Also by Caroline Finkel

The Administration of Warfare: The Ottoman Military Campaigns in Hungary, 1593–1606

The Seismicity of Turkey and Adjacent Areas: A Historical Review, 1500–1800 (with N. N. Ambraseys)

Osman's Dream
The Story of the Ottoman Empire 1300–1923

CAROLINE FINKEL
Sultan Mehmed II established firm rule over the Ottoman domains, yet he was unable to exert a similar authority over his own household. After his death, rivalry between his two surviving sons Bayezid and Cem (known as Cem Sultan) greatly disturbed the tranquillity of the state. Bayezid was successful in claiming the throne but the challenge to his right to rule posed by his charismatic younger brother continued until Cem’s death in 1495.

A second challenge was less easily dealt with, and continued to plague both Bayezid and his son and successor Selim I: although to western states the victorious Ottomans seemed a perpetual threat, the Ottomans themselves were preoccupied with danger from the east in the shape of the Safavid state of Iran and the allure it held for the Turcoman people of eastern Anatolia — whom Mehmed II had tried by force to bring into his empire.

At the time of Sultan Mehmed’s death, Cem was prince-governor of the Ottoman province of Karaman from his seat at Konya and Bayezid was at Amasya, administrative centre of the frontier province of Rum which he had governed — if only in name during his childhood — since 1454. He had served as commander of the east Anatolian frontier during his father’s reign and distinguished himself in campaigns against Uzun Hasan and the Akkoyunlu. His court at Amasya was a refuge for those who opposed his father, particularly during Mehmed’s final years when Grand Vezir Karamani Mehmed Pasha was working to increase the authority of central government over the provinces. Whereas Mehmed had educated himself in the Classical and Byzantine legacy to which he imagined himself heir, Bayezid sought the company of teachers of Islamic science and philosophy, poets and mystics, men whose intellectual roots lay in the east.1

Islamic practice requires that corpses be buried as soon as possible but Mehmed II’s body was neglected after it was secretly brought into Istanbul the night after he died, and it was three days before perfumed candles were lit beside it to temper the smell.2 Karamani Mehmed Pasha had attempted to realize what he supposed to be the late Sultan’s wish, the succession of
Prince Cem rather than Prince Bayezid, by sending both brothers notification of Mehmed’s death: Konya being closer to the capital than Amasya, he hoped that Cem would arrive to claim the throne before Bayezid. But the janissaries supported Bayezid, and Karamani Mehmed’s strategy enraged them. Despite the secrecy, news of Mehmed’s death had spread, and when Karamani Mehmed tried to prevent the janissaries from returning to Istanbul – which they had been forbidden to do – they killed him. His murder clearly demonstrated that the janissary corps, created by the Ottoman sultans to be their loyal guard and the elite force of their army, was an unreliable monster which put its own interests before those of its masters.

The arrival of the corpse in the capital and Karamani Mehmed Pasha’s murder provoked uncertainty and days of rioting. A former grand vezir, Ishak Pasha, who had remained in Istanbul in the absence of the Sultan and Grand Vezir on campaign, understood the importance of the unfolding drama. He wrote begging Bayezid to hurry and seized the initiative by proclaiming Bayezid’s eleven-year-old son Prince Korkud regent until his father should reach the capital. Such had been Mehmed’s fear of a rival within his own family during the last years of his reign that Korkud had been held in Istanbul in case he became a focus of loyalty for those opposed to his grandfather. The proclamation of Korkud’s regency quelled the looting and disorder and the pro-Bayezid faction rallied to halt Cem’s advance. Bayezid’s partisans included two of his sons-in-law who held positions of influence in ruling circles: the governor of Rumeli, Hersekzade Ahmed Pasha, and Sinan Pasha, governor of Anadolu province, who was instructed to block the routes between Konya and the capital. It seems that Sinan Pasha intercepted the messengers sent by the unfortunate Karamani Mehmed to Cem in Konya.

Although Bayezid could be assured of an enthusiastic welcome once he reached Istanbul, Cem had strong support in Anatolia. Cem’s army moved from Konya towards the old Ottoman capital of Bursa, meeting with resistance from Bayezid’s partisans along the way. Bayezid made the journey from Amasya to claim the throne with some apprehension, but arrived in Istanbul and was proclaimed sultan on 22 May. Although Cem’s army included troops from Karaman and tribesmen who resented Karaman’s recent incorporation into the Ottoman state it was not safe for him to remain in Anatolia and, taking his family and advisers with him, he went south across the Taurus mountains to Adana, seat of the Ramazanoğulları, clients of the Mamluks.

Bayezid appealed to his father-in-law Alaüdddevle, ruler of neighbouring Dulkadir, to apprehend Cem. That this appeal was ignored demonstrated that Cem was perceived as a real challenger for the throne whom Dulkadir – which like the Ramazanoğlu emirate was a buffer state between the Ottomans and the Mamluks, aligning itself first with one and then with the other of these great powers – could not afford to alienate. From Adana Cem continued to Antakya and then Aleppo, where he entered Mamluk territory, reaching Cairo in late September.

Cem and his entourage, which included his mother Çiçek Hatun, his wife and his immediate household, were greeted with great warmth and ceremony in the Cairo of Sultan Qa‘it Bay. Cem made the pilgrimage to Mecca, and on his return to Cairo was approached by a Karamanid prince, Kasım, brother of Uzun Hasan’s protégé Pir Ahmed. Like many possessed princes before him Kasım saw opportunity in a disputed succession and in the hope of regaining his own ancestral territories proposed to Cem an offensive alliance against Bayezid. Cem accordingly returned to Anatolia early in 1482, to meet Kasım and his army in Adana. They besieged Konya, where Bayezid’s eldest son, Abdullah, had been appointed prince-governor in Cem’s place, but were beaten off by Abdullah and Gedik Ahmed Pasha. Cem and Kasım marched towards Ankara, but news of Bayezid’s own approach from Istanbul compelled them to retreat into Cilicia. Here Cem received an envoy from Bayezid offering him a sum of gold and the opportunity to retire to Jerusalem – but Cem had no intention of withdrawing.
It is not clear why Bayezid thought Cem might agree to settle in Jerusalem, a city deep inside Mamluk territory. Not only were relations between the Mamluk and Ottoman states less than cordial, but Jerusalem was still claimed by western monarchs harbouring dreams of continuing the crusade in Greater Syria. King Ferrante of Naples styled himself ‘King of Jerusalem’ in letters to Sultan Bayezid negotiating the Ottoman withdrawal from Otranto in 1481–2,12 and Charles VIII, who became king of France in 1483, was even more ambitious: he not only used the title ‘King of Jerusalem’ but also, like Mehmed, imagined himself the successor to the Byzantine emperors.13

As it had after Tamerlane’s defeat of the Sultan’s namesake Bayezid I in 1402, the Ottoman Empire again seemed in danger of being partitioned. Kasm Bey of Karaman, less optimistic than Cem about the prospect of successfully pursuing Bayezid across Anatolia, proposed that Cem should instead sail to Rumeli and foment rebellion there (perhaps he had in mind the example of Musa, son of Bayezid I, some seventy years before). But Cem could count on no natural constituency in Rumeli, and had no intention of continuing his struggle from there. His support lay in Anatolia; outside this region he would have ranged against him all the resources of the regular army inherited by Bayezid as the legitimate sultan.14 Obtaining a safe-conduct from the Knights Hospitallers of St John on Rhodes, Cem set sail with a suite of some thirty companions and servants from the Mediterranean port of Korikos (Corycos) on the south coast of Anatolia and reached Rhodes on 29 July 1482. Kasm had appealed to the Knights for weapons to further his Rumelian adventure but they, reluctant to antagonize Bayezid openly, refused to supply him.15 Cem spent a month in Rhodes during which time he authorized the Grand Master of the Order, Pierre d’ Aubusson, to negotiate with Bayezid on his behalf.16 He then sailed for France where the Knights could keep him safe from his brother.20

At around this time Cem sent Bayezid a couplet in which he expressed his sense of injustice and sadness at his situation:

A smile on bed of roses dost thou lie in all delight,
In doulour’s stove-room mid the ashes couch I – why is this?

To which Bayezid replied:

To me was empire on the Fore-eternal day decreed,
Yet thou to Destiny wilt yield thee not – why, why is this?
‘A pilgrim to the Holy Shrines am I’ thou dost declare,
And yet thou dost for earthy Sultan-ship sigh – why is this?21

The very day after Cem quit Rhodes for France, ambassadors left the island for the Ottoman court. The Knights were considering how to rally support for a crusade against the vulnerable Sultan, but finding no allies, hastened to renew their peace treaty with the Ottomans. This treaty, ratified by the end of the year, was broadly similar to that agreed on Mehmed II’s accession. Possession of Cem gave the Knights enormous leverage over Bayezid and confidence that the siege of 1480 would not be repeated, at least for the present. Furthermore, they could afford to betray Cem’s trust: rather than acting to protect Cem from Bayezid, d’ Aubusson charged his envoy in a secret memorandum to intimate to Bayezid that he was willing to discuss Cem’s position. Bayezid was alive to the harm Cem might do as the figurehead of a Christian offensive against his empire and, as the secret memorandum had promised, the envoy sent to take the treaty to Rhodes for ratification by the Grand Master struck a further bargain: reminiscent of the deal between Mehmed II and the Byzantine Emperor Constantine XI over the pretender Orhan, it stipulated that the Knights would keep Cem under guard in France in return for an annual payment by Bayezid of 40,000 gold ducats.18

Cem reached Nice on 17 October 1482, and allegedly expressed his amazement at his exotic surroundings in the following couplet:

How wondrous nice a town this town of Nice,
Where none is questioned, what’er his caprice!19

Two executions followed Cem’s departure west. Gedik Ahmed Pasha, former grand vezir and grand admiral, had incurred Bayezid’s displeasure for his failure to apprehend Cem when he fled to Egypt; now that the immediate threat posed by Cem had receded, Bayezid had Gedik Ahmed murdered in Edirne. In Istanbul Iskender Pasha, warden of the city, was ordered to strangle Cem’s young son Oğuz (like Korkud, he had been kept in Istanbul as a hostage since Mehmed II’s time), but found himself unable to carry out the grisly murder with his own hands. He administered poison instead.20

Bayezid feared Cem was either plotting on his own or, worse, being used by his enemies for their own ends. But Cem’s enforced move to France took him further from the throne. Any offensive mounted by Kasm from Rumeli would, he knew, be foiled by the Ottoman fleet, which was under Bayezid’s control. Cem also understood that he could expect no help from the West. The Italian states were reluctant to adventure against a proven foe – Naples had regained Otranto, but the shock of the Ottoman seizure of the fortress in 1480 persuaded the King to strike a peace21 – and though while he was in Rhodes Cem might have envisaged the possibility that King Louis XI would back him, France proved uninterested in promoting a crusade against Bayezid.22

From Nice, Cem was moved inland, from castle to castle in south-east
France, his captors motivated by the substantial annual sum they received from the Sultan to guarantee his confinement. Bayezid sent various agents to ascertain his brother’s whereabouts and report on what he was doing.\textsuperscript{23} One such was a seaman named Barak, who in 1486 travelled from Istanbul across Italy bound for France, a hazardous journey during which he was robbed. He reached Genoa from where he was taken to Turin to see Charles, Duke of Savoy, who, having met Cem earlier and tried to help him escape, was at first suspicious of Barak but agreed to give him a guide if Barak could pay his expenses. Barak failed to raise enough money and took ship from Genoa, intending to return to Istanbul. Alighting on the coast at Rapallo, south of Genoa, however, he overheard a significant conversation – possibly in a tavern: Cem was to be transferred by the Knights to Italy. This prompted Barak to return to Genoa where he managed to raise the money he needed to continue his quest and, with the guide provided by the Duke, set off westwards from Turin; they crossed the Alps by the Mont Cenis pass, following reported sightings of ‘Turks’ by local informants, until they reached the remote fortress of Bourganeuf in central France, some forty kilometres west of the town of Aubusson, birthplace of Pierre d’Aubusson, Grand Master of the Knights of St John.

As Barak reported to his interrogators after his return to Istanbul:

\begin{quote}
We asked the tavern-keeper ‘Is it time for mass?’ . . . ‘Yes’, he replied. He [i.e. his guide] took me to the church. On entering the church we saw a lot of Knights, each reading from a book in his hand. I stood in a secluded corner.

The man conducting me came up and pulled me by the shoulder, and we went out of the church. We saw a number of men in turbans outside the castle by the moat. I saw six persons in turbans. He himself [i.e. Cem] was wearing a garment of black velvet and was chatting with a man with a full beard – he looked like a civilian. He himself had his beard cut short and let his moustaches grow long, but his face was pale: I asked [my guide] about this and it appears that at that time he had just recovered from illness.\textsuperscript{24}
\end{quote}

This was as close as he came to Cem. There was no further help from Charles of Savoy, who had a rebellion on his hands, and Bayezid’s agent Barak seems to have returned to Istanbul.\textsuperscript{25} Spurred on by Cem’s mother Çiçek Hatun, who had remained in Egypt after her son left, the Mamluk sultan Qa’it Bay had on various occasions during the early months of Bayezid’s reign corresponded with the Knights of Rhodes about the possibility of having Cem sent back to Cairo, but this was always refused.\textsuperscript{26} He intensified his efforts after 1485 when Mamluks and Ottomans were at war, and in 1487–8 approached King Charles VIII of France through an agent of Lorenzo de’ Medici and offered 100,000 gold ducats for the return of Cem to Cairo.\textsuperscript{27} But by this time the negotiations of which Barak had overheard mention were under way: the Pope, Innocent VIII, was seeking to persuade King Charles that the interests of Christendom would be best served if Cem were handed over to him. In March 1489 Cem reached Rome and the Vatican; he was 29 years old.

With Cem in his hands, the Pope began to rally support for an ambitious crusade against Bayezid, and in autumn 1489 sent an envoy to Qa’it Bay to initiate negotiations for Mamluk help.\textsuperscript{28} Qa’it Bay, still hoping to have Cem returned to his custody, promised Innocent that the former Crusader kingdom of Jerusalem could be re-established if he sent Cem to Egypt.\textsuperscript{29} But in 1490 Matthias Corvinus – who had tried for years to gain custody of Cem, whether on his account or on behalf of Qa’it Bay\textsuperscript{30} – died, and a new diplomatic era began. Ambassadors were exchanged between Bayezid and the Pope and an agreement eventually reached which was essentially the same as that between the Knights of Rhodes and Bayezid. The Pope undertook to be Cem’s custodian and not to use him against Bayezid, in exchange for which he would receive an annual sum of 40,000 gold ducats – and Christian relics such as the head of the lance that had pierced Christ’s side at the crucifixion, preserved in Istanbul since the fall of Constantinople. The bargain was concluded with much bad faith on both sides.\textsuperscript{31}

As Cem’s years in captivity went by, boredom set in. In the impregnable tower constructed to house him at Bourganeuf – which survives today – his life in exile with only a few servitors for company began to pall, and his zest for pursuing his quarrel with his brother\textsuperscript{32} With Cem in his hands, the Pope undertook to be Cem’s custodian and not to use him against Bayezid, in exchange for which he would receive an annual sum of 40,000 gold ducats – and Christian relics such as the head of the lance that had pierced Christ’s side at the crucifixion, preserved in Istanbul since the fall of Constantinople. The bargain was concluded with much bad faith on both sides.\textsuperscript{31} As Cem’s years in captivity went by, boredom set in. In the impregnable tower constructed to house him at Bourganeuf – which survives today – his life in exile with only a few servitors for company began to pall, and his zest for pursuing his quarrel with his brother\textsuperscript{32} Once he had arrived in Rome, considerable sums were spent on his comfort but Cem wanted nothing so much as to return to his homeland, or failing that, he wrote, to live out his days in Iran, the Arab lands or India.\textsuperscript{33} Even with the possibility of a crusade looming, he told the Pope that he could not abandon his faith ‘even for the rule of the whole world’.\textsuperscript{34} In letters taken to Bayezid from Rome, Cem expressed his great desire to leave his prison, and must have been sincere when he said that he was ready to forget their differences and swear allegiance to his brother.\textsuperscript{35} As a captive in Rome, Cem might have been aware of a drama being played out even further from his homeland that would have repercussions there. On 2 January 1492 the city of Granada in Andalusia in southern Spain, seat of the Islamic Nasrid dynasty, fell to the armies of Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabella of Castile; a month later a magnificent pageant was enacted in Rome to celebrate the Spanish victory. The fall of Constantinople was still fresh in the minds of Christendom, and the triumph over the ‘Moors’ was welcomed as some revenge for the many tribulations suffered
at the hands of the Ottomans. Sultan Mehmed II had received a delegation of Andalusian Muslims seeking his protection in 1477, the year before the Spanish Inquisition officially began, and Bayezid offered them asylum after the fall of Granada. Although not forced to make the choice between conversation or emigration until 1501, many accepted this offer, and within a few years three large churches in Thessalonica were converted into mosques to serve those who took refuge with the Ottomans. After various vicissitudes, the remnants of the Andalusian Muslim community were expelled from the Iberian peninsula between 1609 and 1614.

