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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.

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2 Ibidem, 236.
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. 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. Even a well-known and learned historian like Colin Imber too quickly discards, in my opinion, the

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early Ottoman chronicles for scientific historical analysis. He argues that early Ottoman history represented ‘a black hole’.

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.

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.

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

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

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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).

thought as the antithesis of the European ideas of sovereignty has indeed very much been part of western discourse since the Renaissance.\textsuperscript{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.’\textsuperscript{13}

The history of the Ottoman state and society has also often been framed in terms of ‘arbitrary use of power’ or ‘oriental despotism’.\textsuperscript{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’.\textsuperscript{15}

\textsuperscript{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).


\textsuperscript{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. 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, 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. 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.

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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

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.
as subjects of a state, members of a religion, etc.\textsuperscript{27} In addition, a state also usually relies on a class or social group that mediates the relationship between the ruler/ruled 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.\textsuperscript{28}

Pierre Bourdieu remarked that the classic theories of state formation did not ask\textit{ 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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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

\textsuperscript{27} Haldon,\textit{ The State and the Tributary Mode}, 140.
\textsuperscript{28} Ibid., 7-8.
\textsuperscript{30} Wallerstein,\textit{ 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.
\(^{33}\) 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.”

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.

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. 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. 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.

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

Furthermore, Nicola Di Cosmo conceptualised the nomad state formation primarily in terms of crisis, militarisation and centralisation. 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. 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 Kök Türk Empires. Recent research does not support that these could only be states if they used administrative institutions and a bureaucracy.

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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 pasturelands. 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.

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.

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.

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

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43 Ibid., 181.
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.

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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. 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. 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,

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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 ulerma, 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.\(^\text{53}\)

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 enunciations and statements.\(^\text{54}\) A statement, for Foucault, is composed of ideas,

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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. 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’. 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. To give a fitting example from Ottoman
historiography, the Ottoman historian Neşri omitted the marriage of Orhan Gazi with the
Byzantine princess Theodora in his account. This can be understood when we look at
Neşri’s social context. Neşri 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, Neşri 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.

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

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55 Foucault, The Archeology of Knowledge, 28.
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.  

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. 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). 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.

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. 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 formable, qui, pour chaque œuvre au moment de l’histoire où elle apparaît, résulte de trois facteurs principaux : l’expérience préable 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.
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

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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.
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), Enverî (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

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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

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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 interstate 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 Kastriotis 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

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

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’anûvis or court

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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.
chronicler had been established. 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. 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. 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 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.
Sufi saints (evliya), sheikhs and the mystical orders were also accounted by these texts.31 The word *menakib* in the fifteenth-century Turkish meant ‘deeds’ both in an Islamic and in a political sense. In the thirteenth century, the earliest examples of *menakibs* 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 *menakib* works remained focused on heroic ‘chivalric’ and miraculous adventures of famous thirteenth-century gazi-leaders, such as the post-Seljuk heroes Seyyid Battal Gazi, Sari 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 *menakibnames* 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 *menakib*.

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33 Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*, 63.
In the fifteenth century, a growing number of gazavat or غزافت (Book of Campaigns) deal with the accounts of the deeds and campaigns of a sultan or a famous commander. 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.

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 İzlandı 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. 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 İnalcık and Oğuz in 1948. İnalcık used the text in greater detail in his analysis of the reigns of Murad II and Mehmed II. Until 1978, there was no critical edition of this gazavatname. In 2006, Imber published an

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36 Agah Sırri 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.


38 I will use the critical edition: Gazavat-ı Sultan Murad bin Mehmed Han, ed. Halil İnalcık & Mehmet Oğuz (Ankara, 1978).


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

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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 Zaïfî 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, Zaïfî, 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 Zaïfî understood Greek and the Serbo-Croat language. And since he was well informed about the events in Hungary, Zaïfî 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, Kâşîfî, was a Persian poet who came to

Istanbul during the reign of Mehmed II. Kaşifî 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.\textsuperscript{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).\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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 (menakıbnames and gazavatname) situated within the oral tradition of the Muslim Oğuz culture in Anatolia.\textsuperscript{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, Neşri 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

\textsuperscript{45} Suraiya Faroqhi, Approaching Ottoman History. An Introduction to the Sources (Cambridge, 1999) 146-147.
\textsuperscript{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 Mülük-i Âl-i Osmân* (History of the Kings of Ottoman Dynasty) is considered as the oldest identifiable comprehensive Ottoman history. Ahmedî was not only a historian, but also one of the most prolific and successful writers of Ottoman court poetry. 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. 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. 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.

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 Aydin-oğulları. It is still unclear how and when exactly he entered Ottoman service. We do know that in the period between 1389 and 1390, Sultan

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52 Faroqhi, *Approaching Ottoman History*, 144.

Bâyezid I had annexed the neighbouring Turkish principalities (beyliks) in Western Anatolia. At that time, Ahmedî 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. 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. 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.’

The earliest redaction of Ahmedî’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. Ahmedî certainly survived into the reign of Çelebi Mehmed I and he died in 1413 at the age of eighty.

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

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56 ‘Mîr Süleyman dün ü gün sohbet ider, Ahmedî’le dem-be-dem işret ider; Ahmedî dervişdi bay eyledi şâh, Oldı muhtâc ana cümle ehli-i cân’i: Düstûrnâme-i Enverî,
57 Kafadar, Between Two Worlds, 84-85.
the ending words of two lines, and follows a specific meter.\textsuperscript{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 \textit{İskendername} 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 \textit{Zülkarneyn} in Turkish or in Arabic \textit{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.\textsuperscript{60} \textit{Zülkarneyn}, usually identified as Alexander the Great, had traveled to Hejaz and had visited the two Holy Cities of Islam.\textsuperscript{61} Alexander’s successes had left a rich legacy inherited by Islamic literature and historiography. \textit{Zülkarneyn} or İskender represented the ideally dynamic, triumphant and prudent king, frequently used by Muslim authors to portray the ideal ruler.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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

\textsuperscript{61} Ibidem.
\textsuperscript{63} ‘Ve yes’elâneke an Zîl-karneyn kul se-etlû aleykûm minhû zikrâ’ – And they ask you about ZulKarneyn ; say I will recite you an account of him’, in: Tursun Beg, \textit{Târîh-i Ebûl-Feth} (İstanbul, 1977) 3.
\textsuperscript{64} Silay, \textit{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 Menakibname’s. Ahmed’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).

Ahmed 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’. Ahmed presented the Ottoman sultans as gazi-kings and defined the gazi as: ‘the servant of God’ (*Tangrınun ferrâşidur*), ‘the sword of God’ (*Hak kılıcıdur*) and ‘the support and refuge of the people of religion’ (*püşt ü penâh-ı ehl-i dîn*). The influential Ottomanist, Paul Wittek used these verses of Ahmed as his main textual evidence for the gaza-thesis, which I shall discuss extensively in the following chapter.

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. 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.’

However, Ahmed’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. In 1402, Sultan Bâyezid I was defeated by Timur Lenk (r. 1370-1405) – the powerful Turkish ruler from Central Asia. 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

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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 Ahmed, Dasitan-i Tevârîh, 27.


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 Bāyezid’s defeat by Timur. Bāyezid 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, *nashihatname* or mirrors-for-princes and epic literature.\(^{74}\) Ahmedî addressed his patron, Süleyman, the son of Bāyezid 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 Bāyezid. His attitude towards the gaza-motive in his *İskerdername* 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


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.

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, terciüme ve tahâlli (İstanbul, 1982).
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. 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. 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.

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. The first versions relied on a common text, which was a collection of tales and historical data. The textual material

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was regarded as common property and each author or copyist felt himself free to change or elaborate as he wished. 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. 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. 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 şehid.

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

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88 Anonim Osmanlı Kroniği (1299-1512), ed. Necdet Öztürk (İstanbul, 2000).
90 Ibidem, 131: ‘Sultan Bayezid şarab meclisin idüp o gice Edrene’dde Yeni Saray’da bu meclisde Gedik Ahmed Paşa’yı şehid 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 attular), 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 menakib 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 Vulkoglu’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

93 Kafadar, Between Two Worlds, 104-105.
preparations to confront Timur Lenk. He is said to have fallen prey to his pride. 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. 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 gazî followers. The anonymous chronicler, who addressed the gazî 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.

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

With his *Behcetüt Tevarih* or *Splendor of Histories*, the Ottoman ulama scholar and historian, Şükrullah, wrote the second oldest Ottoman historical tekst. It was composed in Persian between 1456 and 1458. Şükrullah was also a musical theorist and translated a treatise on music into Turkish on demand of Murad II. 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.

Another historical text from this period is the *Düstûrname*, the chronicle of Enverî. Enverî wrote it in 1465 in dedication to Mahmud Paşa, the grand vizier of sultan Mehmed II. 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

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97 Şükrullah, *Behcetüt Teyârîh* [In the Light of History], ed. and tr. Hasan Almaz (İstanbul, 2013).
99 Şükrullah, *Behcetüt Teyârîh*, 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.
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.\footnote{İnalçık, ‘The Rise of Ottoman Historiography’, 152-167; and Ménage, ‘The Beginnings of Ottoman Historiography’, 168-179.} 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’.\footnote{For a critical edition, see: Tursun Beg, Târîh-i Ebû’l-Feth, ed. Mertol Tulum (İstanbul, 1977).} What is known about Ṭursun 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 Ḥamza Beg.\footnote{Tursun Beg, Târîh-i Ebû’l-feth , XI-XII; H. İnalçik and R. Murphey, The History of Mehmed the Conqueror by Tursun Beg (Chicago, 1978) 11.} 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.\footnote{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}  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, Ṭursun may have risen to the post of defterdar (director of finances) of Anatolia.\footnote{İnalçık and Murphey, The history, 16.} 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, Ṭursun 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
thought. 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.

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107 Christine Woodhead, ‘Ṭursun 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). 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. He lived through the entire century and reportedly died in 1502. His great-grandfather was the famous Turkish mystic poet Aşık Paşa (1272-1333), the author of the Garîbnâme, a prose work on tasavvuf (mysticism). Aşık Paşa belonged to a dervish family that had migrated from Khorasan to Anatolia in the thirteenth century. 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

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

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. 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.

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 menâkıb of Yahşi Fakih, which deals with the period from Osman Beg until the reign of Bayezid I and

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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).
114 Aşıkpaşazade Tarihi, 5: ‘Kim neseb ü neslüm bu âlile doğdu; Hem doğanumuz bu âli gördü; Nesl ü nesebüme Âl-i Osman Aşıkî deyüb ederler ihsan.’
115 Aşıkpaşazade Tarihi, 49: ‘Bu ömür seksen altı olduğunda, Bâyezid Han Boğdan’a ağduğunda 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, Neşri 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 Inalcik, 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 Gevye in 1413, on his way from the Elvan Çelebi convent (zaviye) to probably the Balkans. Aşık Paşazade fell ill at Gevye 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

119 Ibidem, 91.
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.

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. 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. 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

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121 Aşıkpaşazade Tarihi, 114: ‘Hünkar, devletilen Bursa dan göçdü, yürüdü geldi, Yorusa kondu. Ol vakit duacı fakir Geyye de kaldum, Orhan’ un imami oglu Yaḥşî Fakih evinde hasta oldum. Menakıb-ı Al-i Osman’ t â Yıldırım Han’a gelince ol imam oglundan nakl ederin.’
122 İnalçık, ‘How to Read Ashik Pasha-Zade’s History,’ 32.
124 Aşıkpaşazade Tarihi, 147-154.

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 Paşazâde’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.\footnote{Inalcık, ‘The Rise of’, 155.} 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 Ménage 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.\footnote{Among his numerous contributions, the most pertinent is: Victor L. Ménage, \textit{Neshri’s History of the Ottomans: The Sources and Development of the Text} (New York, 1964).} 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.\footnote{Kafadar, \textit{Between Two Worlds}, 100.} 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
finance the imperial policies, led to resentment and confusion among the ruling elite and the people in general.  

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 sheiks 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.’

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?’

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130 Aşıkpaşazade Tarihi, 240, 242, 297: ‘Bir aceb Rum vezir oldu gene, Şöyle bil kim uğri girdi bu dine; Adını mü’min komuşdi han anun, Fursatun gözleri gündüne kine; Bu vezir oldu kafirler gör nider, Ağu verür der Müslüman kına. [...] El hasil-i kelâm, Lârende’den ve Konya’dan ziyâde ev almakdan murađı ehl-i İslâm’un evlerin yikdurmagıdı. Rum Mehmed pâdişah emrinden dahi ziyade evler sürdü. [...]Âl-i Osman kapusunda, tâ ol vezir oluncaya değil teşrifün ba’zısın o kesdürdi.’
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].

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. 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.


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. 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. 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.

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. 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.

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. Neşrî dedicated this last book

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134 Ibidem, 391: ‘Dergehinde Neşrî’yâ her müşkilün âsândur.’
135 Ménage, Neşrî’s History of the Ottomans, 2.
137 Neşrî, Cihân-nümâ, 5: ‘Pes bu ma’ânî-i zahireyi tezekkür idüüp, tûl-i ömrümde ben dahi sevdâ itdüm ki, alâ-kadîr’-t-tâkîl’-beşeriyyet ilm-i târîhden Türkî diluted bir kitab cem’ idem.’
138 Ménage, Neşrî’s History of the Ottomans, 4-5.
139 Paul Wittek, ‘Zum Quellenproblem der ältesten osmanischen Chroniken (mit Auszügen aus Nesri)’, Metteilungen 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.\textsuperscript{140}

At the start of his \textit{Cihân-nümâ}, Neşrî describes how he decided to compose his \textit{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 \textit{Kitâb-ı Cihân-nümâ} or ‘the Book of Cosmorama’\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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

\textsuperscript{140} Ménage, ‘The Beginnings of Ottoman Historiography’, 175.
\textsuperscript{142} Ménage, \textit{Neshrî’s History of the Ottomans}, 7.
\textsuperscript{143} Ménage, ‘The Beginnings’, 175.
histories': most notably those of Ahmedî and Şükrüllah; 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 ulaire-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 elfare 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. 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 ulaire 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.’

Another source used by Neşrî is the set of Royal Calendars or Takvims. 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, İnalcık remarked that the calendars and the Anonymous Chronicles are far more chronologically exact than the later compilation of Neşrî. 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,

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144 Kafadar, Between Two Worlds, 102-103.
145 Ibidem, 103.
147 Ibidem, 159.
they have kept their distinct identity at the same time.\footnote{Ménage, Neşri’s History of the Ottomans, 10-79.} It seems that Neşri 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). Neşri 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. Neşri’s work is the oldest compilation that sought to combine the various traditions from the Anonymous Chronicles and Aşık Paşazade.\footnote{İnalçık, ‘The Rise’, 165-167; Ménage, ‘The Beginnings’, 177; Inalçı, ‘The Rise’, 165-167.}

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 Neşri 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 Paşazâde, rising to be Şeyh-ül-Islam under Suleyman the Magnificent, would introduce an entirely new outlook on Ottoman historiography with his approach.\footnote{For example, see: Kemalpaşazâde, Tevârîh-i Âl-i Osman, IV. Defter, ed. Koji Imazawa (Ankara, 2000) 237-265.} 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.\footnote{İnalçık, ‘The Rise’, 167.} Kemal Paşazade apparently used a detailed copy of Neşri, 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.\footnote{İnalçık, ‘The Rise’, 167.}

The language of Kemal Pasazade’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 Neşri.

1.7.3 Oruç Beg (c. 1502)

One of the other Ottoman prose chronicles is the Tevârîh-i Âl-i Osmân (History of the House of Osman) written by Oruç Beg.\footnote{In this study, I will use the recent critical edition: Oruç Beg Tarihi, ed. Necdet Öztürk (İstanbul, 2008).} Oruç was the son of a silk merchant and was born in
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. 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’. There is no other information on him. Franz Babinger speculated that his family had moved from Bursa to Edirne. 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.

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. In his own fashion, he used the common source of Yahşî Fakıh 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. He noted that Aşık Paşazade’s source for the period until 1413 was the text (menâkıb) 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 menâkıbnames. Individual copies of all these historical texts may be as

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).
159 Oruç Beg Tarihi, 3: ‘Aşık Paşa-oğlu Elvân Çelebi menâkıb’inda ma’lûm itmişdür.’
important as different texts, because their authors made revisions at various dates by
adding or omitting information.\textsuperscript{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 Derviş Ahmed Âşikî,
a wise man of hundred years old. [...] He has collected these events. However, his source
was the son of the imam of Orhan Gazi, Bahşi Fakı, who lived until the reign of Sultan
Mehemmed, the father of Sultan Murad.’\textsuperscript{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 \textit{Takvims}. In contrast
to the writers of the Anonymous Chronicles, Oruç copied the calendars fairly well. The
authors of the Royal Calendars or \textit{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 \textit{gazavatnames} for the great events. In the
chronological listing of the events, Oruç’s text is far more systematic than the compilation
of Neşrî.\textsuperscript{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.

\textsuperscript{160} İnalcık, ‘The Rise of Ottoman Historiography’, 154.
\textsuperscript{161} Oruç Beg Tarihi, 9.
\textsuperscript{162} İnalcık, ‘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 caravanners *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.

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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

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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. For instance, China often chose the prospect of trade as a means of control. 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. 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. The frontier zone was an area in which local economies and cultures were neither purely nomadic nor purely sedentary, but a combination of both.

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. 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. 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.

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8 Golden, An Introduction, 8.
10 Di Cosmo, Ancient China, 169.
12 Di Cosmo, Ancient China, 170-171.
14 Di Cosmo, Ancient China, 163-166.
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.\(^\text{16}\)

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.\(^\text{17}\) 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.\(^\text{18}\) 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 kağanates or steppe-empires in Central Asia.\(^\text{19}\) Although there is earlier

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\(^\text{16}\) Ibidem, 37.

\(^\text{17}\) Di Cosmo, Ancient China, 162.

\(^\text{18}\) Ibidem, 179.

