, 233, 248-253; Köprülü, *The Origins*, 35.

A silver coin bearing the inscription ‘Struck by Osman, son of Ertuğrul’ confirms that Osman’s father was Ertuğrul.¹³⁰ The inscription on the coin further refers to Gündüz Alp as the father of Ertuğrul, which supports the Oğuz genealogy of the Ottomans. The chronicler Âşık Paşazâde notes that Osman first had to fight against the neighbouring Germiyan principality and against a settlement of Mongol nomads in order to secure his position.¹³¹ The power of the Rum Seljuks had declined, while the Ilkhanids lost their control of the western marches. Since the people in Söğüt were under pressure of several other Turkish principalities in the rear, Osman probably understood that he had to expand towards the west in order to survive and to secure a polity.



Figure 3: Silver coins struck by Orhan Gazi (c. 1326).
Reproduced in: Halil Inalcik ed., *Osmanlı Uygarlığı* (Ankara, 2009) 60.

However, Osman’s position did not remain unchallenged. A competition with his uncle Dündar emerged after Ertuğrul had died. During the *kurultay* or assembly, some members of the tribe wanted Osman, and others his uncle Dündar, to succeed Ertuğrul and to be the new *bey*. Seeing Osman’s strong support, Dündar gave up and accepted his nephew’s leadership.¹³² The compromise seems to have been superficial. In a later chapter, Neşrî writes that Osman was angry about the patronising attitude of the Byzantine lord of Bilecik (*Belekoma*, in Roman time), who required Osman to kiss his hand, and in retaliation Osman wanted to seize him. However, Dündar disputed this plan: ‘while the Germiyan-oğlu and the neighbouring infidels are hostile to us, we cannot afford to make any more

¹³⁰ İbrahim Artuk, ‘Osmanlı beyliğinin kurucusu Osman Gazi’ye ait sikke’, *Birinci Uluslararası Türkiye’nin Sosyal ve Ekonomik Tarihi (1071-1920) Kongresi Tebliğleri* (Ankara 1980): 27-33.

¹³¹ Âşık Paşazâde, *Tevârih-i*, 282.

¹³² Neşrî, *Cihânnümâ*, 39.

enemies.’ According to Neşrî, Osman felt intimidated and thought that his uncle intended to weaken his political rise. Thereupon, during that dispute, he shot him with an arrow and killed him.¹³³

Actually, Osman managed to create an independent political entity after defeating a Byzantine army at the Battle of Bapheus (Koyunhisar), near the Sakarya river, on 27 July 1302.¹³⁴ Neşrî set this event as the foundation date of an independent *beylik*, and wrote that Osman’s victory gained him the charisma and legitimacy to found a dynasty and state.¹³⁵ The account of the contemporary Byzantine chronicler Pachymeres also confirms this. Pachymeres wrote that the battle of Bapheus was a result of Osman’s attempt to capture İznik (Nicaea).¹³⁶ Neşrî described that when Osman learned that the Byzantine emperor had prepared an army against him and was coming to relieve the siege of Nicaea, he first asked the help of the Seljuk Sultan in Konya. The Sultan instructed the frontier-gazis of the Sahibin Karahisar region to go and assist Osman against the Byzantines.¹³⁷ Karahisar was the principal centre of the Seljukid frontier under direct control of the Seljuks. Osman had clearly not yet become a leader among the gazis in the area, who still acted independently. Prior to the Battle of Bapheus, Osman had to rely on alliances with local Turkish and Byzantine commanders, such as Köse Mihal.¹³⁸

When Osman decided to confront the Byzantine army, his allies and several warriors of the Aydın and Menteşe principalities joined him in this campaign. This alliance was the result of a defensive reflex against the major Byzantine reaction, which threatened all of them. İncalcık argued that Osman benefited in this way from the increasing advance of the Turkish marcher warriors in western Anatolia.¹³⁹ With his victory over an imperial Byzantine army, Osman gained a tremendous reputation as gazi-leader and emerged as a charismatic leader able to arouse support from his followers. He welded more strongly his independent-minded nomadic followers and more warriors came under his leadership. The Byzantine court chronicler Pachymeres provides details on the blockade of Nicaea. He mentioned Osman for the first time, noting that after his Bapheus victory, Osman’s fame spread as far as Paphlagonia (Kastamonu).¹⁴⁰

¹³³ Neşrî, *Cihânnümâ*, 45.

¹³⁴ İncalcık, *Osmanlı Tarihini Yeniden Yazmak. Kuruluş* (İstanbul, 2010) 52-54.

¹³⁵ Neşrî, *Cihânnümâ*, 51. The most detailed Ottoman account on the siege of Nicaea and the Battle of Bapheus is provided by the Anonymous Chronicle: *Anonim Osmanlı Kroniği*, 12-14. The earliest reference to the siege of Nicaea is in: Ahmedî, *Tevârih-i Müluk-i Al-i Osman*, 29.

¹³⁶ İncalcık, ‘Osman Ghazi’s siege of Nicaea and the Battle of Bapheus’, in: ed. Elizabeth Zachariadou, *The Ottoman Emirate* (Rethymnon, 1993) 77-99.

¹³⁷ Neşrî, *Cihânnümâ*, 50-51.

¹³⁸ İncalcık, ‘The Rise of Ottoman Historiography’, in: *Historians of the Middle East*, ed. Lewis and Holt, 152-167.

¹³⁹ İncalcık, ‘Osman Ghazi’s siege’, 80-82.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibidem*, 78-79.

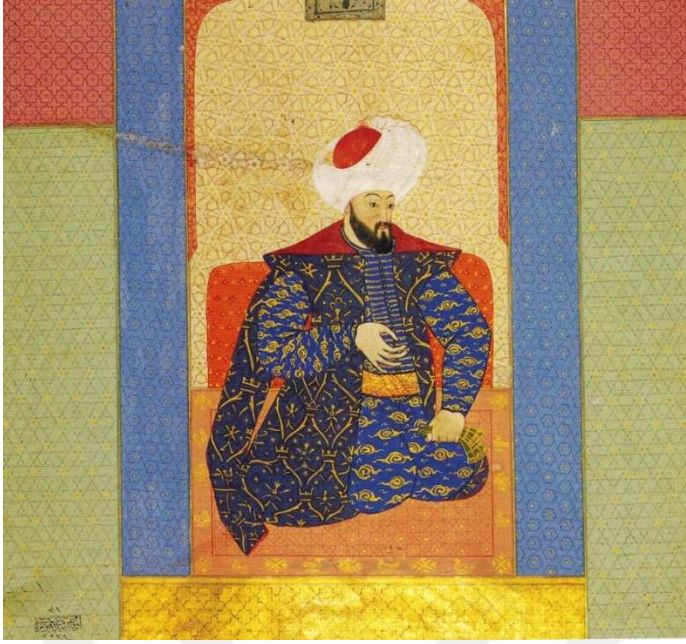


Figure 4: Miniature portrait of Osman Gazi.
Included in the court chronicle of Seyyid Lokman, *Zübdetü't Tevârih* (c. 1583).

According to Pachymeres, Osman's military success alarmed the Byzantine government. The latter presented princess Maria as wife to the Ilkhanid ruler Ölceytü Khan in order to provoke a Mongol Ilkhanid punishment against Osman.¹⁴¹ The Byzantine government must have thought that the Turkish marcher lords were under control of the Ilkhanids and that their raids could be checked by the Ilkhanid Khan. However, the Mongol Khans had in fact lost the control of the western marches in Anatolia, where Osman's victory at Bapheus had secured his political position. Soon, various Byzantine fortresses and towns were seized and all of Bithynia, except for the big cities, was captured. Osman's successes also attracted more warriors, settlers, dervishes, scholars, unemployed Seljuk *ulema*-bureaucrats, refugee villagers, artisans and city dwellers from the Muslim hinterland. The religious scholars (*fakihs*) and former Seljuk officials brought sedentary traditions with them. More and more nomads began to settle and changed their lifestyle, and this affected the political organisation.¹⁴² All these very different people with various social backgrounds came to settle within the complex frontier beylik of Osman. At this stage, the Ottomans were obviously not a unitary nomadic tribe anymore. Indeed, we see an emerging Ottoman polity that blended a variety of identities and traditions whose prominence changed over time.

¹⁴¹ İnalcık, *Osmanlı Tarihini*, 57.

¹⁴² For a detailed discussion of these social groups: Köprülü, *The Origins*, 48-70.

2.7.3 Early socio-political structures and institutions

In the earliest period, the cavalry dominated composition of Osman's forces showed that he had surrounded himself with nomadic warrior leaders composed of *alps* and *nökers* (comrades), who under his leadership took part in raids (*akın*) and conquests or *gaza*, in exchange for pasture land to live in (*yurtluk*).¹⁴³ In the beginning, marcher lords such as Akça Koca, Konur Alp, Hasan Alp, Turgut Alp and Samsa Çavuş were acting independently. When Osman Bey excelled as the successful leader in the frontier region, they became members of Osman's staff. The titles of *alp* and *nöker* appear to have been central institutions during Osman's time. In the steppe empires of Central Asia, the *alps* were descendants of the noble Turkish families. The concept of *nöker* was essentially a Mongol institution and had become widespread as a common Central Asian usage, which enabled Osman to build an entourage of companions and a personal staff.¹⁴⁴ The *nökers* consisted of individuals selected by the ruler himself. They were required to be independent of every social connection with tribal groups or powerful families and served the ruler with loyalty and obedience. They acted as royal guards with additional duties such as commander, messenger and envoy, but unlike royal pages they did not perform steward duties.¹⁴⁵ Towards the end of the fourteenth century, the institution of *nöker* evolved in the *Kapıkulu*-officials, who were the conscripted servants of the dynasty serving in the army and administration (see below).

According to the oldest texts, Osman's entourage was mainly composed of loyal commanders who organised the newcomers (*garibs*) in the frontiers for *gaza*-expeditions. These 'garibs' were the have-nots in search of a livelihood ('doyum', i.e. booty); they were quasi 'swing warriors', who were ready to respond to calls of *gaza* by different leaders. The Turkish nomad warriors constituted the majority of these 'garîbs'. As the word spread that those who fought with Osman won, more and more people were attracted to his banner. Successful expeditions brought fame, prestige and wealth, which attracted ever more people.¹⁴⁶ Hence, individual warriors flocked to join Osman's raids. However, there is no reason to assume that all those warriors became permanent additions to the Ottoman forces. Among the many volunteers, some of the well-rewarded stayed and became part of the emerging polity. Others whose expectations had not been met, might have joined another leader for a lucrative raid. In these circumstances, leadership

¹⁴³ Âşık Paşazâde, *Tevârîh-i Âl-i Osmân*, 283.

¹⁴⁴ İnalçık, 'An Overview of the Ottoman History' in: ed. Kemal Çiçek, *The Great Ottoman-Turkish Civilization* (Ankara, 2000) 19-20.

¹⁴⁵ B.Y. Vladimortsov, *Moğolların içtimai teşkilatı. Moğol göçebe feodalizmi* (Ankara, 1995) 133-146; Uyar and Erickson, *A Military History of the Ottomans*, 18.

¹⁴⁶ Âşık Paşazâde, *Tevârîh-i Âl-i Osmân*, 290, 293; Neşrî, *Cihânnümâ*, 54-59.

abilities counted more, becoming catalysts for new forms of political and social organisations.¹⁴⁷ The successful leader also determined the identity of the hybrid group. As it was reflected in their name: the *Osmanlı* were the ‘men of Osman’.

Despite fluctuations, Osman’s following and his leadership abilities must have attracted enough volunteers and gained enough momentum to grow. In the end, all those who stayed with Osman took part in the successful building of a state. The Ottoman socio-political structure found its logic in the fact that it was created through the efforts of this small professional martial class, the warriors who were gathered around Osman Gazi. Later, the state preserved this central position of the martial class as a keystone of its entire socio-political organisation. The general principle was upheld that each individual should remain in his own status group in order to maintain the stability of the society and state. In time, two classes would emerge. The *askeri* class was the military or administrative group and officially exempted from taxes. The second class, the *reaya* – literally ‘the flock’ – entailed the Muslim and Christian productive groups that paid taxes, such as peasants, artisans and merchants. According to the ancient political traditions, the ruler was defined as the shepherd protecting his flock, the *reaya*, and governing them with justice and protecting the *reaya*’s rights against the abuse of state power by officials.¹⁴⁸

Finally, without some degree of long term vision, all the strategic advantages and circumstantial opportunities would not have brought the Ottomans much further. However, this vision was not a ‘master plan’ and was probably continuously redefined during the following phases of Ottoman state building. Osman Gazi and his followers acted with good tactical and strategic sense that eventually gained them the control over Bithynia. Halil İnalcık demonstrated that Osman Gazi’s conquests show a clear military rationality.¹⁴⁹ At the same time, the composition of Osman’s followers kept changing. Already by the early 1320s, Osman’s polity had reached an administrative structure of enough complexity to strike coins, to assign offices to loyal commanders and to donate *waqf*-endowments. Already during the reign of Osman Gazi, former Seljuk scribes who wrote in Persian were employed and by 1350 they translated Persian and Arabic chancellery vocabulary into Turkish. Unlike the late fifteenth-century Ottoman chroniclers, who usually described the early Ottomans as naive nomads, the fourteenth-century Seljuk and Ilkhanid chroniclers portrayed the Turks in the frontiers as being in

¹⁴⁷ Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*, 129-130.

¹⁴⁸ İnalcık, *An Economic and Social History*, 16-17.

¹⁴⁹ İnalcık, ‘Osman Ghazi’s siege of Nicea’, 77-100.

much closer contact with and influenced by the Seljuk, Ilkhanid and Byzantine administrative practices.¹⁵⁰

In any event, the most important achievement for Osman's small *beylik* was that it had survived his death without a loss of the integrity of its territories. At a very early stage, the Ottomans abandoned the Turkish-Mongol practice of dividing the realms among different heirs, as the earlier Turkish states had done before. This practice was based on an idea that was particularly strong in the Turkish-Mongol steppe tradition: the belief that sovereignty is invested in every member of the dynastic family and both male and female members were able to claim a share in the exercise of sovereign power.¹⁵¹ In the succession of Osman, they did not follow this practice, as the other Turkish principalities around them did. Otherwise, this would have resulted in the partition of the principality among the sons of Osman Bey, who would have their own designated functions and domains. In any case, in the end Orhan's inheritance was not contested and Osman's patrimony was not divided. This shows that the Ottomans renovated the Central-Asian Turkish tradition according to their own vision of a strong centralised polity with undivided territories. An apanage became merely a princely fief. When one of the crown princes reached the capital to succeed their father, the others would be dispossessed or eliminated. Although in the next generations many succession wars took place between the crown princes, the Ottomans remained always reluctant to share government with other heirs, which made the political integration possible. The Ottoman succession practice finally culminated in legislating fratricide by sultan Mehmed II (r. 1451-1481) in order to eliminate all tendencies toward fragmentation and to consolidate the centralised state. Eventually, no other dynasty ever emerged out of the House of Osman.¹⁵²

2.7.4 Dynastic marriages

Already under Osman Bey, the Ottomans constructed a set of marriage alliances with the neighbouring dynasties as a strategy to extend their sphere of political influence. They built new networks through clientelism and marriage strategies. The first example of the dynasty's nurturing of ties was with the spiritual Sufi leaders. Osman Gazi married Malhun, the daughter of Sheikh Edebali, one of the most influential Sufi leaders in

¹⁵⁰ Linda T. Darling, 'Persianate Sources on Anatolia and the Early History of the Ottomans', *Studies in Persianate Societies* 2 (2004): 126-144; Kerimuddin Mahmud Aksarayi, *Müsameret'ül Ahbâr: Moğollar Zamanında Türkiye Selçukluları Tarihi*, ed. Osman Turan (Ankara, 1944), tr. Mürsel Öztürk (Ankara, 2000).

¹⁵¹ For an examination of how Ottoman sovereign power was allocated among the male and female members of the dynasty, and on dynastic politics: Leslie P. Peirce, *The Imperial Harem. Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire* (New York, 1993) 17-27.

¹⁵² Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*, 136-138.

Bythinia. This marriage was of importance for the internal legitimisation of sovereignty. Even as the Ottoman dynasty engaged in various forms of ideological rhetoric to maintain the loyalty of its diverse following, the ruling house continued to foster close relations with the sheikhs. Their charismatic approval was invoked to support dynasty's claims to sovereignty.¹⁵³ Moreover, Sheikh Edebali became Osman Gazi's spiritual guide and advisor in matters of Muslim law.¹⁵⁴ Maintaining relations of patronage by Ottoman dynasty with Sufi dervishes and Sheikhs was imperative. The Ottoman rulers relied on the services of many of the Sheikhs and *babas* (literally 'father') – Muslim mystical leaders of the Turkish nomad and urban populations – and patronised them. These Sufi leaders seem to have captured the hearts and minds of the Turkish nomads as well as those of the local Christians. They appeased the acceptance of Ottoman rule and developed mechanisms for coexistence.¹⁵⁵ Like the Ottomans, other Muslim dynasties who appealed to nomad Turkish-Mongol political principles also sought the blessing of popular spiritual masters.¹⁵⁶

The early Ottomans constructed political alliances and brought together Christian and Muslim frontiersmen and women, employing the cultures of both worlds to build a new enterprise. Until the mid-fifteenth century, the Ottoman rulers took both legal wives as well as concubines. Osman married his son Orhan Gazi to Nilüfer Hatun, the daughter of the Byzantine governor of Yarhisar.¹⁵⁷ This liaison was part of Osman's strategy to build alliances and ties. Marriages with neighbouring dynasties were not only a way to integrate the Ottoman dynasty into the 'international royal community', but they also served territorial expansion. The wives formed political intermediaries between dynastic families, as they maintained links with their families of origin.¹⁵⁸ After his accession to the Byzantine throne in 1347, emperor John Kantakuzenos married his daughter Theodora to Orhan Bey, son of Osman. This marriage consolidated the Ottoman-Byzantine alliance that had already existed for a few years. The many visits of Orhan Gazi to Constantinople allowed the second Ottoman prince and his emissaries to assist directly in Byzantine ceremonies at the imperial court and contributed to the adaptation of Ottoman practices.¹⁵⁹ Orhan's wife, Theodora Kantakuzenos played a very important intermediary

¹⁵³ Peirce, *The Imperial Harem*, 16, 33.

¹⁵⁴ Âşık Paşazâde, *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osmân*, 277-78, 318-19.

¹⁵⁵ Ömer Lûtfi Barkan, 'İstîlâ devirlerinin Kolonizatör Türk dervişleri ve Zaviyeler', *Vakıflar Dergisi* II (1942) 274-386.

¹⁵⁶ Manz, *The Rise and Rule of Tamerlane*, 17-18.

¹⁵⁷ Âşık Paşazâde, *Tevârih*, 287.

¹⁵⁸ Peirce, *The Imperial Harem*, 28-31; 37-40.

¹⁵⁹ Keith Hopwood, 'Low-Level Diplomacy between Byzantines and Ottoman Turks: The Case of Bithynia', eds. Jonathan Shepard and Simon Franklin, *Byzantine Diplomacy. Papers from the Twenty-fourth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies* (Cambridge, 1990) 151-158.

role, which helped the early Ottomans to familiarise themselves with the Byzantine court culture.¹⁶⁰ This does not seem a very odd practice as there are earlier examples of such marital unions reaching back to the Rum Seljuk period. For example, Seljuk Sultan Alaaddin Keykubad I also married a Byzantine princess and strengthened his relations with Byzantium. Keykubad lived for many years in Nicea and became acquainted with the customs at the Byzantine court.¹⁶¹

In the second half of the fourteenth century, the marriages with the Christian Balkan dynasties increased. Previously, in the Balkans, marriages between Muslim and Catholic or Orthodox dynastic families had been unthinkable. In 1378, however, Sultan Murad I (r. 1362-1389) married Kera Tamara, the daughter of Bulgarian Tsar Ivan Alexander Asen (1310-1371). Murad I became the brother-in-law of Ivan Sisman (r. 1350-1395), the future Tsar of Bulgaria. In 1391, Sultan Bayezid I (r. 1389-1402) married Oliveira Despina, the daughter of Lazarus Hebeljanović, king of Serbia who was killed at the battle of Kosovo in 1389. Hence, in his turn Stefan Lazarević (r. 1374-1427) became the brother-in-law and vassal of Bayezid I, allying his principality to the Ottoman state.¹⁶²

Dynastic marriages also played an important role in the expansionist policy of the Ottoman principality in Anatolia. Sultan Murad I married his son, crown prince Bayezid, to the daughter of Süleymân Şah, the *bey* of the Turkish state of Germiyan. Through this alliance, Murad not only formed relations with his southern neighbor, but also allied his dynasty with the leading Sufi families in Anatolia. Sultan Hatun, the daughter of Germiyanoglu and the wife of Bayezid I, was the great-grand daughter of Mevlana Rumi - the famous Sufi poet from Konya. The Ottoman chroniclers presented this marriage as a result of the request by the Germiyanid lord, Süleyman Şah, who wished to protect his territory against annexation by the Karamanids. He proposed this marriage to Murad I and offered the city of Kütahya, the Germiyanid capital, and several other cities as dowry of his daughter. Murad agreed and acquired most of the Germiyanid principality.¹⁶³ In 1376, Alaeddin Ali Bey of Karaman asked for the hand of Melek Hatun, the daughter of Sultan Murad I, a request that was accepted. A few years later, the bey of Karaman attacked Ankara, which had recently been incorporated into the Ottoman realm. It was only thanks to the appeals of Sultan Hatun to his father Murad I that he renounced a punitive expedition against Alaeddin Bey.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶⁰ Ruth Macrides, 'Dynastic Marriages and Political Kinship', in: Shepard and Franklin ed., *Byzantine Diplomacy*, 263-280.

¹⁶¹ Köprülü, *Early Mystics*, 149.

¹⁶² İnalcık, 'Bâyezid I', *TDIAV*, vol. III, 267.

¹⁶³ Âşık Paşazâde, *Tevârîh-i*, 328-329.

¹⁶⁴ Neşri, *Cihannüma*, 107-108.

While royal marriages of the fourteenth century were contracted predominantly with Christian women, those of the fifteenth century were made primarily with Muslim women. This shift reflects the growing importance of the Ottomans as an Anatolian power. Marriage marked the submission of some Turkish dynasties to the Ottomans. Sultan Murad II (r. 1420-1451) married three times. His first marriage was with Alime Hatun, a princess of the Dulkadir principality. He also married Tacünnisa Hatice Hatun, the daughter of the prince of İsfendiyar. His last marriage was in 1433 with Mara Brankovic, the daughter of the king of Serbia.¹⁶⁵ This was the last inter-dynastic marriage. With Sultan Mehmed II (r. 1451-1481) royal inter-dynastic marriages came to an end. The sultans no longer tied themselves into dynastic marriages. They no longer wished to share the political and symbolic power that they had accumulated with the conquest of Constantinople. Another reason for the cessation of inter-dynastic marriages was the drying up of the pool of neighbouring dynasties. With the conquest of Constantinople the last of the neighbouring dynasties was eliminated. The House of Osman contracted three more marriages with Turkish dynasties, but these were made for princes rather than for the sultan himself. In 1450, Murad II married his son Mehmed to Sitti, a princess from the south-eastern Turkish dynasty of Dulkadir. Mehmed II in turn married his son Bayezid to Ayşe, another Dulkadir princess. This marriage was most probably concluded to secure the neutrality of the Dulkadir ruler in the wake of Ottoman eastern campaign against the Akkoyunlus in 1468. Bayezid II married his son Selim to Ayşe Hafsa Hatun, the daughter of the vassal Crimean Tatar khan Mengli Giray in 1494. In this period, the principle that sultans did not contract legal marriages, but instead perpetuated through concubines was firmly established. It was Sultan Süleyman (r. 1520-1566) who broke the tradition with his formal marriage to one of his concubines, Hürrem.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁵ İnalçık, 'Murâd II', *TDIAY*, vol. XXXI, 167-170; Mihailo Popovic, *Mara Brankovic. Eine Frau zwischen dem christlichen und dem islamischen Kulturkreise im 15. Jahrhundert* (Ruhpolding, 2010).

¹⁶⁶ Peirce, *The Imperial Harem*, 29-30.

2.8 The Debate on the Origins and Nature of the Ottoman State

The scarcity of Ottoman sources from the early fourteenth century has inevitably tempted the fantasies of scholars and led to a series of speculations on the origins of the Ottomans and their state formation. Early Ottoman state building was the most controversial and highly debated issue of this historiography. The central question focused on how the Ottoman state could develop in a few generations from a tiny principality into a world power and could survive for more than six centuries. Most importantly, to whom should this success be attributed? Some modern scholars suggested that the only possible explanation for the success of the Ottoman dynasty was owed to the Christian elements and influences. In 1916, the American theologian, Herbert Gibbons, initiated the debate by claiming that the foundations of the Ottoman state were laid by the Christian and Byzantine recruits and converts.¹⁶⁷ He perceived the Ottomans as a 'new race', a mixture of Turkish, Greek and Balkan peoples, in which the Christian element was much more crucial. Gibbons saw the Ottoman state formation as the outcome of this 'racial blending' of a 'wild Asiatic blood' with the 'European stock', in which the Byzantine state structure and institutions were maintained under a Muslim guise. The underlying assumption of Gibbons' approach was his belief that the powerful Ottoman Empire could simply not have emerged from Turkish and Muslim roots alone. Gibbons assumed that 'nomadic Turkish tribes had no ability to establish the organisation for a state'.¹⁶⁸

In the Europe of his time Gibbons' theory enjoyed a very broad recognition. Charles Diehl, a French Byzantinist, joined him and believed that the Turks were merely rough soldiers, but certainly no administrators and that they understood little from politics. Diehl wrote: 'Les Turcs modelèrent donc en grande partie de leur institutions d'Etat et leur organisation administrative sur ce que leur offrait Byzance [...] Les Turcs avaient besoin d'autre part d'administrateurs et de diplomates. Ils les trouvèrent en grand nombre parmi les chrétiens.'¹⁶⁹ The Romanian medievalist, Nicolae Jorga, was also convinced that the 'rough Turks' had created nothing new and that they merely continued the existing Byzantine institutions.¹⁷⁰ As a consequence, these authors overlooked the multiple connections of the nascent Ottoman enterprise with Seljuks, Mamluks, Byzantines, Venetians, Genoese and Mongol Ilkhanids. Fundamentally, they

¹⁶⁷ Gibbons, *The Foundation of the Ottoman Empire*, 41.

¹⁶⁸ Ibidem, 27, 46.

¹⁶⁹ Charles Diehl, *Byzance: Grandeur et Décadence* (Paris, 1920) 325-326.

¹⁷⁰ Nicolae Jorga, *Byzance après Byzance: continuation de l'histoire de la vie byzantine* (Bucarest, 1935).

expressed the consensus that the Turks were inferior to Europeans, an implicit or explicit assumption that still prevailed among Western scholars of this generation. This negative perception and description of 'the Turk' was actually a continuation of the historical pattern of thought, which was already developed by the humanists during the Renaissance.¹⁷¹ Even later in the twentieth century, often clearly without realising this themselves, implicitly or unwillingly, some authors still held similar perceptions.¹⁷²

2.8.1 Critical Voices: Giese, Köprülü and the Annales-methode

In the early twentieth century, some more nuanced historical approaches appeared. In explaining the emergence and success of the Ottoman state formation, the German historian Friedrich Giese pointed to the structure of craft guilds and merchants in Anatolia, the network of *Ahi*-corporations.¹⁷³ Predominantly, *ahis* were artisans who had passed through various stages in order to become masters in their craft.¹⁷⁴ They had to produce qualitative goods and share the profits of their trade among themselves. The underlying idea was that arts, trade and artisanship were perceived as means to serve the people. Giese argued that the foundations of the early Ottoman administrative practices had to be sought in these urban guild-like *ahi* organisations that were active during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries in Anatolia. The *ahi*-organisations provided for security and continuation of the social and economic life in the cities, when the overarching political authority of the Seljuks had collapsed due to the Mongol invasion

¹⁷¹ Many fifteenth and sixteenth-century humanists traced the origins of the Turks back to the Scythians and the Trojans. They thought in this way to reveal crucial information about the 'barbaric' nature of the Ottoman state. As a result, the humanist historiography created an image of 'the Turk' and identified the Ottoman state as a rogue state, which threatened Europe and the entire world. It concluded that the Ottoman state had no right to exist in the civilized world. See : Margaret Meserve, *Empires of Islam in Renaissance Historical Thought* (Cambridge, 2008); Nancy Bisaha, *Creating East and West. Renaissance Humanists and the Ottoman Turks* (Philadelphia, 2004); David R. Blanks and Michael Frassetto ed., *Western Views of Islam in Medieval and Early Modern Europe: Perception of Other* (New York, 1999); Johanna D. Hintzen, *De kruistochtplanen van Philips den Goede* (Rotterdam, 1918); Jean Richard, 'La Croisade bourguignonne dans la politique européenne', *Publications du Centre Européen d'études Burgondo-médianes* 10 (1968): 41-44.

¹⁷² See: Anderson, *Lineages of the Absolutist State* 379, 382-384, 397-398. Anderson underlined the uniqueness of the historical trajectory of Europe and placed it against the 'inferior' nature of Ottoman history. From a similar assumption, Ottoman political theory was also described as inferior by Black, 'Ottoman Political Thought. A Comparison with Europe', 235-241.

¹⁷³ Friedrich Giese, 'Das Problem der Entstehung des Osmanischen Reiches', *Zeitschrift für Semitistik und verwandte Gebiete* 2 (1924): 246-271.

¹⁷⁴ The term '*ahi*' literally meant 'brother' in Arabic and 'generous' in Turkish.

of Anatolia in 1248.¹⁷⁵ The American historians, Blake and Langer also argued persuasively that the early guild-like *ahi* organisations in the Anatolian cities had provided the fundamentals of the early Ottoman governmental practice. In the absence of an authority during the political chaos of the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, these *ahi* federations and 'brotherhoods' provided not only solidarity between craftsmen, but also ensured services for the continuation of social life in the Anatolian cities.¹⁷⁶

Köprülü also rejected Gibbons' reasoning and formulated a thesis focusing on Turkish nomadic lore. He demonstrated the extent to which the Ottoman institutions derived from Seljuk and Mongol Ilhanid administrative heritage.¹⁷⁷ Köprülü argued that the Ottoman state derived from an amalgam of different Turkish tribes living in Anatolia. These Turkish groups were the inheritors of an administrative legacy passed to them from Muslim Seljuk and Mongol Ilkhanid roots. The Ottoman bureaucracy was formed according to these two inherited practices. Köprülü argued that urban life among the Anatolian Turks in the fourteenth century was sufficiently developed to attract Turks who had gained experience in the administrative organisation of the Seljuk, Ilhanid and Mamluk state.¹⁷⁸ He shifted the focus from the military incidents to the social context, the cultural traditions and the institutional structures upon which the Ottomans built their polity.¹⁷⁹ In this sense, Köprülü's work (1935) was already in line with the new approach of the *Annales*. An interesting fact, as it would still take some decades before this approach would decisively replace the traditionally dominant political-military narrative historiography in Europe itself.¹⁸⁰

2.8.2 Wittek's *gazi*-thesis

In 1938, the Austrian historian Paul Wittek published his famous *gazi*-thesis in a reaction to Köprülü.¹⁸¹ Wittek rejected the nomadic Oghuz-Kayı origins of the Ottoman dynasty

¹⁷⁵ For more information on the urban guild-system of the *Ahi*'s, see: Bernard Lewis, 'Islamic Guilds', *The Economic History Review* 8/1 (1937): 26-33; Franz Taeschner, 'Beiträge zur Geschichte der Ahi's in Anatolien (14.-15. Jhdt.) auf Grund neuer Quellen' *Islamica* (1929): 1-47.

¹⁷⁶ William L. Langer and R.P. Blake, 'The Rise of the Ottoman Turks and Its Historical Background', *American Historical Review* 37 (1932): 468-505.

¹⁷⁷ Köprülü, *The Origins*, 11-21.

¹⁷⁸ Ibidem, 87-88, 94-98.

¹⁷⁹ Ibidem, 22-25.

¹⁸⁰ Fuad Köprülü received for his study the praise of the leading *Annales*-historian: Lucien Febvre, '[Review of] Köprülü: Les Origines de l'Empire Ottoman', *Annales: ESC* 9 (1937): 100-101.

¹⁸¹ Paul Wittek, *The Rise of the Ottoman Empire* (London, 1938). Recently, a collection of Wittek's oeuvre has been published, see: P. Wittek, *The Rise of the Ottoman Empire. Studies in the History of Turkey, Thirteenth-Fifteenth Centuries*, ed. Colin Heywood (London, 2012).

and sought the essence of the Ottoman state formation in the so-called *gaza*, a term which he translated as ‘holy war’. Paul Wittek claimed that the Ottoman state expanded because of its Islamic inclination to wage a holy war or *gaza*. For generations his thesis remained the dominant explanation of the Ottoman state and today it is still often quoted.¹⁸² Although warfare is only one aspect of state formation, Wittek initiated a controversial debate and claimed that the *gaza* – which he understood as a continuous ‘holy war’ and as proselytism against Christians – was the central ideological motive of the Ottoman state. He described the Ottoman Turks as ‘fanatic warriors of Islam’ for whom ‘from their first appearance, warfare against their Christian neighbours was the principal factor of their political practice. This struggle never ceased to be of vital importance to the Ottoman Empire.’¹⁸³ Initially, the Byzantine resistance was of crucial importance as it slowed down Ottoman expansion. In fact this delay made it possible for the Ottomans to build and consolidate their institutions. In the seventeenth century, the Ottoman state gradually began to decline after the *gaza* had struck in Western Europe. The final breakdown came after the loss of nearly all the European possessions due to Ottoman defeat in the Balkan Wars of 1912-1913: ‘This defeat obliged the Ottomans to resign definitely and forever any ambition of ruling over Christian countries and this meant the renunciation of the *raison d’être* of their state.’¹⁸⁴ Wittek assumed that his interpretation of *gaza* had continuously driven the Ottoman state from its emergence until its demise. Recognising the scholarship of Wittek, I will nevertheless question his theory in several respects.

Firstly, regarding warfare, it should be noted that waging war has always been an outcome and a crucial component of state formation. Both in medieval Western European history and during the early Ottoman period, the wars of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries were the products not only of violence, but also of conceptual and administrative developments; wars resulted in the growth of centralised jurisdictions, governmental intrusiveness and administrative capacity.¹⁸⁵ To explain the politics of this

¹⁸² Halil İnalcık, *The Ottoman Empire. The Classical Age, 1300-1600* (London, 1973) 3; Bernard Lewis, *Istanbul and the Civilization of the Ottoman Empire* (Oklahoma, 1963) 36; Jason Goodwin, *Lords of the horizons. A History of the Ottoman Empire* (London, 2000) 10; Caroline Finkel, *Osman’s Dream. The Story of the Ottoman Empire 1300-1923* (London, 2006) 10; John Jefferson, *The Holy Wars of king Wladislas and Sultan Murad. The Ottoman-Christian Conflict from 1438-1444* (Leiden, 2012) 70-74.

¹⁸³ Wittek, *The Rise*, 2.

¹⁸⁴ Ibidem, 3.

¹⁸⁵ On the role of war in medieval European politics, see: John Watts, *The Making of Politics. Europe, 1300-1500* (New York, 2009) 19-30; Jean-Philip Genet, ‘L’Etat moderne: un modèle opératoire’, in: ed. Genet, *L’Etat moderne : genèse* (Paris, 1990). On the role of the cities in the development of European states, see: Wim P. Blockmans, ‘Voracious States and Obstructing Cities: An Aspect of State Formation in Pre-Industrial Europe’, eds. Tilly and Blockmans, *Cities and the Rise of States in Europe, 1000-1800* (Boulder, 1994).

period in terms of war is, in a sense, to explain them in terms of state building. Charles Tilly's pithy observation, 'War made the state and the state made war', echoes this point clearly.¹⁸⁶ In order to legitimise their wars, both the Western and Ottoman sides referred to religious terms. The Ottomans justified their campaigns and mobilisation for war with references to the 'chivalric' gaza-ethos. The Ottoman court poet Ahmedî, who wrote the first historical text (c. 1410), presented the Ottoman rulers as gazi-sultans and defined the gazi as: 'the servant of God' (*Tangrınun ferrâşıdır*), 'the sword of God' (*Hak kılıcıdır*) and 'the support and refuge of the people of religion' (*püşt ü penâh-ı ehl-i dîn*).¹⁸⁷

It is exactly on this oldest chronicle of Ahmedî that Wittek based his gaza-thesis and referred to the inscription (*kitabe*) from 1337 at the Şehadet Mosque in Bursa, where Orhan Bey in a canonical formulation is called 'Sultan of the Gazis'. The composition of the titles in the inscription at the Şehadet mosque were for Wittek 'absolutely unique in the Ottoman protocol and demonstrated that this peculiar formulation expressed a historical reality, which also dominated the chronicle of Ahmedî'.¹⁸⁸ However, Feridun Emecen showed that taking the gazi-title and the political use of its ethos were not uniquely Ottoman, as Wittek had claimed. Other Muslim rulers in Anatolia before the Ottomans had also used the title of gazi. This was a legacy of the warrior culture and dynamics of the earlier Arab-Byzantine frontiers of Anatolia and the frontiers of Transoxania.¹⁸⁹ Furthermore, the gaza was neither an uniquely Ottoman ideology nor necessarily a Sunni doctrine. The sixteenth-century Safavid dynasty, which promoted the Shia dogma as an instrument of their anti-Ottoman policies in order to split the Turkish nomadic communities under Ottoman control, also keenly portrayed themselves as the 'real gazis'.¹⁹⁰

Wittek's main evidence, Ahmedî, was a fifteenth-century poet attached to the Ottoman court, as we have discussed in Chapter 1. To answer the Ottoman need for legitimacy, Ahmedî praised the Ottomans through the gaza-motive. In the eyes of many Muslims, the Ottoman military successes legitimised them as heroic warriors at the frontiers of Islam. The gaza-rhetoric was actually intended for an internal audience: as a vehicle for legitimisation. And so Ahmedî elevated gaza from the level of a religious concept to that of a political principle that legitimised the otherwise pragmatic conquests at the

¹⁸⁶ Charles Tilly, *The Formation of Nation States in Western Europe* (Princeton 1975) 42.

¹⁸⁷ Ahmedî, *Dasitan-i Tenvârîh-i Mülûk-i Âl-i Osman*, ed. Kemal Silay (Harvard, 2004) 27.

¹⁸⁸ Ibidem, 16.

¹⁸⁹ Feridun Emecen, 'Gazaya dair. XIV. yüzyıl kaynakları arasında bir gezinti', *Hakkı Dursun Yılmaz'a armağan* (Istanbul 1995) 191-197; Abdulkadir Özcan, 'Türklerde Gaza ruhu ve bunun Osmanlılardaki tezahürü', in: *10. Osmanlı Sempozyumu Bildirileri* (Söğüt, 1995) 9-13; Linda Darling, 'Contested territory. Ottoman Holy War in Comparative Perspective', *Studia Islamica* 91 (2000): 133-163.

¹⁹⁰ Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*, 93.

frontiers. Indeed, *gaza* meant different things to different groups at different times, according to their political agendas. The fifteenth-century chronicler Neşrî noted that Osman Bey decided to undertake *gaza*, so that he could win his own bread and would not be dependent on any other king for his existence.¹⁹¹

Wittek uncritically accepted the literary devices of Ahmedî. On this basis, he concluded that there was sufficient evidence that the *gaza* was the driving force of the Ottoman state. However, Ahmedî's epic poem was not meant to discuss the history of the Ottomans. It was rather an example of the popular *nasihatname*-genre, a literary genre to educate and advise the princes, whereby he advised his patrons that the army should undertake warfare against 'infidel' states and not fight against fellow Muslim Turkish states. Ahmedî was aware that, although *gaza* might serve to justify the conquests of non-Muslim territories, it could be dangerously used to justify the conquest of Muslim states. It did not serve to win the loyalty of the other Muslim Turkish princes in Anatolia. He had witnessed how Sultan Yıldırım Bâyezid had lost the battle against Timur Lenk, the powerful Turkish conqueror from Central Asia. Earlier, Bâyezid I had seized the Turkish principalities of Anatolia, whose princes were displeased after they had lost their positions. Consequently, during the battle at Ankara they went over to Timur's side, with catastrophic consequences. Timur restored the Turkish princes and divided the Ottoman territories. As I shall discuss more in detail in the following chapter, in his introduction to his chronicle, from which Wittek selectively cited, Ahmedî actually emphasised the Islamic principle of just rule or justice.¹⁹²

Furthermore, Linda Darling's study of medieval Muslim frontiers in Central Asia, India and Anatolia demonstrated that *gaza* existed on all those frontier regions, where each group held a different understanding of *gaza* and its practices.¹⁹³ *Gaza* could thus serve as a foundational concept in Ottoman discourse of legitimization, appealing to a wide variety of people. This did not necessarily imply that a 'holy war' was the engine of Ottoman state building. Interestingly, the confrontational ideology of *gaza* appeared predominantly on the popular level, especially among the converts, rather than coming from the Ottoman rulers themselves, who always seemed less enthusiastic.¹⁹⁴ In fact, the tensions between the different groups who struggled for power and rewrote their history were reflected in the contradictions in the sources. Indeed, as we shall see, *gaza* meant different things to different groups at different times and circumstances.

¹⁹¹ Neşrî, *Cihânnümâ*, 46.

¹⁹² Ahmedî, *Dasitan-i Tevârîh*, 25-26.

¹⁹³ Darling, 'Contested Territory: Ottoman Holy War', 133-163; *ibid*, 'Reformulating the Gazi Question: When Was the Ottoman State a Gazi State?' *Turcica* 43 (2012): 13-51.

¹⁹⁴ Darling, 'Christian-Muslim Interaction on the Ottoman Frontier: Gaza and Accommodation in Early Ottoman History', *The Ottoman Mosaic: Exploring Models for Peace by Re-Exploring the Past*, eds. Karpat and Yildirim (Seattle, 2010) 117.

2.8.3 Critics of Wittek's thesis

Wittek's gaza-thesis was a narrative of which the dominant motif was conquest of and warfare against Christians. In other words, Ottoman historiography acquired a kind of exoticism, fabricated by European observers. Consequently, it was no surprise that for so long scholars fell for burlesque depictions of corruption and decline once the age of conquest came to an inevitable end. Wittek's thesis remained very influential for a long time and only in the 1980s it first received systematic scholarly criticism. Among these critics, there existed a variety of answers to the question of gaza. Scholars came to opposing theories about the early Ottomans. Some regarded them as engaged in an Islamic 'holy war' activity and some as heterodox and inclusive, while others rejected their gazi identity as later fabrications of the princely court.

Relying on anthropological studies on nomadism, the American historian Paul Lindner claimed that the early Ottomans had been predominantly motivated by a desire for booty and plunder.¹⁹⁵ Lindner argued that the recruitment of Byzantine Christians in the Ottoman military ranks was inconsistent with the alleged 'spirit of the exclusive gaza ideology'. According to him early Ottomans were rather 'shamanistic nomads', whose practices and traditions were inconsistent with the 'essence' of Islam. Consequently, he rejected the gaza motive in the Ottoman historical texts as 'orthodox religious fantasies', invented by the late fifteenth-century 'court-chroniclers'.¹⁹⁶ After Lindner, there appeared a number of articles which defended a similar perspective.¹⁹⁷ However, the Turkish historian Cemal Kafadar clearly demonstrated the problematic aspects of Lindner's viewpoint. According to Kafadar, his approach was the result of an Orientalist reading of the early Ottoman sources. He pointed to the distortions caused by the essentialist trap when one assumes such notions as the 'real Islam' or the 'real gazis' and apply them as criteria.¹⁹⁸ In his work, Kafadar reconstructed a balanced picture of the Anatolian marcher culture and society during the early Ottoman period.¹⁹⁹ He concluded that Wittek's gaza-thesis was much more flexible than was recognised by its critics.²⁰⁰

The British historians Colin Heywood and Colin Imber regarded Wittek as a kind of demon that had to be expelled. However, Imber did Wittek little justice by associating

¹⁹⁵ Lindner, *Nomads and Ottomans*, 2-50.

¹⁹⁶ Ibidem, 110.

¹⁹⁷ Gyula Kaldy-Nagy, 'The Holy War (*jihad*) in the First Centuries of the Ottoman Empire', *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 3/4 (1979-80): 467-473; Ronald C. Jennings, 'Some Thoughts on the Gazi-Thesis', *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 76 (1986): 151-161.

¹⁹⁸ Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*, 52 and 55-57.

¹⁹⁹ Ibidem, 62-90.

²⁰⁰ Ibidem, 58. Kafadar also gave a detailed overview of the existing literature, see: 29-59.

him too easily with the German nationalist historiography, which is somewhat irreverent towards a scholar who fled to England when the Nazis came to power in Germany.²⁰¹ Heywood argued that Wittek's gaza-thesis is an 'ideal type', which says more about his own education in late Habsburg Vienna, than about early Ottoman history itself. He explained that a link existed with the German neo-romantic poet, Stefan George, as Wittek's alleged principal inspiration. Heywood concluded that Wittek's interpretation of Ottoman history was 'mystically inspired and amoral'.²⁰² Imber claimed that Wittek's interpretation of the early Ottoman history was 'a false analysis' based on broad generalisations that did not stand. He suggested that the term gazi was already in the period of Osman Gazi a 'hollow concept'. However, Imber also reasoned that the early Ottoman history was a 'black hole', about which nothing can be said due to the lack of reliable sources.²⁰³

In response, the Turkish historian Halil İnalcık suggested a detailed chronology of the earliest history of the Ottoman Empire using both Byzantine and Ottoman texts written from different viewpoints.²⁰⁴ As we have already seen, İnalcık argued that the early Ottoman historiographical sources should be carefully interpreted instead of being entirely rejected from the onset. He also incorporated the Wittek-thesis in his work and emphasised the importance of the gaza-ideology as 'a unifying factor that exceeded the tribal divides'.²⁰⁵ İnalcık confirmed that the gaza, for which he also used the term 'holy war', was an important factor in the emergence and expansion of the Ottoman state. He agreed with Wittek that the frontier society in the Anatolian marches conformed to specific cultural traits, imbued with the 'ideal of continuous Holy War and the expansion of the realm of the Islam – the Dârülislam – until they covered the whole'.²⁰⁶ The gaza-ideology accorded to the idea of universal rule that was inspired by Islamic political thought. However, the gaza was not aimed at proselytism against the Christians nor was it intended to destroy the infidel world – the Dârülharb – driven by an a priori religious hatred. The Ottoman state ideology used it as a legitimising rhetoric tool to cover its

²⁰¹ Colin Imber, 'Paul Wittek's De la défaite d'Ankara a la prise de Constantinople', *Osmanlı Araştırmaları* 5 (1986) 291-304; Bernard Shaw, 'Professor Paul Wittek, 1894-1978', 140.

²⁰² Colin Heywood, 'Introduction. A Critical Essay', in: idem ed., *Wittek, The Rise*, 22. Ibid, 'The Bursa inscription and its interpreters' *Turcica* 36 (2004): 215-232.

²⁰³ Imber, 'The legend of Osman Gazi', 75; idem, 'The Ottoman Dynastic Myth', 7-27; Idem, 'Canon and Apocrypha in early Ottoman history,' in: *Studies in Ottoman History in Honor of Professor V. L. Menage*, eds. Heywood and Imber (Istanbul, 1994) 117-137.

²⁰⁴ Halil İnalcık, 'The Question of the Emergence of the Ottoman State', *International Journal of Turkish Studies* 2 (1980) 71-79.

²⁰⁵ Ibidem, 75.

²⁰⁶ İnalcık, *The Ottoman Empire*, 6.

endeavours to subdue their adversary Christian states, as well as the rival dynasties in the Muslim world.

The final voice in this debate was that of the American historian, Heath W. Lowry, a specialist of the Christian peasants in the Ottoman state.²⁰⁷ Following the ideas of Lindner, Lowry claimed that gaza was not a 'hollow concept, but it was well used by the Ottomans to gain booty and slaves'. The primary motivation of the Ottomans, according to Lowry, was a desire for booty and slaves. He held that the Ottoman state was founded by Christian and Muslim war lords, who organised themselves into a 'plundering confederation', open to everyone who could contribute to this goal of amassing booty, slaves and plunder for its followers.²⁰⁸ It was this desire for booty and slaves, rather than religious zeal, which attracted increasing numbers of warriors to the Ottomans. However, Lowry tended to treat the entire fourteenth century as possessing a single ethos, namely the desire for booty and slaves. He assumed that the Ottoman 'war machine' rolled into the Balkans, 'fuelled by the greed and ambition of a predatory confederacy'.²⁰⁹ Lowry concluded that the Ottomans were not gazis, but a predatory band. Furthermore, he ascribed the success of the Ottoman state formation to the integration of the Christian Balkan and Byzantine aristocracy into the Ottoman ruling elite.²¹⁰ This integration would have been necessitated due to the lack of skilled human resources among the Muslim Turks, who were not able to build the structures of governmental organisation.²¹¹ In this sense, Lowry's work is a reformulation of Gibbons' old idea of the exaggerated role of the Christians in the Ottoman state building.²¹²

2.8.4 Gaza, Jihad and Holy War

Scholars have debated the nature and origins of the early Ottomans, and particularly the definition and role of gaza for some time without closure. In order to clarify some matters in this complex debate, it seems better to firstly consider the semantic differences of the notions of gaza and holy war. Because the question still remains whether the concepts gaza, jihad and holy war can be used as equivalents. Are they interchangeable synonyms? Wittek interpreted the concept gaza wrongly as an equivalent to the western term 'holy war'. He was the first historian who translated the term gaza in this way.²¹³ This

²⁰⁷ Heath W. Lowry, *The Nature of the Early Ottoman State* (Albany 2003).

²⁰⁸ Ibidem, 46, 52-54.

²⁰⁹ Lowry, *The Nature*, 54, 57, 70, 77.

²¹⁰ Ibidem, 89-93 en 115-130.

²¹¹ Ibidem, 134-136.

²¹² For example, see: Gibbons, *The Foundation*, 41, 74; Diehl, *Byzance*, 325-326.

²¹³ Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*, 11.

translation was soon adopted by other scholars. However, this translation is problematic in the context of the fourteenth-century Ottoman history, since the early Ottoman sources did not use the term *jihad*. Furthermore, the *gaza* did not mean the same thing as *jihad* and it had different connotations than the Christian term 'holy war'. Each of these terms appear in different semantic and historical contexts, which are to be explored in the sources.²¹⁴

The term 'holy war' is obviously a European Christian concept and mostly finds its origins, development and connotations in the context of medieval European history. From the European Christian perspective, religious difference was the main reason to start a holy war. The western idea of holy war was driven by proselytism and was characterised by religious intolerance, which usually made the coexistence of different creeds very difficult. The term implied a categorical hostility of Christianity towards the other religions. During the Crusades, which had the ultimate goal of liberating Anatolia and Jerusalem from the Muslim infidels, the use of violence was commonly justified by the hatred against 'the infidel Turk and his heretical religion'. From 638 onwards, Jerusalem was under Muslim rule. In 1095, at the Council of Clermont-Ferrand, pope Urban II called for the First Crusade and summoned to take up the cross against the Seljuk Turks. Urban was a French nobleman who had served as grand prior of the monastery of Cluny before becoming cardinal-bishop and then pope. Guilbert of Nogent, an eyewitness chronicler of the First Crusade, observed: 'In our own time, God has instituted a holy warfare, so that knights and common people have found a new way of winning salvation.'²¹⁵

According to Robert the Monk, an eyewitness writing after 1099, in his speech Pope Urban II denounced the Seljuk Turks as 'an accursed race, utterly alienated from God'.²¹⁶ Fulcher of Chartres, another eyewitness who wrote after the First Crusade, reported that the pope called the Seljuk Turks 'enemies of God' and summoned that it was a Christian duty 'to exterminate this vile race from our lands.'²¹⁷ In declaring the Crusade, Pope Urban stated that the 'Holy Sepulcher of our Lord is polluted by the filthiness of an unclean nation. Therefore, go forward in happiness and confidence, and destroy the enemies of

²¹⁴ For a detailed discussion of this matter, see: Kaçar, 'Moedige krijgers', 245–267.

²¹⁵ Guilbert of Nogent, *Historia quae dicitur Gesta Dei per Franco*, in : *Recueil des historiens des Croisades: Historiens occidentaux*, Vol 4. (Paris, 1844-95) 195.

²¹⁶ Robert the Monk, *Historia Iherosolomitana*, cited by August C. Krey, *The First Crusade: The Accounts of Eye-Witnesses and Participants* (Princeton, 1921) 30. For this reference I rely on Karen Armstrong, *Holy War: The Crusades and their Impact on Today's World* (London, 1988) 387.

²¹⁷ Fulcher of Chartres (Foucher de Chartres), *A History of the Expedition to Jerusalem, 1095-1127*, ed. Harold S. Fink, trans. Frances Rita Ryan (Knoxville, 1969) 66.

God.²¹⁸ Both the Christian and Muslim eyewitness accounts confirm that during the three days after the crusaders had captured Jerusalem, they massacred, in an orgy of killing, nearly every Muslim and Jewish inhabitant of the city.²¹⁹ Norman Housley, a leading historian of the crusades, wrote: ‘The main characteristic of western Christianity [that undertook the crusades] was an a priori hostility towards the Turks and the desire for their destruction.’²²⁰ And since the late fourteenth century, the ultimate goal of the Crusades changed into the objective of expelling the Muslims, i.e. the Ottomans, from Europe and Anatolia. The idea of a Christian holy war against the Muslim ‘Turks’ was in this way embedded in a long cultural tradition. This intellectual tradition disseminated the old assumption of a relentless struggle between Christianity and Islam.²²¹ As noted above, many humanist writers from the fifteenth and sixteenth-century imagined that the Turks originated from the Scythians and the Trojans, and assumed that this revealed crucial information about the ‘barbaric’ nature of the Ottoman Empire.

The above discussed Western perception of the Islam and ‘the Turk’ in historical writings also somehow determined the viewpoint of Wittek. It is apparent that he interpreted the concept *gaza* exactly from this cultural background and intellectual heritage when he translated *gaza* as holy war. He understood and described the *gaza* as a kind of mirroring image of the Western crusade ideology. Consequently, the terms *gaza*, *jihad* and holy war were used as interchangeable synonyms in many scholarly works.²²² As Kafadar already remarked, however, neither *gaza* nor *jihad* originally meant holy war. The early Ottoman sources made a difference between the concepts *gaza* and *jihad* and the latter was not used in the early Ottoman narratives on campaigns. Studies have also shown that the concept *jihad*, once it was introduced in the late seventeenth century by the Ottomans, was not used in the sense of continuous warfare to expand the territories

²¹⁸ Roland H. Bainton, *Christian Attitudes Toward War and Peace: A Historical Survey and Critical Re-Evaluation* (Nashville, 1960) 112.

²¹⁹ Benjamin Kedar, ‘The Jerusalem Massacre of July 1099 in the Western Historiography of the Crusades’, in: eds. Kedar and Riley-Smith, *The Crusades*, vol. 3., (London, 2004) 63–67.

²²⁰ Norman Housley, *The Later Crusades, 1274–1580. From Lyons to Alcazar* (New York, 1992) 454.

²²¹ On this topic, see especially the influential work of Henri Pirenne, *Mahomet et Charlemagne* (Paris, 1937) 136, 138–174. For works that followed Pirenne’s thesis, see: P. K. Hitti, *Islam and the West: a Historical Cultural Survey* (Princeton, 1962); J. L. Esposito, *Islam and the West* (Colchester, 1991); B. Lewis, *Islam and the West* (Oxford, 1993); M. Greene, ‘Resurgent Islam: 1500–1700,’ in: *The Mediterranean in History*, ed. D. Abulafia (London, 2003).

²²² İnalçık, *The Ottoman Empire*, 6–7; *ibid.*, ‘Osmanlı Devletinin Kuruluşu Problemi’, in: Oktay Özel ed., *Söğüt’ten İstanbul’a. Osmanlı Devletinin Kuruluşu üzerine Tartışmalar* (İstanbul, 2000) 229; Bernard Lewis, *İstanbul and the Civilization of the Ottoman Empire* (Oklahoma, 1963) 36; Goodwin, *Lords of the Horizons*. 10; Finkel, *Osman’s Dream*, 10; Jefferson, *The Holy Wars of king Wladislas and Sultan Murad*, 70–74; Darling, ‘Reformulating the Gazi Question: When Was the Ottoman State a Gazi State?’ *Turcica* 43 (2012) 18.

of Islam.²²³ The originally Arabic word jihad literally means 'striving in the path of God.'²²⁴ The term jihad carried both the meaning of moral and spiritual self-improvement, as well as to struggle for the Muslim community or *umma*, if it was threatened from outside. Long after the medieval crusades, the second meaning once again became important and was reintroduced in the 1850s, during the resistance against the European colonial intrusion. It was firstly announced by the Muslims in India against the British colonisation, later in the Arab world and during the First World War proclaimed by the Ottoman Sultan and Caliph.²²⁵ Jihad in the sense of struggle against the European colonialism is a relatively modern meaning. The jihad differs from the concept of holy war, which is characterised by hostility based on religious difference and proselytism.

Originally, the term gaza meant 'a raid into enemy territory'; in this meaning, the term was taken over into Western languages as *razzia*.²²⁶ The concept had a belligerent connotation in the sense of expanding the political power. Many Muslim princes before the Ottomans had used the word gazi (i.e. a person who undertakes the gaza) as a honorary title.²²⁷ The Islamic principles considered the gaza as a lesser obligatory exploit or as *farz-i kifaye*: a battle waged by a group of warriors for the benefit of the whole society. However, in case of great danger for the Muslim community, the gaza was asserted as *farz-i ayn*: a general obligation and duty for every man of the community.²²⁸ The gazis before the Ottomans lived in the frontier regions of Khorasan under the rule of the Samanids, in the ninth and tenth centuries. They were active as a part of the armies of the Great Seljuk Empire. For instance, after his conversion to Islam, Selçuk, the eponymous founder of the Seljuk dynasty, led gaza raids against the non-Muslim Oğuz Turks in Khorasan.²²⁹

During the eleventh century, the term gaza gained importance, particularly under the influence of al-Nasir. This Abbasid caliph used the concept to legitimise the struggle to defend the Muslim world when it was attacked by the Crusaders and during the thirteenth century by the Mongols. Subsequently, gaza became a part of the *futuvva* movement, a

²²³ Rudolph Peters, *Jihad in Classical and Modern Islam* (Princeton, 1996); Asma Afsaruddin, *Striving in the Path of God. Jihad and Martyrdom in Islamic Thought* (New York, 2013).

²²⁴ Michael Bonner, *Jihad in Islamic History. Doctrines and Practice* (Princeton, 2006) 2.

²²⁵ Ali Maulavi Cheragh, *A Critical Exposition of the Popular 'Jihad'* (Delhi, 1984, originally, 1885); Rudolph Peters, *Islam and Colonialism. The Doctrine of Jihad in Modern History* (Den Haag, 1979) 118.

²²⁶ 'Ghazw', *Encyclopaedia Islamica*, Second Edition (EI²), Brill Online.

²²⁷ Feridun Emecen, 'Gazaya Dair. XIV. Yüzyıl Kaynakları Arasında bir Gezinti', *Hakkı Dursun Yılmaz'a armağan* (Istanbul 1995) 191-197; Darling, 'Contested Territory', 133-163.

²²⁸ Şinasi Tekin, 'XIV. Yüzyılda Yazılmış Gâzilik Tarikası. 'Gâziliğin Yolları' adlı bir Eski Anadolu Türkçesi Metni ve Gazâ/Cihâd Kavramları Hakkında', *International Journal of Turkish Studies* 13 (1989): 139-204.

²²⁹ Köymen, *Büyük Selçuklu İmparatorluğu Tarihi* vol. I, 22-28.

canon of ethical norms to achieve spiritual perfection and to pursue 'chivalric' heroism.²³⁰ The futuvva idea was revived in the Turkish society in Anatolia by the guild-like ahi organisations. The gazis thus operated as part of the overarching futuvva movement.²³¹

Furthermore, the Ottoman interpretation of gaza was also rooted in the pre-Islamic, Turkish nomadic political traditions. In the sources, Osman and his followers were simultaneously referred to with the terms gazi and *alp*. For the pre-Islamic nomadic Turks, *alp* meant 'brave warrior', an honorary title adopted by nobility. After their conversion to Islam, the Turks used the title *alp* simultaneously with the honorary title gazi. According to Ashik Pashazade, around Osman Bey a group of warriors formed, consisting of alps and 'comrades' or *nökers*, who under his leadership took part in the gaza.²³² The group that was mentioned by Ashik Pashazade as gazi were at the same time alps.²³³ The fourteenth-century Turkish poet and mystic Ashik Pasha (the grandfather of the chronicler) used in his *Garibnâme* the term *alp*, which he described as the ideal professional warrior. He used gazi and *alp* usually as synonyms.²³⁴ The Ottoman gazi groups grew out of this Turkish *alp* communities. Their struggle against both Christian and Muslim opponents was covered by the principle of gaza. The gaza idea worked somehow as a unifying factor that transcended the tribal rifts, and granted them a group solidarity under the leadership of the House of Osman. This was very similar to the way the first Seljuk princes managed to bring together different Oghuz tribes under their banner.

The sources of post-Seljuk Anatolia and the early Ottoman chronicler Aşık Paşazade often invoked three social groups: namely the ahis, the *abdâl* (Turkish Sufis and dervishes) and the gazis. Aşık Paşazade added a fourth and even a more enigmatic group: the *baciyânı Rûm* ('the sisters of Roman lands' that referred to the mounted women warriors).²³⁵ Broquière, when passing through south-east Anatolia in 1432, encountered a group of armed and mounted Turkish women warriors. He was impressed by the sight of mounted women warriors and noted that these women were equally fine cavaliers and archers as the men: 'They told me that there were thirty thousand female warriors, which is extraordinary.'²³⁶ It is most probable that the mounted women warriors whom Broquière saw, were the same *baciyânı Rûm* which Aşık Paşazade had mentioned.

²³⁰ Köprülü, *The Origins*, 90-92.

²³¹ Ibidem, 94-98.

²³² Aşık Paşazâde, *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osmân*, Saraç, Yavuz ed., 283.

²³³ Köprülü, *The Origins*, 89 en 93.

²³⁴ Aşık Paşa, *Garibnâme*, as quoted by İncalcık in: ed. Nejat Göyünç, *The Ottoman-Turkish Civilization* (Ankara 2000) 21.

²³⁵ Aşık Paşazâde *Tarihi*, ed. Öztürk, 307-308.

²³⁶ Broquière, *Le voyage d'outremer*, 82.

In the *Risalet'ül Islam*, a Turkish theoretical handbook on the principles of Islam from the fourteenth century, there is a chapter on 'the Ways of the Gazi'.²³⁷ The *Risalet* sums up nine criteria in order to become a gazi: a gazi must have the permission of his parents; he must have no debts, leave behind revenues for his family, and possess a profession that will allow him to earn his own livelihood. The gazi is not permitted to use violence against the local population and he must not flee from the battlefield. As an important detail, the handbook mentions that, when dealing with the redistribution of the booty, the Christian warriors also have to get their share of the booty if they have participated in the gaza.²³⁸ The gaza was thus not considered as an activity that was reserved exclusively for Muslims.

It is also very likely that the Turkish nomads have used the Islamic gaza-concept as a synonym for the steppe concept of *akın*. The noun *akın* is derived from the verb *akmak* which means to flow; in military terms it attained the meaning of 'incursion into enemy territory'.²³⁹ It can be said that the Ottoman gazi-warriors were actually *akıncı*-raiders, who legitimised their military actions by referring to the gaza-ethos, in the meaning of expanding the power of their authority. The fifteenth-century historian Ahmedî also interchanged the term gaza with *akın*.²⁴⁰ Imber and Lowry also noticed this, but they made a problematic distinction between the two terms by categorising them as 'secular' *akın* and 'religious' gaza.²⁴¹ Today, we undoubtedly tend to separate the political from the religious in a way that would have been unusual in the fourteenth-century historical context. Such a categorical distinction between 'secular' and 'religious' dimensions did not exist in the Ottoman tradition; both were in fact entangled. During the early Ottoman period, the terms *akın* and gaza underwent a transformation and gaza began to mean 'conquest'. The methodology of Lowry is at times biased if not teleological. He tenaciously holds to the meaning of 'desire to acquire booty and slaves' and he therefore considers the Ottomans as merely a predatory confederation.²⁴² However, the binary opposition between a 'plundering band' or 'holy warriors' is a false assumption. The gaza is to be considered on the level of warfare as a product of state formation, or as Tilly noted: 'war makes the state and the state makes war'. It is rather revealing to explore how the Ottomans perceived their policy of expansion and legitimised it.

Witteks methodology was not fundamentally wrong. He passed over the fact too readily that the gaza-rhetoric was rather intended for internal consumption as a tool for legitimisation of Ottoman political formation. Certainly, the gaza-concept is extensively employed by the first chroniclers who produced a set of 'Histories of the House of Osman'.

²³⁷ Şinasi Tekin, 'XIV. yüzyılda yazılmış Gazilik tarikası', 143.

²³⁸ Ibidem, 144-145.

²³⁹ Decei, A. 'Akıncı' *El*², Brill Online.

²⁴⁰ Ahmedî, *Dasitan-i tevârîh*, 30.

²⁴¹ Imber, 'The Legend of Osman Gazi', 73; Lowry, *The nature*, 45.

²⁴² Lowry, *The Nature*, 46.

Ahmedî was the first to present the gaza-motif as an important source of identity and legitimacy for the Ottoman dynasty. Ahmedî wrote his work after the Battle of Ankara (1402), at a time when the invasion of Timur in Anatolia led to chaos and fear. He addressed it to his patron, the Ottoman crown prince Süleyman Çelebi, the son of Sultan Bayezid I. Ahmedî advised to Süleyman to carry out gaza raids against Christian states in order to back off the Timurid threat and to unite the sons of Bayezid who were involved in a civil war. The poet Ahmedî raised gaza to the level of a political principle. It remained, however, merely one of the various elements that constituted the Ottoman 'state ideology'. In this discursive and historical context, the self-image of the Ottoman princes began to form as gazi-sultans.

2.9 The Policy of *İstimâlet*

Another important difference of the term gaza with the notion of 'holy war' derives from the fact that the Ottomans applied pragmatic and inclusive policies towards the Christian and Jewish populations in the newly seized territories. The conquests were not focused on proselytism but on expanding the influence of Ottoman authority and neutralising its political opponents. In his discussion of the Ottoman methods of expansion, İnalçık pointed to the policy of *istimâlet* that focused on winning the consent of the non-Muslim population in the newly acquired territories.²⁴³ With this policy, the Ottomans kept the laws, traditions, status and privileges intact, as they had existed in the period before Ottoman rule. The non-Muslim military elite and the Christian leading clerics were included in the Ottoman administrative system.²⁴⁴ The extent to which the early Ottomans rather sought accommodation than they were bent on conversion can be illustrated by the following examples, which demonstrate the characteristics of the *istimâlet* process. As Kafadar and İnalçık convincingly argued, the Ottoman polity had emerged as a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society that accompanied Ottoman tolerance, which was not a lapse on the part of a few individuals but another established characteristic of Ottoman identity. In the context of Muslim-Christian relations in

²⁴³ İnalçık, 'Ottoman Methods of Conquest', 112, 115-117.

²⁴⁴ İnalçık, 'The Status of the Greek Orthodox', 409.

Anatolia, Tijana Krstić's work also presents a significant contribution to the debate. She presented a new view at Islamisation and conversion in the Ottoman lands.²⁴⁵

It is widely known that the early Ottomans allowed a great degree of religious and cultural diversity within their realm. This was obviously not a unique Ottoman practice, but the expression of a deeply rooted tradition in Islamic history. In this respect, the Greek Orthodox Patriarch and the Genoese colony in Galata retained their status and privileges after the conquest of Istanbul.²⁴⁶ The chronicler Aşık Paşazade wrote that Osman Gazi actively tried to maintain his good relations with the Christian neighbours. When his brother Gündüz Alp insisted to raid the neighbouring Christian villages, Osman Gazi rejected this proposal: 'If we destroy the surrounding places, our city Karacahisar cannot develop.'²⁴⁷ A few passages further, when asked why he shows so much respect and pays attention to the 'infidels' of the city Bilecik, Osman Gazi replied: 'Because they are our neighbours. When we arrived to this place, we found ourselves in a grim situation and they were nice to us. Now we have to make sure that they feel good.'²⁴⁸ And during the takeover of Bursa in 1326, Orhan Gazi accepted a ransom of thirty thousand florins for the surrender of the city instead of killing the Christian population or forcing them to convert to Islam.²⁴⁹

The protection of the Jews, who in many parts of Europe were of course regularly persecuted and oppressed, was also a part of the Ottoman *istimâlet* policy. Since the founding years, oppressed and persecuted Jews found a refuge in the Ottoman realm. For example, Orhan Gazi found in Bursa a Jewish community which had been oppressed under Byzantine rule and gave them permission to build a synagogue in the new Ottoman capital, upon which the Jews welcomed the Ottomans as saviours.²⁵⁰ In 1394, Sultan Yıldırım Bayezid I granted refuge to the Jews in France, where they had been persecuted by King Charles VI. The most notable event is the evacuation of the Jews expelled from Spain in 1492 by the Ottoman fleet on order of Sultan Bayezid II.²⁵¹ The non-Muslims in the Ottoman realm enjoyed the status of *zimmi* or recognised and protected Christian and Jewish subjects of the sultan. As it was a common policy under the earlier Islamic states,

²⁴⁵ Tijana Krstić, *Contested Conversions to Islam: Narratives of Religious Change in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire* (Stanford, 2011) 27-28, 43-44.

²⁴⁶ İnalçık, 'The policy of Mehmed II toward the Greek population of Istanbul and the Byzantine buildings of the city', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 23/25 (1969-1970): 231-249.

²⁴⁷ Aşık Paşazâde, *Tevârih-i*, 282.

²⁴⁸ Ibidem, 284.

²⁴⁹ Aşık Paşazâde, *Tevârih-i*, 300.

²⁵⁰ Moise Franco, *Essai sur l'histoire des Israélites de l'Empire Ottoman depuis les origines jusqu'à nos jours* (Paris, 1897) 27-28.

²⁵¹ Abraham Galanté, *Histoire des Juifs d'Istanbul. Depuis la prise de cette ville en 1453 par Fatih Mehmet II jusqu'à nos jours I* (Istanbul 1941) 7-11.

the only requirement for non-Muslims was to pay an individual tax, *djizye* (or *jizya*).²⁵² They were exempted from military service and received a high degree of autonomy in regulating their own education, religious affairs, housing and social care. Many Christian peasants in the Balkans did therefore not regret to come under Ottoman rule, as they had previously been burdened by heavy taxes imposed by their feudal lords.²⁵³ This explains why the Ottoman government could rather easily settle in the Balkans without major resistance from the local Christian population.

It is unlikely that the Ottomans conquered Christian countries merely because of religious hostility – as Wittek claimed – while they endorsed towards the non-Muslims a safe place in their society. Beyond the pragmatic considerations, the Ottoman inclusive attitude was based on two cultural elements. According to the standard conciliatory Islamic principle, the choice of faith is a personal preference and there can be no coercion.²⁵⁴ Furthermore, as it is generally known, the Islam considered the Christians and Jews as ‘people of the Book’ (*ehli kitap*), with whom the Muslims share common religious traditions.²⁵⁵ The Burgundian spy Broquiere, who visited Bursa in 1432, reported that the Ottoman charities (*imarets*) distributed ‘bread, wine [sic] and meat to the poor of the city for God’s will.’²⁵⁶ As a western Christian, he was astonished that his co-religionists were not excluded from the Ottoman social services.

Wittek did observe and recognise the Ottoman tolerance towards other faiths, but he did not go deeper into this matter. For Wittek, the gazis were merely ‘the ruthless fighters for the faith, continuously stirred up by the fanatical dervishes to impose Islam on the Christians in the conquered lands.’²⁵⁷ He minimized the Ottoman policy of accommodation as a purely ‘opportunistic measure’, only interested in the taxes they could collect from the non-Muslims. It is obvious that Wittek neglected to explore the Ottoman *istimâlet* policy, as this inevitably would have undermined his theory. His thesis was, after all, based on the assumption that the essence of the Ottoman state rooted in ‘Islamic crusades’ and proselytism.

²⁵² İnalcık, ‘Djizya’, *EI*², Brill Online.

²⁵³ Stefan Pasco, *La révolte populaire de Transylvanie des années 1437-1438* (Boekarest 1964) 34-107.

²⁵⁴ *Qur’an*, 10:99: ‘And had your Lord willed, those on earth would have believed - all of them entirely. Then, [O Muhammad], would you compel the people in order that they become believers?’

²⁵⁵ *Qur’an*, 2:136: Say, [O Muslims], ‘We have believed in Allah and what has been revealed to us and what has been revealed to Ibrahim (Abraham), Isma’il (Ishmael), Ishak (Isaac), Yakub (Jacob), and to Al-Asbat [the twelve sons of Yakub (Jacob)], and that which was given to Musa (Moses) and Isa (Jesus) and what was given to the prophets from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and we are Muslims [in submission] to Him.’

²⁵⁶ Broquière, *Le Voyage d’Outremer*, 133.

²⁵⁷ Wittek, *The Rise*, 43.

The second element that formed the basis of the Ottoman inclusive policy was the symbiosis of the nomadic steppe culture and the Islamic principles. The Central Asian Turks embraced Islam through the mediation of the Persian Sufi movements from Khorasan.²⁵⁸ The Persian *sufi* dervishes (mystics) travelled to the steppe and brought along their mystical Muslim ideas to the Turkish communities. However, the interaction between the Persians and various Turkish communities possessed a longer history. After the conversion of the Persians to Islam and the Turkish migrations westward, the Turkish communities were attracted by the Persian cultural production in art, literature and luxury goods.²⁵⁹ For instance, the eleventh-century scholar and lexicographer of Turkish languages, Mahmud al-Kashgari, commented that when the *Oğuz* mixed with the Persians, they had forgotten many Turkish words and used Persian instead.²⁶⁰

Indeed, Sufism played a very powerful role in the popular forms assumed by Islam among the Turks. One reason for this *sufi* connection resides in the pre-Islamic mystical character of the previous religions that the different branches of the Turks adhered. Buddhism, Manichaeism, Shamanism and various forms of mystical nature worship were the most widespread traditions among the Turks of Central Asia in the pre-Islamic period.²⁶¹ In time, Muslim Sufi movements spread steadily among the Turkish communities, as it flourished from the great Muslim centres like Bukhara and Samarkand and passed through ‘dervishes equipped with an ecstatic religious love’.²⁶²

However, the old religions and traditions of the nomadic *Oğuz* Turks continued to affect them, even after they had gradually adopted Islam. Their conversion to Islam did not mean that they were totally skinned of all of their old beliefs and traditions. For the nomadic Turks who came to the Muslim frontiers, conversion was a dual process. They constructed their own interpretation of Islam by blending it with the mystical aspects of the former religions, in which they preserved the ancient mythological traditions.²⁶³ Ahmet Yaşar Ocak pointed out that this interpretation of Islam developed quite spontaneously from the combining and fashioning of the remnants of several nomadic

²⁵⁸ Köprülü, *Türk Edebiyatında İlk Mutasavvıflar*, 46-47, 52.

²⁵⁹ Ibidem, 50-51.

²⁶⁰ Mahmud al-Kashgari, *Compendium of the Turkish Dialectics – Divan Lügat at-Türk*, tr. Robert Dankoff (Cambridge, 1985) 51, 101.

²⁶¹ Abdülkadir Inan, *Tarihte ve Bugün Şamanizm, Materyeller ve Araştırmalar* (Ankara, 1972); Esin, *İslamiyetten önceki Türk kültür*, 163-184; Jean-Paul Roux, *La Religion des Turcs et des Mongols* (Paris 1984) 59-98; Irene Mélikoff, ‘Les Origins Centre-Asiatique du Soufisme Anatolien’, *Turcica* 20 (1988): 7-18.

²⁶² Köprülü, *Türk Edebiyatında*, 49-50: ‘As for the dervishes, who recited hymns and poetry, who did many good works for the people in order to please God, and who showed the people the ways to happiness, the Turks enthusiastically accepted them and likened them to their own *ozans* [troubadour, shaman], whom they had endowed with religious sanctity since ancient times. In this manner, a number of Turkmen saints, who were called *bâbâ* [‘father’, spiritual leader], took the place of the old *ozans*.’

²⁶³ Mélikoff, ‘Les origins centre-asiatique’, 7-18.

traditions with Muslim principles. The result was that this interpretation of Islam was not characterised by the written and highly developed theological and canonical principles. The Turkish interpretation of Islam was rather compatible with the nomadic life under the severe natural conditions of the steppe.²⁶⁴

The Turkish Sufi master, Ahmed-i Yesevî, was the first and most important representative of this early Turkish-Islamic mystical interpretation and his teachings marked the beginning of a tradition in Turkestan and Transoxania. His influence spread out until Anatolia and the Balkans.²⁶⁵ His thought was based on the influential idea of *vahdet-i vücud* (monism), which was formulated by Muhyiddin Ibn Arabî. This idea, often misunderstood and confused with pantheism, is a complicated conception. It can be roughly summarised as meaning that everything in the universe is a manifestation of God who is the sole creator, and since existence is God, all existence is actually nothing else than an expression of His existence. This line of thought became so influential that it not only affected the Sufi understandings of the time, such as Yunus Emre and Mevlana Rumi, but also the Sufi interpretation in almost the entire Islamic world until today.²⁶⁶

The Muslim-Christian relations in the Ottoman world still appear to be a topic of undecided scholarly debate.²⁶⁷ In this respect, one can mention the recent approach of Krstić on Muslim-Christian relations in Anatolia and the Balkans. Krstić explored the degree of coexistence of Islam and Christianity in the early Ottoman period. She reinterpreted the shared 'sacred space' as 'sites of intense inter-religious negotiation', where 'religious differences are upheld rather than collapsed'.²⁶⁸ She argued that these shared shrines are sites of perpetual competition and negotiation, which need to be understood in terms of local power relations: 'the deeply competitive aspect of ambiguous shrines and thus as points of intense interfaith polemics rather than reconciliation is often lost to modern students of the Ottoman empire.'²⁶⁹

²⁶⁴ Ocak, 'The Interpretation of Islam by the Turks throughout the Historical Process', in: Çağatay and Kuban ed., *The Turkic Speaking Peoples*, 326.

²⁶⁵ Köprülü, 'Ahmed Yesevî', *İslam Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 1, 210-15; Köprülü, *Türk Edebiyatında*, 57-183.

²⁶⁶ Ocak, 'The Interpretation of Islam', 394-395.

²⁶⁷ A volume in press overviewing the issue of Muslim-Christian relations, see: eds. A.C.S. Peacock, Bruno de Nicola, Sara Nur Yıldız, *Islam and Christianity in Medieval Anatolia* (London, 2015).

²⁶⁸ Tijana Krstić, 'The Ambiguous Politics of "Ambiguous Sanctuaries"'. F. Hasluck and Historiography of Syncretism and Conversion to Islam in 15th- and 16th-century Ottoman Rumeli', ed. David Shankland, *Archaeology, Anthropology and Heritage in the Balkans and Anatolia: The Life and Times of F.W. Hasluck, 1878-1920*, vol. 3 (İstanbul, 2013) 252.

²⁶⁹ Ibidem.

2.10 'Brokerage' across networks and alliances

To transcend the trap of the rhetoric of the sources, we need other approaches to the early Ottoman history. When Halil İnalcık described the Ottoman principality as 'a true frontier empire, a cosmopolitan state, treating all creeds and races as one', he at the same time highlighted an important feature of the Ottoman state building.²⁷⁰ A very fruitful approach was recently formulated by Karen Barkey. She noted that the conditions of the hybrid frontier promoted mutual assistance and concerted action not only in warfare, but also in festivity, gift exchange and building of reciprocity, often as ways of reducing uncertainty. Some of the social dynamics included 'brokerage across networks', recombination through alliances and moves from one network into another.²⁷¹ According to Barkey, people who are located at the boundaries of cultural and political spheres can communicate across their divides by making use of these social practices. They become able to bring opinions, beliefs, and practices together and are likely to have innovative ideas and to promote change. As she put it: 'the actors at the interstices of cultures can learn from both, connect them, find analogies between them, and exploit the best practices and beliefs of each end up innovating.'²⁷² This model in the same way applies to early Ottoman state building.

In the hybrid frontier zones, the cultural forms were mixed and much more complex than previously presented. As Wittek also pointed out, the early Ottomans built their polity within such a frontier territory, characterised by a high degree of cultural diversity, mobility, independence from the hinterland, sharing of lifestyles, ideas, institutional practices and epic tales.²⁷³ In this Turkish-Byzantine frontier, they told analogous narratives and increasingly adopting each other's characteristics. In Anatolia, the frontier warriors – *gazis* and *akritai* – on both sides had for centuries been living in closer proximity to each other than to their central governments in their respective cultural hinterlands. Hence, it is not surprising to encounter the same type of motives and legends in the gests of Battal Gazi and Danişmend Gazi among Turkish Muslim epic

²⁷⁰ İnalcık, *The Ottoman Empire*, 7.

²⁷¹ Barkey, *Empire of Difference*, 33-34, 39.

²⁷² Ibidem, 45.

²⁷³ Wittek, 'Turkish Asia Minor up to the Osmanlıs', in: *The Rise of the Ottoman Empire*, 46-48; ibid., 'Two Chapters on the History of the Rum', in: ibidem, 95-96.

narratives, while similar Byzantine narratives were visible in the tales of Digenis Akritas. Their myths and legends often crossed geographical and cultural frontiers.²⁷⁴

An example for the hybridity in the frontiers is the Muslim gazi epic of Battal Gazi, whose best friend and companion was his former foe on the Byzantine side. There also is the Byzantine tale of Digenis Akrites, whose father was a Muslim. Analogous to the European genre of the *chanson de geste*, these works told the heroic 'chivalric' and miraculous adventures of famous thirteenth-century gazi-leaders, such as the post-Seljuk heroes Seyyid Battal Gazi, Sarı Saltuk or Danişmend Gazi.²⁷⁵ These legendary-histories or 'pseudo-histories' dealt with the legendary vitae of warriors and dervishes and were produced within the 'knightly' gazi values of the social and political life in western Anatolia in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The gests of Arab warriors, deriving from early Muslim history in the Arab-Byzantine frontiers, continued to play an important role in shaping the self-image and 'knightly' behaviour of the Muslim Turkish communities in Anatolia.²⁷⁶

Furthermore, by creating local allies, the early Ottomans also managed to expand their authority. The Byzantine *tekvür* of Harmankaya, Köse Mihal, joined the ranks of Osman, becoming not only his brother-in-arms (*nöker*), but also his best friend (*muhibbi*). The fifteenth-century Ottoman chronicler Neşri writes that the ex-Byzantine Köse Mihal had joined Osman. Mihal was left in charge, which encouraged stability.²⁷⁷ His descendants, known as the Sons of Mihal or Mihal-oğulları, enjoyed one of the highest ranks among the gazis in Ottoman service.

The fact that former Byzantine commanders and warriors were active among Osman's followers indicates that the Ottomans were not driven by merely religious 'holy war'. Although Osman took the Muslim warrior title of gazi, this did not contradict with the pragmatic inclusion of non-Muslim warriors (*martolos*, *voyruk*) into his ranks.²⁷⁸ They were first of all the followers of Osman, the *Osmanlı*. This indicates that one's religion did not determine whether or not one could join Osman's banner; one's performance and merits

²⁷⁴ See for more details: Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*, 56, 63-68, 78-82, 144; Keith Hopwood, 'The Byzantine-Turkish Frontier 1250-1300', *Acta Viennensia Ottomanica* (1999) 154-57; Anthony Bryer, 'Han Turalı rides again', *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 11 (1987) 193-206.

²⁷⁵ For a more comprehensive overview of these works from the thirteenth and fourteenth century, see: Uzunçarşılı, *Anadolu Beylikleri ve Akkoyunlu*, 209-223, 259-262. Also see: Irène Melikoff, *La geste de Melik Danişmend: étude critique du Danişmendname* (Paris, 1960); Saltukname, ed. Ş. Akalın (Ankara, 1988); Pertev N. Boratav, 'Battal', *İslam Ansiklopedisi*; Paul Wittek, 'The Taking of Aydos Castle: A Gazi Legend and its Transformation', ed. G. Makdisi, *Arabic and Islamic Studies in Honor of H.A.R. Gibb* (Cambridge, 1965) 662-672.

²⁷⁶ Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*, 63.

²⁷⁷ Neşrî, *Kitab-ı Cihânnümâ*, 39. For the debate on Köse Mihal, see: Orlin Sabev, 'The Legend of Köse Mihal - Additional Notes' *Turcica* 34 (2002): 241-253.

²⁷⁸ Halil İnalcık, *Fatih Devri Üzerinde Tetkikler ve Vesikalar* (Ankara, 1954) 137-184.

were more significant. In this light, the Ottomans were tolerant enough to accommodate the various religious and ethnic groups in an effective and pragmatic practice to incorporate manpower from rival dynasties. This was possible in the hybrid circumstances at the frontiers that gave a tremendous impetus for the early Ottomans to form 'brokerage across networks'.²⁷⁹

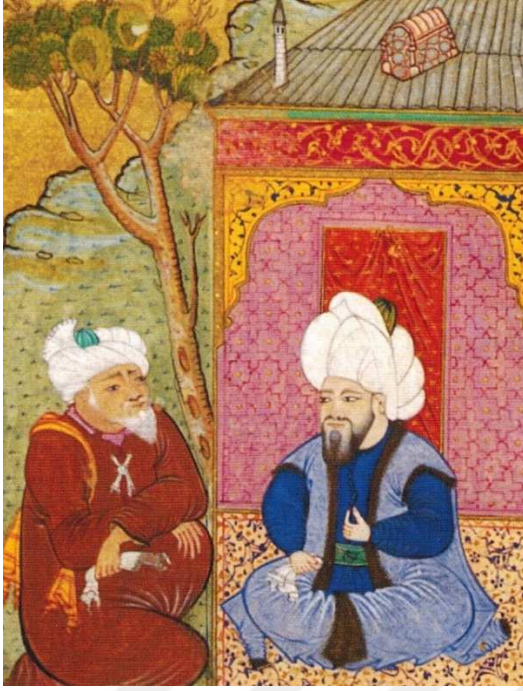


Figure 5: Sultan Yıldırım Bâyezid in a conversation with Molla Şemseddin Fenarî.
Source: Şakayku'n Nu'mâniyye, Topkapı Palace Museum, H1263, folio 22a.

There was another important element in the building of a network of alliances. Turkish Sufism (*tasavvuf*) was non-conformist and open to the traditions of the regions where the Turks arrived. As shown in the works by Köprülü and Barkan, Turkish mystical Islam, under the guidance of the *Kalenderî*, *Haydarî* and *Bektaşî* dervishes, who accompanied the Ottoman army, easily accommodated to the local Christian beliefs and traditions in Anatolia and the Balkan.²⁸⁰ Through their participation in military campaigns, the Sufi dervishes became familiar with the local, non-Muslim beliefs and rituals and selectively integrated some of them. This practice produced an atmosphere which facilitated the accommodation with the non-Muslim population and must clearly have enhanced the relatively easy acceptance of Ottoman rule by the mass of the population in the newly conquered territories in Anatolia and the Balkans. The successes of the early Ottoman

²⁷⁹ Karen Barkey, *Empire of Difference. The Ottomans in Comparative Perspective*, 41-42.

²⁸⁰ Köprülü, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunun Kuruluşu*, 101-120; Ömer Lûtfi Barkan, 'İstila devirlerinin Kolonizatör Türk dervişleri ve Zaviyeler', *Vakıflar Dergisi*, II (1942): 274-386.

expansion were to a large degree due to the spiritual authority of dervish leaders who supported the Ottoman dynasty in its political endeavours. The many convents or 'abbeys' (*zaviye*, *tekke*) formed the nuclei for Muslim Turkish settlements that grew into towns and garrison centres. This enabled cohabitation with and accommodation of the local, non-Muslim population within the early Ottoman realm. The inclusive nature of the Turkish Sufis supported the Ottoman expansion in Anatolia and the Balkans.²⁸¹

It seems that the role of the Sufi dervishes in the emergence and growth of the Ottoman state was equally important to that of the *gazi-warriors*. Although not directly linked to the Turkish sheikh Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli, the *Bektaşî Order* (*tarikât*) was one of the most influential brotherhoods in the Ottoman villages and even cities in Anatolia and the Balkans. It was actually founded in the sixteenth century, although its roots are much older. Two other important orders were the *Nakşibendiye* and *Halvetiye*, with Central Asian origins and Sunni leanings. These two played a very important role in political, social and religious spheres. Particularly, there were the urban *tarikats* of *Mevleviyye* linked to Jelaladdin Rumi and the *Kadiriyye* mystical order, which both represented the urban written Sufism. The *Mevleviyye* gained influence at the Ottoman court only after the mid-fifteenth century.²⁸²

Following the Anatolian Seljuk Rum tradition, the early Ottoman state gradually adopted and implemented the *Hanafi* school of Muslim jurisprudence within its realm. The preference of the Ottomans for the *Sunnî Hanafi* jurisprudence (*mezhep*) coincided with the centralisation of state authority in the late fifteenth century. The Ottoman government was concerned to find out pragmatic and practical policies in order to govern over a multi-religious population. In this process, it showed enough rationality and openness to adapt to new situations in the recently seized territories and easily adapted to the practical needs of their particular social structure.²⁸³ This made the *Hanafi* school an ideal legal tool for a state which governed over different ethnic and religious communities. Compared to the dogmatic law systems of *Shafism* or *Hanbalism*, the *Hanafi* legal school used reason, logic, opinion (*ray*), analogy (*qiyas*), and preference (*istihsan*) in the formulation of religious laws.²⁸⁴ The legal policies of *Hanafism* were more liberal in respect to personal freedom, the corporal penalties were usually altered to the payment

²⁸¹ Köprülü, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunun Kuruluşu*, 101-120; Ömer Lûtfi Barkan, 'İstîlâ devirlerinin Kolonizatör Türk Dervişleri ve Zaviyeler', *Vakıflar Dergisi* 2 (1942): 274-386.

²⁸² Ocak, 'Social, Cultural and Intellectual Life', 393-394.

²⁸³ Ibidem, 385.

²⁸⁴ M. Bernard, 'Qiyas', *IE*²;

of fines. It also rested on a more tolerant basis in regard to different religions and traditions.²⁸⁵

Further evidence for Ottoman moderation and religious toleration can be found in the memoirs of Gregory Palamas (d. 1359), a Byzantine theologian and mystic, who was a captive at the court of Orhan Gazi in 1355. Palamas noted that he had participated at two debates, once at Orhan Gazi's court and once with a Muslim scholar.²⁸⁶ Orhan Gazi, who had titled himself as the 'Sultan of the Gazis', made Palamas enter into a debate with Muslim scholars at his court about the doctrines of Islam and Christianity. According to Palamas, the debate was concluded with the comment of his opponents who said 'the time will come when we will be in accord with each other'.²⁸⁷ It seems that the eclectic religious culture at the Ottoman court of the sultans can be observed at least until the first half of the sixteenth century. For instance, Sultan Yıldırım Bâyezid I in the 1390s patronised at his princely court among others Ellisaëus, a Jewish philosopher, and his Greek pupil Plethon, who was later persecuted by the Byzantine state on the accusation of being an activist of pagan Hellenism.²⁸⁸

²⁸⁵ Heffening, W., Schacht, J. 'Ḥanafīyya', *EP*²; Branon Wheeler, *Applying the Canon in Islam: The Authorization and Maintenance of Interpretive Reasoning in Ḥanafī Scholarship* (New York, 1996); Nurit Tsafrir, *The History of an Islamic School of Law: The Early Spread of Hanafism* (Harvard, 2004).

²⁸⁶ On Palamas's captivity, see: Anna Philippides-Braat, 'La captivité de Palamas chez les Turcs: dossier et commentaire', *Travaux et Memoires* 7 (1979): 109-221; Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*, 90; Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, vol. 1, 182.

²⁸⁷ As cited in: Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*, 90.

²⁸⁸ C. M. Woodhouse, *George Gemisthos Plethon: The Last of the Hellens* (Oxford, 1986) 24-29.

2.11 Towards Centralisation and the Rise of Tensions within the Ruling Elites

Ottoman territorial expansion was slower than the rapid rise of the Anatolian states around them or certainly than the swift rise of the Great Seljuk Empire. However, their slow expansion turned out to be an advantage in the long run, which gave them more time to institutionalise their state building. At the start of the fourteenth century, other Turkish states in Anatolia, such as Menteşe, Germiyan or Karaman were more powerful and politically advanced than the Ottomans. But their decentralised way of expansion would create many problems for themselves.²⁸⁹ While the *beys* of these states tried to remain independent of their Seljuk and Ilkhanid overlords, they were at the same time unsuccessful in controlling the ambitions of their own commanders (*subaşı*). In this process, subordinate commanders of these principalities became uncontrollable and carved out independent polities for themselves. For example, during the thirteenth century, several commanders of the House of Germiyan successfully seized the Aegean coastlands and hinterland independently of each other. Instead of remaining loyal to the Germiyanid dynasty, they proclaimed their independence on the lands that they had conquered. In this way, the frontier states of Karasi, Saruhan, Menteşe and Aydın were formed.²⁹⁰

The Ottomans probably learned lessons from this fragmentation of power and inter-state rivalry in the neighbouring Turkish principalities. They seem to have successfully dealt with this decentralised way of expansion by keeping their commanders under strict control and using every opportunity to control the distribution of resources. Earlier than the other principalities, they were able to transform the independent warrior groups into a standing army, which was arguably the world's first 'modern' army with standardised organisation, uniforms and weaponry. The emergence of this infantry-based standing army was one of the most crucial developments of Ottoman state formation. This standing army was led by a class of professional officers and it was centered on a specialised forces characterised by standardisation, of which the janissaries were the most well-known. From the 1300s until the middle of the seventeenth century, the Ottoman army developed into the most advanced and powerful landed armed force in Europe and the Middle East.²⁹¹

²⁸⁹ For a detailed history of the Anatolian Turkish principalities, see: Uzunçarşılı, *Anadolu Beylikleri*.

²⁹⁰ Mustafa Çetin Varlık, *Germiyanogulları Tarihi, 1300-1429* (Istanbul, 1974) 32-33, 40; Wittek, *Menteşe Beyliği*, 36, 40, 46.

²⁹¹ Uyar and Erickson, *A Military History of the Ottomans*, 15-21, 40-47.

With the conquest of the cities Bursa and Iznik, during the reign of the second Ottoman ruler Orhan Gazi (r. 1326-1362), the Ottoman beylik controlled all the major towns of Bythinia. The defeat of the Byzantine emperor Andronikos III and the Ottoman victory at the Battle of Pelekanon in 1329 represent a crucial event, which resulted in the surrender of Iznik in 1331.²⁹² The Ottoman chroniclers do not mention this battle. But a contemporary Byzantine chronicler, Nikeforus Gregoras gives a detailed description of the event. In the account of Gregoras, it is clear that Orhan's army fought according to the classic steppe military tactics. Orhan Gazi used effective intelligence about the Byzantine army, chose the battlefield and laid an ambush with the infantry in a valley. During the first two days of the campaign, using vanguard actions, the Ottoman cavalry harassed the Byzantine imperial forces with successive charges and arrow rains. The aim was to disorganise the Byzantine battle formations, to bring them towards the hills and finally destroy the disorganised and fleeing enemy by encircling him.²⁹³ This was the classic battle tactic of the Ottomans, with which Bayezid I would also defeat the western European crusader army at the battle of Nicopolis in 1396.²⁹⁴ Eventually, in the account of Gregoras: 'the Byzantine forces began to panic, precisely as during the battle of Malazgirt; a great army was fleeing before 300 cavalry warriors of the Ottoman army, while carrying its wounded emperor in a blanket.'²⁹⁵ The Byzantine defeat at Pelekanon forced the emperor Andronicus III (1296-1341) to start negotiations with Orhan Gazi.²⁹⁶ However, in 1339, Andronikos sent emissaries to pope Benedict XII indicating that he was willing to settle the Orthodox-Catholic religious differences in return for military support against the Ottomans.²⁹⁷

2.11.1 Crossing into Europe

Thus in the 1350s, the Ottoman principality (*beylik*) was one of the many Anatolian small states, but a series of developments after 1352 increased its position vis-a-vis its rivals. The most important event was the gaining of a bridgehead in southeast Europe, with

²⁹² İnalçık, *The Great Ottoman-Civilization*, vol. 1, 28-30.

²⁹³ Gregoras' description as cited in: Nicolae Jorga, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu Tarihi*, vol. 1, tr. Nilüfer Epçeli (Istanbul, 2005) 169-171.

²⁹⁴ Kelly De Vries, 'The Lack of a Western European Military Response to the Ottoman Invasions of Eastern Europe from Nicopolis (1396) to Mohács (1526)', *The Journal of Military History* 63 (1999): 539-599.

