

**IDEAL KINGSHIP IN THE LATE MEDIEVAL WORLD:
THE OTTOMAN CASE**

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SABANCI UNIVERSITY

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IDEAL KINGSHIP IN THE LATE MEDIEVAL WORLD:
THE OTTOMAN CASE

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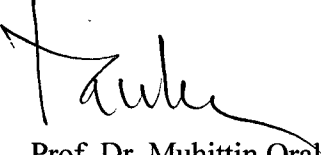
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ABSTRACT
IDEAL KINGSHIP IN THE LATE MEDIEVAL WORLD:
THE OTTOMAN CASE

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The aim of this study is to examine the characteristics of the ideal ruler as seen through the eyes of the members of late medieval societies. Throughout the study, main features attributed to the ideal ruler in various cultures have been pursued. Comparing the concepts and attributes apparent in these cultures, it has become possible to talk about a single ideal of kingship as far as the “Christian” and “Muslim” realms of the late medieval era is concerned. The early Ottoman enterprise has been taken as a case reflecting this ideal in practice. Attributes of the ideal king as reflected in the works of the medieval theorists in both “Islamic” and “Medieval European” lands have been examined. The characteristics apparent in these works have been traced in early Ottoman chronicles. Their expression and evaluation of the events reflect certain approaches to these characteristics and individual rulers. Combining theoretical work with practice and focusing on the similarities between the ideals of “Islamic” and “Christian” ideals rather than the differences, a sketch of the ideal ruler in the late medieval era has been drawn as a result of this study.

Keywords: Kingship, Medieval, Ottoman, Islamic, Europe

ÖZET
GEÇ ORTAÇAĞDA İDEAL HÜKÜMDAR:
OSMANLI ÖRNEĞİ

Nevin Zeynep Yelçe

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Bu çalışma, ideal hükümdarın niteliklerini Geç Ortaçağ toplumlarının üyeleri gözünden incelemek amacını taşımaktadır. Çalışma boyunca, farklı kültürlerde ideal hükümdar kavramına yüklenen nitelikler izlenmiştir. Bu kültürlerde göze çarpan kavramların ve niteliklerin karşılaştırılması sonucunda Geç Ortaçağ sürecinde “Hristiyan” ve “Müslüman” ülkeler açısından ortak bir ideal hükümdar görüntüsüne ulaşmak mümkün olmuştur. Bu idealin uygulamasına örnek olarak erken dönem Osmanlı tarihi bir vaka çalışması olarak ele alınmıştır. Ortaçağ “İslam” ve “Hristiyanlık” dünyasının düşünürlerinin eserlerinde ele aldıkları ideal hükümdar özellikleri incelenmiş ve bu eserlerde beliren nitelikler erken dönem Osmanlı kroniklerinde izlenmiştir. Söz konusu kroniklerin olayları ifade ediş ve yorumlama biçimleri, bu niteliklere ve bireysel olarak hükümdarlara yaklaşımları yansıtmaktadır. Teorik eserleri uygulama ile yan yana getiren, “İslam” ve “Hristiyanlık” idealleri arasındaki farklardan ziyade benzerlikler üzerine odaklanan bu çalışmanın sonucunda Geç Ortaçağ’da ideal hükümdar tablosunun bir taslağı ortaya çıkmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Hükümdarlık, Ortaçağ, Osmanlı, İslam, Avrupa

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FOR THE MEMORY OF MY GREAT-GRANDFATHER
NAZIM YÜCELT

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INTRODUCTION

*If you have nothing to tell us except that one barbarian succeeded another
on the bank of the Oxus and Jaxartes, what is that to us?*

Voltaire¹

Voltaire's remark on history in the *Encyclopédie* makes one question the approach to history as a sequence of events in terms of war and peace and encourages one to go beyond the events and explore the exciting world of mentalities. This study focuses on one aspect of the mentality of a specific period in history, which seems to have preoccupied the contemporaries themselves: the concept of ideal kingship in what may be called the "late medieval era". The ultimate goal is to re-construct, to the extent possible, the image contemporaries have drawn.

Many studies examining various models of kingship have been successfully done throughout the ages and throughout the world. However, these studies usually involve a single culture or geography. The general tendency is to separate the world before the sixteenth century into two spheres, the "Christian West" and the "Islamic East" and accentuating the differences rather than the similarities. Perhaps starting with Arnold Toynbee's theories on the interaction of civilizations, Fernand Braudel's emphasis on the Mediterranean civilization and Marshall Hodgson's attempts at a broader "world outlook", historiography started to gain a more universal sense of a "world civilization".² Although Braudel categorizes the Mediterranean civilization into three components, namely West (Christianity), Islam and the Greek world, he nevertheless

¹ Quoted in Cemal Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds: The Construction of the Ottoman State* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), p. 27

² Paul Rich, "Civilization in European and World History: A Reappraisal of the Ideas of Arnold Toynbee, Fernand Braudel and Marshall Hodgson", *The European Legacy*, vol.7, no.3, 2002, pp. 331-342

emphasizes the broad heritage of Islam: “There is an often repeated phrase: Islam means the desert. The phrase is good but we need to add: Islam is the Middle East. And this makes it laden with an unbelievably enormous heritage and thus with centuries.”³ Building on these, the author of this thesis prefers not to draw distinct borders between the “East” and the “West” as far as the period in question is concerned, but rather proposes trying to see the larger picture. Thus, instead of seeking proof of “interaction” between cultures with borders set in bold, the inclination of this study is towards searching for common aspects observable in these two spheres, the borders of which seem to be more blurred, and moving beyond mere “interaction” in order to reach a picture of “co-habitation” or “co-formation”.

In a recent study on Western perceptions of Islam, the authors emphasize the common heritage shared by the two spheres and the resulting cultural synthesis. Drawing attention to the cultural synthesis observable in the Amarna Age, Hellenistic Age and the Middle Ages experienced in the Mediterranean world and western Asia, Alauddin Samarra suggests that although there is a tendency to speak “reflectively of Western civilization and Islamic civilization as two distinctive and, often mutually hostile, entities,” the relationship between ‘Islam’ and ‘Christendom’ was something more.⁴ The author stresses the common roots:

The civilizations of medieval Islam and Latin Christianity share common roots in religion and culture. That they were often unaware of what they had in common is true, but that is a different subject altogether. Neither the culture of Latin Europe, nor that of medieval Islam would have been possible without classical antiquity and the religion of Israel.⁵

The references to ancient Greek philosophers both in late medieval European texts and in early Ottoman texts as authorities on various matters is a case in point. Although Bernard Lewis focuses more on the differences in his *Political Language of Islam*, he also points out the similarities in many aspects:

If we compare Western and Islamic political language, we shall find that they have much in common. Some of this resemblance is due to our common human

³ Fernand Braudel, “Tarih”, in *Akdeniz: Mekan ve Tarih*, Fernand Braudel (ed.), Necati Erkurt (trans.) (İstanbul: Metis, 1990), pp. 101,103

⁴ Alauddin Samarra, “Arabs and Latins in the Middle Ages: Enemies, Partners and Scholars”, in *Western Views of Islam in Medieval and Early Modern Europe: Perception of Other*”, David R. Blanks and Michael Frassetto (eds.) (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999), p. 137

⁵ *ibid.*, p. 142

predicament – to our living in the same physical world, experiencing the same basic needs, and, often, encountering the same problems. Similar problems may naturally produce similar solutions.⁶

At this point, it would be worthwhile to focus on the characteristics of the world in which the “late Medievals” lived. The period this study is concerned with stretches approximately between the twelfth and the fifteenth centuries. The period covers an era when scholars in Europe have started to theorize about rulership and government. Meanwhile, the line of political thought starting with Farabi and Ibn Sina developed with different traditions in the Muslim realms. This world was ruled by divine ordinance and whatever He may be called, whether God, Lord or Allah is the supreme ruler and authority. In other words, we are concerned with a world based on a monotheistic worldview that is strongly regulated by religious principles. In this world, whatever happened was God’s will, whether one lived in the East or the West. That members of the society are not equal by nature is taken to be the will and creation of God. Thus, there were three ranks of people: those who fight (and therefore have the claim to rule), those who pray and those who work. Since humankind was meant to live in societies, all of these were expected to live in harmony with each other and this could only be possible with one head. Such a worldview gave rise to the “body analogy” or “body politic” both in the West and in the East. This world view also has its roots in the Aristotelian tradition shared by “European” and “Islamic” political cultures.

This world was one largely dominated by frontier societies that are by nature marked by continuous tumult, by plunder as the means to earn one’s living and by prospects of opportunity.⁷ A commentary on Frederick Jackson Turner’s theories on frontier societies provides perhaps the best definition of the frontier as “contact zones in which people of different cultures struggle with each other for control of resources and power.”⁸ Robert Burns also stresses on the essentiality of the frontier experience for the period between 950 and 1350, underlining the aspect of both internal and external expansion. He draws attention to the comment of Archibald Lewis: “Few periods can be

⁶ Bernard Lewis, *The Political Language of Islam*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), pp. 8-9

⁷ Paul Wittek, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun Doğuşu*; Fatmagül Berktaş (trans.), (İstanbul: Pencere Yayınları, 1995), p. 29

⁸ Robert I. Burns, “The Significance of the Frontier in the Middle Ages”, in *Medieval Frontier Societies*, Robert Bartlett and Angus MacKay (eds.) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), p. 310

better understood in the light of a frontier concept than Western Europe between 800 and 1500".⁹ Although whether the whole of Europe is to be considered as a frontier zone is arguable, the concept seems to apply for the borderlands of Hungary, Poland and Andalusia (until 1492). Further west, the Irish and Scottish lands seem to fit in this concept. Moreover, it does not really seem possible to separate the feudal system observed throughout the period from this frontier experience. In one sense, the societies in question also had in common the land tenure system commonly acknowledged as "feudalism", although minor and major differences could be observed in its practice.

The world in question here is one, which is not yet round and is still the center of the universe. The world consists of three continents and ends at some point. This is a world of people ready to believe that once upon a time King Arthur fought a giant¹⁰ and giants carried around columns of immense size.¹¹ Printing has not been invented yet, making it less convenient for ideas and knowledge to circulate around the world. The frontier had not yet moved beyond the Atlantic Ocean. Martin Luther had not yet fired the sparkle of Reformation and the crusade spirit had not been quite extinguished. Michelet's hero, the sixteenth century,¹² would start changing this worldview. In the sixteenth century, the West would start differentiating itself, benefiting from the developing lines of thought, with the aid of printing press and the resources and experience provided by the newfound lands. Now that the Cape of Good Hope had been circumnavigated, the "end of the world" was easier to access. The peak point of Islam, i.e. the sixteenth century according to Hodgson¹³, would witness the firm establishment of three strong empires with high degrees of bureaucratization in the East. The Ottoman principality would by now have grown out of being a frontier principality to a large empire governing a realm stretching over three continents with the bureaucratization and "empire-building" process starting from Mehmed II and reaching its "classical age" with an established imperial ideology in the sixteenth century. A little further east, the Safavids would prove to be a similar force.

⁹ *ibid.* 313

¹⁰ Geoffrey of Monmouth, *History of the Kings of Britain*, Lewis Thorpe (ed.) (Penguin, 1977), p. 140

¹¹ Anon., *Anonim Osmanlı Kroniği*; Necdet Öztürk (ed.) (İstanbul: Türk Dünyası Araştırmaları Vakfı Yayınları, 2002), pp. 106-7

¹² Jules Michelet, *Rönesans*, Kazım Berker (trans.) (Cumhuriyet, 1998)

¹³ Rich, "Civilization in European and World History", p. 338

The underlying assumption of this thesis is that East and West were not two different spheres totally ignorant of and hostile to each other in the later Middle Ages but that they shared a common mentality. However, this does not mean that these societies perceived themselves as parts of a whole. On the contrary, contemporary texts reflect two antithetical spheres. Looking from where each author stands, the whole world must be either Christian or Muslim. Engelbert of Admont (c.1250-1331), a Benedictine abbot who defended a universal kingdom with one true divine law, said “there is but one consensus of the people about that divine and human law, namely the Christian faith; and but one people, namely the Christian people...”¹⁴ If the author in question is writing from the Muslim point of view, the Christian automatically becomes “the other”, “the infidel”, “the villain” and vice versa. Such is the almost “fanatic” hate expressed by an Ottoman chronicle: “The magnanimous and majestic sultan defeated the evil infidel and his lot which is like an animal or perhaps even worse than that.”¹⁵ On the other hand, an anonymous Greek chronicler voices almost the exact sentiment for Mehmed II: “Thus the sultan behaved like an animal, since he was an animal himself.”¹⁶ Thus, the use of force was justified as long as it aimed at the “other”. For example, Humbert of Romans was defending such a point of view when he wrote for the Council of Lyons in 1274, claiming that “the Muslims were culpable in the highest degree” and that “the Church had the right to wield a sword against both heretics and rebels, and the Muslims were both”.¹⁷ On the other hand, Muslims were ordered by the *Quran* (9:29) to fight the infidel until all were converted to the path of *Allah* or agreed to pay taxes: “Fight those who do not believe in Allah, nor in the latter day, nor do they

¹⁴ Anthony Black, *Political Thought in Europe: 1250-1450* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 95

¹⁵ Karamanlı Nişancı Mehmed Paşa, *Osmanlı Sultanları Tarihi*, Konyalı İbrahim Hakkı (trans.) in *Osmanlı Tarihleri I*, N. Atsız Çiftçioğlu (ed) (İstanbul: Türkiye Yayınevi, 1947), p. 359

“Ulu ve yüce sultan aşıklık ve kötü kafiri, onun hayvan gibi belki de hayvandan da aşıklı olan tayfasını yendi”

¹⁶ Anon., *16. Asırda Yazılmış Grekçe Anonim Osmanlı Tarihi: Giriş ve Metin (1373 - 1512)*, Şerif Baştaş (ed.) (Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi Dil ve Tarih - Coğrafya Fakültesi Yayınları, 1973), p. 145

¹⁷ Jo Ann Hoepfner Cruz, “Popular Attitudes Toward Islam in Medieval Europe”, in *Western Views of Islam in Medieval and Early Modern Europe: Perception of Other*, David R. Blanks and Michael Frassetto (eds.), (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999), p. 66-7

prohibit what Allah and His Messenger have prohibited, nor follow the religion of truth, out of those who have been given the Book, until they pay the tax in acknowledgment of superiority and they are in a state of subjection.”¹⁸

Virtues are generally attributed to the members or societies of the author's own religion and the vices are reflected onto the “other”. The interesting point is that what is perceived as “virtue” and “vice” remain the same. In the introduction of their book, David Blanks and Michael Frassetto define the Western construction of the Muslim image as the “photographic negative of the self-perception of an ideal Christian”.¹⁹ A reading of Ottoman chronicles reflects the same to be true for the Muslim construction of the image of the “infidel”. Although the “Christian” appears as the villain in early Ottoman texts, it is also interesting to note the various references to ancient Greek philosophers as authorities. Especially the so-called teachings of Aristotle to Alexander are often repeated. Interesting reflections of perceptions of self and the other can be deduced from the chronicles. However, we also get an insight about Muslims living peacefully in Christian territories and vice versa. We even have accounts of the Spanish, Egyptian and Turkish envoys traveling in company to visit Timur at the beginning of the fifteenth century and being received together in Samarqand.²⁰

We observe processes of “othering” throughout the pursuit of the ideal ruler in later medieval societies, but with the advantage of being able to look from a distance, it will be possible to observe how similar the expectations of the “other” actually were.

The works of medieval scholars and chroniclers, in both the East and the West, cover an ideal of kingship either explicitly or in between the lines. On the one hand, they deliberately discuss kingship and arrive at firm conclusions as to who the king is to be and what his duties and attributes should be, in the form of both political treatises and the popular genre of “mirrors for princes”. On the other hand, one can sense the expectations through the author's evaluation of the events or his tone, especially as observed in the chronicles. The author's disappointments or praises mirror his

¹⁸ *The Holy Quran*, 9:29, Electronic Text Center, University of Virginia Library, <http://etext.virginia.edu/koran.html> (Electronically scanned version of M. H. Shakir's translation of the Holy Qur'an, as published by Tahrike Tarsile Qur'an, Inc., P.O. Box 1115, Elmhurst, New York 11373)

¹⁹ Blanks, David and Frassetto, Michael, “Introduction”, in *Western Views of Islam in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*

²⁰ Denison Ross and Eileen Power (eds), *Clavijo: Embassy to Tamerlane* (London: George Routledge & Sons Ltd., no date)

expectations. Although these accounts can not be taken for granted due to their often subjective stance and the legendary elements they contain, they represent concerns and attitudes of their time, for legends do not “spring from historical vacuums”²¹

Since the aim of this study is to see and perceive the world through the eyes of the contemporaries and thus understand their ideal of rulership, the works of contemporary Ottoman chroniclers such as Ahmedi, Aşıkpaşazade, Neşri, Oruç Beğ, anonymous chronicles, as well as those of Dukas, Kritovulos and Francis shall lead the way. Besides reading between the lines of the chronicles, a mirror written for Murad II shall prove useful to draw out the Ottoman ideal. The laws of Mehmed II and Bayezid II shall also be consulted. The narratives on the struggle between Bayezid II and his youngest son Selim reflected in the works of Celâlzade and Çelebi Hadidi shall conclude the time-line of this study, since these narratives seem to sketch out the ideal ruler as seen through the eyes of the contemporaries at the dawn of the sixteenth century. The Oghuz myth and *The Book of Dede Korkut* shall be taken into consideration for the Turkic influences on Ottoman ideals. The visions of Nizâm al-Mulk, Mawardi, Ghazali, Tusi and Ibn Taymiyyah shall also be investigated and put into context. Selections from Medieval European scholars such as Thomas Aquinas, John of Salisbury, Gilbert of Tournai, Giles of Rome and William of Ockham shall be examined for early European ideals. Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *The History of the Kings of Britain* and Froissart’s *Chronicles* shall be consulted as examples of medieval non-Ottoman chronicles. The works of Erasmus, Machiavelli and Castiglione shall be consulted for the ideals reflected within the “mirrors for princes” genre at the turn of the century. Since references to the sacred books to support arguments are visible in almost all of these sources, the Quran and the Bible have also been used as primary sources.

Following contemporary “Christian” and “Islamic” accounts, which have remained largely theoretical within the scope of this study, the ideal king shall be pursued by focusing mainly on the Ottoman case as reflected in the chronicles. In other words, the Ottoman ideal of kingship as revealed by the chroniclers shall be treated as a case study to show the values and expectations attached to kingship in not only the Ottoman realm, but also a wider sphere for the time period concerned. The texts examined display a consensus on “one man rule” or monarchy as the best form of

²¹ Cruz, “Popular Attitudes Toward Islam in Medieval Europe”, in *Western Views of Islam in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, p. 57

government. Thus, the first chapter of the study focuses on the necessity of a ruler, investigating the divine right of the king to rule, his position as the shadow or vicar of God on earth, and the fragility of this divine providence. This argument shall also include ideas on the theory of “divine kingship”. In addition to the theory of divine kingship, the chapter focuses briefly on methods of succession and argues why many prefer hereditary succession and how it should be supported with training and merit. As the monarch is a person, this chapter also dwells on the person of the king, in other words his physical traits. In a world where war is a matter of fact, the second chapter focuses on the role of the ruler as a military leader. This chapter includes arguments on holy war as an ideology, how it is conceived in the East and West, and under which circumstances and why fighting those of the same religion is justified. The third chapter examines the concepts of virtue and vice. We shall first investigate the concept of justice, appearing widely in every single source as *the* virtue. We shall go on with consultation as it is expected from the ruler, with the issue of councilors and companions of the ruler as a natural extension of consultation. Other virtues to be found in an ideal ruler, such as charity, generosity and faith shall also be explored. To conclude with, we shall concentrate on the vices of the ruler, including tyranny, injustice, oppression, lying, indulgence in entertainment and so forth.

Having mentioned the main arguments behind my assumption of a similar mentality touching upon secondary literature, from this point on I shall let the contemporaries speak for themselves. What they tell may not be the “truth” itself, they may often be subjective or even distorted, they may contain legendary elements, and they may be pure “wishful thinking”. So much the better because this study aims to understand how they preferred to perceive the world they lived in.

I. RULER AND DYNASTY

I.1. No Chessboard Without a King: Monarchy

Any attempt at exploring one or more aspects of “kingship” and at understanding the values attached to the term inescapably leads to questioning the motive behind the need for the post of “king”. Therefore, the initial question of this study shall be “Why were there kings?”.

According to medieval scholars, man was created to live in society and could function only if he was part of a society. For example both Thomas Aquinas (1226-1274) and Ibn Taymiyyah (d.1342), were convinced of this need and nobody seems to have questioned it at the time. According to them, any society would naturally need a head to lead it, in other words they needed a ruler. While Aquinas wrote on the impossibility of the existence of a society without a king²², Ibn Taymiyyah argued that taking the burden of handling the matters of mankind was the biggest of obligations and that it was the only possibility to maintain institutions including religion. Since mankind needed each other, it could survive only by living in society. And when men lived in a society, there had to be a ruler.²³ Furthermore, if there were no rulers, people would lead a life of chaos, evil and oppression.²⁴ Ghazali asserted that the existing power had to be accepted because the alternative would be “anarchy” and social life would not function for lack of a definite authority.²⁵ On the other hand, according to Brunetto Latini (c.1220-94), although nature made all equal, “to restrain the iniquity caused, not by vice

²² Black, *Political Thought in Europe*, p. 23

²³ İbn Teymiye, *Siyaset : es-Siyasetu's -şer'iyye*, Vecdi Akyüz (trans.) (İstanbul: Dergâh Yayınları, 1985), p. 194

²⁴ *ibid.*, p. 29

²⁵ A.K.S. Lambton, “Islamic Political Thought”, in *The Legacy of Islam*, Joseph Schacht and C.E. Bosworth (eds.) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979) , p. 414

of nature but by evil deeds, one man has rule over others, not because of their nature, but because of their vices.”²⁶

An Irish bardic poem dated around 1213 voices the same concern, as well justifying the inequality between people:

Not equal in length are the tops of the fingers
All men are not equally strong
There is no chessboard without a king
There is no brood without a leader.²⁷

In his *Banquet (Convivio)*, the humanist writer Dante Alighieri (1265-1321) also meditates on the need for society and “one man rule”. He refers to Aristotle’s phrase that “the human being is by nature a social animal” and confirms the philosopher’s conviction that “when the polity is directed to a single end [which is a life of happiness for Dante], it is suitable that one person rules and directs and that all the others are ruled and directed”.²⁸ The discussion is also visible in the author’s *Monarchia*. After stating the need for justice in government, the author defends that the administration of justice would only be possible in a monarchy; thus, the best method of government was *monarchia*:

If this holds true in these cases and in individuals who are ordered to one particular goal, then the proposition advanced above is true; now it is agreed that the whole of mankind is ordered to one goal, as has already been demonstrated: there must therefore be one person who directs and rules mankind, and he is properly called 'monarch' or 'Emperor'. And thus it is apparent that the well-being of the world requires that there be a monarchy or empire.²⁹

Democracy which is defined as government of the many is generally viewed to be one of the worst kinds of government, as echoed in Aquinas’ words based on an Aristotelian view:

Moreover, if bad government is conducted by the multitude itself, it is called a democracy, that is control by the people. This occurs when the plebian populace

²⁶ Cary J. Nederman and Kate Landon Forhan (eds.), *Medieval Political Theory – A Reader: the quest for the body politic, 1100-1400* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), p. 78

²⁷ Katharine Simms, “Bards and Barons: The Anglo-Irish Aristocracy and the Native Culture”, in *Medieval Frontier Societies*, p. 179

²⁸ Nederman and Forhan (eds.); *Medieval Political Theory*, p. 168

²⁹ Dante Alighieri, *Monarchia*, Book I, ch.5, Dante Online by Società Dantesca Italiana, <http://www.danteonline.it>, date of access: July 14, 2003

by force of numbers oppresses the wealthy. In this way, the whole people becomes virtually a single tyrant.³⁰

At the beginning of the fifteenth century, Christine Pizan (c.1364-c.1430), a relatively unconventional figure in that she was a lady writing on politics, followed Aristotle's preference for the "polity of one" and found government by one to be the most natural way of governing. She claimed that the people of France were very happy because they were ruled by one and this passed on from one generation to the next:

I consider the people of France very happy. From its foundation by the descendants of the Trojans, it has been governed, not by foreign princes, but by its own from heir to heir, as the ancient chronicles and historians tell. This rule by noble French princes has become natural to the people. And for this reason and the grace of God, of all countries and kingdoms of the world, the people of France has the most natural and the best love and obedience for their prince, which is a singular and very special virtue and praiseworthy of them and they deserve great merit.³¹

This was also how the entire universe was governed; in other words, one God ruled over the universe. According to Aquinas, the king's duty was to secure the good of society which was greater and more divine than that of the individual. He was of the opinion that "the government of the political multitude by one man is like the divine government of the universe."³² John Wycliff (c.1330-1383) explains the duties of the kings, insisting that the king should rule his kingdom in the same manner as God rules the universe. He explains, "although the king in the rule of his kingdom can not match God, still since he is to be the vicar of God, he ought to administer his kingdom along similar lines inasmuch as he can".³³ Janos Thuroczy, the Hungarian chronicler writing in the fifteenth century, attributes to the Ottoman sultan Mehmed II the following phrase: "One God rules in the heavens; it is appropriate that only one prince rule the earth."³⁴

In the thirteenth century, Muslim scholar and statesman Nasiruddin Tusi (1201-1274), who worked for the Mongol ruler Hulagu, claimed that man was inherently a

³⁰ Nederman and Forhan (eds.), *Medieval Political Theory*, p. 101

³¹ Christine de Pizan, *The Book of Body Politic*, Kate Logdon Forhan (ed. and trans.) (Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 92-3

³² Black, *Political Thought in Europe*, p. 24

³³ Nederman and Forhan (eds.), *Medieval Political Theory*, p. 224

³⁴ Janos Thuroczy, *Chronicle of the Hungarians*, Frank Mantello (ed) (Bloomington: Indiana University Research Institute for Inner Asian Studies, 1991), p. 174

social creature and, government was a must for mankind to live in peace. According to Tusi, government was possible through the just administration of a just ruler. Such a ruler would be the vicar of God on earth and the doctor of the health of the world.³⁵ The late fifteenth century Ottoman chronicler Tursun Beg starts his work by explaining the nature of man as a creature living in society and thus the need for a single ruler. According to Tursun Beg, people need each other by nature so that they can cooperate. Therefore, they have to live together. However, if they are left to their own devices or to their inherent nature, conflicts would arise. They would not be able to cooperate but would incite treason and destroy each other. Therefore, it was necessary to give each a status/place so that each would be satisfied with his lot and not attack that of others'. Thus, the law (*örf*) had emerged. A king (*padişah*) was needed at all times so that the order of things could be preserved: "Thus, the king's person was necessary for the desired order to be attained, without him the conditions for an honorable order would be impossible."³⁶

The ruler appears as the vicar of God on earth in several contemporary texts. When giving the account of the Saljuqid ruler Tughrıl Beg, the *Jami al-tawarikh* recalls the relevant verse of the *Quran* which reads: "O David, behold! We have appointed you as viceroy on earth".³⁷ The concept of sultan as "shadow of God on earth" which appears in many "Islamic" texts seems to be based on the "protective" role of the ruler. One explanation for the wording can be found in the climatic conditions of the Muslim countries where the sun is regarded more like an enemy than a friend to humankind. Just like the shadow provides safety and refuge from the hostile sun, the ruler provides protection to his people from the enemy.³⁸ The fifteenth century chronicler Neşri, too, believes that the sultan is the shadow of God on earth (*es-sultan zillullahi fi'l-arz*) and is

³⁵ Bahtiyar Hüseyin Sıddıki, "Nasıruddin Tusi", Kasım Turhan (trans.) in *İslam Düşüncesi Tarihi II*, M.M. Şerif (ed.), (İstanbul: İnsan Yayınları, 1990), pp. 192-5

³⁶ Tursun Bey; *Târih-i Ebu'l-Feth*, Mertol Tulum (ed.) (İstanbul: İstanbul Fetih Cemiyeti, 1977), p. 12-13

"Pes, nizâm-ı matlûb husûli için vücûd-ı pâdişâh vâcib oldı ki, vücûdinsuz intizâm-ı ahvâl-i eşref-i mümkinât – ki nev'i insâundur – mümteni'."

³⁷ *The history of the Seljuq Turks from the Jami al-tawarikh : an Ilkhanid adaptation of the Saljuq-nama of Zahir al-Din Nishapuri* / translated and annotated by Kenneth Allin Luther ; edited by C. Edmund Bosworth (Richmond, Surrey : Curzon, 2001), p. 37-8 and see *Quran* 38:27

³⁸ Lewis, *The Political Language of Islam*, p. 21-2

guided by the prophets, enabling him to find the right path; Neşri starts his account by making this point clear.³⁹ Oruc Beg, another early Ottoman chronicler, claims that all writers should write about the morals of the rulers of their time because these rulers are the shadow of God on earth.⁴⁰

The concept of “one man rule” or monarchy was theoretically formulated in the “body politic” rhetoric of the time. Society was likened to the human body with the ruler as the head. The body analogy in Islamic scholarly works had already appeared with Farabi who described the city as a whole similar to the organs of the body which must function together.⁴¹ In the twelfth century, John of Salisbury (c.1120-80) gives a detailed description of the body analogy with the king as the head. He attributes the duty of ears and eyes to the judges and governors of provinces, while the officials and soldiers are identified with the arms.⁴² The feet are those who perform “humbler duties”, such as artisans and peasants.⁴³ Christine Pizan starts her book by describing “body politic”, claiming, as John of Salisbury has done, that Plutarch has compared the polity to the human body in a letter he had written to Emperor Trajan. According to this theory, rulers act like the head and the institutions come from the rulers, just like the actions of the other parts of the body come from the head. As the arms of a person should be strong to achieve some deeds, the knights and nobles should be strong in order to defend the realm. She also likens them to the hands because they “push aside harmful things”. The rest are compared to the belly, the feet and the legs because they sustain the first two.⁴⁴ To demonstrate the co-functioning of all parts in order to bring out a sound whole, Pizan relates a fable about the disagreement between the belly and the limbs, while no doubt relating the real life experience of the oppressed medieval peasants:

Once upon a time there was great disagreement between the belly of a human body and its limbs. The belly complained loudly about the limbs and said that they thought badly of it and that they did not take care of it and feed as well as

³⁹ Mehmed Neşri; *Kitabı Cihan-nümâ – Neşri Tarihi*; Faik Reşit Unat and Mehmed A. Köymen (ed), v.1 (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1995), p. 5

⁴⁰ Edirneli Oruç Beğ; *Oruç Beğ Tarihi*, Atsız (ed.) (İstanbul: Tercüman, 1972), p. 17

⁴¹ İbrahim Medkûr; “Farabi”, in *İslam Düşüncesi Tarihi II*, p. 80

⁴² Nederman and Forhan (eds.), *Medieval Political Theory*, pp. 38-9

⁴³ *ibid.*, p. 43

⁴⁴ Pizan, *The Book of Body Politic*, p. 4

they should. On the other hand, the limbs complained loudly about the belly and said they were all exhausted from work, and yet despite all their labor, coming and going and working, the belly wanted to have everything and was never satisfied. The limbs then decided that they would no longer suffer such pain and labor, since nothing they did satisfied the belly. So they would stop their work and let the belly get along as best it might. The limbs stopped their work and belly was no longer nourished. So it began to get thinner, and the limbs began to fail and weaken, and so, to spite one another, the whole body died.⁴⁵

Shepherd allegories appears to be another means of justifying the need for a single ruler. A flock needs a shepherd to guide and protect, as the people need a ruler. The twelfth century writer Geoffrey of Monmouth tells that when the Romans invaded Britain and left the realm after a while without a ruler, the Archbishop of London Guithelinus delivered a speech to the people. In this speech, he likened the Britons to “sheep wandering about without a shepherd” who were forced to abandon their sheepfold under the attack of “hostile men of other nations”.⁴⁶ While the shepherd allegory can be associated with the image of Christ as shepherd, the Islamic roots of the allegory go back to a certain Tradition of the Prophet addressing rulers, which says: “You are all shepherds and are responsible for your flocks”.⁴⁷ Based on this, Ibn Taymiyyah reminds that the ruler (*veliyyu'l-emr*) is the shepherd of the people, like the shepherd of a flock. Therefore, the ruler is responsible for the people.⁴⁸ The Saljuqid history presented in an early fourteenth century adaptation of Zahir al-Din Nishapuri's *Saljuq-nama*, the *Jami al-Tawarikh*, starts with the conviction that “the kings are the shepherds of the flock and the protectors of the creatures from all kinds of calamity and dread”.⁴⁹

In a “mirror” written for the Ottoman sultan Murad II, the author again reminds that whoever becomes the king of the world becomes its shepherd.⁵⁰ The conversation between Orhan and his brother Alaeddin over rulership, which was recorded in fifteenth

⁴⁵ *ibid*, p. 91

⁴⁶ Geoffrey of Monmouth, *History of the Kings of Britain*, pp. 145-6

⁴⁷ Ebu'l Hasan Habib el Mâverdi; *El-Ahkâmü's-Sultâniye*, Ali Şafak (trans.) (Bedir Yayinevi, 1994), p. 54

⁴⁸ Ibn Teymiye, *Siyaset : es-Siyasetu's -şer'iyye*, p. 42

⁴⁹ *The history of the Seljuq Turks from the Jami al-tawarikh*, p. 25

⁵⁰ *Bedr-i Dilşad'ın Murâd-nâmesi*, Âdem Ceyhan (ed), 2 vols. (İstanbul: MEB, 1997), p. 235

“Meseldür kim 'âleme hân olur; re'âya koyunlar o çoban olur”

century Ottoman chronicles, vividly demonstrates this issue. When their father Osman dies, Alaeddin says to his brother Orhan: “You have the right to this realm. There needs to be a king to shepherd it, to observe the condition of the realm and to protect it.” As a reply, Orhan offers his brother to be the shepherd. However, his brother refuses this on the grounds that it was Orhan whom their father had preferred.⁵¹ The shepherd allegory is still apparent in early sixteenth century chronicles, as the example of Çelebi Hadidi demonstrates.⁵²

Chronicles supply us with abundant examples of what befalls a society without a head or shepherd: the outcome is without exception conflict, chaos and tumult. Geoffrey of Monmouth, who completed his *History of the Kings of Britain* in 1136, relates the almost tragic account of the Britons who were left without a head after Maximianus bereft the island of its soldiers and worthy people. The island was ravaged, people were short of food and “there has been no one to stop this, for not a single strong man, not one military leader, was left” to them. They actually begged Aldroneus, king of Armorica, to help them out of this situation by accepting to become their ruler.⁵³ When in 1382 Louis the Great, the last Angevin king of Hungary died, the fate of the Hungarians was not much different and “the course of events took a violent change, with considerable bloodshed and plundering”.⁵⁴ Likewise, when King John of France was captured by the English at the battle of Poitiers and his heirs were too young to rule, “the kingdom of France was deeply disturbed by it. There was cause enough, for it brought loss and suffering to people of all conditions”.⁵⁵

⁵¹ Aşıkpaşaoğlu, *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osman*; in *Osmanlı Tarihleri I*, N. Atsız Çiftçioğlu (ed) (İstanbul: Türkiye Yayınevi, 1947), p. 115

“Bu vilâyet hakkındur. Buna bir çobanlık etmeğe padişah gerek. Bu vilayetin halini göre ve başara”

and Neşri; *Kitabı Cihan-nüma*, p. 149

“Bu vilâyete çobanlık itmeğe padişah gerekdür kim cemi’-i re’âyayı ve sipâhiyi görüb gözede”

⁵² Çelebi Hadidi, *Tevârih-i Al-i Osman*, Necdet Öztürk (ed.) (İstanbul: Marmara Üniversitesi Fen-Edebiyat Fakültesi, 1991), p. 202

“Her iklimin şeh olur pâs-bânı; Koyun kalır mı olmasa çobanı”

⁵³ Geoffrey of Monmouth, *History of the Kings of Britain*, p. 149

⁵⁴ Thuroczy, *Chronicle of the Hungarians*, p. 38

⁵⁵ Froissart, *Chronicles*, selected, translated and edited by Geoffrey Brereton (Penguin, 1978), p. 146

Neşri's account of the Karamanids trying to find themselves a *beg* is noteworthy in this respect. As the Mogols come to Persia, some Turks escape and settle in Anatolia. Their leader was an old man and respected man who had a son named Karaman. As we understand from the account, the people asked the old man to make his eldest son Karaman their ruler so that troubles would cease.⁵⁶

The most vivid portrayals of the consequences of being without a head can be found in Ottoman chronicles as they relate the "interregnum period" after the defeat of Bayezid in 1402. At this point, a reference to Nizâm al-Mulk would be useful to see what happens when a land is thrown into confusion: "At any time the state may be overtaken by some celestial accident or influenced by the evil eye. Then the government will change and pass from one house to another, or the country will be thrown into disorder through seditions and tumults; opposing swords will be drawn and there will be killing, burning, plunder and violence."⁵⁷ These words in a way mirror what happened after Bayezid was defeated and captured by Timur. Some chronicles such as that of Ahmedî claim that Emir Suleyman actually reigned over the Ottoman lands; others such as the anonymous sixteenth century Greek chronicle attribute kingship to all three sons of Bayezid. It seems that the plurality or lack of a ruler – depending on how one looks at it – has brought about a considerable amount of confusion. This concern is implied through the sadness of Mehmed during the Timurid invasion; Mehmed is troubled because his people who have been trusted to his house by God are helpless in the hands of the enemy.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Neşri; *Kitabı Cihan-nüma*, p. 45

"İçimüzde yiğit-yiğil çokdur. Beklemeyüb nice hâdise iderler. Gel, büyük oğlın Karaman'ı bize emir kıl. Anun emrinden tecâvüz itmiyelüm ve suç idenlerimüzün ol hakkından gelsün."