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. 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 Uygurs (744-840) and the Khazars (630-965). The most important source for the Kök Türk period are the Orhun inscriptions from the eight 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.

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.

Particularly, the political significance of the Kök Türk Empire was great. Its political system established norms for Turkish states for centuries. 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.

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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.
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

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administrative class of appointed military and civil officials. 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. Thereafter, Osman Bey managed to create an independent political entity after defeating the Byzantine army at the Battle of Bapheus (Koyunhisar) in 1302.

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. The Turkish term töre corresponded to the nomadic custom and traditions codified, such as the yasa (laws) of Cenghiz Khan. Yasa and töre expressed Central Asian steppe concepts of impersonal justice, and derived their authority from custom and formal proclamation by the ruler. 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. 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’. 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

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29 Neşri, Cihânmûmd, 39.
30 Ibidem, 50-52.
31 Tekin, Orhon Yazıtları: Kül Tigin, Bilge Kağan, Tunyukuk, 25-34.
33 Tekin, Orhon Yazıtları, 38-39.
34 İnalçık, The Ottoman Empire, 67.
sedentary culture and they established the Great Seljuk Empire (c. 1040-1194). The nomadic, steppe origins of the Seljuks were of much greater importance in determining the early development of the empire than was previously assumed. 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. 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.

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. The conversion of Selçuk to Islam also proved to be a crucial step with longstanding political

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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.


consequences that not only transformed the Islamic history, but also the history and identity of the Turks. 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. 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. 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). The early Seljuks were initially caught up as auxiliary troops in the conflict

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between the fading regional states of the Samanids, Ghaznavids and the Karahanids.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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, Tugrul Beg seized Baghdad. Having freed the caliph from the supremacy of the Buyids (Buheyvi’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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{50} However, his hegemony was not secure. He struggled with the other descendants of the dynasty to secure the tribal support of the

\textsuperscript{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.

\textsuperscript{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-Tarih, tr. Kivameddin Burslan (İstanbul, 1943) LIV-LXIII.

\textsuperscript{47} Başan, The Great Seljuqs, 21.

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

\textsuperscript{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.

\textsuperscript{50} Turan, Selçuklular Tarihi, 92-93.
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.

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. 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.

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-Ghazâlî 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. 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.

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51 Ibidem, 66-68.
52 Ibidem, 94-95;
53 Lewis, The Middle East, 88.
55 Peacock, Early Seljuq History, 100-108.
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. 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.

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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] Görgo [Frederick Barbarossa], a famous infidel who carried the title of despot, invaded the lands of Rome [bîlâd-î 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

61 Turan, Selçuklular Zamanında Türkiye, 220-229.
62 Neşrî, Cihannüma, 16.
in Nicea (İznik). 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.

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. 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. 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. As an example of this alliance, Sultan Alaaddin 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.

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. 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

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64 Turan, Selçuklular Zamanında Türkiye, 360-365.
65 Ibidem, 395-403.
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. 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. 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.

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. 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. 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,

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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.\textsuperscript{75}

The religiously and ethnically diverse society in which the Seljuks lived was also reflected in the princely court of the dynasty.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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, \textit{baba} Ilyas-i Horasani, who claimed that he was \textit{Resul Allah}, a prophet. The figure of \textit{baba} or ‘father’ was a continuation of the shaman character, typical for the syncretic Islam of the nomad Turkish communities. These \textit{baba}'s guided their people as spiritual masters and sometimes as political leaders.\textsuperscript{79} Due to the growing tensions with the Seljuk central government, Baba Ilyas proclaimed the \textit{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

\textsuperscript{75} Mecit, ‘Kingship and Ideology under the Rum Seljuqs’, 69-70.
\textsuperscript{76} Peacock and Yildiz eds., \textit{The Seljuks of Anatolia}, 4.
\textsuperscript{77} Köprüülü, \textit{Early Mystics}, 149.
\textsuperscript{78} Lindner, \textit{Explorations in Ottoman Prehistory}, 3-4.
to have allied. This so-called Babai Revolt shaked 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 Kösedağ 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

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\(^80\) Turan, *Selçuklular Zamanında Türkiye*, 422-23.

\(^81\) Ibidem, 427-457.

\(^82\) Köprülü, *The Origins*, 33-34.

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 lifestyle.  
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. The old Roman-Byzantine cities were revitalised and became more prosperous than before thanks to vigorous trading activity.

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). 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,

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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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 \textit{ahl al-dhimma}, they adopted a policy designed to win the consent of the population, a policy known in the Ottoman period as \textit{istimalet}.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{92}

For instance, in the early thirteenth century, the \textit{akritai}, the Byzantine marcher-warriors, found the fiscal policy of the Byzantine administration insupportable as it gravely affected their interests. These \textit{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.\textsuperscript{93} As the non-Greek Christian population of Anatolia resented the Byzantine policies, they were benevolent towards the Turkish conquerors, who replaced


\textsuperscript{89} Togan, ‘Moğollar devrinde Anadolu’nun İktisadi Vaziyeti’, 31-33.

\textsuperscript{90} Ocak, ‘Social, Cultural and Intellectual Life’, 367-369.

\textsuperscript{91} Halil İnalcık, ‘Ottoman Methods of Conquest’, 103-129.

\textsuperscript{92} Ocak, ‘Social, Cultural and Intellectual Life’, 387-388.

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. 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.

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. 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.

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. 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. The Turkish

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94 Claude Cahen, Pre-Ottoman Turkey (London, 1968) 204.
95 Wittek, ‘Turkish Asia Minor up to the Osmanlis’, in: The Rise, 56.
96 Ibidem, 46.
97 Köprüülü, Türk Edebiyatında İlk Mutasavvıflar, 191.
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. 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. 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. 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. To the north of Saruhan, lay the maritime beylik of Karasi with part of its shoreline along the Dardanelles and with Balikesir 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 Söğüd 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.

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

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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 Aydin (1300-1415) (Venice, 1983); Paul Lemerle, L’Emirat d’Aydin, 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. 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. These beyliks gradually built their own regional power, which gave them better prospects to negotiate with Byzantium. Their emergence augmented the regional redistribution of resources that otherwise would have been extracted by Mongol Ilkhanid imperial centres. 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. 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.

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106 Köprülü, *The Origins*, 34.


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

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).
113 Turan, Selçuklular Zamanında Türkiye, 36; Togan, Umumi Türk Tarihine Giriş, 196.
114 Togan, Umumi Türk Tarihine Giriş, 196.
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. 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, Kharezmsahs and the Ilkhanids.

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. 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. 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. 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. 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

118 Ibidem, 11-21 en 87-88.
119 Köprülü, The Origins, 43-47.
119 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.
120 Kafadar, Between Two Worlds, 2.
121 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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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 Bythinia, the trade roads and the access to resources.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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 Süleminiş in 1298. Osman’s activities in the years 1298-1301 coincided with the rebellion of Süleminiş, who became popular among the Turkish frontier warriors.\textsuperscript{127} Süleminiş 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 Süleminiş against the Ilkhanid Khans.\textsuperscript{128} In 1300, the Ilkhanids managed to defeat the rebellion and killed Süleminiş, however, they were unable to establish firm control on the western frontier lands.\textsuperscript{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.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{123} Köprülü, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun Kuruluşu*, 86, 132.
\item \textsuperscript{125} Lindner, *Explorations*, 50-53.
\item \textsuperscript{126} Yaşar Yücel, *XIII. ve XV. Yüzyıllar Kuzey-Batı Anadolu Tarihi: Çobanoğulları ve Candaroğulları Beylikleri* (Ankara, 1980) 48-49.
\item \textsuperscript{128} Togan, *Umumi Türk Tarihine Giriş*, 228-231, 243.
\end{itemize}
A silver coin bearing the inscription ‘Struck by Osman, son of Ertuğrul’ confirms that Osman’s father was Ertuğrul.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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).

However, Osman’s position did not remain unchallenged. A competition with his uncle Dündar emerged after Ertuğrul had died. During the \textit{kurultay} or assembly, some members of the tribe wanted Osman, and others his uncle Dün dar, to succeed Ertuğrul and to be the new bey. Seeing Osman’s strong support, Dündar gave up and accepted his nephew’s leadership.\textsuperscript{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


\textsuperscript{131} Âşık Paşazâde, \textit{Tevârîh-i}, 282.

\textsuperscript{132} Neşrî, \textit{Cihânmümdar}, 39.
enemies.’ According to Neşri, 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.\(^ {134}\) Neşri 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 Iznik (Nicaea).\(^ {136}\) Neşri 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. İnalcık 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).\(^ {140}\)

\(^{133}\) Neşri, Cihânnümâ, 45.

\(^{134}\) İnalcık, Osmanlı Tarihini Yeniden Yazmak. Kuruluş (İstanbul, 2010) 52-54.

\(^{135}\) Neşri, 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, Tevarih-i Mülük-i Al-i Osman, 29.


\(^{137}\) Neşri, Cihânnümâ, 50-51.


\(^{139}\) İnalcık, ‘Osman Ghazi’s siege’, 80-82.

\(^{140}\) Ibidem, 78-79.
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. 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. 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.

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141 İnalçık, 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 (akım) and conquests or gaza, in exchange for pasture land to live in (yurtluk). 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. 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. 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 (garıbs) in the frontiers for gaza-expeditions. These ‘garıbs’ 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 ‘garıbs’. 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. 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

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143 Âşık Paşazâde, Tevârîh-i Âl-i Osmân, 283.
146 Âşık Paşazâde, Tevârîh-i Âl-i Osmân, 290, 293; Neşrî, Cihannûmâ, 54-59.
abilities counted more, becoming catalysts for new forms of political and social organisations.\textsuperscript{147} The successful leader also determined the identity of the hybrid group. As it was reflected in their name: the \textit{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 \textit{askeri} class was the military or administrative group and officially exempted from taxes. The second class, the \textit{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 \textit{reaya}, and governing them with justice and protecting the \textit{reaya’s} rights against the abuse of state power by officials.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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 \textit{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

\textsuperscript{147} Kafadar, \textit{Between Two Worlds}, 129-130.
\textsuperscript{148} İnalcık, \textit{An Economic and Social History}, 16-17.
\textsuperscript{149} İnalcık, ‘Osman Ghazi’s siege of Nicea’, 77-100.
much closer contact with and influenced by the Seljuk, Ilkhanid and Byzantine administrative practices.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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


\textsuperscript{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.

\textsuperscript{152} Kafadar, Between Two Worlds, 136-138.
Bythnia. 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

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\(^{153}\) Peirce, *The Imperial Harem*, 16, 33.


\(^{155}\) Ömer Lûtfi Barkan, *İstilâ devirlerinin Kolonizatö r Türk dervişleri ve Zaviyeler*, *Vakıflar Dergisi* II (1942) 274-386.

\(^{156}\) Manz, *The Rise and Rule of Tamerlane*, 17-18.

\(^{157}\) Âşık Paşazâde, *Tevârîh*, 287.


role, which helped the early Ottomans to familiarise themselves with the Byzantine court culture. 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.

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.

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 Germiyanoğlu 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. 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.

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161 Köprülü, Early Mystics, 149.
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. 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

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’État 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

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\(^{167}\) Gibbons, *The Foundation of the Ottoman Empire*, 41.

\(^{168}\) Ibidem, 27, 46.


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.\textsuperscript{171} Even later in the twentieth century, often clearly without realising this themselves, implicitly or unwillingly, some authors still held similar perceptions.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{173} Predominantly, ahi were artisans who had passed through various stages in order to become masters in their craft.\textsuperscript{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.

\textsuperscript{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, \textit{Empires of Islam in Renaissance Historical Thought} (Cambridge, 2008); Nancy Bisaha, \textit{Creating East and West. Renaissance Humanists and the Ottoman Turks} (Philadelphia, 2004); David R. Blanks and Michael Frassetto ed., \textit{Western Views of Islam in Medieval and Early Modern Europe: Perception of Other} (New York, 1999); Johanna D. Hintzen, \textit{De kruistochtplannen van Philips den Goede} (Rotterdam, 1918); Jean Richard, ‘La Croisade bourguignonne dans la politique européenne’, \textit{Publications du Centre Européen d’études Burgondo-médianes} 10 (1968): 41-44.

\textsuperscript{172} See: Anderson, \textit{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.


\textsuperscript{174} The term ‘ahi’ literally meant ‘brother’ in Arabic and ‘generous’ in Turkish.
of Anatolia in 1248. The American historians, Blake and Langer also argued persuasively that the early guild-like ahi organisations in the Anatolian cities had provided the fundaments 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.

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. 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. 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. 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.

### 2.8.2 Wittek’s gazi-thesis

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

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178 Ibidem, 87-88, 94-98.

179 Ibidem, 22-25.


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.\textsuperscript{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.’\textsuperscript{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.’\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{185} To explain the politics of this

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\textsuperscript{183} Wittek, The Rise, 2.

\textsuperscript{184} Ibidem, 3.

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. 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’ (Tangrûnun ferrâsdur), ‘the sword of God’ (Hak kılıçdur) and ‘the support and refuge of the people of religion’ (püşt ü penâh-ı ehl-i dîn).  

It is exactly on this oldest chronicle of Ahmedî that Wittek based his gaza-thesis and referred to the inscription (kitâbe) 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’. 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. 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’.

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

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188 Ibidem, 16.
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 legitimation, 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, Cihânümâ, 46.
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. 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’. After Lindner, there appeared a number of articles which defended a similar perspective. 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. In his work, Kafadar reconstructed a balanced picture of the Anatolian marcher culture and society during the early Ottoman period. He concluded that Wittek’s gaza-thesis was much more flexible than was recognised by its critics.

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.
198 Kafadar, Between Two Worlds, 52 and 55-57.
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 Witteks 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 Dârûlislam – 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 Dârıülharb – driven by an a priori religious hatred. The Ottoman state ideology used it as a legitimising rhetoric tool to cover its

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 (İstanbul, 1994) 117-137.
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. 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. 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’. 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. 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. 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.

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. This

208 Ibidem, 46, 52-54.
210 Ibidem, 89-93 en 115-130.
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.\textsuperscript{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. Guibert 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.’\textsuperscript{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’.\textsuperscript{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’\textsuperscript{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

\\textsuperscript{214} For a detailed discussion of this matter, see: Kaçar, ‘Moedige krijgers’, 245–267.
\\textsuperscript{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.
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. 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.’ 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. 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. 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

of Islam. The originally Arabic word jihad literally means ‘striving in the path of God.’ 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. 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. 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. 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. 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.

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 futuwa movement, a

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canon of ethical norms to achieve spiritual perfection and to pursue ‘chivalric’ heroism.\textsuperscript{230} The futuvva idea was revived in the Turkish society in Anatolia by the guild-like ahı organisations. The gazis thus operated as part of the overarching futuvva movement.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{232} The group that was mentioned by Ashik Pashazade as gazi were at the same time alps.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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 ahıs, the abdal (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).\textsuperscript{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.”\textsuperscript{236} It is most probable that the mounted women warriors whom Broquière saw, were the same baciyânı Rûm which Aşık Paşazade had mentioned.

\textsuperscript{230} Köprülü, \textit{The Origins}, 90-92.
\textsuperscript{231} Ibidem, 94-98.
\textsuperscript{233} Köprülü, \textit{The Origins}, 89 en 93.
\textsuperscript{235} Aşık Paşazâde Tarihi, ed. Öztürk, 307-308.
\textsuperscript{236} Broquière, \textit{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’. 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. 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’. 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*. 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. 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. 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’.

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238 Ibidem, 144-145.
239 Decel, A. ‘Akıncı’ *EF*, Brill Online.
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, İnalcık 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 İnalcık 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

244 İnalcık, ‘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.\footnote{245}{Tijana Krstić, \textit{Contested Conversions to Islam: Narratives of Religious Change in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire} (Stanford, 2011) 27-28, 43-44.}

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.\footnote{246}{İnalcık, ‘The policy of Mehmed II toward the Greek population of Istanbul and the Byzantine buildings of the city’, \textit{Dumbarton Oaks Papers} 23/25 (1969-1970): 231-249.} 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.’\footnote{247}{Akbir, \textit{Tevârîh-i}, 282.} 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.’\footnote{248}{Ibidem, 284.} 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.\footnote{249}{Âşık Paşazâde, \textit{Tevârîh-i}, 300.}

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 \textit{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.\footnote{250}{Moise Franco, \textit{Essai sur l’histoire des Israélites de l’Empire Ottoman depuis les origines jusqu’à nos jours} (Paris, 1897) 27-28.} 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.\footnote{251}{Abraham Galanté, \textit{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 non-Muslims in the Ottoman realm enjoyed the status of \textit{zimmi} or recognised and protected Christian and Jewish subjects of the sultan. As it was a common policy under the earlier Islamic states,
the only requirement for non-Muslims was to pay an individual tax, djizye (or jizya). 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. 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. 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. 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.’ 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.’ He minimalized 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.

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’îl (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.
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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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’.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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

\textsuperscript{258} Köprülü, \textit{Türk Edebiyatında İlk Mutasavvıflar}, 46-47, 52.
\textsuperscript{259} Ibidem, 50-51.
\textsuperscript{262} Köprülü, \textit{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.’
\textsuperscript{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 vücuda (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

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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. 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. 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.’ 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. 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 Danişmand Gazi among Turkish Muslim epic

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270 İnalcık, The Ottoman Empire, 7.
271 Barkey, Empire of Difference, 33-34, 39.
272 Ibidem, 45.
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 tekvur 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, voynuk) 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


276 Kafadar, Between Two Worlds, 63.


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'.

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. 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.
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 'abbey' (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.\footnote{Köprülü, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun Kuruluşu*, 101-120; Ömer Lûtfi Barkan, 'Istilâ devirlerinin Kolonizatör Türk Dervişleri ve Zaviyeleri', *Vakıflar Dergisi* 2 (1942): 274-386.}

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-i Veli, the Bektâşî Order (tarikat) 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.\footnote{Ocak, 'Social, Cultural and Intellectual Life', 393-394.}

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.\footnote{Ibidem, 385.} 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.\footnote{M. Bernard, 'Qiyas', *EP*;}

The legal policies of Hanafism were more liberal in respect to personal freedom, the corporal penalties were usually altered to the payment
of fines. It also rested on a more tolerant basis in regard to different religions and traditions.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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’.\textsuperscript{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 Ellisaeus, 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.\textsuperscript{288}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{287} As cited in: Kafadar, \textit{Between Two Worlds}, 90.
\end{flushright}
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, Germiyano or Karaman were more powerful and politically advanced than the Ottomans. But their decentralised way of expansion would create many problems for themselves. 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.