The Jews of Spain, called Sephardim, were less fortunate. They had been under pressure long before the Inquisition and many had converted to Catholicism. However, the Inquisition tested the sincerity of converts and many were found wanting and put to death. Practicing Jews were expelled from Spain in 1492 and emigrated to Portugal, France, and other countries of Europe. Many went to live in the Ottoman Empire, where they found Greek-speaking Jews, called Romaniotes, and German Jews, called Ashkenazim, who had also been expelled from their homelands. Sultan Bayezid welcomed the Spanish Jews, reportedly with the observation: 'Can you call such a king [i.e. Ferdinand] wise and intelligent? He is impover­ishing his country and enriching my kingdom'.

The greatest wave of Jewish immigration into the Ottoman lands took place between 1492 and 1512 in the wake of the persecutions which spread across Europe during this period. Bayezid wished these refugees to concentrate in provincial centres, and there were soon Sephardi communities in many towns of the empire. They were not welcomed in Istanbul, however, and new syna­agogues in the capital were closed down and prominent Jews encouraged to convert to Islam.

The equilibrium established in 1490 by the agreement reached between Innocent VIII and Bayezid concerning Cem did not last. The Ottoman pretender was used as a pawn in European politics as Charles VIII attempted to make good his claim to the Kingdom of Naples. In 1492 Innocent was succeeded by Alexander VI, and the new pope had a pressing reason for standing by the agreement with Bayezid, to whom he wrote of the French king’s plans:

... the king of France is pushing on toward Rome with the greatest land and sea forces, supported by the Milanese, Bretons, Portuguese, Normans and others in order to wrest from us Jem Sultan, the brother of his Highness, and to seize the kingdom of Naples and oust King Alfonso.

Bayezid’s reply to the Pope, together with money sent to Rome for Cem’s pension, was intercepted and made public, a damming condemnation of the Pope as an ally of the enemy of Christendom. Charles, who was at Florence, moved south through Italy and reached a terrified Rome on the last day of 1494. He demanded that Cem be handed over to him. Pope Alexander agreed under duress, on the understanding that it should be for six months only, and against payment of a surety. Cem was duly transferred into Charles’s custody and continued towards Naples with the King’s army.

King Alfonso of Naples, successor to King Ferrante, turned to Bayezid for help. According to a contemporary Venetian writer, the Sultan truly feared that Charles might take Cem into the Balkans and raise the people of the region against him: the Ottoman ambassador to Venice recorded that the French King counted on support from disinherited scions of the noble houses of Byzantium and Serbia and Scanderbeg’s Kastriot clan. The Sultan reinforced the Dardanelles defences and prepared his fleet. Panic spread in Istanbul where he inspected the walls and set up gun positions to defend the city.

Two days after Charles and his army reached Naples, Cem died there in the night of 24–25 February 1495 at the age of 36, after thirteen years in exile. There were rumours that poison had brought about his end, but it seems that he died of natural causes. Even in death he found no rest. Bayezid sent a messenger to request that the body be sent to him in exchange for further Christian relics in his possession: without the body, he said, he had no proof of Cem’s demise. Charles moved the corpse to the strong fortress of Gaeta on the coast north of Naples, and when in November 1496 the French withdrew from Gaeta the coffin was handed over to Prince Frederick of Naples in exchange for French prisoners in Neapolitan hands. Naples needed the Sultan’s support against its enemies, and Bayezid threatened to nullify the peace between them if Naples did not send the body to Istanbul. Further threats brought results, and by early 1499 Cem’s body was on its way to Istanbul, crossing the Adriatic from San Cataldo in the heel of Italy to Vlorë on the Albanian coast. From there it was borne home, probably by sea, met with great pomp after passing Gelibolu, and taken to Bursa. Here Cem was finally interred alongside his eldest brother Mustafa, in the funeral complex of his grandfather, Sultan Murad II. His tomb can still be visited. The extraordinary story of Cem’s life captured the imagination of writers in both east and west and has continued to provide inspiration to the present.

He is depicted as a tragic figure on an epic scale, a true Renaissance prince – educated and artic­ulate and the author of well-regarded poetry – who realized the folly of his political ambitions too late to save himself from elegant captivity and a mysterious death.

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With Cem buried, Sultan Bayezid was free at last, but this episode in
Ottoman history was remarkable for heralding a change in the style of
Ottoman diplomacy vis-à-vis the Christian powers. Unlike the diplomatic
agreements of the past, whereby one state would mediate relations with
the Ottomans on behalf of others whose interests were affected, negotia-
tions over Cem’s custody had been conducted individually with each state.
Bayezid had been able to exploit the rivalry between them and, from the
mid 1480s, direct bilateral relations with the European states began to
outweigh the collective agreements of the past. The first Ottoman envoys
were sent to European courts at this time – to France in 1483, to Muscovy
in 1495 and to the Holy Roman Emperor in 1496-7. Although both
Christian and Muslim states depicted their relations as being perpetually
hostile, Cem’s odyssey demonstrated the extent to which political expedi-
ency rather than religious ideology dictated their attitude. It was appar-
tent to all that Charles VIII’s France was a far more immediate threat than the
Ottoman Empire to peace in Italy, and the Ottomans exploited this situa-
tion with acumen.

The years during which Bayezid was occupied with the fate of Cem also
demonstrated that despite Mehmed II’s remarkable achievements, the integrity
of the Ottoman Empire could not be taken for granted. Cem’s departure for
Rhodes in July 1482 had given Sultan Bayezid some respite from domestic
turmoil. Prince Kasım of Karaman, who had made common cause with Cem,
sought a pardon from the Sultan and in return for renouncing his claims to independence was appointed governor of the southern Anatolian
province of İç-il (roughly, Cilicia), formerly part of the emirate of Karaman. An elderly man, he died in 1483. Karaman could now be administered as an integral part of the Ottoman domains but the situation remained tense. As late as 1500, Bayezid was forced to despatch troops to defeat another claimant to Karaman, Kasım’s nephew Mustafa, who appeared from Iran with an army in support of an uprising there.

In the competition for the allegiance of the Turcoman tribal population living in the buffer region between Mamluks and Ottomans, Sultan Qa’it
Bay acted decisively to contain the Ottoman threat to his domains. In March 1486 Mamluk troops clashed on a battlefield near Adana
with a combined force of Karagöz Mehmed’s units from Karaman and an
army sent from Istanbul under the command of Bayezid’s son-in-law
Hersekzade Ahmed Pasha, now governor of Anadolu. Karagöz Mehmed and his men fled (he was later arrested and executed) and Hersekzade
Ahmed was captured and sent to Cairo. The Mamluks took control of
Adana, Tarsus and the Cilician plain. The following year the grand vezir,
Daud Pasha, led into the field an imperial army joined this time by
Alaidddevle’s forces from Dulkadir. Against Alaidddevle’s advice, the original plan to march against the Mamluks was abandoned and the army re-
directed to suppress an uprising of the Varsak and Turgudlu tribes. Having
succeeded in this, Daud Pasha returned home knowing that he had reduced the risk of an attack in the rear whenever the Ottomans resumed their campaigns against the Mamluks.

In 1488 the Ottomans launched a two-pronged attack on the Mamluks
by land and sea. Hersekzade Ahmed Pasha, lately freed from captivity in
Cairo, commanded a fleet in support of the land operations, while the army
was commanded by the governor of Rumeli, Hadım (‘Eunuch’) Ali Pasha. As it moved into disputed territory, the army captured a number of fortresses from the Mamluks and their clients. Both antagonists attempted to attract assistance from the West – because of its treaty relations with the Mamluks Venice refused Bayezid the use of Cyprus as a base, while Qa’it Bay approached the other Italian states with equal lack of success. There was reliance in Rhodes when the Ottoman fleet sailed by without making any
demands, for while the Knights of St John maintained diplomatic and
commercial relations with the Mamluks, it was the Ottomans they feared. Venice sent a fleet to Cyprus which prevented Hersekzade Ahmed’s armada
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landing; instead it docked at Iskenderun on the Anatolian coast to confront the Mamluk forces as they came north through the pass from Syria. But a great storm wrecked the Ottoman fleet and the Mamluks were able to continue towards Adana unimpeded. Hadim Ali’s army suffered a great defeat in the ensuing battle and fled, pursued by Turcoman tribal forces. It was small consolation that a Mamluk unit returning to Aleppo was routed by Hersekzade Ahmed. Hadim Ali withdrew into Karaman and tried to regroup his scattered forces. Many of the Ottoman provincial commanders who had fled the battlefield were taken back to Istanbul and imprisoned in the Bosporus fortress of Rumeli Hisari. Adana castle resisted siege for three months before its Ottoman garrison handed it over to the Mamluks. Defeat cost the Ottomans the support of the few Turcoman tribes over whom they had been able to exert influence, and also led Alâeddindevle of Dulkadir to be more open about his preference for the Mamluks as the stronger power in the region. The Ottomans responded by favouring his brother Şahbudak as ruler of Dulkadir, but they were unable to enforce his candidacy and he was sent by Alâeddindevle as a captive to Egypt where he, too, took the Mamluk side. 58

Yet the Mamluks were unable to exploit their advantage. In 1490 their army pushed into Karaman to besiege Kayseri in central Anatolia, only to withdraw when it was learned that Hersekzade Ahmed Pasha was marching against them. The Mamluks could no longer bear the cost of a conflict that had become bogged down in stalemate, and they faced internal opposition to the war. The Ottomans were aware that their own forces might have to confront a crusade from the West, and a peace was agreed the following year: the frontier between the two states was fixed at the Gilek pass commanding the route over the eastern Taurus Mountains, and the Mamluks retained their influence in the Adana region. 59

The inconclusive Ottoman–Mamluk war having already ended when Cem died in 1495, Bayezid was then free to turn his attention westwards. The Venetian envoy in Istanbul saw the extensive preparations being undertaken at the arsenal in the Golden Horn in 1499, but could not believe that either his republic or its overseas territories could be the target: Venice had been careful to keep its distance from any plans for a crusade being discussed during the years of Cem’s captivity, and had been at peace with the Ottomans since 1479. He thought instead, as did the Knights, that the armada would sail against Rhodes. 60

It seemed that Bayezid had always been determined to complete his father’s project of driving the Venetians from their remaining outposts. Naufaktos surrendered to a land and sea attack on 28 August 1499 and the Ottomans fortified the narrow entrance to the Gulf of Corinth to the west with a pair of opposed fortresses, just as they had fortified their other strategic waterways, the Bosporus and the Dardanelles. Venice itself was harassed in October by raids which came to within 30 kilometres of the city. Early in 1500 a Venetian emissary sought the return of Naufaktos in an audience at the Ottoman court, only to be informed that the Sultan intended to take over Venice’s outposts on the eastern Adriatic coast as well, and make the Adriatic the frontier between his domains and Venice; later that year, Methoni, Koroni and Pylos (Navarino) on the coast of the south-western Peloponnese fell to Ottoman naval attack. 61

Putting aside their disputes, and after much diplomatic wrangling, Venice, the Papacy and Hungary entered into a league against the Ottomans in May 1501. Venice still retained the islands of Cyprus, Crete and Corfu, but the number of its minor possessions was dwindling. It stepped up its attacks on Ottoman territory: later in the same year a joint French–Venetian force landed on Lesbos, off north-west Anatolia, but was driven off. 62 In the following year Venetian forces landed on the south-western coast of Anatolia at Fethiye (Makri) and pillaged the surrounding area. 63 Despite the assistance of its allies Venice could not improve upon these paltry shows of strength; it sued for a peace, and a treaty concluded in 1503 saw Bayezid closer to attaining his goal of driving Venice out of the Balkans.

Sea-power had won the Venetian war for Bayezid, and as its end approached, he began a full-scale revamping of his navy. Lighter, more manoeuvrable ships were built and manpower was greatly increased. No major naval operations were undertaken for some years, but the fleet was employed to keep maritime routes open, protecting commercial and other shipping from the pirates, both foreign and indigenous, who operated in the waters of the eastern Mediterranean. 64

The possession of a powerful navy opened up new vistas for the Ottomans, as it did for other European states. After Vasco da Gama rounded the Cape of Good Hope in November 1497 and reached India the following spring, Portuguese commercial interests began to threaten centuries-old Arab commercial networks in the Indian Ocean; in particular, they threatened Mamluk control of the spice trade from south and south-east Asia. Mamluk naval strength proved insufficient to protect either this trade, or trade closer to home: in the same years as the Portuguese became active in the Indian Ocean Rhodian piracy was increasing in the eastern Mediterranean, and the defeat by a Rhodian fleet of a Mamluk convoy carrying timber from the north Syrian coast in 1508 exposed Mamluk impotence at sea. The Mamluks were obliged to call on Bayezid’s help, and Bayezid was thus able to achieve by friendship what he had been unable to gain by force: an acknowledgement of his superiority over the Mamluks in the Middle

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Eastern power struggle. In 1510 an embassy to the Ottoman court was rewarded with substantial aid in raw materials and supplies for the Mamluk navy. In addition to their expertise in naval matters, the Ottomans possessed artillery the equal of that used by the Europeans; they provided the Mamluk navy with cannon to use against the Portuguese and also sent their own officers to command the Mamluk fleet.65

This inability of the Mamluks to protect their shipping against the Portuguese presented Bayezid with a magnificent opportunity to intervene in Mamluk affairs and further his own interests. His motives were various: Ottoman access to the Indian Ocean would allow him a share of the lucrative spice trade, while his support for the Mamluks would discourage them from allying with a new enemy now appearing on the eastern frontier – the Safavid shah Isma’il – and also neutralize any possible Mamluk help to his son Korkud who, unhappy with the choice of sub-province he was ordered to govern, had gone to Cairo in 1509, possibly in preparation for a challenge to Bayezid’s rule. Bayezid’s calculations bore fruit.