⁵⁷ Nizâm al-Mulk; *The Book of Government : or, Rules for kings : the Siyar al-muluk or Siyasat-nama of Nizam al-Mulk*, Hubert Darke (trans.) (London and Boston: Routledge & K. Paul, 2002), p. 139

⁵⁸ Neşri; *Kitabı Cihan-nümâ*, p. 367

"Ey diriğ memleket-i Osman'a ki, düşmanun atı ayağında helâk ola. Ve diriğ reayasına ki, vedâyi-i hazret-âferid-kârdur, düşman elinde aciz ve sergerdan olmuşlardur."

Perhaps it is the Ottoman chronicler Sükrullah's couplet which explains the situation best in quite simple terms: "If there is no lion in the forest, the jackals hold the rope in that forest."⁵⁹

I.2. Match Made in Heaven: Divine Kingship

There was no questioning the need of one man ruling. How was that one man to be found? Both the Quran and the Bible had already provided the answer: "And their prophet said to them: Surely Allah has raised Talut to be a king over you. They said: How can he hold kingship over us while we have a greater right to kingship than he, and he has not been granted an abundance of wealth? He said: Surely Allah has chosen him [ruler] in preference to you, and He has increased him abundantly in knowledge and physique, and Allah grants His kingdom to whom He pleases" in the Quran⁶⁰ and "Thou shalt in any wise set him king over thee, whom the LORD thy God shall choose: one from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee"⁶¹ in the New Testament. Thus, the ruler is chosen by God and is therefore not disputable.

The theory commonly known as Divine Kingship appears as a general belief in the writings of late medieval scholars and chroniclers. The idea that God chooses one person to rule over mankind in general or over a specific realm in particular is a prevalent belief, irrelevant of the geography in which these works have been produced. However, the idea of divine kingship is not unique to either the Middle Ages or Christianity and Islam. It seems to be the legacy of an older heritage. One of the earliest surviving written evidences supporting this concept dates back to around 2600 BC in Mesopotamia. Archeological evidence shows that in the legendary city of Kish, kingship was considered to be "descended from heaven".⁶² In his *Republic*, Plato

⁵⁹ Şükrullah, *Behçetüttevarih*, in *Osmanlı Tarihleri I*, N. Atsız Çiftçioğlu (ed) (İstanbul: Türkiye Yayınevi, 1947), p. 60

"Bulunmazsa ormanda arslan eğer, çakallar o ormanda erlik eder"

⁶⁰ *The Quran*, 2:247

⁶¹ *The Bible*, Deuteronomy 17:15

⁶² Irene J. Winter; "Seat of Kingship: A Wonder to Behold: The Palace as Construct in the Ancient Near East", in *Ars Orientalis XXIII*, Gülru Necipoğlu (ed.), vol.23, 1993

suggests telling people that God who has created them has mixed gold into the stock of those who were ordained to be leaders.⁶³

According to Ghazali, too, the rulers were sent on earth by God and were entrusted with the well-being of their subjects:

God has singled out two groups of men and given them preference over others: first prophets, upon them be peace, and secondly kings. Prophets He sent to His servants to lead them to Him and kings to restrain them from [aggression against] each other; and in His wisdom He handed over to them the well-being of the lives of His servants and He gave them a high status.⁶⁴

Moving to a Saljuqid statesman of Islamic origin Nizâm al-Mulk, the issue of divine kingship comes up in the very beginning of his *Siyasetnama*. According to Nizâm al-Mulk, God selects a person to be king and “having endowed him with goodly and kingly virtues, entrusts him with the interests of the world and the well-being of His servants”.⁶⁵ The author goes on noting that the present king [Malikshah] was put on earth by God: “He [God] caused The Master of the World, the mightiest king of kings, to come forth from two noble lines whose houses were cradles of royalty and nobility, and had been so from generation to generation as far back as the great Afrasiyab.”⁶⁶

In the fifteenth century, the concept of kingship was so deeply engraved in political thought that it was taken for granted. Tursun Beg, for example, states that there had been kings since the beginning of the world and will be as long as God wishes so.⁶⁷ The Ottoman chronicler and statesman Nişancı Mehmed Paşa, on the other, expresses his gratitude to God for the blessing he bestowed on mankind by placing such a grand ruler on earth.⁶⁸

In medieval Europe, too, the king was believed to be divinely ordained. Rakewin of Freising tells that when Frederick Barbarossa gave an oration to his nobles and clergy

⁶³ Plato, *Devlet*, Sabahattin Eyuboğlu and M. Ali Cimcoz (translators), 2nd ed. (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Yayınları, 2000), p. 96

⁶⁴ A.K.S. Lambton, “The Internal Structure of the Saljuq Empire”, in *The Cambridge History of Iran* (Cambridge, 1968), v.5, p. 208

⁶⁵ Nizâm al-Mulk, *The Book of Government*, p. 9

⁶⁶ *ibid*, p. 10

⁶⁷ Tursun Bey, *Târih-i Ebu'l-Feth*, p. 29

“... cihan cihan olaldan padişahlar var idi ve vardur ve ilâ mâ şâ'allah olsa gerek.”

⁶⁸ Karamanlı Nişancı Mehmed Paşa, *Osmanlı Sultanları Tarihi*, p. 349

in his youth, he stressed that “divine ordinance sanctioned his rule”.⁶⁹ The works of late medieval jurists suggest that monarchy is viewed as the best form of government, one of the main arguments being the issue of divine kingship. John of Salisbury, for example, is quite firm on his belief in the prince being established in his seat by God.⁷⁰ His argument is based on the conviction that all power is from God:

Therefore, according to the general definition, the ruler is the public power and a certain image on earth of the divine majesty. Beyond doubt the greatest part of the divine virtue is revealed to belong to the ruler, insofar as at his nod men bow their heads and generally offer their necks to the axe in sacrifice, and by divine impulse everyone fears him who is fear itself. I do not believe that this could have happened unless it happened at the divine command. For all power is from the Lord God, and is with him always, and is His forever. Whatever the ruler can do, therefore, is from God, so that power does not depart from God, but is used as a substitute for His hand, making all things learn His justice and mercy. ‘Whoever therefore resists power, resists what is ordained by God’ (Romans 13:2), in whose power is the conferral of authority and at whose will it may be removed from them or limited.⁷¹

Aquinas, too, heralds that God will choose someone to rule the people: “Hence, the Lord, by his prophets, promises to his people that as a great reward he will place them under one head and that one ruler will be in the midst of them.”⁷² In response to arguments that the authority of the Romans is not the highest one since it was not founded on reason or by a decree from a universal convention, but by force, Dante goes a step further and argues that supreme temporal authority was given to the Roman ruler. According to him, the reason for this “people” to be chosen was obvious:

The choice of the highest official originates in the decision of God, otherwise the choice would not be equitable for all, since there was no official whose intent is the good of all, who predates Him. Furthermore, there never has been, nor will there ever be, any sweeter nature in ruling, greater strength in maintaining, more subtlety in acquisition than the Italians have, especially that holy people [of Rome] whose blood is mixed with the noble blood of the Trojans. God has chosen them for that office.⁷³

⁶⁹ Kenneth Pennington, *The Prince and the Law, 1200-1600: sovereignty and rights in the western legal tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), p. 10

⁷⁰ Lester Kruger Born, “The Perfect Prince: A Study in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Century Ideals”, *Speculum*, v. 3, issue 4 (Oct. 1928), p. 472

⁷¹ Nederman and Forhan (eds.), *Medieval Political Theory*, p. 30

⁷² *ibid.*, p. 103

⁷³ *ibid.*, p. 170

The tracts written in the second half of the thirteenth century by Jordan of Osnabrück and Alexander of Roes reflect a similar view but change the focus to the Germans instead of the Romans of Dante. They claim that “divine dispensation had allotted the empire to the Germans via Charlemagne”.⁷⁴ When in 1399 Richard II was disposed and had to hand over to Henry, Duke of Lancaster the crown of England “with all the rights belonging to it”,⁷⁵ the Archbishop of Canterbury who performed the coronation ceremony of the new king gave a speech in which he explained to people “how God had sent them a man to be their lord and king”. When he asked people whether they accepted this, nobody disagreed and they rejoiced over their God-given king.⁷⁶ A similar episode appears in the *Chronicle of the Hungarians*. After the death of king Ladislas, the nobles decided to have Count Matthias as their king and nobody dared to disagree for “what were they to do, except agree, when the entire Hungarian people walking through the broad streets of the city, as well as a crowd of children running about here and there, kept saying and loudly shouting: We want Matthias to be king; God has chosen him for our protection; and he indeed is the one we choose”.⁷⁷ Eventually, Matthias came to be so successful that an old hymn was adapted, proclaiming him as the “chosen one”:

... Behold, it is resolved that Matthias be chosen. The chosen one quickly takes up these clear expressions of their wishes. Shaken in his mind by commands from heaven and prayers on earth, he bows down before you, Christ the merciful, and obeys.⁷⁸

As far as the Turkish tradition is concerned, the issue of divine kingship comes up in *Oğuzname*, for example. When Köl Erki Khan, who has acted as regent/prince to the young Tuman Khan, hands over his titles and duties to Tuman Khan, he says that the right to the throne belongs to Tuman Khan who inherited it from his father. He goes on to say that if he himself had any intention of possessing the throne, it would be an impossible pursuit because “the throne of kingship is reserved only for those who have been selected by God the Most Exalted and for their off-springs”. He also gives a reason for this: those rulers who have been selected by God would definitely not make any

⁷⁴ Black, *Political Thought in Europe*, p. 93

⁷⁵ Froissart, *Chronicles*, p. 462

⁷⁶ *ibid.*, p. 465

⁷⁷ Thuroczy, *Chronicle of the Hungarians*, p. 207

⁷⁸ *ibid.*, p. 218

mistakes but as an ordinary man he could.⁷⁹ In the history of the Saljuqs, Malik Shah, son of Alp Arslan, is described as being favored by fortune and made successful by destiny; furthermore “he was strengthened by heavenly assistance and made successful by divine favor”.⁸⁰

Based on these views and examples, we can trace the idea of divine kingship through the works of the Ottoman chroniclers. Before going on with specific examples, it is worth mentioning that the whole idea of divine kingship translates into the possession of *kut* or *devlet* in these chronicles. The use of the word *kut* in these texts implies the power and prosperity given by God to a person who is destined to rule. It appears to go in parallel with the definitions of divine ordinance exemplified above. This divine sanction is sometimes projected through dreams of the founder of a house, as the case seems to be with those like Brutus, Clovis and Osman. However, dreams are not the only signs.

For example, as Osman fights the unbelievers, the Saljuqid Sultan too realizes that Osman has God’s support.⁸¹ On the other hand, although not denying the Sultan’s divine ordinance, Osman claims similar rights after conquering Karacahisar, which Aşıkpaşazade presents as a kind of turning point with the calling of the *hubbe*, the appointment of a *kadı* and the designation of taxation. Most importantly in this account, Osman directly claims rulership based on the fact that he himself has fought for the place and God has given him kingship together with *ghaza*.⁸² Oruc Beg’s explanation is that Osman became the ruler although he was the youngest of the brothers because *devlet* was on his head.⁸³ Ahmedi does not even bother to provide any reasons or explanation but directly says that God made Orhan king and he protected the

⁷⁹ Togan, Zeki Velidi; *Oğuz Destanı: Reşideddin Oğuznamesi, Tercüme ve Tahlilî*, 2nd ed. (İstanbul: Enderun Kitabevi, 1992), p. 61

⁸⁰ *The history of the Seljuq Turks from the Jami al-tawarikh*, p. 57

⁸¹ Aşıkpaşaoğlu, *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osman*, p. 97

“Oğul, Osman Gazi! Sende saadet nişanları çoktur. Sana ve neslüne alemde mukabil olucu yokdur. Benim duam ve Allahın inayeti ve evliyanın himmeti ve Muhammedin mu’cizatı senün ile biledür.”

⁸² *ibid*, p. 103

“Bu şehri ben hod kendi kılıcım ile aldum. Bunda sultanın ne dahli var kim andan izin alam. Ona sultanlık veren Allah bana dahı gazâyile hanlık verdi.”

⁸³ Oruç Beg, *Oruç Beg Tarihi*, p. 22

believers.⁸⁴ According to Aşıkpaşazade, it was again God who enabled Orhan to take Karası, to call the hutbe and to issue coins.⁸⁵ In *Selâtin-nâme*, an Ottoman chronicle written in the late fifteenth century, the author keeps repeating the phrase “God gave him his father’s realm” at the beginning of each reign.⁸⁶

An important aspect of divine sanction or *kut* is that it does not necessarily last forever. There is always the danger of “reversal of fortune”. In other words, God can withdraw the support he gives to a ruler or a people. The ruler’s mistakes or vices may cause the divine favor to turn away, as it was the case with Pandrasus, the Greek king whom Brutus captures. According to Geoffrey of Monmouth, when the captured king is brought before Brutus, he says, “Since the gods are hostile to me and have delivered me and my brother Anacletus into your hands, I must obey your command.”⁸⁷ In some cases such as the Saxon prince Octa, the gods may disappear altogether, especially when “pagans” are concerned. When Aurelius lays siege to the city of York, which the Octa holds, Octa finally decides to surrender on the grounds that his gods are vanished: “I do not doubt for a moment that it is your God who reigns supreme, for He has compelled so many noble men appear before you in this manner”.⁸⁸ Geoffrey of Monmouth’s account of Octa’s realization may bring to mind a praise of monotheism in the face of paganism at first sight. However, it also reflects a firm belief in some kind of divine assistance and preference, regardless of religion, and the fragility of this assistance.

There are many cases where the monotheistic God withdraws his favor from a monotheistic ruler. Perhaps the most famous example of God’s withdrawal of favor from not only a ruler but also a people can be found in the conquest of Constantinople. The famous Byzantine chronicler Dukas associates this doom to God’s removing his support because of the evil deeds and faithlessness of the people. One should keep in

⁸⁴ Ahmedi, *Dastân ve Tevârih-i Mülûk-i Âl-i Osman*; N. Atsız Çiftçioğlu (ed), (İstanbul: Türkiye Yayınevi), p. 10

“Çünkü Hak, Orhanı etdi padişah / Oldı ol din ehline püşt ü penah”

⁸⁵ Aşıkpaşaoğlu, *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osman*, p. 121

“Çünkü Hak Ta’âlâ vilayet-i Karasıda hutbeyi ve sikkeyi Orhan Gazi’ye mukarrer etdi, padişah oldu.”

⁸⁶ See, for example, Kemâl, *Selâtin-nâme*, Necdet Öztürk (ed) (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2001), p. 33, 62

⁸⁷ Geoffrey of Monmouth, *History of the Kings of Britain*, p. 63

⁸⁸ *ibid.*, 193

mind the religious controversy experienced by the Byzantines just then. As some were trying to gain the support and assistance of the West by negotiating a union with the Catholic Church, others were arguing that this was heresy and they would rather see the turbans of the Turks than the caps of the cardinals. People had even stopped going to St. Sophia for proper Christian worship. It is apparent that Dukas opposes the union; he repeats the association of doom with sin and lack of faith throughout his work. However, his sentiments are quite clear and even heart breaking in the eulogy he writes for the city of Constantinople:

Tremble thee oh sun! Tremble thee, too, oh earth and mourn for the Lord, the just judge, has abandoned our kind because of our sins... We are not worthy enough to turn our gazes to the skies, we should only put our faces on the ground and cry out to the Lord, 'you are just and your decisions are right'. We have sinned, we moved away from religious rules. We did more injustice than any other people and whatever you did to us, you have done so by your true and just verdict. However, oh Lord, have mercy on us and we shall keep praying.⁸⁹

Froissart expresses the idea of “reversal of fortune” while relating the tragic story of Richard II through the words of one of his followers: “Sir, you must take heart. We know, and you know, that this world is vanity and its chances and changes are unpredictable. Fortune sometimes runs against kings and princes as well as against humble people.”⁹⁰

An episode in the *Chronicle of the Hungarians* demonstrates how untrustable Fortune was. After King Charles was murdered and the queens – eleven-year old Queen Mary and her mother Elizabeth as regent – acquired the rule of the realm, the ban Janos of Horvati goes to revenge the death of the king and takes the queen captive. Such an event gives the author the opportunity to express his fatalistic worldview:

Alas for the human condition! How changeable is its fate! For who could have thought that chance, which long smiled upon the queens, could be changed so quickly into adversity, that vengeance, itself recently extracted, should be followed in so short a time by an unexpected retaliation for their crime? Such were the penalties paid by the queens and the palatine for the murder of Charles. For He who created all things and is mindful of them all also leaves nothing untouched by his judgment.⁹¹

The theme of “reversal of fortune” is also visible in Eastern texts. In the *Jami al-Tawarikh*, the author tells the deeds of Tughril Beg and a battle between the sultan and

⁸⁹ Dukas, *Bizans Tarihi*, p. 192

⁹⁰ Froissart, *Chronicles*, p. 458

⁹¹ Thuroczy, *Chronicle of the Hungarians*, p. 36

Masud of Ghazna. When Masud heard the former sitting on the throne of Sultan Mahmud in Shadhyakh, he was quite upset and decided to march on Tughril Beg. However, the Saljuqs held the water and Masud's army started to be dissolved. Mounting his elephant, Masud "set out in flight". However, some Turcomans followed him and suddenly he got off his elephant and hopped on a horse, immediately hitting a blow to one of the men pursuing him. They were astonished. One of them asked how could someone who could hit a blow like that "fly and leave his inherited land?". Masud was aware of the trick fortune played on him, he replied: "O youth, even though my blows are thus, good fortune no longer remains and heavenly assistance is not in accord with human plans".⁹²

God's turning away from a ruler or a people can be traced through certain signs and omens. There were signs and omens pointing out the victory of the Ottomans throughout the siege of Constantinople, for example. According to Dukas, Lord had taken away the best, ablest and most powerful warrior and commander of the Byzantines in order to show that fortune would in the end favor the "Turks".⁹³ Kritovulos, a chronicler of Greek origin who wrote for Mehmed II, relates that a thick fog had surrounded the city of Constantinople during the siege, as if an omen of God leaving Byzantium forever.⁹⁴ Another non-Ottoman chronicler of the siege, Francis talks about the sudden appearance of a strong light beam. The light came down from the sky and stayed over the city for the whole night. When they first saw the light, the "Turks" thought that God was angry with the Christians and decided to destroy them with fire. However, after a few hours passed and they saw that their men kept falling down the fortress walls and they could not yet capture the city, their convictions about this mysterious light began to change direction. Now they were more and more inclined to believe that the light meant God's assistance and protection was on the side of Byzantines; anything beyond His will was not in their power. The sultan had even considered removing the siege the next day. However, although the light appeared in the distance as usual that night, it did not spread over the city but disappeared quickly.

⁹² *The history of the Seljuq Turks from the Jami al-tawarikh*, p. 37-8

⁹³ Dukas, *Bizans Tarihi*, p. 174

⁹⁴ Kritovulos, *İstanbul'un Fethi*, M. Gökman (trans.) (İstanbul: Toplumsal Dönüşüm Yayınları, 1999), p. 93

Seeing this, the sultan and those with him were extremely happy, they began shouting: “God is finally leaving the Christians!” Francis goes on to express his own opinion:

That light had become a sign of their taking the city in the opinion also of all those wise and religious men who were devoted to that religion and belief which is the enemy of our faith. Thus, their hopes were revived and behind the realization of their hopes lay our sins.⁹⁵

According to Tursun Beg’s version of the story, when Mehmed II laid siege on Constantinople, “a glorious light appeared on the fortress as if a celestial misfortune”.⁹⁶ Seeing the light and the Ottoman army surrounding the city, the inhabitants understood that they were trapped within the walls. The author likens their feelings to the Quranic verse which says “But when they saw it, they said: Most surely we have gone astray”.⁹⁷ The author also relates an anecdote about the fragility of fortune, thus emphasizing the moral of the story to be taken from the fall of Byzantium and her emperor:

Once they asked an Arabian: ‘bi-me arefta’llah’, meaning ‘How did you know the existence of God?’. He replied: ‘bî-naksil-azâyim’, meaning ‘I knew the existence of God through the plans He destroyed.’ He has made a *nemrûd* who sat on the throne of the caesar, assuming greatness and commending so many soldiers and property, indigent of a half-dead soldier.⁹⁸

Such omens need not be heavenly signs, humbler references also reflect fortune’s turning away from a ruler. When Richard II fell from God’s favor and had to abdicate in favor of his cousin the Duke of Lancaster, Froissart tells us how his dog also turned away from him. As the tale goes, King Richard had a greyhound which did not follow anyone but the King and put his paws on the shoulders of Richard. One day as the Duke and the King were talking in the courtyard, the dog left the King and went to the Duke, putting his paws on his shoulders and licking his face:

The Duke of Lancaster, who had never seen the dog before, asked the King: ‘What does this greyhound want?’ ‘Cousin,’ replied the King, ‘it is an excellent omen for you and a bad one for me.’ ‘What do you mean?’ asked the Duke. ‘I mean’ said the King, ‘that the dog is hailing and honoring you today as the King

⁹⁵ Francis, *Şehir Düştü*, Kriton Dinçmen (trans.) (İstanbul: Scala, 2002), p. 61-2

⁹⁶ Tursun Bey, *Târih-i Ebu’l-Feth*, p. 51

“... kal’a üzerine kazâ-yı Rabbâni gibi nüzûl-ı iclâl buyurdı”

⁹⁷ *The Quran*, 68:26

⁹⁸ Tursun Bey, *Târih-i Ebu’l-Feth*, p. 59-60

“... Dün that-ı kayserde oturur, zu’m ider, ve bunca nökere ve askere ve mülk ü kişvere hükm ider bir nemrûdî, bugün bir nim-mürde azebe zebûn kıldı”

of England which you will be, while I shall be deposed. The dog knows it by instinct. So keep him with you, for he will stay with you and leave me'.⁹⁹

The *tekvur* of Bursa also seems to have realized in time that God has withdrawn his favor from him and thus surrenders the city to Orhan. When the officials are asked why the city has given in, the wazir responds by saying that their fortune has turned while that of the Ottomans increased.¹⁰⁰ This concept can be traced to not only Christian rulers but also Muslim rulers, as the case of Uzun Hasan demonstrates. According to Aşıkpaşazede, God helps Mehmed II and the other party is defeated because Mehmed's *devlet* surpasses that of Hasan.¹⁰¹

Although the Ottoman sultans seem to have *kut* and *devlet* on their side most of the time, the example of Bayezid is the first instance where a descendent of Osman loses the *kut*. Bayezid, too, is aware of the importance of *devlet*. Before going to one of the battles with his father, he says that God would be with whoever has *devlet* and wisdom, thus they won all wars.¹⁰² He could not have known that his *kut* would turn back on him, bringing him death and his land confusion. He would soon have to face a ruler who was known for the good fortune he had, namely Timur.¹⁰³ An anonymous chronicle gives an account of the conversation between Timur and Bayezid after the former defeats and captures the latter. Timur says that they had both been given kingship by God but Bayezid lost it probably because he did not know how to treasure it, but then again as long as one lives he may find it again.¹⁰⁴ If we keep in mind that it

⁹⁹ Froissart, *Chronicles*, p. 453

¹⁰⁰ Aşıkpaşaoğlu, *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osman*, p. 111

“Sizün devletünüz yavmen feyevmen ziyade oldu. Ve bizim devletümüz döndi”.

¹⁰¹ *ibid*, p. 124

“Sultan Mehmed Han Gazi'ye Hak Ta'âlâ inâyet etdi ve devleti galib oldu ve düşmanı mağlub ediverdi.”

¹⁰² Neşri; *Kitabı Cihan-nümâ*, p. 286

“Zira devlet ve akıl ki bir kişiye yâr ola, zâhir budur ki Hakkun inâyeti onunladır”.

¹⁰³ For a reference on Timur's good fortune, see Clavijo, *Clavijo: Embassy to Tamerlane*, p. 323

¹⁰⁴ *Anonim Osmanlı Kroniği*; Necdet Öztürk (ed) (İstanbul: Türk Dünyası Araştırmaları Vakfı Yayınları, 2002), p. 48

“İy Bayezid Han! Hak ta'âlâya çok şükürler olsun kim senünle bana padişahlık virdi. Bir agsak ben ve bir kötürüm sen. Tâ Hindustan'dan Sivas sınırına gelince pâdişâhlığı ben za'ife virdi. Ve Sivas'dan Ungurus'a varınca sana virmüşdür... Belki sen Hak ta'âlânın şükrini bilmedün ola. Anın için sana bu güşmalı eyledi ola.”

is not actually Timur but the author speaking, we might sense some degree of criticism towards Bayezid. Apparently, Bayezid should have known better than to lose God's support and behaved accordingly.

After the defeat of Bayezid, the issue of *kut* rises probably to a peak point in Ottoman chronicles due to the abundance of legitimate candidates to the throne. What followed were evil times, as the reader would recall because a single head did not rule the realm. To go back to Nizâm al-Mulk, when evil times are over, "God will bring forth a just and wise king from princely stock, and will give him the power to vanquish his enemies, and the wisdom and intelligence to judge matters aright..."¹⁰⁵ Since we already know what happened after Bayezid was captured, Nizâm al-Mulk's words seem prophetic. However, thus was the order of the day and in the end Bayezid's son Mehmed – of princely stock – did vanquish his rivals and put matters in order. Was it God who placed him on the throne or his own prowess and capability or the support of those around him? Although today we prefer finding more scientific and reasonable causes for his success, the contemporaries have by no means underestimated the role of *kut* in this affair. When Mehmed wins a battle against his brother Isa, their oldest brother Suleyman who then reigned in Edirne, is not happy with the outcome and does not see Mehmed fit to rule. However, his wazirs and notables warn him by saying that judgment comes from God and He gives the land to whomever He wants.¹⁰⁶ Neşri also tells us that when Isa went around trying to conquer places, people did not obey him and told him to fight Mehmed first so that everyone would know for sure whom God chose as the rightful ruler and whom to obey.¹⁰⁷ During the fight over *kut* between the brothers, we also witness another lord losing hope on his own *kut*. Trying to help Isa, the lord of Kastamonu Isfendiyar attempts to fight Mehmed. However, seeing Mehmed's army, Isfendiyar praises Mehmed. Neşri tells us that "his *kut* dried up".¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ Nizâm al-Mulk, *The Book of Government*, p. 139

¹⁰⁶ Neşri; *Kitab-ı Cihan-nümâ*, p. 433

"Ey şâh-ı cihân, eyi dersiz amma emir Allahındır, mülk Hakkındır. Her kime dilerse ol verir."

¹⁰⁷ *ibid*, p. 435

"Evvel var kardaşınla, Sultan Mehmed birle bir yana ol. Andan devlet herhangiizin ise kamumuz can ve baş yoluna komuşuz. Şimdi vilâyet gezmeden ne fayda olur. Ol vakit cemi' memleket senin olur."

¹⁰⁸ Neşri, *Kitab-ı Cihan-nümâ*, p. 443

"Bu taraftan Sultan dahi, heman tabl ve nekkare çalıp, 'alemleri çözüp, nefir ve

Neşri goes on with the battle the day after which results with the defeat of Isfendiyar. The passage implies God was not on Isfendiyar's side, but Mehmed's. Isa, later, goes to İzmiröğlü and asks for support since he has decided to try his fortune once more. Finally, Mehmed defeats him. Seeing it is Mehmed whom God prefers, İzmiröğlü asks to be pardoned. In the meanwhile, Mehmed hears that Suleyman is gathering an army to attack him and calls his wazirs and notables for consultation and he decides to fight to see on whose side *devlet* is. At this point, the people get quite confused and do not know what to do since their loyalty had once lain with Bayezid. Now both of the candidates are sons of their lord.¹⁰⁹ Things get still more complicated as Musa overthrows Suleyman in Edirne. Musa's explanations are voiced by Dukas:

My brother came here and conquered Thrace. However he did not show due respect and affection to my father. Other than this I can tell you he is half *gavur*. Therefore God turned his back on him and gave in my hand the sword of the Prophet to cut the unbelievers into pieces. He raised me, religious as I am, above others.¹¹⁰

However, Musa's words would not last long. Finally, the people of Edirne want Mehmed and Musa to fight and the winner would have the right to rule by virtue of his *devlet*. When Mehmed finally defeats his brother, Musa is convinced that his fortune turned back on him.¹¹¹ The fight over *kut* finds echoes even in the reports of a Spanish ambassador going over to see Timur on behalf of the Spanish King Henry. As they were detained in Chios for a while, he reports that younger brothers "were now waging civil war one with another, for it to be seen who should become lord of that country".¹¹²

The validity of the theory of divine kingship is still not questioned in early sixteenth century. In Europe, traces of the theory can be seen in Castiglione's book, *Il Cortegiano*. As the courtiers discuss the principle qualities of the perfect prince, Signor Ottoviano professes his belief that good princes have been sent by God and that "they have been made by Him to resemble each other in youth, in military prowess, in state, in

zurna avazı 'âleme dolup, Rûm serverleriyle yetişip, anlara mukabil kondu. İsfendiyar bunu görüp kutu kurudu."

¹⁰⁹ *ibid*, pp. 451-457

¹¹⁰ Dukas, *Bizans Tarihi*, p. 55

¹¹¹ Neşri; *Kitab-ı Cihan-nümâ*, p. 515

"Devlet benden yüz çevirdi. Ulu karındaşıma bunun gibi işler ettim."

¹¹² Clavijo; *Clavijo: Embassy to Tamerlane*, p. 48-9

physical beauty and constitution”.¹¹³ Writing at around the same time, the Ottoman chronicler Çelebi Hadidi refers to the idea of divine kingship as he relates the succession conflict faced towards the end of Bayezid II’s reign. Although the author does not stress this issue of divine ordinance throughout his work as strongly as the earlier chroniclers do, the concept finds expression in the case of Bayezid’s wish to leave his realm to his oldest son. Hadidi tells that the sultan gathered his *begs* and told them his wish to leave the throne to his eldest son Ahmed. However, divine providence was to the contrary. God gave the realm to whomever He willed and the thoughts of the wazirs and the ruler counted for nothing.¹¹⁴ The question here is whether it was really God’s will which conflicted the sultan’s? The obvious answer is that it was the army’s. Hadidi’s explanation seems to be an attempt at justification and legitimation of Selim’s finally acquiring the throne, rather than a genuine belief in divine ordination.

If we go further east at an even later period such as the seventeenth century, we may see references to divine ordinance in Mughal tradition. When the future emperor Shah Jahan Prince Khurram (1628-1658) was born, one of the poets at his grandfather Akhbar’s court had written a poem celebrating the prince’s birth: “The Shamsa [image of the sun]... is a divine light, which God directly transfers to kings, without the assistance of men...”.¹¹⁵ This divine light has presumably been transferred to Shah Jahan as well. Moreover, since he is of imperial lineage, meaning that he descends from Timur who is the first Sahib-i Qiran (Lord of the Auspicious Planetary Conjunction – another reference to celestial influence), he can claim to have inherited Timur’s prestige and power which make him qualified to rule.¹¹⁶

As the various instances where God provides sanction or assistance show, the concept of “divine kingship” is supported by various kinds of divine favor. God’s appointment, however, does not seem to be enough for describing the idea of divine

¹¹³ Castiglione, Baldasare; *The Book of the Courtier*, George Bull (trans.) (London: Penguin Books, 1976), p. 313

¹¹⁴ Çelebi Hadidi, *Tevarih-i Al-i Osman*, p. 367

“Diledi begleri idüp âgâh; İde tahtına Sultan Ahmed’i şah; Bular gerçi böyle itdi tedbir; Muhâlif düşdi bu tedbire takdir; Kime dilerse virür mülki Allah; Ne olur rây-i vezir ü himmet-i şah”

¹¹⁵ Abu’l Fazl’ Allami; *A’in-i Akbari*, as quoted in Milo Cleveland Beach and Ebra Koch, *King of the World: The Padshahnama* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1997), p. 24

¹¹⁶ Beach and Koch; *King of the World*, p. 25

kingship. The concept has other aspects attached to it by nature. All three aspects regarding the prerequisite of divine kingship is neatly summarized by Nizâm al-Mulk when he makes Anushirvan the Just say: “You know that God has granted me this kingdom; furthermore I inherited it from my father; and thirdly my uncle rebelled against me and I did battle with him and regained the throne by the sword.”¹¹⁷ These words are also echoed in Duke Henry’s claim to the throne. Sent by God to be lord and king,¹¹⁸ the Duke claims three titles to the office of king as confirmed by the Archbishop of Canterbury: “first by right of conquest; secondly, because he said he was the rightful heir; thirdly because King Richard of Bordeaux had resigned the crown to him of his entire free will.”¹¹⁹

Now that we have seen instances of God granting kingship, let us have a look at what being “the rightful heir” means.

I.3. Like Father Like Son: Hereditary Claims

We have already witnessed the chaos and tumult a society is believed to go through without a ruler. Geoffrey of Monmouth relates the death of the good king Lucius – kingship went far back in Lucius’ family – who died heirless thus, “after his death dissension arose between the Britons”.¹²⁰ At this point, the issue of immediate succession gains importance. In order to secure order and not give cause to any acts of oppression or conflict, medieval scholars have tried to formulate methods of succession. The proposed methods and the practice show variances in different regions. While France, England and many minor kingdoms believed in the efficiency of hereditary succession, the German emperors were selected by electoral means, yet still from among the major dynasties. In Italy, on the other hand, though theory favored election, powerful dynasties had begun to form.¹²¹ Keeping in mind the acceptance of monarchy

¹¹⁷ Nizâm al-Mulk, *The Book of Government*, p. 33

¹¹⁸ Froissart, *Chronicles*, p. 465

¹¹⁹ *ibid.*, p. 463

¹²⁰ Geoffrey of Monmouth, *History of the Kings of Britain*, p. 126

¹²¹ Black, *Political Thought in Europe*, 146-7

as the preferable method of government and of the divine right to rule supported by divine favor, we can approach the issue of succession as a matter of divine favor granted to an individual ruler or to a house all together.

The claims to kingship as projected by Nizâm al-Mulk in the eleventh century and by Froissart in the fourteenth bring forth the concept of “rightful heir”, and thus the issue of dynastic claims. The preference of some European scholars for hereditary succession is visible especially in the works of John of Salisbury who however limits hereditary claims with the prerequisite of merit, Gilbert of Tournai who accepts the idea of hereditary monarchy without any doubt, Aegidius Romanus who believes hereditary monarchy to be the best form of government¹²² and people would naturally tend to obey the sons of the kings.¹²³ According to Aegidius Romanus, “those who are catapulted to power are more prone to bad behavior than those who have grown accustomed to it.”¹²⁴ Jaques de Cessoles, presumably writing at the beginning of the fourteenth century, claims the superiority of hereditary succession of primogeniture over succession through election of “desire of princes”. The author suggests that election is not a good method because the elected prince would owe his position to the personal interests of the electors rather than to common good. Thus, everybody would want his desires to be fulfilled and the kingdom would be lost under violence caused by lack of unity. He proposes, therefore, that the first-born of a ruler be educated “to the ways of goodness, morality and proper deeds”.¹²⁵

Marsiglio of Padua (c.1270-1342), on the other hand, advocates succession by election to maximize the chance of selecting the right kind of ruler. However, the heir of the previous ruler would also have a chance in the elections.¹²⁶ Brunetto Latini (c.1220-1294), a Florentine scholar and statesman, is of the same opinion. According to Latini, a ruler should not be evaluated according to the reputation of his ancestors but according to his morals and deeds, “for the house ought to be honored by a good ruler and not the ruler by a good house”.¹²⁷

¹²² Born, “The Perfect Prince”, p. 472, 479, 488,

¹²³ Black, *Political Thought in Europe*, p. 147

¹²⁴ *ibid.*, p. 147

¹²⁵ Born., “The Perfect Prince”, p. 491

¹²⁶ *ibid.*, p. 498

¹²⁷ Nederman and Forhan (eds.), *Medieval Political Theory*, p. 74

Although diverse opinions about hereditary succession are observable, it is not possible to disregard the claims of lineage when the practice is examined. Hereditary succession was not a novel idea for the Franks and Germans, who had experienced it early on the rule of the Merovingians and Carolingians respectively. In France, members of the Capetian house succeed one another after the election of Hugh Capet in 987 when Louis V of the Carolingians died without heir.¹²⁸ Capetians held the French throne until 1328 when it passed to the house of Valois, also claiming indirect descent from Hugh Capet. The house of Valois held the French crown until it was delivered to the Bourbons in 1589.¹²⁹ The German throne, on the other hand, was held by the Hohenstaufen dynasty from 1138 to 1254. The period between 1254 and 1308 had witnessed rulers from different dynasties of Europe such as Richard of Anjou ruling from 1256 to 1272 and Rudolf I of the Habsburgs from 1273 to 1291, to name a few. In the period between 1308 and 1437, we can observe that the throne passed between the houses of Luxemburg and Wittelsbach alternately. In 1438, however, with Albrecht II the crown had passed to the Habsburgs who were to hold it until 1740.¹³⁰

In the discussions regarding succession, Islamic scholars tend to concentrate on the practice of the age of the four caliphs. While Ibn Taymiyyah, radical as he is, argues that how the ruler obtains power is less important than how he uses it,¹³¹ Mawardi talks about various methods of succession. Mawardi is concerned with the designation of the caliph whom he defines as the ruler of the Muslim society. In his definition, the caliphate emerges as the institution which is acknowledged to succeed the prophets in the administration of worldly and religious affairs.¹³² Mawardi then goes on to explain the various methods proposed in the designation of the caliph. The foremost method seems to be that of election by a council (*şûra*), as the caliph Omer had done. Another

¹²⁸ Norman Zacour, *An Introduction to Medieval Institutions*, (USA: St. Martin's Press, 1969)

¹²⁹ "Capetian" and "Valoise"; *A Dictionary of World History*. Oxford University Press, 2000. Oxford Reference Online. Oxford University Press. date of access: 22 July 2003

¹³⁰ Clifton R. Fox, "Holy Roman Empire", <http://wwwtc.nhmccd.cc.tx.us/people/crf01/history/hre.html>, date of access: July 23, 2003

¹³¹ Albert Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples* (London: Faber and Faber, 2002), p. 144

¹³² Mâverdi, *El-Ahkâmü 's-Sultâniye*, p. 30

method could be the current caliph appointing an heir apparent, like Ebu Bekir had appointed Omer. However, the author notes that there was not a strict agreement between the scholars as far as the approval of the council is concerned. In the case of appointing an heir apparent, the caliph could appoint his son to the office.¹³³ Although there does not seem to be a theoretical conviction on hereditary succession, practice shows that in time hereditary succession had become a norm from early times on. Even a superficial observation of the succession lists of various “Islamic states” demonstrates one member of the family succeeding another – though such a generalization requires caution when the Mamlukes are in question, for example. Neither the pre-Islamic Arab tribal tradition nor the Sasanian imperial tradition had left a definite and strict method of succession for the Islamic states to come. The *Quran* itself does not give any direct commands on succession either. The first four caliphs (*rashidun* – the rightly guided) were chosen somewhat by the leading men of the community. Muawiya, on the other hand, proclaimed himself caliph and the position became hereditary thereafter. The election principle was theoretically preserved and the electors still had the right to oppose the heir named by the caliph, but in practice the office became hereditary although not based strictly on seniority. Muawiya would later be criticized for having turned the caliphate into private property (*mülk*) but the Abbasids would continue this practice nevertheless.