The Ottomans probably learned lessons from this fragmentation of power and interstate 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.

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289 For a detailed history of the Anatolian Turkish principalities, see: Uzunçarşılı, Anadolu Beylikleri.
290 Mustafa Çetin Varlık, Germiyanoğulları Tarihi, 1300-1429 (İstanbul, 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. The Ottoman chroniclers do not mention this battle. But a contemporary Byzantine chronicler, Nikeforus Gregor as 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. 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. 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.’ The Byzantine defeat at Pelekanon forced the emperor Andronicus III (1296-1341) to start negotiations with Orhan Gazi. 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.

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

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295 Jorga, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu Tarihi, vol. 1, 171.
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. 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 Karasid captains and sailors had the necessary maritime expertise and ships to cross over. And the Karasi gazi leaders such as Haci Ilbeyi, Gazi Evrenuz and Ece Bey were encouraging the Ottoman leadership for expeditions across the Dardanelles.

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.

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. 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. Thereupon, Kantakouzenos sought the military support of Orhan Gazi. Although the Ottoman sources remain silent on this

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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.
matter, in 1346 Orhan formed an alliance with Kantakouzenos by marrying his daughter Theodora in a splendid ceremony. Ottoman chroniclers, such as Âşık Paşazâde and Neşri 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.

![Orhan Gazi gives a composite bow as a gift to the Byzantine prince Kalo-Ioannis.](image)

*Source: Hünernâme, vol. 1, Topkapi 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

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it a strong base from which he started the conquests in Thrace of which he was the architect.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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-ucat, the masters of the marches.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{307} It was seized by crown prince Murad.\textsuperscript{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

\textsuperscript{304} Halil İnalcık, ‘Osmanlının Trakya’da Yerleşmesi (1352-1361)’, in: ibid, 
\textit{Kuruluş ve imparatorluk sürecinde Osmanlı} (İstanbul, 2011) 94-97.

\textsuperscript{305} Ibidem, 98-100; Luttrel, ‘Latin Responses to Ottoman Expansion’, 122-123.

\textsuperscript{306} İnalcık, ‘Osmanlının Trakya’da Yerleşmesi’, 104-106.

\textsuperscript{307} Irène Beldiceanu-Steinherr, ‘La Conquête d’Adrianople par les Turcs: La Pénétration turque en Thrace et la valeur des chroniques ottomanes’, 

\textsuperscript{308} Âşık Paşazâde, 
\textit{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 *alel infirâd ʿâhd ile* (one by one, by consent) and after negotiation with the inhabitants (*ʿahd 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

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\(^{309}\) Ibidem, 326-327.

\(^{310}\) Ibidem, 321, 327; İnalcık, *The Ottoman Empire*, 10.

\(^{311}\) İnalcık, *An Economic and Social History*, 34-35.


\(^{314}\) 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 ferman (decrees) that safeguarded the properties of the monasteries in Bithynia, Macedonia, Mount Athos or Serres. 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. They could become scribes, secretaries and dragomans in the Ottoman chancellery. 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).

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. These successes greatly weakened the regional

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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. In 1372, pope Gregory XI tried to form an anti-Turkish crusade. 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. 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.

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. 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. 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

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320 İnalçı, *The Ottoman Empire*, 12.
325 Ibidem, 134-137.
the ending phase of the battle. 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.
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.\textsuperscript{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 (\textit{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.\textsuperscript{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 \textit{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.\textsuperscript{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 \textit{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 \textit{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 \textit{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.\textsuperscript{335}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[333] İnalcık, \textit{An Economic and Social History}, 145.
\item[334] Ibidem, 103-108.
\item[335] Ibidem, 105.
\end{footnotes}
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 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 Timar-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 üç beyleri, lords of the frontiers.338 Later, they were gradually and systematically rendered into fief-holder (timarlı) 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 timar 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 İnalçık, The Ottoman Empire, 13.
337 Neşri, Cihannûmû, 338 Oruç Beğ Tarihi, 24.
imperial army (Hassa Ordu), and stood on the payroll of state treasury. It was the Seljuk Grand vizier Nizam al-Mülk who restructured the iqta-system, by merging the military and administrative fiefs into single units. During the fourteenth century, nearly all Anatolian Turkish principalities tried to develop their own iqta-systems. 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. 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. 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 cavalrymen, 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

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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.\footnote{İnalçık, An Economic and Social History, 71, 115, 171-177.}

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.\footnote{On the timar regime, see: Ibidem, 71-73, 108-118.}

\subsection*{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.\footnote{Emecen, ‘Ottoman Policy of Conquest of the Turcoman Principalities’, 38-39; Imber, The Ottoman Empire, 26-29.}

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
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 beyliks 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

Neşri accounts this episode as follows: ‘The Germiyan oglu [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 Neşri 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, Menteshe-

348 On the Saruhan principality, see: Uzunçarşılı, Anadolu Beylikleri, 84-88; Emecen, ‘Ottoman Policy’, 38-40.
350 Âşık Paşazâde, Tevârîh-i, 328-329.
351 Neşri, 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.  

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.’

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.

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.

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352 Âşık Paşazâde, Tevârîh-i, 329; Neşrî, Cihannüümâ, 95.
353 Âşık Paşazâde, Tevârîh-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 Karaman-oğlu Alâeddin Bey attacked Ottoman territories while Sultan Murad I was on campaign in southeast Europe. 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.

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. 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

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356 Neşrî, Cihânnüma, 99.
357 Ibidem, 99-100.
358 Emecen, ‘Ottoman Policy of Conquest’, 36.
Ottomans suzerainty. Only Kadi 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.\footnote{Inalcık, The Ottoman Empire, 15.} 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 Ilbegi, questioned Ottoman claims to being in charge of the marches and he was killed.\footnote{Kafadar, Between Two Worlds, 117, 139; Anonim Osmanlı Kroniği, 30.} Although the anonymous chronicler does...
not clarify by whom Hacı İlbegi was killed, we can assume that the Ottoman dynasty probably had eliminated him when he begun to claim independent power. Indeed, the üç 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. 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. 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. 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

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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.  

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 kadi (judge) successively of Bilecik, Iznik and Bursa. Sultan Murad I, shortly after his accession in 1362, appointed Halil to the newly-created office of kadi ‘asker or ‘judge of the affairs of the military-administrative class’ and later made him vizier and his political advisor. The creation of the new office of kadi ‘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. 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 Çandarlis 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.

Murad I’s appointment of the first kadi ‘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). 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

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364 Itzkowitz, *The Ottoman Empire and Islamic Tradition*, 42.
365 Oruç Beş Tarihi, 22.
366 Inalcık, *The Ottoman Empire*, 95.
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 kapikulu (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 Seljuḳ 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

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\(^{369}\) Anonim Osmanlı Kroniği, 31.

\(^{370}\) İnalcık, Ottoman Empire, 104.


\(^{373}\) 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.\(^\text{374}\)

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 kadi’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.\(^\text{375}\) 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.\(^\text{376}\) 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.\(^\text{377}\) The sipahi’s possessed a relative degree of


\(^{375}\) Anonim Osmanlı Kroniği, 28-29; Neşrî, *Cihânnüma*, 90-91; Aşık Paşazâde, *Tevârîh*, 326.

\(^{376}\) Ibidem.

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.

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. 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.

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

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378 İnalcık, ‘Ottoman Methods of Conquest’, 121.
380 For more detailed discussion of the various corpses of the Kapikulu 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.\textsuperscript{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 (\textit{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.\textsuperscript{382} Separated from their family background, the influence of the Ottoman palace school or \textit{Enderun-i Hümédün}, in which the most intelligent had been selected, was appealing to make a career in higher administration.\textsuperscript{383}

Roughly categorised, the least intelligent of the enrolled cadets were for example made into palace gardeners (\textit{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 (\textit{has oda başı, silahdar, sir katibi}, etc).\textsuperscript{384} As their names suggest, many of them had official functions at court distinct from their military duties. This last group of the \textit{kul}-institution could rise to the highest offices in the Ottoman administration. They could become \textit{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.\textsuperscript{385} The Ottoman practice of \textit{kul} did certainly not possess the same pejorative connotations and meaning as the western concept of ‘slave’.

\textsuperscript{381} Halil İnalcık, \textit{Devlet-i Aliyye. Osmanlı İmparatorluğu Üzerine Araştırmalar} (İstanbul, 2009) 205.
\textsuperscript{382} Uzunçarşılı, \textit{Osmanlı Devleti Teşkilatında Kapıkulu Ocakları}, 159.
\textsuperscript{384} Ibidem, 322-326.
\textsuperscript{385} Itzkowitz, \textit{The Ottoman Empire}, 50-54; İnalcık, \textit{Devlet-i Aliyye}, 214.
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. 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.

Sultan Mehmed II (r. 1451-1481) had firmly established the kapikulu-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

387 Halil İnalcık, ‘Djizya’, EI² (Brill Online).
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. 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. 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. 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

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388 Uyar and Erickson, A Military History of the Ottomans, 37.
389 Uzunçarşılı, Osmani Devletinin Saray Teşkilatı, 297-299.
390 Jefferson, The Holy Wars of King Wladislas and Sultan Murad, 193.
391 Uzunçarşılı, Osmani 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.\(^{395}\)

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\(^{392}\) Ibidem, 258-259, 290-305.


\(^{395}\) 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.\textsuperscript{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 \emph{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{398} An Ottoman Muslim imperial state, with a sultan and administration, a standing army, provincial cavalry and gazi frontier defenders had begun to emerge.

\textsuperscript{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, \textit{The Middle East and the Balkan under Ottoman Empire} (Bloomington, 1993) 38-41.
\textsuperscript{397} Cahen, \textit{Pre-Ottoman Turkey}, 25.
\textsuperscript{398} Kafadar, \textit{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. Alaeeddin 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. 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.

One of Bâyezid’s vassals, Süleyman Pasha of Kastamonu, shifted his allegiance to Kadi Burhaneddin, ruler of Sivas in central Anatolia. Bâyezid defeated him and seized Kastamonu, but in Amasya he was confronted by Kadi Burhaneddin, a powerful rival.

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

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399 Ahmedî, Dasıtân-i Tevarîh, 45-46; Âşık Paşazâde, Tevârîh-i Âl-i Osmân, ed. Yavuz and Saraç, 336-337; Neşrî, Cihâmûma, 142-143.
400 Elizabeth Zachariadou, Trade and Crusade: Venetian Crete and the Emirates of Menteshe and Aydin (Venice, 1983) 77.
401 Uzunçarşılı, Osmanlı Tarihi I, 83-85; Yücel, Kadi 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.](image)

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

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402 Imber, *The Ottoman Empire*, 42-43.
Bayezid’s wishes. 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.

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. In the meantime, he led an expedition against the Hungarians and Wallachia (Eflok) and subjugated the Wallachian voyvoda Mircea in 1395. 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.

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.

The Burgundian duke Philip the Bold became the chief architect of a crusade to

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403 Neşri, Cihannüma, 144-145.
405 Aşıkpaşazâde, Tevârîh-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 Neşri, Cihannüma, 144.
407 İnalcık, The Ottoman-Turkish civilization, 37.
strengthen his own political position and therefore sent his son, Count Jean de Nevers, as the nominal head of the French forces. 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. When in 1396 the crusaders under king Sigismund of Hungary came to lay siege to Nicopolis, Bâyezid was besieging Constantinople.

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 cavalrymen to Nicopolis, the scene of the famous battle. The next day, at the Battle of Nicopolis, he destroyed the crusader army, which signalled a first blow to the European crusader ideology. 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. 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.

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411 Oruç Beğ Tarihi, 32.

412 Düstûnâm–e Enverî, 36-37.


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. 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. 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.

At the height of his power, Bâyezid returned to Anatolia in 1398 and annexed the Turkish principality of Karaman and that of Kadi Burhaneddin. 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. Meanwhile, Manuel II sought assistance at various European courts and capitals for several years. His quest for military aid brought no results. 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. 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.

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. Furthermore,
the semi-independent *gazi* marcher lords also resented Bâyêzid’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 Bâyêzid 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’.

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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. To punish the Ottomans, Timur restored the lands of the Turkish principalities of Anatolia. 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 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. 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. For example, in the text of the Byzantine-Ottoman treaty of 1403, Çelebi Süleyman addressed the emperor as his ‘father’, assuming a subordinate position. 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.

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

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426 For a detailed treatment of the events of Ottoman succession strife, see: Kastritsis, *The Sons of Bayezid*, 41-194.
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.
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.\footnote{Kastritsis, *The Sons of Bayezid*, 60-63.}

In 1403, Bâyezid’s youngest son, Çelebi Mehmed managed to defeat his brother Isa Çelebi and took control of Bursa.\footnote{Ibidem, 97-99.} In 1404, Mehmed sent a ‘letter of commitment’ (sevgendname) to Yakub Beg, the lord of Germiyanid principality, who was at that time under the protection of Timur himself.\footnote{For the edition of Mehmed’s letter, see: Şinasi Tekin, *Ottoman Manuel I* (Harvard, 2002) 9-10.} 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.\footnote{Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi I*, 315.} In the account of Neşri, 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.\footnote{Neşri, *Cihânımıh*, 199: ‘Andan sultân buyurdı ki, Germiyan-oğlı Yakub Beg’e mektûb yazup, âdem viribidi ki, atası Yıldırım Han’un tâbutün, karındaşı Mûsâ Çelebi birle gönderde. Mektûb Yakub Beg’e yetişip, mazmûn-ı şerîfi mûcebile amel idüp, Yıldırım Han’un tabutun tamam tazîm ve ikrâm birle oglı Mûsâ Çelebi’yle, bu tarafdan varan âdemlere yarar âdemler koşup gönderdi. Alup gelip Bursa’da olan mevzî’i şerîfe defn itdiler.’} 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.\footnote{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.} 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
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.  

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. 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. 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.’ 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.

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

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438 Ibidem, 223-224.
439 Kastritsis, The Sons of Bayezid, 62.
440 Ibidem, 161-165.
442 Ibidem, 60-61.
forces of his brother Musa. 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. 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. 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?’

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.

Perhaps equally important was the fact that the military groups of the central state (kapluku, 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

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445 Aşıkpaşazâde, Tevârîh-i Âl-i Osmân, 357; Neşrî, Cihânünkâ, 238-44.
appeasement. A semblance of peace and friendship was preserved between Byzantium and the Ottoman State.

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 gázis. For instance, Turahan Beg, according to the chroniclers, acted negligently during the Battle of Varna (1444) and misled Sultan Murad II.

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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, Bertrand de la Broquière who saw him in 1433, Murad II was ‘large in build but short in size,


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.

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.’

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.’ 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. 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.’ 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
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.\textsuperscript{460}

![Miniature portrait of Sultan Murad II.](image)

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.\textsuperscript{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.

\textsuperscript{460} Broquièrè, \textit{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.’

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.\footnote{Ekrem H. Ayverdi, Osmanlı mimarisinde Çelebi ve Sultan II. Murad devri, 806-855 (1403-1451) (Istanbul, 1972).} 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.’\footnote{Broquière, Le Voyage d'Oultremer, 132-133.}

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 Ibrahim Paşa and Halil Paşa of the Çandarlı family.\footnote{Uzunçarşılı, Çandarlı Vezir Ailesi (Ankara 1974).} Furthermore, there were other influential marcher gazi lords from Rumeli (the Balkans), such as Turahan Beg, Ḥacı İvas Paşa and other members of the marcher gazi dynasties such as Timurtaş, Evrenos, and others.

\subsection*{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.\footnote{İnalçık, The Ottoman Empire, 90.} 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
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. Although the decisions on state policies were reserved for the sultan, in practice they were made by the State Council or the divan-ı hümâyun. This new practice was wrongly understood by the contemporary western observers as that the real power and authority rested with the divân or council, while the sultan continued to exert control over the way the state was run.

In principle, the divân or the state council counted a few members and formed the nucleus of the Ottoman central administration. Örüş 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-Islam) and the judge of the military and administrative affairs (kadi 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). Sâhib-i mühr or the ‘holder of the seal’ was another term used for the sadrazam. The grand vizier could not take major decisions without consulting the Imperial Council or divan-ı hümâyun, the centre of

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467 For a comprehensive discussion of the divan or council, see : Uzunçarşılı, Osmanlı Devletinin Merkez ve Bahriye Teşkilâtı, 2-9; İnalcık, 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. It was Murad II’s successor, Mehmed II, who consolidated with his renowned Laws or kanûnînames the composition of the divan and the decision-making procedure. The kanûnîname or laws of Sultan Meḥmed 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 kanûnîname referred to the sadrazam as: ‘He is greater than all men, he is in all matters the sultan’s absolute deputy (cümlé umûrûn 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.’

The title of grand vizier or Sadrazam, which strictly meant ‘the greatest of the high dignitaries’, appeared around 1360. At this time, the title had been used to refer to the highest ‘ulemâ’ official or the kaḍî ‘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 sadrazam 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. 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. 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.

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468 İnalçık, The Ottoman Empire, 95.
471 Broquière, Le Voyage d’Outremer, 186-199.
Outside the purview of the grand vizier, the ulema or the clerical scholarly class had the greatest power. The two ḛadi ʿaskers (judges) for the provinces in Anatolia and in the Balkans were responsible for the administration of Shari Law throughout the realm. The Şeyh īl-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 īl-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 ümerāʾ 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 kapikulu 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

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474 İnalçık, 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 strive, caused by a rival claimant, his uncle Mustafa, known as ‘Düzme’ (pretender) Muṣṭafa, and the latter’s ally Cüneyd. 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. Although Musa was found, his brother Mustafa was not found and the Ottoman tradition suggested that Mustafa was lost during the battle. The Ottoman chroniclers led us to believe that Mustafa was only a ‘pretender’ (düzme) and not actually a son of Bâyezid I. However, in the fethnames (letters of victory), Timur mentioned that Bâyezid was taken prisoner together with his two sons. The historian Enverî also noted that Çelebi Mustafa was caught by Timur and that he afterwards appeared to claim the throne.