Although the Portuguese arrival in the Indian Ocean and subsequent Ottoman intervention there initiated a long struggle between the two, both powers realized considerable financial and strategic advantage from their engagement in a part of the world with which they had hitherto been little concerned. Even more importantly, Bayezid’s intervention in Mamluk affairs opened the way for his son Selim’s conquest of Syria and Egypt a few years later. But before that, the Safavid state of Iran presented a challenge to the foundations of Ottoman legitimacy as aggressive as any previously encountered. The struggle for pre-eminence within the Islamic world was every bit as contentious as the rivalry between Christian and Muslim states, and for the first three hundred years of its existence posed a greater threat to the empire of the Ottomans.

If the early part of Bayezid’s reign was dominated by the fate of his brother Cem, his last years were plagued by the Kızılbaş (‘Red Head’) phenomenon. Kızılbaş was a term used to describe those who wore tall red bonnets with twelve folds as a way of expressing their devotion to the Twelve Imams of Shia Islam. Unlike the Karmanids and Akkoyunlu who with the Mamluks and Ottomans espoused Sunni Islam, the new power arising on the Ottoman eastern frontier, the fledgling Safavid state, would develop an ideology underpinned by the beliefs of the minority Shia branch of Islam. Religious practice and law vary little between Sunni and Shia Islam – the main difference is doctrinal: Shia Islam limits leadership of the Islamic community to the family of the Prophet Muhammad and does not recognize the legitimacy of the Umayyad and Abbasid dynasties who had succeeded to this role.

SULTAN OF THE FAITHFUL

Devotees of the ‘Twelver’ creed believe that the Twelfth Imam, the leader of the Muslim community, has merely been hidden from his followers since he disappeared in 940 CE and will appear again to usher in the kingdom of heaven on earth.66 This creed was an Islamic equivalent of the messianic movements of early modern Europe.

The Safavid state took its name from Sheikh Safi al-Din Ishak, the founder of the Safavid religious order which arose in Ardabil in northwestern Iran. Sheikh Safi al-Din died in 1334, and historical convention ascribes the foundation of the state he inspired to 1501, when the fourteen-year-old Safavid shah Isma’il led an army which seized Tabriz, capital of the rump Akkoyunlu state, from its ruler who was his cousin. This was the decisive battle in a long war of succession among the Akkoyunlu princes that had begun before Isma’il’s birth with the death of Uzun Hasan (who was Isma’il’s maternal grandfather) in 1474 and intensified during the last years of the fifteenth century. The transformation of the Safavids between Sheikh Safi al-Din’s time and Isma’il’s – from what a modern historian characterizes as a ‘more or less conventional Sunni sūfi organization, gradually acquiring disciples and property in a not especially unworldly fashion’67 into a state exhibiting extreme antipathy to the Ottomans combined with a radical stance towards what is commonly understood as Sunni ‘orthodox’ Islam – is still poorly understood. Indeed, using the term ‘orthodox’ to describe the Islam of the Ottomans – and ‘heterodox’ to describe that of the Safavids – fails adequately to convey a sense of the variety of religious practices in a region where institutions to enforce ‘right’ patterns of observance were rudimentary, and where popular beliefs were little affected by bookish Islam.

The Safavid order was founded in the rugged uplands of Anatolia and western Iran at a time when there was no effective central power in this culturally diverse region to impose the Sunni creed of the central Arab lands. The teachings of the Safavid sheikhs of Ardabil did not at first differ much from those of Sunni Islam. A key figure in the transformation in Safavid beliefs was Isma’il’s paternal grandfather Sheikh Junayd, who came to head the Safavid religious order in 1447 – Junayd’s militant teachings would have shocked contemporary adherents of both Sunni and Twelver Shia Islam alike. Junayd became so influential that he was exiled by the Karakoyunlu leader Jihanshah, himself a Shiite, in whose territory Ardabil lay, and found refuge with Jihanshah’s enemy Uzun Hasan. Junayd won ready adherents among the Turcoman tribes of eastern Anatolia, north Syria and Azerbaijan at the very time that Ottoman power was reaching into these regions. He attracted, among other groups, the descendants of the followers of Sheikh Bedreddin, who some fifty years before had complicated the course of the
Ottoman civil war. Yet, paradoxically, Junayd was among the holy men sent money and gifts by Murad II, whose father Mehmed I had had Sheikh Bedreddin executed.

Almost half a century before Junayd came to head the Safavid order in 1447 and Sultan Mehmed II’s conquest of Constantinople in 1453. Tamerlane had visited Ardabil as he returned to Samarkand after his defeat of Bayezid I in 1402. The incumbent sheikh persuaded Tamerlane to free the prisoners of war he had taken on his campaigns in Anatolia, and Tamerlane also sent letters to the reinstated emirs of Anatolia asking them to exempt these former captives from taxation. Presumably this, too, fostered an inclination among them and their descendants in favour of the Safavids.

Like Mehmed II before him, Isma’il was very young when he came to the throne and again, like Mehmed, was encouraged by his advisers towards the direction he took. His aggressive adoption of an ideology for the Safavids which contrasted so markedly with that of the Ottomans was a political move with a stark religious dimension that polarized the two states and exacerbated their territorial rivalry in eastern Anatolia. To the extent that Uzun Hasan’s challenge to Sultan Mehmed II had been religious, it was a challenge for primacy in the Sunni Islamic world. Competition for power in eastern Anatolia and beyond was about to become more intense and vicious than ever before. Dissidents in the region saw the Ottomans as a westward-looking Byzantine-Balkan power, particularly after the capture of Constantinople, and turned east for salvation. Isma’il’s message provided an avenue of protest for these reluctant subjects of the sultan – in particular the nomadic Turcoman tribes of the mountinous rim of Anatolia, whose loyalty to the Ottomans was demanded merely as the result of accidental conquest – allowing them to voice their preference for a state which extolled the virtues of rebellion. The danger for the Ottomans was that Isma’il’s new populist creed attracted those whose religious and political beliefs were poorly-defined and who saw little place for themselves in the centralized Ottoman regime being built on the ruins of other Anatolian emirates which had once seemed equally viable. The disenfranchized tribal populations of the Ottoman–Iranian borderlands were a liability for the Ottomans who, while they did not want them participating in the running of their state, did not want to lose them to the Safavids who would use them to promote their own military and political interests.

Safavid doctrine declared that the shah was the reincarnation of the Prophet Muhammad’s son-in-law and cousin, Imam ‘Ali – succession from ‘Ali, at the least, was a necessary condition for succession to the Shia imamate – who was himself the manifestation of God in human form. and western travellers who visited Iran in the early sixteenth century reported that Isma’il was revered by his followers as a god. The term Kizilbaş was first used in the time of Isma’il’s father Sheikh Haydar. Shah Isma’il’s proclamation that with the establishment of the Safavid state his adherents had at last found a territory they could call their own led thousands to rally to him in expectation of the imminent reappearance of the Twelfth Imam. He wrote of his followers that ‘no one can be a Kizilbaş unless his heart is pure and his bloody entrails are like rubies.’ In 1502 a rumour that there were some 5,000 Kizilbaş in Istanbul prompted Sultan Bayezid to take the first measures to suppress their activity by closing the city gates and arresting suspects. Fearing that Kizilbaş sympathizers would take refuge with Isma’il, he banned movement across the Ottoman-Safavid frontier – but to little effect.

While he was prince-governor of Amasya, Bayezid had patronized the emerging Halveti order of dervishes whose sheikhs had had links with Uzun Hasan and whose teachings had certain features in common with Safavid doctrine. Mehmed II, who was suspicious of holy men from the eastern provinces, had expelled an influential Halveti sheikh from Istanbul, but when he succeeded his father Bayezid invited one of the Sheikh’s foremost pupils to settle in the capital, and the order flourished. Bayezid’s own mystical leanings may explain in part, at least, why he was anxious to avoid open conflict with his new Safavid neighbour. In the winter of 1504–5 he wrote to Isma’il to condemn his treatment of Sunni Muslims, warning him that good relations could develop only if such persecution stopped. A raid into Safavid territory in 1505 by Bayezid’s son Selim provoked only a mild reaction from Isma’il; the mutual wariness of Isma’il and Bayezid was still apparent in 1507, when Bayezid gave his tacit blessing to Isma’il to allow him to cross Ottoman territory to campaign against the emirate of Dulkadar. Like Uzun Hasan before him, Isma’il had for some time been in contact with Venice in the hope of initiating an anti-Ottoman alliance, but without success; in 1508, for example, when he renewed proposals for an alliance, Venice demurred on the grounds that it had to honour its peace treaty with the Ottomans. Shah Isma’il gradually brought the former Akkoyunu territories under his rule and by 1508 had reached Iraq and taken Baghdad, the former seat of the caliphate.

Bayezid’s disinclination to provoke Shah Isma’il contrasted with his son Prince Selim’s eagerness to confront what he saw as the menace of the Kizilbaş. Selim, the third of Bayezid’s four surviving sons, was the first of Bayezid’s four surviving sons and for many years
years prince-governor of the province of Trabzon on the impoverished borderlands of the empire where the threat posed by the Kızılbaş to the integrity of the Ottoman domains was most evident, was infuriated by his father’s inactivity. This tension between father and son was exacerbated by the incompatibility of the lands Bayezid had assigned for his support: in a letter to his father, Selim complained bitterly about Trabzon – its inhospitality, the lack of ready supplies, and the unproductivity of the lands Bayezid had assigned for his support:

Since no grain ripens in this province and there is always paucity and poverty, whoever is [prince-governor] is weak and helpless. Produce comes from outside. Thus, ever since I came here, grain has come by boat or from the Turks. There has never been much value to this place and nothing has changed. I don’t even have the capacity to build my own boat... The upshot is that it is impossible to describe a situation of such neediness.

Soon after, Selim deserted the province for the court of his own son, Suleyman – the future Suleyman the Magnificent – who was prince-governor at Feodosiya of the province of Kefe, aided in this act of defiance by his father-in-law, the khan of the Crimea Mengli Giray. Selim’s disobedience to Sultan Bayezid and his aggressive policy toward the Safavids shaped the course of Ottoman history over the coming years.

In 1511 the province of Teke in south-west Anatolia was the scene of a major Kızılbaş uprising led by an adherent of Shah Isma‘ıl’s teachings to whom Sultan Bayezid regularly sent alms. The missionaries of this holy man – one Karabiykhoğlu (‘Son of Blackbeard’) Hasan Halife, popularly known as Şahkülu (‘Slave of the Shah’) – not only incited disobedience to Ottoman rule in Anatolia but also fomented rebellion in Rumel; several were arrested. Early in 1511 Bayezid’s second surviving son Prince Korkud had returned from his exile in Egypt to govern Teke, only to learn that Selim had been appointed prince-governor of Saruhan, a province more desirable than Teke on account of its greater proximity to the capital. Korkud suddenly left his seat at Antalya and headed north, and Şahkülu promptly proclaimed himself rightful heir to the Ottoman throne, on behalf of Shah Isma‘ıl. The timing of the revolt was hardly accidental: it came to a head on 9 April, which corresponded to the Shia holy day of 10 Muharram, anniversary of the martyrdom of Imam Husayn, son of Imam ‘Ali. Şahkülu was hailed by his followers as Messiah and Prophet, the very words anathema to the rulers of a state which saw itself as the repository of orthodox Islam. The Ottoman view of themselves as the foremost Muslim power led them to brand Şahkülu not just a rebel but a heretic.

It was a role Şahkülu was only too happy to embrace. While Prince Korkud was on the road, a band of Şahkülu’s Kızılbaş followers numbering four and a half thousand attacked Korkud’s retinue and killed some of his men. Local government troops who responded to the attack were forced to retreat in disarray into the fortress of Antalya. By no means all of Şahkülu’s followers could fairly be described as religious fanatics: as well as peasants and tribesmen they included impoverished provincial cavalrymen who had lost their lands (to government officials and their retainers who were not strictly eligible to hold them) and also provincial cavalrymen belonging to old Muslim Turkish families dispossessed when their lands were awarded to the rising class of Christian-born Muslim cavalrymen as a reward for prowess in battle.

Encouraged by his victory, Şahkülu’s army of the dispossessed marched north through Anatolia setting fire to towns and villages as they went – the government accused them of burning mosques and dervish lodges, even Korans. Their numbers swollen to 20,000 men, they passed Burdur in the lake district of south-west Anatolia and reached the town of Kütahya, where they were initially put to flight by the governor of Anadolu province whose seat it was. He then found himself isolated and was captured by Şahkülu’s troops, who beheaded him, impaled him and roasted him on a spit. A sergeant who witnessed the passage of the Kızılbaş reported that they attacked and plundered everything in their path, with the collaboration of the townsfolk of Kütahya:

They destroyed everything – men, women and children – and even sheep and cattle if there were too many for their needs; they destroyed cats and chickens. They looted all the valued possessions of the [villagers] and burned them... your servant Sergeant İskender witnessed all this... the townspeople of Kütahya, in particular, behaved with great dishonour and allowed [the Kızılbaş] to destroy the means of livelihood of the [villagers] and did not [help them].

The force Prince Korkud sent against the Kızılbaş was defeated, and he had to take refuge in Manisa castle. The road to Bursa and, beyond that, to Istanbul, was now open to the rebels. On 21 April 1511 the kadi (judge) of Bursa wrote to the commander of the janissaries that if he and his men did not reach the city within two days, the country was lost. Şahkülu seemed close to successfully expelling Ottoman writ from Anatolia and establishing his own authority in the name of Shah Isma‘ıl. Grand Vezir Hadım Ali Pasha was appointed to lead the campaign against Şahkülu and his followers. Near Kütahya he combined with the forces of Bayezid’s eldest
Surviving son Prince Ahmed, but caught up with the rebels only after a forced march through Anatolia to Sivas, where both Şahkulu and Hadım Ali were killed in the ensuing battle. Many of the Kızılbaş fled east into Iran; those who fell into Ottoman hands were deported to Methoni and Koroni in the Peloponnese, captured by Bayezid in 1500 during the war with Venice.

Şahkulu’s rebellion dramatically affected the balance of power among Bayezid’s sons in their bids to succeed to his throne. The elderly Sultan – he was now about 60 – also had many grandsons, further embittering the succession contest. The logic of the prince-governor system was that it distanced princes from Istanbul, making it more difficult for them to challenge the ruling sultan; at the same time, appointments could be manipulated so that the sultan’s favourite to succeed was closest to Istanbul and upon his death would have the best chance of arriving in the capital ahead of his rivals to seize the throne. Before abandoning Trabzon in 1510 Selim had tried to secure for his son Sülleyman the governorship of the province of Bolu, less than 200 kilometres east of Istanbul, but was blocked by Prince Ahmed supported by Bayezid (who himself favoured Ahmed). Selim’s own appointment to Saruhan brought him closer to the capital than Ahmed, who had succeeded his father as prince-governor at Amasya, yet Saruhan was not close enough for Selim, and before his appointment to that province he had requested the governorship of a province in Rumeli, a request that was also refused, on the grounds that it was unlawful.

Selim had no intention of going to Saruhan. Leaving Sülleyman’s province of Kefe in March 1511 he marched through Rumeli at the head of an army. By June he had reached Edirne where Bayezid’s court had been in residence since the great earthquake of 10 September 1509 – referred to in contemporary sources as the ‘Lesser Judgement Day’ – which had devastated Istanbul and the surrounding area. To avert a bloody confrontation with his son, Bayezid ignored his earlier ruling as to the legitimacy of prince-governorships outside the Anatolian provinces and conceded to Selim the governorship of the Danubian frontier province of Semendre (centring on Smederevo). Most critically, he also promised Selim that he would not abdicate in favour of Prince Ahmed.