Although this study concentrates on values attributed to kingship in what might be called the late medieval times, occasional references to Antiquity seem inescapable, for the heritage and influence of the Greek and Roman cultures are undeniable on medieval modes of thought. In his *Republic*, Plato suggests telling people that the God who has created them has mixed gold into the stock of those who were ordained to be leaders. Therefore their children also have this same quality in their blood, making them qualified to rule.¹³⁴

In the Ottoman tradition we see that kingship has been heralded to not only Osman but also his whole house through a dream, which is not very different conceptually from the dream of Clovis or that of Brutus. According to Geoffrey of Monmouth, goddess Diana had appeared to Brutus in his dream, telling him that an

¹³³ *ibid.*, 39-41

¹³⁴ Plato, *Devlet*, Sabahattin Eyuboğlu and M. Ali Cimcoz (trans.), 2nd ed. (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Yayınları, 2000), p. 96

island inhabited once upon a time by giants waited for him past the lands of Gaul. The goddess went on:

Down the years this will prove an abode suited to you and to your people; and for your descendants it will be a second Troy. A race of kings will be born there from your stock and the round circle of the whole earth will be subject to them.¹³⁵

Thus went Brutus to Britain. As far as the Ottoman tradition is concerned, Aşıkpaşazade, for example, makes Sheikh Edebalı, a religious figure, interpret the meaning of Osman's dream that heralded him kingship.¹³⁶ As the right of ruling belongs to a certain dynasty by divine ordinance, leaving behind a worthy heir becomes important for the ruler.

The echoes of this concern can be found in the stories in the *Book of Dede Korkut*, which provides us with reflections of tribal life. In the first story of the book, we witness a banquet given by Bayındır Khan where he orders three different tents to be set up: white for those who have sons, red for those who have daughters, and black for those who do not have any children. Dirse Khan, a notable who has neither sons nor daughters is placed in the black tent and is very offended.¹³⁷ We can thus draw out that offsprings may be regarded as an asset for the king. In *Oğuzname*, we see that the lineage of Oghuz Khan is traced back to Noah and the whole dynasty is presented as descending from Japheth. When Oghuz was born, it was clear that he had fortune on his side and that he was fit for kingship.¹³⁸ Oghuz Khan wins kingship by fighting his father and uncles, thus providing an example of succession by might. However, succession in this case is still within the family. Only the most deserving member of the family attained kingship and his victory over other family members confirmed that God was on his side. This theme is not very far from what we have observed in the case of Mehmed I and his brothers. Even in the tradition of the steppes, not everyone had to fight family members to attain kingship. Oghuz Khan clearly leaves his kingdom to his eldest son

¹³⁵ Geoffrey of Monmouth, *History of the Kings of Britain*, p. 65

¹³⁶ Aşıkpaşaoğlu, *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osman*, p. 95

“Oğul, Osman! Sana muştuluk olsun kim Hak Ta’âlâ sana ve neslüne padişahlık verdi. Mübarek olsun.”

¹³⁷ Muharrem Ergin, *Dede Korkut Kitabı* (İstanbul, Boğaziçi Yayınları, 1981), pp. 21-22

¹³⁸ Togan, *Oğuz Destanı*, p. 17

before he dies.¹³⁹ Bugra Khan, on the other hand, tells his notables to decide between his three sons. When they cannot arrive at a decision because all three sons of the Khan are eligible for crown and throne, they leave the decision to Bugra. He then names his second son, saying that the middle of any thing is better than the rest.¹⁴⁰

At this point, it is important to mention another succession method seen mainly in the Turco-Mongolian tradition. The selection of a ruler from within the dynasty seems to be a combination method. The practice can be seen in many Turco-Islamic states, as Halil Inalcık points out in various examples. In this case, the worthiest member of the family, whether a son or a brother, would be recognized as ruler.¹⁴¹ An example of this method is seen after Ertugrul's death, as Neşri relates the story. When Ertugrul dies, some of the people (nomads) wanted to have Osman as their ruler and some preferred Ertugrul's brother Dundar. However his own clan decided on Osman. When Dundar came to see that people preferred Osman for their leader, he gave up his claims and obeyed Osman.¹⁴² A fifteenth century chronicler, Yazıcızade Ali's comments explain the link between rulership and house of Osman:

Gathering together in council (kuriltay) the Turkish begs on the frontier ascertained what the Oghuz traditions were and proclaimed as Khan Osman Beg, son of Ertugrul of the Kayı... by requirement of the Oghuz traditions as they were handed down from Gün Khan; so long as the line of Kayı survives, the khanate and sultanate (padişâhlık) must not pass to the line of the rulers of any other clan.¹⁴³

Another option within hereditary succession was assigning regions to sons; eventually opening up the way to dissolution of the realm. Cengiz Khan, for example, had assigned certain parts of the country to his sons: to his oldest son Jöchi the lands from the Irtysh river westwards to eastern Europe, to his second son Chaghatay the present-day Turkestan and Afghanistan; to Ögedei Jungaria; to his youngest son Tului Karakorum and Mongolia. These regions had become independent khanates by the end of the thirteenth century.¹⁴⁴ The Ottomans, too, designated certain provinces to their

¹³⁹ *ibid*, p. 47

¹⁴⁰ *ibid*, p. 64

¹⁴¹ Halil İnalcık, "The Ottoman Succession and Its Relation to the Turkish Concept of Sovereignty", p. 39

¹⁴² Neşri; *Kitabı Cihan-nümâ*, p. 79

¹⁴³ İnalcık, "The Ottoman Succession", p. 45

¹⁴⁴ *ibid.*, p. 50

sons, however the practice has not extended to the point of breaking the realm into independent principalities. According to Cemal Kafadar, this practice of “keeping their territories intact in each succession under the full control of a single heir stands out as a significant difference from the other principalities, which allowed for fragmentation by recognizing the rights of the different heirs according to Turco-Mongolian tradition”.¹⁴⁵

The listing of the ruler’s lineage in the Turkic and Ottoman chronicles is also an expression of the importance given to hereditary claim. In the beginning of the *Jami al-Tawarikh*, the author starts by telling the origins of the house of Saljuq. It has been noted, for example, that Alp Arslan’s title was Adud al-Dawla Alp Arslan Muhammad b. Chaghri Beg Dawud b. Mikail b. Saljuq. Thus, we can say that the lineage going back to Saljuq himself was an expression of legitimization. It is worth noting that many Turkic and Ottoman texts start with providing the lineage of the ruling house. Being the son of a sultan seems to be emphasized in various instances in Ottoman texts. Even in a book written for Murad II and providing information on various precious gems, the author has felt the need to express the fixed pattern of “sultan son of sultan” and to list the ancestors of the sultan while praising him by naming his titles.¹⁴⁶ It is also possible to observe such listings in various parts of the so-called calendars: “Murad han bin Muhammed han bin Bayezid han bin Murad han bin Orhan bin Osman.”¹⁴⁷ The case does not seem to be much different from the rest of the Anatolian principalities of the fourteenth century. On the tomb inscription of Ahmed Ghazi of Menteşe dated 1391, his lineage was thus written: Ahmed Gazi ibn Ibrahim ibn Orhan ibn Mesud ibn Menteşe ibn Elbistan ibn Karatay.¹⁴⁸

Although such listings do not appear frequently in European chronicles, lineage is often emphasized as part of the claim to the throne. Geoffrey of Monmouth explains why Maximianus was suggested to take over the British throne when Octavius decided to name an heir because of his old age:

¹⁴⁵ Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*, p. 120

¹⁴⁶ Muhammed b. Mahmûd-ı Şirvânî; *Tuhfe-i Murâdi*, Mustafa Argunşah (ed.) (Ankara: Türk Dil Kurumu, 1999), p. 71

“...sultan bin sultan, Sultan Murad bin Muhammed bin Bayezid bin Murad bin Orhan bin Osman...”

¹⁴⁷ See for example, Osman Turan (ed.); *İstanbul’un Fethinden Önce Yazılmış Tarihi Takvimler*, 2nd ed. (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1984), p. 57

¹⁴⁸ Paul Wittek, *Menteşe Beyliği: 13-15inci asırda garbi Küçük Asya tarihine ait tetkik/ O.Ş. Gökyay (trans.), 2nd ed.* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1986), p. 52

Maximianus was a Briton on his father's side, for he was a son of Ioelinus, the uncle of Constantine, whom I have mentioned before. From his mother and by race he was, however, a Roman, and by birth of royal blood on both sides. This solution therefore promised a lasting peace. Caradocus felt that Maximianus had a right to Britain, for he came both from the family of the Emperors and from a British origin.¹⁴⁹

When we take a look at the thoughts of the medieval European jurists, we see that those who are for hereditary succession also emphasize the prerequisite of merit. John of Salisbury, for example, believes that "the prince may only hope to have his son succeed him if that son is worthy of his father." He presents succession in the family as both a reward to the ruler who was able to train his son properly and as a motivation for the son to deserve his position.¹⁵⁰ Gilbert of Tournai (d.1270) and Aegidius Romanus (1247-1316) are also examples of jurists defending not only monarchy as the best form of government but also a hereditary one. Aegidius Romanus also stresses the need for the prince to be affectionate to his children and take concern in their training and welfare.¹⁵¹ It seems that the principle of hereditary succession has become even more firmly rooted in European political thought and practice at the beginning of the sixteenth century. Machiavelli thinks it is easier for hereditary princes to succeed based on the relative ease of preserving the established order:

I say, then, that states which are hereditary, and accustomed to the rule of those belonging to the present ruler's family, are very much less difficult to hold than new states, because it is sufficient not to change the established order, and to deal with any untoward events that may occur; so that, if such a ruler is no more than ordinarily diligent and competent, his government will always be secure, unless some unusually strong force should remove him. And even if that happens, whenever the conqueror encounters difficulties, the former ruler can re-establish himself.¹⁵²

Erasmus believes that it is the duty of a Christian prince to educate his heir and to make sure that the heir is not an unworthy one: "It is a fine and glorious thing to govern well, but it is no less meritorious to ensure that one's successor is not inferior".¹⁵³ Perhaps the one who meditates most on this issue is Castiglione. According to him,

¹⁴⁹ Geoffrey of Monmouth; *History of the Kings of Britain*, p. 134-5

¹⁵⁰ Born, "The Perfect Prince", p. 472

¹⁵¹ *ibid.*, p. 479, 489

¹⁵² Machiavelli, *The Prince*, Quentin Skinner and Russell Price (eds.) (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 6

¹⁵³ Erasmus, *The Education of a Christian Prince*, Lisa Jardine (ed. and trans.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 6

even the courtier should be of noble birth. If a noble man does not follow the right path, his doings would also dishonor his family and he will lose even what his ancestors have achieved. So it would not be as easy for a person of noble lineage to do wrong as for the common person, since he has more at stake, as well as his background and training. We can see traces of Plato's golden stock theory in Castiglione's words:

Noble birth is like a bright lamp that makes clear and visible both good deeds and bad, and inspires and incites to high performance as much as fear of dishonor or hope of praise... Thus as a general rule, both in arms and in other worthy activities, those who are most distinguished are of noble birth, because Nature has implanted in everything a hidden seed which has a certain way of influencing and passing on its own essential characteristics to all that grows from it, making it similar to itself.¹⁵⁴

The issue of succession is rarely touched upon directly in the Ottoman chronicles but as we trace the events, it is possible to get information on the heirs. One of the direct references to succession found in Aşıkpaşazade is when Mehmed I names his successor on his deathbed, so that the land does not fall into chaos.¹⁵⁵ According to Enveri, Murad I had named Bayezid as his successor when he was wounded on the battlefield.¹⁵⁶ Another direct reference to the importance the ruler gives to his successor, which we find in most of the chronicles, is about Osman not going to conquer Bursa himself, but sending his son instead. While they also mention Osman's illness as a reason, they seem to concentrate on the wish of Osman to see Orhan gain power and majesty in his lifetime.¹⁵⁷ Neşri, too, tells the same story adding that Osman wished so because he wanted to make sure that the people showed obedience to his son.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁴ Castiglione; *The Book of the Courtier*, p. 54

¹⁵⁵ Aşıkpaşaoğlu, *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osman*, p. 155.

“Ve Murad gelmedin ben ölürin. Memleket biri birine dokunmadın tedârük edün. Benüm vefatımı duyurmayasız Murad gelince.”

¹⁵⁶ Enveri; *Düstürname i Enveri : Osmanlı Tarihi Kısmı 1299-1466 Fatih Devri Kaynaklarından*, Necdet Öztürk (ed.) (İstanbul: Kitabevi Yayınları, 2003), p. 33

¹⁵⁷ Aşıkpaşaoğlu, *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osman*, p. 112

“Oğlum Orhan benüm zamanımda şevket bulsun.”

¹⁵⁸ Neşri; *Kitabı Cihan-nümâ*, p. 137

“Ammâ niza' anda kaldı-ki hin-i fetihde Osman Gazi hayatda mıydı değil miydi meşhur ve asah budur kim, hayatda idi. Zirâkim, oğlını ol sefere Osman kendü göndermişti. Ve kendü gelmediğine bir nice vech vardır. Biri bu ki, Osmanun ayağında nikris zahmeti vardı. Ve dahi bunu kasd itdi kim oğlı Orhan kendü zamanında şevket tutub nâmdâr ola ki, kendüden sonra halk ana ita'at göstereler.”

The chronicles provide us with valuable insight about the experience of the heirs. Lots of incidents can be found regarding the military roles and *sancak* designations of early Ottoman princes. Orhan was sent to conquer Bursa by his father, as we have already seen. When we look at Orhan's career as a prince, it is possible to say that he was with his father most of the time and engaged in battles. To give a full list of what the princes did would be impossible but a few examples can prove the point. The *Gazavâtname* of Sultan Murad II opens with the sultan sending his son Mehmed to Saruhan giving him *tuğ*, *sancak*, *davul* and *nişan*. He sends Kassaboğlu Mehmed Beg and Nişancı İbrahim Beg to be in charge of the young prince. He also gives his son advice.¹⁵⁹ Such *sancak* designations are meant to serve as training for young princes. Mehmed accompanies his father on expeditions even at an age when he could be considered a child. But in the end, Murad II wins the praise of Aşıkpaşazade on having left behind a worthy successor, reminding us John of Salisbury's argument.¹⁶⁰ In earlier periods, we also see other family members fighting along with the ruler, drawing a picture resembling a family enterprise. Osman's nephew and brother both die fighting with Osman. He sends his nephew as an envoy to the Saljuqid sultan.¹⁶¹ When Orhan ascends to the throne, he assigns Yenice to his son Suleyman Pasha, Bursa to his other son Murad and Karacahisar to his nephew Gündüz.¹⁶² His sons actually fight on their own on behalf of their father. Suleyman Pasha goes on to conquer Rumelia and Murad conquers Edirne.¹⁶³ After the first two or three generations, references to family members become harder to find, though the activities of the sons are still clearly visible. In a battle with the Karamanids, Murad I places himself in the middle of the army with his own men, positioning his elder son Bayezid on the left wing and his younger son Yakub on the right wing.¹⁶⁴ This example vividly shows the active role played by the princes. When Murad I goes to fight in Kosovo, his son Bayezid comes along from his

¹⁵⁹ *Gazavât-ı Sultan Murad b. Mehmed Han*, p. 1

¹⁶⁰ Aşıkpaşaoğlu, *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osman*, p. 189

“Ahır ül-emir akıbeti dahı hayr olındı. Ve oğlu Sultan Mehmed dahı kendüden sonra eyü, azametlü padişah oldı. Ve akıbet hayırlılığının dahı alâmeti budur.”

¹⁶¹ *ibid*, p. 94, 96, 98

¹⁶² *ibid*, p. 120

¹⁶³ *ibid*, p. 124, 127

¹⁶⁴ Mehmed Neşri; *Kitabı Cihan-nümâ*, p. 225

sancağ at Kütahya and Yakub from Karasi.¹⁶⁵ Neşri's account on the behavior of Bayezid at the battle of Kosovo shatters all assumptions, if any, about passive princely lives at court.¹⁶⁶ Although we can understand that Bayezid has fought fiercely on his father's side, his sons seem to be more hesitant on this matter. Bayezid, like his father, takes his sons along when he goes to fight Timur. But the sons prove to be of no help and flee.¹⁶⁷ Although Bayezid is very much criticized for his actions and behavior, as will be demonstrated later on, it is worth examining why his sons deserted him, though not in this study. When Mehmed II goes on campaign to fight Uzun Hasan, he takes along his sons Bayezid and Mustafa. It seems Uzun Hasan also had his sons with him.¹⁶⁸ Mustafa also deals with the Karamanids, thus helping his father preserve peace and order among his subjects.¹⁶⁹ These examples point out that the experiences of the princes prepared them for their role as rulers, as well as supporting the military mechanism.

The same concern is observable in European chronicles. As Froissart tells us, the English prince fought in a battle between the British and the French. At some point, the nobles who were responsible for the prince sent a knight to the king to ask for help, since they felt the prince was in danger under the heavy attack of the French. The King asked the knight whether his son, the Prince, was so badly wounded that he could not fight. The knight replied that was not the case but he needed help. The king was resolved to let his son show his prowess and said:

Go back to him and to those who have sent you and tell them not to send for me again today, as long as my son is alive. Give them my command to let the boy win his spurs, for if God so ordained it, I wish the day to be his and the honor to go to him and to those in whose charge I have placed him.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁵ Aşıkpaşaoğlu, *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osman*, p. 133

¹⁶⁶ Mehmed Neşri; *Kitabı Cihan-nümâ*, p. 301

“Bayezid Han şevketle kafire yıldırım gibi yitişüb, kurd koyuna, şahin kargaya girer gibi tekbir getirüb, Ya Allah diyüb, Hamza-vâr nara urub, tokındı; ve fi'l hâl kâfir askerini tağıtmağa başladı.”

¹⁶⁷ *ibid*, p. 353

“Hay Bayezid Han, ol güvendiğin oğlanların seni böyle görüb, beğlük belasına düşüb, kaçdılar, ya ol sancağın beğleri dahi kani? Ne gökçek yoldaşlık itdiler? Akçayı harc itmeye kıyamazdun, hazineye koyub, oğlanlarum rıskıdır, dirdün.”

¹⁶⁸ Aşıkpaşaoğlu, *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osman*, p. 222, 224

¹⁶⁹ Neşri; *Kitab-ı Cihan-nümâ*, p. 799-801

¹⁷⁰ Froissart, *Chronicles*, p. 91-2

The prince and his men fought with greater courage and enthusiasm when they received the message of the King. Father and son met at the night of the battle. King Edward seemed pleased with his son and hoped that he would keep on in this manner. Embracing the prince, the king expressed his opinion on the worthiness of his son: "You are indeed my son, for you have done your duty most loyally this day. You have proved yourself worthy to rule a land."¹⁷¹

When the king of France received news that the Prince of Wales was approaching the city of Poitiers, his sons were already with him. He had positioned his oldest son, Duke of Normandy, in the charge of his nobles. His three younger sons were also placed in the charge of other knights. As things got worse for the French and negotiations regarding surrender were going on, the king "kept with him his sons and the most important members of his family on whom he depended for advice".¹⁷² This incident again brings out the character of a "family enterprise", as discussed above with the Ottoman case.

The incidents regarding succession after Bayezid I and Richard II seem to confirm the belief that once a dynasty is selected by God, any member who is worthy of the position is qualified to rule. In both cases, although the ruler himself was not available or was inappropriate, the successor came from within the dynasty without external rivalry. In the case of Richard II, another grandson of Edward III is directly invited to take over kingship. In all the accounts concerning the so-called "interregnum" period in Ottoman history, we do not see any major opposition to the house Osman or any plans to change the ruling dynasty. Although petty warlords of other families appear in Neşri's account, none of these are presented as threats. Even if we take the accounts of early Ottoman chronicles as inevitably subjective, this study found no reference to the ruling ambitions of another dynasty, even in the anonymous sixteenth century Greek chronicle - except for a dream of Murad II. Murad dreams of a ring that passes through each of the five fingers of his son and is finally thrown away. Wise men interpret the dream, saying that five kings will descend from the line of Murad and then the rule will pass onto another dynasty. Therefore, according to the chronicle, established families of old nobility such as the Turahan, Mihaloğulları and Evrenoz have lost their privileged

¹⁷¹ *ibid.*, p. 92

¹⁷² *ibid.*, p. 131

positions and power.¹⁷³ The chronicle does not provide any concrete proof regarding the ambitions of or opposition from a particular family.

To what extent this acceptance of dynastic claim actually depended on the belief in the divine right of a dynasty to rule is not easy to tell. Speculating on the influence of an environment with a high risk of instability with continuous wars and unfavorable natural events such as famine, epidemics and earthquakes, the contemporaries could have felt – consciously or subconsciously – the need for continuity in at least one aspect of their lives. In other words, a society wishing to maintain the status quo and willing to believe in the wisdom of “time immemorial” may have preferred to hold onto the same dynasty for the sake of avoiding further complications.

On the other, there are occasional incidents where the son was not worthy of his father. In the case of the English throne, this lot fell to Richard II, according to Froissart’s account. People were displeased with Richard’s rule and his cousin Duke of Lancaster was invited to rule instead. They were both grandsons of King Edward III, who had a preference for his son the Prince of Wales. Thus, he had appointed the son of the Prince, Richard as his heir. However, the Duke accused Richard of not following the example of the Prince and taking sound advice. He had done the opposite instead and there were rumors about him not being the real son of the Prince but of some clerk.¹⁷⁴

Another example is Bayezid II, son of Mehmed II. Although the criticism aimed at Bayezid II is not as hard as it was with Richard II, it seems that he was never as successful as his father, at least in warfare. With a disposition to peace – unlike his grandfather Murad II who did not like wars either but was an excellent military leader - Bayezid is not portrayed as a good military leader. In an anonymous chronicle, we are told that when Bayezid was yet a prince, his father took him to fight in the battle of Otlukbeli along with his brother Mustafa. As they prepared their armies for battle, Mehmed II saw that Bayezid’s troops were poorly organized. He sent Gedik Ahmed Paşa to warn the young prince and help him with the appropriate order. Bayezid should have learned from this experience; however, after he was enthroned, Gedik Ahmed Paşa had to warn him once again about the organization of his army.¹⁷⁵ Eventually, the

¹⁷³ 16. *Asırda Yazılmış Grekçe Anonim Osmanlı Tarihi*, p. 134

¹⁷⁴ Froissart, *Chronicles*, p. 460

¹⁷⁵ Anon., *Haniwaldanus Anonimi’ne Göre Sultan Bayezid-i Veli (1481-1512)*, Richard F.Kreutel (ed.) (İstanbul: Türk Dünyası Araştırmaları Vakfı Yayınları, 1997), p. 3-4

downfall of Bayezid II would be mainly due to his lack of military capability, as we shall see later on.

I.4. The King's Person: Physical Traits

Whether sent by God or not, whether king by virtue of heredity or election, the ruler is still a mortal human being with a body. Could any human being be a ruler, provided that he had the appropriate claim to the throne? Or were there certain physical prerequisites? Ancient custom and wisdom shows that there were.

First of all, during the late medieval era, one can get the feeling that the ruler is generally expected to be a man. The shepherd of the people, the shadow or vicar of God on earth was by default a “king”, not a “queen”. This is already visible in the various tracts about “kings” and “princes”. The domination of “men” in the chronicles is another proof of this presumption. When giving advice, the writers tend to use the masculine pronoun unlike today’s “politically correct” usage of “s/he”. Although we cannot say that there were no “queens”, an examination of the chronicles reflects their obviously exceptional status. It is not possible to talk about a British or German queen during the period between the twelfth and the fifteenth centuries. In spite of the efforts of Matilda against Stephen in the twelfth century, England would welcome her first queen only in 1553 with the accession of Queen Mary I, daughter of Henry VIII. Ascending the throne in 1558, Queen Elizabeth I of England would still have to justify her femininity after thirty years of rule in her famous Armada speech by saying: “I know I have the body but of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a king and a king of England too.”¹⁷⁶ One of the few examples of strong queens is Catherine of Aragon and that towards the end of the fifteenth century. As far as the Islamic lands are concerned, perhaps the Ayyubid queen Shadjar al-Durr is an outstanding example that comes to mind and her fate was not very favorable either.. Already wielding power behind the scenes during her husband’s reign, she had been appointed sultana by al-Salih’s amirs and the Mamluks on al-Salih’s death. She reigned

¹⁷⁶ Leah S. Marcus, Janel Mueller, and Mary Beth Rose (eds.), *Elizabeth I: Collected Works* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), p. 326

for a few months until the Bahri Mamluks started to grumble for the wish of a man as sultan. Although she withdrew in favor of Aybak, she kept exercising power. On Aybak's attempt to marry another woman, she had him killed. Only two weeks after the death of Aybak, her naked corpse was found outside the citadel.¹⁷⁷ Under these circumstances, we must acknowledge the fact that we are faced with a dominantly male world in which women are usually seen as inferior creatures that are to be approached with caution. In a society which shows no hesitation in blaming Eve for getting both herself and Adam – and thus all of human kind – thrown out of Heaven, such caution should not be surprising. Since this study is not on gender, we shall not explore the status of women. Although women rulers were not favored much by late medieval societies, this does not mean that they were absolutely powerless in the game of politics, but that too is an issue to be meditated on its own. However, taking a brief look at the *manly* character of rulership through a few examples would be useful.

A Tradition of the Prophet supposedly says: “Those societies that leave affairs to women can find no salvation”. Mawardi repeats the Tradition as he describes the qualities of the wazir, asserting quite firmly that the position could not be granted to a woman. He does not see women fit for the position because he believes that a wazir is expected to possess determination, patience and judgment, i.e. traits in which women are weak. Furthermore, engaging personally with administrative affairs would bring many unfavorable consequences for women themselves.¹⁷⁸ The fact that he does not include gender in the list of pre-requisites for the caliph could be interpreted as something already taken for granted. Nizâm al-Mulk devotes a chapter of his book to “those who wear the veil”. He strongly opposes women interfering in the affairs of the ruler based on the grounds that women do not have complete intelligence – based on this opinion, we can safely assume that he would definitely not tolerate a woman ruler! According to him, the purpose of women's existence is “the continuation of lineage of the race”. Other than that, when they assume some sort of power, all they bring is mischief and “their commands are mostly the opposite of what is right”. Nizâm al-Mulk, whose aim in expressing these views was to make sure that kings did not act according to women's opinions – since a female ruler seems already out of the question, he does not

¹⁷⁷ L. Amman, “Shadjar al-Durr”, *Encyclopædia of Islam*, New Edition, v.9 (Leiden: Brill, 1997), p. 176

¹⁷⁸ Mâverdi, *El-Ahkâmü's-Sultâniye*, p. 73

go into the discussion of a woman legally ruling – justifies his argument by the most famous example of what happens to a man who obeys a woman and suffers greatly, namely the story of Adam and Eve.¹⁷⁹

Queen Elizabeth, whose husband King Albert of Hungary died in 1439 and left her behind pregnant, summoned the magnates and told them to choose for themselves a king who could do better than a woman although she did have the right to throne:

My lords and brothers! It is your duty no less than mine to take thought for the affairs of the kingdom. I am, as you know, the kingdom's heiress, but I do not think I am strong enough to guide the reins of the kingdom. If you are looking forward to the birth of my child, I believe I shall deliver a daughter rather than a son, to the extent that my woman's nature can know this from experience. Try, therefore, to find yourselves a prince who is more qualified than a woman to bear the responsibilities of so great a realm, keeping in your hearts and before your eyes the kindness of my father, lest you arrange for me to have no share in the kingdom of whose daughter I am.¹⁸⁰

When we say that the ruler was expected to be a *man*, it is not only the gender of the ruler which the word implies. The “king” is expected to be a man, not a boy, if possible. The events recorded in the chronicles show that a very young king would evoke ambitions in neighboring kingdoms. There are plenty of kings who have been encouraged to attack a neighbor ruled by a youth. Froissart's example of the Scots invading England demonstrates what could happen to a realm with too young a king. Edward III had ascended the throne of England in 1327. At that time, Robert Bruce was king of Scotland. Although he had grown old and suffered from leprosy, he was a great soldier with much experience with the English. Having heard of the events in England, he decided to set a challenge for the young king, interpreting the youth of the new king “a good opportunity to conquer a part of England”. He immediately sent a challenge to the young King Edward with the threat of burning and ravaging his country. Thus, taking advantage of the king's young age and inexperience, the Scots invaded part of England, indeed ravaging and burning as they moved on.¹⁸¹ Eventually, the war did not end with a definite victory or defeat, however with the treaty signed the next year, the Scots had all their demands agreed to and the King of Scots was recognized as an independent ruler; furthermore the country had been devastated.¹⁸²

¹⁷⁹ Nizâm al-Mulk, *The Book of Government*, p. 180

¹⁸⁰ Thuroczy, *Chronicle of the Hungarians*, p. 104-5

¹⁸¹ Froissart, *Chronicles*, p. 46-7

¹⁸² *ibid.*, p. 54

A similar situation can be observed in the events following Murad II's abdication in favor of his son Mehmed II. Murad's decision had precedence; Osman had wanted to leave affairs to his son Orhan during his lifetime to know for sure that his son achieved glory and obedience of the people. Neşri, for example, does not neglect noting that Osman did not repent his decision. He then writes about Murad II's leaving the throne to his thirteen-year-old son, only to regret it later.¹⁸³ This comparison of Neşri brings to mind the difference between the two situations. Why would one ruler's resignation in favor of his son be viewed favorable while another's not? The problem seems to be the age of the successor. While Orhan was a fully-grown man of about forty-six, Mehmed II seems to be regarded as a child still. Aşıkpaşazade relates what followed Murad's decision: judging this move as insanity, the enemy had lost no time to turn the situation to their favor. Upon hearing the news Karamanoğlu and the king of Serbia were overjoyed. Karamanoğlu provoked the Serbian king, the Hungarian king and Janos Hunyadi [Yanko], telling them that a better opportunity could not be found to fight the "Turks". Under the leadership of Janos Hunyadi, they passed through Belgrade towards Varna.¹⁸⁴ The anonymous Greek chronicle also relates the situation: "Their king Mehmed was a thirteen year old child who knew nothing about battles."¹⁸⁵ Perhaps they were right to say so for when the enemy started marching, Murad was called back to fight the war. He returned victoriously to Edirne and sent his son back to Manisa, while he resumed the Ottoman throne.¹⁸⁶ In the meanwhile Mehmed wished his father to stay in Edirne and protect the city as he himself went on to fight. However, his grand wazir Halil Pasha firmly refused this suggestion based on the fact that Mehmed was too young. When Mehmed nevertheless asked his father to stay in Edirne, Halil Pasha tried to excuse this by saying to Murad that his son was still too young and did not have any

¹⁸³ Neşri; *Kitabı Cihan-nümâ*, p. 137

"El-hasıl [Osman] beğliği Orhan'a teslim idüb kendi pir olub mütekâ'id olmuşdı. Nitekim Murat Han dahi Sultan Mehmed'i tahta geçirüb kendü Manisa'da mütekâ'id oldu. Gayeti, bu sonra pişiman oldu. Ol olmadı."

¹⁸⁴ Aşıkpaşaoğlu, *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osman*, p. 184

"Osmanoğlu delü oldu. Tahtını bir oğlana verdi. Kendü çalıcı avratlar ile bağlar ve bağçalar bucağında yeyüb içib yürür. Vilayetinden el çekdi. İmdi fırsat sizün ve hem bizümdür. Yürimek gerek... Türke bundan yeg fırsat elünüze girmez"

¹⁸⁵ 16. *Asırda Yazılmış Grekçe Anonim Osmanlı Tarihi*, p. 135

¹⁸⁶ Aşıkpaşaoğlu, *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osman*, p. 185

bad intentions, only lack of etiquette.¹⁸⁷ Neither Thuroczy nor Dukas mention anything about the ambitions of the Hungarian and Serbian kings being provoked by the youth of the new sultan. Though Dukas only mentions that after the battle was over and victory obtained, the wazir Halil realized that the young ruler would never be successful – Dukas does not mention at this point how mistaken he was – and called Murad to Edirne and acclaimed him as sultan.¹⁸⁸ Thuroczy, on the other hand, does not even mention Mehmed but puts the blame of war on Cardinal Giuliano's provocation. This lack of mention in the *Chronicle of the Hungarians* which devotes pages to the Battle of Varna is worth noting, taking into consideration the fact that “the best of kings” had died in the battle.¹⁸⁹

As the enemy saw Mehmed II merely a boy, so was Mehmed I regarded when he fought to win over his father's land. Various people reproached him on the grounds of his youth. As Mehmed I challenged various petty lords of Anatolia, he was reproached by replies such as: “You are still a baby boy. Your mouth smells of your mother's milk. On what grounds do you dare to claim land?”¹⁹⁰ The reactions of his own brothers were not much different than those of the lords.¹⁹¹ These passages demonstrate that the Ottomans did not favor a very young ruler, due to lack of experience and insufficient training.

Similar concerns can be traced in Dukas' account of Ioannis Paleologos. Ioannis was yet a child when he assumed his father's throne, therefore Cantacuzinos had been appointed as regent.¹⁹² Cantacuzinos was an intelligent and prudent man, talented and experienced in the art of war. However, he had to leave Constantinople and thus the

¹⁸⁷ *Gazavât-ı Sultan Murad b. Mehmed Han*, p. 49, 50

¹⁸⁸ For Dukas' version of the Battle of Varna, see Dukas, *Bizans Tarihi*, pp. 134-5

¹⁸⁹ For Thuroczy's version of the Battle of Varna, see Thuroczy, *Chronicle of the Hungarians*, pp. 141-146

¹⁹⁰ Neşri; *Kitabı Cihan-nümâ*, p. 377, 391

Kara Devletshah to Mehmed I: “Sen henüz bir tıfl oğlansın. Anan südi dahi ağzında kokar. Ne liyâkat ve ne isti'datla adını Sultan koyub, memleket taleb edersin?” / İnanoğlu to Mehmed I: “Henüz sen bir tıfl oğlansın. Adımı Sultan koyub, öyle pence urmak sana mülayim değildir.”

¹⁹¹ *ibid*, p. 425, 433

İsa to Mehmed I: “Şimdi ben ulu karındaşım, that benim elimdedir. Ol henüz bir genç oğlandır. Beylik anın nesine gerektir.” / Suleyman to Mehmed I: “Henüz bir tıfl oğlandır. Tahta ol dahi kaçan lâyık olur?”

