

**RECONSIDERING THE RHETORIC OF OTTOMAN GAZA AND THE DISCOURSE
OF EUROPEAN ANTEMURALE IN THE LATE FIFTEENTH CENTURY:
LEGITIMACY, MYTHS, AND IMPERIAL IDEOLOGIES**

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Abstract

This thesis explores the Ottoman rhetoric of *gaza* in the late fifteenth century and recontextualize it with the Christian European use of the *antemurale christianitatis* rhetoric by considering the apocalypticism's implications for adoption of such discourses. This thesis primarily focuses on the reign of Beyezid II (r. 1481-1512) and other contemporary sovereign figures of the age since it argues that the late fifteenth century political climate and apocalypticism pushed these figures to develop adjusted imperial ideologies. It considers the Ottoman capture of Constantinople and subsequent Ottoman expansionism in Europe as the causative factors behind the reinvigoration of the *antemurale christianitatis* discourse. It also suggests that the events of 1453 triggered the Christian apocalypticism since the fall of Nova Roma and annihilation of the Eastern Roman Empire disturbed both the Latin Church and Orthodox communities in Eastern Europe. Simultaneously, it argues that the rhetoric of Ottoman *gaza* gained additional dimensions owing to the political actions taken by Bayezid II – as well as his predecessor Mehmed II's political designations- and challenging internal and external threats targeted his throne. This thesis adopts a mixture of the comparative historical methodology and connected histories in an attempt to show that the Ottoman use of the *gaza* discourse and European understanding of the bulwark metaphor cannot be fully understood independently.

Besides, this thesis reveals that both Bayezid II and his Christian adversaries in Europe such as Charles VIII of France or Ștefan cel Mare utilized the same pool of the religious myths and semi-historical legends. For instance, Alexander the Great legend that the Ottoman sultans were smitten with including Bayezid II and the apocalyptic nation of Magog that the Christian demagogues employed in their anti-Turkish writings illustrate why this methodological

approach is adopted. Alexander the Great legend provided the Ottoman sultans with a generally acknowledged universal ruler sample that they were eager to follow, while the evil nations of Gog and Magog that they were associated with by the Christian demagogues enabled Christian political establishments to draw a civilizational line between Christian Europe and infidel Ottomans. To sum up, this thesis argues that the late fifteenth century Europe witnessed the eschatological transformation of the holy war discourses and the process itself provides historians with a perfect example of the interconnectedness that existed between Christian Europe and the Ottoman Empire.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Petyr Baelish, the famous fictional character in *A Song of Ice and Fire*, which opens a window into the ruthless nature of politics, is known for his stimulating quote: “Chaos isn’t a pit. Chaos is a ladder. Many who try to climb it fail and never get to try again. The fall breaks them. Only the ladder is real. The climb is all there is.” At first glance, Baelish’s remarks on the flip-flopping order of political rivalries among the seven kingdoms of Westeros, which constitute the main plot of the story in the fictional world created by George R. R. Martin, has nothing to do with the late fifteenth century Southeastern European borderlands, Bayezid II (r. 1481-1512), or his Christian adversaries in Europe, who claimed to be the bulwark of Christendom against the Ottomans. Yet, the turbulent events of the reign of Bayezid II recall the chaos portrayed by Petyr Baelish. Undeniably, the religious and political chaos of the late fifteenth century turned out to be a pit for many of the political actors of the age including Bayezid II’s rebellious brother Prince Cem (b.1459-d.1495). Prince Cem tried to climb the ladder again and again; he fought against Bayezid, humiliatingly defeated by him, fled to Cairo, Rhodes, France, and at last died in Italy in sorrow; hence the fall broke him. A similar impulse conquered the mind of John Albert of Poland (r. 1492-1501), who devoted most of his reign to fighting a crusade against the Ottomans and ultimately broken by the fall owing to the betrayal of Stephen III of Moldavia (r.1457-1504). Bayezid II, on the other hand, appears to be the only one who realized the truth: Only the ladder is real.

Despite the misleading consensus among the Ottoman historians about his military and strategic incompetence, Bayezid II redesigned the Ottoman imperial ideology through a strange blend of *gaza* discourse and cosmological-universal sovereignty ideal.¹ Even though his

¹ Selahattin Tansel’s biography of Sultan Bayezid II provides us with a perfect example of the one-sided approach towards Bayezid II. Throughout his biography, the reader gets the impression that Bayezid II was an epic failure compared to both his predecessor Mehmed II and successor Selim I. Selahattin Tansel, *Sultan II. Bayezid’in Siyasi Hayatı* (İstanbul: Milli Eğitim Basımevi, 1966). Other notable Ottomanists who approached the reign of Bayezid II with the same cynical attitude are İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, Colin İmber, and Stanford Shaw. Feridun Emecen,

political wisdom was criticized owing to the lack of measures to halt the advance of Shah Ismail's Safavids, the imperial ideology he constructed established the political foundations of the later decades of the empire. Besides, he captured Chilia and Akkerman from the Principality of Moldavia in 1484, two strategic fortresses on the Black Sea shores of Eastern Europe that Mehmed II failed to conquer. I argue that he perceived the gist of Mehmed II's military expeditions in Eastern Europe and realized how crucial it was to control the region. In a sense, he accomplished the longed-for dream of establishing naval supremacy against the Christian powers in the Black Sea and the Mediterranean. Between 1498 and 1503, he established Ottoman dominance in the Eastern Mediterranean by overpowering the Venetian navy and completed the conquest of the Peloponnese.² However, his last years on the throne witnessed a series of catastrophes, including the military fiasco against the Mamluks in the East, the rise of the Safavid Dynasty, which was destined to be the archenemy of the House of Osman in the years to come, Şahkulu Revolt erupted in Teke region and subsequently pervaded whole Anatolia, and ultimately his dethronement by his son Selim I (r. 1512-1520) once again revealed that the climb was all there is and Bayezid II was not an exception to this.

This research investigates the political pandemonium of the late fifteenth century through a comparative lens and aims at the reconsideration of the Ottoman use of the *gaza* discourse by recontextualizing it within an asymmetrical-comparative model with the European *antemurale christianitatis* rhetoric. Although my research places a great emphasis on a handful of contemporary sovereign figures of the period, it indicates that systems, ideologies, and political discourses prove to be enduring in the long run. Thus, these figures and their critical actions illustrate how interconnected the Ottoman and Christian European worlds were in the

on the other hand, challenges their works and reconsider the reign of Bayezid II in a similar vein with this thesis. Feridun Emecen, 'II. Bayezid Devriyle İlgili Meselelere Dair Yeni Bakışlar', in *Sultan II. Bayezid Dönemi ve Bursa*, ed. by Nilüfer Alkan Günay (Bursa: Gaye Kitabevi, 2017), pp. 13–24 (p. 13).

² Volkan Dökmeci, *Akdenizde Devletler ve Korsanlar Venedik Kaynaklarına Göre II. Bayezid ve I. Selim Dönemlerinde Osmanlı Denizciliği ve Korsanlık* (İstanbul: Babil Kitap, 2020), p. 18.

late fifteenth century and on what basis they can be regarded as the asymmetrical correspondents of each other. Despite careful consideration of the decisive moments in Bayezid II's reign -in relation to their effects on European politics-, the focus of this research remains how holy warfare discourses adapted to the altering circumstances rather than the role of the individuals in history.

It also examines the marriage between the Ottoman *gaza* rhetoric and the cosmological-universal sovereignty model in the reign of Bayezid II. Two underlying reasons for searching for this unison in the reign of Bayezid II are listed as follows. First, as already mentioned elsewhere, Bayezid II's reign has often been associated with military lethargy and political stupor, which allegedly constitutes a stark contradiction with Mehmed II's policies.³ Contra them, I argue that Bayezid II essentially followed the expansionist policies of Mehmed II and constructed a public image as a *gazi* sultan who also aspired for cosmological-universal sovereignty. Hence, investigating how the *gaza* rhetoric is applied by the Ottoman court *littérateurs*, chroniclers, and hagiographers of Bayezid II's time can make a serious contribution to the current literature on *gaza* debate. Second, this project can expand the scope of the messianism debate in early modern Eurasia to which Cornell Fleischer, Mayte Green-Mercado, and Sanjay Subrahmanyam made an enormous contribution.⁴ For instance, Fleischer has already renewed interest in the reign of Süleyman I (r.1520-1566) since Süleyman's hostility

³ Aikaterini Dimitriadou, 'The Heşt Behişt of Idris Bidlisi: The Reign of Bayezid II(1481-1512)' (unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, The University of Edinburgh, 2000), p. 26.

⁴ Cornell Fleischer, 'Mahdi and Millennium: Messianic Dimensions in The Development of Ottoman Imperial Ideology', in *The Great Ottoman-Turkish Civilisation*, ed. by Halil İnalcık, İlber Ortaylı, and Nejat Göyünç (Istanbul: Yeni Türkiye, 2000), III, 42–54; Cornell H. Fleischer, 'A Mediterranean Apocalypse: Prophecies of Empire in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 61.1–2 (2018), 18–90; Cornell Fleischer, 'The Lawgiver as Messiah: The Making of the Imperial Image in the Reign of Süleymân', in *Soliman Le Magnifique et Son Temps: Actes Du Colloque de Paris, Galeries Nationales Du Grand Palais, 7–10 Mars 1990*, ed. by Gilles Veinstein (Paris: Documentation française, 1992), pp. 159–77; Mayte Green-Mercado, 'Speaking the End Times: Early Modern Politics and Religion from Iberia to Central Asia', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 61.1–2 (2018), 1–17; Sanjay Subrahmanyam, 'The Politics of Eschatology: A Short Reading of the Long View', in *Historical Teleologies in the Modern World* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), pp. 25–45; Sanjay Subrahmanyam, 'Connected Histories: Notes towards a Reconfiguration of Early Modern Eurasia', *Modern Asian Studies*, 31.3 (1997), 735–62.

with the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V (r.1516-1556) was perceived as an apocalyptic rivalry even by the contemporaries. Since the reign of Bayezid II remained an uncharted period within the scope of this debate, this study places a greater focus on the years between 1481-1512 to develop a better understanding of the initial stages of the making of an imperial ideology informed by messianism, apocalyptic fear, and cosmology.

My investigation of the parallels between the two discourses in the political context of the second half of the fifteenth century and early years of the sixteenth century-which roughly corresponds to the reign of Bayezid II (r. 1481-1512)-, slightly differs from the traditional historiography. Unlike the previous scholars, my primary motivation is to demonstrate how and why the two discourses were linked with a pool of eschatological vocabulary and employed by both the Ottomans and their Christian rivals in Europe correspondingly. This parallel was achieved owing to the common motives of the late fifteenth century apocalypticism such as the Gog and Magog metaphor, Alexander the Great trope, or Qutb al-Aqtab nom de guerre. To achieve this goal, I illustrate their commonalities and differences when analyzing climacteric occurrences such as Charles VIII's invasion of the Italian Peninsula under the veil of fighting against the enemies of Christianity. My research indicates that both the Ottomans and Eastern European sovereignties, starting with the second half of the fifteenth century, strived to adapt themselves to the changing circumstances that had detrimental effects on the established political ideologies. For example, the rising apocalyptic fear and growing eschatological pretension shared by two communities who lived on different sides of the Eastern European borderlands undeniably forced the ruling elites to revise their ideologies to remain in power. A somewhat modified and buttressed imperial ideology, via a combination of political motives with an eschatological vocabulary, proved to be obligatory for kings and sultans to compete with the changing political circumstances.

Another driving force of this research is to discuss how exceptional the Ottoman *gaza* was compared to another dominant holy war discourse of the age, *antemurale christianitatis*. The uncovering of the exceptional features of the Ottoman *gaza* and *antemurale christianitatis* also requires us to keep a lookout for differences that existed between them. For the most part, these similar and different characteristics came to characterize both discourses in the late middle ages and the early modern period. Besides, it is worth noting that this approach enables us to overcome the fallacy of exceptionalism that many historians in the field were entrapped by in the previous decades. Unlike the previous scholarship, I investigate the circumstances under which the holy war discourses proved to be essential political tools for the Ottomans and their Christian neighbors in Europe through comparative lenses.

Equally crucial to these motivations, this thesis proposes to answer the following questions. First, can we argue that relatable incidents and recurrent themes observable in the Ottoman Empire and Christian Europe, such as the succession wars, economic struggles, or growing eschatological disquiet brought forth the strange blend of holy war discourses and apocalyptic vocabularies? If such is the case, can we conclude that the fifteenth-century Ottomans and their contemporary ‘enemies’ in *res publica Christiana* shared a political vision, which is articulated through widely used motives such as the myth of Alexander the Great? Can we argue that both the Ottomans and their neighboring Eastern European rivals demarcated a civilizational line between their world and enemy territories by referring to the same mythical motives such as Alexander the Great? Finally, how do these relate to what I refer to as the eschatological transformation of the Ottoman *gaza* and Christian bulwark concept in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries’ Europe?

In an age when the line of demarcation between different religious communities was not indisputably discernible, and their apocalyptic traditions were far from homogenous - as we tend to imagine them – the possible result that we can discover may seem absurd to the

contemporary reader. Besides, the answers to the questions listed above may vary depending on the sources referred to by the author. Yet, a venture into the often-neglected relationship between the holy war discourses and the apocalyptic expectations of Muslims, Christians, and Jews alike is still needed. This undertaking allows me to illustrate how fluid the apocalyptic traditions of the seemingly isolated religious communities were. It also enables me to discuss whether the Ottoman *gaza* and *antemurale christianitatis* discourses may have triggered each other inscrutably. It is essential to stress that this is an age each one of the following Christian rulers cast themselves as the Last Roman Emperor in keeping with the Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius: Ivan III of Moscow, Jan Olbracht (r. 1492-1501), Charles VIII (r. 1483-1498), and Stephen the Great (1457-1504). Strange as it may seem that both the Ottoman sultans such as Bayezid II (r. 1481-1512) and the Safavids, namely Shah Ismail (r. 1501-1524), fashioned themselves as either the *Messiah*, Alexander of the Age or *Qutb al-Aqtab* in a similar fashion with the first group of rulers. Also, the spellbinding appeal of the Alexander the Great myth for both the Ottomans and European rulers constitutes the connection point in this narrative. The more we delve into the question of how they perceived the world surrounding them through alike myths, ideologies, and discourses, the more we become aware of the intricateness of late fifteenth-century European history.

1.1.Literature Review and Background

Numerous scholars have made incessant efforts to disentangle the emergence of the *Antemurale Christianitatis* rhetoric in Central Europe and the Ottoman Holy War discourse primarily concerning the events surrounding the rise of the Ottoman Empire. That said historical scholarship has often eschewed certain similarities that the two religious discourses shared in favor of perpetuating the presumptive and so-called civilizational differences between Christendom and the Islamic world. One such exception to this tendency is John Armstrong. While Armstrong's approach is innovative in the sense that he provides a window into the

similar patterns followed in the Islamic and Christian worlds, he fails to capture the bigger picture. While it may prove to be fruitful in elaborating on similar dynamics that existed in most pre-modern Islamic establishments and European kingdoms, his belief that engagement with *gaza* lends legitimacy to all rulers in the Islamic world is an invalid claim.⁵ Besides, devotion to a crusading ideology or eagerness to sacrifice for the *Res publica Christiana* were not sufficient causes for Christian sovereigns to preserve their thrones.

Despite the flimsy comparison that John Armstrong attempted on the Ottoman *gaza* and the *antemurale christianitatis* discourses, it is Nora Berend to whom all scholars in the field are in high debt when it comes to delving into the complexities of the latter. In a way, her interpretation of the bulwark myth and its historical transformation in Central Europe illustrates the interconnectedness of religion and social identity in the Middle Ages. Besides, her study merits careful consideration since it traces the discourse back to the Mongol invasion of Central Europe and avoids a misconception that the rhetoric was a direct result of the Ottoman incursions. Simply put, ‘At the Gate of Christendom’ provides a window into the pre-Ottoman history of the *antemurale* discourse in Central Europe.⁶

Kerstin Weiland, another scholar, who contributed toward the *antemurale* literature, commands our attention to how the Ottoman advance in Europe revitalized the *antemurale* discourse. Weiland alleges that the rise of the concept of *antemurale* became observable with the rapid expansion of the Ottomans. She mainly argues that the Ottoman capture of Constantinople in 1453 contributed to the revival of this old discourse. Although Constantinople had already lost its former glory when the Ottoman Empire captured the city, its fall instilled a terrible fear in the European kingdoms because of the symbolic meaning

⁵ John Armstrong, *Nations before Nationalism* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1982), p. 292.

⁶ Nora Berend, *At the Gate of Christendom: Jews, Muslims, and ‘Pagans’ in Medieval Hungary, c. 1000-C. 1300* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

assigned to *Nova Roma*. Constantinople was reminiscent of the Roman legacy even though it was far away from its once venerable grandeur -and as the Islamic apocalyptic thinking- the Latin world regarded the fall of the city as the herald of the last hour. For instance, Charles VIII justified his Italian Campaign in 1494 by asserting that his sole purpose was to save Constantinople and the Holy Land from Islamic tyranny and oust the Ottomans from Europe back to the Asian steppes.⁷ Weiland's interpretation of the *antemurale* rhetoric and the Ottoman advance in Europe confirms that both discourses merit an asymmetrical comparative analysis.

As noted earlier, the Ottoman arrival in Europe and its armed forces, unleashed against the Christian principalities located on the Eastern borderlands of Christianity in the fifteenth century, stirred the crusading ideals and prompted collective defensive strategies throughout *res publica Christiana*.⁸ Yet, I avoid interpreting Christian Europe as a cohesive political unit driven by a sense of 'collective consciousness' and whose members exhibit a willingness to sacrifice their self-interest for the sake of the whole Christian community. Liviu Pilat and Ovidiu Cristea, two leading Romanian medievalists, point out this issue and investigate the Ottoman penetration of the Black Sea region.⁹ Their study reveals the apathetic attitude taken by the rest of the Christian world against the Ottoman advance, except the borderland

⁷ Kerstin Weiland, 'The Origins of Antemurale Christianitatis Myths: Remarks on the Promotion of a Political Concept', in *Rampart Nations: Bulwark Myths of East European Multiconfessional Societies in the Age of Nationalism* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2019), p. 11.

⁸ In its classical form, the term *res publica Christiana* referred to the 'terrestrial society of Christians' and implied the political and societal unity among Christians. Marshall Baldwin notes that most Middle Age scholars attributed the emergence of the *res publica Christiana* concept to the greatest Latin father Saint Augustine of Hippo (354-430) who elaborated on the term in his magnum opus the City of God. Marshall W. Baldwin, *Christianity Through the Thirteenth Century*, The Documentary History of Western Civilization (London: Macmillan Press, 1970), p. 6. It is worth noting that the term did not go out of fashion after the Middle Ages. *Res publica Christiana* and other terms which were on par with the first were widely used by the Western literati of the Enlightenment age such as Leibniz. *Imperium Romanum* which stands for the Roman Empire, and *Orbis Christianus*, which is the whole Christian world, had wide application in the Christian West, to name a few. However, we should note that Leibniz's philosophy appears to be a complicated one in the sense that what he meant by the *respublica christianitatis* cannot be fully appreciated without considering his understanding of the Roman church. Briefly stated, he held the Roman Church responsible for the cohesion that ideally should exist among believers. In this regard, *res publica Christiana* helped him foster the political system he considered ideal. Hartmut Rudolph, "'Res Publica Christiana" and "Corpus Mysticum": Some Remarks on Their Meaning in the Political Thought of Leibniz', *Studia Leibnitiana*, 43.1 (2011), 24-35 (p. 24).

⁹ *The Ottoman Threat and Crusading on the Eastern Border of Christendom during the 15th Century*, ed. by Liviu Pilat and Ovidiu Cristea, East Central and Eastern Europe in the Middle Ages, 450-1450, 48 (Leiden: Brill, 2017).

principalities and Poland for whom the peril the Ottomans posed was imminent. What truly makes this work distinctive from the previous attempts is the perspective of the authors. They reinterpret the Ottoman advance in the region by revisiting the *antemurale christianitatis* and argue that neither the crusading ideology nor the *antemurale* concept was distinctive to the Papacy or its Western European allies. Instead, they discuss how the Pontic principalities refashioned themselves as the bulwark of Christendom in the face of the Ottoman peril.