With the death in battle against Şahkulu of his main supporter, the grand vezir Hadım Ali Pasha, Prince Ahmed realized that his position was much weakened. Prince Selim, however, doubtful of his father’s sincerity and unable to believe that Ahmed would so readily be cast aside, turned his army towards Istanbul and early in August offered his father battle in Thrace, near Çorlu, between Edirne and Istanbul. When Bayezid ordered his forces to open fire, Selim fled back into Rumeli and took ship up the Black Sea coast to Kiliya, on a mouth of the Danube. He was ordered by his father to return to Kefe. Bayezid again took up residence in Istanbul.

During this time, Prince Ahmed was engaged in putting down the Şahkulu uprising, after which he moved from the Sivas area to Afyon in west-central Anatolia; hearing of the battle between Bayezid and Selim, he marched towards Istanbul, insisting he wanted to pay his respects to his father – Bayezid invited him to do so. Gathering his forces, which included tribal contingents from the province of Karaman – the very men who were so receptive to Shah Isma‘îl’s propaganda, hoping again to seize advantage from the internecine struggles of the Ottoman dynasty – Ahmed wrote to tell the grand vezir, Koca (‘Great’) Mustafa Pasha, to prepare for his arrival. Against all his expectations, when he reached Istanbul on 21 September 1511 he was greeted with a janissary revolt and forced to remain in Üsküdar, on the Asian shore of the Bosporus, unable to cross to the capital where he had in fact hoped to be proclaimed sultan. The Grand Vezir (who had been Bayezid’s trusted envoy to the Pope to negotiate the terms of Cem’s custody in Rome) was assassinated. The battle-lines were now drawn: the janissaries supported Selim, and Shah Isma‘îl’s partisans supported Ahmed.

Ahmed retreated into Anatolia, aiming to increase his support and take the capital by storm. His hopes of seizing the sultanate dashed, he openly contested his father’s authority by making provincial appointments on his own account. When his repeated demands for the governorship of Karaman – now held by Bayezid’s grandson Prince Mehmed, who had succeeded his late father Prince Şehinşah – were refused, he successfully besieged the prince-governor’s seat of Konya. The janissaries were again instrumental in frustrating Ahmed’s hopes, for when news of his victory reached Istanbul they rebelled again, demanding that Selim stake his claim as sultan and taking their ultimatum to the council of state. Their vociferous support for Selim forced Bayezid’s hand and, bowing to force majeure, he appointed Selim commander-in-chief of the army. Selim set out again from Kefe, to march on Istanbul.

With Ahmed in Konya and Selim in Kefe, Prince Korkud in his turn imagined that he could win the throne by getting to Istanbul first. He left Manisa and arrived quietly, reaching the city by boat, asked Bayezid to
would not entertain the idea of giving up any part of his domains, and proposed that Ahmed seek asylum in a Muslim state. Ahmed's partisans from Afyon to Ankara, and thence towards his former seat, triggered a revolt which won him the support of Shah Isma'il - who had sheltered him to seek asylum outside the Ottoman lands would bring dishonour on the dynasty, Ahmed asked Selim for some territory in Anatolia. But Selim, who could not accept Bayezid's appeasement of Shah Isma'il's state and its Kızılbaş adherents, was heir to this legacy; the majority of his troops were Ottoman by education rather than by birth, and needed a resolute sultan to fulfil the mission for which they had been recruited. Ahmed, by contrast, was a focus for those who had been dispossessed of their former existence and saw no place for themselves in the new Ottoman state. Bayezid's brother Cem had appealed to broadly the same constituency. 

Sultan Mehmed II had greatly enhanced the status of the janissaries and Selim, who could not accept Bayezid's appeasement of Shah Isma'il's state and its Kızılbaş adherents, was heir to this legacy; the majority of his troops were Ottoman by education rather than by birth, and needed a resolute sultan to fulfil the mission for which they had been recruited. Ahmed, by contrast, was a focus for those who had been dispossessed of their former existence and saw no place for themselves in the new Ottoman state. Bayezid's brother Cem had appealed to broadly the same constituency. 

Sultan Bayezid II had survived an assassination attempt while on campaign in Albania in 1492 when a dervish of the anarchical Kalenderi sect lunged at him, an attack which precipitated the expulsion of the Kalenderi from Rumeli. He could not survive deposition, however, and a month later died of natural causes while on the road to retirement in his birthplace of Didymoteicho in Thrace.

In Konya, Prince Ahmed's reaction to Selim's deposition of his father was to proclaim himself the rightful sultan. He sent his second son Alaeddin to Bursa with an army which entered the city in mid-June 1512, sacking it and causing the population to flee. News that Selim was planning to cross the Sea of Marmara from Istanbul, supposedly to hunt, forced Alaeddin to retreat to join his father, who was by now back in Afyon. Ahmed summoned all available reinforcements, throwing Anatolia into turmoil; leaving his son Suleyman regent in Istanbul, Selim marched into Anatolia. Ahmed was most reluctant to meet his brother in open battle, withdrawing from Afyon to Ankara, and thence towards his former seat at Amasya - but there he found the city defended against him. He left a trail of destruction and disorder behind him as he crossed Anatolia and was branded a rebel by Selim.

Ahmed next went southwards, his every move observed by Selim's spies, who also reported on the intentions of his supporters. Suggesting that for him to seek asylum outside the Ottoman lands would bring dishonour on the dynasty, Ahmed asked Selim for some territory in Anatolia. But Selim would not entertain the idea of giving up any part of his domains, and proposed that Ahmed seek asylum in a Muslim state. Ahmed's partisans encouraged him to take refuge with Shah Isma'il - who had sheltered Ahmed's eldest son Murad since Selim became sultan - or in Dulkadir, or in Egypt. The new Mamluk sultan Qansawh al-Ghawri was unwilling to help so Ahmed retired to Dulkadir for the winter; Selim based himself for the season at Bursa.

Despite this apparent resolution of the troubles attending Selim's succession to Bayezid, there was no trust between the brothers. Ahmed feared that Selim would return to attack him in the spring and Selim learned that Ahmed was negotiating with Shah Isma'il. Ahmed again turned his forces against Amasya; this time the city surrendered to him, and in the first days of 1513 he left his fourth son Osman there as regent. He had received a number of letters encouraging him to think the sultanate could still be his, and it may be that he believed them, but they were a trap laid for him by Selim. Bent on reaching Bursa, Ahmed marched across northern Anatolia, encountering resistance as he went. Following Bayezid's death, Selim had humoured Korkud for a while. His brother was allowed to return to Manisa, from where he made repeated requests for an appointment to the island of Lesbos which Selim refused. Korkud changed his plea to the lands of Teke or Alanya, which were also refused; Selim feared that from these places on the south Anatolian coast he might, like their uncle Cem, flee to Egypt, and become the figurehead of a European crusade. Early in 1513 Selim travelled south on the pretext of a hunting expedition and attacked Manisa. Korkud escaped the city and was later found hiding in a cave; he was sent to Bursa, and strangled on 13 March; he was in his mid-forties.

On 4 April 1513 Selim marched from Bursa with his army, and joined battle with Ahmed at Yenisehir eleven days later. Ahmed was captured after a fall from his horse, and strangled. Amasya was soon retaken from his son Osman, who shared the fate of his cousins - the remaining sons of Korkud, Ahmed and Selim's late brothers Mahmud, Alemşah and Şehinşah - who had been executed a short time earlier. The tombs of these many grandsons of Bayezid are still to be seen in Bursa and Amasya.

Now secure on the throne, Sultan Selim I was free to impose his own solution to the problem of the Kızılbaş which had in part provoked his rise to power. The Kızılbaş independence was an affront to the Ottoman dynasty's sovereignty, and its leaders plotted against the throne. During the last years of Bayezid's reign Selim's open challenge to his father's authority had motivated some other members of the Ottoman dynasty to side with the Kızılbaş - his brother Şehinşah had seemed ready to join those rebelling in the name of Şahkulu, but had died before his sympathy had turned to action. Prince Ahmed's son Murad had sympathized with the Kızılbaş to such an extent that from the summer of 1511, when his father was appointed to campaign against Şahkulu and Murad became governor at Amasya in his place, he adopted their red head-
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merit to war against the non-Muslim enemies of Islam. The outright condemnation of the Safavids in Ottoman sources is in surprising contrast to the respectful terms in which Safavid historians referred to the Ottomans, seeing them as a bastion of Islam in the face of European unbelief. The Ottomans needed to exorcize the Safavids in the harshest terms their religion could allow in order to justify the severity of their repressive measures.

Sultan Selim carried out his religious duty with brutal efficiency. Once in possession of a juridical opinion permitting him to go to war against Shah Isma’il, he wrote to accuse his enemy of departing from the faith:

… you have subjected the upright community of Muhammad … to your devious will [and] undermined the firm foundation of the faith; you have unfurled the banner of oppression in the cause of aggression [and] no longer upheld the commandments and prohibitions of the Divine Law; you have incited your abominable Shi‘i faction to unsanctified sexual union and the shedding of innocent blood.

To reduce the threat of Kızılbəş harassment along his route to Iran, Selim sent his officials to the province of Rum in north-central Anatolia to register by name the Kızılbəş who had settled there. Many thousands of the 40,000 registered were massacred, and thousands more arrested; as a result no Kızılbəş agitation was experienced in the rear of the Sultan’s march, nor for the next five years or so. Selim also closed his frontiers with the Safavid state, forbidding the passage of merchants in either direction – this was a trade war aimed at ruining the Safavid economy by halting its export of silk to the west, but also at preventing arms, metal or specie moving into Iran from the west. As a precursor to this more drastic measure, Selim had expelled Iranian merchants from Bursa when he wintered there in 1512–13.

Of advantage to Selim was the presence on Shah Isma’il’s eastern frontier of the Özbek state which had been a contender for the spoils of the Akkoynulu and the Timurids which had fallen to the Safavids. In 1510 Isma’il had driven the Özbek back across the River Oxus, but in 1512 they again invaded his north-eastern province of Horasan and defeated a Safavid army. In the summer of 1514 Selim marched on Isma’il’s territory from the west. Despite having advance warning of Selim’s intentions, Isma’il could do little to prepare for this encounter, and the only tactic he could employ was a scorched earth policy in advance of the Ottoman army.

The rigours of the journey across Anatolia by Selim’s army to engage Shah Isma’il in battle exhausted his troops, provisions were in short supply, and the failure to reach Isma’il triggered discontent. Despite the juridical opinion justifying the campaign, there were murmurings in Ottoman ranks.

SULTAN OF THE FAITHFUL

For years the Safavids and their sympathizers had been trying to subvert Ottoman political authority in Anatolia; having disposed of the rivals for power within his own family, Sultan Selim readied himself to take on Shah Isma’il himself. Single-mindedly he prepared for what would clearly be a difficult campaign: the distance to be travelled by the army was great, the terrain inhospitable, and the Kızılbəş hostile. In the spring of 1514 he crossed the Bosphorus to begin the long journey eastwards.

Like Sultan Mehmed II on the eve of the siege of Constantinople, Selim I renewed treaties with European states – Venice and Poland – and with the Mamluks, hoping thereby to avert any risk of war on two fronts. Agreement with Hungary proved more difficult, even though both parties knew it to be to their mutual advantage. The Hungarian envoy was held hostage and with his suite was taken on Selim’s campaigns in Iran and afterwards in Syria and Egypt, where, for the purpose of demonstrating Selim’s enormous power, he was paraded to observers as the Hungarian king.

In Islamic law, the only allowable justification for the war of Muslim against Muslim is a religious one, ‘to enforce the sacred law or to check transgressions against it’; Ottoman campaigns therefore required sanction in the form of an opinion expressed by the religious authorities that the proposed foe had departed from the path of true Islam. When the Anatolian emirates came under Ottoman sovereignty as the result of territorial disputes, chroniclers had been eager to provide the conquerors with due provocation. The struggle with the Safavids was clearly going to be not only logistically taxing but, without doctrinal sanction, illicit. The Ottoman quarrel was cloaked accordingly in religious rhetoric, their claim to be the repository of ‘right religion’ – in distinction to the errant Safavids – duly emphasized. As the propaganda battle against the Safavids intensified, a new vocabulary was employed to describe Isma’il’s adherents:

… according to the precepts of the holy law … we give an opinion according to which [the Kızılbəş whose chief is Isma’il of Ardabil] are unbelievers and heretics. Any who sympathize with them and accept their false religion or assist them are also unbelievers and heretics. It is a necessity and a divine obligation that they be massacred and their communities be dispersed.

The scholar-historian Kemalpaşazade (who during the succeeding reign of Sultan Süleyman I held the highest office in the Ottoman religious hierarchy, that of sheikhulislam) stated the matter more forcefully yet: in his opinion, war against the Kızılbəş was counted ‘holy war’, of equivalent gear. Even as Şahkulu’s forces were devastating wide swathes of western Anatolia, Kızılbəş sympathizers were propagandizing among the population of north-central Anatolia; indeed, the uprising had spread here too. For years the Safavids and their sympathizers had been trying to subvert Ottoman political authority in Anatolia; having disposed of the rivals for power within his own family, Sultan Selim readied himself to take on Shah Isma’il himself. Single-mindedly he prepared for what would clearly be a difficult campaign: the distance to be travelled by the army was great, the terrain inhospitable, and the Kızılbəş hostile. In the spring of 1514 he crossed the Bosphorus to begin the long journey eastwards.

Like Sultan Mehmed II on the eve of the siege of Constantinople, Selim I renewed treaties with European states – Venice and Poland – and with the Mamluks, hoping thereby to avert any risk of war on two fronts. Agreement with Hungary proved more difficult, even though both parties knew it to be to their mutual advantage. The Hungarian envoy was held hostage and with his suite was taken on Selim’s campaigns in Iran and afterwards in Syria and Egypt, where, for the purpose of demonstrating Selim’s enormous power, he was paraded to observers as the Hungarian king.

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that it was wrong to fight fellow Muslims. The janissaries, never given to concealing their anger, were close to outright mutiny and fired their guns at the Sultan’s tent when they were camped north of Lake Van. Soon Selim heard that Shah Isma’il’s forces were assembled at Çaldıran, north-east of the lake; the prospect of imminent confrontation mollified the janissaries. In the battle that took place on 23 August 1514 Isma’il fielded 80,000 cavalry archers, many of them drawn from the tribes it was Selim’s mission to subdue, including those from Dulkadir and Karaman. Selim’s forces numbered some 100,000 men, of whom 12,000 were janissary musketeers. Isma’il lacked not only muskets but also cannon, of which the Ottomans had 500 which they chained together, preventing Safavid advance. Both sides suffered great losses in the ensuing battle, notably among the high command.125 One of Isma’il’s wives was captured and given to an Ottoman statesman126 while Isma’il himself fled the field, first to Tabriz and then south-east. Selim pursued him as far as Tabriz where he arrived on 6 September, and sacked the city. It was unseasonably cold; Selim may have intended to remain in the region with a view to fighting the following spring, but the Ottoman troops, including the provincial cavalrymen, refused to winter in the east and he was obliged to turn back towards Amasya.