²⁹⁵ Jorga, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu Tarihi*, vol. 1, 171.

²⁹⁶ Angeliki E. Laiou, *Constantinople and the Latins. The Foreign Policy of Andronicus II 1282-1328* (Cambridge, 1972) 312-314.

²⁹⁷ Anthony Luttrel, 'Latin Responses to Ottoman Expansion Before 1389', ed. Zachariadou, *The Ottoman Emirate*, 121.

prospects of westward expansion. The crossing over to Europe initially seemed difficult, since the region was under Byzantine control. In 1335, the annexation of the Karasi principality, centered at the coast of the Gulf of Edremit and controlling the Anatolian shores of the Dardanelles, provided all the important components needed to cross the Dardanelles into Europe. The crossing over to Thrace enabled the Ottomans to enlarge their realms in Europe, while the other Turkish small states in Anatolia stopped to grow. The conquests in southeast Europe proved to be crucial for the transformation from a frontier polity into a state.

The Karasi beyliği was a maritime principality and achieved many successes in sea warfare until the beginning of succession strife and the crusading expeditions of a Latin fleet.²⁹⁸ By intervening in the succession wars among the sons of the Karasid dynasty, the Ottomans annexed the Karasid lands one by one. Once the Karasid territories were captured, certain lands were left to the latter dynasty as *timars* (land fiefs) and the majority of the Karasid military elite was integrated into the Ottoman military class. The Karasi captains and sailors had the necessary maritime expertise and ships to cross over. And the Karasi gazi leaders such as Hacı Ilbeyi, Gazi Evrenuz and Ece Bey were encouraging the Ottoman leadership for expeditions across the Dardanelles.²⁹⁹

The Ottomans themselves also had several experienced veterans of the European wars. Many Turkish warriors had already participated in military operations into the Balkans as mercenaries of the Byzantine state. In these campaigns, the Turkish warriors became familiar with the terrain and learned the weaknesses of the local states. Already for some time, the Byzantine emperors increasingly depended on Turkish military services to stop the Serbian and Bulgarian invasions, and even for their own succession wars.³⁰⁰

The gaining of the first settlements in Europe resulted from an alliance of Orhan Bey with the Byzantine claimant to the throne, John VI Kantakouzenos.³⁰¹ After the death of emperor Andronicos III in 1341, Byzantium had plunged into succession wars. Kantakouzenos initially sought the aid of Umur Bey of Aydin, who had significant naval power. However, in 1344, Umur Bey lost his life in the battle when defending his seat in Izmir that came under the attack of a crusader fleet.³⁰² Thereupon, Kantakouzenos sought the military support of Orhan Gazi. Although the Ottoman sources remain silent on this

²⁹⁸ Elizabeth A. Zachariadou, 'The Emirate of Karasi and that of the Ottomans: Two Rival States', *ibid.* ed., *The Ottoman Emirate 1300-1389*, 225-236.

²⁹⁹ Âşık Paşazâde, *Tevârîh-i Âl-i Osmân*, 316-317, 320-321. In 1349, Karasi became an Ottoman province under the governorship of Süleyman Paşa, the eldest son of Orhan Gazi. In 1354, Süleyman Paşa crossed over to Europe (Rumelia) from an outpost in Karasi and conquered the first bases in Gallipoli.

³⁰⁰ Jorga, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu*, vol. 1, 166, 168, 172-188.

³⁰¹ Halil İnalcık, 'Osmanlı Sultanı Orhân (1324-1362). Avrupa'da Yerleşme', *Belleten*, 266 (2009): 77-107.

³⁰² Halil İnalcık, 'The Rise of Turcoman Maritime Principalities in Anatolia, Byzantium and the Crusades', in: *ibid.*, *The Middle East and the Balkans under the Ottoman Empire* (Bloomington, 1993) 317-319.

matter, in 1346 Orhan formed an alliance with Kantakouzenos by marrying his daughter Theodora in a splendid ceremony.³⁰³ Ottoman chroniclers, such as Âşık Paşazâde and Neşrî must have been aware of the fact that including such fluidity and inter-religious liaisons in their account would undermine their ideological portrayal of a purely Muslim dynasty and state. After all, they primarily aimed to represent the Ottoman dynasty as the leading Muslim political power in the eyes of their intended audiences.

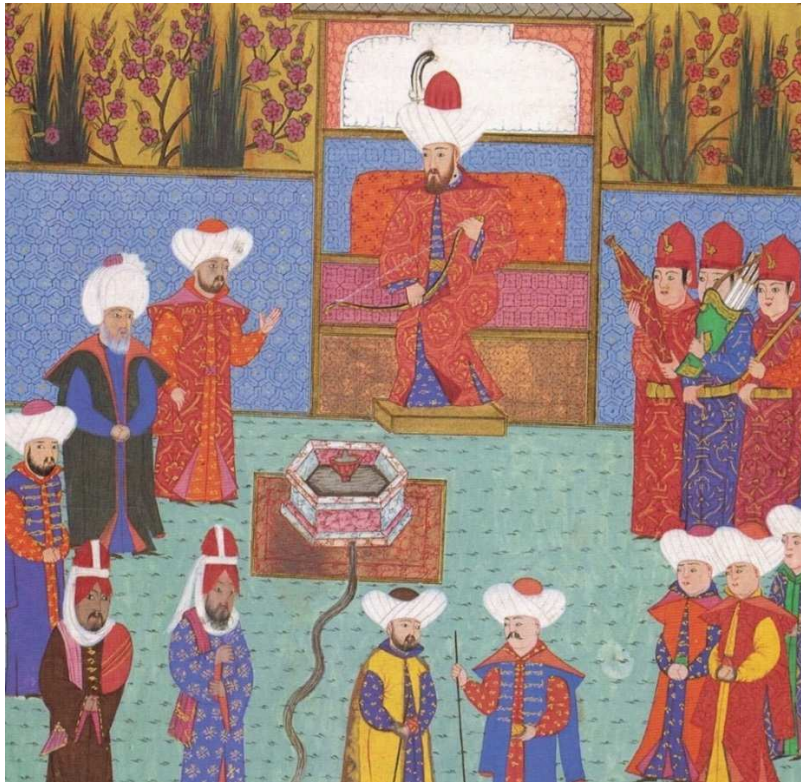


Figure 6: Orhan Gazi gives a composite bow as a gift to the Byzantine prince Kalo-Ioannis.
Source: *Hünernâme*, vol. 1, Topkapı Palace Museum, H1523, folio 72a.

The next year, with the support of Orhan Gazi, Kantekouzenos was able to enter Constantinople and to proclaim himself co-Emperor. In this way, Orhan Gazi became an influential player in Byzantine power politics, taking Emperor Kantakouzenos, his father-in-law, under his protection against John Palaiologos. Orhan Bey himself gained a lot from this arrangement. In 1352, he sent his son, crown prince Süleyman Paşa, to Europe to aid Kantekouzenos, who was trying to repel an invasion of the Serbian and Bulgarian troops. After defeating them near Edirne, on his way back home Süleyman Paşa captured the strategic castle of Tzympe (Çimpe) in Gallipoli. This was the first Ottoman territory in Europe. Two years later, Süleyman Paşa also seized the fortified city of Gallipoli and made

³⁰³ Peirce, *The Imperial Harem*, 31-32.

it a strong base from which he started the conquests in Thrace of which he was the architect.³⁰⁴

The swift Ottoman settlement in Thrace was favoured by the conditions that had been created by a war between Genoa and Venice that lasted from 1351 until 1355. In this conflict, the survival of the Genoese trade colony in Galata or Pera came in danger under the attacks of Venice in alliance with Byzantium. In 1351, Orhan's envoys were negotiating with the Genoese of Pera and providing information to them. To help the Genoese in Galata, Orhan sent thousand Ottoman archers. They fought alongside the Genoese in the battle for the defence of their colony against the Venetian-Catalan and Byzantine troops. In 1352, Orhan concluded a formal treaty with Genoa, the first one with a European state. The relationship between the Italian city-state Genoa and the Ottoman dynasty would last for many decades. Following this treaty, the Ottomans supplied the Genoese fleet with provisions and Genoese ships took shelter in Ottoman ports. In turn, the Genoese provided Ottoman forces with ships to ferry them across the Dardanelles. Venice and Byzantium sent envoys who, without success, tried to convince Orhan Gazi to abandon the alliance with Genoa. Confronted with this situation, the Ottomans chose the side of Genoa against Byzantium, while Genoa enjoyed the crucial Ottoman support as an ally in its fierce struggle against Venice.³⁰⁵ Meanwhile, the Ottomans established a permanent presence in Europe.

After the sudden death of Süleyman Paşa in 1357, there was a decade of delay in the conquests, also due to the kidnapping of Orhan's young son Halil by pirates. Eventually, the Ottomans secured their possessions in Thrace and eastern Balkans with the capture of Edirne (Adrianople) in 1361. Within a half century, the Ottoman rulers became the leaders of the *gaza*, and were called *sahib al-ucak*, the masters of the marches.³⁰⁶ The European frontier lands were organised under the command of crown prince Murad, who was sent to Europe to replace Süleyman Paşa after his death. The most important achievement of this period is the conquest of Edirne, which occupied a central place in the economic system of Eastern Thrace.³⁰⁷ It was seized by crown prince Murad.³⁰⁸ In 1362, Murad succeeded his father to the Ottoman throne and he transported his capital to Edirne in order to control the marcher lords. He appointed his trusted tutor Lala Şahin

³⁰⁴ Halil İncalcık, 'Osmanlıların Trakya'da Yerleşmesi (1352-1361)', in: *ibid*, *Kuruluş ve imparatorluk sürecinde Osmanlı* (İstanbul, 2011) 94-97.

³⁰⁵ *Ibidem*, 98-100; Luttrell, 'Latin Responses to Ottoman Expansion', 122-123.

³⁰⁶ İncalcık, 'Osmanlıların Trakya'da Yerleşmesi', 104-106.

³⁰⁷ Irène Beldiceanu-Steinherr, 'La Conquête d'Adrianople par les Turcs: La Pénétration turque en Thrace et la valeur des chroniques ottomanes', *Travaux et Mémoires* 1 (1965): 439-61; Elizabeth A. Zachariadou, 'The Conquest of Adrianople by the Turks', *Studi Veneziani*, XII (1970): 211-217.

³⁰⁸ Âşık Paşazâde, *Tevârîh-i Âl-i Osmân*, 323-325.

Paşa to the office of governor general (*beylerbeyi*) of the European provinces, which the Ottomans named *Rumeli* (land of Rome).³⁰⁹ This was the first office of governor general in Ottoman administration.

To secure the new conquests, Şahin Paşa resettled various semi-nomad groups (*Yörük*) from Anatolia into the conquered territories.³¹⁰ As was the case with the Seljuk Empire, the Ottomans applied the policy of transfer of population to control a conquered area. The Ottomans also sought to reduce the nomad's influence by resettling them to the frontiers in Thrace, where they could continue to expand the territories without interfering with the central authority. The newly arrived *Yörük* nomads in Thrace eventually adapted a sedentary life and founded Turkish villages and towns.³¹¹ The gradual transfer of population from Anatolia played an important role in the integration of the Balkans into the Ottoman realm.³¹²

2.11.2 Expansion in Europe

In the acquisition of new territories, the Ottomans implemented various methods of diplomacy. For example, the Ottoman chroniclers noted that Kavala, Drama and Zihne in Macedonia were acquired through *ale'l infirâd 'âhd ile* (one by one, by consent) and after negotiation with the inhabitants (*'âhd u eman [ve] halk ile söyleşerek*).³¹³ To maintain peace and political stability, the Ottomans left to the rulers of the conquered lands their titles and kingdoms. This measure promoted continuity and reduced the risks of disorder. This generally enabled a serene transformation of the local elites. In turn, they had to pay an annual tribute and deliver auxiliary troops to Ottoman campaigns. These vassal sovereigns were placed under the surveillance of the Ottoman marcher lords (*uç beyleri*). If any of these vassals showed disobedience to their agreements, their realm was raided by the *akıncı* march lords and they could lose everything they had.

The policy of *istimâlet* (accommodation) was studied by Halil İnalcık in his article on 'Ottoman methods of conquest'.³¹⁴ Contrary to the title, which evokes belligerent connotations, it rather explores the adaptation of the Ottomans to the political realities in the Balkans. İnalcık remarked that the Ottoman expansion went through two stages. The first phase aimed at establishing Ottoman suzerainty over the seized states. In this

³⁰⁹ Ibidem, 326-327.

³¹⁰ Ibidem, 321, 327; İnalcık, *The Ottoman Empire*, 10.

³¹¹ İnalcık, *An Economic and Social History*, 34-35.

³¹² Machiel Kiel, 'The Incorporation of the Balkans into the Ottoman Empire, 1353-1453', in: Kate Fleet ed., *The Cambridge History of Turkey. Volume I* (Cambridge, 2009) 138-191 ; Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, vol. 1, 179-181.

³¹³ Dimitri Angelov, 'Certains aspects de la conquête des peuples balkaniques par les Turcs', *Byzantinoslavica* 17 (1956): 220-275; Neşrî, *Cihannüma*, 214-215.

³¹⁴ Halil İnalcık, 'Ottoman Methods of Conquest', *Studia Islamica* 2 (1954): 103-129.

transition period, the Ottomans did not strive for direct rule, but aimed at the recognition of a suzerainty relationship by the vassal state. While allowing its internal autonomy, the vassal state had to pay a tribute and join the Ottoman campaigns with a military force when asked for. During the second phase, instead of occupying the entire newly seized land, the Ottomans annexed a part of it, leaving the rest in the hands of the vassal dynasty. The next step in the long run was to establish direct dominion over these lands. During this incorporation process, the Ottomans integrated the local ruling elite into their own state organisation according to the needs of the moment.

This policy was implemented mainly by Sultan Murad I (1362-1389) and his Grand Vizier Çandarlı Hayreddin Pasha. They also adopted a policy of pacification with the Orthodox Church. There are several examples of *berat* (letters) of investiture for the assembled Orthodox clergy, safe passage for prelates who wanted to visit their colleagues or documents certifying their tax immunity. The sultans also released *fermans* (decrees) that safeguarded the properties of the monasteries in Bithynia, Macedonia, Mount Athos or Serres.³¹⁵ Balkan elites did not hesitate, often without converting to Islam, to integrate themselves into the Ottoman ruling class. They occupied different layers in Ottoman society. They could be *sipahi* (cavalrymen) or serve as auxiliary troops (*martoloz*, *voynuk*) in the military class.³¹⁶ They could become scribes, secretaries and dragomans in the Ottoman chancellery.³¹⁷ No pressure was put on them to become Muslim. Some members of the Balkan and Byzantine ruling elite embraced Islam. Mahmud Pasha Angelovič, the famous Grand Vizier of Sultan Mehmed II (r. 1451-1481), who originated from both the ruling dynasty of Serbia and that of Trebizond, is far from being an exception. He became a Muslim in the 1420s at the beginning of the reign of Sultan Murad II (r. 1421-1451).³¹⁸

Sultan Murad I subdued the greater part of the Balkans north to the Danube and turned the local dynasties into Ottoman vassals, establishing a centralised state with vassals in Europe and Anatolia. In 1371, the Ottoman army won a major victory over the Serbian king Stephan Dusan at the Battle of Çirmen, putting the whole Balkan, and in the long run Hungary and Venice, under their visor.³¹⁹ These successes greatly weakened the regional

³¹⁵ Irène Beldiceanu-Stiehl, 'La prise de Serres et le fiman de 1372 en faveur du monastère de Saint-Jean-Prodrôme', *Acta Historica*, IV (1965): 15-24; Elizabeth Zachariadou, 'Early Ottoman Documents of the Prodromos Monastery (Serres)', *Südost Forschungen*, XXVIII (1969): 1-12.

³¹⁶ Halil İnalcık, 'Stefan Dušan'dan Osmanlı İmparatorluğuna: XV. Asırda Rumeli'de Hristiyan Sipahiler ve Menşeleri', *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu Toplum ve Ekonomi* (İstanbul, 1996) 67-108.

³¹⁷ For example: Laonikos Chalkokondyle, fifteenth-century Byzantine historian, who served as secretary of Sultan Murâd II. See: Matei Cazacu, 'Les parentés byzantines et ottomanes de Laonikos Chalkokondyle', *Turcica* XVI (1984): 95-114.

³¹⁸ Theoharis Stavrides, *The Sultan of Vezirs. The Life and Times of the Ottoman Grand Vezir Mahmud Pasha Angelovic (1453-1474)* (Leiden, 2001).

³¹⁹ Neşri, *Cihannüma*, 93.

dynasts in the Balkans, capable of resisting Ottoman advances. In the end, the local Byzantine, Bulgarian and Serbian lords had to recognise Ottoman suzerainty and became vassals of the Ottoman state. After the Ottoman victory at Cirmen, the Byzantine emperor also became virtually an Ottoman vassal, as the ruling family sought Murad's support to hold the Byzantine throne.³²⁰ In 1372, pope Gregory XI tried to form an anti-Turkish crusade.³²¹ However, no major Christian state could oppose and participated to a crusade. Hence, the Ottoman advance continued.

In 1383, an Ottoman army under Çandarlı Kara Halil Hayreddin Paşa took Serres and laid siege before Thessaloniki. Four years later, in 1387, the city surrendered. By 1387, all of southern Macedonia came under Ottoman control. Ottoman expansion continued in the direction of Serbia. In 1385, Sofia was captured. Nish followed the next year, giving the Ottomans access to the Morava river and the territory of the Serbian prince Lazar. Meanwhile, Murad's absence in Anatolia because of his campaigns in the Balkans, gave Alaeddin Ali Bey, the prince of Karaman, the opportunity to attack Ottoman lands in Anatolia, and Murad had to campaign against Karaman in 1387.³²² The same year, the Bulgarian king Shishman, who was also Murad's brother-in-law, declared his independence from Ottoman suzerainty. This unleashed a campaign of the army under the command of Çandarlı Ali Paşa to force him to submission. In 1388, at the advance of Ali Paşa, Shishman surrendered, accepted Ottoman suzerainty and was left as vassal.³²³

In 1388, Bosnian troops routed the troops of *beylerbeyi* (governor-general) Lala Şahin Paşa. This provoked a campaign of sultan Murad I in 1389. Murad gathered his army with reinforcements from his Anatolian vassals, but some Balkan vassals such as Shishman did not appear. Sultan Murad first aimed to punish Lazar of Serbia before continuing into Bosnia. But in the meantime, prince Lazar had concluded an alliance with the Bosnian princes. In 1389, at the Battle of Kosovo Polje, Murad encountered the Serbian-dominated allied army with Bosnians, Albanians, Bulgarians and units from Hungary and Bohemia.³²⁴ In Neşri's account, we read that the Ottoman army gained the upper-hand after the last-minute counterattack of the right wing under the command of crown prince Bayezid.³²⁵ The destruction of the enemy command cadres created chaos and the crusader units fled from the battlefield. Ottoman units captured many leading Balkan nobility, including the Serbian king Lazar, commander in chief, who was instantly executed. However, the Ottoman army also suffered heavy casualties and Sultan Murad was assassinated during

³²⁰ İnalçık, *The Ottoman Empire*, 12.

³²¹ Luttrell, 'Latin responses', 126-128.

³²² Neşri, *Cihannüma*, 99-107.

³²³ Neşri, *Cihannüma*, 97-99, 114-115; Colin Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300-1650* (New York, 2002) 11-12.

³²⁴ Neşri, *Cihannüma*, 108-111, 119, 123-138.

³²⁵ Ibidem, 134-137.

the ending phase of the battle.³²⁶ Both sides suffered great losses, however, in comparison to the Ottomans, the Balkan coalition did not have the means to replace its losses. The Battle of Kosovo put an end to the independent Serbian kingdom and fortified the Ottoman position in southeast Europe.



³²⁶ Ibidem, 138.

Political and social-economic factors of Ottoman success in Europe

The expansion of Ottoman sovereignty in the Balkans was facilitated by several factors. With the decline of Byzantine rule, southeast Europe was covered by a patch-work of small states divided among feudal lords. The Ottomans skilfully exploited the religious and social resentments and extended their authority over these local dynasts, first as their allies and later as their overlords. The feudal Balkan princes generally followed a pro-European policy, in return for military aid. As a result, the leading elite tended to recognise the supremacy of the Pope and the Catholic Church. However, this move alienated the people from the local feudal nobility. Their cooperation with Catholic states such as Hungary and Venice, who usually regarded the Orthodox Christians as schismatic apostates, led to growing resentment among the Orthodox population, whereas the Ottomans created conditions more favourable for them after their conquests. They accorded the local Orthodox clergy an official status in the Ottoman state organisation. This implied that henceforth the life and creed of the Orthodox Christians, as Ottoman subject, were protected by the Ottoman state. As a result, many local Orthodox priests cooperated with the appeasing political power of the Ottomans.³²⁷

Before the Ottoman conquests, the social and economic conditions of the Balkan peasantry had deteriorated due to the wide-spread control of the land by various tiny feudal lords, who imposed heavy taxes and labour burdens upon the peasantry. These local feudal lords had usurped the power as the Byzantine rule in the Balkans began to decline. In pre-Ottoman medieval times the Balkan peasantry had to provide additional labour force services for their lords. As the peasantry resented these labour services, the Ottoman state ingeniously converted them into cash payments.³²⁸ Further, the Ottomans reorganised the land through the *çift-hane* system, of which the indivisible family farm (*çiftlik*) was its nucleus.³²⁹ The regular production unit of *çift-hane* was based on a peasant family household (*hane*) holding a certain amount of land (*çiftlik*), which was workable by two oxen. This formed the basis for the Ottoman state's agrarian and fiscal survey of land. As a production unit, the Ottoman *çift-hane* corresponded to the Roman *iugum-caput* and the Byzantine *stasis* or *zugokefalai*.³³⁰ State ownership of land combined with a class of independent peasantry was a predominant characteristic in most ancient empires.³³¹

³²⁷ Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, vol. 1, 182-186; Halil İnalcık, *Fatih Devri*, 143-144.

³²⁸ İnalcık, *An Economic and Social History*, 150-151.

³²⁹ On the *çift-hane* land system, see: ibidem, 108-118, 132-138, 145-153.

³³⁰ G. Ostrogorsky, *Pour l'histoire de la féodalité byzantine* (Brussels, 1954) 296-303 ; A.E. Laiou-Thomadakis, *Peasant Society in the Late Byzantine Empire* (Princeton, 1977) 69, 147, 153-163, 173.

³³¹ Studies on Byzantine rural society emphasize this, see: M. Kaplan, 'Remarques sur la place de l'exploitation paysanne dans l'économie rurale Byzantine', XVI. *Internationaler Byzantinisten Kongress, Jahrbuch der österreichischen Byzantinistik* 32/2 (1981).

As Deborah Boucoyannis has argued, the Ottoman land regime was also highly similar to the English tenurial system. Until now, no one had drawn the parallel between the two land regimes: all land belonged in theory to the ruler and there were leaseholds, not private ownership of the land. The property rights of the peasantry were under the protection of the Ottoman judicial system and differed little from those granted to English peasants. As she has further shown, representative institutions emerged where central authority was strong, not where rights were ceded in exchange for resources (taxation): such concessions happened only where taxation was already effectively imposed.³³²

These revolutionary Ottoman measures in land regime eliminated the feudal domains and structures in the Balkans, which were particularly beneficial to the peasantry since it relieved them from many feudal obligations and heavy burdens. The Ottomans considered the peasants not as enslaved, but as both dependent and free. The peasants' mobility and use of land were strictly regulated by laws issued by the central government in order to provide the amount of tax as recorded in the land survey registers (*tahrir*). He was 'free' in the sense that he was unrestricted to organise the production of his family farm and no one could extract his labor arbitrarily.³³³

The obvious aim was to enhance the economic output abilities of the productive classes in order to diversify the revenues from taxes. In this process, the Ottomans restored the lands that were in the hands of petty feudal lords into state propriety, which was called *miri* land. The state became the only legitimate authority establishing propriety rights on land, through conquest and reclamation. The state retained the ownership of land, but the actual possession and usufruct rights were handed over to farmers.³³⁴

The Ottomans thus established a centralised administration of the land and abolished the feudal decentralisation. The administration and control of this land system was initially entrusted to the *beys* or march lords. The lands were converted into *timars* (see below) and distributed in return for military services to *sipahi* cavalry or to the *yayas*, Turkish peasants serving in the army. Under Bayezid I (r. 1389-1402), their control and management was increasingly executed by the appointed *kul*-administrators, who belonged to the household of the dynasty. Furthermore, landholding and taxation were treated as an area of civil administration, independent of religious laws. The state lands were placed under the responsibility of a bureaucrat of the chancellery, the *nişancı*, who ran them according to the sultanic law. It was this law code, a combination of Islamic legacy and Roman practices, which administered the relationship in landholding and taxation.³³⁵

³³² Deborah A. Boucoyannis, *Land, Courts, and Parliaments: The Hidden Sinews of Power in the Emergence of Constitutionalism* (forthcoming).

³³³ İnalçık, *An Economic and Social History*, 145.

³³⁴ Ibidem, 103-108.

³³⁵ Ibidem, 105.

Hence, the restoration of state ownership of land and the family farm system brought several improvements to the conditions of the Balkan Christian peasantry. The Ottomans enhanced effective centralised state control with considerable improvements in the lives of the productive and tax-paying classes. In this process, the social crisis in the Balkans eased the establishment of Ottoman rule. People seem to have favoured Ottoman governance as it ended the age-old conflict between peasantry and feudal lords. The Ottomans succeeded to gain the support of the local Christian peasant groups. It is noteworthy that in the following centuries, many Ottoman defeats, succession wars or political crises did not seem to have created existential problems for the survival of the Ottoman state and dynasty.³³⁶

2.11.3 *Tımar*-system

The Ottoman military structure in the early fourteenth century still resembled the Seljuk system. The mounted warriors – called *sipahi* – constituted the majority of the Ottoman army. As mentioned earlier, during Osman's reign, conquered territories were divided up among the gazi leaders as personal domains, known as *yurtluk*, but they had to remain loyal to their overlord to continue providing military service.³³⁷ A half century later, this system apparently did not work well. Most of them settled in their domains and ceased to take part in campaigns.

During the reign of Murad I, a transition took place. The gazi marcher warrior leaders, whose military services had supported the Ottoman expansion, were firstly appointed as *uç beyleri*, lords of the frontiers.³³⁸ Later, they were gradually and systematically rendered into fief-holder (*tımarlı*) commanders and their duties were regulated by the central state. This measure enabled the Ottoman administration to control and transform the nomad cavalry. The relation with the marcher gazi-lords in Ottoman service gradually evolved from egalitarian partnership into vassalage in new hierarchical structures. In the course of this process, the Ottomans developed the *tımar* system that was tailored to the Seljuk *iqta* system, i.e. giving land as a source of revenue to military elite for their services.³³⁹ An essential element of the Seljuk state structure was its system of revenue producing land grants or *iqta* to the military commanders or emirs who governed over a province under Seljuk rule. These *iqta*-holders commanded forces, who were integrated into the Seljuk

³³⁶ İnalcık, *The Ottoman Empire*, 13.

³³⁷ Neşrî, *Cihânnümâ*,

³³⁸ Oruç Beğ *Tarihi*, 24.

³³⁹ On Seljuk *iqta* or land fiefs, see: Claude Cahen, 'L'évolution de l'*iqta* du 9e au 13e siècle', *Annales, ESC* 8 (1953): 25-52

imperial army (*Hassa Ordu*), and stood on the payroll of state treasury.³⁴⁰ It was the Seljuk Grand vizier Nizam al-Mülk who restructured the iqta-system, by merging the military and administrative fiefs into single units.³⁴¹ During the fourteenth century, nearly all Anatolian Turkish principalities tried to develop their own iqta-systems.³⁴² Osman Turan observed the distinction between the large iqta's given to leading commanders by the Great Seljuks and the modest timars placed at the disposal of commanders in Anatolia by the Rum Seljuks.³⁴³ In both cases, paying commanders with revenue assignments gradually weakened the Seljuk central government's control over both the land and the military, as iqta-holders frequently usurped it. This weakening of the government made the holding of the provinces very difficult.

The Ottoman timar institution may also be related to the Byzantine *pronoia* system.³⁴⁴ A *pronoia* was a type of conditional grant from the emperor, often to soldiers, of various properties and privileges. In large measure the institution of *pronoia* characterised social and economic relations in later Byzantium. The *pronoia*-system determined the Byzantine agrarian relations, taxation, administration and the economy, as it structured the relations between the ruler, monastic and lay landholders, including soldiers and peasants.

After the Ottoman expansion into the Balkans, a new land system was gradually established. The newly seized territories, which belonged to state property, were divided according to their tax value (*timar*) and given to the warrior cavalymen, the so-called *timarlı sipahi*, according to their merit and contribution in the campaigns. They lived in the villages and had the right to collect the tax revenue from the land, but were not allowed the ownership of the land itself. This was a temporary allocation in which the state retained the right to change these 'fief holders' if the *sipahi* were not able to provide the appropriate military service. The most important distinction from a European type of patrimonial feudalism or hereditary landed nobility was that all personal dependencies between the *sipahi* and the peasants were eliminated. The relation between them was strictly regulated by sultanic laws and remained under tight control of the agents of the central state. The *sipahis* represented the sultan's authority in the village and they were prohibited to take possession of the land reserved for the farmer. There was also a

³⁴⁰ Christian Lange and Songül Mecit ed., *The Seljuqs: Politics, Society and Culture* (Edinburgh, 2011) 4, 109.

³⁴¹ Ann Lambton, 'Reflections on the Iqta', ed. G. Makdisi, *Arabic and Islamic Studies in Honor of Hamilton Gibb* (Leiden, 1965) 369.

³⁴² Uzunçarşılı, *Anadolu Beylikleri*, 72-73; Fuad Köprülü, *Bizans Müesseselerinin Osmanlı Müesseselerine Tesiri* (Ankara, 2002) 102-106, 111, 126.

³⁴³ Turan, 'Anatolia in the period of the Seljuks and the Beyliks', 254-255.

³⁴⁴ For the origin, evolution and characteristics of *pronoia*, see: Mark C. Bartusis, *Land and Privilege in Byzantium. The Institution of Pronoia* (Cambridge, 2013).

deliberate policy behind it to prevent the emergence of rival foci of power. The regular rotation system in the holding of a *timar* disallowed the *sipahi* to acquire complete and independent control of the land and peasantry. Otherwise, his control of the land and the revenues could have enabled him to build his own independent power.³⁴⁵

According to his successes on the battlefield, a *sipahi* might increase his *timar* by gaining additional lands, but if he failed to perform his tasks or fled from the battle, he would certainly lose all his rights. However, he retained the title *sipahi* and could gain another *timar* on condition that he participated in the campaigns. If a dismissed *sipahi* recycled himself into a peasant and did not join the army for seven years, he lost his title of *sipahi* and all the privileges of the military class altogether. The effectiveness of the *timar* system was one of the main reasons behind the Ottoman military successes. Expansion through conquest provided new sources of revenue in the form of *timars* and became a stimulus for expansions.³⁴⁶

2.11.4 Expansion in Anatolia

The conquests and expansion into southeast Europe (*Rumeli*) increased the Ottoman power vis-à-vis the other Turkish principalities, but expansion into Anatolia also required to make it the leading political power. Already since their emergence, there had been a relentless competition between the Turkish principalities in Anatolia. The gradual development of Osman's tiny principality into a centralised state within a few generations and its rapid extension in Europe caused uneasiness among the neighbouring Turkish *beyliks*. While the pursuit of gaza and growth reached its limits in the other principalities, the Ottomans had gained new outlets by crossing over into Europe and became the unquestionable leaders of all *gazis*. Even the powerful principality of Karaman was unable to parallel the Ottoman success, when it imitated the Ottomans by trying, without success, to conquer Byzantine castles in Anatolia.³⁴⁷

The Ottoman policy of incorporation of the neighbouring Turkish Muslim states in Anatolia was similar to their policy towards the Christian states in Europe. In both regions they applied the method of gradual integration of these entities into the Ottoman political hierarchy. The gradual annexation of Karasi *Beyliği* in 1341-1344 had brought another principality, the Saruhan *Beyliği* into the direct neighbourhood of the Ottoman state. The Ottomans tried, exactly as their rivals, to control and annex the principalities bordering their territories. The principality of Saruhan had its capital in Manisa and was involved

³⁴⁵ İnalçık, *An Economic and Social History*, 71, 115, 171-177.

³⁴⁶ On the *timar* regime, see: Ibidem, 71-73, 108-118.

³⁴⁷ Emecen, 'Ottoman Policy of Conquest of the Turcoman Principalities', 38-39; Imber, *The Ottoman Empire*, 26-29.

in sea warfare on the Aegean islands and on the shores of Rumelia. However, as a result of the decline in sea warfare and the decrease of the resources, after the Latin capture of Izmir, the Saruhanids were deprived of incomes and were inclined to maintain good relations. Eventually, the Saruhan *beyliği* accepted Ottoman sovereignty and became a vassal state, like the other Turkish principalities. During the Battle of Kosovo in 1389, the forces of the Saruhan *beyliği* fought the Ottoman army. Nevertheless, directly after the succession of Bayezid I (1389-1402) to the throne, the Saruhanids played a significant role in the revolts of the Anatolian beyliks that forced sultan Bayezid I to undertake a campaign.³⁴⁸

During the reign of sultan Murad I (1360-1389), there occurred a shift to a policy of directly controlling and turning the Anatolian *begliks* into vassal states.³⁴⁹ Several Turkish local states, such as Germiyan and Hamid, accepted Ottoman suzerainty and forged ties through dynastic marriages. The Ottoman chronicles present Murad as the overlord of all the Anatolian beyliks, with legitimate grounds to incorporate the *beyliks* of Germiyan and Hamidili. Âşık Paşazâde, whose source was the contemporary Yahşi Fakih, accounts that Süleyman Şah, the Germiyanid lord, sent an envoy to sultan Murad I, proposing a marriage between his daughter, Sultan Hatun and crown prince Bayezid in 1378. The Germiyanid lord, Süleyman Şah, who wished to protect his territory against the invasions of the Karamanids, had proposed this marriage and had offered, as a dowry to his daughter, Kütahya, his seat of power and several other Germiyan cities. Murad agreed and acquired most of the principality.³⁵⁰

Neşrî accounts this episode as follows: ‘The Germiyan *oğlu* [son of Germiyan] understood that he had reached an old age, he called his son Yakup Bey and said to him: ‘My son, if you wish that this land remains in your possession, try to forge an alliance with the son of Osman; marry one of my daughters to him.’ (...) Ishak Fakih [the Germiyanid envoy] came to Murad Khan with some exceptional presents and said: ‘If our sultan judges that one of our daughters is suitable for his son Bayezid, please accept her as wife to his son. We furthermore offer you as a dowry several castles, such as Kütahya, Simav, Eğrigöz and Tavşanlı.’³⁵¹

Concerning the festivities during this marriage, the accounts of Âşık Paşazâde and Neşrî testify of the riches that was displayed during the wedding feast of crown prince Bayezid and Sultan Hatun, daughter of the Germiyan *bey*. This act seems to have served as diplomatic propaganda to demonstrate Ottoman economic and political power to the *beys* of the neighbouring states. Envoys from the Karamanids, Hamid-oglu, Mentеше-

³⁴⁸ On the Saruhan principality, see: Uzunçarşılı, *Anadolu Beylikleri*, 84-88; Emecen, ‘Ottoman Policy’, 38-40.

³⁴⁹ Emecen, ‘Ottoman Policy’, 37.

³⁵⁰ Âşık Paşazâde, *Tevârih-i*, 328-329.

³⁵¹ Neşrî, *Cihânnümâ*, 94.

oglu, Saruhanids, Isfendiyarids and an envoy of the Mamluk sultan were all present at the wedding feast. The chroniclers describe the valuable presents brought by Gazi Evrenos, the Ottoman marcher lord (*akıncı uç beyi*) in Europe, to the wedding of Bayezid, which included among other items cloths of gold, two hundred gold and silver trays filled with gold florins.³⁵²

Âşık Paşazâde noted that during the wedding feast, the envoy of Hüseyin Bey, the lord of the Hamidili principality, offered to sell his *beylik* to Murad. When, afterwards, Murad came to Kütahya, Hüseyin Bey sent his envoy to conclude the formalities of the sale. In his words: 'The envoy of Hamid-oğlu was also present at the wedding. It was agreed with him that Hamid-oğlu Hüseyin Bey would sell his lands to Murad Khan Gazi. According to this arrangement, Murad Khan Gazi came to Kütahya. Hamid-oğlu understood that he was coming to him, he sent an envoy who confirmed that 'he was loyal to his oath'. Thereupon, they arranged the sell and purchase formalities of the six cities (...) according to the Sharia. Murad Khan Gazi sent then his men who took the control of the cities that were purchased by him.'³⁵³

The purchase of territories from other principalities is an indication of Ottoman wealth. The main sources of this wealth were control of trade, territorial expansion and booty. During the reign of Murad I, the Ottomans controlled networks of international trade, which was of great importance for their treasury. They had acquired important trading ports and took cities on trade routes under their control. Bursa was the center of silk trade in Anatolia. The Ottoman control of the trade zones of western Anatolia, Aegean Sea, Marmara and northern Black Sea resulted in the development of mercantile relations with the Venetian and Genoese trade families. Commodities such as alum, cloth, carpets, grain, timber, soap and spices were of major importance in the trade partnerships between the Ottoman and Italian merchants.³⁵⁴

The incorporation of the Hamidili territories brought yet another principality, the *Beylik* of Karaman, centred in south-central Anatolia, into the direct vicinity of the Ottoman state. From the 1300s until its fall in 1483, the Karamanid dynasty or *Karamanoğulları*, was one of the oldest and most powerful Turkish states in Anatolia. During the last decades of the thirteenth century, the Karamanids had increased their power and influence, largely aided by the Mamluk Sultanate of Egypt, especially during the reign of Baybars. The Karamanid state developed after the fall of the Ilkhanid Empire in the early fourteenth century.³⁵⁵

³⁵² Âşık Paşazâde, *Tevârih-i*, 329; Neşrî, *Cihânnümâ*, 95.

³⁵³ Âşık Paşazâde, *Tevârih-i*, 331.

³⁵⁴ Fleet, *European and Islamic Trade*, 16, 23-36

³⁵⁵ Uzunçarşılı, *Anadolu Beylikleri*, 1-3; Cahen, *Pre-Ottoman Turkey*, 304.

The Ottoman expansion towards south-east Anatolia would make a conflict for supremacy with the Karamanids inevitable. The clash occurred in 1386, when Karamanoğlu Alâeddin Bey attacked Ottoman territories while Sultan Murad I was on campaign in southeast Europe.³⁵⁶ Karamanid forces marched into the territories of Hamidili, a disputed territory that had recently become an Ottoman vassal state. Murad decided to counterattack and moved his army. Because warfare against a fellow Muslim state posed difficulties, Murad had to justify his action against the Karamanids. According to the early Ottoman chroniclers, Murad legitimised his endeavour by proclaiming that the Karamanid act of aggression not only 'impeded the Ottoman gaza efforts' in Europe, but also that the Karamanids brought 'tyranny upon Muslims'. So, it was legitimate to act against the Karamanid rebellion and to wage gaza against it. We find the details of this conflict in the history of Neşrî, which I will discuss in the next chapter.³⁵⁷

It was on these grounds that the Ottomans legitimised the incorporation of the other Turkish *beyliks* into vassal states, as narrated by Ottoman chroniclers. The first step in establishing Ottoman sovereignty was to make rivals into vassals. However, Murad was soon confronted with the difficulty of motivating his army. The Ottoman Muslim contingents were hesitant to fight against Karamanid forces, who shared the same backgrounds and belief. Moreover, due to the strict Islamic regulation on warfare among Muslim states, material gains and booty prospects were limited. Islamic law regulated that the defeated Muslim soldiers could not be taken captive to purchase ransom and their possessions could not be taken as booty.³⁵⁸ These factors tempered their willingness to fight the Karamanids. Murad solved this problem by employing Christian forces of his vassals in the Balkans – the Serbian despot and the Byzantine emperor – who contributed decisively to the defeat of the Karamanid troops. Nevertheless, when the Serbian troops began to plunder in Karamanids territories, and disobeyed Murad's instructions, they were executed. This would become one of the important reasons for the later rebellion of the Serbian despot Lazar.

After his defeat at the Battle of Frenkyazısı in 1387, the Karamanid prince withdrew to his capital Konya, where Murad I besieged him. Sultan Murad I's daughter, Nefise Sultan, who was married to the Karamanid ruler Alaeddin Bey, came and begged her father to forgive her husband. Thereupon, Murad pardoned Alaeddin and gave him his territory back on condition that he had to come and kiss his hand, a gesture that symbolised the acceptance of the vassal relation. Murad's success had effective results. The independent princes in Anatolia, such as the Karamanids and the Candarids in Kastamonu, recognised

³⁵⁶ Neşrî, *Cihânnüma*, 99.

³⁵⁷ Ibidem, 99-100.

³⁵⁸ Emecen, 'Ottoman Policy of Conquest', 36.

Ottomans suzerainty. Only Kadı Burhaneddin, who had replaced the dynasty of Eretna in Sivas, still remained independent and prevented Ottoman expansion towards Amasya, an important city on the silk-road.³⁵⁹ However, by then, Sultan Murad I had established an empire that consisted of various vassal states in Anatolia and Europe.

2.11.5 Standardisation and centralisation

Initially, the Turkish communities in Anatolia had employed Central Asian nomadic command and control systems. Combined with strong leadership, these produced a decentralised but powerful political unity in the foundation period. However, these systems changed as the early Ottomans selectively started to appropriate elements from the Islamic and Byzantine military and administrative systems. These encounters introduced new ideas into the Ottoman state formation. Eventually, the loosening of the group solidarity (the *asabiyya* in Ibn Khaldun's words) within the equal partners of the early period, coincided with the divergence of their interests with that of the House of Osman. This ensued in tensions between the centrifugal and centripetal political forces within the ruling elite. In the initial stage of state building, the Ottoman dynasty relied on the semi-independent Turkish aristocracy for the conquests and acquisition of new territories. After a few generations, the dynasty began to implement policies aimed at centralisation of state power and the control of the distribution of the resources. In this conflict-ridden process, the Turkish aristocracy was marginalised from the central foci of power and brought under the central authority. Gradually, a new ruling elite – with cross-cultural backgrounds – replaced them as bureaucrats and military commanders loyal to the House of Osman. They emerged as a bureaucratic elite which was conscious of its own function within the state, identifying itself with a specific set of ideological narratives, serving as symbolic power. During the fifteenth century, the actual power of the House of Osman depended largely on this new ruling elite.

The capture of Thrace and expansion in Europe represented a major line of tension in early Ottoman state-building. The conquest of the towns in Thrace leading into the control of the Balkans, constituted one of the successes of the Ottomans, and it ultimately sealed the fate of Byzantium while strengthening Ottoman rule in southeast Europe. However, the decades after the crossing into Europe were also tension-ridden. During this period, the fledgling Ottoman state would face the risk of fragmentation.

The marches allowed building up alternative centres of power. Some early gazi leaders, such as the former Karasi warrior leader Hacı İlbegi, questioned Ottoman claims to being in charge of the marches and he was killed.³⁶⁰ Although the anonymous chronicler does

³⁵⁹ İnalcık, *The Ottoman Empire*, 15.

³⁶⁰ Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*, 117, 139; *Anonim Osmanlı Kroniği*, 30.

not clarify by whom Hacı Ilbegi was killed, we can assume that the Ottoman dynasty probably had eliminated him when he begun to claim independent power. Indeed, the *uç beyleri* or the lords of the frontiers were more independent of the central government than those closer to the capital. These marcher warrior dynasts, such as Mihal-oğulları, Turahan-oğulları, Malkoç-oğulları or Evrenos-oğulları, were initially equal partners in the original conquests and held their positions on a hereditary basis. Therefore, the frontier martial nobility tried to use every opportunity to remain independent or to obstruct the mechanism of central control. Their position was similar to that of Osman Gazi under the Rum Seljuks and the Ilkhanids. Although during the early period of principality the Ottoman dynasty inevitably had to ally itself with these warrior leaders, they later became 'elements of instability' in the stage of empire-building.³⁶¹ Moreover, the gazi mounted warriors were loyal only to their own leaders and remained fiercely independent; They were rather interested in booty than in empire-building. This led to a tendency of the marcher warrior leaders to create autonomous political entities.

It was for this reason that Murad I (r. 1362-1389) did not trust the frontier nobility during the conquests in Europe.³⁶² It was probable that they would carve independent polities for themselves. The Ottomans must have been aware of the fragmentation of power in the neighbouring Turkish principalities, where the princes failed to control the ambitions of their own commanders. Many of their subordinate commanders had become uncontrollable and created independent polities for themselves. The Ottomans probably learned lessons from these challenges and withstood the pressures of dissolution. Hence, the relationship of the Ottoman central government with the marcher lords was always tension-ridden. While the semi-independent marcher aristocracies wished to continue the decentralised way of partnership in conquests and control of resources, the Ottoman dynasty tried to concentrate power in the center. In this light, Murad I moved the Ottoman capital from Bursa to Edirne, where he established a second centre of state power.³⁶³ Murad I entrusted the command of major campaigns in the Balkans to officials who were close to him, such as Çandarlı Halil or to his tutor Lala Şahin Paşa, whom Murad appointed to the newly created office of governor general (*beylerbeyi*) of Rumeli. Murad aimed to give greater cohesion to the expansion in the Balkans. Thereafter, the office of *beylerbeyi* of Rumeli was the most important one. In 1393, Sultan Bayezid I created the

³⁶¹ Carl M. Kortepeter, *The Ottoman Turks: Nomad Kingdom to World Empire* (Istanbul, 1991) 33.

³⁶² See the passage from the Anonymous Greek Chronicle about the dream of Sultan Murad I on the possibility that the marcher lords such as Turahanoglu, Evrenos, etc could construct independent polities. After this dream, Murad's court decided that the old aristocratic families at the frontiers in the Balkans should be restricted to positions under the control of the central government. As quoted in: Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*, 151.

³⁶³ İnalcık, *Osmanlı*, 113.

second office of *beylerbeyi* of Anatolia. These two positions formed the basis of the provincial structure.³⁶⁴

As to institutions, already in 1331, the first Ottoman *medrese* (college for high education) was established by Orhan Gazi in Iznik and started to train scribes, scholars and judges. The influx of Muslim scholars, such as Çandarlı Kara Halil, an *ulema*-bureaucrat and member of an old Anatolian Muslim family, also occurred at this time. Çandarlı Hayreddin Kara Halil Paşa occupied administrative positions as *kadı* (judge) successively of Bilecik, Iznik and Bursa. Sultan Murad I, shortly after his accession in 1362, appointed Halil to the newly-created office of *kadı'asker* or 'judge of the affairs of the military-administrative class' and later made him vizier and his political advisor.³⁶⁵ The creation of the new office of *kadı'asker* can be attributed to the influence of traditions from previously established governmental structures of the Seljuks. The joint supervision over army and administration made Çandarlı Kara Halil actually the first grand vizier of the Ottoman state. The grand vizier's status as a military commander and the sultan's absolute deputy in administration, something which had not existed in the earlier Islamic states, became a standard in the Ottoman practice. The sultan entrusted the grand vizier with his own seal, as a symbol of his status as the absolute representative of the ruler. On campaign, the power of the grand vizier as commander in chief of the army reached its zenith and he could take decisions without consulting the sultan, make appointments and dismissals.³⁶⁶ The office of vizier was not new. Before Çandarlı Halil, the sources mention the existence of three viziers in the chancery. Nevertheless, until 1453, three generations of the Turkish clerical or *ulema*-originated Çandarlı family monopolised the top offices in the administration. The Çandarlıs played a major role in the building of new institutional structures, which reinforced the centralising tendency of the Ottoman dynasty, much to the resentment of the gazis and their supporters.³⁶⁷

Murad I's appointment of the first *kadı'asker* is another indication that the gazi egalitarianism of the early days was being replaced by a social hierarchy, which consisted of a military-administrative (*askeri*) ruling class and a subject class (*reaya*).³⁶⁸ This hierarchy between the elite and the common people echoes the differentiation found already in the Gök Türk Empire, with a difference. The Ottoman elite increasingly consisted of officials loyal to the dynasty, not tribal or aristocratic leaders with independent power bases, something the Ottomans persistently avoided. This development of a centralised administrative apparatus was severely criticised by the

³⁶⁴ Itzkowitz, *The Ottoman Empire and Islamic Tradition*, 42.

³⁶⁵ Oruç Beğ Tarihi, 22.

³⁶⁶ İnalcık, *The Ottoman Empire*, 95.

³⁶⁷ İnalcık, *Fatih Devri Üzerinde*, 81-85.

³⁶⁸ Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*, 142.

early chroniclers. The members of the Çandarlı family, along with other ulema-scholars who had sophisticated administrative expertise, are blamed for the introduction of ‘evil’ practices such as a treasury and regular bookkeeping.³⁶⁹

Despite the criticism, together with bureaucrats such as Çandarlı Kara Halil, Rüstem Paşa and Kara Temürtaş Paşa, sultan Murad I reinforced the institutional organisation of centralisation. Lala Şahin Paşa was appointed to the newly created office of governor general (*beylerbeyi*) of Rumeli. Kara Temürtaş Paşa was employed as the second vizier next to Çandarlı Kara Halil. As *beylerbeyi* of Rumeli, Lala Şahin Paşa was the supervising agent of the central administration and exercised effective control and command over the march lords in Rumeli, who were converted in *sancak beyi*. The *sancak* was an administrative provincial unit under a military commander – *sancak beyi* – who received a banner from the sultan as symbol of authority.³⁷⁰ In this way, the provincial military-administrative hierarchy headed by the *beylerbeyi* (governor general) and governors (*sancak beyi*) took shape.

The *kapıkulu* (dynasty’s household) institution

With the loosening of the social bonds (the *asabiyya*, as Ibn Khaldûn would have formulated it) that held the nomad gazi warriors together when Osman was one of them, the House of Osman gradually tended to accumulate power in itself by creating a standing army, the so-called ‘*Kapıkulu ocakları*’ – literally ‘hearts of the slaves of the gate’. The term ‘slave’, however, is misleading. The status and role of these people differed drastically from the common image of enchained slaves, deported for agricultural slavery-labor. As mentioned earlier, the Ottoman *Kapıkulu* institution had evolved from the Central Asian tradition of *nöker*. The Ottomans certainly adapted the practice of training young men for the Palace service and the service of the state from the Seljuq Sultanate of Rûm.³⁷¹ In Seljuk practice of the *ghulam*-system, the *ghulams* were originally more a palace guard.³⁷² Further, the systematic recruitment of military ‘slaves’ had begun earlier during the reign of the Abbasid caliph Al-Mamun (813-833). It became a common practice in the Muslim states, which collected *ghulams* (‘young men’) or *mamluks* (‘those who are owned’) through purchase or capture. Mostly, they were selected among Turkish nomad mounted archers from Central Asia. They became an army unit loyal to the ruler and to each other.³⁷³ The

³⁶⁹ Anonim Osmanlı Kroniği, 31.

³⁷⁰ İnalçık, *Ottoman Empire*, 104.

³⁷¹ Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devleti Teşkilâtına Medhal* (İstanbul, 1941) 85-94, 108-122; Köprülü, ‘Bizans Müesseselerinin Osmanlı Müesseselerine Tesiri Hakkında Bâzı Mülâhazalar’, *THITM* 1 (1931) 208-221, 242-246; idem, ‘Osmanlı İmparatorluğunun Etnik Menşe’i Meseleleri’, *Belleten* 7/28 (1943) 275.

³⁷² ‘Ghulam’, *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition* (Brill Online).

³⁷³ Itzkowitz, *The Ottoman Empire*, 49.

military *ghulam*-system provided the Abbasids with a solid power instrument, paid by the central government and with no other loyalty or connection to political actors in the society. The highly centralised Abbasid regime, funded by agrarian taxes and maintained by a conscripted army, became the ideal government for the bureaucrats and administrators of later Islamic history, such as the Great Seljuk Empire and the Ottoman Empire.³⁷⁴

The institution of *kapıkulu* was an Ottoman innovation of the *ghulam* system. The establishment of the Ottoman *kapıkulu* institution started after the crossing into Europe. At first, it consisted of prisoners captured during the raids or in battle. In Europe, the warriors at the frontiers seized many captives and for the first time a special tax, called the *pençik*, was introduced. It instructed to take one of every five captives from the gaza booty for the treasury of the central government. According to the early chroniclers, the idea for the *pençik*-tax on captives was suggested by Kara Rüstem of Karaman, whom they called 'one of those who filled the world with all kinds of cunning tricks'. Kara Rüstem Paşa was an *ulema*-bureaucrat who probably had knowledge of Seljuk administration. In the 1370s, he proposed it to Çandarlı Hayreddin Kara Halil, who was serving as *kadı'asker* (judge of the affairs of the military and administrative class). Halil Paşa consulted sultan Murad I, who authorised this innovation (*ihdât*) of taking duties (*bâc*), after having been assured that this was indeed the provision of the *shari'a*. Thereupon, Kara Rüstem installed himself at Gallipoli and collected 25 *akçe* per prisoner.³⁷⁵ After a certain period, the physically fit and young captives were selected and sent to Turkish farmlands in Anatolia to work in the fields and to learn the Turkish language and culture. Finally, they came back to the dynasty's household to serve as *yeni çeri* (janissary) or new soldier.³⁷⁶ These conscripts (*devshirme*) formed a part of the larger ruling classes of military and bureaucratic officials (*kapıkulu*), who administered the central government.

The building of new institutions and the adopting of sedentary practices contradicted the norms and demands of the Turkish nomad gazi warriors. The Turkish nomad cavalry had formed the bulk of the Ottoman forces until the time of Orhan Gazi (1324-1362). These nomad gazi warriors had received lands as a reward for their military services during the conquests and were bound to serve in the campaigns of the sultan. As already noted, in time, they had evolved into the provincial landed cavalry (*timarlı sipahi*), which was formed by various timar-holders within the realm. The provincial landed cavalry constituted the backbone of the Ottoman army and their numbers during Murad II's reign amounted to circa 30.000 soldiers. However, every now and then their reliability in battle was questioned by the central government.³⁷⁷ The sipahi's possessed a relative degree of

³⁷⁴ Hugh Kennedy, *The Army of the Caliphs: Military and Society in the early Islamic State* (London, 2001).

³⁷⁵ Anonim *Osmanlı Kroniği*, 28-29; Neşrî, *Cihânnüma*, 90-91; Âşık Paşazâde, *Tevârîh*, 326.

³⁷⁶ *Ibidem*.

³⁷⁷ Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, 515-517.

independence in the marcher lands that were assigned to them within the Ottoman governmental system. In contrast to the officials of the *kapıkulu* or dynasty's household, they did have hereditary positions, in which their sons succeeded them. The Turkish nobility and the gazi marcher lords (*uç beyleri*) possessed their own military retinues and household, whose loyalty was with their own *bey*, who led them in war and provided for their livelihood. However, as Halil İnalcık argued, since all the timars (land fiefs) were granted directly by the sultan, they were not comparable to the European feudal lords who had an independent economic power base and private armies. The sultan possessed after all the largest household of military retinue and was able to check the power of the marcher lords.³⁷⁸

Sultan Murad I (r. 1362-1389) tried to place some limitations upon the power and influence of the older Turkish nobility over the provincial *timarlı* cavalry. He therefore enlarged his household retinue through the *kapıkulu*-institution and army, which formed the second important group of the Ottoman army. After some time, a new mode of recruitment came into being, the well-known system of boy-conscription known as the *devşirme* (literally 'to collect') was introduced.³⁷⁹ The youths of Ottoman Christian subjects were conscripted during their childhood to be educated and trained for the Ottoman administration and army. The conscription of boys with cross-cultural backgrounds was a result of the need to create troops and administrators who were independent of every social connection with the Turkish nobility. The Christian peasant boys were usually enrolled because they lacked political connection and stood outside the loyalties towards Turkish ruling elite. Their sole loyalty had to be to the head of the House of Osman. This institutional novelty accelerated eventually the success of the Ottoman state vis-à-vis the other Turkish principalities of Anatolia. It is a common mistake to regard the janissaries, *devşirme* and *kapıkulu* as one and the same. The *devşirme* conscripts made up a subgroup of the larger *kapıkulu* institution (conscripted servants of the dynasty's household). The famous sub-unit of the *devşirmes* was the infantry troops, known as the *yeniçeriler* or Janissaries (new soldiers). The janissaries formed merely one part of the *kapıkulu* army.³⁸⁰

Created as an institution to counteract the independent power of the Turkish nobility, no Ottoman institution has aroused more discussion than the *kul* institution. This was

³⁷⁸ İnalcık, 'Ottoman Methods of Conquest', 121.

³⁷⁹ İsmail H. Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devleti Teşkilatında Kapıkulu Ocakları*, vol. 1 (Ankara, 1988) 5-12; V. L. Ménage, 'Some Notes on the Devshirme', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 29/1 (1966): 64-78; Paul Wittek, 'Devshirme and Sharia', in: ed. Stanford J. Shaw, *Selected Readings on Ottoman History*, vol. 2 (Cambridge, 1965) 645-653; Speros Vryonis, 'Isidore Glabas and the Turkish devshirme', *Speculum* 31 (1956): 433-443.

³⁸⁰ For more detailed discussion of the various corps of the *Kapıkulu* army and officials, see: Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devleti Teşkilatında Kapıkulu Ocakları*, vol. 1 and 2; Mesut Uyar and Edward Erickson, *A Military History of the Ottomans* (Santa Barbara, 2009) 19-20, 36-66; Reşad Ekrem Koçu, *Yeniçeriler* (İstanbul, 2004); Erdal Küçükyalçın, *Turna'nın Kalbi. Yeniçeri Yoldaşlığı ve Bektaşilik* (İstanbul, 2009).

certainly one of the most important innovations of the fourteenth and fifteenth-century Ottoman state formation.³⁸¹ The *devşirme* was the primary way for recruitment into state service, in which they were integrated into the dynasty's household. The education of the *kapıkulu*-conscripts was intensive, competitive and selective. They were divided accordingly in those who were suitable for courtly service and those who were not. For the novices (*acemi*) who were qualified for the higher offices, it was a comprehensive one. In one of the outlying palaces, they lived for seven years under a disciplined schedule of learning and physical exercise. In the higher grades their training included a literary education in Arabic and Persian, in the same way as the Ottoman crown princes. They were also trained in the fine arts and in the arts of war. No pressure was put on these novices to become Muslims; but they invariably did so. The influence of Bektashi mystical Sufis who introduced them into the principles of Islam, might have encouraged them to conform their values and behaviours to group norms.³⁸² Separated from their family background, the influence of the Ottoman palace school or *Enderun-i Hümayun*, in which the most intelligent had been selected, was appealing to make a career in higher administration.³⁸³

Roughly categorised, the least intelligent of the enrolled cadets were for example made into palace gardeners (*bostancı*). At the next level of intelligence, they were drafted into the Janissary corps, the elite infantry corps. At a higher level, the trainees were drafted into the household cavalry or imperial sipahi. The most intelligent and talented were selected for staffing the imperial administrative offices (*has oda başı*, *silâhdar*, *sır katibi*, etc).³⁸⁴ As their names suggest, many of them had official functions at court distinct from their military duties. This last group of the *kul*-institution could rise to the highest offices in the Ottoman administration. They could become *vezir* or minister in sultan's state council; or the premier of the council, the grand *vezir*; or else become governors, army commanders, jurists and scribes at the chancery. Their membership in the household of the Ottoman dynasty gave them prestige and privileges and they therefore demanded the respect of Ottoman subjects, both Muslims and non-Muslims. They were paid salaries and were rewarded for their merits in the form of ranks, power and wealth. They did not constitute a hereditary nobility as in Europe; their career lines were based upon meritocracy and were not defined by aristocratic descent.³⁸⁵ The Ottoman practice of *kul* did certainly not possess the same pejorative connotations and meaning as the western concept of 'slave'.

³⁸¹ Halil İnalcık, *Devlet-i Aliyye. Osmanlı İmparatorluğu Üzerine Araştırmalar* (İstanbul, 2009) 205.

³⁸² Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devleti Teşkilatında Kapıkulu Ocakları*, 159.

³⁸³ Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devletinin Saray Teşkilatı* (Ankara, 1984) 300-358.

³⁸⁴ *Ibidem*, 322-326.

³⁸⁵ Itzkowitz, *The Ottoman Empire*, 50-54; İnalcık, *Devlet-i Aliyye*, 214.



Figure 7: The conscription of Christian boys (*devshirme*) for the *kul* institution, probably in the Balkans. Source: Süleymanname (1558), Topkapı Palace Museum H1517, folio 31b.

Once the shocking novelty of *devşirme* had passed, many Christian peasant families volunteered their children for such a potentially good career. It was reported that many Christian peasants tried to offer bribes so that their children would be conscripted.³⁸⁶ In the early Ottoman period, the relatives of the children levied for the Janissaries were exempted from paying the *jizya*-tax (levied on non-Muslim Ottoman subjects). To conscript a son through the *devşirme*-system seems to have been regarded as a quasi-military service, comparable with the other services, such as guarding bridges and passes, could also bring exemption from *jizya*-tax.³⁸⁷

Sultan Mehmed II (r. 1451-1481) had firmly established the *kapıkulu*-class on an equal footing with the Turkish aristocracy. For instance, Sultan Mehmed purposefully allocated the final victorious assault on the walls of Constantinople to the janissaries in order to render his household infantry prestige and reputation. He also publicly proclaimed their role in the prestigious conquest. The unfortunate auxiliary troops, who were decimated

³⁸⁶ Alexander Mikaberidze ed., *Conflict and Conquest in the Islamic World. A Historical Encyclopedia* (California, 2011) 273.

³⁸⁷ Halil İnalcık, 'Djizya', *IE²* (Brill Online).

during the earlier attacks in order to fatigue the enemy, received no public recognition.³⁸⁸ In the second half of the fifteenth century, the *kapıkulu* became a new ruling elite, conscious of its common interests and powerful positions within the Ottoman administrative and military system. The members of the *kapıkulu* were made up by people of various origins (Turkish, European, Balkan, Arab etc.) who lived together and shared a cross-cultural background. The notion of the ruling elite was reconstructed as 'Ottomans' and the list of admission to the ruling class was elaborated. The term *askeri* (military class) applied to all members of this ruling class, even though many did not serve as soldiers. Because the identity of the ruling elite was culturally defined, it opened itself for newcomers and made up a strong force of integration. The general criteria for entry into the ruling class included loyalty to the House of Osman and the state, embracing Islam (although an element less important than has often been assumed) and knowledge of the 'Ottoman way', a set of practices, customs and language of the ruling elite. The elite also maintained and conserved classic Islamic civilisation. It was based on the knowledge of classic works on literature, history, philosophy, religion, sciences, etc. And a new code of conduct or *adab* was shaped, based on the ideas of *intisab* (relation between master and protégé), *şeref* (personal dignity) and *hadd* (personal limit). These ideas formed the basis of the new households that relied on new networks and master/protégé ties.³⁸⁹ The sixteenth-century multi-ethnical and multi-cultural Ottoman Empire was a result of these developments.

With regard to military organisation, already during the reign of Murad II (r. 1421-1451), the janissary corps had become the most important unit of the standing *kapıkulu* forces of the Ottoman army, particularly in terms of combat effort. Their number at the field during the reign of Murad II is assumed to be around 6.000 janissaries.³⁹⁰ As we shall observe, in the pitched battles during the major campaigns of Nish and Varna in 1443 and 1444, the provincial cavalry had turned and fled the field in the early stages of the battle. It was primarily through the withstanding of the janissary corps that the Battle of Varna was won against the invading crusader army. Their role had been decisive. They provided an anchor for the army and an unshakable centre around which the left and right wings of cavalry could operate and rally to in time of need. The organisational structure, command and control system of the janissary corps became in time stable.³⁹¹ The *élan* and cohesion within each janissary regiment were very strong. They were proud of their own regiments and generally identified themselves with their units that each regiment became something of a great family. Most of these warriors tattooed the symbols of their

³⁸⁸ Uyar and Erickson, *A Military History of the Ottomans*, 37.

³⁸⁹ Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devletinin Saray Teşkilatı*, 297-299.

³⁹⁰ Jefferson, *The Holy Wars of King Wladislas and Sultan Murad*, 193.

³⁹¹ Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devleti Teşkilatında Kapıkulu Ocakları*, vol. 1, 64, 155-156, 163-170, 178-179.

respective units on their arms and shoulders. Their distinctive uniforms and high white bonnets were other symbols of their prestige and identification. Obviously, the Ottoman government understood the importance of uniforms to promote élan, raise morale and discipline. The colours of the uniforms and shoes showed the status and the rank.³⁹²

The Ottoman state also employed other means to create identities and cohesion. The Ottoman government established an intimate connection between the janissary corps and the Bektashi mystical order and promoted the activities of the Bektashi dervishes within the corps. Indeed, the professional soldiers who sharing the harsh life of a warrior, facing dangers at battlefields, shared also their identities as being a member of the janissary corps. The Bektashi mysticism helped them to self-sustainment and to create strong traditions. Indeed, the harshest punishment for any janissary was to be sacked from his regiment.³⁹³ This unity proved to be very successful during the combats at the battlefield, but it had also the result that janissaries stood together against other groups and units, even occasionally against the sultan. The solidarity within the corps later became very dangerous for the government after the 'politicisation' of the corps, which made use of this unity to start uprisings and launch coups.³⁹⁴

In conclusion, it was only after the Ottomans successfully withstood the tremendous pressures to dissolution during the early period of decentralised expansion that they began to build their state institutions, such as a bureaucracy, an *ulema* and a standing (*kapıkulu*) army. The creation and acceptance of new institutions could only be possible when it made sense, when society required or could easily accommodate that change. The transformations took place between the 1360s and 1450s. Sedentarisation, which entailed distancing from nomadic practices, was only one aspect of this conflict-ridden transformation process. The trajectory of Ottoman state-building was a history of shifting alliances and conflicts among various social forces, some of which would eventually drop out of the enterprise or be subdued and marginalised. The social forces themselves underwent swift changes as well while continuously negotiating their position within the state. In this rapidly changing socio-political order, the reign of Sultan Murad I (r. 1362-1389) represents the first major turning point in the standardisation and bureaucratisation of the Ottoman administration.³⁹⁵

³⁹² Ibidem, 258-259, 290-305.

³⁹³ Küçükyağcı, *Turna'nın Kalbi. Yeniçeri Yoldaşlığı ve Bektaşilik*, 122-151; Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devleti Teşkilatında*, 147-150, 159-160, 259.

³⁹⁴ Indeed, in the seventeenth century, they became an asymmetric and powerful political group that enforced their interests through coercion and even by brutally killing the reigning sultans. See: Baki Tezcan, 'The 1622 military rebellion in Istanbul: a historiographical journey', *International Journal of Turkish Studies* 8/1-2 (2002): 25-43; Jane Hatheway, *Mutiny and Rebellion in the Ottoman Empire* (Madison, 2002); Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq, *The Turkish Letters of Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq*, tr. Edward S. Forster (Oxford, 1968) 155, 158-159.

³⁹⁵ Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*, 139-143.

This is reflected in the fact that Murad I was the first Ottoman ruler to take the title of Sultan. This change is very similar to the fact that the Great Seljuk rulers also showed less interest in their nomad roots and sought legitimacy largely through appealing to the ideals of Islamic rulership, by claiming the title of *sultan*. In both the Seljuk and Ottoman cases, the Persian Islamic concept of absolute sovereignty of the sultans did not impress the Turkish nomad nobility (*begs*). Following the Turkish administrative system, the opponents considered the state as common property and power had to be shared.³⁹⁶ The Turkish Oghuz princes in the entourage of Seljuk sultans and the Turkish nobility around the Ottoman sultan were accustomed to regard him as *primus inter pares*. The title of *sultan* had placed the ruler above all these *begs* of the Turkish nobility. They were annoyed by the centralisation of power that was surrounded by the members from the household of the dynasty, precisely as in the Seljuk case.³⁹⁷ The Great Seljuks gained a reputation for having betrayed their group solidarity with the Oghuz nomads. The critics of the Ottoman gazi-chroniclers expressed similar resentments. Eventually, sultan Murad I succeeded to establish a centralist state, similar to certain states of western Europe in the fifteenth century.³⁹⁸ An Ottoman Muslim imperial state, with a sultan and administration, a standing army, provincial cavalry and gazi frontier defenders had begun to emerge.

³⁹⁶ Turan, 'Anatolia in the Period of the Seljuks', 253-54; Halil İnalcık, 'The Ottoman Succession and its Relation to Turkish Concept of Sovereignty', in: *ibid*, *The Middle East and the Balkan under Ottoman Empire* (Bloomington, 1993) 38-41.

³⁹⁷ Cahen, *Pre-Ottoman Turkey*, 25.

³⁹⁸ Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*, 140, 142.

2.12 The First Empire, 1389-1402

By 1389, the Ottoman dynasty had founded a state of vassal principalities in Anatolia and the Balkans, the two heartlands of the Ottoman Empire. In 1389, in the Battle of Kosovo-Polje, the attempt of the assembled Balkan states to stop Ottoman expansion ended in their absolute defeat. Losing his father Murad I at Kosovo, Sultan Bâyezid I (r. 1389-1402) assumed government on the battlefield. However, he still had to secure his power. After a short strife for succession, Bâyezid eliminated the challenges raised by his brothers. During this brief period of confusion, some Anatolian Turkish *begliks* tried to make use of this opportunity to annex Ottoman possessions. Alaeddin Beg of Karaman took Beyşehir back, which he earlier ceded to sultan Murad I. The prince of Germiyan dynasty tried to recapture the cities that his father had given to Murad I.

By the end of 1389, Bâyezid I secured his authority and led his army into Anatolia to repress the revolting Turkish vassals. As a result, the Ottoman chronicles list the complete annexation of the *beyliks* of Saruhan and Aydın, followed by the capture of Germiyan and Menteşe in south-west Anatolia. Bâyezid now marched against the Karamanids, recaptured Beyşehir and forced them into a treaty. The lord of Menteşe fled and sought refuge with Timur Lenk.³⁹⁹ In 1390, the Venetians were renegotiating with sultan Bâyezid I on their earlier treaties with the *begs* (lords) of Aydın and Menteşe, indicating that these principalities were controlled by the Ottoman state.⁴⁰⁰ One of Bâyezid's vassals, Süleyman Pasha of Kastamonu, shifted his allegiance to Kadı Burhaneddin, ruler of Sivas in central Anatolia. Bâyezid defeated him and seized Kastamonu, but in Amasya he was confronted by Kadı Burhaneddin, a powerful rival.⁴⁰¹

However, the events in Europe forced Bâyezid I to return westwards. The situation in Serbia was alarming. After the death of the Serbian despot Lazar at Kosovo in 1389, his vassals Vlk Brankovich and Stracimirovich refused to recognise the rule of Lazar's widow Milica. This succession strife led to the involvement of the Hungarian king Sigismund who wanted to impose his own sovereignty on Serbia. After Sigismund had invaded Serbia, Sultan Bâyezid I abandoned his campaign in Anatolia and came to Rumeli to check the Hungarian ambitions in Serbia. To this end, in 1392 Bâyezid proposed to Milica to protect her against Hungary and they concluded a marriage agreement between her daughter Olivera and Bâyezid. After accepting these terms, Bâyezid resettled Lazar's son Stephen

³⁹⁹ Ahmedî, *Dasitân-i Tevârih*, 45-46; Âşık Paşazâde, *Tevârîh-i Âl-i Osmân*, ed. Yavuz and Saraç, 336-337; Neşrî, *Cihânnüma*, 142-143.

⁴⁰⁰ Elizabeth Zachariadou, *Trade and Crusade: Venetian Crete and the Emirates of Menteshe and Aydın* (Venice, 1983) 77.

⁴⁰¹ Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi I*, 83-85; Yücel, *Kadı Burhaneddin Ahmed ve Devleti*.

to the Serbian crown as an Ottoman vassal. As he acquired suzerainty over the Lazarevich dynasty, Bâyezid also subjugated Brankovich and other nobles. In this way, he secured control over all Serbian domains and prevented Hungarian rule in Serbia.⁴⁰²



Figure 8: The enthronement of Sultan Yıldırım Bâyezid I in Kosovo in 1389.
Source: Hünernâme, vol. 1, Topkapı Palace Museum H1523 folio 96b.

When Sultan Bâyezid I departed to Rumeli, he appointed Kara Temürtaş as *beglerbegi* (governor-general) of Anatolia, with his seat in Ankara. In Bâyezid's absence, Alaeddin beg of Karaman attacked Ankara and imprisoned Kara Temürtaş in Konya. This provoked Bâyezid Khan, who on his return from Europe, rejected the excuses and gifts sent by Alaeddin and led an army against him. The Karamanid forces were defeated, Alaeddin's sons, Mehmed Beg and Ali Beg, were captured and imprisoned in Bursa. Bâyezid left the fate of Alaeddin to Kara Temürtaş, who captured and killed him, apparently against

⁴⁰² Imber, *The Ottoman Empire*, 42-43.

Bayezid's wishes.⁴⁰³ Alaeddin's widow was in fact Bâyezid's sister. He took his sister and his nephews with him to Bursa. The Ottoman army advanced further and seized several other Karamanid cities. With these conquests and the removal of Alaeddin's heirs, the principality of Karaman lost its independence.

In the winter of 1394, Bâyezid had invited the Byzantine emperor Manuel II and the other Christian vassals from the Balkans to an assembly in Serres in order to strengthen relations of vassaldom between them. In particular, he wanted the Byzantines, who tended to unite with Venice, to hand over their main cities in the Morea or the Peloponnese peninsula. However, Manuel left with the impression that Bâyezid intended to eliminate him and conquer Byzantium. As soon as he came back to Constantinople, Manuel broke off relations with Bâyezid and sent messengers to Hungary for military aid.⁴⁰⁴

In the summer of 1394, Bâyezid ordered the siege and blockade of Constantinople, which continued until 1402. He hoped to take it by means of a long blockade. As a part of the siege and to control the passage in the Bosphorus, Bâyezid built the watch fort of *Güzelce Hisar* on the Anatolian side.⁴⁰⁵ In the meantime, he led an expedition against the Hungarians and Wallachia (Eflak) and subjugated the Wallachian *voyvoda* Mircea in 1395.⁴⁰⁶ Thereafter, Bâyezid crossed the Danube river and seized the fortress of Nicopolis (Niğbolu), which controlled one of the passages over the Danube. There, he captured the Bulgarian king Shishman and executed him. In this way, Bâyezid ended the Bulgarian kingdom that was transformed into an Ottoman *sancak* or province under direct Ottoman rule.⁴⁰⁷

Bâyezid I's swift conquests in the Balkans caused commotion in Europe. Hungary and Venice, who had already concluded an alliance in 1394 and pleaded for a crusade against the Ottomans in several European capitals. Their calls and the continuous Byzantine requests for aid eventually caught the attention of the Western European states, such as the Valois dukes of Burgundy, who involved themselves heavily in a project of holy war.⁴⁰⁸ The Burgundian duke Philip the Bold became the chief architect of a crusade to

⁴⁰³ Neşrî, *Cihânnüma*, 144-145.

⁴⁰⁴ Kemalpaşazâde, *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osman*, IV. Defter, ed. Koji Imazawa (Ankara, 2000), 237-39.

⁴⁰⁵ Aşıkpaşazâde, *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osmân*, 339. It is currently known as Anadolu hisari. On the opposite side, another fortress, the Rumeli hisar on the European shore, was built by sultan Mehmed II in 1452, before he conquered Constantinople.

⁴⁰⁶ Neşrî, *Cihânnüma*, 144.

⁴⁰⁷ İnalcık, *The Ottoman-Turkish civilization*, 37.

⁴⁰⁸ Kaçar and Dumolyn, 'The Battle of Nicopolis', 12-16; A. Luttrell, 'Latin Responses to Ottoman Expansion', 119-134; Jean Richard, 'La Bourgogne des Valois, l'idée de croisade et la defense de l'Europe', in : *Le Banquet du Faisan. 1454: l'Occident face au défi de l'Empire ottoman*, eds. Caron and Clauzel (Arras, 1997); Jim Magee, 'Le temps de la croisade bourguignonne', in *Annales de Bourgogne* 68 (1996): 49-58.

strengthen his own political position and therefore sent his son, Count Jean de Nevers, as the nominal head of the French forces.⁴⁰⁹ The count and a coterie of Burgundian vassals formed a contingent of the larger crusader army, which consisted of knights and crusaders from Flanders, Germany, England, Italy, Spain, Scotland, Hungary, Poland, Rhodes, Lombardy and Wallachia. The allied Christian army counted around 120.000 men.⁴¹⁰ When in 1396 the crusaders under king Sigismund of Hungary came to lay siege to Nicopolis, Bâyezid was besieging Constantinople.⁴¹¹

As soon as Bâyezid received the news that the crusaders had crossed the Danube into Ottoman territory, he abandoned the siege of Constantinople and rushed with then thousand cavalymen to Nicopolis, the scene of the famous battle.⁴¹² The next day, at the Battle of Nicopolis, he destroyed the crusader army, which signalled a first blow to the European crusader ideology.⁴¹³ This battle was the first major encounter between the Ottoman state and the Western European states of the later Middle Ages.

The outcome of this western crusade is well-known and I shall not consider the details of the battle. It is sufficient to note that the defeat shocked and discouraged the Western nobility for a long time to undertake again such a project against the Ottoman state.⁴¹⁴ Yıldırım Bâyezid's crushing victory at Nicopolis had ensured Ottoman control of the Balkans and raised his fame and prestige in the Muslim world. To announce his victory, Bâyezid sent some of the crusader war prisoners to the Mamluk sultan in Egypt.⁴¹⁵

⁴⁰⁹ Jacques Paviot, *Les Ducs de Bourgogne et la Croisade et l'Orient* (Paris, 2003), 23, 31-36; David J. Wrisley, 'Burgundian Ideologies and Jehan Wauquelin's Prose Translation', ed. Jan Veenstra, *The Ideology of Burgundy. The Promotion of National Consciousness, 1364-1560* (Leiden, 2006).

⁴¹⁰ Atiya, *The Crusade in the Later Middle Ages*, 430-445.

⁴¹¹ Oruç Beğ Tarihi, 32.

⁴¹² *Düstûrnâme-i Enverî*, 36-37.

⁴¹³ The classic but often unreliable reference is Aziz S. Atiya, *The Crusade of Nicopolis* (London, 1934); See also idem, 'The Crusade in the Fourteenth Century', in *A History of the Crusades. Volume Three: The Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries*, ed. Harry W. Hazard (Madison, 1975), 3-26; Charles Tipton, 'The English at Nicopolis', *Speculum* 37/4 (1962): 528-540; Bertrand Schnerb, 'Le contingent franco-bourguignon à la croisade de Nicopolis', *Annales de Bourgogne* 68 (1996):59-74; Kelly De Vries, 'The Lack of a Western European Military Response to the Ottoman Invasions of Eastern Europe from Nicopolis (1396) to Mohács (1526)', *The Journal of Military History* 63 (1999): 539-599; Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, 246-249; Ali Haydar Taner, *Kosova Meydan Muharebesi* (İstanbul, 1930); Şehabeddin Tekindağ, 'Niğbolu', *İslam Ansiklopedisi* IX, 248-250; Köprülü, 'Yıldırım Bâyezid'in esareti ve intiharı', *Belleten* 1 (1937): 591-603; Metin Kunt, 'Siyasal Tarih', eds. Kunt and Faroqhi, *Türkiye Tarihi 2, Osmanlı Devleti, 1300-1600* (İstanbul, 1997) 51-56.

⁴¹⁴ For the events directly leading to the battle and its aftermath, see Philippe de Mézières, *Une epistre lamentable et consolatoire adressée en 1397 à Philippe le Hardi, duc de Bourgogne, sur la défaite de Nicopolis (1396)*, eds. Contamine and Paviot (Paris, 2008) 53-64; De Vries, 'The Effect of Killing the Christian Prisoners at the Battle of Nicopolis', ed. Kagay, *Crusaders, Condottieri, and Cannon: Medieval Warfare in Societies around the Mediterranean*, (Leiden, 2003) 157-172.

⁴¹⁵ Kemalpaşazâde, *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osman*, 263.

Furthermore, his victory at Nicopolis re-enforced the Ottoman position in its claim to pre-eminence over the other Turkish dynasties in Anatolia.⁴¹⁶ The leader of the Christian army, count Jean de Nevers, the future Burgundian duke John the Fearless, and several other noblemen were taken prisoner by Bâyezid.⁴¹⁷ All over Europe, kings and dukes were engaged in raising money and paying ransoms for the captive knights and noblemen, which led to the first diplomatic contacts between the Ottoman and European states.⁴¹⁸

At the height of his power, Bâyezid returned to Anatolia in 1398 and annexed the Turkish principality of Karaman and that of Kadi Burhaneddin.⁴¹⁹ With this, the 'sultan of Rûm' (sultan of Roman lands), Bâyezid I created a centralised Ottoman Empire stretching from the Balkan to Anatolia. In Anatolia, he replaced the native Turkish princes with appointed state servants to establish direct control.⁴²⁰ Meanwhile, Manuel II sought assistance at various European courts and capitals for several years. His quest for military aid brought no results.⁴²¹ Eventually, Constantinople escaped the Ottoman conquest by Sultan Bâyezid I through an unexpected event. The unforeseen defeat of Bâyezid I against Timur Lenk in 1402 ended the first, short-lived empire of the Ottomans. The conflict arose after the deposed and unhappy Turkmen princes defected to the powerful Central Asian Turkish ruler, Timur Lenk, who captured the Ottoman city Sivas in 1400. On 28 July 1402, at the Battle of Ankara, Timur's army delivered a fatal blow to Bâyezid and dismantled his empire.⁴²² Bâyezid's decisive defeat against the armies of Timur in 1402 showed Bâyezid's impulsiveness and the fact that he did not make effectively use of diplomacy in order to build alliances which may have prevented his failure.⁴²³

It is also noteworthy that Bâyezid's policy of centralisation and establishing direct rule over the vassal princes had made him very unpopular. The chroniclers noted that Bâyezid had lost the battle mainly because the auxiliary forces of the annexed Turkish principalities defected to their princes who stood at the side of Timur.⁴²⁴ Furthermore,

⁴¹⁶ Mükrimin H. Yinanç, 'Bâyezid I', *İslam Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 2, 376.

⁴¹⁷ Jean Richard, 'Les prisonniers de Nicopolis', *Annales de Bourgogne*, 68 (1996): 75-83.

⁴¹⁸ Philip the Bold alone had to pay 187.000 gold florins to Yıldırım Bâyezid for the release of his son Jean de Nevers: Paviot, *Les ducs*, 36.

⁴¹⁹ On the Turkish principalities in Anatolia see: a general survey by Uzunçarşılı, *Anadolu beylikleri*; Cahen, 'Notes pour l'histoire des turcomanes d'Asie mineur', 325-54; Woods, *The Aqqoyunlu*; Sümer, *Kara Koyunlular*, vol. I (Ankara, 1967); Yücel, *Kadı Burhâneddin Ahmed ve Devleti*; Karadeniz, *Osmanlılar ile Beylikler Arasında*, 11-19; Emecen, 'Osmanlılar ve Türkmen Beylikleri (1350-1450)', in: *İlk Osmanlılar ve Anadolu Beylikler Dünyası* (İstanbul, 2003) 37-74.

⁴²⁰ Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi* vol. I, 39-43, 246-249; Yinanç, 'Bâyezid I', 369-371.

⁴²¹ Barker, *Manuel II*, pp. 154-199.

⁴²² İnalçık, 'Ottoman Methods of Conquest', 104-106; İsmail Aka, 'Timur Devri Anadolu'su', *Osmanlı*, vol. I: 229-234; Mathilde Alexandrescu-Dersca, *La campagne de Timur en Anatolie, 1402* (London, 1977).

⁴²³ Alexandrescu-Dersca, *La campagne de Timur*, 125-128.

⁴²⁴ For example, see : Neşrî, *Cihannümâ*, 160.

the semi-independent *gazi* marcher lords also resented Bâyezid's centralist policies and the increasing employment of *kapikulu* administrators in the decision-making process. All of these diminished their own positions and threatened their control of resources. They wanted a polity in which the old traditions assured the high position of their social class and in which they could keep their control of resources. After the battle, Timur returned the various lands in Anatolia to the Turkish dynasties whom Bâyezid had disposed to install direct Ottoman governance. He left the Ottoman dynasty only the lands in Europe as he considered these legitimately theirs. Timur also sent letters of victory to king Charles VI of France and king Henry IV of England, saying 'I succeeded to defeat our common enemy, the Ottoman ruler, whom you failed to rout at Nicopolis'.⁴²⁵

⁴²⁵ Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, vol. 1, 314.

2.13 The Civil War, 1402-1413

After Bâyezid's defeat at Ankara, the Ottoman state could very well have completely disintegrated during a decade of unprecedented political crisis. A civil war between the Ottoman princes was the main result of Bâyezid's defeat.⁴²⁶ To punish the Ottomans, Timur restored the lands of the Turkish principalities of Anatolia.⁴²⁷ The rule of the remaining Ottoman lands was divided between the sons of Bâyezid, all of whom apart from one were able to escape from the army of Timur. In 1403, the eldest son, Süleyman made extensive territorial concessions (including the strategic cities of Thessaloniki and Mesembria) to Byzantium and other Christian states in order to establish his power. He had essentially given up the control of the straits to Byzantium and the Christian league and was allowed to keep a limited number of ships. Süleyman promised that his ships would not sail through the Dardanelles without the permission of Byzantium or the Christian signatories of the treaty.⁴²⁸ Although in the 1370s Byzantium was reduced to the *de facto* status of an Ottoman vassal, the political turbulences following the Battle of Ankara in 1402 marked a turning point. Byzantium regained the upper hand in its relation with the Ottoman state.⁴²⁹ For example, in the text of the Byzantine-Ottoman treaty of 1403, Çelebi Süleyman addressed the emperor as his 'father', assuming a subordinate position.⁴³⁰ The elevation of the Byzantine ruler's status from vassal to that of 'father' was an obvious expression of the reversal in the Ottoman-Byzantine power relations after 1402. Throughout the next decade, Byzantium exploited the rivalries among Bâyezid's sons and maintained its ascendancy.⁴³¹

After he had signed such a humiliating treaty, Süleyman crossed the Dardanelles to Edirne in the company of Çandarlı Ali Pasha, the vizier of his father. Bâyezid's other two sons, Mehmed and İsa, established their power respectively in the cities of Amasya and

⁴²⁶ For a detailed treatment of the events of Ottoman succession strife, see: Kastritsis, *The Sons of Bayezid*, 41-194.

⁴²⁷ Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi I*, 329.

⁴²⁸ For the text of the Treaty of 1403, which has only survived in Italian translation of a Turkish original, see: George T. Dennis, 'The Byzantine-Turkish Treaty of 1403', *Orientalia Christiana*, 33 (1967): 72-88. See also: Elizabeth Zachariadou, 'Süleyman Çelebi in Rumili and the Ottoman chronicles', *Der Islam* 60/2 (1983): 268-296; Kastritsis, *The Sons of Bayezid*, 52-57.

⁴²⁹ Nevra Necipoğlu, *Byzantium Between the Ottomans and the Latins. Politics and Society in the Late Empire* (Cambridge, 2009) 29-35.

⁴³⁰ The fifteenth-century Byzantine chronicler Doukas also mentioned this subordinate relationship and wrote that Süleyman send an envoy to Manuel saying: 'Go and tell my father, the emperor of the Romans that I henceforth will be as obedient to him as a son to his father.' See: Doukas, *Decline and Fall of Byzantium to the Ottoman Turks*, ed. and tr. H.J. Magoulias (Detroit, 1975) 111.

⁴³¹ Kastritsis, *The Sons of Bayezid*, 58-59.

Bursa. Bâyezid's remaining son, Musa, was captured alongside his father. Knowing that without the unification of the Ottoman lands in the Balkans and Anatolia the Ottomans could not survive for long, both Süleyman and Mehmed sought to extend their power in the Balkans and Anatolia.⁴³²

In 1403, Bâyezid's youngest son, Çelebi Mehmed managed to defeat his brother Isa Çelebi and took control of Bursa.⁴³³ In 1404, Mehmed sent a 'letter of commitment' (*sevğendname*) to Yakub Beg, the lord of Germiyanid principality, who was at that time under the protection of Timur himself.⁴³⁴ In 1391, Bâyezid had seized the Germiyanid principality and Yakub had escaped to Timur for support. After the Battle of Ankara in 1402, Timur restored Yakub's territory and he even stayed for a while in Kütahya, the Germiyanid capital.⁴³⁵ In the account of Neşrî, Çelebi Mehmed requested from Yakub Beg the delivery of the body of his father together with his brother Musa. Thereupon, Yakup sent Bâyezid's body together with Musa to Bursa, where the unfortunate sultan was finally buried in the ancestral city.⁴³⁶ Most importantly, the delivery of his brother Musa, who formed a political danger as a rival to the throne, must have formed the most delicate matter for Mehmed. In the perilous situation, to back off the Timurid danger, Mehmed applied a wise and discrete approach and waited for his time to restore the shattered authority.

During the following decade of Ottoman civil wars, Byzantium, the Balkan lords, the Venetians and the Genoese, also attempted to take advantage of the situation and preferred a divided Ottoman rival to a united one.⁴³⁷ They all followed a policy of supporting the weaker party against the stronger. However, these regional power brokers played a dangerous game. Their loyalties were always shifting so that they might find themselves owing allegiance to more than one master at the same time. For instance, in 1410, with the support of the Byzantine Emperor Manuel II, Süleyman managed to route his brother Musa, who enjoyed the support of the gazi-warriors. After his victory, Süleyman returned to Edirne, while Mehmed filled the power vacuum that had been created in Anatolia. Musa fled to his main power base in the north-eastern Balkans, where

⁴³² Kastritsis, *The Sons of Bayezid*, 60-63.

⁴³³ Ibidem, 97-99.

⁴³⁴ For the edition of Mehmed's letter, see: Şinasi Tekin, *Ottoman Manuel I* (Harvard, 2002) 9-10.

⁴³⁵ Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi I*, 315.

⁴³⁶ Neşrî, *Cihânnümâ*, 199: 'Andan sultân buyurdi ki, Germiyan-oglı Yakub Beg'e mektûb yazup, âdem viribidi ki, atası Yıldırım Han'un tâbutın, karındaşı Mûsâ Çelebi birle göndere. Mektûb Yakub Beg'e yetişüp, mazmûn-ı şerîfi mûcebile amel idüp, Yıldırım Han'un tabutın tamâm tazîm ve ikrâm birle oğlu Musa Çelebi'yle, bu taraftan varan âdemlere yarar âdemler koşup gönderdi. Alup gelüp Bursa'da olan mevzi'i şerifde defn itdiler.'

⁴³⁷ For the discussion of the involvement of the Christian Balkan powers in the Ottoman strife for succession, see: Dimitris Kastritsis, 'Religious Affiliations and Political Alliances in the Ottoman Succession Wars of 1402-1413', *Medieval Encounters* 13 (2007): 222-242.

he continued to enjoy the support of his gazi followers and Christian allies, including the Serbian vassal, Stefan Lazarevic. The Ottoman struggle for the throne in the Balkans at this time was directly related to the power struggles between rival Serbian lords, Stefan Lazarevic (who supported Musa) and George Brankovic (who remained loyal to Süleyman). It was, among other reasons, through the support of Stefan Lazarević and his gazi warriors that Musa was finally able to eliminate Süleyman and seize from him the throne in Edirne.⁴³⁸

Musa resumed an expansionist policy in the Balkan. At the same time, he also forged alliances with local lords in an effort to gain new vassals and extend Ottoman influence. Musa formed such an alliance with the Italian prince, Carlo Tocco of Cephalonia, against the Albanians and he married Tocco's daughter to seal this pact.⁴³⁹ Since Byzantium had supported Süleyman, Musa besieged in 1411 Thessaloniki, Constantinople, and Selymbria. However, Musa's imprudent centralising policies, which aimed at undermining the semi-independent power of the influential frontier lords (*uç begleri*) and replacing them with the members of his own household (*kul*), gradually alienated many of his influential followers.⁴⁴⁰ The Anonymous Chronicle accounts this episode as follows: 'Çelebi Musa had put his own men (*kuls*) forward and the Rum [marcher] lords fell from grace. He saw how they had betrayed his brother and knew that they would also betray him. Indeed, this was an old characteristic of the Rumelian people. He decided to kill or imprison the lords whom he distrusted. The Rumelian lords understood this and they lied off, they watched what the wind would bring forth.'⁴⁴¹ Eventually, the powerful marcher lords Evrenos Beg and Mihal-oğlu Mehmed Beg and even the commander of the Janissaries had defected to the side of Çelebi Mehmed. Only the *akıncı*-raiders stayed with Musa.⁴⁴²

The resentment against Musa caused his enemies to overcome their disputes and band together against him. Meanwhile, his brother Mehmed had signed agreements with the *Beyliks* of Anatolia, whose lands were restored by Timur after the Battle of Ankara. Reinforced by the troops of his father in law, the Bey of Dulkadiroğlu, Mehmed I crossed the Dardanelles. In the Balkans, he joined his forces with the marcher lords, who had defected to him, and with the Serbian troops under the command of Stefan Lazarevic. Ultimately, on 5 July 1413, at the Battle of Çamurlu near Sofia, Mehmed's army routed the

⁴³⁸ Ibidem, 223-224.

⁴³⁹ Kastritsis, *The Sons of Bayezid*, 62.

⁴⁴⁰ Ibidem, 161-165.

⁴⁴¹ *Anonim Osmanlı Kroniği*, 59: 'Çün Musa Çelebi kulların ilerü çekdi, Rum beglerin mansıbdan düşürdi. Gördi kim karındaşıdan nice döndiler hâyin oldılar, bildi kim kendüsine dahi hâyin olurlar. Zîrâ kim Rum-ili'nün evvelden âhire âdetleridür. Ve kangı begde, kim şüphesi var idi kim, kasd itdi kim cümlesin helâk ide ve kimini dahi habs ide. Bu hâli bilüp Rum begleri çekilüp oturdılar, rûzigârı gözlediler kim ne göstere.'

⁴⁴² Ibidem, 60-61.

forces of his brother Musa.⁴⁴³ This event marked the formal end of the civil war and the beginning of an era of recovery and reunification during the reign of *Çelebi* Mehmed I (r. 1413-1422). Mehmed I intelligently made use of diplomatic instruments. He gained the cooperation of the local Muslim and Christian powers, and he pursued a policy of accommodation through commercial treaties and political alliances. Mehmed I was able to restore the state and reunite its former lands in Anatolia and in the Balkans.⁴⁴⁴ The Ottoman state began to restore its position as a powerful actor in the political system of the Balkans and Anatolia.

In 1414 and 1416, the Byzantine emperor Manuel II again attempted to restart the civil war by sponsoring rival claimants to the Ottoman throne. However, Mehmed routed them all and the attempts of Manuel failed. He instigated a Karamanid invasion of the Ottoman territory in Anatolia.⁴⁴⁵ Concerning the recovery and reunification after the disastrous crisis of the civil war, Halil İnalcık asked a fundamental question: 'how could the Ottoman state re-emerge as the dominant power in Anatolia and the Balkans under the most hostile conditions of the dynastic wars, crusader invasions and other crises that threatened to destroy it altogether?'⁴⁴⁶

There were several powerful factors that worked in favour of the Ottoman unity. Probably, one of them was the fact that Timur was probably not interested to enforce his hegemony in Europe and he left the decision in the hands of the local Balkan rulers. However, they were unable to strip the Ottomans of all their gains in Europe. Despite military dissolution after the battle of Ankara, the Ottomans continued to be the major military power in both regions. The Ottoman dynasty was able to create an imperial tradition which was considered the only source of legitimation for the feudal lords and dynasts in this area. In 1405 and 1413, for example, Serbian princes sought the resolution of differences among themselves through the intervention of the Ottoman ruler.⁴⁴⁷ Perhaps equally important was the fact that the military groups of the central state (*kapıluku, sipahi*), as well as the peasantry, saw that the confirmation and legitimation of their status and rights in the land were dependent on the existence and functioning of the Ottoman government. This opportunity gave the sons of Bâyezid a space to re-emerge and make a second conquest possible, which occurred even faster. However, because of the hostile policies of Byzantium and Venice, Mehmed I realised that it was too early to revive the centralised empire of his father Bâyezid and he pursued a policy of

⁴⁴³ Ayhan Gültaş, 'Fetret Devri'ndeki Şehzadeler Mücadelesini Anlatan İlk Manzum Vesika', *Türk Dünyası Araştırmaları* 72 (1991): 99-110; Kastritsis, *The Sons of Bayezid*, 188-194.

⁴⁴⁴ İsmail H. Uzunçarşılı, 'Mehmed I', *İslam Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 7, 496-506.

⁴⁴⁵ Aşıkpaşazâde, *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osmân*, 357; Neşrî, *Cihânnümâ*, 238-44.

⁴⁴⁶ Halil İnalcık, 'Mehmed I', *El²*; Ibid, *The Ottoman Empire. The Classical Age, 1300-1600* (London, 2003) 17.