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. 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

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478 Uzunçarşılı, Osmanli Tarihi I, 367.

479 Oruç Beğ Tarihi, 42: ‘Yıldırım Han’uñ altı oglu kaldı. Birisi cenk yüzinde belûrûsiz oldu.’

480 Oruç Beğ Tarihi, 54: ‘Sultan Murad Bursa’dâ otururken Selenik’den Düzme Mustufa çıkdi, gelip Ece ovasına kondi. Yıldırım Han ogluym deûû Vardar Yeñicesine geldi.’

481 Uzunçarşılı, Osmanli Tarihi I, 368.

482 Düstûrnâme-i Enverî, 36: ‘Mustafa’yı Çağatay etdi esir, Niçê yûldan 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.\footnote{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.} According to the Burgundian diplomat, Ghillebert de Lannoy, Ҫelebi 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.\footnote{Ch. Potvin ed., Oeuvres de Ghillebert de Lannoy. Voyageur, Diplomate et Moraliste (Leuven, 1878) 66.} 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.\footnote{İnalcık, ‘Byzantium and the origins of the crisis of 1444 under the light of Turkish sources’, Actes de XIIe Congrès International des etudes Byzantines, 2 (Belgrade, 1964): 159-160.}

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.\footnote{Necipoğlu, Byzantium Between the Ottomans and the Latins, 34-35.} 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.\footnote{Doukas, Decline and Fall of Byzantium, 133.}

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.\footnote{Doukas, Decline and Fall of Byzantium, 154.}

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
governor of New Phokia – an alum-producing Genoese colony – Giovanni Adorno, ferried Murad’s army across the straits of Gallipoli.\textsuperscript{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.’\textsuperscript{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.’\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{494} This pact laid the base for a long-lasting relationship between Sultan Murad II and Adorno, the governor of the Genoese colony.\textsuperscript{495}

\textsuperscript{490} İnalçık, ‘Murad II’, IA.
\textsuperscript{491} Doukas, \textit{Decline and Fall of Byzantium}, 150-151.
\textsuperscript{492} Ibidem, 151.
\textsuperscript{493} Ibidem, 159.
\textsuperscript{494} Ibidem.
\textsuperscript{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, \textit{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. Neşri 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 Beg 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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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’ (\textit{küçicek}) Mustafa, who had revolted and laid siege to Bursa.\textsuperscript{498} At the same time, the princes of the Germiyanids, Karamanids and Çandarls 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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{500} Making their way to Bursa, Neşri 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 \textit{küçicek}
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.’\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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-oglou of Sinop had seized the territories in Kastamonu. Murad personally led his army to Kastamonu and recovered the lost territory and its copper mines.\textsuperscript{503} At the same time, he ordered Firuz Beg, the Rumelian marcher lord to lead a punitive campaign into Wallachia.\textsuperscript{504} The outcome of both campaigns was to reduce both Drakul and Isfendiyar-oglou 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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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

\textsuperscript{501} Neşrî, \textit{Cihânnümâ}, 262.

\textsuperscript{502} Aşıkpaşazade Tarihi, 136.

\textsuperscript{503} Aşıkpaşazade Tarihi, 138-139.

\textsuperscript{504} Neşrî, \textit{Cihânnümâ}, 265.


\textsuperscript{506} Ibidem.
again were not able to defend it and in 1423 ceded the city to Venice.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{508} De la Broquièrè 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.’\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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 takeover of their city in order to avoid enslavement. Many citizens fled and joined the Ottoman forces.\textsuperscript{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

\textsuperscript{507} Doukas, \textit{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, \textit{Byzantium Between the Ottomans and the Latins}, 46-55, 67-83, 103-115.

\textsuperscript{508} Necipoğlu, \textit{Byzantium Between the Ottomans and the Latins}, 35-36, 84-102.

\textsuperscript{509} Broquièrè, \textit{Le Voyage d’Outremer}, 164-165. According to a contemporary Venetian document, the amount of the tribute was 100,000 ducats, see: Necipoğlu, \textit{Byzantium}, 36.

\textsuperscript{510} Necipoğlu, \textit{Byzantium}, 46.

\textsuperscript{511} Ibidem, 48-49.

\textsuperscript{512} Doukas, \textit{Decline and Fall of Byzantium}, 247-249.
support for surrender to Ottoman rule considerably increased. 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.’ 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.’ Because of increasing poverty, hunger and shortage of rations, many Greek guards and soldiers also fled to the Ottomans. 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. 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.’ 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.

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. 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.’ 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

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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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.’\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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

\textsuperscript{522} On Cüneyd, see: Jean Dayantis, \textit{Doukas, Un Historien Byzantin du 15e Siècle. Entre Grecs et Turcs} (Piscataway, 2009) 8-45.

\textsuperscript{523} Uzunçarşılı, \textit{Osmanlı Tarihi}, 409; Imber, \textit{The Ottoman Empire}, 107-110.

\textsuperscript{524} Doukas, \textit{Decline and Fall of Byzantium}, 172.


\textsuperscript{526} İnalcık, ‘The Ottoman Turks and The Crusades’, 269-271.

\textsuperscript{527} On the Venetian-Ottoman relations, see: Eric Dursteler, \textit{Venetians in Constantinople. Nation, Identity, and Coexistence in the Early Modern Mediterranean} (Baltimore, 2006); Paolo Preto, \textit{Venezia e i Turchi} (Florence, 1975).

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. Broquiére 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

\(^{532}\) İnalçık, ‘The Ottoman Turks and The Crusades’, 273.
\(^{533}\) 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.
\(^{534}\) İnalçık, ‘The Ottoman Turks and The Crusades’, 274.
\(^{535}\) Imber, *The Ottoman Empire*, 114-116; Finkel, *Osman’s Dream*, 42-68.
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.\textsuperscript{537} It seems that the Transylvanian peasantry profited greatly from Murad’s expedition, which safeguarded the Balkan peasants from vengeance by their feudal lords.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{541}

\textsuperscript{537} Uzunçarşılı, Osmanlı Tarihi, 416-417.
\textsuperscript{538} Stefan Pasco, La révolte populaire de Transylvanie des années 1437-1438 (Bucharest, 1964) 34-107.
\textsuperscript{540} Inalcik, ‘The Ottoman Turks and the Crusades’, 267.
\textsuperscript{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. 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. 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.

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

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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).
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.\(^5\)

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.’\(^5\) In 1444, the crusader fleet counted twenty-two galleys, which were provided by Burgundy, Venice, the papacy, Dubrovnik and Byzantium.\(^5\)

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, Bans and Royal Metropolitanso 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.’\(^5\) 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:


\(^5\) *Gazavât-ı Sultân Murâd*, 2: ‘törvinim vardır deyûb cümle papazların ve banların ve midrepolid hâsların dâvet eyledi; anlar dahi cümlesi bir yere cem olub törvinleri şunda karar buldu ki, Rim-Papa dedikleri mel’ûn-i bi-dîne varub ve ahvâli beyân edûb dansâr 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.

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
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,

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.
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. Bertrand 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.’ 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.’

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. 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.’

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

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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.

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 Ishak 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. 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. The Burgundian chronicler Jehan de Wavrin prefaces his account of Varna with these minor victories of Hunyadi.

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. However, the invasion of the Karamanid prince, İbrahim Bey, into the Ottoman lands in Anatolia overturned his plan. Both Aşık Paşazade and Neşri noted that İbrahim Bey launched an attack emboldened by the defeat of Shehabeddin Pasha (Kula Şâhin). 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. 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

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564 Uzunçarşılı, Osmanlı Tarihi, 419-421; Imber, The Ottoman Empire, 120-121.
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; Neşri, Cihannümâ, 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 Ibrahim 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 Ibrahim 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. Ibrahim 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. Ibrahim 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
Ibrahim 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, Ibrahim had fled and Murad had sent Tatar troops to devastate his lands. With
no help coming from his Byzantine ally, John VIII, Ibrahim sent an ulema-delegation to
Murad pleading mercy. In light of the looming crusader attack in the Balkans, Murad
agreed to conclude peace with Ibrahim on the condition ‘to never again instigate sedition

570 Gazavat-i Sultan Murad, 4.
571 Imber, The Ottoman Empire, 115-116.
572 Uzunçarşılı, Osmanlı Tarihi, 45-47; Setton, The Papacy and the Levant, 76.
573 İnalçık, ‘The Ottoman Turks and The Crusades’, 266-276.
574 The most detailed account of this campaign is provided by Neşri, Cihânmümda, 292-295.
and treachery’ and he gave the Karamanid his lands back.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{577} Events left Murad no time to mourn his loss. Murad strove to 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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{580} Murad ordered his viziers, Halîl Pasha, Şehabeddin Pasha and Fazlullah, to make preparations. However, Murad’s \textit{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.\textsuperscript{581} According to the Gazavat, the viziers had already mobilised the janissaries and the household cavalry (\textit{kapikulu sipahi}), who were assembled and ready.\textsuperscript{582} Although the household army (\textit{kapikulu}) 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 (\textit{azabs}, \textit{voynuks}, \textit{martalos}, \textit{müsêlem}-infantry, etc) from various provinces (\textit{sancaks}) of Anatolia and Rumelia.\textsuperscript{583} The \textit{timariot} cavalry from the provinces wished to

\textsuperscript{575} \textit{Gazavat-ı Sultan Murad}, 6-7.
\textsuperscript{576} \textit{İnalçık}, \textit{Fatih Devri}, 55-60.
\textsuperscript{577} Menage, ‘The Annals of Sultan Murad’, 578.
\textsuperscript{578} Jehan de Wavrin, in: Imber, \textit{Crusade of Varna}, 117.
\textsuperscript{579} Jefferson, \textit{The Holy Wars}, 315-316; Imber, \textit{The Ottoman Empire}, 127-128.
\textsuperscript{580} Jefferson, \textit{The Holy Wars}, 323.
\textsuperscript{581} \textit{Gazavat-ı Sultan Murad}, 12.
\textsuperscript{582} Ibidem.
\textsuperscript{583} For a detailed discussion of the Ottoman army units in the fifteenth century, see: Uyar and Erickson, \textit{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 nefiri 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

585 Gazavat-i Sultan Murad, 13.
586 Ibidem, 14.
587 Ibidem, 15.
588 For a detailed discussion of this truce, see: İnalçik, *Fatih Devri*, 8-53. See also: Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant*, 79-83.
589 For the historical background of Murad’s abdication, see: İnalçik, *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. 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. 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. 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.

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. 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. 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 Peloponnese under Ottoman control, but he also recaptured Imbros and Limni. Only the Venetian colonies in the area remained now independent of the Ottoman State.

References:

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 İnalçık, Fatih Devri, 71-75.
593 İnalçık, ‘The Ottoman Turks and The Crusades’, 319-320.
594 İnalçık, Rönesans Avrupası, 30-32.
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 Neşri, 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.’ 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.

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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. Other authors, such as Colin Imber, rejected the nomadic Oğuz descent as later inventions of the fifteenth-century Ottoman chronicles. However, the early historical texts reveal influences of the nomadic tradition on the Ottoman principles of succession to the throne. 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.’ 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

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4 İnalçık, ‘The Ottoman Succession’, 37-69; Togan, Umumi Türk Tarihine Giriş, 41-57.

elimination of the centrifugal tendencies of the tribes was one of the cornerstones of Djengizid policy. 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, Kipcak, etc. within their already established territories. 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. 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 alpgazis 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. 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. Henceforth, the principles of sovereignty and legitimation in the Muslim world were radically altered with the rise of

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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. 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.

The sixteenth-century Ottoman bureaucrat and historian Mustafa Ali divided Islamic history into Arab Caliphal and Turkish-Mongol post-Caliphal periods. 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. 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.

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). 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

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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.
Djengizid dynasty and the ‘Sky God’.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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 sacrificial and cosmological images and ideas of sovereignty.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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 Khani d world-empire.\textsuperscript{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

\textsuperscript{20} De Weese, \textit{Islamization and Native Religion in the Golden Horde}, 37, 46.
\textsuperscript{22} Woods, \textit{The Aqqoyunlu}, 4-7.
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). 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 Samarqand 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.

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’.

A similar topos 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

24 Tursun Beg, Tarih-i Ebû’l Feth, 12: ‘mücerred tavr-ı akl üzre nizâm-ı âlem-i zâhir için, mesela tavr-ı Cengiz Han gibi olursa, (...) siyaset-i sultanı ve yasag-ı padişâhî dirler ki, örfümüzce ana örf dirler.’
26 Oruç Beg Tarihî, 3: ‘Cingiz Han kim, Belh şehrini harâb itdükkde, Hurozûm Şâh’i memleketden çıkarup, ol hînde Cingiz Han vêfat idüp, fi’în-nârî fi’s-sakar.’
their sons, many mothers were separated from their daughters; there was famine and people died of hunger.’

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 age-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. 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.

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.


As Baki Tezcan already remarked, the account of Aşık Paşazade on the founding period reflects a slightly different narrative about the Mongols. Aşık Paşazade integrated into his chronicle the old source of Yahşi Fakih that transmitted this memory loss. 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. He created a symbolic character, Sultan Alâeddin, who represented the whole Seljuk history and he collapsed two and half centuries of Seljuk history into the lifetime of this sultan Alâeddin. 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 [Yafes]. 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.’ 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

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32 On Yahşi Fakih’s text, see: Chapter 1.
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 Origins Gentium and the Community of the Realm’, History 68 (1983): 375-390.
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.\textsuperscript{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.’\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.


\textsuperscript{39} Ibidem, 274: ‘Ca’ber kal’asî’nun önîne deîf itdîler. Şîmdîki hînde ana Mezâr-ı Türk dîrîler [...] Eyle olsa bu göçerler tagîldîlîr. Ba’dîsî bilîyyeye geldîlîr. Şîmdîki halda anlara Şam Türkmanî dîrîler. Ba’dîsî gine Rûm’a döndîler; kimi Tatar ve kimi Türkman’ûr. Şîmdîki hînde bu Rûm’da olan olan Tatar ve Türkman o tayîfedendîr.’

\textsuperscript{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 Ilyas-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 Xîle 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.
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-i Acem’den huzûr kalmaduğu ecilden geçer-evli Etrak’ün cümlesi elli bin hâne, reisleri Süleyman Şah bin Kaya Alp’a uyup, gelüp Rûm’a döküldiler.’
at Khorasan (in today’s Iran and Azerbaijan).\textsuperscript{47} Neşri’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.\textsuperscript{48} In his account of the Mongol Djengizid invasions of the Rûm Seljuk realm, Neşri 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 Keyhüşrev, 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.’\textsuperscript{49}

We can observe from this passage that Neşri 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 Kösedâğ in 1243. As Neşri 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 Neşri’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 Neşri, the anti-Mongol tone of his account can be related to a great degree to this incident.

\textsuperscript{47} Ibidem, 13-14.
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.'

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. 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.'

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 Mısr) 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

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50 Anonim Osmanlı Kroniği, 8-9: ‘Cingiz Han kim Hitay vilâyetinden çıkup gelüb Belh vilayetini ve şehrini ve Horasan vilâyetini harâb itmiş idi. [...] Cingiz Han Belh şehrini harâb itdükde, Âl-i Selçuk tâyiyesini memleketlerinden çıkarıp sonra kendii helâk olüb ogli Ögetey Han pâdişah olüb gelüb Bagdad’i harâb idüb tahtı Âl-i Abbâsiler’den alüb, memleketlerin Gingiz Haniler dutüb âlem halki kaşr murûş olüb.’

51 Neşrî, Cihanname, 23: ‘[…] Rûmîlere i’timâdî olmamagın leşker-i Mogol’dan ifraz itmiş, Şöyle ki, bu askerüñ içinde Rûmîlere bir kimse yogdü.’

Seljuk governor, Pervâne Süleyman, whom he suspected of collaborating with Sultan Baybars as both were Muslims.  

Among the fifteenth-century Ottoman chroniclers, Neşri 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.’ As he was previously attached to the Karamanids before he came in the service of Ottoman court, Neşri 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.

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94 Ibidem, 24: ‘Rivâyet olunur ki, Mogol gelüp Iran’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 Behcetüüt 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 Uyghur

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\(^{55}\) See: Zeki Velidi Togan, Oğuz Destami. Reşideddin Oğuznâmesi, Tercüme ve Tahlili (İstanbul, 1982).


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.’

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.’

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.

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. 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. 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.

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. 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. 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, Cihânmûmâ, 6-12, 30.
63 Kastritsis, The Sons of Bayezid, 197-199.
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 khan 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 khan 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; İnalcık, ‘Osmanlılarda Saltanat’ 150-152; İnalcık, The Ottoman Empire, 56.
67 Kastritsis, The Sons of Bayezid, 200.
71 İnalcık, ‘Padişah’, İslam Ansiklopedisi, 491.
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 (kurıltây) and agreed upon following the Oğuz custom (törə). 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. 

Remarkably, Yazıcızade Ali bemoaned that the Oguz 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. 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.

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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’ (kâfîr-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 (sârkdan garba dak bilad-i arza vardi, rây-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 (Zûlkarneyn) 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 Zûlkarneyn in Turkish and in Arabic as Dhul-Qarnayn, literally ‘the Possessor of Two Horns, as he was mentioned in the Quran.’\(^{83}\) Furthermore, Neşrî


\(^{78}\) Neşrî, *Cihânnumâ*, 7: ‘Esnaf-i Etrâkdan evvel Lâ-îlahe illsîlah diyen budur.’

\(^{79}\) Ibidem, 7.

\(^{80}\) Ibidem.