¹⁹² Dukas, *Bizans Tarihi*, p. 5

regency because he was a target of envy and intrigues. His enemies had reflected his act as an act of disobedience. His rivals had taken advantage of the situation to announce him a rebel and started to execute members of his family.¹⁹³ In the meanwhile, Ottomans were conquering Byzantine lands and there was a lack of authority. Relatives and friends of Cantacuzinos called him back, saying:

We are being murdered one by one by one and losing our relatives, all because of you. The most honorable notables of the Byzantines are being destroyed; and the Empire, just like a weaver's shuttle in a woman's hand, is collapsing like a melting candle. The government of the realm is in the hands of an infant whose only concern is for toys and flattering words. Insignificant and wicked men hold the reigns of government. Rely on our words and assume the rule, put on your sword.¹⁹⁴

As the Byzantine incident above demonstrates, in some cases when the heir is too young to rule, the practice of "regency" is observed. In *Oğuzname*, we see that Tuman Han was too young when his father died; Köl Erki Han had acted as regent for many years. Finally, after thirty-two years, he was convinced that he should hand over rulership to its rightful heir, now that he was old enough. The complaints of Tuman Han's son about him holding his father's rightful throne probably had to do with his late decision.¹⁹⁵ Köl Erki's slowness does not of course mean that all heirs had to wait until they were almost forty years old. As can be understood from Froissart's account, the king had to be twenty-one before he could "exercise sovereignty over his territory or rule a kingdom" in England. Until then, he had to be guided by older relatives such as uncles or older notables. Richard II was underage when he was crowned and had been guided by his uncles. When he turned twenty-one, the Archbishop of Canterbury advised that all vassals renew their oaths and recognize Richard as their sovereign.¹⁹⁶

Although youth seems to have been perceived as a problem, old age was not so as long as illness and infirmity were not an obstacle in governing the realm and leading the army to victory. At this point, we should note that what "old age" meant can not be defined for sure, since a forty year old man could be described as "old" as well as a

¹⁹³ *ibid.*, p. 11-2

¹⁹⁴ *ibid.*, p. 13

¹⁹⁵ Togan, *Oğuz Destanı*, p. 61

¹⁹⁶ Froissart, *Chronicles*, p. 326

seventy year old one.¹⁹⁷ Although an over-exaggerated and mythical example, Oghuz is said to have lived for a thousand years.¹⁹⁸ Talking about the feats of Ertuğrul Gazi, the author of the *Selâtin-nâme* warns the reader not to assume that Ertuğrul was a young man. On the contrary he was an old man of ninety-one, but he would not let the sword off his hand, he could still fight and spill lots of blood.¹⁹⁹ The above-mentioned account of the Scots invading England includes no criticism to Robert Bruce's old age while Edward's youth is employed as an encouraging motive for waging war. Even though Robert had not lead the army himself, he had been able to make up for his absence by appointing the right leader and by drawing the strategy.²⁰⁰

A striking example of an old ruler is Timur who sowed fear and awe in the hearts of his enemies and vassals. In spite of his old age, he did not encounter much difficulty in devastating the lands he passed through and was able to defeat and capture a ruler who was much younger than himself; namely Bayezid I, notorious for his swiftness in his early forties. The Spanish ambassador Clavijo was sent to Timur in 1403, spending three years with the journey and his stay with Timur. Clavijo relates his first impressions of Timur when finally seeing him after days of waiting. The ambassadors kneel down before Timur to pay him their respects:

His Highness however commanded us to arise and stand close up to him that he might the better see us, for his sight was no longer good, indeed, he was so infirm and old that his eyelids were falling over his eyes and he could barely raise them to see.²⁰¹

Although old age is not considered to be a problem in many cases, grave illness causing physical and mental hindrances does pose a serious problem. While listing the pre-requisites of the caliph, Mawardi says that he should have healthy ears, eyes and tongue and adds that he should not have any impediments restricting swift movement.²⁰² According to Mawardi, people have to obey the ruler as long as he is qualified to rule. However, loss of one or more bodily parts or functions, or mental problems makes the

¹⁹⁷ See Clavijo, *Clavijo: Embassy to Tamerlane*, p. 164 for the forty year old Miran Shah and Thuroczy, *Chronicle of the Hungarians*, p. 96 for the seventy year old Sigismund.

¹⁹⁸ Togan, *Oğuz Destanı*, p. 47

¹⁹⁹ Kemal, *Selâtin-nâme*, p. 30

²⁰⁰ Froissart, *Chronicles*, p. 46

²⁰¹ Clavijo, *Clavijo: Embassy to Tamerlane*, p. 221

²⁰² Mâverdi, *El-Ahkâmü's-Sultâniye*, p. 32

right of rulership invalid. He discusses these kinds of impediments and mental disorders in detail. First, he mentions disorders which involve the five senses. Blindness, deafness and muteness are reasons for the ruler to be discharged, although some scholars accept their rule valid if they can read and write. Loss of smell and taste is not considered a problem. As far as the loss of any limbs or organs is concerned, the problem arises if the impediment affects one's capacity to think, move or stand and his appearance. The appearance aspect is again arguable, for some scholars believe that impediments which affect the outlook, like the loss of one eye, may be acceptable. Mental disorders that affect one's ability to think and to administer one's affairs are considered unacceptable for the office of ruler.²⁰³

The chronicles include cases where potential claimants to the throne are blinded in order to render their claims invalid. The Ottoman chroniclers tell one such example. When Mehmed I comes out of the succession struggle as the final victor, he blinds his nephew, son of Suleyman and sends him to Bursa and grants him land. Neşri tells us that he used to bring his nephew gifts whenever he went to Bursa and took affectionate care of him saying, "He is my brother's son".²⁰⁴ Although blinding a beloved nephew might seem like a cruel act to the modern reader, what Mehmed had done was actually a merciful act. He could have ordered the boy to be killed in order to get rid of any potential succession conflict and he would not be hated for it. However, by blinding the boy, he had removed any possibility of his nephew claiming right to the throne and thus creating confusion through the realm. Aşıkpaşazade relates the incident in a very affectionate manner, saying that the sultan had opened the spiritual eye of the boy, closing the earthly one.²⁰⁵ Christine Pizan relates a similar story about a king who had to blind his own son:

There was once an emperor who proclaimed an edict that anyone who broke a certain law would lose his two eyes. When it was broken by his own son, rather than blind his own heir so that he could not govern the republic, he found a remedy to satisfy the punishment without preventing the son from governing one day. But this remedy was too pitiful: his son had one of his eyes put out, and he put out his own, as the other.²⁰⁶

²⁰³ *ibid.*, pp. 56-60

²⁰⁴ Neşri, *Kitab-ı Cihan-nümâ*, p. 525

²⁰⁵ Aşıkpaşaoğlu, *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osman*, p. 119

"Sultan Mehmed dahı oğlanun gönli gözini acdı. Dünya gözini örttdi"

²⁰⁶ Pizan, *The Book of Body Politics*, p. 35

According to the chronicles, one of the most visible illnesses suffered by rulers is gout, which actually causes physical hindrances because it affects the victim's feet and legs directly, thus causing difficulty in movement. Gout, a painful and potentially disabling form of arthritis, was described as a disease in the days of Hippocrates. Modern research has proved the association of gout with excessive eating and drinking habits, as well as the possible hereditary nature of the disease.²⁰⁷ Given the courtly eating and drinking habits of the late medieval kings, the frequency of gout cases is not surprising. For example, Clavijo was a guest of Timur's son Miran Shah and tells about some of his personal traits. "Prince Miran Shah is a man of advanced age, being about forty years old, big and fat, and he suffers much from the gout."²⁰⁸ Dukas informs that the Byzantine emperor Ioannis suffered from gout for many years.²⁰⁹ Looking at the accounts of the chronicles, we can get the idea that of the Ottoman rulers until the end of the fifteenth century, at least Osman,²¹⁰ Orhan,²¹¹ Bayezid I,²¹² Mehmed II²¹³ and Bayezid II²¹⁴ were victims of the disease. A contemporary relating Mehmed II in person, describes Mehmed's illness:

Men who have seen him have told me that a monstrous swelling formed on his legs; at the approach of summer it grew as large as the body of a man and could not be opened; and then it subsided. No surgeon was able to say what it was, but it was said that his bestial gluttony had a good deal to do with it and that it must be divine punishment. Lest people notice his sorry state and his enemies despise him, he seldom allowed himself to be seen and remained secluded in his serai.²¹⁵

²⁰⁷ "Fact Sheet", American College of Rheumatology, date of access: June 8, 2003 <http://www.rheumatology.org/patients/factsheet/gout.html>,

²⁰⁸ Clavijo, *Clavijo: Embassy to Tamerlane*, p. 164

²⁰⁹ Dukas, *Bizans Tarihi*, p. 136

²¹⁰ Neşri, *Kitab-ı Cihan-nümâ*, p. 137 "Ayağında nikris zahmatı vardı"

²¹¹ Aşıkpaşaoğlu, *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osman*, p. 248

²¹² *16. Asırda Yazılmış Grekçe Anonim Osmanlı Tarihi*, p. 100

²¹³ Aşıkpaşaoğlu, *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osman*, p. 248

"Vefatına sebep ayağında zahmatı var idi. Tabibler ilacında âciz kaldılar. Ahır tabibler bir araya cem oldılar. Ittifak e etdiler, ayağından kan aldılar. Zahmat dahı ziyâde oldu. Ahır şarâbı fâruk verdiler. Allah rahmetine kavuşdı."

²¹⁴ *16. Asırda Yazılmış Grekçe Anonim Osmanlı Tarihi*, p. 185

²¹⁵ Account of Philippe de Commynes as quoted in Franz Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror and His Time*, William C. Hickman (ed.) and Ralph Manheim (trans.) (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1992), p. 424

Having written some medical books, Şirvâni suggests certain remedies for gout as he describes the various gems. One of his suggestions is to hang corals on the patient's feet.²¹⁶

According to Geoffrey of Monmouth's account, when old age weakened the British king Octavius, he asked his councilors who they proposed to be king from his family. He had no sons, only a daughter so he sought counsel. As they discussed to find the best solution, the Duke of Cornwall suggested that "they invite Senator Maximianus and offer him the hand of the Princess together with kingship".²¹⁷ As things got complicated and there appeared other candidates for kingship, the Duke persuaded the king to leave his throne and daughter to Maximianus. His conversation with the king confirms the belief that bodily incapability hinders ruling ability: "You ordered your leaders to advise you what you should do about your daughter and your kingdom, now that your senile condition makes it difficult for you to go on ruling your people any longer".²¹⁸

Emperor Sigismund suffered paralysis in his old age. He was well aware of the potential consequences of his invalidity. Thus, he chose to speak with his men directly without waiting to be humiliated. He told them to put him in a litter, arranging his hair and beard, and then proceed him through the city. His intention was probably to make all to see him and know that he was still in rule. His men did as he wished, moved deeply by his words. The passage in the *Chronicle of the Hungarians* reflects the thoughts on the unfavorable combination of old age and illness:

My dear sons! I think I have satisfied the supreme creator of the world concerning the days of my life, as I myself am aware of the infirmity of my body. And if death does here intervene, I am afraid that the Bohemians, who have always hated me and you, will make an attack on you and expose you and your possessions to rapacious pillaging.²¹⁹

Whether Sigismund's honorable end was due to his self-consciousness or the deeds he had performed throughout his life is hard to tell. But definitely Bayezid II's infirmity was not taken so kindly. The sultan was already old and suffered from gout. His illness had advanced so far that going on campaign had become too much of a burden to him, therefore had to stay not only in the capital but also in bed most of the

²¹⁶ Şirvâni, *Tuhfe-i Murâdi*, p. 183

²¹⁷ Geoffrey of Monmouth, *History of the Kings of Britain*, p. 134

²¹⁸ *ibid.*, p. 138

²¹⁹ Thuroczy, *Chronicle of the Hungarians*, p. 94-5

time. The land was almost thrown into confusion because of the lack of authority caused by this situation. There was unrest in the countryside and the Shah Ismail threat was growing with people from the Ottoman districts joining him. Furthermore, earthquakes followed one another, devastating the realm. Bayezid, finally realizing that his age was quite advanced and suffering from the pain caused by gout, decided to abdicate in favor of his oldest son Ahmed.²²⁰ He had named the wrong candidate though. His janissaries opposed:

Your son Ahmed is just like you. He is not much different from a log and will do no good. He is a coward and with his fat belly he is not suitable for war. We need someone bold, dynamic and warlike, someone who can hold sway over the districts and their inhabitants with his authority, someone who can bring things back into order and take the initiative on action.²²¹

Interpreting the events about a decade later, Çelebi Hadidi claims that Anatolia had been ravaged because of the sultan's condition, since the feet could not walk if there was no head.²²² Both Hadidi's comment and the words attributed to the janissaries reflect the view that the realm needed a ruler and Bayezid was not capable of being one any longer. Actually, the janissaries seem to insist on recognizing Bayezid as their lawful ruler in theory. However, recalling Mawardi's prerequisites, he lost his capability to move and this alone rendered him incapable of maintaining kingship. In another speech to the sultan, the janissaries describe the dreadful condition of the realm and tell that there is no one to save the realm from this situation. As for the sultan himself, they can expect nothing from him:

As for you, expecting you to find a remedy for this horrible condition would be in vain. It has been three or four years since you have been in bed because of gout. Nobody can see you. You hear neither official nor private complaints. And you have no information on the economic condition of the realm. Neither the revenue from Anatolia nor from Rumelia is sent to the treasury. Therefore we see that the treasury is empty and poverty is spreading all over. If we want to preserve this realm, we have to rekindle the fire of the army. [Bayezid asks for their proposal.] We need a military leader we can follow in important wars, a leader sound and strong who can take the burden of the campaign.²²³

Şirvâni, in his *Tuhfe-i Murâdi*, states that the capital of the kings consists of their bodily maintenance and strength, as well as their mental health and external

²²⁰ *Haniwaldanus Anonimi'ne Göre Sultan Bayezid-i Veli*, p. 34, 44-46

²²¹ *ibid.*, p. 63

²²² Çelebi Hadidi, *Tevarih-i Al-i Osman*, p. 363

“Ayak altında kaldı Anadolu / Baş olmasa ayak yürür mi yol”

²²³ *Haniwaldanus Anonimi'ne Göre Sultan Bayezid-i Veli*, p. 60

magnificence.²²⁴ Since the ruler is responsible for the well-being of the realm, he has to be able to attend business personally. Furthermore, in a world with a strong military emphasis, opposition to a ruler suffering illness and infirmity is quite understandable. This brings us to the issue of the ruler's military skills and role. Descent may provide a prince with a valid claim to the throne. However, he has to be worthy of the position and be capable of ruling a realm. In a world where survival depends mainly on one's military strength, the military skills of the ruler become an important issue. This we shall now explore.



²²⁴ Şirvâni, *Tuhfe-i Murâdi*, p. 74

“Meliklerin sermayesi bedenlerinin perverişi ve kuvveti ve ruhlarının ferahı ve zahirlerünün ârâyişi durur.”

II. WAR AS A MATTER OF FACT

Even a brief journey through the chronicles gives one a strong sense of continuous war. Considering how much space chroniclers have devoted to the various battles, one may get the idea that war was the most important element in the lives of these societies. And perhaps it was. In feudal and frontier societies in which the main occupation of the ruling class is fighting, this would probably be considered natural. As a natural extension of this system, the ruler – whether king or sultan – would be expected to be the head of the military machine.

It is a generally acknowledged fact that Islam had spread mainly by force of the sword. There are verses in the *Quran* commanding to fight until all accept the word of *Allah* or pay tribute; the most famous being:

Fight those who do not believe in Allah, nor in the latter day, nor do they prohibit what Allah and His Messenger have prohibited, nor follow the religion of truth, out of those who have been given the Book, until they pay the tax in acknowledgment of superiority and they are in a state of subjection.²²⁵

The Prophet himself had acted as a military leader; he was also attributed to have made many comments on fighting in the name of God. For instance: “I was ordered to fight until all professed the oneness of God [*lâ ilâhe illah*]. If they pronounce these words, their lives and possessions are safe with us. If not, they deserve to be fought.”²²⁶ Thus the war-oriented order was justified and this justification was used time and again by theorists and chroniclers. Mawârdi, for example, discusses under which conditions and against whom fighting is legitimate. He groups those who deserve to be fought in four categories: unbelievers, those who change their religion, those who resist law and those who rebel.²²⁷ Ibn Taymiyyah, too, attempts defining legitimate war: “The name of

²²⁵ *The Quran*, 9:29

²²⁶ Buhari, *Īman*, 17,28 as quoted in Maverdi, *El-Ahkâmü's-Sultâniye*, p. 113

²²⁷ Maverdi, *El-Ahkâmü's-Sultâniye*, p. 121

legitimate war is *jihad*; and since its purpose is to bring all religion under the possession of *Allah* and glorify His name, those who hinder this purpose shall be fought with all the Muslims uniting.”²²⁸ What we find in these treatises is a sketch of organized warfare with the rules of the game already designated. They express opinions on how the prisoners shall be treated according to their status and on the legitimate modes of war. The *Quran* also guides in certain cases such as distribution of booty: “And know that whatever thing you gain, a fifth of it is for *Allah* and for the Messenger and for the near of kin and the orphans and the needy and the wayfarer.”²²⁹ (8:41) Or on what to do in case two parties of believers fight:

“And if two parties of the believers quarrel, make peace between them; but if one of them acts wrongfully towards the other, fight that which acts wrongfully until it returns to Allah's command; then if it returns, make peace between them with justice and act equitably; surely *Allah* loves those who act equitably.”²³⁰

On the other hand, when we look at the writings of late medieval European jurists, the main tendency seems to be for peace. They tend to impose war as a means of defense and protection of the Church. Giraldus Cambrensis (c.1146-1220), for example, notes that making war rashly would be folly, although he recognizes that the ruler's magnificence depends on his bravery.²³¹ Aquinas also favors peace and sees war as an obstacle in maintaining the good order of the state. Under these circumstances the best the ruler could do was to “guard against all possible enemies”.²³² Likewise, William Perrault (d.1275) argues that war is to be avoided when possible, “because of the countless evils that result from it – burning, plundering, theft” and so forth.²³³ Defending the land and the people is of course expected from the king; however, war for its own sake or on the expense of others is not much appreciated. As Aegidius Romanus puts it: “Princes should be powerful enough to keep off enemies from their realms, but should not enlarge their territory by injuring others.”²³⁴ Although an advocate of peace on the grounds that virtue and sciences can be developed only under

²²⁸ Ibn Teymiye, *Siyaset : es-Siyasetu's -şer'iyye*, p. 151

²²⁹ *The Quran*, 8:41

²³⁰ *The Quran*, 49:9

²³¹ Born, “The Perfect Prince”, p. 476

²³² *ibid.*, p. 482

²³³ *ibid.*, p. 488

²³⁴ *ibid.*, p. 490

conditions of peace, Pierre du Bois (1255-1321) does stress that one of the principle duties of the ruler is to protect his realm.²³⁵ Although Thomas Occleve (1370-1450) pleads for peace and puts the blame of war on ambition, he finds war legitimate under one circumstance: “to bring unbelievers into the faith of Christ”.²³⁶

Perhaps the issue of war is the one which appears to have been approached quite differently by Muslim and Christian theorists. While the ideology of holy war is appraised and promoted in “Islamic” writings, we see that the medieval jurists of Christian Europe do not favor the idea of war as much and that their views are oriented more towards peace. While the Christian prince is expected to avoid war when possible, the Ottoman ruler is encouraged to fight the infidel. For a turn-of-the-century view on the issue, perhaps the words of Erasmus who disapproves of any kind of war can shed some light on the matter:

Indeed, judging by the people who fight this kind war nowadays, it is more likely that we shall turn into Turks than that our efforts will make them into Christians. Let us first make sure that we are truly Christian ourselves and then if it seems appropriate, let us attack the Turks.²³⁷

His main argument is that Christ has not created and spread his kingdom by fighting and in fact “the whole philosophy of Christ argues against war”.²³⁸ A comparison of the pacifist ideology of Christ and the activist ideology of Muhammad probably explains to some extent the difference in the two approaches.

On the other hand, did the practice reflect the theory? The chronology of the period does not, neither do the various chronicles. Then what did war mean for the contemporaries who were not theorizing but actually experiencing war? In *Le Jouvencel*, a fifteenth century biographical French romance, the sentiments of a French knight do not show a pacifist view of war at all:

It is joyous thing, is war... You love your comrade so in war. When you see that your quarrel is just and your blood is fighting well, tears rise to your eye. A great sweet feeling of loyalty and of pity fills your heart on seeing your friend so valiantly exposing his body to execute and accomplish the command of our Creator. And then you prepare to go and die or live with him, and for love not to abandon him. And out of that there arises such a delectation, that he who has not tasted it is not fit to say what a delight it is. Do you think that a man who does that

²³⁵ *ibid.*, p. 495-6

²³⁶ *ibid.*, p. 501-2

²³⁷ Erasmus, *The Education of a Christian Prince*, p. 109

²³⁸ *ibid.*, p. 105

fears death? Not at all; for he feels so strengthened, he is so elated, that he does not know where he is. Truly he is afraid of nothing.²³⁹

In these words, we find the expression of fighting for a just cause, fighting in the name of God and the rewarding feeling war evokes. An early fourteenth century Byzantine account echoes a similar attitude to war when talking about the “Turks”:

In truth they find that it is very dishonorable for them not to die in war, not to have the frenzy of war operated over their bodies; this is something that they often say to each other as an insult.²⁴⁰

Although chronicles and chivalric romances of the late medieval era provide us with all kinds of “noble” reasons for fighting – and these “noble” motives should not be disregarded at all in a study which pursues the ideals – one of the main concerns appearing in between the lines seems to be economic. In very basic terms, war means booty and booty means wealth. In one of the campaigns of the Black Prince aimed at the French, the English were so successful that those who participated all got rich. The prisoners they had taken were considered their own property; they could either free these prisoners or ransom them. They had also captured other possessions such as gold, silver and jewels.²⁴¹ On the way back, “they were so encumbered by booty and valuable prisoners that they had no time or inclination to attack fortresses on their way home.”²⁴² A French knight participating in a battle takes his high-ranking prisoner with him and places the wounded man in a hostelry in town. His commands to the host reflect the economic value of prisoners: “Take good care of this prisoner and make sure his wound is properly seen to. If he stays alive, he’s big enough to pay me thousand franks.”²⁴³ The same theme can be followed through the work of Aşıkpaşazade, for example, who had participated in some of the Ottoman campaigns. Relating his experience in the siege of Belgrade, the author tells us that the soldiers, *gazis* in his words, had gained so much that a beautiful slave servant would be exchanged for a pair boots and there were more prisoners around than soldiers. He then goes on giving the prices of various kinds of

²³⁹ As quoted in J. Huizinga, *The Waning of the Middle Ages* (New York: Anchor Books, 1956), p. 76

²⁴⁰ Nikolas Oikonomidis, “The Turks in Europe (1303-1315) and the Serbs in Asia Minor (1313)”, in Elizabeth Zachariadou (ed.), *The Ottoman Emirate (1300-1389)*, (Crete: Crete University Press, 1993), pp. 163-4

²⁴¹ Froissart, *Chronicles*, p. 143

²⁴² *ibid*, p. 145

²⁴³ *ibid*, p. 287

slaves. He himself has bought a young boy for a hundred akças and acquired seven prisoners, male and female. Moreover, the sultan has given him one more slave and when he told the sultan that so many prisoners would require a horse and journey expenses to be taken back, the sultan provided him with two horses (he already had four horses of his own) as well as five thousand akça for the expenses. He says that he went back to Edirne and sold some of the prisoners for three hundred and some for two hundred akça and was grateful to the sultan.²⁴⁴ Although we have no way of calculating the expenses of the trip back to Edirne, a rough calculation shows that he has earned around two thousand akça selling the prisoners and when we add the sultan's gift to this figure his gain could probably be considered a fine income through only one campaign – especially when consider that the lowest annual land tenure rate within the Ottoman administrative system was three thousand akça.

In a campaign against the French, there seems to have been pillagers and irregulars among the English who were not all too familiar with the rules of the game. Going after the French and killing them as they find themselves in difficulty, they attract the fury of King Edward III: “It was a great misfortune and the King of England was afterwards very angry that no one had been taken for ransom, for the number of dead lords was very great”.²⁴⁵ King Edward is not the only example of a ruler getting angry at missing a financial opportunity. During his Bosnia campaign Mehmed II was very mad at wazir Mahmud Paşa for persuading the king, who hid in a castle, to willfully surrender the castle. In case of willful submission, there could be no plunder, as we shall see below. Mehmed, on the other hand, had his mind set on getting the castle forcefully so that he would not have to spare his king and could occupy the rest of his lands. Whether the sultan had calculated the booty aspect or not, in the end religious scholars were consulted and the king was sentenced to death upon their approval. His castle was plundered and the soldiers got what they wanted.²⁴⁶

²⁴⁴ Aşıkpaşaoğlu, *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osman*, p. 178-9

²⁴⁵ Froissart, *Chronicles*, p. 93

²⁴⁶ Aşıkpaşaoğlu, *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osman*, p. 213

“Kıralı depelediler... Ve bu kafirlerin hazinelerin padişaha getürdiler. Ve akıncılar dahi gayet doyumluklar ile geldiler. Şol kadar idi doyumluklar kim hiç kişi mahrum kalmamış idi eserden ve maldan. Ve hem ol vilayetde olan hisarlarda ve şehirlerde ol kadar hazineler buldılar kim hesabı yok”

To look at it from a realistic and materialistic view based on the accounts in the chronicles, it seems obvious that the ruler has to keep on plundering, whether it be called *ghaza* or *akan*, in order to finance his community. According to Neşri, Osman decided to pursue the *ghaza* like his father so that he could win his bread and not be dependent on any sultan for his existence.²⁴⁷ Aşıkpaşazade's accounts on what used to be done once a place was conquered illustrate the fact that the *gazis* got booty, houses, villages and sometimes even wives.²⁴⁸ In the *Gazavatname*, it is possible to see the incentives offered to the participants of a *ghaza*. Those who come and fight in the name of the religion are to have whatever they want.²⁴⁹

Bearing in mind the maxim "nothing succeeds like success", we could say military success and thus the prospect of booty and a sense of protection provided by being on the "right side" meant a lot as far as the power of the ruler was concerned. Geoffrey of Monmouth tells about the military achievements of King Arthur and relates how he made various kingdoms submit to himself. He had then achieved a state of peace which would last for twelve years, for the other kingdoms had come to be afraid of him while adoring and imitating him:

... At last the fame of Arthur's generosity and bravery spread to the very ends of the earth; and the kings of countries far across the sea trembled at the thought that they might be attacked and invaded by him, and so lose the control of the lands under their dominion...²⁵⁰

This reputation had encouraged Arthur to nourish the idea of conquering the whole of Europe, which he started with Norway and Denmark. Ironically, although the author praises Arthur's ravaging other countries to conquer them, in a previous occasion when a native young British man of humble origins had tried to get Britain for himself

²⁴⁷ Neşri; *Kitab-ı Cihan-nümâ*, p. 53

"Mahzâ etmeği gazâdan çıkarayın ve hiç bir melike ihtiyaç göstermiyeyin; hem dünya ve hem âhiret elüme girsin"

²⁴⁸ Aşıkpaşaoğlu, *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osman*, p. 106

Osman conquers Yenişehir: "Gaziler ferah oldılar, her birisine köyler verdi."

²⁴⁹ *Gazavât-ı Sultan Murad b. Mehemmed Han*, p. 14

"Şöyle ma'lum oluna kim, bu sefer-i nusret-me'âbıma gelüb Din-i İslam aşkına imdâd idüb bizimle ma'an sefere varanların her ne mürâcaatları var ise, katımda makbul-i hümâyunumdur, eğer tumar isteyene ve eğer zeamet isteyene ve eğer yeniçerilik isteyene ve eğer sipahilik isteyene ve eğer yürüklükten çıkmak isteyene her birinin murâd(u) maksudları makbulumdür."

²⁵⁰ Geoffrey of Monmouth, *History of the Kings of Britain*, p. 222

by tricking Rome and ravaging the coasts, he does not refrain from criticizing those who join this young man:

He sailed along all the coasts of the kingdom, making the greatest possible upset among the inhabitants. Then he landed in the neighboring islands, laid waste to the open fields, sacked the cities and the towns, and plundered those who lived there of all that they had. While he was behaving in this way, all those who lusted after someone else's possessions flocked to join him. In a short time he had so great a force under command that no local leader could resist him.²⁵¹

The Ottoman chronicles include similar accounts. For example, what Süleyman Paşa, older son of Orhan Beg, did was not different than what Geoffrey of Monmouth criticizes, even though he was known for his "bravery, organization skills, generosity, intelligence and horsemanship". Wherever Süleyman went with his men, they destroyed the "land of the infidels", killing those who refused changing their religion and taking children as prisoners. He got hold of many lands in this way and burnt down churches.²⁵² However, since what the prince did was under the veil of promoting and expanding Islam, he is not criticized for his otherwise brutal actions. In fact, he is supported. The "islamification" of a newly conquered city seems to be standard praise in early Ottoman chronicles. A random example can be seen in Ağrıboz which had been conquered during Mehmed II's reign by plunder because it did not surrender.²⁵³

The Ottoman enterprise seems to have been based on military achievement. One may assume that it started resembling the above mentioned account on Arthur eventually and perhaps such a picture had been reached during Mehmed II's reign, if not before. But in the earlier period as the Ottomans got known better and better for their military success and thus the prospect of booty, more and more people joined them. This seems to be the case from early on, as a Byzantine imperial bull dated 1313 demonstrates:

Numerous were their compatriots who came to join them again and again, the ones being added to others, and large numbers came to be added to the numerous ones that were already there, and their power increased much; and this was bad,

²⁵¹ *ibid*, p. 128

²⁵² Şükrullah, *Behçetüttevarih*, p. 54

²⁵³ Aşıkpaşaoğlu, *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osman*; p. 217

"Ve bu Ağrıboz vilayeti sancaklık El oldu. Şehrün kiliselerin mescid etdiler. Vilayet-i ehl-i islamdan hatırı olub gelen müslümanlara kafirün hâli kalan evlerini mülklüğe verdiler. Ve hem bir kadı dahı nasb etdiler. Ve sancağı begliğini bir kulına tımar Verdi. Ol kafiristan iken vilayet-i islam oldu. Hak Ta'âlâ avniyile"

because our forces were not yet organized to face them. They could not be contained by any means...²⁵⁴

The power base of Osman had started to build up while he was living in Söğüt with his father. He was so brave and skillful in hunting that brave young men started gathering around him.²⁵⁵ Neşri tells how people had by and by came to Osman and joined him, including local Christian notables.²⁵⁶

The most laudable “noble” reason for waging war appears to be religious, in the form of either “crusade” or “jihad”. One of the participants of the First Crusade, Petrus Tudebodus, defines the victory over “paganism” as part of the divine plan: “The crusaders’ amazing victory against enormous odds was the work of God, not man: Christ awarded the fidelity and valor of his army by granting it victory over innumerable pagans. This victory over the pagans is part of the divine plan...”²⁵⁷ Moreover, death while fighting the infidel promises glory in the afterlife. This encouraging theme is traceable throughout the feats of John Hunyadi, as reflected in the *Chronicle of The Hungarians*. Hunyadi uses these phrases as he encourages his soldiers to fight the Ottomans: “Never mind if death is cruel to one or another of you. For if he has taken eaten breakfast with me or with his comrades, he will take his supper with Christ.”²⁵⁸ The words spoken by Janos Hunyadi echoe in a speech of his rival Murad II before a battle:

Let me see how for the sake of Islam you fight those unbelievers who are our enemies. You know the virtue of *ghaza* and you know how exalted a rank is martyrdom... Those of us who kill shall be *ghazis* and those who get killed martyrs.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁴ Oikinomidis, “The Turks in Europe”, p. 163

²⁵⁵ Aşıkpaşaoğlu, *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osman*, p. 94 and Neşri; *Kitab-ı Cihan-nümâ*, p. 71

²⁵⁶ Neşri; *Kitab-ı Cihan-nümâ*, p. 77

²⁵⁷ John V. Tolan, “Muslims as Pagan Idolaters”, in *Western Views of Islam in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, p. 100

²⁵⁸ Thuroczy, *Chronicle of the Hungarians*, p. 137

²⁵⁹ *Gazavât-ı Sultan Murad b. Mehemmed Han*, p. 57

“Hemân göreyim sizi dîn-i İslam aşkına âşikâne küffâr-ı hâkisâra, ki anlar dinimiz düşmanlarıdır nice kılıç urursunuz. Zahir bilürsünüz kim, gazânın fazileti ne mertebedir ve şühedânın mertebesi ne yücedir. İmdi kullarım çünkü doğmakdan kalmadık, elbette ölmekden dahi kalmamız. Eyle olsa size ve bize vâcib olan budur ki, şimdi fırsat elimize girmişken dilirâne savaş edüp gazâlar edelim. Öldürenlerimiz gâzi ve ölenlerimiz şehid olub...”

Thus the parallel of the “crusade spirit” of medieval Europeans can be found to some extent in the Ottoman *ghaza*. Since it is not possible to exclude altogether the relevance of the *ghaza* factor in the effort of understanding the early stages of Ottoman state formation as a frontier society, it is perhaps only natural that the chronicles concentrate so much on battles. Being a *ghazi* or actually being the leader of *gazis* appears to be one of the most important qualities and duties of the ruler. Therefore, fighting the infidel becomes a natural duty of the ruler.²⁶⁰

A laudable reason can always be provided for *ghaza*, like the account of a traveler who saw Muslim women serving the infidels as slaves in Morea. When the man comes to Edirne and tells Mehmed II about it, the sultan loses no time to announce a *ghaza* to save these innocent Muslim women from the hands of the unbelievers.²⁶¹ Perhaps the clearest comment on the issue is found in Aşıkpaşazade’s account of Mehmed II’s journey to Trabzon with the mother of Uzun Hasan. The sultan goes to conquer the city and Sara Hatun, mother of Uzun Hasan, tries to persuade him not to. Sara Hatun says that the road is quite steep and rough and asks whether it is worth taking the trouble just for Trabzon. Mehmed tries to explain to her that he is doing this in the name of Islam and if he does not do it, he would not deserve to be called a *ghazi*.²⁶² Furthermore, it is an order of God to fight the infidels and unbelievers.²⁶³ Therefore, fighting against the infidel is a matter of both duty and prestige for the ruler. Neşri calls Bayezid *sultan ul-guzzat ve’l mücâhidin*.²⁶⁴

During the period between the late thirteenth and early fifteenth century, Ottomans were not the only *ghazis* in Anatolia. The title “*sultan ul-guzzat*” was used on

²⁶⁰ Ahmedî; *Dastân ve Tevârih-i Mülûk-i Âl-i Osman*, p. 6
“Kamusının işi kâfirle cidâl / Geydügi vü yedügi malı helâl”

²⁶¹ Aşıkpaşaoğlu, *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osman*, p. 199
“Ol kişi doğru Edreneye gelmiş. Dahı padişaha buluşdı. Bu avratların habarların bildürdi. Bu gördügi halları ona da aslıyile habar verdi. Padişah bu habarı işidicek gayret-i islam galebe etdi. Heman dem cemi’ leşkerini cem’etdi. Niyet-i gazâ edüb Mora vilâyetine yürüdi.”

²⁶² Aşıkpaşaoğlu, *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osman*, p. 208
“Ana! Bu zahmatlar Durabuzun çün degüldür. Bu zahmatlar din-i İslam yolınadır kim ahrette Allah Hazretine varıcak hacil olmayavuz deyüdü. Zira kim bizim elümüzde islam kılıcı vardır. Ve eger biz bu zahmatı ihtiyar etmesevüz bize gazi demek yalan olur”

²⁶³ Neşri; *Kitabı Cihan-nümâ*, p. 291 (quoting *Quran* 9:74)
“Ey resul, kâfirler ve münafıklarla cihâd et”

²⁶⁴ Neşri; *Kitab-ı Cihan-nümâ*, p. 335

the inscription of Aydınoğlu Mehmed Beg's tomb dated 1334. Moreover, Sultan Veled gave him the title of "sultan ul-guzzat ve'l mücâhidin".²⁶⁵ At the beginning of his work, Dukas gives a list of other Turkish emirates occupying various parts of the Byzantine realm: "Ephesus and Caria by the Manthians (*Menteşe*); Lidia up to Izmir by Atın (*Aydın*); Manisa up to Pergamon by Saruhan; the whole of Phyrighia by Germiyan; larger Phyrighia from the city of Asu to Çanakkale by Karasi; the whole of Bythinia and part of Paphlagonia by the Osman. These were all Turkish leaders."²⁶⁶ The anonymous historical calendars also note the dates of the conquests by other principalities, such as the conquest of Tarsus by Karamanoğlu Mustafa Beg.²⁶⁷

The rhetoric of *ghaza* brings to mind what may be called "counter-ghaza". The identity of the "infidel" or "other" shifts at this point. A very enlightening explanation of this "othering" process is found in Clavijo's account:

...for they call us Christian Kafirs [which is Infidels], implying that we are an unbelieving folk with no divine law, and they call themselves Moslems, for that name in their tongue signifies the folk who live under the divine law of Almighty God.²⁶⁸

In many instances, there are Ottoman attempts at expanding deeper in Europe; they are seen as a threat to Christianity, therefore requiring Christian kings to stick together and fight the "infidel". While "the infidel" who had to be fought was the "Christians" for the Ottomans, for the "Christians" the "infidel" happened to be the Ottomans. For example, in September 1454 Pope Nicholas V issued a charter announcing that whoever participated in the war with the Ottomans would be pardoned their sins and would carry the sign of the cross on their breasts.²⁶⁹ At a much earlier date, in 1375 when the various principalities of Turkish origin were fighting and plundering under the name of *ghaza*, Pope Gregorius XI approached the matter in more realistic and less romantic terms in a letter he addressed to Giovanna, queen of Naples. Although not denying the religious factor involved, he saw the matter as one of security as well:

²⁶⁵ Wittek, *Menteşe Beyliği*, p. 62

²⁶⁶ Dukas, *Bizans Tarihi*, p. 5

²⁶⁷ *Tarihi Takvimler*, p. 37

²⁶⁸ Clavijo, *Clavijo: Embassy to Tamerlane*, p. 323

²⁶⁹ Nejat Göyünç, "Avrupa'da Türk Görünümü", *Osman Gazi ve Dönemi: Sempozyum Sonuç Bildirileri*, (Bursa: Bursa Kültür Sanat ve Turizm Vakfı Yayınları, 1996), p. 40

Opposing the Turks can not only be considered a work of faith, but it is a better contribution towards the defense of the Principality of Achaëa and the Kingdom of Naples; it is easier and more important to help those in danger, lest they perish, than to attempt at present the recovery of the holy land which has been occupied for so long.²⁷⁰

Janos Thuroczy refers to the Ottomans as pagans in his *Chronicle of the Hungarians*. According to the chronicler, Christian lands were being “savagely plundered by the Turks” and cities were burnt down, people were taken prisoner. It was such a big disaster that the people living in these areas had deserted them. However, “during all this turmoil” Lord Janos [Hunyadi] had “alone fiercely withstood this great persecution of Christian religion”.²⁷¹ In this account the key phrase appears to be the resistance to the attack on Christian religion. When we look at the Ottoman chronicles for accounts of the battles involving Janos Hunyadi, it is possible to see that although the Ottomans are generally the attacking side, they always have a noble reason like *ghaza* or defending their realm in the face of potential threats from Eastern European rulers.