One such exception to the shared inertia of Christian Europe at this stage of the Ottoman advance was John I Albert (r. 1492-1501), who stepped forward to confront the Ottomans. The young Polish king presented himself as the defender of Christendom and appealed to the *antemurale christianitatis* rhetoric following the Ottoman conquest of *Akkerman* and *Chilia*. For the Polish kingdom, the defense of *Akkerman* and *Chilia* was essential for safeguarding the integrality of the whole Christian world.¹⁰ The humiliating military fiasco of Albert against Bayezid II in the so-called crusade of 1497, aimed at restoring Wallachia and Moldavia to Christian rule, resulted in the pursuant Ottoman-Crimean incursions into the inner Polish lands led by *Bali Bey*.¹¹ The unfolding of events in such a catastrophic way mitigated the tension between John I Albert and Stephen the Great since the latter sided with Bayezid against the Polish forces in 1497 and illustrated the lack of unity among Christian sovereigns. From a different angle, however, Stephen's allegiance with Bayezid and betrayal of the crusading ideal provided John Albert the fertile ground for boosting his fame as the sole defender of Christianity.

A literature review on the Ottoman *gaza* paradigm requires us to revisit one of the most controversial historiographical debates of the twentieth century: the *Gazi Thesis*.¹² Paul

¹⁰ Pilat and Cristea, pp. 223–24.

¹¹ Natalia Nowakowska, 'Poland and the Crusade in the Reign of King Jan Olbracht, 1492-1501', in *Crusading in the Fifteenth Century: Message and Impact*, ed. by Norman Housley (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p. 131.

¹² Paul Wittek, *The Rise of the Ottoman Empire: Studies on the History of Turkey, 13th-15th Centuries*, ed. by Colin Heywood, Royal Asiatic Society Books (Abingdon-on-Thames: Routledge, 1938).

Wittek's argument that *gaza* was the decisive factor in distinguishing the Ottomans from other Turcoman principalities who competed for supremacy in Anatolia was to be named *Gazi Thesis*. He alleged that the religious warfare enabled the Ottomans to prevail over other competitive powers in Anatolia and launch grand campaigns in Europe. His magnum opus stirred a response from the Turkish historian Fuad Köprülü, who prioritized the role played by Turkoman groups in accounting for the success of the early Ottomans. Köprülü emphasized that we are obliged to consider the socio-economic conditions that dominated the borderland regions to explain how the Ottomans outrivaled other principalities.¹³ Wittek asserted that *gaza* has never ceased to be the *raison d'être* of the Ottoman Empire until its demise in the wake of World War I. As Wittek saw it, the Ottomans divided the world into two camps, namely, *Darü'l-Islam* and *Darü'l-Harb*. This perpetual warfare necessitated the rulers of *Darü'l-Islam* to fight against the sovereigns of *Darü'l-Harb* until they convert to Islam or agreed to pay tribute. In this context, Wittek considered the early Ottomans as devout Muslims motivated by their religious zeal in their military expeditions. In practice, however, the Ottomans employed the *gaza* discourse only when it served their best interests rather than piously adhering to a religious doctrine.

Although many critics have addressed the problematic aspects of Wittek's thesis, such as his excessive dependence on Ahmedî's *İskendernâme* as a primary source, the crux of the matter remains worthy of discussion. One of the solid arguments against the *gazi* thesis was put forward by Friedrich Giese who posited that guilt crafts played no less significant role than the *gaza* notion in the emergence of the Ottoman Empire. Another blow he hit at Wittek's thesis was his counterargument that the Christian soldiers and nobles - recruited in the Ottoman ranks- contradict the exclusive *gaza* spirit, which was the name of the game in Wittek's analysis of the early Ottomans. Besides, Lindner put forward that the rise of the Ottomans relied upon their

15. Mehmet Fuad Köprülü, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun Kuruluşu* (İstanbul: Alfa Yayıncılık, 2016).

tribal organization, which was in no way different than other Anatolian Turkoman principalities at this time.¹⁴

Another well-known Ottoman historian who rekindled the interest in the emergence of the Ottoman state is Cemal Kafadar. Kafadar lends credence to the *gazi* thesis and acknowledges that *gaza* contributed to the consolidation of the heterogeneous elements of the early Ottoman society. Yet, he casts doubts on Wittek's analysis and cautions his reader that the *gaza* spirit may have denoted different values for different societal groups. In this sense, his approach reminds us of the methodological contextualism as proffered by Quentin Skinner.¹⁵ His methodological approach, which considers *gaza* an inclusive political system, fits into my research. As I discuss elsewhere throughout my thesis, I argue that neither *gaza* nor the Christian bulwark rhetoric was inclusive and homogenous, but they were rather inclusive and heterogeneous. To be more precise, my research suggests that both *gaza* and *antemurale* discourses were informed by similar religious and political sources such as the defense of faith through political actions and apocalypticism. On a final note, Heath Lowry's study on the early Ottomans should be taken into consideration given that he openly rebutted Wittek's *gazi* thesis and argued that the Ottomans abused the classical *gaza* notion to acquire new slaves and gain war booty.¹⁶

1.2.Methodology

This thesis adopts a combination of two methodological approaches to better understand the late fifteenth century Eastern European and Ottoman histories: 1) Asymmetrical Historical Comparison and 2) Connected Histories. To a certain extent, it follows the asymmetrical

¹⁴ Rudi Paul Lindner, *Nomads and Ottomans in Medieval Anatolia*, Uralic and Altaic Series (Bloomington: Sinor Research Institute of Inner Asian Studies/Sinor Research Institute of Inner Asian Studies, 1983), p. 20.

¹⁵ Cemal Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds: The Construction of the Ottoman State* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), p. 75.

¹⁶ Lindner, p. 22.

comparative methodology developed by the German historian Jürgen Kocka. However, it also appeals to the connected history approach promoted by Sanjay Subrahmanyam. Subrahmanyam's methodological approach fits the aims and scope of this thesis since my research findings show that both the Ottomans and Christian European political establishments were linked through similar impulses, myths, and surrounding developments.

The comparative method proves to be a useful methodological tool for all historians, including the experts on Ottoman history in two respects. First, as Marc Bloch aptly puts it, history remains unintelligible if historians cannot establish explanatory relationships between phenomena. Accordingly, the Ottoman historians cannot consider themselves an exception to this basic principle.¹⁷ While a great number of Ottoman historians limit themselves to the circumscribed sections of Ottoman history and surrender themselves to its so-called exceptionality, this study evaluates the evolution of the Ottoman *gaza* discourse within the wider political context of late fifteenth-century Europe. It links the coalescence of the Ottoman cosmological-political vision and the *gaza* discourse with a similar process that can be found in the apocalyptic climate of Europe. Second, it is now well established from a variety of studies that the comparative method prevents the fallacy of exceptionalism and historians can distinguish what is unique in their subject. Besides, Jürgen Kocka suggests that an asymmetrical historical comparison can free researchers from the nationalist history narratives and it enables them to devise more inclusive explanatory systems. Theoretically, it does so by providing the historians with a fertile ground to compare their case society with another society that was in touch with the first. Hence, historians, who follow this methodological approach, can better distinguish between the exceptional features and shared characteristics of the case societies.¹⁸

¹⁷ William H. Sewell, 'Marc Bloch and the Logic of Comparative History', *History and Theory*, 6.2 (1967), 208–18 (p. 208).

¹⁸ Jürgen Kocka and Heinz-Gerhard Haupt, 'Comparison and Beyond: Traditions, Scope, and Perspectives of Comparative History', in *Comparative and Transnational History: Central European Approaches and New Perspectives* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2009), p. 5.

Given that both Wittek and his critics put forward exceptionalist views on early Ottoman history, the very basis of Ottoman history is built on a myth destined to be torn into shreds by contemporary historians. The Ottomans were not exceptional in the sense that they inherited a religious and political formula to engage in religious warfare against their Christian European adversaries. Furthermore, most of the apocalyptic themes they incorporated into their imperial ideology were also shared by the same adversaries in Europe in the late fifteenth century. Building on this premise, this thesis explores the symbiotic relationship between religion and politics illustrated best by comparing two holy war discourses, namely, the Ottoman *gaza* and Latin *antemurale christianitatis* rhetoric. Achieving this goal would help us to see how fluid and heterogeneous Holy War discourses were than they are considered to be. However, this thesis does not undertake a fully comparative analysis of how these two discourses underwent a cosmological transformation. Instead, I aim to develop a better understanding of the Ottoman *gaza* discourse by investigating the Christian bulwark rhetoric.

The connected histories, on the other hand, constitute the other half of the methodological skeleton of my study and I particularly follow the example of Sanjay Subrahmanyam who draws an entangled picture of the histories of India and Europe in the early modern era. Subrahmanyam argues that the connected histories can offer an alternative to the comparative investigation of early modern history since -according to him-, the latter downplays the interconnectedness of the early modern continents, kingdoms, and societies. However, his study fails to devise a model, which utilizes both the comparative method and still exercises attention to the interconnectedness of the early modern world. This study attempts to reconcile the comparative method and connected history approaches since the rest of Subrahmanyam's remarks on the interconnectedness of the early modern world remain essentially important. It has been demonstrated by him that it was not only armies, commercial and religious agents, military practice and innovations, or commodities that swapped places

across the early modern world. The ideas, mental constructions, and myths were traded between societies and remote continents through either direct or indirect contact with each other.¹⁹

Even the specific example he refers to is the gravity of the Franciscan apocalypticism and messianic thought in convincing Christopher Columbus that his voyage was an integral part of God's plan. It is conclusively shown by Subrahmanyam that a messianic vocabulary and apocalyptic thought cut across the northern and southern globes; hence, created a link between distant continents.²⁰ Within this political climate, at least a handful of Eurasian rulers appear to have been concerned with associating themselves with eschatological figures such as Alexander the Great or the Last Roman Emperor. While the Christian European reception of the Alexander legend concentrated on his erection of a wall which turned out to be a civilizational demarcation line between the civilized and evil nation of Gog, the real persona of Alexander is linked with the prophetic figure of Dhul-Qarnayn the Two Horned One in the Islamic world. In addition to this, the late fifteenth century Ottoman scholars served the purpose of designing a new imperial image for their patrons, the Ottoman sultans, by likening them to Alexander the Great. Yet, as Subrahmanyam points out, it was not only the Ottoman sultans who referred to themselves as the Alexander of the Age. The contemporary European litterateurs, who were under the influence of Alexander the Great myth, and Ismail I of the Safavid dynasty also resorted to the same motive.²¹ Therefore, there is enough evidence to suggest that the Alexander the Great legend was one of the connecting points between the Christian European world, the Ottomans, and the Safavid Persia.

The combination of two seemingly irrelevant -even contradictory-, methodological approaches may seem absurd at first glance. In a way, the comparative method and connected histories approach the case societies from different angles and have different priorities.

21. Subrahmanyam, 'Connected Histories: Notes towards a Reconfiguration of Early Modern Eurasia', p. 748.

22. Subrahmanyam, 'Connected Histories: Notes towards a Reconfiguration of Early Modern Eurasia', p. 749.

23. Subrahmanyam, 'Connected Histories: Notes towards a Reconfiguration of Early Modern Eurasia', p. 753.

Nevertheless, comparative studies should take into consideration the connections between geographically remote societies and be informed by the entanglements that existed between them.²² These entanglements can reveal themselves to the researchers only if the researchers ask the proper questions to the sources at their disposal. Judy Wakayabashi's thoughts on the inception of the globalization process in the late fifteenth century deserve particular attention in this regard. As she aptly puts it, the late fifteenth century can be considered as the inception phase of a globalization process that connected hitherto disconnected societies, remote geographies, and until then irrelevant phenomena. A handful of audacious explorers, daring missionaries, sultans, and kings -who all fell victim to the dream of universal sovereignty-, and ruthless colonizers created countless entanglement points.

While some of these conjunctures received more attention than others such as the Voyage of Christopher Columbus, the Ottoman capture of Constantinople, or the Reconquista; some still wait to be examined carefully by historians. In this sense, the late fifteenth century is replete with connection points. To quote Tijana Krstic, this was an age when the imperial competition between the Ottoman Empire, Serenissima, the House of Valois, and Hapsburgs was of soteriological importance if we consider that millenarianism turned out to be the common norm of their political ideologies.²³ These norms were supported by seductive mythos among which the Alexander the Great myth seems to be the most common and alluring one considering its gravity for both the Ottoman and Christian European sovereigns. The legend of the Alexander the Great myth did not only provide the upcoming generations of rulers and political authors with a source of aspiration but also created a common political language to which both pre-modern Islamic and Christian European political establishments were beholden.

²² Kocka and Haupt, p. 20.

²³ Tijana Krstić, 'Illuminated by the Light of Islam and the Glory of the Ottoman Sultanate: SelfNarratives of Conversion to Islam in the Age of Confessionalization', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 51.1 (2009), 35–63 (p. 39).

Chapter II

The Rhetoric of Ottoman Gaza, Apocalypse of 1492, and the Ottoman Imperial Ideology

2.1. The Islamic Holy Warfare and the Ottomans up Until the Reign of Bayezid II

This chapter aims to provide the reader with a brief background of the Islamic Holy Warfare that the Ottoman Empire inherited from their predecessors and trace the formation of Ottoman *gaza* discourse. The first military campaigns launched by Prophet Muhammad and his rightly-guided caliphs set an example for the Ottomans -as well as other competitive political establishments in the Turkic-Islamic Anatolia-, to engage themselves in religious warfare against their Christian adversaries in Europe. In reality, the Ottomans were cognizant of the rhetorical power of *gaza* and *jihad* and how these concepts lent credence to their sovereignty claims. They utilized the Islamic Holy Warfare as they saw fit throughout the fifteenth century such as reinterpreting the early decades of their history through religious lenses.

Accordingly, in the first section of the first chapter, I explore the emergence of the Islamic Holy Warfare discourse and how the Ottomans applied this rhetoric to the political circumstances they struggled with. Also, semantic consideration on the meanings ascribed to *gaza* and *jihad* are discussed throughout this section. In the following section, I examine the Ottoman use of the *gaza* discourse during the reign of Bayezid II and scrutinize the factors that pushed Bayezid II to reconfigure the Ottoman imperial ideology around this notion. These factors encompass Bayezid II's visit to Sarı Saltuk's tomb in Dobruja and the failed assassination attempt that targeted the Ottoman sultan in 1492. Bayezid II's renegotiation of power with *gazi* and dervish circles cannot be fully perceived without considering these instances. In the last section of this chapter, I explore how the late fifteenth century apocalypticism contributed towards the eschatological transformation of the Ottoman *gaza* discourse during Bayezid II's time.

Starting with the prophet Muhammad's earliest military campaigns against those who refused to join the community of believers or paying *jizya* to the Islamic Caliphate, nearly all sovereign figures of the Muslim world applied the holy war rhetoric to justify their expeditions.²⁴ One of the earliest and rarest exceptions to this appears to be the Constitution of Medina whereby Muhammad conceded to include the Jewish tribes into the ummah. Islam was a religion of peace for Muhammad's followers, and it indubitably restricted the 'unnecessary' use of violence. However, the same did not hold for those who rejected conversion to Islam or paying tribute to the Muslim sovereign since their insubordination made them the natural targets of the Islamic war machine. This phenomenon became palpable in the third Rashidun caliph Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb's time, who invaded Anatolia, Persia, Azerbaijan, and the Caucasus. Within this context, Islamic jurists endeavored to determine the certain circumstances under which any war against non-believers would be considered legitimate. These offensives were presented under the pretext of *gaza* or *jihad* to legitimize the war against non-believer communities.²⁵

Both *gaza* and *jihad* are of Arabic origin and are mentioned in the Quran on several different occasions. However, they are often mistaken for each other due to the similar aims they served.

²⁴ Selahattin Döğüş, 'Osmanlılarda Gaza İdeolojisinin Tarihi ve Kültürel Kaynakları', *Belleten*, 72.265 (2008), 817–88 (p. 819).

²⁵ Although *gaza* often proved to be practical rhetoric to justify the military expeditions against non-Islamic sovereignties, even the prophet Muhammad first resorted to peaceful negotiations with strong neighboring polities such as the Eastern Roman Empire. It becomes palpable in Muhammad's letter to the Roman Emperor Heraclius. Heraclius is widely acknowledged by his contemporaries and the next generation of scholars and chroniclers as one of the exemplary and valiant emperors ever to sit on the throne of the Roman Empire. Besides, his rise to power and his eventual victory against the Sassanid Empire roughly correspond to the emergence of the Islamic State under the leadership of Muhammad. Moreover, Heraclius's triumph over the Sassanid Empire is believed to have been recorded by the Quran itself since the verses of Surat al-Rum directly refers to the reconsolidation of the 'Greek' supremacy over Persians. More importantly, however, Heraclius remains as one of the notorious 'Byzantine' figures as a letter allegedly penned by the prophet Muhammad to call him to Islam suggests that he considered a possible conversion. The eight-century Arabian scholar and biographer Ibn Sa'd alleges that Muhammad sent envoys to Heraclius, the Sassanid King Chosroes, and Najashi of Abyssinia upon his return from Hudaibiya. For more information see Nadia Maria el-Cheikh, 'Muhammad and Heraclius: A Study in Legitimacy', *Studia Islamica*, 89 (1999), 5–21. However, it should be noted that it is hard to argue that there is an indisputable consensus among the experts on this issue and the reliability of these letters. For instance, Robert Bertram Serjeant indicated that the letter that is believed to have been sent to Heraclius by Muhammad is likely a forgery since at that time Muhammad was still struggling to consolidate his power in the Arabian Peninsula. Robert Bertram Serjeant, 'Early Arabic Prose', in *Arabic Literature to the End of the Umayyad Period*, ed. by T. M. Johnstone and others, The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 141–42.

Primarily, the Quran defined jihad as an act of resistance against the incursions of non-believers into the Muslim lands and called it the self-defense right of the community of believers.²⁶ Nevertheless, the Quranic verses about holy war might be misleading and paradoxical at the same time. Jihad primarily refers to such occasions, including the legitimate defense of the community of believers, temples, and Darü'l-Islam countries.²⁷ However, elsewhere, Muslims were granted the permit to combat against their adversaries provided that surrounding societies refused to pay tribute or observe the same religious rules as the Islamic community.²⁸ It is also worth mentioning that the term jihad has gained divergent meanings in the long run. Şinasi Tekin, for instance, illustrated that the concept of jihad is broken down into two sub-categories as *jihad-ı Akbar* and *jihad-ı Asghar*. On the one hand, *jihad-ı Akbar* (the Greater Struggle) denotes that all Muslims were expected to prevail against their ego by practicing self-denial. On the other hand, *jihad-ı Asghar* (the Lesser Struggle) stands for the collective obligation of the Muslim community to engage in a military struggle against the enemies of Islam, who attacked their countries and violated their religious freedom.²⁹ Thus, the term that is mistaken for *gaza* is *jihad-ı Asghar* rather than *jihad-ı Akbar* since the latter is more of a Sufi expression for individual self-growth. In other words, it is more appropriate to understand jihad as a comprehensive legal concept interpreted quite distinctively by Islamic jurists, political theorists, and Sufi thinkers.

When contextualized historically, it comes to our attention that jihad is deeply related to the prophethood of Muhammad and the establishment of the first Islamic state in the sixth century.

26. The Quran 2:190.

27 Alexander Lopasic, 'Islamization of the Balkans with Special Reference to Bosnia', *Journal of Islamic Studies*, Islam in the Balkans, 5.2 (1994), 163–86 (p. 167).

28 Ahmad Atif Ahmad, 'The Evolution of Just War Theory in Islamic Law: Texts, History, and the Purpose of "Reading"', *American Foreign Policy Interests: The Journal of the National Committee on American Foreign Policy*, 28.2 (2006), 107–15 (p. 110).