⁴⁴⁷ Kastritsis, 'Religious Affiliations and Political Alliances', 222-242.

appeasement.⁴⁴⁸ A semblance of peace and friendship was preserved between Byzantium and the Ottoman State.⁴⁴⁹

Finally, the political crisis of this decade had brought to the surface the political tensions caused by the centralist policy of the dynasty. The civil war even more intensified the tensions between the dynasty and the anti-centralist groups, particularly the marcher lords and the gazis.⁴⁵⁰ For instance, Turahan Beg, according to the chroniclers, acted negligently during the Battle of Varna (1444) and misled Sultan Murad II.⁴⁵¹



⁴⁴⁸ See the anonymous chronicle on Çelebi Mehmed I: *The Tales of Sultan Mehmed, son of Bayezid Khan* [*Ahval-i Sultan Mehmed bin Bayezid Han*], tr. and ed. Dimitris Kastritsis (Harvard, 2007). Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, 347-349.

⁴⁴⁹ John Barker, *Manuel II Palaeologus (1391-1425). A Study in Late Byzantine Statesmanship* (New Brunswick, 1969) 287-289, 331-350.

⁴⁵⁰ Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*, 120-121; Kastritsis, *The Sons of Bayezid*, 195-196.

⁴⁵¹ Franz Babinger, 'Turakhan Beg', *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition (Brill Online). Turahan Beg was a gazi marcher lord in the Balkans. He was the son of Yigit Beg who had governed a part of Bosnia after 1390.

2.14 The reign of Sultan Murad II, 1421-1451

Most scholars concentrate on the reign of Sultan Mehmed II (r. 1451-81) and on his consolidation of the imperial state power through economic centralisation, legal and administrative consolidation.⁴⁵² However, such measures would not have been possible without the reinforcement of Ottoman sovereignty during the reign of Murad II (r. 1421-51). During Murad II's reign, the Ottoman state had mostly recovered its earlier political and military prowess. Its realm again stretched almost to the territories under sultan Bâyezid I. Ottoman control of Eastern Europe and Anatolia was firmly reinforced. Murad developed his father's aims through centralising the administration.

His reign was also marked by an elusive transition from the Turkish nomadic organisation to a centralised model of governance, of which the fundamentals were consolidated by Sultan Mehmed II, after the conquest of Constantinople. As a matter of fact, the near destruction of the state in 1402 and its reconsolidation within half a century both occurred through the effects of the centralist policy of the government and its control mechanisms. This centralist policy can be considered as the main cause of the tensions within the Ottoman ruling classes. They were divided into two groups: the supporters and the opponents of the central authority or dynasty. The oppositional stance of the gazi milieu and marcher lords to the centralising policies of the Ottoman dynasty was a matter of fact. Sultan Murad II's reign went through times of turbulences, crusader invasions and even abdication of the throne.

In 1421, Murad II mounted at the age of seventeen the throne of the Ottoman state, as Mehmed I's eldest son.⁴⁵³ He was named successor to the throne by Mehmed I himself. As crown prince he had resided at Manisa, where he had acquired experience in governance and taken part in the suppression of the revolt of Simavna-Oğlu Bedreddin.⁴⁵⁴ Sultan Murad II was the sixth ruler of the Ottoman dynasty, born in 1404 in Amasya and died in Edirne in 1451. In terms of his physical appearance, according to the Burgundian spy, Bertrandon de la Broquière who saw him in 1433, Murad II was 'large in build but short in size,

⁴⁵² Rhoads Murphey, 'External Expansion and Internal Growth of the Ottoman Empire under Mehmed II: A Brief Discussion of Some Contradictory Aspects of the Conqueror's Legacy', ed. Kemal Çiçek, *The Great Ottoman-Turkish Civilization*, vol. I (Ankara, 2000) 155-162.

⁴⁵³ Unfortunately there are no monographs devoted to the life and reign of sultan Murad II. See for a survey of the major events during his reign, based on primary sources: İncalcık, 'Murad II', *İslam Ansiklopedisi* 8, 598-615; Barbara Flemming, 'The Reign of Murad II. A Survey' *Anatolica* 20 (1994): 249-267; Imber, *The Ottoman Empire*, 91-116; Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, ; İncalcık, *Fatih Devri*, 3-109; Jefferson, *The Holy Wars*, 69-118.

⁴⁵⁴ J.H. Kramers, 'Murad II', *Encyclopediae of Islam*, sec. ed.

with Tatar features. He has a large, round nose and rather small eyes, is dark in complexion, with large jowls and a round beard. He has a deep toned voice.’⁴⁵⁵

In the following passage, Bertrandon wrote down his eyewitness account when he saw Murad nearby the capital of Edirne: ‘I saw the Great Turk coming, who entered the village of Yenipazar [Yeniköy] in a shower of rain, having only fifty horsemen attending him and a dozen archers walking on foot before him. His dress was a robe of crimson velvet, lined with sable, and on his head he wore, like the Turks, a red hat to save himself from the rain, he had thrown over this robe another, in the manner of a mantle, after the fashion of the country. [...] In the afternoon he came out of his pavilion to go to the bath, and I saw him at my ease. He was on horseback, with the same hat and crimson robe, attended by merely six persons on foot. He is about twenty eight or thirty years old.’⁴⁵⁶

Murad’s disposition to peace always seemed to be praised by the contemporary chronicles. According to de la Broquière, Sultan Murad II appears to conform to the ideals of the age: ‘they told me that he [Murad II] hates war, and I think it is true, because if he wanted to use the immense wealth at his disposal it will be easy for him to conquer many places in Europe.’⁴⁵⁷ In Ottoman, Byzantine and western sources, Murad II is usually described as a ruler who did not like wars either, but he was an excellent army commander in the most critical moments. He is portrayed as an able statesman, with a clear insight of the political situation, but by no means a man who found satisfaction in war. The contemporary Byzantine chronicler Doukas spoke of him as a friendly and trustworthy man and praised him for his maturity of judgment and tolerance.⁴⁵⁸ Kritovoulos, another Byzantine chronicler wrote on Murad: ‘He was a kind, generous, majestic ruler of high character, skilful in military leadership and purely noble in descent.’⁴⁵⁹ Bertrandon again commented in his narrative: ‘Every now and then Amurad beg [Murad II] makes great examples of justice, which gains him perfect obedience at

⁴⁵⁵ Broquière, *Le Voyage d’Outremer*, 181 : ‘il est homme de grosse taille, courte personne et a ung pou le visage large sur la philosomie de Tartre et si a le nés grant assés et courbe et assés petis yeulx et est moult brun par le visaige et a grosse joes et la barbe ronde. Et est homme ung pou sur le plus gras, et l’ouys parler à ses gens.’

⁴⁵⁶ Ibidem, 176-177: ‘Je veys venir ledit seigneur Grant Turc quant il entra en ladite ville de Jangibatzar et n’avoit avec luy que environ de L chevaux. Il plouvait et portoit vestu une robe de veloux sur veloux cramoisy fourrée de martres sebelines en guise d’un mantel, selon la mode du pays, et un chappeaul vermeil sur sa teste, tel que les autres Turcs le portent et aloient devant luy XII archiers. Et veys, icelluy vespre, ledit seigneur de bien près, lequel aloit en ung baing se baignier et estoit encoires grant jour et n’avoit en sa compaignie que VI personnes. Il estoit à cheval et les autres estoient avec luy de pié. Car ledit baing estoit près de son logis et portoit son dit chappeaul et une robe de satin cramoisy et estoit de l’aage de XXVIII à trente ans.’

⁴⁵⁷ Ibidem, 181-182: ‘On m’a dist aussi qu’il het assés la guerre et ainsi me le samble il, car s’il vouloit exequiter la puissance qu’il a et sa grant revenue, veu la petite resistance qu’il treuve en la crestienté, ce seroit à luy legiere chose à en conquerer une grant partie.’

⁴⁵⁸ Doukas, *Decline and Fall of Byzantium to the Ottomans Turks*, tr. Harry Magoulas (Detroit, 1974).

⁴⁵⁹ Kritovoulos, *İstanbul’un Fethi*, 31

home and abroad. He likewise knows how to keep his country in an excellent state of defence, without oppressing his subjects by taxes or other modes of extortion.’⁴⁶⁰



Figure 9: Miniature portrait of Sultan Murad II.

Through his character and deeds, as reflected in the chronicles, there emerges an image of ‘an ideal ruler in the late medieval Muslim world’. His reign was very significant for the future political and cultural development of the Ottoman state. After the first critical years of dynastic struggles, Murad II continued his father’s work of consolidation. His aim was mainly to live on peaceful terms with the vassal princes, of whom the bey of Sinop at the Black Sea and the despot of Serbia gave their daughters to him.⁴⁶¹ Murad’s nature, which tended toward Sufism, marked his interest for a spiritual life. In his early years, Murad also enjoyed wine and courtly life and had himself encircled with musicians, poets and scholars. Because of his taste for the arts, he acted as a patron for the production of many literary, historical and musical works. The mystical tradition was strong in his surroundings, as is proved by the great influence of Sheikh Emir Buhari.

⁴⁶⁰ Broquière, *Le Voyage d’Outremer*, 184: ‘Il est moult bien obey en son pays et de ses gens [...] Il fait de grandes justices et tient son pays en grant seureté et ne fait nulle extorsion à ses gens, c’est assavoir de taille ou d’autre chose.’

⁴⁶¹ J.H. Kramers, ‘Murad II’, *Encyclopediae of Islam*, Second Edition.

Many other sheikhs came to his court from Iran and Iraq. This also determined the direction which the Ottoman literature was to take in the following period.

The court of Murad II was a vivid centre of politics, arts and culture, precisely as at the courts of his contemporary Turkish princes in Anatolia (see Chapter 1). The first Ottoman capitals Bursa and Edirne also benefited from Murad's architectural constructions: mosques, *medreses*, soup kitchens, hospitals, *hamams*, bridges, streets and monasteries for dervishes.⁴⁶² When visiting Bursa, Broquière was overwhelmed by the city: 'Cette ville de Bourse est bien marchande et plus riche et mieux peuplée que Constantinople et est la meilleure ville que le Turc aye (...) Et sont assés beaulx lieux ainsy que hospitaux, et de ceulx cy, en a trois ou quatre où on donne souvent de pain, de la char et du vin à ceulx qui le veulent prendre pour Dieu.'⁴⁶³

The circumstances of the time, the crusader invasion at Varna and the renegade viziers such as Şihabeddin Paşa who favoured the policy of conquest, as well as the domestic political conflicts, enforced Murad II into a different way. He became one of the most brilliant sultans with a series of crucial military and political successes. He left much of the action to his military commanders seeking conquest in Eastern Europe. His most influential viziers were not yet the renegades (*devshirme*) of later times. They belonged to the old Turkish aristocratic families that had supported the cause of Murad's forefathers and were becoming a kind of hereditary nobility, such as İbrahim Paşa and Halil Paşa of the Çandarlı family.⁴⁶⁴ Furthermore, there were other influential marcher *gazi* lords from Rumeli (the Balkans), such as Turahan Beg, Hacı İvas Paşa and other members of the marcher *gazi* dynasties such as Timurtaş, Evrenos, and others.

2.14.1 Central Administration during the reign of Murad II

As the state expanded, the Ottoman central administration further developed. The term *kapı*, translated in western languages as 'the Porte', originally referred to the place where the Ottoman sultan heard complaints and conducted governmental affairs. This word eventually came to mean the Ottoman government.⁴⁶⁵ During the reign of Murad II, the *dîvân-ı âli* or state council served for various functions without observing a specific regularity of its meetings or stability of its composition. The meetings of the Ottoman state council (*divan*) can be reconstructed as follows: the Ottoman ruler called it together at the place where he was at that moment; the council heard complaints of the people and set right injustices; the sultan invited the *beys* or lords whom he chose to consult

⁴⁶² Ekrem H. Ayverdi, *Osmanlı mimarisinde Çelebi ve Sultan II. Murad devri, 806-855 (1403-1451)* (Istanbul, 1972).

⁴⁶³ Broquière, *Le Voyage d'Oultremer*, 132-133.

⁴⁶⁴ Uzunçarşılı, *Çandarlı Vezir Ailesi* (Ankara 1974).

⁴⁶⁵ İncalcık, *The Ottoman Empire*, 90.

about the issues he had beforehand defined on the agenda. Major holidays or weddings were preferred as occasions for these meetings. Furthermore, when the sultan went to the Friday prayer, rode to hunt or during a campaign, he would listen in person to the grievances of the people. Nothing escaped the authority of the *divan*, whether it was foreign policy or domestic affairs, financial issues, judicial or administrative matters. These issues were debated and decision were taken on all governmental affairs and appointments. The results were presented to the sultan. The *divan* or the council administered vast territories and it functioned as the supreme court of the state.

The changes in the council started with the growing technical complexity of the land register books (*tahrir*). The administrative system of financing, accountancy and judiciary became increasingly complex. As a result, the marcher lords (*uç begleri*) and the other officials in the decision-making process lacked the capabilities to adequately deal with these issues. Therefore, for the daily administration of the affairs, the sultan relied ever more on technically specialised staff members who were skilled in financing and in Shari'a law.⁴⁶⁶ Although the decisions on state policies were reserved for the sultan, in practice they were made by the State Council or the *divan-ı hümayun*. This new practice was wrongly understood by the contemporary western observers as that the real power and authority rested with the *dîvân* or council, while the sultan continued to exert control over the way the state was run.

In principle, the *dîvân* or the state council counted a few members and formed the nucleus of the Ottoman central administration.⁴⁶⁷ Oruç Bey notes that there were usually three viziers or ministers during the reign of Murad II: Mahmud Paşa, İshak Paşa and Çandarlı Halil Paşa, who was the grand vizier. The Çandarlı dynasty provided grand viziers during four generations until 1453 the Ottoman. The enlarged *divan* consisted besides the viziers, as well as governors of the most important provinces, head of the chancellery (*nişancı*), the state treasurer (*baş defterdar*), and the *ağa* or commander of the Janissaries. In some sessions, other dignitaries such as the chief official of Islamic affairs (*şeyh ül-İslam*) and the judge of the military and administrative affairs (*kadı asker* or *kazasker*) were also invited. The Sultan frequently delegated his political and executive authority to his viziers.

The grand vizier was appointed directly by the sultan as his 'absolute deputy' and received the sultan's golden ring of the imperial seal (*tuğra*). *Sāhib-i mühr* or the 'holder of the seal' was another term used for the *sadr azam*. The grand vizier could not take major decisions without consulting the Imperial Council or *divan-ı hümayun*, the centre of

⁴⁶⁶ Halil İnalçık, 'Osmanlı Padişahı', *Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi Dergisi*, 13 (1958): 68-79; 74.

⁴⁶⁷ For a comprehensive discussion of the *divan* or council, see : Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devletinin Merkez ve Bahriye Teşkilâtı*, 2-9; İnalçık, *The Ottoman Empire*, 89-103.

Ottoman administration. Neither could he make expenditures from the treasury without the permission of the treasurer or dismiss him without the approval of the sultan. However, he did have supreme control of the administration.⁴⁶⁸ It was Murad II's successor, Mehmed II, who consolidated with his renowned Laws or *kanûnnâme* the composition of the divan and the decision-making procedure. The *kanûnnâme* or laws of Sultan Mehmed II specified the grand vizier's position as the 'head of the viziers (*vüzerâ*) and commanders (*ümerâ*)'. It implied that his authority was limited to military-administrative matters and did not extend to *ulemâ* (clerical) affairs and appointments. Practically in the same breath, the *kanûnnâme* referred to the *sadrâzam* as: 'He is greater than all men, he is in all matters the sultan's absolute deputy (*cümle umûruñ vekîl-i mutlakıdır*). The *defterdar* is the deputy for my treasury, but under the supervision of the grand vizier. In all meetings and ceremonies the grand vizier takes his place before all others.'⁴⁶⁹

The title of grand vizier or *Sadrâzam*, which strictly meant 'the greatest of the high dignitaries', appeared around 1360.⁴⁷⁰ At this time, the title had been used to refer to the highest '*ulemâ*' official or the *kađı* '*asker* (literally, judge of the administrative and military affairs), who were promoted to serve as viziers. Later, because the vizier came to operate as military commander in the absence of the sultan, the *sadrâzam* was appointed from the ranks of the commanders (*umerâ*'). Unlike most viziers in Islamic history, the Ottoman first minister was also a military commander. The role of the Grand Vizier in the Ottoman governmental practice evolved over time. From the time of Murad II, during the first half of the fifteenth century, the sources reveal that the viziers began to play a significant role in decision-making. Brocquière noted that the ambassador of Milan, before being received by Sultan Murad II in 1433, had to make visits to the three viziers as well as to other state officials.⁴⁷¹ A decade later, in 1444, Cyriac of Ancona, who negotiated a truce between the king of Hungary and Sultan Murad II made his talks mostly with the Grand Vizier, Çandarlı Halil Pasha.⁴⁷² We also know that Halil Pasha led the negotiations on behalf of Sultan Mehmed II with the Byzantine envoys in 1453 during the siege of Constantinople.⁴⁷³

⁴⁶⁸ İnalcık, *The Ottoman Empire*, 95.

⁴⁶⁹ *Kânûnnâme-i Âl-i Osman*, ed. Abdülkadir Özcan (İstanbul, 2007) 5: 'Bilgil ki, evvelâ vüzera ve ümeranın sadrazam başıdır. Cümleñin ulusudur. Cümle umûrun vekîl-i mutlakıdır. Ve mâlımın vekîli defterdârımdır. Ve ol nazırıdır. Ve oturmada ve durmada ve mertebede veziri 'azam cümleden mukaddemdür.'

⁴⁷⁰ Metin Kunt, 'Şadr-i A'zam', *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition* (Brill Online).

⁴⁷¹ Brocquière, *Le Voyage d'Outremer*, 186-199.

⁴⁷² Edward W. Bonnar and Clive Foss ed., *Cyriac of Ancona: Later Travels* (Cambridge, 2003) 35-49.

⁴⁷³ Halil İnalcık, 'İstanbul Fethinin Yakın Sebepleri', *Ankara Dil Tarih-Coğrafya Fakültesi Dergisi* 11/2-4 (1953): 345-354.

Outside the purview of the grand vizier, the *ulema* or the clerical scholarly class had the greatest power. The two *kađı* 'askers (judges) for the provinces in Anatolia and in the Balkans were responsible for the administration of Shari Law throughout the realm. The *Şeyh ül-Islam* was the chair of the *ulema* class. He was not actually a state official as he received no government salary and had no political authority. He was paid consulting fees and frequently received lucrative appointments as administrator of charitable foundations or *waqf*. The *Şeyh ül-Islam* was an authority on the Shari Law. He advised the grand vizier for the appointment, promotion and dismissal of the *ulema*-staff.⁴⁷⁴

Many of the administrative class or *ümerā* were members of the *devshirme* institution. This change in the vizierate from the religious scholars (*ulema*) to the military-administrative officials (*ümera*) also implied a change within the ruling elite. It came along with an ethnic shift away from the Turkish-Muslim-born nobility to those of the imperial household or *kapıkulu* class, who shared cross-cultural Balkan, Greek, Turkish, and Arab origins. As such, this shift was a prominent feature in the centralisation of power and it enforced the position of the sultan.

During the reign of Murad II, members of the provincial military elites and the *devshirme*, served in the central administration. The Turkish aristocratic family of the Çandarlıs dominated the administration until 1453.⁴⁷⁵ Their fall marked the beginning of an elite change, in which the central administration was staffed by the members of the *devshirme*. Some freeborn Muslims, mostly with *ulema*-scholarly background, held important offices. Members of the ruling elites of the annexed states were integrated into the Ottoman ruling class and some of them considerably contributed to the Ottoman government. For example, both Mahmud Pasha Angelovic and Gedik Ahmed Pasha belonged to Byzantine nobility. Mahmud Pasha served as the Grand Vezir under Sultan Mehmed II, in the years following the conquest of Constantinople.⁴⁷⁶

⁴⁷⁴ İnalcık, *The Ottoman Empire*, 96.

⁴⁷⁵ Uzunçarşılı, *Çandarlı Vezir Ailesi* (Ankara 1974).

⁴⁷⁶ On Mahmud Pasha's family network, as well as his multi-faceted contribution to the Ottoman state through military leadership, diplomatic practices and architectural and literary patronage see: Theoharis Stavrides, *The Sultan of Vezirs: The Life and Times of the Ottoman Grand Vezir Mahmud Pasha Angelovic (1453-1474)* (Leiden, 2001).

2.14.2 The Succession War, 1421-22

During the first years of his reign, sultan Murad's main concern was to consolidate the internal order of the state, threatened by a series of pretenders to the throne and to heal the wounds caused by the turmoil of the civil war after Bâyezid's defeat against Timur. Although Mehmed I had pronounced Murad's name to avoid possible conflicts after his death, Murad was not able to acquire the throne in tranquillity. During the first three years of his reign, the young sultan had to deal with internal conflicts. Immediately after his accession, Murad II had to face a succession strife, caused by a rival claimant, his uncle Mustafa, known as 'Düzme' (pretender) Muştafa, and the latter's ally Cüneyd.⁴⁷⁷ Both were supported by the Byzantines in exchange for important territories. In order to exploit the uncertainties of the succession, the Byzantine Emperor Manuel II released Mustafa from custody in Thessaloniki. Mustafa Çelebi was actually a son of Sultan Bâyezid I, whom he accompanied at the Battle of Ankara (1402). When Bâyezid fell captive, he asked to Timur to find his two sons, Musa and Mustafa, who were together with him at the centre of the army.⁴⁷⁸ Although Musa was found, his brother Mustafa was not found and the Ottoman tradition suggested that Mustafa was lost during the battle.⁴⁷⁹ The Ottoman chroniclers led us to believe that Mustafa was only a 'pretender' (*düzme*) and not actually a son of Bâyezid I.⁴⁸⁰ However, in the *fethnames* (letters of victory), Timur mentioned that Bâyezid was taken prisoner together with his two sons.⁴⁸¹ The historian Enverî also noted that Çelebi Mustafa was caught by Timur and that he afterwards appeared to claim the throne.⁴⁸²

The Byzantine Emperors, Manuel II and his son John VIII, saw the death of Mehmed I in 1421 as an opportunity to foment a strife within the dynasty. They requested Murad II to deliver Bâyezid's two remaining sons to them as hostages and threatened to install Mustafa as ruler in the Balkans.⁴⁸³ When Murad refused to deliver his brothers to the emperor, they concluded a treaty and freed Murad's uncle, Mustafa, who agreed to cede the important fortress of Gallipoli, the rich coastal plains of Thrace and the Black Sea

⁴⁷⁷ For a detailed description of this dynastic strife, see: Halil İnalcık, 'Murad II', *İslam Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 8 (Istanbul, 1960) 599-601. Also see: Doukas, *Decline and Fall of Byzantium to the Ottoman Turks*, ed. and tr. H.J. Magoulias (Detroit, 1975) 132-169.

⁴⁷⁸ Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi I*, 367.

⁴⁷⁹ *Oruç Beğ Tarihi*, 42: 'Yıldırım Han'ın altı oğlu kaldı. Birisi cenk yüzünde belürsiz oldu.'

⁴⁸⁰ *Oruç Beğ Tarihi*, 54: 'Sultan Murad Bursa'da otururken Selenik'den Düzme Mustafâ çıktı, gelip Ece ovasına kondı. Yıldırım Han oğlıyam deyü Vardar Yeñicesine geldi.'

⁴⁸¹ Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi I*, 368.

⁴⁸² *Düstûrnâme-i Enverî*, 36: 'Mustafa'yı Çağatay etdi esîr, Niçe yıldan sonra geldi ol emir.'

⁴⁸³ Doukas, *Decline and Fall of Byzantium*, 132-133.

coasts to Byzantium. In exchange, the Byzantines offered military help to Mustafa.⁴⁸⁴ According to the Burgundian diplomat, Ghillebert de Lannoy, Çelebi Mustafa promised not only to surrender the important base of Gallipoli, but also his fleet to Byzantium. Furthermore, he guaranteed not to cross to Anatolia, but to settle in the Balkans and fight Murad from there.⁴⁸⁵ The Byzantines clearly envisaged to prevent Murad's control of the Balkans, while a state in Anatolia would be rendered powerless, since Timur's son Shahruh, still threatened the Ottomans and guaranteed protection to the Turkish prince of Karaman, who was a rival of Ottoman rule in Anatolia.⁴⁸⁶

The Byzantine policy was a result of the events of the earlier period. Shortly after the coronation of Manuel II's son, John VIII, as co-emperor in 1421, a crisis within the Byzantine court started. This also led to a greater crisis in Byzantine-Ottoman relations. Manuel did not wish to interfere in the Ottoman succession issue and accepted the designated successor, Murad II as sultan. His son, John VIII, however, suggested to support a rival claimant to the throne, Murad's uncle Mustafa, whom the Byzantines held in their custody at Lemnos since 1416. John VIII advocated a more aggressive policy and he won the upper hand.⁴⁸⁷ However, John was aware that he could not defeat the Ottoman state on his own. He decided to rely on creating strife within the Ottoman dynasty and explored the possibility of aid from the Christian states in Europe and the Turkish princes in Anatolia.⁴⁸⁸

At his release, Mustafa was initially successful in the Balkans, where he was recognised as sultan by some marcher lords in *Rumelia*. The Turkish princes in Anatolia, which Timur had restored to their principalities also rebelled. The young sultan Murad II received the support of the Janissaries and the *ulema* at his ascension to the throne in the capital Bursa. However, in the final encounter in 1422, at the Battle of Ulubat, the frontier lords defected to Murad's side and the latter defeated his uncle Mustafa. The Byzantine chronicler Doukas also gave voice to the argument of the unsuitability of Mustafa for the throne. He recorded a conversation between İzmiroğlu Cüneyd Beg, an ally of Mustafa, and his brother Hamza Beg, who since childhood resided in the entourage of Murad.⁴⁸⁹

Mustafa managed to flee across the straits to Gallipoli, where he blocked the straits with the ships he had received from the Byzantines. In this time of need, the Genoese

⁴⁸⁴ John Barker, *Manuel II Palaeologus (1391-1425). A Study in Late Byzantine Statesmanship* (New Brunswick, 1969) 357-358; Doukas, *Decline and Fall of Byzantium*, 136.

⁴⁸⁵ Ch. Potvin ed., *Oeuvres de Ghillebert de Lannoy. Voyageur, Diplomate et Moraliste* (Leuven, 1878) 66.

⁴⁸⁶ İnalçık, 'Byzantium and the origins of the crisis of 1444 under the light of Turkish sources', *Actes de XIIe Congrès International des études Byzantines*, 2 (Belgrade, 1964): 159-160.

⁴⁸⁷ Necipoğlu, *Byzantium Between the Ottomans and the Latins*, 34-35.

⁴⁸⁸ Doukas, *Decline and Fall of Byzantium*, 133.

⁴⁸⁹ Doukas, *Decline and Fall of Byzantium*, 154.

governor of New Phokia – an alum-producing Genoese colony – Giovanni Adorno, ferried Murad’s army across the straits of Gallipoli.⁴⁹⁰ Because of their mutual interest and enmity with Venice and Byzantium, the Genoese had been allies of the Ottomans since the reign of Orhan. According to the Byzantine historian Doukas, who in the 1420s served as secretary to the Genoese colony, Adorno had received the rights by Mehmed I to exploit the alum mine in Phokia. However, he had suffered great losses due to the Genoese-Catalan war, which prevented him from sailing to Italy, France, Spain and England. Consequently, the alum could not be sold in Europe and lay unused. As Adorno fell heavily in debt, he sought an audience with Sultan Murad to receive new decrees and to pay the tribute that had not been paid for six years. Adorno sent two letters to Murad, which were composed by Doukas in Turkish, saying: ‘As your faithful servant, I am eager to offer you my assistance by ferrying you with my warships. I can provide you with better service than any other person. Only command me and your request will be swiftly carried out.’⁴⁹¹

Murad was pleased with this offer and asked Adorno to send a trusted servant to discuss the details. The Genoese dispatched a certain Demetrios Aga with letters, which were again composed by Doukas, addressed to Murad and his viziers. They concluded an agreement and Murad sent one of his officials, Hatib, ‘one of the most learned and prudent of the Turks, with the sum of fifty thousand gold coins to fit out a fleet which would take the Turks over the straits.’⁴⁹² As Mustafa was worried about this agreement with Murad, he promised to give Adorno fifty thousand gold coins on the condition that he would not transport Murad’s army. However, according to Doukas, Adorno refused.⁴⁹³ Murad, who was concerned that the Genoese would disregard their commitment to him, had taken the precaution of taking on board five hundred janissaries with him. At sea, in the middle of the straits, Adorno kneeled before Murad and informed him that Mustafa had proposed to deliver him, which he had rejected. He requested if Murad might absolve his heavy debt about twenty-seven thousand gold coins owed for his lease of the alum mines. According to Doukas, Murad embraced Adorno and said: ‘from this day you are my brother and trusted friend’ and he gladly granted Adorno’s wish.⁴⁹⁴ This pact laid the base for a long-lasting relationship between Sultan Murad II and Adorno, the governor of the Genoese colony.⁴⁹⁵

⁴⁹⁰ İnalcık, ‘Murad II’, *IA*.

⁴⁹¹ Doukas, *Decline and Fall of Byzantium*, 150-151.

⁴⁹² *Ibidem*, 151.

⁴⁹³ *Ibidem*, 159.

⁴⁹⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁹⁵ The significance of this friendship later became clear in the eve of the Battle of Varna in 1444. The crusader fleet had blockaded the straits and again it were the Genoese ships that ferried Murad’s army across. See: Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, 381-382, 385-386.

Remarkably, the Ottoman chroniclers are silent about Murad's cooperation with Adorno at the Battle of Ulubat in 1422. Neşrî and Aşık Paşazâde, when accounting the conflict between the young Sultan Murad and his uncle Mustafa, emphasised his release of the marcher lord Mihal-oğlu Mehmed Bey from the prison in Tokat. Earlier in 1413, after defeating Musa, Murad's father Çelebi Mehmed had put Mihal-oğlu Mehmed Beg in prison, for supporting Musa against Çelebi Mehmed. Since Mustafa enjoyed the support of the powerful marcher lords of Rumeli, Murad attempted to divide Mustafa's forces by releasing Mihal-oğlu Mehmed Beg, a respected leader of the marcher lords in the Balkans. The chroniclers unanimously accounted that this plan worked well. Aşık Paşazade writes that Mihal-oğlu Mehmed approached the shore and shouted: 'Ahoy, Turahan the Turk! He also called the other marcher lords, Kömlü-oğlu and Evrenos-oğlu. All the Rumelian marcher lords came to the shore and welcomed him, spoke with him and became aware that Mihal-oğlu Mehmed was still alive.'⁴⁹⁶ After stirring confusion among Mustafa's troops, Murad landed on the shore and he routed Mustafa, who fled towards the Danube where he was finally caught after a long pursuit. Meanwhile, Murad seized the fortress of Gallipoli and entered Edirne, where he gave a rich banquet to which he invited Adorno and the Genoese ship captains.⁴⁹⁷

For Murad II, Manuel's attempt to foment internecine war formed the pretext to lay siege to Constantinople and Thessaloniki in 1422. The siege lasted until September, when Sultan Murad withdrew due to renewed dynastic strife. The cause was the appearance of his younger, thirteen year-old brother 'Little' (Küçük) Mustafa, who had revolted and laid siege to Bursa.⁴⁹⁸ At the same time, the princes of the Germiyanids, Karamanids and Çandarlis in Anatolia rose in revolt. They responded favourably to a Byzantine diplomatic move for an attack on the Ottoman territories in Anatolia. These Anatolian emirs and Byzantium had encouraged Murad's brother Mustafa.⁴⁹⁹ The Byzantine chronicler Doukas wrote that emperor Manuel secretly posted letters to the tutor of Mustafa, şarabdar İlyas, a wine cupbearer in rank, to bring the child to Bursa and provided İlyas with a large amount of gold to hire a mercenary army.⁵⁰⁰ Making their way to Bursa, Neşrî accounts that two nobles of the ahi-guilds of Bursa, Ahi Yakup and Ahi Kadem, went to şarabdar İlyas and pleaded to him that he should do everything he could to prevent the devastation of the city by their troops. They also paid a large amount of money to İlyas, which they had gathered from the citizens of Bursa. İlyas accepted their request and took *küçük*

⁴⁹⁶ Aşıkpaşazade *Tarihi*, ed. Öztürk, 130; Neşrî, *Cihânnümâ*, 259.

⁴⁹⁷ Doukas, *Decline and Fall of Byzantium*, 160.

⁴⁹⁸ Neşrî, *Cihânnümâ*, 262.

⁴⁹⁹ Osman Turan, *Tarihi Takvimler*, 60; Nicolae Iorga, 'Sur les deux Prétendants Mustafa', *Revue historique du sud-est européen* 10 (1993) 12-13.

⁵⁰⁰ Doukas, *Decline and Fall of Byzantium*, 164.

Mustafa to Iznik, where they installed themselves. Meanwhile, Murad raised the siege of Constantinople and Murad's pasha's send an envoy to şarabdar İlyas saying that he was appointed to the office of governor-general of Anatolia. They demanded İlyas 'to keep the young boy busy until they arrived.'⁵⁰¹ Murad's marcher lords, Mezid Beg and Mihal-oglu, came in advance and besieged the fortress where İlyas had took shelter. İlyas delivered the child to Mezid Beg and 'little' Mustafa was instantly executed.⁵⁰²

2.14.3 The International situation

It was only after the internal troubles had ended that Murad could turn against external threats. When Murad was occupied with dynastic strife, Drakul, the Voyvoda of Wallachia, had crossed the Danube and harassed Ottoman Balkans. At the same time, Isfendiyar-oglu of Sinop had seized the territories in Kastamonu. Murad personally led his army to Kastamonu and recovered the lost territory and its copper mines.⁵⁰³ At the same time, he ordered Firuz Beg, the Rumelian marcher lord to lead a punitive campaign into Wallachia.⁵⁰⁴ The outcome of both campaigns was to reduce both Drakul and Isfendiyar-oglu to vassalage. As a result, Drakul came to Murad's court accepting Ottoman vassalage and leaving his two sons as hostages. One of these boys would later become the famous Drakula who caused great troubles in Wallachia. The bey of the İsfendiyar dynasty also became a vassal and married his daughter to Sultan Murad II. These campaigns restored the stability of Ottoman territories, and within twenty years Murad II had, with the exception of Karaman and the upper Euphrates valley, recovered the territories lost after the Battle of Ankara. In 1422, a series of raids into the Peloponnesus led by the Ottoman marcher lord Turahan reminded the Christian league of the 1403 Treaty of Gallipoli that their advantages over the Ottomans had faded.⁵⁰⁵

In the Balkans, Murad II was confronted with the great power struggle with Venice and Hungary and there was always the looming threat of an allied Christian invasion from Europe.⁵⁰⁶ Due to the unfavourable conditions of the treaty of 1403, the most significant loss in Europe had been the loss of Thessaloniki, which Süleyman Çelebi had surrendered to Byzantium. In 1387, the Byzantines had surrendered the city to the Ottomans. In order to recapture Thessaloniki, Murad's forces blockaded in 1422 the city. The Byzantines once

⁵⁰¹ Neşrî, *Cihânnümâ*, 262.

⁵⁰² Aşıkpaşazade *Tarihi*, 136.

⁵⁰³ Aşıkpaşazade *Tarihi*, 138-139.

⁵⁰⁴ Neşrî, *Cihânnümâ*, 265.

⁵⁰⁵ İnalcık, 'The Ottoman Turks and The Crusades, 1329-1451', ed. Setton, *A History of the Crusades. Vol. VI: The Impact of the Crusades on Europe* (London, 1990) 266-276.

⁵⁰⁶ Ibidem.

again were not able to defend it and in 1423 ceded the city to Venice.⁵⁰⁷ The same year, co-emperor John VIII travelled to Europe in search for aid. However, John's anti-Ottoman policy based on expectations of military help from Latin Europe proved fruitless attempts. In 1424, after John's departure and probably without his knowledge, Manuel II took advantage of his absence and concluded a peace treaty with Sultan Murad II. The terms of the treaty held that Byzantium had to surrender the territories which Süleyman Çelebi had ceded in 1403. About twenty years later, the Byzantine emperor was once again reduced to the status of a tribute-paying Ottoman vassal.⁵⁰⁸ De la Broquière noted in the early 1430s that the 'emperor of Constantinople' was under great submission of the 'Grant Turc': 'car il me fut dict qu'il luy paye tous les ans dix mille ducatz de tribute seulement pour le corps de la ville de Constantinople.'⁵⁰⁹

The events of the Ottoman siege of Thessaloniki between 1423 and 1430 show interesting indications about the reception of Ottoman rule by the people of the Eastern Roman Empire. Manuel II's negotiations in the 1380's with the papacy to unite the Roman and Latin Churches had alienated the clergy and the popular classes of the city. They were inclined to accommodate with the Ottomans. As a result, in 1387 they forced Emperor Manuel II outside the city, surrendering it to Sultan Murad I.⁵¹⁰ The same antagonism reached a climax when Murad II launched a siege in 1422. The common people rioted in 1423 against the transfer of the city to the Venetians. However, the pro-Latin nobility arranged the transformation to Venice.⁵¹¹ The option of accommodation with Ottoman rule remained strong among the popular classes. As pointed out earlier, the Ottomans acted according to the principles of Muslim Law, which offered the Christian enemies the option of surrendering while keeping their rights as an alternative to conquest by force. Consequently, many inhabitants of Thessaloniki showed a preference for a peaceful take-over of their city in order to avoid enslavement. Many citizens fled and joined the Ottoman forces.⁵¹²

The diffusion of the conciliatory attitude towards the Ottomans among the Thessalonians must also be attributed to the discontentment with the repressive Venetian regime, which even dissatisfied the upper class of the city. Therefore, the

⁵⁰⁷ Doukas, *Decline and Fall of Byzantium*, 170-171; On the conflict between city-dwellers inclined towards surrendering the city to Murad and those in favor of fighting with western aid: Necipoğlu, *Byzantium Between the Ottomans and the Latins*, 46-55, 67-83, 103-115.

⁵⁰⁸ Necipoğlu, *Byzantium Between the Ottomans and the Latins*, 35-36, 84-102.

⁵⁰⁹ Broquière, *Le Voyage d'Outremer*, 164-165. According to a contemporary Venetian document, the amount of the tribute was 100.000 ducats, see: Necipoğlu, *Byzantium*, 36.

⁵¹⁰ Necipoğlu, *Byzantium*, 46.

⁵¹¹ Ibidem, 48-49.

⁵¹² Doukas, *Decline and Fall of Byzantium*, 247-249.

support for surrender to Ottoman rule considerably increased.⁵¹³ Doukas informed us that: ‘the Latins were afraid that the Romans would rise up and revolt and introduce the Turks into the city to expel the Venetians.’⁵¹⁴ He noted that the Venetians expelled ‘the Roman nobility who were suspected of cooperating with the Ottomans outside Thessaloniki, and deported them to Crete and Venice.’⁵¹⁵ Because of increasing poverty, hunger and shortage of rations, many Greek guards and soldiers also fled to the Ottomans.⁵¹⁶ The salaries they received from Venice were insufficient to meet their basic needs and the Venetian paymasters who distributed their salaries often extracted heavy taxes. According to Byzantine chronicles, the Venetian cavalry guard of the duke was infamous for molesting the citizens.⁵¹⁷ All this evidence clarifies the vague references to the bad relations between the citizens of Thessaloniki and Venice found in the text of Doukas, who wrote that ‘those who remained in the city were maltreated in countless acts of violence and others were tortured as infidels.’⁵¹⁸ The Venetian regime also interfered with the religious freedom of the Orthodox community. The difference between the religious policies of the Ottomans and the Latins was widely known in the Eastern Roman Empire, where the trauma of the Fourth Crusade (1204) and the following plunder and occupation of its capital never were forgotten. The anti-unionist monasteries in the city were in favour of an Ottoman take-over. Suffering from poverty, hunger, mistreatment and exhaustion, the citizens of the city became less and less willing to continue the war against the Ottoman army. This was the point especially, when Murad II in 1430 sent them letters guaranteeing the right to maintain their immovable together with their sources of incomes.⁵¹⁹

Following the Venetian take-over, the Ottomans had considerably increased the pressure on the blockade of Thessaloniki. Murad II viewed the city’s cession to Venice as a transgression of his rights on Thessaloniki by virtue of its former belonging to Ottoman dominion.⁵²⁰ He argued that: ‘This city is my ancestral property. My grandfather Bâyezid, by the might of his hand, wrested her from the Romans. But as you are Latins from Italy, why have you trespassed into these parts? You have the choice of withdrawing. If you do not, I will come post-haste.’⁵²¹ The take-over of Thessaloniki involved the Venetians in the war with Murad Han, which they could not sustain alone. One of the Turkish princes

⁵¹³ Barker, *Manuel II Palaeologus*, 120-199.

⁵¹⁴ Doukas, *Decline and Fall of Byzantium*, 170.

⁵¹⁵ Ibidem, 170.

⁵¹⁶ Necipoğlu, *Byzantium*, 106-107.

⁵¹⁷ Ibidem, 110.

⁵¹⁸ Doukas, *Decline and Fall of Byzantium*, 170.

⁵¹⁹ Necipoğlu, *Byzantium*, 114.

⁵²⁰ Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, 408.

⁵²¹ Necipoğlu, *Byzantium*, 171.

whose assistance Venice could bring in was Cüneyd, a pretender to the principality of Izmir who had joined earlier the rebellion of Mustafa.⁵²² Cüneyd planned to send an Ottoman pretender to Rumelia, but Murad secured a Genoese aid to block him from the sea. With his elimination Venice looked for other allies and began negotiations with king Sigismund of Hungary. Venice offered him to support an invasion of Ottoman territory in the Balkans by cutting Ottoman communications at the straits. However, Venice failed to engage Sigismund in a joint action against Murad Han. After seven years of Venetian-Ottoman war for Thessaloniki, a principal centre of the Venetian colonies in the eastern Mediterranean, the city was recaptured by the Ottomans in 1430.⁵²³ In the words of Doukas: 'Murad issued instructions that if any of the Romans wished, he was allowed to come and dwell again in the city. He also ordered that the church should remain in the hands of Christians.'⁵²⁴

After the decline of the Eastern Roman Empire, Venice had emerged as the dominant commercial power in the Levant, with colonies and outpost in Dalmatia, the Aegean, Black and Mediterranean Seas. It controlled the shores of the Balkan Peninsula and claimed the monopoly of the Eastern Mediterranean trade.⁵²⁵ Therefore, the principal concern of Murad II was to change the imbalance of economic control in the region. Murad sought to implement policies to weaken the Venetian commercial hegemony through taking over the control of the Levantine trade routes, combined with alliances with Venice's rivals such as Genoa or Ancona.⁵²⁶ The Venetians needed to adapt their commercial and colonial policies to accommodate with the Ottoman expansion. The Ottoman expansion alarmed these Latin colonists in the Aegean region, who rightly feared that they would lose their colonies.⁵²⁷

Sultan Murad II also had to move fast to counter Venetian claims in Albania, which was vitally important for Venetian relations with the world outside the Adriatic Sea. Albania received support from Venice, Naples and the papacy against the establishment of Ottoman rule.⁵²⁸ The Ottomans encountered in Albania a long and stiff resistance and the years after 1430 saw the uncertain establishment of Ottoman rule in central and southern Albania. Ottoman diplomacy took advantage of the struggle between Venice, Naples and

⁵²² On Cüneyd, see: Jean Dayantis, *Doukas, Un Historien Byzantin du 15e Siècle. Entre Grecs et Turcs* (Piscataway, 2009) 8-45.

⁵²³ Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, 409; Imber, *The Ottoman Empire*, 107-110.

⁵²⁴ Doukas, *Decline and Fall of Byzantium*, 172.

⁵²⁵ William Miller, *The Latins in the Levant: a History of Frankish Greece (1204-1566)* (London, 1964).

⁵²⁶ İnalcık, 'The Ottoman Turks and The Crusades', 269-271.

⁵²⁷ On the Venetian-Ottoman relations, see: Eric Dursteler, *Venetians in Constantinople. Nation, Identity, and Coexistence in the Early Modern Mediterranean* (Baltimore, 2006); Paolo Preto, *Venezia e i Turchi* (Florence, 1975).

⁵²⁸ Kenneth M. Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant, 1204-1571*, vol. 2 (Philadelphia, 1980) 17-20.

the papacy. Very close to Italy, Albania was perceived by the Ottomans as a bridgehead to conquer Italy and by the Italian states as their first defence line.⁵²⁹

The zeal of the papacy to organise a crusade against the Ottoman state was related more to this direct menace to the Vatican than to the 'liberation' of Jerusalem.⁵³⁰ In the 1430s, anti-Ottoman crusade plans were constantly discussed in the west to stimulate Christian enthusiasm. Broquière observed that Sultan Murad II had immense resources at his disposal to conquer Europe if he wished to do so.⁵³¹ However, until 1479, the Ottoman state did not consider to conquer Italy without first taking control of the Albanian coasts. From the 1430s, the Aragonese kings of Naples fought in Albania the Ottomans.⁵³² By this time, Alfonso V of Naples had securely established a state in eastern Spain. He revived an old ambition of his predecessors, namely the reestablishment of a Latin empire in eastern Mediterranean. However, as his fleet suffered losses in the war with Genoa and with Venice and Milan, Alfonso did not feel safe to commit large overseas campaigns.⁵³³ He maintained diplomatic relations with the rivals of the Ottomans such as the Mamelukes in Egypt, Christian rulers in Cyprus and Rhodes and with the Turkish emirs in Anatolia.⁵³⁴

Geopolitically, while the Ottoman state was struggling with the Italian city-states and the papacy in Albania, the Hungarians were striving to extend their influence into Wallachia and Serbia. The middle Danube was actually the real front between Christian Europe and the Ottoman state. The competition for control of Serbia and Wallachia, which lay between the two powers, marked the struggle between the Ottoman state and Hungary for dominance in the Balkan. With much of Albania under his control, Sultan Murad II now extended his attention to Serbia and Bosnia.⁵³⁵ In 1435, Murad married Mara, the daughter of the Despot George Brankovic, establishing her father as his vassal. Meanwhile, unable to come to terms with Murad II, the doge of Venice continuously proposed logistic support if Hungary would invade the Ottoman lands.⁵³⁶ However, Hungary plunged into a civil war after the death of king Sigismund in 1437 and the

⁵²⁹ İnalçık, 'Arnavutluk'ta Osmanlı Halimiyetinin yerleşmesi ve İskender Bey Menşei', *Fatih ve İstanbul* 1/2 (1953): 152-175; *ibid.* 'Arnavutluk', *Encyclopedia of Islam*, Second Edition (online).

⁵³⁰ Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant*, 36-39.

⁵³¹ Broquière, *Le Voyage d'Oultremer*, 181-182.

⁵³² İnalçık, 'The Ottoman Turks and The Crusades', 273.

⁵³³ Francesco Cerone, 'La Politica orientale di Alfonso di Aragona', *Archivio storico per le provincie napoletane* XXVII (1902): 3-93.

⁵³⁴ İnalçık, 'The Ottoman Turks and The Crusades', 274. After 1453, Alfonso's policies became more defensive; he only renewed his alliances with the rivals of the Ottomans and did not leave Naples because of the civil war among the Italian states. See: Dorothy M. Vaughan, *Europe and the Turk. A Pattern of Alliances, 1350-1700* (Liverpool, 1954) 73-75.

⁵³⁵ Imber, *The Ottoman Empire*, 114-116; Finkel, *Osman's Dream*, 42-68.

⁵³⁶ Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, 407-409.

peasantry rose in revolt against the excessive exploitation by their feudal lords. The next year, Sultan Murad II led a campaign into Hungary to restore Ottoman control of the Danube.⁵³⁷ It seems that the Transylvanian peasantry profited greatly from Murad's expedition, which safeguarded the Balkan peasants from vengeance by their feudal lords.⁵³⁸

Believing that the Hungarian menace was eliminated, Murad captured the Serbian despotate in 1439. And in 1440, he made the commercial city of Dubrovnik (or Ragusa) on the Adriatic Sea an Ottoman vassal, which accepted to pay an annual tribute. This alliance with the Ottoman state enabled Dubrovnik to develop an alternative trade route to the Venetians, which damaged Venetian commercial hegemony in the region.⁵³⁹ The Serbian silver mines at Novo Brdo, of vital importance for silver supplies to Italy via Dubrovnik, were conquered and the export of silver to Europe was prohibited.⁵⁴⁰ In 1441, Murad II attempted to capture Belgrade, the gate to central Europe, which had been fortified by the Hungarians. He failed and the pendulum swung in the reverse direction. During the debate about the union of the Latin and Orthodox Churches at the Council of Florence in 1439, a campaign against the Ottomans was then under negotiation and to turn the discussions into action the Christian league needed prospects of success. Hungary was the key to any allied Christian invasion of the Ottoman lands.⁵⁴¹

⁵³⁷ Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, 416-417.

⁵³⁸ Stefan Pasco, *La révolte populaire de Transylvanie des années 1437-1438* (Bucharest, 1964) 34-107.

⁵³⁹ Barusa Krekic, *Dubrovnik (Raguse) et le Levant au moyen âge* (Paris, 1961); Salim Aydıöz, 'Firearm and Munitions Trade between Ottoman Empire and some European States, 1350-1600' in: *Europe's Economic Relations with the Islamic World 13-18th Centuries*, Fondazione Istituto Internazionale di Storia Economica Prato, 38 (2006): 843-862.

⁵⁴⁰ İnalçık, 'The Ottoman Turks and the Crusades', 267.

⁵⁴¹ Imber, *The Crusade of Varna*, 8-9.

2.14.4 The Crusade project at the Council of Florence, 1439

Since the so-called Eastern schism between the Eastern Roman Orthodox Church and the Latin Roman Catholic Church in 1054, their relations had long been antagonistic due to theological differences and disputes. The schism occurred when the pope and the Byzantine patriarch excommunicated each other following the dispute concerning the liturgical customs of the Greek churches in Italy.⁵⁴² The Council of Florence in 1439 formed the ultimate attempt to reunite the two churches. The union was declared in Florence on July 1439, but no effective unification was realised.⁵⁴³ The Council of Florence in 1439 also formed the first step in the organisation of an anti-Ottoman crusade. The Venetian Condulmer, who in 1431 became pope as Eugenius IV, had a strong motive for organising a crusade. His position as head of the Church was not secure, but a successful crusade would make it unassailable. Nor did he have difficulty in raising support for the project. The Doge of Venice supported the unionist initiatives of the Pope, as Venice was also eager to participate. Venice hoped through a successful crusade to recapture Thessaloniki and other lost colonies to the Ottomans.⁵⁴⁴

The Duke of Burgundy, Philip the Good, whose realm was not directly pressured by the Ottoman expansion, also sent representatives to the council in Florence. The duke's willingness to support the crusade is at first glance puzzling. Hungary, Venice, Byzantium, etc. all had a direct strategic and political interest in fighting the Ottomans. The Ottoman expansion in no way threatened Burgundy and only indirectly affected its trade interest in the Mediterranean. Yet, Duke Philip had its own reasons in participating in an anti-Ottoman campaign. The Hundred Years War was ongoing and although the Duke of Burgundy allied with the English against the French king, he remained despite his wealth and power a subject vassal of his enemy the king of France. He had an eye on a royal crown and he intended to rise his status to a king through participating in a successful crusade. In return, Philip hoped to endear himself with the Pope, the only authority able to legitimise a Burgundian crown. However, his interests were more than only political calculations. For him, the crusade-idea served as a symbolic instrument to justify his rule. A half century before, his dynasty participated in the Crusade of Nicopolis (1396) but suffered a humiliating defeat and Philip's father, John the Fearless, had been taken prisoner by Sultan Bâyezid I. His interests were related in large part to his family's

⁵⁴² Linda Woodhead, *An Introduction to Christianity* (Cambridge, 2004) 83.

⁵⁴³ A key issue was the papal primacy, i.e. the supreme jurisdiction of the Bishop of Rome over all these Churches and the promise of military assistance against the rising Ottoman state. See: Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant*, 40-51; Joseph Gill, *The Council of Florence* (Cambridge, 1959).

⁵⁴⁴ Hubert Jedin and John Dolan eds., *History of the Church*, vol. IV (London, 1980) 474-484; Imber, *Crusade of Varna*, 8 ; Setton, *The Papacy*, 50.

participation in the crusade-tradition. One of his ancestors, Count Baldwin of Flanders was crowned as the emperor of Constantinople in 1204 during the Fourth Crusade. The Burgundian dynasty saw itself as the standard-bearer of the crusade movement in Western Europe. Philip liked to style himself as the *athleta Christi* and wished to uphold this image by patronising the crusade ideology that took an important part in the chivalric culture of his princely court.⁵⁴⁵

According to the Burgundian chronicler Jehan de Wavrin, in 1442 the duke received at his court the Byzantine ambassador Karystinos, who was exploring the possibility of receiving military aid against the Ottomans. Philip promised him to supply seven galleys if Venice and the papacy would also enter the alliance: 'to bring aid to Christianity, I have offered the [Byzantine] Emperor three galleys and a galliot as well as a great ship and a caravel (...) since I know that the Venetians have innumerable galleys and that they are more than ready to oblige me, I shall arm the four galleys in Venice (...) You should tell the Emperor of Constantinople that I shall send them to the assistance of him and Christianity.'⁵⁴⁶ In 1444, the crusader fleet counted twenty-two galleys, which were provided by Burgundy, Venice, the papacy, Dubrovnik and Byzantium.⁵⁴⁷

As the anonymous author of the *Campaign of Sultan Murad (Gazavat-ı Sultan Murad)* informs us, the union of the Churches at the Council of Florence (1439) was the first step in the organisation of an anti-Ottoman expedition. The *Gazavat* started by noting that the Byzantine Emperor John VIII sailed to Florence together with the patriarch of Constantinople and with the high clerics: 'He summoned all his priests, Bishops and Royal Metropolitans to a council. They decided to go to the accursed and irreligious man called Pope of Rome to tell him the situation and to take counsel with him; they were ready to accept every wish of the pope.'⁵⁴⁸ The anonymous author of the *Gazavat* emphasised that John VIII was not attending the Council of Florence to discuss the theological issues, but rather to obtain the pope's military and financial support against the Ottomans:

⁵⁴⁵ Taparel, 'Une épisode de la politique orientale de Philippe le Bon : les Bourguignons en Mer Noire (1440-1446)', *Annales de Bourgogne*, LV (1983), 5-29 ; Jean Paviot, *Les Ducs de Bourgogne, la croisade et l'Orient (fin XIVe siècle - XVe siècle)* (Paris, 2003) 17-57, 293; Georges Doutrepont, 'A la Cour de Philippe le Bon. Le banquet du faisan et la littérature de Bourgogne', *La Revue Générale* 35 (1899): 787-806; 36 ; 99-118 ; Jean Devaux, 'Le Saint Voyage de Turquie: croisade et propagande à la cour de Philippe le Bon (1463-1464)', ed. Claude Thiry, *A l'heure encore de mon écrire. Aspects de la littérature de Bourgogne sous Philippe le Bon et Charles le Téméraire* (Louvain-la-Neuve, 1997) 53-70 ; Richard Vaughan, *Philip the Good. The Apogee of the Burgundian State* (London, 1970); Willem Blockmans and Walter Prevenier, *The Promised Lands: The Low Countries under Burgundian Rule, 1369-1530* (Philadelphia, 1999).

⁵⁴⁶ Jehan de Wavrin, *Anciennes Chroniques d'Angleterre*, in: Imber, *Crusade of Varna*, 117 ; Paviot, *La politique navale des ducs de Bourgogne, 1384-1482* (Lille, 1995) 159.

⁵⁴⁷ Imber, *The Crusade of Varna*, 18-19.

⁵⁴⁸ *Gazavât-ı Sultân Murâd*, 2: 'törvinim vardır deyüb cümle papazların ve banların ve midrepolid hâsların da'vet eyledi; anlar dahi cümlesi bir yere cem olub törvinleri şunda karar buldu ki, Rim-Papa dedikleri mel'ûn-i bî-dîne varub ve ahvâli beyân edüb danışalar ve Rim-papa her ne herze yer ise, bunlar dahi eyle edeler.'

‘Then the Pope said: ‘My son, what do you want? Speak and we will listen.’ The *tekvur* [emperor] replied: ‘O head of our religion, the son of Osman is no longer confined to his Anatolia or Bursa, but has set foot in Rumelia and conquered Sofia, Plovdiv, Edirne and many other cities and lands [...] We therefore urge you to admonish all the kings and the Christian community, so that we can punish these sons of Osman and remove them from our lands, turn their mosques into churches and others into taverns, destroy their minarets and hang bells. If we let these Turks be, they will utterly dig out the Christian community by the roots [...] Now you are the glory of the Christians, the leader of our religion. You should never cease from admonishing and warning every Christian and every king to prevent that the torch of the religion of Jesus should be extinguished in your time [...] The Pope of Rome knew that he could stir up immense trouble and immediately gave orders that the king of Hungary, the despot [Serbian ruler] and others should be summoned. He wrote letters and posted them to all quarters, calling the aforementioned execrated men. They all set out and gathered around the pope of Rome and he said them: (...) You should expel the son of Osman from the Balkans and then, when your army is rested, proceed to take Bursa and all the lands up to Jerusalem.’⁵⁴⁹

As the author of the *Gazavat* shows, the Ottomans were informed about the plans that were being put forth at the council in Florence. He saw the council not merely as a religious meeting between churches in dispute, but as a forum for planning war against the Ottomans and the Muslims. As the *Gazavat*-author implies, the crusade and the Church union of 1439 can equally be attributed to the ambitions of the Byzantine Emperor John VIII. Since the papacy, Venice, Burgundy and Hungary participated in this crusade against the Ottomans, it also formed a general European issue. The Byzantine diplomacy succeeded in altering the priority towards the Ottomans instead of Jerusalem. The initiative and planning of the expedition came from the Hungarian king Sigismund. Byzantium and Hungary felt the direct pressure of the Ottoman expansion. The Eastern

⁵⁴⁹ *Gazavat-ı Sultan Murad*, 2-3: ‘Ba’dehu Rim-Papa: Oğul, Tekvurum, murâdın nedir, eyitgil işidelim dedikde, Tekvur eytti kim, ey bizim dinimizin ulusu, Osman-oğlu Anadolu’sunda Bursa’sında sığışamayub Rumelin’e dahi kadem basub Sofya’yı ve Filibeyi ve Edreneyi ve dahi nice il ve memleketleri feth edüb (...) senden rica ederim ki, cümle kırallara ve Kırısğan tâyifesine pend ü nasîhatler edesin, ola kim bu Osman-oğlanlarının hakkından gelüb ilimüzden çıkaralım ve mescid ve medreselerini puthâne ve nicesini meyhâne edüb ve düzdükleri minâreleri bozub çanlar asalım, eğer bu Türkleri kendi hallerine korsak, Kırısğan tâyifesinin kökünü kazır. (...) İmdi sen bizim ve cümle Kırısğan tâyifesinin âb-i rûyusun ve dinimiz ulususun, cümle Kırısğan tâyifesine ve Kırallara tenbîh ve te’kîd ve nice nasîhatlar edesin ki, Hazret-i Isa dîni çerâğı senin zamanında söyünmek ma’kûl değildir. (...) Rim-Papa bildi ki azîm fitne kaynadacaktır hemân-dem emr edüb Ungurus Kırıl’ını ve Despot nâm kırılı ve sâyirlerini da’vet edüb çağırılar, derhâl nâmeler yazılıb etrâf ve eknâfa perâkende edüb zikr olunan melâ’inler da’vet olundukda cümlesi hareket edüb Rim-Papa tarafına gelüb cem’olub emrin nedir dediklerinde, Rim-Papa dedikleri la’în zebân (...) şöyle bilesiz ve ba’dehu şöyle edesiz ki, Rumeli’nden Osman-oğlunu çıkarub andan sonra leşkerünüz dinlendikde yab yab Bursa’sını dahi alub Kudüs-i Şerife dek zabt u rabt idesiz.’

Roman Empire had been reduced to a shadow of its former self. The once-mighty Roman empire was cornered and encircled. Since the recapture of Thessalonica in 1430, the Ottoman state was regaining its former powerful position and had re-established its authority in the Balkans. The only way to achieve a breakthrough, John VIII thought, was requesting military support from the West. Manuel II's earlier attempts for union in 1369 had failed, because the Orthodox clergy was reluctant and did not even attend the negotiations in Rome. Whereas, Manuel II was extremely cautious on this issue, John VIII agreed to the union in 1439.⁵⁵⁰

Indeed, the question of western aid to Byzantium was inextricably linked with this council in Florence.⁵⁵¹ However, western assistance came with a price. The union was accepted on papal terms, implying the subordination of the Byzantine Church to the Vatican. Therefore, it was bitterly resented by the citizens of Constantinople, who regarded it as betrayal of their faith.⁵⁵² John VIII was willing to swallow this act of humility in return for what he desperately needed, an allied Christian attack on the Ottomans. George Scholarius, a Byzantine representative in Florence, emphasised that 'the primary purpose of this union is the hope of military aid and there remains no other salvation for us.'⁵⁵³ However, for the following fourteen years until the conquest of the city in 1453 by Sultan Mehmed II, the inhabitants of Constantinople were torn by controversy about this matter.⁵⁵⁴ The union was so unpopular that John VIII's successor, Constantine XI, avoided imposing it on his subjects, until the very eve of the city's capture by Ottomans. According to Doukas, the Byzantine chief minister, grand duke Loukas Notaras who was one of the anti-unionist leaders, would have said against the Latins: 'It is better to see the turban of the Turks reigning in the centre of the city than the Latin mitre.'⁵⁵⁵

The anti-unionist feelings were strongly related to the sack of Constantinople in 1204, during the Fourth Crusade. The hostility took firm root after the West European crusaders and Venetian merchants sacked Constantinople, looting the *Hagia Sophia*, violating Orthodox churches and monasteries and converting them to Latin Catholic worship. The altars had been smashed and torn to pieces for their gold and marble. The crusaders had also destroyed the Imperial Library of Constantinople, the last of the great libraries of the ancient world which preserved many Greek and Roman manuscripts. The civilian population of Constantinople was subjected to massacres, humiliations and depredations.⁵⁵⁶ The Byzantine emperor had been replaced by Count Baldwin of Flanders,

⁵⁵⁰ Barker, *Manuel II Palaeologus*, 321-331; Gill, *The Council of Florence*, 20-39, 42-43.

⁵⁵¹ Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant*, vol. 2, 58-66.

⁵⁵² Necipoğlu, *Byzantium Between the Ottomans and the Latins*, 36-37.

⁵⁵³ Gill, *The Council*, 243.

⁵⁵⁴ Doukas, *Decline and Fall*, 208-209; Gill, *The Council*, 253.

⁵⁵⁵ Doukas, *Decline*, 210.

⁵⁵⁶ Jonathan Phillips, *The Fourth Crusade and the Sack of Constantinople* (London, 2004) 258-270.

who was appointed as the new emperor and the imperial lands were divided into feudal provinces. The Latin occupation of Constantinople lasted until 1261 and had left a heavy mark on the Byzantine historical consciousness. Bertrandon de la Broquière took note of the enmity when he travelled through the Ottoman lands in 1433. He recorded that the Greeks at the port of Uskudar initially thought that he was a Turk, because he was disguised in Turkish clothes, and paid him honours. However, when the Greeks understood that he was a Latin Christian, they wanted to overcharge him for his passage and cheat him: 'They would have happily beaten me, as at this time they despised [Latin] Christians.'⁵⁵⁷ From the perspective of Latin Christianity, the Byzantines were seen as heretics, as Petrarch put it: 'The Turks are our enemies but the Greeks are schismatic and worse than enemies. They hate us in their guts'⁵⁵⁸

However, there were some Byzantines, such as the chronicler Sphrantzes, who were not opposed to the Church union on merely religious grounds. For them, it represented the initial catalyst for a series of events that caused the downfall of the empire. Sphrantzes criticised Emperor John VIII for his over-ambition and his choice to court with Latin Europe, which invited the fall of Constantinople.⁵⁵⁹ As he rightly feared, a sense of threat was felt at the Ottoman court when the news reached of the union in Florence, which the account of the *Gazavat* elucidates. Sphrantzes noted that Murad II expressed his concerns about the council to the Byzantine envoy who was sent to inform him on John VIII's participation to the assembly: 'It does not seem a good idea to me, to work so hard and to spend so much money. What will he win? I am here: if he is in need of money for his expenses or for any other funds for his maintenance, I am prepared to help him.' A long discussion and debate ensued at the Byzantine court over whether to follow Murad's offer or to attend the council. Finally, Sphrantzes noted 'our emperor's desire, or rather our evil fortune, prevailed in the end.'⁵⁶⁰

We find the details on the debate on this matter among the members of the Ottoman *divan* in the Byzantine chronicles; the Ottoman chroniclers are silent on the Church union, except the *Gazavat-ı Murad*. Sphrantzes writes that the members of the *divan* intensely debated and decided to send an expedition force to Constantinople in light of Byzantium's alliance with the Latins. Yet, the grand vizier Çandarlı Halil Pasha who had great influence at the princely court, argued that sending an army to Constantinople would only drive the Byzantines further into the arms of Western Europe. And even if the union would come about, Halil Pasha trusted on the 'treaties and friendly relations with

⁵⁵⁷ Broquière, *Le Voyage d'Oultremer*, 148-149.

⁵⁵⁸ As quoted in : Jefferson, *The Holy Wars*, 39.

⁵⁵⁹ George Sphrantzes, *The Fall of the Byzantine Empire*, ed. and tr. Marios Philippides (Amherst, 1980) 49-51.

⁵⁶⁰ *Ibidem*, 52.

the Romans'. This seems to have been convincing to Murad and he called off the siege.⁵⁶¹ The account of the Castilian traveller Pero Tafur who at that time was in Constantinople, confirms that an Ottoman army was underway and that a skirmish was fought before the walls of the city. However, the Ottomans struck the siege and marched home.⁵⁶²

2.14.5 The Battles of Varna (1443-1444) and Kosovo (1448)

The historical circumstances that led to the Battle of Varna were longstanding. This battle was actually the continuation of the international power struggle in the Balkans between the Ottoman Empire, the Eastern Roman Empire, Venice, Hungary, the papacy and other minor Christian states by means that had already been used before. In this sense, the events of 1444 were also significant for the general history of Europe.⁵⁶³ The invasion by the allied Christian powers, which was organised as a crusade, signalled a serious threat to the Ottoman state, precisely during a period of recovery under sultan Murad II. Surely, it is hazardous to relate the recovery and consolidation of the Ottoman state to the coincidental outcome of one single battle. The Ottoman state had proven to be able to survive many severe political crises in the previous period and had accumulated pivotal experiences in statecraft. One should also take into account its social and political institutional organisation (for example, the timar land regime) that made it possible to recover after the defeat against Timur and the ensuing civil war.

Nevertheless, in contrast to Nicopolis in 1396, the Battle of Varna was perceived as a crucial event in the early Ottoman historical texts. This crisis of 1443-1444 severely threatened the Ottoman realm in Europe. The possibility that Byzantine or the Eastern Roman capital, Constantinople, would fall in the hands of Latin Europe was acute. This meant a disaster for the Ottomans. If Constantinople was conquered by Latin Europe, then

⁵⁶¹ Sphrantzes, *The Fall of the Byzantine Empire*, 52.

⁵⁶² Jefferson, *The Holy Wars*, 111.

⁵⁶³ On the Battle of Varna, see: Iorga, *Geschichte des Osmanischen Reiches*, 440-443; Jan Dabrowski, 'La Pologne et l'expédition de Varna en 1444' *Revue des études slaves* X (1930) 57-75; M. Berza, 'Der Kreuzzug gegen die Turken - ein europäisches Problem' *Revue Historique du sud-est Europeen* XIX, 1 (1942) 51-72; Pall, 'Autour de la croisade de Varna: la question de paix de Szeged et de sa rupture (1444)', *AR, BSH*, 22 (1941) 144-158; Franz Babinger, 'Von Amurath zu Amurath. Vor und Nachspiel der Schlacht bei Varna (1444)', *Oriens* III, 2 (Louvain, 1950) 229-265; İnalcık, 'Byzantium and the Origins of the Crisis of 1444 under the Light of Turkish Sources' *Actes du XIIe Congrès international d'Etudes Byzantines* II (1964) 159-161; Chasin, 'The Crusade of Varna', in: *A History of the Crusades*, VI, 276-311; Jean Colin, *Cyriaque d'Ancone* (Paris, 1984); Lajos Fekete, 'Das Fethname über die Schlacht bei Varna', *Byzantinoslavica*, XIV (1953), 258-270; İnalcık, *Fatih Devri*, 1-103; Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, 407-421; Pehlivan, 'Varna Savaşı', 598-617; Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant*, 39-106; Paviot, 'Gênes et les Turcs (1444, 1453): sa défense contre les accusations d'une entente' *La Storia dei Genovesi* IX (Genua, 1989) 129-137; Housley, *The Later Crusades*, 86-89; Antioche, 'Les Expéditions de Nicopolis (1396) et de Varna (1444)', 28-74; Imber, *The Crusade of Varna*, 13-26; Jefferson, *The Holy Wars*, 8-15, 28-53.

Anatolia and Rumelia, the two heartlands of the Ottoman state, would be definitively separated and finally result in its disintegration. This threat was brought to an end by Murad's successful routing of the Western crusader army at the Battle of Varna, and a second threat at the Battle of Kosovo (1448).

To turn the discussions on crusade into action, the Christian league needed prospects of success. The failed siege of Belgrade in 1440 signalled the beginning of a crisis of Ottoman rule in the Balkans. Over the next four years, the Ottomans were forced to wage defensive campaigns at great expense. In 1441, John Hunyadi, the Hungarian marcher lord, defeated a raid of İshak Pasha. In 1442, he routed another raid by Mezid Bey in Transylvania and defeated a second raid under the command of the governor-general of Rumelia, Shehabeddin Pasha, whom Murad II had sent to avenge the earlier defeat. These were not full-scale expeditions of the Ottoman army but raids (*akın*) by the marcher lords, which Hunyadi had overcome. Against the western perception of invincibility of the Ottoman armies, these victories were seen like miracles that raised the hopes for an anti-Ottoman crusade. Western European powers and Byzantium were convinced of and rejoiced the idea that 'the Turks' would soon be thrown out of Europe.⁵⁶⁴ In Venice, Hunyadi's skirmishes had been announced as 'the most felicitous and triumphant victory' won against the Ottomans' and the senate ordered a procession at San Marco's square to celebrate it.⁵⁶⁵ The Burgundian chronicler Jehan de Wavrin prefaces his account of Varna with these minor victories of Hunyadi.⁵⁶⁶

According to the *Gazavat*, Murad II wished to retaliate Shehabeddin Pasha's defeat in 1442. He led personally his army into Wallachia and brought the country once again under firm Ottoman control.⁵⁶⁷ However, the invasion of the Karamanid prince, İbrahim Bey, into the Ottoman lands in Anatolia overturned his plan. Both Aşık Paşazade and Neşrî noted that İbrahim Bey launched an attack emboldened by the defeat of Shehabeddin Pasha (Kula Şâhin).⁵⁶⁸ They stated that İbrahim Bey was acting according to his alliance with the Serbians, which foresaw that the Hungarians attacked from the west and Karaman from the east.⁵⁶⁹ According to the *Gazavat*, İbrahim Bey also concluded an agreement with the Byzantine emperor to launch an assault when requested. In 1442, John VIII had sent ambassadors to Hungary, Rome and as the *Gazavat* informs us, he also sent an envoy to his Turkish and Muslim ally, İbrahim Bey of Karaman: 'One day the emperors ambassador met with the son of Karaman and spoke: you should assemble your

⁵⁶⁴ Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, 419-421; Imber, *The Ottoman Empire*, 120-121.

⁵⁶⁵ Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant*, 68-70.

⁵⁶⁶ See the translated account of Jehan de Wavrin in Imber, *The Crusade of Varna*, 108-111.

⁵⁶⁷ *Gazavat-ı Sultan Murad*, 4.

⁵⁶⁸ Aşıkpaşazade *Tarihi*, 172 ; Neşrî, *Cihânnümâ*, 291.

⁵⁶⁹ Aşıkpaşazade *Tarihi*, 156, 158.

troops and set out on a campaign to grab Bursa from the son of Osman. If Sultan Murad tries to come against you, we shall prevent him crossing over the sea.⁵⁷⁰

The principality of Karaman was in fact a buffer state between the Ottomans and the Mamluks in Egypt. The policy of İbrahim Bey of Karaman (r. 1422-1464) was in many ways similar to that of the Balkan Christian vassals, such as Brankovic or Vlad Dracul. He hoped that events would deliver him a political salvation. Earlier, during the Ottoman civil war, the Karamanids had scrambled to grab every land they could. However, when Murad II succeeded to recover the lost territories in Anatolia and to re-establish Ottoman authority, he had to acknowledge Murad's suzerainty. As İbrahim Bey was an ardent rival of the Ottomans, it is not unconceivable that he willingly cooperated with the Christian league against the Ottomans. He must have been aware that he could not compete on his own against the Ottomans, as the latter continued to extend their territories by incorporating other Turkish principalities.⁵⁷¹

For the Karamanid dynasty, the only breakthrough was to extend its own lands by either seizing Ottoman territory or that of neighbouring Turkish principalities. However, such opportunistic expansion could only succeed when the Ottomans themselves were distracted by conflicts elsewhere. İbrahim readily cooperated with the plan of the crusader invasion.⁵⁷² After the Karamanid ruler had attacked Sultan Murad II in the east and drew him into Anatolia, the Venetian, Burgundian, papal and Byzantine galleys would block the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles and prevent Ottoman army from crossing the Straits to meet the Hungarians as they simultaneously invaded the Ottoman lands in Europe.⁵⁷³ A try-out of this plan was carried out with no success in 1443. İbrahim launched an attack on Ottoman cities in Anatolia. However, neither the crusader fleet nor the Hungarians were ready. Sultan Murad II and his son, crown prince Ala'eddin Pasha, forced İbrahim into submission before turning to Europe and stopping the crusader advance at the Zlatitsa Mountain pass in the Balkans.⁵⁷⁴

Among the fifteenth-century Ottoman historical texts, the *Gazavat-i Murad* gives the fullest and most accurate account of the Ottoman campaign against the invasion of the crusaders. Murad's campaign against Karaman had taken the entire summer. On Murad's approach, İbrahim had fled and Murad had sent Tatar troops to devastate his lands. With no help coming from his Byzantine ally, John VIII, İbrahim sent an *ulema*-delegation to Murad pleading mercy. In light of the looming crusader attack in the Balkans, Murad agreed to conclude peace with İbrahim on the condition 'to never again instigate sedition

⁵⁷⁰ *Gazavat-ı Sultan Murad*, 4.

⁵⁷¹ Imber, *The Ottoman Empire*, 115-116.

⁵⁷² Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, 45-47; Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant*, 76.

⁵⁷³ İnalcık, 'The Ottoman Turks and The Crusades', 266-276.

⁵⁷⁴ The most detailed account of this campaign is provided by Neşrî, *Cihânnümâ*, 292-295.

and treachery' and he gave the Karamanid his lands back.⁵⁷⁵ Murad knew that the Hungarians were gathering a large army and that an assault could come at any time. His agreement to peace with the Karamanids should also be related to the menace of the Mamluk sultan, who claimed authority over south-eastern Anatolia. It is reasonable to assume that Murad was cautious to give neither Ibrahim nor his potential ally, the Mamluks, any pretext for starting a war in the east.

In the autumn of 1443, after his return to Amasya, Murad received the tragic news of the death of his eldest son, Ala'eddin. The young prince was eighteen years old and had been Murad's chosen heir and favourite son.⁵⁷⁶ Murad was, according to the Royal Calendars, still in mourning when the news came that the king of Hungary, the despot of Serbia and Hunyadi had crossed the Danube with a heavily equipped army.⁵⁷⁷ Events left Murad no time to mourn his loss. Murad struck a deal with Vlad Drakul. He released him on the condition of peace and to assist Murad in fighting his enemies. So he neutralised the Wallachian support for the crusade expedition.⁵⁷⁸ However, the Serbian despot George Brankovic was willing to take Vlad's place as an eager participant in the crusade. Due to the power struggles between the Ottoman state and Hungary, Brankovic had lost nearly all his lands and dominions. With nothing more to lose and everything to gain, the Serbian despot put his full effort into supporting the crusade.⁵⁷⁹

When the invasion began, the Ottomans knew from their informants that the crusader fleet was not ready and the naval expedition would not take place.⁵⁸⁰ Murad ordered his viziers, Halil Pasha, Şehabeddin Pasha and Fazlullah, to make preparations. However, Murad's *divan* was confronted with a shortage of troops primarily due to the late season. Based on the reports of Kasim Pasha, the viziers informed Sultan Murad II about the insufficient numbers.⁵⁸¹ According to the *Gazavat*, the viziers had already mobilised the janissaries and the household cavalry (*kapıkulu sipahi*), who were assembled and ready.⁵⁸² Although the household army (*kapıkulu*) formed a standing army and could be mobilised at any time, the vast majority of the Ottoman army was composed of cavalry forces and auxiliary troops (*azabs*, *voynuks*, *martalos*, *müsellem*-infantry, etc) from various provinces (*sancaks*) of Anatolia and Rumelia.⁵⁸³ The *timariot* cavalry from the provinces wished to

⁵⁷⁵ *Gazavat-ı Sultan Murad*, 6-7.

⁵⁷⁶ İnalçık, *Fatih Devri*, 55-60.

⁵⁷⁷ Menage, 'The Annals of Sultan Murad', 578.

⁵⁷⁸ Jehan de Wavrin, in: Imber, *Crusade of Varna*, 117.

⁵⁷⁹ Jefferson, *The Holy Wars*, 315-316; Imber, *The Ottoman Empire*, 127-128.

⁵⁸⁰ Jefferson, *The Holy Wars*, 323.

⁵⁸¹ *Gazavat-ı Sultan Murad*, 12.

⁵⁸² *Ibidem*.

⁵⁸³ For a detailed discussion of the Ottoman army units in the fifteenth century, see: Uyar and Erickson, *A Military History of the Ottomans*, 16-21, 36-66.

return to their farms and manage their duties there. Because the winter was approaching and the normal campaigning season had ended, most of the regiments had returned to their homes and were reluctant to mobilise. And since this was a full-scale war, the risks were great and the gains minimal. All these factors had a daunting effect on the majority of the troops, who remained hesitant to fulfil their duties of military services. Murad's *divan* was faced with a difficult challenge. While the mobilisation for a standard raid took several months, the court was now forced to mobilise for such a great campaign all from Rumelia and Anatolia in a matter of weeks.⁵⁸⁴

To meet the looming threat of the crusade, Sultan Murad declared the unusual *nefirî am* or general mobilisation, which obligated all Muslim men in the Ottoman realm to join the army. The *Gazavat* noted that even the Christians were invited to military service, as Murad said: 'let everyone in Rumelia who is capable of wielding a mace set out, whether on foot or horse.'⁵⁸⁵ According to the *Gazavat*, Murad issued a *ferman* or royal decree stating the obligation of all able men to join the army. This declaration was sent out to the judges or *kadis* in Rumelia and Anatolia, who were responsible for local administration. In return for their assistance, Murad promised them to grant whatever they requested, 'whether a *timar*-land, whether a post in the janissary corps or household cavalry or whether release from *yörük* (nomadic) status, I have accepted.'⁵⁸⁶ This generous incentive indicates the great need of the Ottoman government. Thereafter, Murad left the capital Edirne and advanced towards Sophia, in the company of the household troops.

In the meantime, the grand vizier Halil Pasha was left behind in Edirne to help ease the increasing panic among the citizens of the capital, who were frightened by the approaching crusaders. Murad had also ordered Halil Pasha to manage the passage of troops from Anatolia to the Balkans and to safeguard the rear from any possible attacks from the Byzantines or the Karamanids. Arrived in Sophia, Murad once again ordered to send decrees to the *kadis* to hasten the general mobilisation.⁵⁸⁷

After a truce with the Hungarians, Murad made an unprecedented decision.⁵⁸⁸ Saddened by the death of his favourite son Alaeddin and the horrible events of the winter war, and with all his borders apparently secure, he abdicated in favour of his twelve-year-old son, prince Mehmed II.⁵⁸⁹ This was an opportunity that the Pope did not let pass. To allow the crusade to continue, he absolved the king of Hungary from his oath and, in the

⁵⁸⁴ Jefferson, *The Holy Wars*, 324.

⁵⁸⁵ *Gazavat-ı Sultan Murad*, 13.

⁵⁸⁶ *Ibidem*, 14.

⁵⁸⁷ *Ibidem*, 15.

⁵⁸⁸ For a detailed discussion of this truce, see: İncalcık, *Fatih Devri*, 8-53. See also: Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant*, 79-83.

⁵⁸⁹ For the historical background of Murad's abdication, see: İncalcık, *Fatih Devri*, 56-67.

autumn of 1444, king Vladislav and John Hunyadi led the Hungarian army on a march to Varna, on the Black Sea coast of Bulgaria.⁵⁹⁰ The grand vizier Çandarlı Halil Pasha recalled Murad from his retirement in Manisa. However, the allied fleets had blocked the Straits. Murad chose to cross at the Bosphorus and, as he set up cannons on the Asian shore, the Genoese of Pera established a shore battery on the European side. Under the cover of these guns, and in boats which the Genoese had supplied, his army crossed the Straits. In 1444, the Ottoman army met the crusaders at Varna, where they decisively defeated them.⁵⁹¹ The Ottoman victory ensured that the largely Orthodox Balkan Peninsula came under the rule of the Ottomans. Another crisis in 1446 brought the aged Murad again out of retirement. A Janissary rebellion, which the very young Sultan Mehmed II could not control, terrorised Edirne. The grand vizier Halil Pasha recalled Murad II.⁵⁹² After his re-accession, Murad received the news that the Hungarian warlord John Hunyadi had again invaded Ottoman lands with Hungarian and Vlach troops. In 1448, Sultan Murad II encountered Hunyadi's army on the Plain of Kosovo. After a two-day battle, the crusaders were again crushed. While their commander Hunyadi fled the battlefield. The threat from Hungary was decisively removed.⁵⁹³

When Sultan Mehmed II ascended the throne for the second time in 1451, his father Murad II had already established the control of western and northern Anatolia and a large part of the Balkan peninsula. Furthermore, the Ottomans dominated the major overland trade route between Asia and Europe. The conquest of Constantinople in 1453 cemented the status of the Ottoman State as the preeminent power in the eastern Mediterranean.⁵⁹⁴ Thereafter, Sultan Mehmed II secured the surrender of Pera, the Genoese colony opposite the Byzantine capital, across the Golden Horn. In 1456, Pope Calixtus III and king Alfonso V of Aragon managed to assemble an anti-Ottoman fleet that in 1457 captured the islands Imbros and Limni.⁵⁹⁵ The success of Pope Calixtus's crusader fleet alerted Sultan Mehmed II about the dangers of the Latin interventions in the Aegean and the Balkans. In 1458, while both Alfonso and Calixtus had died, Mehmed II not only brought the Peloponnesos under Ottoman control, but he also recaptured Imbros and Limni. Only the Venetian colonies in the area remained now independent of the Ottoman State.⁵⁹⁶

⁵⁹⁰ Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, 430-433; Imber, *The Ottoman Empire*, 129-130; Setton, *The Papacy*, 84-94.

⁵⁹¹ Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, 434-439; Imber, *The Ottoman Empire*, 130-137.

⁵⁹² İnalcık, *Fatih Devri*, 71-75.

⁵⁹³ İnalcık, 'The Ottoman Turks and The Crusades', 319-320.

⁵⁹⁵ İnalcık, *Rönesans Avrupası*, 30-32.

⁵⁹⁶ Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300-1650. The Structure of Power* (London, 2009) 26-30.

Chapter 3 The Discursive Registers of Fifteenth Century Ottoman State Ideology

In order to describe and explain the development of the Ottoman state ideology in the fifteenth century, the focus of this study, this chapter will analyse the discourse of the earliest Ottoman historical texts. Ottoman political language was created through blending ideas from various political cultures available in the Muslim world during the fifteenth century. A closer reading of the early Ottoman chronicles reveals that they mostly rely on two traditions: nomadic Turkish political ideas and Islamic political thought. The influence of the Byzantine tradition obviously occurred in other ways, as it is invisible in the discourse of the early Ottoman historical texts. No significant ideological concept seem to be appropriated from the Byzantine political thought. As the discourses of the Ottoman historians mainly derived from nomadic Turkish-Mongol and Islamic traditions, I will shed more light on these two. Therefore, I will explore how the various political cultures were blended together as the needs for legitimacy developed with the shifting historical context. I will reconstruct the particularities of each of those traditions that endured in the discourses of the Ottoman chronicles.

The methodology of this chapter has already been discussed in detail in the introduction to this dissertation. Summarising the most important points that I have already outlined, I will focus on the concepts that represented paradigmatic ideas and constituted value systems which formed the powerful legitimising pillars of Ottoman political discourse. I will consider the semantic meaning of the concepts and how they were used and understood by the Ottoman chroniclers. I will therefore explore the key-concepts used by the Ottoman authors themselves. Hence, I will consider the meanings of the central concepts or *discursive registers*, their semantic development and the senses in which they were applied in the early Ottoman historiographical texts. This will allow me to find out which political principles and ideas of sovereignty became the ‘central signifiers’ of Ottoman political language. In the typical discourse of the chroniclers, some of these ‘central signifiers’ frequently recur. These concepts constituted ‘knots of

signification' that dominated and determined the other concepts and directed political action.

This chapter thus forms an attempt to reconstruct the fifteenth-century political value system of the Ottomans. What concepts and ideas formed the dominant legitimising ideas of sovereignty in their discourse? What does the discourse of fifteenth-century historical texts reveal on Ottoman ideals of sovereignty and on the relations of state and society? Hence, the general focus is on the shifting ideas and images of Ottoman sovereignty and legitimacy as revealed in the fifteenth-century chronicles.

The late fifteenth-century historian Neşrî, formulated the dominant concepts of the Ottoman ideological matrix, such as the gaza-ethos, *adl* or justice, *emr-i siyaset* (political verdicts), *nizam-i alem* (right order of the world) and the *Sultan* as 'the shadow of God on Earth' (*zillu'llah fî'l arz*). Similar views on political philosophy and perception of power realities are reflected in a number of ways in other early Ottoman historical texts. As Rhoads Murphey has warned, 'in seeking the roots of Ottoman sovereignty traditions and ideals of rulership, one must be cautious of identifying a single, pure and uncorrupted or clearly dominant source of inspiration.'¹ After all, the construction of Ottoman state ideology was a long process of experimentation and blending that took more than a century and a half.

The concepts defining sovereignty and the image of the ideal ruler are important as they express the value systems of a society. Sovereignty can be understood as the claim by a group, an individual or an institution to rule. This claim must be legitimate to gain the acceptance or consent of the people to those in power. Legitimacy thus forms the outcome of negotiations between the ruler and the ruled. The prince who claims the right to rule has to win the consent of his subjects by ensuring them justice, personal security and continuity of social order and cultural and economic prosperity. This means that every sovereign had to justify his claim to rule over territories, people and resources to different social groups by deploying a set of ethical concepts. Through these ideas, we can distinguish what rulers, state officials and various other social groups thought was important in the political organisation of the society.

¹ Rhoads Murphey, *Exploring Ottoman Sovereignty. Tradition, Image and Practice in the Ottoman Imperial Household, 1400-1800* (New York, 2008) 19.

3.1 The Nomadic Political Tradition in the Early Ottoman Chronicles

Historians have formulated a variety of theories about the nomadic legacy from the steppe. For some modern scholars, such as Fuad Köprülü, the Ottomans descended from the *Oğuz Kayı*-tribe.² Other authors, such as Colin Imber, rejected the nomadic Oğuz descent as later inventions of the fifteenth-century Ottoman chronicles.³ However, the early historical texts reveal influences of the nomadic tradition on the Ottoman principles of succession to the throne.⁴ Most importantly, as I will demonstrate, the tension between the nomadic elements and the Ottoman dynasty's inclination toward sedentary state formation ran through the entire Ottoman history during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The nomadic polities, with their tribal bases and political traditions of collective sovereignty (see Chapter 2) of the ruling group, were often unstable. As a result, the nomads were accustomed to the fragility of large political structures based on tribal polities. While 'statelessness' was for the nomads an acceptable condition, the Ottoman dynasty aimed to establish a sedentary model of centralised state.

3.1.1 Mongol Djenghizid influence

It was Djengiz Khan who introduced some radical changes in the world of the steppe. He broke up the tribal confederations, which had been his rivals, and apportioned them among princely armies as units. In return for their loss of political power, the tribal leaders received 'greater or more steady economic resources and a society open to talent.'⁵ Of the greatest consequence was the dismantling of Turkish nomadic polities by Djengiz, who tried to split up the tribes and reform them as soldiers of his dynasty (*nökers*). Tribal loyalty, based on bonds of kinship, real and imagined, of course, was often changeable. Nomads were only willing to follow a leader who was militarily successful and generous in his redistribution of the spoils. Djengizid policy aimed at replacing this tribal organisation with dynastic and personal loyalty to a charismatic ruler. The

² Köprülü, *The Origins*, ; ibid, 'Osmanlı İmparatorluğunun Etnik Menşei Meselesi', *Belleten* 7/28 (1943): 219-303. The scholarly discussion was initiated in 1938 by Paul Wittek, who rejected Köprülü's thesis about the nomad Kayı-origins of the Ottomans. On the gaza-thesis, see Chapter 2.

³ Imber, 'The legend of Osman Gazi', ed. Zachariadou, *The Ottoman Emirate*, 75.

⁴ İnalçık, 'The Ottoman Succession', 37-69; Togan, *Umumi Türk Tarihine Giriş*, 41-57.

⁵ Peter B. Golden, 'I Will Give the People unto Thee: The Çinggisid Conquests and Their Aftermath in the Turkic World', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 10/1 (2000) 22-23.

elimination of the centrifugal tendencies of the tribes was one of the cornerstones of Djengizid policy.⁶ As discussed in Chapter 2, similar patterns occurred in the early Ottoman state building and the establishment of its institutions. Both Djengiz and the first Ottoman rulers sought to break up the tribal bases as the tribes were stripped of their traditional leadership. In Chapter 2, I have noted that this method of control had been used by earlier nomadic empires such as the Kök Türks, who, however, kept the tribes intact. Previously, the nomadic empire of the Kök Türks, although often at war with disobedient nomads, never attempted to break up the tribal system. The result of the Djengizid policy was a shuffling of the principal Turkish groups, such as the Oğuz, Kıpçak, etc. within their already established territories.⁷ To varying degrees, early Ottoman state building resembled the Djengizid one. For example, in return for submission to the Djengizid state, the tribesmen could profit from a meritocratic system with careers open to talent and merits. In addition, the redistribution of spoils and rewards, now systematised, would encompass all who participated, rather than filtering down through the tribal elites.⁸ The breakup of tribal armies and their transformation into more flexible components of state formation was hardly unique to the Mongols. Similar patterns of this process can be observed in early Ottoman society and state building. Particularly, the *alp-gazis* under the command of the marcher lords (*uç beyleri*) owed loyalty to the House of Osman. However, it would take more than one century and a half to remove the centrifugal tendencies of the marcher lords.

In the Muslim world, the influence of the Djengizid principles of hegemony was a direct consequence of the execution of the last Abbasid Caliph al-Mustasim in Baghdad in 1258 by the Mongol ruler Hülegü.⁹ The Mongol conquest of Baghdad not only put an end to the Abbasid Caliphate. The demise of the Abbasid Caliphate also coincided with a period of great political fluidity that permitted the polities subsequently established, such as the Ottoman state, to assert multiple claims to legitimacy.¹⁰ Henceforth, the principles of sovereignty and legitimation in the Muslim world were radically altered with the rise of

⁶ Golden, 'I Will Give the People unto Thee', 24.

⁷ Ibidem, 25.

⁸ Ibidem, 24.

⁹ Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual*, 273-274.

¹⁰ On the political openness of the post-Mongol Islamic world, a case in point is the political experimentation in the Turkish nomadic Akkoyunlu state, see: Woods, *The Aqqoyunlu*, 2-7.

the Mongol Empire.¹¹ As a result, the concept of a universal Caliphate had lost its political significance. The Mamluk Sultanate in Cairo was one exception to this tendency.¹²

The sixteenth-century Ottoman bureaucrat and historian Mustafa Ali divided Islamic history into Arab Caliphal and Turkish-Mongol post-Caliphal periods.¹³ Before the Mongol conquest, the political life of the Islamic world had been dominated by the idea of universal Muslim Caliphate. The institution of Caliph (see below) represented the sole legitimate locus of political authority in the Muslim world. It symbolised the unity of the community of believers (the *umma*) and the integral universality of the Sharia. The dynasty of the Seljuk Sultanate of Anatolia, for instance, drew its legitimacy from the dispensation of the Abbasid caliph. The Mongol conquest of Baghdad in 1258 deprived the Islamic world of its unifying force and opened the way for new formulations of legitimacy. The Mongols radically changed the claims to sovereignty and legitimacy. Initially, they installed their own ideology of universal rule, which held that divine dispensation to rule the world was given to Djenghiz Khan (r. 1206-1227) and his descendants.¹⁴ It is noteworthy that the Djengizid conquests were carried out largely by nomad troops drawn from Mongol and Turkish populations which had to varying degrees participated in the building of the earlier steppe empires. Consequently, the Muslim states established after the Mongol conquests, drew on a greater or lesser degree on Turkish and Mongol political ideas and models of sovereignty. Simultaneously, different principles of legitimacy received greater emphasis and attention than they had before the middle of the thirteenth century.¹⁵

In Mongol historiographical texts, Djenghiz Khan is represented as the ‘emperor of the world’, who was sent to this position by the ‘Eternal Sky God’ (in Mongol: *Möngke Tenggeri*).¹⁶ Djenghiz Khan’s investiture of supreme authority was described in terms of universal rule with the powers mandated to him by the sky god. Any member of the ruling class who intended to retain his independence was considered a rebel against the

¹¹ Togan, *Umumi Türk Tarihine Giriş*, 106-110; 277-285; Halil İnalcık, ‘Osmanlılar’da Saltanat Veraseti Usulü ve Türk Hakimiyet Telakkisiyle İlgisi’, *Ankara Üniversitesi Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi Dergisi*, 14/1 (1959) 82-85; İnalcık, *The Ottoman Empire*, 64-69.

¹² On the Mamluk ideology, see: Anne F. Broadbridge, *Kingship and Ideology in the Islamic and Mongol Worlds* (New York, 2008) 12-26.

¹³ Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual*, 286.

¹⁴ Ibidem, 273.

¹⁵ Particularly, the Turkish nomad communities of the Qarluqs and Kıpçaks took part in the Mongol armies. For a thoughtful essay, see: Golden, ‘I Will Give the People unto Thee’, 21-41.

¹⁶ Paul Ratchnevsky, *Genghis Khan: his Life and Legacy*, ed. and tr. Thomas N. Haining (Oxford, 1991); Broadbridge, *Kingship and Ideology*, 6-11.

Djengizid dynasty and the 'Sky God'.¹⁷ According to the Chinese chronicles, the Mongol ruler Temuçin received the name of 'Djinghiz' or 'ocean' and the title of *khan* or emperor by the assembly (*kurultai*) he had gathered in 1206.¹⁸ Mongol historical tradition also asserted that Djenghiz descended from the 'Sky God' because as a princess his mother was impregnated by a light coming from the sky.¹⁹ It is very likely that Mongol tradition was indirectly influenced by the sixth-century Gök Türk political principles. Indeed, before their conversion to Islam, the Oğuz Turkish principles of government for instance were also shaped by naturalistic sacral and cosmological images and ideas of sovereignty.²⁰

In the post-Mongol period, the claims to sovereignty and legitimacy were to a great degree based upon the Central Asian steppe traditions of hegemony separate from, but not necessarily contradictory to the classical, sedentary Islamic tradition of government.²¹ After the conversion of the Mongol Ilkhanids to Islam at the beginning of the fourteenth century, an acculturation of legitimising principles evolved. The Ilkhanids blended the Islamic Law of the eliminated Abbasid Caliphate (1258) with the concepts and ideals of the disintegrating nomadic Djenghiz Khanid world-empire.²² However, the discontinuity in political organisation and theory between a pre-Mongol and a post-Mongol age does not seem very strict, as nomadic traditions from central Asia had already been imported to the sedentary Islamic world from the tenth century onward. This took particularly place through the political practice of several dynasties and their military commanders, who were often of Turkish origin (see Chapter 2). These Turkish dynasties, such as the Karakhanids, the Ghaznavids and the Great Seljuks, had to a significant degree integrated their own traditions into Islamic political thought and practice before the conquest of the Caliphate by the Mongols. For instance, the political system of the Kök Türk Empire was passed through the Oğuz communities into the Seljuk and Ottoman statecraft. In this Turkish nomadic political constellation, at the top, the *Kaghan* ruled by heavenly mandate (*kut*), embodying and demonstrating Sky God's (*Kök Tengri*, in Turkish) favour through military successes and through the performance of his functions as

¹⁷ Igor de Rachewiltz, 'Some Remarks on the Ideological Foundations of Chingis Khan's Empire', *Papers on Far Eastern History* 7 (1973): 21-36.