The dichotomy of *ghaza* and *counter-ghaza* perhaps finds one of its best descriptions in an anonymous Ottoman chronicle relating Murad II’s meditation on waging war:

O God! The intent of these infidels is to conquer the lands of Islam, to destroy the mosques and build churches instead, to vanquish Islam and fill the world with blasphemy. You know all the secrets. The wish of your humble slave is to root out the blasphemy, to destroy the churches and build mosques, erect minarets instead of the bell towers and thus to strengthen the religion of Islam, to clean the world from infidelity by overcoming the unbelievers.²⁷²

On the other hand, this was just what the “other”, the Christians, were blaming the Ottomans for. Naturally for them, it was the Muslims who were the unbelievers and they were threatening their churches and religion. Dukas, for example, was complaining of Murad’s army destroying the churches and breaking the holy relics of the Christians. However, he blamed their own sins for such a disaster more than he did Murad.²⁷³

²⁷⁰ Anthony Lutrell, “Latin Responses to Ottoman Expansion Before 1389”, in Elizabeth Zachariadou (ed.), *The Ottoman Emirate (1300-1389)* (Crete: Crete University Press, 1993), p. 126

²⁷¹ Thuroczy, *Chronicle of the Hungarians*, p. 125

²⁷² *Anonim Osmanlı Kroniği*, p. 80

²⁷³ Dukas, *Bizans Tarihi*, p. 121

Whether the fighters are Muslim or Christian, two prevailing modes of war – or rather of conquest – can be traced through the chronicles: peaceful surrender and plunder. As stated in the tribal traditions narrated in *Oğuzname* and *The Book of Dede Korkut*, if a city or people surrender willingly, it is not fit to plunder or give them any harm. However, if they do not surrender and insist on fighting, then it is legitimate to sack whatever there is in the result of victory. In *The Book of Dede Korkut*, we find various instances where the infidels do injustice to someone from the Oghuz tribe; one or more notables go to the infidels and ask them to correct their misdoing. When they refuse, Oghuz notables fight and win. Then, according to the standard pattern, they kill the infidel lord of the castle in question, as well as those who serve him, destroy the church and build a mosque instead. They take booty, the daughter of the lord and other slaves.²⁷⁴ Likewise, when Oghuz Khan decides to conquer the northern lands, he sends out envoys to tell them to surrender and agree to pay taxes. If they agree, there would not be a problem; if not, there would be war.²⁷⁵ Oghuz Khan also gives strict orders about not plundering those places which have submitted voluntarily.²⁷⁶

Ahmedi touches on the matter when talking about the deeds of Suleyman Pasha, son of Orhan, saying that they killed those who did not submit and thus the army of Islam turned out to be victorious.²⁷⁷ Aşıkpaşazade summarizes the whole issue in four verses, reflecting the custom of not hurting those who willfully surrender.²⁷⁸ There are various examples of cities which have surrendered like Bursa and Amasra whose people were not harmed.²⁷⁹ Bilecik provides a good example in that an announcement was made not to harm any of the population and people felt so safe that even the women could go shopping on their own.²⁸⁰ When Mehmed II sends Gedik Ahmet Pasha to

²⁷⁴ An example can be found in the story of Bamsı Beyrek, *Dede Korkut Kitabı*, pp. 59-93

²⁷⁵ *Oğuz Destanı*, p. 22

²⁷⁶ *ibid*, p. 39, 44

²⁷⁷ Ahmedi; *Dastân ve Tevârih-i Mülûk-i Âl-i Osman*, p. 12
“Davet ile gelmeyenî öldüre / Leşker-i islâmî galib oldura”

²⁷⁸ Aşıkpaşaoğlu, *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osman*, p. 185
“Gazalar kim edübdür Âl-i Osman / Vilayet kafirin etdi müsülman / Kaçanı komadılar yağılarda / Dileyene dahı verdiler aman”

²⁷⁹ Aşıkpaşaoğlu, *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osman*, p. 111, 203

²⁸⁰ Neşri; *Kitab-ı Cihan-nümâ*, p. 89

“Yasak idüb çağırtdı kim kimesne Bilecik keferesine zulm itmeye. Şol kadar adl

conquer Alanya, both sides know what will happen if the city does not surrender. Kılıç Arslan Beg, the lord of the castle, thinks that there is no use in fighting since the invaders are not like the Karamanids. (Here, we can also sense the superiority concern of the Ottomans as transmitted by Neşri). They ask Gedik Ahmet Pasha what happens to the *beg* if they surrender; the castle gives in upon hearing the answer. The sultan in return gives Kılıç Arslan Beg robes of honor and grants him Gümölcine as *tımar*.²⁸¹ When the city of Siderovia surrenders, Mehmed II presents gifts to the lady of the castle and tells her that she is free to go anywhere she likes.²⁸² Kefe is yet another city which surrendered; Aşıkpaşazade makes the infidels themselves explain the reason for surrender. In this case, there is no talk of one's *kut* surpassing the other's, as in the account of Bursa; it is a matter of interests. Those under siege know by now that if they give in, the "Turks" will be good to them, develop their city rather than plunder it. Under these circumstances why should they seek their doom?²⁸³ In the *Gazavatname*, a Christian ruler tells this merciful attitude of Ottoman rulers.²⁸⁴

The same two modes are apparent in Froissart's *Chronicles*. For example, in a skirmish between the French and the English led by the famous Black Prince, the French take refuge in the castle of Romorantin. When the English forces come near the castle, the Prince sends one of his knights to go and ask the French whether they would like to surrender peacefully. The knight goes to the castle and proposes the French knights to surrender, ensuring them that they shall be treated honorably. The French decline the offer. Thus, the next day the Prince attacks. Eventually the French knights

gösterdi ki hatta Bilecik keferesinin avretleri dahi pazara gelüb pazarlağın kendüler idüb giderlerdi. Osman Gazi'ye itimad-ı külli itmeğın emn ü aman içinde olmuşlardı.”

²⁸¹ Neşri; *Kitab-ı Cihan-nümâ*, p. 793

“Lütf ile verirse, Hünkardan ana ikliminden yeğ tımar alıvereyim. Eğer cebr ile alırsam, hod iş malumdur”

²⁸² *16. Asırda Yazılmış Grekçe Anonim Osmanlı Tarihi*, p. 157

²⁸³ Aşıkpaşaoğlu, *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osman*, p. 226

“... bu Türk bu hisarı cebr ile alur ise bizi kırar ve bazımızı esir eder ve malumuzu alırlar. Ve şehrimüzi harab eylerler. İmdi bunun gibi olmakdan ise âsanlığ ile verelüm kim cemi'müzi esir etmeyeler. Ve hem ol padişah kim bu Türkleri göndürmüşdür, her alduğı vilayeti ma'mur etdi. Yıkub harab etmedi.”

²⁸⁴ *Gazavât-ı Sultan Murad b. Mehmed Han*, p. 31

“Şöyle umarım ki, Osmanoğlu'na söz geçer. Zira anlarda merhamet vardır, aman diyene anlar kılıç urmaz ve kaçanı dahi kovmaz”

lose hope of holding the castle for long, they surrender unconditionally. They are not killed but the castle is burnt down and the town plundered.²⁸⁵

The principle of willful submission without being harmed or plunder if taken by assault seems to be an established rule of the military game. However, a problematic issue was war between those who were of the same religion. Although fighting “your own kind” is not favored in any society, Ottomans have found ways to justify their conflict with especially the Karamanids. Since they usually lost no time in attacking Ottoman territories as soon as the Ottomans were engaged elsewhere, the Karamanids were accused of hindering the *ghaza* efforts of the Ottomans. Thus what might have been called a vice translates into a virtue in the sultan.²⁸⁶ Once when the Karamanids provoke the Byzantines against the Ottomans, sultan Murad II calls the jurists, tells them the problem and asks what needs to be done according to religious law. The jurists say that the group in question would count as infidels.²⁸⁷ Neşri attributes a similar story to Murad I. He gathers his army to go on *ghaza* to Thrace. However, other “tyrant-lords” around aim at Bursa. Thus, Murad asks for a *fatwa* from the judges to judge whether going against these Muslims was legitimate. It was because they were hurting the Muslim people.²⁸⁸ During the reign of Mehmed II, Karamanoğlu tries to provoke Isfendiyaroğlu İsmail Beg against the sultan. İsmail Beg however scolds Karamanoğlu saying that deterring a sultan who is going to *ghaza* is not fit for Islam.²⁸⁹ As Karamanoğlu is accused of being a *münafık*, it is totally legitimate to wage war on him

²⁸⁵ Froissart, *Chronicles*, p. 125-6

²⁸⁶ Neşri; *Kitab-ı Cihan-nümâ*, p. 219
“mani-i gazâya gazâ gazây-ı ekberdür”

²⁸⁷ *Gazavât-ı Sultan Murad b. Mehmed Han*, p. 4-5

“Yarındaşı al’es-sabah Padişah ulemayı katına davet edüb ve bu ahvali anlara söyleyüb dedi kim, efendiler ne buyurursunuz, bir adam kafir ile arka bir edüb ümmet-i Muhammed-i rencide ve pâymâl eylese, şer’an ne lâzım gelür dedikte, ulema cevab verüb eyittiler kim, çünkü öyle olıcak ol kafirdir...”

²⁸⁸ Neşri; *Kitab-ı Cihan-nümâ*, p. 191

“iş-bu leşkeri kafir niyyetine cem idüb müteveccih oldum-kim, Geliboli’dan geçüb küffara gaza idem. Bu taraftan müluk-i zaleme, müslimin üzere kasd itdiler. Küffar niyyetine cem olan leşkerle bunların muharebesi caiz olub, gaza niyyetin tehir itmek reva olur mı? didi. Ulema eyitdiler: küffara gaza nefir-i âm olmasa, farz-ı kifayedür. Amma mümünlerden mezâlimi defetmek farz-ı ayndur”

²⁸⁹ Aşıkpaşaoğlu, *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osman*, p. 206

“Bu senün sözün müsülmanlığa layık söz degüldür. Buna münafıklık derler. Bir gazi padişah gazaya gide yürür. Biz anı yolundan komak İslam’a sığar iş degüldür”

according to the Quran. However, the tension caused by the fact that both sides are Muslim is visible, especially in the anonymous Greek chronicle. When Timur comes to Anatolia, the lords of the principalities complain to him about Bayezid invading their lands. Timur is very concerned about the matter because they are all of the same religion.²⁹⁰ He sends an envoy to Bayezid to warn him: “You are an evil man because you fight against our fellow co-religionist Turks. It is fit to fight foreigners, however not against those who believe in our Prophet. They have not erred towards you. You are being unjust.” Bayezid has reasons to defend himself: “They do not like me neither in the west nor in the east, for I fight in the name of the religion.”²⁹¹ We understand from the historical calendars that the Ottomans were not the only ones fighting the Karamanids. For example, there is an instance of Dulkadiroğlu Nasreddin beg, Hamza beg and other Turcomans attacking Karamanoğlu Ibrahim Beg.²⁹² Likewise, the Karamanids seem to bother not only the Ottomans but also others like the Germiyanids.²⁹³

The rhetoric of “fighting the infidel” and “crusade spirit” does not mean that Christian princes are always best of friends and support each other either. For example, there are many incidents of hatred in the Hundred Years War between England and France. According to Froissart, the Duke of Gloucester who was famous for his deep dislike for the French, “was rather pleased than sorry to hear of the defeat which they had suffered in Hungary”, meaning the battle of Nicopolis in 1396.²⁹⁴ At the turn of the sixteenth century, Erasmus dwells on the matter: “What do we imagine the Turks and Saracens say about us, when they see that for hundreds of years the Christian princes have been utterly unable to agree among themselves?”²⁹⁵

Long before Erasmus saw the danger in this kind of war, Geoffrey of Monmouth expressed his heart-felt concern and disgust about an even worse situation; that of fighting within the realm:

You foolish people, weighed down by the sheer burden of your own monstrous crimes, never happy but when you are fighting one another, why have you so far

²⁹⁰ 16. *Asırda Yazılmış Grekçe Anonim Osmanlı Tarihi*, p. 97

²⁹¹ *ibid.*, p. 103

²⁹² *Tarihi Takvimler*, p. 41

²⁹³ *ibid.*, p. 37

²⁹⁴ Froissart, *Chronicles*, p. 421

²⁹⁵ Erasmus, *The Education of a Christian Prince*, p. 107

weakened yourselves in domestic upsets that you, who need to submit far-distant kingdoms to your authority, are now like some fruitful vineyard which has gone sour and you cannot protect your own country, wives and children from your enemies? Keep on with your civil squabbling and forget what the Gospel says: 'Every kingdom divided against itself shall fall.' Because your kingdom was divided against itself, because the lunacy of civil war and the smoke-cloud of jealousy obscured your mind, because your pride did not permit you to obey a single king, that is why you see your fatherland ravaged by the most impious of heathens and your homesteads overturned one upon the other, all of which things those who come after you will lament in the future...²⁹⁶

Another reference to civil war almost bringing a kingdom into ruin can be seen in the *Chronicle of the Hungarians*. When King Albert died, Murad II conquered Serbia. Concerns about the dangers facing a divided kingdom were expressed through the assumed plans of the Ottoman Sultan Murad II:

When he heard that all the people of the kingdom of Hungary were devouring each other in civil wars, he reckoned that a divided people could do nothing to defend itself. He therefore decided to invade the kingdom of Hungary.²⁹⁷

In a world in which war was the order of the day, the ruler's skills as a military leader were of vital importance. Those who did not possess these skills were doomed to have a hard time or even lose their right to rule. In Froissart's *Chronicles*, Richard II's uncle the Duke of Gloucester criticizes him for having made truce with the French. Apparently, the Duke believed that the people wanted war and that "peace is no good to them".²⁹⁸ He grumbles over the fact that there was not a strong king in England to wage war and get back his rightful possessions from the French. If there were, people would have followed him and things would have been different:

I am the youngest of King Edward's sons, but if I was listened to I would be the first to renew the wars and put a stop to the encroachments we have suffered and are still suffering everyday, thanks to our simplicity and slackness. I mean particularly the slackness of our leader the King, who has just allied himself by marriage with his principal enemy. That's hardly a sign that he wants to fight him. No, he's too fat in the arse and only too interested in eating and drinking. That's no life for a fighting man, who ought to be hard and lean and bent on glory. I still remember my last campaign in France. I suppose I had two thousand archers with me. We sliced right through the kingdom of France, moving out and across from the Calais, and never found anyone who dared come out and fight us...²⁹⁹

²⁹⁶ Geoffrey of Monmouth, *History of the Kings of Britain*, p. 264

²⁹⁷ Thuroczy, *Chronicle of the Hungarians*, p. 121

²⁹⁸ Froissart, *Chronicles*, p. 421

²⁹⁹ *ibid.*, 422

Froissart warns the reader that these words were foolishly said, as if to prepare us for the arrest of the Duke. Although the Duke is arrested and dies in prison under suspicious circumstances, the fate of Richard II is probably sufficient proof of the validity of the Duke's arguments.

Another anecdote about the necessity of war is found in Clavijo's account of Timur. His point of view seems to reflect the idea that people would fight anyway, so it is better to engage them in war rather than causing disturbance in the city: "Good order is maintained in Samarqand with utmost strictness and none dare fight with another or oppress his neighbor by force: indeed as to fighting, that Timur makes them do enough but abroad."³⁰⁰

Perhaps one of the most striking and almost heart-breaking incidents of military incompetence is revealed by the accounts relating the end of the reign of Bayezid II. The soldiers reproach Bayezid for his incapability to fight. Upon their complaints, he decides to abdicate in favor of his eldest son, Ahmed. However the janissaries do not approve of his choice either, since they do not trust the military skills of the prince and believe that his sole preoccupation is eating, drinking and entertaining himself.³⁰¹ Finally the sultan is left with no choice but to leave his throne to his youngest son Selim, who is the choice of the janissaries on the account of his military capability and enthusiasm.³⁰²

War, as appears in the chronicles and chronology, was doubtlessly one of the most important elements of late medieval life and thus military capability was a major asset and requirement of a ruler. But were being a military hero and a military genius enough to be a king or to hold kingship until death?

³⁰⁰ Clavijo, *Clavijo: Embassy to Tamerlane*, p. 294

³⁰¹ Çelebi Hadidi, *Tevarih-i Al-i Osman*, p. 361

³⁰² *ibid.*, p. 358

"Ne Sultan Ahmed idi tahta layık; Ne Sultan Korkud idi bahta layık; Buların her biri iş ü safada; Veli Sultan Selim idi gazâda; Komazdı kılıcın her dem belinden; Zebûn olmuşdı Gürcistân elinden; Ne Gürcistân ki tutdı şark u garbı; Salâbetle sadâ-yı darb u harbı"

III. VIRTUE AND VICE

III.1. Queen of All Virtues: Justice

“Sultan Malik Shah’s justice and administration of justice were so good that in his time no creature dared to commit injustice.”³⁰³

“...good King Edward of happy memory. In his time justice reigned and was properly enforced.”³⁰⁴

These comments are just two examples among the many similar expressions found in the chronicles. The abundance of almost identical comments on individual rulers and the promotion of justice by the theorists help us name *the* foremost virtue and obligation binding the ruler: Justice. Eastern or Western, Muslim or Christian, the ruler has to have a strong sense of justice and the ability to administer it, for “it is in the nature of kings to have justice and the ability to govern.”³⁰⁵

Without any exception, the contemporaries were united in the absolute value of justice for the maintenance of order in the society. But what did justice mean to them? The references found in the chronicles and works of theorists point at the preservation of the status quo as suggested by “ancient custom” and making sure that nobody is oppressed. In a way, justice was some kind of justification for social and hereditary inequalities by recognizing these differences and coordinating them in harmony as a whole.³⁰⁶ According to Giraldus Cambrensis, justice was the “binding substance of

³⁰³ *The history of the Seljuq Turks from the Jami al-tawarikh*, p. 60

³⁰⁴ Froissart, *Chronicles*, p. 442

³⁰⁵ *The history of the Seljuq Turks from the Jami al-tawarikh*, p. 25

³⁰⁶ Black, *Political Thought in Europe*, p. 16

society”.³⁰⁷ According to Aquinas, it was unjust for a ruler “to impose burdensome laws on his subjects” aimed at his own greed or glory; however, the application of laws aimed at common good was a just act.³⁰⁸ Dante defines justice as “a kind of rectitude or rule which spurns deviation from the straight path to either side” and emphasizes that it is “a virtue that operates in relation to other people”.³⁰⁹ Repeating Aristotle’s wisdom, Christine Pizan provides a very clear definition for justice: “a measure which renders to each his due.”³¹⁰ This phrase brings to mind the famous biblical maxim: “Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s; and unto God the things that are God’s.”³¹¹ In *The Mirror for King Edward III*, William of Pagula defines justice in these exact terms: “Justice is to return to each what is his own. For justice never sells another’s goods, but gives to each one what is his own; it neglects its own utility so that it might serve the communal equity.”³¹² Thomas Occleve describes justice as “of the nature of God” and asserts that justice “restrains bloodshed, punishes guilt, defends possessions and keeps the people safe from oppression”.³¹³

Mawardi’s definition of justice includes honesty, loyalty to the thing entrusted, avoiding sin and the forbidden, not being involved in suspicious affairs, ability to distinguish between willful and forced, approaching religious and earthly issues with the same sensitivity. Mawardi extends the obligation to all administrative offices.³¹⁴ Actually, Mawardi’s *El-Ahkâmü’s-Sultaniyye* opens with a verse from the Quran about governing justly: “Surely Allah commands that when you judge between people you judge with justice.”³¹⁵ Various references to the virtue in acting justly can be found in the Quran. The Book reminds time and again that *Allah* likes those who act justly. One

³⁰⁷ Born, “The Perfect Prince”, p. 478

³⁰⁸ Black, *Political Thought in Europe*, p. 26

³⁰⁹ Dante, *Monarchia*, Book 1, ch.11, Dante Online by Società Dantesca Italiana, <http://www.danteonline.it>

³¹⁰ Pizan, *The Book of Body Politic*, p. 35

³¹¹ *The Bible*, Matthew 22:21

³¹² Nederman and Forhan (eds.), *Medieval Political Theory*, p. 201

³¹³ Born, “The Perfect Prince”, p. 500

³¹⁴ Mâverdi, *El-Ahkâmü’s-Sultâniye*, p. 139

³¹⁵ Mâverdi, *El-Ahkâmü’s-Sultâniye*, p. 25 and see *Quran*, 4:58 “Surely Allah commands you to make over trusts to their owners and that when you judge between people you judge with justice.”

example would be verses in the *Hucurât* where it is commanded that if two Muslim parties are in dispute, they should be reconciled and doing this required justice: "...make peace between them with justice and act equitably; surely Allah loves those who act equitably."³¹⁶ Nizâm al-Mulk is also very keen on the issue of justice. He keeps emphasizing the importance of justice by quoting traditions of the Prophet or anecdotes of great men. As tradition goes, Muhammad said: "Justice is the glory of the faith and the power of the government; in it lies the prosperity of nobility and commons." He also notes that a famous teller of traditions used to say that he would only pray to be a just ruler "because the ruler's virtue underlies the well-being of his subjects and the prosperity of the world".³¹⁷

Influenced by the traditions of Persian kingship, the concept of Justice is often emphasized by the "circle of equity" in "Islamic" texts. According to this formulation, the world is perceived as a garden and the ruler as the fence defending the garden: "The ruler is supported by soldiers; soldiers are maintained by money; money is acquired from the subjects; the subjects are protected by justice and justice is maintained by the ruler."³¹⁸ If we take out justice from this equation, we will realize that subjects will not be protected, thus unprotected subjects would not be able to produce income. Such an outcome would disable the ruler to maintain soldiers and if there are no soldiers, the ruler will not be able to defend the country and the whole order would collapse. Therefore, the ruler's sense and administration of justice gain vital importance. Even in the book on gems written for Murad II, the author felt the need to mention the circle of equity in his claim that kings need to have wealth and gems.³¹⁹

Muradname makes reference to the success story of the Sasanids. The author tells that Anushirvan is still remembered for his just rule and that he will not be sent to hell because of his just attitude. The issue is further emphasized by a comment attributed to the Prophet who had boasted of being born in the time of a just king.³²⁰ And when the Prophet was asked what caused the fall of the Sasanids, one of the reasons he stated was

³¹⁶ *Quran*, 49:9

³¹⁷ Nizâm al-Mulk, *The Book of Government*, p. 49

³¹⁸ Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples*, p. 145

³¹⁹ Şirvani, *Tuhfe-i Murâdi*, p. 74

"Ays u neşât u ferah meliklere milksüz müyesser olmaz ve milk çerisiz olmaz ve çeri mal ıla cem olur ve mal imâret ve imâret adl ü siyâset ile olur."

³²⁰ *Bedr-i Dilşad'ın Murâd-nâmesi*; p. 227

their negligence of justice.³²¹ Murad II probably took this advice seriously throughout his reign. For example, after a conflict with the Karamanids, Murad II accepted their apologies – as usually happened – and did not take or let anything be taken from them by force. The reason for this was the custom and desire to be just which the House of Osman had.³²² In *Oğuzname*, it is stated that Tugrul Khan established his state on justice, truth and goodness.³²³

Justice was such an important issue that the Mongol conqueror Hulagu had been able to obtain a *fatwa* legitimating his rule, as an Iraqi historian tells us at the very beginning of the fourteenth century. When Hulagu conquered Baghdad, he had asked the *ulema* whether it was more preferable to have an unjust Muslim sultan or a just infidel sultan. However, the religious scholars he had brought together were reluctant to provide an answer. Finally, a very respected scholar Radi al-Din ibn Ali ibn Taus provided Hulagu with the *fatwa* with the answer he probably desired. The scholar had preferred the just infidel to the unjust Muslim. Once he had written the words, others followed him.³²⁴

There are plenty of references to justice and just kings in the Bible and Quran. David was an exemplary biblical king as far as justice is concerned: “So David reigned over all Israel, and executed judgment and justice among all his people.”³²⁵ David’s obligation of justice also found echo in the *Quran*: “David! Surely We have made you a ruler in the land; so judge between men with justice”³²⁶ Perhaps *the* king to mention is Solomon, who is famous for his sense of justice and judgment: “Blessed be the Lord thy God, which delighted in thee, to set thee on the throne of Israel: because the Lord loved Israel for ever, therefore made he thee king, to do judgment and justice.”³²⁷

Latini, who believes that rule and rank on earth are given by God, states that government is founded on three pillars: justice, reverence and love: “Justice must be

³²¹ *ibid.*, p. 226

³²² Aşıkpaşaoğlu, *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osman*, p. 175

“Sultan Murad Han Gazi dahı Karamandan bir ahadun bir çöpin zulum ile aldırmađı ve almadı. Zira kim Âl-i Osmanun muradları ve âdetleri adl üzerinedür”

³²³ Togan; *Oğuz Destanı*, p. 74

³²⁴ Lewis, *The Political Language of Islam*, p. 107

³²⁵ *Bible*; 1 Chronicles, 18:14

³²⁶ *Quran*, 38:26

³²⁷ *Bible*; 1 Kings, 10:9

established so firmly in the heart of the ruler, that he gives to each his due, and does not incline either to the right or to the left”.³²⁸ Aegidius Romanus insists that the prince should be just, for the state cannot exist without justice.³²⁹ William of Pagula also talks about the favorable conditions justice would cause for both the king himself and his realm:

The justice of the king is the peace of his people, the defense of the fatherland, the immunity of the commoner, the defense of the nation, the care of the sick, the joy of all, the solace of paupers, the heredity of sons and the hope for the king’s own future happiness, and the war with vices, as Cyprian says. Likewise whoever does justice is loved by God, for which reason the Psalmist says: ‘The Lord loves who are just’ [Psalms 146:8]... for you will love God if you imitate Him in this so far as you will justice to be done to everyone and to injure no one, and then all who follow you will call you just; they will venerate and love you³³⁰

Erasmus takes the issue of being just to another extreme by advising the prince to “prefer to be a just man rather than an unjust prince”. He also suggests that the best kind of wisdom a prince could have is an “understanding of how to administer the state justly”.³³¹ In *Il Cortegiano*, after qualifying temperance as the cause of many other virtues, Signor Ottoviano goes on to explain the importance of justice:

And this is just as true of justice, the pure friend of modesty and goodness, and the queen of all virtues, because justice teaches us to do what should be done and to eschew what is wrong. Thus justice is wholly perfect, since the other virtues perform their work through her, and she benefits both the just man and others as well. And without justice, as it is said, Jove himself could not govern his kingdom well.³³²

Numerous references to justice in the chronicles leave no doubt as to the absolute necessity and expectance of a just ruler. Ottoman chronicles often compare the justness of their rulers with those grand figures of the past who were known for their just rule. For example, in *Selâtin-nâme* the chronicler Kemal praises Bayezid II for his just rule, saying he was so just that the fame of Anushirvan was forgotten. He also tells how the troubles of the people had been cleared and the realm flourished by such behavior.³³³

³²⁸ Nederman and Forhan (eds.), *Medieval Political Theory*, p. 73

³²⁹ Born; “The Perfect Prince”, p. 489

³³⁰ Nederman and Forhan (eds.), *Medieval Political Theory*, p. 201

³³¹ Erasmus, *The Education of a Christian Prince*, p. 20, 37

³³² Castiglione; *The Book of the Courtier*, p. 295-6

³³³ Kemal, *Selâtin-nâme*; p. 12

“Olalı ‘adli ol şâh-ı cihânun / Unudıldı adı Nûşirrevân’un / Cihanda ‘adli şu

Ahmedi says that the Ottomans were more just than even Ömer (the caliph renowned for his justice).³³⁴ Whether this is wishful thinking, simple praise for getting recognition or the truth itself cannot be said for sure but these verses suggest that being a just ruler was an important asset, taking into consideration that somebody felt the need to write down such comparisons. Ahmedi also praises Bayezid for his justice.³³⁵ Ahmedi's verses imply a tradition based on justice since Bayezid was just like his forbearers. Moreover, because justice reigned in the country, people of all standings could go on with their activities. Orhan was famous all around Anatolia for his justness.³³⁶ Aşıkpaşazade stresses the importance of justice not only in his narratives but also in additional verses.³³⁷ Bayezid was so just that he conquered many cities by voluntary submission, people were so tired of oppression that they willingly welcomed and obeyed him.³³⁸ According to Şükrullah, Bayezid had not only been just himself but had paid attention to how justice was administered around his realm. When he came back from Erzincan after the Taharten conflict, he gathered together all the judges and commanded an interrogation. Finding out that they were not doing their jobs accordingly, he ordered them to pay back any extra charges they have collected from the people. He discharged the worst ones from office. And when the people heard of his high sense of justice and reverence, they were willing to go about their business of cultivating the land happily. As a result of this mood, production improved almost ten

resme kılur han / Hiç azdırmazıdı insanı şeytan / Cihânı 'adlile ol kıldı ma'mûr /
Kamu gamdan bu halk olumuşıdı dûr”

³³⁴ Ahmedi; *Dastân ve Tevârih-i Mülûk-i Âl-i Osman*, p. 10

“Kanda kim Osmaniler adli ola / Orada adli Ömer nişe anıla?”

³³⁵ *ibid.*, p. 21, 22

“Ata, dede bigi âdil oldı ol / Dükeli işlerde kâmil oldı ol... Memleketde kıldı
gayet adl ü dâd / Halk ol adli çün andan buldılar / Ulu, kice işe meşgul oldılar”

³³⁶ Aşıkpaşaoğlu, *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osman*, p. 120

“Ve ol vilayetler cemi'I orhan Gazi'nin adlin işitmişler idi. Ve hem her vilayeti
kim aldılar, ana adl ü dâd etdiler. Alınmayan vilayetler dahı anlarun
neyledüklerini bilmişler idi”

³³⁷ *ibid.*, p. 140

“Velidür her ne han kim âdil olsa / Degül aybı cihan ana kul olsa / Süleyman adl
edüb dutdı cihani / Süleyman mislödür han âdil olsa”

³³⁸ Neşri; *Kitab-ı Cihan-nümâ*, p. 313

“Bu vilâyetleri Bayezid Han hep adlile müsahhar itdi. Evvelki beğleri halka
zulm iderlerdi. Çünkü Sultan Bayezid adl bisatını basit-i zemine bast itdi. Her
vilâyetin halkı karşu gelüb, istkbal idüb, itaat itdiler.”

fold.³³⁹ Going over the events in early sixteenth century, Çelebi Hadidi makes Bayezid's deathly rival announce his justness. The rulers of the other principalities go to Timur and complain of Bayezid, accusing him of disturbing their lands. However, Timur speaks in favor of the latter, saying that Bayezid is a just Muslim king and a *ghazi* so he would not disturb them for no reason. He tells them to wait until he has found out the situation.³⁴⁰ On the other hand, the account related in *Zafernama*, which was written for Timur himself, is not quite like those told by Çelebi Hadidi and Aşıkpaşazade.³⁴¹ In *Zafernama*, Bayezid is shown almost as an usurper who had gotten hold of the land of *Rûm*, which was one of the grandest lands on earth, due to a lack of worthy rulers.³⁴² On the other hand, Timur is depicted as a rightful ruler who had a larger claim in Anatolia than Bayezid.³⁴³ Most Ottoman chronicles villianate Timur, though, emphasizing his lack of justice and oppressive acts.³⁴⁴ Again we seem to be facing a justification problem. Expressing positive attributes through the enemy's words probably enhances the extent of the attribute and is perhaps considered more prestigious.

The ruler also takes care to demonstrate the fact that he is the dispenser of justice. Nizâm al-Mulk organizes the issue in strict terms. According to him, it is absolutely necessary for the king to have a court for the redressing of wrongs. The reason for these gatherings would be "to extract recompense from the oppressor, to give justice and to listen to the words of his subjects with his own ears, without any intermediary".³⁴⁵ According to Christine Pizan, a writer of a different century and culture, the ruler should not leave all things in the hands of his ministers and officials and should be

³³⁹ Şükrullah, *Behçetüttevarih*, p. 57

³⁴⁰ Çelebi Hadidi, *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osman*, p. 126

"Temür anlara didi Yıldırım Han / Şehi 'âdildürür gazi, müsilman / Abes irmez size anun ziyânı / Meger siz itmedüğünüz zindegâni / Hele turun ana kasıd salalum / Nicedür sözi peygamun alalım"

³⁴¹ For Aşıkpaşazade's version of the events which also has Timur justify Bayezid, see Aşıkpaşaoğlu, *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osman*, p. 143

³⁴² Nizamüddin Şâmi; *Zafernâme*, Necati Lugal (trans.) (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1997), p. 296

³⁴³ *ibid.*, p. 296

³⁴⁴ See, for example, Ahmedi, *Dastân ve Tevârih-i Mülûk-i Âl-i Osman*, p. 23

"Bu arada Rûma yürüdi Temür / Mülk doldı fitne vü havf u fütûr / Çün Temürün hiç adli yoğ idi / Lâcerem kim zulm ü cevri çoğ idi"

³⁴⁵ Nizam al-Mulk, *The Book of Government*, p. 13

available to his subjects to hear their pleas. He should not “fear nor despise the pitiful supplications of the people, but kindly condescend to their requests of mercy and justice.”³⁴⁶ The Egyptian chronicler Ibn Hajar has heard from one of Bayezid’s doctors that the sultan “would sit early in the morning on a broad eminence, with the people standing away from him at a distance where he could see them. If anyone had suffered on injustice, he would submit it to him, and he would remove it”.³⁴⁷

References to justice in the writings of the contemporaries also imply that being just served the ruler’s interest as well. Brunetto Latini in his *Book of Treasures*, while discussing rule and its foundation, quotes Solomon’s words “no evil will befall the just king”.³⁴⁸ Moreover, since the ruler is supposed to justify his actions in the other world, justice is important in getting rewarded in the other world.³⁴⁹

The ruler had to be just both because it was the right way to behave and because his subjects would thus become more devoted him. Mehmed I followed the footsteps of his forefathers and became known for his just attitude; all people living in the Ottoman realm were pleased with him.³⁵⁰ Even Dukas praised the sultan’s attitude. When he brought down the castle of the Knights of Rhodes, the master of the knights came to him in disappointment. He told the sultan that the castle had been built during the time of Aydınoğlu and financed by the inhabitants themselves. He asked the castle to be rebuilt. Mehmed listened to him peacefully and replied:

Dear father, it is my wish to be kind and generous to all Christians in the world. Kingship requires so, anyway. It is my duty to grant favors to good men and punish the evil and look after the interests of the subjects. When I first came here, I found many Muslims. They persuade me justly and wisely that even if Timur did nothing good in Asia, he destroyed the castle at Izmir.³⁵¹

³⁴⁶ Pizan, *The Book of Body Politic*, p. 18

³⁴⁷ Colin Imber, *The Ottoman Empire 1300-1650: The Structure of Power*, (Great Britain: Palgrave MacMillan, 2002), p. 155

³⁴⁸ Nederman and Forhan (eds.), *Medieval Political Theory*, p. 73

³⁴⁹ Aşıkpaşaoğlu, *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osman*, p. 234

“Ne han kim dünyadan adl ile gitdi / Ol ukbâda dahı bil tahta gitdi / Fenâ mülkinde sultan âdil oldı /Baka mülkine mahbub, pâk gitdi.”

³⁵⁰ Neşri; *Kitabı Cihan-nümâ*, p. 517

“... Sultan Mehmed Han serir-i saltanatta müstakil padişah oldu. Âbâ ü ecdâdının âdetini tagyir etmeyip, belki dahi ziyade etti. ‘Adl ü dâdı âlemi tutu. Tamam-ı mülk-i Osmanı kendinden hoşnud ve râzı etti.’”

³⁵¹ Dukas, *Bizans Tarihi*, p. 65

Making this explanation, he does not rebuild the castle, but shows the master a suitable place for a new one; thus satisfying everybody. When Suleyman Pasha, son of Orhan, went on to conquer Thrace, people heard of his justice, surrendered willfully and became Muslims.³⁵² Similar views regarding willful submission in the face of justice can be traced in European works, such as the comments of a Benedictine abbot, Engelbert of Admont (c.1250-1331). Talking about the rise of the Roman Empire, he underlines them importance of the capability of defense for the Romans and their just administration:

The Romans acquired new territories because they were better able to defend their peoples; those whom they conquered came to see that Roman rule (imperium) over them was tolerable, modest and fair. Thus the Roman Empire acquired other kingdoms and dominions through voluntary subjection... subjection by force became subjection by consent, so that they obeyed and were subjected no longer through coercion but voluntarily and they accepted of their own will the Roman laws which had been imposed of them. The Roman Empire was therefore just.³⁵³

A striking passage in Froissart's *Chronicles* demonstrates the belief in the ruler's role as dispenser of justice. Talking about the peasants revolt in England, Froissart – although in no way appreciates the revolt – quotes one of the leaders, John Bull who complains from injustice and encourages the people to go to the King for justice:

... We are called serfs and beaten if we are slow in our service to them, yet we have no sovereign lord we can complain to, none to hear us and do us justice. Let us go to the King – he is young – and show him how we are oppressed, and tell him that we want things to be changed, or else we will change them ourselves. If we go in good earnest and all together, very many people who are called serfs and are held in subjection will follow us to get their freedom. And when the King sees and hears us, he will remedy the evil, either willingly or otherwise.³⁵⁴

It would also be noteworthy to recall that one of the objections that were raised against Bayezid II and that forced him to abdicate was the fact that justice could not be administrated under an incapable ruler. Since Bayezid was not powerful anymore due to his illness and could not manage the business of the realm, the governors and other officials moved away from justice and thus the subjects were oppressed.³⁵⁵

³⁵² *Anonim Osmanlı Kroniği*, p. 19

“Ol vilayetlerde ne kadar kafir var ise Süleyman Paşa'nın adl ü dâdını görüp cemi' müslüman oldılar. İl gün hep ana tapdılar”

³⁵³ Black, *Political Thought in Europe*, p. 94

³⁵⁴ Froissart, *Chronicles*, p. 213

³⁵⁵ *Haniwaldanus Anonimi'ne Göre Sultan Bayezid-i Veli*, p. 60

In all contemporary accounts, justice as the antithesis of oppression – which shall be explored within the vices – stands out as the most important and vital virtue expected of a ruler. Of course, it is not the *only* virtue and we shall now take a look at other positive characteristics of an ideal late medieval ruler.