\(^{81}\) Ibidem, 9: ‘Müverrih eydûr: Vaktâ ki, Oguz bilâd-i arza şarâk ve garban, Çîn ve Hitay ve Gûr, Gazne ve Hindistan ve Türkistan, Bâbil ve Rûm, Efresco ve Rûs ve Şâm ve Hicâz ve Yemen ve Habeş ve Noba ve Berber’e müstevlî oldı.’

\(^{82}\) Neşrî, *Cihânnumâ*, 8: ‘Etrâk zu’ı m iderlerdi ki, Oguz, şol Zûlkarneyn’dür ki, Hak ta’alâ celle zikrûhu Kitab-i Azîz’inde anup, sedd-i ye’cuc ve Me’cuc’i yapduguna tasrîh itdi.’

\(^{83}\) W.M. Watt, ‘al-Iskandar’, *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, second ed. (EFI), Brill Online
suggested that Oğuz Khan’s conversion took place in the lifetime of the Prophet Abraham (İbrahim-Halil).

Relying on ‘eminent histories’ (tevârîh-i muhtârda eydûr), of which the names or titles he did not mention, Neşrî also integrated a brief history of the Oğuz. Most remarkably, Neşrî represented the legendary Oğuz Han as a Muslim ruler. He probably built upon the existing Oğuzname-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.  

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).

In his account of the Turkish tribes, Rashid al-Dîn also included the history, legend and genealogy of the Oğuz. Although the Oğuz 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. According to Zeki V. Togan, Rashid al-Dîn had read various versions of the Oğuzname 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). 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). Neşrî is one of the few fifteenth-century Ottoman chroniclers, who integrated a rich history of the pre-Islamic Turks as

84 ‘Rashid al-Dîn Tabib’, EI², Brill Online.
86 For an edition in Turkish of the Oğuzname from Rashid al-Dîn’s work, one of the extant written versions, see: Togan, Oğuz Destami.
87 Togan, Oğuz Destami, 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, Cihâmümâ, 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.’

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. The Khazar Khanate (660?-1048) had emerged as the most powerful state after the breakup of the western part of the Kök Türk Empire. The Kök Türk 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 Turks in 657. The breakup of the western Türk 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. It is to this historical context that Neşrî selectively and briefly referred to in his account of pre-Ottoman history.

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93 Ibidem.

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.’

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 Turkestan the succession principle upon kinship.’

In a later passage, Neşrî asserted that Çanak Han was the first Turkish ruler to convert to Islam. 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). 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. 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.’ 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).
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. 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. 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.

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

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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). 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.’

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). 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. 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. 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.
107 Findley, The Turks, 47.
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.
112 Oruç Beg Tarihi, 8.
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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.

\textsuperscript{114} Ocak, \textit{La révolte de Baba Resul}, 83-84, 160-161.
\textsuperscript{115} Woods, \textit{The Aqqoyunlu}, 4-7.
\textsuperscript{116} Al-Huseyni, \textit{Akhbar al-dawla al-Saljuqiya}, ed. Muhammed Iqbal (Lahore, 1933) 2.
\textsuperscript{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, \textit{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). 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.’ 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 coquetish 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.’

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. 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-kü nel der tâk-1 kîsrâ 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’, EI².

\[120\] Aşık Paşazade, Tevarih, 340: ‘Bu çarh kim çeznigür pür gamze eyler; Kimin Rüstem kimini Hamza eyler. Tolanur her sâ’at bin nahi baglar; Başîndan tâcîn alur gamze eyler. Kiminün içtiyârin komaz eleden; Hevâlar sahrasinda pervâz eyler. [...] Kamu bir ata oğludur bu âdem; Ya ne’yçün gavgâlarıne dirâz eyler.’

\[121\] Anonim Osmanlı Kroniği, 48: ‘İy Bâyezid Han! Hak ta’alaya çok şükürler olsun kim senünle bana padişahlık virdi. [...] Belki sen Hak ta’alânın şükrihini bilmedün ola. Ann içiçin sana bu güsmâli 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 Neşri, after the youngest son, Çelebi Mehmed, won a battle against his brother Isa 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.’ In a later episode of the civil war, Neşri accounted that, in an attempt to support Isa, 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.’ 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 Neşri told the events from Mehmed’s perspective, clearly glorifying the deeds of his patron who came out of the succession strife as the winner.

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).


123 Neşri, Cihannümâ, 206 : ‘Sultan bu tarafadan dahı tabi u nakâre çalup, alemlerin çözüp, nefir ü zurna âvâzi âleme tolup, Rûm serverleriyle yetişüp, anlara mukabil kondu. İsfendiyar bünü görüp kuti kurdu.’

3.1.2.3 The Principles of Succession

In the fifteenth century, no fixed rules governed the succession procedure of the Ottomans. 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. 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.

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. 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). 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 lâlâs 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. 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.

At this point, it is important to mention another method of succession mainly encountered in the Turkish-Mongolian tradition. This second succession principle was

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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 İnalcık, ‘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 Kök Türk practice. The worthiest member of the family, whether a son or a brother, would be recognised as ruler. Among the Kök Türks, 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.' 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.’ 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 [töru], the land and the people of Turk.’

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.

Neşri wrote that Gün Khan succeeded his father Oğuz according to his testament and established the principle of succession upon kinship. However, there are also many examples of struggles for the throne. Neşri 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 [göçer evler] wanted Osman to be the new Bey and others preferred Dündar. Noticing the strong support for Osman, his uncle Dündar gave up and accepted his nephew’s leadership. The compromise, however, seems to have been insincere. In a later episode, Neşri 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

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132 İnalcık, ‘The Ottoman Succession’, 38.
133 Tekin, Orhun Yazıtları, 75.
134 Muharrem Ergin, Orhun Abideleri (İstanbul, 2002) 40-41: ‘Üze tenri basmasar asra yir telinmeser Türk bodun iliñin töruñün kim artatı udaçi erti.’
135 Neşri, Cihannümâ, 9.
136 Neşri, Cihannümâ, 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.
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, Neşri 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 Neşri 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 Neşri 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

observe the conditions of the soldiers (sipahi).' 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.’ 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.’

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’. 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. 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. 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 Neşri, Cihânnümâ, 70: ‘Bu vilâyete çobanlık itmege pâdişâh gerekdir kim cemî’-i re’âyayı ve sipâhiyi görüb gözede.’ In the version of Âşık Paşazâde, Tevârîh-i, 307: ‘Bu vilâyet hakkındur, buña bir çobanlık itmege pâdişâh gerek. Bu vilayetünü ve re’âyânıñ hâlini göre ve gözede.’


143 Tursun Beg, Tarih-i Ebu’l Feth, 26: ‘külüküm râ’in ve külüküm mes’üllün an râ’yetiñ.’

144 Bedr-i Dilşad’ın Murâd-nâmesi, ed. Âdem Ceyhan (İstanbul,1997) 235: ‘Meseldür kim ‘âleme hân olur; re’âyaya koyunlar o çoban olur.’

145 Neşri, Cihannümâ, 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.’ 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. 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. Aşık Pașazade 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.’

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 rejoined the ongoing battle. 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: ‘Çıktı zamanında begler karındaşlarıyla mesveret ıderler, bir yere cem olurlardı. Bırbirin öldürmezlerdi, tâ Yıldırım Han zamanına degin. Kardaş kardaşı öldürmek Yıldırım Han zamanından kaldılı.’

147 Oruç Beg Tarihi, 30.


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.'

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’ 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.’ 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.’ 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. As the protector and maintainer of the nizam-ı âlem, the Ottoman ruler was denoted ‘the Padisah the Refuge of the World’ or Pâdişâh-ı 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 alemd was indeed a

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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.\textsuperscript{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 \textit{nizam-i 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 \textit{örfü} law was mostly used. In this respect, one can refer to the article on fratricide in the Law Book or \textit{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 [\textit{nizam-i alem}]. Most of the \textit{ulema} have declared this permissible.’\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{158} However, Neşrî did not provide any clues about the content of this letter. We understand from its modern edition by the historian Şinasi Tek in that it was actually a ‘letter of commitment and oath’ (sevgendname, an earlier form of \textit{ahdname}). In this letter, Mehmed referred to the ‘earlier agreements between them’ (ol aramuzdagı kavl ü karar üzerine) and vowed ‘to be henceforth friend and ally of Yakub Beg’ (ba’del-yevm Süleymanşah oglu 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).\textsuperscript{159} The text further stated that this letter was sent and transferred personally by the ‘master of aristocrats, our Taceddin’ (seyyidil’-emacid bizüm Taceddin hidmetiyle). The person who is named as Taceddin was most probably the respected and influential poet Ahmedî – who

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{157} \textit{Kanunnâme-i Âl-i Osman}, ed. Özcan, 18.
\item \textsuperscript{158} Neşrî, \textit{Cihânnümâ}, 199: ‘Andan sultân buyurdu ki, Germiyan-ogli Yakub Beg’e mektûb yazup, âdem viribidi ki, atası Yıldırım Han’un tâbutun, karındaşi Mûsâ Çelebi birle gönder. Mektûb Yakub Beg’e yetişüp, mazmûn-ı şerîfî müceبيلi amel idüp, Yıldırım Han’un tabutun tamâm tażım ve ikrâm birle oğlı Mûsâ Çelebi’yle, bu taraftan varan âdemlere yarar âdemler koşup gönderdi. Alup gelüp Bursa’da olan mevzi’i şerîfde defn itdiler.’
\item \textsuperscript{159} Tekin, \textit{Ottoman Manuel I}, 9.
\end{itemize}
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 Yakub Beg and to prevent retaliation from Timur. He must also have understood the urgency of preventing Yakub 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...’

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

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Germiyanid provisions were never deficient.\textsuperscript{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 requiring the humble terms which he had earlier to write down and for the affronts that his father had suffered.

Neşri 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. Neşri 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.’\textsuperscript{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.’\textsuperscript{163}

In this period, Shahrukh, the son of Timur, sent Mehmed I a letter.\textsuperscript{164} The correspondence between the two monarchs is reproduced in a sixteenth-century handbook for chancellery scribes by Feridun Beg.\textsuperscript{165} Shahrukh implicitly criticised the Ottoman system of succession, in which the claims of brothers to the throne were

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{Neşri, \textit{Cihânnümâ}, 244: ‘Karındaşmun ogludur diyüp, hoşça tutup, gönülcügin ele alurdı. Ve kız karındaşına dahi hayli nesne atañ eðerdi.’}
\footnote{Aşıkpaşazade \textit{Tarihi}, ed. Öztürk, 117: ‘Sultan Mehmed dahi oğlanun gönlünü açdı. Bu dünya gözünü ortdu.’}
\footnote{For a discussion of the correspondence between Mehmed I and Shahrukh, see: Kastritsis, \textit{The Sons of Bayezid}, 203-205.}
\footnote{Feridun Beg, \textit{Münşe’at al-Selatin}, vol. 1 (İstanbul, 1857).}
\end{footnotes}
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].’

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. Aşık Paşazade obviously endorsed the official version of the court when commenting: ‘that is how deceitful impostors come to their end.’ 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’ (Küçicek) Mustafa claimed the throne, but lost and was executed. According to Neşrî, the tutor of Mustafa, Sharabdar Ilyas, 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

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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, Cihānmümdâ, 262.
person is better than damage to the society. This principle is an ancient tradition since long before.\footnote{Ibidem, 263: ‘Eğerçi süretâ ben hıyânet itdüm; ammâ ma’nen isâbet kildum. Eger kosam bu ikisi ugraşup, yürüyüp, iklîmi harâba virûrleridi. Zarar-ı âmmmdan zarar-ı âhass yigdürür. Bu fî’l asldan âdet-i kadîmedür.’}

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.\footnote{Neşrî, \textit{Cihânnümâ}, 263-264: ‘Şöyle rivâyet olunur ki, Küçicek Mustafâ’yı Sultan Murâd gâyet severdi. Öldürtükten sonar dahi dâyım a françardı. Sohbetde mest olicak, Mezîd Beg’i görüb: ‘Mezîd sen benüm kanlîmsuñ’ dirdi. Mezîd Beg bu sözi işdîçek, kendüden giderdi. Mezîd Beg, gördü ki, hünkâr mest oldukuça, bu sözi âdet idindi. Bir gün yine diyicek, Mezîd Beg dahi başını ortaya koyub eyitdi: ‘Haşa Sultânum! Ben anun bir kilna zarrar idem’, diidi. Hünkâr bu sözen gâyet sevindi. Zîrâ Mezîd Beg’i severdi, öldürürnege kiyamazdı. Andan hünkâr, Mezîd Beg’e eyitdi: ‘Bi’lîlähi Mezîd, sol sözinde gerçek misin?’, diidi. Mezîd Beg dahi yemîn idüp hünkârî inandurdi. Andan Murâd Han Küçîcek Mustafâ’yı öldüreni tefiş idüp, buldurup boynun urdurdu.’}

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.\footnote{Ibidem, 64: ‘Nitekim Murâd Han dahi Sultan Mehemed’i tahta geçîrûp, kendi Magnissa’da mûteka’id oldı. Gayeti bu soñra peşımân oldı.’} 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
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.’

Figure 11: Miniature Portrait of Sultan Mehmed II (c. 1480), by Ahmed Şiblizâde. Source: Topkapı Palace Museum, H2153, folio 10a.

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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’.\textsuperscript{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.’\textsuperscript{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 \textit{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.’\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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 \textit{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

\textsuperscript{174} Tursun Beg, \textit{Tarih-i Ebu’l Feth}, 34: ‘Bir memlekette fitne olur iki pâdişâh.’
\textsuperscript{175} Ibidem, 35: ‘Be kişi hey ne turfa iş ittün; İşün altun iken gümiş ittün. Getürüp on iki yaşar tanayı, Geçürüp yirüne kömiş ittün.’
\textsuperscript{176} Gazavat-ı Sultan Murad, 42: ‘Tiz babama haber edüp ve her nice mümkün ise babamı getürün ki, zîrâ ol küffar üzerine gitmek lazım geldi. Ammâ bu Edrene yalnız olmaz, birimiz bunda oturub ve birimiz gitmek gerekdir.’
\textsuperscript{177} Ibidem, 47-49.
the Padishah commands and do nothing contrary to what he says.” 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.’

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?’ 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.’ Thenceforth, 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. 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 demeǧe kadir değilim, hele Pâdişâhımız geldi, şimdiden geri teda[b]r anundur, ol nice dirse öyle olur deyüb çevâb verdi. Zîrâ bu düşman ağır düşmandır ve Şâhzâdem sen dahi bir taze gülsün, hemân sana lâyik olan budur ki, Pâdişâh’ın fermânı üzere hareket edüb ve sözünden taşra çikmayasın.’


180 Gazavat-ı Sultan Murad, 50: ‘Lala, sen bir teda[b]r sâhibi âkil vezîr olasın, sana düşer mi kim, oğluma öğredirsin, bu seferi taleb eyleyiye? Sen bilûrûn kim, bu âlem fitne ile mûlamûldir, niçün bu asil sözi ol oğlûnun ağzına verirsin?’


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 Neşri, 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? ’\textsuperscript{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.’\textsuperscript{184} His brother Isa 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?’\textsuperscript{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 ıllüşh 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

\textsuperscript{183} Neşri, \textit{Cihannüma}, 172: ‘Sen henüz bir tıfl oglan olup, anañ südi dahi agzuña kokar. Ne liyâkat ve ne isti’dâd ki aduñı Sultan koyub, memleket taleb idesin?’

\textsuperscript{184} Ibidem, 179-180: ‘Sen henüz bir tıfl oglansın; aduñı sultan koyub, eyle pençe urmak sana mülayim değildir.’

\textsuperscript{185} Ibidem: 196: ‘şimdi ben ulu karındaşım, taht benüm elimdedür. Ol henüz bir genç oglundur. Beylik anuñ nesine gerek değildir.’
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-i 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 (Mozes), 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. 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.

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. 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. 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.

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190 Crone, *Medieval Islamic Political Thought*, 50.
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.  

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. The Qur’an only stipulated: ‘O believers, obey God and obey his Messenger and those who have the authority among you.’ 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.

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). This

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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 Sunni and Shia, 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 began to formulate views on Imamate as the ideal state. 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. 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 imamate. He was identified as the Mahdi, whose return before the end of the world is expected. 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 imamate 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.

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. 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

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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.
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.  

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. 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. 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.

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.

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203 Ibidem; The Princeton Encyclopedia of Islamic Political Thought, 525.
204 Black, The History of Islamic Political Thought, 19–28.
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

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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.
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 for 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.’

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.’

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. 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

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215 Black, *The History of Islamic Political Thought*, 70.
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 [shâhânsâh], 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.
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. 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. 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

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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. 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.

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. 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. 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. 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.

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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 İnalcık, '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 Hûdâvendîgâr (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 recognize 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, Neşri described Seljuk and Ottoman Anatolia as bilâd-ı Rûm or ‘the Roman lands’. Neşri 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

Neşri 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

231 Neşri, Cihannüma, 15.
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-Dīn Tūsî (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 Tūsî 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. 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 Isma'ili’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 Tūs. 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.

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.

To understand al-Ghazali’s political thought, one has to consider his focus on the Sufi concept of ma’rīfā, 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. For al-Ghazali, true inner knowledge

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238 Black, Political Thought in Europe, 23
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.’ 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.

As discussed in Chapter 2, the Ottoman sultans kept strong ties and relations with masters of Sufism or *tasavvuf*, 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.

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. 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 lives of the common people.

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241 Black, *The History*, 100.
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.\footnote{Al-Ghazali, Revival of the Knowledge, 28.}

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.’\footnote{Ibidem, 27.} 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.’\footnote{Ibidem, 16.} 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-i 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.’\footnote{Hillenbrand, ‘Islamic Orthodoxy or Realpolitik?’ Al-Ghazali’s Views on Government’, 88.}

The term nizâm-i 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.’\footnote{Ibidem, 87.}

In his ‘Advice for Kings’ or Nasihat 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

\footnotesize{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.’ 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.

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. 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*). We will observe below that his ideas recurred in the thought of Ottoman chroniclers, such as Neşri 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. 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

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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.