¹⁸ Osman Turan, 'Çingiz adı hakkında', in: *Belleten*, (1942) 267.

¹⁹ Marie-Lise Beffa, 'Le Concept de *tenggeri* "ciel" dans l'Histoire secrète des Mongols', *Etudes Mongoles et Siberiennes* 24 (1993): 215-236.

²⁰ De Weese, *Islamization and Native Religion in the Golden Horde*, 37, 46.

²¹ For the problems encountered in the post-caliphate age in constructing theories of legitimacy, see: H.A.R. Gibb, 'Lutfi Paşa on the Ottoman Caliphate', *Oriens* 15 (1962): 287-295.

²² Woods, *The Aqqoyunlu*, 4-7.

ruler.²³ Another example is the Seljuk ruler Tugrul Bey, who was formally confirmed in his position as the ‘Sultan of East and West’ by the Abbasid Caliph in Baghdad.

The Ottoman historiographical texts of the fifteenth century were careful to make a distinction between the Ottoman and Mongol traditions. In his panegyric chronicle, Tursun Beg summarised Mongol sovereignty as *örf* (customary law).²⁴ This seems to be the only case wherein a Mongol friendly tone was expressed. Generally, in almost all other fifteenth-century chronicles, Djengiz Khan is perceived as a ruler whose polity, governed by customary law and laws promulgated by the ruler, was inferior to a state regulated by Sharia. Furthermore, the Ottoman chronicles frequently emphasised the cruelty and oppressive acts of Djengiz Khan and contrasted this with the ‘just and Muslim Ottoman’ political system. For instance, in his *Selâtin-nâme* (Book of Kings), the fifteenth-century historian Kemal noted that Djengiz captured east and west by force, burning down Samargand and Belh. He had given Baghdad to one of his men and that official continued to oppress (*zulm*) the people. The tyranny of Djengiz became everlasting; the whole land was damaged and people were driven away. Ertugrul was one of those who left his land with his people in order to escape the cruelties of Djengiz Khan’s lot.²⁵

Another chronicler, Oruç Beg provided a similar account of the Djengizid incursions of the Muslim lands. Oruç noted that after destroying and sacking the city of Balkh, Djengiz expelled the Shah of Khwarezm from his land. He died there and in Arabic Oruç added his condemnation of Djengiz: ‘may he be cursed in Hell’.²⁶

A similar topoi of the ‘terror of Djengiz’ is visible in a passage that Neşri provided when he spoke of Timur Lenk, who claimed lineage from the Djengizid dynasty. In his description of Timur’s invasion of Ottoman lands, Neşri noted that the ‘tyrant Timur’ (*Timür-i gaddar*) committed many oppressive acts in *Rûm* (Anatolia): ‘his soldiers plundered, burnt and destroyed the land; they attacked the Muslims; many fathers lost

²³ Golden, *An Introduction*, 71, 146-153; *ibid*, ‘Imperial ideology’, 39-73; Denis Sinor, ‘The Establishment and Dissolution of the Türk Empire,’ in: *The Cambridge History of Early Inner Asia*, ed. Denis Sinor (Cambridge, 1990) 313-316.

²⁴ Tursun Beg, *Tarih-i Ebu’l Feth*, 12: ‘mücerred tavr-ı akl üzre nizâm-ı âlem-i zâhir için, mesela tavr-ı Cengiz Han gibi olursa, (...) siyaset-i sultanî ve yasag-ı padişâhî dirler ki, örfümüzce ana örf dirler.’

²⁵ Kemal, *Selâtin-nâme*, ed. Necdet Öztürk (Ankara, 2001) 22-23, 25: ‘Zamân-ı evâyilde var idi bir han, Ki Cingiz Han’idi ismi anuñ iy can (...) Alup cebrile ol şarkı vü garbı/ Semerkand ile Belh’i yakmışıdı, Çerisi şarka garba akmışıdı/ Virür Bagdâd’ı bir kılın kılur han, Anuñ zulmı kılur ol yiri vîran/ Azîm ol yirleri incitmişıdı, Tagılup ol vilâyet gitmişıdı/ Kırar nâ-hak yere beş yüz bin âdem, Esir itdi anun dışisin ol dem/ Ol zâlim zulmı kıldı bî-nihâyet, Tagıldı kalmadı il gün vilâyet/ Kamusı el çeküp başın aldı gitdi, O zâlim ol yire bu işi itdi (...) Bu Ertugrul ki andan göçdi geldi, Biñ üç yüz kırk kişisi bile geldi.’

²⁶ Oruç Beg *Tarihi*, 3: ‘Cingiz Han kim, Belh şehrini harâb itdükde, Hurozım Şâh’ı memleketden çıkarup, ol hinde Cingiz Han vefat idüp, *fî’in-nâri fî’s-sakar*.’

their sons, many mothers were separated from their daughters; there was famine and people died of hunger.²⁷

While Tursun Beg expressed a Mongol friendly tone, Kemal, Oruç Beg and Neşri – who were members of sedentary social groups – usually wrote in negative terms about the nomads, whether Turks or Mongols. Their criticism of Djengiz Khan and Timur Lenk, whose alleged ‘oppressive acts’ resulted in deserted lands, can be situated in these ages-old sedentary-nomadic tensions. From the sedentary point of view, the productive population of the realm was driven away due to occupation by the nomads, which created problems for economic balances and political instability. However, there was more at stake. These chroniclers were writing in the period after Bâyezid I’s traumatic defeat against Timur, which had forced the Ottoman dynasty to rebuild its shaken legitimacy. These authors retrospectively constructed their past in such a way as to prove themselves descending from the noble Kayı-branch of the Oğuz Turks (see below). In the construction of these genesis stories, the fifteenth-century chroniclers seem to be quite concerned with erasing the memory of the early relationships with the Mongol Ilkhanids as overlords. They rather depicted the early Ottomans as vassals of the Anatolian Seljuks. Modern scholars, however, recognised the possibility of early Ottomans’ relationship of vassalage with the Mongols.²⁸ There is even documentary evidence for this vassalage relationship, as suggested by a copy of a document from 1350 that identifies Orhan Bey as a lord of the Anatolian marches, paying tribute to the Ilkhanids.²⁹

However, the Mongol connection is not recognised and is conveniently omitted from Ottoman historiography. Probably, this was the result of a historical process. After the Mongol Ilkhanid power faded away and left Anatolia permanently in the fifteenth century, the Ottoman historians erased the memory of Ilkhanid authority and emphasised the alleged vassalship to the Anatolian Seljuks.³⁰

²⁷ Neşrî, *Cihan-nümâ*, 163: ‘Andan Timür-i gaddâr, Rûm’da çok zulmler idüb, ol kış Aydınelinde kışladı. Ve çerisi Rûm vilâyetini yağma idüb, yakub, yıkub, müslümanlaruñ ehlin, iyâlin elden geçürüb, iy nice atalar oğlını yâvı kılub ve nice analar kızından ayrı düşüb, âlem gayet kızluk olub, taş taşı yiyüb, çoklık halk açlıktan helâk olmışdı.’

²⁸ For a recent discussion of Mongol-Ottoman associations, see: Baki Tezcan, ‘The Memory of the Mongols in Early Ottoman Historiography’, in: ed. Erdem Çıpa and Emine Fetvacı, *Writing History at the Ottoman Court. Editing the Past, Fashioning the Future* (Bloomington, 2013) 23-38. Also see: Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi* vol. 1, 30-31; Togan, *Umumî Türk Tarihine Giriş*, 320; İnalcık, ‘Osman Ghazi’s Siege of Nicaea’, 81-82; Beldiceanu-Steinherr, *Recherches sur les actes des règnes des sultans Osman, Orkhan et Murad I*, 66-70.

²⁹ Zeki V. Togan, ‘Moğollar Devrinde Anadolu’nun İktisadi Vaziyeti’, *Türk Hukuk ve İktisat Tarihi Mecmuası* 1 (1931) 31.

³⁰ For a thoughtful essay on the Djengizid background of the Ottomans, see: Isenbike Togan, ‘Ottoman History by Inner Asian Norms’, *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 18/3-4 (1991): 185-210.

As Baki Tezcan already remarked, the account of Aşık Paşazade on the founding period reflects a slightly different narrative about the Mongols.³¹ Aşık Paşazade integrated into his chronicle the old source of Yahşi Fakih that transmitted this memory loss.³² He relied for this early period on the text of Yahşi Fakih, which echoes remnants of a past in which the early fourteenth-century Ottomans still saw themselves as closer to the Mongols. As it was characteristic for the early Ottoman chronicles, Aşık Paşazade also blended memory with invention, i.e. what was transmitted through oral narratives and what was clearly tendentious. He suggested that the forefathers of Osman arrived in Anatolia in the company of the Mongols. For instance, he made Osman assert the moment of his declaration of independence from the Seljuks by claiming to descend from the first settlers, both Mongol and Turkish nomads who arrived before the establishment of the Anatolian Seljuk state.³³ He created a symbolic character, Sultan Alaeddin, who represented the whole Seljuk history and he collapsed two and half centuries of Seljuk history into the lifetime of this sultan Alâeddin.³⁴ Aşık Paşazade probably referred to the Seljuk Sultan Alâeddin Keykubad II (r. 1239-1254).

Belonging to the gazi-dervish circles, Aşık Paşazade to a certain degree endorsed the semi-nomadic point of view, at least in his account of the events of the fourteenth century. However, he situated the arrival of Osman's ancestors within the context of Islamic history. In a brief description of Islamic political history, Aşık Paşazade noted that first the Arabs ruled over the Persians: 'From the time of the Abbasid House until Süleyman Şah, the Arab people were victorious over the descendants of Japheth [Yafes³⁵]. Even Byzantium [Rûm] and the Persians were dominated. The Persian kings [i.e. the Seljuk Sultans] decided to employ the nomads who were offspring of Japheth and so succeeded to overpower the Arabs.'³⁶ In this passage, Aşık Paşazade brought the nomadic Turks and Mongols together, who allegedly under Süleyman Şah, supposedly the grandfather of Osman Gazi, were sent to the frontiers in Anatolia:

'Since the Arabs had been subdued, the land of the unbelievers was disobedient.
Now the rulers of Persia took precautions and guarded themselves against these

³¹ Tezcan, 'The Memory of the Mongols', 32-33.

³² On Yahsi Fakih's text, see: Chapter 1.

³³ Aşık Paşazade, *Tevarih-i Al-i Osman*, ed. Yavuz, 289.

³⁴ Tezcan, 'The Memory', 34.

³⁵ In Biblical as well as Koranic tradition, Japheth or Yafes, one of the sons of Noah, is considered to be the progenitor of Eurasian peoples. See: Susan Reynolds, 'Medieval *Origines Gentium* and the Community of the Realm', *History* 68 (1983): 375-390.

³⁶ Aşık Paşazade, *Tevarih-i Al-i Osman*, 273: 'Âl-i Abbâs zamanından tâ Süleyman Şah zamanına degin nesl-i celî Arab galib-idi nesl-i Yafes üzerine. Rum dahı maglûb-ıdı ve Acem dahı maglûb-ıdı nesl-i Yafes oldukları sebebden. Acem pâdişahları gayretlendiler kim bize Arab galib oldu didiler. Yafes neslinden göçer evi kendülerine sened idindiler. Ol sebebden Arab'a galib oldılar.'

nomads. They sent Süleyman Şah Gazi, who was one of the great men among the nomads, forward. They gave him about fifty thousand nomadic Turkish and Tatar [Mongol] household under his command. They said, go and perform the gaza in Rûm.³⁷

In other words, the nomadic households, who had helped the Seljuks gain military ascendancy, were sent to the marches in Anatolia. Aşık Paşazade goes on as follows:

‘the mountains and valleys of Rum caused them damage, for the nomad’s sheep suffered from the valleys and peaks. So they intended to go back to Turkistan. They did not go by the way they had come. They set forth to the land of Aleppo and arrived before the Ja’ber castle.’³⁸ Afterwards, when Süleyman Şah had deceased, ‘they buried him before Ja’ber castle, and even now they call that place ‘the Turkish tomb’. In any event, these nomads were scattered in different directions. Some went to the desert, those who are now called the ‘Turks of Syria’. Others returned to Rûm, some of them were Tatars [Mongols], some Turkish nomads. The Tatars and Turkmen now in Rum [Anatolia] descend from this latter group.’³⁹

With the ‘Persian kings’, Aşık Paşazade referred to the Seljuk Sultans, who had undergone deep influences of Persian culture at their court and were culturally alienated from their nomadic followers. Curiously, Aşık Paşazade did not explicitly mention the Seljuks. Most probably, because he descended from the heterodox Sufi spiritual leaders who had led the nomadic Babaî rebellion against the Rum Seljuk Sultanate in 1239.⁴⁰ As discussed in Chapter 2, separation between the nomadic lifestyle and the sedentary model of Rum Seljuk court culture had played an important role in this revolt. The core of Aşık Paşazade’s account deals with a group of Mongol and Turkish nomads, who came to Anatolia, where, however, they suffered a lot. After the death of Süleyman Shah, they were scattered in different directions.

³⁷ Aşık Paşazade, *Tevarih-i Al-i Osman*, 273-274: ‘Arab kim mağlûb oldu, vilâyet-i kâfir temerrüd itdiler ve hem bu göçer evlü halkdan Acem ihtiraz itdiler. Tedbir itdiler. Süleyman Şah Gazi’yi ilerü çekdiler kim ol göçer evün ulularından idi. Elli bin mikdarı Türkman ve Tatar evin koşdılar; varun Rûm’a gazâ idün, didiler.’

³⁸ Ibidem, 274: ‘Bu Rum’un taglarından ve derelerinden incindiler. Göçer evlerün tavarı dereden ve tepeden incinür oldu. Gine Türkistan’a azm itdiler. Geldükleri yola gitmediler. Vilâyet-i Haleb’e çıkdılar, Ca’ber kal’ası’nun önüne vardılar.’

³⁹ Ibidem, 274: ‘Ca’ber kal’ası’nun önünde defn itdiler. Şimdiki hînde ana Mezar-ı Türk dirler [...] Eyle olsa bu göçerler tagıldılar. Ba’zısı beriyeye geldiler. Şimdiki halda anlara Şam Türkmanı dirler. Bazısı gine Rum’a döndiler; kimi Tatar ve kimi Türkman’dur. Şimdiki hînde bu Rum’da olan olan Tatar ve Türkman o tayifedendür.’

⁴⁰ Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, *Yeniçağlar Anadolu’sunda İslam’ın Ayak İzleri. Osmanlı Dönemi* (İstanbul, 2011) 21. As the historian Aşık Paşazade was the great-grandson of the famous poet and mystic Aşık Paşa (see Chapter 1), Ocak argued that Aşık Paşazade’s lineage was also related to Baba İlyas-ı Khorasanî, the Sufi leader of the nomadic Turkish Babai rebellion against the Rum Seljuk State. On the Babai rebellion in general, see: Ahmet Y. Ocak, *La révolte de Baba Resul ou la formation de l’hétérodoxie musulmane en Anatolie au XIIIe siècle* (Ankara, 1989).

In this respect, one has to keep in mind that earliest Ottoman historical texts are not entirely independent of each other. Due to their highly intertextual composition, the chroniclers mixed and matched different versions. Consequently, this raised some confusion about the dynasty's exact origins. As demonstrated by Imber, in some other versions of this genesis story, the father of Ertugrul was not Süleyman Şah, but Gündüz Alp.⁴¹ For instance, the chronicler Enverî indeed noted that Ertugrul was the son of Gündüz Alp.⁴² This version is also supported by a recently found silver coin. It bears the inscription 'Struck by Osman, son of Ertuğrul'. The inscription on this coin confirms that Ertuğrul was the father of Osman Gazi and Gündüz Alp his grandfather.⁴³

However, most Ottoman chronicles rather reported the version, which suggested Süleyman Şah as the grandfather of Osman Gazi. This version had become an official account, after Neşrî had homogenised the different versions. He mainly relied upon the chronicles of Aşık Paşazade and the anonymous author.⁴⁴ However, Neşrî made some re-editing. For instance, Aşık Paşazade had suggested that the ancestors of Osman had migrated together with the Mongols. By contrast, Neşrî noted that the forefathers of Osman Gazi came to Anatolia, fleeing the Mongol outburst and hoping to build a new life.⁴⁵

Whether the 'proto-Ottomans' arrived with the Mongols or in advance fleeing the Mongol outburst is not our concern here. Indeed, there are different historiographical traditions containing divergent story elements. The background of these versions may have been a recollection of events that actually have happened. It is both possible that the ancestors of the Ottomans arrived with the Mongols or in the wake of Mongol conquests. The point is rather that the ancestors of Osman were nomads, who made their way into the revised memories of the later generations due to the oral tradition of transmitting history through accounting stories.

Whereas the Seljuks did not figure prominently in Aşık Paşazade's chronicle, Neşrî provided a rather different narrative of some parts of the earliest period. The *ulema*-cleric historian gave a relatively extensive account of the histories of the Great Seljuks and the Rûm Seljuks.⁴⁶ He briefly described the history of the Oğuz Kınık tribe and the arrival of Selçuk – the eponymous founder of the Seljuk dynasty – to Jend, a Muslim frontier zone

⁴¹ Imber, 'The Ottoman Dynastic Myth', 7-27.

⁴² Enverî, *Düsturnâme*, 19: 'Pes gelür Er-tugrul ibn-i Gündüz Alp'.

⁴³ İbrahim Artuk, 'Osmanlı beyliğinin kurucusu Osman Gazi'ye ait sikke', *Birinci Uluslararası Türkiye'nin Sosyal ve Ekonomik Tarihi (1071-1920) Kongresi Tebliğleri* (Ankara 1980): 27-33.

⁴⁴ For Neşrî's account on Süleyman Shah in which he puts the various versions together, see: Neşrî, *Cihannüma*, 31-32.

⁴⁵ Neşrî, *Cihannüma*, 31: 'Cingiz Han [...] Belh'e dak gelüp, İran'a musallat idüp, bilâd-ı Acem'de huzûr kalmadığı ecilden göçer-evli Etrak'ün cümlesi elli bin hâne, reisleri Süleyman Şah bin Kaya Alp'a uyup, gelüp Rûm'a döküldiler.'

⁴⁶ Neşrî, *Cihannüma*, 13-24.

at Khorasan (in today's Iran and Azerbaijan).⁴⁷ Neşrî's sources for this period were the Arab and Persian chroniclers of the Seljuks and Ilkhanids. In particular, he probably relied on the 'World History' of the early fourteenth-century Persian chronicler and vizier to the Ilkhanids, Rashid al-Dîn.⁴⁸ In his account of the Mongol Djengizid invasions of the Rûm Seljuk realm, Neşrî represented the Mongols as cruel and ruthless. He wrote:

'when the Mongol invaded Iran, peace in the world had vanished. Security of life and peace still existed only in Anatolia [Rûm]. He [Alâeddin Keykubad] had fought against the ruthless Tatar [Mongols] and had defeated them. During the reign of his son Gıyâseddîn Keyhüsrev, the Tatar intended to attack the realm of Rûm. Their army was commanded by Baycu Noyan. Gıyâseddîn was gravely defeated, the Tatars invaded Anatolia, killed most of the people, plundered and sacked their goods. [...] After the death of Gıyâseddîn, the rule of the House of Selçuk in the realm of the Rûm had ended and the state of the Seljuk dynasty collapsed. The following [Seljuk] rulers were crushed by the overwhelming might of the Tatars and came under their command and orders.'⁴⁹

We can observe from this passage that Neşrî was better informed on this early period than Aşık Paşazade. He provided detailed information on the Seljuk Sultans and also on the Mongols, referring to Baycu Noyan, the commander of the victorious Mongol armies against the Seljuks at the Battle of Köseadağ in 1243. As Neşrî wrote from the Muslim scholarly point of view and as he addressed his narrative to a sedentary audience in court circles, he clearly preferred to call the Mongols in terms of 'cruel and ruthless pillagers'. As such, the image of the Mongols in Neşrî's history endorsed the general Muslim perception. Due to the sack of Baghdad in 1258 and the killing of the last Abbasid Caliph by Hülegü Khan, the image of the Mongols in Islamic historiography was generally represented in negative terms. Undeniably, the Mongol sack of Baghdad had been a shock to the entire Muslim world. This represented a landmark event that changed the course of Islamic history. Although the Mongol sack of Baghdad is not explicitly mentioned by Neşrî, the anti-Mongol tone of his account can be related to a great degree to this incident.

⁴⁷ Ibidem, 13-14.

⁴⁸ 'Rashid al-Din Tabib', *Encyclopedia of Islam, second edition* (Brill Online); Shiela S. Blair, *A Compendium of Chronicles: Rashid al-Din's Illustrated History of the World* (Oxford, 1995).

⁴⁹ Neşrî, *Cihannüma*, 21: 'Zîrâ Mogol İran'a müstevli olup, âlemde huzûr kalmamışdı. Emn ü emân hemân Rûm'da vardı. Tatar-ı gaddârla merâren muhârebe idüp, gâlip olmuşdı. [...] Bunun eyyamında Tatar bilâd-ı Rum'a kasd itdi. Leşker-keşleri Baycu Noyan idi. Gıyâseddîn andan akbeh-i hezimetle münhezim olup, Tatar Rûm'a dâhil olup, halk-ı kesîre katl idüp, emvâl-i azîme gâret itdiler. [...] Bunuñ mevtiyle bi'l-hakîka salatanat-ı bilâd-ı Rûm, Âl-i Selçuk'dan münkazî olup, Devlet-i Âl-i Selâçika münkariz oldu. Bundan soñra mâlik olanlar Tatar'ıñ taht-ı tasarrufında hükminde makhûr olup, maglûb olmuşlardı.'

Interestingly, the author of the Anonymous Chronicle, who was farther removed from the courtly circles and gave a voice to the concerns and expectations of the gazi environment, did describe the rise of Djengiz and the sack of Baghdad: 'Djengiz Khan left the realm of Khitay and devastated the city and country of Balkh and the land of Khorasan. [...] When Djengiz Khan had laid Balkh waste and drove the Seljuk people from their lands, and after he himself perished, his son Ögetey Khan became ruler. He came and destroyed Baghdad, ended the Abbasid dynasty and took the Abbasid throne from them. The Djengizids occupied their lands. All people went pell-mell.'⁵⁰

Neşrî accounted the defeat of the Mongol armies against the Mamluk Sultan Baybars. In 1277, Sultan Baybars had invaded the Seljuk Sultanate of Rûm, controlled by the Ilkhanid Mongols, and defeated a Mongol army at the Battle of Elbistan and captured the city of Kayseri. Again this event has been omitted or was not mentioned in the chronicle of Aşık Paşazade. In his account of this battle, Neşrî noted that not one soldier from the Rum had participated, as the Mongols did not trust the 'people of Rûm', i.e. the Turks of Anatolia.⁵¹ During the battle, the left wing of the Mongol forces attacked 'the banners of Sultan [Baybars]. Thereupon, the entire army of the Sultan of Egypt at once attacked the Tatars and a great fight began. God helped the Muslims who encircled the Tatar forces and killed an unmeasurable amount of Tatars. Their commanders Tuda and Toga were also killed. [...] The ruler of Egypt, the magnificent king Baybars Bundukdârî came to Kayseri in 1277. And on the Friday prayers, the *hutbe* (public preaching in the mosque) was delivered in the name of the Sultan of Egypt.'⁵²

Remarkable in this passage is that the Mongols are denoted solely as 'infidel Tatars', without any esteem. By contrast, the Mamluk Sultan Baybars is referred to with the royal title of 'Majestic King' or *Meliküzzâhir*. Curiously, Sultan Baybars and his army are not called as the Mamluks. Neşrî used the title of 'Sultan of Egypt' (*sultan-ı Mısır*) and described his soldiers as Muslims (*mü'minler*), 'who with the help of God succeeded to defeat the infidel Mongol forces'. Neşrî also accounted that the Ilkhanid ruler, Abaqa Khan, was deeply saddened by the defeat of his armies. According to him, Abaqa Khan visited the battlefield. When he saw the dead Mongol soldiers on the field, he ordered to punish the

⁵⁰ *Anonim Osmanlı Kroniği*, 8-9: 'Cingiz Han kim Hitay vilâyetinden çıkup gelüp Belh vilayetini ve şehrini ve Horasan vilâyetini harâb itmiş idi. [...] Cingiz Han Belh şehrini harâb itdükde, Âl-i Selçuk tâyifesini memleketlerinden çıkarup sonra kendü helâk olup oğlu Ögtei Han pâdişah olup gelüp Bagdad'ı harâb idüp tahtı Âl-i Abbâsiler'den alup, memleketlerin Cingiz Haniler dutup âlem halkı karış murış olup...'

⁵¹ Neşrî, *Cihannüma*, 23: '[...] Rûmîlere i'timâdı olmamağın leşker-i Mogol'dan ifraz itmiş. Şöyle ki, bu askerüñ içinde Rûmîlerden bir kimse yogdı.'

⁵² *Ibidem*, 23: 'Tatar, sultan-ı Mısır'un sancaklarına kasd idüp, asker-i sultân dahi bir kezden Tatar üzerine hamle idüp, kâtâl-i azîm olup, Hak ta'âlâ mü'minlere fırsat virüp, leşker-i Tatar'ı her cânibden ihâta idüp, bî-kıyâs Tatar maktûl oldu. Mukaddemleri Tuda ve Toga maktûl oldu. [...] Sahib-i Mısır Meliküzzâhir Baybars Bundukdârî, Kayseri'ye dâhil olup, Cum'a gün hutbe Kayseri'de sultan-ı Mısır adına okundu.'

Seljuk governor, Pervâne Süleyman, whom he suspected of collaborating with Sultan Baybars as both were Muslims.⁵³

Among the fifteenth-century Ottoman chroniclers, Neşrî was the only one who recorded a brief history of the Karamanid dynasty, the most ardent adversaries of the Ottomans in Anatolia. He noted that ‘according to the narratives, when the Mongols had invaded Iran, a group of Turks had fled for the Mongols. They came and settled themselves around Ermenek [southeast Anatolia, near Konya] and maintained good relations with the infidels of Varsak.’⁵⁴ As he was previously attached to the Karamanids before he came in the service of Ottoman court, Neşrî most probably had information on Karamanid history as well.

As a preliminary conclusion we might say that in constructing the themes and discourse of their account, the early Ottoman historiographical texts assembled the elements and notions deriving from the steppe nomadic and Islamic traditions. This fusion was obviously constructed in order to cope with the fifteenth-century challenges of the House of Osman. These earliest chroniclers attempted to establish a basis for the legitimacy of the ruling dynasty and to produce a state ideology. In this respect, the chroniclers selectively appropriated discursive registers from the available traditions and blended them into a political language of their own.

⁵³ Neşrî, *Cihannüma*, 23-24.

⁵⁴ Ibidem, 24: ‘Rivâyet olunur ki, Mogol gelüp İran’a müstevlî olıcak, Etrak’dan bir taife Mogol’dan kaçup gelüp, Ermenâk civârında mütemekkin olup (...)’

3.1.2 The Turkish Oğuz legacy as reflected in the Early Chronicles

The influence and importance of the Turkish Oğuz legacy and tradition gained a momentum after the fall of the Mongol Ilkhanids in the middle of the fourteenth century. By then, the Djenghizid prestige had declined. With the rise of the Turkish Empires in Anatolia and Azerbaijan, the Oğuz genealogy and traditions replaced the Djenghizid ideology as a source of political legitimation. In the Turkish political tradition, the central figure was the mythical ruler Oğuz Khan, who in the epic of the *Oğuzname* [the Book of Oğuz] was portrayed as a universal ruler who allegedly had conquered the world together with his six sons.⁵⁵ In the fourteenth and fifteenth century, nearly all Turkish princely dynasties in Anatolia created their own Oğuz genealogies.

The Oğuz genealogy of the Ottoman dynasty was for the first time created by the court-poet Ahmedî, who wrote (c. 1410): ‘Gündüz Alp with Ertugrul; Gök Alp and many of the Oğuz became his companions on this path’.⁵⁶ This means that already since the very start of the fifteenth century the Ottomans considered the Oğuz as their ancestors. Ahmedî solely noted that the Ottoman dynasty descended from the Oğuz, but gave no concrete reference to a tribal branch. He did not spoke of the Oğuz Kayı tribe. He portrayed Ertugrul as a comrade-in-arms to Seljuk Sultan Alaeddin, together with Gündüz Alp and Gök Alp, who appear as companions of Ertugrul. Ahmedî probably chose to record this version, as this direct link between persons of near equality must have served his goal to promote the prestige of the dynasty. This implied a higher phase of legitimation than distant endowment or appointment could do. As Bayezid I had as first officially claimed the title of ‘Sultan of Rûm’ – a title which previously the Rum Seljuks had deployed for themselves – Ahmedî’s choice for this version cannot be arbitrary.⁵⁷ The Oğuz genealogy of the Ottoman dynasty became a tradition that with some variation was included in almost every later historical text.

After him, the *ulema* historian, Şükrullah, elaborated on the Oğuz genealogy and explicitly suggested that the House of Osman descended from the Oğuz through its Kayı line. In his *Behcetüt Tevarih* (c. 1458), Şükrullah based his claim on the *Oğuzname*-book, which he reportedly had consulted during a diplomatic mission to the court of the Karakoyunlu ruler, Mirza Cihan Şah. Indeed in 1449, Sultan Murad II had sent him as his envoy to Mirza Şah. At the request of Mirza, his court historian, Mevlânâ İsmâil showed Şükrullah the *Book of Oğuz*, which was written in the Mongol alphabet (i.e. in the Uyğur

⁵⁵ See: Zeki Velidi Togan, *Oğuz Destanı. Reşideddin Oğuznâmesi, Tercüme ve Tahlili* (İstanbul, 1982).

⁵⁶ Ahmedî, *Dasitan-i Tevârih-i Mülûk-i âl-i Osman*, 27 : ‘Gündüz Alp Ertugrul anuñla bile; Dahı Gök Alp ü Oğuzdan çok kişi, Olmuşıdı ol yolda anuñ yoldaşı.’

⁵⁷ Pal Fodor, ‘Ahmedî’s Dasitan as a Source of Early Ottoman History, *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 38/1-2 (1984) 49-50.

language). Reading from this book, Mirza allegedly told Şükrullah: ‘Oğuz had six sons: Gök Alp [Sky Prince], Yer Alp [Earth Prince], Deniz Alp [Sea Prince], Gün Alp [Sun Prince], Ay Alp [Moon Prince] and Yıldız Alp [Star Prince]. The lineage of my brother sultan Murad descends to Oğuz Han through his son, Gök Alp.’⁵⁸ Thereafter, Cihan Şah summed forty five generations for the sons of Gök Alp that reached to Ertuğrul, Osman’s father. And he linked the lineage of his own dynasty to Deniz Alp through forty one generations. Then he allegedly said: ‘the lineage of my brother Murad is as outstanding as the difference between the sky and the sea.’⁵⁹ The Oğuz-genealogy obviously fulfilled the political need of the Ottoman dynasty to have a legitimate basis for its authority and to gain the consent and support of its Turkish nomad followers.⁶⁰ The late fifteenth-century historian, Neşrî, also began his History of the House of Osman with a summary of the *Oğuzname*-epic and traced Osman’s genesis to the mythological ruler Oğuz Han.⁶¹ The early historical texts thus devotedly and explicitly emphasised the Oğuz Kayı-descent of the Ottoman dynasty.

The popularity of the Oğuz lineage as one of the dominant forms of self-identification for the dynasty seems to have developed as a response to two major events. Firstly, it was related to the event that had changed the course of Ottoman history. As discussed in Chapter 2, at the famous Battle of Ankara in 1402, the Ottoman Sultan Yıldırım (Thunderbolt) Bâyezid I (r. 1389-1402) was defeated by Emir Timur Lenk (r. 1370-1405) – the powerful Turkish ruler from Central Asia.⁶² Secondly and the most importantly, Bâyezid I’s defeat against Timur had led to a crisis of legitimacy and a loss of prestige for the Ottoman dynasty.⁶³

Before the Battle of Ankara in 1402, Timur Lenk and Bâyezid I had exchanged a series of letters, in which Timur legitimised his conquest and rule by claiming authority in the name of the Djenghiz Khanid Çağatay dynasty. He associated himself with the House of Djenghiz and the charisma attached to it.⁶⁴ Timur and his successors claimed as their foundation both Islamic law and the Mongol customary law, the *yasa* of Djengiz Khan. Timur claimed that he had a ‘natural right to rule’ as the reviver of the majestic Djenghizid legacy.⁶⁵ He denoted Bâyezid as a mere regional ‘Sultan of Rum’ (Roman lands) and called Bâyezid a ‘descendant of Turkmen sailors’ and rejected the Kayı genealogy of

⁵⁸ Şükrullah Efendi, *Behcetüt Tevârih*, 376.

⁵⁹ Ibidem.

⁶⁰ İnalcık, ‘Osmanlı Padişahı’, 68-69.

⁶¹ Neşrî, *Cihânnümâ*, 6-12, 30.

⁶² Mathilde Alexandrescu-Dersca, *La campagne de Timur en Anatolie, 1402* (London, 1977).

⁶³ Kastritsis, *The Sons of Bayezid*, 197-199.

⁶⁴ Woods, *The Aqgoyunlu*, 106-109.

⁶⁵ Beatrice Forbes Manz, *The Rise and Rule of Tamerlane* (Cambridge, 1989) 56-58.

the Ottoman dynasty. Therefore, Timur demanded obedience of Bâyezid; he had to acknowledge his over-lordship if he wished to avoid a war.⁶⁶

To rival the Islamic Turkish-Mongol model of Timur Lenk, Bâyezid I drew upon much older Turkish Oğuz tradition.⁶⁷ Yıldırım Bâyezid reacted to Timur's challenge by offering refuge to two Turkish princes, who had fled from Timur. In his letter to Timur, Bâyezid produced a genealogy, which went back to the ancient Turkish *khans* of Central Asia. He claimed descent from Oğuz Khan, thereby holding on to his right of sovereignty.⁶⁸ He also cultivated and used the title of *khan* probably to strengthen his legitimacy among the Turkish semi-nomadic audience.⁶⁹ As is known, the title of *khan* appears in the Ottoman tradition as early as the reign of Bâyezid I.⁷⁰ The Ottoman use of the title *khan* before the advent of Timurid threat seem to have been a vaguely invoked title that referred to a distant past.⁷¹ Furthermore, as Bâyezid's defeat had created a crisis of legitimacy and a loss of prestige, the first half of the fifteenth century seem to be marked by experimentation with varieties of political ideologies.

During the reign of Sultan Murad II (r. 1421-1451), the epic stories about the first Ottoman rulers were re-edited, reproduced and preserved in the earliest historical texts. During Murad II's reign, the Timurid threat had faded and the Ottoman territories were mostly recovered. This time, the challenge came from another Turkish state. The Akkoyunlu dynasty was the principal rival of the Ottomans in eastern Anatolia. The Akkoyunlu ruler, Kara Osman (r. 1403-1435) and Karakoyunlu prince, Mirza Cihan Şah (r. 1436-1467), claimed their descent from the ancient Turkish *khans* of Asia.⁷² Conscious of the force of the rival Akkoyunlu claims to Oğuz-genealogy, Sultan Murad II reacted by tracing the lineage of the House of Osman to Oğuz Han's son, Gök Alp, who allegedly inherited the right to universal rule and to make up an imperial dynasty.⁷³

On the request of Murad II, the epic of *Oğuzname* was also reproduced in the History of the House of Selçuk, written in the 1430s by the historian and scholar Yazıcı-zâde Ali (see Chapter 1).⁷⁴ He correlated the link between sovereignty and the House of Osman again by referring to the Oğuz tradition:

⁶⁶ Feridun Bey, *Münşeat us-Selatin*, 126-127; İncalcık, 'Osmanlılarda Saltanat' 150-152; İncalcık, *The Ottoman Empire*, 56.

⁶⁷ Kastritsis, *The Sons of Bayezid*, 200.

⁶⁸ Anooshahr, *The Ghazi Sultans and the Frontiers of Islam*, 120-122.

⁶⁹ Joseph Fletcher, 'Turco-Mongolian Monarchic Tradition in the Ottoman Empire', in: ed. Frank Sysyn, *Harvard Ukrainian Studies. Essays presented to Omeljan Pritsak*, 3/4 (1979-1980): 236-251.

⁷⁰ Yinanç, 'Bâyezid I', 390.

⁷¹ İncalcık, 'Padişah', *İslam Ansiklopedisi*, 491.

⁷² Woods, *The Aqqoyunlu*, 5.

⁷³ Aşık Paşazâde, *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osmân*, ed. Yavuz and Saraç, 272-273.

⁷⁴ Yazıcı-zâde 'Ali: *Tevârih-i Âl-i Selçuk*, ed. Abdullah Bakır (Istanbul, 2009); Yazıcı-zâde 'Ali: *Tevârih-i Âl-i Selçuk*, 2 vol., ed. Sevim Y. Önder (Istanbul, 2009).

'The news arrived that Osman Beg, the son of Ertuğrul, of the Kayı was selected as the sovereign (*khan*) by the Turkish lords (*begs*), who had came together in a council (*kurultây*) and agreed upon following the Oğuz custom (*töre*). This story actually goes as follows: the Turkish lords from various Oğuz tribes feared the Tatar [Mongol] cruelty. In time, growing number of people had came to the marches fleeing the Tatar tyranny. These lords gathered and went to Osman Beg's princely court, where they discussed (*meşveret kıldılar*) and finally ascertained that Kayı Han was the ruler and leader of all the Oğuz tribes. By requirement of the Oğuz traditions as they were handed down from Gün Han, so long as the line of Kayı survives, the khanate and sultanate (*padişâhlık*) must not pass to the line of the rulers of any other clan. Moreover, the Seljuk Sultans also cannot help us, as they have lost most of their lands and are subjugated by the Tatars. As such, the lords asked Osman Beg: 'be our ruler (*khan*) and we will carry out the gaza in the name of our Sultan.' Osman Beg accepted their offer. [...] In those old days, the Oğuz traditions were known and respected, and not forgotten as today.'⁷⁵

Remarkably, Yazıcızade Ali bemoaned that the Oğuz tradition was mostly forgotten in his own time at the Ottoman princely court. He thus tried to restore the ties between the Ottoman dynasty and their nomadic Turkish Oğuz followers. In general, the first half of the fifteenth century seem to be a period in which the Ottoman dynasty recalled its actual or supposed roots from the Kayı tribe of the Oğuz tribal confederation. Furthermore, the inscription of the Kayı emblem IYI (arrow-bow-arrow) or the *tamga* on Ottoman weapons and various outfits also started precisely in this period.⁷⁶ This practice was obviously effected by the political circumstances of the early fifteenth century. Indeed, the princely court of Murad II tried to adjust the dynasty's identity to the ideals and expectations of the nomadic social groups that could potentially challenge the sovereignty of the House

⁷⁵ Yazıcı-zâde Ali: *Tevârih-i Âl-i Selçuk*, ed. Abdullah Bakır (İstanbul, 2009) 872-873: 'Bu esnâda uc etrâfindan haber vardı ki; 'Kayı'dan Ertuğrul oğlu Osmân Beg'i ucağı Türk begleri dirilüp, *kurultây* idüp, Oğuz töresin sürüşüp hân dikdiler!' diyu. Ol hikâyet bu minvâl üzerineydi ki; ucağı Türk begleri ki, Oğuz'ın her boyından uc etrâfında Tatar şerrinden korkup yaylar ve kışarlardı, rûzigârla karşı Tatar'dan incinenler uca gelüp çoğaldılar. Fî'l-cümle ol illerün begleri-kethüdâları cem' olup Osmân Beg katına geldiler ve meşveret kıldılar. Çün kâl-u kıylden soñra sözlerinün ihtiyârı bu oldu ki, eyitdiler: 'Kayı Hân hûd mecmû-ı Oğuz boylarınun Oğuz'dan soñra ağaları ve hânlarıydı. Ve Gün Hân'ın vasiyyetin[c]e, Oğuz töresi mücebince hânlık ve pâdişâhlık Kayı soyı var-iken özge boy hânlarınun soyına hânlık ve pâdişâhlık degmez! Çün şimden-girü Selçuk sultânlarından bize çâre ve meded yokdur, memleketün çoğı ellerinden çıkdı, Tatar üzerlerine geregi gibi müstevlî oldu. Çün merhûm Sultân 'Alâ'ü'd-dîn'den dahı size safâ nazar olmışdur. Siz hân olun ve biz kullar Sultân'umuz hizmetinde bu tarafda gazâyâ meşgûl olalım!' didiler. Osmân Beg dahı kabûl itdi. Pes mecmû'ı örü turup Oğuz resmince üç kerre yükinüb baş kodılar. Ol zamânlarda Oğuz töresinden bakiyye vardı, şimdiki bigi top unutulmamışdı.'

⁷⁶ In nomadic tradition, the *tamga* was the emblem of the ruling dynasty, a sort of 'coat of arms'.

of Osman. In this respect, the Oğuz genealogy and legacy were of primordial importance for the dynasty as devices of legitimation, especially during Murad II's reign.⁷⁷

Likewise, Neşrî highlighted the Central Asian Turkish history of the *khanates*. He not only traced the origins of the Ottoman dynasty to the legendary ruler Oğuz Khan, but in his summary of the *Oğuzname*, Neşrî also depicted Oğuz Khan as the first Turkish ruler to convert to Islam.⁷⁸ He obviously elaborated both elements to enhance the Ottomans' principal identity as Muslim sovereigns. According to Neşrî, Oğuz fought after his conversion against his father Kara Han, whom Neşrî called an 'irreligious and tyrant infidel' (*kâfir-i bî-dîn-i ve cebbârdî*).⁷⁹ When Oğuz began to preach Islam to his people, a conflict arose with his father, who ordered him to be killed. Thereupon, Oğuz fled with his children, women and followers towards the south, in what is now Turkestan.⁸⁰ From there, Oğuz expanded his rule in the whole world from east to west (*şarkdan garba dak bilad-ı arza vardı, rûy-i zemîne müstevlî oldu*): 'from China to India, to Turkistan and the kingdoms of Hitay, Uygur and Gazne, to Babylon and Rome, to the lands of Franks and Russians, to Damascus, Hejaz, Yemen, Soudan (*Habeş*) and the lands of Berbers.'⁸¹ Neşrî placed these events in the lifetime of the Prophet Abraham. He also noted that the Turks assumed and used to say that Oğuz was the same Alexander (*Zülkarneyn*) to whom the Koran referred as the ruler who had built the wall against Gog and Magog (*Yecuc ve Mecuc*).⁸²

It is known that Neşrî based his work on the *Book of Alexander* of Ahmedî, the early fifteenth-century Ottoman court poet (see Chapter 1). Consequently, Neşrî adopted elements from the canonical sources of Islamic poetry as inspiration for his narrative of the mythical history of the Oğuz Turks: i.e. the Qur'an and the already established Islamic historiography. Obviously, the Alexander legend was also adopted by Neşrî as a convenient ideological device. As already discussed, in the Muslim historical tradition, Alexander was known as *Zülkarneyn* in Turkish and in Arabic as *Dhul-Qarnayn*, literally 'the Possessor of Two Horns, as he was mentioned in the Quran.⁸³ Furthermore, Neşrî

⁷⁷ Woods, *The Aqqoyunlu*, 5; Halil İnalcık, 'Periods in Ottoman History', in: *ibid.*, *Essays in Ottoman History* (İstanbul, 1998) 21; Şükrullah Efendi, *Behcetüt Tevârih*, 47.

⁷⁸ Neşrî, *Cihânnümâ*, 7: 'Esnaf-i Etrâkdan evvel Lâ-ılahe illa'llah diyen budur.'

⁷⁹ *Ibidem*, 7.

⁸⁰ *Ibidem*.

⁸¹ *Ibidem*, 9: 'Müverrih eydür: Vaktâ ki, Oguz bilâd-ı arzı şarkan ve garban, Çîn ve Hitay ve Gûr, Gazne ve Hindistan ve Türkistan, Bâbil ve Rûm, Efrenc ve Rûs ve Şam ve Hicâz ve Yemen ve Habeş ve Noba ve Berber'e müstevlî oldı.'

⁸² Neşrî, *Cihânnümâ*, 8: 'Etrâk zu'm iderlerdi ki, Oguz, şol Zülkarneyn'dür ki, Hak ta'alâ *celle zikruhu* Kitab-ı Azîz'inde anup, sedd-i Ye'cuc ve Me'cuc'i yapdugına tasrîh itdi.'

⁸³ W.M. Watt, 'al-Iskandar', *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, second ed. (*EI*²), Brill Online

suggested that Oguz Khan's conversion took place in the lifetime of the Prophet Abraham (*İbrahim-Halil*).

Relying on 'eminent histories' (*tevârih-i muhtârda eydür*), of which the names or titles he did not mention, Neşrî also integrated a brief history of the Oguz. Most remarkably, Neşrî represented the legendary Oğuz Han as a Muslim ruler. He probably built upon the existing Oguzname-texts in the Arab and Persian chroniclers produced at the Seljuk and Ilkhanid courts. Particularly the 'World History' of the early fourteenth-century Persian chronicler and vizier to the Ilkhanids, Rashid al-Dîn was probably one of Neşrî's sources.⁸⁴ This *Jami'üt-Tevarih* or 'World History' of Rashid al-Dîn is considered as the most important source from the Ilkhanid period. It is conceived as a 'universal history'. As such, it includes a history from Adam to the Prophet Muhammad and the Caliphs, dwells upon the Islamic dynasties of the Umayyads, Abbasid and Fatimids; the Turkish Islamic states of the Ghaznavids, Karahanids and the Shahs of Khwarezm; the Turks and the Mongols in Central Asia, a history of China, India and the Jews; as well as of 'the Franks' (primarily the Papal state and the Holy Roman Empire).⁸⁵

In his account of the Turkish tribes, Rashid al-Dîn also included the history, legend and genealogy of the Oguz.⁸⁶ Although the Oguz epic relates the history of the Turks in the pre-Islamic period, Rashid al-Dîn had also depicted Oğuz Han as a Muslim. Reportedly, after his conversion to Islam, Oğuz Khan had to fight against his 'infidel' father and uncles, whom he ultimately defeated and subsequently established his rule.⁸⁷ According to Zeki V. Togan, Rashid al-Dîn had read various versions of the Oguzname in Persian and in Mongol languages. Obviously, he copied the available texts in Persian integrally and even added some verses from the Koran and historical information. Stylistically, he ornamented it with poems from the famous Persian mirrors-for-princes *Shahname* or The Book of Kings, written by Firdawsi (ca. 1010).⁸⁸ Thus, Neşrî had most probably incorporated this account of Rashid al-Dîn into his own chronicle.

Following Rashid al-Dîn's text as his source, Neşrî noted that the Oghuz people descended from prophet Noah (*Nûh Nebî aleyhi's-sêlam*).⁸⁹ Neşrî is one of the few fifteenth-century Ottoman chroniclers, who integrated a rich history of the pre-Islamic Turks as

⁸⁴ 'Rashid al-Din Tabib', *EL²*, Brill Online.

⁸⁵ Shiela S. Blair, *A Compendium of Chronicles: Rashid al-Din's Illustrated History of the World* (Oxford, 1995) 4-5.

⁸⁶ For an edition in Turkish of the *Oguzname* from Rashid al-Din's work, one of the extant written versions, see: Togan, *Oğuz Destanı*.

⁸⁷ Togan, *Oğuz Destanı*, 17-20.

⁸⁸ *Ibidem*, 120. Indeed, various Turkish dynasties, such as the Rûm Seljuks, were deeply influenced by the Persian literary tradition, particularly by the *Shahname*-books. This probably explains the fact that the Rûm Seljuks named nearly all of their sons after *Shahnameh* characters, such as Kay Khosrew, Kay Kâvus, and Kay Kubad. See: Köprülü, *Early Mystics in Turkish Literature*, 149.

⁸⁹ Neşrî, *Cihânnümâ*, 6.

well as a description of the Great Seljuk dynasty, the Rûm Seljuks and a brief history of the Karamanids. As he used various sources, his work was certainly more informed than the chronicles of Aşık Paşazâde, Oruç and the 'anonymous author'. In his brief description of the history of the Turks in Central Asia, Neşrî wrote: 'The current Turks branch out in various groups. Some of them possess cities and castles; some others live in tents, i.e. in transportable houses in the steppe or at the top of mountains. Some of them worship the sun and fire, others worship idols, cows, trees or stones; some of them even do not know what a religion is, some others imitate Judaism. The Turks call their rulers *hakan*, who are dressed in silk robes and wear a crown. They are extraordinarily valiant. They all descend from prophet Noah – peace be upon him, through Bulcas Han, son of Yâsef.'⁹⁰

Interestingly, Neşrî did not portray the Turks in Asia all as Muslims, but as a mosaic of pagan, Tengrist, Jewish, Muslim and various other religious traditions. He probably referred to the Khazar rulers who became famous for apparently converting to Judaism at the turn of the ninth century.⁹¹ The Khazar Khanate (660?-1048) had emerged as the most powerful state after the breakup of the western part of the K k T rk Empire.⁹² The K k T rk Empire disintegrated in 639 when the Eastern Turkish emperor or *kaghan* was captured by China. The Chinese armies marched west as far as Persia, defeating the western T rks in 657.⁹³ The breakup of the western T rk Empire led to a series of states forming in its wake, such as the Pechenegs, Khazars and the Oğuz. In the rivalry between the Arab, Byzantine and Russian rulers, the Khazar kaghans played an important role. Their conversion to Judaism was probably due to their attempts to remain unaligned in the Islamic-Christian rivalry. The Oğuz had once been allies of the Khazars. In the late ninth century, the alliances shifted and some of the Oğuz turned against them and helped the Russian princes of Kiev and Novgorod to defeat the Khazars.⁹⁴ It is to this historical context that Neşrî selectively and briefly referred to in his account of pre-Ottoman history.

⁹⁰ Ibidem: 'Bu Etr k ki vardur, esn f-i kes red r. Ba'zı ash b-ı m d n ve hus ndur ve ba'zı ash b-ı verbed r; yani derim evler ile r ' s-i cib lde ve sahr larda m temekkin olurlar. Ve bunların dađı kimi řemse tapar ve kimi n ra ve kimi saneme ve kimi bakra ve kimi řecere ve kimi hacere taparlar. Ve ba'zılar dađı var ki, hiř d n ve d yanet bilmezler. Ve ba'zılar Yehud'e takl d iderler. Meliklerine hakan dirler. Har rlar gey p t c-ı m zehheb urunurlar. Bu taife g yet bah dur olur. Ve bunların mecm 'ı Bulcas Han bin Y fes bin N h Neb  aleyhi's-sel m evl dındandır.'

⁹¹ Peter B. Golden, 'Khazar Studies: Achievements and Perspectives', in: ed. Golden, Ben-Shammai, R na-Tas, *The World of the Khazars: New Perspectives* (Leiden, 2007) 28.

⁹² David Sneath, *The Headless State: Aristocratic Orders, Kinship Society and Misrepresentations of Nomadic Inner Asia* (Columbia, 2007) 25.

⁹³ Ibidem.

⁹⁴ Thomas Noonan, 'The Khazar *Kaghanate* and its impact on the Early Rus state', eds. Anatoly Khazanov and Andr  Wink, *Nomads in the Sedentary World* (London, 2001) 89-90.

He made a distinction between various tribes of which the Turks were composed: ‘Bulcas Han had three sons, one was Türk, another Oğuz and a third was Mogol. Their sons and descendants are so numerous that only God knows their precise number. They lived in the region between China and the Ceyhun River [Amu Derya], which is called Turkistan.’⁹⁵ An interesting feature of this family tree is that Neşrî represented the Mongols as nephews of the Turks. The sons of Oğuz are also depicted as Muslims and as just and wise rulers. For example, Neşrî wrote: ‘Gün Han succeeded his father Oğuz according to his testament. Just like his father, he also believed in God, he was just and wise. He restored the lands in south and north with his justice. He also was the ruler who established in Turkistan the succession principle upon kinship.’⁹⁶

In a later passage, Neşrî asserted that Çanak Han was the first Turkish ruler to convert to Islam.⁹⁷ According to Neşrî, Çanak Han, a grandson of Oğuz, took the name of Kara Han and in 999 he embraced Islam together with his followers consisting of two thousand nomadic households. Neşrî probably referred with this Kara Han to the founder of the Muslim Turkish Karahanid dynasty (c. 840-1242).⁹⁸ His account here aligns with some variation with the chronicles of the earlier Muslim historians, upon which he probably relied. For instance, in 960, according to Ibn Miskawaih and Ibn al-Athir, there was a mass conversion reportedly of two hundred thousand tents. Circumstantial evidence suggests these were the Karakhanids.⁹⁹ Neşrî took this number back to two thousand.

In what followed, Neşrî gave an etymological description of the term ‘Türkman’. He noted: ‘the Turks who converted to Islam were called ‘Türk-i imân’, meaning ‘the Turk who believes’; its pronunciation evolved and became ‘Türkman’. As such, the name Türkman emerged.’¹⁰⁰ Indeed, the word Türkman started to be used after the Turks converted to Islam. It later became a general term to denote the Turkish nomadic communities. For a long time, the Oğuz themselves did not adopt this new name. However, in the thirteenth century, the association to Oğuz was progressively replaced by the term Türkmen. The Ottomans generally used the term Türkman to denote the nomadic Turks in Anatolia; in the Ottoman Balkans, they were called *yörük* (meaning nomad in Turkish).¹⁰¹

⁹⁵ Neşrî, *Cihânnümâ*, 6.

⁹⁶ Ibidem, 9.

⁹⁷ Ibidem, 10: ‘Mülûk-i Türkten evvel İslâm’a gelen mü’min olan budur. aña Çanak dinilür. Kara Han dimekile mülakkabdur. Hicretin üç yüzinde Etrâkdan iki bin hargâhla İslâm’a gelüp, müttekî ve ahsenü’l-İslâm oldılar’

⁹⁸ Peter Golden, ‘The Karakhanids and Early Islam’, ed. Denis Sinor, *The Cambridge History of Early Inner Asia* (Cambridge, 1990) 343-370.

⁹⁹ Golden, ‘The Karakhanids and Early Islam’, 354.

¹⁰⁰ Neşrî, *Cihânnümâ*, 10: ‘Andan ötüri buña Türk-i îman dinildi. Lafzda tahfif idüp, Türkman didiler.’

¹⁰¹ Erkan Göksu, ‘Osmanlı Devletinin Kuruluşunda Giza ve Türkmen (Oğuz) Ananelerinin Rolü Üzerine’, in: ed. İsmail Özçelik, *Oğuz Geleneği Çerçevesinde Tarihten Günümüze Karakeçililer* (Kırıkkale, 2003) 29-30.

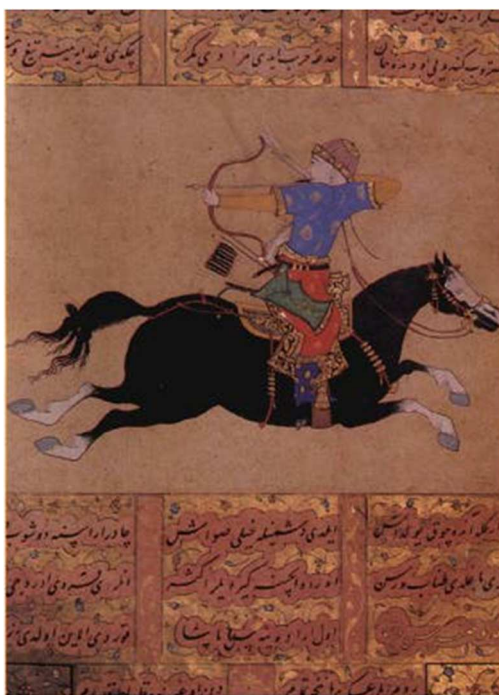


Figure 10: A Turkish nomadic mounted warrior with the composite bow.

The legendary Oğuz Khan survived in the memories and epic narratives as a glorious legacy. The *Book of My Grandfather Korkud* or the *Kitâb-ı Dedem Korkud Alâ Lisân-ı Tâife-i Oğuzân* is the most famous among the epic stories of the Oghuz Turks or Türkmans.¹⁰² Dede Korkut, for instance, is a heroic *destan* or legend, which starts out in Asia, continues in Turkey and Iran, and centres most of its action in Azerbaijan. An older substratum of these oral traditions probably dates to conflicts between the Oguz and their Turkish rivals, the Pechenegs, the Kipchaks, and others. However, this substratum seems to be covered in references to the fourteenth-century campaigns of the Akkoyunlu Oguz nomads against the Georgians, the Abkhaza Circassians and the Byzantine Empire of Trebizond.¹⁰³ In the nomadic culture, the ‘Dede Korkud stories’ passed from generation to generation in an oral form. These epic stories told by Dede Korkud were a product of a long series of narrators, any of whom could have made alterations and additions, right down to the two sixteenth-century scribes who produced the oldest extant manuscripts.¹⁰⁴

The stories appeared after the Turks converted to Islam in the tenth century. The heroes are often portrayed as valiant Muslims, while the villains are referred to as ‘infidels’. But there are also many references to the Turkish pre-Islamic traditions. The stories carry morals and values significant to the social lifestyle of the nomadic Turks in

¹⁰² *The Book of My Grandfather Korkut*, transl. and comments by V. Barthold (Moscow and Leningrad, 1962) 6.

¹⁰³ Michael E. Meeker, ‘The Dede Korkut Ethic’, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 24/3 (1992): 395-417.

¹⁰⁴ Geoffrey Lewis ed., *The Book of Dede Korkut* (Harmondsworth, 1974) 20-21.

the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Dede Korkud, meaning ‘Grandfather Korkut’, is a respected fortune-teller and bard who links the stories together. The figure of Dede Korkud appears as the *ak sakallı* (literally ‘white-bearded’ or the respected elder), representing the sage advisor who solved the difficulties faced by the Oğuz tribes. As the ‘white-bearded elders’ or the *ak sakallı* were respected for their wisdom and experience in solving problems; they were generally called *dede* (grandfather).¹⁰⁵ According to the Anonymous Chronicle, for instance, Murad II gave importance to having old wise men in his council. After the Battle of Varna in 1444, he was inspecting the battlefield. When he saw the dead crusaders lying on the ground, he called his *ak sakallı* lord Azeb Beg, and asked him whether there were any white-bearded elder men lying on the ground. Azeb Beg replied: ‘Such was their end because they did not have even one old and wise man (*ak sakallı pîr*) among them.’¹⁰⁶

Finally, it can be argued that the style and themes of the epic stories of Dede Korkud and similar narratives also influenced the style of the early Ottoman chroniclers. This is especially the case for Aşık Paşazade and the anonymous author, who both addressed an audience composed in great part of Oğuz Turkmans.

3.1.2.1 The Dream Narrative

Another theme within early Ottoman political discourse was the Kök Türk identification of sovereignty with the control of sacred sites and images, which was elaborated on the symbolism of the hearth (*ocak*).¹⁰⁷ The Ottoman dynasty used the image of ‘hearth’ when describing one of its crucial state institutions, the *Kapıkulu Ocakları* (hearths of the ‘slaves’ of the Porte). The symbol of the hearth roots back to the sixth-century Kök Türk Empire. It not only represented familial continuity but also expressed spatial and cosmological significance.¹⁰⁸ Dug out by the mother, the hearth implied a gate opened to the ancestor’s netherworld. Centrally located in the *yurt*, the round felt tent of the nomad, the hearth symbolised the centre of the world. The sacred images of the Mountain, Moon, Tree, Cave, Water and Female Spirit were all identified with the *ocak* through its cosmic orientation and through its connection with the netherworld of the ‘grandmothers’, the ancestral female spirits.¹⁰⁹ Nearly all these elements, as well as the themes of emergence and enclosure that run through Turkish and Mongol origin myths reappear in the miraculous

¹⁰⁵ Lewis, *The Book of Dede Korkut*, 12.

¹⁰⁶ *Anonim Osmanlı Kroniği*, 83-84: ‘Meger Azeb Beg dirler bir ak sakallu beg var idi. Ana Sultan aydur: Göre Azeb Beg, bu kırılan asker içinde hiç bir ak sakallu beg var mıdır? Ol dahi ayıtdı: Anların bu hâl anun için başlarına geldi ki içlerinde bir ak sakallu pîr olmadı içündür, dedi.’

¹⁰⁷ Findley, *The Turks*, 47.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibidem*.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibidem*, 48.

dream of Osman Bey, which retrospectively predicted the future destiny of the House of Osman.¹¹⁰

This dream is one of the significant mythical narratives that contain important elements about the Ottoman perception of sovereignty and the fundament on which the dynasty grounded its legitimacy. In the version of Aşık Paşazâde, while Osman was a guest of the popular spiritual master, Sheikh Edebali, Osman allegedly dreamt that a moon rose out of the chest of the Sheikh and set in his own chest. Then a tree sprang from Osman's navel, spread over the world and extended its shade over mountains from which waters sprang. People drank from these waters and used them for their gardens to build fountains. When Osman Bey informed the Sheikh of his dream, the latter interpreted it as follows: 'Son, kingdom (*pâdişahlık*) is yours, may it be blessing to your descendants.' Thereafter, he married Osman to his daughter Malhûn.¹¹¹

There are some differing versions of this dream story but in very similar terms. The fifteenth-century historian Oruç Beg ascribed the dream to Ertugrul, the father of Osman. Oruç relates that one night Ertugrul dreamed a strange dream. In the morning he pondered the dream and went to Konya. There lived a Sheikh, named Edebali, who was also an interpreter of dreams (*mu'abbir şeyh*) to whom he told his dream. Ertugrul told him that he saw a moon rising from the sheikh's chest and enter his. Then a tree sprang from Ertugrul's navel; there were mountains in its shade, and from them streams flowed to water the land. The Sheikh said:

'You will have a son named Osman, and I will have a daughter named Rabia. Your son will marry my daughter and they will have a son named Orhan. A line of kings [*pâdişah*] will be born from your stock. Son, rulership [*pâdişahlık*] is given to your descendants, may it be blessing. Ertugrul was very pleased with the interpretation of his dream and prayed to God in gratitude.'¹¹²

The account of Oruç Beg is very close in verbal detail to that of the version above of Aşıkpaşazâde, but there are also some important differences. The dreamer is not Ertugrul but Osman, the girl is named Malhun, not Rabia, and Sheikh Edebali is living near Söğüt, and not in Konya. In making these modifications to the story, Aşıkpaşazâde perhaps changed it after what he had been told by Mahmud Paşa, a descendant of Edebali.¹¹³ The Turkish dervish orders dominated the spiritual life at the frontiers, and consequently Osman or Ertugrul sought legitimisation through Sheikh Edebali. Edebali was a master of

¹¹⁰ For the regular deploying of the dream topos in nomadic folk stories, see: İlhan Başgöz, 'Dream Motif in Turkish Folk Stories and Shamanistic Initiation,' *Asian Folklore Studies* 26 (1967): 1-18.

¹¹¹ Aşık Paşazâde, *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osmân*, 276-277 ; Neşrî, *Cihânnümâ*, ed. Necdet Öztürk (Istanbul, 2008) 40-41.

¹¹² Oruç Beg *Tarihi*, 8.

¹¹³ Ménage, 'On the Recensions of Uruj's History', 317.

great spiritual influence and a respected Sufi Sheikh of the Vefaiyye-order, the mystic order that descended from Baba Ilyas who led a popular nomadic revolt against the Rum Seljuks.¹¹⁴ Predicting that Osman's descendants would build a universal empire, Sheikh Edebali girded him with a *gazi* sword. The idea that Osman Gazi's rule was justified by his personal connection to God's favour, mediated by Sheikh Edebali, was a nomadic concept of sovereignty.¹¹⁵

Myths are usually concerned with concerns on origins and genesis. For example, the Seljuk chronicles also predicted the future destiny of the Great Seljuk dynasty through a dream attributed to Selçuk, the first Seljuk ruler. The interpreter of Seljuk's dream predicted that his descendants were destined to rule the whole world.¹¹⁶ This mythmaking process in both the Seljuk and Ottoman chronicles were apparently designed to legitimise the new rulers of the Islamic world. The early Ottoman chronicles heralded universal rulership not only to Osman but to his whole house through this dream.¹¹⁷

Osman's dream narrative also suggested that the rise of Osman as a supra-tribal leader (*bey*) was recognised as enjoying God's favour. However, such a sacral investiture required unconditional subordination to the *bey* and his dynasty. This meant a radical change of the social and political relations from a relatively egalitarian to a more hierarchical set of class relations. It is hardly believable that during the reign of Osman Gazi, his followers could have consented to such a hierarchical subordination. In early Ottoman society, the relations of equal partnerships must have been of greater importance for the emerging polity. Although Osman Gazi, as the eponymous founder of the dynasty, had succeeded to place his dynasty in control of the emerging polity, this did not yet mean that the first rulers were absolute rulers.

Through this dream story, fifteenth-century chroniclers suggested that the utopian goals of the dynasty were realised. Ideologically, this story implied that Osman Gazi was successful to place the House of Osman in control of the emerging state. Otherwise, the foundation of the political organisation would have remain weak and the *beylik* itself might have easily vanished at his death.

¹¹⁴ Ocak, *La révolte de Baba Resul*, 83-84, 160-161.

¹¹⁵ Woods, *The Aqqoyunlu*, 4-7.

¹¹⁶ Al-Huseyni, *Akhbar al-dawla al-Saljuqiya*, ed. Muhammed Iqbal (Lahore, 1933) 2.

¹¹⁷ Similar narratives of mythmaking process through dreams are also persist for instance in medieval British historiography. The twelfth-century chronicler, Geoffrey of Monmouth, traced the genealogy of the British kings to Brutus, a descendant of the Trojan hero Aeneas from Roman antiquity. He makes Goddess Diana appear to Brutus in his dream. Diana tells him that an island inhabited once upon a time by giants waited for him past the lands of Gaul. The Goddess heralded: 'A race of kings will be born there from your stock and the whole earth will be submitted to them.' See: Geoffrey of Monmouth, *History of the Kings of Britain*, ed. Lewis Thorpe (London, 1977) 65.

3.1.2.2 Kut or divine dispensation

The term 'kut' often recurs in the narratives of the earliest chroniclers. The concept referred to the idea of a divinely favoured dynasty that appealed to the belief in 'Sky God's favour (*kut*).¹¹⁸ This idea of a divinely mandate for rulership originated from the Turkish concept of *kut*. According to nomadic custom, the *kaghan* ruled as he personified the favour of the 'Sky God's. This favour (*kut*) was demonstrated in his military successes and in the performance of his functions as ruler. The steppe-nomadic Turkish tradition held that sovereignty was to be granted by the divine fortune (*kut*) to a family chosen for political rule.

However, there was always the danger of a 'reversal of fortune' as the divine favour or *kut* did not necessarily last forever. In other words, God could withdraw the support he gave to a ruler, for instance, when the ruler lost battles and his throne. For example, Tursun Beg accounts that directly after the conquest of Constantinople Sultan Mehmed II, when looking at the former Byzantine capital, contemplated on the volatility of fortune. In these reflections, Sultan Mehmed uttered the following verses in Persian: 'The spider is curtain-bearer [*perde-dâr*] in the window of Kisrâ / The owl sounds the relief in the castle of Afrasiyab.'¹¹⁹ Aşık Paşazade also included a poem contemplating on the changeable fortune, when Sultan Bâyezid I had laid siege on Constantinople, after having crushed a crusader army at Nicopolis: 'This fortune is changeable and tosses sideways glances. [...] Every hour she turns and bonds thousand mysterious affairs. She takes the crown off the head and looks with a coquettish glance. Some do not give up precaution, but end up in the sky flying. [...] All men are a son of a father. Yet, why do they have long talks about their fighting.'¹²⁰

The early chronicles, which generally seem to have been conceived in the form of moral stories with a primarily function of ethical advices, indicate that the mistakes or vices of a ruler may cause the heavenly favours or fortune to turn away. The first Ottoman ruler who lost the favour of the *kut* was Bâyezid I. The Anonymous Chronicle accounted an imaginary conversation between Timur and Bâyezid, after the former had defeated and captured the latter. Timur said that they had both been given rulership by God but Bâyezid lost it because he did not know how to treasure it.¹²¹ The anonymous chronicler

¹¹⁸ İnalçık, 'Osmanlılarda Saltanat', 74-78; ibid, 'The Ottoman Succession', 41-43.

¹¹⁹ Tursun Beg, *Tarih-i Ebu'l Feth*, 64: 'Perde-dârî mî-küned der tâk-ı kisrâ ankebût / Bûm nevbet mî-zened der kal'a-i Efrâsiyâb.' The Persian term *perde-dâr* or 'curtain-holder' is here a metaphor of power, referring to the chamberlains who guarded the points of access to the monarch from outside. See: 'Hadjib', *EI*².

¹²⁰ Aşık Paşazade, *Tevarih*, 340: 'Bu çarh kim çeknigür pür gamze eyler; Kimin Rüstem kimini Hamza eyler. Tolanur her sâ'at bin nahs baglar; Başından tâcın alur gamze eyler. Kiminün ihtiyârın komaz elden; Hevâlar sahrasında pervâz eyler. [...] Kamu bir ata oğludur bu âdem; Ya ne'yçün gavgâların dirâz eyler.'

¹²¹ *Anonim Osmanlı Kroniği*, 48 : 'İy Bâyezid Han! Hak ta'âlâya çok şükürler olsun kim senünle bana padişahlık virdi. [...] Belki sen Hak ta'âlânın şükürini bilmedün ola. Anın için sana bu güşmâli eyledi ola.'

implied that Bâyezid lost the battle because he failed to satisfy the needs of his followers, which he should have known better in order not to lose divine support and to behave accordingly.

The civil war between the sons of Bâyezid following the death of their father were also described in terms of struggle over *kut* between the brothers. According to Neşrî, after the youngest son, Çelebi Mehmed, won a battle against his brother İsa Çelebi, their oldest brother Süleyman Çelebi, who then reigned in Edirne, did not agree with the outcome and saw Mehmed not suited to rule as he was ‘a little boy’. When Süleyman revealed his intention to fight Mehmed, his viziers remarked: ‘O king, you say it well but the verdict emanates from God and He gives the land to whomever he wants. Mehmed may be still young of age, but he stands firm with his state power [*devletde*]. Everyone who confronted him is defeated. He even deluded lord Timur in many ways and succeeded to keep his position.’¹²² In a later episode of the civil war, Neşri accounted that, in an attempt to support İsa, the lord of Kastamonu, İsfendiyar Beg, decided to fight Mehmed. Neşri noted: ‘Thereupon, the sultan summoned to beat the drums, the banners were untied and the sounds of the wooden pipes (*zurna*) filled the air. [...] When İsfendiyar saw Mehmed’s army, his *kut* dried up.’¹²³ Neşri’s account of the civil war relied on the anonymous short chronicle, written by a scribe attached to the princely court of Çelebi Mehmed I. Consequently, the anonymous source of Neşrî told the events from Mehmed’s perspective, clearly glorifying the deeds of his patron who came out of the succession strife as the winner.¹²⁴

Hence, despite the profound influence of the Muslim historiographical tradition, the earliest Ottoman historical texts still kept drawing on concepts from Turkish steppe tradition, such as the widely used term *kut*. As expected, in the construction of their discourses, fifteenth-century historians created a political language that was a synthesis of terms that derived both from the nomadic tradition and from the Muslim political thought (see below).

¹²² Neşri, *Cihannümâ*, 200: ‘İy Şâh! Eyü dirsiz ammâ iş Allahındır, mülk Hakk’undur. Her kime dilerse ol virür. Zîrâ egerçi ol kişi yaşda kiçidür, devletde ulu gibidür. Her kişi ki anunla mukabil oldu, âhirü’l-emr münhezim olup, sındı. Ve Termür Beg’i ne vechile aldayup kendüyi ele virmedi.’

¹²³ Neşri, *Cihannümâ*, 206 : ‘Sultan bu taraftan dahı tabl u nakâre çalup, alemlerin çözüp, nefir ü zurna âvâzı âleme tolup, Rûm serverleriyle yetişüp, anlara mukabil kondu. İsfendiyar bunu görüp kutı kurıdı.’

¹²⁴ Kastritsis, *The Sons of Bayezid*, 31, 197, 206-207.

3.1.2.3 The Principles of Succession

In the fifteenth century, no fixed rules governed the succession procedure of the Ottomans.¹²⁵ Already at a very early stage, the Ottoman sultanate abandoned the nomadic practice of dividing the realms among different heirs (*ülüş*-system), as previous Turkish states had done before them. The practice of *ülüş* was based on the nomadic principle that perceived the state as the *mülk* or 'joint possession and inheritance' of the ruling dynasty. This idea was particularly strong in the Turkish and Mongol traditions.¹²⁶ According to these political traditions, sovereignty was invested in every member of the dynastic family and every male and female member of the ruling dynasty had the right to claim a share to exercise sovereign power.¹²⁷

The Ottomans gradually renovated the Turkish *ülüş*-system according to their own vision of a strong centralised state with undivided territories. From the time of Osman Bey, it had been customary for all the sons of the ruler to serve in a governorship (*sancak*) in Anatolia, and for each son to have an entitlement to the succession.¹²⁸ According to the chronicler Neşri, Osman Gazi kept his youngest son Alaeddin Pasha with him at the centre, while giving his elder son Orhan Gazi the *sancak* of Karacahisar near Bursa, which he captured in 1326, and to his brother Gündüz another governorship (*sancak*).¹²⁹ Already during the reign of Çelebi Mehmed I (r. 1413-1421), the custom of apanage (*yurtluk*) or assigning the governorship of a province (*sancak*) to uncles and brothers had been abandoned. Governorship merely became a princely fief (*sancak*). The actual political control in these *sancak*-provinces rested in the hands of the tutors (*lâlâ*), who accompanied the crown princes to their governorship. The position of these *lâlâ*s was similar to the one of the *atabegs* in the Seljuk administration (see below). The *lâlâ*-officials were men of the state who were usually members of the *kul*-institution who belonged to the household of the dynasty.¹³⁰ For instance, as a crown prince, Murad I (r. 1362-1389) was assigned to take control of the newly captured province in the Balkan, in the accompany of his tutor, Lâlâ Shahin.¹³¹

At this point, it is important to mention another method of succession mainly encountered in the Turkish-Mongolian tradition. This second succession principle was

¹²⁵ İncalcık, 'The Ottoman Succession', 37-39; Kastritsis, *The Sons of Bayezid*, 200-203.

¹²⁶ Abdülkadir İnan, 'Orun ve Üleş Meselesi', *Türk Hukuk ve İktisat Tarihi Mecmuası* 1 (1931): 121-128; İncalcık, 'The Ottoman Succession', 49-50; Togan, *Umumi Türk Tarihine Giriş*, 201, 278-279.

¹²⁷ For an examination of how Ottoman sovereign power was allocated among the male and female members of the dynasty, and on dynastic politics: Peirce, *The Imperial Harem*, 17-27.

¹²⁸ Ibidem, 51-52.

¹²⁹ Neşri, *Cihannüma*, 54.

¹³⁰ İncalcık, 'The Ottoman Succession', 57.

¹³¹ Neşri, *Cihannüma*, 90.

based upon the nomadic view that none of the heirs of the ruling dynasty enjoyed primacy or privilege. The selection of a ruler from within the dynasty seems to be a 'combined' method, originating from K k T rk practice. The worthiest member of the family, whether a son or a brother, would be recognised as ruler. Among the K k T rks, the succession to the throne was perceived as a matter of destiny, left in the hands of God who chooses to whomever he grants his favour (*kut*) to rule. The Orhun Inscription noted that Bilge Khan had allegedly said: 'Because it was God's will and my destiny, I took the status of *Khan*.'¹³² The inscription also recorded: 'Because God is gracious and I was fortunate, I mounted the throne and brought together all the poor people, and I made the poor people rich.'¹³³ According to the inscription, Bilge Khan also assured his people: 'As long as the blue sky above and the earth beneath you do not vanish, who can ruin the law [*t r *], the land and the people of Turk'.¹³⁴

The ambiguity of the Ottoman system of royal succession reflected the ambiguity inherent to the nomad political tradition. Any sons or brothers of the *kaghan* had a legitimate right to succeed him, for the entire dynasty shared jointly in the possession of the realm/state. No fixed rules governed the succession among the Mongols and Turks, who both continued the traditions of the Central Asian steppe lore. The principal means to acquire the throne were achieving priority by timely arriving at the *kurultay* (assembly) and, most important of all, securing the support of influential tribal leaders through personal relations and negotiations. The fundamental principle was always that the succession to the throne was left to divine dispensation or *kut*. The long failure to resolve the question of orderly succession threatened the existence of many polities, opening the way for civil wars.

Ne r  wrote that G n Khan succeeded his father O uz according to his testament and established the principle of succession upon kinship.¹³⁵ However, there are also many examples of struggles for the throne. Ne ri accounted that Osman Gazi killed his uncle during one of the succession related disputes. He accounted that at the council or *kurultay*, some members of the nomads [*g  er evler*] wanted Osman to be the new *Bey* and others preferred D ndar. Noticing the strong support for Osman, his uncle D ndar gave up and accepted his nephew's leadership.¹³⁶ The compromise, however, seems to have been insincere. In a later episode, Ne r  wrote that Osman was offended by the Byzantine lord of Bilecik, who required of Osman to kiss his hand, by which he wanted to impose a

¹³² İnal ık, 'The Ottoman Succession', 38.

¹³³ Tekin, *Orhun Yazıtları*, 75.

¹³⁴ Muharrem Ergin, *Orhun Abideleri* (İstanbul, 2002) 40-41: ' ze tenri basmasar asra yir telinmeser T rk bodun ili nin t r   n kim artatı uda ı erti.'

¹³⁵ Ne r , *Cih nn m *, 9.

¹³⁶ Ne r , *Cih nn m *, 39.

superior position. In requital, Osman wanted to seize him. Dündar rejected this plan and said: 'while the Germiyan-oğlu and the neighbouring infidels are hostile to us, we cannot afford us to create more enemies.' Osman accused his uncle of disloyalty and killed him with an arrow.¹³⁷

When compared, we see some similarities with the historiographical accounts of emergence in other political formations. The *Secret History of the Mongols*, written after the death of Djengiz Khan, recounts in detail a biography of Djengiz, who as teenager was called Temujin. After his father was assassinated, Temujin's half-brother Begter exercised full power on the family. During a hunt, Begter seized a lark that Temujin had shot, probably to enforce his claim as the head of the family. Soon thereafter, when they were fishing, Begter again snatched the fish that Temujin had caught. Angered and frustrated, Temujin and his full brother Hazar ran to their mother. Instead of taking sides with her own sons, she reportedly sided with Begter, telling them they should be worrying about their enemies and not fight with their older half-brother. Temujin decided not to tolerate such a situation with Begter. He went back, shot an arrow and killed Begter. Although he had freed himself from the grip of his half-brother, he committed an act of taboo that put his family in greater dangers. This killing gave their enemies an excuse to hunt them down. Temujin found no ally, he became a renegade and had to flee.¹³⁸ This Mongol historical text presents Djengiz Khan at a young age as someone who already played the game of life to win. He is portrayed as willing to violate custom, disobey his mother and kill whoever obstructed his decisions, even if it was his own family member.

Although these historical accounts on Djengiz Khan and Osman Gazi are not fully comparable, they nevertheless give an idea of this kind of post factum ideological fashioning. The historical texts portray both the actors as determined to lead and not to obey when insulted. Djengiz Khan would lead the Mongols only after years of being hunted down and imprisonment. Unfortunately, it is not possible to check whether something like this really happened or whether it was completely invented afterwards by the author.

In Osman's case, he had already obtained a position as leader. According to the Ottoman texts, the conflicting ideas on the orientation of the emerging principality were at stake. The chroniclers suggest that after Osman had freed himself from the grip of his aged uncle, he drastically changed the fate of the *beylik*. The image of Osman Gazi is fashioned as a young and dynamic political leader who started to expand towards west, at a time when the Seljuk and Ilkhanid control of the marches had declined. However, since the Ottoman chronicles were produced more than a century after the events they

¹³⁷ Ibidem, 45.

¹³⁸ Weatherford, *Genghis Khan and the Making of the Modern World*, 23-25.

described, there is obviously good reason to read them as legitimatising narratives post factum and to be extremely cautious with taking such stories at face value.

Remarkably, other fifteenth-century chroniclers, such as Oruç Beğ and Âşık Paşazâde do not mention this earliest episode of dynastic strife. The obvious *argumentum ex silentio* would be that these chroniclers, in order to sustain the moral message of their narratives, had probably omitted the killing of Dündar. The logic of their account appears to emphasise the alleged rupture in the moral uprightness of the Ottoman dynasty during the reign of Bâyezid I (r. 1389-1402). The rule of Sultan Bâyezid I was characterised by the development of a centralised political system, which was resented by the semi-independent Turkish aristocracy and their follower gazis and dervishes. They were the intended audience for whom Âşık Paşazâde wrote his history. This public, the circle of the gazis and dervishes, tribal nomads and Turkish aristocracy, expected to read or hear some values and events being accentuated. They were inclined to resist a centralisation of power which did not directly favour their own interests. In this respect, the chroniclers rewrote the facts after more than one and half century and reformulated them within a discourse in which they attributed the fratricide and all other deviations from the early egalitarian time of Osman Gazi, to the rule of Bâyezid.¹³⁹ As discussed in Chapter 1, the problem of early Ottoman historical texts is highly complex, and each account must be compared with others and its circumstances of composition must be explored. The same is true of the early period of the *beylik* (principality) as a whole.

Probably, Neşrî had access to some oral traditions about this conflict between Osman and his uncle Dündar and wrote these down. Another fundamental reason is possibly that the *ulema* historian Neşrî saw the infra-dynastic killing as an accepted measure of political life, because the alternative was fragmentation or civil war among heirs in which many lives and properties would perish. Presumably, the tax-paying people (*reaya*), *ulema*-scholars and men of the state all looked up with approval upon the measure of infra-dynastic execution that prevented the warring among brothers with destructive consequences for the society.

The only peaceful case of accession appears to be the account of the way Osman Gazi was succeeded, after he had died. Both Neşrî and Âşık Paşazâde drew their information about this earliest period on a source that was written in the years 1422–23, at the time of the succession wars at the beginning of the reign of Murad II. They accounted a story in which Osman's son, Alaeddin Ali Pasha, voluntarily renounced the throne in favour of his older brother Orhan Gazi. In the conversation between Orhan and Alaeddin about the succession of their father Osman, Alaeddin said to his brother: 'You have the right to this realm. There needs to be a ruler to shepherd it, to protect the realm and the *reaya* and to

¹³⁹ Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*, 106-107.

observe the conditions of the soldiers (*sipahi*).¹⁴⁰ However, Orhan suggested to his brother Alaeddin to be the shepherd. Alaeddin, who was apparently disinterested in worldly power and wished to spend a spiritual life as a dervish, refused the offer as it was their father who had preferred Orhan Gazi to succeed. In Neşri's version, Alaeddin replied: 'In his lifetime, my father has granted the sovereignty to you. While you are here, there is no duty for me. My great brother, [I consider] you as a father to myself.'¹⁴¹ In the version of Âşık Paşazâde, Alaeddin answered: 'Brother! The prayers and blessings of our father are with you. Therefore, during his lifetime, he gave the soldiers under your command. As such, you also must be the shepherd.'¹⁴²

Drawing on the 'shepherd' allegory of the time, Neşri and Âşık Paşazâde represented Osman and his son Orhan as the 'founding sultans' through the image of the shepherd who protects the *reaya* (the people) against all kinds of power abuses, tyranny or harassments. In Ottoman political thought, the metaphor of the shepherd derived from a Tradition of the Prophet addressing the rulers: 'You are all shepherds and are responsible for your flocks'.¹⁴³ Likewise, the *Murâd-nâme* or the advice book dedicated to sultan Murad II counselled that whoever becomes the ruler of the world, he also becomes its shepherd.¹⁴⁴ Most important in the passage above is that both Neşri and Âşık Paşazâde suggested that the ascension of Orhan Gazi to the throne was a peaceful one and that the patrimony was not divided. Neşri had noted that Osman had designated Orhan Gazi to succeed. Osman Gazi wished so because he wanted to make sure that the people showed obedience to his son and to see Orhan gain power and majesty in his lifetime.¹⁴⁵ Before he passed away, Osman Gazi had left rulership into the hands of Orhan Gazi. Though not explicitly stated, this passage on the succession of Osman Gazi suggests that the historians actually wished to see that the claimants to the throne should find a peaceful way out.

The author of the Anonymous Chronicle also recorded this conversation between Alaeddin Ali and Orhan and remarked that 'at that time, rulers came together with brothers and counselled each other.' He explicitly reproached the practice of fratricide:

¹⁴⁰ Neşrî, *Cihânnümâ*, 70: 'Bu vilâyete çobanlık itmege pâdişâh gerekdür kim cemî'-i re'âyayı ve sipâhiyi görüb gözede.' In the version of Âşık Paşazâde, *Tevârîh-i*, 307: 'Bu vilâyet hakkuñdur, buña bir çobanlık itmege pâdişâh gerek. Bu vilayetüñ ve re'âyânuñ hâlini göre ve gözede.'

¹⁴¹ Neşrî, *Cihânnümâ*, 71: 'Atam hâl-i hayâtında pâdişâhlığı saña tefvîz itmişdür. Sen tururken baña ne iş düşer. Sen benüm hemân atam yirinesin, ulu kardaşumsın.'

¹⁴² Âşık Paşazâde, *Tevârîh*, 307-308: 'Karındaş! Atamuzun du'âsı ve himmeti senüñ-iledür. Anuñ-ıçun kim kendü hâl-i hayâtında bu askeri saña koşmış-idi. İmdi bu çobanlık dahı senüñdür.'

¹⁴³ Tursun Beg, *Tarih-i Ebu'l Feth*, 26: 'küllüküm râ'in ve küllüküm mes'ûlün an ra'yyetih.'

¹⁴⁴ *Bedr-i Dilşad'ın Murâd-nâmesi*, ed. Âdem Ceyhan (İstanbul,1997) 235: 'Meseldür kim 'âleme hân olur; re'âyâ koyunlar o çoban olur.'

¹⁴⁵ Neşri, *Cihannüma*, 64: 'Ve dahi bunu kasd itdi kim oğlı Orhan kendü zamanında şevket tutub nâmdâr ola ki, kendüden sonra halk ana ita'at göstereler.'

‘brothers did not kill each other until the reign of *Yıldırım* Khan [Bâyezid I]. The practice of killing brothers became a custom during the reign of *Yıldırım* Khan .’¹⁴⁶ Important to note here is that the anonymous author was the only chronicler who openly criticised the practice of fratricide. As discussed in Chapter 1, the anonymous author, who belonged to the *gazi* circles, often directed the bluntest criticism towards Sultan Bâyezid I. His attempt to create a centralist state was immensely resented by the *gazi* milieu, who feared to lose their resources and positions of power.

In any event, the succession of Osman Gazi seems to be the only case of peaceful succession in early Ottoman history. Both Murad I and Bâyezid I eliminated the rivalling male members of the dynasty to avoid civil war. When Sultan Murad I was assassinated by the enemy during the Battle of Kosovo in 1389, the viziers kept his death silent until Bâyezid had arrived to the tent of Murad I. Oruç noted that they preferred to support crown prince Bâyezid by informing him as first about his father.¹⁴⁷ Yakub Çelebi, the other son of Murad, who was still pursuing the fleeing enemy and had remained unaware of his father’s death, was called back only later and was strangled in order to secure Bâyezid’s accession.¹⁴⁸ Aşık Paşazade noted that this event had caused ‘great agony and sadness among the soldiers. The next morning, however, they accepted Bâyezid Khan as their new ruler. And he ascended to the throne.’¹⁴⁹

Although fratricide was indeed acknowledged as a bad thing, according to some of the chroniclers this severe measure seemed to have been necessary to avoid chaos during the succession of the new sultan, especially in this case, as the Battle of Kosovo still raged on. According to Oruç, only after the succession of Murad I was secured, the state officials re-joined the ongoing battle.¹⁵⁰ Oruç suggests that the reason for the killing of crown prince Yakub was to avoid chaos and tumult in the army, as the battle still endured. One had to prevent that the officials and soldiers, who supported Yakub Çelebi as the rival claimant to the throne, would not recognise Bâyezid’s accession. The state officials feared that the battle could be lost if the news of Murad’s death would spread in the army. The army would split in two parties, leave the battle against the enemy and return to the main camp in order to back up their own candidate to the throne. As such, a battle that was won could end up in a defeat. In his chronicle, Karamani Mehmed Pasha, a chancellor and

¹⁴⁶ *Anonim Osmanlı Kroniği*, 18: ‘Ol zamanda begler karındaşlarıyla meşveret iderler, bir yere cem olurlardı. Birbirin öldürmezlerdi, tâ Yıldırım Han zamanına degin. Kardaş kardaşı öldürmek Yıldırım Han zamanından kaldı.’

¹⁴⁷ *Oruç Beg Tarihi*, 30.

¹⁴⁸ For an account of Bâyezid’s accession, also see the sixteenth-century historians: İbn Kemâl, *Tevârîh-i Âl-i Osman*, 4. *Defter*, ed. Koji Imazawa (Ankara, 2000) 5-7; Hoca Sa’adeddin, *Tacü’t-Tevârîh*, Vol. 1 (Ankara, 1979) 190.

¹⁴⁹ Aşık Paşazâde, *Tevârîh-i Âl-i Osman*, 335: ‘Ol gice leşker arasında be-gâyet ıztırab oldu. Sabâh kim oldu bu halk Bâyezid Han’ı pâdişâhlığa kabûl itdiler. Gelüp tahtına cülûs itdi.’

¹⁵⁰ *Oruç Beg Tarihi*, 30.

vizier to Sultan Mehmed II, commented on the execution of Yakub as follows: 'As will not be hidden to those of sound intelligence, there was the possibility of great evil in Yakub Çelebi's continuing to live. The Sultan dealt with him as was necessary and removed his body. Necessity justifies what is forbidden. As such, the adversity and hostility of a rival opponent was removed and the land that he had inherited from his ancestors remained in the possession of the generous and great Sultan.'¹⁵¹

In the account of Sa'addin, the state officials had decided to offer the throne to Bâyezid. They grounded their decision by referring to the Qur'anic verse: 'sedition is more dangerous than murder'¹⁵² and by taking into account the earlier peril caused by Murad I's son, Savcı Beg, who rebelled against his father. The gathered officials argued that 'since it was experienced that several members of the dynasty who claimed the throne had often destabilised the order of the society and state affairs (*nizâm-ı âlem*) and since the position of Sultan is conceived as the 'Shadow of God', the one who sat under the shadow and the shadow itself had to be equal to each other. On these grounds, they decided to make Yakub Çelebi a martyr.'¹⁵³ The above quoted verse from the Qur'an usually served to legitimise the Ottoman practice of politically motivated fratricide. This verse was commonly interpreted by Ottoman scholars and jurists in the following meaning. They argued that although murder was *in se* an immoral and forbidden act, 'sedition' (*fitne*) was evaluated as a greater evil and more violent event, as a civil war ruined the lives of many and caused the perishing of many people. Therefore, the principle was maintained that 'damage to one person was permissible if that avoided the damage to the whole society and public interest.'¹⁵⁴ This damage to 'one person' was usually directed at the member(s) of the dynasty, who had lost their right to the throne during the process of succession.

This practice was usually legitimised by referring to the concept of *nizâm-ı âlem*, the so-called 'right order of the world' in favour of the public interests. The chroniclers tried to justify and explain the practice of fratricide. Tursun Beg defined the 'order of the world' (*nizam-ı âlem*) as an ideal political organisation which serves the public interest and prevents chaos.¹⁵⁵ As the protector and maintainer of the *nizam-ı âlem*, the Ottoman ruler was denoted 'the Padishah the Refuge of the World' or *Pâdişâh-i âlem-penâh*. In this ideological point of view, the Islamic Law or *Sharia* was considered as a control balance for altering the power of the Sultan. The discursive register of *nizam-ı âlem* was indeed a

¹⁵¹ *Osmanlı Sultanları Tarihi*, ed. İbrahim H. Konyalı (İstanbul, 1949) 347.

¹⁵² Qur'an, Bakara:191: 'el-fitnetü esheddü mine'l-katl'

¹⁵³ Sa'adeddin, *Tacü't-Tevârîh*, Vol. 1, 190.

¹⁵⁴ 'Zarar-ı âmmı def için zarar-ı has ihtiyâr olunur'. For a discussion of the Islamic law on this issue, see: Elmalılı Hamdi Yazır, *Hâk Dîni Kurân Dili*, vol. II (İstanbul, 1936) 695-696. Also see: Osman Öztürk, *Osmanlı Hukuk Tarihinde Mecelle* (İstanbul, 1973) 125-126.

¹⁵⁵ Tursun Beg, *Tarih*, 12.

central motive of Ottoman ideology.¹⁵⁶ The elimination of one individual from the dynasty was preferable to the death of many and to the devastation of the society due to internecine wars. This destabilised the *nizam-ı alem* or the social order. Several members of the Ottoman dynasty were rather sacrificed to prevent political chaos or to avoid the death of thousands soldiers and civilians in civil wars. In the implementing of political affairs, the customary or *örfü* law was mostly used. In this respect, one can refer to the article on fratricide in the Law Book or *Kanunname* of Sultan Mehmed II. This clause explicitly legitimised fratricide for the sake of eliminating all tendencies toward fragmentation, to prevent civil war and to consolidate central authority: ‘To whoever of my sons the sovereignty shall be granted by God, it is permissible to kill his brothers for the good order of the world [*nizam-ı alem*]. Most of the *ulema* have declared this permissible.’¹⁵⁷

During the civil war of 1402-1413, the Ottomans had intensely witnessed the chaos and continuous violence their society went through, caused by the succession wars for the throne between the members of the dynasty. When accounting the succession struggles between Bâyezid’s sons, Neşrî wrote that Çelebi Mehmed I sent a letter to the Germiyan lord, Yakub Beg, requesting the transport of the dead body of his father together with his brother Musa. Thereupon, Yakup sent Bâyezid’s body together with Musa to Bursa.¹⁵⁸ However, Neşrî did not provide any clues about the content of this letter. We understand from its modern edition by the historian Şinasi Tekin that it was actually a ‘letter of commitment and oath’ (*sevgendname*, an earlier form of *ahdname*). In this letter, Mehmed referred to the ‘earlier agreements between them’ (*ol aramuzdaki kavl ü karar üzerine*) and vowed ‘to be henceforth friend and ally of Yakub Beg’ (*ba’de’l-yevm Süleymanşah oğlu Yakub Beg ile dost, müttehid olam*), and ‘to end his relations with the other lords and not to interfere in their affairs’ (*girü kalan beglerden sözümi kesem ve elümi çekem*).¹⁵⁹ The text further stated that this letter was sent and transferred personally by the ‘master of aristocrats, our Taceddin’ (*seyyidü’l-emalek bizüm Taceddin hidmetiyle*). The person who is named as Taceddin was most probably the respected and influential poet Ahmedî – who

¹⁵⁶ See: İnalçık, *The Ottoman Empire*, 65-69; *ibid.*, ‘The Ottoman Succession’, 44-61; *ibid.*, ‘Decision making’, 113-121; *ibid.*, ‘State, Sovereignty and Law during the Reign of Süleymân’, eds. Cemal Kafadar and Halil İnalçık, *Süleyman the Second and His Time* (İstanbul, 1993) 55-92; Boğaç Ergene, ‘On Ottoman Justice: Interpretations in Conflict (1600-1800)’, *Law and Society* 8, 1 (2001): 52-87; Gottfried Hagen, ‘Legitimacy and World Order’, eds. Hakan Karateke and Maurus Reinkowski, *Legitimizing the Order. The Ottoman Rhetoric of State Power* (Leiden, 2005) 55-83.

¹⁵⁷ *Kanunnâme-i Âl-i Osman*, ed. Özcan, 18.

¹⁵⁸ Neşrî, *Cihânnümâ*, 199: ‘Andan sultân buyurdi ki, Germiyan-oglı Yakub Beg’e mektûb yazup, âdem viribidi ki, atası Yıldırım Han’un tâbutın, karındaşı Mûsâ Çelebi birle göndere. Mektûb Yakub Beg’e yetişüp, mazmûn-ı şerîfi mûcebile amel idüp, Yıldırım Han’un tabutın tamâm tazîm ve ikrâm birle oğlu Musa Çelebi’yle, bu taraftan varan âdemlere yarar âdemler koşup gönderdi. Alup gelüp Bursa’da olan mevzi’i şerifde defn itdiler.’

¹⁵⁹ Tekin, *Ottoman Manuel I*, 9.

had earlier been attached to the Germiyanid court and enjoyed the patronage of Yakub's father, Süleymanşah. He was sent by Mehmed on a secret diplomatic mission to Yakup Beg as a person who was highly respected by both sides. The secrecy of their agreement was probably not only related to the transport of the dead body of his father Bâyezid. The delivery of his brother Musa, who formed a political danger as a rival to the throne, must have formed the most delicate matter for Mehmed I.