29 Şinasi Tekin, 'Türk Dünyası'nda Gaza ve Cihad Kavramları Üzerine Düşünceler (Başlangıcından Osmanlıların Fetret Devrine Kadar)', *Tarih ve Toplum*, 109 (1993), p. 156. Abdul Javad Falaturi, 'Martyrdom in the Shia Culture', trans. by Hamid Farnagh, *Safinah Al-Nejat*, 1.4 (2016), 73–78 (p. 76).

Gaza- or *ghazw* in Arabic-, by contrast, has its roots in the pre-Islamic history of the Arabian Peninsula. Initially, it referred to the sporadic incursions or plunder-motivated expeditions of the Arabian Bedouins in the Sahara. Thus, the salient feature of *ghazw* was the redistribution of the wealth through plunder of the enemy camels. With the advent of Islam and its blistering spread to Eurasia and Transoxiana, the Islamic borderland principalities also applied the *ghazw* concept, such as the Samanid Dynasty, Ghaznavids, and later the Seljuks. The borderland warriors, who engaged in a military struggle with idolators, were bestowed upon an honorary title of *gazi*, which was a great source of prestige among the community of believers.³⁰ They were reminiscent of the Arabian Bedouins since the Eurasian *gazis*, who roamed the borderlands and engaged in clashes with their warlords, were mainly under the illusion of acquiring wealth. Against this background, Irène Mélikoff interprets them as the Islamic equivalent of the *condottieri*, who served as bands of mercenaries. In her defense, she refers to Mahmud of Ghazni's (d. 1030) military campaigns in India since at least 20,000 *gazis* were reported to have accompanied Mahmud in his journey to the continent.³¹ To a large extent, Turks were the constitutive elements of the mercenary armies and active members of the *gazi* community, owing to their widely accepted martial skills. Their success in dealing with the Byzantine *akritais* in the Arab-Byzantine frontier zones was inherited by the next generations of nomadic Turkic warriors in the same region during the Seljuk time.³² With the ever-increasing influence of the *futuwwa* organization and their principles on the Anatolian *gazi*

³⁰ It is worth mentioning that the term *gazi* and the concept of *gaza* were already popular before the establishment of Ottoman supremacy in the Islamic world. Moreover, Turks were often considered to be the initial target of *gazi* groups and indispensable elements of the Islamic armies in the later ages. Varying numbers of Turkic groups can be observed in the Abbasid, Umayyad, and Samanid armies as well. Darling argues that the number of *gazi* troops that complimented the large army of the Abbasid Dynasty is estimated to have been 20,000-30,000. The Turkic groups who were engaged in *gaza* expeditions were given the control of border towns and cities where we can observe a composite societal structure and the high volume of trade between the 'believers' and 'idolators.' For more information, see Linda T. Darling, 'Contested Territory: Ottoman Holy War in Comparative Context', *Studia Islamica*, 91 (2000), 133-63 (p. 144).

³¹ Irène Mélikoff, 'Ghāzī', *The Encyclopedia of Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 1991), p. 1043.

³² Pınar Kayaalp, 'Frontier Warriors as Cultural Mediators: Shifting Identities of Byzantine and Turkish March Fighters as Elicited from Anatolian Epic Literature', *Mediaevistik: Internationale Zeitschrift Für Interdisziplinäre Mittelalterforschung*, 25 (2012), p. 119.

community in the fourteenth century, the act of *gaza* also gained a more palpable religious spirit.³³

Anatolia was a perfect location for the brotherhood to flourish and instill the *gazi* community with its moral principles. Given that there was a continuous state of conflict between the Anatolian Seljuk Empire and the Byzantines, the *akhis* must not have struggled to find a place for themselves in this environment.³⁴ However, we should remember that the Anatolian Seljuk Empire struggled to keep the *gaza* spirit alive when it ached from the indirect rule of the Komnenos Dynasty and later the catastrophic Mongolian invasion of Anatolia.³⁵ Furthermore, the Mongolian invasion of Anatolia in the thirteenth century and the deterioration of the established Seljuk order in the region played into their hands. Another group that greatly benefitted from the decline of the Seljuk Empire was the Anatolian borderland *gazis*, who indirectly reaped the benefits of the unleashing of the Mongol war machine.³⁶ The acknowledgment of the Seljuk political superiority by *gazis* was already decreased to a symbolic level since they were loyal to their beys who were the bona fide rulers of their territories. One of these influential beys of Anatolia-but neither the strongest nor the wealthiest-, was Ertuğrul Bey, who was the father of Osman and the eponymous forerunner of the Ottoman Empire. The Mongol invasion was a fortuitous occasion for Osman, who famed himself as a fearless fighter and shrewd tactician to succeed in his grand strategy. Before he died, he transformed this petty borderland principality he inherited from his father into a notable *beylik*

³³ The *futuwwa* refers to a series of moral codes that every chivalrous young Muslim man should abide by and a certain kind of brotherhood whose members mostly roamed in the borderlands.

³⁴ Here, it should be noted that the Anatolian Seljuk Empire had already lost its once admirable grandeur prior to the Fourth Crusade and turned out to be a border sultanate. With the Anatolian Seljuks losing power and vitiating their ability to keep a tight rein on their subjects, dissident Anatolian Turkoman tribes emerged as the new powerhouses in the region. Besides, so-called Islamic trade unions, which are referred to as the *Akhis*, were the Anatolian parallel of the Arabic *futuwwa* organization that flourished in the region following the Battle of Köseadağ in 1243.

³⁵ Claude Cahen, *The Formation of Turkey: The Seljukid Sultanate of Rum (Eleventh to Fourteenth Century)*, ed. by Peter Malcolm Holt, A History of the Near East (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2001), p. 173. Berend, *At the Gate of Christendom: Jews, Muslims, and 'Pagans' in Medieval Hungary, c. 1000-C. 1300*, p. 164.

³⁶ G. G. Arnakis, 'Futuwwa Traditions in the Ottoman Empire: Akhis, Bektashi Dervishes, and Craftsmen', *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 12.4 (1953), p. 234.

by severely threatening the local Byzantine power elite through his fruitful military expeditions what fifteenth-century Ottoman chroniclers tended to define as *gaza*.

2.2. The Rhetoric of Ottoman Gaza in the Late Fifteenth Century

The fifteenth-century Ottoman historiography viewed the early Ottoman expeditions, including those of Osman, as motivated by religious zeal rather than the pursuit of material wealth. Osman and his companions may have honestly considered their incursions into the Byzantine-controlled areas as evidence of their religious commitment. However, contemporary scholars doubt that fifteenth-century Ottoman chroniclers manipulated early Ottoman history in order to create a new imperial ideology that was supposed to be compatible with the political aims of Mehmed II and Bayezid II.³⁷ While this might be the case, it should be noted that Muhammad's remarks on the city of Constantinople were of great significance for the pre-modern age Islamic sovereigns, including but not limited to the Ottomans. The zeal of realizing Muhammad's prophecy concerning the eventual capture of the city by an Islamic army reached its zenith during the reign of Mehmed II. It is logical given that Mehmed II was verbatim obsessed with fulfilling the prophecy and becoming the new Caesar (*kayzer* in Turkish) of *Nova Roma*.³⁸ Building on this, Mehmed II left a legacy as the father of conquest, and his successors were expected to accomplish no less than he did.

³⁷ Halil İnalcık, the doyen of the Ottoman historians who passed away in 2016, notes that most Ottoman chronicles composed during the reign of Bayezid II attach specific importance to the military achievements of Bayezid II and compare the sultan with his predecessors such as Mehmed II. For instance, Tursun Beğ, a well-known contemporary Ottoman historian who is known for *Tarih-i Ebu'l- Feth*, narrates us Bayezid II's Moldavian Campaign and argues that Bayezid's triumph was beyond Mehmed II's capability since Mehmed failed to capture Kilia and Akkerman. Thereupon, İnalcık concludes that the upsurge in history production under the reign of Bayezid II implies that Bayezid weaponized the historiographical tools to propagate his imperial ideology. Nevertheless, his analysis has given rise to criticism as well. Among them was Murat Cem Mengüç, who criticized İnalcık for reaching a definitive conclusion as to the formulation of a new imperial ideology by the Ottoman literati at the behest of Bayezid II although we lack enough evidence. Halil İnalcık, 'Osmanlı Tarihçiliğinin Doğuşu', in *Söğüt'ten İstanbul'a: Osmanlı Devleti'nin Kuruluşu Üzerine Tartışmalar* (Ankara: İmge Kitabevi, 2005), pp. 93–119 (p. 113). Murat Cem Mengüç, 'Histories of Bayezid I, Historians of Bayezid II: Rethinking Late Fifteenth-Century Ottoman Historiography', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 76.3 (2013), 373–89 <<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0041977X1300089X>>.

³⁸ *Söğüt'ten İstanbul'a: Osmanlı Devletinin Kuruluşu Üzerine Tartışmalar*, ed. by Mehmet Öz and Oktay Özel (Ankara: İmge Yayınevi, 2000), p. 265.

Hüseyin Yılmaz notes that the conquest of Constantinople was the linchpin of the *gazi* sultan image Mehmed II strove the design. Hacı Halil el-Konevî -a descendant of Sadreddin Konevî (1209-1274)-, corroborates his claim by referring to Mehmed II as *sāhib-i taht-i Quntstantīn, khalīfat Allāh fī mashāriq al-‘ard wa maghāribihā* (Heir to the Throne of Constantine, Caliph of Allah and sultan of the East and West) in the chronicle he composed upon Mehmed II's request.³⁹ Konevî's depiction of Mehmed II reveals that the shocking events of 1453 furnished the Ottoman sultan with such epithets, including the Roman Emperor and the caliph. In addition to this, Yılmaz reminds us that Mehmed II received education from the most famous tutors of his time who were acquainted with the Mongolic-Persian political ideals. Coupled with his zealous engagement in *gaza*, he acted in accordance with this set of ideals and forged an alliance with the dervish groups and ulama. The alliance among the military leaders, ulama, and dervishes appears to be an indispensable element of the idealized sovereignty model and the centralized state structure according to the Persian political culture that the Ottomans internalized in the fifteenth century. Based on this, Mehmed II managed to convince -either in peaceful terms or by resorting to violence-, all other political actors that his supreme authority was incontestable.⁴⁰ Perhaps even more important than adjusting the Ottoman sovereignty model to the Mongolic-Persian ideals is the semi-legendary historical figure of Alexander the Great, who was by far the most shining example of a universal sovereign for the Ottomans. Self-obsessed in the Greco-Latin culture and classics even when he was a prince-governor of Amasya, he was an avid reader of Arrian's *Anabasis Alexandri*. Philoturk Renaissance scholars such as Francesco Berlinghieri (d. 1501) and Greek Helenoturkists of the age like George Trebizond did not hesitate to associate Mehmed II with Alexander the Great.⁴¹ As will be further

³⁹ Hüseyin Yılmaz, *Caliphate Redefined: Mystical Turn in Ottoman Political Thought*, Rulers&Elites (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), p. 241.

⁴⁰ Halil İnalcık, 'Mehmed the Conqueror (1432-1481) and His Time', *Speculum*, 35.3 (1960), 408–27 (p. 412).

⁴¹ James Hankins, 'Renaissance Crusaders: Humanist Crusade Literature in the Age of Mehmed II', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 49.Symposium on Byzantium and the Italians (2016), 111–207 (p. 141).

discussed throughout the thesis, Bayezid II fell heir to this political tradition and was referred to as Alexander the Great of the Age by his contemporaries. The additional political vocabulary adopted by the court historians and poets who devoted their works to Bayezid II pictured Bayezid II as a savior, defender of Islam, renewer of faith, and a cosmological sovereign.

Among contemporary scholars, Heath Lowry seems to be the first to shift our attention to the designation of a new imperial ideology in Bayezid II's reign. He notes that the Ottoman chronicles depicted the ancestors of Bayezid II as *gazi* sultans and religious warriors to serve this purpose and manipulated the early Ottoman history. Lowry argues that the Ottoman chroniclers of Bayezid's reign purposefully ascribed religious zeal to the military campaigns of the first Ottoman sultans. This deliberate attempt was calculated to provide the House of Osman a religious legitimacy against the Mamluks and Safavids in the East. While the Mamluks were still considered the caliphs this title lost its sanction power in the wake of the Mongol invasion. Regardless, he suggests that the shifting Ottoman understanding of *gaza* from plunder-motivated and sporadic military incursions to consciously waged military campaigns enabled them to distinguish between *gaza* and jihad.⁴²

Indeed, the concept of *gaza* had a prominent role in the redesignation of the Ottoman imperial ideology. As already mentioned elsewhere, the fifteenth-century Ottoman chroniclers served this purpose by reinterpreting the early Ottoman age through the lens of Islamic Holy Warfare. This retrospective interpretation of the early Ottoman history that we can trace back to the times of Osman Gazi functioned to convince the reader that the House of Osman deserved its supreme status in the Islamic world and Anatolia more than any other dynasty. Since the reign of Bayezid II witnessed a series of clashes between the Ottomans, Safavids, Mamluks, this explicit effort of the Ottoman literati seems a willful act and reasonable strategy. Hence, I

⁴² Heath Lowry, *The Nature of the Early Ottoman State*, Suny Series in the Social and Economic History of the Middle East (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2003), p. 50.

posit that the target audience of these chronicles and their claims about the legitimacy of the Ottomans was the Turco-Islamic subjects rather than the Christian dependents of Bayezid. Hüseyin Yılmaz corroborates this claim by referring to the *Heşt Bihişt* written at the behest of Bayezid II in which İdris-i Bidlîsî assimilated the Turcoman *gazi* ethos to the centralized state formation and new imperial ideology. He must have been considered as the most suitable litterateur to undertake this task owing to his acquaintance with the Turcoman tribes since his days in the service of the Aqquyunlu rulers in Eastern Anatolia. In a sense, Bayezid II appears to have attempted to appease the unrest among the dervish groups, *gazi* warriors, and Turcoman population.⁴³ Another contemporary litterateur in Bayezid II court who served a similar purpose with Bidlîsî was Oruç b. 'Adil whose history scrutinized how essential the concept of *gaza* was for the early Ottomans:

“The Ottomans are gazis and victorious, they serve Allah with no thought of personal gain. They gather up the spoils of their raids and spend them for the sake of their religion. They devote themselves to Allah and they live their lives according to sharia. They are the avengers of the infidels...”⁴⁴

Oruç endeavored to illustrate the basis on which Bayezid II could develop his discourse of legitimacy. However, we should also consider the number of *gazavatnâme* written at Bayezid's time. This genre consisted of works that narrated the military achievements of the Ottoman sultans, grand viziers, and a handful *gazi* warlords roamed in the European borderlands. Both Firdevsî's *Kutbnâme* and Safayî's *Fetihnâme-i İnebahtı* suggests that *gaza* became a prominent tool to boost the legitimacy of Bayezid.⁴⁵ Besides, a Persianate emigree İdris-i Bidlîsî's *Heşt Bihişt* in which he narrated the history of the House of Osman and exemplary characteristics of Bayezid II corroborates my claim that the target audience was the Islamic world. Bidlîsî reconsidered Bayezid's aid for the Mamluks against the Portuguese navy and argued that

⁴³ Yılmaz, p. 245.

⁴⁴ Oruç b. Âdil, *Oruç Beğ Tarihi*, trans. by Hüseyin Nihal Atsız (Ankara: Ötüken Yayınevi, 2016), p. 73.

⁴⁵ Firdevsî-i Rumî, *Kutb-Nâme* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2011).

Bayezid's military and logistic support should be considered as clear evidence of Bayezid's willingness to protect Islam against Christian incursions.⁴⁶ This may be considered as one of the earliest but systematic references to the Ottoman claim to the caliphate epithet. After all, protecting Darü'l-İslâm and Muslims from any invader forces was the highest priority of the Caliph. In reminding his reader that it was Bayezid II who defended the welfare of all Muslims regardless of the dynasty they lived under, Bidlîsî attempted to show that Ottomans began assuming the mantle of caliphate even before the reign of Selim I. All these accounts aim to argue that first and foremost, the Ottomans were religious warriors, and they were triumphant against their enemies, the majority of whom were 'infidels'. Second, they were not driven by personal ambitions or self-interests such as accumulating material wealth; on the contrary, they disbursed their riches on religious matters. They did not even hesitate to help the Mamluks when a common Christian enemy appeared. Hence, they were dedicated to pursuing a life in accordance with the Islamic law and they believed that they were given the divine task of punishing the 'infidels.' This was the discursive foundations of Bayezid's imperial ideology whereby Bayezid did refashion himself as a noble religious warrior whose military expeditions were in keeping with the Sharia law code.⁴⁷ Moreover, references to the *gaza* spirit of the early Ottomans served to portray Bayezid as the rightful inheritor of the Ottoman legacy.

Neither Oruç nor İdris-i Bidlîsî or Safayî was the only contemporary chroniclers who left a considerable room to discuss the centrality of the concept of *gaza* in elaborating on the legitimacy of the House of Osman. A contemporary Ottoman chronicler whose identity remained unknown to us corroborates Oruç's claim that the early Ottomans were legitimate rulers by virtue of their military expeditions waged against the Christian principalities. This

⁴⁶ Dimitriadou, p. 32.

⁴⁷ Dimitriadou, p. 62.

time, the reference point of the chronicle appears to be the military campaigns of Orhan Gazi, son and successor of Osman Gazi:

“The warriors walked over the enemy,
And plundered them day and night,
Women and men, they enslaved all
They killed everyone they found, elder and juveniles
Raided against the infidels the warriors of Islam
Those who were the servants of Islam
This is how they engaged in *gaza*...”⁴⁸

The anonymous chronicler gives us further details about the fifteenth-century Ottoman understanding of *gaza* and the very nature of the Ottoman war machine. First, plunder and *gaza* were strictly connected, and pillaging the enemy territory was permissible.⁴⁹ Yet, plunder has never been the primary motivation of these raids. It was rather the by-product of the Ottoman religious zeal in expanding the frontiers of Islam. In this sense, I argue that this is the first diversion of the Ottoman *gaza* concept from the classical Holy War formulation of the early Islamic jurists. Moreover, the enslavement of the defeated population and the massacre of certain groups were allowed since the warriors were on a religious duty of subjugating the ‘infidel’ to the true faith and its champion, the Ottomans. It should be noted that Bayezid’s court historians’ willful manipulation of the early Ottoman history was only one dimension of the imperial ideology in making that was bound to the concept of *gaza*. The same chroniclers also considered Bayezid II’s seizure of Chilia and Akkerman as the shining examples of the Ottoman *gaza* and regarded Bayezid as a great Islamic warrior.⁵⁰ Concerning this, Liviu Pilat

⁴⁸ *Anonim Tevârih-i Âl-i Osman*, ed. by Nihat Azamat, trans. by Friedrich Giese, Marmara Üniversitesi Yayınları, 510 (İstanbul: Edebiyat Fakültesi Basımevi, 1992), p. 16.

⁴⁹ “Know that whatever spoils you take, one-fifth is for Allah and the Messenger, his close relatives, orphans, the poor, and ‘needy’ travelers, if you ‘truly’ believe in Allah and what We revealed to Our servant on that decisive day when the two armies met ‘at Badr’. And Allah is Most Capable of everything.” The Quran, 8:41.

⁵⁰ Rûhî Çelebi, *Ruhi Tarihi*, Belgeler, XIV (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1992), XVIII, p. 471.

notes an interesting visit paid by Bayezid II to the tomb of Sarı Saltuk (d.1298) during the Ottoman campaign of Moldavia. He was considered to be one of the leading figures of the pre-establishment stage of Bektashism in Europe and venerated by the Ottomans owing to his dedication to the spreading of Sunni Islam among the local communities.⁵¹ According to Saltuknâme, compiled by Ebu'l-Hayr Rumî in which the author provided his contemporaries with the miracles Sarı Saltuk performed and narrated the warrior saint's participation in *gaza* activities in the *Babadağ* region, Sarı Saltuk was a highly-esteemed mystic for everyone who knew him regardless of their religion.⁵² While Ebu'l-Hayr Rumî compiled the deeds of Sarı Saltuk at the request of Prince Cem in 1480, the tomb of the *gazi* mystic is restored by Bayezid II who paid homage to his sepulcher during his Moldavian campaign.⁵³ According to Liviu Pilat, Bayezid II's trip to Babadağı and his restoration of Sarı Saltuk's tomb suggest that Bayezid II's attempted to gain the favor of *gazi* and dervish circles roaming in the European soils of the Ottoman Empire. This interpretation seems to be a valid one given that Bayezid II's reluctance to cope with the agrarian reforms launched during the reign of Mehmed II and targeted the dervishes and *gazi* circles corroborates his intimacy with these milieus. When he ascended the throne, he redistributed the lands and *vaqfs* taken from these power groups and won their favor.