III.2. No Man is an Island: Consultation

No matter how “absolute” the authority of the king may seem, he is still a single man and can not be expected nor desired to take all the burden himself. In order govern well, the ruler also needs have worthy companions around him and he should consult them on important matters. The medieval European jurists advise the princes to have wise men and councilors around him. Aegidius Romanus, who firmly believes in the superiority of monarchy to all other forms of government, for example, stresses the obligation of the ruler to “associate with himself wise men... and virtuous men,” so that he would become “one man with many eyes, many hands and many feet”, based on an Aristotelian view.³⁵⁶ John of Salisbury, too, underlines the importance of having good advisors while including “acting on the counsel of wise men” as part of the duty of a ruler.³⁵⁷ But he does not neglect warning the ruler against evil councilors, for an evil advisor could make a tyrant out of a prince and the people would then be oppressed.³⁵⁸ For William Perrault, writing in the thirteenth century, the prince is always to be willing to ask for counsel and give council. He should also be able to choose his advisors well and evaluate the advice they offer.³⁵⁹ In a late twelfth century treatise on the laws and customs of the Kingdom of England, doubtfully attributed to Ranulf of Glanville, the chief judicial officer, it is stated that the king follows the laws of the kingdom which were established long time ago as well as receiving counsel from wise men. These men who advice the king in various matters are known for their “gravity of character, greatly skilled wisdom, and outstanding eloquence... in regard to the knowledge of the laws

³⁵⁶ Black, *Political Thought in Europe*, p. 159

³⁵⁷ Born, “The Perfect Prince”, p. 473

³⁵⁸ Nederman and Forhan (eds.), *Medieval Political Theory*, p. 27

³⁵⁹ Born, “The Perfect Prince”, p. 487

and customs of the kingdom".³⁶⁰ Christine Pizan, too, underlines the importance of consultation, stating that councilors should be selected from among the old, the most wise and experienced. Basing her argument on Aristotle, Pizan states that older men would be wiser since they have had many experiences and have been deceived often enough to be able to distinguish between right and wrong.³⁶¹ She also stresses the importance of employing the advice of the experts in each matter:

And on the subject of believing the wise and following their advice, [Aristotle's] great *Dialectic* says that one ought to believe each expert in his art. This means that the good prince ought to consult a variety of people according to the variety of things to do. For the governance of justice and the diverse important cases which he hears, he ought not to take advice from his soldiers nor his knights, but from jurists and clerks of this science. The same with warfare; not from clerks but from knights, and similarly in other matters.³⁶²

Likewise, much earlier, in his *Banquet* Dante also stresses on the importance of the counsel of wise men, claiming that old age is when men can provide the best counsel. He also discusses the attention due to the selection of councilors. However, the author does not seem to be pleased with the current situation:

Pay attention to what is by your side, you enemies of God who have seized the rods of the governments of Italy. I am speaking to you, Charles and Frederick, and to you other princes and tyrants! Beware who sits by your side and offers advice, and count how many times a day your counselors call your attention to this end of human life. Better would it be for you to fly low like a swallow than to soar aloft like a kite over things that are totally base.³⁶³

In *The History of the Kings of Britain*, we see that even Arthur, the legendary king of England, can not do without consulting. As soon as Arthur is crowned, he starts distributing gifts to his soldiers, as a demonstration of his generosity. However, he has so many followers that his wealth does not suffice. Thus he decides to fight the Saxons and use their wealth to distribute among his people. He pursues the Saxons till York and traps them within the city walls. But things do not turn out as he wishes and Saxons get support from Germany. At this point, Arthur's advisers persuade him to remove the siege because they would not be able to hold up to a large army. Arthur accepts their

³⁶⁰ Nederman and Forhan (eds.), *Medieval Political Theory*, pp. 61-2

³⁶¹ Pizan, *The Book of Body Politic*, p. 36

³⁶² *ibid.*, p. 39

³⁶³ Dante, *The Banquet*, Book 4, ch.6, Dante Online by Società Dantesca Italiana, <http://www.danteonline.it>

advice and withdraws in the tower of London. There he gathers the bishops and the clergy, asking them what he should do to be safe. They agree on requesting help from King Hoel of Brittany.³⁶⁴

An even more striking occasion for consultation appears when the Romans ask tribute from Arthur. This incident happening during the coronation festivities is perhaps one of the most characteristic sketches of Arthur's rule. It was the fourth day of the festivities and Arthur was already crowned. Everybody in the service of Arthur had been summoned together and was granted with offices. When Arthur was distributing grants to the clergy, arrived the Roman envoy. The letter they were responsible to read described Arthur's behavior as tyrannical, accusing him of giving damage to Rome. According to the letter, the entire world owed submission to the Senate and Arthur should have known this too well. He was required to show up in Rome and pay his respect as well as the tribute or else the Romans would invade his territory. Hearing these Arthur gathered his leaders "to consider what ought to be done in the face of such a message":

You who have been my companions in good times and in bad, you of whose fortitude both in giving advice and in waging war I have had ample proof in the past, give me now your closest attention, every one of you, and in your wisdom tell me what you consider we should do on receiving such a letter as this. Anything which has been planned with care by man in his wisdom is realized the more easily when the time for action comes.³⁶⁵

One by one those present express their agreement to resist Rome's request of tribute and their readiness to stand by Arthur. They also promised to provide as many men as were required of them as their feudal service.³⁶⁶ The passage concerning the feudal obligations also bring to mind the requirement of consultation, rather than being merely a favorable virtue on the part of the ruler. In a way, the ruler is obliged to take opinions for his power largely consists of the power of those bound to him by feudal obligations. Thus, one could say that if the feudal lords were not willing to fight, for instance, there would no possibility of success. Therefore, consultation emerges as a vital aspect of ruling.

³⁶⁴ Geoffrey of Monmouth, *History of the Kings of Britain*, p. 214

³⁶⁵ *ibid.*, p. 232-3

³⁶⁶ *ibid.*, p. 234

As far as Islamic practice is concerned, we see that consultation is already a firmly established aspect of the political culture. The ideas on consultation are generally based on Quranic verses and the Traditions of the Prophet:

Thus it is due to mercy from Allah that you deal with them gently, and had you been rough, hard hearted, they would certainly have dispersed from around you; pardon them therefore and ask pardon for them, and take counsel with them in the affair; so when you have decided, then place your trust in Allah; surely Allah loves those who trust.³⁶⁷ (3:159)

Nizâm al-Mulk reminds that everyone knows something better than others do therefore “holding consultation on affairs is a sign of sound judgment, high intelligence and foresight”. He tells about Muhammad consulting others in occasions and comes to the conclusion that if even the Prophet consulted then “nobody could do without it”. So the king needs to consult with “wise elders, loyal supporters and ministers of state” and they will say what they think. Thus the right path shall come up.³⁶⁸

We can find a direct reference to the Prophet’s practice in the Ottoman chronicler Neşri. Murad I calls his officials and notables for consultation on where to meet the enemy and how to fight. Although they respond by saying that their words would be worthless for the sultan knows best. But Murad insists on having their opinion reminding them that consultation is the tradition of the Prophet.³⁶⁹ When we think in terms of the advice of Nizâm al-Mulk, this passage seems to be exactly what he was talking about. The sultan is confronted with a difficult situation, so he calls the notables and asks for their opinions. He especially insists on hearing what one of them has to say because he happens to be the most experienced and knowledgeable person among the

³⁶⁷ *The Quran*, 3:159

³⁶⁸ Nizâm al-Mulk, *The Book of Government*, p. 91-2

³⁶⁹ Neşri; *Kitab-ı Cihan-nümâ*, p. 271

“Rivâyet olunur ki, Hunkâr dahi erkân-ı devleti ve a’yanı saltanat-ı bir yire cem’idüb müşavere kıldı. Evvel kimse dahi söz söylemedin, hacı Evronoz’a hitab idüb eytdi: ‘Evronoz bu kafirle nice buluşub, cenk itmek gerekdür? Asânı bu işün ne vechile olur?’ didi. Evrenoz Gazi dahi dua kılub, yir öpüb, eytdi: ‘Ey Hudavendigâr, ben kemine kulum. Benüm fikrim ve re’yüm ne ola! Süleyman yanında karıncanın ne fikri ola ve ne mikdarı ola ki söz söyleye! Leşker yasamak ve cenk ahvalin bilmek, Sultanum hakkında gelmişdür’ didi. Cümle Beğler dahi ana müsa’ade itdiler. Hunkâr eytdi: ‘Beğler, eğerçi Hak inâyetiyle çok çeri sıyub, cenk itdüm, ammâ, bu kalan cenk gibi değıldür. Müşaveret itmek sünnet-i Resuldur. İttifak idüb, gönül berkidüb, gönül berkidürmek vacibdür,’ dedi. Andan Evrenoza eytdi: ‘nice zamandır ki seni bu ucda koydum. Bunların âyinin, erkânın bildün ve tecrübe itdün. Senin fikrün kalanın fikri gibi değıldür’didi.”

group on this specific issue. At this point, one may also recall Pizan's advice on consulting experts of various issues. It is possible to get more clues from this passage. It tells us something about the relationship between the ruler and the notables. We sense a great degree of respect and obedience on the side of the notables. On the other hand, the sultan too shows respect to them. The words of Evrenozoğlu suggests the ruler's natural right to lead. Since the author states that he is about to transmit a tradition or rumor, we may assume that what we are about to read is not necessarily a fact. Even so, since it has been told for so long we may again assume that this is a narrative people like to believe in. At this point, perhaps it would be useful to move away from the chronicles for once and mention the role of the "house of Evrenoz" as a noble local dynasty referring to secondary literature. According to the findings of Vasilis Dimitriadis, the frontier lord Evrenoz fights together with the Ottoman troops but is largely independent in his actions. Not only Evrenoz, but also others like Turahan, Mihaloğlu and Malkoçoğlu would conquer places, pass them over to Ottoman administration and go on expanding the frontier. Dimitriadis notes the inscription of "*malikü'l-guzât ve l'mücahidin*" on the grave of Evrenoz and underlines the privileged status the family had under the Ottoman administration. Yenice region which he had chosen as his main base had been turned into a foundation in 1386 and had not been handed over to the Ministry of Foundations (*Evkaf Nezareti*) even in 1826. The author also stresses that although the Ottoman army was present during the siege of Thessalonica, the siege could only be undertaken with the support and efforts of Evrenoz's troops.³⁷⁰ If such is the case, then it might be suggested that consultation was something more than due courtesy and ancient wisdom in the Ottoman case as well. Considering the relationship between Murad I and Evrenoz, the feudal obligations mentioned above might have been valid for the early Ottomans as well.

It is possible to find reflections of the issue of consultation also in tribal Turkic life. As we are told by the *Oğuznâme*, learning that Oghuz started believing in a single God, his father Kara-Han gets furious, calls the rest of the family and after consultation they decide to kill Oghuz, though the attempt turns out contrary to their plans.³⁷¹ Oghuz,

³⁷⁰ Vassilis Demetriades, "Some Thoughts on the Origins of the Devşirme", in Elizabeth Zachariadou (ed.), *The Ottoman Emirate (1300-1389)* (Crete: Crete University Press, 1993) pp. 26-28

³⁷¹ Togan; *Oğuz Destanı*, p. 19
"Kengeş ederek Oğuz'u öldürmeye karar verdiler."

too, during his reign continues the practice of *kengeş* on many occasions. For instance, as they go on their grand conquering tour, they reach the border of the Land of Darkness and it is not possible to go any further because of the immense darkness. Oghuz consults his close companions and wise men.³⁷²

References to consultation (*meşveret*) are frequently seen in Ottoman chronicles as well. It appears to be the usual practice and those who neglect it are disapproved, as shall be seen with Bayezid I. However the custom of consultation does not mean that the sultan did not have the right to command. Before Kosovo, Murad I commands the *begs* to gather their soldiers and be ready to fight.³⁷³ Murad II decides to conquer Thessalonica and consults his notables, first by asking whether it is far away or not. Then he asks them how the city could best be taken. Evrenozoğlu Ali Beg suggests plunder because it was not an easy castle to take. The Sultan agrees.³⁷⁴ The Evrenozoğlu reference at this point might be interesting to note. We have seen that four generations earlier, Murad I had valued the opinion of another Evrenozoğlu on a frontier issue. It seems that there is not only some sort of hereditary nobility during the earlier periods of the Ottoman state, but a specialized one.

In *Murad-nâme*, the “mirror” written for Murad II, the vitality of consultation for the ruler is stressed in various parts of the work. The author reminds the sultan that whoever becomes ruler of the people should keep together with wise men and consult with them, mentioning the relevant verse of the Quran [3:159].³⁷⁵ Then he goes on with the “success story” of Anushirvan, who when asked why nobody opposes him, lists consultation among the reasons.³⁷⁶ The author also relates an anecdote about the Prophet being asked why fortune turned away from the Sasanids after they were able to rule so long. Among the reasons was their negligence of consultation.³⁷⁷ Towards the

³⁷² *ibid.*, p. 26

“Oğuz Qara-Hulun sınırına, yani Karanlık ülkesine vardığında karanlık dolayısıyla orada gitmek mümkün olmadı. Oğuz yakınları (maqarrebân) ve akli erenlerle kengeş yapıp danıştı.”

³⁷³ Aşıkpaşaoğlu, *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osman*, p. 133

“Murad Han Gazi emr etdi kim cemi’ vilâyetün begleri eyü leşker cem edeler. Ve hazır olalar. Geleler.”

³⁷⁴ *ibid.*, p. 173

³⁷⁵ *Bedr-i Dilşad’ın Murâd-nâmesi*, p. 221

³⁷⁶ *ibid.*, p. 223

³⁷⁷ *ibid.*, p. 226 “Akıl tanışığını unuttular”

end of his book, the author relates advices attributed to Anushirvan, the legendary Sasanid king who was generally taken to be a stereotype of ideal kingship. One of these advices is again on consultation; as if to make sure that the sultan will not act on his own, but consult so that he will not be reproached later.³⁷⁸

Murad II seems to have taken these advices seriously. An interesting anecdote concerning the issue in the *Gazavâtname* is between Murad II and Turahan on battlefield. Although the Ottomans seemed to be winning, Turahan kept saying that they were going to be defeated and wanted to call the soldiers back. The sultan was not convinced of Turahan's words, however he insisted so much that Murad II found himself agreeing in fear of seeming like not caring for the opinions of elder wise men.³⁷⁹ Although this proved to be the wrong decision, Murad was not accused of going his own mind as was Bayezid before him. According to an anonymous chronicle, Bayezid had not consulted his notables before marching to Ankara to meet Timur. He did not listen to the advice of anyone. If he had listened to what they have said, such misfortune would not happen.³⁸⁰ Interestingly however, in the *Selâtin-nâme*, a chronicle written for Bayezid II, the occasion has been reflected in the opposite manner. According the chronicler Kemal, who hopes to gain recognition from the sultan as we understand from the praises he has written for the sultan and high-ranking officials, Bayezid I had actually consulted his *begs* before deciding to fight Timur. Once he heard of Timur's approach into *Rûm*, burning and destroying the countryside, he had gathered them together and asked their opinion regarding whether to react or let things be. Although asking for their opinions on what measures to take, Bayezid did not neglect

³⁷⁸ *ibid.*, p. 1000 "Meşveretsiz iş itmeyesin / ki sonra 'itâbın işitmeyesin"

³⁷⁹ *Gazavât-ı Sultan Murad b. Mehemed Han*, p. 24-5

"...Baka Pâdişâhım, senün beğlerün ve kulların arasında benden yaşlı bir kimesne yokdur, meğer kim Anadolu kullarında ola. Ammâ anlar dahi bu düşmanın kallâşlığın ve hilekârlığın bilmezler. Pâdişâhım ummakla menzil alınmaz, te'eni hilmle âkillerindir, gazab ta'cil ile cahillerindir. Bunun akıbetini düşün Padişâhım, bu işden sen zarar görürsün. Belki bu pirin sözleri sana tiryâk-i ekber ola deyüb çok söz söyledi. Ammâ Pâdişâh bilür idi kim, küffâr-ı hâkisârın davranmağa mecâli olmadığını, ammâ tefekkür eyledi ve dedi kim bu iş benim dediğim gibi olursa ne güzel, ammâ aksi zuhur edecek olursa Pâdişâh söz tutmaz derler. Hemân olası budur ki, askerimizi geri çekelim."

³⁸⁰ *Anonim Osmanlı Kroniği*, p. 46,48

"Kendi kendüye mağrur olup yürüdi ve kimseyle tanışmadı. Kendi başına birlik iderdi, kimseyle meşveret etmezdi." / "Eğer Yıldırım söz tutaydı başına bu hal gelmezdi. Ve hem biz dahi dutsak olmazduk soyulmazduk."

telling them how great an enemy Timur was and how he has destroyed the area. The officials, on the other hand, told him to open up the treasury and use it to pull together a huge army. They also told him that if he did so, he would not need to worry. The author also notes that although the officials express their opinions, it is for the sultan to decide for better or worse. At the end the sultan listened to their advice and decided to fight.³⁸¹ The chronicler puts the blame of the defeat not on the headstrong character of Bayezid, but on the treachery of his troops. The two chronicles were both written during the reign of Bayezid II and the contradiction seems to suggest that discussions were still current on whether the defeat of Bayezid I in Ankara was his fault or not. When we take into consideration the sided stance of *Selâtin-nâme* and the relatively liberal stance of the anonymous chronicle, the former seems to find excuses for Bayezid I's actions. Although the two accounts relate contradictory versions of the occasion regarding the issue of consultation, they both seem to confirm the importance attached to consultation.

A different version of the events between Bayezid and Timur can be found in the *Zâfernâme*, written by Nizamüddin Şâmi in 1402 on the order of Timur himself, thus another relatively sided source. In this work, which reflects Bayezid as a ruler with a much lower status than Timur, the initial conflict between the two rulers rises up because of Bayezid's protection of Kara Yusuf, who has revolted against Timur. As Timur decides attacking Rûm to put an end to this state of events, the people of Rûm see the size and power of Timur's army and try to lead Bayezid towards peace through the advices of well-wishing (*hayırhah*) advisors. Bayezid was told that resisting such a great lord would not be a good thing and it would be more appropriate to agree and make peace. According to the chronicle, Bayezid listened to their words and sent an envoy to Timur to settle the affair.³⁸² In this instance, the anecdote about Bayezid's consultation with his officials resembles some kind of justification and glorification of Timur.

Consultation seems to be so important that it is presented as solving every problem and without it what is done is of no use.³⁸³ However, the writer of these verses

³⁸¹ Kemal, *Selâtin-nâme*, pp. 98-9

³⁸² Nizamüddin Şâmi; *Zâfernâme*, p. 297

³⁸³ *Anonim Osmanlı Kroniği*, p. 46

“Meşveretsüz işini iş sanmagıl / Kendi râyınla işe el sunmagıl / Meşveretten

had probably never heard of the conversation between Murad II and Turahan. Otherwise he would have known that at least Murad II did regret taking advice from Turahan. At this point, whose advice to take and whom to consult becomes an important issue. Chronicles again provide examples regarding the fate of those who have evil counselors. The Byzantine chronicler Dukas, although seems to be fond of Murad II and describes him as a good man, puts the blame of his attacks on the Christians on his wazir Fazlullah. “The merciless enemy of the Christians, a man who was capable of any evil” had provoked the sultan saying:

Why do you not destroy the enemies of religion completely? God has granted you such great lordship, and you treat it with contempt not acting according to God’s will. You treat these infidels humanely and gently. Your behavior is not proper. God will not like it. You should destroy the bodies of these infidels with your sword until they accept the commandments of the only God and His Prophet.³⁸⁴

Thus, this “evil counselor” had proposed that they take the castle of Smedrovo, and use it to pass on to Hungary. By taking Hungarian lands, they would have taken over the possession of rich gold and silver mines. After occupying Hungary, they would then pass on to Italy and win over the “enemies of our religion”. Based on these words Dukas blames the wazir, for “Murad, because he was a naïve and good man without any treachery in his heart, took the words of this devil seriously and demanded the castle of Smederevo from the Serbian despot, who was at the same time his father-in-law. This evil advice was the cause of Murad II’s Serbian campaign, according to Dukas.³⁸⁵ Aşıkpaşade and Neşri, on the other hand, do not mention any “ill-advice” from the wazir for this specific instance, but tell that Murad II had asked who knew the roads of Hungary best. Listening to Ali Beg [Evrenozoğlu] he decided to let him go.³⁸⁶

Evil advisors show up in European chronicles as well. Froissart, for example, puts the blame of Edward II’s bad government on his advisor Sir Hugh Despenser, whose only ambition was magnifying himself:

This King Edward II governed his kingdom so badly and did such foolish things in the country because he was advised by an evil counselor called Sir Hugh

kimse hüsrân bulmadı / Meşveret iden pişman olmadı / Meşveretle hâsıl olur her ümid / Meşveretdür bağı işlere kilid”

³⁸⁴ Dukas, *Bizans Tarihi*, p. 126

³⁸⁵ *ibid.*, p. 126

³⁸⁶ Aşıkpaşaoğlu, *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osman*, p. 176 and Neşri, *Kitab-ı Cihan-nümâ*, p. 621

Dispenser, who had been brought up with him from youth. Sir Hugh had managed things so well that he and his father, of the same name, had become the richest barons in England and were always the chief masters of the King's council, ambitious to overtop the other great barons of the realm. This had disastrous consequences for themselves and the country.³⁸⁷

Perhaps the most famous example of a king with evil advisors appears to be Richard II of Britain. Froissart relates us how the uncles of the king, some dukes and earls, together with the archbishop of Canterbury, criticized Richard II for being a puppet at the hand of his companion, the Duke of Ireland. The Duke had started to do whatever he wished with the kingdom and the king would not resist. They were also worried because, "the king listens only to bad people, of mean birth in comparison with princes". They claim that a kingdom can not be ruled by and under the influence of bad and unworthy people:

It always happens that, when a poor man rises in the world and is honored by his master, he becomes corrupt and ruins the people and the country. A base man has no idea of what honor means, but wants to grab everything and gobble it up, just like an otter in a pond destroying all the fish it finds there. What good can become of this intimacy between the Duke of Ireland and the King? We know his ancestry and where he came from and we fear that England will be entirely ruled by him, and the King's uncles and blood relations left aside. That is not a thing to be tolerated.³⁸⁸

Although Froissart makes it seem as if the matter was one of low birth, the issue lies with the respectability of the family's reputation. From the next few lines, we can understand that the Duke was the son of the earl of Oxford, however the father was not known for his wisdom, honor or sound judgment either. Thus, added up the deeds and character of the Duke, he is not found suitable for a counselor.³⁸⁹

Military notables are not the only ones whom the ruler applies for opinion. Consulting men of religion is also required at times. We have already seen examples of this when fighting the Karamanids was concerned, for instance. In an anonymous chronicle, the time of Mehmed I is praised because the sultans used to consult.³⁹⁰ Before his death Osman had given advice to his son on this matter, telling his son and heir not

³⁸⁷ Froissart, *Chronicles*, p. 40

³⁸⁸ *ibid.*, p. 316

³⁸⁹ *ibid.*, p. 316

³⁹⁰ Neşri; *Kitab-ı Cihan-nümâ*, p. 165

"Ol zamanın padişahları şöyle müsülman idi kim şuncılayın fesâd idüb asi olanları öldürmek câiz mi diyü sual iderler idi."

to do anything which God forbids and if he is not sure about God's commands regarding a certain issue to ask counsel from those who know.³⁹¹

Based upon the given examples and views, we may gather that consultation was one of the foremost obligations and modes of behavior expected from a ruler. Since the world we are talking about is mainly a feudal one, though the extent and mode of feudalism may differ, the ruler has to depend on the loyalty of the other/lesser power holders. Looking at it from this point of view, he has to have their approval before taking action or else he may find out that he is totally left alone. Besides sharing the burden of hard decisions awaiting the ruler, consultation also seems to have helped legitimating the decisions. Even if the ruler had his mind set on some action, by consulting and asking for opinions he was definitely being "politically correct".

III.3. Actions Speak Louder Than Words: What Else To Do?

According to what we have seen so far, a just ruler with military prowess, surrounded by wise and good-willed counselors had a pretty good chance, with the grace of God, of maintaining his power. If there had been institutes setting up the minimum standards for kingship, such a ruler would probably have passed the test. However, additional qualities were naturally required for such a ruler to stand out among similar rulers as well as for glory both in this world and the next. These additional qualities, or virtues as they may be called, also assured the support of his officials, army and subjects.

Osman had given his son Orhan a very precious advice. He had told his son to please those who were obedient to him and favor his followers (*nöker*).³⁹² Starting with Osman we see constant references to rulers granting favors to those who fight with

³⁹¹ Aşıkpaşaoğlu, *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osman*, p. 112

"Ve kimse kim sana Tanrı buyurmadığı sözi söylese sen anı kabul etme. Ve ger bilmezsen Tanrı ilmi bilene sor."

³⁹² *ibid.*, p. 112

"Ve dahı sana muti olanları hoş dut. Ve bir dahı nökerlerine dâyım ihsân et kim senün ihsânun anun halınun duzağıdır."

him.³⁹³ Ahmedi's verses reflect a ruler who carries those around him to prosperity.³⁹⁴ As the supporters of such a ruler get certain advantages and grow to be stronger, this creates an incentive for yet others to join the ruler in his enterprise. We might call this a process of redistribution of wealth perhaps. The notion becomes clearer in the case of Murad I marrying his son Bayezid to the daughter of Germiyanoglu. During the wedding other lords and his own notables bring gifts. Murad does not take anything for himself, but distributes them among his men and people.³⁹⁵ An opposite example can be found in Neşri's account of Musa when he claims the lands of his brother Suleyman. Let alone grant favors to the *begs*, he starts taking their possessions away. On seeing this they change sides and go to join Mehmed.³⁹⁶ We see that the chronicles do not approve those who keep the riches to themselves instead of distributing.³⁹⁷ It seems that Bayezid was very much criticized for this, as Aşıkpaşazade clearly demonstrates in his answer to the question of what happens to the rulers who accumulate riches. According to him, Bayezid had accumulated riches and kept them to himself. However, Timur took it all at the end and the realm had suffered thereby. The author reminds that wealth

³⁹³ *ibid.*, p. 97

“Ahır kalayı yağma etdi. Feth olındı. Tekvürini dahi dutdı. Gazileri dahı doyum etdi. Şehrinün evlerini gazilere ve gayrıya verdi.”

³⁹⁴ Ahmedi; *Dastân ve Tevârih-i Mülûk-i Âl-i Osman*, p. 14

“Padişaha şöyle gerekdür nazar / Kim katında ola beraber hâk ü zer / Şahda gerek ki ola yümn-i hümây / Bay ola ererse ona bir gedây”

³⁹⁵ Aşıkpaşaoğlu, *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osman*, p. 130

“Evrenüz Begün getürdigi kuli, karavaşı bu etraftan gelen elçilere üleşdürdi. Ve ol atlar kim etrafun elçileri getürdiler idi, cemi'sin Evrenüze verdi. Ve ol filöriden bazısın gerü Evrenüze verdi. Ve bâkisini ulemâyâ ve fukarâyâ üleşdürdi. Ve kendüye hiç nesne almadı. Ve niçeler müflis geldiler. Gani gittiler.”

³⁹⁶ Mehmed Neşri; *Kitabı Cihan-nümâ*, p. 489

“... Rumeli beylerinden be-nâm be-nâm maldâr beyleri tutup helâk edip, malını almağa başladı. Hattâ Divanda otururken maldâr Beylerden Paşalardan kimesne görse, ‘Şol arada filori kokar’ deyip, öldürüp malını alırdı... İbrahim Paşa dahi cemi' Beylerle danışıp, ‘Bu kişinin bed-hâli var, giderek cemi'mizi öldürüp malımızı alır. Sultani davet etmek evlâdır.’ deyicek, cemi' Beyler bu fikri savap görüp, ol umuru İbrahim paşaya ısmarladılar. Andan İbrahim Paşa, dahi İstanbul'a vardığı gibi, fi'l-hal Sultana haber gönderip, Musa Çelebi'nin ef'âl-i şeni'asını ilâm edip, ve Beylerin andan nefret ettiğini bildirdi.”

³⁹⁷ *Anonim Osmanlı Kroniği*, p. 31

“Ol zaman padişahları tama'kar değüllerdi. Her ne ellerine gelürse yiğide ve yegile virürler idi. Hazine nedir bilmezler idi.”

should be spent on good deeds and that the friends of the sultan are only those who are satisfied.³⁹⁸

In *Muradname*, the sultan is recommended to grant favors to those who participate in wars, so that they will volunteer for going to war.³⁹⁹ Moreover, the sultan is warned against the fact that if he kept bread from the soldiers, they in return would keep their lives.⁴⁰⁰ The theme of “eating the sultan’s bread” comes up frequently in the chronicles. Dukas, though not an Ottoman, is aware of the allegory when he relates Mehmed I’s last will to his wazir Bayezid: “Mehmed, as he told these to Bayezid, commanded him to realize his wishes for the sake of God and the Prophet and for the sake of the bread and salt he provided him.”⁴⁰¹ Dukas has observed the relation between the sultan and his men quite well and reflects the vitality of such generosity to obtain and maintain the loyalty of the army:

He converted them into Islam and after circumcising them he placed them in his household. The sultan bestowed on them many presents and high ranking offices and equipment as well as other grants. He would admit them to his table and eat with them; for them would nourish the affection of a father to his child. To whom were such grants were being made? To shepherds, to the sons of farmers and horse breeders. And in return for all this kindness they sacrificed their lives for the sultan, or more accurately they ended up victorious in the battles by demonstrating extraordinary strength and bravery in order not to lose these blessings.⁴⁰²

A conversation between the Duke of Savoy and an Ottoman official in the 1480’s demonstrates the concept of “eating the sultan’s bread”, in other words earning one’s living from the sultan. The Duke asks the official his status and whether he is a *kul*. To the duke’s question on whether Turks can be *kul* or not, the official answers: “I am the son of a *kul*; I eat the Sultan’s bread and so count as his *kul*”.⁴⁰³ Giving this allegorical

³⁹⁸ Aşıkpaşaoğlu, *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osman*, p. 233

“Merhum Yıldırım Hünkâr mal cem’ etdi. Tedbir-i memleket kıldı. Akçalar cem’ idüb hazinelere koyalar, memleket kesadlık oldu. Âhır ol malı Temür-i bedbaht yedi. Vilâyet ayak altında kaldı... İmdi azizler! Mal oldur kim hayra sarf ola. Padişahların dostu oldur kim karnı dok ola ve galaba ola. Kendü açlığı kayusu olmaya.”

³⁹⁹ *Bedr-i Dilşad’ın Murâd-nâmesi*, p. 284

⁴⁰⁰ *ibid.*, p. 287

“İder isen olardan eger nân dirîğ / Olar dahı senden ider can dirîğ”

⁴⁰¹ Dukas; *Bizans Tarihi*, p. 77

⁴⁰² *ibid.*, p. 83

⁴⁰³ Metin Kunt, *The Sultan’s Servants* (New York: 1983), p. 41

meaning material shape also through occasional feasts again seems to confirm mutually the silent contract between the sultan and his men. Refusing to eat what the ruler served could imply a dislike towards the ruler, a great offence or even an uprising.

Geoffrey of Monmouth relates the coronation feast of Arthur. Arthur had invited all the princes and notables who owed him homage using the approaching Whitsunday as a reason to celebrate. The purpose of Arthur in organizing such a feast was actually renewing and confirming the ties with these nobles.⁴⁰⁴ The author then goes on to list the names of the princes and lords who came to this feast. He claims there was “no prince of any distinction this side of Spain who did not come when he received his invitation.” Geoffrey finds nothing remarkable in this enthusiasm the princes showed towards Arthur’s invitation because “Arthur’s generosity was known throughout the whole world and this made all men love him”.⁴⁰⁵ Unfortunately, King Richard II of England was not so lucky and wise as Arthur had been. He had committed so many wrongs that show of generosity through a grand banquet could not help him save face. Almost nobody had showed up for the feast he organized.⁴⁰⁶ The symbolic value of the feast reflecting the confirmation of mutual loyalty and bond taken into consideration, the case of Richard II seems to display the point.

The issue of “redistribution” may be seen in the light of the ruler being “paterfamilias” of the state, a notion that can be found in both eastern and western traditions.⁴⁰⁷ However, the most down to earth comments again come from Machiavelli. He makes it clear that a prince who goes to war with his soldiers and who levies tribute on others has to behave generously or else his soldiers will not follow him.⁴⁰⁸ He thinks that the rulers of the time please their people the most since the people have gained power. However he makes exceptions of the Turkish and Egyptian sultans because:

The Sultan of Turkey is an exception because he always keeps twelve thousand foot-soldiers and fifteen thousand cavalry in his service near him, and the security and strength of his Kingdom depends on these forces. Hence, he must keep these forces friendly and pay more regard to them than to others.⁴⁰⁹

⁴⁰⁴ Geoffrey of Monmouth, *History of the Kings of Britain*, p. 226

⁴⁰⁵ *ibid.*, p. 228

⁴⁰⁶ Froissart, *Chronicles*, p. 440

⁴⁰⁷ Nizâm al-Mulk, *The Book of Government*, p. 119 and Erasmus, *The Education of a Christian Prince*, p. 17

⁴⁰⁸ Machiavelli, *The Prince*, p. 57

⁴⁰⁹ *ibid.*, p. 71

The notion of redistribution also translates into various charitable activities and public improvement (*imar*) activities. Such activities help promote the image of the ruler as a generous one, as well as enhance the prosperity of the community. According to Dante, the monarch is the man who possesses the virtue of charity:

Moreover, just as greed, however slight, dulls the habit of justice in some way, so charity or rightly ordered love makes it sharper and brighter. So the man in whom rightly ordered love can be strongest is the one in whom justice can have its principal abode; the monarch is such a man; therefore justice is or can be at its strongest when he exists.⁴¹⁰

Brunetto Latini, too, stresses the ruler's obligation to take care of widows and orphans, to maintain the works and buildings of the community and to make arrangements for highways, bridges, gates, walls and so forth.⁴¹¹ An anonymous mirror written in early fourteenth century recommends the ruler to help widows, to visit monasteries, to give alms to the poor and to provide dowries for poor girls. Generosity as a necessary virtue probably finds its clearest expression in the words of Giles of Rome, when he discusses how kings should treat their subjects to be loved by them: "They ought to be generous and liberal, because the common people, who know nothing about them except that they have a great deal of money, love and revere those who are generous and spend a lot, and who willingly give what is theirs."⁴¹² Ptolemy of Luca, for example, stresses the importance of such activities, regardless of the political structure or religious orientation of government:

It is opportune for kings and any state (dominium) to provide for the poor out of the common treasury of the republic or king. So it is that, in particular provinces, city-states and boroughs, hospitals have been established by the kings or citizens in order to relieve the need of the poor. This is found not only among believers but among unbelievers.⁴¹³

Dukas, who is not an Ottoman and who does not refrain from expressing harshly his hatred of Mehmed II, nevertheless speaks very favorably about Murad II, the former's father. The author's tone seems to be moved by the kind character of Murad II: "God knows, Murad was always kind to the people and generous towards the poor. And

⁴¹⁰ Dante, *Monarchia*, book 1, ch.11, Dante Online by Società Dantesca Italiana , <http://www.danteonline.it>

⁴¹¹ Nederman and Forhan, *Medieval Political Theory*, p. 92

⁴¹² *ibid.*, p. 151

⁴¹³ Black, *Political Thought in Europe*, p. 26

this attitude of his was not only directed to those of his race and religion, but to the Christians as well.”⁴¹⁴

In *Muradnâme*, three things were recommended by the wise men of the past to the rulers who are to be Alexanders and Solomons. Two of these recommendations have to do with the suggestions of Ptolemy de Luca. One is to make public improvements on one’s land and the other is to show compassion to the poor.⁴¹⁵

Architectural activities aimed at the revival of the prosperity of a certain city or area are also expected from the ruler. Nizâm al-Mulk lists some architectural activities the ruler should be involved with based on the argument that such improvements shall advance civilization. Among such activities are: construction of underground channels, digging main canals, building bridges, rehabilitating villages and farms, raising fortifications, building new towns, erecting lofty buildings and magnificent dwellings, having inns on highways and schools built.⁴¹⁶ King Arthur, when he moves to York, seeing the place devastated by the pagans feels very sorry to find the churches in poor condition. He orders the churches to be rebuilt.⁴¹⁷

Aşıkpaşazade gives a whole list of the charitable deeds of the Ottoman rulers until Mehmed II under the title of virtues. Among these we can see building activities such as mosques, public kitchens, schools, various religious complexes (such as *zaviyes*) and hospitals. Through this list we can also observe numerous pious deeds such as giving alms and clothing to the poor and needy, supporting widows, allocating certain amounts of money to be sent to the holy cities.⁴¹⁸ Şükrullah praises Murad I for being a friend of the poor along with the qualities of justice and bravery.⁴¹⁹

Murad II’s example when he decides to take care of the troublesome area of Ergene perhaps summarizes the whole issue. This place had been forest area which was not properly looked after. Therefore it had become a nest of evil. Thus he ordered for a

⁴¹⁴ Dukas, *Bizans Tarihi*, p. 139

⁴¹⁵ *Bedr-i Dilşad’ın Murâd-nâmesi*, p. 224-5

“Rivâyetdür ehl-i ‘akıldan bize / Hikâyet iderem nakıldan size / Ki vâcibdür üç nesne sultanlara / Sikenderler’e ve hem Süleymanlar’a / Biri ol ki milkin ‘imâret ide / Dilerse ki hayli imâret ide / İkinci bu yoksul hakına katı / Gerekdür ki ola anun şefkatı”

⁴¹⁶ Nizâm al-Mulk, *The Book of Government*, p. 10

⁴¹⁷ Geoffrey of Monmouth, *History of the Kings of Britain*, p. 221

⁴¹⁸ Aşıkpaşaoğlu, *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osman*, p. 230-3

⁴¹⁹ Şükrullah, *Behçetüttevarih*, p. 55

bridge and a public kitchen to be built. In a short while a whole city had been established there, with unrest replaced by peace and order.⁴²⁰ This passage confirms the image of a ruler who is concerned about the security and welfare of his people, who strives to bring them prosperity and order, who is pious at the same time.