As Timur had empowered the Anatolian princes with his royal seal (*al-tamga*), which officially made them Timur's regional governors, Mehmed followed a prudent policy in order not to upset Yakup Beg and to prevent retaliation from Timur. He must also have understood the urgency of preventing Yakup to use his brother Musa against him and instigate a civil war. Therefore, he used utterly humble terms to emphasise his oath and commitment in order to appease Yakup Beg so that he would deliver his brother Musa. For instance, Mehmed wrote: 'As a witness for my oath, I recall upon God, his angels, his Prophets, the four Caliphs, the Imams who guide us to the right way and upon all the humankind. [...] As long as I live, for thirty years I shall not revert from my commitment and decision. I shall allow no one to interfere and goad me to change my oath and commitment...' ¹⁶⁰ These pleading terms written by Mehmed I are to be situated within the perilous context following to Bayezid's disastrous defeat against Timur and his occupation of Anatolia after 1402. In the difficult situation of civil war, to back off the Timurid danger, Mehmed seems to have chosen for a humble tone as the Ottoman power was still fragile.

After Çelebi Mehmed I had ended the succession wars and had re-unified the Ottoman provinces, he sent an envoy to the princes of Isfendiyar and Germiyan in the wake of his campaign against the Karamanids. The threatening tone of his message to Yakup Beg of Germiyan is remarkable: 'You see for yourself the ill-judged attitude of the son of Karaman. Now, I go upon him. If you wish to remain in friendship with me, then you should immediately send provisions to my victorious army. And also gather your troops and come instantly. If you show negligence, then wait for your turn. For, I will come first upon you and thereafter upon Karaman. You must know this. When the son of Germiyan heard the news, he said: Ay sir! I will come and send provisions. He sent abundant provisions, gathered his troops and welcomed the king. During the campaign, the

¹⁶⁰ Tekin, *Ottoman Manuel I*, 9: Uşhidu'llahe ve kefa bihi şehiden ve uşhidu melaiketehu'l-mukarrebîn ve enbiya'ehü'l-mürselîn ve uşhidu'l-hulefa'er-raşidin ve'l-e'immete'l-mühtedin ve'n-nase küllehum ecma'in 'ala hazihi'l-yemini'l-mugallaza [...] Çendan ki cânım tenüm içinde ola otuz yıla degin, bu kavl ü karardan tecavüz itmeyem ve bu 'ahd ü peyman üzerine sabit-kadem olam. Hiç aferide sözine ve igvasına uyup bu yemin-i mugallazayı, bu ahd ü misaki tebdil ve tegyir itmegiçün bu andumdan dönmeyem.'

Germiyanid provisions were never deficient.¹⁶¹ The harsh and intimidating tone of Mehmed's message to the Germiyan ruler differed profoundly from the courteous one sent to the prince of Isfendiyar. The obvious reason is Yakub's earlier defection to Timur, with whom the Germiyan ruler kept close relations. Mehmed I had not forgotten this. Obviously, he was requiting the humble terms which he had earlier to write down and for the affronts that his father had suffered.

Neşrî accounted an example in which the potential claimants to the throne and threats to the political stability were blinded to render their claims invalid. When Mehmed I came out as the ultimate winner of the civil wars, his nephew, the son of his brother Süleyman, was used by some raiders who wished to continue the war. When Mehmed marched upon them, these instigators fled and the young boy was caught. Mehmed I ordered to blind his nephew and send him to Bursa and granted him a land for his livelihood. He also married the daughter of Suleyman to one of his commanders. Neşrî described how Mehmed I used to bring gifts to his nephew whenever he went to Bursa and took affectionate care of his nephew and said: 'he is the son of my brother, he placated and pleased the boy's little heart. And he also cared after his sister like a father.'¹⁶² Though blinding a beloved nephew seemed a cruel act, to the criteria of his time, Mehmed had actually committed an act of mercy. Instead of ordering the execution of the boy in order to eliminate any potential civil war, he blinded his nephew to remove any possibility that opponents could use him to claim the throne and to create another war and chaos. Aşık Paşazade also spoke of the incident in very kindly terms: 'Sultan Mehmed opened the spiritual eye of the boy by closing the earthly one.'¹⁶³

In this period, Shahrukh, the son of Timur, sent Mehmed I a letter.¹⁶⁴ The correspondence between the two monarchs is reproduced in a sixteenth-century handbook for chancellery scribes by Feridun Beg.¹⁶⁵ Shahrukh implicitly criticised the Ottoman system of succession, in which the claims of brothers to the throne were

¹⁶¹ Neşrî, *Cihânnümâ*, 245: 'Karaman-oglu'nuñ nâ-ma'kul hareketin hod gördüñ, üşde üzerine varırın. Eger benümle dostluguñ varısa, İnşa'allahu'r-Rahman, Seyyid Gazi yüzünden togru çıksam gerekdür. Sen dahi asakiri mansurıma vilâyetinden erzak gönderesin ve sen dahi 'askerüñi tizcek cem idesin, gelesin. Ve eger bu bâbda tekâsül iderseñ, vaktüñe hâzır olasın. Evvel saña varup andan Karaman'a varuram. Bilmiş olasın!' didi. Germiyan ogli bu haberi işidicek, 'sem'an ve tâ'aten ben dahı varayın ve hem azuk dahı göndereyin' diyüp, mübalaga azuklar gönderdi ve gendü dahı 'askerin cem idüp hünkar'ı karşılamak ardınca oldu. Ta hünkar ol memlekete varup gelince Germiyan ogli'nuñ azukçısı egsük olmadı.'

¹⁶² Neşrî, *Cihânnümâ*, 244: 'Karındaşımun oğludur diyüp, hoşça tutup, gönülcüğün ele alırdı. Ve kız karındaşına dahı hayli nesne atâ ederdi.'

¹⁶³ *Aşıkpaşazade Tarihi*, ed. Öztürk, 117: 'Sultan Mehmed dahi oğlanun gönü gözünü açdı. Bu dünya gözünü örttü.'

¹⁶⁴ For a discussion of the correspondance between Mehmed I and Shahrûkh, see: Kastritsis, *The Sons of Bayezid*, 203-205.

¹⁶⁵ Feridun Beg, *Münşe'at al-Selatin*, vol. 1 (İstanbul, 1857).

removed and this meant a rupture with the Ilkhanid or Turkish-Mongol tradition. Mehmed I answered by emphasising the Ottoman principle of indivisible sovereignty: 'Your advice with regard to brothers is well taken. However, from the very beginnings of the Ottoman state [*Devlet-i Osmaniyye*], our ancestors resolved to solve their problems guided by experience. And there is no doubt that the 'state power' [*saltanat*] does not admit division [cannot shelter two rulers].'¹⁶⁶

One can easily assert that the Ottoman practice of succession differed in many ways from the earlier Turkish and Islamic practices of succession and it was developed as a measure due to necessities of specific historical contexts. This was based upon the idea that state power and control of territories were indivisible. Although many succession wars took place among the members of the dynasty, the Ottoman rulers always seem to remain reluctant to share state power with other heirs in order to prevent political disintegration. As discussed, the sons of Bâyezid I rather fought each other than to split up the lands that remained to them after Timur's invasion of Anatolia.

Concerning the fratricide, even if it was carried out out of precaution, the execution of heirs who had not demonstrated any signs of rebellion, raised the critic and reprimands of the people. For instance, immediately after his accession in 1421, Murad II had to face with a succession strife, caused by a rival claimant, his uncle Mustafa. Following a short war, Mustafa was caught. Aşık Paşazade noted that Murad II decided to execute Mustafa 'the impostor' as a common criminal by hanging him on the tower of the fortress, so that all the people of Edirne could be convinced that Mustafa was not a son of Bâyezid.¹⁶⁷ Aşık Paşazade obviously endorsed the official version of the court when commenting: 'that is how deceitful impostors come to their end.'¹⁶⁸ Although Mustafa was truly Bâyezid's son, a member of the dynasty, the official version of Murad's princely court clearly intended to clear out all hesitations by treating Mustafa as an impostor, created and supported by the Byzantine Emperor to cause sedition and civil wars.

Shortly afterwards, there was a renewed dynastic strife when Murad II's younger brother 'Little' (*Küçük*) Mustafa claimed the throne, but lost and was executed.¹⁶⁹ According to Neşrî, the tutor of Mustafa, Sharabdar İlyas, who delivered the child to the viziers of Murad II, justified his deed by arguing that he avoided the 'sedition' or *fitne*: 'some might consider that I committed treason, however with a reason. If I had let these two fight each other then the entire land would have collapsed into ruins. Damage to one

¹⁶⁶ Feridun Beg, *Münşe'at al-Selatin*, 151-152. For a translation of Mehmed's letter, see: Kastritsis, *The Sons of Bayezid*, 204-205.

¹⁶⁷ *Aşıkpaşazade Tarihi*, 133.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibidem*.

¹⁶⁹ Neşrî, *Cihânnümâ*, 262.

person is better than damage to the society. This principle is an ancient tradition since long before.¹⁷⁰

He also legitimised his deed by grounding it on the Islamic principle of ‘damage to one person is better than damage to the society’. Neşrî included a story as if he wished to soften the image of Murad, who was deeply saddened with the death of his little brother Mustafa, whom he loved very much:

‘It is said that Sultan Murad loved little Mustafa very much. After he had ordered his execution, he always commemorated his brother. Every time that he [Murad] was intoxicated at courtly gatherings, he always said to Mezîd Beg: ‘You are my blood vendetta, I will revenge [the murder of my brother].’ Mezîd Beg lost himself each time when he heard these words. Mezîd Beg saw that the Sultan always threatened him when he was intoxicated. Once, during such a banquet, at risk of his life, Mezîd Beg swore that he never had any intention of hurting the child. This answer satisfied the Sultan, who very much appreciated Mezîd Beg and did not wish not to kill him. After being convinced of the loyalty of Mezîd Beg, Murad Khan ordered to find the executioner of his little brother, who was instantly decapitated.’¹⁷¹

Whether this story was invented or not, it is self-evident that even the sultans themselves had great troubles and pricks of conscience, caused by the practice of fratricide. It is clear that this practice was most severely experienced by the members of the dynasty, who most bore the burdens of fratricide. By telling this story, Neşrî possibly expressed the desire of his early fifteenth-century audience for a peaceful succession to the throne. In a previous passage on the allegedly peaceful succession of Osman Gazi, he had already indirectly criticised the practice of fratricide. He had suggested that the ascension of Orhan to the throne was a peaceful one and the patrimony was not divided. However, he noted that Murad II left the throne to his thirteen-year-old son Mehmed, only to regret it later.¹⁷² Sultan Murad’s decision had precedence. Osman Gazi had left the throne to his son Orhan Gazi during his lifetime to ensure that his son would attain

¹⁷⁰ Ibidem, 263: ‘Egerçi sûretâ ben hıyânet itdüm; ammâ ma’nen isâbet kıldum. Eger kosam bu ikisi uğraşup, yürüyüp, iklîmi harâba virürleridi. Zarar-ı âmmıdan zarar-ı hâss yigdür. Bu fi’l asldan âdet-i kadîmedür.’

¹⁷¹ Neşrî, *Cihânnümâ*, 263-264: ‘Şöyle rivâyet olunur ki, Küçicek Mustafâ’yı Sultan Murâd gâyet severdi. Öldürdükdüden sonar dahı dâyim añardı. Sohbetde mest olıcak, Mezîd Beg’i görüp: ‘Mezîd sen benim kanlımsuñ’ dirdi. Mezîd Beg bu sözi işidicek, kendüden giderdi. Mezîd Beg, gördi ki, hünkâr mest oldukça, bu sözi âdet idindi. Bir gün yine diyicek, Mezîd Beg dahı başını ortaya koyub eyitdi: ‘Haşa Sultânım! Ben anun bir kılına zarar idem’, didi. Hünkâr bu sözden gâyet sevindi. Zîrâ Mezîd Beg’i severdi, öldürmege kıyamazdı. Andan hünkâr, Mezîd Beg’e eyitdi: ‘Bî’llâhi Mezîd, sol sözinde gerçek misin?’, didi. Mezîd Beg dahi yemîn idüp hünkârı inandurdu. Andan Murâd Han Küçicek Mustafâ’yı öldüreni teftiş idüp, buldurup boynın urdurdu.’

¹⁷² Ibidem, 64: ‘Nitekim Murâd Han dahı Sultan Mehmed’i tahta geçürüp, kendi Magnissa’da müteka’id oldı. Gayeti bu soñra peşîmân oldı’.

leadership and success. However, the chroniclers did not mention that Osman Gazi had repented his decision.

This comparison between Osman Gazi and Sultan Murad II by Neşri brings to mind the difference between the two situations. Why would one ruler's resignation in favour of his son be regarded as favourable while another one's would not? The problem appears to be the age of the successors. While Orhan Gazi, who succeeded Osman Gazi was an experienced man of about forty-six, Mehmed II was a twelve-year old boy. The chronicler seemed to be implicitly criticising Murad for abdicating in favour of this under-aged child in 1444. According to Aşık Paşazade, upon hearing the news of Murad II's abdication in favour of his son Mehmed, the Karamanid ruler and the European kings were overjoyed and made use of this opportunity by launching a crusade. The young Mehmed was too unexperienced to handle the situation and panic broke out in Edirne. Aşık Paşazade noted that Karamanoğlu provoked the Serbian king, the Hungarian king and the Hungarian commander Janos Hunyadi, judging Murad's abdication as insanity. He urged them not to lose time to turn the situation to their favour, saying: 'a better opportunity cannot be found against the Turk.'¹⁷³



Figure 11: Miniature Portrait of Sultan Mehmed II (c. 1480), by Ahmed Şiblizâde.
Source: Topkapı Palace Museum, H2153, folio 10a.

¹⁷³ Aşık Paşazade, *Tevarih-i*, ed. Yavuz and Saraç, 404: 'Osmanoğlu delü oldu. Tahtını bir oglana virdi. Kendü çalıcı avratlar ile bağlar ve bahçalar bucağında yeyüb içib yürür. Vilayetden elin çekdi. İmdi fırsat sizün ve hem bizümdür. Yürimek gerek. Türke bundan yeg fırsat elüñüze girmez.'

On the perilous situation in 1444 created after Murad II's abdication in favour of his too young son Mehmed, Tursun Beg commented that 'two rulers in a land cause sedition and chaos'.¹⁷⁴ He noted that the Hungarians took advantage of Mehmed's young age and inexperience and invaded the Ottoman Balkans, ravaging and burning as they moved on toward Edirne. According to Tursun Beg, some of the courtiers even criticised Murad II's abdication during banquets. He included a quatrain that one used to say during those gatherings: 'O man, what a weird thing have you done; you turned your gold into silver. You brought a twelve-year old calf, put him in your place and made him a buffalo.'¹⁷⁵ Tursun Beg noted that Sultan Murad II had later regretted his decision, but he concealed his remorse and entrusted the affairs into the hands of the grand vizier Halil Pasha.

According to the *Gazavat*, when the crusader invasion had started in 1444, the pashas consulted together and informed Sultan Mehmed II about the situation. Mehmed II ordered to inform his father and to bring him to Edirne: 'because we must go against these infidels. But Edirne must not be abandoned. One of us must stay here, and one of us must go.'¹⁷⁶ In spite of his very young age, Mehmed appears in this passage as a young ruler who bore the responsibilities of a monarch. He even implied that, despite his tender age, he was ready to go to war against the crusaders. And as the head of the state, he found it necessary to call his father back to the capital. Murad II was initially reluctant to come back, as he possibly did not wish to diminish the authority of his young son. Only after the insistence of the viziers on the urgency of the crusader's invasion, Murad decided to come back from his withdrawal in Manisa.

Murad II crossed the straits and reached the surroundings of Edirne, but did not wish to enter the city. Murad waited outside and Mehmed did not directly abdicate from the throne. Mehmed welcomed his father and was relieved that the latter was waiting outside the city.¹⁷⁷ At this time, it was still not clear who should stay in Edirne and who would lead the army into battle. The young sultan Mehmed made his move first. According to the *Gazavatname*, Mehmed told Halil Pasha to ask his father to stay in Edirne and to defend the city against the Byzantines, while he would lead the army against the crusaders. However, the grand vizier kindly refused this suggestion and argued that he was too young: 'My prince, I cannot say this to His Majesty the Padishah. Praise be to God, our Padishah has come. From now on it is for him to decide. We do whatever he says. This enemy is a heavy one and you, my prince, are still a fresh rose. It suits you only to act as

¹⁷⁴ Tursun Beg, *Tarih-i Ebu'l Feth*, 34: 'Bir memlekette fitne olur iki pâdişâh.'

¹⁷⁵ Ibidem, 35: 'Be kişi hey ne turfa iş ittün; İşün altun iken gümüş ittün. Getürüp on iki yaşar tanayı, Geçürüp yirüne kömiş ittün.'

¹⁷⁶ *Gazavat-ı Sultan Murad*, 42: 'Tiz babama haber edüp ve her nice mümkün ise babamı getürün ki, zîrâ ol küffar üzerine gitmek lâzım geldi. Ammâ bu Edrene yalnız olmaz, birimiz bunda oturub ve birimiz gitmek gerekdir.'

¹⁷⁷ Ibidem, 47-49.

the Padishah commands and do nothing contrary to what he says.’¹⁷⁸ However, Mehmed did not seem to be convinced by this advice. He went to his father and asked Murad to take him to the battle. Murad admonished the young prince: ‘No, my son, do not say this. You do as I tell you. The enemy is tough and when I march against him, you defend this city from the infidels of Istanbul, for who knows how things will turn out. You just offer prayers.’¹⁷⁹

Assuming that it was Halil Pasha who had advised the young prince to say this, Sultan Murad II reproached the vizier: ‘Tutor [lala], you should act as a wise and prudent minister. Is it for you to advise my son to go on this campaign? You know that this world is full of trouble and sedition, so why did you put such words into the boy’s mouth?’¹⁸⁰ Halil Pasha replied that he knew nothing of this. He said that Mehmed had asked him earlier to say this to him, but he had not consented. His advice had clearly no effect that the prince asked Murad himself. Halil said: ‘However, my padishah, there is no harm done. He is young and knows no better. He means nothing else by it, otherwise I would have known.’¹⁸¹ Therafter, while Mehmed was instructed to protect the Ottoman capital, Murad himself led the army and defeated the crusaders at the Battle of Varna in 1444.

This passage in the *Gazavat* clearly reveals that the young prince Mehmed II wished to demonstrate to his father that he was the monarch. Initially, Mehmed had not revealed his intention to lead the campaign. He offered his father to cooperate. But in the end, he explicitly conveyed his wish to his father. This implied that Mehmed dared to go against his father though in a courteous way. The dialogue between father and son was probably a little softened by the author of the *Gazavat*.

The fact that despite his age the young prince Mehmed dared to go against his father can also be related to the struggle between the various ministers at the court. The young pashas Zaganos and Shehabeddin, backed Mehmed II, while the old vizier Halil Pasha openly chose the side of Murad II.¹⁸² This was clear as when Halil Pasha admonished Mehmed by pointing to his father Murad as the actual sovereign and that all decisions

¹⁷⁸ *Gazavat-ı Sultan Murad*, 49-50: ‘Şâhzâdem, Pâdişâh hazretlerine ben bu sözi demeğe kadir değilim, hele Pâdişâhımız geldi, şimden gerü tedbîr anundur, ol nice dirse öyle olur deyüb cevâb verdi. Zîrâ bu düşman ağır düşmandır ve Şâhzâdem sen dahi bir taze gülsün, hemân sana lâyük olan budur ki, Pâdişâh’ın fermânı üzere hareket edüb ve sözünden taşra çıkmayasın.’

¹⁷⁹ *Ibidem*, 50: ‘yok oğul bu sözü sen söyleme. Hemân sen benim dediğim gibi eyle. Ol düşman bek düşmandır ve ben ona karşı vardugumda sen bu tahtı İstanbul keferesinden hıfz ede-gör ki, kim bilür iş niye varacaktır. Hemân sen du’âda ol.’

¹⁸⁰ *Gazavat-ı Sultan Murad*, 50 : ‘Lala, sen bir tedbîr sâhibi âkil vezîr olasın, sana düşer mi kim, oğluma öğredirsin, bu seferi taleb eyliye? Sen bilürsin kim, bu âlem fitne ile mâlâmâldır, niçün bu asıl sözü ol oğlanın ağzına verirsin?’

¹⁸¹ *Ibidem*: ‘ammâ Pâdişâhim zarar etmez, delikanlıdır, bilmez. Yohsa gayrı bir murâdı yokdur. Olsa elbette ben kulun haberdâr olurudum.’

¹⁸² İnalcık, *Fatih Devri*,

were to be taken by Murad. This was the first disagreement between Mehmed II and his father Murad II. The *Gazavat* is the only source that recorded this intra-elite contention. Murad probably became aware of the fact that his son had a more arduous temperament than he had imagined before. However, Murad did not give a lot of attention to it and instead interpreted his young son's act as an expression of his adolescence and inexperience. And as Mehmed was aware of the fact that the state officials did not take him very seriously because of his inexperience and young age, he probably felt the need to demonstrate that he was indeed capable to possess the throne and carried things a little too far.

Nearly all chroniclers did not favour a ruler who was too young, due to lack of experience in life and insufficient training in leadership. As Mehmed II was at that time considered as a child, so was Çelebi Mehmed I as well considered when he struggled against his brothers in the succession strife for the throne. According to Neşrî, various rulers reproached him on the grounds of his youth. In trying to recover Ottoman control in Anatolia, Mehmed I challenged various Turkish princes. He was scolded by Kara Devlet Shah as follows: 'You are still a baby boy. Your mouth still smells of your mother's milk. On what grounds do you dare to call yourself Sultan and to claim land!'¹⁸³ In a following passage, Mehmed I was also reproached by İnal-oğlu: 'You are still a baby boy. It does not fit you to slam with your paws and to call yourself a Sultan.'¹⁸⁴ His brother İsa also did not take Mehmed I very seriously: 'Now, I am his older brother and the throne is in my possession. He is still a young boy. For what purpose does he needs to become prince?''¹⁸⁵

It has also become clear that the harsh practice of fratricide was not an expression of the personal whims or the 'despotic cruelty' of the Ottoman monarch. As already noted, the Ottomans had abandoned the nomadic practice of dividing the realm among different heirs, as the previous Turkish states (in the first place the Seljuks) had done before them. The practice of *ülüş* was based on the nomadic principle that perceived 'the state' as the *mülk* or 'joint possession and inheritance' of the ruling dynasty. However, as this nomadic practice often led to the decentralisation of power and realm, dynastic states often collapsed after a few generations. Probably by drawing lessons from history and learning from their own experiences, the Ottomans modified the nomadic principle and practiced the succession issue in a sense that each heir had an equal right to the throne, but only the most deserving one who had acquired the most and effective support of the ruling class could successfully succeed. The rulers' sons would have their own designated functions and domains (*sancak*). The Ottomans experienced that living rival heirs not

¹⁸³ Neşri, *Cihannüma*, 172: 'Sen henüz bir tıfl oğlan olup, anañ südi dahi agzuñda kokar. Ne liyâkat ve ne isti'dâd ki aduñı Sultan koyub, memleket taleb idesin?'

¹⁸⁴ Ibidem, 179-180: 'Sen henüz bir tıfl oğlansın; aduñı sultan koyub, eyle pençe urmak sana mülayim degüldür.'

¹⁸⁵ Ibidem: 196: 'şimdi ben ulu karındaşım, taht benüm elimdedür. Ol henüz bir genç oğlandur. Beylik anuñ nesine gerekdür.'

always accepted and recognised the authority of the new ruler, which often led to succession wars. In order to prevent the tumult and deadly clashes, they introduced the custom of fratricide. Situated within the specific fourteenth and fifteenth-century political realities, one has to admit that this practice effectively worked. Eventually, no other dynasty ever emerged out of the House of Osman. Osman Gazi established a dynastic state (ca. 1300) that was maintained by thirty-six of his descendants ruling in unbroken succession for more than six hundred years. It is noteworthy that although there were numerous social and political revolts, none of these rebellions questioned the right of the Ottoman dynasty to govern or tried to replace it by another House. The Ottomans modified the available traditions and practised the succession issue in the sense that each heir had an equal right to the throne, but only the most deserving one who acquired the most support of the ruling class could be successful.

Indeed, during its long existence, Ottoman self-representation and the ideological components of Ottoman sovereignty constantly shifted. The discourses of the fifteenth-century chroniclers demonstrate an enduring blending of nomadic and Islamic traditions. This synthesis was obviously not an easy process, as at some points they conflicted. For instance, concerning the fratricide, a field of tension and ambiguity existed in the state ideology as expressed in the chronicles. Though fratricide was generally perceived as a 'necessary evil' to avoid civil wars, this was also criticised and resented. Discursively, the chroniclers justified and explained the Ottoman state practices and institutions by referring to the concept of *nizâm-ı âlem*, a term that derived on Islamic political thought and which meant the 'right order of the world' in public interest.

3.2 Islamic Political Thought

As we will demonstrate, many of the Islamic and Ottoman concepts and ideas on sovereignty and legitimacy were analogous. The work of fifteenth-century scholars and chroniclers, both Ottoman and Islamic, covered a set of ideals of rulership either explicitly expressed or suggested between the lines. They deliberately discussed rulership and arrived at firm conclusions on what princely duties and attributes should be, in the form of both political treatises, the popular genre of mirrors for princes and the chronicles.

The Ottoman state was formed during the 'post-Mongol' period, which saw a great deal of experimentation with varieties of political theories that in large measure reflected the progressive synthesis of nomadic and Islamic traditions.¹⁸⁶ As discussed above, after the execution of the Abbasid Caliph in 1258, the ideal of universal Caliphate was first replaced by Djengizid ideology, which was later rivalled by the Turkish tradition of political legitimacy of the Oğuz. In the fifteenth century, the Ottomans attempted to exploit both Muslim principles and ancient Turkish notions of state ideology. The period from 1300 to c. 1453 was marked by a process of mixing the political norms of the steppe with the sedentary ideals of Islamic tradition. The centralisation of political power, as conceived by the chroniclers, required an unconditional subordination to the *sultan* and his household. This meant a fundamental reversal of the social and political relations from relatively egalitarian to hierarchical sets of class relations.

However, the first Ottoman rulers could barely demand such an unconditional submission from their followers in the decentralised and relatively egalitarian milieu of the mainly nomadic society in which the early *beylik* took shape. When over time, the power of the Ottoman dynasty was firmly established, unconditional sovereignty could be claimed and early-day companions turned into clients and vassals. The emergence of new political institutions and ideologies accompanied this process. It is important to note that the chroniclers wrote at a time when a new governmental organisation took shape. The Ottomans tried to reconcile the regulations of the Shari'a with the Turkish law codes or *törü/töre* (*yasa*), which derived its authority from tribal custom and formal proclamation by the ruler.¹⁸⁷ This process was not self-evident as the two traditions were on certain points difficult to blend. For instance, a khan had the authority to proclaim laws and possessed in theory more power than the caliph who could only uphold and submit to the Shari'a. Especially in the fifteenth century the Ottomans tried to reconcile their Muslim identity with their Turkish nomadic origins and traditions. In this process,

¹⁸⁶ Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual*, 274.

¹⁸⁷ Togan, *Umumi Türk Tarihine Giriş*, 106-110; İnalcık, *Ottoman Empire*, 65-69.

they blended various political theories and created a new state ideology, which reconciled the ideological principle of '*dîn ü devlet*' (or the unity of religion and state, see below) with the promulgation of customary law code (*kanun*) separate from the Shari'a. According to early Ottoman chroniclers, the Ottoman sultan had to be a just ruler and good Muslim, paying notice to the obligations of rulership in customary law (*kanun* or *yasa*) and at the same time uphold the spirit of the Sharia.

Already at the end of the fourteenth century, the Ottoman state ideology had accorded to a more sedentary model, deriving on the Islamic political thought. The Ottoman inclination towards Islamic political principles was most visible during the reign of Bâyezid I. For instance, Bâyezid had named his sons after the five Prophets. From the oldest to the youngest one, the crown princes were called Mûsa (Moses), Süleyman (Solomon), İsa (Jesus), Mustafa (another name of Prophet Muhammed) and Mehmed (Muhammed). This is not at all odd, as Islam perceived the previous monotheistic religions as true religions and accepted the previous prophets as true Prophets of God. Moreover, the choice of Bâyezid I for Qur'anic names to his sons suggest that during his reign the Ottoman ideology was more strongly deviating from the nomadic traditions. Other indications for this differentiation are demonstrated by the fact that Bâyezid I had asked from the 'shadow caliph' in Cairo to recognise him as the 'Sultan of Rum'. And this is also shown by the fact that he attempted to organise his realm as a 'Sultanate' with a highly centralised administration. However, when Timur appeared on the scene, this last measure proved to be one of the causes for his defeat. The central state system was very unpopular among the local Turkish princes, who had defected to Timur's side. The centralised governance was only later restored and consolidated during the reigns of Murad II and Mehmed II.

3.2.1 Early Islamic Political Thought

In what follows, I will give a brief survey of the development of those elements in Islamic political thought, which deeply influenced the discourse of early Ottoman chronicles. After having discussed the nomadic tradition above, the following very concise and selective introduction to some elements of Islamic political thought seems necessary. This general background will provide the reader a better understanding of the analysis of the ideological discourse of the Ottoman chronicles.

Like each utopian system, Islamic thought also suggested that its principles and ideas would establish the best and most desired social order of which humankind was capable. In this view, the Qur'an provided people with a 'utopia', i.e. rules of moral behaviour and practical conduct or a program for action, aimed at the creation of a society favoured by God. Consequently, the life of Prophet Muhammad was to a great part devoted to establishing this divinely authorised political society.¹⁸⁸ Central to this was the transfer of political authority from an Empire to the prophetic message of God's communication and his laws. God issued laws. Adam received a set of them, as did later prophets, and finally Prophet Muhammed received the last version of this revelation. In this respect, the word *Sharia* was often used to mean the revealed message and laws of God.¹⁸⁹

The forging of the Muslim community or *umma* was both a spiritual and political matter. The relative egalitarianism of early Muslim society, as it was presented in the Qur'an and the Hadith, upheld universal ideas and was theoretically detached from tribal or ethnical connections. The unity of *umma* emerged as the social norm, whereby all adult members shared the same rights and duties.¹⁹⁰ Situated in the historical context, this was a revolutionary ideology that overthrew the hierarchical relations of the previous state systems. Judaism and Christianity respectively preached a set of law and a universal brotherhood, but neither directly addressed the issue of political authority. By contrast, Islam preached universal brotherhood, an all-embracing law and a universal political authority. Islamic political thought was based on the unity of 'religion' and politics, one of its main principles.¹⁹¹ In this respect, Muslim political theorists asserted that the Prophet had established a form of political authority. The state of Medina included a territory, a community and a form of sovereignty entrusted with governing the affairs of that community. The Prophet exercised both religious leadership and temporal authority. He acted as a spiritual master and guide, a ruler, judge and military commander

¹⁸⁸ Stephen Humphreys, *Islamic History* (New York, 1991) 149.

¹⁸⁹ Patricia Crone, *Medieval Islamic Political Thought* (Edinburgh, 2004) 8.

¹⁹⁰ Crone, *Medieval Islamic Political Thought*, 50.

¹⁹¹ Antony Black, *The History of Islamic Political Thought: From the Prophet to the Present* (Oxford, 2001) 10.

and appointed officials to represent him in the faraway provinces. In short, this model of the Prophet represented a clear unity of spiritual leadership and political functions.¹⁹²

In general, the origins of Islamic political thought can be traced back to the Qur'an, the traditions of the Prophet (*hadith*) and the practices of the first four Caliphs. However, Islamic political thought was not a monolithic theory. During its long history, various formulations have been constructed due to different interpretations and disputes. For example, the Caliphate had emerged in 632 with the election of Abu Bakr, a senior companion of the Prophet, to lead the Muslim community after the Prophet's death. The election of the first three caliphs had been peaceful, but the period afterwards was conflict-laden. After the decease of the Prophet, there emerged conflicting opinions about who should succeed Him as the Leader (Imam) of the community and as the Deputy of the Prophet (Caliph), and also on how the leader should be chosen. The dispute was a result of the fact that there were no explicit principles or laws about political authority or state structure in the Qur'an.¹⁹³ The Qur'an only stipulated: 'O believers, obey God and obey his Messenger and those who have the authority among you.'¹⁹⁴ At the same time, the notion of *mülk* or political rule by a sovereign was bitterly reproached by the Prophet. Because to call a human being ruler meant trespassing the Qur'anic sanction which asserted that the only basis for human pre-eminence was piety and knowledge.¹⁹⁵

However, the assassination of the third caliph Uthman in 656 and the controversial succession of Ali, the cousin and son in law of the Prophet, led to the first civil war (or *fitna*) among Muslims in 657 at the Battle of Siffin (near the Syrian-Iraqi border).¹⁹⁶ This

¹⁹² *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Islamic Political Thought* (Princeton, 2013) 201.

¹⁹³ *Ibidem*, 14.

¹⁹⁴ Qur'an, 4:59.

¹⁹⁵ Black, *The History of Islamic Political Thought*, 14.

¹⁹⁶ As it is generally known the civil war at Siffin laid the seeds for not only the two main rival branches of Islam, the Sunnî and Shi'a, but also of several sub-groups who defined themselves by reference to these events at Siffin. See: M. Lecker, 'Siffin', EI². This first conflict had started when Mu'awiyah, the governor of Syria and a junior companion of the Prophet, refused to recognize Ali as the new caliph before justice was done for the murder of his kinsman Uthman. Ali gathered support in Kufah, where he had established his centre, and invaded Syria. The two armies met along the Euphrates River at Siffin, where they engaged in an indecisive succession of skirmishes, truces, and battles, culminating in the legendary appearance of Mu'awiyah's troops with pages of the Qur'an impaled on their lances – by claiming to let God's word decide the conflict. Ali agreed to bring the matter to arbitration and delegated a representative. By unwisely agreeing to arbitration, Ali conceded to the deception of Mu'awiyah, thus permitting him to challenge Ali's claim as leader of the Muslim community. However, this concession raised the disapproval of a large group of Ali's followers, who protested that 'judgment belongs to God alone'. (Qur'an, 6:57). They asserted that arbitration would be a denial of the Qur'anic statement: 'If one party rebels against the other, fight against them who rebels'. (Qur'an, 49:9). A small number of these purists withdrew and became known as the Kharijites. This conflict eventually undermined the authority of Ali as fourth caliph. In 658, Mu'awiyah was proclaimed as caliph by some of his Syrian supporters. With the

civil war split the Muslim community into factions, and the Shi'ites begun to formulate views on Imamate as the ideal state.¹⁹⁷ Although the historical reports demonstrate that the Prophet did not specify a successor, the Shi'ites believed that the Prophet had designated Ali to succeed him.¹⁹⁸ As such, the Shi'a Imamate doctrine repudiated the Caliphate of Abū Bakr, Umar and Uthman. They maintained that leadership was reserved for the descendants of Ali, until the arrival of Mahdi or the 'messiah'. The idea of messianism had emerged after the death of the eleventh imam in 873 without an apparent son to succeed him. This crisis was resolved by the claim of the existence of a son and the doctrine of the mystical absence (*ghayb*). The radical branch of the Shi'a, the Twelver Imams and the Isma'ilis, upheld the belief that this twelfth or 'hidden' imam actually continued to live in concealment on earth and could fulfil the essential functions of the imam.¹⁹⁹ He was identified as the Mahdi, whose return before the end of the world is expected.²⁰⁰ In Shi'a doctrine, the Imamate was founded on the idea of permanent need of mankind for a divinely guided, infallible leader and authoritative teacher in religion. The imam was thus raised to the level of prophecy. The only difference between the messenger Prophet (*rasul*) and the *imam* was that the latter did not transmit a divine book. To ignore or disobey the divinely invested *imam* was infidelity equal to ignoring or disobeying the prophet. Although the imam was entitled to political leadership as much as to religious authority, his sovereignty did not depend on his actual rule.²⁰¹

As is generally known, the Ottoman political thought drew mainly on Sunnî political theory. For instance, as already mentioned, both the Seljuks and the Ottomans adopted the relative tolerant and mild Hanafi School of Islamic law. As also demonstrated above, in the fifteenth century, the Ottomans still carried the influence and far memories of the Turkish nomadic tradition. At the same time, they had also appropriated elements from various sedentary traditions, in particular from Islamic political thought. The Sunnî tradition emphasised that the leader or Caliph of the *umma* had to be elected and referred to the first four caliphs as a model of political morality.²⁰² As such, the Sunnî tradition recognised the first four caliphs as the Prophet's rightful successors. In contrast to the Shi'ites, the Sunnî convention conceived the state built by the Prophet as an earthly, temporal dominion and regarded the leadership of Islam as being determined not by

assassination of Ali by a Khariji in 661, Mu'awiyah was finally free to establish himself as the first caliph of the Umayyad dynasty.

¹⁹⁷ 'Imamate', *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Islamic Political Thought* (Princeton, 2013) 247-248.

¹⁹⁸ 'Succession', *ibidem*, 524.

¹⁹⁹ 'Shia Leadership', *ibidem*, 52.

²⁰⁰ In modern time, this doctrine led many to believe that Ayatollah Khomeini was the Mahdi.

²⁰¹ W. Madelung, 'Shi'a', *Encyclopedia of Islam, Second Edition*; 'Ismailis', *Princeton Encyclopedia of Islamic Political Thought*, 265-266.

²⁰² Black, *The History of Islamic Political Thought*, 16.

divine order or inspiration, but by the prevailing political realities of the Muslim world. This led to Sunnî acceptance of even foreign Caliphs, so long as their rule accorded to the proper exercise of religion and the maintenance of order. The Sunnî school accordingly held that the Caliph had to be a member of Prophet's tribe, the Quraysh, but devised a theory of election that was flexible enough to permit that allegiance be given to the de facto caliph, whatever his origins. The Caliphate was central to the Sunnî political theory on government and society.²⁰³

3.2.2 The Introduction of Monarchy

Between the seventh and ninth centuries, interaction and acculturation with Roman and Persian traditions in the conquered lands brought about many influences in terms of political practice. In particular, during the reigns of the Umayyads and the early Abbasids, the idea of monarchy was incorporated into Islamic political thought.²⁰⁴ The early Muslim political philosophers during the reign of the Abbasids translated and reformulated the Persian Sassanid tradition and the teachings of Greek philosophers Aristotle and Plato. Gradually, a coherent set of political principles compatible with the basic ethical codes of the Qur'ân and prophetic tradition was created.²⁰⁵ By the tenth century, these cultural and political borrowings from these older civilisations were blended into a political culture that became distinctively Islamic. In this respect, the Abbasid Caliphate reflected the legacy of the ancient empires in the region and not anymore the original state of Medina during the lifetime of the Prophet. There had emerged a centralised and bureaucratic regime and a standing army paid by the government. This Abbasid transformation of the Caliphate into an imperial monarchy was regarded by some Muslim scholars as a betrayal of the original Islamic idea about state and society.²⁰⁶

The Abbasids were also reproached for having corrupted the notion of Caliphate. The term Caliph originally denoted the 'deputy' or 'successor of the Prophet of God', (*khalifat rasulullah*); the word did not mean the status of an absolute monarch, but implied only temporal political and administrative functions. During the Abbasid period, under the influence of Persian political tradition, the office of Caliph acquired the status of a monarch who ruled over an empire, and became to mean 'the deputy of God' (*khalifatullah*). This shift in connotation was severely criticised as a corruption of the early Islamic political norms.²⁰⁷

²⁰³ Ibidem; *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Islamic Political Thought*, 525.

²⁰⁴ Black, *The History of Islamic Political Thought*, 19-28.

²⁰⁵ Aziz al-Azmeh, *Muslim Kingship: Power and the Sacred in Muslim, Christian and Pagan Politics* (London, 1997) 99.

²⁰⁶ Black, *The History of Islamic Political Thought*, 24.

²⁰⁷ Ibidem, 25.

A second major transformation and acculturation occurred after the arrival of the nomadic Turks and later the Mongols into the heartlands of Islamic world, from the eleventh to the fourteenth centuries. Unlike the Persians or the Greeks and Romans, the Turks and Mongols had not been conquered by the early Muslim Arab states. On the contrary, they had moved into the Muslim world as conquerors. As discussed in Chapter 2, the Turks converted along their way through their interaction with the Persian Sufis. The Mongols, arriving in the thirteenth century, initially imposed their nomadic belief and political system, but they also soon converted to Islam. In the following ten centuries, the Muslim world was dominated by states, dynasties and armies of predominantly Turkish origin.²⁰⁸

This was a period in which a new and different pattern of government and political thought was established which reached its zenith in the Muslim Empires of the Ottomans, Mughals and Safavids, stretching from Europe to India.²⁰⁹ The cultural and political borrowings from ancient Arabic, Persian, Greek and Turkish traditions and civilisations were blended into a vigorous political culture that became distinctively Islamic. This distinctive political ideology was even more pronounced in for example the *Siyasetnâme* or political treatise of Nizam al-Mulk (1018-1098), the famous vizier of the Seljuk Sultans Alp Arslan and Malik Shah.²¹⁰ The Ottoman Empire, as the main successor to the Seljuk Empire, was generally ruled by the same traditions, that saw the powerful ruler as the active promoter of the common good.²¹¹

One of the main genres of Islamic political treatises consisted of *Fürstenspiegel* or mirror-for-princes literature. Al-Farabi was one of the most influential Islamic political philosophers in the tenth century.²¹² Most of his preserved works are introductions to or commentaries on Aristotle's logics.²¹³ Before al-Farabi, neo-Platonic ideas had influenced Islamic political language when dealing with the purpose and structure of the society. For example, the Islamic idea of the *umma* or the Muslim Community reflected the influence of Neo-Platonism.²¹⁴

In his philosophy, Al-Farabi interconnected knowledge and leadership. He argued that politics required knowledge and power. As we will observe below, the Ottoman historians

²⁰⁸ Lewis, *The Political Language of Islam*, 7.

²⁰⁹ Stephen F. Dale, *The Muslim Empires of the Ottomans, Safavids, and Mughals* (Cambridge, 2010).

²¹⁰ Ann Lambton, *Theory and Practice in Medieval Persian Government* (London, 1980) 135; Black, *The History of Islamic Political Thought*, 55.

²¹¹ Murphey, *Exploring Ottoman Sovereignty*, 24.

²¹² According to the historian Ibn Khallikan (d. 1282), stated in his work *Wafayat* that al-Farabi was born as the son of a Turkish commander in a village near Farab, in Turkestan. See: B.G. Gafurov, *Central Asia: From Pre-History to Pre-Modern Times* (New Delhi, 2005) 124.

²¹³ *Al-Farabi's Commentary and Short Treatise on Aristotle's De Interpretatione*, ed. F. W. Zimmerman (London, 1987).

²¹⁴ Black, *The History of Islamic Political Thought*, 21.

Neşrî and Tursun Beg clearly seem to have been influenced by his ideas, as they formulated similar principles. Al-Farabi's discussion of political organisation was based upon views on knowledge, happiness and virtues. He followed Aristotle in identifying happiness as the goal of human action and of politics. Right conduct leads to happiness; wrong conduct is what prevents happiness. This idea also reappears in the *Kutadgu Bilig* or The Wisdom of Happiness, the tenth-century Turkish *Fürstenspiegel* or advice literature for princes. Based upon an empirical description of human life, Al-Farabi showed that the division of labour makes it necessary to human beings to live in a society: 'Every human being is by his very nature in need of many things which he cannot provide for himself. Therefore men cannot attain perfection, because of their inborn nature, unless many societies of people cooperate and come together.'²¹⁵ Therefore, in a political society virtues and vices were of key importance. Al-Farabi indeed seems to have been influenced by the thoughts of Aristotle and Plato. For instance, in his *Politeia* or the Ideal State, Plato said: 'A human being is simply by his very nature egoistic and thinks only of his self-interest. Only the law can enforce him to take others into account. [...] I believe that a society emerges because none of the people is self-satisfied and they cannot provide many of their needs by themselves.'²¹⁶ It was a commonly shared idea that man was created to live in society and could survive only if he was part of a society. As we will observe, this idea explicitly recurs in the work of Tursun Beg.

3.2.3 The concepts Caliph and Sultan

I will now describe the historical development of the concepts 'sultan' and 'caliph', in order to provide the reader with the necessary general background when dealing with the explanation of several text fragments I have selected from the earliest Ottoman chronicles. Another important political writer who influenced the discourse of the Ottoman chroniclers was al-Mawardi (974-1058), the Chief Judge in Baghdad during the reign of Seljuk Sultan Tugrul Bey (see Chapter 2). Al-Mawardi sought to reconnect the *de facto* rulership of Seljuk Sultans with the Abbasid Caliphate.²¹⁷ His restatement of the Caliph-Sultan relationship provides a legal base for the Seljuk conquest of Baghdad from the Buyids. Al-Mawardi suggested that when a ruler acts contrary to justice, the Caliph himself may call for the aid of a Sultan who will restrain the usurper's power and put an end to his rule. His theory thus made rulers dependent upon the Caliph's recognition for their legitimacy. However, in practice, the Sultan or the Commander (*emir*) who seized

²¹⁵ Black, *The History of Islamic Political Thought*, 70.

²¹⁶ Plato, *Politeia of De Ideale Staat*, tr. Gerard Koolschijn (Amsterdam, 2005) 53 and 68.

²¹⁷ See: Al-Mawardi, *The Ordinances of Government [Kitab al-Ahkam al-Sultaniyye]*, tr. Wafaa Wahba (London, 1996).

the reins of power through conquest and governed independently of Caliphal administrative oversight. Al-Mawardi's views helped to legitimise, especially under the Ottomans, the role of the *Mazalim* or 'Redress of Injustice' courts and the practice of sultanic laws or *kanuns*.²¹⁸

Al-Mawardi's theory provided a judicial basis for the rise of Great Seljuk Empire in the early eleventh century, when the political authority of the Caliph was redefined and reduced. The Seljuks redefined the concept of Sultan with a new meaning and connoted it with a new claim to universal sovereignty. The term *sultan*, originally meaning 'authority' or 'government' in Arabic, had become a common royal title employed by the Seljuk and Ottoman rulers, who adopted it as their principal title.²¹⁹ However, as a honorific title, the word initially described a regional military commander who seizes the reins of power through conquest and governs independently of Caliphal administrative oversight. With the rise of independent 'sultanates' during the later Abbasid period (945 – 1258) the political authority of the Caliph was redefined and drastically reduced. The term sultan became an official title in the eleventh century as the Seljuks redefined the concept with a new meaning and connoted it with a new claim to universal empire.

For the Seljuks, there was one Sultan just as there was only one Caliph, and the Sultan was the supreme political and military leader of Islam. It was customary for a Sultan to receive a 'diploma of investiture' from the Caliph, which legitimised the Sultan's right to rule through a formal act of delegation and recognition of his sovereignty. For instance, the Seljuk Sultan Malik Shah requested an official recognition by the Caliph for his political position, emphasising his claim to political power and leaving religious leadership to the Caliph. As is generally known, the Seljuk redefinition of the concept of the Sultan brought with it a formal distinction between the political and military leader of Islam, the Sultan himself, and its religious leader associated with the title of Caliph. The term Caliph initially meant authority deriving directly from God, 'deputy of God', meaning one supreme Muslim ruler above all the other in early Abbasid period.²²⁰

The Seljuk Sultan Malik Shah, for instance, used the following titles in an inscription on the Friday Mosque in Isfahan:

'The mighty Sultan, the greatest King of all Kings [*shâhânshâh*], the King of the West and the East, the Pillar of Islam and the Muslims [...] the Father of Conquest, Malik Shah, the Supporter of the Caliph of God, the Commander of the Faithful, may God glorify his victory'.²²¹

²¹⁸ Black, *The History of Islamic Political Thought*, 90.

²¹⁹ On the term sultan, see: 'Sultan', *EI*²; C.E. Bosworth, 'The titulature of the Early Ghaznavids', *Oriens* 15 (1962) 222-225; Barthold, *Turkestan*, 271.

²²⁰ Lewis, *The Political Language of Islam*, 46-47.

²²¹ Cited in: Lange and Mecit ed., *The Seljuqs*, 65.

The honorific royal title *Shahanshah* or 'king of the kings' is a typical Persian title for a sovereign and was used by the Great Seljuks and their successor states to express their ideology of rulership. This ideology was based on three elements according to which the Great Seljuk Sultan was a powerful ruler, the guardian of Islam and the Muslims and the loyal ally and deputy of the Abbasid Caliph. His duties were the support of the Sunni Caliph and the protection of the Muslims against heresy and unbelievers. He was obliged to uphold Islamic law to ascertain that Muslim lands prospered and that justice prevailed. This concept of legitimate rulership remained the same down to the times of the successor states of the *Rum* Seljuks and the Ottomans. Yet, this concept was not static. Different options were developed in reaction to the transformations in the historical and political circumstances. Hence, the context of the later Anatolian Seljuks or that of the Ottomans were in many aspects different from the context of the Great Seljuks. The ideological and political opponents of the Great Seljuks were the Shi'i Buheyvis (Buyids) in Iraq and the Fatimids in Egypt. They therefore sought to legitimise their claims to power and their expansion towards Syria and Egypt with the argument of protecting Islam from heresy.²²² The priority of Sultan Alp Arslan's policy was to seize Syria and Egypt from his main rival, the Fatimids.

The Seljuk Sultans had sought legitimacy among their subjects largely through the ideals of Islamic political theory. The Great Seljuk Sultan Malik Shah is represented above as an absolute monarch according to the Persian-Islamic tradition. But Malik Shah could not have been such a ruler and we also cannot be sure if he wanted to be one or whether this was the image that his Persian ministers and courtiers found appropriate. Indeed, the Turkish nomadic tradition was still influential although in this case the titulature remained silent about this. As discussed in Chapter 2, the Great Seljuk Sultans could not ignore the ancient Turkish tradition of collective sovereignty and the realm was divided among the heirs who already ruled their respective domains as semi-independent provinces. Sure enough, the Persian Islamic concept of absolute sovereignty of the Great Seljuk Sultans was not easily accepted by the other members of the dynasty and it surely did not impress the Turkish nomadic Oghuz princes (*Beys*). The title of *Sultan* had placed the Seljuk ruler above all these princes. Following the Turkish administrative system, his opponents considered the state as the common property of the ruling dynasty and power had to be shared.²²³ The Turkish Oghuz princes in the entourage of the Seljuk ruler were accustomed to regard him as *primus inter pares*; they were annoyed to see him centralising

²²² Ibidem, 65.

²²³ Turan, 'Anatolia in the Period of the Seljuks', 253-54; Halil İnalcık, 'The Ottoman Succession and its relation to Turkish Concept of Sovereignty', in: ibid, *The Middle East and the Balkan under Ottoman Empire* (Bloomington, 1993) 38-41.

state power and being surrounded by a Persian bureaucracy.²²⁴ While the Seljuk court increasingly came under the influence of the sedentary Persian culture and the written Islamic principles, among the Oğuz nomadic communities the pre-Islamic steppe-beliefs and traditions had remained. As a result, this process deteriorated the solidarity between the Seljuk dynasty and the Oghuz, who launched several rebellions.²²⁵

Most importantly, it is since the times of the Great Seljuk Empire that we can distinguish the development of the practice of a division between Caliphate and Sultanate as two supreme authorities.²²⁶ Within Seljuk political practice, the real political power of the Caliph was replaced by the authority of Sultan. This change meant that the classical definition of the Caliphate in terms of lineage was also replaced by state building and government in the name of Islam. After the disintegration of the Great Seljuk Empire, the title of sultan was informally adopted by regional rulers, such as Zangi and the well-known Saladin.²²⁷ After the Seljuks, the title sultan was also adopted in the thirteenth century by the Turkish Khwarazm Shah dynasty in Iran and by the Rum Seljuk Sultanate in Turkey, who both claimed the legacy to the universal empire of the Great Seljuks.

The Seljuk redefinition of the term Sultan thus had the effect to differentiate the political and military head of Islam from its religious head, associated with the title *Caliph*, the deputy of God. The title of Caliph or *Halîfe* in Turkish had initially signified authority deriving directly from God, one supreme Muslim ruler above all.²²⁸ After the destruction of the caliphate in Baghdad by Djengiz Khan in 1258, the title lost its significance and came to be applied to all those Muslim rulers who acted to protect Islam. Its real power was replaced by the position of Sultan. Ottoman Sultan Bâyezid I could therefore claim the right to the title as a protector and defender of Islam.

After the annexation of Mamluk Sultanate of Egypt in 1517, Sultan Selim I (r. 1512-1520) appropriated the title of 'Servant of the Holy Cities Mecca, Medina and Jerusalem' – *Hadimül Harameyn*, and of the Guardian of the pilgrimage routes. By the era of Süleyman I, the Ottoman usage of the title Caliph of the Muslims was accepted by all. The institution of the Caliphate had already lost its power. The classical definition of the caliphate in terms of lineage was replaced by action in the name of Islam. Sultan Süleyman employed the title of *Halîfe-i rû-i zemîn* (the Caliph of the Universe), which suggested claims on world sovereignty.²²⁹

²²⁴ Cahen, *Pre-Ottoman Turkey*, 25.

²²⁵ Lange and Mecit ed., *The Seljuqs*, 80.

²²⁶ Lewis, *The Political Language*, 52.

²²⁷ Ibidem.

²²⁸ Ibidem, 46-47.

²²⁹ İnalçık, 'Osmanlı Padişahı', 70-72.

The Ottoman appropriation of the title of sultan coincided with their expansion into Byzantium and the Balkans, after the decline of the Rum Seljuk Sultanate. Orhan Gazi (1324-1360) was the first Ottoman ruler to bear the title of ‘Sultan of the Ghazis’ and to strike the first Ottoman coins as a symbol of independence. His son Murad I (1360-1389) carried the titles *Hüdâvendigâr* (a Persian title for emperor), and *Sultan-ı â’zâm* (the most exalted Sultan). Yet, it was Bâyezid I (r.1389-1402) who requested from the Caliph in Cairo to formally recognise him with the title of *Sultân ar-Rum*, the Sultan of the Roman lands. As the power of the Ottoman dynasty expanded over Muslim lands during the fifteenth century, the title Sultan became an integral part of Ottoman rulers’ honorary titles.²³⁰

Concerning the term *Rûm*, Neşrî described Seljuk and Ottoman Anatolia as *bilâd-ı Rûm* or ‘the Roman lands’. Neşrî based his account on earlier Islamic historical texts, which used to describe Anatolia as *bilâd ar-Rûm*. For instance, the chronicler denoted the Anatolian Seljuks in terms of *selâtînü’s Selçukiyye bi’r-Rum* or ‘Kings of the Rum Seljuks’.²³¹ While the term *Rûm* in its political sense was reserved for the (Eastern) Roman Empire, the geographical sense of the epithet *Rûm* was used by the Seljuk Turks to indicate the territory which they inhabited and also governed. Because they had founded their state ‘in the lands of Romans’ Muslim and Ottoman sources referred to it as *Seldjûkiyân ar-Rûm* or Seljuks of *Rûm*.²³²

Neşrî perceived the Rum Seljuks to some extent as heirs to the Eastern Roman Empire. There was a period of some confusion when the Seljuk sources referred to the Byzantine sovereign as the Roman Emperor and to the orthodox Christians within the Seljuk realm also as *Rûm*.²³³ Hence, the term *Rûm* in Ottoman usage was not merely a geographical designation, but it rather revealed a symbiosis of various cultures and peoples in the process of Seljuk and Ottoman state-building. The term referred to a ‘melting pot’, which was supra-religions and stood beyond the ethnic groups.²³⁴ As Paul Wittek wrote: ‘in associating the great name of Rome with the Turks, it recalls that which is their greatest glory, the foundation of the empire that – if only for its duration and expanse – will always continue one of the most important chapters in history.’²³⁵

²³⁰ İnalçık, ‘Osmanlı Padişahı’, 72.

²³¹ Neşrî, *Cihannüma*, 15.

²³² Wittek, ‘The Sultan of Rum’, 75.

²³³ Songül Mecit, *The Rum Seljuqs: Evolution of a Dynasty* (New York, 2013) 128.

²³⁴ For an interesting discussion of the question of Rum identity, see: Salih Özbaran, *Bir Osmanlı Kimliği: 14. ve 17. Yüzyıllarda Rûm/Rûmi Aidiyet ve İmgeleri* (İstanbul, 2004) 52-64, 89-108; Cemal Kafadar, ‘A Rome of One’s Own: Reflections on Cultural Geography and Identity in the Lands of Rum’, *Muqarnas* 24 (2007): 7-25.

²³⁵ Wittek, ‘The Sultan of Rum’, 96.

3.2.4 The Influence of the three Muslim philosophers

For a further understanding of early Ottoman state ideology I must also first discuss the three pivotal Muslim political authors, whose work deeply influenced the development of Ottoman state ideology. These are al-Ghazali (1058-1111), Nizam al-Mulk (1018-1092) and Nasir al-Dîn Tûsî (1201-1274). In the texts of fifteenth-century historians, such as Neşrî and Tursun Beg, the political thought of al-Ghazali, Nizam al-Mulk and Tûsî clearly reappears. Therefore, I will briefly outline some elements of their work.

3.2.4.1 Al-Ghazali

The role of al-Ghazali in the development of Islamic political theory was important and had a profound influence on Seljuk and Ottoman principles of sovereignty. Al-Ghazali established the basis of the Sunni view of politics and governance.²³⁶ In 1091, he was a brilliant teacher at the Nizamiya madrasa in Baghdad, founded by Nizam al-Mulk. When in 1092 Nizam al-Mulk was assassinated by Shia Ismaili's, al-Ghazali initially took to the task to defend the Sunni view and to refute the rival Ismaili dynasty of the Fatimids in Egypt and Syria. He had also witnessed the falls of Antioch (1098) and Jerusalem (1099) during the First Crusade. These internal and external political crises certainly influenced his intellectual journey, which equally proved to be a spiritual quest. Al-Ghazali finally abandoned academic life and withdrew to meditate in seclusion in his birthplace Tûs. After ten years of wandering as a Sufi, he concluded that it was above all the Sufis who walked the path to God and that their life was the best life and their method the soundest method.²³⁷ Al-Ghazali's importance to Islamic thought may indeed be compared with that of Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) in Europe, where similar political ideas reappeared nearly two centuries later in the work of Aquinas, who spent a lifetime explaining Christianity through his mystical experience. Likewise, Aquinas emphasised the impossibility of the existence of a society without a king.²³⁸

To understand al-Ghazali's political thought, one has to consider his focus on the Sufi concept of *ma'rifa*, meaning intuitive and direct knowledge acquired through spiritual experience. The mystical awareness illuminates the soul and unites it with God; knowledge (*ilm*) and intelligence (*aql*) are the supreme paths to the divine, the basis of happiness and ranking above worship or prayer.²³⁹ For al-Ghazali, true inner knowledge

²³⁶ Carole Hillenbrand, 'Islamic Orthodoxy or Realpolitik?' Al-Ghazali's Views on Government', *Iran* 26 (1988): 81-95.

²³⁷ İmâmî Gazalî, *Kimya-yı Saâdet*, tr. Faruk Meyan (Istanbul, 1974) 6-7.

²³⁸ Black, *Political Thought in Europe*, 23

²³⁹ Henry Corbin, *Histoire de la philosophie islamique des origins jusqu'au mort d'Avorrees* (Paris, 1964) 253-254.

was acquired through spiritual experience and accessible to whoever was capable of 'penetrating intelligence and strong insight.' In discussing the merits of mediation, he argued that one can understand the world only by experiencing it. Al-Ghazali wrote: 'True knowledge is that in which the thing known reveals itself completely in such a way that no doubt remains about it and no error can tarnish it. It is a state in which the heart cannot admit or even imagine doubt. All knowledge which does not achieve this state of certainty is incomplete knowledge, subject to error.'²⁴⁰ Therefore, he attacked envy, desire for power, hypocrisy and pride, which were probably the reasons why he found academic life unsatisfying. The very few capable of attaining this inner knowledge should pass it on to the others.

Al-Ghazali distinguished two other levels of knowledge. One is the discursive reasoning of what philosophers, jurists and theologians are capable of; they sometimes use it to stir up trouble and disunity. The other one is proper to common people who, absorbed by crafts and daily hard work, are merely capable of following the authority of others; they should avoid all controversy.²⁴¹

As discussed in Chapter 2, the Ottoman sultans kept strong ties and relations with masters of Sufism or *tasavvuf*,²⁴² some of whom had enormous popular appeal. The support of wandering dervishes and spiritual masters or sheikhs became a sort of ideological cement for the emerging Ottoman political society. In the broader Muslim world, Sufism crossed the differences between the various branches of Sunnism and Shi'a. Furthermore, the spiritual disposition of Sufism accorded with the concept of *devlet* (see below), a key-concept for 'state power', signifying the divinely favoured choice of a dynasty on grounds of merit. Particularly, the advice literature often reminded its readers that fortune is changeable, both for individuals and dynasties.²⁴³

In this respect, the connection between the spiritual and the worldly dimensions constantly ran through al-Ghazali's political thought. In a famous work which he wrote when he withdrew in meditation, *Revival of the Knowledge of the Religious Sciences [Ihya' ulum al-dîn]*, the philosopher formulated his thoughts on governance or *siyasa*. He distinguished between four types of governance: prophetic, that of Caliphs and Sultans, that of scholars (*ulema*), and that of popular Sufis.²⁴⁴ For al-Ghazali, the Prophets ruled over the internal (*batin*) and external (*zahir*) lives of both the ruling elite (*al-khassa*) and common people (*al-amma*). The sultans and rulers administered the external lives of both these groups. The learned *ulema* ruled over the internal lives of the elite and the Sufis over the internal

²⁴⁰ Quoted in: Corbin, *Histoire de la philosophie islamique*, 254.

²⁴¹ Black, *The History*, 100.

²⁴² 'Tasavvuf', *Encyclopedia of Islam, Second Edition*.

²⁴³ Black, *The History*, 135.

²⁴⁴ Al-Ghazali, *Revival of the Knowledge of the Religious Sciences [Ihya' ulum al-dîn]*, Book 1, tr. N.A. Faris as *The Book of Knowledge* (Lahore, 1962) 28.

lives of the people. These forms of governance did not stand in opposition to each other; they were complementary and co-existing. The noblest was the prophetic one, followed by the *siyasa*, which was related to knowledge and people's souls. The governance of sultans, *ulema* and Sufis all shared in this. It encouraged the good and forbade the bad both by persuasion and by coercion. Such equilibrium in governance was essential to the political order. In this view, consent was achieved through a commonly shared understanding of the political and moral values and duties of each group. The sultan had to seek the advice from the learned *ulema* and from the Sufis who as 'true souls' were capable to uncover the hidden knowledge and wisdom (*ma'arifa*), which played an important role in the governance of state.²⁴⁵

According to al-Ghazali, 'religion' and state or in Ottoman terms *dîn ü devlet*, depended on each other: 'no order exists in the spiritual world without an order in the material world.'²⁴⁶ He expressed the classic Islamic idea that 'the way of God' (*din*) and sovereignty (*mülk*) are two sides of the same coin and thus inseparable. He noted: '*din* is the root, the state the protector.'²⁴⁷ This meant that if *din* or 'the way of God' is to enhance spiritual lives of people, the material world (*dunya*) had to be organised to an order that enhances its potentialities. This premise accorded with the Islamic view that God has arranged the things in this world so that we are not so much expected to suffer in order to be moral beings, in spite of whatever terrible sufferings one can experience in this world. As such, to prevent that people do terrible things to each other, the political power of a Sultan is necessary 'for the good order of this world [*nizâm-ı âlem*] is necessary for the good order of 'the way of God' (*din*) and the latter is necessary for the acquisition of the wisdom of happiness in this world and in the hereafter.'²⁴⁸

The term *nizâm-ı âlem*, which so often reappeared in Ottoman texts, was in this sense a fundamental value to maintain the social order in favour of the society. And the purpose of political society was to enable people to attain happiness in this world and in the hereafter. Al-Ghazali noted: 'if one has to spend one's time in protecting oneself against tyranny [*zulm*] and in searching for food, one cannot devote oneself to knowledge and producing good works, which are the means of acquiring happiness.'²⁴⁹

In his 'Advice for Kings' or *Nasihât al-Muluk*, which he presented to the Seljuk Sultan Malik Shah, Al-Ghazali wrote that strong central authority was preferable for the public good. He attributed a higher value to the position of the ruler in preventing anarchy and in promoting the social order than to the ideal quality of royal justice. When dealing with

²⁴⁵ Al-Ghazali, *Revival of the Knowledge*, 28.

²⁴⁶ Ibidem, 27.

²⁴⁷ Ibidem, 16.

²⁴⁸ Hillenbrand, 'Islamic Orthodoxy or Realpolitik?' Al-Ghazali's Views on Government', 88.

²⁴⁹ Ibidem, 87.

the required virtues of the sultans, al-Ghazali noted that: 'a century of unjust rule by sultans will not cause so much more damage as one hour of the injustice of subjects against each other.'²⁵⁰ The maintenance of the social order required the satisfaction of basic human needs. This implied a set of social relations based on a division of labour between various occupations and crafts. In this order, each one performed a necessary job by which the welfare of the whole society was accomplished.²⁵¹

Al-Ghazali was convinced that man was created to live in society and displayed a consensus on monarchy as the best form of government. For the social order in the world could only be achieved with the help of a legitimate political power, a *malik* (ruler) who reconciled the differences among human beings inherent to diversity of their natures.²⁵² For him, political authority could only be stable if it resided in a single monarch. His arguments were based upon the fundamental moral and legal principle of public utility and interest (*maslaha*).²⁵³ We will observe below that his ideas recurred in the thought of Ottoman chroniclers, such as Neşrî and Tursun Beg.

3.2.4.2 Nizam al-Mulk

Next to al-Ghazali, the most influential scholar in this period was the famous Seljuk vizier, Nizam al-Mulk (1018-1098), who was the architect of the Seljuk governance and of the judicial, administrative and fiscal institutions. Nizam al-Mulk argued that there was no need for the guiding hand of an enlightened monarch or for al-Farabi's 'philosopher-king' in order to promote the interest of the society.²⁵⁴ The public good was served by a powerful and just ruler who prevented anarchy, enforced law and order, and tempered his decisions with compassion and charitable concern about the needy in society. His *Book of Government*, which he dedicated to Seljuk Sultan Malik Shah, opens with an explanation of *devlet*: 'In every age and time God chooses one member of the human race and, having adorned and endowed him with kingly virtues, entrusts him with the interests of the world and the well-being of his servants. He charges that person to close the doors of corruption, confusion and conflict. And God imparts to him such dignity and majesty in

²⁵⁰ Gazzali's *Book of Counsel for Kings* (*Nasihat al Muluk*), tr. F. Bagley (London, 1964) 77. The Italian writer, Dante Alighieri (1265-1321) also confirmed similar ideas that 'when the polity is directed to a single end [which is a life of happiness], it is suitable that one person rules and directs and that all the others are ruled and directed.' See: Cary Nederman and Kate L. Forhan, *Medieval Political Theory. The Quest for the Body Politic, 1100-1400* (London, 1993) 168.

²⁵¹ Al-Ghazali, *Revival of the Knowledge*, 27.

²⁵² Hillenbrand, 'Islamic Orthodoxy or Realpolitik?', 88.

²⁵³ Black, *The History of Islamic Political Thought*, 108.

²⁵⁴ A.K.S. Lambton, 'Justice in the Medieval Persian Theory of Kingships', in: *Theory and Practice in Medieval Persia* (London, 1980) 96-97.

the eyes and hearts of men, that under his just rule they may live their lives in security and ever wish for his reign to continue.’²⁵⁵ Sovereignty was transferred from one people to another through God’s enigmatic knowledge of their merits.

Nizam al-Mulk noted that the Seljuk Sultan Malik Shah enjoyed divine favour, and that ‘such merits had been lacking in the princes of the world before him’. According to Nizam al-Mulk, Sultan Malik Shah accorded to the virtues of the ideal ruler, such as: ‘pleasing in appearance, a kindly disposition, integrity, bravery, horsemanship, knowledge, skill in the use of various arms and accomplishments in several arts, pity and mercy upon the creatures of God, performance of vows and promises, sound faith and true belief and the practice of such virtuous deeds as praying in the night, respect for ulema, winning the society of men of learning and wisdom, giving regular alms, protecting the poor, being gentle to servants and officials and freeing the people from oppressors.’²⁵⁶ As we will observe below, Ottoman chroniclers expected to see or ascribed similar virtues to the Ottoman Sultans as well.

Nizam al-Mulk continued by emphasising the dominant idea about the connection between moral and spiritual observance and political success: ‘Whenever there occurs any disobedience or disregard of God’s laws on the part of His servants (...) and He wishes to chastise them and make them taste the retribution for their deeds (...); anarchy comes up in their midst, opposing swords are drawn, blood is shed and whoever has the stronger hand does whatever he wishes, until those sinners are all destroyed in tumults.’²⁵⁷ In a later passage, he formulated similar contemplations: ‘At any time the state may be overtaken by some godly accident, or influenced by the evil eye. Then the government will change and pass from one house to another, or the country will be thrown into disorder through seditions and tumults; opposing swords will be drawn and there will be killing, burning, plunder and violence.’²⁵⁸

Nizam al-Mulk’s argumentation was based upon the well-known principle of sovereignty, namely the symbiosis between ‘the way of God’ (*din*) and ‘state power’ (*dawla*). They were interdependent and their fortunes were intertwined. We have seen how al-Ghazali elaborated on this idea. An interpretation of it reached its zenith in the Ottoman political theory and was expressed in the unity of ‘*din ü devlet*’. Nizam’s *Rules for Kings* became the most widely used manual for state craft and was one of the influential inspirations behind the tradition of Ottoman state craft. His tolerant and statesmanlike

²⁵⁵ Nizâm al-Mulk, *The Book of Government: Rules for Kings. The Siyar al-Muluk or Siyasat-nama of Nizam al-Mulk*, tr. Hubert Darke (New Haven, 1960) 9.

²⁵⁶ *Ibidem*, 10-11.

²⁵⁷ *Ibidem*, 9.

²⁵⁸ *Ibidem*, 143.

approach to political society appears to have left its greatest mark on the Ottoman state.²⁵⁹

3.2.4.3 Nasir al-Dîn Tûsî

Another scholar whose work would become very influential on the development of Ottoman political thought was Nasir al-Dîn Tûsî (1201-1274). The period between 1220 and 1405, i.e. the rise of Djengiz Khan and the death of Timur Lenk, represent a time of ruptures and great changes in the Muslim world. As discussed above, the nomadic Mongol armies under Djengiz Khan had invaded the Muslim world. The cultural and intellectual centres of learning of the Islamic heartland, such as Balkh, Herat, Marv, Nishapur and Rayy have suffered from immense destruction and annihilation of peoples. Finally, in 1258, the last Abbasid Caliph in Baghdad was executed by the Mongol ruler Hülegü Khan. However, half a century later, attracted by Sufism, the Mongol Ilkhanid ruler Ghazan Khan converted to Islam. In this period of enormous tumult and chaos, Nasir al-Dîn Tûsî produced an original work. Tûsî was a scholar, mathematician and astronomer, who worked for the Ilkhanid khan Hülagü. His work provided a link between the Islamic world before the Mongols and the sedentary courtly culture of the early Ottoman state.²⁶⁰

Tusî argued that man was inherently a social creature and government was a necessity for human beings to live in peace. Such human cooperation required a kind of precaution, which is the *siyasa* (governance). According to Tusî, government was possible through the just administration of a just ruler. Such a ruler would be the vicar of God on earth and the doctor of the health of the world.²⁶¹ The concept of 'justice' appeared as a necessary element that contributed to the achievement of harmony within diversity. As for *siyasa*, Tusî focused, like al-Ghazali, on the virtues and duties of a ruler whom he called a '*malik*' (king), whose authority was indispensable for the good order of political society. A ruler was needed at all times to maintain the laws and the social order.²⁶² Furthermore, knowledge in the meaning of wisdom was also pivotal for public order: 'the ordering of cities depends on sovereignty (*mulk*) and the ordering of sovereignty on governance (*siyasa*) and that of governance on wisdom.'²⁶³ The aim of governance, for Tusî, was equilibrium and the virtuous ruler was the 'doctor of the world'. Every person was compelled to study political theory in order to attain virtues and expertise in state craft.

²⁵⁹ Black, *The History*, 95-96.

²⁶⁰ Wilferd Madelung, 'Nasir al-Din Tusi's Ethics: Between Philosophy, Shi'ism and Sufism', *Hovannisian* (1985): 85-101.

²⁶¹ Bahtiyar Hüseyin Sıddıki, 'Nasiruddin Tusi', in *İslam Düşüncesi Tarihi* vol. 2, ed. M.M. Şerif, (İstanbul, 1990) 192-195.

²⁶² Black, *The History*, 153.

²⁶³ As quoted in Black, *The History*, 154.

This egalitarian idea was remarkably closer to al-Ghazali's thought and deviated from Shi'ite doctrine, which regarded rulership as merely preserved for the divinely elected Imam who possessed the divine wisdom of state craft.²⁶⁴



²⁶⁴ Ibidem.

3.3 Islamic Political Thought in Early Ottoman Chronicles

3.3.1 Neşrî

In the chronicle of Neşrî, the thought of Tûsî and al-Ghazali clearly recurred, i.e. the idea that the maintenance of the social order required the satisfaction of basic human needs. For Tûsî and al-Ghazalî, this equilibrium required a set of social relations based on a division of labour between various occupations and crafts. In this order, each one performed a necessary job by which the welfare of the entire society was accomplished. A central authority, in the person of a *pâdişah* was the key to the maintenance of continuity and balance of this social order. Indeed, the social order in the world could only be achieved with the help of a legitimate political power. That was the *pâdişah* who reconciled the differences among human beings inherent to diversity of their natures. A similar reasoning was also formulated by the *ulema*-historian Neşrî.

At the very start of his chronicle, Neşrî emphasised the pivotal importance of knowledge and wisdom, which echoes the thought of al-Ghazali: ‘the obviousness of intelligence [*akl*] witnesses that knowledge [*ilm*], life and body are signs of health and excellence; whereas ignorance and death are related to evil. Though life is the cause of knowledge, knowledge in turn is the cause of life, for a life without knowledge is worse than death. Indeed, it is said: the one who has no life in his body is not considered as dead, but the one who lacks mindfulness [*şu’ur*] in his body is really the one who has died. [...] One can distinguish three categories of knowledge: the science of revelation, of the Shari’a and that of history.’²⁶⁵

Subsequently, Neşrî elaborated on al-Ghazali’s ideal types of governance as he described the ideal sovereignty according to Ottoman understanding. He distinguished among the humankind three categories of ‘noble groups’:

‘the prophets, the men of high learning [*ulema*] and sovereigns. The dignity of the prophets comes from their duty to communicate the revelation; the dignity of the *ulema* or high learned scholars lies in their expertise of the science of prayer; and the dignity of rulers comes from [dispensing] justice (*adl*) and [the affairs of] governance [*siyaset*]. [...] The great scholars, even though erudite on various matters, are still dependent on the authority of a sultan to implement their decisions and are therefore powerless without him.’²⁶⁶

²⁶⁵ Neşrî, *Cihânnüma*, 3-4.

²⁶⁶ Neşrî, *Cihânnüma*, 4: ‘Ve eşref-i insân dahı üçdür: enbiyâ, ulemâ ve ümerâ. Ve enbiyânun şânı teblîğ ü risâletdür. Ve ulemânun şânı ilm ü ibadetdür. Ve ümerânun şânı adl ü siyâsetdür. [...] ammâ ulemâ-i fihâm ve

Thereafter, Neşrî explained the values attached to the ideal ruler:

‘When a monarch [*melik*] cultivates his knowledge of the *shari’a*, his knowledge of history of the *hadith* and of the history of the conditions of the earlier kings and sultans, he will have adequately interiorized these three sciences. And as the heavenly lights enlighten his heart, the judgements of the prophets reveal themselves to him and he will discover the secrets of the mission of the prophets. As the prophets reveal [the Qur’an] being the messengers of God, they [the rulers] put an order into execution and govern. Therefore, the sultans are called ‘the Shadow of God on Earth’ [*es-sultân zillu’llah fî’l arz*], who are the experts of taking decisions and governance [*mazhar-ı ahkâm ü siyaset*] and the treasures of secrets and leadership [*münhazin-i esrar u riyaset*]. If there were no verdicts of governance [*emr-i siyaset*], then the order of the world [*âlemde nizâm*] would not have existed, and the grievances of the powerless and the poor would have disappeared in the smoke of the fire set up by the cruelties of tyrants’.²⁶⁷

The passage above quoted from Neşrî gave clues about the construction of the Ottoman political thought that elaborated on earlier writings. He seemed to mirror al-Farabi’s idea that knowledge and leadership are interconnected; politics requires knowledge. The ideal ruler for Neşrî appeared to be the ‘scholar-king’, who only can attain this stage if he has the knowledge of the Shari’a, of the prophetic tradition and knowledge of history. His discussion of political organisation emerged out of describing the perfect ruler who has to uphold a spiritual mind set and wisdom. In this respect, he equated the prophets and kings as ‘two rings in a finger’.²⁶⁸ He implied that prophethood and rulership are complementary to each other. Neşrî also confirms the general consensus that the preservation of social order and the prevention of anarchy and disorder are the primary tasks of government.

Furthermore, Neşrî suggested that the ruler had to be a good Muslim and uphold the spirit of the Shari’a, which limited the power of the sultan. For Neşrî, the sovereignty of the Ottoman ruler could legitimately be claimed through demonstrating devotion to protection of the Shari’a. Although he did not explicitly formulate it, Neşrî referred to the idea of the synthesis between the state and ‘the way of God’ (*dîn*) when discussing the

fudalâ-i izâm dahi egerçi cümlesine vâkıflardur, lâkin tenfîz-i ahkâmda selâtine muhtâclardur. Ol sebebden mütevakıflar ve kâsırlardur.’

²⁶⁷ Neşrî, *Cihânnüma*, 4: ‘Ammâ mülûk-i kirâm ve selâtîn-i izâmdan birisi kaçan ilm-i serâyi’a âlim olup, tevârîh-i vekayi’a vukuf bulup, mülûk-i sâlifün ve selâtîn-i sâbıkanun ahvâllerine muttali’ olsa, merâtib-i selâseyi câmi’ olup, envâr-ı ilâhî kalbine lâmi’ olmanın, mazhar-ı ahkâm-ı nübüvvet ve kâşif-i esrâr-ı risâlet olur. Zîrâ mürselin, teblîğ ü risâlet ve bunlar, tenfîz ü siyaset iderler. Anunçün *es-sultân zillu’llah fî’l arz* dinilür. Mazhar-ı ahkâm ü siyaset ve münhazin-i esrâr u riyâset bunlardur. [...] Eger emr-i siyâset dahı olmasa âlemde nizâm olmayup, zu’afânun dûd-ı tazallımı, zalemenün âteşinden, cihân hânesinin revzenesinden taşra çıkardı.’

²⁶⁸ Ibidem: ‘Nübüvvet ve şâhî, iki hâtem gibidür bir parmakda’.

behaviour required from a ruler in order to govern successfully. A sultan was only able to rule successfully if he had the knowledge of Shari'a and the traditions of Prophet. He thus expressed the classic Islamic idea that 'the way of God' (*din*) and sovereignty (*mülk*) are two sides of the same coin and thus inseparable. The sultan acquires the status of 'the Shadow of God on Earth' from his diligent observance of the Shari'a and his inner knowledge of the Prophetic tradition. The title suggests the divine sanction for rule within the Islamic context and its use express the blending of nomadic ideals with the sedentary Islamic ideal of a divinely ordained social order exemplified by the Shari'a.

With the title 'Shadow of God' Neşrî referred to the metaphoric duty of the ruler, providing shade and shelter to protect the people under his authority from the merciless sun. This idea found its expression in the metaphoric title of 'the Shadow of God on Earth' (*es-sultân zillu'llah fî'l arz*). According to a tradition of the Prophet, 'the Sultan is the Shadow of God on Earth with whom all people seek shelter.'²⁶⁹ Similarly, another Prophetic tradition stated that 'the Sultan of Muslims is the protector and shadow of God for the people.'²⁷⁰ Neşrî here showed himself to be completely in tune with the theoretical political tenor of his time. By using this title, he emphasised that the ruler had to protect and promote the basic rights of people with no particular social status. Governance (*emr-i siyaset*) was in this sense the protection of the socially disadvantaged against the damages and aggression of socially and economic dominant groups or magnates. Therefore, the sultan was essential to maintain the social order of the world [*âlemde nizâm*] by preventing the preying of the strong on the weak. Because, if the authority of the sultan did not exist, 'the grievances of the powerless and the poor would disappear in the smoke of the fire set up by the cruelties of tyrants'. In other words, for Neşrî justice or just rule were essential to the practice of good governance.

Before continuing with the discussion of Tursun Beg's view, it is worthwhile to give some more background about the term *siyasa*. The word *siyaset*, today meaning politics or governance, was an Arabic word, which originally meant 'to manage or to train a horse'. In the context of early Islamic history, the sense of training and managing horses passed into the conduct of state affairs and the management of the subjects, the *reaya*. This change in meaning was probably influenced by the ancient Near Eastern idea of the ruler as the shepherd and manager of his human flock, and also with the nomadic idea of the person who leads his horse through its reins. These served as metaphors for the authority that governs a society. When the Seljuks and the Ottomans used the horsehair banner or *tuğ* as emblem of authority, they were clearly evoking the image of the horse mounted

²⁶⁹ Lewis, *The Political Language*, 22.

²⁷⁰ Ömer Ziyâüddîn, *Hadîsü Erbaîn fî Hukûki's-Selâtîn* (İstanbul, 1908) 12: 'es-Sultân zillullâhi fî'l-ardi fermen ekramehû ekramehullâhu ve men ehânehû ehânehullâhu'.

warrior as the symbol of effective political power.²⁷¹ Hence, the meaning of *siyasa* in Ottoman and Islamic usage evolved in time to the sense of statecraft, the management of affairs of state and eventually that of governance.²⁷² For instance, the Ottoman *fethname*, written after the Battle of Varna in 1444 and addressing to the Karakoyunlu ruler, compared the governing of a state to the leading of a horse: ‘The Creator put the halter of grasping and distention, and the reins of loosing and binding and of the twisting and untwisting into our firm and imperial grasp and into our felicitous possession.’²⁷³

3.3.2 Tursun Beg

The next fifteenth-century chronicler who in his work devoted particular attention to the political theory of sovereignty was Tursun Beg. This bureaucrat-scholar and historian wrote the panegyric ‘the History of the Conqueror’, dedicated to the reign of Sultan Mehmed II (r. 1451-1481). Tursun Beg started his work by asking the question: why did society need a ruler? He answered by discussing the nature of humankind and also based his formulation on the social theory of Nasir al-dîn Tûsî, he explicitly mentioned. Tursun Beg argued that if human beings were left to their own basic instincts, inherent to their nature, conflicts would soon arise. They would not be able to cooperate, but would incite treason, fight and destroy each other, failing to form a political society. Therefore, according to Tursun Beg, each one has to be assigned to tasks and jobs that fit him best. It was necessary to give each person a status or place in the society according to their merits and talents so that each would be satisfied with his rights and livelihood and not attack the rights of others. To enhance cooperation between people and to increase development, human beings needed each other by nature so that they have to live together in society. To maintain this set of social relations, there was need for a ruler. A king (*padişah*) was necessary so that this ‘order of the world’ (*nizam-ı âlem*), which serves the public interest, could be preserved and chaos could be avoided.²⁷⁴ As the keynote for

²⁷¹ In old, steppe-nomadic Turkish tradition, the *tuğ* was the banner, which was composed of a horse’s tail or horsehair. The Ottomans continued to use the *tuğ* as an emblem of royal authority, with the sultans campaigning under their banners with nine *tuğs*. The Turkish word *tuğ* is the parent of the verb *doğmak* (to be born, to arise) in various Turkish languages; for example, *kün tuğdı* (the sun has arisen). The horsehair banner symbolized the Oğuz kinship in the army during the emergence of a new social and military embodiment. ‘While the warrior lived, the horsehair banner carried his destiny; in death, it became his soul. It captured the power of the wind, the sky and the sun, and the banner inspired the warrior’s dreams.’ See: Ümit Hassan, *Osmanlı. Örgüt, inanç, davranış’tan hukuk ideoloji’ye* (İstanbul, 2009) 33-41.

²⁷² ‘Siyasa’, *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition.

²⁷³ *Fethname*, in Imber’s translation, see: *The Crusade of Varna*, 189.

²⁷⁴ Tursun Beg, *Tarih-i Ebu’l Feth*, ed. Mertol Tulum (İstanbul, 1977) 12-13.

his view, Tursun also quoted the following verse from the Qur'an: 'Obey God and obey the Messenger, and obey those from among you who are invested with authority.'²⁷⁵ And he enunciated the same principle by referring to the tradition of the Prophet, saying: 'Besides the Prophet we have sent and the angel we have appointed, there is no other supreme rank than that of the sultan.'²⁷⁶

Tursun Beg also confirmed the classical idea that God distributes rulership by referring to a verse from the Qur'an: 'but God supports whom He wills'.²⁷⁷ Tursun continued by acknowledging the metaphoric role of the sultan as 'shadow of God' by noting Prophet's tradition, saying: 'God exalts whom he wishes and He bemoans whom He dislikes'.²⁷⁸ Tursun asserted again that therefore one has to comply with and show loyalty to the authority of the ruler.²⁷⁹ However, he warned that God did not give this supreme attribute to the kings merely to satisfy their personal selfish and insatiable whims or to enrich themselves with crowded armies.²⁸⁰

The favouring of God implied that when a ruler took the responsibilities of sovereignty, he should bestow justice through the 'beauty of his governance', his wisdom and his awe-inspiring appearance. According to Tursun, the ruler should bring order and keep this order in the world through 'his lightning sword and by the auspices of granting lands. The person of the sultan is a candidate to the happiness in this world and he might deserve that pleasure by his acts, which should be aimed at attaining the true happiness of the world hereafter.'²⁸¹

Tursun Beg also indorsed the thought of al-Ghazali on happiness and sovereignty as it has been briefly outlined above. Tursun wrote: 'It is said that this state [*devlet*], which is the elixir of the rare and precious happiness, can only be attained through good virtues of ethics.'²⁸² He continued to elaborate on al-Ghazali's thought by noting that the sultan must seek the advice from the learned *ulema* and the sheikhs. This would enable the ruler to open the path towards happiness in this world and in the hereafter. as 'the secrets of

²⁷⁵ Qur'an, 4:59.

²⁷⁶ Tursun Beg, *Tarih-i Ebu'l Feth*, 13.

²⁷⁷ Qur'an, 3:13.

²⁷⁸ Tursun Beg, *Tarih-i Ebu'l Feth*, 15.

²⁷⁹ Ibidem: 'vâsıtasıyle tâ'at ü mütâba'atini ekâsî vü edâni üzre farz-ı ayn itti.'

²⁸⁰ Ibidem: 'bu husûssiyet-i kerâmet anun için degülmüş, ki pâdişâhlar mücerred istifa-yı lezzât-ı nefsânîyyesine velû' gösterüp asâkir-i cerrâr ile temettü' ü istizhâr artura.'

²⁸¹ Tursun Beg, *Tarih-i Ebu'l Feth*, 16: 'uhde-i saltanatı ahinde hüsn-i siyâseti ile ve kemâl-i mehâbet ü yümn-i kifâyeti ile şah-ı adl müreşşah u bâr-ver, ve bârân-ı ihsân fâyiz olup, tîğ-ı berk-dıraş ve himmet-i mülk bahşı ile mesâlih-i cihân muntazam u ârâste ola; ve râyât-ı dîn-i Hak. Ve niteki zât-ı şerif-i pâdişah müstahıkk-ı devlet-i dünya-yı zûd-güzardır, şâyân-ı saltanat-ı dârül-karar vakı olup, gabuk-ı devlet-i mecâziyi sabûh-i sa'âdet-i hakîkiye ulaştırur, bu cihanda ömr-i devletten ber-hordâr ve ol cihanda...'

²⁸² Ibidem: 'Ve bu zikr ittügümüz devlet – ki iksîr-i kimyâ-yı sa'âdetdür – dimişler ki husûle mevsûl olmaz, illâ tahsil-i mekârim-i ahlâk ile mümkindür.'

sovereignty are hidden from the unfortunate ones who only see the apparent and obvious things.’²⁸³ Tursun Beg also referred to Tûsî’s ‘Nasirian Ethics’. Relying on this work, he explained the cardinal virtues (wisdom, courage, gentleness and justice) that rulers had to demonstrate, which I will discuss below. According to Tursun Beg, the candidate for rulership accredited by lineage was not necessarily the best sovereign; true sovereignty and legitimate rule were only demonstrated by the acts and virtues of rulers. He wrote:

‘No one [ruler] can be worthy of praise or be truly proud unless it is by reason of possessing all or some of these four virtues. Those who take pride in their descent and lineage can only do so because they have fathers and ancestors who were known for these virtues.’²⁸⁴

It is worth noting that the discourse of the early Ottoman chroniclers explicitly emphasised the notions ‘justice’ and ‘gaza’. This was precisely a result of the fact that Ottoman dynasty lacked a distinguished lineage from the line of the Prophet or from that of the Djengizid imperial house, which both could have provided a legitimacy. Therefore, in the introduction to his chronicle, Tursun Beg based the legitimacy of the Ottoman dynasty on the customary law (*örf*) or the laws promulgated by the sultan (*kanun*). Furthermore, in his discourse, he also emphasised Ottoman commitment to justice as a tool of legitimacy. Tursun posited the notion of *kanun* as the primary legitimate ordering mechanism for political life:

‘The laws based on principles that ensure felicity in this world and the next is called divine government or *şeriat*. Furthermore, there are the laws based on the reason that endorse the right order of the world [*nizam-ı âlem*], such as Djenghiz Khan did. In these laws, the events are connected to their causality, which is called the sultanic politics and imperial law [*siyâset-i sultani* and *yasağ -ı padişâhi*] and it is named *örf* in our [Turkish] tradition. Its maintenance requires the existence of a ruler [*padişah*]. There is no need for a prophetic law giver in every age [...] However, in every period, there is a need for a ruler who has the authority to establish laws and to implement measures for the public interest. If his authority is

²⁸³ Tursun Beg, *Tarih-i Ebu'l Feth*, 28: ‘ammâ esrâr-ı saltanat, her gedâ-yı zâhir-bin fehminden gâyibdür [...] Atyeb-i ahlâk-ı selâtin – ki müstelzim-i sa’âdet-i dünyevî ve uhrevîdür – bunu dahı dimişler ki, takarrüb-ı Hak içün terhîb ü takrîbi-i ulema vü meşâyih buyurula.’

²⁸⁴ Ibidem, 17: ‘Ve hîç bir şahs müstahıkk-ı medh ve müsta’idd-i mübâhât ü müfâharet olmaz, illâ bu dört fazîletün cümlesiyle yâ ba’ziyle olur. Ve şunlar ki neseb ü kabîle şerefiyle fahr iderler, merci’i budur ki, âbâ vü eslâfında bu fezâyil ile mevsûf kimesne var imiş.’

lost no law can be enforced and people cannot live together; they would destroy each other and this world order all together.’²⁸⁵

As is known, the Ottoman term *kanun* or dynastic law was modelled on an idealised steppe *töre/yasa* notion.²⁸⁶ The *kanun* was issued by the sultan and was integrated with Islamic law or *Shari’a*. In this way, the promulgation of a customary law code, the *kanun*, separate from the *Shari’a* expressed the most enduring blending of nomadic traditions with Islamic principles. This synthesis fulfilled the need of the House of Osman to legitimacy for its sovereignty.²⁸⁷ However, as mentioned, this synthesis was on certain points antithetical. A *khan* in the nomad tradition was one who had the power to make law and had more absolute authority than the caliph, who could only uphold and submit to the *Shari’a*.²⁸⁸ Since the Ottoman sultans were also Muslims, bound to observe the *Shari’a*, the situation had become complex. The Ottoman Sultans had to be just rulers and good Muslims. At the same time they had to fulfil the obligations of rulership and submit to the spirit of the *Shari’a*. In this respect, Tursun Beg made a clear distinction between the customary law or the *kanun* promulgated by the sultan and the law code of the *Shari’a*. Separate from the *Shari’a*, the *kanun* was the proper sphere of scholarship for bureaucrats, the chancery official’s badge of learning analogous to the *Shari’a* of the ulema. As indicated above, one of the earliest promulgation of a set of laws or *kanun* were collected in the *Kanunnâme* or the Law Book of Sultan Mehmed II. This compilation of *kanuns* was probably written after 1477.²⁸⁹

3.3.3 Ahmedî

The importance of *kanun* for reasons of legitimacy can also be read clearly in the introductory verses of the court poet Ahmedî. He referred to the Djengizid model of law

²⁸⁵ Tursun Beg, *Tarih-i Ebu’l Feth*, 12-13: ‘Ve eğer şöyle ki bu tedbîr bervefk-ı vücub ve kâide-i hikmet olursa ana ehl-i hikmet siyâset-i ilâhi dirler, ve ehl-i şer’ ana şariat dirler. Ve illâ, ya’ni bu tedbir ol mertebede olmazsa, mücerred tavr-ı akl üzere nizâm-ı âlem-i zâhir için, meselâ Cingiz Han gibi olursa, sebebine izâfet iderler, siyâset-i sultanî ve yasağ-ı pâdişâhî dirler ki, örfümüzce ana örf dirler. Keyfe mekân, anun ikâmeti elbette bir pâdişâh vücuduna mevkûf. Hatta şöyledir ki, her rûzgârda vücûd-ı şâri’ hâcet değüldür (...); ammâ her rûzgârda bir pâdişâhun vücudı hâcettir ki anun tasarruf-ı cüz’iyyâtta vilâyet-i kâmilî vardır. Ve anun tedbîri munkati’ olsa, bakâ-yı eşhâs ber-vech-i ekmel sûret bulmaz; belki bi’l-küllî fenâ bulur. Ve ol nizâm fevt olur.’

²⁸⁶ The term *kanun* is a derivative from Arabic, which meant ‘a measure or rule’, and later ‘assessment for taxation’, ‘imperial taxes’ and dynastic law. See: ‘Kânûn’, *El²*; Halil İnalcık, *The Ottoman Empire*, 65-69; Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and intellectual*, 274; Woods, *The Aqqoyunlu*, 7-9.

²⁸⁷ Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and intellectual*, 286-287.

²⁸⁸ Ibidem, 274.

²⁸⁹ *Kanunnâme-i Âl-i Osman*, ed. Özcan, XII-XIII.

and promoted the ancient Persian-Islamic ideology of justice (*adl*) to establish a legitimate ground for the Ottoman dynasty:

‘Concerning the justice of the Mongol Sultans [Ilkhanids], hear now the explanation of how it was. They did not do as did Djenghiz Khan, who made justice to the people, far from injustice. They oppressed them [the people] with the law [*kanun*]; they did not bathe their hands in people’s blood. When tyranny [*zulm*] is performed in the name of law, a just leader [*adl beg*] comes forth for the people. Since all of those oppressors have been named, let us remember all the just as well. Let us recall the *begs* [the Ottoman princes], who were Muslim and just rulers.’²⁹⁰

Following on this statement he established Ottoman legitimacy on the ideology of justice and he put forth the *yasa* (the laws) of Djengiz Khan as an important model for Ottoman sovereignty. He denoted the Djenghizid law with the term *kanun*. Elaborating on the customs of nomadic polities, Ahmedî implied that a ruler and his law might be accepted in so far as that they could ensure justice and good governance. Such a law derived its authority only from the prestige and justness of the ruler. As already discussed, the early Ottomans preserved their own legal codes, the Turkish *törü* and the Djengiz Khanid *yasa*. These expressed the Central Asian concepts of law that received authority through formal proclamation by the ruler, the *kaghan* of the nomadic state.

Moreover, in the verses quoted above Ahmedî also emphasised the Islamic principle of just rule or justice as an important asset. He based Ottoman legitimacy upon justice and just governance. Ahmedî clearly blended Turkish-Mongol nomad and Islamic legal systems. He combined the nomadic usage of *kanun* with the Islamic principle of ‘justice’ (*’adl*) as principles for legitimacy. Ahmedî implied that a ruler and his laws could only be accepted as long as he could guarantee justice and could protect the people against the abuse of power.