The most convincing explanation that elucidates the chroniclers' deliberate effort in associating the Ottoman expansion with their religious zeal must be providing the House of Osman with an additional source of legitimacy that answers to the new challenges arising from the Eastern and Western borderlands of the empire. Bayezid's younger brother Cem was kept

⁵¹ Pilat and Cristea, p. 219.

⁵² Ebü'l Hayr Rûmî, *Saltuk - Name: The Legend of Sarı Saltuk Collected from Oral Tradition by Ebu'l-Hayr-i Rûmî*, ed. by Şinasi Tekin (Cambridge: Harvard University Print, 1974); Stefan Rohdewald, 'A Muslim Holy Man to Convert Christians in a Transottoman Setting: Approaches to Sarı Saltuk from the Late Middle Ages to the Present', *Interdisciplinary Journal for the Studies of Religious Contact and Transfer*, 9 (2019), 57–78 (p. 61).

⁵³ Halil İnalcık, 'Türkler ve Balkanlar (The Turks and the Balkans)', in *Balkanlarda İslâm: Miadı Dolmayan Umut (Islam in the Balkans: Unexpired Hope)*, ed. by Muhammet Savaş Kafkasyalı, *Türkistan'dan Balkanlara (From Turkestan to the Balkans)*, 19, 5 vols (Ankara: TİKA, 2016), II, 9–41 (p. 16).

captive in Europe until he died in 1495, and the sultan was required to pay a huge sum of gold to ensure his safety.⁵⁴ The Ottoman Empire was also struggling to establish a reliable vassal system in Eastern Europe and about to enter a fierce war with the Venetian Republic at the time Cem was a hostage. In such a case, The Papacy could have equipped Cem with an army and sent him to Istanbul as the commander of a new crusade on a theoretical level. However, both Bayezid and the Papacy must be cognizant of the fact that such a crusade would contrast with the traditional crusade notion. Cem was still adhering to Islam until his last breath, and it was theoretically unfeasible for a crusading army to be led by a pretender rather than a liege, which equally would render Cem's command of a Christian army impossible. That said there was not legally binding that would prevent the Papacy from supporting Cem against his brother Bayezid II. Thus, so long as he lived, Cem remained a legitimate contender for the Ottoman throne and his release was quite a risk that Bayezid was reluctant to take.⁵⁵ Coupled with this, there was a growing hostility among the centrifugal power groups that permeated throughout the European borderlands of the empire against Bayezid's centralist policies. The tension between Istanbul and these groups seems to have reached a climax in 1492 when reportedly a *Kalenderi* dervish attempted to assassinate Bayezid II who was returning to the Ottoman capital after the Albanian Campaign.

The year 1492 could not have been predicted to become the ominous turning point of the sultanate of Bayezid II, whose ascension to the throne was already toilsome due to fraternal war fought by him and his brother Cem for the Ottoman throne. However, the failed assassination attempt against Bayezid II revealed that all attempts of Bayezid II to regain the

⁵⁴ Bayezid II was supposed to pay approximately 40,000 gold ducats annually to the Papacy for Cem's expenditures. İsmail Hikmet Ertaylan, *Sultan Cem* (Istanbul: Milli Eğitim Basımevi, 1951), p. 224.

⁵⁵ Bidlisi suggests that the mastermind behind the assassination of Prince Cem was either Pope Alexander VI or Bayezid II. Given that the pope had little to benefit from assassinating the rebellious Ottoman prince, the finger of suspicion is naturally pointed at Bayezid II who according to Thuasne had already attempted several assassinations on Prince Cem such as poisoning the fountain where the Pope and Prince Cem would take water. Dimitriadou, p. 89.

support of *gazi* and dervish circles were fruitless. Bayezid II's dismay is manifested in the chronicles compiled at his request as they either overlooked the importance of the event or mentioned it in passing. Hence, the actual identity of the assassin and his ultimate purpose remained vague. Yet, Halil İnalcık argues that it was Otman Baba dervishes who conspired to kill the sultan since Bayezid II found the followers of Otman Baba guilty of the assassination attempt and punished them accordingly. Based on his analysis of the *Velâyetnâme-i Otman Baba*, İnalcık notes that some of these dervishes were tortured into confessing their role in the plot and butchered eventually. The remaining dervishes affiliated with the plot were exiled to Anatolia.⁵⁶ Perhaps what is more puzzling is the fact that *Qutb al-Aqtab* notion is also claimed by Otman Baba and his caliph Akyazılı Sultan. Given that Otman Baba passed away in 1478, the assassination attempt seems to be carried out by one of his caliphs. Indeed, Akyazılı Sultan was recorded to be the new leader of this mysterious dervish order and he was known as the most revered caliph of Otman Baba at the time. However, it should also be taken into consideration that Akyazılı Sultan was not considered and/or declared the *Qutb al-Aqtab* by his followers until 1495. The assassin-dervish, perchance, may have been sent to that specific spot by the sheik he was committed to. In this case, the messianic claims of Otman Baba dervishes might have occasioned the assassination of Bayezid. Although Otman Baba cannot be the perpetrator of the assassination since he had succumbed to death before the assassination attempt was carried out, he was believed to be reborn hundreds of times. In other words, it was believed that Otman Baba was reincarnated several times and was to be resurrected after he died.⁵⁷ Thus, it is likely that one of his followers devised the assassination of Bayezid to prepare the world for the return of their Qutb and manifest the false axis mundi claims of Bayezid.

⁵⁶ Halil İnalcık, 'Dervish and Sultan: An Analysis of the Otman Baba Vilâyetnâmesi', *The Middle East and the Balkans under the Ottoman Empire*, 1993, 19–36 (p. 33).

⁵⁷ *Ol şehirlüye ayıtdı ki: Bak bire çirkin, gebe karınlı şehirlüsü! Yüz kere bin yıldır ki ben bu milke gelürem, bir taş bir taş üzerine komadım. Başınıza yıkılsun...* Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, *Alevî ve Bektaşî İnançlarının İslâm Öncesi Temelleri*, 9th edn (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2012).

We catch the messianic claim of the Otman Baba dervishes in Hoca Saadeddin Efendi's account of the incident. He notes that the dervish was received by the sultan since the guards thought that he was asking for alms.⁵⁸ Once he moved closer to the sultan, he drew his sword that he was hiding under his dervish coat and cried out loudly "I am the messiah of the time!". The imperial guards then trembled with fear and ran away in different directions since they were unprepared for such an assault. All the contemporary and later Ottoman chroniclers noting this incident seem to concur on this point. However, there are slightly varying opinions concerning who prevented the dervish from killing Bayezid. İdris-i Bidlîsî, for instance, argues that it was Kurt Aydın, a *çavuş* (court sergeant) who acted first and pacified the dervish.⁵⁹ However, Gelibolulu Mustafa Âli Efendi and Sadeddin Efendi argue that it was İskender Pasha who ripped the head of the dervish with his dagger. According to the chronicle of *Müneccimbaşı*, the perpetrator was a dervish with Qalandar attire who approached the sultan by hiding his sword under his coat. When he noticed that the *solaks* (royal bodyguards) were unarmed and the sultan was defenseless, he managed to take his sword. However, İskender Pasha took precedence over the dervish and killed him with his sword. Then, the janissaries ripped up the deceased body of the Qalenderi into the pieces. Following all these, Bayezid II exiled all Qalenderi dervishes from Rumelia.⁶⁰ On the other hand, Ahmet Karamustafa, a prominent scholar of Sufism and Sufi groups in Ottoman history, posits that the assassin dervish,- who attempted to kill Bayezid II on the road to Bitola, was a Haydari dervish based on the account of Oruç b. Adil.⁶¹ Besides, the sixteenth-century Ottoman writer Matrakci Nasuh

⁵⁸ Hoca Sadettin Efendi, *Tacü't-Tevarih*, ed. by İsmet Parmaksızoğlu, Bilim Dizisi, 1, V vols (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1979), II.

⁵⁹ Vural Genç, *Acem'den Rum'a Bir Bürokrat ve Tarihçi İdris-i Bidlîsî (1457-1520)* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2019), pp. 667–68.

⁶⁰ 'Menâkıb-ı Sultan Bayezid Han Ibn Muhammed Han', trans. by Étienne Roboly (Istanbul, 1732), *bibliothèque nationale de paris e. blochet catalogue*, no. 922.

⁶¹ Ahmet Karamustafa, *God's Unruly Friends: Dervish Groups in the Islamic Middle Period 1200-1550* (Bloomsbury Street London: Oneworld Publications, 2006).

similarly argues that the assassin had the same outlook as Haydarî dervishes.⁶² Nevertheless, it is hard to distinguish between Qalandari dervishes and Haydarîs as both tariqas' dresses were quite similar to each other.

Both the internal and external perils against his sultanate must have forced Bayezid to take certain measures and refashion himself as the champion of Islam through the narration of his victorious *gaza* over the Christian principalities of Europe. To a certain extent, Bayezid's strategy may be regarded as mimicry of his father's policy as Mehmed II remained a perfect role model for his successors in terms of military and politics. However, being a *gazi* sultan could have proved insufficient to persuade the dissident groups within the empire to stand with him against Cem and other external threats. First, the powerful actors of the empire's borderlands -*gazi* families and wandering antinomian dervish circles-, also considered themselves as religious warriors.⁶³ Further, these frontier warlords and dervish circles were speaking with one voice against the bureaucratic hierarchy of this new imperial order. The centralist policies of Mehmed and Bayezid filled them with nostalgia for the time when the Ottomans raided over the 'infidels' together with borderland warriors and did not lord it over them. In other words, Bayezid was needed to remodel the *gaza* concept to win over the dissident *gazi* groups against possible contenders for the throne and external threats to his universal sovereignty claim.

Moreover, the unexpected rise of a young and charismatic leader from Azerbaijan, who was the sheik and political leader of the Safawiyya tariqa, heralded the dawning of a new era in the Ottomans' relationship with their eastern neighbors. Shah Ismail's rise to power was quite unpredictable not to mention his capture of Tabriz from the Aqqyunlu Confederation in

⁶² Matrakçı Nasuh, *Tarih-i Sultan Bayezid: Sultan II. Bayezid Tarihi*, trans. by Mertol Tulum (İstanbul: Giza Yayınları, 2012), p. 186.

⁶³ Inalcik, p. 26.

1501.⁶⁴ The magnetic leadership and riveting messianic claims through which he garnered tremendous support in Eurasia made him the first shah of the Safavid Empire.⁶⁵ Yet, he was not strong enough to publicly and belligerently take issue with Bayezid's superior authority and remained cautious in the face of a possible military clash with the Ottomans until Selim I's ascension to the throne.⁶⁶ Instead, he sent the Safavid propagandists to the Ottoman-controlled Anatolian territories to mobilize political support for his 'divine' cause informed by messianic expectations of the age.⁶⁷ Selim the Grim, the son and successor of Bayezid, frustrated Ismail's expansionist policies and ruined his religious charisma after defeating him at the Battle of Chāldirān in 1514. Nevertheless, the Safavid Empire remained a substantial threat to the Ottoman hegemony throughout the following centuries as well. Along with the indicated political reasons that pushed Bayezid II to adjust the Ottoman imperial ideology and renegotiate with the local power groups, we need to explore the late fifteenth century Ottoman apocalypticism to better analyze the making of the new imperial ideology.

2.3.The Ottoman Gaza, Apocalypse, and the Making of the Ottoman Imperial Ideology

Three external political factors pushed Bayezid II to develop a new imperial ideology around the *gaza* concept: Cem's captivity in Europe and his claim to the Ottoman throne; the emergence of the Safavid Empire; and the political turmoil of the late fifteenth-century Eastern European political climate. Bearing in mind the magnitude of all three factors, we should not disregard how pressing the apocalyptic expectations of both Muslims and Christians were in the late fifteenth century. Most Islamic scholars, jurists, and intellectuals built a consensus over the impossibility of knowing the exact date of the doomsday. However, they also admit that

⁶⁴ Adel Allouche, *The Origins and Development of the Ottoman-Safavid Conflict* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 1983), p. 132.

⁶⁵ Hans Robert Roemer, 'The Safavid Period', in *The Cambridge History of Iran: The Timurid and Safavid Periods*, ed. by Peter Jackson, 7 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), VI, p. 189.

⁶⁶ Oktay Efendiyevev, 'Sultan II. Bayezid ve Şah İsmail', *Türk Tarih Kongresi: Kongreye Sunulan Bildiriler*, XII (1999), pp. 92–94.

⁶⁷ Efendiyevev, p. 93.

certain portents of the last hour could be surmised from eschatological hadiths and Quranic verses.⁶⁸ The second advent of Jesus Christ and the appearance of Al-Dajjāl- the Antichrist in the Bible-, were regarded as the shared harbingers of the last hour in Islam and Christianity.

One of the striking apocalyptic signs shared by Muslims and Christians alike was the conquest of Constantinople by a Muslim ruler since the fall of the city was associated with the end of the world.⁶⁹ Among the Ottoman intellectuals and cosmographers who devoted their writings to the Islamic understanding of the apocalypse, Ahmed Bican occupies a special place for his references to Constantinople's role in presaging the last hour.⁷⁰ Thanks to his expertise in Islamic eschatology, he epitomized Mehmed as a cosmological warrior, who was charged with shielding the community of believers from sinister supernatural forces.⁷¹ However, the prophecy did not only presume the conquest of the Byzantine capital by an Islamic army but also portended the recapture of the city from the Muslims by *Banu al-Asfar* (The Blonde People). As Kaya Şahin suggests, the Ottomans were adept at reinterpreting the old prophecies according to their political agendas. While *Banu al-Asfar* was first associated with the French people owing to their royal symbol yellow fleur-de-lis, later, the Habsburgs were thought to have been Banu al-Asfar since Landsknecht troops were wearing yellow trousers as uniform.⁷² The shifting tendency of the Ottomans to affiliate the French and Habsburgs with Banu al-Asfar sheds light on their precariousness in identifying their archenemies. Yet, it also indicates that starting with the unleashing of the Ottoman war machine by Mehmed II and ensuing conquests of Bayezid, the Ottomans began confronting the great powers of Europe.

⁶⁸ Norman O. Brown, 'The Apocalypse of Islam', *Social Text*, Winter (1983), p. 163.

⁶⁹ Gottfried Hagen and Ethan L. Menchinger, 'Ottoman Historical Thought', in *A Companion to Global Historical Thought*, ed. by Presenjit Duara, Viren Murthy, and Andrew Sartori (New Jersey: Wiley-Blackwell), p. 102.

⁷⁰ Âmil Çelebioğlu, 'Ahmed Bican', *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, 2 (Istanbul: TDV, 1989), pp. 49–51 <<https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/ahmed-bican>>.

⁷¹ Ahmed Bican Yazıcıoğlu, *Dürr-i Meknun*, trans. by Necdet Sakaoğlu (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1999), p. 124.

⁷² Kaya Şahin, 'Constantinople and the End Time: The Ottoman Conquest as a Portent of the Last Hour', *Journal of Early Modern History*, 14.4 (2010), p. 326.

At this point, we need to revisit the issue of Constantinople, the symbol of Ottoman supremacy over Latin Europe, and the apocalyptic expectations of Ottoman society. It is worth noting that the city and its surrounding areas, such as Bursa, witnessed terrible calamities and miraculous happenings between 1490-1509, which all directly contributed to the collective solicitude of the society. A massive earthquake shook Constantinople in 1509 and lasted for approximately forty days with aftershocks. An anonymous Ottoman chronicle reports that the minarets of the mosques were fallen to pieces, most houses were either entirely collapsed or their walls crumbled in the night of the earthquake. All inhabitants of the city, men and women side by side, prayed to God for the earthquake to stop shaking the city.⁷³ Shortly after, a devastating fire broke out in Bursa and destroyed circa twenty-five neighborhoods in a single day this time. Yet, Matrakçı Nasuh notes another catastrophe befell the city of Constantinople on July 24, 1490. On this day, the Mamluk ambassador to Istanbul was rejected by Bayezid II, and a lightning strike hit the Güngörmez Church-, we surmise from the sources that the Ottomans used the church as powder storage-, and it subsequently reduced to rubble. Moreover, at least four neighborhoods were entirely wiped away following the blast of the church.⁷⁴ In 1492, the same year when a Qalanderi dervish attempted to kill the sultan, another Qalanderi dervish was reported to have flown over the Bosphorus on his dervish coat. Gelibolulu Mustafa Ali notes that nobody ever saw the dervish again.⁷⁵ As these examples illustrate, Bayezid II's reign witnessed a series of misfortune accidents which triggered apocalyptic expectation that instilled peoples' hearts with a terrible fear.

The reconstruction of the *gaza* discourse functioned to counter the Safavid propaganda and consolidate the Ottoman subjects under Bayezid II's rule. The Safavids' assumption of power

⁷³ Necdet Öztürk, *Anonim Osmanlı Kroniği(1299-1512)* (İstanbul: Türk Dünyası Araştırmaları Vakfı, 2000), p. 139.

⁷⁴ Mustafa Karazeybek, 'Matrakçı Nasuh's Tarih-i Âl-i Osman' (unpublished Master's Thesis, İstanbul University), p. 229.

⁷⁵ Gelibolulu Mustafa Âli Efendi, *Kitâbü't-Târih-i Künhü'l-Ahbâr*, ed. by Ahmet Uğur and others, 2 vols (Kayseri: Erciyes Üniversitesi Yayınları, 1997), I, p. 877.

in Persia and Azerbaijan was highly contingent upon their utilization of the *gaza* rhetoric like the Ottomans. The enchanting leadership of Shah Ismail was also supplemented with supernatural attributions such as the divine help he received from God and his distinctive cosmological importance. The Kizilbash soldiers of Shah Ismail (they were named so because they wore twelve-peaked red caps as a portent of their reverence of twelve imams) were fearless before their enemies and would run against their adversaries on the battlefield without helmet, armor, or shield owing to their unflinching belief in their shah.⁷⁶ From this perspective, Shah Ismail had considerably more legitimate claims to universal sovereignty than Bayezid II on a theoretical level. He was both the messiah and a long-awaited figure among the Shiite Muslims and *gazi* warriors for whom thousands of Kizilbash would go into bloodshed without even blinking. It was under these circumstances that a certain trend of referring to Bayezid as *Qutb al-Aqtab* started. The Ottoman chroniclers developed a complex sovereign identity for Bayezid II and justified their claim that Bayezid was the cosmological ruler of the universe by virtue of his exemplary *gaza* against the ‘infidels’.

As noted earlier, the Ottoman expansion reached the Black Sea shores of Eastern Europe during the reign of Bayezid II. Until 1484, Stephen the Great aptly secured the independence of the Principality of Moldavia against the recurrent Ottoman threats which considerably increased by Mehmed II’s time. Stephen the Great, who consistently disregarded Mehmed’s ultimatums confronted the Ottoman war machine in 1475 at the Battle of Vaslui and vanquished Hadım Süleyman Pasha.⁷⁷ It was only after his remarkable repulsion of the Ottoman forces in 1475 that he was referred to as the Champion of Christendom.⁷⁸ However, it should also be noted that the battle was not the final stage of the Ottoman expansion in the region nor the last

⁷⁶ Palmira Brummett, ‘The Myth of Shah Ismail Safavi: Political Rhetoric and “Divine” Kingship’, in *Medieval Christian Perceptions of Islam: A Book of Essays*, ed. by John Victor Tolan (Abingdon: Routledge, 2000), p. 338.

⁷⁷ Teodora C. Artimon, ‘All Moldavian Eyes on Ottomans: Perceptions and Representations at the End of the Fifteenth Century and the Beginning of the Sixteenth Century’, in *Practices of Coexistence*, ed. by Marianna D. Birnbaum (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2017), p. 182.