To assuage the rumblings of discontent in the army, scapegoats were needed. They included the grand vezir, Hersekzade Ahmed Pasha, who had seen a long career in Ottoman government service since being brought from his native land of Bosnia by Mehmed II’s army in 1474. He was dismissed and his place taken by the second vezir, Dukakinzade (‘Son of the Duke’) Ahmed Pasha — his father was an Albanian nobleman — who was soon executed for colluding in a janissary mutiny at Amasya which had erupted early in 1515 with the aim of preventing another campaign in the east; Dukakinzade Ahmed was also suspected of corresponding with Alaüddevle, ruler of Dulkadir. Alaüddevle had refused to join the Ottomans in their war against Isma’il, and Dulkadir troops had fought at Çaldıran with the Safavid shah, who had sent a Kızılbaş force to assist Alaüddevle in launching attacks across the Ottoman frontier to cut Selim’s supply lines. Selim determined to end Dulkadir’s existence. On this occasion the Mamluks failed to aid Alaüddevle. Dulkadir fell to Selim’s army in June 1515, and the road to Syria and Egypt was open to the Ottomans.127

In the wake of the Çaldıran campaign the Kızılbaş refuge of Kemah (Kamakh), on the Euphrates to the south-west of Erzincan, fell into Ottoman hands, as did, among others, the strategic city of DIYARBAKIR on the Tigris. Attracted to Selim’s side by the prestige of his victory at Çaldıran, the Kurdish tribal lords of the region chased Isma’il’s officers and officials from the mountains of south-eastern Anatolia, and as Selim’s grip on the borderlands tightened, the Ottoman sphere of influence was extended eastwards to the Erzincan-Diyarbakır line and into what is now northern Iraq. The accompanying extension of Selim’s ‘closed frontier’ policy all but cut off Tabriz from its Kızılbaş constituency and the centre of gravity of the Safavid lands perforce shifted eastwards, to the disadvantage of Isma’il’s Turcoman supporters.

But Selim could not afford to be complacent. Fresh problems arose concerning the loyalty of his own troops. A commander from Amasya wrote to complain that, because of the wretched economic conditions in the area, the land-holdings allotted to the cavalrymen of the province of Rum to finance their upkeep were so impoverished that there was a risk that they would be unable to make their appearance on campaign. In the days before the extension of Ottoman control over the other states of Anatolia, it had been permissible for a cavalryman to send a proxy to fight in his place; now, Ottoman law demanded that he go in person. Furthermore, land rights which had formerly been heritable were now bestowed at the whim of the sultan. Both changes, wrote the commander, were the cause of great dissatisfaction.128

Three successive reigns had failed to bring stability to the lives of the provincial cavalrymen who were such an important component of the army in battle and of the rural order in peacetime. Scholarly opinion is undecided about how far Sultan Mehmed II had effected his policy of reassigning the holdings of indigenous Anatolian families to his new breed of Christian-born cavalrymen, but it seems that the trend began in his reign. Bayezid II had reversed his father’s measures, returning these holdings to their former owners and as a consequence antagonizing those whom Mehmed had favoured. Selim continued his grandfather’s policies of undermining local ties by making the sultan the principal source of largesse. In the province of Karaman, for instance, he bestowed lands on cavalrymen brought in from Rumeli for the purpose of breaking up the old order of dynastic and tribal allegiances since these were proving a stronger focus for loyalty than the new imperial order he was intent on imposing.129 Palliatives the peasant class was accorded — such as the preservation in the province of Rum of laws dating back to the days of the Akkoyunlu130 — were not extended to the indigenous provincial cavalry, while Selim’s reforms compounded the uncertainties and insecurities brought about by the suppression of the Kızılbaş and the simmering hostility against Iran.

After his defeat at Çaldıran Isma’il assumed that Selim would return in the spring to continue his campaign, and his anxiety was heightened by further Özbek attacks in the east. Selim refused to accept Isma’il’s pleas for
peace, arresting and imprisoning the several Safavid envoys (they included the highest religious authority in Azerbaijan) who came as supplicants to his court. Isma'il began to look for allies among the Christian powers but his appeals fell on deaf ears. Venice had had cordial relations with Isma'il from the early years of the century but had renewed its treaty with the Ottomans in 1513 and declined to offer assistance. Cem's son Murad had continued to live on the island of Rhodes after his father's short sojourn there in 1482 but had never put himself forward as a claimant to the Ottoman throne; as if to emphasize the point, he had converted to Catholicism. Yet Isma'il demanded of the Knights that he be handed over. In 1510 and 1513 Isma'il had failed in an attempt to interest Affonso d'Albuquerque, Viceroy of the Indies and the architect of Portuguese expansion into the Indian Ocean, in an attack on their common enemy, the Mamluks; he appealed again to the Portuguese after Çaldıran, and Albuquerque sent two small cannon and six arquebuses — scarcely even a symbolic gesture. Appeals to Hungary, Spain and the Pope were turned down.

The Ottomans had many reasons to attempt the conquest of Egypt, and it was clear that now was the time to act. Before Çaldıran the Mamluk sultan Qansawh al-Ghawri, wanting to keep his options open, had refused to participate in an alliance with Selim against Isma'il; after Çaldıran, in 1515, he declined to enter into a pact with Isma'il against the Ottomans. Before Çaldıran Selim's attitude towards the Mamluks had been conciliatory; after Çaldıran, the Ottoman annexation of Dulkadır exposed the Mamluks to a direct attack, and the Sultan could risk more open aggression. He snubbed the Mamluks by appointing Alaüddevle's nephew and rival Ali Bey as governor of the new province of Dulkadır in his place and sending Alaüddevle's head to Cairo.

Diplomacy between the great powers of the Middle East was a complicated business. The spies and agents of each — Ottoman, Mamluk and Safavid — were engaged in an endless game of disseminating propaganda and disinformation in equal measure. In 1516 Selim's army set out eastwards again from Istanbul, having spent the winter preparing for what was clearly planned to be a major campaign. Qansawh al-Ghawri believed the attack would be directed against Isma'il, as did Isma'il himself. Modern scholarship is divided as to whether Selim did indeed intend to campaign against Isma'il in 1516, and only changed direction once he was well advanced. Against this, Selim's campaign of 1514 had been arduous and his troops mutinously unenthusiastic, and moreover Isma'il had been thoroughly humiliated by his defeat at Çaldıran, and could no longer sustain his claims to precedence in the Islamic world.

Ottoman chicanery reached its climax in a letter from Khayr Bak, a Mamluk official in Aleppo, who sent news to Qansawh al-Ghawri in April 1516 stating — falsely — that Isma'il, invading Ottoman territory at the head of a large army, had ousted the recently-installed Ottoman garrison of Dıyarbakır, close to the Mamluk border. This inspired Qansawh al-Ghawri to march to Aleppo to see for himself what was happening, an advance which Selim disingenuously interpreted as provocation. But the Mamluks, as Sunni Muslims and guardians of the Holy Places of Islam at Mecca and Medina, could scarcely be branded heretics even in the interests of Ottoman realpolitik, so that a campaign against them was harder to justify than one against the Safavids and their Kızılbaş adherents. Although the evidence of Qansawh al-Ghawri's purported intrigues with Isma'il is little more than Isma'il's approach to him in 1515, the Ottoman religious establishment agreed to support a campaign against the Mamluks on the grounds that 'who aids a heretic is himself a heretic', and that to do battle against them might be considered holy war. Selim was in no mood to let the weakness of this pretext deflect him from his purpose; the Ottoman chroniclers, perhaps because they realized that the Sultan's case was canonically questionable, took pains to emphasize that the campaign was directed against the 'heretical' Safavids rather than the Sunni Mamluks.

Armed with the religious opinion he sought, Selim marched south from Malatya into Syria, and the Ottoman and Mamluk armies met north of Aleppo at Marj Dabik on 24 August 1516. In a few hours the battle was over. Although the Mamluk army was perhaps as numerous as Selim's, they had barely begun to embrace gunpowder technology and had few firearms to face the Ottoman cannon and muskets. Panic set in among his troops as Qansawh al-Ghawri fled the field, his flight marking the end of more than 250 years of Mamluk rule in Syria. The desertion of the Ottomans of the Mamluk forces under Khayr Bak, now governor of Aleppo, was another decisive factor in this crucial battle: Ottoman cunning again became evident, for it turned out that Khayr Bak had for some time been an agent of the Sultan. Qansawh al-Ghawri did not survive, but the cause of his death is uncertain.

The people of Aleppo had no love for the Mamluks and rejoiced at news of the Ottoman advance; Selim's army met with no resistance as it moved south to Damascus, which surrendered. On the first Friday in the holy month of Ramadan the prayer was performed in Sultan Selim's name in the city's great Umayyad mosque, built in the early eighth century. In this way did the new, Ottoman, ruler of Syria announce his victory to the world. Selim and his advisers were at first undecided whether the army should proceed to Cairo: it was already late in the campaigning season,
and the Mamluk capital lay far across the desert. It was clear, however, that the gains already made in Syria would not be secure if Egypt remained in Mamluk hands, and Selim therefore accepted the advice of those eager to continue this outstandingly successful campaign. In Cairo, there was disagreement between the notables over whether to heed Selim's call to surrender. Tuman-Bay, the new Mamluk sultan, was in favour of reaching an accommodation with Selim, but the war party won the argument; in a battle south of Gaza a Mamluk army under the command of the dispossessed Mamluk governor of Damascus, Janbardi al-Ghazali, was outgunned and outmanoeuvred. On his march south Sultan Selim visited the Muslim Holy Places in Jerusalem, a city which, as well as being sacred to Christians and Jews, is the third most revered shrine in Islam — the site, in some traditions, of the Prophet Muhammad's ascent into heaven. A week after leaving Damascus, on 23 January 1517, the Ottoman army defeated the Mamluks at Raydaniyya outside Cairo — like the Safavids at Qadran, the Mamluks relied on their mobile cavalry archers who were no match for the cannons and muskets of the Ottomans. Selim briefly entered Cairo a few days later to be confronted with strong resistance which his troops could only overcome with much loss on both sides. The Mamluk commanders fled across the Nile and remained at large for some two months. Tuman-Bay was apprehended and brought before Selim on 31 March; he was killed and his body displayed in public at one of the gates of the city for all to see. Only then could the Ottoman sultan consider Cairo his and the Mamluk empire defunct. 138

Selim's conquest of the Mamluk domains shifted the centre of gravity of the Ottoman Empire eastwards culturally as well as geographically. He was now the ruler of the Arab lands where Islam had begun, and for the first time in its history the population of the empire was predominantly Muslim. Selim was now visibly the most successful Islamic ruler of his time. He had won his throne in the struggle against the Kızılbaş heresy and thereby reinforced the identification of the Ottomans, both politically and ideologically, with religious orthodoxy. Victory over the Mamluks made him guardian of the Holy Places of Mecca and Medina and guarantor of the pilgrimage routes by which the Muslim faithful had travelled to the sites associated with the life of the Prophet Muhammad for more than eight hundred years. Possession of the sites sacred to Islamic orthodoxy could only imbue the Ottoman dynasty with greater legitimacy. This sudden Muslim predominance within the empire sealed the Ottoman tendency towards fuller adoption of the traditional Islamic practices and mores of the Arab lands: as it has been recently put: 'the question of who conquered whom is debatable'. 19

Until its sack by the Mongols in 1258 and their murder of Caliph al-Musta'in of the Abbasid dynasty which had held the office for five centuries, Baghdad had been the centre of the Islamic caliphate. In 1260 the Mamluk general Baybars had brought an Abbasid scion to Cairo, but the caliphate had long since lost the religious authority it had enjoyed in the days when Islamic rulers had had to apply to the caliph for full legitimization of their rule. The Cairo caliphs lacked power, and retained only a shred of their former influence. The Mamluks exploited them as part of their accession ceremonial, and their titles were appropriated by Islamic rulers as an instrument in establishing their legitimacy. The title of caliph had, for instance, been used on occasion by Ottoman sultans since Murad II, but in a rhetorical sense rather than as a straightforward political-legal assertion of sovereignty over the Muslim community. Selim certainly made no claims to exercise what remained of the sacred authority of this office; the last caliph, al-Mutawakkil, was sent into exile in Istanbul, where he stayed until the reign of Selim's son Süleyman. As time went by, the issue of the caliphate came to intrigue Ottoman intellectuals, but stories that there had been an official transfer of the office to Selim when he conquered Cairo did not begin to circulate until the eighteenth century, 140 when it was necessary to counter Russian claims to protect Ottoman Christians with claims to Ottoman spiritual authority over Russian Muslims. With Selim's conquest of Egypt and Syria, the trade blockade of Iran became easier to enforce. Despite Selim's prohibition, merchant caravans had circumvented it by passing from Iran into Mamluk territory and thence sending goods westwards by sea. After the conquest, the Mamluk trade routes both by land and sea came under direct Ottoman control. If this was a cause for satisfaction, the truth was that the Safavid and Ottoman economies had both suffered from the blockade: the silk which passed along the trade routes was the engine of the Iranian economy, and Bursa the chief market for this commodity in the Ottoman Empire. The shortage must also have been keenly felt in Italy, the end-market, where silk was much prized and where profits from the trade were vital to the economies of the city-states. Deportation was another tool Selim used in his trade war with the Safavids. The Iranian community in the newly-Ottoman city of Aleppo — the emporium in whose markets silk from Iran was sold on, especially to Venetian merchants — was suspected of maintaining ties with Shah Isma'il, and in 1518, like the Iranian community of Bursa before it, was removed to Istanbul. 41

The conquest of the Mamluk lands promised prestige and geopolitical advantage, and opened new vistas of Ottoman expansion. Selim now had
a route to the Red Sea, and a new era of direct Ottoman rivalry with the Portuguese in the Indian Ocean began. In its heyday in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the Mamluk state had been as splendid as the Ottoman, thanks to the revenues derived from its control of the spice trade from the east and taxes levied on locally-grown rice, sugar and cotton; these riches would now fill the Ottoman sultan’s coffers. The resounding defeat of Shah Isma’il at ‘Ayn Jazirah in 1514 neutralized the volatile tribes of the Ottoman south-eastern flank, and many of them came under Ottoman rule with the redrawing of the political map of the region. With the reverse suffered by their champion the Kızılbaş were subdued for the time being, but their total suppression continued to be a major preoccupation of Ottoman domestic politics throughout the sixteenth century.

Selim left Cairo in September 1517 and moved north at a leisurely pace. When Shah Isma’il’s envoy arrived in Damascus with rich presents to express his master’s hopes for peace, he was executed. In May 1518 Selim’s army marched to the Euphrates, apparently heading towards Iran, but then without warning turned west and returned to Istanbul. His reasons for this change of direction are unknown but his decision may have been influenced by discontent among his troops at the prospect of another campaign against Iran, or by doubt that his logistic preparations were sufficient to undertake such an expedition.142

Observers wondered what Selim would do next. Following his annexation of the Mamluk lands, his neighbours in the west feared that he would now turn his attack on them. At the same time, his conquest of Syria had given them cause to go on the offensive themselves, the Holy Sites of Christendom in Bethlehem and Jerusalem having fallen into Ottoman hands. Although the Christian Holy Sites had been in Muslim hands since the seventh century, except for the interlude between 1099 and 1244 when they were held by the Crusaders, the Ottomans were far more threatening to the West than the Mamluks, and their possession of these sites intensified Pope Leo X’s efforts to organize a crusade. He commissioned a report from his cardinals who responded in November 1517 that there was no alternative to a crusade when the enemy’s aim was the destruction of Christianity. Francis I of France and the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I put forward their views, Maximilian proposing that a five-year European-wide peace was necessary before a crusade could be considered. In 1518 the Pope accordingly declared that the princes of Christendom must renounce the quarrels which so often in the past had prevented them acting in concert against the Ottomans.143

A flurry of diplomatic activity followed as the Pope sought ratification of this project,144 but he was to be disappointed yet again by the lukewarm reaction of various parties essential to its success. Venice could not afford to be involved: having renewed peace with the Ottomans in 1513 and refused to be wooed by Isma’il after his defeat at ‘Ayn Jazirah, in 1517 the republic had won from the Ottomans the right to continue to hold Cyprus as a tribute-paying colony, as it had done under the Mamluks.145 Raid and counter-raids had for many years continued at a low intensity on the long Ottoman-Hungarian frontier, but in 1513 the King of Hungary had concluded a peace treaty with the Ottomans.146 The treaty between the Ottoman Empire and Poland was renewed in 1519.147 Perhaps the greatest hindrance to the proposed crusade, however, was the contention between Francis I of France and Emperor Charles V for mastery within Europe. The Ottomans were learning how to exploit the rivalry between the Christian powers, and the plan for a crusade collapsed.