Ahmedî also indicated that just rulership did not necessarily depended upon hereditary privileges. He also implied that just rulership is not necessarily co-existent with the Muslim identity. To him, a lord who revolted against an established but tyrannical ruler could have a more compelling right to rule if he was more just and capable. Or, as in the case of the Ilkhanid khans, a non-Muslim but just ruler was preferable to a Muslim but tyrannical monarch. This idea implied that governing a state could be separated from religion of the ruler, for being a Muslim likewise did not guarantee of being a competent and just ruler. This view addressed the political need for

²⁹⁰ Ahmedî, *Dasitân-i Tevârîh*, 25-26: ‘Ol Mogol sultanlarının adlini, niceydi işit imdi şerhini. İtmediler anı kim Cingiz Han, zulmden halka ider idi ’ayan. Zulm itdiler velî kânûnıla, ellerin boyamadılar hûnıla. Zulm kim kânûn u zabtıla ola, ’adl gibi halka ol âsân gele. Çün anıldı ol kâmu ehl-i sitem, zikre getürelüm ehl-i ’adli hem. Analum ol begleri kim serteser, hem Müsülman idiler hem dâdger.’

legitimacy of the Ottomans, as they lacked a distinguished lineage. Therefore, as Neşrî had also asserted, Ahmedî precisely portrayed the Ottoman rulers as *gazi*-sultans and just sovereigns who protected the people from tyranny and took care of them. In the passage above, he echoed in a certain way the thought of Nizâm al-Mülk: ‘when through divinely good fortune the evil times pass away, God will bring forth a just and wise king from princely stock, and will give him the power to vanquish his enemies, and the wisdom and intelligence to judge matters aright.’²⁹¹

Yet, the views of Ahmedî, Tursun Beg and Neşrî are complementary to each other. The customary law or *kanun* and the Shari’a, coupled with powerful central authority of the ruler, appeared as the pivotal legitimising ideas of early Ottoman state ideology.²⁹² The ruler was the key to the maintenance of balance between these two separate law codes and spheres, which in practice are co-existent. The Shari’a was universal, immutable, revealed by God and hence spiritually superior to the *kanun*, which was regional, amendable and created by human intelligence. The latter had greater relevance for ad hoc governance and for the practice of statecraft. The Ottoman chroniclers implied that the duty of the sultan was to protect the ‘*din ü devlet*’ (the way of God and state). In this respect, the mandate of the dynasty was also expressed through highlighting its Muslim identity. The ideal ruler was considered as the one who had accumulated in his person the political wisdom of an administrator, the learning of a scholar and historian, and the understanding of the prophetic revelations. Only when a ruler had reached this mature state of mind, he could adequately deal with the affairs concerning the governance of a political society.²⁹³

Obviously, some elements of Platonic theory had reached the Ottoman intellectual literature through mainly the works of al-Farabi, al-Ghazali and Tûsî. The notion of ‘justice’ and the unity of *kanun* and Shari’a represented the Ottoman principles of state ideology. As we will discuss, the terms of ‘justice’ and ‘gaza’ also appeared in the chronicles as the predominant discursive registers of Ottoman state ideology.

3.3.4 The concepts *devlet* and *saltanat*

It is useful at this point to shed more light on the concepts of ‘devlet’ and ‘saltanat’, which figured prominently in the early Ottoman chronicles’. Both terms appeared as important concepts denoting ‘state power’. The term ‘devlet’, in the sense that it was used in the early Ottoman texts, is difficult to translate into an European language. First of all, the historical context and the register of Muslim political tradition in which it evolved was

²⁹¹ Nizâm al-Mulk, *The Book of Government*, 143.

²⁹² Also see the similar views of Ali, in: Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual*, 290-292.

²⁹³ Ibidem, 293.

very different from that of Europe. The etymology of the Arabic word *dawla*, from which the Turkish notion *devlet* derives, has not been extensively studied. It is not known exactly when and under what historical conditions the term lost its meaning of 'turn' or 'alternation' (of success, holding office), a connotation that it had in the early Islamic history and during the Abbasids.²⁹⁴ During the later Abbasid period, the word was frequently used by the Abbasids with reference to their own 'turn' of success. It came to be associated with the ruling house. Yet, how and when the term *dawla* acquired the meaning of 'dynasty' has still not been established.²⁹⁵ The word *devlet* certainly acquired the meaning of 'dynasty' and 'state' with the emergence of Turkish and Mongol dynastic states in the Muslim world, such as the Great Seljuks, Ilkhanids, Mamluks, Ottomans, Timurids and Mughals.

Rifaat Abou-El-Haj already demonstrated that the term *devlet* (*dawla*) only acquired the modern sense of 'state' towards the end of the seventeenth century. He suggested that, before the seventeenth century, the Ottoman use of the concept *devlet* had neither 'the connotation [nor] the denotation of the modern nation-state', but rather meant 'the decision-making power of the legitimate head of state as well as of those to whom he had delegated this power'.²⁹⁶ Recently, scholars have also studied the semantic development of the term *devlet*. Following their analysis, the term had the meaning of 'power' or 'dynasty' in the fifteenth century, with strong implications of 'divine favour'. The word seems to be structured around the divine charisma of the ruler throughout the fifteenth century.²⁹⁷

The Arabic term *dawla*, or its Turkish equivalent *devlet*, directly implied the widely accepted formulation of the idea that God gives, to whomever he chooses, a turn in sovereignty. In this sense, the fifteenth-century Ottoman chroniclers used the term *devlet*, alternately in the meanings of 'good fortune', 'divine favour' and 'state power'. Moreover, the term was often interchanged with the word *kut*. Clearly, the historical texts from this period used the steppe-nomadic idea of *kut* or 'divine favour' and the Arabic-Islamic concept of *devlet*, in the sense of 'good fortune' and 'state power', as interchangeable synonyms. For instance, Neşrî noted that Sultan Bâyezid I was aware of the importance of *kut* and *devlet*. Before departing on a campaign with his father, Bâyezid reassured

²⁹⁴ F. Rosenthal, 'Dawla', *Encyclopedia of Islam, Second Edition*, Brill Online (2014).

²⁹⁵ Lewis, *The Political Language of Islam*, 35-37.

²⁹⁶ Abou-El-Haj, *Formation of the Modern State*, 19-20.

²⁹⁷ Nikos Sigalas, 'Devlet et Etat: du glissement sémantique d'un ancien concept du pouvoir au début du XVIIIe siècle ottoman', in: *Byzantina et Moderna: Mélanges en l'honneur d'Hélène Antoniadis-Bibicou*, ed. Gilles Grivaud and Sokratis Petmezas (Athens, 2007) 385-415; idem, 'Des histoires des Sultans à l'histoire de l'Etat. Une enquête sur le temps du pouvoir ottoman (XVIe-XVIIIe siècles)', in: *Les Ottomans et le temps*, ed. François Georgeon and Frédéric Hitzel (Leiden, 2011) 99-127; Marinos Sariyannis, 'Ruler and State, State and Society in Ottoman Political Thought', *Turkish Historical Review* 4 (2013): 92-126.

Murad I that God would grant his favour to whomever had wisdom and the *devlet* on his side.²⁹⁸ The term *devlet* appears here in the meaning of ‘good fortune’ and ‘state power’. The word *devlet* also twice appears in Ahmedî’s history. In one verse, when the city of Kastamonu was conquered by Bâyezid I, Ahmedî used the word in the sense of ‘state power’: ‘because, for him such is the task of the state.’²⁹⁹ In another verse, *devlet* clearly meant ‘good fortune’, when Ahmedî referred to the reign of Süleyman Çelebi: ‘may despair not affect his good fortune.’³⁰⁰

The word *hümâ* was another term that the early Ottoman historical texts used as an equivalent to *devlet* (*dawla*) and *kut*. The Ottoman use of the term *hümâ* is related to the gradual blending of Persian-Islamic and Turkish traditions. The nomadic idea of *kut* that attributed divine dispensation to its recipient, is transmitted through the Islamic-Persian mythical bird of *hümâ* to whom God has entrusted part of his secrets. It was believed that the shadow of the *hümâ*-bird tumbling on a person’s head proclaimed the divine elevation of that person to royal authority, predicting a ‘good fortune’. The mythical *hüma*-figure derived from the pre-Islamic Persian principles of sovereignty. It represented the intangible ‘Glory of Light’. According to the philosophical and mystical opinion, the candidates for royalty can only enjoy the favour of the *hüma*-bird if they are spiritually qualified to receive it.³⁰¹ Part of this pagan mythology was reworked and reintroduced after the Persians had converted to Islam.³⁰² For instance, the adjective *hümâyûn* – which meant splendid, majestic – was applied to all objects and attributes related to Ottoman sovereignty. Particularly since the sixteenth century, the Ottoman ‘state council’ or *divan*, the army, the palace, the tent and decrees of sultans were always accompanied by the adjective *hümâyûn*.³⁰³

The fifteenth-century Ottoman poet Kivamî fashioned the ascension to the throne of Mehmed II in the following terms: ‘Sultan Mehmed Han Gazi became the monarch [*padishah*] of the lands of *Rûm*. He came to sit on the throne of ‘the state’ [*saltanat*]. Again

²⁹⁸ Neşrî, *Cihannüma*, 128: ‘Zîrâ, devlet ve akl bir kişiye kim yâr ola, zâhir budur ki, Hakk’uñ inâyeti anuñladur.’

²⁹⁹ Ahmedî, *Dasitân-i Tenvârîh*, 45: ‘böyle olur devlet işi çün ona.’

³⁰⁰ Ibidem, 50: ‘devletine irmesün anun fütûr.’

³⁰¹ This idea recurs in the famous mystical (*tasawwuf*) manuscript, *Mantiq-ut Tayr* or ‘The Language of the Birds’, of the Persian poet Farid Al Din Attar (d. 1221). Led by the hoopoe, all the birds of the world set forth in a quest of their king, Simurgh, which is equated with the *Hüma*-bird. Their quest takes them through seven valleys, which Attar used to describe the seven stages of spirituality and wisdom. See: Feridüddin Attar, *Mantiku’t Tayr*, tr. Mustafa Çiçekler (Ankara, 2005).

³⁰² Henri Corbin, *Iranian Islam. Spiritual and philosophical aspects*, vol. II (Paris, 1971) 81-140.

³⁰³ On *Hümâ*, see: Clément Huart and Henri Massé, ‘Huma’, *Et*²; Said A. Arjomand, *The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam* (Chicago, 1984) 89-100; Abolala Soudavar, *The Aura of Kings: Legitimacy and Divine Sanction in Iranian Kingship* (California, 2003) 6-9. On the mythical figure of *Hüma* in Ottoman poetry, see: Ahmet Talat Onay, *Eski Türk Edebiyatında Mazmunlar* (Istanbul, 1996) 276.

a silver winged *hümâ*-bird [*hüma-yı sîmîn-per*] such as a coquettish peacock flourished like a rose whose perfume gives life to the masters of sense. On the sapling of the *devlet* a *hümâ*-bird came to sit and his 'justice'³⁰⁴ made the people of the world reach towards infinite happiness.³⁰⁵

In this passage Kivamî used the term '*saltanat*' to denote the entity of 'the state' or sovereignty. We have seen in the dream narrative that Neşrî also deployed the concept *saltanat* in the meaning of 'state' or sovereignty, suggesting the type of regime as ruled by the sultan according to God's verdicts and favour. Neşrî noted that when Osman Bey informed the Sheikh of his dream, the latter predicted: 'O Osman, may it be blessing! God gave the *saltanat* ['state'] to you and to your descendants. May the entire world find a shelter under the shadow of your sons.'³⁰⁶

But more importantly, the earliest chroniclers rather used the term *saltanat* to denote the entity of 'state authority'. It appears that *saltanat* was used as an Ottoman equivalent to the term 'state'. The preference of the chroniclers for the term *saltanat* shows that the Muslim political tradition was prevailing in the 'knots of signifiers' of their narratives. The concept of *saltanat* was identified with the ruler's household and court, thus considered in highly personal terms. For instance, in the Law Book or *Kanunname* of Mehmed II, the term recurs in two cases. After having described the regulation of the court through a set of clauses, Sultan Mehmed said: 'so many affairs of the 'state' [*saltanat*] have been put into order. Hereafter, let my sons also continue to promulgate laws'.³⁰⁷ And when he decreed the famous code on fratricide: 'to whomever of my sons the *saltanat* is facilitated by God'.³⁰⁸ The term was also used in the fethname written after the Battle of Varna in 1444, to the Karakoyunlu ruler in Tabriz. The letter started with a description of Ottoman concept of sovereignty: 'With the favours of divine assistance and with the gifts of divine protection, God strengthened the bonds of our dominion and laid the foundation of our *saltanat* and strengthened the good order of our realm.'³⁰⁹ The fethname asserted that Ottomans cherish divinely state power, which was given to them in custody by God,

³⁰⁴ For a discussion of the concept 'justice', see below.

³⁰⁵ Kivamî, *Fetihnâme*, ed. Ceyhun Uygur (İstanbul, 2007) 70: 'Hâliya çün kim Rum kişverine Sultan Muhammed Han Gazi pâdişah oldu, saltanat tahtına geçti [...] hüma-yı sîmîn-per ve tavus-ı cilve-ger bigi yine sa'âdet ravzasında bir taze gül açıldı kim kohusu ma'ânî ehline cânlar bağışlar. Yine nihâl-i devlete bir hümâ kondı kim cihan halkı saye-i adlinde devletlere ve sa'âdetlere irişdiler, bî-nihâyet ve bî-şumar.'

³⁰⁶ Neşrî, *Cihânnümâ*, 41: 'Yâ Osman! Muştuluk olsun. Saña ve evlâduña Hak ta'âlâ *saltanat* viridi. Mecmû'î âlem evlâduñun zıll-i himâyetinde ola.' In his account of the same story, Oruç Beg used the word 'pâdişahlık', see: *Oruç Beg Tarihi*, 8.

³⁰⁷ *Kanunnâme-i Âl-i Osman*, ed. Özcan, 14: 'bu kadar ahval-ı *saltanata* nizam verildi. Şimden sonra gelen evlâd-ı kirâmım dahi islâha sa'y itsünler.'

³⁰⁸ Ibidem, 18: 'her kimesneye evlâdumdan *saltanat* müyesser ola.'

³⁰⁹ *Fethname* in: Imber, *The Crusade of Varna*, 189.

to upheld God's verdicts, the welfare of mankind and to fight the enemies of Islam. A most remarkable playing with the various connotations of the words *devlet* and *saltanat* could be found in a poem written by Sultan Süleyman. Translated into English from its poetic expression in Turkish, the first four verses said: 'Nothing is more prestigious than 'state power' [*devlet*] for the people; Yet, there is no better fortune [*devlet*] than a healthy breath; What they call 'the state' [*saltanat*] is merely a fight for the world; while there is no greater happiness than the unity of the world.'³¹⁰

Tursun Beg, however, used the words *devlet* and *saltanat* interchangeably in the introduction to his chronicle. He noted that there had always been rulers (*pâdishâh*) since the beginning of the world and that they would exist as long as God permitted them to. However, the wise ruler who had attained the fortunate state of happiness (*devlet yâr-ı hûşmend*), also had to try to reach the sovereignty in the afterlife (*ahiret sultanlığı*).³¹¹ Tursun Beg continued this line of thought by emphasising al-Ghazali's idea about the connection between moral and spiritual observance and political success: 'the *pâdishâh* will unquestionably win the hearts and mind of his subjects by striving to revive the knowledge of the 'religious' sciences [*ihyâ-yı ulum-ı dîniyye*], by dispensing justice day after day, by continuing the previous ruler's deeds of generosity, by distributing wealth, by developing the land through his just and virtuous rule. All this generates happiness that as a result wins the consent of the people under the rule of that state [*devlet*].'³¹² His argumentation was based on the principle of sovereignty, namely the symbiosis between 'the way of God' (*din*) and 'state power' (*dawla*). They are interdependent and their fortunes are intertwined. We have seen that al-Ghazali worked out this idea. This idea reached an explicit expression in the unity of 'din ü devlet' as developed in the sixteenth century.

Furthermore, Tursun Beg introduced his account of the reign of Sultan Mehmed II with the following ideological principles:

'the almighty God has granted to the House of Osman the sovereignty [*saltanat*] and the universal rule, [the right] to act according to the rules of universal sovereignty, [the right] to collect an army and to prepare them for battles, to reconstruct the land and to dispense justice, to implement the decrees of sovereignty [*saltanat*], to protect the frontiers of the Muslim world, to establish

³¹⁰ 'Halk içinde mûteber bir nesne yok *devlet* gibi / Olmaya *devlet* cihân da bir nefes sıhhat gibi / *Saltanat* didükleri ancak bir cihân gavgâsıdır / Olmaya baht u saadet dünya da vahdet gibi.'

³¹¹ Tursun Beg, *Tarih-i Ebu'l Feth*, 29.

³¹² Ibidem, 30: 'çün pâdishâh ihyâ-yı ulûm-ı diniyyede ve ifâzat-ı ma'dilette ve ibkâ-yı rûsûm-ı hayrat-ı selâtin-i selefte âsâr-ı sıdk u ragbet izhâr ide, ve bezl-i mâl ile celb-i kulûb ve adl ü fazl ile ta'mîr-i memleket kıla, yakîndür ki bu devletün dest-i eseri dâmen-i ubûda çeng irgüre.

the rules of generosity and to take care of the people, to collect taxes and to fund a treasury.’³¹³



³¹³ Tursun Beg, *Tarih-i Ebu'l Feth*, 32: ‘Ammâ ol tavr-ı cihângiri ve kavâ'id-i cihân-küşâyî, ve tertib-i asker ve durûb-ı âlât-ı hurub [...], ve ta'miri memleket ve intişâr-ı âsâr-ı ma'dilet ve tenfîz-i ahkâm-ı saltanat ve hıfz-ı hudûd-ı şerî'at, ve vaz'ı kavâ'id-i hayrat ve bast-ı merâsim-i meberrat, ve cem'i hazâyin ü defâyin ve sâyir esbâb-ı saltanat ü cihândâri ki, sultan-ı zi'l-batşı'ş-şedid kıbelinden Âl-i Osman'a virildi.’

3.4 The Discursive Registers of Rulership in the Early Ottoman State Ideology

3.4.1 The *Gaza* or conquest ideology

After the long discussion of the Islamic and Ottoman political thought, I will explore more in detail the discursive registers that frequently recur in the discourse of the Ottoman chroniclers. I will shed more light on the predominant concepts, such as the *gaza*, justice (*adl*), etc., which served to shape the discourses of early state ideology.

As discussed in Chapter 2, in the earliest Ottoman chronicles, *gaza* (raid into enemy territory) served as a foundational concept for the legitimation of the early state formation. The Ottoman court poet Ahmedî who wrote the first Ottoman historical text that has come down to us in writing (c. 1410, see Chapter 1), was the first author to present the Ottoman sultans explicitly as *gazi*-sultans. He defined the *gazi* as: ‘the servant of God’ (*Tangrının ferrâşıdır*), ‘the sword of God’ (*Hak kılıcıdır*) and ‘the support and refuge of the people of religion’ (*püşt ü penâh-ı ehl-i dîn*).³¹⁴ Indeed the notion of *gaza* appealed to a wide variety of people. Moreover, what could be called the ‘*gaza*-ideology’ also corresponded with the idea of universal rule that was inspired by the Islamic political thought. The political Ottoman world view also frequently applied the juridical concepts of the Muslim law. ‘The realm of Islam’ (*dar al-Islam*), the ‘realm of war’ (*dar al-harb*) and the ‘realm of truce’ (*dar al-’ahd*) were recurring concepts within the political discourse formulated in the historiographical texts.³¹⁵

However, these juridical concepts were not always the best tools to formulate a comprehensible analysis of the complex political realities and historical practices of the Ottoman Empire. If one does not consider the differences between norm and reality, it can obviously be misleading to take these fundamentally normative ideas at face value. Actually, the concepts ‘*dar al-Islam*’ and ‘*dar al-harb*’ were developed by various schools of jurisprudence in the tenth century, at a time when Muslims increasingly began to travel outside the Muslim world. As a result, the need arose to distinguish the territories in which Islamic law was applicable outside the *dar al-Islam*.³¹⁶ Muslim jurists subsequently

³¹⁴ Ahmedî, *Dasitan-i Tevârîh*, 27.

³¹⁵ For example, see: Viorel Panaite, *The Ottoman Law of War and Peace. The Ottoman Empire and Tribute Payers* (New York, 2000) 26-32, 82-86.

³¹⁶ For the creation of a territorial juridical system concerning both Byzantium and the Muslim world, see: Youval Rotman, ‘Byzance face à l’Islam Arabe 7^e-10^e siècle. D’un droit territorial à l’identité par la foi’, *Annales HSS* LX, 4 (2005) 767-787, 775-778.

developed conceptual frameworks and juridical tools to regulate the relations with non-Muslim states and communities. The Ottomans also adapted these Islamic juridical notions. The fifteenth-century poet, Kivamî, noted when describing Mehmed II's campaign against Moldavia: 'The Sultan of the World went upon Moldavia [*Kara Bogdan*] with the intention of carrying out the gaza for God's sake [*fi-sebîli'llah niyyet-i gaza*]. He crossed with the army of the Islam the bloody Danube and passed into the *dar al-harb* [realm of war].'³¹⁷

As demonstrated in Chapter 2, the gaza did not aim at proselytism against the Christians nor did it intend to destroy the infidel world – the *Dârülharb* – driven by a priori religious hatred. It was unlikely that the Ottomans conquered Christian countries merely because of religious hostility – as Wittek claimed – while they ensured the non-Muslims a safe place in their society. The Ottoman state ideology used gaza as a legitimising rhetoric tool to cover its endeavours to subdue their adversary Christian states, as well as the rival dynasties in the Muslim world. Both in, medieval European history and early Ottoman period, the wars of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries were the products not only of simple violence; wars resulted in the growth of centralised jurisdictions, governmental intrusiveness and administrative capacity.³¹⁸ The Ottoman gaza or conquest ideology can be considered as a component of state formation, or as Charles Tilly noted: 'war makes the state and the state makes war.'³¹⁹

The tensions between different social groups who struggled for power and rewrote their history were reflected in the various chronicles. Their discourses reveal that the political ideals and self-representation as *gazis* can also be considered as a part of an identity. For the Ottomans, the gazi-ideal could go hand-in-hand with a belief in it. As I will demonstrate, the gazi-ideal interacted with other components of the cultural environment, practices and legacies. The earliest Ottoman historical texts adapted the gaza-register to the horizon of expectations of their intended audiences to whom they wished to appeal. It can be considered as a legitimising tool used by the dynasty to justify its political status within the Islamic political arena. Ottoman claims to sovereignty had to obtain a degree of consent from the people that they ruled. Most importantly, for many Muslims, the military successes of the Ottomans offered them a source of status as heroic warriors at the frontiers of the Muslim world.³²⁰ As the Ottoman dynasty attached great importance to their public image, the chroniclers explicitly emphasised the gazi-identity of the sultans.

Indeed, many passages employing the discursive register of gaza can be encountered in the early chronicles. Almost every Ottoman campaign was described in terms of gaza

³¹⁷ Kivamî, *Fetihnâme*, 444.

³¹⁸ Watts, *The Making of Politics*, 19-30.

³¹⁹ Tilly, *The Formation of Nation States*, 42.

³²⁰ Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual*, 287-290.

and the term became a real *topos* in the discourse of nearly all the fifteenth-century historical texts. The concept of *gaza* appear in the early Ottoman chronicles as a discursive tool to ideologically explain the past with the goal of alleviating the political conflicts with Christian and Muslim states. Neşrî, for instance at one point, noted that Osman Gazi decided to perform *gaza*, so that he could win his bread and would not be dependent on any other ruler for his livelihood and existence. After Osman captured Bilecik, the contemporary sultans and rulers granted him whatever he seized from the infidels. For this reason, Neşrî stated that Osman and his descendants were called *gazis*.³²¹ Aşık Paşazade asserted that Osman proclaimed his declaration of independence from the Seljuks by claiming lineage from the first settlers and by emphasising his dedication to *gaza*. When Tursun Fakih, one of his jurists, recommended Osman Gazi to ask the permission of the Seljuk sultan, Osman replied: 'I conquered this city [Karacahisar] with my own sword! What has the sultan to do with this that I should ask his authorisation? God gave him the sultanate and He granted me the office of khanate by *gaza*. Concerning the banner he granted me, it was I who bore the banner and fought against the infidels. And if he says: I descend from the House of Selçuk; then I say that I am a grandson of Gök Alp. And if he says: I came to this land before them; my grandfather Süleyman Shah himself came before him. When the people heard this news from Osman Gazi, they accepted [his independence].'³²² Neşrî clearly considered the first Ottoman rulers both as nomadic leaders as well as *gazis*.

Curiously, the tone of *gaza* narratives in the chronicles was not always hostile. There was a famous love story told by Aşık Paşazade (with some modifications by Neşrî). This romantic story dealt with the daughter of a Byzantine commander of the Castle of Aydos letting in the Ottomans, after she fell in love with the leader of the *gazis*, to become in the end the wife of the young leader, Gazi Rahman.³²³ This 'gazi legend' or folk tale played during the early reign of Orhan Gazi, to the background of the Ottoman siege of the Castle of Aydos (1328), which the Byzantines called *Aetos*, meaning 'eagle'. In his chronicle Aşık Paşazade recorded this popular narrative about the conquest of Aydos Castle, which was

³²¹ Neşrî, *Cihânnümâ*, 28-29: 'Mahzâ etmeği gazâdan çıkarayın ve hiç bir melike ihtiyaç göstermiyeyin; hem dünya ve hem âhiret elüme girsın. Ve bunun zamânında olan selâtîn-i izâm ve mülûk-i kirâm, Bilecük'i feth idicek aña mâni olmayup, kâfirden ne feth iderse aña helâl olsun, didiler. Anuñçün Osman'a ve evlâdına gâzi dinildi.'

³²² Aşık Paşazade, *Tevarih-i Al-i Osman*, ed. Yavuz, 289: 'Osman Gazi eydür: Bu şehri ben hûd kendü kılıcum-ıla aldum. Sultânun bunda ne dahlı var kim andan izin alam, didi. Ana sultanlık viren Tañrı bana dahı gazây-ıla hanlık virdi, didi. Ve eger minneti şol sancag-ise ben hûd dahı sancak götürüp küffar-ıla oğraşmadum, dir. Ve eger ol ben Âl-i Selçuk neslindenendirse, ben hûd Gök Alp oğlın, dirin. Ve eger bu eyâlete ben anlardan öñdin geldüm dirse, benüm dedem Süleyman Şah dedem hûd andan evvel gelüp turur, didi. Osman Gazi'den bu habarları işidicek bu halk râzı oldılar.'

³²³ Ibidem, 303-306.

an important fortification in the Byzantine defence system guarding the roads to Constantinople and protecting the seaports nearby.³²⁴

The synopsis of the story goes as follows. One night the castellan's daughter had a dream in which she saw the Prophet [*hazret-i resûl*]: a 'lovely-faced friendly person' [*bir hûb ve latîf sûretli kiři*] came, raised her out of a pit, washed her and clothed her in new silk garments. When she woke up she could not forget the appearance of the man of her dream. She was curious about the man who saved her out the well; not yet aware of the significance of her dream, she ceaselessly wandered until 'the Turks' besieged the castle. The girl went to fight the Turks and recognised the 'man of her dream' leading the siege. With a sudden revelation the girl returned home and wrote a letter in which she described her dream and promised to turn over the castle to the gazis at an appointed time. She attached the letter to a stone and threw it down. It landed at the feet of Gazi Rahman. When the letter was interpreted the gazis decided to leave. The inhabitants of the castle rejoiced at the gazis departure. Later, the girl dropped a rope and Gazi Rahman climbed up into the castle. Together they captured the doorkeeper, let in the other gazis and seized the castle. Gazi Rahman, together with the commander of the castle, his daughter and the treasure, was sent to the Ottoman ruler Orhan Gazi, who rewarded him with the hand of the girl. Aşık Paşazade concluded by assuring his readers that he did not invent this story, he wrote down the information that had reached him.³²⁵ This story was clearly rooted in thirteenth-century oral epic narratives on the deeds of famous dervish-gazi hero's, such as *Battalname* and *Saltukname* – and in the much earlier Oğuz narrative of Dede Korkut stories.³²⁶ These narrative sources formed some of the stylistic inspirations of the early Ottoman historical texts. As already noted, Aşık Paşazade derived his information for the early period from the text of Yahşi Fakih, which only survived in his chronicle (see Chapter 1).

³²⁴ For a discussion on this story in the chronicles, see: Paul Wittek, 'The Taking of Aydos Castle: A Ghazi Legend and its Transformation', *Arabic and Islamic Studies in Honor of H.A.R. Gibb*, ed. George Makdisi (Cambridge, 1965) 662-672.

³²⁵ Aşık Paşazâde, *Tevarih*, 306.

³²⁶ For a discussion of the parallels between the account of Aşık Paşazâde and that of *Battalname* and the Dede Korkut narrative, see: William Hickman, 'The Taking of Aydos Castle: Further Considerations on a Chapter from Aşıkpaşazade', *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 99/3 (1979): 399-407, esp. 402-405.



Figure 12: Miniature of the legend about the capture of Aydos Castle. Gazi Rahman enters the castle by climbing to the hair of his lover, the daughter of the Byzantine commander of the castle.
Source: *Şehnâme-i Âl-i Osman* (ca. 1550). Reproduced in: Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*.

Indeed, one of the characteristics of the early Ottoman historiographical tradition was the blending of fiction and facts, such as the *menakıb* or legendary narratives woven around the deeds of gazis. As such, Aşık Paşazade kept the style and the line of narrative of this folk story intact and integrated it into his chronicle. The religious and romantic facets of the dream and the story clearly expressed the various dimensions of the gaza; i.e. the fusion of the struggle for Islam with more worldly concerns, such as material benefits and emotional affairs. This understanding of gaza was mostly widespread among the popular social groups, especially among the gazi circles to which Aşık Paşazade appealed. A convincing explanation for the girl's desertion of her own community is provided through her dream, where she first sees the Prophet and then the 'lovely-faced friendly person'. He included a poem, which expresses the Anatolian Turkish Sufi spiritual ideas. Aşık Paşazade alluded to the fusion of two dimensions of love, spiritual and worldly: 'Who has seen that friend [*dost*]³²⁷ with the eye of the soul; the moment she saw him she yielded her whole being to her friend. Nothing but the lover remained in the

³²⁷ The word '*dost*' means both friend as God in Turkish Sufi poetry.

city of the soul; thought dispersed, the reason is given away to the winds. O dervishes, do not be astonished by this; she did not see him, but the eye of the soul saw. Aşıkî, love has two meanings; the one is apparent and the other is the Manifest One [God].³²⁸

In his own version of the story, Neşrî clearly based his account on that of Aşık Paşazade with some minor modifications. For instance, Neşrî changed the name of the hero into Abdurrahman Gazi. As ‘al-Rahman’ is one of the names of God, he probably found it not fitting and modified it into a more permissible usage of Abdurrahman. He also depicted the daughter of the *tekvur* of the castle not as intending to fight, but coming to the edge of a tower to watch how the battle against the Turk was evolving [*Türk ile nice ceng iderler temâşa ide*].³²⁹ In both versions, the key character in the story was the girl, the castellan’s daughter. A remarkable difference in Neşrî’s account is that he gave the story an explicitly romantic tone, by leaving out any reference to the Prophet. Neşrî, who was more detached from the gazi-ethos, probably wished to distinguish the personality of the Prophet from this folk-legend. The obvious reason to tell this story is to cast a familiar basis for the ethos of gaza-conquests, represented as wilfully surrender of the inhabitants.

3.4.1.1 The Ottoman-Karamanid conflicts

As discussed in Chapter 2, the Ottomans did not exclusively fought against the Byzantines or Christian polities, but also battled with the fellow Muslim principalities in Anatolia. In the 1380s, for instance, the Ottoman dynasty was involved in a conflict with the Turkish Muslim polity of the Karamanids. Contemporary sources such as the Royal Calendars or *Takvims* (see Chapter 1) show that the Karamanids were not the only fighting against the Ottomans. These calendars referred to Nasreddin beg of the Dulkadir dynasty, to Hamza beg and other local Turkish princes who also were in conflict with the Karamanid ruler Ibrahim Beg.³³⁰ Moreover, the Karamanids also seem to have bothered the Turkish principality of the Germiyanids as well.³³¹ In this respect, Neşrî’s search for a legal base of Murad I’s campaign against the fellow Turkish Muslim rulers, is of particular interest for our topic. He noted that directly after Murad I’s accession, the neighbouring ‘tyrant lords’ intended to attack the Ottoman city of Bursa. Consequently, Murad called his jurists to a

³²⁸ Aşık Paşazâde, *Tevarih-i Al-i Osman*, 304: ‘Anun kim cân gözi ol döstü gördi; Hemîn-dem gördi varın dâsta virdi. Gönül şehrinde ol dâst kaldı ancak; Fikir tagıldı aklın yile virdi. Ta’accüb itmen anı iy azîzler; Anu kim görmedi cân gözi gördi. Âşıkî ‘ışka ma’nî iki vardır; Biri zâhir biri dâst ma’nî oldu.’

³²⁹ Neşrî, *Cihannüma*, 67.

³³⁰ *Tarihî Takvimler*, 41.

³³¹ *Tarihî Takvimler*, 37.

council and said that ‘while he gathered his army to go on gaza into Europe, the tyrant lords had attacked the Muslim people’.³³² As they were harassing the Muslims, Murad I asked for a *fatwa* (religious verdict) from the *ulema*-judges to evaluate whether fighting against these ‘tyrant’ Muslim princes was permissible. The judges replied that although the gaza against infidels was not obligatory, however, to remove the oppression of Muslims was a compulsory duty for a just Muslim prince.³³³ We observe that the gaza-idea and the concept of ‘tyranny’³³⁴ offered the legitimate grounds to undertake a war against the fellow Muslim rulers. This kind of justification seem to be supported by the Islamic jurists, according to Neşrî.

In his account of Sultan Murad I’s conflict with the Karamanid ruler Alâeddin Beg in 1386, Neşrî portrayed Murad I in line with the ideals of gazi-rulership: ‘While I am occupied with efforts for the sake of God and religion [*Hak ta’âla yolunda dîn gayretine çalışup*], leave therefore my land, forsake the pleasures of banquets [*ayş ü işreti terk idüp*] and go amidst the infidels [*kâfir içine girüp*] to dedicate my life day and night to gaza, with the intention of repelling calamities and troubles [*belâ ve mihnet ihtiyâr idem*] from our lands. He hinders me from undertaking the gaza and enforces me to use the sword upon fellow Muslims. If I leave him and continue with gaza then the Muslims will suffer more from this tyrant. And if I decide to fight him, then the gazis will have to use their swords against Muslims [*mü’minler*].’³³⁵ In a later passage, the legitimacy of a campaign against the Karamanids is justified as follows: ‘Without having defeated you, I cannot undertake gaza in peace of mind.’³³⁶ [...] ‘Every year, he attempts to hinder me from the pursuit of gaza. To carry out gaza against who hinders the gaza, is the supreme gaza.’³³⁷

In the passage above, we observe that as undertaking the gaza to expand the realm of Islam was considered a higher occupation in Islamic political thought, Neşrî therefore situated Sultan Murad I in a superior position to the Karamanid prince, Alâeddin Beg. The latter was depicted as a local dynast and most importantly a tyrant who oppressed the Muslims. According to Neşrî, Sultan Murad – ‘who worked for the sake of Islam, had abandoned the worldly pleasures and had dedicated his day and night to the gaza’ – was

³³² Neşrî, *Cihânnüma*, 88: ‘Sultan Murad [...] leşker cem idüp, diledi ki, Rûm-eline geçüp gazâ ide. Etrafuñ mülûki Bursa’ya kasd itdiler. Anı işidüp ulemâyı cem idüp, istiftâ idüp, eyitdi: ‘İş-bu leşkeri kafir niyyetine cem idüb müteveccih oldum-kim, Gelibolı’dan geçüb küffara gaza idem. Bu taraftan mülûk-i zaleme, müslimîn üzere kasd itdiler. Küffar niyyetine cem olan leşkerle bunların muharebesi caiz olub, gaza niyyetin tehir itmek reva olur mı?’ didi.

³³³ Ibidem: ‘Ulema eyitdiler: küffara gaza nefir-i âmm olmasa, farz-ı kifâyedür. Amma müminlerden mezâlimi def’itmek farz-ı âyındur.’

³³⁴ For the concept of ‘tyranny’, see below under ‘justice’.

³³⁵ Neşrî, *Cihânnüma*, 99-100.

³³⁶ Ibidem, 101

³³⁷ Neşrî, *Cihânnüma*, 103.

hindered in his gaza-endeavours and conquests in Europe by the Karamanids. Neşrî suggested that the Karamanid dynasty had hindered Murad I's gaza activities, making it a duty for Murad to take measures against the Karamanids. The rebellious act of the Karamanids justified the war against them and Neşrî concluded: 'to carry out gaza against who hinders the gaza, is the supreme gaza'.³³⁸

Obviously, this passage had the purpose of highlighting the Ottoman dynasty's commitment to the gaza, which appears to be explicitly formed during Murad I's conflict with the Karamanid ruler. Neşrî's account suggested that the Ottoman dynasty legitimised and denoted the wars against Christian and Muslim rivalling polities through the term gaza. By emphasising its gaza activities, Neşrî ideologically explained that the Ottoman dynasty had all rights to claim priority and pre-eminence over the neighbouring Turkish principalities in Anatolia. The discursive register of gaza in Neşrî's account clearly constituted the ideological legitimisation of the Ottoman dynasty's sovereignty. He clustered his account around the image of Murad I as the Gazi Sultan who reportedly personified the ideal ruler.

Furthermore, following Islamic jurisprudence, the Ottoman historian described the Karamanid attack of the Ottoman realm as an act of rebellion. According to the Islamic law books, a rebel Muslim prince or regime was called *bâgî* and warfare against it was legal. It was lawful for a Muslim state to wage war against the rebels and bandits. It is in this light that the Ottoman jurists prepared a legal ground for the war against Karaman-oğlu by appealing to the concept of *dâr ül-bâgî* (land of rebellion). A country in rebellion was categorised by Muslim jurists as involved in *dâr ül-bâgî*, which was very important for legitimising the warfare between Muslim states.³³⁹

Remarkably, the *dervish*-historian Âşık Paşazâde remained silent about this first Ottoman-Karamanid conflict between Sultan Murad I and Karaman-oğlu Alâeddin Bey in 1386, probably because it did not fit well in his line of narrative. Writing in 1485, Âşık Paşazâde possibly wished to represent the first Ottoman rulers as sincere gazi-princes fighting only against the infidels. Warfare against Christian states was easily covered with the ideology of gaza, but wars against fellow Muslim states were more difficult to explain to his gazi and dervish audience unless there was a legitimate basis.

During the preparations for the battle with the Karamanids in 1386, Neşrî recorded the visit of a Mamluk embassy from Cairo to Murad I's princely court in Bursa. The envoy brought a message of the Mamluk Sultan who ascribed to Murad I the title of 'Sultan of

³³⁸ Neşrî, *Cihânnüma*, 103: 'Mânî'i gazâya gazâ, gazâ-yı ekberdür.'

³³⁹ On the concept of rebellious Muslim ruler or *bâgî*, see: Feridun Emecen, 'Ottoman policy of conquest of the Turcoman principalities of western Anatolia with special reference to Sarukhan Beyliği' ed. Elizabeth Zacharidou, *The Ottoman Emirate, 1300-1389* (Rethymnon, 1993) 35-36; Bernard Lewis, *The political language of Islam* (Chicago, 1988) 81-82.

the Gazis and Mujahidin' (*Sultânü'l-guzât ve'l mücâhidîn*). According to Neşrî, the Mamluk monarch allegedly asked to Sultan Murad I to recognise him as his son and not to see him differently than crown prince Bâyezid. The Mamluk Sultan also said that his affection for and fondness of Murad was such that if he had a chance, he would readily take part in the gaza on Murad's side.³⁴⁰ Neşrî likely embellished the content of the envoys' message in order to emphasise the support that Murad I received on the eve of the battle with the Karamanids. However, his suggestion that the Mamluk Sultan pleaded to be accepted as a son of Murad I implied power relations in which Murad was categorised in a superior position than the Mamluk ruler. It meant that the Mamluk Sultan had supposedly been a vassal of the Ottoman Sultan. This can of course be hardly the case in 1386, when the actual event took place. Writing around 1495, at a time of growing Ottoman-Mamluk tensions, Neşrî obviously narrated this event in a way that heralded Ottoman power and influence vis-à-vis the Karamanid and Mamluk adversaries.

Likewise, the campaign of Murad I against the Karamanid ruler Alâeddin Beg was explained and defended by Ahmedî by emphasising an Ottoman commitment to gaza which was hindered by the Karamanids. Remarkably, Ahmedî justified this conflict with the fellow Muslim dynasty by referring to the gaza-ideology. He noted: 'For good fortune befell to Gazi Murad; the crown and throne found adornment through him. He was solemnly devoted to continue the gaza; and he inflicted on the infidel what he deserved. He was widely known for his heroism. And all his efforts focused on the gaza. His brothers [Karamanid prince and other Turkish lords] became hostile to him; Their fate ended in his hands. They all perished by his sword. [...] The şah of Karaman took up battle with him [...] The Varsak and the Turgud and the Turk and Rum and Şam, all were with him [Karamanid ruler] without exception.'³⁴¹

The rhetoric of gaza did not mean that the Ottomans and neighbouring Turkish princes always supported each other and were allies against Christian states. There were many conflicts and incidents between the Ottomans and the other Turkish principalities, particularly with the *beglik* of Karaman. Since fighting 'your own kind' is obviously not favoured in any society, the Ottomans searched for ways to justify their wars with other Muslim states, in this case with the Karamanids. In Neşrî's account of the way how Sultan Murad I prepared legitimate grounds for warfare against Karamanid ruler Alâeddin Beg, the concepts of gaza and 'tyranny'³⁴² recur as the important discursive registers in the ideological narrative of the text. The chronicler represented Murad I as a sultan who

³⁴⁰ Neşrî, *Cihânnüma*, 100.

³⁴¹ Ahmedî, *Dasitân-i Tevârîh*, 36-37: 'Çünkü ol Gazi Murâda irdi baht; Buldı ârâyış anuñla tac u taht. Nezir itdi kim kıla dâyim gazâ; Anı ide kafiye ki oldur sezâ. Ol bahadurlıkda key ma'rufıdı; Hem gazâya himmeti maşrûfıdı. Oldılar yağı ana kardeşleri; Kamunun bitdi elinde işleri. Kılıcından oldılar cümle tebâh. [...] İtdi anunla Karaman şahı ceng [...] Varsak u Turgud u Türk ü Rum u Şam; Anunıla bileyidi anda tamam.'

³⁴² For a discussion of the term 'tyranny', see below the section on 'justice'.

upholds the ideals of gaza. The concepts gaza and tyranny (*zulm*) also justified Murad's punitive action against Alâeddin, who was allegedly only good in 'stealing horses' and in oppressing the poor and defenceless people.

Neşrî concluded his account of the reign of Murad I by presenting him as the ideal gazi ruler: 'this Sultan Murad, who currently is famous as Gazi King, was a good sovereign like his father. He dedicated his entire life to gaza. No Sultan of the House of Osman undertook such gaza-campaigns as he did. He was the one who smashed the nose of the infidels and crushed their morale and shape.'³⁴³ Likewise, Ahmedî also praised Murad I as a gazi-sultan in various verses: 'They seized so many lands and cities from the infidels and subjugated all their kings. Keep in mind that God has said 'My people will ascend and nothing can rise above them', said it for them. The reports are many that Gazi Murad was a man of pure sincerity and of pure belief.'³⁴⁴ In his account of the Battle of Kosovo, Ahmedî again fashioned Murad I as a ruler who dedicated his life to gaza and subsequently gave his life for this purpose: 'There, in that instant, the Auspicious Sultan, who was a gazi, became a martyr. He was a gazi and indeed he was carrying out the gaza. He became a martyr and certainly he is a martyr. Recall [in battle] to his soul, so that you can achieve conquests by means of his conquests.'³⁴⁵

These verses strike the keynote of Ahmedî's work that represented the rulers of Ottoman dynasty as *gazis* who devote their life to gaza and as such are destined to die a martyr's hero death in battle. He heralded gaza through martyrdom: 'The one who became a martyr along God's path; Do not think that he has died, for the fortunate one is alive.'³⁴⁶ As his work was conceived as a eulogy rather than a historical work in the strict sense, he preferred to narrate some of their brilliant exploits, their highest merits and of course their heroic battles and deaths in presenting the Ottomans to his audience. According to Ahmedî, these sufficiently characterised the pivotal qualities of heroes with exemplary traits. His account of the events served the portrayal of the ideal types as embodied in his heroes. In contrast to Neşrî, Ahmedî seems to aim at telling a story that illustrated the historical reality in a simpler form by choosing events and simplifying their historical significance. The events he selected were certainly not completely invented but were simplified and reframed with an array of legends. In any event, Ahmedî's silence and focus on certain topics have to be understood in this context. As

³⁴³ Neşrî, *Cihannüma*, 139: 'Ve bu ol Sultân Murâd'dur ki, şimdiki zamânda buna Gâzî Hünkâr demekile meşhûrdur, atası gibi ol dahî sahib-i hayr'dı. Cemî ömrini gazaya sarf itmişdi. Nesl-i Osman'da bu itdügi gazâyı hiç bir pâdişah itmedi. Evvel küffarun burnın ovup, şevketin giderüp sûretin sıyan budur.'

³⁴⁴ Ahmedî, *Dasitân-i Tevârih*, 43: 'Kafir elinden bu mikdar il ü şehîr; Alıban kıldı mülukün cümle kahr. Ümmeti ta'alâ velâ tu'lâ diyen; Bunlarun-çün didi ola fikr eyle sen. Söz öküştür çünki ol Gazi Murad; Pâk-ihlâsıdı vü pâk- itikâd.'

³⁴⁵ Ibidem, 44: 'Ol arada ol demde Sultan-ı sa'id; Gaziyidi mutlaka oldı şehid. Gaziyidi vü gazada ber-hak ol; Çün şehid oldı şehid-i mutlak ol. İstianet dile ruhından anun; Ki iresin fethe fütuhâtından anun.'

³⁴⁶ Ibidem, 27: 'Anı ki ola Tanrı yolunda şehid; Öldi sanma kim diridür ol sa'id.'

demonstrated in Chapter 2, Ahmedî presented the Ottoman Sultans as gazis in ideological ways that served the political purposes and needs of his time.

In the end, Ahmedî's representation of gaza became a dominant idea in all early Ottoman chroniclers. In Neşrî's account, when the Karamanid ruler had attempted to hinder their activities, he hindered the performance of this gaza-mission and it was a moral duty for the dynasty to take measures against him. Neşrî explicitly used the gaza-register in his attempt to defend Murad I's campaign against the Karamanids. In the chronicles, the dedication to gaza constituted one of the central legitimations of the dynasty's claim to rule. The gaza-register appears as a literary device to explain the inter-state conflicts and to defend the development of state formation. This phenomenon can also be clearly observed below in the correspondence between Bâyezid and Timur.

3.4.1.2 The Correspondance between Bâyezid and Timur

Apart from the prominence of this motive in the chronicles, the discursive register of 'gaza' also explicitly appeared in the correspondence between Bâyezid and Timur. Bâyezid I had responded to Timur's challenge by reconciling his Muslim identity with the nomadic political traditions.³⁴⁷ Like 'Emir Timur', Sultan Bâyezid I also appealed to the Muslim *gazi*-idea. Bâyezid said that fighting Timur – whom he compared with infidel Mongols – amounted to the 'greatest gaza'.³⁴⁸ The gaza in this sense meant war against the Mongols. They both tried to combine the ideals of a ruler mandated to establish a universal empire, in the nomad steppe tradition, with the Islamic ideal of political unification of the Muslim world. Before the battle in 1402, both monarchs exchanged a series of letters during two years. The records of this epistolary dialogue between Bâyezid and Timur were not preserved independently nor were they reproduced in the fifteenth-century Ottoman chronicles. However, Ibn Arabshah, a historian at the court of Timur, did mention the epistolary dialogue and one of the letters is quoted almost verbatim in his chronicle.³⁴⁹ On the Ottoman side, four letters are found in a sixteenth-century compilation of diplomatic briefs, collected by Feridun Bey (d. 1583), a scribe in the Ottoman chancellery).³⁵⁰ The authenticity of the letters in Feridun's manuscript remains

³⁴⁷ For an analysis of the letters between Bâyezid and Timur, with special attention to their invocation of Mongol, Turkish, Rum Seljuk and Islamic *gazi* principles and hegemony claims, see: M. H. Yınaç, 'Bayazid I', *İslam Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 2, 269-279; Anooshahr, *The Ghazi Sultans and the Frontiers of Islam*, 120-128.

³⁴⁸ Yınaç, 'Bayazid I', 277.

³⁴⁹ Anooshahr, *The Ghazi Sultans*, 121.

³⁵⁰ See: Feridun Bey, *Münşeat us-Selatin*, vol. 1 (İstanbul, 1858) 119-126.

a topic of intensive debate among scholars.³⁵¹ However, important for this study is the rhetoric of the correspondance and specifically the question whether and how the term *gaza* was deployed. Even if Feridun Bey forged some of these letters in the 1570s, he most probably attempted to reformulate them in line with the *gazi* image which we also encounter in the fifteenth-century historical texts.



Figure 13: (left) Sultan Yıldırım Bâyezid I.

Figure 14: (right) Emir Timur Lenk. Timurid period.

Source: Topkapı Palace Museum H2152, folio 33b.

The first letters between Bâyezid and Timur were written in Arabic. Timur wrote an intimidating letter with a brief message: ‘Know this, you king of Rûm, Yıldırım Bâyezid, that I am the new sultan in the lands of God’.³⁵² He demanded the return of the two Turkish lords who had fled from Timur to Bâyezid’s protection. Bâyezid responded to Timur’s claim by rejecting Timur’s Muslim identity because of his violence towards Muslims. Bâyezid represented himself and his dynasty as the true gazis, who spent all their time ‘fighting the enemies of religion’: ‘Praise the lord who honoured us with the Islam and graced us with *gaza* from amongst the sultans of the Arabs and Persians. Know this, you atrocious dog, who is called Timur and who is more infidel than the Byzantine emperor, we read your letter, you cursed man. Do you take me as the kings of Persia or

³⁵¹ For the source critic of Feridun Bey’s *Münşeat* and the debate on the authenticity of the letters, see: M. Halil, ‘Feridun Beg Münşeatı’, *Tarih-i Osmani Encümeni Mecmuası*, 162-165, 216-226. A recent overview of the debate, see: Anooshahr, *The Ghazi Sultans*, 121-122.

³⁵² Feridun Bey, *Münşeat us-Selatin*, vol. 1, 120. For these letters in Arabic and Persian, I used the translation of Anooshahr, *The Ghazi Sultans and the Frontiers of Islam*, 123.

the rabble Mongols of the steppe [...] Sure enough, all you do is break promises and vows, shed blood and violate the honour of women. Our whole occupation and the bulk of our affairs is to fight the enemies of religion, be they infidels or apostates. [...]’³⁵³ Bâyezid’s reply supposedly led to Timur’s first invasion of Anatolia and capture of Sivas in 1400.

A year later, they exchanged two more letters, in which the princes switched to Persian. Timur defended himself by asserting that he was not keen on violating the honour of Muslims, and rather portrayed himself as their protector. He again demanded of Bâyezid to acknowledge his overlordship and avoid warfare. Bâyezid should not cause anxiety as they were like father and son in age. In return for his submission, Timur would aid Bâyezid in his gaza efforts as he was a well-known supporter of the gazis. Although Timur in his first letter had not recognised Ottoman dedication to gaza, he now seemed to have become aware of the Ottoman gaza-tradition from Bâyezid’s letter. He seemed to have accepted Bâyezid’s self-representation and called him the ‘protector of gazis and mujahids’. Therefore, he proposed to Bâyezid not to fight each other, because the infidel Franks would take advantage of it. However, he also implied that Bâyezid’s army was not composed of Muslims. Finally, Timur reminded Bâyezid that he undertook world conquest and was of Djengizid lineage, in contrast to Bâyezid whom he reproached with being of an unknown lineage.³⁵⁴

Bâyezid answered Timur in the following way: ‘Let him mark that my forefather of excellent lineage, Ertuğrul, along with three hundred warriors, dashed himself against the army of infidel Tatar Mongols who had overrun Sultan Alaaddin [Keykubad], the Seljuk prince, dashed himself against a mountain of iron and tore open the line of Mongols with the power of his mace, and with the help of God, broke and defeated them. He [Ertuğrul] was honoured with the position of marcher lordship of the frontier lands of the Muslims. His rightful heir, Sultan Osman made gaza his motto and his means of earning for this world and the next. [...] If we had intended to destroy countries and to subject people seeking world conquest, we would easily have captured all the lands from east to west. Instead, we have battled the adversaries of Muhammed’s religion. You called our army born of heathens. There is no shame in that. All the companions of the Prophet were thus. Benevolent sons of non-Muslims are better than cruel sons of Muslims. Until this day, no member of the House of Osman has repelled the enemy with flattery or with ruse. Rather, we come directly as the sun that lights the world.’³⁵⁵

In Bâyezid’s letters, the image of gazi-sultan was clearly already strongly consolidated and emphasised as the identity of the dynasty. Bâyezid dismissed Timur’s Mongol lineage by referring to his great grandfather Ertuğrul as a gazi who had already defeated the

³⁵³ Feridun Bey, *Münşeat*, 121.

³⁵⁴ Anooshahr, *The Ghazi Sultans*, 124-125.

³⁵⁵ As translated by Anooshahr, *The Ghazi Sultans*, 125-126.

Mongols of whose decent Timur boasted. He implied that gaza against the Mongols was a point of pride to him, since his ancestors had fought and defeated them. To defend his sovereignty against Timur's claims, Bâyezid asserted that the founders of his dynasty were legitimate rulers of excellent lineage. He represented his forefathers as proud marcher lords who were confirmed in their status by Seljuk Sultan Alaaddin Keykubad, the last independent Seljuk ruler before the Mongol invasion of Anatolia. Bâyezid also styled himself as the Sultan of Rum (*Sultan-ı Rûm*) and claimed the legacy of the Seljuks of Rum.

The discursive register of gaza had remained significant, but had changed in connotation during Bâyezid's time as directed mostly against Christian states. However, when Timur challenged Bâyezid by boasting his Djengizid lineage, Bâyezid most likely drew from the older thirteenth-century meaning of the notion of gaza as fighting against the Mongols, which was more appropriate in this situation. As discussed earlier, after the fall of the Ilkhanids in the early fourteenth century, the anti-Mongol understanding of gaza had steadily changed. When around 1400 Timur appeared on the scene as the new Mongol khan, the late thirteenth-century connotation of the gaza in the meaning of the fight against the pagan Mongols was revived by many Turkish princely courts in Anatolia. When Bâyezid represented himself as Sultan of Gazis, he was clearly drawing on this older Turkish rhetoric of gaza in the anti-Mongol sense.³⁵⁶

Though Bâyezid I represented himself as a gazi, some of the Ottoman chroniclers refused to use the title of gazi for Bâyezid, despite the fact that he himself deployed it explicitly against Timur. Ahmedî was the first writer who refused to depict him as a gazi, although he described his early reign similar to other rulers. In laudatory verses, he depicted Bâyezid as a just ruler, patron of sciences and scholars, etc. Concerning his conflict with Timur, Ahmedî seems to take a rather critical tone. For instance, he was remarkably silent about Bâyezid's victory against the crusaders at the Battle of Nicopolis. As Ahmedî had recorded his work several years after the Battle of Nicopolis, it was impossible that he had no information about this significant success of Bâyezid.

The obvious reason was that Ahmedî did not find it opportune to portray Bâyezid as a gazi, because of his sudden fall at the Battle of Ankara. If he had not been defeated by Timur, Ahmedî would probably have fashioned Bâyezid as a great gazi similar to his predecessors. But his unfortunate defeat enforced some modifications, because if a failure befell Bâyezid as a gazi, it would undermine the whole legitimacy of the dynasty and weaken the confidence in it. This was certainly not in the interest of Ahmedî's patron, Süleyman Çelebi, the son of Bâyezid, who competed for the throne. Ahmedî's treatment of the concept was actually the result of a work of art, which was produced in the service of the political objectives of his patron, belonging to the Ottoman dynasty.

³⁵⁶ Anooshahr, *The Ghazi Sultans*, 127.

The reason why the author of the Anonymous Chronicles also refused to call Bâyezid a gazi was the result of completely different political objectives and concerns. As noted in Chapter 1, the anonymous author expressed the concerns of the Turkish gazi nobility, who resented the attempts of Bâyezid to extend the bureaucratic and centralised administration to the entire realm. This had generated immense discontentment in the gazi milieu, as the warriors felt that they were being marginalised from their former positions in which they had been in control of resources and had inherited privileges. The anonymous text affirmed the concerns and values of that gazi audience about their society. As a result, the account of the Anonymous Chronicles is full of bitterness and expresses particular hostility towards Bâyezid. Consequently, the anonymous chronicler suggested that Bâyezid lost the battle against Timur because he failed to satisfy the needs of his followers, and that he should have known better in order not to lose the divine support for his kingdom and to behave accordingly.

However, Neşrî, who wrote almost a century after Ahmedî and was detached from these early fifteenth-century ideological and political concerns, saw no objections to fashion Bâyezid as a gazi. As he was an ulema-historian, rather addressing a courtly and scholarly audience, he portrayed Bâyezid in general both as a just ruler and as gazi.³⁵⁷ However, he did criticise him for neglecting to consult his officials and for his quick temper and anger as these were viewed as behaviours that a ruler should avoid.³⁵⁸ Among the fifteenth-century chroniclers, Neşrî was the only historian to praise Bâyezid despite his tragic defeat. For instance, he included the following poem in Persian where he scolded Timur as ‘a feetless kharidji’: ‘For many years, Gazi Sultan Bâyezid found the grace that had reached him. He ruled for nearly fourteen years the lands of Rum, as straight as the arrow under his arrow-ring. When the inevitable misfortunate reached him, he found his feet tied at the battlefield. Three nights before the start of the outer year, the feetless *kharidji* has defeated him.’³⁵⁹

3.4.1.3 Murad II as the ideal Gazi Sultan

We have already observed that in the chronicles Murad I was the first ruler who was fashioned as the ideal Gazi Sultan. However, the unfortunate defeat of Bâyezid I and the subsequent painful civil wars in 1403 represented a rupture in the use of the gazi-

³⁵⁷ Neşrî, *Cihânnüma*, 155: ‘İy begler! Sizin söziñüz gerçek mi yalan mı inanmazuz. Zîrâ, ol bir gâzî handur’; 151: ‘Pâdişâh-ı âlem-penâh [...] âlemi zalemeden hâlî kılup, bir vechile adl itdi ki, ganî vü fakîr, azîz, hakîr, vazî vü şerîf, kavî vü za’îf, hep anun zill-i himâyetinde âsûde olup.’

³⁵⁸ Neşrî, *Cihânnüma*, 163: ‘Bâyezid Gâzî gâyet ile gönüllü ve tiz-nefesdi. Tiz-nefesliginden sabr idemeyüb...’

³⁵⁹ Ibidem, 162: ‘Salhâ Sultân-ı Gâzî Bâyezid; Âncî himmet-râ der-û peyvest yâft. Kurb-ı çehârdeh sâl mülk-i Rûm-râ; Hem-çü tîr-est zîr-i şast yâft. Çün kazâ-yî mübrem âmed ber-sereş; Hîs-râ der ma’reke pâ-best yâft. Sâl-i hâric-râ se şeb kabl ez-duhûl; Hâricî bî-pây ber-vey dest yâft.’

ideology. The unity of the conception of gaza seems to have been broken during this period. Somewhat later, during the reign of Murad II, we see the notion of gaza come forward again as a prestigious discursive register. It was most strongly elaborated in the *Gazavat-ı Sultan Murad* or the 'Book of Conquest' dealing with Murad II's Varna campaign in 1444. This time, the concept was used in the meaning of struggle directed against the crusaders or infidels (*küffar*). During Murad II's reign, the Timurid threat had faded and the Ottoman state had mostly recovered. The anonymous author of *Gazavat* reported that when the Karamanid Ibrahim Beg allied himself with the Byzantine emperor John VIII against the Ottomans, Sultan Murad II called the jurists, explained the problem and asked them what needed to be done according to Islamic law: 'The Padişah summoned the ulema on the morning of the following day. When he explained the situation to them, he said: Masters, what is your ruling? What is the judgement of the Sharia if a man makes common cause with the infidel and causes harm and oppression to the community of Muhammed? The ulema replied: if this is the case, he is himself an infidel.'³⁶⁰

Some passages further on, Murad II replied to the Karamanid envoys, who told him that the Karamanid prince had repented what he had done and begged forgiveness: 'that scum called the son of Karaman has collaborated with the infidel and coveted the throne. Does he believe that he can get away with this mischief? Either I shall seize and kill him, or else he takes himself off to another land.'³⁶¹ The anonymous author of the *Gazavat* portrayed Murad II as a merciful Sultan, who finally forgave the Karamanid ruler on the condition that he should never again stir up any sedition or mischief. According to Aşık Paşazade and Neşrî, the Karamanids had launched an attack emboldened by the defeat of Shehabeddin Pasha (Kula Şâhin).³⁶² They noted that Karamanid lord was acting according to his coalition with the Serbians, which foresaw that the Hungarians attacked from the west and Karaman from the east.³⁶³

Confronted with a shortage of troops when the crusaders invaded in 1444, the *Gazavat* reported that Sultan Murad II declared the unusual *nefiri âm* or 'general mobilisation'. This measure obligated all Muslim men in the Ottoman realm to join the army: 'the Padişah of the World gave the command: because the infidels have overrun our dominions and are attacking us, it is incumbent on every member of the community of Muhammed to depart

³⁶⁰ *Gazavât*, 5: 'Yarındası al'es-sabah Padişah ulemayı katına davet edüb ve bu ahvali anlara söyleyüb dedi kim, efendiler ne buyurursunuz, bir adam kafir ile arka bir edüb ümmet-i Muhammed-i rencide ve pâymâl eylese, şer'an ne lâzım gelir dedikde, ulema cevap verüb eyittiler kim, çünkü öyle olıcak ol kafirdir.'

³⁶¹ *Ibidem*, 6: 'Karaman-oglu dedikleri pelîdin dîni imânı yokdur ve kâfir-i bî-dîn ile arka bir edüb taht arzûsuna düşmüş, ol eyle mi kıyâs eder ki bu fesâd anun yanına kala. Ya budur ki, anı ele getürüb başını keserim ve yahud başın alur bir gayrı iklîme gider.'

³⁶² Aşıkpaşazade *Tarihi*, ed. Öztürk, 172 ; Neşrî, *Cihânnümâ*, 291.

³⁶³ Aşıkpaşazade *Tarihi*, 156, 158.

for this gaza-war.³⁶⁴ The author noted that even the Ottoman Christians were invited to military service: ‘let everyone in Rumelia who is capable of wielding a mace set out, whether on foot or on horse.’³⁶⁵

In early Ottoman military practice, this *nefiri âm* or general mobilisation was still very exceptional, for the Islamic principles considered the gaza not as an obligatory exploit. Gaza was usually seen as *farz-i kifaye*: a battle waged by a group of warriors for the benefit of the whole society and community. However, in case of great danger for the Muslim community, as in the case of the Battle of Varna, the gaza was asserted by the Ottoman government as *farz-i ayn*: a general obligation and duty (*nefiri âmm*) for every man. According to the *Gazavat*, Murad II also issued a *ferman* or royal decree stating the obligation of all able men to join the army. This declaration was sent out to the judges or *kadis* in Rumelia and Anatolia, who were responsible for local administration. In return for their assistance, Murad offered the participants of the gaza whatever they wished: ‘It should be known that whoever accompanies us on this victory-crowned campaign and offers assistance out of love for the religion of Islam, my imperial assent has been granted for whatever it is they request. Whatever it is they wish, whether a *timar* or *zeamet* military fief, whether a post in the janissary corps or household cavalry or release from *yörük* (nomadic) status, I have accepted it.’³⁶⁶

At the eve of the battle, Sultan Murad II called the commanding officers, pashas and beys before him and explained to everyone of them what they had to do on the battlefield. After having ordered the ranks, he gave the following message to his lords and pasha’s: ‘Each one of you should stay in this correct position and each one of you should encounter his own enemy. Even if the enemy attacks me, if they fall upon my ranks, in no way you should break your rank and leave your position. [...] My lords and pasha’s, you should be aware that if any of you shows cowardice as you did before and turns his face from the infidels, he should never again appear before my sight or remain within my realm. However, if any of you distinguishes himself and smites the enemy in the gaza, then I shall show him even greater consideration than he could wish for, and bestow the highest offices to him.’³⁶⁷

³⁶⁴ *Gazavat-ı Sultan Murad*, 12: ‘Padişah-ı âlem buyurdular kim, çünkü küffar-i hâkisâr il ve memleketi çıneyüp üstümüze geldi. Cemî’an ümmet-i Muhammed olanların üzerlerine farz oldu kim, bu gazâyâ çıkalar.’

³⁶⁵ *Ibidem*: ‘şöyle kim Rumelinde eger atlu ve eger yayak çomak atmaga kâdir olanlar bile çıksun deyü nefir-i ‘âm buyurmagnın.’

³⁶⁶ *Ibidem*, 14: ‘Şöyle ma’lum oluna kim, bu sefer-i nusret-me’âbıma gelüb Dîn-i İslam aşkına imdâd idüb bizimle ma’an sefere varanların her ne mürâcaatları var ise, katımda makbul-i hümayunumdur, eğer tımar isteyene ve eğer zeamet isteyene ve eğer yeniçerilik isteyene ve eğer sipahilik isteyene ve eğer yörüklükten çıkmak isteyene her birinin murâdu maksudları makbulumdur.’

³⁶⁷ *Ibidem*, 56-57: ‘Padişah-ı âlem nasihatlar eyledi ve eyitti kim, göreyim sizi hemân her biriniz kollu kolunuzda olub hemân her biriniz kendi hasmınıza cevâb veregörün. Şöyle kim, eğer küffar benim üzerime dahi yürüyüb

We have observed that Bâyezid I was harshly criticised for his defeat. Some historians even refused to call him a gazi. It appears that a sultan could only receive the reverence of gazi according to his skills as a successful army commander. Those who were not victorious in battles were doomed to have a hard time or even lose their right to rule. According to the chroniclers, being a successful army commander appears to be a major asset and requirement of a ruler. Indeed, as we have observed, in the fifteenth century, states were made or collapsed according to their prowess in battles and the position of the ruler as a victorious leader of the army seemed to be very important.

One of the notable examples of this theme can be found in the account of Murad's role as the leader of the army during the Battle of Varna in 1444. According to Neşrî, a fierce battle had begun in the early morning. Initially, the crusaders were at the winning hand and they had routed the left and right wings of the Ottoman army. Murad witnessed how the *beylerbeyi* (governor general) of Anatolia, Karaca Beg, had been slain. Shortly afterwards, the troops from Rumelia also began to retreat and they fled in groups to the mountains. Murad was left at the battlefield only with his household infantry or the janissaries, who also hoped to quit the battlefield and avoid the capture of Murad.

Neşrî described this moment: 'The sultan, left alone with his janissaries, was on the verge of fleeing as well. Aware of this situation, Dayı Karaca Beg, dismounted from his horse, grabbed the reins of sultan's horse and said: 'O, my Sultan! What are you doing? If you go, the infidel will chase us to Edirne.' He did not let go of the sultan's horse's reins. He rode the sultan's horse to the top of a high place and halted there. At this time, there was a commander (*aga*) of the janissaries, called Kazancı Doğan. He reproached Karaca Beg and said: 'Hey you, vicious man! You killed Sultan Alaeddin. Do you intend this time to do the same to our prince? Release the reins and let him go.' Karaca Beg was by no means deterred. Even Sultan Murad said: 'Karaca, the infidel has defeated us.' However, Karaca Beg replied: 'And we will crush them, with God's will'.³⁶⁸ Thereupon, Murad followed the advice of his lord Karaca Bag and decided to stay, bracing himself to imminent assault. This choice proved to be the decisive event in the battle.

benim alayıma dest urub benimle ceng iderse dahi siz olmaya kim, gediginizden ayrılıub alayı bozasız. [...] imdi begler, paşalar, bilin ve âgâh olun ki, eger yine evvelki gibi muhannislik edüb her kangınız küffardan yüz döndürürse bir dahi benim gözüme görünmesin ve il ve memleketimde durmasın ve ammâ her kangınız ki, yüz ağırduub düşmana dîn-i mübin ogruna kılıç urub gazâ iderse ana dahi diledüğinden ziyade re'âyetler edüb mansıblarını a'lâ edeyim.'

³⁶⁸ Neşrî, *Cihannüma*, 296 : 'Rûm-ili leşkeri çekilüp giñ yire çıkdı. Hünkar dahı kapısı halkıyla yaluñuz kalıcak kasd itdi kim, ol dahı kaçā. Tayı Karaca Beg, bu hâle vâkıf olup, fi'l-hâl atından inüp, hünkaruñ atına berk yapışup: 'Hay devletlü Sultanum! Neylersin? Eger sen gidicek olursan, kafır ardımızca Edrene'ye gelür', diyüb, hünkârüñ atını koyu virmedi. Gedip, bir yüksecük yire çıkarup, tutub turırdı. Ol vakt, Kazancı Togan dirlerdi, bir yeñiçeri agası varıdı. Karaca Beg'e kakıyub eyitdi: 'Bire kara yüzlü gidi! Sultân Alâeddin'i öldürdüñ. Bu kerre begimize dahı mı kast itdün? Koyuver gitsün', didi. Karaca Beg aslâ mukayyed olmadı. Sultân Murâd, Karaca Beg'e 'kâfir bizi sıdı Karaca' didikçe, Karaca Beg 'Biz de anları sıyaruz, inşâ-Allah', dirdi.'

Interestingly, the moment in which Murad II initially thought for a moment to retreat as the battle seemed lost, was censored and not mentioned in the *Gazavat*, nor by Oruç Beg. As the *Gazavat* was composed as a panegyric narration of the Varna campaign, this moment of hesitation experienced by Murad probably did not fit in the image of the valiant gazi-sultan that the *Gazavat* aimed to fashion. From Neşrî's account, we understand that the military insights and skills of Murad's lord, Karaca Beg, proved to be decisive that eventually led to the victory. His account implied that it was one of Murad's statesmen who kept his calm and guided the sultan to take the right decisions. In this way, a seeming defeat and the possible occupation of the Ottoman capital Edirne were avoided. Furthermore, Murad's attempt to retreat and to stay at the battlefield seem not to be merely expressions of a ruler's whims. They appear to be bound by rational and emotional considerations. Neşrî implied that the choice for retreat, stay and attack had decisive consequences not only for the outcome of the battle, but also for the reign and realm of Murad II.

By contrast, the author of the *Gazavat* fashioned rather the topic of the gazi-sultan: 'many of the troops of Islam who had been defeated and fled the field collected their wits and saw that his majesty the Padishah the Refuge of the World was standing firm like a wounded lion, never retreating from the infidel and never for a moment giving up the battle. Those who foresaw what the end would be, had returned and were standing in ranks behind the Padishah.'³⁶⁹ Similarly, Oruç Beg noted that when Murad saw the withdrawal of the army's wings, he raised his hands and prayed for the help of God. Oruç described the retreat of the greater part of the army as 'God's will and His verdict'.³⁷⁰ Furthermore, while Neşrî described the retreat of the troops in neutral terms, the author of *Gazavat* reproached them as 'cowards of Rumelia'.³⁷¹

The anonymous author of *Gazavat* portrayed Murad as taking immediate action and implementing the necessary battle formation: 'the Padishah the Refuge of the World commended himself to God and sent the rear guard into action, placing his janissaries and azabs in front. They took refuge in God, scouted the warriors oath [or *gülbânk*]³⁷² of Allah

³⁶⁹ *Gazavât-ı Sultan Murad*, 64: 'ammâ asâkir-i İslâm'dan sinub kaçanlardan bir nicesi aklın başına devşirüb bakdı gördü kim, Pâdişâh-i âlem-penâh hazretleri kanar asrslan gibi durub küffar-hâkisârdan yüz döndürmeyüb dâima ceng u cidâlden bir ân hâli degildir. Bunun sonunu müşâhede edenler yine dönüb Pâdişâh'ın ardında saff olub alaylar düzüb durmuşlar idi.' For Oruç Beg, see: *Oruç Beg Tarihi*, 67.

³⁷⁰ *Oruç Beg Tarihi*, 67: 'iş Hakk'ıñ kudret anuñ. Hakk'ıñ emrine kimesne girmez. [...] Sultân Murâd Han dahı gördi kim, hâl böyle oldu, el götürüp yüz göge dutup Hak tâ'âla tarafına tazarru'lar idüp...'

³⁷¹ *Gazavât-ı Sultan Murad*, 63: 'Rumeli'nin muhannislerini'

³⁷² The word 'gülbang', is a Persian term literally meaning 'the song of the nightingale' and by extension also loud cries of various kinds. In Ottoman usage, the word is applied more particularly to the call of the *muezzin* and to the Muslim war-cry, citing the sacred praise of the name of God ('Allah Allah'). Specifically in the Ottoman case, *gülbang* was also the name for the ceremonial oath of the Janissary corps. They recited the *gülbang* at

Allah; and as the army band [*tablhane*]³⁷³ began to beat the drums in battle tempo and the trumpets brayed, they launched an attack on the infidels who are as low as the dust on the ground'.³⁷⁴ The *Gazavat* described the following battle scene: 'it was impossible to describe how the two armies got so mixed together and fought a fierce battle that day. Both the Muslim soldiers and the infidels indulged in such great efforts on the battlefield, that a father could not recognise his son, nor a son his father. And the angels in the heaven and the fish in the sea marvelled the sight of the majesty of this battle.'³⁷⁵

The flow of description of the battle in the next episode is more or less similar in both the *Gazavat* and Oruç Beg. When Murad decided to stay on the battlefield, the desperate assault of the Hungarian king Wladislas and his slain changed the tide of the battle. Along with those among the janissaries and *azabs*³⁷⁶ who had not yet fled, Murad still had some of his household soldiers around him. The *Gazavat* noted that four hundred janissaries

payment parades, accession of a Sultan and during a campaign. In particular, the janissaries cited this praise before the corps launched the attack in the battlefield, as a way of building morale and intimidating the enemy. Since the jannisary corps had strong relations to the Bektashi mystical order, their *gulbang* comprised many terms deriving from the Bektashi tradition. See: 'gülbang', *EI*²; Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devleti Teşkilâtında Kapıkulu Ocakları*, 249, 375, 421-422, 533-534. The janissaries recited this oath led by an officer (*baş çavuş*) standing with crossed arms: 'Allah Allah, there is no second God. In barehead, in a state of trance and with the sword in blood. No one asks how many heads are cut off in this arena. That's all right, that's all right, our fury and our sword hurting the enemy demonstrate our loyalty to our Padishah. For the sake of the threes, the sevens, the fourties, of the *gulbang* of Muhammad, the Light of the Prophets, of our spiritual master Ali, our king and sultan Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli [patron saint of the janissary corps], for their epoch and wheel of fate, let us recall and say God.' See: Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devleti Teşkilâtında Kapıkulu*, 422. It is obvious that this oath was a martial code of conduct to create a psychological effect in order to stand firm at the eve of a deadly fight, in which one could die after a minute. This implied upholding the morale of soldiers, legitimizing the martial acts and strengthening the ties of solidarity and identity among the ones who shared the same fate and the way of warrior.

³⁷³ *Tablhane* (ltr. 'the drum house') or *mehterhane* was the music band of the Ottoman army. One of its functions was to play continuously during the battle. The Sultan's *standard* ('*alem*') was located near the *mehter*, so that silence from the direction of the band could lead to abandoning of the battlefield. Certain battle signals were given by the percussion section of the *mehter*. Although *Gazavat* wrote that the janissaries entered battle at the pace of the *mehter* music, the band was, however, not responsible for regulating the movement of the troops in battle. The abolition of the janissary corps in 1826 led to the neglect of the *mehter* repertoire, which appears to have been mostly forgotten by the start of the twentieth century. See: Walter Feldman, 'Mehter', *EI*².

³⁷⁴ *Gazavât-ı Sultan Murad*, 64: 'Hemân Pâdişâh-i âlem-penâh hazretleri vücudunu Allah'a sipariş kılub dip alayı depredüp yeniçerisin ve azabın önüne katub ve Hazret-i Allah'a sığınub *gülbang*-i Allah Allah edüb ve *tablhâne* çeng-i harbiye turrarlar urub [...] küffâr-i hâkisânın üzerlerine hamle edüb yürüdüler.'

³⁷⁵ *Gazavât-ı Sultan Murad*, 64: 'Bu kerre iki asker serâser birbirilerine karılub ol gün bir ceng durdu kim, takrîri mümkün degil. Amma ceng gittikçe kızıştı. Eger İslam askeri ve eger küffar ziyade gayret edüb şöyle bir bâzâr kuruldu kim, ata oğlu ve oğul atayı teşhîsden kaldı ve ol cengin heybetine gökde melek ve deryada semek tahsîn eyledi.'

³⁷⁶ Infantry made up by recruited troops from the Muslim population.

and four to five hundred *azabs* remained with Murad.³⁷⁷ The chronicler Oruç Beg noted that Murad was left with only five hundred janissaries at the battlefield, entrenched in a fortified position.³⁷⁸ This position consisted of a trench and bulwark behind which stood soldiers armed with arquebus. Many of the crusaders were killed by gunfire and bowshots while attempting to breach this defensive fortification of the centre.³⁷⁹ According to the *Gazavat*, the crusaders made seven charges in attempting to break through.³⁸⁰ Neşrî impeached the Hungarian commander Janos Hunyadi (Yanko) of deceiving his king to personally charge an attack to break through the ditch. According to Neşrî, Hunyadi said: 'We have defeated the Turk. What are you waiting for? As the king, you have to maintain the honour for yourself and fight Sultan Murad personally.'³⁸¹ Neşrî suggested that Hunyadi wished to become the king of Hungary and he therefore lured all the rivalling Hungarian lords to attack the Ottomans. While these were usually captured by the Ottoman warriors, Hunyadi fled each time. He called Hunyadi 'an accursed type full of trickeries.'³⁸²

Neşrî portrayed king Wladislas as misled by his own ambitious commander Hunyadi and as such charged in pride and vanity towards his own end. Oruç Beg also stated that king Wladislas, 'indulged by pride and arrogance', attempted to break through the ditch and to reach Sultan Murad II.³⁸³ The chroniclers unanimously account that after the king and his followers had broken through the ditch, the disciplined janissaries let them pass only to surround them afterwards. A janissary felled the horse of the king, who fell to the ground, and another janissary, called Koca Hızır, chopped his head off.³⁸⁴ Interestingly, the *fethname* written after the battle to the Karakoyunlu ruler in Tabriz, asserted that the king was captured and brought to the sultan and was subsequently executed after it was ascertained that he was the king.³⁸⁵ Although the battle continued to rage on while the retreated troops came back, the Ottoman army had secured the victory.

³⁷⁷ Ibidem, 64.

³⁷⁸ Oruç Beg Tarihi, 67: 'Sultân Murâd Han dahı kendü alayı ile kapu halkuyla tururken kapu halkı tagılub sehel yeñiçeri kalub, beş yüz mikdarı kalmamış idi dirler.'

³⁷⁹ Gazavât-ı Sultan Murad, 62.

³⁸⁰ Ibidem, 66.

³⁸¹ Neşrî, Cihannüma, 296: 'Yanko yürüyüp kiral'a eyitdi: 'İşte Türk'ü sıdık. Ne turursın? Sultân Murâd üzerine var ki, bege yine beg gerekdür', didi.'

³⁸² Neşrî, Cihannüma, 296: 'Bu Yanko bir hîle-bâz mel'ûndı, murâdı Ungurus'a beg olmakdı. Ol sebebdan ol diyârdan kendüye itâ'at itmiyen kâfir beglerinden her kangı olursa, 'vuralım Türk'e şöyle idelüm, böyle idelüm' diyüp, aldayup götürüp, Türk'ün bahâdırlarına tutıverip, kendü kaçardı. Kırالا varup, bu kez işimiz rast gelmedi, dirdü. Bu suretile Ungurus beglerinden kırdurı kırdurı az komışdı. Pes kiral dahi mestdi. Yanko'nun sözine i'timâd idüp, eline bir gönder alup, hemân hünkâruñ alayına at depti.'

³⁸³ Oruç Beg Tarihi, 67.

³⁸⁴ Oruç Beg Tarihi, 67-68; Neşrî, Cihannüma, 296-297; Gazavat, 65-66; Aşık Paşazade, Tevarih, 405.

³⁸⁵ Imber's translation in: *The Crusade of Varna*, 194.



Figure 15: *The Ottoman army on campaign*, by the court miniaturist Nakkaş Osman (c. 1597).
Source: *Şehinşehnâme*, Topkapı Palace Museum, H1524, folio 256b.

The Ottoman descriptions of the deeds and conducts of king Wladislas and Sultan Murad II at the battlefield had obvious ideological intentions. The chroniclers suggested that Murad II retained his position as the ruler and the commander of the army by taking the right decisions, despite a moment of hesitation when the battle seemed lost. By contrast, King Wladislas lost his head and his kingdom due to his 'pride and arrogance', his personal ambitions and his lack of insightful decisions. Furthermore, Neşrî fashioned Sultan Murad II in terms of a benevolent and merciful ruler. After the battle was won, the soldiers prayed for the sultan and congratulated him with this 'great gaza'. Murad ordered that the lords who had fled the battlefield should be displayed in women skirts.

However, his entourage and the lords pleaded for mercy and Murad seemed receptive and forgave them.³⁸⁶

In the discourse of the Gazavat, Sultan Murad is also depicted as encouraging his soldiers and commanders by employing the noble understanding of the gaza-register. According to the Gazavat, Murad made the following speech before the Battle of Varna: 'the Padişah commanded all the Janissaries, infantry officers and azabs into his presence. He greeted them all and said: You are all my companions in every gaza-campaign. Let us see how for the sake of Islam you fight those unbelievers who are our enemies. You know the virtue of gaza and you know how exalted a rank of martyr is. Just as we were born so too we shall die. Therefore, we will fight together valiantly now while the opportunity is there to undertake the gaza. Those of us who kill shall be gazis and those who die will be martyrs. Together let us achieve our desires in this world and the next.'³⁸⁷

Obviously, being a gazi or actually being the sultan of *gazis* appeared to be one of the most important qualities and duties of the ruler. The author of the Gazavat portrayed Murad II as the ideal Gazi Sultan and popularised this image through a courtly view. Therefore, he developed peculiar features and topics which he probably borrowed from the earlier geste narratives of famous gazi-warriors, such as Battalname (see Chapter 1). This becomes clear in the following passage in the Gazavat:

'That night the Padishah of the World performed the night prayer and he lifted his hand and said: O Padishah of Padishahs! My hope is in You, O my God! O God who is the remedy for the sorrowful and the decree for the helpless. With tears I have rubbed my face in the black earth, O God, do not abandon me at this hour! O Lord of all creation, it is You who are the God, the Creator, the Deity, Allah. There is nothing apart from your court, God, who is the mine of mercy for all sinners. For the honour of Your beloved, Muhammed, double Your mercy to us! The enemies of religion are coming and wish to abrogate the Koran, O God! Make me the means for this gaza, grant us the decree, O God! That night the Padishah offered prayer and supplication until morning, rubbing his face in the earth.'³⁸⁸

³⁸⁶ Neşrî, *Cihannüma*, 297: 'dönüp gelüp Sultan Murâd'a du'â idüp, 'devletlü sultanum gaza-yı ekber mübarek olsun' didiler. Andan Sultan Murad buyurdi, ol kaçan beglere avrat tonın geyürüp, tahkîr idelerdi. Yine nedimler ve yine begler dilek idüp, afv itdürdiler.'

³⁸⁷ *Gazavât-ı Sultan Murad*, 57.

³⁸⁸ *Ibidem*, 57-58: 'Ammâ Pâdişah'ı âlem o gece yatsı namâzın edâ edüb ve el kaldurub eyitti:

Ey Pâdişahlar Pâdişahı; Ümidim sana tutmuşım İlâhî; Ki ey dertlilerin dermânı Allah; Mededsiz kalmışım fermânı Allah; Yüz urdum kara yere göz yaşıyle; Koma mahrûm bu anda beni Allah; Bu cümle mahlukâtın sensin ey Hak; İlâhı hâlıkı Yezdânı Allah; Senin kapından özge yokdurur hîç; Heme âsiye rahmet kânı Allâh; Habîbin ol Muhammed hörmetiyyün; Muzâ'af kıl bize gufrânı Allah; Bu dîn düşmanları şimdi gelüben; Diler ibtâl ede Kur'ânı Allâh; Sebeb kılub beni işbû gazâyâ; Nasîb edüb bize fermânı Allah; deyüb o gice Pâdişah tâ subh olunca yüzünü yerlere sürüp tazarru' ve niyâz eyledi.'

Aşık Paşazade's account of the Battle of Kosovo of 1448, in which he participated himself, showed remarkable similarities to the language and style of the passage above of the *Gazavat*. The themes emphasised and a number of other discursive registers all suggested that Aşık Paşazade strongly relied on the *Gazavat* and gave prominence to an officially endorsed version of the events. His version was very similar to the style of narrative of the *Gazavat*, propagating the glorious image of the gazi-sultan Murad:

'Sultan Murad expressed his intention of waging gaza against the enemies. When he heard the news that the infidels had moved towards Kosovo, the sultan also marched for Kosovo. On Friday, at dusk, he encountered the infidels. When the sultan saw the infidel army, he immediately got down from his horse and performed two sets of emergency prayers. He lifted his hands and implored the Highest Lord, rubbed his face on the earth, and said: O my God, protect this handful of Muslims and give them your assistance. For the sake of Muhammed, the dear pride of both worlds, protect them. Do not humiliate them at the hands of the infidels for the sake of my sins. When he finished his prayer and supplication, he restated his intention for gaza, got back on his horse, and charged the infidels. That day, they fought an incredibly intense battle. Many heroic lords risked their lives and became martyrs. Among the infidels too, many princes fell and died and many were taken alive. [...] I myself killed an infidel and Sultan Murad gave me and Dervish Akbıyık a horse each.'³⁸⁹

After the disastrous defeat of Bâyezid I at Ankara in 1402, the officially endorsed historical texts by the court managed to solidify Murad II's image as the ideal gazi-sultan and propagated it. This view of Murad II as a Gazi sultan was even endorsed by the author of the Anonymous Chronicle, who as we have seen was otherwise very critical of the dynasty's centralising policies. Both the author of the Anonymous Chronicle and Aşık Paşazade came from gazi and dervish social backgrounds and they accordingly reflected the perception and concerns of this gradually ever more marginalised class of frontier warriors and semi-nomadic people. Interestingly, the storyline of the Anonymous Chronicle also shows some similarities with the *Gazavat*, such as Murad getting off from his horse rubbing his face in the earth and begging to God before the battle of Varna.

In his panegyric World History or *Behcetü't Tevârih* (ca 1458), the Ottoman historian Şükrullah included a brief chapter on Ottoman dynasty until the reign of Murad II. As Ali Anooshahr already showed, Şükrullah depicted the history of the dynasty as one of early rise due to gaza, a decline and absence of it during the reign of Bâyezid I and the following

³⁸⁹ Aşık Paşazade, *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osman*, 407-408.

civil war, and a return to gaza during the reign of Murad II.³⁹⁰ Şükrullah explicitly denoted only Murad II as the 'sultan of the gazis and mujahidin'.³⁹¹

He clearly propagated a courtly image of Murad II as the ideal gazi-sultan, which demonstrates the effectiveness of courtly propaganda: 'He performed five gazas. First, he conquered Thessaloniki; second was his gaza at the pass of Zlatitsa; third, the gaza of Varna; fourth, the gaza of Germe; fifth, the gaza of Kosovo. During the reign of this pious Padishah, the believers in the lands of Rûm [Ottoman realm] were safe from disasters and oppression, living in security and justice. The experienced and insightful scholars who knew the situation in other countries of the world unanimously agreed and said that they had never seen or heard about such a prosperous country as the land of Rum during the reign of Sultan Murad. [...] In no other time had there been as many good and pious deeds as during the reign of this religion-nurturing Padishah – deeds such as gazas, conquests of the lands of infidels, takings of castles and fortresses, the building of schools, mosques, caravanserais, bridges and other works of charity, the education of scholars, the ennobling of spiritual masters, and compassion towards the people and the weak.'³⁹²

In the Ottoman *fethname* written after the Battle of Varna in 1444 and sent to the Karakoyunlu ruler in Tabriz, the dedication to gaza is also explicitly formulated as one of the prestigious components of Ottoman state ideology. The *fethname* of Varna emphasised this idea by quoting the following verses from the Qur'an: 'Those who struggle on Our behalf, we shall guide them on Our paths.'³⁹³ 'Do not count those who struggle in God's way as dead. No, they are alive and are given sustenance from their Lord, rejoicing in what God has given them out of His grace'³⁹⁴; and 'battle those who make sedition appear on earth.'³⁹⁵ Thereafter, the *fethname* grounded the Ottoman claims on sovereignty on the gaza topos, in the sense of expanding the realm of Islam:

'We [...] for years and days held state power in trust for exalting the affairs of Islam and for making comfortable the state of mankind, things which are given in custody by God, the Omniscient King. We have confined and devoted the seasons and the hours to raising the standards of Muhammad and reviving the edicts of the law of Islam. We have not for one minute neglected to guard the right order of the public affairs [*nizâm-ı âlem*], to contribute to the welfare of

³⁹⁰ Ali Anooshahr, *The Ghazi Sultans*, 163.

³⁹¹ Şükrullah, *Behcetü't Tevarih*, 391.

³⁹² Ibidem, 392.

³⁹³ Qur'an, 29:69.

³⁹⁴ Qur'an, 3:168-169.

³⁹⁵ Qur'an, 40:26.

mankind, to make ready the necessities of gaza, and to prepare the weapons to wage battle against those 'who make sedition appear on earth.'³⁹⁶

And some passages further: 'we are struggling for the advancement of the true religion and the illumination of the straight path. We are putting on our full armour for the gaza and the embarrassment of the people of rebellion and sedition [...] Through the blessing of the beauty of faith and sincerity of mind, victories, new and without measure, come to pass in our imperial days.'³⁹⁷

This *fethname* depicted Murad II as the ideal gazi-sultan and referred to the Ottoman troops as 'the armies of Islam'. By using the rhetoric of binary opposition, the treachery of the 'infidel' enemies was contrasted to them: 'I have exercised my sword with the help of God, the Exalted, the Blessed, in scattering and confounding the infidels [...] In every year and under every circumstance, the victorious armies of Islam have encountered the pig-headed Albanians, who are full of hypocrisy. Sometimes they have settled matters with contemptible infidels of Constantinople, and sometimes opposed the ill-omened Hungarians, who are enemies of the religion of the Prophet and deniers of Muhammad's message. Sometimes, they made treaties and agreements with the wicked and debauched bandits of Karaman, who in truth are robbers and enemies of the people of faith.'³⁹⁸

It has by now become clear from many passages of the chronicles that Murad II appeared as the ideal ruler who corresponded to all the virtues of the Sultan of the gazis: just, prudent and merciful. Murad II was portrayed according to these values and role models, expressed in a narrative style familiar to the various social groups to whom the historians addressed their words. In this case as well, the image of Sultan Murad II was fashioned in line with their horizon of expectation, with the tastes and presuppositions of their intended audiences and anticipating on their personal knowledge of what had happened. The discourse on noble and courageous gazi behaviour was indeed crucial in shaping the self-representation and forms of behaviour for the intended audience. In this respect, Sultan Murad II was unequivocally portrayed as a ruler who confirms to the ideals of a gazi-sultan, who undertakes his campaigns in favour of the Muslim community and styled as the champion of the faith.

However, Murad II does not give the impression of a ruler who fights just for the sake of warfare. He appeared as a ruler who knows the value of peace as well as an excellent army commander at extremely sensitive moments. At the Battle of Varna, Murad showed that he knew when and how to battle if circumstances required so. Some non-Ottoman historians also described Murad II as a ruler who did not like wars. He was portrayed as

³⁹⁶ *Fethname*, originally written in Persian, in Imber's translation, *The Crusade of Varna*, 189.

³⁹⁷ *Ibidem*, 190.

³⁹⁸ *Ibidem*, 190.

an able statesman, with a clear insight of the political situation, but by no means as a man who found satisfaction in war. The Byzantine historian Doukas praised Murad II saying that he 'truly despised warfare and loved peace, and the Father of Peace meted out in turn a peaceful death'.³⁹⁹ He was gentle to his enemies, kept his oaths and was not vengeful. Moreover, 'he did not set out thirst after the complete destruction of the fallen nation, but as soon as the vanquished he sued for peace, he dismissed the ambassadors in peace.'⁴⁰⁰ Kritovoulos, another Byzantine chronicler wrote of Murad II: 'He was a kind, generous, majestic ruler of high character, skilful in military leadership and purely noble in descent.'⁴⁰¹ Even Bertrandon de la Broquière, praised Murad II's disposition to peace: 'they told me that he hates war, and I think it is true, because if he wanted to use the immense wealth at his disposal it will be easy for him to conquer many places in Europe.'⁴⁰² Murad's nature, which tended toward Sufism, marked his interest for a spiritual life and which probably influenced his character and deeds. Most importantly, the Ottoman chronicles created his image as 'an ideal ruler in the late medieval Muslim world'.

Of course, Sultan Mehmed II the Conqueror was also portrayed as a gazi sultan. The most vibrant comment on Mehmed II's gaza-identity may be found in Aşık Paşazade's account of his campaign upon Trabzon. Mehmed made a long trip to conquer the city and Sara Hatun, mother of Uzun Hasan, the ruler of the Akkoyunlu dynasty, attempted to persuade him not to. She said that the mountain road was steep and rough and asked whether it was worth taking the trouble just for one city. Sultan Mehmed II explained his reasons to her: 'Mother! All these pains are not for Trabzon, but for the sake of the religion of Islam, so that I should not be shamed in the afterlife in front of God. For, we carry the sword of Islam. If we do not undertake these efforts, we would not deserve to be called a gazi.'⁴⁰³

Aşık Paşazade provided the following account on the conquest of Kefe, located at the southern coast of the Crimea. In 1475, the province of Kefe was conquered by Sultan Mehmed II's brilliant army commander, Gedik Ahmed Pasha, probably of Byzantine origin. When the Ottoman army had landed on the port of Kefe, Gedik Ahmed Pasha gave the following speech to encourage the soldiers: 'O Gazi comrades! Work for the sake of

³⁹⁹ Doukas, *Decline and Fall of Byzantium*, 189.

⁴⁰⁰ Ibidem.

⁴⁰¹ Kritovoulos, *İstanbul'un Fethi*, 31

⁴⁰² Broquière, *Le Voyage d'Outremer*, 181-182: 'On m'a dist aussi qu'il het assés la guerre et ainsi me le samble il, car s'il vouloit exequiter la puissance qu'il a et sa grant revenue, veu la petite resistance qu'il treuve en la crestienté, ce seroit à luy legiere chose à en conquerer une grant partie.'

⁴⁰³ Aşık Paşazade *Tarihi*, ed. Öztürk, 224: 'Sara Hatun eydür: 'Hay oğul! Bir Tırabuzon için bunca zahmetler niçün çekersin?', didi. Pâdişâh cevap verdi kim: 'Ana! Bu zahmetler Tırabuzon için degüldür. Bu zahmetler dîn-i İslâm yolınadır kim ahretde Allah Hazretine varıcak hacil olmayavuz deyüdü. Zîrâ bizüm elümüzde İslâm kılıcı vardır. Ve ger biz bu zahmetleri ihtiyâr etmesevüz bize gazi demek lâıyk olmaz.'

Islam. This city of Kefe is befitting to be a part of ‘the realm of Islam’ [*dârü’l-islâm*]. With the help of God, we will add Kefe to the realm of Islam.’⁴⁰⁴ In this passage, Aşık Paşazade clearly expressed a more courtly endorsed gaza-ethos and understanding. Remarkably, he used the term ‘*dârü’l-islâm*’, which derived on Islamic political thought. He made Gedik Ahmed Pasha proclaim the gaza in the sense of struggle for the sake of Islam and as an activity undertaken to expand the territories of the Muslim world.

3.4.1.4 The material components of gaza

However, it is important to note that the gaza also carried other connotations and meanings, different from the political agenda of the royal court. Especially for the average soldiers, gaza implied in the first place material gains, such as spoils and booty. The gaza in this understanding can be most explicitly found in the work of Aşık Paşazade, who had participated in the campaigns of Sultan Murad II. He noted that he participated in all the campaigns of Murad II and that whatever he wrote about the sultan came from his own personal observations: ‘I, Aşıkî Derviş Ahmed, have seen and known all the gazas and adventures that Sultan Murad Han made as well as the circumstances which occurred to him and his utterances and actions, but I wrote them in summary in this *menakıbnâme*.’⁴⁰⁵ However, in the following passage, sultan Murad II merely played a distant role while the story is all about Aşık Paşazade’s personal gains and benefits in highly personal tone:

‘One day, a fight occurred among the soldiers. Ishak Bey immediately mounted on his horse and all the gazis mounted too. Unfortunately, we saw a troop of infidels suddenly appear before us and behind them came still many more troops. Their infantry was in the front and their cavalry behind them. They came upon us swiftly as a thick black cloud. On this side, the Muslim gazis cried out ‘Allah is great’, and they attacked the infantry with their horses. [...] Then Ishak Bey commanded: ‘Hey gazis, that’s enough killing for now. Start taking prisoners.’ By God, I myself took five of them captive, apart from the ones I had killed. I brought them to Üsküb and sold all five for nine hundred silver coins. To say it brief, Semendire was captured in that year.’⁴⁰⁶

⁴⁰⁴ Aşık Paşazade *Tarihi*, ed. Öztürk, 263: ‘Hey gazi yoldaşlar! Gayret-i islâm edün kim bu Kefe dârü’l-islâm’un üzerinde havâledür, didi. Bunu dahi dârü’l-islâm idelüm, didi.’