⁷⁸ Brummett, p. 178.

attempt of the Ottoman sultans to subjugate the Principality of Moldavia. Only nine years later, Bayezid II undertook the dynastic task of transforming the Black Sea into a shelter for the Ottoman navy and controlling the commercial activities in the region by capturing Chilia and Akkerman.⁷⁹ The Ottoman threat against the two Moldavian-controlled Black Sea fortresses unnerved Stephen of Moldavia to such an extent that he propagated the whole Christendom may fall under the ‘Turkish Yoke.’⁸⁰

Getting back to the Ottoman side, one particular poet interpreted Bayezid’s capture of Chilia and Akkirman within the eschatological context. We surmise from Sehi Bey Tezkiresi that an Ottoman poet Kıvâmî, the author of *Fetihnâme-i Sultan Mehmed*, devoted a passage to Bayezid II’s impulse and desire to capture these fortresses.⁸¹ He first referred to Bayezid as the shadow of God and likened him to the Prophet Suleyman who was believed to have controlled jins together with human beings. Moreover, he uttered particularly significant eschatological words that are associated with the apocalypse in the wider Islamic world:

“You are the shadow of God; Suleyman of the Age
 No one should be surprised if you conquer new countries
 With jins and humans under your control
 Since you walked against your enemy through a great gaza
 You will also conquer the gardens of the paradise
 Why should we need Jesus Christ to kill Dajjal?
 Why should we expect the Messiah to conquer the world?
 Oh Shah, since you established your kingdom on the skies

⁷⁹ Gelibolulu Mustafa Âlî Efendi, I, p. 835.

⁸⁰ Pilat and Cristea, p. 19.

⁸¹ İsa Kayaalp, ‘Kıvâmî’, *TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi*, 25 (Ankara: TDV, 2002), p. 507. 71. İsa Kayaalp, p. 507. However, it should be noted that Firdevsi was not among the favorite and most intimate littérateurs of Bayezid due to his lack of elite markers as Tunç Şen puts it. Nevertheless, his references to the Qutb al-Aktab notion demonstrate that he was familiar with the Islamic cosmology and search for the patronage of Bayezid II. For more information see Ahmet Tunç Şen, ‘Reading the Stars at the Ottoman Court: Bâyezîd II (r. 886/1481-918/1512) and His Celestial Interests’, *Arabica*, 64 (2017), 557–608 (p. 605) <<https://doi.org/10.1163/15700585-12341461>>.

Your victory became the tenet, the rope of the conquest...’’⁸²

As this excerpt further illustrates, Bayezid II was cognizant of the rising eschatological tension within the empire and endeavored to refashion his sovereign image around the *gaza* concept and through the adaptation of eschatological terms such as Messiah, dajjal, *sahib-kıran*, *mujaddid* -the renewer of the faith, *qutb*, and *mahdi*. We can surmise that the growing eschatological anxiety of the Ottoman society pushed Bayezid to re-establish the sovereignty rhetoric. Especially, the assassination attempt of 1492 of a Kalenderi dervish and the reckless revolt of Şahkulu should be analyzed bearing in mind this eschatological anxiety. For instance, Baba Tekeli, the leader of the Şahkulu Revolt, claimed that he was the *mahdi* and the long-awaited secret imam. He declared that all believers were supposed to acknowledge his authority as he was the shadow of God.⁸³ In a similar vein with Kivâmî, Firdevsî-i Tevil defined Bayezid’s sovereign image through his harmonious combination of the Sufi vocabulary and *gaza* concept. The specific term Firdevsî used to refer to Bayezid II was *Qutb al-Aqtab*(axis mundi). *Qutb* was regarded as the leader of a Sufi group and a perfect human being who was responsible for maintaining order on earth. However, several *Qutbs* were assigned to different roles and divine tasks by God. In this sense, *Qutb al-Aqtab* was the head of all *Qutbs* and superior to all profane authorities in the world.⁸⁴ It should be noted that Christopher Markiewicz traces the *Qutb* notion to the philosophical writings of Ibn Arabi and argues that it was meant to denote the true leader of the community of believers.⁸⁵ The rumor that Sheikh Edebali, the spiritual mentor of Osman Gazi and eminent mystic of the fourteenth century Anatolia, attended

⁸² Ahat Üstüner, ‘Kivâmî: Fetihnâme-i Sultân Mehmed’ (unpublished Unpublished Master’s Thesis, Fırat Üniversitesi, 2006), p. 406.

⁸³ Devlet Arşivleri Başkanlığı Osmanlı Arşivi. TSMA. 6321.

⁸⁴ Azfar Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign: Sacred Kingship&Sainthood in Islam*, ed. by Dipesh Chakrabarty, Sheldon Pollock, and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, South Asia Across the Disciplines (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), p. 23.

⁸⁵ Christopher Markiewicz, ‘Caliphate Redefined: The Mystical Turn in Ottoman Political Thought. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018. 384 Pp. \$39.95 (Cloth), ISBN 978-1-4008-8804-7.’, *H-Net Reviews in the Humanities&Social Sciences*, 2018, p. 255.

Ibn Arabi's open-to-public discussions in Damascus points out an indirect relationship between the Ibn Arabi School and the first generations of the Ottoman sultans and scholars.⁸⁶

Firdevsî-i Tevil appears to have had a clear understanding of the term and interpreted it within the context of political turmoil that characterized the last quarter of the century. In *Kutbnâme*, he argues that the axis mundi of the age must be Bayezid II since through *gaza* he waged against the 'idolators', he proved his capability of renewing the faith. Further, he posits that Bayezid could command the natural forces and manipulate them as he wished. He was believed to possess the divine power of determining the direction of the winds, striking thunderbolts on his enemies, and achieve his aims by just uttering the words. Further evidence that he was the *Qutb al-Aqtab* of the age were his generosity, bravery, justness, and devotion to *gaza*.⁸⁷ Thus, the eschatological transformation of the Ottoman *gaza* becomes more palpable and evident once we probe into the contemporary texts. In a way, this type of combination of secular and cosmological sovereignty models appealed to the expectations of multiple religious jamaats within the empire. Besides, another factor in designing such an imperial ideology is the functionality of this type of eschatological-political vocabulary in solidifying the diverse range of ethnic and religious communities.

Overall, the rise of the Ottomans from a meager *gazi* principality located on the western borderlands of the Seljuks, which was not more than a ramshackle empire in the thirteenth century, to world power is a phenomenon itself. Their adaptation of Islamic warfare and timely modifications that the *gaza* concept underwent remains an issue to be further investigated. Their religious zeal is assumed to have motivated them to fight against the 'infidels' and therefore, it was a factor behind their astounding expansionism. Yet, their ability to adapt themselves to changing circumstances lies at the heart of their success more than anything. While his

⁸⁶ Mahmud Erol Kılıç, 'İbnü'l-Arabî, Muhyiddin', *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: TDV, 1999), 520–22 (p. 522).

⁸⁷ Firdevsî-i Rumî, p. 30. Tansel, p. 5.

ancestors also weaponized the *gaza* rhetoric to justify their mostly profane political aims, Bayezid II took a step further and transformed the traditional *gaza* concept by merging the notion with the Sufi terminology. Both *Qutb al-Aqtab* and *sahib-kiran* were deliberately selected words to define Bayezid's sovereignty. It was the House of Osman's dynastic response to the challenges arising within and outside the empire.

Chapter 3

The Antemurale Christianitatis Rhetoric against the Ottomans: Apocalypse, Eschatology and Ottoman Advance in Europe in the Late Fifteenth Century

The *antemurale* myth or bulwark rhetoric can be considered as the discursive line drawn between the 'civilized' and 'uncivilized' to construct and further consolidate the collective Christian identity by othering what remains on the other side of the border. It creates a hypothetical boundary between what is praised as good and demonized as bad. This dichotomic

understanding of self and other attributes all the desired qualities to self and demonizes the other by associating it with despised characteristics, cursed historical roots, and civilizational prejudices.⁸⁸

The use of the discourse by the Christian sovereigns, scholars, and clergy of Europe has a long history in the collective memory of the continent. On the one hand, the term is related to the interwoven history of the Middle East and Europe since crusades launched against the Islamic rulers of the East created Christian-controlled power zones surrounded by ‘infidel’ enemies. On the other hand, the Ottoman threat transformed the classical form of crusades and forced the Papacy and Eastern European sovereigns to rely upon the *antemurale christianitatis* rhetoric more than ever. In either case, the Christian world was divided into the Western *res publica Christiana* and Eastern *res publica Christiana* with often contradicting priorities. Papal calls to crusade, sermons given by the clerics to inflict the Christian public with religious fervor to take up arms against the enemies of the faith, and urgent letters sent by the bulwark kingdoms of Christian Europe to the Western Christian lords often proved to be ineffective. Left alone against the Ottoman peril; Poland, Livonia, Hungary, and Principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia fashioned themselves as the protecting walls of Christianity.⁸⁹ The swift shift from pugnacious crusades to the *antemurale* rhetoric -which is accountably a more defensive concept-, became more palpable after the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople in 1453. The heroic victories that the Christian armies enjoyed against the infidel Muslims were something of a distant past when the Ottoman armies began shattering the bulwarks of Christendom.

Three major apocalyptic works, the Book of Daniels, Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius, and Gennadius Scholarius’s *Chronographia*; all point out to the late fifteenth century for the

⁸⁸ Weiland, p. 31.

⁸⁹ Paul Srodecki, ‘“Universe Christiane Reipublice Validissima Propugnacula” – Jagiellonian Europe in Bulwark Descriptions Around 1500’, in *The Jagiellonians in Europe: Dynastic Diplomacy and Foreign Relations*, ed. by Attila Bárány, *Memoria Hungariae*, 2 (Debrecen, 2016), pp. 57–77 (p. 57).

coming of the Anti-Christ.⁹⁰ It is known that 1492-1493 was marked as the 7000th year in the Byzantine calendar and Eastern Orthodox Christians believed that this was the year when the world was coming to an end.⁹¹ In a similar vein, the Muslim world in the late fifteenth century was awaiting the *mujaddid* (renewer of faith) who will establish a universal empire and restore justice.⁹² The failed assassination attempt against Bayezid II in 1492 by a *Kalenderi* dervish claiming to be the actual *Qutb al-Aqtab*, translation of the Book of Daniels from Syriac to Arabic at the behest of Mehmed II -which does not only provide the reader with a window into the apocalypse but also the Last Roman Emperor motive-, Metropolitan of Moscow's, Zosimos the Bearded,⁹³ composition of a paschal for the eighth millennium, which starts in 1493; another paschal table compiled by a monk at Putna Monastery in Romania, which ended in 1493 during the reign of Stephen cel Mare are examples corroborating the claim that the year was received with an apocalyptic expectation in Eastern Europe.⁹⁴ Both the Christian and Islamic apocalypticism of the late fifteenth century spoke with one voice concerning the eventuality of the apocalypse and they both presaged a series of colossal battles that should be fought among the believers and the evil forces. While Christian Europe perceived the evil other as the Ottomans and likened them to the wicked nations of Gog and Magog, the Ottomans were expecting a final attack on Constantinople by Banu al-Asfar, the Blonde People of North. In this apocalyptic climate, it was inevitable that the most useful discursive tools of the Christian rulers of Europe and the Ottoman sultans proved to be holy war discourses. Notwithstanding a piece of direct evidence, I argue that Christian European sovereigns of the age responded to the Ottoman capture of Constantinople and the subsequent Ottoman expansionism in Eastern

⁹⁰ Şahin, p. 323.

⁹¹ Isabella Sullivan, 'The Painted Fortified Monastic Churches of Moldavia: Bastions of Orthodoxy in a Post-Byzantine World' (unpublished Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, University of Michigan, 2017), p. 10.

⁹² Cornell H. Fleischer, p. 18.

⁹³ Zosimos the Bearded (d.1494) served as the Metropolitan of Moscow during the reign of Ivan III (r.1462-1505).

⁹⁴ Isabella Sullivan, p. 11; Gülru Necipoğlu, 'Visual Cosmopolitanism and Creative Translation: Artistic Conversations with Renaissance Italy in Mehmed II's Constantinople', ed. by Gülru Necipoğlu and Karen A. Leal, *Muqarnas: An Annual on the Visual Cultures of the Islamic World*, 29 (2012), p. 12.

Europe and the Mediterranean in the reign of Bayezid II by resorting to myths, legends, and *antemurale christianitatis* discourse.

Throughout this chapter, I explore three different dimensions of the *antemurale christianitatis* rhetoric. First, I briefly introduce the rhetoric and discuss how and under what circumstances it emerged. Second, I illustrate how this discourse is weaponized by the Christian bulwark sovereigns against the imminent Ottoman threat that became more tangible following Mehmed II's capture of Constantinople. I argue that the expansionist policies pursued by Bayezid II and military campaigns launched against the Principality of Moldavia, the Kingdom of Poland, and Venice were in line with the new imperial ideology adopted by the Ottoman Empire at that time. Concurrently, however, the European world responded to Bayezid II's *gaza*-centered ideology and discourse by resorting to a similar discursive instrument. My research suggests that the revised Ottoman ideology and interminable Ottoman-Crimean raids provided Stephen cel Mare, John Albert of Poland, Charles VIII with a fertile ground to justify their expeditions on religious ground. Moreover, some of their actions imply that they were under the spell of fifteenth-century apocalypticism to a considerable extent.

Finally and most importantly, I argue that the apocalypticism of the late fifteenth century was a universal phenomenon, which asserted itself most clearly in the common belief that the apocalypse was destined to occur in 1492-1493. My argument echoes Liviu Pilat's assertion that the rising apocalyptic anxiety may have had an impact on the decision-making mechanisms of the late fifteenth century.⁹⁵ As will be further discussed in the following pages, Charles VIII's invasion of Italy was introduced under the pretext of restoring the Holy Land to Christianity and driving off the Ottoman pretenders to the Roman Emperor's throne in Constantinople. The fall of Constantinople in 1453, the Ottoman advance in Europe during the reigns of Mehmed II

⁹⁵ Liviu Pilat, 'Mesianism Și Escatologie În Imaginarul Epocii Lui Ștefan Cel Mare (Messianism and Eschatology during the Time of Stephen the Great)', *Studii Și Materiale de Istorie Medie (Studies and Sources of Medieval History)*, 12 (2004), p. 14.

and Bayezid II, Eastern European sovereigns' attempts to launch a crusade against the Ottomans should be considered as related to Charles VIII's rhetorical defense concerning his Italian Campaign. Also, we should bear in mind the fact that Charles VIII's military expedition gave a new impetus to Girolamo Savonarola's apocalyptic sermons which prophesized that Florence would become the New Jerusalem.⁹⁶ The issue of New Jerusalem becomes especially important given that the Last Roman Emperor was required to "lay down his diadem and robes, relinquishing authority to God" in Jerusalem after he defeated the peoples of Gog and Magog.⁹⁷ In this regard, the Italian War of 1494-1495 brings forward the long-debated sincerity of crusaders and Christian eschatology. Was it truly motivated by religious fervor or did he use the crusading rhetoric together with implicit references to the Last Roman Emperor to materialize his political agenda?

Building on this, I argue that apocalypticism of the late fifteenth century buttressed the use of holy war discourses explored throughout this thesis. Both Stephen cel Mare, John Albert of Poland, Charles VIII of France, and Bayezid II utilized the apocalyptic climate of the age to justify their political agenda and increasingly used the holy war discourses to refashion themselves as pious sovereigns.

3.1. A Brief Sketch of the *Antemurale Christianitatis* Discourse

Antemurale christianitatis concept refers to the bulwark of Christendom or the borderland sovereignties of the Christian Europe, who were the first victims of the enemy assaults. The sovereigns of these territories regarded themselves as religious warriors, and their countries were regarded as the protecting walls of the whole Christendom.⁹⁸ In this regard, it

⁹⁶ Patrick D. McCorkle, 'Fifteenth-Century Florentine Exceptionalism: Civic Humanism, the Medici, and Savonarola', *Oshkosh Scholar*, 2014, 77–93 (p. 78).

⁹⁷ Ilkka Lindstedt, 'The Last Roman Emperor, the Mahdī, and Jerusalem', in *Understanding the Spiritual Meaning of Jerusalem in Three Abrahamic Religions*, Studies on the Children of Abraham (Leiden: Brill, 2019), p. 205.

⁹⁸ Charlton Lewis and Charles Short, 'Antemurale Christianitatis', *Harper's Latin Dictionary: A New Latin Dictionary* (New York: Harper&Brothers Publishers, 1891), p. 130.

should be noted that the term has a long history in Christian politics starting from the first half of the eleventh century. For instance, Pope Urban II (r. 1088-1099) referred to Tarragona as *antemurale christianitatis* since it was considered the Western bulwark of Christendom against the Moors.⁹⁹ Another earliest known use of the term belongs to Saint Bernard of Clairvaux (d.1153), the Burgundian abbot who played a major role in the revitalization of Benedictine monasticism in the eleventh century and referred to the County of Edessa as *antemurale christianitatis*. Saint Bernard of Clairvaux's addressing of the County of Edessa through the bulwark rhetoric was cut to the chase considering the unceasing Seljuk attacks on the crusader state.¹⁰⁰ Besides, defending the Christian territories against enemy attacks at the risk of sacrificing their lives was considered a way of emulating Jesus Christ's sacrificial love for the body of believers.¹⁰¹ This seems to be the main reason why heroic Christian figures who fought against the enemies of Christianity were bestowed upon the title of *athleta christi* by the Papacy.¹⁰²

Paul Srodecki draws our attention to an often-overlooked aspect of the *antemurale christianitatis* rhetoric in his exploration of the *antemurale* based frontier societies in the early modern period. He reminds us that the formation of a collective identity necessitates the existence of self and others. In this sense, the division of the world into the civilized and

⁹⁹ Nora Berend, 'Hungary: The Gate of Christendom', in *Medieval Frontiers: Concepts and Practices*, ed. by David Abulafia and Nora Berend (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 195–217 (p. 209).

¹⁰⁰ Andrew D. Buck, *The Principality of Antioch and Its Frontiers in the Twelfth Century* (Suffolk: Boydell, 2017), p. 44.

¹⁰¹ Borislav Grgin, *The Ottomans and Croatia at the End of the Middle Ages (1458-1526)*, trans. by Abidin Temizer, *Glimpses of Balkans* (Ankara: Gece Kitaplığı, 2017), p. 1.

¹⁰² *Athleta Christi* was one of the honorary titles that the Papacy bestowed upon Christian kings, princes, and lords, who proved their dedication to the Christian faith through their engagement with the adversaries of Christianity. The military clashes with the Ottoman Empire provided the Eastern Christian sovereigns with ample opportunities to get concessions and financial aid from the Papacy. One of these princes was Gjergj Kastrioti Skënderbeu (r.1443-1468) who has found huge fame among Western Christians owing to his heroic resistance against the Ottomans. Peter Mario Kreuter notes that his rebellion against Mehmed II was glorified by Pope Calixtus III (r. 1455-1458) and he was given the title of *athleta christi*, champion of Christ. Peter Mario Kreuter, 'How Ignorance Made a Monster, Or: Writing the History of Vlad the Impaler without the Use of Sources Leads to 20,000 Impaled Turks', in *Disgust and Desire*, ed. by Kristen Wright, *At the Interface/Probing the Boundaries* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), XCI, p. 7.

barbarian sections by the Greeks and Romans was a tradition to be inherited by Christian Europe to consolidate the self-consciousness of Christians.¹⁰³ The feeling of togetherness and uniting against a common enemy -oftentimes associated with the Biblical figures such as the Anti-Christ, Gog and Magog, the beast of the Apocalypse, etc.-, was the linchpin of this dualistic perspective. While these motives will be further analyzed in the following pages, we need to address the first instance when this rhetoric is properly used by a Christian king in Europe. The first serious attempt of a Latin ruler to unite the Christian world against a common infidel enemy by applying this discourse was to be made by King Bela IV of Hungary and Croatia in the wake of the Mongol Invasion in the 1240s.