In 1519 the scope of activity in the imperial arsenal seemed to suggest Rhodes as a likely target of Ottoman designs: since the conquest of Egypt an attack on this Christian stronghold, on the maritime route between Istanbul and Selim’s new provinces, was only a matter of time. But Shah Isma’il feared the worst: although his former power was gone, he still had the capacity to annoy Selim and in the early months of 1520 he gave his blessing to a Kızılbaş rebellion that became known as the Şah Veli uprising, after a Kızılbaş leader from near Sivas where in 1511 Şahkulu had met his end in battle. Some years before, Şah Veli’s father Sheikh Celal had rallied thousands of men to his side, proclaiming himself the Messiah and posing a serious threat to order in south-east Anatolia, and in 1516 and 1518 Şah Veli himself had evaded the Ottoman blockade to travel to and from Iran. The Ottoman governor of Sivas wrote to Istanbul of the scope of Kızılbaş ravages in Anatolia, where their sympathizers included members of the Dulkadir dynasty, opposed to Selim’s client Ali Bey. The Sultan mobilized his army against this renewed menace and two major battles ensued in central and north-central Anatolia. Ali Bey executed Şah Veli and had him dismembered in public, as a lesson to his supporters and a warning to those of his own men with Kızılbaş leanings.148 Following this uprising, the commander of the Ottoman army was ordered to spend the summer in Anatolia with his men, in preparation for a new campaign.

From Istanbul’s throne a mighty host to Iran guided I;
Sunken deep in blood of shame I made the Golden Heads [i.e. the Kızılbaş] to lie.
Glad the Slave [i.e. the Mamluks], my resolution, lord of Egypt’s realm became:

* Sheikh Celal and Şah Veli are venerated to this day and their supposed tombs, situated to the south-west of Sivas, are apparently still standing.
OSMAN'S DREAM

Thus I raised my royal banner e'en as the Nine Heavens high.
From the kingdom fair of Iraq to Hijaz these tidings sped,
When I played the harp of Heavenly Aid at feast of victory.
Through my sabre Transoxiana drowned was in a sea of blood;
Emptied I of kuhl of Isfahan the adversary's eye.
Flowed down a River Amu [i.e. the Oxus] from each foe'man's every hair-
Rolled the sweat of terror's fever - if I hap'd him to espy.
Bishop-mated was the King of India by my Queenly troops,
When I played the Chess of empire on the Board of sov'reignty.
O SELIMI, in thy name was struck the coinage of the world,
When in crucible of Love Divine, like gold, that melted I.149

The violent images conjured up by this poem by Sultan Selim - under his
nom de plume, Selimi - endorse the reputation for ruthlessness he earned himself, towards enemies (such as the hapless envoys of the Safavid shah Isma'il) and also closer to home. His treatment of Isma'il's envoys may have been a response to the Shah's earlier mistreatment of one of Bayezid's envoys, reported to have been forced to watch a Sunni opponent of the Shah burn, and also to eat forbidden pork.150 In his treatment of his own ministers, however, Selim exercised to the full his absolute power of life and death over the 'sultan's servants'. His father had rotated the office of grand vezir among seven men during the twenty-nine years of his reign; of the six men who held the office of grand vezir during the eight years of Selim's reign, he caused three to be executed. Selim is known to posterity as 'Yavuz', 'the Stern': he came to power violently, and violence marked his reign. He died on the road from Edirne to Istanbul during the night of 21-22 September 1520, leaving only one son, Süleyman, who came to the throne without crisis. Before he died he ordered his leading clerics to renew the opinion sanctioning war against Isma'il.151

The conquest of Constantinople had given Mehmed II the power that went with the possession of an imperial city which had exerted its fascination for centuries, a legacy he drew upon in his bold claims to be the inheritor and continuator of the glorious secular traditions of Byzantium. With his victory over the Mamluk state and his possession of the Holy Places of Islam, Sultan Selim made the Ottomans heir to an equally glorious sacred tradition. Secular and sacred traditions would together sustain the legitimacy and authority of his successors.
EGYPT'S ADJUSTMENT TO OTTOMAN RULE

Institutions, Waqf and Architecture in Cairo
(16th and 17th Centuries)

BY

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CHAPTER SEVEN

OTTOMANS AND EGYPTIANS VIEW EACH OTHER

According to Ibn Iyās, Salīm was, like the Mamluk Sultan Khushqadam, a "rāmi," i.e. a Greek or Anatolian, and the third rāmi sultan of Egypt, following the Mamluks Khushqadam and Timurbughā. The term "ṣafarī" was also used to refer to Turks from Azerbaijan. In waqf documents of the Ottoman period the term ʿājam is used for Turks from Anatolia. The waqf of the Ottoman Shaykh Ḥasan al-Rūmī dedicates his zalikya to the ʿājam, and another waqf calls the Baktāshī takliya the Takliyyat al-ʿĀʾjam. The waqf of Hāfiz Ahmad Pasha applies the term ʿājam to the takliya of al-Kulshani, which was a Turkish institution. Maqārī refers to the Bahri Mamluks as ʿarūd and to the Circassians as sharākīṣa, while Ibn Iyās calls the Circassian Mamluks ʿarūd, türkmand or sharākīṣa. Ibn Zunbul speaks only of Circassians. The Ottoman conquerors are generally called ʿunnānīyya in Ibn Iyās' chronicle and rīm by Ibn Zunbul. Later chronicles make no reference to the ethnic origin of Ottomans or anyone else; they refer merely to names or offices.

Ibn Iyās viewed the conquerors, including Sultan Salīm himself, as uncivilized and lacking manners and traditions. The deportation of Egyptian notables to Istanbul, even though they were permitted to take their goods and money with them, was regarded as a great catastrophe, the likes of which Egypt had not witnessed since the times of Nebukadnezzar or Babylon. Ibn Iyās' account of the Ottoman conquest is written with a strong feeling of hostility; however, it should not be considered for this reason as unreliable.

One document that provides some insight into how the Egyptians regarded the Ottomans at the time of the conquest is the account of Ibn Zunbul on the battles between the Mamluks and the Ottomans. This account is in the first place an apology for the Mamluks who had been unprepared for the massive confrontation with Ottoman might. It presents the Mamluks as the true Muslims and the Ottomans as parvenu Muslims of Christian origin. It is at the same time a eulogy to Mamluk courage and bravery. Ibn Zunbul's view of the Ottoman conquerors is very clearly illustrated by two extensive and probably fictitious dialogues, the first between Sultan Salīm and the Mamluk amir Kurtubāy, and the second between the Ottoman sultan and Tūmānbāy.

In his talk with Salīm, Kurtubāy, who had surrendered to the Ottomans after the Mamluk defeat, accused him of having disregarded the rules of fair play in his conquest of Egypt. He won his victory over the Mamluks with the help of an army of Christian recruits. The firearms he used to win the war had been invented by Christians as an unfair stratagem to defeat the Muslim soldiers of the Mamluks. The Mamluks refused to use these firearms precisely because they were a Christian invention, and with such weapons even women could fight.

In the second dialogue Tūmānbāy accused his Ottoman adversary of committing a sacrilege by throwing fire at Muslims. The Mamluks were brave knights, fighting like lions according to Allāh's Law, with orthodox methods and weapons used by the Prophet. Sultan Salīm is described as cruel and bloodthirsty, but his tragic situation is presented as a result of Khārybāk's and Jānartāl's ambitions. Khārybāk is a diabolical figure in this account; even the Ottomans did not quite trust him. In his dialogue with Tūmānbāy, Salīm apologizes for having initiated the war. He defends himself by reminding him that he had fought from the outset allowing him to conquer Egypt.

On the whole, Ibn Zunbul shows less animosity towards the Ottomans than Ibn Iyās does. Ibn Zunbul's account is a rather nostalgic version of the Mamluk past, and in his view it is the Mamluks themselves rather than the Ottomans who were to blame for their defeat. Here, the legitimacy of Ottoman rule is not seriously questioned, for in Sultan Salīm's own words, a sultan must descend

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1 Ibn Iyās, V, p. 151.
2 Ibn Iyās, V, p. 455.
3 Waqf of Yūnus Bey Ghiyāthddī, Awqāf 945.
5 Ibn Iyās, V, pp. 207 ff.
6 Ibn Iyās, V, pp. 268 ff.
7 For the military aspect of the Mamluk-Ottoman war, see Ayeb, Gunpowder, which also deals with Ibn Zunbul's account, pp. 86 ff.
9 Ibn Zunbul, pp. 133-36.
10 Ibn Zunbul, p. 139; Ibn Zunbul, Ms. München 411, fol. 119. The Ottomans were eager to justify their conquest of Muslim territories with fevān. Instead, "Emergence", p. 289 ff.; Repp, Miṣrī, pp. 218 ff.; Tursan, pp. 297 ff.
from sultans, and the Mamluks did not. Even before the Ottoman conquest, the Mamluks were aware of this Ottoman view, and the comment was “who was the father of Abraham or Muhammad?” Ibn Zunbul expresses a popular nostalgia for the Mamluk past under the Ottomans, which however, bore no hint of rebellion.

Egypt showed no unanimity in its attitude towards the Ottomans, neither among the Circassians, nor among the Arab tribes, nor among the religious establishment, nor as a consequence, ordinary people, since they were apt to follow the opinions of their religious leaders. Dīyārbakrī writes that Egyptians, unlike the Maghrībīs in Egypt, disliked the Ottomans. In fact, the Maghrībīs of Cairo had rejected Sultan al-Ghūrī’s demand to fight the Ottomans on the grounds that they were Muslims. According to Dīyārbakrī, one Egyptian was ordered to be chopped in half because he openly wished Ottoman rule to come to an end.

As for religious groups, some shaykhs were prepared to support or encourage Sultan Salīm’s conquest of Egypt just to get rid of Sultan al-Ghūrī’s despotic rule. Shaykh Sa’īd saw God’s punishment of Egypt’s unbelievers in the Ottoman conquest. The chief qādis of Mecca, Ibn ‘Abī ‘l-Surūr Ibn Ibrāhīm, who had been ill-treated by al-Ghūrī, welcomed Salīm and Shaykh Ahmad al-Zawawi. Although he would have liked to have stopped the Ottomans from conquering Egypt, he was prevented from speaking out by other shaykhs. Similarly in Syria, the religious establishment was favorable to the Ottomans as the case of the qādi Ibn Farfūr demonstrates. This shows that the Ottomans could reckon on religious arguments in their favor, at least among some of the population and its religious leaders. On the other hand, Dīyārbakrī reports about the uneasiness felt by Ottoman soldiers about killing rebellious Mamluks, because they were not Christians, but Muslims like themselves.

Later Egyptian historians did not share Ibn Iyās’ animosity towards the Ottomans. Ishāqī describes Sultan Salīm as a hero who saved Egypt from the impious rule of Sultan al-Ghūrī and praises his integrity. Too remote to be criticized, Ottoman sultans were celebrated by Arab historians and ulama for their victories against the unbelievers and their defense of Islam against Christians, as well as for their care of the Ḥaramayn. The criteria applied to judge the pashas were drawn from everyday life in Egypt. Bakrī, for instance, evaluated the pashas according to how fair or generous they were toward the poor and the religious. They seem quite often to have deserved his praise, especially Muhammad Pasha Qāl Qīrān who abolished the oppressive tulba tax, made great endowments, and visited many shrines and mosques. During the soldiers’ revolts of the early 17th century, which threatened to devastate the countryside, Ottoman authorities and local forces were firmly allied.

As they were accustomed to being ruled by the Mamluks of every possible ethnic origin, Egyptian historians did not judge the Ottomans in terms of their being Turks. The sources rarely even mention origins of an amir or a pasha. When Husayn Afandī of the Rāḥima talked with members of the French Expedition in the late 18th century, he told them that the Arabs were the descendants of Sem, the Africans the descendants of Ham, and the Turks and the Europeans the descendants of Japheth, these being the three sons of Noah. When feuds arose, however, they were described as “ignorant and stubborn”, and an angry Arab would quote the apocryphal Hadith, “Leave the Turks as long as they leave you.” Khaṭṭāī’s passages about the ignorance of the Turks and their scholars in his book Rūḥānī al-ʿalba’īṣī’ seem to have been inspired rather by irritation that his own career as qādi in Istanbul
was not as successful as he had expected, and did not necessarily represent the views of his peers.

When the Ottoman conquest proved to be less damaging to Mamluk interests and status than the Mamluks had originally assumed, they proved to be not only cooperative, but also valliant soldiers of the Ottoman sultan. Only those who showed themselves to be unreliable and tried to become too powerful, like Jānīm al-Ḥamzāwī and Jānīm al-Sāyfī, were eliminated by the Ottomans in the early years.

The Ottomans or at least their scholars, were familiar with the Arabic language and the history of Egypt. As already mentioned, several Ottoman scholars had studied in Egypt or Syria during the 15th century; Egyptians knew far less about the Ottomans and about the lands they came from. Numerous Turkish translations had been made of Egyptian histories, but Egyptian historians cared little about Ottoman history. Egyptian sources usually refer only to brief notes on the Ottoman sultans usually included in their necrologies. Little was known about the Ottoman establishment or about the careers of the governors before they came to rule Egypt.

With Sultan Sulīm’s conquests, the Ottomans controlled the heartland of Islamic tradition and the Arabic-speaking people for the first time, whose tongue was the language of the Koran and of Islamic scholarship. They attempted to justify their conquest of Egypt with religious arguments, including al-Ḥūrī’s tyrannies, his disregard for Islamic law, and the corruption of his jurists. During his campaign in Egypt, Sultan Sulīm ordered the translation of Mamluk historical literature, and later Dāwūd Pasha, who founded what became a famous library, also ordered Arabic historical literature to be translated into Turkish. From Ottoman literature it clearly appears that Sultan Sulīm demonstrated great reluctance before conquering Egypt and Syria out of consideration for their Sunni Muslim population. Whether this reluctance was genuine or not may not be easy to confirm, though it shows Ottoman concern to avoid the appearance of greed or brutality when dealing with Arab Muslims, whom Sulīm considered as “neighbors of God and His Messenger” (Allāh u’s-ṣalam ve resultnīm konsuları). Therefore, Sultan Sulīm wanted to put the entire blame on Sultan al-Ḥūrī’s tyranny and justify his conquest with the latter’s overthrow. But once al-Ḥūrī was killed in Syria, Sulīm was short of pious arguments. Because Tūmānībī was very popular and, unlike al-Ḥūrī, known to be a good Muslim, Sulīm could not pursue his campaign against him and attack Egypt without some justification. It was important to demonstrate diplomacy so that Tūmānībī would appear as the inflexible one and ultimately responsible for an inter-Muslim war. Ibn Zunbul and Ottoman chronicles agree that Sulīm was impressed by Tūmānībī’s courage and only an execution of the Mamluk sultan could bring any hope for his possible return to an end.