⁴⁰⁵ Aşıkpaşazade *Tarihi*, 186: ‘Ve bu gazalar u mâcerâlar cemî’i anun hâlinün, kâlinün, efâlinün; bu ben Aşıkî Derviş Ahmed her birisini gördüm ve bildüm ammâ ihtisar etdüm. Bu menâkıbda yazdum.’

⁴⁰⁶ Aşıkpaşazade *Tarihi*, 167-168: Bir gün leşker içinde bir gavgâ belürdi. Ishak Beg ol sa’at at üzerine bindi. Cemî’i gaziler dahi at arkasına geldiler. Nâgâh gördük karşudan bir alay kafir çıka ve arkasından bir nice alay dahı çıka geldü. Yayasın önüne tutmus. Ve atlusı ardına turdı. Kapkara pus olup üzerimize yörüdi. Bu taraftan ehl-i Islam

This sample from Aşık Paşazade's account explicitly displays intimacy with and passion for the gazi ideal, something the author experienced as a young man. As already discussed, Aşık Paşazade was not writing directly under the patronage of the Ottoman court. Rather, he narrated for his personal audience of gazi-dervishes to whom he addressed this story.

One of the most striking comments on and criticism of the motivation of the soldiers by prospects on material gains can be found in the famous letter, written by Sheikh Ak Şemseddin to Sultan Mehmed II during the siege of Constantinople.⁴⁰⁷ In the first phase of the siege, on 20 April, three Genoese ships managed to break through the Ottoman blockade on the sea and reached the city under siege. Tursun Beg noted that 'this event caused a lot of desolation and sadness among the people of Islam.'⁴⁰⁸ The despair was great and it was feared that the entire campaign would end in failure and defeat. The then twenty-one year old Sultan Mehmed II was reportedly losing his morale after this naval battle. During the military council that was held after this event he was put under pressure by the influential grand vizier Çandarlı Halil Pasha, who asserted to lift up the siege claiming that it might provoke another crusade similar to the one of Varna. However, since the policy of appeasement of Halil Pasha had failed to prevent the crusader invasion and assault in 1444, it was too naive to think that a withdrawal of the siege might avoid such a threat at this point. As such, the young vizier Zaganos Pasha dismissed Halil's claims and argued that the European Christian rulers were too divided because of their internal rivalries and could not form an alliance at once. Zaganos also asserted that even if they managed to put together a crusader fleet, the amount of soldiers they could transport would be far smaller than the Ottoman forces. As there was no danger of a large scale crusade, he insisted on continuing the siege and asserted that the city could even be seized before the arrival of any military aid.⁴⁰⁹ Although the young Sultan Mehmed II maintained the same view as Zaganos Pasha and wished to continue the siege, he seems to have remained undecided.

At this moment, Mehmed's spiritual master Ak Şemseddin came to the scene. In his epistle to Mehmed, Ak Şemseddin firstly acknowledged that the defeat at sea had caused general disillusion and one might easily doubt victory: 'by this event the heart of the Sultan is broken and furious, while the enemy intensifies its zeal. You might have

gazileri tekbir getürdiler bir kezden, heman yayanun üzerine at saldılar. [...] Ishak Beg çağırttı kim: Hey gaziler, Yiter kırdunuz, esir edün imden gerü, didi. Vallahi fakir kırdıgumdan gayri beşin esir itdüm, Üsküb'e getürdüm. Beşini tokuz yüz akçaya virdüm. El-hasıl-ı kelim, ol yılda Semendire dahi feth olundu.'

⁴⁰⁷ *Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Arşivi*, no. 5584. This letter is reproduced in facsimile in: İnalçık, *Fatih Devri üzerinde tetkikler ve vesikalar*, 217-218.

⁴⁰⁸ Tursun Beg, *Tarih-i Ebu'l Feth*, 53: 'bu hâdise ehl-i İslâm arasında fütur ve perişânî saldı.'

⁴⁰⁹ İnalçık, *Fatih Devri*, 128-130

indulged by a lack of opinion and judgement [...]’⁴¹⁰ The ulema scholar, Ak Şemseddin reminded Mehmed II that most of the soldiers did not fight and risked their lives solely for the way of God. He noted that they only would fight when they could see the prospects on gains: ‘If there was an opportunity for spoils, the soldiers would throw their life without hesitation into fire for the material gains in this world.’⁴¹¹ Therefore, Ak Şemseddin advised Mehmed II not to let himself go in negligence and to appoint a commander with ‘little mercy and gentleness’ in order to fill up the ditches and to attack the fortifications.⁴¹² The scholar wrote that if Mehmed wished to be victorious, then he had to act with determination. The young sultan had to accept and follow the guidance of his own fate and fortune. His feeling was that the outcome of the siege would not be a retreat in shame and disillusion, but a victorious conquest and triumph.⁴¹³

Most importantly, in this letter we can notice that Ak Şemseddin disapproved and disliked the booty-driven understanding of gaza that the common soldiers held, as he reminded Mehmed of this aspect in order not to give up his endeavour. Apart from the courtly endorsed gaza rhetoric as ‘fighting on the path of God’, most soldiers indeed appeared to be driven and motivated by booty and profits. As we have seen, this was also observed in Aşık Paşazade’s account of his personal gains and benefits in the campaigns of Murad II. In this respect, it seems that the siege of Constantinople took a long time because most of the soldiers showed indifference to fight. Initially, Mehmed II had prohibited the looting of the city, as he wished to make it the new Ottoman capital and capture it untouched. Nevertheless, he had to change his mind when he became aware that most of the soldiers did not want to risk their lives solely for Mehmed II’s geopolitical vision and ambitions.

According to Neşrî, the Byzantine emperor discussed to surrender the city with Lucas Notaras (Kir-Luka). However, ‘the Frank’ (i.e. the Genoese mercenary, de Giustiniani) opposed this plan and said that they wished to fight and not surrender. There followed a period of fifty days of fierce fighting. Finally, on day fifty one, Sultan Mehmed proclaimed

⁴¹⁰ In İnalçık’s edition of the letter: *Fatih Devri*, 217: ‘Oldur ki bu hadise ki ol kemi ehlinden oldu kalbe hayli tekessür ve melamet getirdi. Bir fırsat görünürdi fevt olduğuna gayretler geldi. Biri gayret din ki kafirler ferah olub, şemateti ada-ı olundu ve biri buna mübarek vucudkeze noksan-ı rey ve adem nifaz hükm nisbet olmak ve biri buna, bu zaife, ademi isticabeti dua nisbet olmak ve tebşirimiz gayri muteber olmak ve dahi mahsur çok imdi müsahele ve rıfk gerekmez.’

⁴¹¹ Ibidem, 218: ‘Bilirsiz ekseri Allah çün canını ve başını koyan azdan azdır. Meger ki bir ganimet göreler canlarını dünya çün oda atarlar.’

⁴¹² Ibidem: ‘bunun gibiye racı oluna bir merhameti ve rıfkı az olan kimesneye buyurasız ve kal’aya hücum idecek ve hendeki doldurumlu olacak tahavün ideler’.

⁴¹³ ‘Cidde ve cehdde bi-kadril istida’a hem fiilen ve hem emren ve hükmen ve kavlen idasız [...] Akibet hicaletle inkisarla gitmeyuz belki ferah ve mansur ve muzaffer gideyuz bi avnillah ve nusratihi amin.’

the right to plunder the city and the general attack began.⁴¹⁴ Following the advice of his spiritual master Ak Şemseddin, Sultan Mehmed II allowed and proclaimed the right to plunder on the 27th of May in the army camp. The final and general assault started after midnight of the 29th of May. Only a few hours later, in the morning, Constantinople was conquered.⁴¹⁵

We can assume that the bulk of the army showed reluctance to fight until the perspectives on profits and benefits were real and the plundering allowed. The *ulema*-historian Neşrî showed some implicit criticism or distanced himself from this booty-driven gaza ethos. He recorded that the benefited booty at the conquest of the city had become so famous that if one wanted to tease someone one used to say ‘have you profited of the looting of Constantinople’.⁴¹⁶ He did not seem to be interested in this practice, as he did not provide a further discussion of the immense profits gained.

According to the Byzantine chronicler, Chalkokondyles, Sultan Mehmed II had sent one of his lords, Isfendiyar-oğlu İsmail Bey, to the Byzantine emperor and offered him an agreement for peaceful surrender in order to avoid the plunder of the city.⁴¹⁷ Another contemporary Byzantine historian, Doukas, mentioned that, after the capture of the city, Sultan Mehmed asked the grand duke Lucas Notaras why he did not surrender the city. Mehmed II said that in that case the damage and plunder would have been avoided. Notaras allegedly replied that he and the Emperor wished to surrender, but neither he nor the emperor had the authority to do so. Notaras also said that one of Mehmed’s officials, referring to Halil Pasha, had urged them not to surrender and assured them that Mehmed could not capture the city.⁴¹⁸

Interestingly, Aşık Paşazade recorded a story which suggested the alleged ‘corruption’ of Halil Pasha. According to this story, Halil Pasha had supposedly receive bribes from the Byzantines: ‘the emperor said that only our friend Halil Pasha can save us from the Turk. However, we have to send him a fish again. They filled the belly of the fish with florin coins and sent it to Halil Pasha. Kir-Luka [Lucas Notaras], a vizier of the emperor, warned them and said: Halil will eat that fish, but will not support you. The fish came to Halil.

⁴¹⁴ Neşrî, *Cihannüma*, 313: ‘Tekfur, vezîri Kir-Luka’yıla müsavere itdi ki, kal’ayi vire. Fireng komayup, biz ceng iderüz virmezüz, didiler. Elli gün leyl ü nehâr ceng itdiler. Elli birinci gün hünkâr İstanbul’a yagma buyurup, yüris olundi.

⁴¹⁵ Tursun Beg, *Tarih-i Ebu’l Feth*, 54-55. For a discussion of the details from various sources, see: İnalçık, *Fatih Devri*, 130-132.

⁴¹⁶ Neşrî, *Cihannüma*, 314: ‘Hattâ darb-ı mesel olmuşdur, bir kişiyi gınâya nisbet itseler, ‘İstanbul yagmasına mı tuş geldün’ dirler. El-kıssa, anda olan toymulukları tamâm zikr idersevüz kelâm tatvîl olur.’

⁴¹⁷ Chalkokondyles as quoted by İnalçık, *Fatih Devri*, 131.

⁴¹⁸ Doukas, *Decline and Fall of Byzantium*, 232.

Halil Pasha put the belly of the fish into a coffer. He accepted the words of these infidels, went to the sultan and told him all kind of things about these infidels.’⁴¹⁹

There might be some elements of truth in it, however, the story might also have been entirely fabricated by Halil’s political opponents, becoming a popular narrative widely disseminated after his fall and execution. Still, the accounts of Doukas and Aşık Paşazade curiously seem to confirm each other to a certain degree. It is remarkable that though the conquest of Constantinople took place in Aşık Paşazade’s lifetime, he accounted this important event very briefly and did not mention any personal gains. By contrast, he usually described in detail his gains in the campaigns of Sultan Murad II. Consequently, in his chronicle, Aşık Paşazade gave more attention to the reign of Murad II, while his account of the reign of Mehmed II was very concisely recorded, though he also lived in this period.

Particularly interesting, concerning the discursive register of gaza, is that whereas Aşık Paşazade was able to reflect the gaza mentality, Neşrî was not. Not because he was closer in time to the events than Neşrî, who wrote only a decade after Aşık Paşazade, but clearly because they belonged to two different social worlds. Aşık Paşazade expressed the historical consciousness of the frontier gazi dynasties that had helped the House of Osman to build a state and had received in return the centralising policies of Sultan Mehmed II. Mehmed II successfully took over sources of revenue that had still remained in the hands of gazi warlord and *ulema* households, significant for the early consolidation of the Ottoman Empire.⁴²⁰ These groups were aware of their marginalisation and consequently felt alienated from the dynasty and its household, who formed the new ruling elite. As discussed above, this tension characterised the whole process of state formation and was also reflected in the fifteenth-century historiography.

In other words, the constitution of a state ideology in the earliest chronicles was to a certain degree determined by the struggle between various political factions. In this respect, Aşık Paşazade’s history was characterised by bitterness that stemmed from deep feelings of loosening ties (*asabiyya*) between the dynasty and the Turkish aristocracy. Therefore, he was very critical against the officials from this newly emerging elite. In many passages, he cherished nostalgia for the old days of sharing of wealth and of relatively egalitarian relations, during the reigns of Osman Gazi and Orhan Gazi. By

⁴¹⁹ Aşık Paşazade, *Tevarih-i Al-i Osman*, ed. Yavuz and Saraç, 414: ‘Tekür eydür: eger bu Türkten bize kurtılmaga çâre olursa dostumuz Halil Paşa’dan olur. İmdi giri Halil Paşa’ya balıcağlar göndürmek gerekdir. Balığın karnını filorile toldurdılar. Halil Paşa’ya göndürdiler. Tekürün bir veziri var-idi, Kir-Luka dirlerdi. Ol eydür: Hey! Halil balığı yudar size dermânı tokınmaz, dir. [...] Balığı Halil’e getürdiler. Halil Paşa balığın karnını sanduga koydı. Kâfirlerin sözünü kâbul idüp turdı, hünkara geldi ol kâfirler hakkında niçe sözler söyledi.’

⁴²⁰ Linda T. Darling, ‘Political Change and Political Discourse in the Early Modern Mediterranean World’, *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 38/4 (2008) 506.

contrast, Neşrî's intended audience consisted mainly of the *ulema* scholars and the new ruling groups closer to the court. He frequently used the gaza-ethos as a literary motif with ornamented descriptive style, of which the vocabulary derived from Persian epic narratives.⁴²¹ However, in general, Neşrî's text displayed no interest in the gazi-warrior practice of booty, so vividly expressed and described by Aşık Paşazade.

⁴²¹ For example, see his ornamented description of the battles during the siege of Constantinople: Neşrî, *Cihannüma*, 311-313.

3.4.2 Justice or *Adl*, the king of all virtues

It may well be that *gaza* was one of the most important discursive registers to ideologically support the genesis of the Ottoman state. However, possessing military leadership capabilities and being a *gazi*-sultan alone were not sufficient qualities to be called a successful ruler or to be represented as one. Without exception, the earliest Ottoman historiographical sources agreed on the key importance of 'justice' for the maintenance of order in the society. The legitimacy of the Ottoman sovereigns' authority relied not only on their capability of negotiation with the subjects. Especially, on the perception of the Sultan's public image by his Muslim, Christian and Jewish subjects as a just ruler to whom they had given their consent. The loyalty of the people could only be won and kept up by justice. As Ali counselled, if the human treasury was neglected, the financial one would necessarily pass to another dynasty.⁴²² The Ottoman state ideology certainly claimed that it would establish the best and desired social order, in which justness and legitimacy was self-evident for everyone. This was illustrated in the following verses of a poem included by Âşık Paşazâde in his chronicle: 'A just khan is a friend of God; it is not a shame if the world submits to such a ruler. [Prophet] Süleyman⁴²³ also seized the world through justice; every just khan is equal to Süleyman.'⁴²⁴

The reason for such emphasis on just rule in Ottoman chronicles, was mainly because the base of the Ottoman legitimacy was weak. Regarding the fifteenth-century Ottoman political thought, Cornell Fleischer pointed out that the Ottomans had the weakest claim to political legitimacy. Neither religion nor genealogy were sufficient to legitimise the Ottoman claim on sovereignty.⁴²⁵ Firstly, the Abbasid Caliph of Baghdad, who could authorise the Ottoman claim to sovereignty, was long ago executed by the Mongols. Secondly, the Ottomans were no descendants of Prophet Muhammad or of the imperial dynasty of Djenghiz Khan, which also could have legitimised their claims to sovereignty. Lacking an imperial lineage and the authorisation of a caliph, the Ottoman historical tradition of the early chroniclers, compensated it through the active promotion of pivotal ideas, such as 'justice' and *gaza*. These concepts explicitly endorsed a state ideology.

Commitment to justice was necessarily made as explicit as possible. Indeed, justice together with *kanun* (law code) seem to have provided the tools to consolidate an empire

⁴²² As quoted in: Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual*, 282.

⁴²³ In Islamic tradition, Süleyman (or Solomon) is considered as a great prophet and as a divinely appointed monarch, who ruled the world with justice. Süleyman, the youngest son of prophet Davud, was endowed with a high level of wisdom and with extraordinary gifts.

⁴²⁴ Âşık Paşazâde, *Tevârîh*, ed. Yavuz and Saraç, 344: 'Velîdür her ne han kim âdil olsa; Degül ayıb cihân aña kul olsa. Süleymân adl idüp tutdı cihânı; Süleymân mislidür han âdil olsa.'

⁴²⁵ Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual*, 276.

that governed over widely diverse territories and religious communities. As Tursun Beg noted, a distinguished lineage was not necessary for a good governance. The candidate for rulership accredited by lineage was not necessarily the best sovereign; true sovereignty and suitable rule were better demonstrated by acts and virtues. Tursun wrote: ‘No ruler can be worthy of praise or be justly proud unless it is by reason of possessing all or some the four virtues: wisdom, courage, honesty and justice. Those who take pride in their descent and lineage can only do so because they have fathers and ancestors who were known for these virtues.’⁴²⁶

Justice was also often highlighted in earlier historical works and advice books. In the *Oğuzname*, it is stated that Tugrul Khan established his state on justice, truthiness and goodness.⁴²⁷ Neşrî noted that Gün Han, the son of Oğuz, was a just ruler: ‘he was a just and wise ruler. He restored the lands in south and north with his justice. During his reign, many cities were built in Turkistan and elsewhere.’⁴²⁸ Furthermore, the *Kutadgu Bilig*, one of the oldest mirrors-for-princes in the Turkish language, instructed the princes on their duties towards the people in order to obtain a successful rule and emphasised justice as the supreme virtue: ‘I settle matters with justice. I do not make a difference between lords and subjects. I settle the matter with integrity. [...] Whoever comes to my door fleeing from tyranny finds justice. That man will depart from me in sweetness; he is pleased and laughs.’⁴²⁹

In his *siyaset-nâme* or ‘Book of Government’, the Seljuk vizier Nizâm al-Mulk also emphasised the necessity of justice. He therefore quoted several traditions of the Prophet. According to one tradition, Prophet Muhammad said: ‘Justice is the glory of the faith and the power of the government; therein lies the secret of the prosperity of nobility and commons.’⁴³⁰ Nizam al-Mulk advised: ‘A kingdom may last while there is irreligion, but will not endure when there is oppression.’⁴³¹ He defined just rule as: ‘the right way for a sultan to acknowledge God’s grace is by looking after his subjects, giving them justice and preserving them from oppressors.’⁴³² Likewise, as mentioned above, Ahmedî had also

⁴²⁶ Tursun Beg, *Tarih-i Ebu’l Feth*, 17.

⁴²⁷ Togan, *Oğuz Destanı*, 74: ‘[...] Tugrul, etraf ve çevre ülkelere elçiler gönderip devleti adalet, doğruluk ve iyilik esasında kurdu.’

⁴²⁸ Neşrî, *Cihânnümâ*, 9: ‘Veled-i ekberi Gün Han [...] melik-i muvahhid, âkıl ve âdildi. Bilâd-ı şarkiyyeyi ve şimâliyyeyi imâret idüp, bunun zamânında Türkistanda ve gayrda nice şehirler binâ olundu.’

⁴²⁹ Yusuf Has Hacib, *Kutadgu Bilig*, ed. and tr. Reşit Rahmeti Arat (Ankara, 1998) 40: ‘Şekere gelince, o zülme uğrayarak, benim kapıma gelen ve adaleti bende bulan içindir. O insan benden şeker gibi tatlı tatlı ayrılır; sevinir ve yüzü güler.’

⁴³⁰ Nizâm al-Mulk, *The Book of Government*, 49.

⁴³¹ Ibidem, 12.

⁴³² Nizâm al-Mulk, *The Book of Government*, 45.

suggested that the justice of an infidel ruler might preserve his reign while an unjust Muslim sultan might lose his throne.

In several Ottoman advice books as well as in the chronicles, the notion of 'justice' or '*adâlet*' was defined as the prevention and elimination of oppressive acts (*zûlm*) by those who exercise state power.⁴³³ The concept *adl* originally meant 'straight', 'balanced' and later acquired the more specific meaning of 'justice'. The term is frequently used in the Qur'an and in the traditions of the Prophet.⁴³⁴ The classical view of 'justice' or *adl* can be found in the work of al-Ghazâlî, who noted: 'Justice is distinguished from tyranny (*zulm*) only by law. The religion of God and the law of His Prophet are the goal and the sanctuary of every departure and every arrival to justice.'⁴³⁵ In later works, *adl* was employed in a meaning closer to its original connotation of 'balance' and 'equilibrium'. It denoted a situation in which the public order of society was kept in balance. For a successful government, it was advised to protect the tax-paying classes (merchants, craftsmen, peasants) which were the main sources of revenue. This was required to ensure the stability of state-society relations. The discourse on justice emerged in this respect as the crucial rhetoric tool for maintaining the *nizâm-ı âlem* or 'right order of society to the benefit of the general public', which as we have already mentioned was a central concept in Ottoman political theory.⁴³⁶

The earliest known Ottoman *siyaset-nâme* or *Fürstenspiegel* was Bedr-i Dilşâd's *Muradnâme*, written in the early 1420s (see Chapter 1).⁴³⁷ The advices given to princes in the *Muradnâme* relied on the ideas of the ancient philosophers, Quranic verses and the traditions of the Prophet. After the conversion of the Turks to Islam, the most important sources for the principles of ethics were based upon the Qur'an and the prophetic tradition.⁴³⁸ The main principles for good political behaviour and virtues of kings in the *Muradnâme* are clustered among others around being honest, possessing divine sanction and favour, obligation to consult statesmen, being prudent, avoiding oppression and cruelty, refraining from pride and vanity, being serious, being kind and generous, showing mercy, being brave and most importantly implementing a just rule. As we will observe, Sultan Murad II, according to the Ottoman chronicles, kept step with all these features as the ideal ruler.

⁴³³ Ahmedî, *Dasitân-i Tevârîh*, 25; Tursun Beg, *Tarih-i Ebu'l Feth*, 17, 25; Abou-El-Haj, *Formation of the Modern State*, 23-24.

⁴³⁴ Toshihiko Izutsu, *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qur'an* (Montreal, 1966) 209-211, 234; See also: 'adl', *El*².

⁴³⁵ Lewis, *Political Language*, 143.

⁴³⁶ For a brief introduction to the Ottoman use of the concept 'justice', see: İnalcık, 'State and Ideology', 70-78.

⁴³⁷ *Murâd-nâme*, 2 vols., ed. Âdem Ceyhan (İstanbul, 1997).

⁴³⁸ Ibidem, 19; Agah Sırrı Levend, *Türk Edebiyatı Tarihi* (Ankara, 1988) 121-122, 166.

At the very start of *Muradname*, the author formulated a set of advices to monarchs, emphasising just rule. The author asserted that a monarch has to know God's verdicts in order to rule with justice and mercy and make this his custom, combined with benevolence and kindness. If a prince wished to be merciful, he had to be above all a just ruler. However, when a prince did not take to divine ordinances, then he would become a deputy of the devil, opposing to God's will. A ruler should know that if officials under his command should oppress people, he would be taken responsible for the oppressive acts of his statesmen.⁴³⁹

The *Muradnâme* continued by emphasising the importance of justice by referring to the Prophet's tradition (*hadith*): 'One hour of just governance is more auspicious than sixty years of worship in vain'.⁴⁴⁰ A verse from the Qur'an about just government was also quoted: 'Surely God commands that when you judge between people you judge with justice.'⁴⁴¹ Various references to the virtue of acting justly can be found in the Qur'an. For instance, in one of the Qur'anic verses, it is re-commanded that if two Muslim parties are in dispute, they should be reconciled in justice: 'make peace between them with justice and act equitably; surely God dears those who act equitably.'⁴⁴² The Qur'an frequently reminds the believers that God only appreciates the rulers who act justly.

Likewise, the *Muradnâme* noted that one of the seven selected groups among mankind, which God would keep under his shadow and shelter at doomsday, were the sultans who governed their realm with justice. Every monarch, who sought to find this favour with God, should consequently act with justice. Furthermore, the ruler was advised to act with empathy toward his subjects. The author of the *Muradnâme* defined justice by advising the ruler 'to treat the people in a way that you would seem right that you yourself be treated'.⁴⁴³ The *Muradnâme* also referred to a famous tradition of the Prophet, which accounted that a monarch should only pray to be a just ruler: 'because the ruler's virtue underlies the well-being of his subjects and the prosperity of the world'.⁴⁴⁴

⁴³⁹ *Murâd-nâme*, 209-211: 'Ulu iş imiş âleme hânlık; Eger Hak süzine hilaf itmeye; İşi kendözinden güzaf imeye; Halîfe olur Tañrı'dan âleme; Ki hükm eyleye bunca bin âdeme; Dilerse ki Rahman sıfatlu ola; Gerekdür ki key ma'diletli ola; Ve eger ki Tañrı sözine uymaz ise; Nedür hükmi tuyar ya tuymaz ise; Dahı re'feti şefkati olmasa; Halife olur ki şeytan için; [...] Boyun koya Tañrı'nun emrine; Sora bile Tañrı'nun emri ne; Gerek adl ü insafî âdet kıla, Dahı lutf u ihsânı gâyet kıla. [...] Dahı şöyle bilmek gerekdür ki her; Ne zulmi kulları anı ider; Kamusını andan sorarlar imiş.'

⁴⁴⁰ *Murâd-nâme*, 212: 'Kâle'n-Nebiyü Aleyhi's-selâm; Adlû's-sâati hayrun min ibadeti sittîne sene.'

⁴⁴¹ Quran, 4:58

⁴⁴² Qur'an, 49:9.

⁴⁴³ *Murâd-nâme*, 213: 'Hüdâ gölgesinde dutar anları; Ki ol demde râhat ola cânları; Biri ol yidinün şu sultan imiş; Ki âlemde adl idici hân imiş [...] Kim ister ise bu makâmı bula; Ne tamu ki dârü's-selâmı bula; Gerek on kavâ'id ri'âyet kıla; [...] Dahı her neyi kim özine anı; Revâ görmeye kendözine anı; Ra'iyetlere câyiz aňlamaya; Dilerse güle sonra ađlamaya.'

⁴⁴⁴ Ibidem, 216.

Likewise, Tursun Beg noted that every people and each society are in need of justice.⁴⁴⁵ He linked justice with mildness and considered these two as the highest virtues for a Sultan. Tursun argued that the maintenance of the political organisation was only achievable through the combination of these two qualities. Governance that was based on justice would endorse the desired social equilibrium among the human kind. For him, justice was sufficient to satisfy the needs of the elite groups. However, the common people, due to their excessive requests for material gains, were inclined to acquire privileges to the detriment of others. Therefore, Tursun argued that justice alone was insufficient to preserve the social order. As the people take no satisfaction by only justice, a gentle and just monarch should make the life of the people comfortable so that they could manage poverty and difficulties. Tursun counselled the sovereign to be merciful and sometimes to forgive the criminals. In this way, the people would truly give their consent to the sovereign, whom they would perceive as merciful and just.⁴⁴⁶ To illustrate his point, Tursun accounted a story in which Alexander forgave a criminal. One of his officials protested and said: I would have killed him. Alexander wryly replied: I do not find suitable to kill him as I am not deficient as you are.⁴⁴⁷ In this sense, Tursun Beg counselled the virtue of mildness, which he defined as ‘to forgive when one is powerful.’⁴⁴⁸

As is generally known, in Muslim mirrors for princes the connection between the prosperity of the people and just rule was often explained by referring to the then famous ‘circle of equity’ or the *daire-i adliye*. The concept of the circle of justice, which dates back to at least the time of the Babylonian ruler Hammurabi, was a model for how state and society had to relate to each other. The notion implied that the ruler, whose position was at the top of the circle, maintained justice through reasonable taxation and through protection from oppressive acts of his officials. The peasantry paid taxes for the treasury and the treasury paid the army. The army completed the circle by securing the

⁴⁴⁵ Tursun Beg, *Tarih-i Ebu'l Feth*, 18: ‘temâmet-i tavâyif-i muhtelif adle mahtâcdur.’

⁴⁴⁶ Ibidem, 19-20: ‘bu adl ü hilm iki haslet-i şeriftür ki, pâdişâhlara ser-defter-i mefâhir ve zîver-i peyker-i menâkıb u me’âsir olabilür. Ve te’bîd-i devlet ü tahlîd-i saltanat bununla müyesserdür ki; egerçi yalunuz iltizâm-ı tarîka-i adl – niteki zikr olundı – mûcib-i kivâm-ı intizâm-ı âlemyân olur, ve havâss-ı ibâd mümkindür ki mücerred adl ile râzî olalar; ammâ evsât-ı umûm metâmi’ ü metâmipleri iktizası ile dilerler ki, akrân arasında ba’zı ba’zından imtiyâz hâsıl ideler. Ve mahz-ı adl ile bu ma’nâ mütemessîl olmaz, illâ inzımâm-ı fazl ile ki, netâyic-i hilmdendür. [...] Ve amme-i halk, hemm-i Hak’tan, mahzâ adle râzı degüllerdür [...] Pes, çün pâdişâh-ı halîm ü âdil mahall ü makâma münasib iş buyursa ve fazl kapularından ifâzat-ı ihsân itse, bu emr ayn-i hikmet olur ki, âmme-i re’âyâ ve kâffe-i berâyâ harûr-ı cevri dehri anunla teskin iderler. Ve eger, bir nefisine zulm idüp, kar’ı bâb-ı inâbet iden mücrimün cürmini safh-ı cemil ile mukâbele eyleye, belki isâ’etine ihsân ide, bu emr ayn-i tafaddul olur ki, ehvâ vü kulûb anun mütâba’at ü itâ’atine ragıb olur.’

⁴⁴⁷ Ibidem, 20: ‘İskender cevâbında zımn-ı tehçinde bu latîfeyi buyurdu ki: lâcerem, çün senün gibi hazîz-i noksânda degülem, katline ikbal göstermedüm, didi.’

⁴⁴⁸ Ibidem, 18: ‘me’l hilm? El afvü inde’l-kudret.’

sovereignty of the ruler. Preserving this circle ensured the social order of the world.⁴⁴⁹ Many Muslim writers incorporated the notion of ‘the circle of justice’ into their work. For instance, al-Ghazalî, wrote in his ‘Advice for Kings’ (*Nasihat al-Muluk*): ‘the religion depends on the monarchy, the monarchy on the army, the army on money, the money on prosperity and prosperity on justice.’⁴⁵⁰ The concept of the ‘circle of equity’ was also emphasised by the Seljuk vizier Nizam al-Mulk, who perceived the world as a garden and the ruler as the fence defending the garden: ‘The ruler is supported by his soldiers; soldiers are maintained by money; money is acquired from the subjects; the subjects are protected by justice and justice is maintained by the ruler.’⁴⁵¹ If justice is removed from this equation, then the subjects will be left unprotected against oppression and they would be unable to produce revenues. Such a destabilisation would disable the ruler to maintain soldiers and if there are no soldiers, the ruler will not be able to defend the country and the whole order would collapse.

The Ottoman chroniclers also elaborated on the normative discourse of ‘the circle of equity’, in which the rulers’ administration of justice gained vital importance. One of the earliest references to the notion of ‘circle of equity’ in Ottoman chronicles can be found in the advice given by Osman Gazi to his son. According to the chronicler Âşık Paşazâde, in his testament, Osman Gazi counselled Orhan Gazi the following: ‘Please those who obey and serve you. Always treat your soldiers well and grant them with benefactions and favours, for your gifts cause their loyalty.’⁴⁵² The same advice is repeated in the account of Neşrî: ‘make happy those who obey you and do not forget to bestow your soldiers with benefactions and gifts’; and he included a tradition of the Prophet, saying: ‘the human being only submits to the benevolence he receives.’⁴⁵³ By referring to the circle of justice in the meaning of redistribution of wealth, Tursun Beg noted: ‘the wise men have said that the friend of a sultan are his soldiers, his possessions are his enemy. If his wealth diminishes by distributing it to his soldiers, his friends and helpers will increase. But if his wealth increases by withholding it from his soldiers, his friends and soldiers will be weakened.’⁴⁵⁴

To illustrate his advice, Tursun Beg accounted a story about a sultan and his two viziers. One of the viziers advised the sultan to accumulate money in order to generate a

⁴⁴⁹ Douglas Streusand, *Islamic Gunpowder Empires. Ottomans, Safavids and Mughals* (Philadelphia, 2011) 13-14.

⁴⁵⁰ Gazzali’s *Book of Counsel for Kings* (*Nasihat al Muluk*), 19

⁴⁵¹ Nizâm al-Mulk, *The Book of Government*, 49.

⁴⁵² Âşık Paşazâde, *Tevârîh-i*, 302: ‘Sana mutî olup hidmet idenleri hôş dut. Ve bir dahı nökterlerüne dâym in’âm ve ihsân it kim senün ihsânun anlaruñ hâlinuñ duzagıdır, didi.’

⁴⁵³ Neşrî, *Cihânnümâ*, 64-65: ‘Ve dahı saña mutî olanları hoş tutasın. Ve dahi nökterlerüne in’âm u ihsânı eksük itmeyesin ki, *el-insân abîdü’l-ihsân*.’

⁴⁵⁴ Tursun Beg, *Tarih-i Ebu’l Feth*, 27: ‘Sultânun dostı leşkeridür, ve düşmeni malidür. Eger nökterine bezl itmekden mâl zâ’if olursa, nökter kavî olur ki, dostı ve nâsırıdır. Eger nökterinden men’ itmekle mâl kavî olursa, nökter – ki dostı ve yardımcısıdır – za’îf olur.’

treasury. This vizier argued that when it was required one could easily find servants with money. He brought a plate with honey which attracted a lot of flies. And he used to say: if we have a treasury, when required we easily can collect the necessary soldiers, such as these flies that come to the honey. The other vizier said: the sultan needs soldiers and one has to win the hearts of the soldiers with various gifts and goodness, so that they would show braveness and courage without hesitation in deadly and dangerous situations. This vizier continued and counselled that there can occur such a time, that when needed no soldier can be found. And the ones that are found are mostly too weak and hopeless. He also brought a plate with honey and put it before the king at night. No fly came to the honey, merely a few ants showed up but they were soon drowned. The sultan was sage and followed the guidance of his second vizier. He bestowed his servants with donations and kindness, succeeded to govern his realm with justice and prosperity, and he became victorious upon his foes.⁴⁵⁵

In the *Fürstenspiegel* written for Sultan Murad II, the author mentioned the circle of equity in his description of the duties and virtues of princes. The author of *Muradname* noted that when the Prophet was asked why the Persian Sassanid kings succeeded to maintain their sovereignty, he replied the following: ‘God granted them rulership because they were gentle to the poor; they abandoned oppression and made justice; and they reconstructed their realm.’⁴⁵⁶ When the Prophet was asked what caused the fall of the Sassanids, the Prophet allegedly replied: ‘they gave up the consult of reason; the world was filled with oppression and justice was neglected.’⁴⁵⁷ By further referring to the history of the Sassanids and quoting the Prophet, the *Muradnâme* noted that king Anushirvan is still remembered for his just rule and that he is discharged from punishment in the hell due to his justice.⁴⁵⁸ In the *Muradname*, the notion of justice is also emphasised by a comment attributed to the Prophet who allegedly boasted of being born in the time of a just ruler.⁴⁵⁹ However, as demonstrated earlier, this statement does not accord with the early Islamic political norm, which perceived the status of rulership as something objectionable. The *Muradname* concluded with a reference to the circle of equity: ‘A ruler

⁴⁵⁵ Tursun Beg, *Tarih-i Ebu'l Feth*, 27.

⁴⁵⁶ *Murâd-nâme*, 225: ‘Resûl’e su’âl eylediler neden; Ki Sasaniler’de şehenşâhlık; [...] Ki sultânlık anlara oldu yâr. Cevâbında dimiş Aleyhi’s-selâm; İki nesnedendür karâr itdüğü; Hüda anları şehriyar itdüğü; biri yoksula şefkat itdükleri; koyup zulmini adle gittükleri; İkinci bu kim memleketlerini imaret iderler idi varını.’

⁴⁵⁷ Ibidem, 226: ‘Akıl tanışığını unutdılar; Zulüm cevri dünyâyâ teldi tamâm; Adil dâd işidilmez oldu tamâm.’

⁴⁵⁸ Ibidem, 227: ‘Görinmez mi kim şâh-ı Nûşirevân; Henüz adli-y-ile nice anılır; Dahı adl için yiri Araf olur; Cehennem azâbından ol sâf olur.’

⁴⁵⁹ Ibidem, 227: ‘Ki buyruk makâmında durdı Resûl; Tefâhurla didi ki âdil şehün; Zamânında dogdum o âkıl şehün; Vüldtü fi zemeni’l-meliki’l-âdil.’

needs soldiers and smoothness in his affairs; if the ruler loses control then all his affairs falls silent.’⁴⁶⁰

This normative discourse of the advice books also featured in the early Ottoman chronicles. In his account of the reign of Osman Gazi, Âşık Paşazâde included many passages on justice. He recorded that Osman Gazi pursued a policy of good relations with his Christian neighbours, who suffered from the harassments of the Germiyanids. Osman’s conflict with the rival Turkish principality of Germiyan was caused by his intention to keep good relations with his ‘infidel neighbours’.⁴⁶¹ In a later passage, Âşık Paşazâde noted that it was customary for the Ottomans to give meals and open banquets to the people. He included a poem praising the justice and laws of Osman Gazi: ‘We heard that Osman has laws; his justness and benevolence makes the friends cheerful. The *hüma*-bird flies in their shadow, all other birds only become their pray; precisely as might, reason and precaution are necessary, recognise that knowledge and estimation are also required.’⁴⁶²

Âşık Paşazâde recorded a story about the Christian glass merchants from Bilecik. At the market, someone from the Turkish principality of Germiyan had taken some of the merchandise from these Christian traders without paying. The Christian merchants went to Osman Gazi and complained about this wrong and pleaded for its redress. Osman retook from the Germiyanid the value of the goods he had confiscated and returned it to the Christian merchants. Thereafter, he proclaimed and prohibited that ‘No one should hurt the infidels of Bilecik’ and showed justice as such. Since then, the Christian women of Bilecik came to sell their goods at the market in Eskişehir in all safety and security. These Christians even trusted Osman so much that they said: ‘This Turk acts righteous to us’.⁴⁶³ The obvious aim of the story is to represent Osman Gazi as a ruler promoting his authority by applying justice and performing his role as protector of the people, regardless of their faith. The chroniclers unanimously implied that the dedication of Ottoman rulers to justice had been their characteristic already since the first ruler of the dynasty.

⁴⁶⁰ *Murâd-nâme*, 228: ‘Cihân-gîr olan kimse zâbit gerek; Dimezven ki işlerde hâbit gerek; Şu şahun ki zabtı yog ola anun; Her işinde habtı çoğ ola anun.’

⁴⁶¹ Âşık Paşazâde, *Tevârih-i*, 275: ‘Osman Gazi yakın konşı kafirler-ile gâyet müdârâyâ başladı ve Germiyânluylan adâvete başladı. Anun-ıçun kim bu geldükleri vilâyetün kâfirleri Germiyânlu’dan incinürlerdi.’

⁴⁶² *Ibidem*, 281: ‘İşitdük kânûn-ı Osmân kim var; Budur adli vü bezli şen iden yâr. Bularuñ kölgesinde uçdı hüma; Şikârdur bunlara her murg-ı sunkar. Gerekdür kuvvet ü hem akl u tedbîr; Muvâfık olına bil ‘ilm ü takdîr [...]’

⁴⁶³ Âşık Paşazâde, *Tevârih-i*, 282: ‘[...] Osman Gazi dahı ol bardağı alan kişiyi getürmiş, belki döğmiş, dahı kafirün hakkını alıvirmiş. Be-gâyet yasak itmiş: ‘Hergiz Bilecük kafirlerini incitmeyeler’. Bunlara adl gösterdi. Tâ şol hadde vardı kim Bilecük kafirlerinün avratları dahı Eskişehir’ün bazarında gelürler, bazar idüp maksûdlarını görüp giderlerdi emn ü emân-ıla. Bu Bilecük’ün kafirleri dahı Osman Gazi’ye gâyetde i’timâd itmişlerdi kim ‘Bu Türk bizüm-ile eyü togrılık ider’, dirlerdi.’

The most panegyric representation of the justice of Ottoman rulers was formulated by Ahmedî. He fashioned Orhan Gazi and the Ottomans as just rulers: 'Orhân was equitable and a dispenser of justice; Because of him, even the justice of Umar [the second caliph after the Prophet, famous for his just rule] was forgotten. Where the justice [adl] of the Ottomans exists; why would the justice of Umar be mentioned there.'⁴⁶⁴

Likewise, Aşık Paşazade noted that Orhan Gazi was famous all around Anatolia for his justness. He wrote: 'In the conquered places, they [the Ottomans] showed so much justice that their fame spread across to the regions that they not yet had captured.'⁴⁶⁵ He continued by recording that Süleyman Pasha, the son of Orhan Gazi, had conquered many cities in the Balkan through exemplary deeds of justice: 'they surrendered with consent and negotiation (*'ahd u eman*). Süleyman Pasha did so many just acts that the inhabitants said: 'O why did they not come to rule us before?' Many villagers observed these Turkish people and became all Muslims.'⁴⁶⁶ According to Neşrî, many cities in Anatolia also voluntarily submitted to Sultan Bâyezid I due to his reputation of a just ruler and as the people were so tired of oppression that they willingly welcomed and obeyed him.⁴⁶⁷

As discussed in Chapter 2, the principle of willful surrender without being harmed was an established principle of the Ottoman policy of expansion. The option of accommodation to Ottoman rule remained particularly strong among the popular classes in the conquered lands. As pointed out earlier, the Ottomans acted according to the principles of Muslim Law, which offered the Christian enemies the option of surrendering with keeping their rights and properties as an alternative to conquest by force.

Even a non-Ottoman historian referred to this practice. The Byzantine chronicler Doukas noted that in 1422 many inhabitants of Thessaloniki showed a preference for a peaceful take-over of their city by the Ottomans in order to avoid a capture by assault (for the historical background of this event, see Chapter 2). Many citizens of Thessaloniki had fled and had even joined the Ottoman forces.⁴⁶⁸ The *Gazavat* also reported that those under siege knew that if they surrendered, the 'Turks' would be merciful to them and develop their city rather than plunder it. In the *Gazavat*, a Christian ruler speaks about this attitude of Ottoman rulers: 'My expectation is that the son of Osman is open for dialogue. Because,

⁴⁶⁴ Ahmedî, *Dasitân-i Tevârîh*, 30: 'Munsıfıdı Orhan u dadger, Unıdıldı anuñıla adl-i Ömer. Kanda kim Osmaniler adli ola, Orada adl-i Ömer nişe añıla.'

⁴⁶⁵ Aşık Paşazade, *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osman*, 315: 'Ve ol vilayetler cemi'i Orhan Gazi'nin adlin işitmişler idi. Ve hem her vilayeti kim aldılar, ana adl ü dâd etdiler. Alınmayan vilayetler dahı anların neyledüklerini bilmişler idi'

⁴⁶⁶ Aşık Paşazade, *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osman*, 315: 'Bu Süleyman Paşa dahı ol kadar adl ü dâd itdi kim cem'i ol vilayetün halkı eydürlerdi kim: 'Nolaydı evvelden de bunlar bize hâkim olalardı', dirler-idi. Ve niçe köyler bu Türk halkını gördiler, Müsülmân oldılar.'

⁴⁶⁷ Neşrî, *Cihannüma*, 142: 'Bu vilâyetleri Sultân Bâyezid Hân hep adlile musahhar itdi. Zîrâ, evvelki begleri halka zulm iderlerdi. Her vilâyetin halkı karşı gelüb, istikbâl idüb, itâ'at itdiler.'

⁴⁶⁸ Doukas, *Decline and Fall of Byzantium*, 247-249.

they are merciful, they do not kill those who ask for mercy and they even do not hunt those who flee.⁴⁶⁹ Aşık Paşazade summarised the whole issue in four verses, indicating the custom of not harming those who wilfully surrender.⁴⁷⁰

There were various examples of cities which have surrendered like Bursa and Amasra whose inhabitants were not harmed. Kefe was yet another city which voluntarily surrendered. Aşık Paşazade made the inhabitants themselves explain the reason for surrender. In this case, it was a matter of interests. Those under siege knew by then that if they surrendered, the ‘Turks’ would treat them good and develop their city rather than destroy it. If this was the case, then why should they seek trouble. Therefore, the city-dwellers of Kefe appealed their governor (*tekür*) to voluntarily surrender the city. Aşık Paşazade noted: ‘On the third day, they asked for peaceful surrender (*emân dilediler*). [Gedik] Ahmed Pasha accepted their request.’⁴⁷¹

It appears that the ruler had to be just both because it was the right way to behave and because the people would give their consent more easily to a just ruler. For instance, Neşrî portrayed Bâyezid’s father, Sultan Murad I, in most exalted terms as ‘a just and wise ruler, lover of the religion, dispenser of justice, of noble grace, friend of the poor, kind to strangers, protector of who fell in poverty, provider of remedy for the helpless, possessor of opinion, a wise and successful administrator, a valiant and fearless champion.’⁴⁷²

In general, the image of the Ottoman sultans as sensitive for the administration of justice had a pivotal importance in the passages quoted above. Whether these stories were partly true or completely invented, they obviously had an ideological effect. They seemed to serve as discourses on morality, prescribing a set of values and norms. For instance, the story about the Christian merchants from Bilecik may have been simplified or even invented, but it certainly expressed a glimpse of the historical realities of the early 1300s in Anatolia.

A similar story, told by both Neşrî and Âşık Paşazâde, described Osman Gazi as establishing the law on taxation. The anecdote was also intended to represent Osman’s fairness. He was portrayed as a fair but naive nomad prince who did not know what a market tax was. Perhaps its narration served the purpose of reminding the later Ottoman sultans about the justness of the founding father of the dynasty. By representing Osman

⁴⁶⁹ *Gazavât-ı Sultan Murad*, 31: ‘Şöyle umarım ki, Osmanoğlu’na söz geçer. Zira anlarda merhamet vardır, aman diyene anlar kılıç urmaz ve kaçanı dahı kovmaz.’

⁴⁷⁰ Aşık Paşazade, *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osman*, 185: ‘Gazalar kim edübdür Âl-i Osman / Vilayet kafirin etdi müsülman / Kaçanı komadılar yağılarda / Dileyene dahı verdiler aman.’

⁴⁷¹ *Ibidem*, 458: ‘[...] kim bu Türk bu hisarı cebr ile alur ise bizi kırar ve bazımızu esir eder ve malumuzu alırlar. Ve şehrimüzi harab eylerler. İmdi bunun gibi olmakdan ise âsanlığ ile verelüm kim cemi’müzi esir etmeyeler. Ve hem ol padişah kim bu Türkleri göndürdi, ol padişah her aldugı vilayeti ma’mur etdi. Yıkub harab etmedi. [...] Üçüncü gün hemân emân dilediler. Ahmed Paşa dahı emân virdi.’

⁴⁷² *Ibidem*, 139: ‘Âdil ü kâmil ve dîn-perver, adl-güster, âli-himmet, kesîrû’l-menfa’at, fakir-dost ve garîb-nevâz, destgîr-i üftâdegân ve çâresâz-i bî-çâregân, sahib-i rây ve ehl-i tedbîr, pehlevân ve şücâ’ u dilirdi.’

Gazi as a just ruler, the narrative conveyed an image of the first ruler establishing laws on taxation. As taxation was one of the basic characteristics of state formation and as it was also issued in the steppe empires, it is hard to believe that Osman was unaware of this practice.

The story in Neşrî's version, in which he rewrote the one by Âşık Paşazâde, went as follows: 'Someone from the Germiyan principality came and asked Osman Gazi: sell me the tax [right] for this market. 'What is this tax for?', Osman Gazi asked. He answered: 'Everyone who brings goods to [sell on] the market, has to pay me money'. Osman gazi said: 'On what grounds can you be allowed to collect money from them? The man said: 'it is customary, it exists in every region: for every merchandise, they collect money for the *padişah* [monarch].' Osman Gazi asked: 'Is this the command of God [*tangrı buyruğı*] or the words of the prophet? Or, is this proclaimed by every ruler individually?' The man said: 'Since long before, it is the *sultan* custom and law [*türe-i sultânî*].' Thereupon, Osman Gazi burst into anger: 'Go away, you cunning rogue! Otherwise I will harm you. These people are for nothing indebted to me! What should they pay me money for?' However, the advisors of Osman Gazi said: 'O Khan! It is customary to pay something to the guards who protect the market, so that their efforts are not wasted.'⁴⁷³ Both chroniclers noted that only after this counsel Osman legalised the market tax and proclaimed it into a dynastic law. As such, the first Ottoman *kanun* was promulgated.

Curiously, this story was not recorded by Oruç Beg nor by the anonymous chronicler. Once again, this must be explained by the fact that each chronicler adapted his narrative to the tastes and presuppositions of his intended audience and their knowledge of what had happened. Consequently, some themes were emphasised, while other topoi were denounced or omitted. Oruç, who worked as a scribe at the court, chose not to include this story. Although he knew the work of Âşık Paşazâde, whom he even mentioned in his text, and also that of Yahşi Fakih, the source Âşık Paşazâde for the fourteenth century, he clearly composed his chronicle in a careful and selective way.

The possible reason for omitting this story by the anonymous chronicler can be related to the intra-elite competitive power play about controlling resources. As already noted, the anonymous chronicler belonged to the gazi circles and explicitly articulated the perspective of this social group in his text. His 'ideological' framing of events was

⁴⁷³ Neşrî, *Cihannüma*, 53: 'Germiyan vilayetinden bir kişi Osman Gâzi'ye gelüp eyitti: 'Bu bâzârûn bâcını baña satuñ.' Osman eyitti: 'Bâc ne olur?' ol kisi eyitdi: Bâzâra her kim yük getürse, andan akçe alayın.' Osman Gazi eyitdi: 'Bire kişi! Bu bâzâra gelenlerde alımuñ mı vardur ki, bunlardan akça alursın.' Ol kisi eyitdi: 'Bu âdetdür. Her vilayetde vardur ki, her yükden pâdişahçün akça alurlar.' Osman eyitdi: 'Bu Tañrı buyruğı, ya peygamber kavli midür? Ya her ilüñ padişahı kendü mi ihdâs eder?' Ol kişi eyitdi: 'Evvelden türe-i sultânîdür. Osman Gazi gazaba gelüp eyitdi: Yüri ayruk, bu arada turma, ki sana ziyânum dokunur. Bir kişi ki kendü eliyle kesb itmiş ola, bana ne borcu var ki râygân akça vire? Bu sözi Osman Gazi'den halâyık işidecek, eyitdiler: İy Han! Bu bâzârı bekleyenlere âdetdür. Bir nesnecük virürler, tâ ki bunların dahı emekleri zâyî olma.' For the version of Âşık Paşazâde, see: *Tevârih*, 290.

noticeably linked with the view of the gazi groups, who resented the policy of taxation that favoured the treasury of the central government. The gazi circles also opposed the centralist tendencies of the dynasty. Due to his oppositional stance, the anonymous chronicler probably preferred to omit this specific account of Osman Gazi, which represented the eponymous founder of the dynasty as the promulgator of laws.

The anonymous chronicler also resented the introduction of the state treasury and condemned all kinds of taxes that diminished the revenues of the gazi milieu. On the introduction of the central treasury, he noted: 'At that time [the reign of Murad I] the *padisahs* were not greedy. Whatever came into their hands they gave away again, and they did not know what a treasury was. But when [Çandarlı] Hayreddin Pasha came to the court, greedy scholars became the companions of the rulers. 'He who is a ruler must have a treasury', they said.'⁴⁷⁴ He also criticised the *pençik*-tax on captives applied in the 1370s, according to which one-fifth of the gaza booty was taken for the state's treasury and the establishment. The chronicler criticised this tax, as it diminished the revenues of the semi-independent gazi nomad groups. Likewise, he resented the establishment of the janissary institution during the reign of Murad I.⁴⁷⁵

The anonymous chronicler's concern here was clearly not the image of the just and fair sultan, but rather the introduction of taxation, the exclusion of the gazi groups from resources and the vanishing of their privileges. Indeed, it appears that even for the author of the Anonymous Chronicle being a just ruler was an important asset. Although he often harshly criticised Bâyezid, he still felt the need to balance his criticism of the dynasty by pro forma including a reference to his justice. Though this was certainly not his own view, he copied from Ahmedî's prose chronicle the following verses, representing Bâyezid's justness: 'He was as just as his father and his grandfather; and a wise ruler in public affairs.'⁴⁷⁶ As discussed in Chapter 2, Ahmedî presented Bâyezid as just as his ancestors and as continuing the tradition based on justice. Ahmedî had written: 'because justice reigned in the country, people of all standings could go on with their activities'.⁴⁷⁷ The author of the Anonymous Chronicle rather ascribed justice to the first Ottoman rulers. He noted, for example, that the conquests of the first regions in the Balkans by Süleyman Pasha, the son of Orhan Gazi, were eased when the local people had heard about how

⁴⁷⁴ *Anonim Osmanlı Kroniği*, 31: 'Ol zaman pâdişahlar tama'kâr değüllerdî. Her ne ellerine girürse yigide ve yegile virürler idi. Hazîne nedür bilmezlerdi. Heman kim Hayreddin Paşa kapuya geldi, padişahlar ve tama'kar danışmendler musâhib olup, hazîne dahi padisah olana gerekdür didiler.'

⁴⁷⁵ *Ibidem*, 28 : 'Gelibolu'da esîrden bâc almak Cendereli Kara Halîl'den ve Karamanlı Kara Rüstem'den kaldı [...] Bu tertîb üzerine oğlanlar devşirdiler. [...] Bir kaç yıldan sonra götürüp kapuda yeniçeri eylediler. Ve hem adını yeniçeri kodılar'.

⁴⁷⁶ *Ibidem*, 34: 'Ata dede gibi âdil oldu ol; Kamu işlerinde kâmil oldu ol.'

⁴⁷⁷ Ahmedî, *Dastan-i Tenvârîh*, 45-46: 'Ata, dede bigi âdil oldu ol / Dükeli işlerde kâmil oldu ol [...] Memleketde kıldı gayet adl ü dâd / Halk ol adli çün andan buldılar / Ulu, kice işe meşgul oldılar.'

Süleyman Pasha dispensed justice. They subsequently surrendered voluntarily to Ottoman rule and became all Muslim.⁴⁷⁸

In the account of the anonymous author, there is no other reference to justice concerning the later sultans. He clearly cherished nostalgia for the old days of sharing of wealth and relatively egalitarian relations during the reigns of Osman and Orhan. For instance, the Anonymous Chronicle accused the judges (*kadi*) of having become corrupt during the reign of Bâyezid I. He claimed that during the reigns of Osman and Orhan the scholars (*dânişmend*) in the medrese were reticent to take up the office of judge or *kadi*. 'In former times, one allegedly used to say that the office of *kadi* was equal to a place in the hell. No one wanted to become judge.' He complained that at his own time 'people even would draw swords and kill each other for the office of *kadi*.'⁴⁷⁹ However, in the version of the court poet Ahmedî, Bâyezid I was represented as a dispenser of justice by praising how he punished the corrupt judges: 'The Ottoman sultan was the Umar of justice. He knew that the judges were dispensers of injustice. Their deeds were bribery and corruption of the Sharia. [...] He assembled all of them and interrogated them. Whatever they had taken he made them give back. He punished them as necessary. Through struggle, he brought them one mote closer to the right path. How else could anything just evolve from the likes of them?'⁴⁸⁰

The next reference to justice in the Anonymous Chronicle does not concern the Ottoman Sultans, but is to be found in its in his lengthy account of the legends about Constantinople and Hagia Sophia. The chronicler integrated these legends in his concise description of Sultan Mehmed II's conquest of the city. In one of the legends about Constantinople, he spoke of a 'just Muslim sultan' who had lived a long time ago. The anonymous author uttered an implicit criticism of the Ottoman rulers in his own time by the following remark: 'See how the sultans were at that time, they personally listened to the complaints of people who suffered from oppression. They were just sultans because they feared the punishment in afterlife.'⁴⁸¹ He implied that Ottoman rulers neglected their duties to dispense justice by personally hearing grievances. The anonymous author clearly concealed the practice of Ottoman open courts where grievances were heard and injustice redressed. The silence of the Anonymous Chronicle about Ottoman

⁴⁷⁸ *Anonim Osmanlı Kroniği*, 19: 'Ol vilâyetlerde ne kadar kâfir var ise Süleyman Paşa'nın adl ü dâdını görüp cemi' müslimân oldılar.'

⁴⁷⁹ *Ibidem*, 37: 'Bir mahal dânişmend bulunınca değmesi kadılığa razı olmazlardı. Kadılık, cehennemden bir hasîr yeridür dirlerdi. Kadılıktan kaçarlardı. Bu acebdür ki, şimdiki zamanda kadılık için eger elinden gelse kılıç çeküp birbirin kırarlar idi.'

⁴⁸⁰ Ahmedî, *Dastan*, 46.

⁴⁸¹ *Anonim Osmanlı Kroniği*, 119: 'Ol zamanda olan pâdişâhları gör, her şikayetçiye kendüler dinler imiş ki kimseye zulm ideler, âhiretde kendüye azâb ola diyü şunculayın âdil pâdişâh imiş.'

administration of justice in *divan* meetings should be situated within the context of intra-elite tensions.

Although the anonymous author made no references to the practice of holding open court, the *Mühimme Defterleri* (Chancellery Registers), the first one dating from the sixteenth century, amply demonstrate the opposite. It is also well-known that the Ottoman sultan regularly called the *divan* together at whatever place he was at that moment. When the sultan went to the Friday prayer, rode to hunt or during a campaign, he would listen in person to the grievances of the people.⁴⁸² As the story about the Christian glass merchants of Bilecik demonstrates, the Ottoman rulers heard the complaints of the people and set right injustices. Whether the story was invented or not, it told of a practice.

The practice of holding court to redress wrongs and to practise justice was extensively discussed by among others Suraiya Faroqhi.⁴⁸³ She demonstrated that various office-holders lost their positions after complaints of villagers in the sixteenth century. When complaints accumulated that local office-holders used their inspection cum tax-collecting (*devir*) visits to extract large sums of money from the peasants, Sultan Murad III (r. 1574-1594) permitted local peasant militias to chase these officials away and instantly prohibited the *devir*-practice. Faroqhi noted that sultan Murad III, who did not leave his palace to undertake campaigns, possibly attempted to reinforce his slightly shaken image by performing his duty as a ruler protecting his subjects from the damage caused by his office-holders.⁴⁸⁴

As is generally known, the Ottoman Sultans, especially at their accessions, published and promulgated decrees and ordinances, called *adaletnames* or 'proclamation of justice edicts'. These expressed the sultan's wish to ensure that justice is delivered to all his subjects, in particular the poor and weak, and to prevent any oppression by state officials. Through the *Divân-ı Humâyûn* (chancellery) which also functioned as a supreme court, the central authority kept an eye on the tax-collectors, local military commanders and governors, heard complaints of the people against the officials through petition rights against abuses of power and promulgated '*adâletnâmes* or rescripts of justice'.⁴⁸⁵ The institution of holding *divan* also seems to be related with the specific configuration of power relations and the ensuing Ottoman political ideology. Only sultan Bayezid I was apparently able to remove the influence of the Turkish nobility from the *divan*, while his predecessors in the fourteenth century did not yet have the means to impose themselves

⁴⁸² İnalcık, *The Ottoman Empire*, 90.

⁴⁸³ Suraiya Faroqhi, 'Political Activity Among Ottoman Taxpayers and the Problem of Sultanatic Legitimation (1570-1650)', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 35 (1992): 1-39.

⁴⁸⁴ Ibidem.

⁴⁸⁵ İnalcık, 'Decision making in the Ottoman State', 9-18; Ergene, 'On Ottoman Justice', 52-87.

and were enforced to use *müşavere* or consultation with the influential Turkish aristocracy.⁴⁸⁶ This power-play must also have influenced the ideological construction of the narrative of the anonymous chronicler.

One of the most important functions of the *divan* or state council was the administration of justice. The principle of holding open courts was to enable the people to address their ruler directly. In a story about the Sassanid ruler Nushirwan, Nizam al-Mulk emphasised the importance for a ruler to deliver judgements in person and listen to the words of opposing parties with his own ears.⁴⁸⁷ He also noted that the Prophet dispensed justice by himself in person and did not delegate it to anyone else.⁴⁸⁸ As discussed in the *Muradname*, the Ottomans were indeed aware of these ancient traditions. Deriving from these traditions and practices, the Ottoman *divan* also heard the complaints of the subjects who had suffered injustice. An essential motive that made up the royal image of the Ottoman Sultan was that of a just ruler accessible to the complaints of his subjects, particularly if the injustice had been caused by his own officials.⁴⁸⁹ Anyone, regardless of his social status or religion could petition the Ottoman ruler directly, and for important matters the *reaya* (tax-paying subjects) would send delegations to the capital. Providing justice and security were perceived as the most important duties of the Ottoman sultans in order to receive the consent of the people. Rifa'at Abou-el-Haj demonstrated that the Ottoman sultans were observant not to impose their authority by simple coercion, but tried to reach a way of agreement through mutual participation of the sovereign and the subjects in a meaningful discourse, with room for negotiation.⁴⁹⁰

Shams al-Dîn, the physician of Sultan Bâyezid I, wrote: 'Early in the morning the Ottoman sultan would sit on a wide, raised sofa. The people stood some distance away, in a place whence they could see the sultan, and anyone who had suffered injustice would come to him and formulate his complaint. The case was judged immediately. Security in the land is such that nowhere will anyone touch a fully-laden camel whose owner has left it and departed.'⁴⁹¹ Unfortunately, fifteenth-century Ottoman historical texts did not provide any description of the 'open court' tradition. However, de la Broquière delivered a detailed account of such an open court meeting during the reign of Sultan Murad II. He described how Murad organised an open audience and dealt with various matters, such

⁴⁸⁶ Güneş Işıksel, *La politique étrangère ottomane dans la seconde moitié du 16e siècle : le cas du règne de Selîm II (1566-1574)*, unpubl. PhD (Paris, 2013) 41-42.

⁴⁸⁷ Nizâm al-Mülk, *The Book of Government*, 35-43.

⁴⁸⁸ Ibidem, 44.

⁴⁸⁹ Mustafa Akdağ, *Celali İsyanları, 1550-1603* (Ankara, 1963) 150. On the public image of the Ottoman sultans and its reception, see: Suraiya Faroqhi, *Yeni Bir Hükümdar Aynası. Osmanlı Padişahlarının Kamusal İmgesi ve Bu İmgenin Algılanması*, tr. Gül Güven (İstanbul, 2011) 8-11

⁴⁹⁰ Abou-el-Haj, 'Aspects of the Legitimation of Ottoman Rule', 373-383.

⁴⁹¹ Quoted in: Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devletinin Merkez ve Bahriye Teşkilatı* (Ankara, 1948) 1.

as receiving embassies and hearing complaints and petitions of subjects, followed by a banquet: 'What we call the court of the king, the Turks call 'porte de seigneur'. Every time the prince receives an embassy, which happens almost daily, 'il fait porte.' 'Faire porte' is for him the same as when our kings of France hold royal state and open court, although there is much difference between the two ceremonies.'⁴⁹² Broquière also commented on Murad II's just rule: 'Every now and then Amurad beg [Murad II] shows great examples of justice, which gain him perfect obedience at home and abroad. He likewise knows how to keep his country in an excellent state of defence, without oppressing his subjects by taxes of other modes of extortion.'⁴⁹³

In Neşrî's account, the references to 'justice and security' also appeared in the following passages. After Osman Gazi had conquered the fortress of Yarhisar, he showed justice (*adl ü dad*) to the surrounding region. Thereupon, all the villagers returned to their homes and made better life conditions than they had under Byzantine rule. As the security and mercy was so great, so the chronicler told us, even the Christians from other regions immigrated and came to settle in the land controlled by Osman Gazi.⁴⁹⁴ In a later passage, Neşrî noted that when Osman had reached the region of Marmara, the 'infidels' came and submitted themselves. Osman showed them justice and left them in their places.⁴⁹⁵ Aşık Paşazade provided similar accounts. According to him, Osman succeeded in winning the heart of the villagers around the city of Bursa through providing them security, by showing mercy and justice and by reconstructing their villages.⁴⁹⁶

In his account of the siege of Iznik, Aşık Paşazade wrote that the people in the surrounding villages were not harmed. But the inhabitants of the city under siege were troubled by hunger and famine. Finally, they surrendered the city to Orhan. While most of the city-dwellers stayed, the Byzantine governor and his officials left to Constantinople.⁴⁹⁷ When relating Bâyezid I's campaign in Anatolia against the Karamanids, Aşık Paşazade noted that Bâyezid had laid siege to Konya, the capital of the Karamanids. As it was harvest time, immense piles of barley and hay were amassed at the centre of the city. The soldiers approached the city walls and called on the city-dwellers

⁴⁹² Broquière, *Le Voyage d'Oultremer*, 187-191.

⁴⁹³ Ibidem, 184: 'Il est moult bien obey en son pays et de ses gens [...] Il fait de grandes justices et tient son pays en grant seureté et ne fait nulle extorsion à ses gens, c'est assavoir de taille ou d'autre chose.'

⁴⁹⁴ Neşrî, *Cihannüma*, 50: 'Vilâyetlerine adl ü dâd gösterüp, cemî köyler yirlü yirine gelüp, mütemekkin olup, vaktleri kâfir zamânından dahı yig oldi. Hattâ Osmân ikliminde emn ü emân ziyâde olmagın, kalan yirün kafirleri dahı anun iklimine gelüp şinlik oldı.'

⁴⁹⁵ Ibidem, 54: 'andan Marmara vilâyetine varup, kâfirleri gelüp itâ'at itdiler. Osman Gazi anlara adl idüp, yirlerinde mukarrer kıldı.'

⁴⁹⁶ Aşık Paşazade *Tarihi*, ed. Öztürk, 34: 'Ammâ köylerini emn ü emanile ma'mur etdi. [...] Cemî'sinün vilâyetlerini zabt etdi. Adl ü insaf ile ma'mur etdi.'

⁴⁹⁷ Ibidem, 58.

to sell some of their barley and hay for the horses. To find out the real intention of the soldiers, the inhabitants sent out representatives to Bâyezid. After hearing the situation, Bâyezid sent heralds to his troops before the castle, saying: 'no one should be oppressed. The owners should sell their barley according to their own reason and fairness.' And when the merchants had sold their grains and received their money, Bâyezid had them accompanied to the entrance of the castle. As the city-dwellers observed that the soldiers were not after looting and noting their fairness and mercy, they opened the gates of the city. They also allegedly proclaimed to the neighbouring cities that 'this Sultan is a very just and merciful one. He is not after depriving the Muslims from their lives and possessions.' Subsequently, the inhabitants of cities such as Aksaray, Niğde and Kayseri also invited the Ottomans and surrendered their cities and the surrounding villages to Bâyezid.⁴⁹⁸

According to the chroniclers, Murad II also appeared to follow the advices given in the mirrors for princes sincerely. For instance, two times after conflicts with the Karamanids, Murad II accepted their apologies and did not take or let anything be taken from them by force. Âşık Paşazâde noted that the reason for this merciful act of Murad II was because the tradition of the House of Osman was based on justice.⁴⁹⁹

Whether these passages were wishful thinking, simple praise for getting recognition or the truth itself cannot be said for sure but they demonstrate that just governance was an important asset within the ideological discourse produced in the context of new conquests. The chroniclers suggested that the people in the conquered lands welcomed Ottoman rule. Perhaps much more than the gaza-notion, the Ottoman discursive register of justice appeared as the most influential idea of Ottoman sovereignty. The narrative of the anonymous chronicler, who was certainly no court historian, reflected the increasing tensions between the Ottoman dynasty and the world of the nomadic frontier society. The underlying sense of the waning of *asabiyya* (group solidarity) was apparent in his narrative. The constitution of a state ideology in earliest Ottoman chronicles was to a

⁴⁹⁸ Âşık Paşazade, *Tevarih-i Al-i Osman*, ed. Yavuz and Saraç, 343: 'Ol hinde hırmen vaktıydı. Konya'nuñ meydânında arpa ve bugday çaçları çıkup yığılup tururdu. Leşker halkı hisâra varup çağırdılar ve eyitdiler: 'Hey hisâr halkı gelüñ bize arpa ve saman satuñ, atlarumuza yiderelüm', didiler. Anlar dahı bir niçe adamlar gönderdiler. 'Gör bunlaruñ sözleri gerçek midür?', diyü. Adamları geldiler. Bu sözi hana didiler. Han bir iki kul gönderdi, eyitdi: 'Sakınuñ kimseye zulm itmesünler. Arpa issi kendü insâfınca satsun', didi. Arpaların kim satdılar, han adam koşdı ol kişileri hisâra iletdiler. Bu şehrüñ halkı bunlardan bu adli göricek hemân şehrüñ kapusın açdılar, hisâr feth olundu. Etrafdagı şehirlere dahı habar vardı kim: 'Bu gelen pâdişâh be-gayet âdildür ve Müsülmânlaruñ rızkına ve mâlına tama'ı yokdur.' Bu âdil habarın kalanı hisârlaruñ halkı işidicek ol şehirlüden adamlar geldi. Hana: 'Gelüñ şehirlere tîmâr idüñ', didiler. Aksaray'ı ve Nigde'yi ve Kayseri'yi viridirler ve bunlaruñ cem'ın nevâhisiyle bile teslim itdiler.' For a brief version of the same account, see: Neşrî, *Cihannüma*, 143.

⁴⁹⁹ Ibidem, 393: 'Sultân Murâd Han dahı Karaman vilayetinden bir ahad çöpi zulum ile aldırmađı ve almadı. Zira kim Âl-i Osmân'ıñ muradları ve âdetleri adl ü dâd üzerinedür'.

great degree defined by the struggle among various political factions. In this respect, the Anonymous Chronicle bore many resemblances to Aşık Paşazade's history as both expressed a bitterness that stemmed from deep feelings of loosening ties between the dynasty and the aristocracy.

3.4.2.1 *Zulm* or tyranny, the supreme vice

When exploring the narratives and accounts of the chroniclers, cruelty and tyranny or *zulm* appear to be the antithesis of justice. Arbitrary use of political power was considered as *zulm* or injustice and tyranny. As discussed above, the person and the power of the sultan were regarded as indispensable to achieve and maintain the social order. However, when the ruler oppressed his subjects or neglected to fulfil his duties, this situation was rejected as *zulm* (tyranny). Whereas justice (*adl*) was considered a cardinal virtue, the *zulm* appeared to be the ruler's principal vice. Nizam al-Mulk warned princes for tyranny, because: 'when a king is a tyrant all his courtiers begin to practise tyranny; they become forgetful of God and ungrateful for His favour. Verily God abandons them in His Wrath (...) Then, the rulership is transferred to another dynasty.'⁵⁰⁰ He also quoted a famous saying: 'A kingdom may last while there is irreligion, but it will not endure when there is oppression.'⁵⁰¹ The tenth-century Muslim writer, al-Mawardi, considered *zulm* – as a form of turning away from justice – a valid reason for the disposal of a ruler.⁵⁰²

In the *Muradnâme*, this theme was reminded as well and it was noted that the dynasty of an oppressive ruler would be destroyed in the end.⁵⁰³ According to the early sixteenth-century chronicler Çelebi Hadîdî, Sultan Murad II advised his son Mehmed to rule his realm with justice, reminding him that rulership could not accord with tyranny: 'Always do obey the law of God's envoy. Also follow the laws of your ancestors. Take the side of the poor, do not be a tyrant. For tyranny destroys the divine fortune of the state. It has been said that the tyrant cannot achieve fortune. Rulership can go hand in hand with infidelity, but never with tyranny.'⁵⁰⁴ As indicated by Hadîdî and other writers, the rules of the Sharia were important in the form of a 'code of behaviour' for Muslims. This tradition was also followed by the Ottomans.

⁵⁰⁰ Nizâm al-Mulk, *The Book of Government*, 45.

⁵⁰¹ Ibidem, 12.

⁵⁰² Ebu'l Hasan Habib el Mâverdi, *El-Ahkâmü's-Sultâniye*, tr. Ali Şafak (Istanbul, 1994) 54.

⁵⁰³ *Murâd-nâme*, 241.

⁵⁰⁴ Çelebi Hadîdî, *Tevârih-i Al-i Osman*, ed. Necdet Öztürk (Istanbul, 1991) 207: 'Resûl'ün şer'ini gözle be-gâyet, Hem it kânûn-ı ecdâdun ri'âyet; Şefi' ol ehl-i fakra olma zâlim, Ki bozar devlet ü baht-ı mezâlim; Demişlerdür ki zâlim baht bulamaz, Olur küfrile şehlik zulmile olmaz.'

In the chronicle of Neşrî, *zulm* was condemned, for instance, in the description of the Ottoman-Karamanid conflict of 1386. This conflict occurred after Karaman-oğlu Alâeddin Bey had attacked Ottoman territories in Anatolia while Sultan Murad I was on campaign in Europe. He noted: ‘When Gazi Murad Han heard about the Karamanid attacks, he assembled the leading officials of the state in a council in Edirne and said: ‘Look at what this foolish tyrant does [*Şol ahmak zâlimüñ itdügi işi görüñ ki*]. He comes and injures the Muslims. O Gazis! What should I do with this tyrant [*zâlim*]?’⁵⁰⁵ Murad I asked for a *fatwa* (verdict) from the *ulema*-judges to evaluate whether fighting against these tyrannical Muslim princes was legitimate, since they were hurting the Muslim people. The judges replied that to remove the tyranny from Muslims was an important duty for a Muslim prince.⁵⁰⁶ In this way, the chronicler provided an ideological justification for Murad I’s decision to transform Karamanid principality into an Ottoman vassal state. Neşrî described how Murad projected his pre-eminence as the ‘champion of Islam’ vis-à-vis the ‘tyrant’ Karamanid prince. According to Neşrî, Murad I motivated his decision to fight against the Karamanid ruler, whose vices were explicitly catalogued: ‘Hey you, debauched and decadent tyrant [*müdbir ve müfsid zâlim*]. My only aim is to pursue the gaza-conquests day and night. You not only hinder me from the gaza, but you also harm the Muslims as well. You are not a man who knows mercy and keeps to his oath [*Ahd ü emân bilür âdem degülsün*].’⁵⁰⁷

As we have seen, the Ottoman expansion towards south-east Anatolia had led to the struggle for supremacy in Anatolia with the rivalling Karamanids. The historian Neşrî portrayed the adversary Turkish prince Alâeddin Bey as a cruel and untrustworthy tyrant. He implied that Murad I embodied the virtues of a just Muslim Sultan, which Alâeddin allegedly lacked. Sultan Murad I was portrayed as an ideal king and just ruler who protected the vulnerable and defenceless people against tyrant rulers. The Karamanid ruler, however, was evaluated as unreliable because he did ‘not keep to his oath’. He was called a tyrant who knew no mercy, abused his power, plundered the cattle and harassed the Muslims.

Furthermore, Neşri presented the rival Karamanid dynasty as a rebel regime from the Ottoman point of view. However, the term rebel or *bâgî* was not applied in a merely common criminal sense here. He rather used the term *bâgî* to provide a legal and judicial authorisation for a war with the fellow Muslim Karamanid state. The term *dâr-ül-bagı* or

⁵⁰⁵ Neşrî, *Cihânnüma*, 100: ‘İy gâziler! Bu zâlimle nic’edeyin?’

⁵⁰⁶ Neşrî, *Cihânnüma*, 99: ‘Bu taraftan müluk-i zaleme, müslimin üzere kasd itdiler. Küffar niyyetine cem olan leşkerle bunların muharebesi caiz olub, gaza niyyetin tehir itmek reva olur mı? didi. Ulema eytdiler: küffara gaza nefir-i âm olmasa, farz-ı kifayedür. Amma mümünlerden mezâlimi defetmek farz-ı ayndur.’

⁵⁰⁷ Ibidem, 101.

‘the land of rebels’ was in fact borrowed from two Quranic verses.⁵⁰⁸ After the demise of the Caliphate in 1258, each Muslim ruler claimed leadership in the Islamic world and its rivals were established rebels. In the post-Mongol age, warfare against fellow Muslim states was judicially covered and considered legal.

Âşık Paşazâde explained that, before the Battle of Varna in 1444, the Karamanid ruler Ibrahim Beg had attacked Ottoman lands and had broken his oath: ‘The son of Karaman did cruel and illegal things to the wives and sons of the Muslims.’⁵⁰⁹ After receiving this news, Murad II assembled his vassal Christian troops and went to Konya, the Karamanid capital. As a punishment, Murad ordered to plunder the Karamanid lands by his Tatar (Mongol) troops. Thereupon, Karamanid ruler Ibrahim Beg fled and asked for mercy. He also sent his wife, the sister of Murad II, to plead for him. The Karamanid envoys requested Murad to end the punitive campaign, saying: ‘The son of Karaman did wrongful things and has received what he deserved. In front of God, he has disgraced himself, his shame will suffice him. Show us your benevolence and favour. You are a generous sultan, do not do the same thing as he did.’ And Murad forgave Ibrahim. Âşık Paşazâde obviously legitimised Murad II’s punitive act by noting that such ‘cruelty had never been observed before in the deeds of Ottomans’. He put the blame on Karaman-oğlu Ibrahim Beg for causing this, arguing that ‘the Ottomans never before had intruded the rights of others [*hakkına zulm itmek*].’⁵¹⁰

Neşrî wrote that Murad I argued his decision to undertake a campaign against the Karamanids in 1386, by the following reasons: ‘The son of Karaman has many times sworn oaths and asked for mercy, which I granted. When I was busy with the gaza, he raided into our cities and harassed the Muslims. I do not raid into Muslim lands as he does and take away horses and cattle. Let him show up and let us fight. Let the poor not suffer from our battle [*Hîç arada yohsula ziyân gelmesün*].’

Nearly unanimously, the earliest Ottoman chronicles villianated Timur by emphasising his lack of justice and oppressive acts.⁵¹¹ For instance, when accounting Timur’s capture of Aleppo and his campaign against the Mamluks, Neşrî portrayed Timur as a merciless and cruel oppressor: ‘Timur besieged Aleppo, the people refused to surrender the castle. A fierce battle ensued and many people have perished. Timur captured the fortress with one heavy stroke and the cruelty reached in his hands its very

⁵⁰⁸ Qur’an, 4:59 and 49:9. See: Feridun Emecen, ‘Ottoman policy of conquest’, 35-36.

⁵⁰⁹ Âşık Paşazâde, *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osmân*, 402: ‘Hünkâra habar geldi kim Karamanoglu ahdını girü sıdı, Müsülmânlaruñ avratın ve oğlın zâımlara nâ-meşru işler itdürdi.’

⁵¹⁰ Ibidem, 403: ‘İmdi azizler, bu Osmânlu’nun zulm itmesinün sebebi Karamanoglu İbrahim’ün sebebinden olmuş-ıdı, yohsa tâ bugüne degin Osmanlı’dan kimsenüñ hakkına zulm itmek gelmemiş-ıdı.’

⁵¹¹ Ahmedî, *Dasitân-i Tevârih*, 23: ‘Bu arada Rûma yürüdi Temür / Mülk doldı fitne vü havf u fütûr / Çün Temürün hiç adli yoğ idi / Lâcerem kim zulm ü cevri çoğ idi.’

excellence. He did so many cruel things that are not worth to discuss further. Timur was the king of all evil men.⁵¹² Neşrî concluded Timur's campaign of Syria with the comment that: 'Sivas, Aleppo and the land of Syria, were previously very flourishing. They all fell into ruins in the fire of Timur's army.'⁵¹³ Ahmedî also contrasted the 'tyranny' of the Mongols with the 'justice' of the Ottomans. He criticised Mongol domination – represented by Timur – and its oppression of the Muslims (referring to Timur's occupation of Anatolia) as morally reprehensible. In contrast, he described the Ottoman rulers (*begs*) as just and Muslim *gazi*-kings, 'the swords of God, the protectors and the refuge of the believers'.

Neşrî accounted that after Bâyezid had annexed the Anatolian Turkish principalities, such as the ones of Germiyan, Menteşe and Aydın, their lords had fled to Timur. At Timur's court, these *beys* lamented the establishment of direct control of their lands by Bâyezid. For instance, the dethroned lord of Germiyan implored of Timur: 'O Sultan! You are a universal sovereign [*sahib-kıran*], the son of Osman is a cruel person. He made us penniless and took the throne of our ancestors and grandfathers out of our hands. It is known that we had to beg on our way to come here. That land [Anatolia] befits a *khan* like you.'⁵¹⁴ Neşrî commented that these words had flattered Timur's ego and inflamed his desire to become a great conqueror [*sahib-huruc*]. Out of opportunism, the Turkish princes considered Timur as a superior ruler, a universal sovereign, whereas Bâyezid was merely perceived as a regional monarch, and accused of being an oppressor for dethroning them.

According to Neşrî, Timur seemingly did not believe their allegations and said: 'He [Bâyezid] is a *gazi khan*. He would not perform cruelty without a reason. If you were indeed innocent, he would not have hurt you. Probably, you have shown defiance to him.'⁵¹⁵ In this reply of Timur to the Turkish lords, Neşrî implied that acting harsh upon those who showed defiance was legitimate and could not be considered as cruelty or *zulm*.

The Anonymous Chronicle also condemned oppression or *zulm* through the apocalyptic legend story of an imaginary figure, the so-called Yanko ibn Madyan who allegedly built the city of Constantinople. He noted on Yanko's deeds: 'They filled the city with *zulm* [oppression]. They have howled the entire people. As they had brought and

⁵¹² Neşrî, *Cihânnüma*, 157-158: 'Temür, Haleb'ün üzerine varup, halk hisârı vormeyüp, ceng olup, mübâлага âdem kırılıp, âhirü'l-emr hisârı darb-ı destile alup, zulmı kemâlinde kıldı, işler itdi ki, dile almaga yaramaz. Temür, a'zam-ı eşirrâydı. Andan Hama'ya varup, anı dahı Haleb'den bedter idüp...'

⁵¹³ Ibidem, 158: 'Bûd Sivas u Haleb bâ-mülk-i Şam; Der-imâret çün arûs-ı bî-nikab; Şüd harâb ez-âteş-i ceşş-i Temür.'

⁵¹⁴ Ibidem, 156: 'İy Sultân! Sen sahib-kıransın, Osmân-oglı bir zâlim kişidür. Bizi müflis kılup, atamız ve dedemiz tahtın elümüzden alup, dileni dileni geldüğimiz hod ma'lûmdur. Ol iklîm dahi senüñ gibi hana lâıykdur.'[...] Timur'un dahı dımâğında hod sahib-hurucluk hevesi vardı dahı ziyâde oldu.'

⁵¹⁵ Neşrî, *Cihânnüma*, 155: 'İy begler! Sizin söziñüz gerçek mi yalan mı inanmazuz. Zîrâ, ol bir gâzî handur. Yok yire zulm itmez. Sizi bî-günâh incitmez. [...] siz muhâlefet itdünüz ola.'

settled the people at that time through oppression, this city received many curses. [...] Many tears have dropped. This city was decayed into ruins because it caused many laments and moaning. Therefore, this city ends up in ruins every time. For one has prayed that it would turn into ruins.⁵¹⁶ The city's myriad stories and legends were translated from medieval Greek and Arab texts, and as such adapted and appropriated to serve various goals in Ottoman literature. In this way, these stories also figured in the narrative of the Anonymous Chronicle. The anonymous writer obviously implied that since the city was built under oppression, it would never be free of trouble. He directed an implicit critic to the decision of Mehmed II to turn Constantinople into the new Ottoman capital. By implying that the city bore many curses, he suggested that Constantinople was damned and it would bring no good.⁵¹⁷

In the narrative of the anonymous chronicle, one can sense a hidden opposition to Sultan Mehmed II's policy of centralisation. The gazi circles worried that they would lose their privileged positions after the conquest of Constantinople. They very well understood that the transfer of the capital to Constantinople was part of Mehmed II's centralist policies of empire-building. As they objected to the city's status of Ottoman capital, those gazi groups depicted Constantinople as the site of oppression, doom and destruction.

In brief, all chroniclers unanimously agree that cruelty and tyranny or *zulm* were the antithesis of justice, which was the greatest vice that a ruler had to avoid. The concept of *zulm* could even provide the legitimate grounds to express criticism or to justify war against a tyrant ruler.

⁵¹⁶ *Anonim Osmanlı Kroniği*, 94: 'Bu şehri zulm ile doldurdular. Âlem halkını tamamet inletdiler. Ol zamanun halkını zulm ile getürdükleri için bu şehre beddualar itdiler [...] Ve göz yaşın akıtdılar. Ol şehrin harab olmasına sebep oldur kim çok ah vah olmuştur. Anun için her vakit ol şehrin sonu harab harab olur. Zira kim harab olmasına dualar kılınmıştır.'

⁵¹⁷ For a discussion of the apocalyptic Turkish legends and texts about Constantinople, see: Feridun Emecen, *Fetih ve Kıyamet: 1453* (İstanbul, 2012) 30-78; Stefanos Yerasimos, *La foundation de Constantinople et de Sainte Sophie dans les traditions turques* (Paris, 1990). According to Yerasimos, the writers who supported the policy of empire-building developed their own version of legends about the city.

3.4.2.2 İmaret or restoration and rebuilding

A sub-category of the concept justice was the duty of the ruler to rebuild and to reconstruct the realm in order to enhance prosperity. Architectural activities aimed at the revival of the prosperity of the cities and villages formed one of the duties of the sultan. In the *Murâdnâme*, three things were recommended to the rulers who wished to be the Alexander or Solomon of their own time. One was to make public improvements in their realm and the other was to take care of the poor.⁵¹⁸ The historian Şükrullah praised Sultan Murad I for being a friend of the poor, feeding and clothing them, along with the qualities of just, wise, pious and brave.⁵¹⁹ Similarly, Aşık Paşazade portrayed Sultan Murad II as an exemplary ruler who decided to take care of the underdeveloped region of Ergene in the Balkans. This place had been a forest zone, not properly looked after. It had become a nest of bandits who killed and robbed people. Murad donated great amounts of money from his treasury to build a bridge, a public kitchen and a mosque there. The forest was removed. Very soon a city emerged, with unrest replaced by peace, prosperity and security of life and possessions. Murad went there in the company of the ulema and the poor of Edirne, distributed money and land to the inhabitants.⁵²⁰ This passage fashioned the image of Sultan Murad II, who was represented as being concerned about the security and welfare of his people, who strived to bring them prosperity and security.

Tursun Beg accounted that two days after the conquest of Constantinople, when Mehmed II entered the city he observed that the city was in a ruinous state. He was especially saddened by the ruinous state of Hagia Sophia. Subsequently, Mehmed II implemented an urban project to transform the city into the seat of his throne (*pâyitaht*) and he took measures to rebuild and repopulate it.⁵²¹ As the Ottoman state in the fifteenth century was further built up around political centralisation and the creation of a new ruling elite and a new concept of sovereignty, likewise the spaces and image of

⁵¹⁸ *Murâd-nâme*, 224-225: 'Rivâyetdür ehl-i 'akıldan bize; Hikâyet iderem nakıldan size; Ki vâcibdür üç nesne sultanlara; İskenderler'e ve hem Süleymanlar'a; Biri ol ki milkin 'imâret ide; Dilerse ki hayli imâret ide; İkinci bu yoksul hakına katı; Gerekdür ki ola anun şefkatı.'

⁵¹⁹ Şükrullah, *Behcetüt-Tevarih*, 382.

⁵²⁰ Aşık Paşazade, *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osman*, 388-389: 'Bu Ergene köprisinün yeri evvel ormanlıg idi. Çamur ve çökek idi. Ve haramılar turagıyidi. Hîç vakt olmayayadı kim anda haramiler adam öldürmeyeyidi. Sultan Murad Han Gazi hazine ve meblaglar harc itdi. Ol ormanları kırdurdi. Pâk etdüirdi. Ol arada bir âli binâ bile köpri yapdurdı. Köprinün iki başını ma'mur etdi. Şehir itdi. İmâret, Cuma mescidi yapdı. Hamam ve bazarlar yapdı. Gelen giden müsâfirlere ziyâfetler ederler, nimetler bişürürler. Ve ol vaktin kim imâretin kapısı açıldı, Sutan Murad kendüsi Edreneden ulemâyı ve fukârayı aldı. Ol imârete vardı. Bir niçe gün ziyâfetler etdi. Akçalar ve filöriler üleşdüirdi. Evvel ta'am bişdügi gün kendisi mubârek eliyilen fukarâyâ verdi. Ve çırağın dahı kendü uyardı. Ve yapan mi'mara hil'at geyürdi. Çiftlik yerleri verdi. Ol şehrinün halkını cemi' avârizdan mu'af ve müselleme etdi.'

⁵²¹ Tursun Beg, *Tarih-i Ebu'l Feth*, 64-71.

Kostantiniyye – the new Ottoman capital – were reconstructed and reshaped. Sultan Mehmed also ordered his notables to construct public and private buildings and monuments.⁵²² The reconstruction (*imâret-i Kostantiniyye*) project entailed among others repopulation, grants of properties and building of commercial centres (*bedestans*). Tursun gave a detailed account of Mehmed II's efforts to rebuild the city. For instance, he recorded: 'He [the sultan] decreed that both the common and rich people might come and inhabit the empty and ruinous houses of the infidels, which would be granted to them as their properties. As a result, many people from abroad came and took up their residence. However, the rich merchants who did not wish to leave their businesses had not yet come. As the essential goal of this application aimed to attract the merchants, [...] commercial centres with shops [*bedestan*], *bazaars* and *caravanserais* to lodge travellers were constructed.'⁵²³ Tursun Beg suggested that the revival of the devastated city and its prosperity were owed to the efforts of Sultan Mehmed II.

Likewise, Neşrî confirmed this view: 'In short, Sultan Mehmed Khan rebuilt the Hagia Sophia and the entire city of Istanbul. And he established many hamams that have no equals elsewhere. He made the city flourish in such a degree that travellers observe and say that there is no city like this in the world.'⁵²⁴ He also noted that Sultan Mehmed had built many monuments and that the entire government of Anatolia (*vilâyet-i Rum*) had flourished under his reign. Moreover, Mehmed distributed livelihood to the ulema, the poor and widows.

However, the author of the Anonymous Chronicle from the gazi circles downgraded Sultan Mehmed's efforts to restore and revitalise the city as less successful than the chroniclers closer to the court: 'Even a monarch like Sultan Mehmed restored 'Islambol' [Constantinople] with difficulty in two, three, four years. Many parts of it are still in ruins.'⁵²⁵ The narrative of the anonymous author reflected the political tensions between Mehmed's imperial vision and the interests of the centrifugal forces such as the *gazi* nobility. The loyalty of the gazi nobility was maintained as long as they could preserve their semi-independent positions and their political and economic interests. The gazi groups were considered as an destabilising factor by the dynasty.

⁵²² For example, see: Çiğdem Kafesçioğlu, *Constantinopolis/Istanbul. Cultural Encounter, Imperial Vision and the Construction of the Ottoman Capital* (Pennsylvania, 2009).

⁵²³ Tursun Beg, *Tarih-i Ebu'l Feth*, 67: 'Ve buyurdı ki keferenün urûş-ı hâviyesinden ve dîr u büyût-i hâliyesinden, âmm ü hâs her kim ihtiyârı ile gelüp sâkin olur ise, tuttuğı ev mülki ola. [...] ve anlarun için, âli bezzâzistân ve çarşular ve bâzârgâhlar ve âyende vü revende için vâsi' kârânâsarâyılar yaptırdı.'

⁵²⁴ Neşrî, *Cihannüma*, 316: 'El-hâsıl, Ayasofya'yı ve cemî' İstanbul'ı Sultân Mehemmed Han yaptı. Ve dahı nice hammamlar yaptırdı ki, âlemde kimse mislin görmüş degüldür. Bir vechile ma'mûr oldu kim, etrâf-ı âlemde anun misli şehir yokdur, diyü şehâdet iderler seyyahlar.'

⁵²⁵ *Anonim Osmanlı Kroniği*, 111-112: 'Ve hem pâdişâh Sultan Mehemmed gibi pâdişâh Islambol'un meremmetin iki, üç dört yılda güç ile meremmet itdiler. Dahı nice yerleri harâbdur.'

The conquest of Constantinople marked the final resolution of the continuing tension between the dynasty's efforts of centralisation and the semi-independent interests of the aristocratic lords of the frontiers. In this process, power of the Turkish aristocracy within the Ottoman political spectrum was marginalised and they were increasingly replaced by the new military and administrative class that emerged as the builders of the centralising state. It is the resentment about this evolution that underlie the narrative of the Anonymous Chronicle. For instance, the anonymous author was bitter and yearned for the earlier times: 'During the reign of Sultan Murad, only the servants of the sultan and their sons received a salary and were granted timars. Today, many nests of servants have trooped together at dynasty's household. The one who comes from abroad has a greater esteem. Therefore, the blessings and prosperity of the earlier times have vanished.'⁵²⁶ He often criticised the dynasty for depriving the Turkish aristocracy from their privileges, income and positions.

Similar concerns also left a mark of bitterness and criticism in the narrative of Aşık Paşazade, especially regarding the introduction of the *mukataa*-tax on properties in the reconstruction project of Istanbul. The dervish-historian appeared to be discontent with Sultan Mehmed II's fiscal policy of centralisation and the costs of rebuilding Istanbul as the new Ottoman capital. The payment of this imperial project also affected Aşık Paşazade's properties in the city. He owned a considerable amount of property in Unkapanı and Galata and was exposed to the imperial fiscal measures of Sultan Mehmed II and his officials. Instead of criticising Sultan Mehmed II directly, the historian chose to aim his arrows at the statesmen. He criticised the elite change, in which the members of *kapikulu* were appointed as vizier. Aşıkpaşazade accused Rum Mehmed Paşa of the introduction of the rent payments for properties, as the architect of the resented fiscal policy:

'The son of an infidel was appointed as the vizier of the sultan and he became very intimate with the sultan. The old infidels [Byzantine families] from Istanbul were the friends of the ancestors of this vizier. They came to him and said: 'Hey, what are you doing? These Turks have succeeded in reconstructing this city; you have to do something. They took the lands of our ancestors and our lands from ourselves and they possess it in front of our eyes. Since you are now a favourite companion of the sultan, you must do something that will stop these people from rebuilding and settling the city in order to keep this city in our hands as before.' The vizier replied: 'Let us reintroduce the old tradition of *mukata'a* [rent payment or tax], so that these people would stop with reconstructing their properties and the city would remain

⁵²⁶ *Anonim Osmanlı Kroniği*, 112-113: 'İlerü Sultan Murad zamanında pâdişâh kulı ve pâdişâh kul-oglı olmayana kapudan ulûfe ve timâr itmezlerdi. Şimdiki zamanda kuldân kapuda yuvalar ziyâde. Yabandan gelenün ragbeti ziyâdedür. Anun için ilerü zamandaki bereket yokdur.'

in ruins and in our hands.’ On one occasion, this vizier was able to convince the sultan to reintroduce the tax payments on properties. [...] You ask who was this vizier? It was Rum Mehmed. On the sultan’s order, he was strangled like a dog.’⁵²⁷

Aşık Paşazade obviously resolved his anger by aiming it at the former Byzantine official of Sultan Mehmed. As Sultan Bâyezid II (r. 1481–1512) was trying to soften his father’s policies, the chronicler praised Sultan Bâyezid II for putting an end to ‘the illegal dispositions’ introduced by Nişancı Paşa and Rum Mehmed Paşa; for returning hundreds of *waqf* and *mulk* lands and villages to their former owners; for re-establishing the justice and the Ottoman law and order [*kânun-ı Osmaniî*] by restoring the means of livelihood of the people [sheikhs, dervishes and Turkish aristocracy].⁵²⁸

Dealing with the same events, the ulema-historian Neşrî softened Aşık Paşazade’s criticism of the statesmen, but followed his narrative in general. As Neşrî’s work was written for the learned and sedentary circles, he was rather inclined to endorse the official narrative that was promoted by the princely court. Remarkably, he shared the criticism that it was wrong to introduce the *mukataa*-tax on properties. Neşrî noted that the reconstruction project was not an easy process and Mehmed II had to implement a policy of forced resettlement from other parts of the Ottoman realm: ‘He [the sultan] sent messengers to all Ottoman governments, saying, ‘anyone who can, may come and gain a property in Istanbul’. But no wealthy person did come and no one showed enthusiasm in the reconstruction [project]. Thereafter, the sultan ordered to transport from each region an amount of wealthy and poor people. [...] However, the *mukataa* tax on properties was issued, which was intensely resented by the people.’⁵²⁹

According to Neşrî, Shehabeddin Pasha, a vizier of his father, succeeded to convince Mehmed to withdraw this rent-tax on properties. He argued that none of his grandfathers

⁵²⁷ *Aşıkpaşazade Tarihi*, ed. Öztürk, 193-194: ‘Pâdişaha bir vezir geldi kim ol bir kafirün oğluydu. Pâdişaha gayetde mukarreb oldu. Ve bu İstanbul’un eski kafirleri bu vezirün atası dostlarıydı. Yanına girdiler kim: ‘Hey neylersin?’, didiler. ‘Bu Türkler gine bu şehri ma’mur etdiler’, didiler. ‘Senüñ gayretüñ kanı? Atan yurdunu ve bizüm yurdumuzu aldılar. Gözüümüze karşı tasarruf ederler. İmdi sen hod Pâdişahun mukarrebisin’, didiler. ‘İmdi cehd eyle kim bu halk bu şehrin imâretinden el çekeler. Ve girü evvelki gibi bu şehir bizüm elümüzde kala’, didiler. Vezir dahi eydür: ‘Buna şol mukata’a kim evvel komuşlaridi, anı girü koduralum.’ Dedi kim: ‘Bu halk dahi mülkler yapmakdan çekileler. Bu şehir ol nesneyile gine harâba yüz tuta. Âhir gine bizüm tâ’ifemiz elinde kala’, didi. Bu vezir, pâdişaha bir münasibetile ilka itdi; gine mukata’a ihdas itdi. Sual: Bu vezir kimdür? Rum Mehmed’dür kim anı pâdişah it gibi boğdurdu.’