The Mongol invasion of Europe in the thirteenth century started a new chapter in Central and Eastern Central European history and shaped the way how the frontier kingdoms of the continent restructured and utilized the *antemurale* rhetoric. Nora Berend notes that it was King Bela of Hungary and Croatia (r.1235-1270), who applied the *antemurale christianitatis* rhetoric to refashion himself as the bulwark of Christendom and secure concessions from the Papacy.¹⁰⁴ King Bela's intimidation of the Papacy that the fall of Hungary and Croatia would mean the carnage of the whole Christendom set the precedent for how future sovereigns of Christian Europe would negotiate with Rome. In response to the clamors coming from the *Magna Hungaria*, Gregory IX (d.1241) declared that the royal family of King Bela was under the protection of the apostolic see and he granted the same indulgences to all who fight alongside them against the Mongols. However, none of these measures were of practical importance and proved ineffective in lightening the burden on King Bela's shoulders. It was not until 1243 that the Papacy adopted serious measures by recruiting crusaders in Germany through sermons

¹⁰³ Paul Srodecki, 'Antemurale-Based Frontier Identities in East Central Europe and Their Ideological Roots in Medieval/Early Modern Alterity and Alienity Discourses', in *Collective Identity in the Context of Medieval Studies*, ed. by Michaela Antonin Malanikova and Robert Antonin (Ostrava: University of Ostrava, 2016), p. 98.

¹⁰⁴ Berend, *At the Gate of Christendom: Jews, Muslims, and 'Pagans' in Medieval Hungary, c. 1000-C. 1300*, p. 164.

given by Berthold of Aquileia.¹⁰⁵ King Bela's complaining letters addressed to Papacy and other Christian kings of Europe indicate that the Mongol invasion supplied him with a rhetorical tool to accentuate his special status among all Christian kings. He was the defender of Christian faith as much as the Kingdom of Hungary and Croatia was the bulwark of Christendom against the barbarian 'Tartars.' He was the only Christian king fighting against the common enemy of *res publica Christiana*. Berend's enlightening remarks prove that the rhetoric was already in use among the Christian rulers of Europe long before the Ottoman advent in the continent.

The rapid expansion of the Ottoman state in Europe, starting as early as the fourteenth century, allowed the European intellectuals to choose the Ottomans as the external enemy of Christian Europe at that time. They were often referred to as Turks in the primary sources and regarded as the champions of Islam. However, the extent to which the Latin aristocracy was aware of the fundamental precepts of Islam and how Turks and/or Ottomans are Islamized remains open to debate. That said majority of Christian literati placed a particular menacing nature around Turks since the Crusades. For instance, twelfth-century English historian and the author of the *Gesta Regum Anglorum* (Deeds of the Kings of the English), (d. 1143) described Turks as cowards and degenerate people by referring to Pope Urban's crusade rhetoric.¹⁰⁶ Fulcher of Chartres directly referred to the Anatolian Turks as a sub-race of Persian and a barbarian horde who were truly adept at using their bows.¹⁰⁷ Both accounts corroborate the claim that Turks were becoming the evil other for Christian Europe and the theoretical ground on which the future generations of Christian scholars would base their civilizational allegations concerning the Ottomans was in progress. It was the fifteenth-century Renaissance scholar

¹⁰⁵ Berend, *At the Gate of Christendom: Jews, Muslims, and 'Pagans' in Medieval Hungary, c. 1000-C. 1300*, p. 165.

¹⁰⁶ J. A. Giles, 'William of Malmesbury's Chronicle of the Kings of England: From the Earliest Period to the Reign of King Stephen', *Gutenberg.Org*, 2015, p. 361.

¹⁰⁷ Fulcher of Chartres, 'The Siege and Capture of Nicaea (May-June, 1097)', in *The First Crusade: The Chronicle of Fulcher of Chartres and Other Source Materials*, ed. by Edward Peters, The Middle Age Series (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 1998), p. 181.

Francesco Fielfo, who bluntly associated a Christian king with the *antemurale christianitatis* owing to his brave struggle with the Ottomans. This occasion appears to have been one of the earliest Renaissance attempts to revitalize the *antemurale* rhetoric against the Ottoman Empire. As Paul Knoll aptly puts it, Fielfo referred to Wladyslaw III of Poland, who was the king of Poland and Hungary then, (r.1424-1444) as the bulwark of Christendom just before the Battle of Varna in 1444:

"All the nations and kings of Christendom pray God this day for your health and victory... Thou art a bulwark for the whole Christian Commonwealth."¹⁰⁸

While it is very well established from the contemporary sources that the Ottoman advent was a critical stage in the formation of a fully-grown *antemurale*-based frontier society in Poland, we should not disregard the fact that the same rhetoric was used against interior enemies within *finis Christianitatis* as well. In the thirteenth century, Poland fell victim to the ceaseless raids of the Prussians and Jatvings, thus; developed a distinct sense of a frontier society, which is the prerequisite of *antemurale* discourse.¹⁰⁹ In the following century, the Polish king Ladislaus the Short (r. 1320-1333) asked for the moral help of the Papacy against the infidel Tartars in a letter addressed to Pope John XXII (r.1316-1334). Ladislaus the Short can be regarded as a self-seeking opportunist, although he defined the Kingdom of Poland as a *scutum*, protecting wall, of the whole Christendom. Equally important was Pope John XXII's response to the letter sent by the Polish king in which the apostolic see granted Vladislaus with the official permission to fight against "Schismatics, Tatars, Pagans, and other confused unbelieving peoples."¹¹⁰ Pope John XXII's letter proves that the *antemurale* characteristic of the Kingdom of Poland was already acknowledged by the Papacy before John Albert of Poland's ambitious

¹⁰⁸ Paul W. Knoll, 'Poland as "Antemurale Christianitatis" in the Late Middle Ages', *Catholic Historical Review*, 60.3 (1974), p. 381 <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/25019573>>.

¹⁰⁹ Knoll, p. 385.

¹¹⁰ Knoll, p. 387.

crusading plans were executed in the late fifteenth century. It is equally essential that the Papacy also utilized the *antemurale* rhetoric to eliminate all obstacles in the way of Catholicizing the Baltic regions. In other words, resorting to the bulwark metaphor was in the interests of both sides and this was a recurrent motive in the long history of the *antemurale* discourse in Europe.

While the Ottoman peril was already intimidating in the thirteenth and fourteenth century for Christian Europe, it was the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople in 1453 which set the alarm bells ringing in throughout much of the continent. It was the building block of Ottoman expansionism and a crowning achievement that will be praised in the following decades and centuries. The news from Constantinople was received with fear and despair in Italy. There was a growing whisper that if the Turks managed to breach the walls of Constantinople, their invasion of Apulia would be inevitable. Besides, *Gran Turco's* conquest of Constantinople revived the bitter memories of Alaric's sack of Rome in 410 AD.¹¹¹ Once again, the time-honored myth about the eternality of the city of Rome was invalidated by the barbarians coming from the uncivilized world.

3.2. Rome as the Eternal City: Nova Roma, Apocalypse, and the Ottomans

The Ottoman capture of Constantinople is considered thoroughly in the first chapter of this thesis. However, the preliminary exploration of the incidents that took place in 1453 should be accompanied by a further discussion on the eschatological importance attached to the city in the Christian tradition. Pursuing the following questions can prove fertile to realize if the Ottoman and Christian Europe were linked via eschatology, apocalypse, and holy war discourses. First, what is the main reason that the city of Constantinople has been targeted by both Latins and Ottomans? Second, why has it been an enchanting imperial dream for the early modern rulers to fashion themselves as the new Roman Emperor? To facilitate this discussion,

¹¹¹ Kenneth M. Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant (1204-1571)* (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1978), II, p. 139.

I explore the example of the Grand Duchy of Moscow. Third, how does the ascription of eschatological importance to Constantinople and association of the Ottomans with apocalyptic motives i.e., Gog and Magog, connect in the reign of Bayezid II?

The fall of Constantinople in 1453 was terrific news received with great dismay in Christian Europe. On the one hand, the Christian public gained an insight into the magnitude of the danger that the Ottomans possessed for Christian Europe after 1453. On the other hand, the Ottoman capture of the Eastern Roman capital unearthed the apocalyptic anxiety, which was deeply rooted in Christian political thought owing to the eschatological importance attached to the city. It was not the first time that the Roman capital fell under pagan rule or was plundered by infidels. Alaric I's (r. 395-410) invasion of Rome or Latin invasion of Constantinople in 1204 was still alive in the collective memories of Latin and Orthodox Christian communities in the fifteenth century. Constantinople was already named *Nova Roma* in the fourth century by Emperor Constantine the Great (d. 337), and the Ottoman conquest was redolent of Alaric's destruction of Rome in AD 476.¹¹² While it is true that the Ottoman conquest made it clear for the rest of the Christian world that the circle was tightening, it also implied the approaching of an apocalyptic prophecy associated with the city of Rome. In this regard, the reason why the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople set the Christian public off in fear and trepidation remains vague without deliberating about one of the most persistent pagan myths about Rome.

Both the city of Rome and the Roman Empire were believed to live eternally. This belief should be sought in the writings of the greatest Roman authors of the first century B.C. One such name is Albius Tibullus, who epitomized this legend before he died in 19 B.C: "*Romulus*

¹¹² Demetrius John Georgacas, 'The Names of Constantinople', *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association*, 78 (1947), 347-67 (p. 354).

Aeternae nondum formaverat Urbis moenia.”¹¹³ His contemporaries Livy, Ovid, and Virgil also shared his amorphous belief concerning the fate of the city. In his famous Aeneid, Virgil exposed the idealness of Rome as a city and unlimited power that the Roman Empire was thought to have possessed: “...his ego nec metas rerum, nec tempora pono: imperium sine fine dedi...”¹¹⁴ Both of these excerpts illustrate the widely shared Roman belief that Rome was meant to go on eternally and the imperial power of the Romans was endless. Considering that the Roman Empire ruled over most of the known world until its demise, the legacy it has left was contested by the successor political establishments in the following centuries. As demonstrated in the first chapter, the title of Roman Caesar was bestowed upon Mehmed II shortly after his capture of Nova Roma. However, the Ottomans were not left unrivaled in their claims to be the successors of the Roman Empire.

While the Ottomans may have considered Devlet-i ‘Aliyye-i ‘Osmaniyye (دَوْلَتِ عَلِيّهٔ عُثمَانِيّه in the Ottoman Turkish) as the Second Roman Empire and pondered over the eschatological role that Nova Roma will play in the apocalypse, the Russians claim to be the Third Roman Empire after the fall of *Tsargrad* provides us with a junction point between the Ottoman and Russian worlds as well. It was not a simple coincidence that the Metropolitan Zosima of Moscow declared Ivan III as the new Emperor Constantine and named Moscow the new Constantinople shortly after the Ottoman conquest in 1453. Marking the Grand Duke of Moscow as the new Roman Emperor was in line with the shared Christian belief that Rome was eternal. Besides, the Russian response to the shocking news of Constantinople was mixed with the apocalyptic apprehension that the fall of Rome would signal the coming of the Anti-Christ. The Russian clergy was already familiar with the Pseudo-Methodius apocalyptic scenario,

¹¹³ “Neither had Romulus erected the walls of the Eternal Urbe.” Kenneth J. Pratt, ‘Rome as Eternal’, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 26.1 (1965), 25–44 (p. 26).

¹¹⁴ Duncan F. Kennedy, ‘Modern Receptions and Their Interpretative Implications’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Virgil*, ed. by Charles Martindale, Cambridge Companions to Literature (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 44.

which is considered one of the pillars of the Byzantine eschatological ideology. According to this, the Ishmaelites would replace the Eastern Roman Empire under the command of the Anti-Christ until a liberator emperor would defeat them. The fifteenth and sixteenth-century Russian historiography confirm the wide appeal of the Pseudo-Methodius apocalypse and display how the Russian elements were incorporated into the already existent form of this scenario. While the theme of the Last Roman Emperor and his restoration of Constantinople and Jerusalem is found in basically all copies of the Pseudo-Methodius, the mentioning of the Russian tribes appear as novelties. The following excerpt, which is taken from a Russian chronicle estimated to have been composed in 1511 by Philotheus in Pskov, reveals that a grand battle should be fought between the Russians and Ottomans, who are considered to be the Ishmaelites: “The Russian tribes will battle against the Ishmaelites with the help of erstwhile inhabitants, will conquer the city of the seven hills.”¹¹⁵

There is no doubt that the city of seven hills stands for Rome, although the same position has been assumed by several other cities in the long run such as Edinburgh, Durham, Bristol, Jerusalem, and Babylon to name a few.¹¹⁶ It is hard to assume that the Russian public dreamt of capturing Rome and fight against the Ishmaelites in Italy in the early sixteenth century. The most convincing explanation appears to be Nova Roma following the Ottoman conquest. Philotheus’s addressing to Vasily III (r. 1505-1533) as the ‘sole emperor of all the Christians in the whole universe’ shows that the Russian messianism was strictly related to the idea of a chosen people and anointed savior sent by God. Chosen by God since they were the only Orthodox sovereigns free from Ottoman rule, Grand Dukes of Moscow acquired a sense of exceptionality. Besides, Ivan III’s marriage to Sophia Paleologina in 1472 provided the

¹¹⁵ Dimitri Strémooukhoff, ‘Moscow the Third Rome: Sources of the Doctrine’, *Speculum*, 28.1 (1953), 84–101 (p. 88).

¹¹⁶ Caroline Vout, *The Hills of Rome: Signature of an Eternal City* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 2.

Muscovite Tsars with genealogical legitimacy as the new Roman Emperors.¹¹⁷ As mentioned earlier, the Paschal Canon, composed by the Metropolitan Zosima in 1492, sheds light on the Russian eschatology and the Muscovite reactions towards the Ottoman expansionism crowned with the conquest of Constantinople. We observe explicit references to 1492 as the exact year of the transition of imperial power from Rome to its successor in his canon. The reason for this is the end of the world should have occurred around 7000, according to the Byzantine calendar.¹¹⁸

In summary, both Philopheus and Zosima are among the first generation of Russian scholars referring to the year 1492 as the beginning of a new era and ascribed an eschatological mission to the Muscovite Tsar. After all, the Grand Duke of Moscow was the only autonomous Orthodox monarch who can fight against the Ottomans, repel these evil forces of Gog and Magog, and recapture the seat of the Roman Caesars. Nevertheless, the rise of the Grand Duchy of Moscow to world power and its claim to be the Third Rome by ignoring the Ottoman occupation of Nova Roma was either ignored or unnoticed by the Ottomans. Despite the Muscovites' association of the Ottomans with Ishmaelites -and indirectly with Gog and Magog because of the earlier link made between Ishmaelites and Gog and Magog-, the Ottomans found their eschatological enemy in the persona of a Latin king: Charles VIII, who embarked upon the invasion of Italy in 1494 and threatened Bayezid II by implying to the Last Roman Emperor legend.

It would be an uncontested claim that the Russian apocalypticism, which was slowly emerging in the fifteenth century, derived most of its constituent elements from the Byzantine

¹¹⁷ Peter S. J. Duncan, *Russian Messianism: Third Rome, Revolution, Communism, and After*, Routledge Advances in European Politics, 1 (New York: Routledge, 2000), p. 12. Also, see Cyril Toumanoff, 'Moscow the Third Rome: Genesis and Significance of a Politico-Religious Idea', *The Catholic Historical Review*, 40.4 (1955), 411–47 (p. 439).

¹¹⁸ Marshall Poe, 'Moscow, the Third Rome: The Origins and Transformations of a "Pivotal Moment"', in *Jahrbücher Für Geschichte Osteuropas*, 49 (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2001), III, 412–29 (pp. 414–15).

apocalyptic ideology. The Byzantine scholars and public considered the fall of the city was equal to the end of the world, which was to occur after seven thousand years following the Creation in correlation with the eternality *topoi* attributed to Rome. In a similar vein, Islamic eschatology assumed that the conquest of Constantinople was a sign of the apocalypse. The second advent of Jesus Christ and the appearance of Al-Dajjāl- the Antichrist in the Bible-, were regarded as the shared harbingers of the last hour in Islam and Christianity. In addition to this, the fierce clashes between the Ottomans and Christian communities were also considered as a sign of doomsday because the Ottoman sultans were often referred to as Anti-Christ. As we know it, one of the crucial stages of the apocalypse in the Bible is Armageddon, the final battle between Jesus Christ's army and Anti-Christ.¹¹⁹

The capture of the city by Muslims was not the final stage in Islamic apocalypticism. Accordingly, a Nordic nation known as *Banu al-Asfar* would reclaim Rome and repel the Muslims, referred to as Ishmaelites by the Byzantine and Russian scholars of the fifteenth century.¹²⁰ *Banu al-Asfar*, to whom the Ottomans referred as *Asferoğulları*, was a recurrent theme in the Ottoman apocalyptic tradition, and they were often associated with Franks. For this reason, the Ottomans monitored the actions taken by the French kings throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. For instance, Bayezid II is known for his careful observations of the steps taken by Charles VIII after he invaded Italy. It appears that the Ottomans were aware of the Last Roman Emperor propaganda that Charles VIII carefully disseminated and knew that he was aiming for restoring Nova Roma to Christianity. During this time, Kemalpaşazâde, an Ottoman chronicler who was a contemporary of Bayezid II, noted a growing disquiet at Bayezid II's court concerning a possible French attack on Constantinople.¹²¹

¹¹⁹ David Cook, *Studies in Muslim Apocalyptic*, Studies in Late Antiquity and Early Islam, 21 (Princeton, New Jersey: The Darwin Press, Inc., 2002), p. 94.

¹²⁰ Şahin, p. 325.

¹²¹ İbni Kemal, *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osman*, ed. by Ahmet Uğur (Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1997), VIII, p. 144.

Echoing Kemalpaşazâde, Firdevsî-i Tevil also notes that the actual target of the crusading armies in Europe was to remove the Ottoman presence from Europe and restore Holy Land to Christianity. In *Kutbnâme*, he argues that Pope Alexander VI sent a letter to the Hungarian and Polish kings in which he called them to join the crusade:

“Let us pass beyond the Danube River with armies
 Let us conquer the Turkish lands with our sword
 Let us conquer Rum, Egypt, and Damascus
 And restore Jerusalem so that we can all be pilgrims...
 These must be the words uttered by the Pope
 The Messiah should descend from the sky
 Let us go there (Jerusalem) before Jesus Christ descends
 Let us spill the Turkish blood to the ground...”¹²²

Firdevsî’s obvious reference to Jerusalem and the second advent of Jesus Christ enables us to argue that the Ottomans were cognizant of the Pseudo-Methodius apocalypse and the late fifteenth-century Christian fascination by it. Since almost the whole work is dedicated to the brave Ottoman defense of the Aegean Islands against the motley of French, Venetian, and Spanish in 1501, he elaborates on the religious motive that united these different political actors. It appears in his account that a pivotal role is attributed to the Papacy in bringing together the aforementioned political establishments. Citing the papal bull sent by Pope Alexander VI, Firdevsî refers to both the Pseudo-Methodius and Last Roman Emperor topoi:

“Now the time has come that infidels should run
 And Banu al-Asfar should make them frighten away
 So that Banu al-Asfar should reach Constantinople
 Thus the infidels should reach Adana at this time
 And they should settle in Jerusalem and Damascus

¹²² Firdevsi-i Rumî, *Kutbnâme* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 2011), p. 79.

So that the Messiah should descend from the sky...”¹²³

Firdevsî's remarks on the crusade armies gathering in Europe reveals that the most popular Christian apocalyptic scenario was known by the Ottoman chroniclers and Bayezid II to whom this work is dedicated. When we reconsider the fear at the Ottoman court, we can claim that the courtiers of Bayezid II might have realized that the prophesized people of *Banu al-Asfar* could be the French army attempting to recapture Nova Roma.

Being very well aware of the eschatological importance attached to the city by the Byzantine and Islamic sources circulating throughout the century, the late fifteenth century Ottomans referred to the apocalyptic motives more than ever. For instance, the endowment deed of Mehmed II portrayed the Ottoman sultan as if he were fighting against the evil forces of the apocalypse, including the Blonde People.¹²⁴ Besides, all the catastrophes that Istanbul and its surroundings suffered are reminiscent of what happened to Moldavia in 1484, including the blood rain and great fire that swept over the Putna Monastery, which would also house Stephen cel Mare's tomb in the future. Notwithstanding the invalidity of a claim that a series of incidents that are considered bad omens should be related to a prophesized apocalypse in the late fifteenth century, I attempt to picture the lugubrious environment in which political priorities may have been renegotiated by the sovereign powers.