Diyārbakrī’s history of Egypt, which starts with the Arab conquest, includes translations of Arabic chronicles. Diyārbakrī was impressed by the achievements of the Mamluks in Islamic scholarship. Although he never deviates from his belief in the absolute authority of the Ottoman sultan, his view of Egypt is a balanced one that occasionally even includes criticism of his own countrymen.

Muṣṭafā “Ālī’s description of Cairo in the late 16th century conveys an interesting view of Egypt. As an Ottoman official, he could himself have become a pasha of Egypt had he been more fortunate. Following the tradition of the Arab historians, Muṣṭafā “Ālī starts his description of Cairo with citations from the Koran and Hadith that refer to Egypt. He also refers to the biblical patriarchs who were associated with Egypt, such as Joseph, Moses, and Jesus, as well as to Alexander the Great. The Nile, with its source in Paradise, and the Pyramids are also mentioned. Finally, Muṣṭafā “Ālī points out that Egypt is the place where al-Azhar and the shrines of Imam Shāfīʿī, Imam al-Layth, and Sayyida Naṣira are located. He mentions al-Azhar as a place to be visited after Mecca, Medina, Jerusalem and Damascus; prayers read there find God’s favor.

31 Tanel, p. 186; Ibn Zunbul, p. 69; Ibn Zunbul, Ms. Munich, fol. 55v.
32 Diyārbakrī, Taʾrīkh, fols. 115ff.
33 Having failed to realize this dream, he wished at least to complete his historical work in Egypt because of the availability of books there; Muṣṭafā “Ālī, p. 7; see also Haßmann, “The Pliht of the Self-Appointed Genius: Muṣṭafā “Ālī,”
34 Muṣṭafā “Ālī, pp. 29ff.
35 Muṣṭafā “Ālī, pp. 32ff.
Pashas who happened to die in Egypt were buried near the shrines of either Imam al-Layth or Imam Shahî."36

Muṣṭafâ ʿAṣīl goes on to describe the fertility and wealth of Egypt, and expresses his astonishment at the great number of feasts that are celebrated annually by the Egyptians, something which also impresses Evliya Çelebi. Muṣṭafâ ʿAṣīl compares the office of the governor of Egypt with that of the Patriarch Joseph.37 The term al-

diyâr al-ṣāfiya (i.e. the realm of Joseph), was commonly used to designate the Ottoman province of Egypt and is found in both Dumatayr and Bakrî. In his report to the French Expedition about Egyptian administration under Ottoman rule, the bureaucrat Hüsâyn Afandî of the Râzânâma related that Sultan Sâlih respected the continuity of Egypt’s administration whose tradition went back to the time of the Patriarch Joseph.38 However, in his colorful style, Muṣṭafâ ʿAṣīl’s expresses his dismay at Egypt’s government by comparing Cairo with a whore:

“Cairo, which carries the name Mother of the World, was befallen by all sorts of chronic diseases. Above all, her character of being a procuress like Delle and a crafty prostitute in respect to whose and lewdness has become evident. Under these circumstances, her bastard children, planted by illegitimate loins in abject wombs, have grown up and multiplied, the male ones have turned out rotten progency, the female ones ignoble prostitutes. Essentially, she has not found a husband that was a real man.”39

Muṣṭafâ ʿAṣīl, having in mind his own career, knew well who would be the “real man”, whereas those who were running the country were “vipers and scorpions” who had devastated it and turned its wealth into dust. Referring to the manners and customs of the Egyptians, he found that they celebrated too many feasts, their shaykhs were gluttons, their notables conceited and the brokers were crooks. The Egyptians in general had no handsome looks, unless they had Turkish blood. As for the Egyptian women, they were not as good housewives as the Turks, but they were voluptuous. The Egyptian food he found indigestible.40

In the 17th century Evliya Çelebi praised Egypt as the Ottomans’ wealthiest province, which deserved to be called “umm al-dunyed”, or Mother of the World.41 To be the governor of Egypt was a reward from God.42 Evliya relates stories from the Bible and the Koran about how Noah’s descendants came to Egypt as well as the stories of Joseph and other patriarchs.43 He was sympathetic towards the people of Egypt and even understood why they might revolt and their amirs attempt to emancipate themselves. He saw why the pashas oppressed the population and how corruption spread from the large bribes they had to pay to buy their investiture in Egypt:

“The people of Egypt, whether soldiers or religious leaders, have always since the age of the Pharaohs striven to dominate their governors. If the members of the corps did not revolt against their leaders, or if they were beaten, because of the tyranny of these evil persons and vermin, the organization of Egypt would be broken up, its villages and towns would be devastated and destroyed because of the continual tyranny and the hazine of the sultan and sâri of the waqf of God would not be collected.”44

He also wrote:

“To collect that amount of money requires blood in Egypt, and the people do not like to shed their own blood. The cause for the rise of revolt is the increase in the expenses of the viziers of Egypt.”45

Evliya writes that Egypt’s wealth was based on the suffering of the poor,46 but Muṣṭafâ ʿAṣīl had already pointed that out a century earlier, attributing the decrease in the annual tribute to the despoticism of the rulers. Overburdening the common people and peasants had led them to flee, abandoning their land. Corruption and “coffee money” paid to the beylerbeyis increased the tax pressure on the population.47 The Qânûn Mâma, which includes several passages dealing with the land administration of the Egyptian province, does not ignore the plight of the peasants, who were often the victims of the local administrators and bureaucrats.48 Although such concerns

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36 Muṣṭafâ ʿAṣīl, pp. 231; also Dumatayr, Ta‘rikh, fol. 356.
37 Ghiyâbî, p. 7.
38 Muṣṭafâ ʿAṣīl, p. 26 (as translated by Tietze).
39 pp. 40, 41, 44, 45, 49, 50.
40 Evliya Çelebi, p. 166; see also Härtmann, “Evliya.”
41 Evliya Çelebi, p. 140.
42 Evliya Çelebi, pp. 6, 19f.
43 Evliya Çelebi, p. 1024; Shaw, Organizatıon, p. 316.
44 Evliya Çelebi, p. 1025; Shaw, Organization, p. 337.
45 Evliya Çelebi, p. 139.
46 Muṣṭafâ ʿAṣīl, p. 80; see also Winter “Profile,” p. 132. Winter mentions a 17th-century Turkish traveler deploiring the oppression of the Egyptian population by Turkish soldiers.
47 Qânûn Mâma, p. 31.
were ultimately aimed at safeguarding Ottoman interests, in Mamluk times references to peasan and sufferings were not common. The descriptions of the Mamluk social hierarchy provided by "Umari and Qalqashandī hardly refer at all to the peasants. The only Egyptian book known to describe the life of the Egyptian fellah, hazz al-qahaf, was written under Ottoman rule in the second half of the 17th century48 by Shaykh Yūsuf al-Shirbīnī.

The 17th century Turkish historian Ibn Ridwān describes the Egyptians in rather hostile terms.49 In his opinion they lacked endurance, patience and discrimination; they were cruel, miserly, sensualistic, hypocritical and dishonest to the extent of being able to steal the kohl from the eye! They abhorred the Turks and did not respect their dignitaries; they scornfully called the children born from fellah-women and Turks “kuloğlu” which means sons of slaves. To prove that he is not overstating the thievery of the Egyptians, Ibn Ridwān quotes Ibn Iyās’ passages in which he describes how an Ottoman emissary in Cairo was victim of a robbery at the Madrasa Šāliḥīyya; during his sleep his clothes, money and the documents sent by Sālim were stolen from under his head.50 A similar incident had occurred to the ambassador of Shah Rūkh in 848/1444.51

The Turkish scholars and historians who wrote on Egypt, such as Dīyārbakrī, Muṣṭafā “Alī, Abūd al-Karīm, and Eviyya Čelebi, all knew Arabic and were familiar with the history and culture of Egypt. Dīyārbakrī incorporated substantial portions of Ibn Iyās’ chronicle of the Ottoman conquest into his work, despite the hatred of the latter for the Ottomans. Eviyya was familiar not only with the Arabic language but with most of the relevant historical literature on Egypt at that time.52 His 600 pages on Egypt include interesting observations that come from a curious and vivid mind with a great interest in the country where he lived and served. His observations on the geography and architecture of Cairo, on religious life, and on the Ottoman system of administration are contributions as valuable as those of Maqrīzī and “Alī Mubārak, and they complement both very well because of the period Eviyya covers.

It may be interesting here to give a further example of Ottoman interest and curiosity for Egyptian culture, though on a more popular level. The Turkish shadow-play or Karagöz was imported from Egypt by Sultan Sālim himself.53 The Sultan had enjoyed a performance showing the execution of Tūmān-bay. This art became very popular in Turkey and in the 17th century Egyptian shadow-players were invited to perform there.54

Egypt’s fame as a wealthy country with hidden treasures seems to have fascinated many Turks. İbrahim Pasha (991-93/1583-85) is said to have traveled all over Egypt in search of emeralds and did indeed excavate some.55 He returned to Istanbul so wealthy and laden with riches that he was able to marry the daughter of Sultan Murūd III. Among the treasures he took to Istanbul was, according to İshāqi, a golden throne with precious stones which later seated Ottoman sultans. İshāqi reports that İbrahim Pasha almost destroyed the Pyramids in his search for treasure.56 A tale from the Arabian Nights attributes this same greed to Caliph al-Malāʾim, the son of Hārin al-Rashīd, who is said to have tried in vain to demolish the Pyramids in search of treasures.57 Eviyya Čelebi writes that there is no place in Egypt which does not hide a treasure.58

In the 1660’s a quest for emeralds also led to a political controversy between the governor, Ghiṣlī Muḥammad Pasha İbn Şāh Šawār, the provincial administrator of Upper Egypt Muḥammad Ṣeyyid, and Sultan Muḥammad IV. It began when, content with his office in Jirḥā in Upper Egypt, Muḥammad Ṣeyyid refused to obey the Sultan’s order to become pasha in Abyssinia.59 According to Abū al-Ghani, the reason for this reluctance was that Muḥammad Ṣeyyid had mined a great quantity of emeralds from a mountain in the Upper Egyptian desert; his dagger and swords, even his saddle, were encrusted with them. This excited the envy of Ghiṣlī Pasha who killed him.60 Şawāhī and the Turkish chroniclers do not mention

48 On this subject, see Bahr, “Shirbini” in Fellah, pp. 1-47.
49 Ibn Ridwān, fol. 102; Tanesel, pp. 20 ff., n. 574.
50 Ibn Iyās, IV, p. 385.
51 Ibn Iyās, II, p. 244.
53 And, M. Karagöz, pp. 25 ff.; Kohle, Lucehnum, pp. 68 ff.
54 Ibn Iyās, V, p. 192.
55 Kohle, Lucehnum, pp. 68 ff.
56 On the search of emeralds by the Ottomans in Upper Egypt see Gevin, Gev, p. 518 n. 3 & 4.
57 Abū al-Ghani, p. 154; Bahr, Kazakhāb, fol. 32; İshāqi, p. 140; Šamī, p. 27.
59 Eviyya Čelebi, p. 166.
61 Abū al-Ghani, pp. 186 ff.
emeralds however, reporting only that Ghāzī Pasha pursued Muhammad Bey in Upper Egypt until he captured him, killed him and afterwards confiscated his fortune sending it to Istanbul. "Abd al-Ghani tells us that the Sultan wanted the emeralds for himself and therefore ordered Ghāzī Pasha to be killed and his property confiscated. Muṣṭafā Pasha, Ghāzī's successor, was wise enough to send the emeralds to the Porte in any case. Are the emeralds of the Topkapı the trophies of this hunt? 

The Encyclopaedia Britannica (1974) provides the following information about Egyptian emeralds: "Egyptian emerald was obtained as early as 1650 B.C.. It is known that the Greek miners were working the mines in the time of Alexander the Great and later the mines yielded their gems to Cleopatra. Remains of extensive workings were discovered in 1817; "Cleopatra Mines" are situated in Jabel Səkyt and Jabel Zəhrəb near the Red Sea Coast east of Aswān. The Egyptian emeralds occur in mica schist and talc schist." Microtapes, III, p. 874.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE WAQF UNDER OTTOMAN RULE

A. THE WAQFS IN PRACTICE

Under the Mamluks, pious endowments, in addition to their religious functions, had become a means by which the donor could turn lifetime fiefs into hereditary estates and to attempt to escape—although not always successfully—taxes and confiscation. According to Ishāqi, Egypt was saturated with waqfs by the end of the Mamluk period with 10 of its 24 qadās turned into waqfs by the Circassian Mamluks alone. Almost every aspect of urban life had become in some way entangled in the web of pious foundations.

The entire religious establishment lived on waqf posts, and for the Ottomans, who had to govern Egypt from a distance, it was a matter of vital interest to satisfy this most critical sector of society. Waqf policy was an important criterion which historians and men of the religious establishment applied in their evaluation of Ottoman rulers. It regularly occurred that pensions and endowments were a source of friction between the Porte and the local authorities, or between the pasha and the ulema.

The funds from pious endowments represented a very important share of Egypt's urban and agricultural resources. Almost no building was erected in Ottoman Cairo without the involvement of a waqf estate because virtually all of Cairo's land and buildings had already been made waqf by the end of the Mamluk period. Since the foundation of Fustāṭ in the seventh century, the Fustāṭ/ al-Qahirah urban complex had been without competition from any other city. All important buildings were therefore concentrated in this same rather limited space. Nowhere in the Muslim world is there another city which served as an undisputed capital for so long a time without interruption as Cairo has done to this day. The importance of the resources administered by the waqf system can be shown by the following episode. In the early 17th century, a glut of copper in the capital prompted the Porte to send great quantities of this metal

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1 Ishāqi, pp. 149f.
2 On the waqf of the Mamluk period, see Amin, al-Awqaf.
ANDREAS TIE TZE

MUŞTAFA 'ALİ'S DESCRIPTION OF CAIRO OF 1599

TEXT, TRANSLITERATION, TRANSLATION, NOTES

VERLAG DER ÖSTERREICHISCHEN AKADEMIE DER WISSENSCHAFTEN
WIEB 1975
**INTRODUCTION**

The well-known Ottoman historian, poet, and writer on various subjects Muṣṭafā b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz (1644—1690) of Gaḥlap, better known under his pen-name ‘All, visited Egypt twice. His first visit took place in 975/1568 when he was still a young man, private secretary (āḥill-i sārχe) in the service of the successful statesman and general of Ottoman background Lala Muṣṭafā Pasha. He had entered the Pasha’s service in 970/1563—64 when the latter was governor (beleğe) of Damascus. When Lala Muṣṭafā Pasha was appointed sārχe of the Yemen he accompanied him to Egypt. However, through the machinations of his rival and enemy, the Albanian Sīva Pasha, then the governor of Egypt, Lala Muṣṭafā Pasha was dismissed from his office while still in Egypt, and both he and ‘All, now without employment, appear to have returned to the capital soon afterwards. Thus ‘All’s first visit to Egypt can only have been a brief one, but it left pleasant memories as can be seen from several remarks in his later works.

Almost 27 years later ‘All, who in the meantime had served in various offices of the financial administration, was busy writing his World History, the ʿĀdār bābdī, when Mehmed III ascended the royal throne (in January, 1585). As a reward for a congratulatory ode ‘All had submitted to the new Sultan he was offered the post of a secretary of the Justice matters which he had occupied before. But he declined and requested instead the office of a finance director (lāṣerī) of Egypt, for, as he said, Cairo would be the ideal place for him to complete his World History due to the availability of important books. His request was not accepted; instead he was granted a position in Anatolia (as defterdar of Selanik and sanjak commander of Amasya) and proceeded there in the Muharram of 1004 (September—October, 1595).