⁵²⁸ *Ibidem*, 292-293: ‘Ve hem vilyetinde adl ü dâd, bedl ü ihsan ve kerem memlû olundu. Ve hem ol Rum vezir bozduğu teşrifleri girü evvelki kanun-ı Osmânî üzerine mukarrer etdi. Ve ol nesli bühtan vezir kim vakıfları ve mülkleri kim bozmuşidi. Gine sâhiblerine mukarrer itdi.’

⁵²⁹ Neşrî, *Cihannüma*, 314-315: ‘İstanbul’u imâret itmek isteyüp, cemî Osman vilâyetlerine âdemler gönderüp, ‘hâtırı olan gelsün İstanbul’da mülk tutsun’ diyü etrafda çağırdılar. Bu haber âleme çav olup, hâtırı olan gelüp, bu vechile imârete yüz tutmadı. Andan buyurdi, her vilâyetün ganîsinden ve fakîrinden süreler. [...] Andan bu gelen kişilerün evlerine mukâta’a vaz itdiler. Halk nefret idüp...’

had applied such a tax in the lands that they had conquered. Mehmed accepted and withdrew it. However, when Rum Mehmed Pasha became a vizier he convinced Mehmed to reintroduce the rent-tax. Neşrî wrote: 'For, he [Rum Mehmed Pasha] was a boy from Istanbul. He envied that the Muslims restored and built their city. This rent-tax today was established on his insistence.'⁵³⁰

Concerning this tax, Tursun Beg provided in his narrative the perspective of the princely court. As a specialist of the financial bureaucracy, he noted that he was appointed to survey the landholdings and houses in the city in order to levy the rent-tax. He wrote that this tax had led to many changes in properties. For example, a person who could not afford to pay the imposed tax on a house would change it for another house which he could afford. According to Tursun Beg, when he was asked for the reason to apply the rent-tax payments, Sultan Mehmed defended his decision by the following argumentation: 'My wish with this tax was not aimed at [gaining] property [for myself], but to set an order in the public affairs and to redress the situation of the greedy and pride people. For, triggered by greed, people with insufficient incomes and no money desired to possess a house of high value. At the same time, they also did not show a desire to sell and buy in order to purchase money. In that situation, many houses and villas would be soon neglected and decayed into ruins. As such, the initial purpose of restoration and reconstruction works would not be carried out. Therefore, I suggested applying the rent-tax payments so that everyone would select the house that he could afford and meet the expenses of restoration. When I saw that this happened, I have granted the houses as properties to my servants and subjects, for acquiring property was not my wish. In this way, it was established that everyone who selected a house could acquire it as his own property.'⁵³¹

Neşrî also asserted that during the reign of Bâyezid I the Ottoman realm had attained such prosperity that even the neighbouring states envied it. He wrote: 'The Padishah, the Refuge of the World, settled himself in Bursa and called together engineers, architects and masons, and laid the foundation for a great mosque. He also abandoned wine drinking, took great scholars and wise sheikhs as his companions, performed the right guidance of the Shari'a and blanked out oppression from the world. He dispensed justice

⁵³⁰ Neşrî, *Cihannüma*, 315: 'Zirâ kendü İstanbul oğlanıydı. Müslimanlar kendü şehirlerinin evlerini müft tasarruf itdüklerine hased itdi. Bu şimdiki makata'a anun igvâsıyla olmışdur.'

⁵³¹ Tursun Beg, *Tarih-i Ebu'l Feth*, 69: 'Vaz-ı mukâta'adan murâdum mâl degül idi; belki tertîb ü ta'dîl-i umûr-ı cümhûr ve islâh-ı ahvâl ü mâl-i ehl-i tama'a u gurûrdur ki, temlik emrinün tama'ı ile, bir denî-mikdâr kimesne bir âli-mikdâr dâr tutmuş, ve henûz satmak almak rağbeti yok ki satup kifâyet idine. Lâ-büd az müddette ol dūr u kusûr imâretten dūr olup harâba yüz tutar idi, ve ta'mîr ki murâd-ı aslîdür, fevt olur. Pes vaz-ı mukâta'a sûretin teklif ittüm ki, her kimesne mukâta'anun a'bâ-yı edâsına mütehammil olduğınca ev ihtiyâr ide. Çün gördüm ki bu matlûb husûle mevsûl oldu, murâdum olmayan – ki mâldür – yine ihsân yönünden kullaruma ve re'âyâma bağışladum. Ve ihtiyârı ile tuttuklu tuttuğunu temlîk itmek emir dahı sâdık oldu.'

in such a degree that the rich and the poor, the blessed and the despicable, the powerful and the weak, they all reached happiness under his shelter. The Ottoman realm was reconstructed in such a degree that the neighbouring lands envied the Ottoman lands.⁵³²

As Neşrî was an ulemâ-historian close to the princely court, he portrayed Bâyezid I as a devout and just sultan. Neşrî represented him as a monarch, who was pious, had quit drinking, dispensed justice and built and restored the realm up to prosperity. Of the duties that were expected from a ruler, according to Neşrî, Bâyezid I reportedly performed most of them.

3.4.2.3 Redistribution of wealth and prosperity

Public buildings and reconstruction works or *imar* activities appeared to be interrelated with the notion of redistribution and prosperity of the people. Both activities promoted the image of the ruler as a generous sovereign, who enhanced the prosperity of the people. Redistribution of wealth was perceived as a pivotal act that was required for the prosperity of the people and well-being of the society, as well as the personal glory both in this world and the next. As al-Ghazali reminded, the reward of a good sultan will not only be of this world, but also in heaven. The ruler had to strive to attain happiness both in this world and the next. The notion of redistribution was explicitly emphasised in the *Kutadgu Bilig*, one of the oldest mirrors-for-princes in Turkish language, which instructed the princes on their duties: ‘The people must be satisfied, to make them content they must have full bellies. Never let them have too little to eat and to drink. [...] Be generous, forgive and feed [...] Handle the sword with your right hand and give assets with your left. Open your treasury and distribute your wealth [...] You should plentifully reward your retinue, if they are naked clothe them and feed them if they are hungry.’⁵³³

The author of *Kutadgu Bilig* blended the Turkish tradition with the Islamic political ideas that viewed the wealth of the ruler deriving from people’s labour and prosperity. He insisted that the ruler had to care for the poor in order to maintain a good governance. The rich must not load their burden upon the people who produce and pay taxes, as that would upset and impoverish them. As İnalçık remarked, the *Kutadgu Bilig* or ‘the Wisdom

⁵³² Neşrî, *Cihannüma*, 151: ‘Pâdişâh-ı âlem-penâh Bursa’da mütemekkin olup, mühendisler ve mi’mârlar ve bennâlar cem’ idüp, bir ulu câmi bünyâdın idüp, şürb-i hamrdan vazgelüp, ulemâ-i izâm ve meşâyih-i kirâmile musâhabet idüp, icrâ-yı şer-i kavîm üzerine müstakîm olup, âlemi, zalemeden hâlf kılup, bir vechile adl itdi ki, ganî vü fakîr, azîz, hakîr, vazî vü şerif, kavî vü za’îf, hep anun zıll-i himâyetinde âsûde olup, memleket-i Osmâniyye bir vechile şin oldı ki, etrâf-ı memâlik, vilâyet-i Osmân’a hased iderlerdi.’

⁵³³ Yusuf Has Hacib, *Kutadgu Bilig*, 155: ‘Cömert ol, bağışla, yedir ve giydir’; 156: ‘Sağ elinle kılıç sallarken sol elinle mal dağıt’; 220: ‘Maiyetine hizmetine göre bol ihsanlarda bulunmalı, çıplak ise giydirmeli, aç ise doyurmalıdır.’

of Happiness' advised to the ruler to perform his functions in a just way so that the poor would become 'middle class' and the least become more wealthy.⁵³⁴

Broquière described how Murad gave an open audience and a banquet. After the meal was served and distributed among the public, Murad left 'for he never eats in public'. Broquière continued: 'On his going away, the musicians, who were placed in the court near the buffet, began to play. They played instruments and sung songs that celebrated the heroic deeds of Turkish warriors. When the public in the gallery heard anything that pleased them, they shouted cries after their manner. Not knowing what they were playing, I went into the court and saw they were string instruments of a large size. The musicians entered sultan's apartment and ate whatever they could find.'⁵³⁵

This last practice was the continuation of an old custom of the nomadic Turkish tradition. As discussed above, the eighth-century Orhun Inscriptions of the K k T rk Empire noted that the essential role of the ruler was to ensure the welfare of his followers and subjects, share the revenues and redistribute tribute to feed and clothe the people.⁵³⁶ As İnc k has argued, this custom evolved into an institution within the steppe environment of nomadic life.⁵³⁷ One of the duties of the nomadic ruler was to create opportunities in which people came together and eat. The nomadic principle of *toy*, which later was translated into Persian as *khan-ı yağma* (literally, 'plundering the tent of the ruler'), was a custom that continued into the Ottoman state as well.⁵³⁸ However, after the intensive contacts with the Persian Islamic principles on state and sovereignty, the Turkish nomadic custom of *toy* took more a form of symbolic meaning.⁵³⁹

⁵³⁴ İnc k, 'Turkish and Iranian', 15; İbrahim Kafesoğlu, 'Sel uklular', *İslam Ansiklopedisi*, 390.

⁵³⁵ Broquière, *Le Voyage d'Oultremer*, 192.

⁵³⁶ Talat Tekin, *Orhon Yazıtları: K l Tigin, Bilge Kağan, Tunyukuk* (İstanbul, 1995) 25 ; Peter B. Golden, *An Introduction to the History of the Turkic Peoples: Ethnogenesis and State Formation in Medieval and Early Modern Eurasia and the Middle East* (Wiesbaden, 1992) 71, 117, 143.

⁵³⁷ Halil İnc k, 'Turkish and Iranian Political Theories and Traditions in *Kutadgu Bilig*', in: ibid, *The Middle East and the Balkans under the Ottoman Empire. Essays on Economy and Society* (Bloomington, 1993) 13-14.

⁵³⁸ Altan  etin, *Orta  ağda Devletin İki Y z . Devleth me: Liy katın İzinde Devleti D   nmek* (Ankara, 2013) 74.

⁵³⁹ İnc k, 'Turkish and Iranian', 14.



Figure 16: Miniature depicting a banquet given by the Sultan for the janissaries.
Source: *Surname-i Vehbi* (1720), Topkapı Palace Museum.

The same idea reappears with some modifications in the expression used in a sixteenth-century Ottoman chancellery register, about the ‘open door’ ceremony at sultan’s court: ‘My door marked by Felicity is not closed and by the grace of God, is always open to those who come in friendship or enmity.’⁵⁴⁰ This expression manifested itself in most of the deeds of sultans and referred to the norms to which the sultans had to strive. Neşrî suggested that the Ottoman rulers already performed their duties since the earliest days of Osman. He noted that ‘it was a custom of Osman Gazi to feed and to clothe the poor in every three days and to give alms to the widows.’⁵⁴¹ He viewed the fortune of the ruler deriving from people’s labour and prosperity. Therefore, Neşrî portrayed Osman Gazi as a ruler who looked after his subjects. As feeding people and taking of care of the poor endorsed the consent of people and consequently consolidated the authority of the

⁵⁴⁰ *Mühimme Defteri*, vol. X, 108.

⁵⁴¹ Neşrî, *Cihannüma*, 68: ‘Osman Gâzi’nün âdetiydi. Üç günde bir ta’âm bişirüp, fukarâyı cem idüp it’âm iderdi. Ve hem yalıncakları getürüp, tonadurdi. Ve tul avratlara dâyim sadaka virürdi.’

ruler, this practice developed into the Ottoman institution of ‘public kitchens’ or *imarets*.⁵⁴²

As it is the case for any socio-political system, similarly for the Ottomans, the question of legitimacy was also essential. Indeed, any socio-political system can hope to survive only if its distribution of wealth, power and status seems generally right to the people and various groups who constitute the society. Tursun Beg summarised this view as follows:

‘a sultan should show his gratitude for his sovereignty [*saltanat*] by dispensing justice to all men and by doing beneficence and by supporting people. The gratitude for rulership is to recognize the right of God’s blessings and to be right to those who serve you. The gratefulness for the vastness of the realm is expressed by not touching the properties of people. The gratefulness for being exalted is expressed by having empathy with the fate of the one who has fallen down. The gratitude for a rich treasury is shown by charity without expectations in return; the gratitude for power is demonstrated by providing shelter and protection to the weak, and by redressing the wrongs through the law of justice [...] the gratitude for the heavenly gardens at your palace means to protect and to shelter the subjects [*re’aya*] who seek accommodation under the shadow of sovereign. [...] As the Prophetic hadith said: You [sovereigns] are all shepherds and all of you are responsible for those under your rule.’⁵⁴³

In the chronicle of Aşık Paşazade, the notion of redistribution of wealth was most clearly described in his account of Sultan Murad I marrying his son Bâyezid to the daughter of Germiyan-oğlu. During the wedding, various lords, Murad’s notables and envoys from various lands such as the Mamluk sultanate of Egypt brought gifts. Particularly, Gazi Evrenoz Beg brought precious gifts, such as silver and golden trays filled with golden pieces. Murad I did not take anything for himself, but distributed all of them among the *ulema*, his men, the poor and the envoys.⁵⁴⁴ Whereas redistribution of wealth

⁵⁴² See: Nina Ergin, Christoph Neumann and Amy Singer eds., *Feeding People Feeding Power. Imarets in the Ottoman Empire* (İstanbul, 2007).

⁵⁴³ Tursun Beg, *Tarih-i Ebu’l Feth*, 25-26: ‘Şükr-i saltanat âlemiyâna adl’dür ve zîr-destâna ihsân; şükr-i fermân-revâyî hakk-ı ni’met-i Mevlâ’yı ve hizmet-i hizmetkârı bilmektür. Şükr-i fûshat-ı memleket, emlâk-ı ra’iyyetten tama’ kesmek; şükr-i bülendî, baht-ı nejend-bahta merhamet buyurmak; şükr-i hazâyin-i bisyâr, sadakât u idrâr ve ibkâ vü takrîr-i hayrât-ı selef-i ebrâr; şükr-i kudret, acizlere rahmet etmek; şükr-i sihat, bîmâr-ı zulme kânûn-ı adl’dan şifa virmek [...] şükr-i bârgâh-ı felek-sâye-bân ve besâtîn-i bihişt-nüzhet, kendünün zıll-ı zalilinde ola re’âyânun emâkinini nüzül-i azâb ü suhre nüzûlinden mu’af u müsellemler tutmak [...] küllüküm râ’in ve küllüküm mes’ûlün an ra’iyyeti.’

⁵⁴⁴ Aşık Paşazade *Tarihi*, ed. Öztürk, 80: ‘Ve dahi Murad Han Gazi gör kim dahi ne kılsa gerekdür. Bu Evrenoz getürdigi kulları ve cariyeleri bu etraftan gelen elçilere üleşdürdi. Ve bu etrafun elçileri getürdigi yahşi atları

was praised as a virtue and a duty of a ruler, the opposite was generally disapproved. Neşri attributed such an example of 'vice' to Çelebi Musa, who instead of granting favours and gifts started to kill the wealthy marcher lords and take their possessions. Musa justified this by arguing that these lords were disloyal to his brother Süleyman, and as such it was uncertain whether they would be loyal to him. However, as was often warned in advice literature, Musa's act of depriving the marcher lords of their wealth led to the weakening of their loyalty. The resentment against Musa caused his opponents to overcome their disputes and band together against him. The marcher lords changed sides and joined the forces of his brother Çelebi Mehmed.⁵⁴⁵

The Anonymous Chronicle accounted this incident as follows: 'Çelebi Musa had put his own servants [*kuls*] forward and the *Rum* [marcher] lords fell from grace. He saw how they had betrayed his brother and knew that they also would betray him. Indeed, this was an old characteristic of the Rumelian people. He decided to kill or imprison the lords whom he distrusted. When the Rumelian lords understood this, they retreated themselves and observed what the wind would bring forth.'⁵⁴⁶

Eventually, the powerful marcher lords Evrenos Beg and Mihal-oğlu Mehmed Beg and even the commander of the Janissaries had defected to the side of Çelebi Mehmed. Only the *akıncı*-raiders stayed with Musa.⁵⁴⁷ Musa's imprudent and hasty centralising policies, which aimed at undermining the power of the influential frontier lords (*uç begleri*) and replacing them with the members of his own household (*kul*), led to the hostility of the influential lords.

The Anonymous Chronicle, which reflected the viewpoint of the gazis in the Ottoman Balkans, addressed to an audience of warriors, dervishes and tribal elements. In the horizon of expectation of this audience, the ideal ruler had to live a simple life, provide his men with raiding opportunities, share his wealth with them and respect his begs, without whom ruling was impossible. These expectations of the ruler were similar to the

cemî'sin kendünün kulu Evrenoz'e verdi. Ve getürdigi filörinün dahi ba'zısın Evrenoz'e girü verdi. Ve bâkisini ulemâya ve fukarâya üleşdürdi. Ve kendüye hiç nesne almadı. Ve niçeler müflis geldiler ve gani gittiler.'

⁵⁴⁵ Neşrî, *Cihânnümâ*, 227-228: 'Rum-ili beglerinden be-nâm be-nâm maldâr begleri tutup helâk idüp, mâlın almaga başladı. Hattâ dîvânda otururken, mâldâr beglerden ve paşalardan kimesne görse, 'Şol arada filori kokar' diyüp, öldürüp mâlın alurdu. Şol sebebeden ki, 'karındaşum Emîr Süleyman'a ne vechile sadâkat itdünüz ki, baña ne vechile sadâkat idesiz', dirdi. [...] İbrahim Paşa dahi cemî'i beglerle tanışıp, 'bu kişinin bed-hâli var, giderek cemî'mizi öldürüp mâlımızı alur. Sultânı davet etmek evlâdır.' diyicek, cemî'i begler bu fikri savâb gördiler, ol umûr İbrahim Paşa'ya ısmarladılar. Paşa-yı mezkûr İstanbul'a varduğı bigi, fî'l-hâl sultâna haber gönderüp, Mûsâ Çelebi'nün ef'âl-i şen'asın ilâm idüp, beglerinden nefret itdüğün bildürdi.'

⁵⁴⁶ *Anonim Osmanlı Kroniği*, 59: 'Çün Musa Çelebi kulların ilerü çekdi, Rum beglerin mansıbdan düşürdi. Gördi kim karındaşından nice döndiler hâyin oldılar, bildi kim kendüsine dahi hâyin olurlar. Zîrâ kim Rum-ili'nün evvelden âhire âdetleridür. Ve kangı begde, kim şüphesi var idi kim, kasd itdi kim cümlesin helâk ide ve kimini dahi habs ide. Bu hâli bilüp Rum begleri çekilüp oturdılar, rûzigârı gözlediler kim ne göstere.'

⁵⁴⁷ *Ibidem*, 60-61.

functions of *khan* in Oğuz political thought (see above). In general, the chroniclers reproached those who kept the assets for themselves instead of distributing them. The anonymous chronicler explicitly criticised the introduction of the state treasury during the reign of Murad I and condemned all kinds of taxes that diminished the revenues of the gazi milieu. For example, he criticised the *pençik*-tax on captives applied in the 1370s, according to which one-fifth of the gaza booty was taken for the state's treasury and the establishment. The ulema official, Kara Rüstem warned Çandarlı Halil Pasha that 'wealth was wasted. According to God's command, one-fifth of the gaza booty belongs to the padishah. Why don't you claim it?'⁵⁴⁸ The anonymous chronicler criticised this tax as it diminished the revenues of the semi-independent gazi groups.

The anonymous author claimed that Hayreddin Pasha had introduced 'greed' at the Ottoman realm. He noted that until his arrival even the infidels had not been excessively taxed. He yearned for the earlier period when the rulers were 'not yet greedy' and gave whatever they had to the soldiers instead of keeping it to themselves. During Murad's reign, he accused that this sharing of revenues was lost with the new arrivals. Therefore, he detested the introduction of the central treasury: 'At that time [the reign of Murad I] the *padisahs* were not greedy. Whatever came into their hands they gave away again, and they did not know what a treasury was. But when [Çandarlı] Hayreddin Pasha came to the court, greedy scholars became the companions of the rulers. 'He who is a ruler must have a treasury. Greed and oppression have emerged. Indeed, for where there is greed, there is oppression'⁵⁴⁹

About the administrative innovations of the Çandarlı dynasty of high-ranking *ulema* officials and grand viziers, the anonymous writer was also very critical: 'When the Persians and Karamanids became the companions of the princes of the House of Osman, these princes committed all kinds of sins [...] When [Çandarlı] Ali Pasha came to the Ottoman lords, sin and wickedness increased. Until then nothing was known of account books. The practice of accumulating money and storing it in a treasury comes from them. The house of Osman was a solid people, but these outsiders came to them and introduced all kinds of tricks.'⁵⁵⁰ In contrast, the court historian Ahmedî praised the vizirate of the

⁵⁴⁸ *Anonim Osmanlı Kroniği*, 28: 'Nice bunca beglik malı zayı idersin? [...] İşbu esirler kim gazadan gaziden götürürler. Tanrı buyruğında beşde biri pâdişâhındur.'

⁵⁴⁹ *Ibidem*, 31: 'Ol zamanda harâc az idi. Şöyle alurlardı kim kâfirler dahi incinmez idi. Kebesin ve öküzün veya oğlın kızın satdurup veya rehin kodurup almazlardı. Ol zaman pâdişahlar tama'kâr değüllerdı. Her ne ellerine girürse yigide ve yegile virürler idi. Hazîne nedür bilmezlerdi. Heman kim Hayreddin Paşa kapuya geldi, padişahlar ve tama'kar danışmendler musâhib olup, hazîne dahi padişah olana gerekdür didiler. Pâdişâhı kendülere uydurdular. Tama've zulm peydâ oldu. Elbetde tama' olduğu yerde zulm dahi olsa gerekdür'

⁵⁵⁰ *Ibidem*, 38: 'Heman kim Osman beglerine Acem ve Karamanlular musâhib oldu. Osman begleri dahi dürlü dürlü günahlara mürtekib oldılar. Heman kim Ali Paşa Osman beglerine geldi, dürlü dürlü hîle ile âlemi toldırdılar.'

Çandarlıs. Ahmedî wrote: ‘ He [Sultan Murad I] understood the difficult situation of poverty in exile [of Çandarlı]; Graciously, he honoured and appointed him to high office. Ultimately, he made him vizier of the realm. What a vizierate! He became a great prince.’⁵⁵¹

The Anonymous Chronicle also criticise the establishment of the janissary institution during the reign of Murad I.⁵⁵² The anonymous author resented the employment of ill-reputed *iç oğlanı* (pages), coming out of the palace as *kuls* (servants) of the dynasty’s household to dominate over the free-born Turkish nobility. He criticised the breakdown of the established privileges of the Turkish gazi aristocracy who were replaced by appointed officials belonging to the dynasty’s household. He wrote: ‘There were ancient nobles and persons had rights. When a *sipahi* [Ottoman cavalryman] died, his office was given to his son. And if he had no sons, but left behind a daughter and wife they were given to a servant of the dynasty so that they would not be disgraced. The land fief of the one who had died was also transferred [to his family].’⁵⁵³

As already discussed, the process of centralisation was a tension-ridden phenomenon. While the dynasty and its household attempted to centralise state power, the gazi circles who were increasingly excluded from their former revenues and privileges opposed to this process of centralisation.

In this respect, Sultan Bâyezid I was accused of allegedly storing and accumulating wealth in the treasury. Aşık Paşazade suggested that rulers who accumulate riches are condemned to fall in disgrace. According to him, Bayezid had accumulated riches and kept it to himself. However, Timur took it and consumed it all. Consequently, the realm had deeply suffered. Aşık Paşazade noted that a ruler should spend his wealth on charity. The chronicler advised that ‘the sultan needed many friends who had full bellies and who were not occupied by concerns of hunger.’⁵⁵⁴

Andan evvel hisab difter bilmezlerdi, anlar te’lif ettiler. Akça yığıp hazîne itmek anlardan kaldı. Âli-i Osman bir sulb kavm idi. Anlar ki geldiler dürlü dürlü hîleler başlayub takvâyı götürdiler.’

⁵⁵¹ Ahmedî, *Dastan-i Tevârih-i*, 36: ‘Gurbet ü halin ü fakrin bildi ol; Lutfila anı ehl-i mansıb kıldı ol. Akibet mülke anı itdi vezir; Ne vizaret ki oldı bir ulu emir.’

⁵⁵² Anonim *Osmanlı Kroniği*, 28 : ‘Gelibolu’da esîrden bâc almak Cendereli Kara Halîl’den ve Karamanli Kara Rüstem’den kaldı [...] Bu tertîb üzerine oğlanlar devşirdiler. [...] Bir kaç yıldan sonra getirüp kapuda yeniçeri eylediler. Ve hem adını yeniçeri kodılar’.

⁵⁵³ Anonim *Osmanlı Kroniği*, 38-39: ‘Heman kim Ali Paşa vezîr oldı, fisk u fücûr ziyâde oldı. Mahbûb oğlanları yanına aldı. Adını iç oğlanı kodı. Bir nice zaman ne gerekse ider. Andan çıkarup mansıb virür oldılar. Andan ileru kadimler var idi. Kişi iyalleri idi. Cümle mansıb anların idi, azl idüp birine dahı virmezlerdi. Eger bir sipahi ölse mansıbın oğluna virürlerdi. Ve ger oğlu kalmayup kızı veyâ avratı kalsa zelîl olmasun diyü anları bir kula virürlerdi. Ol ölenün rimârın bile virürlerdi. İç oğlanına ragbet itmek Ali Paşa’dan kaldı.’

⁵⁵⁴ Âşık Paşazade, *Tevârih-i Al-i Osman*, ed. Yavuz and Saraç, 483-484: ‘Merhum Yıldırım Hündkâr mâl cem’ itdi, tedbîr-i memleket kaldı. Akçalar cem’ idüb hazînelere koyar, memleket kesedlik oldı. Âhir ol mâlı Temur-i

Both Aşık Paşazade and Neşrî accounted an incident during the Battle of Ankara (1402). When the auxiliary troops of the Anatolian principalities had defected to the side of Timur and his own sons, Mustafa and Süleyman, had fled, Bâyezid was left alone on the battlefield. Only the 'infidel troops of the Serbian lord, who fought very well'⁵⁵⁵ and Bâyezid's household troops and janissaries stayed with him. At this time, one of Bâyezid's personal guards, Solak Karaca, reproached him: 'O Bâyezid Khan! Where are now your sons and those marcher lords in whom you trusted so much? Where are those drunken viziers of yours? This is their comradeship in arms! You could not sacrifice your money, you stored all of it in the treasury and used to say: this is the portion provided by God to my sons.'⁵⁵⁶ These words of his guard had deeply hurt and upset Bâyezid. He replied: 'are you obligating me through witty remarks for a kindness received!'⁵⁵⁷ In fury, Bâyezid galloped out of his household troops followed by his *solak*-guards and attacked Timur's troops. However, in the end, he was captured.

By contrast, Sultan Murad II appeared in the chronicles as an accomplished ruler who knew that he had to satisfy his soldiers in order to guarantee their enthusiasm as well as to keep their loyalty. He provided them with opportunities to promote themselves both in wealth and in rank. For instance, as discussed earlier, during the Battle of Varna, Murad II had ordered the general mobilisation. In return for their assistance, he offered to the participants whatever they wished: 'It should be known that whoever accompanies us on this victory-crowned campaign and offers assistance out of love for the religion of Islam, my imperial assent has been granted for whatever it is they request. Whatever it is they wish, whether a *timar* or *zeamet* military fief, whether a post in the janissary corps or household cavalry or whether release from *yörük* (nomadic) status, I have accepted.'⁵⁵⁸

The *Gazavat* noted on the capture of the castle of Tirnovi: 'The troops took more booty than can be counted. No one bothered with common stuff, they took only pure gold and silver coins.'⁵⁵⁹ After the crusader army was defeated at Varna, the inhabitants of the

bedbaht yedi. Vilâyet ayak altında kaldı. [...] İmdi azizler! Mâl oldur kim hayra sarf ola. Pâdişâhların dostu oldur kim karnı dok ola ve galaba ola. Kendü açlığı kayısı olmaya.'

⁵⁵⁵ Neşrî, *Cihânnümâ*, 160: 'Vilk-oglı kâfir çerisiyle gâyet eyü ceng itdü.'

⁵⁵⁶ Aşık Paşazade, *Tevarih-i Al-i Osman*, 351: 'Hay Bâyezid Han! Kani ol güvendiğün oğlanların. Ya kani ol güvendiğün sancaguñ begleri veyahud kani ol serhos vezîrlerün? Ne gökçek yoldaslık itdiler!' Neşrî, *Cihânnümâ*, 161: 'Akçayı harc itmege kıyamazduñ, hazîneye koyup, oğlancuklarum rızkıdur, dirdün.'

⁵⁵⁷ Aşık Paşazade, *Tevarih-i Al-i Osman*, 351 : 'Çünkü bu sözi Bâyezid Han işiticek katı acıdı: 'Bak, bana minnet idüp nükte de mi idersiz?, didi. Hemân atını depüp kuluñ arasından taşra çıkdı.'

⁵⁵⁸ *Gazavat-ı Sultan Murad*, 14: 'Şöyle ma'lum oluna kim, bu sefer-i nusret-me'âbıma gelüb Dîn-i İslam aşkına imdâd idüb bizimle ma'an sefere varanların her ne mürâaatları var ise, katımda makbul-i hümayunumdur, eğer tımar isteyene ve eğer zeamet isteyene ve eğer yeniçerilik isteyene ve eğer sipahilik isteyene ve eğer yörüklikten çıkmak isteyene her birinin murâdu maksudları makbulumdur.'

⁵⁵⁹ Ibidem, 46: 'ol kadar mâl-i ganimet aldılar kim, hesabı mümkün degil idi. Kaba saba esbâba kimse bakmayub sâfi altun ve gurus aldılar.'

castles of Varna, Bedric and Sumlu that had been taken captive were also freed. The *Gazavat* accounted: ‘everyone rejoiced as they found their sons, daughters and wives [...] That day, the Padishah of the World bestowed lavish gifts on those unfortunates that had been released from captivity. He endowed those poor with so many gold coins that they all became rich and free from desire for goods and they offered prayers for his majesty the Padishah the Refuge of the World.’⁵⁶⁰

Moreover, Murad seems not only to be redistributing wealth to the soldiers, he also favoured the architects and scholars with lavish gifts and regularly distributed money to the poor. For instance, he awarded the architect, who had built a bridge and the settlement in Ergene, with a robe of honour and with a farm. The inhabitants of the village of Ergene were also exempted from paying taxes.⁵⁶¹

It appeared that Sultan Murad’s campaigns provided the participants with abundant prospects of wealth as well as with promotion in the army. For instance, Murad II granted favours to Hacı İsa. He was one of the soldiers of Lord Hasan Beyzade, who was killed during one of the vanguard skirmishes with the forces of Hunyadi. Hacı İsa was the only survivor of that clash and one of his arms was wounded. As Sultan Murad II was informed about the events, he called Hacı İsa into his presence, ordered to clothe him with a robe of honour (*kaftan*) and treated him with kindness, gifts and favours. Murad also permitted him to gather troops under his command and to assemble his own following.⁵⁶² Sultan Murad II’s generosity toward his soldiers is also attested in the *Selâtin-nâme*. After the Battle of Kosovo in 1448, the amount of booty was copious and the soldiers got rich, but Murad himself did not take anything for himself and left it all to his soldiers.⁵⁶³ Oruç Beg noted that during the Battle of Varna, after the Ottoman troops defeated the Hungarian forces in the wagenburg position, ‘they plundered the treasury of the king. The gazis became very rich and they were very satisfied.’⁵⁶⁴

Likewise, in Aşık Paşazade’s account of the unsuccessful siege of Belgrade in 1439, we read the immense wealth that the soldiers had gained. It is actually Aşık Paşazade’s own

⁵⁶⁰ *Gazavat-ı Sultan Murad*, 69: ‘her birisi kimi oğlunu ve kimi kızını ve kimi hâtûnunu bulub mesrûr oldular [...] ol gün Pâdişâh-ı âlem ferman edüb ol esirlikden halâs olan fukarâyâ lûtf u ihsânlar edüb her birine şol mertebe altun gurus ihsân eyledi kim, cümlesi ganî olub ve mâlden müstagni olub Pâdişâh-ı âlem-penâh hazretlerine dua’âlar edüb...’

⁵⁶¹ Neşrî, *Cihânnümâ*, 276: ‘Sultân Murâd Edirne’den ulemayı ve fukarâyı cem idüp, getirüp ziyâfet idüp, akçalar ve filoriler üleşdürüp, evvel aşî kendü eliyle üleşdirdi. [...] Ve yapan mi’mâra hil’atler geyürdi, çiftlikler virdi. Ol kasabanun halkını avâızdan mu’af ve müsellemler kıldı.’

⁵⁶² *Gazavat-ı Sultan Murad*, 15: ‘Pâdişâh emr edüb kaftan giyürdiler ve in’âm ve ihsân edüb Pâdişâh ana lûtf ile mu’âmele edüb var imdî askerini düz dediklerinde, Hacı İsa taşra çıkub kapusını düzmeğe başladı.’

⁵⁶³ Kemal, *Selâtin-nâme*, 158: ‘Şu denlü geldi şâha nimet-i mâl; Bular mâl ile oldular mâlamâl; Orada cem’ olur mâl-ı ganimet; Birin şah almağa kılmadı niyyet; Şeh anı leşkerine eyledi bahş; Kabûl itmedi andan câme vü rahş.’

⁵⁶⁴ *Oruç Beg Tarihi*, 68-69: ‘Arabayı feth idince âkibet gâziler arabayı ve kıraluñ hazînesini yagma ve talan idüp, gâziler gâyet toyum olup ganî oldılar.’

adventures that we read about and the failure of the siege is overshadowed by the immense wealth that the soldiers had gained. Murad II appears in the account as a strategist who takes decisions about master plans and as the benevolent sultan who rewards his soldiers. Aşık Paşazade wrote:

‘Sultan Murad looked upon the land of Hungary. He realized that Belgrade was the gateway to Hungary. He resolved to open this gate. [...] While they pretended to lay siege to the fortress, they crossed over the Sava and suddenly raided into [*akın saldırlar*] Biline. The gazis came back so rich with booty, that one would give a beautiful slave girl for a boot. Well, I was there too. I bought a boy of six or seven years old for one hundred silver coins. Be aware, in those days one would pay a servant a hundred and fifty silver coins to look after a horse. In any event, on that campaign I obtained seven male and female captives from the *akıncıs* [raiders]. [...] Now, one day during that campaign, I went to Sultan Murad and he deigned to grant me a captive. I said: ‘My glorious Sultan, I need both a horse in order to bring this slave home and some money for the road.’ He awarded me five thousand silver coins and two horses. So, I ended up returning to Edirne from that campaign with nine captives and four horses. In Edirne, I sold them for two or three hundred silver coins each. I earned an outstanding keep, praised the sultan and prayed for him.’⁵⁶⁵

We can conclude from all these examples from the early Ottoman chronicles that Murad II through his character and deeds appear to comply with all the expectations and virtues that were required of a sovereign. Neşrî’s following praise of Sultan Murad II represented him as the ideal ruler of his age. He praised Murad as a Gazi Sultan who acted as a protector of the people and the soldiers. During his reign, the learned men and the poor lived in prosperity. Justice, peace and safety reigned in the Ottoman realm. Travelers used to say that such a tender and kind ruler was unusual. The situation of the realm was so good that people could practice their religion freely and work for their salvation in the next world in peace. With all the buildings and deeds, he brought prosperity to the realm and pleased his subjects. In Bursa, Murad built an ‘open kitchen’ or *imarethane* and a grand mosque with a *medrese* or high school. He appointed thirty reciters and fourteen *mühellil* to the mosque so that every day ‘God’s unity was pronounced’. Likewise in Edirne, Murad built a great mosque, a poorhouse, an ‘open kitchen’, a *medrese* and a dervish lodge. He established the town of Ergene with a bridge and an *imaret*. He also built many other lodges, baths, mosques and guesthouses. He sent an annual gift of three thousand five hundred florins to the Holy Cities of Jerusalem, Mecca and Medina. Every year, Murad personally distributed one thousand florins to the descendants of the Prophet. Murad also established an endowment (*waqf*) that generated revenues for the poor of Mecca. He

⁵⁶⁵ Aşıkpaşazade Tarihi, 164-165.

never neglected to give alms to the poor after the Friday prayers. As ‘the land of Sultan Murad’ was so secure and prosperous that ‘seventy two *millet*’ came to live in Ottoman lands. Neşri noted that no matter in how many ways Sultan Murad II was to be praised, he deserved even more every time.⁵⁶⁶

The following question arises: why was Sultan Murad II represented as the ideal ruler, while his grandfather Bâyezid I was harshly criticised? The possible explanation is that the reign of Murad II entailed a period of transition from the Turkish semi-nomadic organisation to a sedentary and centralised state formation, of which the fundamentals were firmly consolidated by Sultan Mehmed II. We have observed that Bâyezid’s policy of centralisation and establishing direct rule over the vassal states had made him very unpopular. The semi-independent marcher lords also resented Bâyezid’s imperial tendencies at court, increasing centralisation of decision-making and employing of *kapıkulu* bureaucrats in the administration. All these developments diminished the positions and threatened the privileges and revenues of the marcher lords.

After the near destruction of the Ottoman state in 1402, it was only recovered and reconsolidated during Murad II’s reign. However, the position of the dynasty was still delicate. At Murad II’s time, the dynasty and the state were to some degree still dependent on the marcher lords who had their own entrenched households. As Murad II was aware of the opposition of the semi-independent marcher lords against centralisation, he seems to have been mindful not to disturb them too much. He sought to maintain the political stability among the various social-political groups. It appears that Murad II rather applied a prudent and discreet policy when he continued his father Mehmed I’s aims in centralising the polity. It was Sultan Mehmed II who actually developed a new princely court with a regulated hierarchy in all respects and who distinguished the ruler as an absolute monarch henceforth. He established a new model of sovereignty with principles that he selectively appropriated from the Eastern Roman and Islamic political traditions.

The historiographical works of both those authors close to the court and those who opposed it, attributed to Murad II nearly all the virtues of the ideal ruler. Particularly, the chroniclers from the gazi milieu contrasted Murad II to both Bâyezid I and Mehmed II, who were criticised for their centralist policies. Murad II appeared as the last representative of rulers who complied with the ancient customs and traditions, while discretely exploring the potentialities of change. It is also worth noting that most of the early chronicles were produced during the reign of Bâyezid II (r. 1481–1512), which marked a period of pacification. Bâyezid II softened his father’s centralist policies and appeased the social groups which had lost some of their privileges and revenues. In this respect, the chroniclers’ praise of Murad II as the ideal ruler and the criticism of Mehmed

⁵⁶⁶ Neşrî, *Cihânnümâ*, 304–306.

II and Bâyezid I can be read as expressions of expectations from the reigning sultan and as voicing their concerns and interests.



3.4.3 Consultation or *Meşveret*

No matter how undisputed the authority of the sultan may have seemed, in order to administer the realm he had to encircle himself with wise and prudent viziers and he was expected to consult them on important matters. A ruler ultimately relied upon ministers and functionaries for the efficient governance of the realm. In Islamic tradition, consultation was a firmly established aspect of the political culture. The principle of consultation derived on Qur'anic verses and the traditions of the Prophet.

Muslim philosophers such as al-Ghazali and Nizam al-Mulk had emphasised the obligation of rulers to consult men of learning and to surround themselves with capable and wise ministers. Al-Ghazali asserted that the sultan had to seek the advice from the learned *ulema* and from the Sufis who as 'true souls' are capable to uncover the hidden knowledge and wisdom (*ma'arifa*), which play an important role in the governance of state.⁵⁶⁷ Nizâm al-Mulk noted that as everyone knew something better than someone else in every branch of knowledge, 'holding consultation on affairs is a sign of sound judgment, high intelligence and foresight'.⁵⁶⁸ He referred to the Prophet who consulted others in various matters and as God commanded him to seek advice, Nizam al-Mulk concluded that if even the Prophet needed counsel then nobody could do without it.⁵⁶⁹ As such, the sultan always needed to consult with 'wise men and loyal friends' and they should say what they think. When various opinions and thoughts are heard and compared to each other, the right course will stand out; that is to which all agree.⁵⁷⁰

In the *Muradnâme*, the importance of consultation for the ruler was also highlighted in various parts of the work. The author reminded the sultan that whoever becomes ruler of the people should keep close ties with wise men and consult them. He also referred to the relevant *hadith* saying: 'there is no greater support than consult'.⁵⁷¹ As an example, he told the story of the Sasanid king Anushirvan, who, when asked why nobody opposed him, referred to his custom of consultation as one of the reasons.⁵⁷² The author of the *Muradnâme* also noted that the Prophet was asked about the reasons why fortune had turned away from the Sassanids after they were able to rule so long. The Prophet replied

⁵⁶⁷ Al-Ghazali, *Revival of the Knowledge*, 28.

⁵⁶⁸ Nizâm al-Mulk, *The Book of Government*, 95.

⁵⁶⁹ Ibidem.

⁵⁷⁰ Ibidem, 96.

⁵⁷¹ *Murâd-nâme*, 221: 'Pes anla ki sultan olan kişiler, Bu âdemlere hân olan kişiler, Hep erbâb-ı akl ile hem-râh idi, Anun-çün cihâna şehenşâh idi. Gerek pâdişaha ki âkıllara, İde meşveret akl-ı kâmillere. Ki Tanrı Te'âlâ Resûli bile, Bu ma'nîyi gelmişdürürler dile.'

⁵⁷² Ibidem, 223: 'Meger meşveretdür ki ayn-ı savâb.'

that they had forgotten to consult, tyranny had filled the world and justice had disappeared.⁵⁷³ The benefit of consultation was considered as equally pivotal as justice.

The importance of consultative assemblies was also clearly emphasised in the early Ottoman chronicles. For instance, on the eve of the Battle of Kosovo in 1389, Neşrî noted that sultan Murad I gathered the state nobility and officials for a counsel, which he opened with the words: 'My lords, with the help of God I have defeated many armies and fought many battles. However, this battle shall be different. To consult each other is a tradition of the prophet. We must forge alliances and win each other's hearts and minds.'⁵⁷⁴ Neşrî suggested here that sultan Murad I behaved in accordance with the tradition by seeking the advice of his officials before taking any important decisions. Murad particularly wished to hear the opinion of Evrenos Gazi, as he appeared to be the most experienced and expert marcher lord concerning the adversaries in the Balkans. In the dialogue, there appeared to exist a mutual respect between the notables and the Sultan. Neşrî remarked that consultation was also recommended by the traditions of the Prophet.

Likewise, the Anonymous Chronicler praised the value of consultation and recommended it as solving every problem: 'No one was ever exposed to defeat by consultation [*meşveret*], no one has ever regretted it. Every hope is realised through consultation, which is the key to solve the affairs.'⁵⁷⁵ The anonymous writer criticised Sultan Bâyezid I for neglecting to consult his officials and ignoring their advices when he decided to confront Timur. As a result, he fell prey to his pride. If he had listened to what they had said, he would not have ended up as captives and not have been robbed.⁵⁷⁶ He also included the following verses to emphasise once more the benefits of consultation: 'The statesmen can only stay firm by seeking advice. When a person neglects to hear the counsel of intellect, what calamities will he bring upon his head?'⁵⁷⁷

⁵⁷³ *Murâd-nâme*, 225-226: 'Akıl tanışığını unuttılar, Zulüm cevri dünyaya toldı tamâm, Adil dâd işidilmez oldu tamâm.'

⁵⁷⁴ Neşrî, *Cihannuma*, ed. Necdet Öztürk (Istanbul, 2008) 123-124: 'Hünkâr dahi erkân-ı devleti ve a'yanı saltanat-ı bir yire cem'idü müşavere kıldı [...] Hünkâr eyitdi: 'Begler, eğerçi Hak inâyetiyle çok çeri sıyub, cenk itdüm. Ammâ bu kalan cenk gibi degüldür. Müşavere itmek sünnet-i Resûl'dür. İttifâk-ı ârâ, goñül berkidürmek vâcibdür.'

⁵⁷⁵ *Anonim Osmanlı Kroniği*, 46: 'Meşveretsüz işini iş sanmagıl; Kendi râyınla işe el sunmagıl; Meşveretden kimse hüsrân bulmadı, Meşveret iden peşman olmadı; Meşveretle hâsıl olur her ümid; Meşveretdür bağı işlere kilid.'

⁵⁷⁶ *Ibidem*: 'hiç kimseyle meşveret itmedi. Nice kim nasîhat itdiler işitmedi. Kendi kendüye mağrur olup yürüdi ve kimseyle tanışmadı. Kendü başına birlik iderdi, kimseyle meşveret etmezdi.' 48: 'Eğer Yıldırım söz tutaydı başına bu hâl gelmezdi. Ve hem biz dahı dutsak olmazduk soyulmazduk. Ve illâ takdîrde olacakdur olur kimse mâni olmaz.'

⁵⁷⁷ *Ibidem*, 47: 'Ehl-i devlet ol durur ki öğüt ala; Öğüt almayan kişiden ne gele. Âkılun pendin işitmeyen kişi, Ne aceb gerekidür olursa başı.'

The traditional custom of ‘counsel and discussion’ was probably seen as a counter mechanism to the growing independence of the rulers, as the Ottoman state extended its authority during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. As such, the sultans consulted publicly and the forum of royal assembly allowed grievances to be heard, judicial cases and principles of law to be settled, plans for peace and war to be discussed and in general the policies of the state to be determined.⁵⁷⁸ In the account of Broquière, Murad II had received in 1433 the Milanese embassy with brilliance, but the real negotiations took place a few days later with the viziers at the *divan*. His account demonstrates that Ottoman diplomacy during the reign of Murad II perceived all foreigners who personally embodied a political power or were accredited by a political entity were likely to become dialogue partners for the Ottoman state.⁵⁷⁹

Concerning the Hungarian embassy of 1444, the anonymous author of the *Gazavatname* suggested that Sultan Murad II preferred an indirect role in the discussions, relegating the essential matters of the negotiation to his *divan* and viziers: ‘When the *pâdişah* [Murad II] had heard the letter, the embassy presented the gifts that it had brought and then left the Imperial Council. The *pâdişah*, the refuge of the world, looked directly at the *paşa*’s and said: ‘What do you think about this? This infidel asked to conclude a peace, but demanded Semendire in return.’ The *paşa*’s replied: ‘My king, this is not like other matters. Please summon a council to bring together the janissary officers and all men of state affairs, great and small. Let them discuss the issue [...] Nothing can be decided until all this has been discussed. [...] The *pâdişah* ordered that it would be wise to accept the peace at an early stage and to strengthen the bargaining position.’⁵⁸⁰ Unfortunately, the page of the *Gazavat* manuscript, which probably related the discussion in the *divan*, is missing. The text resumes with Murad II saying that it would be wise to accept peace. The accounts of the *Gazavat* and Broquière imply that Murad II was indeed relatively detached from the daily functions of government. But he was aware of his authority and he followed the meetings regularly and influenced the decisions. In sensitive matters such as foreign policy, he reserved the final decision for himself.

According to the chroniclers, Sultan Murad II often sought the advice of his statesmen. Before a campaign on Thessalonica, he consulted his notables. He asked them how far the city was situated and how it could be taken. The siege of the fortress lasted long and

⁵⁷⁸ Işıkse, *La politique étrangère ottomane*, 55-57.

⁵⁷⁹ For his eyewitness account of the Milanese embassy to the princely court of Murad II, see: Broquière, *Le voyage d'outremer*, 186-196.

⁵⁸⁰ *Gazavât-ı Sultân Murâd*, 32: ‘Pâdişâh nâmeyi dinledi, andan sonra elçi getürdüğü hedâyâyı teslim edüb Dîvân-i Pâdişahîden taşra çıkdı. Pâdişah-ı âlem penâh hazretleri paşaların yüzlerine bakub: ‘Ne dersiniz? İşte bu küffar barışmak için rica etmiş. Ammâ Semendire kalesini istemiş.’ Paşalar eyitdiler: ‘Pâdişahım, bu iş gayri işe benzemez. Dîvân fermân buyurun ki, sigâr ve kibâr iş-erenleri ve ocak halkı cümle cem’olub müşâvere olunsun [...] Bu, müşâvere olunmayınca olmaz.’

Murad again asked his notables for advice on the measures and precautions that had to be taken. Evrenoz-oğlu Ali Beg said that this fortress was a difficult castle to take and he suggested proclaiming 'plunder' (*yağma*), which would motivate the soldiers. Murad agreed with his advice and indeed the fortress was soon captured.⁵⁸¹ Âşık Paşazade noted in a later passage that Murad consulted Ali Beg and asked who knew best the ways of Hungary. Ali Beg declared that he was ready to swiftly scout the ways and the land of Hungary. Murad agreed and offered him to take regiments from the Balkans and Anatolia with him. Ali Beg asserted that the *akıncı*-raiders would be sufficient to carry out the mission. And Murad decided to let him go.⁵⁸²

According to the *Gazavat*, Murad II was given a remarkable number of bad advices by the marcher lord Turahan Beg before and during the Battle of Zlatitsa pass in the winter of 1443. The crusaders had invaded Ottoman territories, they headed toward Sofia and the Ottoman vanguards failed to stop their advance. Turahan Beg, who led one of those vanguards, went to Murad who was in Sofia with the main army and portrayed a pessimistic picture. He said that they formed no match for the enemy and that its force could not be resisted. He advised to retreat and to give the order to burn Sofia and its surroundings so that the enemy could not find any shelter and food when they arrived here. Murad followed his advice and ordered to set fire to the city and its villages. However, afterwards Murad was deeply grieved about what had happened by taking a wrong decision. Murad suffered bitter pains of conscience, but nothing could be done anymore. According to the *Gazavatname*, Murad abhorred: 'What a fate we have visited on fair Sofia! The man who told us to do this is not our friend. Alas! We acted without thinking when we followed the evil word of a man that caused this calamity.'⁵⁸³ Turahan's 'evil advice' had led to Murad II's wrong decision. Murad reportedly regretted of taking advice from Turahan Beg. As they were in the middle of a military campaign, he did not punish him immediately.

Moreover, according to the *Gazavat*, Turahan again succeeded to mislead Murad. This time, it happened at the Battle of Zlatitsa pass in the winter of 1443. After the initial setback, the Ottoman army succeeded to turn the tide and the army was on the winning hand. At that time, Turahan Beg galloped up and came to Murad and requested to withdraw the troops from attacking the enemy that was entrenched in the wagenburg position. Turahan argued that unless the troops withdrew, the enemy arquebus and cannons would inflict heavy casualties. The Ottoman troops would be routed and the enemy would attack thereafter. However, Murad replied that he was wrong, because the

⁵⁸¹ Âşık Paşazade *Tarihi*, 154-155.

⁵⁸² *Ibidem*, 161.

⁵⁸³ *Gazavât-ı Sultân Murâd*, 15: 'Ammâ Pâdişâh ziyâde melûl olub eyledüği işe nâdim oldu, ammâ çi fâide! Olan oldu ve dün gün endîşesi bu idi kim, eyvâh nâzenîn Safya'ya ne yavuz iş eyledik. Bunu bize diyen dostumuz değil imiş, hayfâ gâfil deprenüb bir nekbetînin sözüne uyduk deyü müteellim olub çok hayıflandı.'

enemy did not had enough strength left to fire either arquebus or cannon. However, Turahan insisted and said that he did not wish to witness the disgrace of defeat: ‘Look, my Padishah, there is no one older than me among your lords. There may be one among your Anatolian commanders, but they do not know the treachery and deceitfulness of these infidels. My Padishah, you cannot strike the target with hope alone. The wise act slowly and with caution, the foolish in anger and in haste. Think what this will lead to, my Padishah. You will suffer for this or you will unless you let the words of this old man be your sovereign remedy.’⁵⁸⁴

Sultan Murad II was not convinced of Turahan’s words. However, the latter insisted so much that Murad found himself agreeing out of the concern of seeming like not caring for the opinion of an elder wise man. According to the author of the *Gazavat*, Murad thought to himself: ‘If things turn out as I said, fine; but if they do not, people will say that the Padishah’s word cannot be trusted. The best thing is to pull back our troops and see what God most High ordains.’⁵⁸⁵ The troops were called back. While they returned to their tents, many cursed Turahan as they had already broke through the carts of the enemy. The next day, during the council, Murad reproached Turahan for ruining the plan by withdrawing the forces and letting the enemy escape.⁵⁸⁶ He asked him what to do about this. Turahan replied that he would personally pursue the enemy.

However, in the meanwhile, while they withdrew the enemy had laid an ambush. The commanders of Ottoman forces had set out to pursue them, stopped underway to deliberate in case the enemy had laid an ambush at the pass. Once again, Turahan Beg disturbed their plans by asserting that fugitive soldiers did not lay an ambush. As a result, the pursuing forces were effectively ambushed and routed and some of the Ottoman lords were taken captive. The scattered troops came back to the main camp together with Turahan Beg. Murad was furious about the outcome and set off for Edirne without showing favour to any of the lords.⁵⁸⁷ In Edirne, when Murad was holding a council and seeing to the affairs of the poor, he saw Turahan. Murad II ordered to seize Turahan Beg and imprison him in the castle in Tokat.⁵⁸⁸

⁵⁸⁴ *Gazavât-ı Sultân Murâd*, 24: ‘Baka Pâdişâhum, senün beglerin ve kulların arasında benden yaşlı bir kimesne yokdur, meger kim Anadolu kullarunda ola. Ammâ anlar dahi bu düşmânın kallâşlığın ve hilekârlığın bilmezler. Pâdişâhim ummakla menzil alınmaz, te’ennî hilmle âkillerindir, gazab ta’cîl ile câhillerindir. Bunun âkibetini düşün Pâdişâhim, bu işden sen zarar görürsün. Belki bu pîrin sözleri sana tiryâk-i ekber ola, deyüb çok söz söyledi.’

⁵⁸⁵ *Ibidem*, 25: ‘bu iş benim dedigim gibi olursa ne güzel, ammâ âksi zuhûr edecek olursa Pâdişâh söz tutmaz derler. Hemân olısı budur ki, askerimizi geri çekelim, görelim hakk ta’âlâ hazretlerinin takdîri ne yüzdendir.’

⁵⁸⁶ *Ibidem*: ‘Baka Turahan, işte bizim pişmiş aşımıza soğuk su katub neyledin ise eyledin, askerimizi geri çekdürüb küffâr-i hâkisâra başlarını bağışlattırdın.’

⁵⁸⁷ *Gazavât-ı Sultân Murâd*, 26, 28-29.

⁵⁸⁸ *Ibidem*, 31.

Besides the fact that Murad II consulted with his men before taking decisions, he was also represented as a prudent leader who cared about his soldiers. According to the Anonymous Chronicle, during a campaign against Albania, they laid siege to the castle of Akça-hisâr. When the castle did not surrender, Murad's lords suggested to capture it. However, the winter was approaching. In view of the disadvantages and risks of a siege in winter, Murad decided that the insignificant fortress was not worth sacrificing his men. Arguing that many people would pointlessly perish, Murad lifted the siege saying that 'he would not sacrifice even one soldier for fifty castles like that one'.⁵⁸⁹ While Oruç Beg, for instance, only mentioned in passing that the castle was not captured,⁵⁹⁰ the anonymous author probably attempted to vindicate an unsuccessful siege.

All these examples show that consultation was one of the foremost obligations and duties expected from a sultan. We have observed that particularly Murad II appeared as attentive of consultation and of prudence in the battles and decisions he took. He gave importance to consult old wise men. However, whose advice to take and whom to consult were equally pivotal issues and concerns. As such, the 'ill-advice' of the marcher lord Turahan Beg proved to be disastrous, as he probably wished to prevent the absolute success of Murad II, which only would strengthen the position of the dynasty. Turahan possibly attempted to prevent such a victory, as this would perpetuate the ongoing centralisation to the detriment of the gazi marcher lords.

⁵⁸⁹ *Anonim Osmanlı Kroniği*, 84: Sultan Murad ayıtdı: 'Yürüyicek, bir nice âdem helâk olur. Ben hod bir yigidi elli bunun gibi kal'aya virmezim', deyüp kal'ayı koyup gitdiler.'

⁵⁹⁰ *Oruç Beg Tarihi*, 75.

3.4.4 Virtues of a Ruler

Whether the ruler enjoyed divine favour and dispensed justice, as the sovereign was a human being he also had to accord to a set of virtues and certain physical qualities. The accounts of the chroniclers show that, in this respect, there could be exceptions as far as obeying the ruler was concerned. The chronicles deliberately discussed rulership and arrived at firm conclusions as to who the ruler was to be and what his duties and attributes should be, in the form of both political treatises and the popular genre of mirrors for princes.

Relying on Tusi's ethics, the Ottoman historian Tursun Beg distinguished three forces at work in the human spirit each of them causing various acts and deeds. The first of these was the ability of perception or (*kuvvet-i natıka*), which served to think and to distinguish the objects. The second force was the anger or *gazab*, which was the characteristic of the predatory animals. This force produced fury, fearlessness, boldness, attempt to become superior, challenging rivals and the desire to be praised. The third force dealt with lust (*kuvvet-i şehvânî*), which produced the will to eat and for pleasure from sexual intercourse. When in equilibrium, the power of perception could produce the virtue of knowledge (*ilm*), which led to wisdom (*hikmet*). When the power of anger was controlled by the intellect, then there emerged the virtue of gentleness (*hilm*), which produced bravery (*şecaat*). Gentleness was the opposite of fury and anger. And if the animal (*behîmî*) instinct was controlled by the intellect, the virtue of honesty (*iffet*) would develop, which produced generosity (*sehâvet*).⁵⁹¹

Those three powers of human spirit also had qualities, such as a positive exaggeration (*ifrat*), negative overdoing (*tefrit*) and the quality in between. For instance, Tursun Beg noted that although gentleness was to be praised, its overdoing can tend to weakness. The ruler had to preserve the awe of his authority by avoiding the extremities. To avoid exaggeration and extremes was a quality, which caused the rise of the virtue of justice (*adâlet*). In this respect, Tursun Beg selected the following virtues as the paramount ones for a ruler: wisdom, bravery, honesty and justice.⁵⁹²

⁵⁹¹ Tursun Beg, *Tarih-i Ebu'l Feth*, 16-17.

⁵⁹² Ibidem, 17.

3.4.5 Vices of a Ruler

When it came to the image and deeds of the ruler, unpleasant personal features and habits could easily be transformed into real vices. These vices could have severe consequences not only for the ruler himself, but also for the realm he is governing. Consequently, the personality and disposition of the prince were considered as very important. Moreover, in this discourse, the ruler's behaviour, whether good or bad, reflected the situation of the realm under his reign in general. This was wisely expressed by the *Muradnâme*: 'How are the times? The times revolve around you; you make it with your vices and virtues.'⁵⁹³

The ideal sultan had to avoid a set of behaviours and vices. If he was not careful enough in avoiding certain deeds or exaggerated some of them, the consequences could be quite grave both in this world and the next. Vanity and pride were among the key vices that a ruler had to avoid. For instance, Sultan Bâyezid I was generally criticised for being defeated by Timur due to his pride. Especially, the Anonymous Chronicle accused Bâyezid of indulging in pride and of underestimating Timur. According to the chronicler, even though Timur addressed him respectfully, Bâyezid would keep on insulting him. Moreover, Bâyezid had not consulted with anyone, but did as he wanted in pride.⁵⁹⁴ Pride and vanity were considered as vices to be avoided by rulers.

Likewise, Oruç Beg wrote that during the Battle of Varna in 1444, the Hungarian king Wladislas, who 'indulged in pride and arrogance', attempted to break through and was killed.⁵⁹⁵ He also depicted the Byzantine Emperor as falling prey to his pride and consequently losing the city. Oruç accused the Emperor of the fact that when Sultan Mehmed II laid siege to Constantinople, he did not ask for mercy and voluntarily surrendered. The Emperor (*Kostantin teküri*) allegedly believed the priests who asserted that the city would not be captured, because this was proclaimed in the Bible. Consequently, they chose to fight. They even insulted and spoke contemptuously about the Prophet and thus 'the almighty God sent them this calamity and destroyed them'.⁵⁹⁶

Beside pride, anger and quick temper were also viewed as grave vices for a ruler. An Ottoman ruler notorious for his quick temper appears to be Sultan Bâyezid I. The anonymous chronicler often criticised him for his furious nature. He provided an

⁵⁹³ *Murâd-nâme*, 230: 'Sensin zaman; Hata vü sevabında sensin zaman.'

⁵⁹⁴ *Anonim Osmanlı Kroniği*, 42, 46: 'Tevekkül olmayıp mağrurlık iderdi'; 'Kendi kendüye mağrur olup yürüdi ve kimseyle tanışmadı'.

⁵⁹⁵ *Oruç Beg Tarihi*, 67: 'bu taraftan kiral-ı mel'ûn dahı kendüye mağrûr olup mağrûrlığından, tekebbürliginden gevdesine derisine sığmayup, Sultan Murâd üzerine yürüyüb alayına at depüp...'

⁵⁹⁶ *Ibidem*, 79: 'Kostantin teküri aman dilemeyüb, ol gayretle cenk idüp İncîl'de keşîşler alınmaz diyüp, tekür dahı keşîşler sözine inanup, kendüye mağrûr olup [...] haşa Hazret-i Muhammed-i Mustafâ'ya dil uzadup [...] Hak tebâreke ve ta'âlâ dahı anlara bu belayı virüp, bunları kahr idüp..'

anecdote about how Bâyezid's quick temper had worsened the situation in which he found himself. Oliveira Despina, Bâyezid's Serbian wife had accompanied her husband to the battle against Timur but they were both captured. One day, Timur allegedly ordered to bring Bâyezid's wife to a drinking party. He then told her to serve the drinks. Bâyezid obviously felt humiliated as his wife was exposed to such a disgrace. In fury, he insulted Timur. The anonymous chronicler commented: 'because Bâyezid was furious of nature. He easily inflamed in anger for even the most trivial things that disturbed him. He told whatever came to his mind in fury.'⁵⁹⁷

Remarkably, the anonymous chronicler showed little understanding for Bâyezid's anger as he was humiliated by Timur. Probably, this was not a serious issue for the chronicler as he had earlier accused Bâyezid's wife of having introduced drinking parties to the princely court and of having perverted Bâyezid. He had asserted that 'until the arrival of the daughter of the Serbian lord, the first Ottoman rulers and even Bâyezid did not drink wine.'⁵⁹⁸ However, this was not entirely correct, as the *ulema*-historian Neşrî did not feel the need to omit the references in which Ottoman rulers relaxed and entertained themselves while drinking and listening to music. However, the anonymous chronicler obviously used every possible device allowing him to criticise Bâyezid.

He continued his story by noting that Bâyezid made things worse as he was Timur's prisoner.⁵⁹⁹ However, the anonymous chronicler was not fair toward Bâyezid who was left no other choice than to take Timur's challenge. If he had submitted to Timur's supremacy, then Bâyezid's own authority over his vassals would have been radically weakened. This could have caused a great threat for the survival of the empire, which he had built. Bâyezid had to react. However, his disadvantages of character appeared to be his impulsiveness and lack of prudence.

Neşrî also criticised Bâyezid's impulsiveness in an anecdote when he was a captive of Timur. According to the Neşrî, they were bathing together in a *hamam* in Denizli and Timur said to Bâyezid: 'It was God's wish. The wind has blown this way. However, if you had captured me, what would you have done?' Bâyezid Gazi was good-hearted and quick tempered. Because of his impulsiveness, he could not show patience and replied: 'If I had captured you, I would have put you in an iron cage.' Timur said: O khan! You said well.'

⁵⁹⁷ *Anonim Osmanlı Kroniği*, 51: 'Yıldırım Han katı gazab ehliydi. Sehelce nesneden kendüzin incidse helâk iderdi. Diline ne gelürse heman söylerdi'.

⁵⁹⁸ *Ibidem*, 36.

⁵⁹⁹ *Ibidem*, 51: 'Bire cüllâh sakallu ebleh köftehor, ben maşırıkda olam sen mağribde olasın. Dahı nene gerekdi kim, dürlü dürlü haberler gönderüp aydasın kim kahpenün erisin. Eger bana gelmezsen ve eger ben dahı varmazsam avratım boş olsun didün? Ve dahı beni bunda getürüp başuna bu belâları getürdün, deyüb aralarında hayli yaramaz söz oldı.'

He ordered to prepare an iron cage and they imprisoned Bâyezid Khan in this iron cage.⁶⁰⁰ Although this was obviously an imaginary conversation, Neşrî probably included this story in his chronicle as a discourse on morality. He clearly wished to demonstrate that impulsiveness and recklessness could lead to bad consequences. He implicitly advised that a ruler should be careful not to get angry too quickly.

Neşrî also related another story about the death of Sultan Bâyezid I. According to his account, Bâyezid was deeply saddened when Timur had invaded Anatolia and dismembered his realm among the Turkish princes. He noted: 'some say that Bâyezid Khan was very ambitious and of quick temper. When he heard that his land was occupied and divided among the Tatars and the Karamanids, he took the poison that he kept in his ring. He said that it was 'better to die instead of witnessing any more disgrace in the hands of the enemy and seeing how my land is being occupied'. Because of his honour, he ended his life.'⁶⁰¹ By contrast, Sultan Murad II was not criticised for having a quick temper or for impulsive acts. He rather appeared as consulting his officials, changing his mind and taking the right decisions before any damage was done.

According to the advice literature and the chroniclers, the sultan was certainly allowed the right to entertain himself. However the dose of entertainment appeared to be important. Feasting, hunting and drinking were tolerated as long as it did not keep the ruler from his official business and as long as he did not exaggerate. Nizam al-Mulk called for carefulness about giving verbal orders in drunkenness. He noted that orders concerning state affairs given in 'a state of merriment' have to be delicately handled and had first to be confirmed by the *divan* before acting upon.⁶⁰² He also advised that a ruler could not do without suitable boon companions with whom he could enjoy complete freedom and familiarity. 'The constant society of nobles and generals tends to diminish the ruler's majesty and dignity because they become too arrogant and too intimate.'⁶⁰³

To Nizam al-Mulk, it was only through boon-companions that the ruler could relax and 'refresh himself in sport, telling stories, jokes and curious tales without detriment to his sovereignty, because he keeps them for this purpose'.⁶⁰⁴ A highly esteemed boon-

⁶⁰⁰ Neşrî, *Cihânnümâ*, 163: 'Temür Han, Yıldırım Han ile Toñuzlu şehrinde ikisi bir hamama girüp, bir kurnada yunurken, Temür-leng, Yıldırım Han'a eyitdi: 'Hikmet Allah'un. Rüzgar böyle gösterdi. Eger bu vartaya ben düşsem, sen beni nice iderdüñ?', didi. Bâyezid Gâzî gâyet ile göñüllü ve tiz-nefesdi. Tîz-nefesliginden sabr idemeyüb, eyitdi: 'Eger bu vartaya sen düşsen, bir demir kafese koyardum', didi. Temür-leng eyitdi: 'İy Han! Yaman söyledün', didi. Hemân buyurdi, bir demür kafes düzdiler. Yıldırım Han'ı kafese koyub, habs itdi.'

⁶⁰¹ Ibidem, 165: 'Bazılar eydür: Bâyezid Han gâyet gayretlü ve tîz-nefesdi. İştidi kim, memleketini Temür-leng Tatar'ıla Karaman-oglı'na virdi; bilesinde zehri vardı. Gayretinden kendüyi sakınmayup, düşmen elinde zebûn olup, memleketi eller elinde görmedin ölem yegdir, diyüp kendü nefsin helâk eyledi.'

⁶⁰² Nizam al-Mulk, *The Book of Government*, 91.

⁶⁰³ Ibidem, 92.

⁶⁰⁴ Ibidem, 123.

companion was the person with life experience who had travelled widely. Nizam al-Mulk advised that a ruler should consult his boon-companion concerning entertainment matters, such as feasting, drinking, hunting and wrestling.⁶⁰⁵ The ideal boon-companion also had to have a rank and a status.⁶⁰⁶ Neşrî, for instance, noted that the former Byzantine aristocrat, Köse Mihal, had become the boon-companion [*muhibbi*] of Osman Gazi.⁶⁰⁷ Similar advices and advices concerning the sultan's close companions (*nedim*) were also formulated in the *Muradname*.⁶⁰⁸ The author warned Murad II to: 'never drink wine when you feel yourself proud and powerful. You cannot wander day and night in merriment, be sober and govern wisely your realm'.⁶⁰⁹

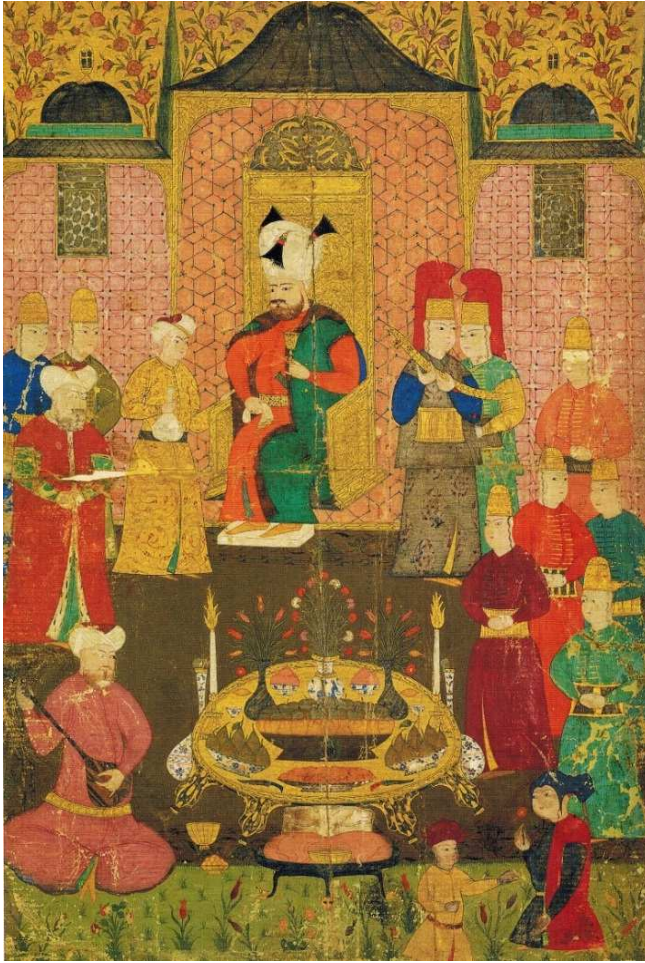


Figure 16: A scene of feasting at the princely court of Sultan Murad IV (seventeenth century).
Source: Topkapı Palace Museum, H2148, folio 11b.

⁶⁰⁵ Nizam al-Mulk, *The Book of Government*, 93.

⁶⁰⁶ Ibidem, 94.

⁶⁰⁷ Neşrî, *Cihannüma*, 39: 'Harman Kaya tekvurı Köse Mihal [...] Osman Beg'e nöker olup, cân u dilden muhibbi oldı. Göç aç memleketde müdebbirlik it.'

⁶⁰⁸ *Murad-nâme*, 277-280.

⁶⁰⁹ Ibidem, 242: "Sakın pâdişâhlık gurûriyle câm; içüp mest olayım dime subh u şâm.'

However, the right of a ruler to relax and to entertain could become a grave vice when it was exaggerated. This was especially the case concerning the drinking of wine. For instance, the author of the *Muradname* instructed the ruler not to drink. However, as he knew that Sultan Murad II preferred to drink wine in some occasions, he advised him not to exaggerate ‘as too much wine had negative effects on the health of intellect, mind and body’. The *Muradname* referred to the verse in the Qur’an about drinking, which stated: ‘although it may have some benefit, however, its sins are far more greater than its benefits.’⁶¹⁰ In other words, the author implied that drinking wine was permissible only if it was done modestly. Of course, the ideal was not drinking. Yet, if one still wished it to drink, then preferably in small proportions by mixing with some water, which in this way ‘gave refreshments to the heart’.⁶¹¹

The discourse of this mirror for princes shows that the person and the position of the ruler were regarded as an inseparable single entity. The behaviour of the ruler, whether good or bad, reflected the situation of the realm during his reign. The *Muradnâme* advised that it was harmful for the ruler to laugh too much, as it would make his retinue perceive him as an ordinary man, rendering his judgment light. As a result, ‘the order [at the princely court] would be disturbed, respect to his office would disappear and arrogance would emerge’.⁶¹² Similar views are also formulated in the chronicles. Neşri noted that Çelebi Mehmed I entertained himself (*ayş u işrete meşgul olup*) after he ascended the throne in Bursa.⁶¹³ The ulema-historian did not feel the need to censure the fact of entertainment and relaxing of prince Mehmed I at his court. However, he did criticise Mehmed I’s brother Süleyman Çelebi for indulging himself too much in drinking parties.

In Neşrî’s account, a spy of Mehmed informed him that his brother Süleyman was drinking wine day and night. The spy reported: ‘he goes to the hammam and drinks wine. If he likes the hammam, he stays there for a month and entertains himself with drinking parties. There is no better opportunity than to strike now.’⁶¹⁴ Indeed, when Mehmed attacked, Süleyman was still in the hammam drinking wine. In general, the chronicles portrayed Süleyman as a debauched ruler who lost the throne due to decadent parties. They depicted him as spending all his time in bath, drinking wine and indulging in courtly

⁶¹⁰ Qur’an, 2:219.

⁶¹¹ *Murad-nâme*, 299-302.

⁶¹² Ibidem, 233: ‘Ki küstahlığa bulunmıya yol; Dimişler ki sultâna çok gülmeden; Zıyanlu yoğ ol hâna çok gülmeden; Ki çok gülse sultân haşemle hadem; Sanurlar vücûdını anun adem; Hüküm geçmez olur bozılır nizâm; Gider padişahlara ihtirâm’.

⁶¹³ Neşrî, *Cihannüma*, 200.

⁶¹⁴ Ibidem, 215: ‘karındaşun be-gâyet halvetdür.[...] Gice gündüz şaraba meşguldür. Şöyle ki, hammâma girüp şarab içer. Bir ay anda oturub, ayş ü nûş ider. Eger üzerine hücum idersek, be-gâyet fursatdur.’

pleasures, while praising the youngest son Çelebi Mehmed, who is portrayed as generous to his soldiers, lords and allies.⁶¹⁵

Neşrî described the end of Süleyman as follows. When his brother Çelebi Musa attacked, Süleyman was allegedly again entertaining himself in the hammam. One of his men, Hacı Evrenos came in and informed him about the battle outside. However, Çelebi Süleyman did not mind the warnings and indulged further in drinking party saying not to disturb him, as Musa had not the strength to battle.⁶¹⁶ The commander of the janissaries, Hasan Aga, also tried to speak him. However, this only made Süleyman even angrier and he 'ordered to pluck the beard of Hasan Aga'. The lords of Süleyman Çelebi were in despair and they deliberated on what to do. Hasan Aga said: 'Know this that good and divine fortune has left this person.'⁶¹⁷ Consequently, most of Süleyman's lords decided to abandon him and defected to the side of his brother, Çelebi Musa. Süleyman was captured by Musa as he tried to escape and was strangled. Besides his weakness for wine that allegedly caused his downfall, Neşrî depicted Süleyman as 'unequalled in generosity and unmatched in bravery. He was discarded from pride and envy, enjoyed a great fame under the entire population as he was a just sultan.'⁶¹⁸

Although old age as such was not considered as a problem for a ruler, a heavy disease causing physical and mental obstructions did pose problems. Physical or mental disorders could affect the ruler's ability to administer the affairs of the realm. They were regarded as unacceptable for the office of sovereign. In this respect, one of the striking incidents of 'incompetent' rulership and dispute on a succession question can be found in the account of the end of the reign of Sultan Bâyezid II (r.1481-1512) by an anonymous chronicler.⁶¹⁹ Bâyezid II had already reached an old age and suffered from gout. His illness had advanced so far that undertaking a campaign had become too much of a burden to him and he had to stay in bed most of the time. At the same time, with the steady growing Safawid power in Iran, the Ottoman eastern provinces in Anatolia were thrown into chaos due to the lack of effective rule by Bâyezid II. Unrest was spreading in the Ottoman heartland of Anatolia, while the threat of Safawid dynasty was increasing.

According to the anonymous chronicle of Haniwaldus, the janissaries had become impatient about these developments and openly accused Sultan Bâyezid II for his

⁶¹⁵ Dimitris Kastritsis gave several examples from the anonymous chroniclers. See: Kastritsis, *The Sons of Bayezid*, 213-214.

⁶¹⁶ Neşrî, *Cihannüma*, 225: 'Hacı Lala! Beni sohbetümden ayırma. Anun cânı yokdur ki, bunda gelüp benümile mukabil ola'.

⁶¹⁷ Neşrî, *Cihannüma*, 225: 'bu kişiden devlet ve sa'âdet gitdi. Şöyle bilmiş olasız.'

⁶¹⁸ Ibidem, 227: 'Merhûm bur hûb-suretlü ve mergûb-suretlü, sahâvetde bî-misl ve şecâ'atde bî-nazîrdir. Ve kibr ü hasedden berî olup, cemî halka eyü sanlu, adl ü dâd issi pâdişâhdıdı.'

⁶¹⁹ Haniwaldus *Anonime'ne Göre Sultan Bâyezid-i Velî (1481-1512)*, tr. Öztürk (İstanbul, 1997) 34-64.

incapability of checking the Safawid threat. Upon their protests, Sultan Bâyezid II, realising his old age and suffering from the pains of gout, decided to abdicate in favour of his son Ahmed.⁶²⁰ However, the janissaries did not approve his choice for crown prince Ahmed. They argued that the sultan had named the wrong candidate to succeed him. They did not trust the leadership skills of Prince Ahmed and asserted that his sole concern was 'drinking and entertaining himself'. Thereupon, Bâyezid offered them to recognise his son Ahmed at least as the commander of the army (*ordu serdarlığı*). However, the janissaries again opposed the sultan's proposal and described to Bâyezid II the type of successor they wished: 'Your son Ahmed is precisely like you. He is not much different from a wood block and is useless for work. Moreover, he is weak-spirited and with his fat belly, he is not fit for battles. Therefore, we will never obey him. We need a ruler who is valiant, dynamic and a warrior, who can reinstall the authority on the provinces, their inhabitants and their governors; someone who can bring the affairs in order again and take the initiative of action.'⁶²¹

According to this chronicler, though the janissaries recognised Bâyezid as their legitimate sultan, they nevertheless blamed him for losing his skills and failing to maintain the security and prosperity of the realm. In the following passages, the anonymous author criticised the insolence and rude behaviour of the janissaries. He described in detail the riots they had caused that were difficult to restrain. The chronicler said that the janissaries were worried by the growing unrest in Anatolia and were losing their hope in Bâyezid II could not solve the crisis: 'Concerning you [Bâyezid II], expecting from you to find a remedy for this bad condition would be in vain. It has been three or four years since you have been in bed because of gout. Nobody can see you. You hear neither official nor personal complaints. You have no information on the economic condition of the realm [c. 1480]. The revenues from Anatolia nor from Rumelia are sent to the treasury. We see that the treasury is empty and poverty is spreading all over the land. If we want to preserve this land, we have to revive the fire of this hearth [referring to the janissary corps].' Thereupon, Bâyezid II asked them what they suggested and they replied: 'We need a commander for the army [*serdar*] whom we can follow into battles, a ruler sound and strong who can endure the burdens of campaigning.'⁶²² The janissaries claimed that Bâyezid II had to be succeeded by a dynamic sultan.

⁶²⁰ Haniwaldus Anonime'ne Göre Sultan Bâyezid, 34, 44-46, 59-61.

⁶²¹ Ibidem, 63: 'Oglun Ahmed tıpkı sana benziyor. O, bir kütükten farksız ve dünyada hiç bir işe yaramaz. Cesaretsiz, yağlı ve tombul göbeğiyle cenge uygun değildir. Bizim atılğan, cengâver, otoritesi ile eyaletleri, onların ahâlisini, beglerbeglerini düzene koyacak ve yiğitce ve cesareti ile teşebbüse geçecek birine ihtiyacımız var.'

⁶²² Ibidem, 60: 'Sana gelince, senden bütün bu kötü duruma çare bulmanı beklememiz beyhûdedir. Senin nikristen yatakta yatmak zorunda kalışından beri üç ya da dört yıl geçti. Hiç kimse senin huzuruna çıkamıyor.

Sometime before, alarmed by his father's decision to give the throne to his brother Ahmed, Prince Selim I had left his governorship in Anatolia, crossed over to the Balkans and gathered an army of Tatar troops in Edirne. This was a plain act of rebellion, by which Selim disapproved his father's decision and attempted to seize the throne from his father. However, at that time, the janissaries still supported the reigning sultan Bâyezid and after a brief battle, Selim was defeated. The janissaries told Selim to wait a little longer and Selim returned to his governorship in Teke.⁶²³ Meanwhile, the janissaries increased their pressure upon Sultan Bayezid II, who was ultimately left with no other choice than to leave the throne to his youngest son Selim. Prince Selim enjoyed the preference of the janissaries on the account of possessing the required competences and passion for conquests and action.⁶²⁴ Fifteenth-century chronicler, Hadidî, commented on Selim's accession to the throne, as follows: 'Neither Ahmed, nor Korkud were fit to the throne, both of them indulged in entertainment. However, Sultan Selim was the one who carried out the gaza; his sword was always girded on his waist'.⁶²⁵

The passages above reflected the idea that the state needed a competent ruler. Physical health and strength, as well as mental health were expected from rulers. As the prince was responsible for dispensing justice to the people, he had to be able to attend councils personally and hear their complaints. In brief, the chroniclers suggested that though descent may provide a prince with a valid claim to the throne, however, he had also to be worthy of the duties of the sultan and be capable of ruling a land. Consultation was one of the those duties for a sultan. Without exception, the earliest Ottoman historiographical sources agreed on the key importance of 'justice' for the maintenance of the political society. Whereas justice (*adl*) was considered a cardinal virtue, the *zulm* (tyranny) appeared to be the ruler's principal vice. Redistribution of wealth was another pivotal duty of a ruler to enhance the prosperity of the people and the well-being of the society. In the same line, public buildings and reconstruction works or *imar* activities were also important. These deeds promoted the image of the sultan as a generous and just sovereign, as well as served to enhance the prosperity of the people.

Se ne resmî ne de hususî şikayetleri duyuyorsun. Ve ülkenin iktisadi durumunun nasıl olduğu hakkında hiçbir malumatın yok...

⁶²³ Haniwaldus Anonimi, 47, 56-57.

⁶²⁴ Ibidem, 63.

⁶²⁵ Çelebi Hadidi, *Tevarih-i Al-i Osman*, 358: 'Ne Sultan Ahmed idi tahta layık; Ne Sultan Korkud idi bahta layık; Buların her biri iş ü safada; Veli Sultan Selim idi gazâda; Komazdı kılıcın her dem belinden; Zebûn olmuşdı Gürcistân elinden; Ne Gürcistân ki tutdı şark u garbı; Salâbetle sadâ-yı darb u harbı.'

Conclusion

Early Ottoman State formation consisted of a complex process that gave rise to a specific state ideology. As scholars Barkey, Tezcan, İnalcık, Köprülü, Findley, Fleischer, Kafadar and Di Cosmo have shown, the steppe origins of the Ottoman state was an important determinant of the early development of the polity. The nomad Turkmens from central Asia gradually constructed a polity within the hybrid frontier zone in Anatolia that separated the Byzantine Empire from the Seljuk Rûm Sultanate. This frontier region was characterised by a high degree of cultural diversity, mobility, sharing of lifestyles, ideas, institutional practices and independence from the hinterland, etc. In the following century and a half, the Ottomans would selectively adopt elements of the settled cultures they had brought into their sphere of influence. They created a specific synthesis of political organisation and governance which also influenced the discursive ideological production in their earliest written sources, including the first Ottoman chronicles.

As Osman's polity expanded, the dynasty's household grew along with it. The opposition of the gazi groups and marcher lords to the centralist government was already widespread during the reign of Murad I. This was most clearly expressed by the author of the Anonymous Chronicle in his criticism of the dynasty's centralising policies. Despite his criticism, the anonymous chronicler still considered the House of Osman as the only source of legitimate rule.

The process of putting into writing the earlier historical narratives that had first only circulated in oral tradition was closely related to the development of a nomadic community into a settled society with a centralised state form. The first fully-fledged Ottoman historical texts or chronicles were produced in the late fifteenth-century. By then, Ottoman society had started using writing to generate a discourse that could provide legitimacy about the past one century and a half. This usage of writing produced new discursive registers, in the first place originating from Islamic political thought in its written form. The earliest chronicles combined ancient Turkish and Islamic ideas and concepts to construct legitimising narratives and to build bridges between different social groups. This reflected the composite nature of the Ottoman state ideology which had already been developing in the early fifteenth century before it took its written form

in historiographical discourse. Over time, Islamic political thought was more and more explicitly formulated in the discourse of the early Ottoman chroniclers. In the model of ideal governance these texts prescribed – similar to the contemporary genre of mirrors for princes – a strong, central authority, in the person of the sultan as the key to the maintenance of balance between the *kanun* or customary law on the one hand and the Sharia (Islamic law) on the other. Both manifested the political idea of universal justice.

Both Ottoman and Islamic mirrors-for-princes shared common principles with classical antiquity, such as sovereignty and legitimacy. These principles appeared in the earliest Ottoman chronicles dealing with the monarchy, the ideas of good governance, the virtues that the ruler had to display. Indeed, all Ottoman chronicles emphasised *gaza*, justice, law and virtuous rulership.

The term *gaza* is one of the ideological signifiers that recurs most often in the chronicles. This suggests that this notion was indeed one of the predominant concepts of early Ottoman state ideology. The Ottoman chroniclers described almost every military campaign in terms of *gaza* and the term appears as a real *topos* in the discourse of nearly all the texts.

Until the 1980s, Wittek's influential *gaza*-thesis remained the dominant explanation of Ottoman State building. Wittek and many of his critics and followers interpreted the concept of *gaza* as synonymous to the western term 'holy war'. Subsequently, as *gaza* is a central notion in the Ottoman texts, many scholars have for generations assumed that holy war was the *raison d'être* of the Ottoman state. However, in this thesis, I have demonstrated that *gaza* did not mean the same as *jihad* and that both terms have different connotations to the European term of 'holy war'. In the Ottoman historical texts *gaza* was not aimed at proselytising the Christians nor was it directed at destroying the 'infidel' world – the *Dârülharb* – or driven by a priori religious hatred. Moreover, the Ottomans also used the concept when describing Ottoman campaigns against the neighbouring Muslim principalities. This clearly shows that religion and holy war were not the main driving forces behind *gaza*.

The discourse of the chroniclers also shows that the notion of *gaza* had various dimensions and carried different ideological connotations. The defence and expansion of the Muslim world were accompanied by more material concerns, such as the benefits and gains from booty. This understanding of *gaza* was most widely spread among popular social groups, especially among the *gazi* and dervish circles to which Aşık Paşazade and the author of the Anonymous Chronicle appealed. In contrast to the political agenda of a monarch, the soldiers appeared to consider the *gaza* in the first place as an opportunity to gain material benefits. However, not all chroniclers shared the same understanding and audiences when it came to this *topos*. For instance, Neşrî's text displayed an indifference to the *gaza* mentality, while Aşık Paşazade expressed and described it so vividly. Each of these chroniclers appealed to different audiences, consisting of the *ulema*

(men of learning), *kapıkulu* (conscripted servants of the dynasty's household), bureaucrats, *gazi* marcher lords, dervishes, and others.

Wittek was perhaps right in emphasising the importance of *gaza*, but as I have shown, he did not understand its precise ideological meaning. The discursive register of *gaza* was clearly intended for internal consumption, adapted to the horizon of expectations of the audiences to whom the chroniclers wished to appeal. The Ottoman dynasty clearly wished to fashion itself as a line of *Gazi* Sultans in order to enjoy the prestige attached to this 'chivalric' and noble notion. As the Ottomans attached great importance to their public image, the chroniclers emphasised the *gazi*-identity of the rulers. However, the defeat of Bâyezid I and the subsequent painful civil wars in 1403 represented a rupture in the use of the *gazi*-ideology. The use of the concept of *gaza* seems to have diminished during this period. Somewhat later, during the reign of Murad II, we see the notion of *gaza* emerge again as a predominant discursive register in the chronicles.

By the fifteenth century, Ottoman society had become imbued with Islamic principles. As a result, the Ottoman dynasty and their chroniclers referred to their *gazi* identity as an explanation for their successive victories and conquests. As we have observed in the chronicles of Ahmedî, Âşık Paşazâde and Neşrî, the continuous successes were described as the exploits of the 'champions of the faith'. The chroniclers represented the Ottoman rulers as the *Gazi* Sultans who not only safeguarded the 'gates of the Islamic world', but also expanded them. Precisely this aspect of being successful *gazis* at the frontiers of the Muslim world was explicitly emphasised by the earliest chroniclers. The *gazi* identity appeared to function as a discourse that fulfilled the ideological needs of various social groups, such as the dynasty, the marcher lords, the ulema, the nomads, soldiers and others.

However, it also appeared that solely being a *Gazi* Sultan was not sufficient quality to be regarded as a successful monarch or to be represented as one in the chronicles. Without exception, the earliest Ottoman historiographical texts emphasised the key importance of 'justice' for the maintenance of order in society. According to the chronicles, it was the pivotal duty of the ruler to maintain the equilibrium between society and the state. The discourse of the Ottoman chronicles upheld the idea that the state could only flourish in a prosperous society when the prince provided just rule. The reason for such an emphasis on justice in the Ottoman chronicles was mainly that the basis of Ottoman political legitimacy was weak. Lacking an imperial lineage and the authorisation of a caliph, the earliest chroniclers tried to compensate this through the active promotion of pivotal ideas such as 'justice', i.e. a just and good governance that enforces law and maintains the social order.

In several Ottoman advice books for princes as well as in the chronicles that were under scrutiny in this thesis, the notion of 'justice' or '*adâlet*' was defined as the prevention and elimination of oppressive acts (*zûlm*) by those who exercised state power. The discourse on justice emerged as the crucial rhetorical tool for maintaining the *nizâm*-

ı âlem or 'right order of society to the benefit of the general public', which was another central concept in Ottoman political theory. In this respect, the chroniclers referred to the well-known idea of the 'circle of equity'. This notion implied that the ruler, whose position was at the top of the circle, was supposed to maintain justice through reasonable taxation and protection from oppressive acts of his officials. The peasantry paid taxes for the treasury and the treasury paid for the army. The army completed the circle by securing the sovereignty of the ruler. The maintenance of this circle ensured that the proper meaning of the universe was preserved.

Arbitrary use of political power was considered *zulm* or injustice and tyranny. The person and the power of the sultan were regarded as indispensable to achieve and maintain the social order. However, if the sovereign oppressed his subjects or failed to fulfil his duties as a ruler, this was rejected as *zulm*. Whereas justice (*adl*) was conceived to be a cardinal virtue, *zulm* (tyranny) was considered a principal vice.

Another duty of a ruler was to rebuild and reconstruct the realm in order to enhance prosperity. Architectural activities aimed at the revival of the prosperity of a certain city or region. The sultan was expected to make public improvements and to take care of the poor. Public buildings and (re)construction works or *imar* activities appear to be related to the notions of redistribution of wealth and prosperity of the people. Both activities helped to promote the image of the ruler as a generous and just sovereign, who improved prosperity. Redistribution of wealth was perceived to be necessary for the well-being of the people and society.

The notion of the maintenance of the social order (*nizam-ı âlem*) that satisfied the basic social needs was also a central thought in Ottoman state ideology. The social order required a set of social relations based on a division of labour between various occupations and crafts. Each individual performed a necessary job that fit him best according to his merits and talents and by which the welfare of the entire society was supported. Human beings needed each other by nature. Thus, the idea was that in order to enhance cooperation between people and to increase development, they had to live together in society. To maintain this set of social relations, there was need for a sultan. The public interest could be served and chaos could be prevented through the authority of a legitimate political power. And this was the sultan. His role was to prevent people to do each other harm and he also preserved the 'order of the world' (*nizam-ı âlem*).

Furthermore, the sultan had to seek the advice from the learned *ulema* and from the Sufis who played an important role in governance. Knowledge, wisdom and leadership needed each other, as governance (*emr-i siyaset*) required knowledge. The ideal ruler was the one who upheld a spiritual mind set and wisdom, had the knowledge of the Shari'a, of the prophetic tradition and of history. The chroniclers equated prophets and sultans to 'two rings on a finger.' The sultan was called the 'Shadow of God on Earth' (*es-sultân zillu'llah fî'l arz*), which metaphorically referred to the duty of the ruler, providing shade and shelter to protect the people under his authority from the merciless sun. Governance

(*emr-i siyaset*) was the protection of the socially disadvantaged from the oppression by socially and economically powerful groups. In this sense, the sultan was regarded as 'the shepherd' of his people. The early Ottoman historiographical tradition also expressed the classic Islamic idea that 'the way of God' (*din*) and state (*devlet*) were inseparable.

In their account of social and political matters, the early Ottoman chronicles suggested that the dynasty achieved legitimate sovereignty through attempting to gain the acceptance of the people. Legitimacy was the outcome of the negotiations between the ruler and the ruled. The ruler who claimed the right to sovereignty had to win the consent of the ruled by ensuring them with justice, protection of life and continuity of the social, cultural and economic activities.

The Ottoman notion of 'political power' or 'state', the *devlet* was another important concept. It also had a mystical meaning, such as 'good fortune', 'divine favour', etc. This *devlet*, which was 'the elixir for rare and precious happiness', could only be achieved through good virtues and ethics. Even though God selected a dynasty to rule over the people, the ruler still had to deserve his position by winning the consent of the people through fulfilling his duties. For good governance, he had to consult the opinions of wise and learned men and viziers. He was also expected to redistribute wealth and to be generous not only toward his own household, but also toward the people in general in order to reassure that each group in society prospered. Following the 'way of God' (*dîn*), he had to work for his happiness and that of the people in this world and the next. This happiness was achievable only if the ruler prevented oppression and cruelty, refrained from pride and vanity, undertook *gaza*, was generous, showed mercy, and most importantly, dispensed justice. The chroniclers seem to have specifically praised Sultan Murad II for complying with all these virtues. It may be asserted that Murad II personified the ideal sultan of the early Ottoman state ideology.

This study did not offer an exhaustive analysis of all types of sources available for the period. Nevertheless I have attempted to contribute to our understanding of fifteenth-century Ottoman state ideology. The discursive analysis of concepts like *gaza* and justice as well as of the sets of virtues and vices expressed in the chronicles has revealed the commonly shared principles of early Ottoman state ideology. Focussing on a very specific topic I have attempted to contribute to the field of Ottoman Studies by shedding more light on how the Ottomans considered their own political organisation. Pragmatically making use of Norman Fairclough's methodologies of 'Critical Discourse Analysis', I have attempted to make early Ottoman history somewhat more intelligible by trying to understand the 'political language' or 'state ideology', as the earliest Ottoman chronicles formulated it in their own words. Nevertheless, I have attempted to avoid imposing preconceived models of analysis on these discourses. Of course, my work relies on and wants to pay tribute to the major scholarly output of venerable historians such as Halil İnalcık, Suraiya Faroqhi, Dimitris Kastritsis and many others. I hope this thesis gives rise to further discussion which will help to refine this scholarly endeavour.



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