In this sense, I argue that Bayezid II did not only inherit a vast empire with well-defined expansionist policies and an ideal sovereign image that engages in *gaza* and brings justice to the world. He also fell heir to a fecund apocalyptic ideology developed by his predecessors and further refined it through the systematic use of myths, apocalypticism, and holy war discourses.

¹²³ Rumî, p. 56.

¹²⁴ Şahin, p. 326.

3.3. The Apocalypse, Gog and Magog, and European Response to the Ottoman

Advance

The apocalyptic expectations of the Christian world and the ever-increasing pressure of the Ottoman threat gained momentum in the last decade of the fifteenth century. On the one hand, it was because the Byzantine calendar was showing the end of the world was nearing in the 1490s. On the other hand, Bayezid II proved himself on the battlefield on several different occasions such as the capture of Chilia and Akkerman from the Principality of Moldavia in 1484. It evoked memories of the military debacles that the Eastern European sovereigns suffered against the Ottomans in the previous decades. As emphasized elsewhere, the apocalyptic apprehension that both the Latin and Orthodox communities shared with Muslims in the late fifteenth century was closely linked to the Ottoman advance in Europe which was crowned with the conquest of Constantinople. The relentless Ottoman invasion of Europe enabled the Renaissance authors, demagogues, and crusaders to expand the archaic discussion over the link between Turks and Gog and Magog into the Ottomans.

Following the fall of Constantinople, both the Greek-speaking parts of the Balkans and Latin Europe found themselves in a state of chaos with the surge of writings concerning the heinous of the ‘Turks.’ Some Renaissance scholars believed that the ‘Turks’ were the descendants of the House of Togarmah, the closest ally of Magog.¹²⁵ Another widely-held belief among the Renaissance scholars was related to the ‘barbarian nature of the Turks’ and their descendancy from the Scythians. The argument that the Ottomans were the descendants of the Scythians was in harmony with the Gog and Magog myth since Scythians appear to be among one of the earliest associated nations with these invader people mentioned in the Bible.¹²⁶

¹²⁵ Michael J. Heath, ‘Renaissance Scholars and the Origins of the Turks’, *Bibliothèque d’Humanisme et Renaissance*, 41.3 (1979), p. 454.

¹²⁶ Scott D. Westrem, ‘Against Gog and Magog’, in *Text and Territory: Geographical Imagination in the European Middle Ages*, ed. by Sylvia Tomasch and Sealy Gilles, The Middle Age Series (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), pp. 54–75 (p. 55).

Coupled with the assumed barbarity of the Turks, the historical region where the Scythians were believed to live was taken as a token of their likeliness to be the descendants of the Scythians and thus the Gog and Magog. Alternatively stated, the surrounding area of the Caspian Sea was feared to have been the starting point of the apocalyptic invasion of the world by Gog and Magog.¹²⁷ Proceeding on this track, we are first required to visit the passages in the Bible concerning the evil nations of Gog and Magog. Then, we need to analyze the Alexander the Great legend so that we can get an insight into the civilizational dimension of the bulwark rhetoric and apocalypticism.

In Ezekiel 38-39, Gog was described as the leader of a confederation of barbarian nations who settled in Magog. They first appeared in the Hebrew Bible owing to their relentless raids -motivated by plunder-, into Israel. Their chief leader was referred to as the ‘chief prince of Meshech and Tubal’ about whom we learn further details in Genesis 10, where the Table of Nations introduces the descendants of Noah.¹²⁸ Accordingly, Magog, Tubal, Meshech, Tiras, and Gomer all descended from Japheth. In Ezekiel 27, Tubal and Meshech were reported to have traded human slaves and bronze to Israelis. Togarmah -associated with Turks by the sixteenth-century Flemish cartographer Abraham Ortelius and French cabalist Guillaume Postel-, were said to have relied upon their trade in chariot horses. Nevertheless, Heath cautions us concerning the link forged between the Turks and Togarmah. He reminds us that the early thirteenth century Franciscan Ubertino of Casale and sixteenth-century German historian

¹²⁷ Nicholas Railton notes that Josephus seems to be the first notable figure who associated the Scythians with Gog and Magog in the third century. Besides, it was Josephus again, who provided us with a vivid narration of how Alexander the Great had the ‘barbarian people’ living beyond the Caucasus imprisoned by erecting iron gates in their lands. Thus, Alexander was named as the defender of civilization against barbarian invasions. However, we need to consider the shifting tendency among the Jewish literati in their considerations about the Gog and Magog story since the Middle Ages. For instance, Rabbi David Kimchi (1160-1235) considered both Christians and ‘Turks’ as the common enemy of the Jews and descendants of Gog and Magog. Nicholas Railton, ‘Gog and Magog: The History of a Symbol’, *EvQ*, 75 (2003), p. 29. Also, see Victor Scherb, ‘Assimilating Giants: The Appropriation of Gog and Magog in Medieval and Early Modern England’, *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 32.1 (2002), 59–84 (p. 62) <<https://doi.org/10.1215/10829636-32-1-59>>. Railton, p. 29. Scherb, p. 62.

¹²⁸ Ezekiel., 38-39.

Johann Carion argued that Turks were the descendants of Japheth and Magog.¹²⁹ Alternatively stated, while there was a common tendency among Christian scholars of the Middle Ages and early modern period authors to associate the Turks with these barbarian nations, there was not a consensus among them about the exact nation that Turks descended from. Yet, an agreement seems to have been reached concerning their motherland. They were believed to have been the offspring of Japheth populating the vast area over the South Caucasus where the Gate of Alexander is constructed.

Andrew Runni Anderson, however, puts forward that the Biblical narrative about the invasion of Israel territories by barbarian nations sent by YHWH was a restructured and distorted version of the actual Cimmerian raids into the Middle East. Putatively, they were Gog and Magog who erased the Alexander Gate -erected in Darial Gorge-, sometime around the eighth century during the reign of Sargon of Assyria.¹³⁰ In this regard, ceaseless raids of Asian tribes that terrorized relatively more ‘civilized’ parts of Eurasia created a frontier myth that would be mixed with the Alexander the Great legend. It was Flavius Josephus, the first-century CE Romanized Jewish historian, who laid the foundations of this rhetoric by associating all invader forces with Gog and Magog regardless of their ethnicity, language, and religion.¹³¹ For him, they were barbarians in the sense that they ruined the civilized Greek territories. Thus, we are allowed to argue that this frontier myth inherently possessed a civilizational dimension which enabled the European public to identify their enemies with barbarianism and attribute innate civilizational elements to their territories.

It is worth elaborating on how this connection between the lineage of Japheth and Turks is perceived by the Turkic scholars in the Middle Ages and Early Modern times. It is public

¹²⁹ Heath, p. 454.

¹³⁰ Andrew Runni Anderson, *Alexander's Gate, Gog and Magog, and the Inclosed Nations* (Cambridge: Medieval Academy of America, 2013), p. 7.

¹³¹ Anderson, p. 8.

knowledge that the twentieth-century Turkish scholars were particularly interested in this discussion and they did not hesitate to verify the claim that the first identifiable ancestor of the modern Turkish nation was Japheth, the third son of Noah.¹³² As expected, their analyses aimed to serve the political interests of the nationalist movements in the country rather than reviving an interesting medieval age sovereignty claim put forward by the well-known scholars of the medieval age Turkic world. One of the earliest dated Turkic scholars, who affiliated Japheth with the Turks was the tenth-century Kara-Khanid poet and lexicographer Kaşgarlı Mahmud (d. 1102). *Dîvânu Lugâti't-Türk*, the first-ever known extensive Turkish dictionary compiled by Mahmud for Arabs to get acquaintance with Turks, contains the genealogical assumption that Turks were the descendants of Japheth:

“The Turks are twenty tribes in fact. They descended from Turk -son of Japheth-, who was the son of God blessed Prophet Noah’s. ...these tribes consist of many clans that their numbers can only be known by God.”¹³³

Echoing the genealogical explanation of Mahmud, Mahmud Sharif al-Din 'Ali Yazdi also considered the Turks as the descendants of Japheth. Yazdi (d. 1454) was a Persian poet famous for his *Zafarname* in which he narrated the life story of Timūr Gurkānī (d. 1405). Besides the heroic victories of Timūr which bestowed upon him the title of sahib-kıran, Yazdi elaborated on the genealogy of Turks and corroborated the previous claims put forward by Mahmud. He argued that the father of Turk was named *Türkhan* and he was Japheth’s son.¹³⁴

Even more important is the shared perspective of the late fifteenth century Ottoman chroniclers who all repeated the age-old claim that Turks descended from Japheth, and thus, the Ottomans genealogically derive from the lineage of the Prophet Noah. It is of primary

¹³² Zekiye Tunç, ‘Turkish Presence in Mosul before Islam’, in *Rifat Özdemir’e Armağan*, ed. by Rahmi Doğanay, Ahmet Çelik, and Fatih Özçelik (İstanbul: Hiper Yayınları, 2018), p. 76; İbrahim Kafesoğlu, *Umumi Türk Tarihi Hakkında Tespitler, Görüşler, Mülâhazalar* (Ankara: Ötüken Neşriyat, 2017), p. 424.

¹³³ Mahmud el-Kaşgari, *Dîvânu Lugâti't-Türk* (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1990), p. 28.

¹³⁴ Junko Miyawaki, ‘The Chinggisid Principle in Russia’, *Russian History*, 19.1–4 (1992), 261–77 (p. 264).

importance to emphasize that this *topos* was known by the Ottoman scholars at Bayezid II's time and inserted into the Ottoman genealogy trees prepared to prove the legitimacy of the House of Osman. One of these chronicles was penned by Bayatî Hasan b. Mahmûd, who was a companion of Prince Cem and named his work after the prince. While our knowledge of Bayatî remains uncompleted and vague owing to the lack of any explicative references made to him by his contemporaries, he notes in his work that he met Prince Cem in Hijaz sometime around 1481. In *Câm-ı Cem-Âyin*, Bayatî referred to the Ottomans as the descendants of Oghuz Khan, who was the scion of Japheth. In doing so, he hit two birds with one stone since he mixed the descendancy from Japheth with another popular genealogical source of legitimacy that the Ottomans utilized extensively.¹³⁵

Another prominent figure, who explored the Ottoman genealogy in his chronicle is a more familiar name whose *Heşt Bihişt* is discussed extensively in the first chapter: İdris-i Bidlîsî. In addition to rehearsing the military and political career of Bayezid II, his association of the Ottomans with Japheth serves a particular purpose considering the political priorities of the sultan. At the time *Heşt Bihişt* is sponsored by Bayezid II, the Ottomans were struggling with the Safavid propaganda in Anatolia and the charismatic leader cult created around the persona of Shah Ismail was threatening the legitimacy of the House of Osman. Considering that the Shia propaganda that targeted the Turkic population in the continent came to be fruitful in the long run, it is logical to assume that Bayezid II strived to re-establish the Turkic origins of the House of Osman and renegotiate with the Turkic communities settled in Anatolia and Persia. Also, as Ali Anooshahr aptly puts it, Bidlîsî's remark concerning the Ottoman descendancy from Japheth was a constituent element of refashioning Bayezid II as the new Alexander the Great

¹³⁵ According to the fifteenth century Ottoman history writing tradition, the Ottomans were descending from the famous Kayı Boyu and thus they were the legitimate heirs to Oghuz Khan. İdris Kadioğlu, 'Câm-ı Cem-Âyin'de Oğuz Kara Han Nesli ve Dede Korkut', *Kesit Akademi Dergisi*, 3.10 (2017), 1–11 (p. 4).

of the age.¹³⁶ Neşri, a contemporary of Bidlîsî and court historian of Bayezid II, also refers to the Ottomans as the descendants of Japheth:

“These people are known for their extreme gallantry, and they are all sons of Bulcas Han b. Yafes b. Prophet Nuh. And Bulcas had two sons: One was named Turk and the other was called Moğul (Mongol). Their descendants and relatives are in great number that they are like sands and trees whose numbers can only be known by God.”¹³⁷

Other eminent court historians of Bayezid II’s time seem to have shared the same tendency with Neşri and Bidlîsî. For instance, Oruç b. Âdil and Derviş Ahmed, also known as Âşıkpaşazâde, touch upon the Ottoman descendancy from Japheth and Noah.¹³⁸ The only remarkable difference that can be found in Derviş Ahmed’s account stems from his addressing the Persians as the descendants of Japheth as well.¹³⁹ This specific reference to the Persians as the relatives of the Turks does not appear in the anonymous Ottoman chronicle -although the Ottomans were still portrayed in the same way with other chronicles-, dated to the 1490s.¹⁴⁰ Among all of these contemporary sources, one poet distinguishes himself because of the curious terms he applied in eulogizing the sovereignty of Bayezid II. Ibnü’l-Uleyf (d.1520) was an Arab poet who appended a *kaside* (eulogy) to his work *ed-Dureru’l-manzûm* in which he praised the sultan and the House of Osman. What gives this work its high distinction is his approach towards the issue at hand. He resorts to the word ‘Rum’ to address the Ottomans and argues that Rums descended from Japheth. Ibnü’l-Uleyf also notes that Japheth is the ancestor of both Rum and Magog. By so doing, he sets up a kindred relationship between the Ottomans and the evil nations of Gog and Magog. Furthermore, he refers to Alexander the Great as *Dhu al-*

¹³⁶ Ali Anooshahr, ‘İdris-i Bitlisi’nin Heşt Bihişt’inde Osmanlı’ya Dair Efsanenin Yaratılması ve Tarih Yazımı’, *Osmanlı Araştırmaları*, 50.50 (2017), 1–28 (p. 6).

¹³⁷ Mehmed Neşri, *Kitâb-ı Cihannümâ: Neşri Tarihi*, 2 vols, I, p. 9.

¹³⁸ Âdil, p. 12.

¹³⁹ Derviş Ahmed, *Aşıkpaşaoğlu Tarihi*, ed. by Hüseyin Nihal Atsız (İstanbul: Ötüken Neşriyat, 2020), p. 6.

¹⁴⁰ Azamat, p. 8.

Qarnayn er-Rûmî (Alexander the Great of Rum).¹⁴¹ In this regard, the following verses in his *kaside* directly refer to the association made between Bayezid II and Alexander the Great:

“Oh Bayezid who breaks his back to defend the Muslim lands
 You drew your sword for the religion of Allah
 And vanquished all infidels and heathens with it
 In the hope of conquering and receiving the approval of Allah
 You fought jihad in the way of Allah
 Your victories over infidels are reminiscent of Alexander
 And they reveal that you are the one that the Quran praised...”¹⁴²

The poetry of Ibnu'l-Uleyf exposes the reader to the Ottoman sovereignty claims and demonstrates the charm of the Alexander the Great topoi at the time Bayezid II ruled the Ottoman Empire. The fact that Bayezid II rewarded the poet with 50 dinars per year makes the impression that Ibnu'l-Uleyf's specific wording of Bayezid II's sovereignty and praises he used to describe Bayezid II's characteristics enabled the poet to ingratiate himself with the Ottoman sultan.¹⁴³

Saint Methodius of Patara provides us with a glimpse into the connection between the people of Magog and the apocalypse. In the seventh millennium, the barbarian nations of Gog and Magog -who were imprisoned by Alexander the Great in the Caucasus-, would be unleashed and the Anti-Christ would appear. Thus, the process of apocalypse would begin until Christians would reclaim Constantinople and Holy Land under the command of the Last World Emperor who would prepare the world for the second advent of Jesus Christ. These nations are often regarded as the descendants of Ishmael and the rise of the Ottoman peril throughout the

¹⁴¹ Şükran Fazlıoğlu, 'Mekkeli Şair Ibnu'l-Uleyf'in Sultan II. Bayezid'e Yazdığı Kaside', *Dîvân*, 2 (2001), 163–81 (p. 169).

¹⁴² Fazlıoğlu, p. 179.

¹⁴³ Fazlıoğlu, p. 167.

eastern borderlands of Christian Europe prompted the idea that they were Gog and Magog.¹⁴⁴ The range of pre-modern age authors and scholars who associated Turks with the nations of Gog and Magog vary depending on the context in which these affiliations are made. For instance, the twelfth-century Arabian author Abu Shaker explains why Turks must be the descendants of Gog and Magog by elaborating on the name ‘Turk.’ He argues that the word Turk was the distorted version of ‘Terkî’, an epithet given to them since they are denied permission to enter into the civilized world. Given that the nations of Gog and Magog were banned from touching the civilized world via the wall that is erected by Alexander the Great, his explanation seems to be in line with the Alexander the Great legend.¹⁴⁵

The millenarian connection made between Turks and the Biblical apocalyptic motives was not limited to rather unknown individuals such as Abu Shaker. It was Pope Nicholas V who openly referred to Mehmed II as the Anti-Christ and indirectly implied that the Ottomans were descendants of Gog and Magog.¹⁴⁶ Therefore, the idea of defending the civilized world against the savagery of Islam was the moral and legal basis of the *antemurale christianitatis* discourse. The military expeditions of the Christians were legitimate by the virtue of their responsibility of defending the Christian civilization and the Papacy. Since the Donations of Constantine, the Papacy assumed the successor role of the Roman Empire and had remained the major political actor on the political stage for a long time.¹⁴⁷ It should be noted that this binary of civilization and savagery does not appear in the Ottoman documents that touch upon the concept of *gaza*. Thus, this binary can be taken as one of the unique features of the

¹⁴⁴ Anderson, p. 45.

¹⁴⁵ Ernest Alfred Wallis Budge, *The Life and Exploits of Alexander the Great*, Elibron Classics (Boston: Adamant Media Corporation, 2000), p. 396.

¹⁴⁶ Hankins, p. 142.

¹⁴⁷ Johann Wilhelm Zinkeisen, ‘The Donation of Constantine as Applied by the Roman Church’, *The English Historical Review*, 9.36 (1894), 625–32 (p. 625).

antemurale christianitatis discourse that can be dated back to the Greco-Roman world's discrimination between civilization and barbarism.¹⁴⁸

One of the leading Renaissance scholars, who were convinced that the 'Turks' were the scourge of God and should be fought against by any means, was the Italian poet Callimachus. He played a major role in Eastern European politics in the late fifteenth century following his appointment as the tutor of John Albert, the future Polish king.¹⁴⁹ Callimachus was believed to have shaped the political mindset of the young Polish prince and persuaded him that he was chosen by God to punish the Ottomans. Although the Ottoman menace was not something new for the Polish Kingdom, the threat became more palpable with Bayezid II's expansionist policies that targeted the coastal towns of the Black Sea region. The Ottoman conquest of Chilia and Akkerman had two-fold significance for Albert. First, the Ottomans were now controlling the Dniester and Dnieper deltas together with the commercial routes passed through them. Second, they were seizing the opportunity of directly threatening the Polish Kingdom and waging deleterious incursions into the Polish territories together with the Crimean forces. Thus, the Polish crusade of 1497 against the Ottoman Empire and John Albert's religious zeal in devoting himself to this cause was evidence of Callimachus' success in training the prince as a chevalier. In addition to the religious fervor that he was imbued with starting from his youth, he was craving eternal fame. The sixteenth-century Polish chronicler Bernard Wapowski delineated his personality as follows:

*"He was full of majesty, and by day and night, he thought of nothing else but how to link his name with fabulous deeds for all eternity. ... His great soul was tortured night and day as he waited for an opportunity..."*¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁸ Zinkeisen, p. 461.

¹⁴⁹ Katarzyna Niemczyk, 'Antemurale Christianitatis? Anti-Turkish Propaganda And The True Goal Of Johannes Olbracht's Crusade', *Tyragetia, Serie Nouă*, XXVII.2 (2018), 31–43 (p. 31).

¹⁵⁰ Nowakowska, 'Poland and the Crusade in the Reign of King Jan Olbracht, 1492-1501', p. 130.