Mercy to some extent seems favorable on the part of the ruler. Thomas Occleve reminds, “power without mercy is tyranny”.⁴²¹ In the *Chronicle of the Hungarians* we are told about mercy through the words of Voivode Stephen, governor of Moldavia, who had resisted King Sigismund at some point. When Stephen realized that he had no other way out of the difficult situation he found himself in, but to ask for pardon, he approached the king and begged to be forgiven: “For an act of mercy towards those who are here prostrate, rather than the crushing of brazen disobedience, brings just as much glory to the royal office you hold.” The king forgave them although their crime deserved punishment, because he did not want his “good name to be smirched by an accusation of excessive harshness”.⁴²² Another example comes from Froissart. After the tough siege of Calais, the town finally surrenders agreeing to send six citizens as prisoners to King Edward III to do as he likes with them. The king was quite upset with the people of Calais because of the difficulty they had caused him, so he was determined to kill the six prisoners for revenge. English nobles and knights who were present were so moved by the honorable self-sacrifice of the six burghers that they begged the king to have mercy on them. Sir Wallace’s words reflect the “merciful image” attributed to a ruler:

Noble sire, curb your anger. You have a reputation for royal clemency. Do not perform an act which might tarnish it and allow you to be spoken of dishonorably.

⁴²⁰ Aşıkpaşaoğlu, *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osman*, p. 171

“Bu Ergene köprisinün yeri evvel ormanlığ idi. Çamur ve çökel idi. Ve haramılar durağıyidi. Hiç vakit olmayayidi kim anda haramı adam öldürmeyeyidi. Sultan Murad Han Gazi hazine ve meblağlar harc etdi. Ol ormanları kırdurdi. Pâk etdürdi. Ol arada bir âli binâ bile köpri yapırdı. Köprinün iki başını ma’mur etdi. Şehir etdi. İmâret, Cuma mescidi yapıdı. Hamam ve bazarlar yapıdı. Gelen giden müsâfirlere ziyâfetler ederler, nimetler bişürürler. Ve ol vaktün kim imâretin kapusu açıldı, Sutan Murad kendüsi Edreneden ulemâyı ve fukârayı aldı. Ol imârete vardı. Bir niçe gün ziyâfetler etdi. Akçalar ve filöriler üleşdürdi. Evvel ta’am bişdügi gün kendisi mubârek eliyilen fukarâya verdi. Ve çırağın dahı kendü uyardı. Ve yapan mi’mara hil’at geyürdi. Çiftlik yerleri verdi. Ol şehrinün halkını cemi’ avârızdan mu’af ve müselleme etdi.”

⁴²¹ Born, “The Perfect Prince”, p. 500

⁴²² Thuroczy, *Chronicle of the Hungarians*, p. 46

If you do not spare those men, the world will say that it was a cruel deed and that it was too harsh of you to put to death these honorable citizens who have voluntarily thrown themselves on your mercy to save others.⁴²³

A striking anecdote about mercy – or forgiving as the concept appears in many cases – is found in the Saljuqid history. As the story goes, Alp Arslan had captured the Byzantine emperor [Caesar] and had treated him quite well. After a banquet, Alp Arslan asked the captive ruler what he would do if the situation was reversed. The emperor, who had drunken too much wine, answered that he would have him killed. Alp Arslan then asked the Caesar what he thought the sultan himself would do. His prisoner guessed he would either kill him or parade him around the lands of Islam. However, nothing changed for some time, the emperor was neither killed nor humiliated. Finally, one day when he was again drunk the Caesar said to Alp Arslan: “If you are a ruler, forgive me. If you are a butcher, kill me. If you are a merchant, sell me”. As one would presume, Alp Arslan chose to demonstrate that he was indeed a ruler by sending the emperor back to his country loaded with gifts, though not neglecting to secure the promise of tribute and release of Muslim prisoners in the Byzantine empire.⁴²⁴

The theme of mercy often appears in Ottoman chronicles in the instances involving the Karamanids. Each time the Karamanids attack Ottoman lands when the latter is somewhere else fighting, they are forgiven in the end; almost reminding a naughty child tolerated by his elders. Relating one of these instances, Oruc Beg describes the Ottoman dynasty as a strong and kind family, justifying his argument by the mercy Mehmed I had shown the Karamanids even after they had burned down a great town like Bursa.⁴²⁵

Faith is another praised virtue in late medieval rulers. Giraldus Cambresis stresses the need for the prince to be devoted to religion in order to be good. He also refers to adhering to the teachings of Christian faith, which he finds similar to the laws of the Roman Empire. He believes that the main aim of a good ruler should be to please God and that in this mission he shall be greatly rewarded for his “efforts to save his fellowmen by word and deed.”⁴²⁶ Nizâm al-Mulk, too, asserts that the ruler has to have sound faith and has to obey the commands of God. He argues that religion and kingship

⁴²³ Froissart, *Chronicles*, p. 109

⁴²⁴ *The history of the Seljuq Turks from the Jami al-tawarikh*, p. 51-2

⁴²⁵ Oruç Beğ; *Oruç Beğ Tarihi*, p. 73

⁴²⁶ Born, “The Perfect Prince”, p. 477

are like two brothers because when the order of the country is disturbed, religion also suffers. Likewise, when there is a disorder in religious affairs, the country is thrown into confusion. His suggestion for preserving this balance is the sound faith of the ruler and his being knowledgeable in the affairs of religion so that he will be able to distinguish between the right path and heresy.⁴²⁷

The Ottoman rulers are generally praised for being devoted to their religion. Neşri starts praising from Ertuğrul Ghazi on, telling that he was a man known for his piety and his devotion to faith and religion.⁴²⁸ Ahmedi, for example, relates how Bayezid I had withdrawn himself from worldly affairs and prayed day and night. Due to the piety of the sultan, nobody had dared drinking wine or listening to entertaining music, acts the author obviously disapproves.⁴²⁹ Dukas confirms the piety of Bayezid I while describing the sultan's devotion to his faith, although such faith seems to be disadvantageous for the Christians:

There was none among his ancestors who was felt so hostile towards the Christians. He was among the most beloved followers of Muhammed in the religion of the Arabs and he strictly applied the commands of the prophet's religion. He would spend many sleepless nights planning mischief aimed at the Christians and to take measures.⁴³⁰

These virtuous acts are required of the ruler for the prosperity and well-being of the society, as well as his personal glory both in this world and the next. While Thomas Aquinas reminds his readers that “the reward of a good prince will not only be of this world, but will be in Heaven”⁴³¹, Nizâm al-Mulk asserts that the ruler shall be renowned forever for the good deeds he has left behind and “he will gather the fruit of his good works in the next world and blessings will be showered upon him.”⁴³²

⁴²⁷ Nizâm al-Mulk, *The Book of Government*, p. 60

⁴²⁸ Neşri, *Kitab-ı Cihan-nümâ*, p. 73

⁴²⁹ Ahmedi, *Dastân ve Tevârih-i Mülûk-i Âl-i Osman*, p. 22

⁴³⁰ Dukas, *Bizans Tarihi*, p. 8

⁴³¹ Born, “The Perfect Prince”, p. 484

⁴³² Nizâm al-Mulk, *The Book of Government*, p. 10

III.4. All That Glitters Is Not Gold: What Not To Do?

All occupations have “do”s and “don’t”s, regardless of time and place. If we consider that kingship, too, is a kind of occupation, we can assume that there are certain kinds of behavior the king must avoid. If he is not careful enough avoiding certain vices, the consequences could be quite burdensome both in this world and the next.

Holy Books preach that the ruler has to be obeyed, almost regardless of the behavior he demonstrates. Resisting or disobeying a ruler is generally considered as disobedience to God. The *Quran* explicitly commands to obey rulers and superiors: “O you who believe! Obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in authority from among you”.⁴³³ One of the many examples on obeying the ruler found in the *Bible* is as follows:

Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. For for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.⁴³⁴

In a society where inequality of rank is considered the natural order, belief in the common wisdom of inferiors serving superiors in return for protection is quite firm.⁴³⁵ A Tradition of the Prophet tells that other rulers shall come after him. Some of these rulers would be good and some evil. The good ones would govern in a good manner, and the evil ones in an evil manner. He tells that good government brings blessings both to the society and to the ruler himself. If the ruler is evil, the society will still achieve good, but not the ruler.⁴³⁶

⁴³³ *Quran*, 4:59

⁴³⁴ *Bible*; Romans, 13:1-7

⁴³⁵ See, for example, Nederman and Forhan (eds.), *Medieval Political Theory*, on John of Salisbury's comments

⁴³⁶ Mâverdi, *El-Ahkâmü's-Sultâniye*, p. 30

The discussions of the scholars and the accounts of the chroniclers show that there may be exceptions as far as obeying the ruler is concerned. The two motives for disobedience stand out as disobedience to God and cruelty. According to John of Salisbury, subjects can justify resistance if the ruler acts contrary to the laws of God. This kind of disobedience should not be in a violent manner, because the ruler is responsible “for his state, not *to* it”. Furthermore, he shall be judged in heaven for his behavior.⁴³⁷ A tenth century Islamic scholar Ibn Batta puts forth a similar argument claiming that a bad ruler would not bring harm to the individual’s religion, so the subjects need to obey any appointed ruler, “except in disobedience to Almighty God, for there is no duty of obedience to a creature against his creator”.⁴³⁸ In *Muradnâme*, too, the author stresses the issue in the beginning of his book. He tells that the ruler has to obey the word of God, or else he would become a servant of the Devil.⁴³⁹

As we go through the discussions of the scholars and accounts of the chroniclers, the most crucial issue appears to be cruelty and oppression (*zulüm*). Cruelty and oppression often reflect the antithesis of justice, thus as justice was conceived to be *the* virtue, cruelty and oppression appear as *the* vice.

Ibn Taymiyyah refers to a Tradition of the Prophet in arguing that the ruler should be obeyed even if he is cruel. According to tradition, when the Prophet heard people complaining of cruel governors, he told them to obey anyway and said that God would punish the cruel ones.⁴⁴⁰ Mawardi, on the other hand, considers cruelty – as a form of turning away from justice – a valid reason for the disposal of the ruler.⁴⁴¹ Since any kind of order was preferred over complete chaos, an unjust and impious ruler could be accepted for some contemporaries. For example, Ghazali says: “The tyranny of a sultan for a hundred years causes less damage than one year’s tyranny exercised by the subjects against one another”.⁴⁴²

⁴³⁷ Born, “The Perfect Prince”, p. 474

⁴³⁸ Lewis, *The Political Language of Islam*, p. 101

⁴³⁹ *Bedr-i Dilşad’ın Murâd-nâmesi*, p. 210

“Ve ger Tanrı sözine uymaz ise / Nedür hükmi tuyar ya tuymaz ise / Dahı re’feti şefkati olmasa / Raiyyetlere rahmeti olmasa / Halife olur liki şeytan için / Hilâf eyledi çünkü Rahmân için”

⁴⁴⁰ Ibn Teymiye; *Siyaset : es-Siyasetu’s -şer’iyye*, p. 59

⁴⁴¹ Mâverdi, *El-Ahkâmü’s-Sultâniye*, p. 54

⁴⁴² Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples*, p. 144

Nizam al-Mulk quotes a famous saying in his *Siyasatnama*: “A kingdom may last while there is irreligion, but it will not endure when there is oppression”⁴⁴³ In *Muradnâme*, too, this tradition is reminded and it is noted that the house of an oppressor would be destroyed in the end.⁴⁴⁴ In some Ottoman chronicles, it is possible to find references to the cruelty and oppressive acts of Cengiz Khan. In *Selatinnâme*, for example, the author tells why Ertugrul left his land. Cengiz Khan had subordinated the whole of East by force, burning down Samarqand and Belh. He had even given Baghdad to one of his men and that official continued to oppress people. The whole land was damaged and people scattered away. Ertugrul was one of those who left in order to escape the cruelty of Cengiz Khan’s lot.⁴⁴⁵ The chronicler Oruc Beg who summarizes the story, cannot help adding his own remark on the Khan: “Let him be cursed by God.”⁴⁴⁶ It would be important to note that, although the author is talking about a nomadic society, he himself is a member of a sedentary agricultural society. His criticism towards Cengiz Khan’s behavior, which has ended up in deserted lands, should perhaps be seen in this light, for if the productive population of the realm scattered away due to oppression, this would create a huge problem for the economic balances of the realm.

A minor model of the terror Cengiz had caused in Inner Asia is visible in a passage Neşri provides when he talks about Mehmed I’s struggle in Anatolia. According the story, one of the petty lords, İnaloğlu plunders and ravages the country with his twenty thousand soldiers. The inhabitants of the area run away to the mountains to escape his terror. Mehmed I was deeply moved by the situation and sent a letter to İnaloğlu, scorning him for hurting the people whom God has entrusted to the ruler, saying that such behavior has no place in Islam.⁴⁴⁷

⁴⁴³ Nizâm al-Mulk, *The Book of Government*, p. 12

⁴⁴⁴ *Bedr-i Dilşad’ın Murâd-nâmesi*, p. 241

⁴⁴⁵ Kemal, *Selâtin-nâme*, p. 22-3, 25

“...’Azîm ol yirleri incitmişidi / Tagılıp ol vilâyet gitmişidi / Kırır nâ-hak yere beş yüz bin âdem / Esir itdi anun dışısın ol dem / Ol zâlim zulmı kıldı bî-nihâyet / Tagıldı kalmadı il gün vilâyet / Kamusı el çeküp başın aldı gitdi / O zâlim ol yire bu işi itdi”

⁴⁴⁶ Oruç Beğ; *Oruç Beğ Tarihi*, p. 21

⁴⁴⁷ Neşri; *Kitab-ı Cihan-nümâ*, p. 387-9

“Memleketin içine girüb, reâyâ ki vedâyi-i Âferidkârdur, bilâ-sebeb incidüb,

If cruelty is the worst of vices, keeping in mind the circle of equity, justice is required and treasured as the best of virtues. Thus it is possible to trace this dichotomy through the chronicles. One of the most obvious examples is Timur's injustice and cruelty.⁴⁴⁸ Neşri calls him "Timur the Cruel" and lists the actions which caused oppression: his soldiers plundered, burnt and destroyed the land; they attacked Muslims, many fathers lost their sons; many mothers were separated from their daughters; there was famine and people died of hunger.⁴⁴⁹ As the Spanish envoy Clavijo relates it, Timur had buried the notables of Sivas alive before the Ottomans could come to help.⁴⁵⁰

There are also many incidents where people complain about the Karamanid oppression and Ottomans going to war with the Karamanids to save the innocent people from oppression. When people complain to Mehmed II that Karamanoğlu plundered the place while the sultan was engaged in war with the Albanians, Mehmed II comforts them.⁴⁵¹ However, Ottomans seem careful not to be cruel towards the Karamanids.⁴⁵² Even when they are cruel, it always seems to be out of necessity or because of somebody else's fault. It is either the Karamanids themselves deserving it as happened

malların gaaret itmek ve teşdîd-i ahvâl-i müslimine meşgul olmak, ehl-i islâmdan ba'iddür"

⁴⁴⁸ Ahmedî; *Dastân ve Tevârih-i Mülûk-i Âl-i Osman*, p. 23

"Bu arada Ruma yürüdi Temür / Mülk doldı fitne vü havf u fütur / Çün Temürün hiç adli yoğ idi / Lâ-cerem kim zulm ü cevri çoğ idi"

⁴⁴⁹ Neşri; *Kitab-ı Cihan-nümâ*, p. 357

"Timur-i gaddar, Rûm'da çok dürlü zulumler idüb, ol kışı Aydın İlinde kışladı. Ve çerisi Rûm vilâyetini yağmaidüb, yakub, yıkub, müslümanların ehlin, 'ayâlin elden geçirüb, ey nice atalat oğlını yâvı (?) kılub ve nice analar kızından ayrı düşüb, âlem gayet kızlık olub, taş taşı yiyüb, çoklık halk açlıktan helâk olmuşdı."

⁴⁵⁰ Clavijo, *Clavijo: Embassy to Tamerlane*, p. 133

⁴⁵¹ Neşri; *Kitab-ı Cihan-nümâ*, p. 781

"Ağlaşman müslümanlar! İnşallah ol zalimin şerrinden sizi azad ederin"

⁴⁵² Aşıkpaşaoğlu, *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osman*, p. 175

"Sultan Murad Han Gazi dahı Karamandan bir ahadun bir çöpin zulum ile aldırmadı ve almadı. Zirâ kim Âl-i Osmanun muradları ve âdetleri adl üzerinedür"

to be in the time of Murad II⁴⁵³ or someone else caused it without the sultan's knowledge as in the case of Rum Mehmed Pasha of Sultan Mehmed II.⁴⁵⁴

Although Ottoman chroniclers soften the oppressive acts of Mehmed II to some extent, non-Ottoman sources stress his cruel nature. While Dukas calls him the "bloody monster" (*hunhar ejder*) talking about the harm and damage he caused during his reign⁴⁵⁵, Thuroczy is almost sorry for Murad II's death, whom he despises. He believes Mehmed II to be "more ferocious than his father and his predecessors in the shedding of Christian blood and in ravaging countrysides."⁴⁵⁶ Thuroczy emphasizes the cruelty of the sultan when relating the conquest of Constantinople:

...everything of beauty the sultan of the Turks found in the city, both of God and of men, he handed over to be pillaged by the unclean hands of the Turks. The city's leading citizens were taken prisoner and brought to him, and the cruel prince had them most miserably strangled; the tombs of saints he had overturned and their relics sunk in the sea. Who can put into adequate words, who can mourn, who can describe the fall of so great a city, the disaster, so very much to be lamented, suffered by the Christian religion, and the countless and enormous crimes indiscriminately perpetuated with brutality and wickedness by a rabid enemy against the sacred and profane, against men and women alike?⁴⁵⁷

Ironically, though, a few poems attributed to Mehmed II reflect an interest in Christian religion rather than hostility and ferocity. The use of Christian imagery employed in these verses are worth noting. Perhaps the most striking one is:

Having a glimpse of Galata, one devotes his heart to Paradise nevermore
Having a glimpse of that charming sweetheart, there one mentions the Cypress tree nevermore
Thither I had a glimpse of a Christian with European airs that
Having a glimpse of that Christian, one would say his lips were the temple
How is one to master mind and wit, religion and faith
Having a glimpse of that infidel, Muslims turned heathens
Taking a sip of the fair wine he drinks, one mentions the Holy River nevermore
Having a glimpse of the church he goes, one walks into the mosque nevermore

⁴⁵³ *ibid*, p. 182

"Osmanlının memleket urub müsülmanlığa zulüm etmesinin sebebi Karamanoğlu İbrahim Beg sebebinden olmuştur. Ve illâ ta bu güne dek Osmanludan kimsenin hakkına zulüm gelmemiş idi nahak yere. Meger ki bilmeye."

⁴⁵⁴ *ibid*, p. 218

"Hünkar, İshak Paşaya emr etdi: 'Sen var! Karamanoğluna Elden çıkar,' dedi. 'Bu Rum devletsüz vardı. Karamanda hayli bedbahtlıklar etmiş!' dedi."

⁴⁵⁵ Dukas, *Bizans Tarihi*, p. 140

⁴⁵⁶ Thuroczy, *Chronicle of the Hungarians*, p. 169

⁴⁵⁷ *ibid.*, p. 173

One would know a European heathen he was, O Avni,
Having a glimpse of the sash and cross on his waist and neck⁴⁵⁸

It is possible to get a sense of tolerance showed towards Christian subjects in the laws of Mehmed II. If we were to continue with the example of Galata, we can talk about a treaty granted to its inhabitants by the sultan following the conquest of Constantinople. According to the articles of the treaty, Christians of Galata have submitted to the sultan. In return for their obedience the sultan allows them to preserve their own customs. He promises not to harm them and not to take their lands, possessions, wives, sons and slaves away. They can cultivate and travel freely around the realm just like the other subjects. He promises to protect them as he protects all others. They are also granted the right to keep their churches and practice their religious rites, except for ringing the church bells. The sultan promises not to turn their churches into mosques on the condition that they do not build new ones. Moreover, he forbids any acts forcing them to change their religion, unless they genuinely want to convert. They are also given the right to select their own judges and excused from the *devşirme* system.⁴⁵⁹ Of course, it was not only the Galata Christians who were protected by law. The law pertaining to Herzegovina, for example, records the appointment of some Christian officials to the region. Their duty was to watch over the area so that the possessions and lives of the Muslims and the Christians living there would not be harmed.⁴⁶⁰

In an anonymous Ottoman chronicle oppression is condemned through the story of Yanko ibn Madyan's building the city of Istanbul. Since the city was built under oppression, it would never be free of trouble.⁴⁶¹ Beneath this passage it is possible to

⁴⁵⁸ *Fatih Divanı*, p. 66 (my translation)

“Bağlamaz Firdevse gönlünü Kalatayı gören / Servi anmaz anda ol serv-i dil-ârâyı gören / Bir firengi şivelü İsâi gördüm anda kim / Lebleri dirilmişî dir idi İsâyı gören / Akl ü fehmin din ü imânın nice zabteylesün / Kâfir olur hey müsülmanlar o tersâyı gören / Kevseri anmaz ol icdüğü mey-i nâbı içen / Mescide varmaz o vardığı kilisâyı gören / Bir firengi dilber oldığın bilürdi Avniyâ / Belî vü boynunda zünnâr ü çelipâyı gören”

⁴⁵⁹ Akgündüz, Ahmed; *Osmanlı Kanunnâmeleri ve Hukuki Tahlilleri*, Book 1 (İstanbul: Fey Vakfı, 1990), p. 477

⁴⁶⁰ *ibid.*, p. 495

⁴⁶¹ *Anonim Osmanlı Kroniği*, p. 94

“Bu şehri zulm ile doldurdular. Âlem halkını tamamet inletdiler. Ol zamanun halkını zulm ile getürdükleri için bu şehre beddualar itdiler... Ol şehrin harab

sense a criticism directed to the forced resettlement policy of Mehmed II. The practice of forced settlement was not unique to Mehmed II it seems. In the early Piast period of Polish administration, we see that prisoners of war were resettled in Poland by force. Village names such as Czechy and Sarbias are reminders of Czechs and Serbs settled there.⁴⁶² Clavijo tells about Timur's settlement policy in Samarqand. He says that Timur brought many immigrants to the city from the places he conquered and the city now accommodated people from all nations. He also notes the professional characteristics of the settlers claiming that Timur cherished trade and therefore had the best men brought to Samarqand from wherever he conquered. He had brought all the weavers of Damascus, together with the city's famous bow-makers and armorers. He had also carried off the craftsmen renown in the entire world for their glass and porcelain crafts. Clavijo reflects the advantages of having so many good craftsmen in a city, but does not relate whether this was conceived as an act of oppression or not.⁴⁶³ In mid-thirteenth century, John of Viterbo dwells on the issue in his *Digest*:

City means 'you dwell safe from violence'. For residence is without violence, because the ruler of the city will protect the lowlier men lest they suffer injury from the more powerful... Again since the home (domus) is for each person a most secure refuge and shelter, no one should be taken therefrom against their will; nor is it reasonable that anyone in a town should be forced by violent fear and the like.⁴⁶⁴

Another veiled reference to oppression by Mehmed II can be found in the account of the construction of St. Sophia. According to legend, since Constantine did not have any money left he stopped the building activity until an angel arrived to show him a treasure to be used in finishing the church.⁴⁶⁵ Mehmed II is criticized for having financed the Fatih mosque complex with income from taxes – he should have financed it with booty. Furthermore, the author accuses Mehmed of bringing workers in the city by exile to work in the construction and not paying them adequately. These acts were

olmasına sebep oldur kim çok ah vah olmuştur. Anun için her vakit ol şehrin sonu harab harab olur. Zira kim harab olmasına dualar kılınmıştır”

⁴⁶² Paul Knoll, “Economic and Political Institutions on the Polish-German Frontier in the Middle Ages: Action, Reaction, Interaction”, in *Medieval Frontier Societies*, p. 157

⁴⁶³ Clavijo, *Clavijo: Embassy to Tamerlane*, p. 286-8

⁴⁶⁴ Black, *Political Thought in Europe*, p. 19

⁴⁶⁵ *Anonim Osmanlı Kroniği*, p. 105

“Zira kim ol zaman padişahı zulm ile nesne yapdurmazdı”

taken to be oppressive.⁴⁶⁶ On the other hand, Kritovulos talks differently about the construction of the palace. He says that Mehmed paid at least six akça to the prisoners who worked on the construction site so that they could earn their living.⁴⁶⁷ The two accounts reflect totally different modes of behavior and that could probably be explained by the partiality of Kritovulos.

The same theme can be traced in the works of late medieval jurists of Europe. They find tyranny to be the worst form of government. John of Salisbury asserts that if a prince acts contrary to the established law, he becomes a tyrant.⁴⁶⁸ He starts by defining the tyrant and goes on comparing him with the ruler:

As the philosophers have portrayed him, the tyrant is, therefore, one who oppresses the people by violent domination, just as the ruler is one who rules by the laws. Furthermore, law is a gift of God, the likeness of equity, the norm of justice, the image of the divine will, the custodian of security, the unity and confirmation of a people, the standard of duties, the excluder and exterminator of vices, and the punishment of violence and all injuries...As the image of the deity, the ruler is to be loved, venerated and respected; the tyrant, as the image of depravity, is for the most part even to be killed.⁴⁶⁹

According to Gilbert of Tournai, the difference between a prince and a tyrant is that: “the latter rages with worldly pleasure and licentiousness unrestrained; the prince acts only through necessity and for a reason.”⁴⁷⁰ Erasmus defines a tyrant as a “bizarre beast” which is more destructive than anything, making a comparison between king and tyrant asserting “If the king is like God, the tyrant is like Satan”.⁴⁷¹ Machiavelli, on the other hand, although not defending outright tyranny, finds it useful to create some degree of fear in the hearts of the people. Quite the black sheep among his contemporaries Machiavelli does not see any harm in the prince being cruel as long as he blames someone else for it.. He also believes that the prince should wish not to *look* like a cruel person, but like a merciful one. However the degree of mercy should be very well balanced. He gives the example of Cesare Borgia who was a notorious

⁴⁶⁶ *ibid.*, p. 112

⁴⁶⁷ Kritovulos, *İstanbul'un Fethi*, p. 127

⁴⁶⁸ Born; “The Perfect Prince”, p. 474

⁴⁶⁹ Nederman and Forhan (eds.), *Medieval Political Theory*, pp. 53-4

⁴⁷⁰ Born, “The Perfect Prince”, p. 480

⁴⁷¹ Erasmus, *The Education of a Christian Prince*, p. 15, 37

oppressor and tyrant, however his cruelty succeeded in putting his land in order and brought him peace and prosperity.⁴⁷²

Geoffrey of Monmouth defines a certain Mempricius as a tyrant listing the crimes he committed. The author's description attributes many other vices to the definition of the "tyrant":

He then took over the government of the whole island, exercising so great a tyranny over the people that he encompassed the death of almost all the more distinguished men. He hated all his own family; and, by main force or by treachery, he did away with anyone who feared might succeed him in the kingship. What is more, he deserted his own wife, by whom he had become the father of a much-admired young man called Ebraucus, and he abandoned himself to the vice of sodomy, preferring unnatural lust to normal passion. At last, in the twentieth year of his reign, he became separated from his companions in a certain valley. There he was surrounded by wolves and eaten up in miserable conditions.⁴⁷³

The ruler becomes a tyrant not only if he is cruel, but also if he does not act according to established law. According to John of Salisbury, killing a tyrant is a just act and the origin of tyranny is found in pride "and ambition, that is, the lust of power and glory."⁴⁷⁴

According to Jacques de Cessoles, greed is the worst quality to be found in a prince.⁴⁷⁵ Dante argues that greed blocks the way of justice in a way:

... It must be noted that the thing most contrary to justice is greed, as Aristotle states in the fifth book of the Ethics. When greed is entirely eliminated, nothing remains which is opposed to justice; hence Aristotle's opinion that those things which can be resolved by law should in no way be left to the judge's discretion. And it is fear of greed which makes this necessary, for greed easily leads men's minds astray. But where there is nothing which can be coveted, it is impossible for greed to exist, for emotions cannot exist where their objects have been destroyed.⁴⁷⁶

The anonymous Ottoman chronicle is of the same opinion with Dante. The author asserts that where there is greed, there is oppression. Talking about the various conquests during the reign of Murad I, the author stresses that the *begs* in those times did not injure the inhabitants by taxing them too much. He adds that rulers back then

⁴⁷² Machiavelli, *The Prince*, p. 58-60, 67

⁴⁷³ Geoffrey of Monmouth, *History of the Kings of Britain*, p. 78

⁴⁷⁴ Born, "The Perfect Prince", 475

⁴⁷⁵ *ibid.*, p. 492

⁴⁷⁶ Dante, *Monarchia*, Book 1, ch.11, Dante Online by Società Dantesca Italiana, <http://www.danteonline.it>

were not greedy in that they would give whatever they have to the soldiers instead of keeping it to themselves. In times this virtue had been lost with the new arrivals such as Hayreddin Paşa. Thus greed and oppression was introduced to the Ottoman realm.⁴⁷⁷

Pride and vanity are also dangerous vices. As Clavijo tells about Bayezid I's challenge with Timur, he touches on the consequences of his vanity by not taking Timur and his messages seriously:

Now Bayezid had heard naught of Timur until that hour, and he believed that in the whole world none could be his equal, he being the Sultan of the Turks. His wrath at the coming of the Tartar envoy with this letter, therefore, was extreme; and he forthwith replied saying how he marveled greatly that so foolish a man as Timur could exist: how could he dare send him, the Sultan, any such message? For he the Sultan should do as he would with Taharten, as indeed he would do with every other man in the whole world. Further in order that Timur might no longer be subject to these presumptuous fancies, he, the Sultan would set out and seek him wheresoever he might happen to be, when he would conquer and make him captive: and would proceed to dishonor Timur's chief wife by taking her to be one of his bond-slaves.⁴⁷⁸

In *Zafernâme*, written for Timur, Bayezid's challenge is attributed to his pride. According to the author, the Devil had sowed pride in Bayezid's heart, thus causing him to overstep his limits relying on his might and power. However, his rival was far grander than himself, a ruler to whom the greatest rulers of the world showed obedience.⁴⁷⁹ Dukas attributes almost an insult to be expressed by Timur: "These uncivilized Turks are men comparable to the grasshopper who wishes to be like the lion when side by side."⁴⁸⁰ An anonymous chronicle points out that Bayezid had actually given in to pride by under estimating Timur. Even though Timur addressed him respect calling him Bayezid my son, Bayezid would keep on insulting him. Moreover, before

⁴⁷⁷ *Anonim Osmanlı Kroniği*, p. 31

"Ol zamanda harâc az idi. Şöyle alurlardı kim kâfirler dahi incinmez idi. Kebesin ve öküzün veya oğlın kızın satdurup veya rehin kodurup almazlardı. Ol zaman pâdişâhları tama'kâr değüllerdı. Her ne ellerine girürse yiğide ve yegile virtürler idi. Hazine nedür bilmezlerdi. Heman kim Hayreddin Paşa kapuya geldi ve pâdişâhlar ile tama'kâr dânişmendler musâhib olup, takvâyı koyup fetvâyâ yürüdiler, hazine dahı pâdişâh olana gerekdür didiler. Pâdişâhı kendülere uydurdular. Tama've zulm peydâ oldı. Elbetde tama' olduğı yerde zulm dahı olsa gerekdür."

⁴⁷⁸ Clavijo; *Clavijo: Embassy to Tamerlane*, p. 132

⁴⁷⁹ Nizamüddin Şâmi; *Zafernâme*, p. 296

⁴⁸⁰ Dukas, *Bizans Tarihi*, p. 39

the battle of Ankara he had not consulted with anyone, but did as he wanted in pride.⁴⁸¹ When we look at Bayezid's earlier career, we might perhaps excuse him his pride, for there have been situations in which Bayezid can be replaced for Timur in the story. In the *Chronicle of the Hungarians*, it is possible to feel accusation aimed at King Sigismund's vanity for the defeat in 1396 at Nicopolis. The king challenged Bayezid in order to get Bulgarian lands back. He gathered a huge army and attacked the Ottomans. He is said to have uttered such words as: "Why should we fear this man? Were the immense weight of the heavens above us to tumble down, we could hold it up with spears we are carrying and thus not be harmed."⁴⁸² However, the end was a crushing defeat and Sigismund barely escaped. He would only be able to return to his realm and throne after a year and a half. The misfortune he brought to his people through too much self-confidence was reason enough for them to hate him.⁴⁸³

Oruc Beg attributes the fall of Constantinople to the pride its ruler and notables. When Mehmed II laid siege, the Emperor, *tekvur* as expressed by the author, did not ask for pardon. Clerics claimed that the city would not be lost because the Bible said so. People believed them and prepared for defense. They even spoke scornfully about the Prophet and thus "because of their pride almighty God sent them this calamity".⁴⁸⁴ Christine Pizan demonstrates the terrible consequences of pride with the example of Hannibal. According to Pizan, good fortune blinds people by causing too much pride and they do not know themselves anymore. Hannibal, the prince of Carthage was one of these people who fell into despair because of his pride. Although he was endowed with many virtues, he had been overcome by pride in the face of his victory over the Romans. He was so proud that he would not listen nor talk to anybody: "He trusted so much in his good sense, good fortune and happiness that it seemed to him that no one could teach him anything". Since he did not listen to those who advised him and thought he knew best, in the end he lost everything including his empire and fortune. Finally in despair he killed himself.⁴⁸⁵

⁴⁸¹ *Anonim Osmanlı Kroniği*, p. 42, 46

"Tevekkül olmayıp mağrurluk iderdi" / "Kendi kendüye mağrur olup yürüdi ve kimseyle tanışmadı"

⁴⁸² Thuroczy, *Chronicle of the Hungarians*, p. 56

⁴⁸³ *ibid.*, 58-60

⁴⁸⁴ Oruç Beğ; *Oruç Beğ Tarihi*, pp. 108-9

⁴⁸⁵ Pizan, *The Book of Body Politic*, p. 33-4

Anger and quick temper are also viewed as vices that the ruler should avoid. Giraldus Cambresis says that the ruler should be careful not to get angry quickly. He should be patient with the faults of others taking the behavior of Christ and some good Roman emperors as example. He should also take care not to give punishments while furious. He must also keep in mind that anger is bad for his health.⁴⁸⁶ Pizan, for example, considers anger a natural vice and recommends that it be avoided since it attracts hatred.⁴⁸⁷ Geoffrey of Monmouth almost pities Morvidus for his quick temper, saying that he “would have been famous for his prowess had he not indulged in the most outrageous cruelty. Once he had lost his temper he spared no one, committing mayhem on the spot, if only he could lay his hands on his weapons”.⁴⁸⁸ An Ottoman ruler notorious for his quick temper and even wrath would be Bayezid I. In an anonymous Ottoman chronicle, Bayezid I is criticized for his furious nature. He would get angry very quickly and told whatever came to his mind in fury, thus he had made things worse when he was Timur’s prisoner.⁴⁸⁹ A famous story about Bayezid’s fury is about the judges. The sultan heard that the judges were not doing their jobs properly and he was extremely furious. He then ordered the judges to be summoned and they were all placed in a house. To everyone’s awe, he ordered the house to be burnt down. Not knowing what to do, the officials called for his favorite jester, since he listened to nobody else. They asked jester to find a way out of the situation without burning the judges. He finally did persuade the sultan to forgive the judges, promising that they would behave properly from then on.⁴⁹⁰ The nervous character of Mehmed II finds expression in an anonymous Greek chronicle. In a sea battle during the siege of Constantinople, the Ottomans were defeated. The sultan was watching from a hilltop. Seeing his ships destroyed, he started swearing and led his horse towards the shore. Because he could not do anything to save them, he tore of his own clothes.⁴⁹¹

⁴⁸⁶ Born, “The Perfect Prince”, p. 476

⁴⁸⁷ Pizan, *The Book of Body Politic*, p. 53

⁴⁸⁸ Geoffrey of Monmouth, *History of the Kings of Britain*, p. 101-2

⁴⁸⁹ *Anonim Osmanlı Kroniği*, p. 51

“Yıldırım Han katı gazab ehliydi. Sehelce nesneden kendüzin incidse helâk iderdi. Diline ne gelürse heman söylerdi”

⁴⁹⁰ Aşıkpaşaoğlu, *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osman*, p. 139

⁴⁹¹ *16. Asırda Yazılmış Grekçe Anonim Osmanlı Tarihi*, p. 138

Jacques de Cessoles says that the prince should not break his oaths, for “truth with compassion and justice are the mainstays of his throne”.⁴⁹² Some of the strongest expressions of condemnation of breaking an oath is probably observable in the *Chronicle of the Hungarians*. In 1444, a ten-year truce was agreed on with Lord Janos swearing on behalf of the Hungarian king and two Ottoman officials on behalf of the sultan. The author goes on: “Would that these oaths had never been sworn! For afterwards these same truces were broken by the king and the lord voivode at the instigation of lord Cardinal Giuliano.” The Cardinal had persuaded the king and Janos that they did not have to keep a promise made to infidels.⁴⁹³ According to *Zafernâme*, Timur wants Kara Yusuf and then his family from Bayezid. Although Bayezid first seems to agree, he does not send the family. Later on he regrets it and sends an envoy to ask for pardon. Timur’s reply is instructive: “And the honest person is that who keeps his word; for discord between word and act is a sign of cowardness.”⁴⁹⁴ In *Muradnâme*, the ruler is recommended to keep his word, reminding that an honorable person does not break his oath and such is required by religion.⁴⁹⁵ The author also notes that Anushirvan never acted contrary to his word.⁴⁹⁶ Mehmed II was famous for breaking his word, it seems. His offer for peaceful surrender seems not to have evoked confidence, for an anonymous Greek chronicle written much later says:

The Emperor and the Romans realized that these words were false and they did not believe him at all. Because they knew that he had never been true to his word or had acted in accordance with an agreement. They knew that his words were not true, but that he had sent the message only to deceive them.⁴⁹⁷

Even though Mehmed’s behavior might have induced disapproval of the contemporaries in general, at least Machiavelli would have approved him. According to Machiavelli, it is good to keep one’s word, but it is those who do not that are successful.⁴⁹⁸ The idea resonates the Platonic view on the issue of diversion from truth.