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.” 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.’ 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.’ 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.’

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
approach to political society appears to have left its greatest mark on the Ottoman state.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{260}

Tûsî 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 Tûsî, 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.\textsuperscript{261} The concept of ‘justice’ appeared as a necessary element that contributed to the achievement of harmony within diversity. As for siyasa, Tûsî 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.\textsuperscript{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.’\textsuperscript{263} The aim of governance, for Tûsî, 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.

\textsuperscript{259} Black, The History, 95-96.
\textsuperscript{262} Black, The History, 153.
\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{264}

\textsuperscript{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-Ghazali, 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.’

Subsequently, Neşrî elaborated on al-Gazali’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.’

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265 Neşrî, Cihânnüma, 3-4.
266 Neşrî, Cihânnüma, 4: ‘Ve eşref-i insân dahi üçdür: enbiyâ, ulemâ ve ümerâ. Ve enbiyânun şâni teblîg ü risâletdür. Ve ulemânun şâni ild ü ibadetdür. Ve ümerânun şâni adl ü siyâsetdür. [...] ammâ ulemâ-i fihâm ve
Thereafter, Neşrî explained the values attached to the ideal ruler:

‘When a monarch [melîk] 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 zîllu’llah fî’l arz], who are the experts of taking decisions and governance [mazhar-i ahkâm ü siyaset] and the treasures of secrets and leadership [münhazin-i esrar u riyaset]. If there were no verdicts of governance [emr-ı 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

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268 Ibidem: ‘Nübüvvet ve şâhî, iki hâtem gibidir 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’ Neşrí 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 fi’il 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 Neşrí 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 Neşrí 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 fi Hukûki’s-Selâtîn (İstanbul, 1908) 12: ‘es-Sultân zillullâhi fi’l-ardi femen ekramehû ekramehullâhu ve men ehânehû ehânehullâhu’.
warrior as the symbol of effective political power.\textsuperscript{271} Hence, the meaning of \textit{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.\textsuperscript{272} For instance, the Ottoman \textit{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.’\textsuperscript{273}

\section*{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 (\textit{padişah}) was necessary so that this ‘order of the world’ (\textit{nizam-i âlem}), which serves the public interest, could be preserved and chaos could be avoided.\textsuperscript{274}

\begin{flushright}
271 In old, steppe-nomadic Turkish tradition, the \textit{tuğ} was the banner, which was composed of a horse’s tail or horsehair. The Ottomans continued to use the \textit{tuğ} as an emblem of royal authority, with the sultans campaigning under their banners with nine \textit{tuğs}. The Turkish word \textit{tuğ} is the parent of the verb \textit{doğmak} (to be born, to arise) in various Turkish languages; for example, \textit{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, \textit{Osmanlı. Örgüt, inanç, davranış’tan hukuk ideoloji’ye} (İstanbul, 2009) 33-41.


273 \textit{Fethname}, in Imber’s translation, see: \textit{The Crusade of Varna}, 189.

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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.’ 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.’ 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.’ Tursun asserted again that therefore one has to comply with and show loyalty to the authority of the ruler. 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.

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.’

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.’ He continued to elaborate on al-Ghazali’s thought by noting that the sultan must seek the advice from the learned ulama 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 müütâba’atini ekâşi vü edâni üzre farz-ı ayn itti.’
280 Ibidem: ‘bu husûsiyet-i kerâmét anun içerik düşülmis, ki pádişâhlar mücerred istifa-yı lezzât-ı nefsânîyyesine velü’ gösterüp askâr-i cerrâr ile temettü’ ü istizhâr artûra.’
sovereignty are hidden from the unfortunate ones who only see the apparent and obvious things. 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.’

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 ālem], such as Djenghiz Khan did. In these laws, the events are connected to their causality, which is called the sultanic politics and imperial law [siyāset-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


284 Ibidem, 17: ‘Ve hiç bir şahs müstahkk-ı medh ve müsta’idd-i mübâhât ü müfâharet olmaz, illâ bu dört faziletün cümlesiyle yâ ba’ziyle olur. Ve şunlar ki neseb ü kabile 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.'

As is known, the Ottoman term *kanun* or dynastic law was modelled on an idealised steppe *töre/yasa* notion. 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. 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*. 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 ulama. 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.

### 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

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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 [Ilkhans], 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.’

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
tyrranical 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, Dasîtân-i Tevârîh, 25-26: ‘Ol Mogol sultanlarının adlını, niceydi işit imdi şerhini. İtmediler ani kim
Cingiz Han, zulmden halka ider idi ’ayan. Zulm itdiler veli kânûnila, ellerin boyamadilar hûnila. Zulm kim kânûn
u zabtul olâ, ’adl gibi halka ol âsân gele. Çün anildi 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.’

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. 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.

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

292 Also see the similar views of Ali, in: Fleisher, 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. 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. 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’. 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.

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

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Murad I that God would grant his favour to whomever had wisdom and the devlet on his side. 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.’ In another verse, devlet clearly meant ‘good fortune’, when Ahmedî referred to the reign of Süleyman Çelebi: ‘may despair not affect his good fortune.’

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. Part of this pagan mythology was reworked and reintroduced after the Persians had converted to Islam. 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.

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

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298 Neşrî, Cihannüma, 128: ‘Zîrâ, devlet ve akl bir kişiye kim yâr ola, zâhir budur ki, Hakk’uñ inâyeti anuñladur.’
299 Ahmedî, Dasitân-i Tevârîh, 45: ‘böyle olur devlet işi çün ona.’
300 Ibidem, 50: ‘devletine irmesün anun fütûr.’
301 This idea recurs in the famous mystical (tasawwuf) manuscript, Mantıq-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 Hûma-bird. Their quest takes them through seven valleys, which Attar used to describe the seven stages of spirituality and wisdom. See: Feridüddin Attar, Mantıku’t Tayr, tr. Mustafa Çiçekler (Ankara, 2005).
a silver winged hûmâ-bird [hûma-yı sîmîn-per] such as a coquetish peacock flourished like a rose whose perfume gives life to the masters of sense. On the sapling of the devlet a hûmâ-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, Fetihname, ed. Ceyhun Uygur (İstanbul, 2007) 70: ‘Hâliya çün kim Rum kişverine Sultan Muhammed Han Gazi pâdişah oldı, saltanat tahtına geçti […] hûma-yı sîmîn-per ve tavus-ı cilve-ger bigi yine sa’âdet ravnazinda bir taze güld aqldi kim kohusı ma’ani ehline cânlar bagıslar. Yine nihal-i devleti bir hûmâ kendi kim cihan halkı saye-i adlinda devletlerere ve sa’âdetlere irişdiler, bî-nihâyet ve bî-şumar.’

\(^{306}\) Neşrî, Cihânnümâ, 41: ‘Yâ Osman! Muştuluk olsun. Saña ve evlâduña Hak ta’âlâ saltanat virdi. Mecmû’ı âlem evlâduñun zıll-i himâyetinde ola.’ In his account of the same story, Oruç Beg used the word ‘pâdişahlîk’, see: Oruç Beg Tarihi, 8.

\(^{307}\) Kanunnâmê-i Âl-i Osman, ed. Özcan, 14: ‘bu kadar ahval-1 saltanata nizam verildi. Şimdén sonra gelen evlâd-1 kirâmûm dahi islaha sa’y itsinler.’

\(^{308}\) Ibidem, 18: ‘her kimesneye evlâdumdan saltanat müyessser 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.’

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 (ahıret sultanlıği).

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-yi 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].’

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
the rules of generosity and to take care of the people, to collect taxes and to fund a treasury.'


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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’ (*Tangrınun ferrâşıdur*), ‘the sword of God’ (*Hak kılıcıdur*) and ‘the support and refuge of the people of religion’ (*püšt 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 7e-10e 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-sebîl’lallah niyyet-i gaza]. He crossed with the army of the Islam the bloody Danube and passed into the dar al-harb [realm of war].’

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. 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.’

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. 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

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317 Kivamî, Fetihnamâ, 444.
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. Neşri, 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, Neşri stated that Osman and his descendants were called gazis. 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]. Neşri 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 Neşri). 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. 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


323 Ibidem, 303-306.
an important fortification in the Byzantine defence system guarding the roads to Constantinople and protecting the seaports nearby.\footnote{For a discussion on this story in the chronicles, see: Paul Wittek, ‘The Taking of Aydos Castle: A Ghazi Legend and its Transformation’, \textit{Arabic and Islamic Studies in Honor of H.A.R. Gibb}, ed. George Makdisi (Cambridge, 1965) 662-672.}

The synopsis of the story goes as follows. One night the castellan’s daughter had a dream in which she saw the Prophet \textit{[hazret-i resûl]}: a ‘lovely-faced friendly person’ \textit{[bir hûb ve latîf sûretli kişi]} 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. \textit{Aşık Paşazade} concluded by assuring his readers that he did not invent this story, he wrote down the information that had reached him.\footnote{Âşık Paşazâde, \textit{Tevarih}, 306.} This story was clearly rooted in thirteenth-century oral epic narratives on the deeds of famous dervish-gazi hero’s, such as \textit{Battalname} and \textit{Saltukname} – and in the much earlier Oğuz narrative of Dede Korkut stories.\footnote{For a discussion of the parallels between the account of \textit{Aşık Paşazade} and that of \textit{Battalname} and the Dede Korkut narrative, see: William Hickman, ‘The Taking of Aydos Castle: Further Considerations on a Chapter from \textit{Aşıkpaşazade}’, \textit{Journal of the American Oriental Society} 99/3 (1979): 399-407, esp. 402-405.} 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).
Indeed, one of the characteristics of the early Ottoman historiographical tradition was the blending of fiction and facts, such as the *menakib* 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] 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

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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].

In his own version of the story, Neşri clearly based his account on that of Aşık Paşazade
with some minor modifications. For instance, Neşri 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]. In both versions, the key character in the story was the girl, the castellan’s
daughter. A remarkable difference in Neşri’s account is that he gave the story an explicitly
romantic tone, by leaving out any reference to the Prophet. Neşri, 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. Moreover, the Karamanids also seem to have bothered the Turkish
principality of the Germiyanids as well. In this respect, Neşri’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

Gönül şehrinde ol döst kaldı ancak; Fikir tagıldı aklın yile virdi. Ta’acüb itmen ani iy azîzler; Anu kim görmedî
cân gözi gördü. Aşıkî ‘ışka ma’nî iki vardur; Birî zâhir birî döst ma’nî oldî.’

329 Neşri, Cihannûma, 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’. 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. We observe that the gaza-idea and the concept of ‘tyranny’ 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 Neşri.

In his account of Sultan Murad I’s conflict with the Karamanid ruler Alâeddin Beg in 1386, Neşri 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 çalısup], 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].’

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.’ [... ‘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.’

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, Neşri 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 Neşri, 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

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334 For the concept of ‘tyranny’, see below under ‘justice’.
335 Neşri, Cihânmüma, 99-100.
336 Ibidem, 101
337 Neşri, Cihânmüma, 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 legitimation 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, Cihannüma, 103: ‘Mâni‘i gazâya gazâ, gazâ-yı ekberdür.’
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. 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.’

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’ recur as the important discursive registers in the ideological narrative of the text. The chronicler represented Murad I as a sultan who

340 Neşrî, Cihânümâ, 100.
342 For a discussion of the term ‘tyranny’, see below the section on ‘justice’.

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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.

Neşîr 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.’ 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.’

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.’

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.’ 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 Neşîr, 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

344 Ahmedî, Dasitân-i Tevârîh, 43: ‘Kafir elinden bu mikdar il ü şehr; Aliban kildi mülükün cümle kahr. Ümmeti ta’alâ veld tu’lalı diyen; Bunlarun-cün didi ola fikr eyle sen. Söz öküşür čünki ol Gazi Murad; Pâk-ihlâsidı vü pâk- itikâd.’
345 Ibidem, 44: ‘Ol arada ol demde Sultan-ı sa’id; Gaziyidi mutlaka oldı şehid. Gaziyidi vü gazada ber-hak ol; Cün şehid oldı şehid-i mutlak ol. Istianet dile ruhundan anun; Ki iresin fethe fütuhatından 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 interstate 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. 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’. 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. 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.

347 For an analysis of the letters between Bâyezid en 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’, *Islam Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 2, 269-279; Anooshahr, *The Ghazi Sultans and the Frontiers of Islam*, 120-128.


a topic of intensive debate among scholars.\textsuperscript{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.

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’.\textsuperscript{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

\textsuperscript{351} For the source critic of Feridun Bey’s Münşeat and the debate on the authenticity of the letters, see: M. Halil, ‘Feridun Beg Münşeati’, Tarih-i Osmani Encümeni Mecmuası, 162-165, 216-226. A recent overview of the debate, see: Anooshahr, \textit{The Ghazi Sultans}, 121-122.

\textsuperscript{352} Feridun Bey, Münşeat us-Selatin, vol. 1, 120. For these letters in Arabic and Persian, I used the translation of Anooshahr, \textit{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. [...] 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

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353 Feridun Bey, Münşeat, 121.
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 to 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.

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. 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. 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.’

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-
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-i 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.’

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.’ 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). 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.

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

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560 Gazavat, 5: ‘Yarındaşı al’es-sabah Padişah ulemayı katına davet edüb ve bu ahvalı anlara söleyüb 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 cevab verüb eyittiler kim, çünkî öyle ołcak ol kafirdir.’
561 Ibidem, 6: ‘Karaman-oglı dedikleri pelîdin dîni imânı yokdur ve kâfir-i bî-dîn ile arka bir edüp taht arzûsuna düşmüş, ol eyle mi kıyâs eder ki bu fesâd anun yanına kala. Ya budur ki, ani ele getürüb başını keserim ve yahud başın alur bir gayrî ıkîme gider.’
562 Aşıkpaşazade Tarihi, ed. Öztürk, 172 ; Neşrî, Cihannûnâ, 291.
563 Aşıkpaşazade Tarihi, 156, 158.
for this gaza-war." 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.

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 âmîm) 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 yörüük (nomadic) status, I have accepted it.’

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.’

365 Ibidem: ‘şöyle kim Rumelinde eger atlu ve eger yayak çomak atmaga kâdir olanlar bile çıksun deyü nefîr-i ‘âm buyurmagın.’
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 varanlarım her ne mürâcaatlan var ise, katımda makbul-i hümâyunundur, eger timar isteyene ve eger zeamet isteyene ve eger yenicerilik isteyene ve eger sipahilik isteyene ve eger yörüülükten çıkmak isteyene her birinin murâdu maksudları makbulumdur.’
367 Ibidem, 56-57: ‘Padişah-ı âlem nasihatlar eyledi ve eyitti kim, göreıyim sizi hemân her biriniz kollu kolumuzda olub hemân her biriniz kendi hasımla cevâb ve group rûn. Şöyle kim, eger küffar benim üzerine dahi yörüüb
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 (ağa) 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.’ 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.
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.’ 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’. Furthermore, while Neşrî described the retreat of the troops in neutral terms, the author of Gazavat reproached them as ‘cowards of Rumelia’.

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] of Allah.

370 Oruç Beg Tarihi, 67: ‘iş Hakk’uñ kudret anuñ. Hakk’uñ emrine girmesne girmez. [...] Sultân Murâd Han dahı gördi kim, hâl böyle oldu, el götürüp yüz göge dutup Hak tâ’âla tarafına tazarru’lar idüp…’
371 Gazavât-i 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, gülbâng was also the name for the ceremenial oath of the Janissary corps. They recited the gülbâng at 281
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

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\(^{373}\) **tablhane** (lit. ‘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** (ʿalem) 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 répertoire, which appears to have been mostly forgotten by the start of the twentieth century. See: Walter Feldman, ‘Mehter’, \(\text{EI}\).\(^{2}\)

\(^{374}\) *Gazavât-ı Sultan Murad*, 64: ‘Hemân Pâdişâh-i âlem-penâh hazretleri väküldûnu Allah’a sipariş kilüb dip alayı depredüp yeniçerisin ve azabın önüne katub ve Hazre-t-i Allah’a signub gülbâng-i Allah Allah edüüb ve tablhâne çeng-i harbiye turralar urub […] küffâr-i hâkisârın üzerine hamle edüüb yürüdülb.’

\(^{375}\) *Gazavât-ı Sultan Murad*, 64: ‘Bu kerre iki asker serâser birbirilerine karilub ol gün bir ceng durdu kim, takrri人民医院 degil. Amma ceng gittikçe kizisti. Eger İslam askeri ve eger küffar ziyade gayret edüüb şöyle bir bâzâr kuruldu kim, ata ogulu ve ogul atayı tehêşsîden kaldib ve ol cengin heybetine gokde melek ve deryada semek tahnîn eyledi.’