This opportunity that the Polish king was seeking seems to have presented itself in 1497 when he managed to muster an army of around 80,000 soldiers with artillery forces.¹⁵¹ While the number of Polish forces gathered to repel the Ottoman forces in Chilia and Akkerman is overestimated, the fate of the campaign was in the hands of John Albert. He was unaware of the secret alliance forged between Stephen cel Mare and Bayezid II when the Polish army stepped into the Moldavian lands. However, Stephen's chancellor asked him to leave the Moldavian soils since the presence of the Polish king in Moldavia would mean the violation of the aforementioned alliance. In response to this, John Albert incarcerated the chancellor and sent him to the Lwów Castle in chains. Shortly after, he united his forces with that of Alexander Jagiellon, the Grand Duke of Lithuania, and besieged Sucaeva to punish Stephen cel Mare and force him to ally against Bayezid II. However, Vladislaus II of Hungary threatened John Albert that should he not lift the siege, he would consider it as a violation of Hungarian rights on the Moldavian soils. Frustrated by the forewarning of Vladislaus and the fact that Stephen cel Mare had already slipped through his fingers, John Albert realized that the campaign had no chance to succeed. The humiliation that the Polish army suffered was exacerbated when a motley of Ottoman, Crimean, and Moldavian forces ambushed them near Codrul Cosminului (Battle of the Cosmin Forest). Along with thousands of Polish soldiers who fell to the ground, we learn that also the Grand Master of the Teutonic Order died with his knights in this battle. In sum, the Battle of the Cosmin Forest exterminated the Polish dream of capturing Chilia and Akkerman and repulsing the Ottomans from Christian Europe.¹⁵² In the following years, the Crimean and Ottoman frontier units had launched more plunder-motivated incursions into the inner Polish lands as there remained no aversive power on the Ottoman-Polish borders.

¹⁵¹ Natalia Nowakowska, 'Poland and the Crusade in the Reign of King Jan Olbracht, 1492–1501', in *Crusading in the Fifteenth Century: Message and Impact*, by Norman Housley (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2004), pp. 128–47 (p. 131).

¹⁵² Tadeusz Grabarczyk, 'The Polish Court Banner in the Moldavian Expedition in 1497', *Fasciculi Archaeologiae Historicae*, 30 (2017), 29–34 (p. 29).

Stephen cel Mare's case was much more complex and more enlightening concerning the eschatological transformation of the *antemurale christianitatis* discourse in the second half of the fifteenth century. According to the millennialist theory informed by the Christian eschatological beliefs, the second advent of Jesus Christ was supposed to take place seven thousand years later than the creation of humankind which approximately corresponds to 1492-1493.¹⁵³ The earthquakes, massive fires, and floods that stroke Moldavia at the time were similar to what the Ottomans experienced on the other side of the border. Also, the appearance of a comet sometime between 1480-1492 aggravated the Moldavian fear that the last hour was imminent. While it may have instigated the fear that the comet harbingered the unstoppable advance of the Ottomans, it should be noted that this was only one of the popular interpretations. Besides, we should be skeptical of this approach since it is unlikely that the comet was seen by both the Ottomans and the Latin world at the same time. In 1484, just like the explosion of the Güngörmez Church near the Topkapı Palace in Istanbul, the Putna Monastery fell victim to a massive fire. Adding to this was the bloody rain which aroused fear among the Moldavians and more strongly convinced them the end was near. This fear was not baseless given that the Book of Revelations presaged that fires, flashes of lightning, and earthquakes were the signs of the apocalypse: "Then the angel took the censer and filled it with fire from the altar and threw it on the earth, and there were peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake."¹⁵⁴ All these ominous accidents were taken as the portents of the apocalypse.¹⁵⁵ Under these circumstances, it is no wonder that Gennadius Scholarius' interpretation of Constantine's calendar gained even more popularity among the Greek-speaking intellectuals.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵³ At this point, however, it should be noted that the prophecy or expectation that Jesus Christ's second advent was to take place roughly around 1492 was not a universally shared Christian belief. Yet, it remains to be one of the most popular eschatological beliefs among the Christian clergy and Renaissance scholars.

¹⁵⁴ *The Book of the Revelation: Apocalypse and Empire*, ed. by Leonard L. Thompson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 83.

¹⁵⁵ Pilat, p. 2.

¹⁵⁶ Scholarius was one of the established and well-known figures of Mehmed II's age owing to his new position as the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople from 1454 to 1464.

Maria Magdalena Szekely argues that Scholarius' prophecy concerning the apocalypse of 1492 must have reached the Moldavian lands through merchants, soldiers, and travelers.¹⁵⁷

Perhaps more importantly, Theodora Artimon points out a particular painting that established a parallel between Stephen the Great's victory over the Ottomans in 1475 and Constantine I's vanquish of Maxentius's army at the battle of the Milvian Bridge. The painting 'The Mounted Procession of the Holy Cross' cannot be argued to have enjoyed popularity among Orthodox Christians, though Stephen saw in it the visual representation of his universal sovereignty dream. The painting served the purpose of portraying Stephen as the true inheritor of the Roman legacy.¹⁵⁸ This prophecy, again, was related to the widespread belief that Rome, as a concept, was to survive until doomsday. The Roman Empire might have collapsed. However, the idea of Rome, as the ideal political entity, was eternal in this sense. This belief also stems from the conventional wisdom that the Papacy inherited the mantle of the Roman Empire owing to the Donation of Constantine. Therefore, the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople and the fall of the Eastern Roman Empire allowed Stephen the Great to represent himself as the heir of the Roman legacy in the same vein as Ivan III of Moscow. Szekely maintains that Stephen's generous donations to the St. George Church following his victory over the Ottomans in 1475 corroborate the possibility that the millennialist anxieties were indeed influential on Stephen's psychology. Stephen believed that he was given the same divine task of fighting against the 'infidels' and 'pagans' as Constantine, which was a common position for many in what was considered the Greek-Orthodox Commonwealth.¹⁵⁹

While the Battle of Vaslui allowed Stephen III of Moldavia to build glorious fame throughout Eastern Europe and brought his name to the forefront in collective defense of

¹⁵⁷ Teodora Artimon, 'The Proto-Myth of Stephen the Great of Moldavia' (unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, Central European University, 2015), p. 55.

¹⁵⁸ Teodora Artimon, p. 188.

¹⁵⁹ Teodora Artimon, p. 66.

Christianity against the Ottomans, Bayezid's Moldavian Campaign severely tarnished Stephen's prestige. Up until 1484, Stephen proved useful to shield Hungarian inner lands and the Polish crown from the Ottoman incursions.¹⁶⁰ Especially, the fortress of Chilia had always been considered the Hungarian outpost since the reign of Janos Hunyadi (d. 1456) until the Ottoman seizure whereas Akkerman served the same purpose for the Polish kingdom.¹⁶¹ Historians attribute Stephen's failure to resist the Ottoman assaults in 1484 to the messianic expectations of the age and their influence on Stephen. Maria Magdalena Szekely, for instance, argues that Stephen's reluctance to oppose these incursions might be related to his belief that the apocalypse was to occur in 1492.¹⁶² However, it is difficult to explain the whole story through the apocalyptic mindset of Stephen the Great. Stephen was already negotiating with Matthias Corvinus (d. 1490) and waiting for the Hungarian diet to decide the fate of Moldavia. Corvinus himself was eager to command the Hungarian army together with Pál Kinizsi (d. 1494) and fight against Bayezid II whom he believed to have violated the peace treaty. However, the long-hoped-for decision to send the Hungarian army to Chilia was never taken and Stephen was abandoned to his fate. Yet, the unfolding of the events following Bayezid's seizure of Chilia and Akkerman might be hinting at his surrender to the '*Qutb al-Aqtab*' Bayezid since Stephen, at least ostensibly, appears to have acted in accordance with Bayezid's grand strategy in the following years. He stabbed John Albert I in the back and divulged his

¹⁶⁰ The *antemurale christianitatis* role assumed by Stefan the Great requires us to revisit Gog and Magog prophecy since there is a direct correlation between the Ottoman penetration to the coastal areas of the Principality of Moldavia. Liviu Pilat notes that the fifteenth-century Moldavian clergy associated the Tartars and Turks with Gog and Magog by the virtue of their ceaseless attacks on *res publica Christiana* and their enslaving of Christians. Pilat. Among his most remarkable military and political achievements was the Battle of Vaslui, fought between Mehmed II and Stefan the Great, which resulted in a shocking defeat for the Ottoman side. His confrontation with the Ottoman sultan who refashioned himself as the New Roman Emperor after his capture of Constantinople provided Stefan the Great with a fertile ground to link his universal sovereignty claims with the messianic climate of the age. His fame as the defender of Christianity persisted until Bayezid II's conquest of Kilia and Akkerman in 1484. Alice Isabella Sullivan, 'The Athonite Patronage of Stephen III of Moldavia, 1457–1504', *Speculum*, 94.1 (2019), 1–46 (p. 39). Isabella Sullivan, p. 39.

¹⁶¹ Tamás Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis to Mohács: A History of Ottoman-Hungarian Warfare, 1389-1526*, The Ottoman Empire and Its Heritage, 63 (Leiden: Brill, 2018), p. 281.

¹⁶² Maria Magdalena Szekely, 'Ștefan Cel Mare Și Sfârșitul Lumii (Stephen the Great and the End of the World)', *Studii Și Materiale de Istorie Medie (SMIM)*, XXI, 2003, 255–62 (p. 260).

‘crusade strategy’ against the Ottomans in 1497, which rendered John Albert’s ambitious desire of removing the Ottoman existence from Christendom abortive. On the verge of death, he advised his son to remain loyal to Bayezid II rather than resisting the Ottomans. It was the last words of a pretender to the Roman throne and messianic ruler whose ambition went astray.

CONCLUSION

The rhetoric of Ottoman *gaza* and European *antemurale christianitatis* discourse whetted the curiosity of a wide range of historians who all approached these holy war discourses with differing priorities and agendas. The first wave of Ottoman historians, who considered the Ottoman *gaza* discourse worthy of academic inquiry, were the eyewitnesses of World War I (1914-1918), which resulted in the dissolution of the last multinational empires of the world. Paul Wittek, for instance, to whom even the present-day Ottoman historians owe gratitude, was

one of the Austrian military officers sent to Istanbul in 1915 amidst the Great War. He returned to Vienna only after the end of the war; thus, he observed the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and grew curious about the history of the House of Osman. One can easily imagine his frustration at what he saw throughout the distant parts of the empire. If these were the Ottomans who once breached the walls of Vienna, then, what on earth has led to this tragic collapse of the empire? It must be the question he had in his mind when delving into the early Ottoman history and *gaza* discourse. Hence, his personal experiences should not be entirely disregarded while gauging his *gazi* thesis. His reinterpretation of the early Ottoman history was erroneous since he was caught in the exceptionalism trap. He falsely associated the rise of the Ottomans to power with their religious fervor, a claim destined to be rebutted by the next generations of Ottoman scholars.

In the same vein, Fuad Köprülü's response to Wittek's *gazi* thesis cannot be fully understood without acknowledging his nationalism. As may be expected, the bitter memories of the Balkan Wars (1912-1913), the First World War, and the Turkish War of Independence (1919-1923) were still alive in the memories of the first generations of the young Turkish Republic. Köprülü's constant references to the pre-Ottoman years of the Turkish dominance in Anatolia implied that the young Turkish republic developed a sense of possessive nationalism over Anatolian soils. Turks have always been the rulers of the Anatolian continent, even before the Ottomans. Disputing the one-size-fits-all theory of Wittek, he counterargued that the religious zeal of the early Ottomans was one of the contributing factors that may account for the rise of the Ottomans.

The second wave of Ottoman historians, who are engrossed by the early decades of Ottoman history and disputed the age-old paradigms that had been hitherto embedded in the academia, appeared in the 1990s following the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991. For instance, Cemal Kafadar published *Between Two Worlds* in 1995, while Heath Lowry

contributed to the extant literature with the *Nature of the Early Ottoman State* in 2003. Both works reinterpreted the rise of the Ottomans and what distinguished them from other competitor Turcoman dynasties roaming in Anatolia in the fourteenth century. Kafadar and Lowry set an example for future studies in the field and adopted a more syncretic and eclectic interpretation of early Ottoman history. For instance, building on Wittek's *gazi* thesis, Kafadar drew our attention to the exclusive nature of the Ottoman *gaza* rhetoric. That is to say that the Ottoman pragmatism allowed their imperial system to incorporate different ethnicities, nations, and religious communities in *gaza*. As Alan Mikhail aptly puts it, the second wave of worldwide academic interest in Ottoman history was encouraged by the collapse of the last conglomerate political establishment of world history in 1991. The pressing issues of ethnic nationalism and growing tension between different religious communities -especially in the Balkans-, revived the legacy of the multinational and multi-confessional empires, including the Ottoman Empire. Hence, again, the increasing academic interest in the Ottoman rhetoric of *gaza* was subject to contemporary developments.

Recently, the outbreak of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) crisis has brought back to the foreground the historical evolution of the hybrid religious-political precepts of the Islamic holy warfare. Moreover, the rise of political Islam in Turkey did not hesitate to associate itself with global jihadism and lost in the pathetic nostalgia for the Ottoman past. It was Tayyip Erdoğan, who declared in 2005 that the whole Islamic world was looking forward to the revival of Muslim Turkey upon whose recovery that the victory over the enemies was imminent. Once again, political circumstances began stimulating the academic interest in Ottoman holy warfare. This thesis does not distinguish itself from its predecessors in the field driven by the political milieu of their ages. However, it contributes to the extant literature on the rhetoric of Ottoman *gaza* by reconsidering it in a new context.

First, this thesis outlines the historical evolution of Islamic holy warfare and discusses how the Turks were involved in the *gaza* raids in the first place. This is essential to understand the legacy that the Ottomans inherited from their predecessors and illustrate how they transformed the traditional *gaza* discourse from a plunder-motivated raid to a religious war fought against the Christian adversaries in Europe.¹⁶³ My investigation of the Ottoman rhetoric of *gaza* suggests that the late fifteenth century was one of the most critical stages in the making of a new imperial ideology that began taking shape in the hands of Mehmed II and Bayezid II. While the conventional wisdom appreciates Mehmed II's role in the designation of a new imperial ideology, it also tends to neglect the titanic efforts Bayezid II made to refashion himself as a *gazi* sultan and a cosmological sovereign. Bayezid II needed to revise the ideal sovereign image he inherited from his father since the pressing issues of his age such as the hazardous situation concerning Prince Cem or the growing tension between the centrifugal power groups in Rumelia and Istanbul required him to take additional measures.

While historians build a consensus about Bayezid II's reluctance in military affairs in the first years of his reign, I argue that he took over the expansionist policies of his father. The Moldavian Campaign in 1484 helped him refashion himself as a *gazi* sultan who was the best candidate for the throne. Besides, his visit to the tomb of Sarı Saltuk in the same year, who was a legendary *gazi*-dervish whose deeds were narrated to the next generations as well, was an easy-to-read message for the *gazi* and dervish circles in the Ottoman Rumelia. He was ready to renegotiate the imperial image of the Ottoman sultan with the centrifugal powerhouses if necessary. However, an antinomian dervish's failed assassination attempt in 1492 in Rumelia revealed the magnitude of the danger these groups possessed for Bayezid II's reign. The

¹⁶³ Here, it should be noted that the metamorphosis of the rhetoric from plunder-motivated raids to zealously fought a religious war against the Christian enemies in Europe is argued on a theoretical level. Both the Ottoman sultans and the court chroniclers of his reign, naturally, tended to dismiss the economic factors behind any *gaza* launched against the Christian communities in Europe.

dervish's claim that he was the Qutb al-Aqtab and legitimate ruler of the universe was an open threat to his sovereignty claims. Based on this, I argue that the rising number of eschatological and cosmological references to his sovereign image, such as Firdevsî's *Kutbnâme* and Bidlîsî's *Heşt Bihişt*, intended to counter this intensifying hostility towards his sultanate. Moreover, the claim that Bayezid II was the cosmological sovereign of the universe strengthened through references to his devotion to Islam and *gaza*. Therefore, the Ottoman chroniclers married the Ottoman *gaza* discourse with a Sufi terminology strongly associated with apocalypticism. This functioned to design a new imperial ideology, at the center of which we can find the rhetoric of Ottoman *gaza* and cosmological sovereignty, which hints at the universalist claims of the Ottoman sultans.

The more puzzling issue that this thesis sought to investigate was the connectedness of the late fifteenth century Ottoman Empire and Christian Europe. As extensively discussed in the previous chapters, I argue that the late fifteenth-century apocalypticism and holy war discourses bonded the two worlds. The Ottoman military campaigns launched against the Eastern bulwarks of Christendom revived the *antemurale christianitatis* discourse -in an age when the Christian public shared the same apocalyptic apprehension with the Islamic communities on the other side of the border. On the one hand, both Islamic eschatology and Christian apocalyptic tradition expected 1492-1493 to be the last year of the world. The fall of Constantinople in 1453 was regarded as the portent of the apocalypse by both the Latin and Orthodox communities. The Pseudo-Methodius apocalypse prophesized the appearance of the Last Roman Emperor who would save *Nova Roma* from the infidels, restore the Holy Land to Christianity, and prepare the world for the second advent of Jesus Christ. Therefore, it is no coincidence that Ştefan cel Mare and Ivan III of Moscow utilized the same pool of religious-political references to adjust their sovereignties to the challenging issues they struggled. While Ştefan cel Mare resorted to both the *antemurale christianitatis* discourse and Last Roman

Emperor *topos*, Ivan III refashioned himself as the true heir to the Roman Empire. In a similar vein, the Ottomans expected the second conquest of Constantinople by *Banu al-Asfar*, who will attack the city. The apocalypse was not meant to occur before the second conquest of Constantinople by the Muslims. Considering that the Ottomans were aware of Charles VIII's propaganda that he was intended to save Constantinople, oust the Turks from Europe, and restore Jerusalem to Christianity, this thesis argues that *Banu al-Asfar* was associated with the French during the reign of Bayezid II. In other words, this thesis illustrates that both the Ottomans and their Christian adversaries in Europe, who undertook the task of bulwarking Christendom against the infidel attacks from the East, underwent a similar process during the late fifteenth century.

As indicated in the introduction, this thesis argues that another connecting point between the Ottomans and Christian Europe was the Alexander the Great legend. While the Christian scholars of the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Period associated the Turks and Ottomans with the evil nations of Gog and Magog, they directly or indirectly drew a civilizational line between Christian Europe and what remains on the other side. Throughout the late fifteenth century, the Ottomans extended the limits of their empire and threatened the so-called civilized Christian territories in Europe. The intriguing coincidence, however, is the fact that the Ottoman sultans patterned their universal sovereignty claims after Alexander the Great. However, the Ottomans did not add another dimension to their *gaza* discourse by undertaking a civilizing role in their expeditions launched against the European political establishments. Most likely, they were not even aware of the Christian European tendency to associate the Ottomans with the barbarian nations of Gog and Magog. However, the Christian references to the Gog and Magog *topos* and the imprisonment of these evil people behind a gate erected by Alexander the Great demonstrate how deeply rooted the bulwark metaphor is in the European historical consciousness. Simply put, the rhetoric of Ottoman *gaza* was responded to by Christian Europe

through the *antemurale christianitatis* discourse and Alexander the Great legend. Thus, the Ottomans -who were often associated with Gog and Magog-, not only breached the bulwark of Christendom, but also the walls of civilization.

Finally, this thesis argues that relatable occurrences and similar themes observed in the Ottoman Empire and Christian Europe in the late fifteenth century contributed towards the emergence of the messianic transformation of holy war discourses. Although the rhetoric of Ottoman *gaza* and European *antemurale christianitatis* rhetoric have separately emerged, they triggered each other. The ruling elite of both worlds utilized the same pool of eschatological vocabulary to either strengthen their universal sovereignty claims or secure their throne. In this sense, it is safe to argue that the Ottomans and their Christian adversaries in Europe shared a similar political vision. Alexander the Great legend, Gog and Magog topos, Qutb al-Aqtab epithet, universal sovereignty claims, and holy war discourses functioned to articulate this shared political vision. Contrary to what has been argued in the literature, thus, the reign of Bayezid II was far from a pacifist interregnum period, but a critical stage in the making of a new Ottoman imperial ideology, which manifested itself as the messianic sovereignty in the reign of Süleyman I.

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