⁴⁹² Born, “The Perfect Prince”, p. 492

⁴⁹³ Thuroczy, *Chronicle of the Hungarians*, pp. 140-1

⁴⁹⁴ Nizamüddin Şâmi; *Zafernâme*, p. 301

⁴⁹⁵ *Bedr-i Dilşad’ın Murâd-nâmesi*, p. 218

⁴⁹⁶ *ibid.*, p. 222

“... ne kıldumsa va’d ü va’id / Hilâf eylemeklikden oldum ba’id”

⁴⁹⁷ *16. Asırda Yazılmış Grekçe Anonim Osmanlı Tarihi*, p. 140

⁴⁹⁸ Machiavelli, *The Prince*, p. 61

Plato tolerates lying as long as it is the privilege of rulers, in other words the ruler can lie to his enemies or subjects if the interests of the state require so.⁴⁹⁹

Within this seemingly strict and tough life style, the ruler is allowed the right to entertain himself. However the dose of entertainment appears to be important. Entertainment is tolerated as long as it does not keep the ruler from his official business and is not exaggerated. For instance, Neşri mentions Mehmed I's entertainment after he ascended the throne in Bursa as a natural flow.⁵⁰⁰ On the other hand, he criticizes the brother Suleyman for overdoing this. Through the words of a spy, we learn that Suleyman has lost himself in lust. He drinks wine day and night. He chooses a bath of his liking and frequents there for a month for wine parties. The spy adds that this is a perfect opportunity to go against him.⁵⁰¹ According to many chronicles Suleyman loses his throne because of this vice. As he indulges in entertainment, his men leave him in favor of another brother, Musa. Although Suleyman is warned for his behavior, he does not mind the warnings and keeps on with his entertainment. Finally the *pashas* invite Musa to rule: "Your brother is doing things that are not fit for a *padişah*. If you wish come along, we want you."⁵⁰² Dukas, too, confirms that Süleyman had indulged in his own amusement. He disregarded the threat Musa posed and passed his time with drinking wine and satisfying his lust.⁵⁰³

After defeating sultan Masud of Ghazna, Tughrıl Beg of the Saljuqs writes a letter to the Abbasid caliph of the time accusing the sultan of not attending the business of the realm. Since he "was busy with amusements, spectacles and making merry" the people were neglected.⁵⁰⁴ The main purpose of the letter is getting recognition from the caliph as the rightful ruler of the land concerned. And Masud's indulging excessive amusement is employed as an element of justification. Another example to be found in the history of the Saljuqs is a certain Malik Shah who reigned for four months in 1152.

⁴⁹⁹ Plato, *Devlet*, p. 73

⁵⁰⁰ Neşri; *Kitab-ı Cihan-nümâ*, p. 429

⁵⁰¹ *ibid.*, p. 461

"Karındaşın şimdi be-gaayet halvettir. Heman altı yüz mikdarı adamı var. Ve fiska düşüb, gece ve gündüz şaraba meşguldür. Şöyle ki, hamamlara girip şarap içer. Her hamamı ki beğene, bir ay anda oturub, 'iysz u nüş ider. Bu veçhile fırsat hiç ele girmez. Eđer şimdi üzerine hücum edersen, be-gaayet fırsattır."

⁵⁰² *16. Asırda Yazılmış Grekçe Anonim Osmanlı Tarihi*, p. 108

⁵⁰³ Dukas, *Bizans Tarihi*, p. 53-4

⁵⁰⁴ *The history of the Seljuq Turks from the Jami al-tawarikh*, p. 39

Although he was a strong and generous man, he liked having fun, hunting and sex. His downfall seems to be caused by the excess of these pleasures:

The cause of his being deposed was that night and day, along with two or three indolent, meddling nonentities, like a negro named Jamal, he was busy with wine drinking, diversion, pleasure and the enjoyment of women. He seldom gave the amirs audience or cared about the affairs of the realm.⁵⁰⁵

About three centuries later, Hungarian King Sigismund was to be reproached by similar comments. Already a victim of vanity in Nicopolis, more and more people began to conspire against him. Added to the suspicions aimed towards him were his voluptuous habits: “The king himself, too, indulging his lust, dissolute and wanton, and given to the violent seduction of maidens, was a source of scandal to the Hungarians.” With all these reasons accumulated, people started looking for ways of getting rid of Sigismund as soon as a suitable opportunity came up.⁵⁰⁶ The same argument was used as one of the reasons in disposing Richard II of England:

... the King is useless. His only concern is to enjoy himself in idle shows and he seems not to care how things are going, so long as he gets his own way. Something must be done about it, or our enemies will begin to crow over us.⁵⁰⁷

Curiously, both Brunetto Latini’s *Book of Treasure* and Bedr-i Dilşâd’s *Muradnâme* recommend the ruler not to laugh too much. Latini advises the prince to avoid too much laughter because “laughter is in the mouth of fools”. He should not laugh falsely or arrogantly either. Although he says that the ruler can laugh and play sometimes for entertainment, his kind of entertainment should not be like those of women and children.⁵⁰⁸ *Muradnâme*, too, claims that it is harmful for the ruler to laugh a lot because it would make his retinue perceive him as an ordinary man, rendering his judgment light and thus order would be disturbed and respect vanished.⁵⁰⁹

The whole issue of vice and its consequences perhaps finds its best expression in the conversation between King Salomon of Armorica and Cadwallo as related in the *History of the Kings of Britain*:

⁵⁰⁵ *ibid.*, p. 121

⁵⁰⁶ Thuroczy, *Chronicle of the Hungarians*, p. 61

⁵⁰⁷ Froissart, *Chronicles*, p. 442

⁵⁰⁸ Nederman and Forhan (eds.), *Medieval Political Theory*, p. 93

⁵⁰⁹ *Bedr-i Dilşâd’ın Muradnâmesi*, p. 233

“Ki küstahlığa bulunmıya yol / Dimişler ki sultâna çok gülmeden / Zıyanlu yoğ ol hâna çok gülmeden / Ki çok gülse sultân haşemle hadem / Sanurlar vücûdını anun adem / Hüküm geçmez olur bozılır nizâm / Gider padişahlara ihtirâm”

... They were made proud by the very vastness of their wealth. They began to indulge in sexual excesses such as had never been heard of among other peoples. As the historian Gildas tells us, they not only indulged in this vice but in all others which are the lot of human nature, especially in the vice which overthrows the very essence of all morality, the dislike of truth and those who stand for truth, the love of lying and those who fabricate lies, the preferring of evil to good, the reverence of viciousness in the place of virtue, the accepting of Satan instead of the Angel of Light. Kings were anointed, not in God's name, but because they were more bloodthirsty than their fellows. Soon afterwards they were murdered out of hand by the very men who had anointed them, not because of some charge properly leveled, but because others even more ferocious were preferred in their stead. If any one of their number seemed to come a pace nearer to moderation or truth, then the hatred and the violence of the whole nation were turned against him, as though he were guilty of betraying Britain. In the end all things seemed to weigh equal in the balance, whether they pleased God or displeased Him: that is, when the things hateful to Him did not simply turn the balance. They managed all their affairs in a way which was harmful to the common weal, as if no remedy whatsoever were offered to them by the true Physician of all men. Not only laymen, but the Lord's own flock, and His shepherds too, behaved in the same way, with no distinction between them. It is therefore hardly surprising that such degenerates, hated by God for the sins which I have described, should have lost their homeland which they had befouled in this way. God decided to take vengeance on them by suffering a foreign people to come and drive them away from the lands of their forefathers.⁵¹⁰

Looking at the examples, we can gather that unpleasant personal characteristics and habits often translate into serious vices concerning the figure of the ruler. These vices may have severe consequences not only for the ruler himself, but for the realm he is in charge of. Thus, the person and the king become an inseparable single entity under the name of "ruler". And the behavior of the ruler, good or evil, reflects the situation of the realm during his reign. As sagely put in *Muradnâme* in response to the question asked by Muawiya: "How are the times?" – "The times revolve around you; you make it with your vices and virtues"⁵¹¹...

⁵¹⁰ Geoffrey of Monmouth, *History of the Kings of Britain*, pp. 273-4

⁵¹¹ *Bedr-i Dilşad'ın Murâd-nâmesi*, p. 230

"Sensin zaman / Hata vü sevabında sensin zaman"

CONCLUSION

“He was a kind, generous, majestic ruler of high character, skillful in military leadership and purely noble in descent.”⁵¹²

Kritovulos on Murad II

While conducting the research for this study, I came to an unexpected conclusion. One Ottoman ruler seems to stand out among the rest when the attributes discussed throughout this study are applied to each of them. Although a seemingly silent figure in Ottoman historiography and not yet a point of focus for thorough research, Murad II appears to conform to the ideals of the age. Except for Thuroczy’s *Chronicle of the Hungarians*, which had every reason to be hostile towards him on the grounds of the battles, the chronicles seem always to be favoring the sultan. Thus, I believe, he deserves to lead us through the way, as we conclude this study. Through his character and deeds, as reflected in the chronicles, we shall finally attempt to draw a complete sketch of the “ideal ruler in the late medieval world”.

We can trace Murad’s career through the chronicles starting with his provincial governorship in Amasya during his father’s reign. While in Amasya, hearing that the infidels have burnt down Samsun, he immediately goes there and surrounds the city. News is sent to his father and Ottomans take the city back.⁵¹³ He was named successor to throne by Mehmed I himself,⁵¹⁴ who had probably been convinced of his oldest surviving son’s prowess by then. Murad was around twenty-one at the time, old enough

⁵¹² Kritovulos, *İstanbul’un Fethi*, p. 31

⁵¹³ Aşıkpaşaoğlu, *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osman*, p. 152; Neşri, on the other hand, attributes the whole event to Mehmed himself. See Neşri, *Kitab-ı Cihan-nümâ*, p. 541

⁵¹⁴ Aşıkpaşaoğlu, *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osman*, p. 155; Neşri, *Kitab-ı Cihan-nümâ*, p. 551; *Anonim Osmanlı Kroniği*, p. 66; Şükrullah, *Behçetüttevarih*, p. 61

to rule and young enough to be excused his moderate entertaining activities.⁵¹⁵ Although Mehmed had pronounced his name to avoid possible conflicts after his death, Murad was not able to acquire the throne in tranquility. First he had to face the threat caused by a long lost uncle; namely Mustafa the Pretender. The threat was dealt with shortly. The main supportive argument was Mustafa's not actually being a son of Bayezid I, but only a pretender. The inappropriateness of Mustafa for the throne finds expression in Hamza Beg's words to his brother İzmiroğlu Cüneyd Beg who happened to be on Mustafa's side:

First of all, everybody cries loudly that Mustafa is not of the Ottoman dynasty... Secondly, if we shall compare his deeds, we shall see his lack of skill and knowledge in military affairs and his lustful addiction to women.⁵¹⁶

Dukas also claims that Murad ordered Mustafa to be hanged in a public place like a criminal so that people would be convinced that he was not a member of the dynasty.⁵¹⁷ The method of execution is verified by Ottoman chronicles as well.⁵¹⁸ Moreover Murad had to kill one of his brothers, too. This was a younger brother, also named Mustafa. The boy was brought up under Germiyanid influence.⁵¹⁹ Provoked by the Karamanids and he had challenged Murad and harmed some provinces. He had even attacked Bursa.⁵²⁰ Therefore, he was killed to avoid any further complications. In the chronicles, the act is justified on the grounds of precedence and good of the realm.⁵²¹ He does not kill his two younger brothers, but blinds them. He marries off three sisters to the Karamanids, two to the sons of Isfendiyar and two to his military officials.⁵²² These marriages can be considered as reinforcing allegiance of both rivals and supporters.

⁵¹⁵ Dukas, *Bizans Tarihi*, p. 95

⁵¹⁶ *ibid*, p. 103

⁵¹⁷ *ibid.*, p. 109

⁵¹⁸ See, for example, Oruç Beğ, *Oruç Beğ Tarihi*, p. 80 and *Anonim Osmanlı Kroniği*, p. 69

⁵¹⁹ Neşri, *Kitab-ı Cihan-nümâ*, p. 567

⁵²⁰ Oruç Beğ; *Oruç Beğ Tarihi*, p. 81; *Anonim Osmanlı Kroniği*, p. 70

⁵²¹ Neşri, *Kitab-ı Cihan-nümâ*, p. 573 and Aşıkpaşaoğlu, *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osman*, p. 162 "Ve illa bu ikisi bu vilâyetde olsalar zarar-ı âmdur. Ve hem bir dahı budur kim ben bu efendüm oğlına yaramaz iş itmedüm. Anun için kim bu dünyenün murdarına bulaşmadın anı şehid etdümdüm. Ve hem cemi âlem rahatda oldılar. Ve hem dahi bizden öndin gelenler bu kanunu kurmuşlar"

⁵²² Aşıkpaşaoğlu, *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osman*, p. 164 and Neşri, *Kitab-ı Cihan-nümâ*, p. 581

We see that Murad is mindful of consultation and prudence in the battles and decisions he engages in. He gives importance to having old wise men around him. After a battle in which he had defeated the Hungarian army, he was going around the battlefield. When he saw the dead Christian soldiers lying on the ground, he called one of his older officials called Azeb Beg and asked him whether there were any old and wise men lying on the ground. Azeb Beg replied: "Such was their end because they did not have even one old and wise man (*ak sakallı pîr*) among them."⁵²³ During the siege of Thessalonica, Murad consults his notables in order to find the best way to take the castle. He decides on plunder only after his military officials say so.⁵²⁴ Once, he is even reported to have complied with Turahan's advice to retreat from battle, even though he knew the enemy was weak and they could win. However, after giving the matter some thought he decided to do as Turahan said, lest he were right. He did not wish people to say that the sultan did not listen to advice.⁵²⁵ But knowing the mistake he made in retreating, Murad did not refrain from scolding Turahan later.⁵²⁶ Although Murad consulted with his men before taking action, he was also generally prudent. During a campaign to Albania the *begs* want to take a certain castle. But winter had already arrived and considering the pros and cons of the siege, Murad decided that it was not worth the trouble. Considering that many men would die in the effort, he said that he would not sacrifice even one soldier for fifty castles like that one.⁵²⁷ Although the anecdote may be taken as one of the many examples for noble explanations made to cover a failure or impotency, it makes Murad II seem like a commander who cares about the wellbeing of his army.

Murad II appears in many instances as a man with quick temper, but he is able to keep it under control before it turns into vice. As can be deduced from various incidents,

⁵²³ *Gazavât-ı Sultan Murad b. Mehemed Han*, p. 82

⁵²⁴ Aşıkpaşaoğlu, *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osman*, p. 173 and Neşri, *Kitab-ı Cihan-nümâ*, p. 611

⁵²⁵ *Gazavât-ı Sultan Murad b. Mehemed Han*, p. 25

"Padişâh bilür idi kim, küffâr-i hâkisârın davranmağa mecâli olmaduğın, amma tefekkür eyledi ve dedi kim bu iş benim dediğim gibi olursa ne güzel, ammâ 'aksi zuhûr edecek olursa Padişâh söz tutmaz derler."

⁵²⁶ *ibid.*, p. 25

"Bak-a Turahan, işte bizim pişmiş aşımıza sovak su katub neyledin ise eyledin, askerimizi geri çekdürüb küffâr-i hâkisâra başlarını bağıslattırdın."

⁵²⁷ *Anonim Osmanlı Kroniği*, p. 84

the main reason for this is the care he gives to taking advice and acting accordingly. Since he generally changes his mind and does the right thing before harm is done, we see that he is not criticized for a quick temper or cruel acts. Dukas, for example, claims that his anger did not last long.⁵²⁸ An impressive example can be found in the aftermath of the battle of Varna: Some of the *begs* have fled from the battlefield. After the victory, Murad orders them to be found and be humiliated by dressing them in women's clothes. Others oppose such a punishment: "Such a thing would not be good. Thank God you have been victorious. Their shame would suffice them. Do not reproach them yourself." The sultan complies with their wishes and forgives the fleeing *begs*.⁵²⁹

His relations especially with the Karamanids display the portrait of a merciful sultan. Each time the Karamanids attack Ottoman lands, they ask for pardon in the end. Murad pardons them in almost all instances. Only once when the Karamanids break their oath, he goes to Konya and orders plunder. Although such cruelty had never been observed before, the chronicles put the blame on Karamanoğlu Ibrahim Beg for causing this, arguing that the Ottomans never indulge in cruelty and oppression.⁵³⁰ Even the anonymous chronicler who is generous with criticisms of oppression committed by other sultans, finds Murad's attitude to the Karamanids quite natural. He makes Karamanoğlu's court jester say to his master: "My sultan! You from here, your brother Janos from there shall destroy Islam." The author goes on with his own criticism accusing the Karamanids of cooperating with the infidels to harm Islam. Thus they have deserved the misfortunes.⁵³¹ The merciful attitude of Murad II extends to the non-

⁵²⁸ Dukas, *Bizans Tarihi*, p. 139

⁵²⁹ Neşri, *Kitab-ı Cihan-nümâ*, p. 655

"Sultan Murad buyurdu: 'Ol kaçan beylere avret donun giydirip, tahkir edin' dedi. Yine beyler derilip, dilek edip eyittiler: 'Devletli Sultanım, bunun gibi hal 'aceb olmaz. Bi-hamdillah ve'l-minne ki, mansûr ve muzaffer oldunuz. Anlara kendi yüzleri karası yeter. Devletli sultanım yüzlemesin,' dediler. Sultan Murad dahi affedip, fariğ oldu."

⁵³⁰ Aşıkpaşaoğlu, *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osman*, p. 182 and Neşri, *Kitab-ı Cihan-nümâ*, p. 643 "Alâeddin Çelebi bin Murad Han babasıyla yürüyüp, Karaman illerini yakıp Lârende'yi urdu. Konya ve Lârende'yi cemi vilâyetiyle harap etti. Ol vakit ol kadar mezâlîm oldı kim, Osman Beylerinden ol vakte-değîn, kimsesi ol kadar zulm etmiş değildi. Bunca mezâlîme sebep Karamanoğlu İbrahim Bey oldu"

⁵³¹ *Anonim Osmanlı Kroniği*, p. 79

"Sultanım! Bu taraftan siz, ol yanadan Yanko kardaşınız bolay ki müsülmanlığı aradan götüresiniz." "Karamanlı şunun gibi tâyifedür kim, kâfire ol vakt elçi

muslims as well. He even pardoned Dracula, who had plundered some Ottoman lands while the sultan was engaged with his brother. Murad first ordered a campaign on Dracula to take revenge and to destroy his land. However, the voivode came along with his two sons and asked for pardon. The sultan forgave him and even presented him a robe of honor before he was sent back home.⁵³² Such behavior conforms with the principle of showing mercy to those asking for pardon and those who submit.

The chronicles all agree that justice reigned supreme all around the realm during Murad's rule. He made sure that justice was properly administered in all senses. He used to send trustworthy men to provinces and they would report him the condition of the realm. He wanted to know whether justice was properly observed or the subjects were oppressed or injured in any manner.⁵³³ According to Çelebi Hadidi's report he had advised his son on the importance of justice in the government of the realm, reminding him that kingship could not be with oppression:

Be on the side of the poor, do not be an oppressor
For oppression destroys divine sanction and fortune
It has been said that the cruel does not find blessing
Kingship can go in hand with irreligion but not oppression.⁵³⁴

Murad II appears as a skillful military leader and soldier in the chronicles. Neşri ends his account of the sultan by reminding that Murad II had devoted his life to *ghaza*.⁵³⁵ The campaigns and battles he undertook during his career prove Neşri's point. However, Murad does not give the impression of a ruler who fights just for the sake of fighting. He appears as a ruler who knows the value of peace as well as when and how to fight. Dukas praises the sultan because he resented war and cherished peace. According to the author, he was gentle to his enemies and not vengeful. He would gladly receive the ambassadors of defeated rulers who appealed for peace. He did not

gönderüp, kâfir ile bir olup müsülmanlığa kâsı itti kim kâfir elinde helâk ide. Müsülmana nisbet idenün niceydüğü hod malûmdur.”

⁵³² Neşri, *Kitab-ı Cihan-nümâ*, p. 579

“Drakula sürüp kapıya gelip, iki oğlunu bile getirip, Hunkâr'a hizmetkâr kıldı. Murad Han dahi suçunu affedip, ettiği yaramazlıklara kalmayıp, hilat geyürüp, yine vilâyetine gönderdi”

⁵³³ *Gazavât-ı Sultan Murad b. Mehemed Han*, p. 72

⁵³⁴ Çelebi Hadidi, *Tevarih-i Al-i Osman*, p. 207

“Şefî' ol ehl-i fakra olma zâlim; Ki bozar devlet ü baht-ı mezâlim; Demişlerdür ki zâlim baht bulamaz; Olur küfrile şehlik zulmile olmaz.”

⁵³⁵ Neşri, *Kitab-ı Cihan-nümâ*, p. 681

want to destroy any nation altogether, so he did not pursue any fleeing or surrendering enemy.⁵³⁶ On the other hand, he was a brave soldier when circumstances required so. An anecdote in the chronicles demonstrates the importance of the ruler as military leader and Murad's inevitable bravery. At the battle of Varna, the forces of Janos Hunyadi gave the Ottoman army a hard time. Many high-ranking military officials including the district governor of Anatolia died in battle. The situation affected the motivation of the troops and some began to scatter around. As the sultan was left alone with his household men, he considered fleeing. Realizing the sultan's intention, one of the officials held firmly the reign of his horse, not letting him go. He said, "What are you doing? If you were to leave, the infidels would follow us till Edirne." Although others intervened and accused him of intending on the life of the sultan, Murad decided to stay.⁵³⁷ In the end the Ottoman army won a victory. Again a mistaken act was reversed to the right at the right moment.

As an accomplished military leader Murad II also knew well that he had to satisfy his men in order to assure their willingness to fight as well as their loyalty. He provided them with the opportunity to further themselves both financially and professionally. Before the Sofia campaign, for example, he sent out decrees announcing that whoever joined his army to fight in the name of Islam would be granted a position of his liking.⁵³⁸ Murad's campaigns promised the participants material wealth as well as the prospect of a place in the military-administrative machine. The conquest of the Castle of Timovi is one of the many examples: "The soldiers of Islam got so much booty that it is impossible to give an account. Nobody cared to lay hands on ordinary clothes, they found gold and silver."⁵³⁹ The reader would remember the gifts granted by the sultan to the chronicler Aşıkpaşazade after the conquest of Belgrade.⁵⁴⁰ The *Gazavât-nâme* of Murad II informs us on the favors granted to another individual, namely Hacı İsa. He

⁵³⁶ Dukas, *Bizans Tarihi*, p. 139

⁵³⁷ Neşri, *Kitab-ı Cihan-nümâ*, p. 651 and 16. *Asırda Yazılmış Grekçe Anonim Osmanlı Tarihi*, p. 131

⁵³⁸ *Gazavât-ı Sultan Murad b. Mehmed Han*, p. 14

"Din-i İslâm aşkına imdâd edüb bizimle ma'an sefere varanların her ne mürâcaatleri var ise, katımda makbûl-i hümâyûnumdur, eğer tımâr isteyene ve eğer zeâmet isteyene ve eğer yeniçerilik isteyene ve eğer sipâhilik isteyene ve eğer yörüklükden çıkmak isteyene her birinin murâdu maksûdları makbûlumdur."

⁵³⁹ *Gazavât-ı Sultan Murad b. Mehmed Han*, p. 46

⁵⁴⁰ See p. 58 of this thesis

was a brave man who had fought in a battle against the Hungarians. He was the only survivor of that battle, but he was wounded. When Murad heard his story and saw he was wounded, he presented him with a robe of honor and gifts, as well as telling him to gather a troop of his own and start building a household of his own.⁵⁴¹ Military success and prowess meant the prospect of promotion and further wealth was an incentive also for the high-ranking officials. However, the prospect of reward was balanced with that of punishment. They were expected to serve the sultan with their best or they could lose what they already had. And Murad reminded them: “If you flee the enemy, never appear before me again...”⁵⁴² Murad’s generosity in battle and his modest attitude to booty is recorded by Kemal in the *Selâtin-nâme*: After the battle of Kosovo, although the amount of booty was plenty and the soldiers got rich, the sultan himself did not care to take anything for himself, but left it all to his soldiers.⁵⁴³

Was Murad who was such an able military ruler tired of fighting at some point and longed for a peaceful life spent in prayer and amusement? Was this why he decided to leave his throne to his son? Chronicles remain largely silent on the reasons of his abdication. According to Neşri the announced reason was to see how his son ruled the realm.⁵⁴⁴ But from what he did when he got to Manisa, we might draw the conclusion that he “retired” to lead a more joyful life.⁵⁴⁵ From the words of Karamanoğlu addressed to provoke the king of Hungary, we can understand that part of the joyful life was

⁵⁴¹ *Gazavât-ı Sultan Murad b. Mehmed Han*, p. 14-5

⁵⁴² *ibid.*, p. 56

“Beğler, paşalar, bilin ve âgâh olun ki, eğer yine evvelki gibi muhannislik edüb her kañınız küffârdan yüz döndürürse bir dahi benim gözüme görünmesin ve il ve memleketimde durmasın ve ammâ kañınızki, yüz ağırdub düşmana din-i mübîn oğruna kılıç urub gazâ ederse ana dahi diledüğünden ziyâde re’âyetler edüb mansıblarını a’lâ edeyim.”

⁵⁴³ Kemal, *Selâtin-nâme*, p. 158

“Şu denlû geldi şâha nimet-i mâl / Bular mâl ile oldular mâlamâl / Orada cem’ olur mâl-ı ganimet / Birin şah almağa kılmadı niyyet / Şeh anı leşkerine eyledi bahş / Kabûl itmedi andan câme vü rahş”

⁵⁴⁴ Neşri, *Kitab-ı Cihan-nümâ*, p.647

“Oğlumu hâl-i hayatımda tahta geçireyim. Tâki gözüm bakarken göreyim, ne veçhile pâdişâhlık eder.”

⁵⁴⁵ *ibid.*, p.647

“... Manisa’ya varıp, ferâgatle oturup, ‘iys ü nûşa meşgul oldu.’”

entertainment with women.⁵⁴⁶ A totally contradictory explanation comes from an anonymous Greek chronicle. According to this account, Murad abdicated for he had made an oath to become a *dervish* and thus he went into seclusion for more religious and spritual motives.⁵⁴⁷ His leaving the throne to his son at an early age could have been a reason for criticism, however he did not lose time to remedy his mistake by coming back as soon as trouble came up. Although he was not inclined to go back, when envoys were sent from Edirne to call him back, he sensed the difficulties the young ruler was faced with, he was convinced to resume the rule.⁵⁴⁸ Interestingly, the chronicles neither criticize his abdication nor praise his return. The whole issue seems to be reflected as a neutral event. Probably, since he listened to those who told him to come back and did not let the country fall, there was no reason left for reproach. Moreover, we see that he took his son to many battles, thus providing an opportunity for training and experience. When Hamza Beg comes the sultan asking for permission to fight the rebels in Albania, the sultan not only listens to the advice of his men and goes to battle himself, but also he takes his son along with him.⁵⁴⁹ The training he provided to his son was praised by, for example, Aşıkpaşazade who implies that leaving behind a worthy and mighty heir was a sign of a blissful end.⁵⁵⁰

Murad seems to have been true to his word all throughout his career. Dukas points out that he always cherished his oaths to the Christians and kept his word, although some Christian rulers have broken theirs. However, God had punished them through Murad's vengeance.⁵⁵¹ Both Thuroczy and Dukas blame the Hungarians for the defeat at Varna for they have broken the oath given to Murad II. Dukas even says that Murad

⁵⁴⁶ Aşıkpaşaoğlu, *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osman*, p. 184 and Neşri, *Kitab-ı Cihan-nümâ*, p. 649 “Kendi padişahlık etmeğe kaadir olmayıp, çalıcı ‘avretlerle bağlar bucağında yiyip, içip yürür.”

⁵⁴⁷ 16. *Asırda Yazılmış Grekçe Anonim Osmanlı Tarihi*, p. 134

⁵⁴⁸ *Gazavât-ı Sultan Murad b. Mehemed Han*, p. 42

“Pâdişahın Rumeli’ne geçmeğe niyeti yogidi. Mahmûd Paşa ziyâde ricâ edüb ve Tekvurun ettiği fitneleri dahi söyleyicek Pâdişâh hazretlerinin gelmeğe gönlü durub ve emreyledi.”

⁵⁴⁹ Aşıkpaşaoğlu, *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osman*, p. 185-6 and Neşri, *Kitab-ı Cihan-nümâ*, p. 657-9

⁵⁵⁰ Aşıkpaşaoğlu, *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osman*, p. 189

“Âhır ül-emir âkibeti dahi hayr olındı. Ve oğlu Sultan Mehmed dahi kendüden sonra eyü, azametlü padişah oldı. Ve âkıbet hayırlığınınun dahi alâmeti budur”

⁵⁵¹ Dukas, *Bizans Tarihi*, p. 139

was very much surprised when he heard that the Hungarians were preparing to wage war on the Ottomans, acting contrary their oath.⁵⁵² Murad had even kept his promise to the *begs* of Larende and Germiyan who had betrayed him by provoking and using his younger brother against him. When Murad had come upon them for revenge, they had surrendered Germiyan and Larende, fleeing to Rhodes themselves. Murad called them back, promising not to do them any harm. When they arrived and gave him their obedience, he took them among his men and showed them due respect.⁵⁵³ These accounts found in non-Ottoman chronicles and the lack of contrary accounts in Ottoman sources are enough proof to assume that Murad II was actually an honest ruler.

Murad II was also known for his civic improvement activities and pious deeds. He built an *imarethane* and a grand mosque in Bursa with a religious school attached to it. He appointed thirty reciters and fourteen *mühellil* to the mosque. In Edirne, too, he built a grand mosque, an *imaret*, a religious school and a dervish lodge. He founded the town of Ergene with a huge bridge and an *imaret*. He also built many other lodges, baths, mosques and inns. He used to send an annual gift of 3500 florins to Jerusalem, Mecca and Medina. Every year he personally distributed one thousand florins to the descendants of the Prophet in whichever town he happened to be. He would give alms to the poor regularly on Fridays.⁵⁵⁴ With all the buildings and deeds, he brought prosperity to the realm and pleased his subjects.⁵⁵⁵

He was a protector (*hâmi*) of the subjects and the soldiers. Everybody lived in prosperity; justice, peace and order reigned in the realm. Travelers used to say that such a tender (*hâssiyetli*) ruler was never heard of. The situation of the realm was so good that people could practice their religion and work for their salvation in the other world in peace. And because the land of Sultan Murad was so secure and untroubled “seventy

⁵⁵² Thuroczy, *Chronicle of the Hungarians*, p. 141-2 and Dukas, *Bizans Tarihi*, p. 134

⁵⁵³ 16. *Asırda Yazılmış Grekçe Anonim Osmanlı Tarihi*, p. 122

⁵⁵⁴ *Aşıkpaşaoğlu, Tevârih-i Âl-i Osman*, p. 232-2 and Neşri, *Kitab-ı Cihan-nümâ*, p. 677-681

⁵⁵⁵ Kemal, *Selâtin-nâme*, p. 139

“Bu vechile kılur ol yiri âbâd / Kılur ol iklîmün halkını şâd”

two nations came to live Rûm". Neşri adds that however much the sultan was to be praised, he deserved even more.⁵⁵⁶

Şükrullah's praise of Murad II is probably one of the best enlightening passages on the "ideals" of the time:

During the reign of this religious sultan, the land of Rûm was free of anxiety and grief, of mischief and extravaganza; it was decorated with braveness and truthfulness, adorned with plenty and prosperity. The value of religion and the religious was well appreciated, due respect was paid the virtuous. Those who are well acquainted with the conditions of all the lands in the world, those who were wise and experienced would all say: 'No land or realm has ever been seen or heard of which was more adorned with righteousness and justness, with good muslims and society than the land of Rûm during sultan Murad's time.' Muslims found comfort and a life with no fear under his fortunate tent. The pious deeds; wars; conquests of infidel lands and castles; building of schools, mosques, hostels, bridges and other charitable places; education and promotion of scholars; care given to the public and the poor; devotion to God observed during the reign of this sultan has never been seen... Let the assistance of God, victory, glory, magnificence, defense of the religion, promotion of justice, opening the banner of knowledge, calling the people to the right path, showing respect to the rights of the Muslims be with his descendents...⁵⁵⁷

Dukas who praises the good nature and deeds of Murad II and stresses the fact that he showed kindness to his subjects whether they were Muslims or Christians. He says that because Murad loved peace and hated war, God who is the father of peace spared him a long and painful illness, but granted him with a peaceful death.⁵⁵⁸ In the *Selâtin-nâme*, it is stated that both muslims and infidels cried for Murad II on his death.⁵⁵⁹ Enveri's account is even more dramatic. According to Enveri the people were so grieved by the death of Murad II that they dressed in black from head to toe, they hit their heads on rocks and their tears mixed with the soil.⁵⁶⁰ No other royal death has been told with so vigorously in the chronicles.

⁵⁵⁶ Neşri, *Kitab-ı Cihan-nümâ*, p. 677

"Ve bi'l-cümle her ne veçhile ki Sultan Murad'ı medh etseler, hezâr o denlû ziyade idi."

⁵⁵⁷ Şükrullah, *Behçetüttevarih*, p. 63. For a more poetical version of the praise, see Kemal, *Selâtin-nâme*, pp. 136-9

⁵⁵⁸ Dukas, *Bizans Tarihi*, p. 139

⁵⁵⁹ Kemal, *Selâtin-nâme*, p. 163

⁵⁶⁰ Enveri, *Düstürname-i Enveri*, p. 46

"Geldi on beşinci gün çün pâdişâh / Halk oldu başdan ayağa siyâh / Başların döğerler idi taşile / Yoğruban toprağı gözler yaş ile"

What made Murad II different from his successor Mehmed II who was more often criticized for his harsh behavior and strict measures? It must not have been easy for Mehmed to be the son of such a distinguished and loved father like Murad. He had been given a chance while his father lived, but his father had been preferred over him. He probably felt the need to prove himself and present himself as a powerful ruler. On one hand, his ambitious and aggressive nature was surely very different than that of his more tender and affectionate father. On the other hand, especially with the conquest of Constantinople, Mehmed now had before him the task of making an Empire out of the powerful principality he had inherited from his father. Could he do this with the more feudal traditional methods? Murad was more dependent on his officials who still resembled feudal lords more or less. Mehmed, on the other hand, needed full submission and obedience. Thus the whole character of the “court” started to change, and with it the attitude of the ruler. However, the expectations were not so quick to change. Mehmed’s laws were perhaps a step towards changing the expectations. Regulating the hierarchy in all respects and distinguishing the ruler above all others in writing, the sultan was on the way of becoming an absolute monarch. It is true that Murad, too, had engaged in war with the Christians; but he was not so much hated for it as his son was. But Murad had not put an end to any “ancient” Christian empire. By bringing the end of the Byzantine Empire, or the Roman Empire, he had put an end to the oldest Christian legacy and thus posed a serious threat to Christendom more than ever. Although Mehmed can be considered a “late medieval ruler” in many respects, he also heralds the approaching of a new age. Mehmed resembles a Machiavellian prince rather than his father Murad, who conforms more to the ideals of Erasmus. In a society which believes in the wisdom of “ancient custom” and regards change as a painful process without much good, Murad II appears as the last full-representative of “how things used to be”. Taking into consideration the fact that some of the chronicles used in this study have been written during the time of Bayezid II, we may also assume that the praises of Murad II and some criticism aimed at Mehmed II were to be taken as “reminders” to the reigning sultan.

Muradnâme was presented to Murad II in the early years of his reign. Based on the *Qabusnama*, the book refers to the ideas of the ancient philosophers, Quranic verses and the traditions of the Prophet. The advice given in the work is not much different than the advice literature of contemporary Europe either. The main principles in both this work and the discussions of European scholars as well as Islamic ones can be listed

as being honest, possessing divine sanction and favor, obligation to consult, being prudent, avoiding oppression and cruelty, refraining from pride and vanity, being serious, being kind and generous, showing mercy, being brave and most importantly being just. As for Murad, if we are to trust the chronicles, he kept in step with all.

I hope to have reached a sketch of the ideal ruler hinted through the early Ottoman chronicles, compared to that of “Christian Europe” and “Islamic Middle East”. Actually all the features touched upon in this study deserve to be handled individually in depth. Nevertheless, the selection of examples gives an idea about what kind of a person the king is supposed to be, regardless of his religion. In the course of this study, I have attempted to let the texts speak for themselves and tried to avoid filtering them through the notions and values of the 21st century. Within this frame, the texts seem to reflect the ideal ruler as such: A divinely ordained king, who has inherited this position from his ancestors. Although God selected his dynasty to rule over and take care of the people, he has the merit and virtue to deserve kingship by his own right. He protects his people and religion, working for their welfare. He opposes any kind of oppression and takes justice as the main value in all his deeds. He does not blindly go his own way, but employs the opinions of others so that he can do what is right for his realm. He is generous in giving and makes it his responsibility to make sure that everyone is well taken care of. He avoids vices like anger, pride, lust and so forth both for salvation in the next world and for a good reputation on earth. Ultimately, he is the father and the shepherd to his people.

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