\(^{376}\) Infantry made up by recruited troops from the Muslim population.
and four to five hundred azabs remained with Murad.\footnote{Ibidem, 64.} The chronicler Oruç Beg noted that Murad was left with only five hundred janissaries at the battlefield, entrenched in a fortified position.\footnote{Oruç Beg Tarihi, 67: ‘Sultân Murâd Han dahi kendü alayı ile kapu halkuyla tururken kapu halkı tagılub sehel ye’huişeri kalub, beş yüz mikdarı kalmamış idi dirler.’} 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.\footnote{Gazavat, the crusaders made seven charges in attempting to break through.} Neşri impeached the Hungarian commander Janos Hunyadi (Yanko) of deceiving his king to personally charge an attack to break through the ditch. According to Neşri, 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.’\footnote{Ibidem, 66.} Neşri 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.’\footnote{Neşri, Cihannüma, 296: ‘Bu Yanko bir hîle-bâz mel’ûndı, murâdı Ungurus’a beg olmakdi. Ol sebedden ol diyârdan kendüye it’a at itmiyen kâfir beglerinden her kangi olursa, ‘vuralım Türk’e şöyle idelüm, böyle idelüm’ diyüp, aldayup götürüp, Türk’ün bahâdurlarına tutiverip, kendü kaçardı. Kirala varup, bu kez işimiz rast gelmedi, dirdü. Bu suretide Ungurus beglerinden kurdurî kurdurî az komışdı. Pes kiral dahi mestdi. Yanko’nun sözine i’timad idüp, eline bir gönder alup, hemän hünkâruñ alayına at depti.’} Neşri 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.\footnote{Oruç Beg Tarihi, 67-68; Neşri, Cihannüma, 296-297; Gazavat, 65-66; Aşık Paşazade, Tevarih, 405.} 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.\footnote{Imber’s translation in: The Crusade of Varna, 194.} 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.\footnote{Oruç Beg Tarihi, 67.} Although the battle continued to rage on while the retreated troops came back, the Ottoman army had secured the victory.
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.\footnote{Neşri, Cihannüma, 297: ‘dönüp gelip Sultan Murâd’a du’â idüp, ‘devletlü sultanum gaza-yı ekber mübarek olsun’ didiler. Andan Sultan Murad buyurdu, ol kaçan beglere avrat tonın şeyyûrûp, tahkîr idelerdi. Yine nedimler ve yine begler dilek idüp, afv itdürdiler.’}

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.’\footnote{Gazavât-ı Sultan Murad, 57.}

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.’\footnote{Ibidem, 57-58: ‘Ammâ Pâdişah’ı âlem o gece yatsu namâzın edâ edüb ve el kaldurub eyitti: Ey Pâdişahlar Pâdişahı; Ümidim sana tutmuşum ilâhi; Ki ey dertlerin dermânı Allah; Mededsiz kalmışım fermânı Allah; Yüz urdum kara kara yere göz yaşiyle; Koma mahrum bu anda beni Allah; Bu cümle mahlukâtın sensin ey Hak; İlâhî hâlik Yezdânı Allah; Senin kâpından özge yokdurur hiç; Heme âsiye rahmet kâmi Allah; Habîbin ol Muhammed hörmetiçin; Muzâ’af’î kî bize gufrânı Allah; Bu dîn düşmanları şîmdî geliben; Diler istât ede Kur’ânı Allah; Sebeb klub beni içbî gazâya; Nasîb edûb 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.‘

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
civil war, and a return to gaza during the reign of Murad II. Şükrullah explicitly denoted only Murad II as the ‘sultan of the gazis and mujahidin’.

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.’

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.’ ‘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’; and ‘battle those who make sedition appear on earth.’ 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-i âlem], to contribute to the welfare of

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.'\textsuperscript{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.’\textsuperscript{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.’\textsuperscript{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

\textsuperscript{396} Fethname, originally written in Persian, in Imber’s translation, The Crusade of Varna, 189.

\textsuperscript{397} Ibidem, 190.

\textsuperscript{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 Bertrand de la Broqui ère, 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 exequter la puissance qu’il a et sa grant revenue, veu la petite resistance qu’il trouve en la crestienté, ce seroit à luy legiere chose à en conquerter une grant partie.’
Islam. This city of Kefe is befitting to be a part of ‘the realm of Islam’ [dârü’l-İslâm]. With the help of God, we will add Kefe to the realm of Islam.’ In this passage, Aşık Paşazade clearly expressed a more courtly endorsed gaza-ethos and understanding. Remarkably, he used the term ‘dârü’l-İslâm’, 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 menâkıbname.’ 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.’

405 Aşıkpaşazade Tarihi, 186: ‘Ve bu gazalar u mâcerâlar cemi’i anun hâlinün, kâlinün, ef‘alînün; bu ben Aşıkî Derviş Ahmed her birisini gördüm ve bildüm ammâ ihtisar etdüm. Bu menâkıbda yazdım.’
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. 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.’ 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. 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...’

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407 Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Arşivi, no. 5584. This letter is reproduced in facsimile in: İnalcık, Fatih Devri üzerine tetkikler ve vesikalar, 217-218.

408 Tursun Beg, Tarîh-i Ebu’l Feth, 53: ‘bu hâdise ehl-i İslâm arasında fütur ve perişânî saldı.’

409 İnalcık, Fatih Devri, 128-130
indulged by a lack of opinion and judgement [...]’

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.’ 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. 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.

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 Neşri, 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...
the right to plunder the city and the general attack began. 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.

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’. 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. 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.

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.

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415 Tursun Beg, Tarih-i Ebu’l Feth, 54-55. For a discussion of the details from various sources, see: İnalcık, Fatih Devri, 130-132.


417 Chalkokondyles as quoted by İnalcık, 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


contrast, Neşri’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. However, in general, Neşri’s text displayed no interest in the gazi-warrior practice of booty, so vividly expressed and described by Aşık Paşazade.

\[\text{For example, see his ornamented description of the battles during the siege of Constantinople: Neşri, Cihannûma, 311-313.}\]
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.\textsuperscript{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] Süleyman also seized the world through justice; every just khan is equal to Süleyman.’\textsuperscript{423}

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.\textsuperscript{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.

\textsuperscript{422} As quoted in: Fleischer, \textit{Bureaucrat and Intellectual}, 282.
\textsuperscript{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.
\textsuperscript{424} Âşık Paşazâde, \textit{Tevârîh}, ed. Yavuz and Saraç, 344: ‘Velîdûr her ne han kim ādîl olsa; Degûl ayîb cihân aña kul olsa. Süleymân ādîl âdîp tutdî cihân; Süleymân mîslîdûr han ādîl olsa.’
\textsuperscript{425} Fleischer, \textit{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.’

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. Neşri 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.’ 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.’

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.’ Nizam al-Mulk advised: ‘A kingdom may last while there is irreligion, but will not endure when there is oppression.’ 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.’ Likewise, as mentioned above, Ahmedî had also

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426 Tursun Beg, Tarih-i Ebu’l Feth, 17.
427 Togan, Oğuz Destanı, 74: ‘[…] Tugrul, etraf ve çevresi ülkelere elciler gönderip devleti adalet, doğruluk ve iyilik esasında kurdu.’
431 Ibidem, 12.
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 (zûlm) 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.


\(^{434}\) Toshihiko Izutsu, _Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qur’an_ (Montreal, 1966) 209-211, 234; See also: ‘adl’, _EI²_.

\(^{435}\) Lewis, _Political Language_, 143.

\(^{436}\) For a brief introduction to the Ottoman use of the concept ‘justice’, see: İnalçık, ‘State and Ideology’, 70-78.


\(^{438}\) 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 hânlik; Eger Hak süzine hilaf itmeye; İşi kendözinden güzaf imeye; Halife olur Tañrı’dan âleme; Ki hükm eleyeye bunca bin âdeme; Dilerse ki Rahman sıfatlu ola; Gerekdür ki key ma’diletlili ola; Ve eger ki Tañrı sözine uymaz ise; Nedür hükmü tuyar ya tuymaz ise; Dahî re’feti şefkati olmasa; Halife olur ki şeytan içûn; [...] Boyun koya Tañrı’nun emrine; Sora bile Tañrı’nun emri ne; Gerek adî ü insafi âdet kila, Dahî lutf u îhsanî gayet kila. [...] Dahî şöyle bilmek gerekdür ki her; Ne zulmi kulları ani ider; Kamusını andan sorarlar imiş.’
440 Murâd-nâme, 212: ‘Kâle’n-Nebiyyü Aleyhi’s-selâm; Adlü’s-sâati hayrun min ibadeti sittîne sene.’
441 Quran, 4:58
442 Quran, 49:9.
443 Murâd-nâme, 213: ‘Hüdâ gölgesinde dutar anlarî; Ki ol demde râhat ola cânlarî; Biri ol yidinün şu sultan imiş; Ki âlemde adî idici hân imiş [...] Kim ister ise bu makâmı bula; Ne tamu ki dârü’s-selâmi bula; Gerek on kavâ’id ri’âyet kila; [...] Dahî her neyî kim özine ani; Revâ görmeye kendözine ani; Ra’iyyetlere câyız aânlamaya; Dilerse güle sonra ağlamaya.’
444 Ibidem, 216.
Likewise, Tursun Beg noted that every people and each society are in need of justice. 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.

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. In this sense, Tursun Beg counselled the virtue of mildness, which he defined as ‘to forgive when one is powerful.’

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

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sovereignty of the ruler. Preserving this circle ensured the social order of the world.\textsuperscript{449} Many Muslim writers incorporated the notion of ‘the circle of justice’ into their work. For instance, al-Ghazālī, wrote in his ‘Advice for Kings’ (\textit{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.’\textsuperscript{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.’\textsuperscript{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.’\textsuperscript{452} The same advice is repeated in the account of Neşri: ‘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.’\textsuperscript{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.’\textsuperscript{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

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{450} Gazzali’s \textit{Book of Counsel for Kings (Nasihat al Muluk)}, 19
\item \textsuperscript{451} Nizâm al-Mulk, \textit{The Book of Government}, 49.
\item \textsuperscript{452} Âşık Paşazâde, \textit{Tevârîh-i,} 302: ‘Sana mutî olup hidmet idenleri hôş dut. Ve bi r dahı nökerlerüne dây tut, iğnâ inâm ve ihsânun anlarağ hâlini nîzâmî duzagdur, didi.’
\item \textsuperscript{453} Neşri, \textit{Cihânâmâ,} 64-65: ‘Ve dahi saña mutî olanları hoş tutasın. Ve dahi nökerleriye inâm u ihsânı eksük itmesisini ki, el-insan abîdî’t-ihsân.’
\item \textsuperscript{454} Tursun Beg, \textit{Tarih-i Ebu’l Feth,} 27: ‘Sultânun dosti leşkeridür, ve düşmeni malidür. Eger nökerine bezl itmekden mâl zâ’îf olursa, nöker kâv olur ki, dosti ve nâsiridür. Eger nökerinden men’ itmekle mâl kâv olursa, nökeri – ki dosti ve yardımsıdur – zâ’îf olur.’
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
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 şehenşâhîk; [...] Ki sultânîk anlara oldî yâr. Cevâbında dimîş Aleyhi’s-selâm; Iki nesnedendir karâr itdîgi; Hüda anlari şehriyari itdîgi; biri yoksul adle itdîkleri; koyup zulmini adle gitdîkleri; Ikinci bu kim memleketlerini imaret iderler idi varımı.’
457 Ibidem, 226: ‘Akîl tanşûgûnun unutdîlaları; Zulûm cevr dünyâya toldı tamâm; Adî dâd iştîlmez oldı tamâm.’
458 Ibidem, 227: ‘Görinmez mi kim şâh-ı Nûşirevân; Henûz adli-y-ile nice anlur; Dahi adî içûn yiri Araf olur; Cehennem azâbından ol sâf olur.’
459 Ibidem, 227: ‘Ki buyruk makâmunda durdı Resûl; Tefâhurla dîdî ki âdîl şehûn; Zamâmında dogdûm o âkîl şehûn; Vüldûtî fî zemeni’l-melikî’l-âdîl.’
needs soldiers and smoothness in his affairs; if the ruler loses control then all his affairs falls silent.\footnote{Murâd-nâme, 228: 'Cihân-gîr olan kimse zâbit gerek; Dimezven ki işlerde hâbit gerek; Şu şahun ki zabtı yog ola anun; Her işinde habı çok ola anun.'}

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’.\footnote{Âşık Paşazâde, Tevârîh-i, 275: ‘Osman Gazi yakın konşı kafirler-ile gâyet müdârâya başladi ve Germiyânulyulan adâvete başladi. Anun-ıçun kim bu geldükleri vilâyetün kâfirleri Germiyânulu’dan incinürlerdi.’} 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.’\footnote{Ibidem, 281: ‘İşitdük kânûn-ı Osmân kim var; Budur adlı vá bezli şen iden yâr. Bularuñ kölgesinde uçdu hümâ; Şikârdur bunlara her murg-ı sunkar. Gerekdür kuvvet ü hem akl ü tedbîr; Muvâfık olna bil ‘ilm ü takdîr [...].’}

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’.\footnote{Âşık Paşazâde, Tevârîh-i, 282: ‘[...] Osman Gazi dahı ol bardagi alan kışiyi getürmiş, belki döğmiş, dahı kâfirün hakkını ahvîrmiş. Be-gâyet yasak itmiş: ‘Hergiz Bilecük kâfirlerini inciteitmeyeler’. Bunlara adl gösterdi. Tâ şol hadde varyd kim Bilecük kâfirlerinün avratlari dahi Eskişehrün bazarnıda gelürler, bazar idüp maksûdlarını görüp giderleri emn ü emân-ıla. Bu Bilecükün kâfirleri dahı Osman Gazi’ye gâyetde itimâd itmişlerdi kim ‘Bu Türk bizüm-ile eyü togrul ider’, dirlerdi.’} 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.
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.’

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.’ 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. 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.

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. 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,
they are merciful, they do not kill those who ask for mercy and they even do not hunt those who flee.” Äşık 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. Äşık 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. Äşık 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 Äşık 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, Osmonoğlu’na söz geçer. Zira anlarda merhamet vardır, aman diyene anlar kılıç urnaz ve kaçañı dahi kovmaz.’
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 Neşri’s version, in which he rewrote the one by Âşık Paşaçâde, 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 padışah [monarch].’ Osman Gazi asked: ‘Is this the command of God [tangrı buyruğu] or the words of the prophet? Or, is this proclaimed by every ruler individually?’ The man said: ‘Since long before, it is the sultanic 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.’

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 Paşaçâde, whom he even mentioned in his text, and also that of Yahşi Fakih, the source Âşık Paşaçâde 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

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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.’ 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.

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.’ 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’. 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

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476 Ibidem, 34: ‘Ata dede gibi âdil oldı ol; Kamu işlerinde kâmıl oldı ol.’
Süleyman Pasha dispensed justice. They subsequently surrendered voluntarily to Ottoman rule and became all Muslim.  

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 (danişmend) 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.’ 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?’

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.’ 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  

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478 Anonim Osmanlı Kroniği, 19: ‘Ol vilâyetlerde ne kadar kâfir var ise Süleyman Paşa’nın adl ü dâdını görüp cemi müslimân oldular.’


480 Ahmedî, Dastan, 46.

481 Anonim Osmanlı Kroniği, 119: ‘Ol zamanda olan pâdişâhları gör, her şikayetçiyyi kendüler dinler imiş ki kimseye zulm ideler, âhiretde kendüye azâb ola diyü şunculayin 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 (Chancellary 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. 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. 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
left 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.

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. 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 İnalçık, The Ottoman Empire, 90.
483 Suraiya Faroqhi, ‘Political Activity Among Ottoman Taxpayers and the Problem of Sultanic Legitimation
484 Ibidem.
and were enforced to use müsavere or consultation with the influential Turkish aristocracy.\footnote{Güneş Işıksel, La politique étrangère ottomane dans la seconde moitié du 16e siècle : le cas du règne de Selim II (1566-1574), unpubl. PhD (Paris, 2013) 41-42.} 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.\footnote{Nizâm al-Mülk, The Book of Government, 35-43.} He also noted that the Prophet dispensed justice by himself in person and did not delegate it to anyone else.\footnote{Ibidem, 44.} 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.\footnote{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 Imagesi ve Bu Imgenin Algılanması, tr. Gül Güven (İstanbul, 2011) 8-11} 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.\footnote{Abou-el-Haj, ‘Aspects of the Legitimation of Ottoman Rule’, 373-383.}

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.’\footnote{Quoted in: Uzunçarşılı, Osmanlı Devletinin Merkez ve Bahriye Teşkilatı (Ankara, 1948) 1.} 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
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 Neşri’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, Neşri 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

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 Neşri, Cihannüma, 50: ‘Vilâyetlerine adl ü dâd gösterüp, cemî köyler yirli yirine gelüp, mütemekkin olup, vaktleri kâfir zamânından daha yiğ oldı. Hattâ Osmân ikliminde emn ü emân ziyâde olmagın, kalan yirün kafırleri dahi anun iklimine gelüp şinlik oldı.’
495 Ibidem, 54: ‘andan Marmara vilâyetine varup, kâfirleri gelüp ita’at itdiler. Osman Gazi anlara adl idüp, yırlarinde mukarrer kıld.’
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

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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.’ He also quoted a famous saying: ‘A kingdom may last while there is irreligion, but it will not endure when there is oppression.’ 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.

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. 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.’ 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.

501 Ibidem, 12.
503 Murâd-nâme, 241.
In the chronicle of Neşri, 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 [Sol ahmak zâlimüñ itdügi işi görûñ ki]. He comes and injures the Muslims. O Gazis! What should I do with this tyrant [zâlim]?’ 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. In this way, the chronicler provided an ideological justification for Murad I’s decision to transform Karamanid principality into an Ottoman vassal state. Neşri described how Murad projected his pre-eminence as the ‘champion of Islam’ vis-à-vis the ‘tyrant’ Karamanid prince. According to Neşri, 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 bilûr âdem deqûlsûn].’

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 Neşri 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 bâğı was not applied in a merely common criminal sense here. He rather used the term bâğı to provide a legal and judicial authorisation for a war with the fellow Muslim Karamanid state. The term dâr-ül-bagy or

505 Neşri, Cihânnüma, 100: ‘İy gâziler! Bu zâlimle nic’edeyin?’
‘the land of rebels’ was in fact borrowed from two Quranic verses.\footnote{Qur’an, 4:59 and 49:9. See: Feridun Emecen, ‘Ottoman policy of conquest’, 35-36.} 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.’\footnote{Âşık Paşazâde, Tevârîh-i Âl-i Osmân, 402: ‘Hünkâra habar geldi kim Karamanoglı ahdını girü sıdı, Müsülmânlaruñ avratın ve oglın zâlımlara nâ-meşru işler itdürdi.’} 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].’\footnote{Ibidem, 403: ‘İmdi azizler, bu Osmânlu’nun zulm itmesinün sebebi Karamanoglı İbrahim’üñ sebebinden olmuş-ıdi, yohsa tâ bugüne degin Osmanlu’dan kimsenüñ hakkuna zulm itmek gelmemiş-ıdi.’}

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 ziyan gelmesün].’