His dream to come back to Egypt materialized not long after, however, it became again a short visit. This time he was appointed ameer and administrator of the revenues (emāra) of the port of Jīldī in the Red Sea. He sailed from Constantinople to Egypt and entered Cairo in the month of Muharram of 1008 (July—August, 1599). Here he stayed for "one or two months"1. Toward the end of his stay he wrote his Description of Cairo. On the 1st of Bahar ‘Alawi of 1008 (September 21, 1599) he was already on one of the last pages

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The Manuscripts

Four copies of the work are known to exist, three of them in Istanbul, one in Cairo.

(F) Fatih Library, Istanbul, no. 5427, fols. 29v—66v, in a codex that contains also other works by 'Ali. At the end of the portion containing the Description of Cairo there are two colophons. According to the second one, the copy was written in the month of Dhu'l-Qa'dah of the year 1336 (May—June, 1626) in a place the name of which is not clearly readable, possibly Karama (Karamalai) or Ksijli (Kasli), a village in the district of Çaglayan (Çağlayan). The scribe's name is not mentioned. Villages with the names Karama and Ksijli abound, none of them however 'belongs' to a place called Çağlayan. The modern register of place names lists three villages by the name of Çağlayan (in the vilayet of Bursa, Bliz, and Yonga, the latter being the only one to appear on a map) and two other Çağlans (in the vilayet of Çorum and Ispir). Another Çağlayan, in the vilayet of Maras, is given on the map (1:200,000). The villages of Çağlayan (in the vilayet of Sivas and Yonga) and Çağlan (village of Ispir) might also be considered. In the former Ottoman lands on the Balkan Peninsula we have been able to locate only one small village by the name of Çaglı Köy, (Çaglı Köy) between Beogradska, vol. 1, pt. 1, Beograd, 1904, p. 219). The location where the manuscript was copied is thus not certain. But since the copyist had copied together with the text also the colophon of the version from which he copied we know that that version was a copy prepared by Ahiye (Aliye) slave Rakhabah in the last ten days of the month of Rajab 5271 or 5272 (i.e., between October 11th and 20th of 1699), thus immediately after the work was written by its author, probably right after their arrival in Jeddah (toward the end of the Preface). 'Ali writes: "I made a clean copy and sent it from the illustrious House of God . . . to his excellency (Ga'aniye Agha)." (see p. 38). Rakhabah's copy lacks several passages which are found in S and E, in particular the paragraph 60 in Chapter II. We can conclude that it was copied before 'Ali had completed his work on the autograph. On the other hand, it includes a protocol which is not found in S and E. This protocol was obviously added to Rakhabah's clean copy at its beginning when the author sent it to the capital, to his protector Ga'aniye Agha, to whom it was also dedicated. This protocol is dated as of the last ten days of the month of Rajab 5271 or 5272 (November 9th and 10th of 1699). It is a carefully prepared, reliable, though—as has been shown—incomplete copy. The copy from which it was copied was written under the author's supervision and was probably corrected by him.


(E) Hacı Sultan Ağa Library, Istanbul (Çakır), no. 767, fols. 49v—71v. 'Ali's work is given without colophon, but the autograph, which contains various other writings copied by the same hand, in the end carries the date 1484 (1660—61). It is thus only a few years more recent than F. The writing is clear and careful, the state of preservation very good.

(R) Mıra Museum Library, Istanbul, no. 2407, fols. 44v. The colophon, which is unfortunately partly obliterated and illegible, informs us that the copy was made in 1125/1715 for the vezir (Aga) of Buca (Buca), İsa, who was governor of Buca (Buca). The copyist may be identical with the well-known physician, translator, and author of medical works Gerevitali Hacı İsa. (died in 1737), or if we assume that he wrote it as a very young man. The copy is severely battered and in parts of poor legibility.

The fourth manuscript, in Cairo (see ‘Ali Efendi al-Daghatî: Fihrist al-Kurîb al-Mawjida fi al-Kuribkhâna al-Khidîwîya, Cairo, 1306, p. 197), seems to be lost and has not been available for this study.

Of the three available manuscripts, F is not only the oldest copy but one that has preserved an early stage of the work. There must have existed a more complete version of the autograph which then became the basis of the copies S and E, much later, E. As far as the contents go there is no significant difference between S and E whereas there are several passages in those two which are absent in F. On the other hand, the wording of F follows F quite closely, being a faithful copy made roughly at the same time, while the copyist of E in the 18th century handled the text more freely, shortening many passages and making numerous small changes everywhere in it. E cannot have been copied from S since there are instances where its wording follows F more faithfully than S. It can be proven, however, that both S and E go back to a copy (perhaps made from the autograph) in which the copyist had inadvertently skipped a page, namely, the first part of paragraph 23 in Chapter II. Disregarding the Cairo manuscript of which we know nothing, we can thus sketch the interrelationship of the manuscripts in the following way:

 autograph (incomplete)

Rakhabah's copy
completed autograph

\[ F \]

\[ S \] copy with skipped page

\[ E \]

In our edition of the text all three versions were used, but preference was given to F wherever possible.

Marginal captions, which the copyist of F had inserted in the text, have been omitted; likewise, the word "prose" marking the end of verses. On the other hand, chapter and verse of Quranic quotations and, occasionally, the Christian date corresponding to the Hijri date have been added in the translation.

The text reproduced on the plates at the end of this volume is taken from the manuscript S. To it are added from the manuscripts F the first (56th) and last (69th) pages as well as the pages 50th and 530th of which contain passages that are lacking in S.
are given effigies (masks) and whistles. All the people are falling over each other in their joy and rejoicing.

21:

Another feature is the frequency of their social gatherings, the great number of their feasts and other excursions in comparison with other lands. Not only do the population celebrate with great jubilation the two religious feasts every year, on the second day of each festival they have an extra feast when the governor of the country appears on horse-back on the field of the games and distributes robes of honor to many soldiers that shoot arrows at the pumpkin on top of the pole planted there and hit the target. (S 69) Especially the departure of the caravan of the pilgrims and, after a time, its return and again housing Cairo with its visit, in certain years the display of the covering for the Gezira by the Sacred Litter, the celebrations—lasting one week—when the Nile reaches its highest level, the custom of the governor of the country to ride out on Thursday every week, and every Saturday the procession of high and low to the punctuation of Bulaq, these are never omitted. In other words, in Egypt is a populous country where various festivities are held, most of which having become a habit since the time of their rulers of Arab stock (F 66) and some of them since the reigns of their Coptic and Christian monarchs†. It would be impossible to restrict them to the celebration of only two sacred feasts every year as in the Ottoman provinces (vivid 4, Mehe).

Impromptu Verses:

The kingdom of Egypt is a peculiar country
Some people mount horse, others step down.
Some constantly make music and sing,
Others give ear (to them) and listen.
Many sit still in the corner of a dervish convent
Where their lives pass in worship and observance of the laws of religion.

But others have lost themselves in the taverns
Where they are drinking their wine day and night.

22:

A strange thing is that the people of Cairo are completely unaware of each other. When, for instance, a Turk (Bosn) all in tatters settles in a residential neighborhood and later somehow acquires a garment of silk velvet or brocade, it would never happen that one of his neighbors should ask “Where did he find that!” To start with, it is even impossible that when asked “Who is this neighbor of yours?” he would know his name. In his answer he would only say “I am a man of the Turks (Bosn)”. If asked again, he would say nothing else but “Are you sure of your own name?”

Verse:

Everybody is busy with his own affairs,
He neither asks nor is asked questions.
No one spies out the blameworthy of other people,
No one asks questions about another person.

† The Sacred Litter that conveys the Sultan's offerings to Mecca and Medina.
†† i.e., the Ayyubids and the Mamluks.
he could have given a lucid description, if he had used the comparison: "the gazelle-eyed ones, slender as poplars, were, so it seems, entering the area of a game: taking each other by the hand, and they would cover with their arms and their hands their noses and their other delicate fingers at the end of the well-formed horns of their forearms, and would begin the game known as Fork to fork how many trees?" (5 135) He also definitely went astray when he colored the dark-complexioned pretty youths that show affection and loyalty to their insistent lovers, and when he dispelled those who go to visit [the cemeteries of] Karafa.

As a whole, the improper behavior and acts of the people of Egypt and of the [Egyptian] cavalry men (jesaila) can be divided into two groups. One group are the blame-worthy acts which have been their habit since time immemorial. The other group are those shocking practices which we witnessed once after the other when we came in the year 1028 (= 1619) whereas there was not trace of those abuses at the time of our previous visit in Egypt. These were first adopted by some from among the lowest cavalry and were then taken up and made into a habit by the other low-class people, that unscrupulous souls known under the name (10 136)

Now, of those things that were seen of old, there in, first of all, the presence of beautiful and handsome people. The children of people of Egyptian origin are rarely beautiful. Even those who are of spectacular appearance and whom they imagine to have gracefulness and comeliness are usually not too special in respect to beauty and handsomeness. (5 136) Those from time to time—a good-looking youth appears among them, it will certainly emerge that he is either a Turk (Rûmi) or the son of a Turk (Rûmiyâ). Even among those of Turkish (Rûmi) extraction, those who belong to the first generation are better looking, those of the second and third generation have deteriorated in their looks. Those of the fourth and fifth generation, on the other hand, look like other Arabs (Tûbâ) like those unbecoming, say what you will, the (pure) Arabs both on the father’s side and on the mother’s side. When someone, for instance, says "He has Turkish (Rûmi) ancestors", (6 136) he will not be believed and the statement will not be held to be correct.

Secondly, their women are unequally in appearance but their abilities and skills in graceful behaviour and especially in coquetry and sexiness is more than one would expect. (5 136) Moreover, according to the words of experienced womanizers and of men of culture and bon-vivants who have much dealings with women, they excel in regard to the voluptuous, rampant, rampant (energetic loving coitus), make amorous advances during intercourse, and most of them show coquettish motions like an, Arabian horse that has slipped out from under its rider, thereby enhancing the sexual enjoyment. Especially when they are tasted by to bite, breast to breast, their lips are as delicious as the cane sugar of Egypt.

Thirdly: [The fact that] their women, all of them, ride donkeys! Even the spouses of some notable ride on donkeys to Beulah promenades. Week after week they mount their donkeys and dismount like soldiers. Moreover, when they marry a daughter off they let her ride on a donkey and seventy or eighty women ride [with her], while the only things visible in terms of weapons are their shields. People of intelligence find that this unbecoming behavior constitutes a serious defect for the city of Cairo, because in other lands they put prostitutes on a donkey as a punishment. In Cairo the women mount donkeys by their own free will and expose themselves to the eyes of all; therefore it appears appropriate that for punishment they be put on camels.

Fourthly: Another point is that they are not; like the Turkish (Rûmiâ) women, good housewives, that they don’t cook food in their houses, that no one will find them bittering to do some sewing or embroidering and that they pass their days in idleness. Namely, mornings and evenings they receive their allocated allowances from their men (6 137) in the form of cash, and [with these] they eat the indigestible food that is cooked in the bazaars. Also in serving their husbands they do not act like the Turkish women (Rûmiâ); it has been authentically reported by trustworthy persons that if they do one thing promptly and remove beddings and pillow themselves, saying "This is the Divine Law prescribes it", the next time they will charge their husbands with this work and will be served by them.

Fifthly: There are among the women (6 137) special mourners. When there is a funeral, they are hired. It is quite a sight to see them all put black aprons over their heads and chant dirges, shedding false tears. (5 135) Whoever hears their screams and lamentations thinks that each one of them is overcome by grief, sadness, and mourning.

Sixthly: On Fridays when people go to visit the graves of the dead that rest in Karafa and in particular the blessed sepulchres of the Iskand Abu l-Lâdîd, the Iskand Bâdît, and of Sîhib Nâfisâ, their women usually meet there with the javelin that is not a long javelin but a huge strong-man. Those who find no opportunity or cannot afford making the preparations for intercourses at least [use this visit] at the sacred places for making the arrangements [for a few pennies]. Then they go to the usual places of sin and adultery. Although it is the duty of the ruling governor to stop this, they won’t do it. Even if this were brought to their attention, they would not listen with an ear of acceptance.

Seventhly: They do not carry their dead [to their graves] with the procedure and symbols that are customary in Rûm. In their way it may not be easy to tell whether the deceased is a man or a woman. It is strange to see them walk in front [of the coffin] reciting now a litany of praise of God, now the formulas of ritual worship, and behind [the coffin] the drum and laments in the voices of the hired waiting women, and as soon as the funeral prayer is completed (at the mosque) to see all the people that had come with [the procession] disperses.
so that the corpse remains alone with a few close friends (or, relatives), and is taken to be buried, with only a few blind men stumbling after it up to the grave itself.

However, that depending on their fortune, one or two bulls (ṣūq) are paraded in front of the funeral of certain rich people, and that behind them on covered trays bread and dates and a platter of salt are carried along up to the grave; that when the corpse is lowered into the grave the sacrificial animals are slaughtered, cut up and distributed to the poor together with the bread and salt that have been brought there on the trays; and that thereafter the dates, those God-made sweets, are also handed out to the poor and needy—these are indeed reasonable acts. Maybe (5 16, 5 27) they are inspired by, and derived from, the story of the bovine sacrifice to Mulla Khinseyev's Wastya.44

Eighty:

[Surangay] are also the various ways of dressing of the Egyptian women. While the Turkish (Rhiaxy) women (in Egypt) are elegantly dressed in white wraps and black lace veils, (P 47) the Arab women wind gem-decorated turbans around their heads, and their shawls which they call kebros (and) their unattractive behavior are a Parody.44 There are also certain female dancers who wear a long black wrap of fine silk gauze without kebros and whose movements need no whip, especially there are many places holes in that gauze and the edges around those holes are spun over in buttonholes with red silk threads, and such ones always wear the Arabian soldier slippers on their feet, and because of their masculine gait their movements are evident. But the Jewish women always appear in strange attire with pointed head-dress and looking boyish like the horses of the bird family.

Ninety:

Also the garb of the men shows (great) variation. Their mollas wear turbans of extraordinary size and of an Arabian twist. Most of them, whom they have no horse or zabe, content themselves with riding a dromedary. Without any shame they mount their asses, and sometimes two or three of them squeeze together on one animal, being a heavy burden on the weak burro.

Also the people of the basar have no fixed attire, some appear with a turban like a molla, many in the manner and robe of a kaia, and some in gowns and sitters of sweets, apart from their other clothes, with the pajama that is characteristic for servants. Moreover, their peasants wear all sorts of skull-caps and garments that don't resemble each other. The low-class people and the subjects that devote themselves to toiling the land are for the most part a strange lot, barefoot, bare-armed, their expectations of life symbolized by a bottomless well, the skullcap on their heads having the shape of baskets emptied of their water (2 19) but—considering their unshaved skulls—(5 28) baskets full of straw and rubbish, or showing that the heads of most of this rabble have become quite flat from the club blows received from the (foot-holding) soldier.

Twelfth:

Most of the people of Egypt are affected by some disease and ailing. One rarely meets a person whose eyes are bright and round, who is (not) himself nor his male sex organ suffer-

44 Mulla Khinseyev (died in Istanbul in 1694) wrote a work called Wastya (see EICKMANN, Geschichte der sächsischen Literatur, Supplementband II, p. 317, last line). The reference could not be verified.

45 The term used here (Thišalay) has a pejorative connotation (cf. 2 26, Note 41). Also a pun is involved as the word for whip in the next sentence is also zambes.