Nearly unanimously, the earliest Ottoman chronicles villianated Timur by emphasising his lack of justice and oppressive acts.\footnote{Ahmedî, Dastîn-i Tevârîh, 23: ‘Bu arada Rûma yüridi Temür / Mülk doldı fitne vü havf u futûr / Çün Temürün hiç adli yoğ ıdi / Lâcerem kim zulm ü cevri çoğ ıdi.’} 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
excellence. He did so many cruel things that are not worth to discuss further. Timur was the king of all evil men.' 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.' 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 (beqs) 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.’ 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.’ 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 zuhm.

The Anonymous Chronicle also condemned oppression or zuhm 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 zuhm [oppression]. They have howled the entire people. As they had brought and

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513 Ibidem, 158: ‘Bûd Sivas u Haleb bâ-mülk-i Şam; Der-imâret çün arûs-ı bî-nikab; Şüd harâb ez-âteş-i ceys-i Temür.’


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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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 \textit{zulm} were the antithesis of justice, which was the greatest vice that a ruler had to avoid. The concept of \textit{zulm} could even provide the legitimate grounds to express criticism or to justify war against a tyrant ruler.


\textsuperscript{517} For a discussion of the apocalyptic Turkish legends and texts about Constantinople, see: Feridun Emecen, \textit{Fetiḥ ve Kıyamet: 1453} (İstanbul, 2012) 30-78; Stefanos Yerasimos, \textit{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 *Imaret* 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 *Muradnâme*, 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. 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. 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. 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. 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

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518 Murâd-nâme, 224-225: ‘Rivâyetdür ehl-i ‘akıldan bize; Hikâyet iderem nakıldan size; Ki váçibdür üç nesne sultanlara; Iskenderler’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.


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 Kafesçioglu, 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 buyurdu ki keferenün uruş-ı hâviyesinden ve dür u büyük-i hâliyesinden, âmm ü hâs her kim ihtiyârı ile gelüp sâkin olur ise , tuttugı ev mülki ola. […] ve anlarun içün, âli bezzâzistân ve çarşular ve başârgâhlar ve âyende vü revende içün vâsi’ kârvânsarâylar yapturdı.’
524 Neşrî, Cihannûma, 316: ‘El-hâsıl, Ayasofya’yi ve cemi’ Istanbul’ı Sultan Mehmed Han yapdı. Ve dahi nice hammamlar yapdurdu ki, âleme kimse mislin gümüş gömürd. Bir vechile ma’mûr oldı kim, etrâf-i âleme anun misli şehr yokdur, diyü şehâdet iderler seyyahlar.’
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.\textsuperscript{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

\textsuperscript{526} Anonim Osmanlı Kroniği, 112-113: ‘İlerü Sultan Murad zamanında pâdişâh kuł ve pâdişâh kul-oglı olmayana kapudan ulûfe ve timâr itmezlerdi. Şimdiki zamanda kuldan kapuda yuvalar ziyâde. Yabanından gelenin ragbeti ziyâdedür. Anun içün 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.\textsuperscript{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 Osmanî] by restoring the means of livelihood of the people [sheikhs, dervishes and Turkish aristocracy].\textsuperscript{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, ‘any one 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.’\textsuperscript{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


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.’

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.’

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...’


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.\footnote{Neşrî, \textit{Cihannüma}, 151: ‘Pâdişâh-ı âlem-penâh Bursa’dâ mütemekkin olup, mühendisler ve mi’mârlar ve bennâlar cem’ idüp, birulu cümî bünüyâdîn idüp, şûrî-bî hamrdan vazgelüp, ulêmâ-i izâm ve meşâyiîh-i kirâmîle musâhabet idüp, icrâ-yi şer-i kavîm üzerine müstakîm olup, âlemî, zalemeden hâlî kulup, bir vechile adî itdi ki, ganî vü fakîr, azîz, hakîr, vâzi vü şerîf, kavî vü za’îf, hep anun zill-i himâyetinde âsûde olup, memleket-i Osmâniyye bir vechile şîn oldî ki, etrâf-i memâlik, vilâyêt-i Osmân’a hased iderlerdi.’}

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 quitted 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 \textit{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 \textit{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.’\footnote{Yusuf Has Hacib, \textit{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, çiplak ise giyîrdemi, aç ise doyurmalıdır.’}

The author of \textit{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 İnalcık remarked, the \textit{Kutadgu Bilig} or ‘the Wisdom
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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{535}

This last practice was the continuation of an old custom of the nomadic Turkish tradition. As discussed above, the eighth-century Orhon Inscriptions of the Kök Türk 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.\textsuperscript{536} As İnalcık has argued, this custom evolved into an institution within the steppe environment of nomadic life.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{539}


\textsuperscript{535} Broquière, \textit{Le Voyage d’Oultremer}, 142.


\textsuperscript{537} Halil İnalcık, ‘Turkish and Iranian Political Theories and Traditions in \textit{Kutadgu Bilig’}, in: \textit{ibid}, \textit{The Middle East and the Balkans under the Ottoman Empire. Essays on Economy and Society} (Bloomington, 1993) 13-14.


\textsuperscript{539} İnalcık, ‘Turkish and Iranian’, 14.
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.’

This expression manifested itself in most of the deeds of sultans and referred to the norms to which the sultans had to strive. Neşri 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.’

He viewed the fortune of the ruler deriving from people’s labour and prosperity. Therefore, Neşri portrayed Osman Gazi as a ruler who looked after his subjects. As feeding people and taking care of the poor endorsed the consent of people and consequently consolidated the authority of the

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’eya] 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).


\(^{544}\) *Aşık Paşazade Tarihi*, ed. Öztürk, 80: ‘Ve dahi Murad Han Gazi gör kim dahi ne kîsla gerekdir. Bu Evrenez getûrdígi pulları ve carîyeleri bu etrafdan gelen elçilere üleştûrdî. Ve bu etrafun elçileri getûrdígi yaşıati
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 akinci-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

cemi’sin kendisinin kulu Evrenez’e verdi. Ve getürdiği filörinün dahi ba’zısın Evrenez’e girü verdi. Ve bâkisini ulemâya ve futarâya üleşdürdi. Ve kendüye hic nesne almadi. Ve niçeler müflis geldiler ve gani gittiler.’


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 pencik-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?’\footnote{Anonim Osmanlı Kroniği} 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’\footnote{Ibidem}

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.\footnote{Ibidem} In contrast, the court historian Ahmedî praised the vizirate of the
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.”

The Anonymous Chronicle also criticise the establishment of the janissary institution during the reign of Murad I. 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].

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.”

Andan evvel hisab difer bilmezlerdi, anlar te’lif ettiler. Akça yığıp hazîne itmek anlardan kaldı. Âli-i Osman bir sub kavm idi. Anlar ki geldiler dürlü dürlü hîleler başlayub takvâyı götürdiler.’

551 Ahmedî, Dastan-i Tevârîh-i, 36: ‘Gurbet ü halin ü fakrin bildi ol; Lutfıla anı ehl-i mansıb kıldı ol. Akibet mülke anı itdi vezir; Ne vizaret ki oldi bir ulu emir.’


Both Aşık Paşazade and Neşri 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 Tîrnovi: ‘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

\(^{555}\) Neşri, Cîhânnumâ, 160: ‘Vilk-ögli kâfir çerisiyle gâyet eyü ceng itdü.’


\(^{558}\) Gazavat-i Sultan Murad, 14: ‘Şöyle ma’lüm oluna kim, bu sefer-i nusret-me’âbıma gelüb Din-i İslam aşkına imdâd idib bizimle ma’anıfere varanların her ne mürâcaatları var ise, katında makbul-i hümûyunundur, eğer timar isteyene ve eğer zemmet isteyene ve eğer yenciçerilik isteyene ve eğer sipahilik isteyene ve eğer yörükülükten çıkmak isteyene her birinin murâdu maksudları makbûnumundur.’

\(^{559}\) Ibidem, 46: ‘ol kadar mâl-i ganimet aldílar kim, hesabi mûmkün değil idi. Kaba saba esbâba kimse balmayub sâfi altun ve guruş 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.’

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.

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 Isa. 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 Isa 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 Isa 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. 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.

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.

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
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 saldılar] 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 akıncı [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.’

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. Neşri’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

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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.\textsuperscript{566}

The following question arises: why was Sultan Murad II represented as the ideal ruler, while his grandfather Bâyezid I was harshly critici sed? 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 fundaments 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 kapikuulu 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 discreetly 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

\textsuperscript{566} Neşrî, Cihâmümâ, 304–306.
Il 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. 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’. 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. 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.

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’. 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. 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

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569 Ibidem.
570 Ibidem, 96.
that they had forgotten to consult, tyranny had filled the world and justice had disappeared.\textsuperscript{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, Neşri 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.’\textsuperscript{574} Neşri 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. Neşri 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 \textit{[mesveret]}, no one has ever regretted it. Every hope is realised through consultation, which is the key to solve the affairs.’\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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?’\textsuperscript{577}

\textsuperscript{573} Murâd-nâme, 225-226: ‘Akıl tanışığını unutdular, Zülüüm cevr dünyaya toldı tamâm, Adil dâd işidilmez oldı tamâm.’


\textsuperscript{575} Anonim Osmanlı Kroniği, 46: ‘Meşveretsüz işini iş sanmagıl; Kendi râyıla işe el sunmagıl; Meşveretden kimse hüsrâ bulmadı, Meşveret iden peşim olmadi; Meşveretle hâsil olur her âmid; Meşveretdür bağlı işlere kilid.’


\textsuperscript{577} Ibidem, 47: ‘Ehl-i devlet ol durur ki öğüt ala; Öğüt almayan kişi den ne gele. Âkılin pendin işitmeyen kişi, Ne aceb gerekiðür olursa baş.’
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.\textsuperscript{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 \textit{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.\textsuperscript{579}

Concerning the Hungarian embassy of 1444, the anonymous author of the \textit{Gazavatname} suggested that Sultan Murad II preferred an indirect role in the discussions, relegating the essential matters of the negotiation to his \textit{divan} and viziers: ‘When the \textit{pâdişah} [Murad II] had heard the letter, the embassy presented the gifts that it had brought and then left the Imperial Council. The \textit{pâdişah}, the refuge of the world, looked directly at the \textit{paşa’s} and said: ‘What do you think about this? This infidel asked to conclude a peace, but demanded Semendire in return.’ The \textit{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 \textit{pâdişah} ordered that it would be wise to accept the peace at an early stage and to strengthen the bargaining position.’\textsuperscript{580} Unfortunately, the page of the \textit{Gazavat} manuscript, which probably related the discussion in the \textit{divan}, is missing. The text resumes with Murad II saying that it would be wise to accept peace. The accounts of the \textit{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

\textsuperscript{578} Işıksel, \textit{La politique étrangère ottomane}, 55-57.
\textsuperscript{579} For his eyewitness account of the Milanese embassy to the princely court of Murad II, see: Broquière, \textit{Le voyage d’outremer}, 186-196.
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. Although Evrenoz-oğlu Ali Beg suggested proclaiming ‘plunder’, 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 Sultan Murâd, 15: ‘Ammâ Pâdişâh ziyâde melûl olub eyledüǧi işe nâdim oldu, ammâ çi fâide! Olan oldu ve dün gün endişi bu idi kim, eyvâh näzenîn Safya’ya ne yavuz iş eyledik. Bunu bize diyen dostumuz değil imiş, hayfâ gâfil deprenüb bir nekbetinin sözüne uyduk deyü müteellim olub çok hayıflandı.’
enemy did not have 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.’

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.’ The troops were called back. While they returned to their tents, many cursed Turahan as they had already broken 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. 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 under way 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. 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.

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585 Ibidem, 25: ‘bu iş benim dedigim gibi olursa güzel, ammâ âksi zuhûr edecek olursa Pâdişâh söz tutmaz derler. Hemân olisi budur ki, askerimiz gişi çekelim, görelim hakk ta’âlâ hazretlerinin takdîri ne yüzdendir.’

586 Ibidem: ‘Baka Turahan, iste bizim pişmiş aşımiza sovuk su katub neyledin ise eyledin, askerimizi geri çekerûb küffâr-i hâkisâra başlarımı bağıslattırdın.’

587 Gazavât-ı Sultân Murâd, 26, 28-29.

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’. While Oruç Beg, for instance, only mentioned in passing that the castle was not captured, 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-advices’ 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.

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589 Anonim Osmanlı Kroniği, 84: Sultan Murad aytıdı: ‘Yürüyincek, bir nice âdem helâk olur. Ben hod bir yigidi elli bunun gibi kal’aya virmezin’, deyüp kal’ayı koyup gidtiler.’
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 şehirvanî), 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 (şecat). Gentleness was the opposite of fury and anger. And if the animal (behîmi) instinct was controlled by the intellect, the virtue of honesty (ıffet) would develop, which produced generosity (şehâvet). \(^{591}\)

Those three powers of human spirit also had qualities, such as a positive exaggeration (ıfrat), 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.’

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. 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. 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’.

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

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93 Murad-nâme, 230: ‘Sensin zaman; Hata vü sevabında sensin zaman.’
94 Anonim Osmanlı Kroniği, 42, 46: ‘Tevekkül olmayıp mağrurluk ıderdi; ‘Kendi kendüye mağrur olup yüruü ve kimseyle tanışmadı’.
95 Oruç Bec Tarihi, 67: ‘bu taraftan kiral-ı mel’un daхи kendüye mağrur olup mağrurlugundan, tekebbürülğinden gevedesine derisine sigmayup, Sultan Murâd üzerine yörüyüb alayına at depüp…’
96 Ibidem, 79: ‘Kostantin текüри aman dilemeyüb, ol gayretle cenk idüp încîl’dede keşîşler alımaz diyüp, tekür dahı keşîşler sözine inanup, kendüye mağrur olup […] haşa Hazret-i Muhammed-i Mustafâ’ya dil uzadüp […] Hak tebâreo ve ta’âlâ dahi anlara bu belayi 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.’

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.’ 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. 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.’

598 Ibidem, 36.
He ordered to prepare an iron cage and they imprisoned Bâyezid Khan in this iron cage.\textsuperscript{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.’\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.’\textsuperscript{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.’\textsuperscript{604} A highly esteemed boon-


\textsuperscript{601} Ibidem, 165: ‘Bazılar eydür: Bâyezid Han şeytân gayretli ve tiz-nefesdi. İşitidi kim, memlekетini Temür-leng Tatar’la Karaman-öğli’na virdi; bilesinde zehri vardi. Gayretinden kendüyi sakınmayup, düşmen elinde zebûn olup, memleketi eller elinde görmedin öлем yegdir, diyüp kendü nefsini helâk eyledi.’

\textsuperscript{602} Nizam al-Mulk, The Book of Government, 91.

\textsuperscript{603} Ibidem, 92.

\textsuperscript{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. The ideal boon-companion also had to have a rank and a status. Neşri, for instance, noted that the former Byzantine aristocrat, Köse Mihal, had become the boon-companion [muhibbi] of Osman Gazi. Similar advices and advices concerning the sultan’s close companions (nedim) were also formulated in the Muradname. 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’.

Figure 16: A scene of feasting at the princely court of Sultan Murad IV (seventeenth century). Source: Topkapı Palace Museum, H2148, folio 11b.

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606 Ibidem, 94.
607 Neşri, Cihannüma, 39: ‘Harman Kaya tekvurı Köse Mihal […] Osman Beg’e nöker olup, cân u dilden muhibbi oldı. Göç aç çem memleketde müdebbirlik it.’
608 Murad-nâme, 277-280.
609 Ibidem, 242: ‘Sakın pâdişâhlık gurûriyle cân; içüp mest olayum 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, he 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.’ 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’.

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’. Similar views are also formulated in the chronicles. Neşri noted that Çelebi Mehmed I entertained himself (ayş u işreve meşgul olup) after he ascended the throne in Bursa.

In Neşri’s account, a spy of Mehmed informed him that his brother Süleyman Çelebi for indulging himself too much in drinking parties. 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

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610 Qur’an, 2:219.
612 Ibidem, 233: ‘Ki küstahlığa bulunmuya yol; Dimişler ki sultâna çok güldeden; Ziyanlu yoğ ol hâna çok güldeden; Ki çok güle sultân hasemle hadem; Sanurlar vücûdünü anun adem; Hükûm geçmez olur bozûr nizâm; Gider padişahlara ihtirâm’.
613 Neşrî, Cihannûma, 200.
pleasures, while praising the youngest son Çelebi Mehmed, who is portrayed as generous to his soldiers, lords and allies.\footnote{Dimitris Kastritsis gave several examples from the anonymous chroniclers. See: Kastritsis, The Sons of Bayezid, 213-214.}

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.\footnote{Neşrî, Cihannüma, 225: ‘Hacı Lala! Beni sohbetümden ayırma. Anun cânı yokdur ki, bunda gelüp benümile mukabil ola’.} 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.’\footnote{Neşrî, Cihannüma, 225: ‘bu kişiden devlet ve sa’âdet gitdi. Şöyle bilmiş olasız.’} 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.’\footnote{Ibidem, 227: ‘Merhûm bur hûb-suretlü ve mergûb-suretlü, sahâvetde bî-misl ve şecâ’atde bî-nazîrdi. Ve kibr ü hasedden beri olup, cemî halka eyü sanlu, adî ü dâd issi pâdişâhdıdı.’}

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.\footnote{Haniwaldus Anonime’ne Göre Sultan Bâyezid-i Velî (1481-1512), tr. Öztürk (İstanbul, 1997) 34-64.} 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
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.\textsuperscript{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.’\textsuperscript{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.’\textsuperscript{622} The janissaries claimed that Bâyezid II had to be succeeded by a dynamic sultan.

\textsuperscript{620} Haniwaldus Anonime’ne Göre Sultan Bâyezid, 34, 44-46, 59-61.
\textsuperscript{622} Ibidem, 60: ‘Sana gelince, senden bütün bu kötü duruma çare bulmanı beklememiz behûdedir. Senin nikristen yatakta yatmak zorunda kalıșından 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. 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. 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’.

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.
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, Neşri’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 Ahmedi, Âşık Paşazâde and Neşri, 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-
i 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-i 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-i 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 mindset 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 fi’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’ (din), 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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